

# WHAT IS PRETTY CANNOT BE BEAUTIFUL? A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE AESTHETICS OF NATURE.

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The aphorism ‘what is pretty cannot be beautiful’ was written by Wittgenstein (1942/1977) and belongs to his reflections on reality in its various manifestations. Also, this statement is consonant with the reasoning of the Austrian philosopher: apparent contradictions can lead to enlightening conclusions. This aphorism, however, seems to contradict what scholars from various disciplines have traditionally agreed: the true opposite terms in aesthetics are ‘beautiful’ vs. ‘ugly’. To delve into what is, or what can be considered ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ we may consider two opposite views: the first relies upon a universalistic ethnological idea by which all humans have similar essential conceptions of both concepts (Cunningham et al., 1995; Dutton, 2009). This approach is related with Wierzbicka’s proposal (1993) who defends the existence of a universal hardwired set of shared perceptions and emotions in humans. The second theoretical tradition considers that the notions of ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ are more dependent upon the cultural and cognitive interpretation of the individuals (Fenko, Otten and Schifferstein, 2010; Majid and Levinson, 2011), with clear implication on a potential individual variation in the conceptualization of these features. In this article we are going to concentrate on the notion of beauty represented by the adjective “beautiful”, therefore leaving the concept of “ugliness” for a future work and for this purpose we will use the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory as the theoretical foundation for its analysis in the Corpus of Language and Nature- CLAN Project (Romero-Trillo 2013). The methodology used for the analysis follows the recent corpus-based pragmatic tradition (Romero-Trillo 2008, 2013, 2014) in an attempt to combine empirical and theoretical approaches to the analysis of data in order to obtain reliable conclusions, as described in Grisot and Moeschler (2014).