

According to the transcendent view, quality is synonymous with “innate excellence.”⁴ It is both absolute and universally recognizable, a mark of uncompromising standards and high achievement. Nevertheless, proponents of this view claim that quality cannot be defined precisely; rather, it is a simple, unanalyzable property that we learn to recognize only through experience. This definition borrows heavily from Plato’s discussion of beauty.⁵ In the Symposium, he argues that beauty is one of the “platonic forms,” and, therefore, a term that cannot be defined. Like other such terms that philosophers consider to be “logically primitive,” beauty (and perhaps quality as well) can be understood only after one is exposed to a succession of objects that display its characteristics.