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A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (Oxford World's Classics)

Edmund Burke

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'Pain and pleasure are simple ideas, incapable of definition.' In 1757 the 27-year-old Edmund Burke argued that our aesthetic responses are experienced as pure emotional arousal, unencumbered by intellectual considerations. In so doing he overturned the Platonic tradition in aesthetics that had prevailed from antiquity until the eighteenth century, and replaced metaphysics with psychology and even physiology as the basis for the subject. Burke's theory of beauty encompasses the female form, nature, art, and poetry, and he analyses our delight in sublime effects that thrill and excite us. His revolution in method continues to have repercussions in the aesthetic theories of today, and his revolution in sensibility has paved the way for literary and artistic movements from the Gothic novel through Romanticism, twentieth-century painting, and beyond. In this new edition Paul Guyer conducts the reader through Burke's Enquiry, focusing on its place in the history of aesthetics and highlighting its innovations, as well as its influence on many subsequent authors from Kant and Schiller to Ruskin and Nietzsche. ABOUT THE SERIES: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the widest range of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, helpful notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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