

Modern Art – I

April 17, 2010

Why is modern art so ugly? Does it have to be so ugly? Cannot artists of today do something nice for a change? And why, when they do something nice, is it normally second- or third-rate as art, sentimental, somehow not authentic? Such recurring questions are raised by a painter like Van Gogh, considered last week, who was on his way to modern art. The questions are easy to answer if God and the human soul are for real. They have no reasonable answer if the spiritual God and the spiritual soul are fictions of self-deceiving man.

If God is the invisible but real “Father Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible,” then he created the invisible human soul, most intimately united at conception to a visible body to constitute every human being that ever was or will be. His purpose in creating creatures with a spiritual reason and therefore free-will is his own extrinsic (not intrinsic) glory, which increases with every human being who uses that free-will so to love and serve God in this life as to deserve at death to be unimaginably happy, by giving to God glory without end in the next life.

And how does a man love and serve God in this life? By obeying his commandments (Jn. XV, 10) which constitute a moral framework of good and evil for all human acts, a framework which men can defy but not evade. If they do defy it, they will put themselves in more or less disharmony with God, self and neighbor, because God created that framework not arbitrarily, but in perfect harmony with his own nature and the human nature bound by him to act within it.

Now art might be defined in its broadest sense as any confection of materials (e.g. paints, words, musical notes, etc.) over which man takes special trouble to communicate to other men what he has in his mind and heart. So if mind and

heart belong to a soul which at any given moment must be in a state of greater or lesser harmony with that moral framework set by God for all its acts, then any artistic product proceeding from that soul is bound to reflect the objective harmony or disharmony within it. And now we are in a position to answer our original questions.

Modern arts are so ugly because all modern souls belong to a global society falling daily deeper into apostasy, such that a huge and influential number of these souls are at war with God, consciously or unconsciously. The artistic products of souls immersed in such an environment can only reflect their internal disharmony with God, self and neighbor, which is why they are ugly. Only from any genuine harmony still remaining in their souls can anything genuinely beautiful proceed. Wilfully "nice" art proceeds from a disharmonious wish to feign harmony, which is why the effect will always be in some way false or sentimental, not authentic, and second- or third-rate as art.

On the other hand if God, and the immortal soul coming from him and due to go to him, are mere fictions, then there is no reason why beauty should not be ugly and ugliness beautiful. That is the mind-set of modern artists, but from the moment that I recognize any ugly artifact of theirs to be ugly, I am implying that there is a framework, not theirs, which they are defying.

Kyrie eleison.