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# INTRODUCTION

In this collection of articles, the authors reflect on justice and beauty. The question is: Why do the authors reflect on, or were asked to again reflect on justice, or more particularly, why on beauty? Why justice and why beauty, and not, for example, ethics and aesthetics? The answer, of course, depends on how justice and beauty are defined.

In many of the articles, the authors did relate justice to ethics and beauty to aesthetics. Some authors, however, deliberately decided for either “justice” or “beauty”, not merely related to ethics and aesthetics. For some of the authors, it was important to define and further develop justice. For others, the further development and definition of beauty was more important.

In addition to the question as to why the authors reflected on justice and beauty, the question was: What does justice have to do *with* beauty, or beauty *with* justice? Why relate justice to *beauty*, or beauty to *justice*?

Although they did not take this relation as a given, the authors in most of the articles in this collection tried to relate justice *to* beauty, and beauty *to* justice. They all deemed this relation to be given at least more *prominence* in theological reflections.

For some of the authors, it was important to argue that justice has to relate to beauty. They argued that justice alone will have to be further differentiated by a reflection on beauty. For them, justice was intrinsically related to beauty. Justice is only justice when related at least also to beauty. Justice is justice *if* there is beauty. Justice is always at least also beautiful justice. They, thus, argued for the beauty of justice.



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For others, it was more important to argue that beauty relates to justice. They argued that beauty alone will have to be differentiated further in relation to justice. For them, beauty was intrinsically related to justice. That is to say, beauty is only beauty when related at least also to justice. Beauty is beauty *if* there is justice. Beauty is always at least also just beauty. Thus, they argued for the justice *of* beauty.

Many of the authors asked about the “and” in justice and beauty. They asked not only *why* justice relates to beauty or beauty to justice, but *how* justice and beauty are related. This “why” and “how” was, whether implicitly or explicitly, always related to a *who*, to *theology* – whether to the theology of the triune God (Giessen, Van Wyk), to the theology of Jesus Christ (Havenga), to the theology of the Spirit (Van der Westhuizen), or to theological anthropology (Marais).

The authors would in different and divergent ways refer to God as the God who *is* justice or the God who *is* beauty. But for them, this reference to the God who is justice and beauty did not mean that justice *or* beauty is God. Neither did it mean that justice *and* beauty is God.

These reflections on the “who”, therefore, were always related to the particularities from which the authors reflected, in most of the articles, the particularities of South Africa (De Gruchy, Coates). The authors reflected theologically on justice and beauty not from above, but from below, that is, not only *for*, but also *with* those below, *inter alia*, in South Africa. For this reason, the collection of articles also includes reflections on justice and beauty in terms of *being* (Louw), *place* (Van Wyngaard), *space* (Auret), and *time* (Wessels).

The collection of articles aims to further a conversation not only on the theological importance of both justice and beauty, but for the theological importance of the relation between justice and beauty, beauty and justice – of theological ethics and theological aesthetics.

For this reason, Cilliers’ depiction is so apt not only for a collection of articles on theological ethics and theological aesthetics, more particularly, on justice and beauty, but also for a collection that arose from Bloemfontein, literally, flower fountain, fountain of flowers, the flowering fountain, or, perhaps, flourishing, blossoming, to bloom. In fact, the city, still so filthy because of the *injustice* and *unbeauty* of a past that is not past, is called the city of roses.

What this may mean is that not only the survival of, say, a rose plant is in view here, but something more; not only the fact *that* the rose plant lives, but the appreciation of *how* the rose plant lives. In other

words, flourishing entails the recognition that the rose plant exhibits and contributes an aesthetic component by its very living. Without life, the plant cannot flourish, and its survival is surely the minimum condition for its flourishing. Yet *when* it flourishes, the rose plant does something more than merely survive – it also brings forth roses, and in the form of its roses, also colours and smells, and a life worth observing, worth planting, worth watering, worth pruning, worth protecting, worth gifting, worth receiving, worth appreciating (Marais).

This is at least one reason why a collection on justice and beauty arose from Bloemfontein. A theological reflection on justice without beauty, or beauty without justice would not adequately reflect on the filthiness of the *injustice* and *unbeauty* of a still severely segregated South Africa, the flourishing, blossoming, the bloom we imagine for beings also in this time, space, and place.

**Dr. Henco van der Westhuizen**  
Guest-editor