

S C A P E G O A T *S* T U D I O

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What are some idioms regarding beauty?

- **Beauty** is in the eye of the beholder.
- One man's trash is another's treasure.
- **Beauty** is only skin deep.
- Age before **beauty**.
- I need my **beauty** sleep.
- A thing of **beauty** is a joy forever.



Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432



Mark Rothko, *No. 6 (Violet, Green, and Red)*, 1951



Jackson Pollock, *No. 5, 1948*

Beauty in the Beheld

Why subjectivity kills art

7/14/15

CCLE XV - Youth Colloquium

by Jonathan Mayer



1. Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder.
2. God is the source of all beauty.
3. Beauty is corrupted.
4. Beauty isn't always "pretty."
5. Humanity needs objective beauty.



1.

Beauty is not in the
eye of the Beholder



Beauty in Postmodern Thought

- How can beauty be objective, when no two people can agree on what is beautiful?
- How can beauty be objective when no one can define it?
- How can beauty be objective when it is clearly determined by race and culture?



Beauty in Postmodern Thought

“Beauty is a purely social construction in the eyes of the Postmodern thinker. Beauty is an illusion in the eye of the beholder, a series of signs fabricated to create the impression of meaning, conditioned by social conventions, shaped by class, race, nation, gender, and ideology. A gesture by one group to raise its status and authority over another group. Beauty is all surface; its deeper meaning is a social construction. Postmodern thinkers even have a wonderful term for beauty: it is “a pleasure technology.” It is neither true nor universal. It is a sort of consumer product; something made rather than discovered. *Thank you Postmodernism.*

— Dana Gioia

The Great Divorce: Catholicism and the Arts



Beauty in Postmodern Thought

- In a culture that rejects theism, beauty has no source, no meaning, and no benefit.
- Art is divorced from beauty on principle.
- “Value” is unrelated to beauty or craftsmanship.
- As a result, art has become a commodity.





Iron Man © 2008 Marvel Entertainment



2.

God is the source
of all Beauty



“ Those *beautiful* patterns, which through the medium of men's souls are conveyed into their artistic hands, emanate from that *Beauty* which is above our souls, which my soul sigheth after day and night.

— St. Augustine
Confessions

Beauty in the Bible

- The universe is intrinsically **beautiful**.
- God made us with the ability to see, recognize this **beauty**.
- Upon recognizing his **beauty**, God wants us to glorify him.





“ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. *Genesis 1:31*

“ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the **work of his hands**. *Psalms 19:1*

“ Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said,

*‘This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called woman,
for she was taken out of man.’*

Genesis 2:22-23



“ Give unto the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the *beauty* of holiness.

— King David
Psalm 29:2

Stewardship of Beauty

Beauty is not just a gift to be admired, but to be used and multiplied.

“ See, the Lord has called Bezalel the son of Uri... and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works... And He has put in his heart the ability to teach.

Exodus 35:30-34



3.

Beauty is Corrupted





“ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was *pleasant to the eyes*, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:6

Effects of the Fall

“Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very *beautiful* to behold.

2 Samuel 11:2



Effects of the Fall

- Even God's good gift of **beauty** can be turned inward and corrupted into sin.
- Sin mars both the **beauty** (order) of God's creation, and our ability to recognize it.
- Sin makes us unwilling to glorify God, even when we do recognize the **beauty** of creation.



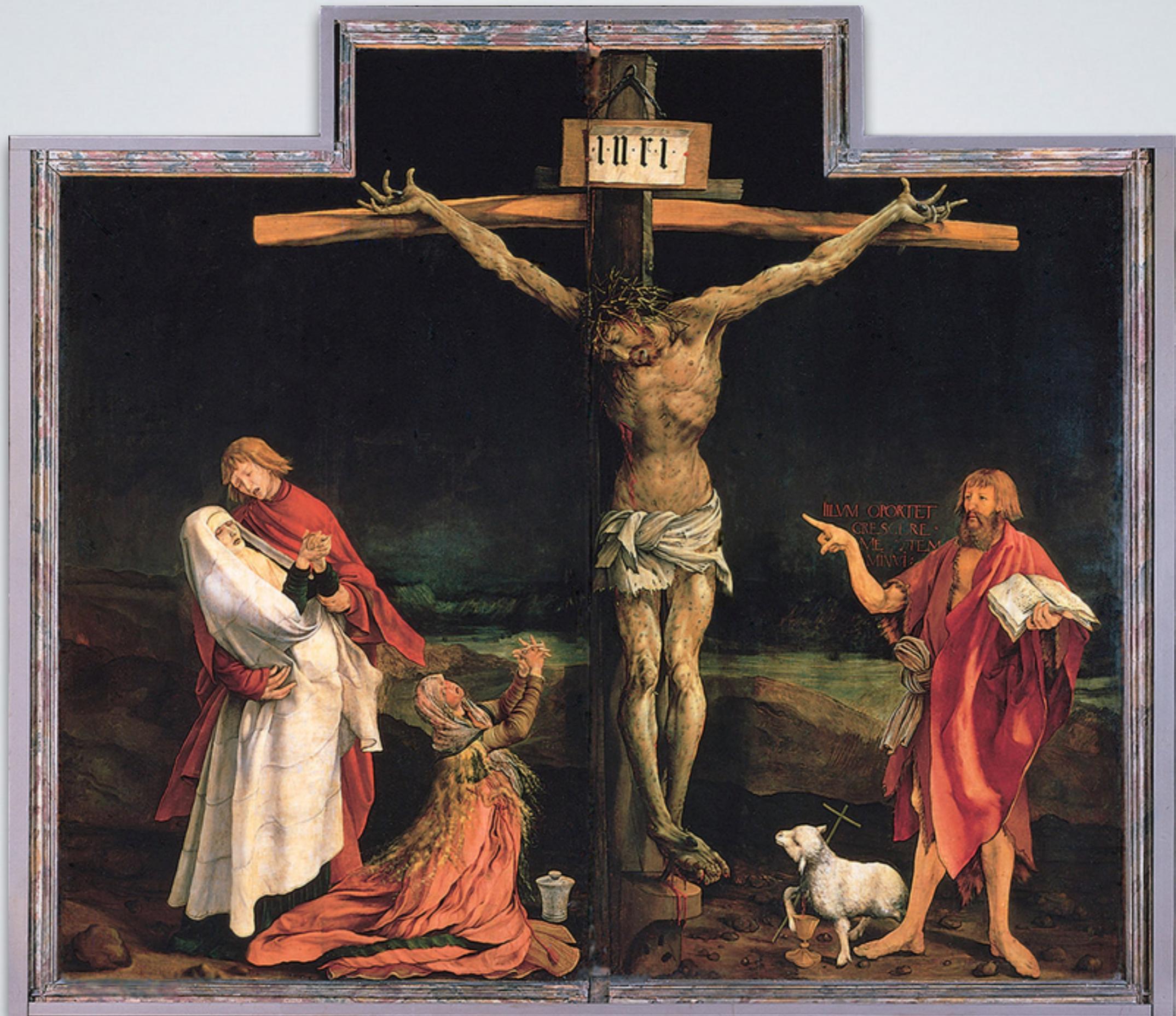
4.

Beauty isn't
always “Pretty”

Paradox of Beauty

- To say that beauty is a “sensory experience” is to cheapen it.
- Beauty can affect us holistically: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.
- Something may please the senses and not be beautiful.
- Conversely, something may be beautiful that does not necessarily please the senses.





Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1515

5.

Humanity needs
objective Beauty

Why **O**bjective **B**eauty?

“**B**eauty is a true and powerful way of looking into the nature of reality.” —Dana Gioia

To discredit **b**eauty as an objective reality is to deny the reality of God's existence.



Why Objective Beauty?

“[God] exults not only in His own creation but also in the creations and **aesthetic satisfaction** of His children.” —Gene E. Veith, Jr.

A subjective view of **beauty** prohibits us from truly enjoying art & creation as God intended.



The **M**iracle of **B**eauty

“ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross.

— St. Paul

Colossians 1:15-17, 19-20



The **M**iracle of **B**eauty

- The miracle of beauty is the miracle of the Incarnation—that God reveals to us the invisible by means of the visible.
- God made himself into an “image”, becoming fully human, and made his love manifest on the cross.





Jonathan Mayer, *Crucifix*, 2014

S.D.G.

