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THE IMPACT OF BEAUTY ON THE HUMAN ACT

INTRODUCTION

It does not take much effort to demonstrate that beauty marks our lifestyles. This circumstance is present in everyday experiences: we pay attention to beautiful things and like to be among them; we like to look pretty; we shape our works to make them beautiful; if we have to choose between objects of a certain kind, we usually pick the most beautiful one, and so on. Nevertheless, "beautiful things are difficult" (PLATO, 304e) and problematic, particularly because of *how* beauty determines our conscious and will-dependent activities (human acts), and *why* we are susceptible to beauty in their course. In this text I try to identify those elements of the human act through which it is determined by beauty, and attempt to characterise the ways in which beauty (through these elements) impacts on the human act.

In section 1, I determine the notion of human act to highlight that the human act boils down to a decision made about what is to be done based on a given set of facts. Next, in section 2, I characterise such a decision as a corollary of a certain relation between an actor's intellect and will. This will be a presentation of the structure of the human act using concepts derived from two main human faculties. Finally, in section 3, I present some information on beauty, in particular on the initial experience of beauty. The paper concludes with a juxtaposition of the findings about beauty and the

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structure of the human act. This clarifies that beauty genetically, heuristically and argumentatively determines the human act.[1]

1. THE HUMAN ACT AS A DECISION

Let us first note this: not everything that emanates from us or occurs in us and is defined by the words "act", "activity" and "action" takes place with our knowledge or consent. Many of our bodily activities take place completely unconsciously. For example, I know from my family members that I occasionally talk in my sleep; I know from school lessons (and my observations in the mirror) that the pupils in my eyes narrow and dilate, but I have no data on the movement of my pupils at this moment. Other human activities have the peculiarity that, although we are aware of them or can direct our attention to them, our control over them remains either slight or nonexistent. Thus, I am aware that I am breathing and can even take a deep breath or a shallow breath, but I am not able to hold my breath for very long; I am conscious that I blink, I can blink with my left or right eyelid, but I am unable to permanently stop moving my eyelids; the sneezing caused by the proximity of cat hair is something I cannot control at all. Moreover, there are acts in people's lives that take place, to use technical legal terminology, under conditions of *vis absoluta.* These are movements performed by a man solely under the influence of an external force that cannot be resisted.

Actions, acts and activities, such as those described above, are outside the area of inquiry. They are not human acts because their structure does not couple the intellect and the (free) will, meaning what is traditionally referred to as a "decision" or "choice" (AQUINAS, I-II, q. 13, pr; KRĄPIEC 1983, 207; DI BASILIO 2021, 420–421). The concept of a human act can thus be tentatively regulated to the form: it is an action that man emanates as the consequence of his own decision about what is to be done in a given set of facts,

[1] Two remarks should be noted here. First, the investigations collected in this text are largely based on Thomas Aquinas'' *Summa Theologiae* and the works formulated within the Lublin Philosophical School (Lublin Thomism). For more on this school see, for example, KRĄPIEC & MARYNIARCZYK 2010. Second, a few years ago, I published an article on beauty in the work of a lawyer and met with suggestions that it would be valuable to develop the concept of beauty and explore the relationship between beauty and the human act. This text responds to these suggestion, complementing the philosophical context of the reflections on the influence of beauty on legal professional activity carried out my article "O pięknie w pracy prawnika" (BARSZCZ 2020, 17–28).

and this decision results from a certain relation of the intellect and the (free) will of the actor.

Two points should now be noted. First, every decision about what is to be done always takes place in a specific set of circumstances: no decision to act is detached from the persons, things, activities and relationships in which this action is to be undertaken. And yes, it happens that we decide about what is to be done without due consideration of the circumstances that are relevant to the action ("due" in the sense that we do not take into account everything that, for various reasons, should be taken into account). However, it is not the case that we decide what is to be done without any regard for the situation in which the action is to be carried out. Second, the definition of a human act as presented here has two obvious flaws: (1) it is too narrow and (2) it operates with a vague notion of decision as a relationship between the intellect and will.

Concerning the first flaw, it is sufficient to note that the indicated characteristic implies (as a necessary element of a human act) the execution of a decision. This is because it uses the expression "an action that a man emanates". Intuitively, however, we feel that the mere realisation of an action already decided upon remains secondary to the qualification of that action (i.e., the action that was the matter of the decision made) as a human act. It happens, after all, that the very implementation of a decision to act suffers an obstacle independent of the decider. We also call such an unrealised decision a human act and, as a result, ascribe to it a moral value or even (less frequently) a legal qualification. Therefore, it is reasonable to edit the above definition of a human act to the form: it is a decision about what is to be done in a given set of facts, resulting from a certain relation between the intellect and (free) will of the decider.[2]

[2] The following terminological convention is adopted in my inquiry: I treat the words "activity" and "act" as synonyms referring to any movement or change. Thus, both human acts and human actions fall under "activity" and "act". The phrase "human act" refers to activities (acts) that are specific only to human beings, i.e., actions that a man brings about when his intellect and (free) will combine in deciding. In turn, I reserve the expression "human action" (or briefly, "action") for activities (acts) that emerge from a human being without the conjunction of intellect and will, or are only a consequence (i.e., realisation) of such a conjunction. This convention seems to correspond to the insights of Thomas Aquinas (I-II, q. 1, a. 1, co).

2. THE STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN ACT

Removing the second flaw will provide data on the structure of the human act. This operation is worth starting with the following remark: man's undertaking any activity ultimately depends on three circumstances. First, there must be a lack in the case of the acting man. This lack may relate directly to the man who is to act, or it may exist in another being with whom the acting man is in a relationship. The rationale of any action of any being is a lack present in that being's situation (FORYCKI 1973, 22–24). A being can strive and act either to obtain what it does not possess but which is obtainable by virtue of its construction (or in the construction of another being with which it is in a relationship), or to preserve what it does not need to possess in its construction (or in the construction of another being with which it is in a relationship).

Second, there must be another being-good appropriate to make up for the lack. The phrase "must exist" here denotes the state in which the complementary object already exists, as well as the state in which this object can be produced. The expression "being-good," in turn, was coined because the object of conscious or unconscious striving (and, consequently, activity) is usually referred to by the word "good" in the theory of being. This means that a being is a good insofar as it is the end (motive) of another being's striving. In turn, a being can become the goal of another being's striving if it is able to complete, perfect or add something to the other being or to enable such completion, perfecting or addition (MARYNIARCZYK 2012, 33–49).

Third, man should have faculties (powers) for an activity directed towards the attainment or production of a being-good that compensates for a lack. In turn, the variety and complexity of human activities indicate that man has many powers.[3] If, however, a human act is a man's decision about what is to be done in a given set of facts, and this decision results from a certain relation of the actor's intellect and will, then it is necessary to look at two specifically human faculties, namely the intellect and the will, in order to determine the structure of a human act.

The intellect (reason) is a cognitive power responsible for intellection, concept organisation and judgement. Intellection (understanding) is directly "taking something in its sense, its identity or its relation to something, its

[3] AQUINAS, I, q. 78, a. 1, passim; I, q. 77, a. 3, co. The types of human faculties (powers), with reference to Aquinas' position, are elegantly presented by Bardan and Bednarski (1967, 6–9) and Majkrzak (2022, 70–85).

role in a certain whole" (STĘPIEŃ 2007, 123); we deal with it when we realise (understand) something, e.g., that the whole of something is greater than its parts, the relationship between colour and surface, or that a being exists and is non-contradictory (CHUDY 1980, 262–263; STĘPIEŃ 1971, 104). It is enough to point out that concept organisation primarily involves capturing the necessary (and as a result, unchangeable and general) contents of objects of impressions or imaginations. For example, when I formulate the concept of a cat, I become aware that it is a four-legged animal that meows; and when I construct the concept of a rectangle, I realise that a rectangle is a quadrilateral with four right angles. Next, the organisation of concepts manifests itself in the mental separation and combining of concepts' contents. For example, to organise the concept of a dragon, one must combine elements of the concepts of a lizard and a bat (CHUDY 1980, 263–265). In turn, when a concept is related to reality, judgement takes place.

There is a long philosophical tradition stating that there are two forms of judgement, namely theoretical judgement and practical judgement. A certain isolated state of affairs is established by means of a theoretical judgement. Thus, when I state "it is a cat" (I relate my notion of a cat to a certain object) and when I adjudicate that "this building is triangle-shaped" (I relate my notions of building, triangle and shape to a certain arrangement of objects), I am making theoretical judgements. In turn, through a practical judgement, the intellect states (more precisely, proposes) what to do in a particular situation. For example, when I try to write this article at one o'clock in the morning and see that I am not succeeding, and I have to get up early and make a practical judgement: "I should go to bed." Thus, people make judgements when they apply their knowledge to learn that something is such and such, and when they find out that something should be done or that they should refrain from doing it (COOPE 2013, 2–3).

The will is an appetitive faculty, manifested in three forms of "wanting". Basically, the will involves an activity that cannot expire: the desire for happiness or, in other words, man's orientation towards good (*Aquinas*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1, co). Therefore, this form of will is the driving force behind every human act. It is simply not the case that we perceive deficiencies in our situation, and it is only this perception that causes our actions. We still need a "driving unit" for concrete acts to emerge in wanting beings recognised as goods suitable to make up for deficiencies; and it is precisely such a driving unit that is the basic and unexpired act of will (KRĄPIEC 1983, 205–206). The second form of will involves acts of wanting that emerge from the will

directly in relation to particular beings that appear as goods. It is a particular being (recognised as good in a given situation) that causes an individual act of wanting to emerge from the desire for happiness. The third form of will includes acts of will that cause other faculties (e.g., locomotive powers) to emerge as actions tailored to objects appearing as finite goods. Each such act of the will is a command or prohibition to take up a specific action, physically measurable (in the case of locomotive power involvement) or of a purely mental nature (KRĄPIEC 2004, 40–41; STRUMP 1997, 584).

I will not enumerate or describe other human faculties. Well, this is not necessary for our investigation, and the will and intellect are superior to all other human powers.[4] However, the very relationship between intellect and will is complicated, and it is in this respect that some facts are worth highlighting. First of all, one cannot desire something without knowing anything about it. Only that which has been, even minimally, recognised can trigger a movement "to" (or "from") itself in the knower (STRUMP 1997, 581-582; ANDRZEJUK 2007, 76). When cognising, man registers beings as existing (*x* exists), possessing content (*x* is *a1*, *a2*, … *an*) and remaining in various relationships (*x* relates to *y* in the manner *m*). It is thanks to these data that, as a result of activities of the appetitive powers, he qualifies the cognised objects in terms of all that is good (complementary) in various life contexts. If the will ultimately constitutes a desire for happiness that manifests itself in individual acts of wanting what is cognised, then every cognised being is paralleled by an act of wanting that directly emerges from the will[5] (DI BASILIO 2021, 436; KRĄPIEC 2004, 55).

The second crucial attribute of the relationship between the will and the intellect is this: no object of cognition attracts the will absolutely, and a person obtaining any good, even repeatedly, is not able to extinguish the will. There is no such being that man must strive for, and no improvement results in the permanent disappearance of the will. In other words, cognitively available beings are limited or finite goods; they serve to complement man in certain aspects of his particular life situation. As a consequence, particular beings trigger acts of the will of varying intensities. Thus, for every cognised being, there corresponds an act of wanting that directly emerges from

[4] The transcendence of will and intellect with regard to other human faculties is revealed primarily in the fact that intellect and will are capable of subordinating the totality of human cognition and desire (STRUMP 1997, 578–579).

[5] In addition, to each cognised being there may correspond an activity of another faculty ordered by the cogniser's will, in particular one of the locomotive powers (KRĄPIEC 2004, 55).

the will, but each such act of wanting has its own greater or lesser strength (KRĄPIEC 1983, 211; STRUMP 1997, 582–583).

Concerning the fact that beings are finite or limited goods, it is worth noting that, in a given situation, the acquisition of one good often requires the prior acquisition of another good (or other goods). This circumstance provides the basis for the distinction between goods that are ends and goods that are means. Thus, a good-end is wanted (it is the object of an act emerging from the will) because it completes or improves the one who wants it. In turn, a good-means is wanted because it is needed for (good for) achieving a good-end.

I will now compile the above data into a model of the human act. If every human act boils down to a decision about what is to be done in this and not another set of facts, then such an act must begin with the setting of what is to be achieved at a particular time under particular circumstances. Therefore, every human act starts with determining an end, and the end of the human act remains a particular being qualified by the will as good. It is something that is to be acquired or produced by virtue of the human act in a particular situation (i.e., in this and not that arrangement of persons, actions, things and relations between these beings) and to compensate for deficiencies in the actor's situation. In other words, the end of the human act is the optimal good in this and not that situation constructed by the actor, and by other persons, things, relations, actions; and each element of the situation remains in a certain state: it is affected by a smaller or larger portion of lacks, and one of these lacks is to be removed or corrected by the actor.

Let me draw attention to some implications of the above description. First, the relationship between the human act and the end in view is one-one: only one end is determined for a given human act; what determines human activity as a single act is the end of that activity. Second, the end of a human act is established under such and no other (unique) circumstances – namely, circumstances in which the actor finds himself at that moment. The end is established because, according to the discernment of the actor, it will complete or improve his situation in this and not another aspect (vital, moral, material, etc.). As such, a particular end may belong to various categories of being. Third, it may happen that the being designated by the actor as the end of the human act turns out to be "not good", so to speak.[6] It may be that it will

[6] Ad hoc igitur quod voluntas in aliquid tendat, non requiritur quod sit bonum in rei veritate, sed quod apprehendatur in ratione boni. Et propter hoc philosophus dicit, in II Physic., quod finis est bonum, vel apparens bonum (Aquinas, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, c.o.).

ultimately worsen the situation of the actor or other people; in particular, it is possible that the pursuit of the end will worsen the situation of others while improving the situation of the actor, or that it will improve the situation of the actor or other people in one dimension (e.g., in the area of wealth) while worsening his or their situation in another dimension (e.g., in the sphere of morality).

Now, let us consider the issue of the means to the end of the human act. Everyday experience suggests this relationship: when we begin to want *x* at a given moment, more or less possible ways of obtaining (acting towards) this *x* reveal themselves to us. As soon as we have set the desired end, we start to carry out a deliberation (*consilium*) on the means leading to that end here and now. In other words, although the human act begins with the establishment of an end, almost simultaneously with this comes the organisation of the means to that end. This operation ultimately depends on the intellect, since the intellect is the faculty responsible for understanding reality and relating information to anything outside of it. More specifically, finding the means to achieve the end in view under such and no other circumstances involves making detailed practical judgements. The word "detailed" here indicates that each of these judgements considers the individual circumstances in which man finds himself at the time of making the judgement. The term "practical" points out that the topic (subject) of every such judgement is a unitary action, each time differently adapted to the set end.[7]

The relationship between the end of a human act and the means of achieving that end takes a one-many form. There are a minimum of two practical judgements in a given case. Even when the set of people, objects, actions and relationships between them (in which the set end is to be achieved) is sparse, the intellect at least suggests the option "do *x*" and the option "do not do *x*."[8] However, there are usually more detailed practical judgements.

[7] Aquinas distinguishes three aspects of the activity of the will with regard to the means to an end presented by the intellect in the course of *consilium,* consent (*consensus*), choice (*electio*) and use (*usus*); Aquinas, I-II, q. 13, pr. Consent consists in a greater or lesser approval of the means, election is the preference of that means which has obtained the highest consensus, and use amounts to the stimulation of other faculties to act appropriately according to their chosen means to the end (Aquinas, I-II, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3; q. 16, a. 1, resp.). It appears that *consensus* and *electio* constitute the same act of the will, considered on different sides. For the will cannot equally approve (endow with equal consensus) two different means to the end (DI BASILIO 2021, 434–439).

[8] AQUINAS, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1; see also: I-II, q. 27, a 1, ad 3. The indicated advantages of the cited definition of beauty are emphasised by both W. TATARKIEWICZ (2004, 8–9) and P. JAROSZYŃSKI (1992, 145).

Under these and no other circumstances, the intellect of one who is to undertake an action towards the end in view may present a multitude of clues: "do *x*", "do not do *x*", "do *y*", "do not do *y*", "do *z*", "do not do *z*", etc; and practical judgements are not formulated "in a vacuum", but in the perspective of such and no other knowledge of the actor, which is provided by the intellect through theoretical judgements, intellection and concepts organisation (KRĄPIEC 2004, 57–59).

Each action suggested in detailed practical judgements presents itself as a good, i.e., as a possible means to a set end; as such, each potential action is more or less wanted by the actor. For its part, the will, in the perspective of the decision-maker's current knowledge, more or less approves of the topic of each practical judgement (as a more or less good-appropriate means with regard to realising the end). This process underpins the human act and ceases when all potential actions towards the end are more or less wanted (as good means). Since each of the potential actions presented by the intellect has been made an object of wanting and each wanting has a different intensity, one of these potential actions is the most wanted. It is this one that is chosen (KRĄPIEC 2004, 60–55).[9]

The will, it is worth noting, does not have to choose the practical judgement whose topic is indeed (truly) the optimal action for achieving the end. Moreover, the will does not have to choose the judgement representing the action that corresponds to moral or legal norms (i.e., it does not have to elect the action that is good in the moral or legal sense). Thus, a person can (1) stop considering the means and even abandon the end being pursued, (2) choose a means that does not correspond to the end (i.e., mistakenly recognise that a given means is optimal for the end), or (3) choose a means which, although in some aspect positively leads to the end (i.e., choose how the end can be achieved most easily, most quickly, at least cost), does so in violation of more or less regulators of human life. This is the case not only because the will's approval of practical judgements always takes place in the perspective of the current, meaning incomplete and limited knowledge of the decision-maker, but also because there is no good (in the world cognitively accessible to man) to which the will is absolutely attracted. Everyday experience tells us that this is often the case; we give up certain goals because "the game is not worth the candle", and also, we make rash, morally wrong, or illegal choices.

[9] Moreover, the definition provided does not assume a systemic-philosophical background – it is naturalistic.

A human act is done when a person, by virtue of the will that has chosen this and not another potential action (from those presented by the intellect as means to the set end), establishes himself as the author (cause) of that action; and the intensity of the wanting associated with the chosen action translates into how this action will be carried out. The very implementation of the chosen action (i.e., the execution of a decision made about what to do in a given set of facts) is already the result of a human act. This result, however, may not even occur because of an obstacle independent of or unforeseen by the actor (KRĄPIEC 2004, 66–67).

3. THE CORE OF BEAUTY

There is a tendency in contemporary research to reduce beauty to the domain of art. Beauty is rather conceived as something that "resides just within", "is solely released by means of" or "is only expressed through" a work of art, the cognition concerning such a work, or emotional condition of one who has established some kind of relationship with a work of art. Yet, beauty understood in this way has a very limited scope: beyond the denotation of the word "beauty" remains most of what is real. Works of art, artists and artistic creation are, after all (even if we greatly expand the notion of art), only a small part of reality. Moreover, associating beauty exclusively with art does not correspond to intuitive and common linguistic practices. Naturally, we use the name "beauty" to refer to sculptures, paintings and musical or poetic works, etc.; yet, this term is also employed to describe completely different (from art-related objects) states of being. We speak, for example, of beautiful creations of nature ("What a beautiful landscape."), of beautiful everyday life activities ("Sonny, you brushed your teeth beautifully!"), of beautiful strictly utilitarian creations ("You keep that notebook beautifully." or "Your car is really beautiful."), of the beautiful qualities of a person, animal or thing ("a beautiful hairstyle", "he has a beautiful personality", "that fortitude is beautiful"), and even about beautiful but tragic or sad events ("What a beautiful disaster!" "His funeral was beautiful.").

The above remarks indicate, so to speak, a doubling of beauty. Classical philosophy employs the expressions "categorical beauty" (or "aesthetic beauty") and "transcendental beauty" (or "metaphysical beauty") to deal with this circumstance; and while aesthetic beauty boils down to a masterpiece or manifestation of a work of art, artist and artistic creation, in meta-

physical terms beauty constitutes a transcendental and analogous attribute of being (KRĄPIEC 1991, 187–188; KIEREŚ 2006, 49–50; JAROSZYŃSKI 1991, 146, fn. 3; JAROSZYŃSKI 2018, 579–591; STRÓŻEWSKI 2002, 157–161). What is more, "[i]n ancient and medieval theories of beauty, transcendental and categorical conceptions of beauty were not presented as opposites" (JAROSZYŃSKI 2018, 585). This, together with the fact that metaphysical beauty (a property of being) is transcendental and analogous, provides the basis for aesthetic beauty (i.e., an attribute of a work of art, the act of cognition of that work or experiences related to it) to be conceived as an instance (actualisation under some additional conditions) of metaphysical beauty (JAROSZYŃSKI 1992, 49–52). This perspective is adopted below: in order to accomplish the task of our inquiry, I will mainly collect data on metaphysical beauty, and against this background, I will introduce some information on aesthetic beauty.

Therefore, let the following expression be the reference point: we call beautiful that which pleases when it is viewed (*pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent*).[10] This phrase not only corresponds to intuition and common linguistic practice, but also indicates, and this expresses its metaphysical dimension, that every being is a vehicle of beauty.[11] This is because every being can be pleasing when it is viewed (JAROSZYŃSKI 1992, 145–146). Moreover, this definition of beauty points not only to an object (that which is viewed), but also to a subject: it reveals what lies on the part of the subject in the initial or source experience of beauty, namely the sensation (vision) of the object and the change in the subject that is brought about by this sensation (pleasing).[12]

There are many explications of the subjective components of the initial experience of beauty.[13] However, it is usually emphasised that viewing an object is a fundamental phase of cognition: it consists of noticing (a visual, aural perception, etc.) an object. As such, vision is characterised by the absence of discourse (absence of organising concepts, making judgements) and

[10] Due to the focus on subjective elements, the referenced term is sometimes called a subjective and relational definition of beauty (KRĄPIEC 1991, 184–185; KIEREŚ 2006, 49; JAROSZYŃSKI 1992, 23).

[11] The dispute between objectivism and subjectivism in the context of beauty seems to stem primarily from an overemphasis on the first or second ingredient (RAMÍREZ 2020, 202–206).

[12] I have used the term "form of being" (instead of the abbreviation "form") to emphasise that what is meant here is the rationale (principle, determinant) of the belonging of a particular being to a set of beings. Nevertheless, *forma multipliciter dicitur*; on the meanings of the word "form" in philosophical and aesthetic discourse, see TATARKIEWICZ 1980, 257–287; STRÓŻEWSKI 2002, 47–69.

[13] AQUINAS, I, q. 39, a. 8, co.

its content is that which is directly and holistically ("in one go", so to say) available to the subject from the object. This content includes the object's appearance, the sound it produces, etc., and not what the subject knows or thinks about it (TATARKIEWICZ 2004, 181–182; KRĄPIEC 1991, 184–186). In turn, the change in the subject (i.e., what we commonly call "motion", "interest", "curiosity") is characterised as an activation of the will (and senses). It is not yet an act of the will (i.e., a particular wanting emerged from the will), but an "embryonic" focus of the will (and senses) on the object of vision. This means that a man loses indifference towards people and things and comes into contact with reality, with the beings encountered (KRĄPIEC 1991, 185–186; MARYNIARCZYK 2016, 117–119, TATARKIEWICZ 2004, 172–180; PÖLNER 2008, 230–241). Our use of language confirms this description: we are ready to call beautiful those people, things, actions and relationships that can "attract our attention" by making us focus on them, if only for a moment.

Everyday life shows that when experiencing beauty, we not only lose our indifference towards a beautiful being (person, thing, activity and relationship), but we can also feel pleasure and joy; and the more we develop in ourselves the experience of beauty, the greater and more intense are the pleasure and joy, so that sometimes they even pass into delight (BROWN 1998, 681; TATARKIEWICZ 2004, 182–184). To be more precise, pleasure, joy and delight are not part of the initial experience of beauty; and this circumstance is rather obvious: it so happens, after all, that the beings we encounter draw us out of our indifference towards them, but at the same time they do not evoke our pleasure (joy and delight). This is because the presence in the initial experience of beauty of a cognitive component (vision) and a sensory-volitional component (pleasing the vision) is embryonic, act-less (KRĄPIEC 1991, 180–181). Such an experience, precisely as an initial one, boils down to merely registering an encountered being and the residual movement of the will and senses towards it. Pleasure, joy and delight, by contrast, are acts of man's faculties. They arise as a result of the development of the experience of beauty, that is, when the encountered being is sensually and intellectually recognised (or better, acknowledged) as *aesthetically* beautiful (and this is the case when it fulfils the requirements or canons of beauty accepted by the cogniser), which may attract acts of will and feelings towards it.[14] We take

[14] If the developed experience of beauty (i.e. the experience of an aesthetically beautiful thing) involves, in addition to pleasure, joy and delight, a sense of necessity and enlightenment, then the sense of necessity, rather, represents a reaction to the fact that the aesthetically beautiful thing fulfils *integritas* and *proportio*. In turn, the human reaction to the *claritas* of an aesthetically beautiful thing can be described as enlightenment (STRÓŻEWSKI 2002, 177–178).

note of the beings we encounter, but some of them activate our cognitive and appetitive faculties towards them precisely when they seem to us prettier or more aesthetically pleasing than others. Thus, the initial experience of beauty constitutes a condition *sine qua non* for pleasure, joy and delight; but such an initial experience is not sufficient to derive pleasure, joy and delight.[15]

Since the experience of beauty includes a cognitive component, we should emphasise that human cognitive faculties are receptive. The senses and the intellect do not construct the object of cognition in a cognising man, but reflect in the cogniser the content of the cognised being; in cognition, we do not create a cognised object, but a mental representation of it. The representation exists in the one who cognises, but the content of the representation, if the cognition succeeds, corresponds to more or less of the content of what has been cognised from being (KRĄPIEC 1983, 153–155). Innate abilities, organic barriers, acquired skills and knowledge indeed create a specific cognitive situation for each person, which means that different people, when encountering being *x*, are able to grasp different contents of *x*. Nevertheless, when person *p* maintains that thing *x* is beautiful, *p* ultimately does so because of what *x* is and what has been noticed in *x* by *p*. If that is the case, then beauty cannot just be a human reaction to being. The being itself must therefore be the vehicle of beauty; there must be something in a being that makes it pleasing.

We can, however, recall the following situation: three viewers look at the same painting and one of them finds it beautiful due to its combination of colours. Another viewer recognises that the painting is beautiful because of the way the objects are portrayed. The last person declares that the painting is not beautiful, since the painted objects should be positioned differently in relation to each other. This situation seems to justify the following statement: from the fact that beauty has a basis in being, it does not follow that beauty is not something individual or personal. However, this objection can be refuted by practical arguments. First, the solution that beauty is individual does not correspond to our everyday experiences and common intuitions:

[15] Two remarks should be noted here. First, the investigations collected in this text are largely based on Thomas Aquinas'' *Summa Theologiae* and the works formulated within the Lublin Philosophical School (Lublin Thomism). For more on this school see, for example, KRĄPIEC & MARYNIARCZYK 2010. Second, a few years ago, I published an article on beauty in the work of a lawyer and met with suggestions that it would be valuable to develop the concept of beauty and explore the relationship between beauty and the human act. This text responds to these suggestion, complementing the philosophical context of the reflections on the influence of beauty on legal professional activity carried out my article "O pięknie w pracy prawnika" (BARSZCZ 2020, 17–28).

after all, we can argue about what is beautiful and we do not consider such disputes barren or frivolous. Second, we accept the existence of canons on beauty.

Beauty, therefore, is not purely subjective: it has a basis in being and its principle is not simply an individual matter. Thus, if beauty resides in being and its principle is not individual, then beauty's *raison d'être* must be the ontic structure or, to use a technical term, the form of being: *pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis* (AQUINAS, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1). Let us note, then, that the function of the form of being is to organise matter (the content basis for change and duration) into being of this and not of that kind. More precisely, the form of *x* causes *x* in such a way that it integrates (actualises, harmonises) the multiplicity of its contents (the multiplicity recognisable by senses) into a single *x* as a specimen of a given kind (KRĄPIEC 1991, 366–375; Reale 1989, 90). For example, the form of being of a triangle is what makes something a plane figure with three vertices; and the matter (content) in which *in casu* the form of the triangle lies results in the concreteness (singularity) of the figure, that is, how long its sides are, how far each vertex is from the base, and so on. In turn, the form of being of a paintbrush is that by which something is such a combination of handle, ferrule and bristles that it is possible to paint or write using this combination; and individual characteristics such as the colour of the handle, the shape of the ferrule, the roughness of the bristle and the overall length depend on the matter that this form organises.[16]

If the form of being works in the above way, we need to note two circumstances. First, by integrating a multiplicity of contents of *x*, the form determines its end: *x* is not able to accomplish (and it cannot be used to accomplish) any other end than that which corresponds to its ontic structure. For example, with a paintbrush (namely, a specific being organised in the form of a paintbrush) I do not cut a piece of paper. The end of a paintbrush comes down to being a tool for painting and writing. Second, the form of being constitutes the optimum of perfection for those entities that realise it: the

[16] The following terminological convention is adopted in my inquiry: I treat the words "activity" and "act" as synonyms referring to any movement or change. Thus, both human acts and human actions fall under "activity" and "act". The phrase "human act" refers to activities (acts) that are specific only to human beings, i.e., actions that a man brings about when his intellect and (free) will combine in deciding. In turn, I reserve the expression "human action" (or briefly, "action") for activities (acts) that emerge from a human being without the conjunction of intellect and will, or are only a consequence (i.e., realisation) of such a conjunction. This convention seems to correspond to the insights of Thomas Aquinas (I-II, q. 1, a. 1, co).

form of *x* does not contain lacks or shortcomings and is not their cause. All defects that are present in *x* arise from the matter underlying *x* (KIEREŚ 2006, 49–51).

Thus, for example, the form of a triangle is perfect (and as such, this form results in the beauty of individual triangles). However, a particular being, meaning the plastic right-angled triangle that I use to draw perpendicular and parallel lines, contains shortcomings: it is greyed out and has chipped sides. The same is true for the form of a paintbrush: it is the optimum of perfection for any paintbrush (and accounts for the beauty of paintbrush-kind beings). By contrast, the several-centimetre-long and oblong thing lying on my desk, which I use to paint on paper, has a broken handle and uneven bristles. Thus, insofar as *x* is material, it is prone to ugliness, meaning to lacking what, by virtue of its form of being, it should possess; and these very lacks make it difficult (or impossible) for *x* to achieve its end. The following situation is quite typical: in everyday life, marked by matter, things and people that are not perfect (optimal), they lack something to a greater or lesser degree; and precisely due to the fewer lacks that an object has, the more we are inclined to recognise it as beautiful.

The above reference to everyday life highlights the problem of the criteria of beauty. This issue, however, is peripheral to answering the question of how beauty determines human acts and why we are susceptible to beauty in their course. Therefore, I will recall a statement about the criteria of beauty with which most people will probably agree: "three are the requirements of beauty: first is fullness or perfection, for what has deficiencies is ugly, as well as proper proportion or harmony and clarity" (*nam ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio, quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt. Et debita proportio sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas* …);[17] and I will only point out that this characterisation is sometimes referred to as an objective or aesthetic definition of beauty (JAROSZYŃSKI 2018, 582–583), as well as that the reference point for *integritas*, *proportio* and *claritas* as criteria of beauty is the state of the object that is assessed in terms of beauty. This state is determined by the form of being (which is revealed in other objects of the same kind as the object being assessed). The fewer lacks in *x* relative to the optimal state that its form defines, i.e., the more elements of *x* that are proportional to (or more integrated

[17] AQUINAS, I, q. 78, a. 1, passim; I, q. 77, a. 3, co. The types of human faculties (powers), with reference to Aquinas' position, are elegantly presented by Bardan and Bednarski (1967, 6–9) and Majkrzak (2022, 70–85).

under) what the form defines, and the easier it is to see in *x* what the form encompasses, the greater the chance that *x* will not only jolt a man out of his indifference, but also cause a man to experience pleasure (joy and even delight).[18]

CONCLUSIONS

Let us compile the above data. Since (1) the principle of beauty is the form of being, (2) the human act is a decision on what is to be done in a given set of facts, and (3) this decision is a combination of man's actions of intellect and will, the human act *heuristically* depends on beauty. Namely, to set out the means leading to the end of a human act is to make at least two practical judgements by reason. Each such judgement indicates that the decider should do something to achieve the end; and each of these potential actions is consented to by the will. However, since each of these actions is different, the attitude of the will towards each of them is also different; the actions presented by reason are more or less wanted. The intensity of the will's wanting a particular action as a means to the end in view stems from the recognition that the action is suitable (good) for achieving this end: if *x* is identified as being more conducive to the end than *y*, then *x* is estimated to be better than *y*; as such, *x* is more wanted than *y*. The content of a decision (human act) becomes that action which gains the highest acceptance of the will. However, since each action appreciated by the will is a certain being, and the fewer lacks or shortcomings the being has in relation to the optimal state determined by its ontic structure – its form of being (the absence of shortcomings is manifested in the fact that the being is considered to be more integrated, proportional and clear), the more suitable it is for achieving the end; a given being identified as beautiful, i.e., a being whose lacks or shortcomings have not been taken into account, is expected to be optimal for achieving the end. Beauty, therefore, is a determinant of the content of a decision (a human act), since it suggests the actions presented in practical judgements as optimal or reliable means to achieve the end.

Beauty has also a *genetic* impact on the human act. This is because (1) deciding what to do boils down to considering potential actions as means to

[18] The transcendence of will and intellect with regard to other human faculties is revealed primarily in the fact that intellect and will are capable of subordinating the totality of human cognition and desire (STRUMP 1997, 578–579).

an end and accepting one of these means, (2) such a decision-making process always takes place under a specific set of circumstances: the persons, things, actions and relationships in which this action is to be undertaken; and (3) the experience of beauty conditions the composition of that set. Thus, to be included at all, a given being must cause the decision-maker to experience beauty. Experiencing the beauty of an encountered person, thing, activity or relationship, at an initial stage, always consists in pleasing the vision (holistic, direct, as if "in one go," grasping-noticing) of what has been encountered. In turn, pleasing one's vision basically involves the loss of indifference towards the object of the vision, in activating the appetitive and cognitive faculties towards that object. Through the experience of beauty, we can perceive the entities we encounter in "the rush of reality"; and this is a prerequisite for their subsequent qualification as elements of the set in which the decision (human act) is to be made.

Since a change in a human experiencing beauty can, under additional conditions (e.g., *integritas*, *proportio*, *claritas*), involve pleasure, joy and even delight, beauty has an *argumentative* effect on the human act. It is, after all, easier to accept what is pleasurable or joyful than what is not pleasurable or joyful. So, if the action that has become the content of the human act (i.e., the action that has gained the highest approval of the will) presents itself as beautiful, it is likely to evoke pleasure, joy and delight. In turn, by evoking pleasure, joy or delight, the content of the human act (chosen action) is easier to accept and, consequently, easier to perform. Let us, however, emphasise the fact that the initial stage of the experience of beauty consists in noticing the being encountered and the rudimentary movement of appetitive faculties towards it. The presence of the intellect and the will is embryonic at this stage. The intensification of pleasure, the evocation of joy and the sensation of delight occur only when the object of vision becomes the object of acts of intellect and acts of will: the more a given being is recognised as fulfilling the criteria of aesthetic beauty, the more it pleases, causes joy and can even delight.

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THE IMPACT OF BEAUTY ON THE HUMAN ACT

Summary

The article discusses the relationship between beauty and conscious, will-dependent human behaviour (human act). Assuming that a human act is essentially a decision on what is to be done in a given set of facts, I explain, using the concepts of intellect and will as human faculties, the mechanism of its undertaking. This shows that beauty determines the decision-making process in three ways: (i) beauty suggests decision options, meaning potential actions, as the optimal means to achieve an end; (ii) beauty is a condition for recognising the circumstances in which a human act is to be made; (iii) beauty influences the approval of the undertaken decision to do something.

Keywords: beauty; human act; decision; intellect; will

WPŁYW PIĘKNA NA CZYN LUDZKI

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy relacji między pięknem a świadomym, zależnym od woli ludzkim zachowaniem (czynem ludzkim). Przyjmując, że czyn ludzki sprowadza się do decyzji o tym, co należy zrobić w danym układzie faktów, wyjaśniam (posługując się pojęciami intelektu i woli jako ludzkich dyspozycji) mechanizm jego podejmowania. Pokazuję, że piękno determinuje proces decyzyjny na trzy sposoby. Po pierwsze, piękno sugeruje opcje decyzyjne, czyli potencjalne działania, jako optymalne środki do osiągnięcia celu. Po drugie, piękno jest warunkiem rozpoznania okoliczności, w których ludzkie działanie ma zostać podjęte. Po trzecie wreszcie, piękno wpływa na zatwierdzenie podjętej decyzji o zrobieniu czegoś.

Słowa kluczowe: piękno; czyn ludzki; decyzja; intelekt; wola