

# Good essay about beauty and being just

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



The ideas presented by Elaine Scarry in her book 'Beauty and Being Just' resonate in my experiences as a 21 year old with perceptions of beauty regarding people and objects in my interactive environment. I find Scarry to be defensive on the premise that the political conceptualization of beauty in contemporary and historical times has always been such that beauty is deemed as a means to gain political advantage. She argues that beauty has two main incoherent criticisms that have in turn served to be misinterpretations of societal conceptualizations of beauty. First, she proposes that one of the incoherent arguments about beauty is that it distracts attention from wrong social arrangements making people inattentive and with effect causing individuals not to notice injustices in the face of beauty. What this proclamation implies is that beauty is taken as a means to gain political advantage in which the unjust guise themselves as beautiful creatures in the eyes of the public who then become oblivious of the injustices propagated through their disguises.

The other incoherent arguments furthered about beautiful things, people and phenomena call for attention that is majorly visual in nature. Moreover, this attention causes us to stare at beauty which is associated with deriving pleasure from looking at beauty. Further the same inconsistency here Scarry argues is associated with the notion that beautiful individuals or objects suffer from being stared at.

Conspicuously, the two notions contradict themselves in the sense that the very thing that causes us to overlook injustice (beauty) suffers from the attention that we give it (beauty) by looking at it in perception that reifies the element of beauty. On the one hand the former implies that our focus on

beauty makes us put a blind eye on injustice while the later implies that we should give up the pleasure of looking at beauty as it is harmful to persons we seem to be admiring.

The reason why Scarry's ideas resonate in my own life experiences is because I share the same sentiments as her with regard to beauty judging from my high school interactions with beauty and the elements that influenced my own perceptions as well as those of the student community that I went to school with. Growing up I was always a reserved young boy not involved much with children comprising my peers. To me it seemed more like I was mature and always thought of myself as different from the others. In Kindergarten, I didn't ride the swings or play with the toys like the other kids my age. Instead I opted to sketch traces of figurines and color sections of drawings in my polar bear book.

As I moved on to first grade I remained the same for the most part eventually making a friend from class. She was a little bit like me reserved, artistic and mature. So we remained friends throughout our childhood and teenage years till we eventually parted ways after high school. At this time my friend Debby had really grown up and her adolescent years were showing in her features. Her round hips and smashing figure had her commanding attention from the boys in school. I slowly faded in her shadow as I was often overlooked when it came to her and me meeting new people and making new friends.

For the most part her beauty became the center of the attention that we received, well that she received; since I was the guy who was her best friend none of the boys paid attention to me in her presence, although I know for

sure that they must have been jealous of my friendship with her. I must admit that I did derive pleasure from her friendship since being the best friend to the most popular girl in school served to place my name in the radar of the ‘celebrity’ list. This brings to the fore a pertinent issue that Scarry discusses with regard to beauty and her perceived incoherent argument that beauty is a way through which the beautiful suffer from the attention that they receive from the stares advanced on them by admirers. I totally am in agreement with her on the premise that during this entire time I found Debby to enjoy the attention that she gained from the boys who kept looking at her everywhere she went in School. Whether, we were walking into the cafeteria, through the parking lot or making our way to the locker cabinets there was always a boy staring in desire and infatuation of Debby’s beauty. With regard to the other misconception and politically incorrect notions advanced by Scarry is that beauty is a means that is used to blind fold us from fighting against the injustices that are presented by beautiful creatures or beautiful people. Moreover, it is a suggestion that people are so much overtaken by beauty that they tend to forgive and forget any injustices that they may suffer or undergo that are propagated by beautiful individuals or objects. I find her objections on this not only arguably incorrect and incoherent but I also find that Scarry’s concerns hold some level of truth to some extent.

Later in high school Debby’s popularity made her a household name in the school, she was well known by all the popular boys in the School football team who wanted her to be their girlfriend. Debby used this to her advantage at various instances where more often than not she served to

propagate injustices to other students. In one instance, Debby used her beauty to manipulate Stan the quarterback of the football team to bully a student so that she could take his parking space at the parking lot. Whereas, Stan was a staunch Christian and an advocate for fairness and equality in the school he fell blind to Debby's beauty by propagating injustice on a fellow student at the request of beauty so to speak.

On the other hand, it was not always the case that Debby and I would get away with breaking school rules unabated. Despite the fact that Debby's beauty was notable even by the teachers and staff at the school she was not given any preferential treatment by the school's administration for breaking school rules. In one instance in 7th grade she gave an excuse in science class that she couldn't finish her science project because it would mess her nail polish, as a consequence of her total disregard for her school work she was sent to the vice principal's office where she received a 3 days detention during which she was expected to finish her science project.

In high school Debby and a girl friend of hers Sharon were found in a rather compromising situation when they were caught red handed bullying a minor in the ladies washrooms and for that they were both suspended from school for two weeks. These two instances tow line with Scarry's ideas that beauty is misconceived to be a leeway for people to propagate injustice and with effect use the same beauty as a veil of ignorance to cover up their responsibility for the injustices suffered. Therefore, this proves that beauty can indeed not be blanketed as a means of overlooking injustices in society. That the community would forgive injustices on the account of the beauty of the individuals or items propagating such injustices.

So it was that my experience with beauty growing up opened me up to experiences that made me realize that there are various elements of beauty that serve as advantageous to the beautiful individuals or creature. Now at the age of 21 and in college I have grown to appreciate beauty as an intelligent young man. I have had my share of glances at beautiful ladies on and off campus. However, my personal experiences have not in any way been as they were during my times with Debby growing up. Now that we are indifferent college institutions we occasionally communicate with Debby over Skype and through mobile phone. She continues to receive attention from the boys as she did in high school. She tells me that she continues to receive favors from admirers just as she did before.

The difference this time is that the favors do not necessarily further injustice. Whenever we talk about our experiences growing up we always laugh about the occasions where we got our way at the expense of someone else or bullied a helpless fellow student on account of her popularity due to her exceptional beauty. She adds that in college similar situations present opportunity but things are done differently from our high school years. Further, she says there might be similarities although not to an in-depth extent.

Basing on my personal opinion, I can generally conclude that Debby's beauty did not play a major role in influencing the dynamics that were eminent in our school life as we were growing up. Particularly with regard to furthering injustice I find that it is a characteristic of school environments for students to get bullied by their peers as much as it is a usual occurrence to see some rivalry between different students to compete for popularity titles in the

school. I term this as part of the necessities of childhood and teenage hood that ultimately transition one into adulthood.

Nonetheless, I also find it worth mentioning that Debby's beauty to a great extent aided in the development of her popularity ratings that eventually made her an object of admiration among school going peers. Moreover, that she and I might have taken advantage of this in several ways to achieve an end to our various ill thought or harmless activities.

Fundamentally, Scarry's ideas about beauty and justice resonate in my childhood as I was growing up through my schooling to this day and age as a young adult. They give me an understanding of the societal conceptualizations of beauty that help in understanding and anticipating human behavior with regard to beauty and being just.

### **Work Cited**

Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton: Princeton University Press , 1999.