

Elegance and effective reasoning (Fall 1996)

Here, the noun "elegance" should be understood in the sense of the second meaning of "elegant", as given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (6th Edition, 1976): "ingeniously simple and effective".

The practical significance of elegance has been contested, but that is only a social phenomenon caused by the fact that elegance requires great care to be achieved and education to be appreciated. In contrast we shall stress that in sophisticated designs, elegance is not a dispensable luxury, but a factor that often decides between success and failure.

The course has at least four goals:

- to identify the salient features of elegance
- to understand how these features make elegance so effective
- to learn how to design elegant solutions wherever they are feasible
- to learn how to form a considered opinion as to which problems are better ignored than solved.

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