
A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BEAUTY: DIALOGUING WITH SCRUTON AND WOLTERSTORFF

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Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is a brutal, graphic, and disturbing portrayal of man's ability to use art to critique the actions of his peers, to inform a blinded public of their sins, and make complicit his audience in the crime it portrays. It is an eight foot tall slap in the face by the reductionism of the human form found in society. It is not beautiful. But it is art.

With a few broad strokes of the brush, Picasso captures the sacrilege of that transcendental nature of beauty that has plagued philosophers and artists alike for centuries. Beauty captures and allures; it calls to something within all mankind and yet remains elusive to definition. It is no wonder that Picasso can then break down the sacred nature of the human form into edges and angles, tribal masks and bare breasts. The portrayal of Barcelona's famed brothel is an effort to condemn a public for their own gleeful destruction of beauty in the social structure.

Any sense of judgment and taste in regards to what we call art and beauty has been so rendered down that rather than seeing Picasso's drastic piece of

social justice for what it is, his abstract cubism has been labeled as the new standard for beauty and sensuality. We have robbed ourselves of a standard by which the sacred nature of beauty both sustains and uplifts a society. In the search for inclusivity and 'progress' mankind has lost any sense of objectivity or morality in the arts. In their destruction of beauty, they have made themselves complicit in their own cultural decay.

This has been the flag that philosopher Roger Scruton has waved for several decades, despite opposition amongst his peers. Scruton's views regarding art and beauty are not popular with the modern art crowd and their post-modern advocates.¹ Having written several books on aesthetics, Scruton has developed a largely metaphysical aspect to understanding standards of art and beauty.² For Scruton, the purpose of art is to save the sacred - the beautiful.³ In a remarkable correlation, fellow philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff uses similar language—speaking of aesthetic contemplation as similar to religious adoration.⁴ Both philosophers use this language of sacred and sacrilege in their discussions of art and beauty. Yet, where Scruton follows the metaphysical side of this much fought-over topic, Wolterstorff takes a more practical, foot-to-the-ground approach. Due to this, they are uniquely situated in developing a practical aesthetic that starts at the conceptual and ends in the actual. When placed in conversation, Scruton and Wolterstorff might just come to an answer both society at large, and especially the church, need to hear in regards to art and beauty in an age of desecration.

DEFINING BEAUTY

For Scruton, beauty is wrapped up in his view of the sacred. The sacred begins with the fundamental nature of man as an end, not merely a means. Scruton, then, is able to apply this concept of ends to beauty. The ability to place

1 Jonathan Glancey, "Roger Scruton Is On Shaky Ground Slating Architecture," *The Guardian* (April 14, 2011): 1, accessed November 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/apr/14/roger-scruton-architecture-zaha-hadid>.

2 *Art and Imagination, The Aesthetics of Architecture, The Aesthetic Understanding, The Aesthetics of Music, and Beauty* in addition to many other essays.

3 Roger Scruton and Mark Dooley, *Conversations with Roger Scruton* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016), 197.

4 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 50.

meaning on things is what gives man his sacredness and makes him an end unto himself.⁵ The sacred gives us a glimpse into eternity, and provides man with the cure to his temporal misery. In a manner almost Platonic, Scruton describes the sacred as pulling man out of the world of things and into the transcendental realm.⁶ It is an attempt to find Eden again, even if only in a finite temporal way, and to “prefigure our eternal home.”⁷

Thus, it is this sacred nature of ends, not means, that Scruton puts forth in his understanding of beauty. According to the Greek philosopher, Plotinus, beauty is seen as an ultimate value, pursued for its own sake, and the way in which the “divine unity makes itself known to the soul.”⁸ Wolterstorff himself elaborates on Plotinus’ view, wherein beauty consists of the glimpses contained in things of the ultimate One. We delight in beauty, because our souls recognize these glimpses as windows into the ultimate One.⁹ Plotinus writes that this beauty as related to “...the soul, since it is by nature... related to the higher kind of reality in the realm of being, when it sees something akin to it or a trace of its kindred reality, it is delighted and thrilled...”¹⁰

Here, both Scruton and Wolterstorff seem to prefer to rest. While other philosophers like Aquinas took Plotinus’ theories and applied it to the nature of goodness and truth, Scruton finds problem with placing beauty on the same metaphysical plain as truth. Wolterstorff also calls into question Aquinas’ end result of equating beauty with uniformity of parts—which has remained dominant in the west—suggesting the inability of this theory to work with such things as literature or protest art. In his book, *Art Rethought*, Wolterstorff comes to this conclusion without spending much time on beauty for that very reason. He claims that beauty in relation to art is only a recent addition, limited to the eighteenth century. Connecting beauty to the arts places a false sense of judgement upon a piece if it is only a recent development. In addition, numerous masterpieces would have to be removed from their ranking of art if it didn’t strike one as beautiful or having “due proportion.”¹¹ Beauty, in turn, came to be thought of as pleasant to behold or easy to listen

5 Mark Dooley, *Roger Scruton: The Philosopher On Dover Beach* (London, UK: Continuum, 2009), 16.

6 Dooley, *Roger Scruton*, 27-29.

7 Roger Scruton, *Gentle Regrets* (London, UK: Continuum, 2005), 239.

8 Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

9 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 309-310.

10 Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 6, 2.

11 Aquinas, *S.Th. I, 5,4*, ad 1.

to. That which causes one awe, however, was replaced with the sublime. So we have in the eighteenth century, a split in what could hold aesthetic merit, the beautiful and the sublime, all without truly recognizing the historical defining qualities of what beauty is.

Wolterstorff is unconcerned with taking the view of either Plotinus or Aquinas. He seeks instead to understand the aesthetic in regards to art, as replacing the belief of beauty being necessary to consider a piece of art excellent. Since beauty attached to art is a relatively recent concept, he declines it, and asks the reader to return to the method of disinterested interest; his desire is to find there what it is about art that makes us so captivated.¹²

Scruton is equally eager to find what it is in art that so captivates us. However, he thinks he has it. It is beauty, particularly the beauty of the sacred that draws us in. Wolterstorff's definition might be more inclusive of modern and abstract art, but Scruton is rigid in his judgments against art that does not fall into the categories of beautiful. He writes, "Is there any point in studying our artistic and cultural inheritance, when the judgment of beauty has no rational grounds?"¹³ Beauty is not just an other-worldly, nebulous concept in Scruton's mind. While connected to the sacred, beauty is also tied to our rational nature. It has real and universal value and is essential in shaping the cultures of mankind. Man's ability to comprehend and make sense of the transcendental object is what allows him to recognize the sacred in the world, and seek to obtain it. Here, Scruton channels Plotinus, saying sacred things are not of this world, they are set apart and made holy - much like Plotinus' glimpse of a higher reality.¹⁴ He connects the idea of sacrilege to beauty; when we meddle with holy affairs, we pollute by "dragging it down into the sphere of everyday events."¹⁵ In an almost perversion of the Platonic sense, we've brought what belongs in the realm of forms down to the realm of things.

Scruton clearly ties the importance of beauty to beyond that of art. Scruton's connection of beauty to the sacred appeals to the timelessness and transcendent nature we often find in pieces of art that recall to us those little glimpses of ultimate reality. It stands in contrast to Wolterstorff's attempts to create a defining line for understanding art. While Scruton might be

12 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 310.

13 Scruton, *Beauty*, xii.

14 *Ibid.*, 43-44.

15 *Ibid.*, 43-44.

known for being rather drastic in his appraisal of specific art forms, Wolterstorff's refusal to include beauty as part of the equation does more loss to his argument than Scruton's inclusion. For Scruton, beauty plays a role in developing taste, which is foundational in creating a proper critique of art. If we are to maintain standards for art—and this includes architecture, music, etc.—then understanding how the presence of beauty shapes our desires for order, harmony, and even dissonance impacts us as a society.

In defining beauty, both Scruton and Wolterstorff take pains to define what it is not. Beauty is not simply excellence in form. Wolterstorff compares it to a scale in reference to Aquinas' standards of proportion, harmony, and pleasantness. If we keep to this traditional standard for beauty, we would consider the works of Raphael, Telemann, and Keats as more beautiful than those of Picasso, late Beethoven, and Donne.¹⁶ However, what exactly is being measured here is unclear. If we equate beauty with aesthetic excellence that makes Telemann's works more beautiful than late Beethoven, and therefore aesthetically more excellent. But not many would hold to this. Some pieces might be more aesthetically excellent—perhaps in skill or execution—yet unable to be called beautiful. Wolterstorff thus does not place beauty as necessary for aesthetic excellence.

Scruton, while content to play with Plotinus, often draws from traditional standards for beauty when discussing how beauty manifests itself in society. Admitting to the slipperiness of aesthetic descriptors, Scruton does seem to align with a measure of harmony, order, or what he calls *fittingness*.¹⁷ Despite the interplay with the scales of Aquinas, Scruton's understanding of fittingness is linked more closely with the ideals of Plotinus. Scruton sees this fittingness as a way "to achieve order in their surroundings and to be at home in their common world."¹⁸ He applies it to his concept of minimal beauty, beauty in the everyday and ordinary. Without this minimal beauty, objects of immense beauty would not contain their "immenseness" due to lack of comparison. Here, Scruton subtly appeals to an "everything in moderation" mindset. Too much beauty can be too much of a good thing. Fittingness is important in an understanding of beauty because it creates harmony and inspires a kind of

16 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 162.

17 Scruton, *Beauty*, 80.

18 *Ibid.*, 81.

rightness to the senses. Scruton admits that there are many other words we use to describe the aesthetic of a thing. We see one thing as elegant, and another charming. One might be intricate, pretty, or attractive. But “to speak of beauty is to enter another and more exalted realm—a realm sufficiently apart from our everyday concerns as to be mentioned only with a certain hesitation.”¹⁹

Scruton couches his understanding of beauty in the implied understanding of sacredness. His wording suggests boundaries and standards; a need for judgment and taste. In fact, much time is spent on cultivating taste and understanding in regards to art and ultimately beauty:

...Taste is not simply a set of arbitrary preferences. It is a complex exercise of sympathy, in which we respond to human life, enhanced and idealized in artistic form. Good taste is not reducible to rules; but we can define it instead through concept of virtue: it is the sum of those preferences that would emerge in a well ordered soul...²⁰

Taste has its roots in moral character. Similar to Augustine’s well-ordered loves, the well-ordered morality of man responds rightly to virtue. And so too, beauty portrays to us not the things we want, but the things we ought to want. It is why Scruton places such emphasis on manners, clothing choices, and well-designed gardens. The minimal beauty we wrap around ourselves is bound up in a standard of taste, rightness, and fittingness. The ideals of community and home depend on it. When bad taste is cultivated, it drives us from our neighbors and makes a dwelling into a squalor. Because Scruton places his emphasis on the sacred nature of beauty’s ability to transcend this “world of forms,” beauty’s real value lies in what it reminds us of. Familiarity, home, rightness, all these little glimpses of the “ultimate reality” that are fast and away disappearing from the arts and culture in general. This leads us to what is perhaps the sharpest distinction between the two philosophers in their views of aesthetics: what qualifies as art.

DEFINING AESTHETIC EXCELLENCE

In order to speak on aesthetic excellence, we must first speak on what qualifies as art in the minds of Scruton and Wolterstorff. Wolterstorff defines art as

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1997), 379.

a skill, craft, or competence at making.²¹ He proceeds to make a distinction with fine art as those produced within a society with the express purpose of using it for disinterested contemplation. Scruton credits Enlightenment thinkers for his definition of art as “a thing whose value lies in it and not in its purpose.”²² However, Scruton does push back against these kinds of philosophically technical terms of “for its own sake,” “intrinsic value,” and ‘end in itself.’ These don’t indicate a clear distinction between having a purely aesthetic interest in a piece or a more utilitarian purpose.

A standard needs to be established for what is considered art in present day society. Art seems to lend itself to contemplation, or a “set-apartness” from other kinds of production. Both Scruton and Wolterstorff agree that art - on the level of museums and galleries—is typically made for contemplation or observation. It is to be enjoyed through the senses. Craftsmanship, on the other hand, tends to imply a level below art—art with a strictly more utilitarian purpose.

Scruton calls these useful arts, and gives such examples as architecture, basket weaving, and carpentry. Each of these categories can produce contemplative art, but are mainly commissioned for a particular practical use. Useful art lends itself well to Scruton’s previous point of minimal beauty. Cultures across the world practice minimal beauty in their craftsmanship of tools, ornaments, and household items. Surrounding themselves with a practical beauty of sorts appears second nature. Even today we open entire exhibits dedicated to the way ancient cultures practiced their everyday lives. The Vatican Archives are full of pottery, tapestries, religious figurines, and weaponry. While they might set these apart as visual curiosities, these pieces are not placed on the same level as Raphael’s School of Athens a few rooms down.

A level of distinction must be made. Wolterstorff defines craftsmanship as how well the work uses the material, subject to the given standards of a community.²³ Traditional standards of craftsmanship are what guided the creation and development of new art throughout history. Respect of these standards helps maintain a higher level of quality of craftsmanship that allows

21 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 37.

22 Scruton, *Beauty*, 15.

23 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 92.

a piece to be considered art. In *Art in Action*, Wolterstorff applies this kind of standard to abstract expressionist paintings and the quasi performance art John Cage calls music.²⁴ In this kind of modern “art,” any semblance of craftsmanship is entirely irrelevant. Scruton, too, expresses his frustration over “soaps being as good as Shakespeare and Radiohead the equal of Brahms.”²⁵ Neither Scruton nor Wolterstorff speak with any fondness of the modern art movement.²⁶ Scruton in particular calls Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* a joke and Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* “downright stupid” and corny.²⁷ Wolterstorff mentions an installation by Robert Morris of a piece that is simply a notarized document stating that the previous piece in the exhibit contained no aesthetic quality or content.²⁸

In response to this, Wolterstorff unites craftsmanship again to the need for a standard in art: “Just as fundamental as our responsibility to promote the cause of art intended for aesthetic contemplation is our responsibility to promote aesthetic excellence in works of art generally, no matter what their intended use.”²⁹ Whether the artist intends a more functional use of his creation—such as baskets, rugs, furniture—or items meant more for contemplation—public art installations, paintings, symphonies—the key is excellence in the execution. The mass creation of art by a people gives rise to a need for standards, a level of excellence to attain. Scruton finds this standard tied to our understanding of community. In creating standards, we make a call for a collective right judgment, an appeal for consensus.³⁰ This is why we have standards in society for fashion, design, and architecture. Even in the avant-garde and the extreme, there are boundaries in place for practicality or colors for the season. It allows us a sense of creativity while remaining in the bounds of polite taste and appropriateness. One could say *fittingness*.

Scruton makes note of the actions of a parent or teacher in encouraging children to foster similar taste in art as themselves.³¹ We wring our hands and frown when literature, music, and art that we consider ugly, obscene, or

24 *Ibid.*, 93.

25 Scruton, *Beauty*, 83.

26 Although Wolterstorff seems to rescind his judgment 20+ years later in *Art Rethought*.

27 Scruton, *Beauty*, 83.

28 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 92-93.

29 *Ibid.*, 170.

30 Scruton, *Beauty*, 113.

31 Scruton, *Beauty*, 114.

offensive is prized by the next generation. There is a striking need for order and objectivity despite universal subjectivity from culture to culture. Scruton makes a distinction between taste—which is more regional and personal—and objective universals. While qualifying that any hard and fast rules are detrimental to the creativity and freedom of art, he maintains his belief that there are universals rooted in our very nature that feed our interest in things that display symmetry, proportion, harmony, and order. At the same time, these universals encourage novelty and excitement. Regarding aesthetic judgment, Scruton divides objectivity and universality. “In the judgment of beauty the search for objectivity is for valid and heightened forms of human experience—forms in which human life can flower according to its inner need and achieve the kind of fruition that we witness in the Sistine Chapel ceiling, in *Parsifal*, or *Hamlet*.”³²

Aesthetic judgment, unlike a parent or teacher, does not demand that you like *Hamlet*; rather, it aims to encourage understanding of human life within *Hamlet*, of the values and forms it endorses. It particularly is not claiming that the aesthetic life pictured in *Hamlet* is universally available. The life of man is subjective, and to a certain sense, so is art. The way we judge color is entirely subjective, yet it is an objective judgment to say that red is red and blue is blue.

It is important to note that Scruton is not saying that judgments of taste—which are universally subjective—guarantee beauty. The creativity vital to art lies in taking the standards and norms and fulfilling them unexpectedly. Scruton gives the example of Michelangelo’s work in the Laurentian Library. Due to structural reasons necessitating Michelangelo place the columns within the walls, he was given a unique opportunity to bend the accepted standards of style while still maintaining an excellence of order and symmetry that is stunning. The architectural details so often found outside the building were brought inside, thus creating a bold statement of strength, solidity and timelessness. He maintains the objective judgment while defying those very rules.

The work of Michelangelo is a clear example of the idea that while beauty contains elements of order and harmony, neither are necessary for a piece to be considered excellent. If only order and harmony were necessary, then

32 Ibid, 120.

originality would no longer be a hallmark of success, and undoubtedly much of art would be a quick succession of Thomas Kinkadee paintings.

In continuing an understanding of aesthetic excellence, Wolterstorff speaks of what he calls *mastering craftsmanship*.³³ Not only does an artist seek such external rigors as harmony, order, and symmetry or some interplay of the kind—in reaching for the goal of aesthetic excellence, an artist must also pursue internal rigors. When an artist chooses his medium, he comes to know the materials he is working with. He learns what he can and cannot do with his materials, what can be done easily and what can only be done with great difficulty. He experiments, creates, and attempts to find new ways of working with his medium that others have not attempted before. Yet, even in his own creativity, there are rules which govern his chosen materials and limit what can be done with them. Take for example, a carpenter. A carpenter knows which types of wood work best for what he hopes to create. Some types of wood are softer than others, hemlock and various white cedars, and thus better suited for certain kinds of delicate detail work. Harder woods, like hickory or rosewood, are better suited for furniture meant to withstand great pressure.³⁴ As a craftsman, a carpenter makes choices regarding his materials so that he may get the best work out of them. Overtime, through practice and knowledge, this leads to skill, which when properly nurtured can turn into expertise. It is in this way that an artist develops craftsmanship.³⁵ Wolterstorff's description reads similarly to Scruton, saying, "Craftsmanship consists in how well one's work meets certain standards in one's use of the material, these being the standards of a certain community."³⁶ An artist's ability to accomplish certain levels of skill is dependent upon the levels of excellence in a given society that have been handed down for centuries. Wolterstorff gives the example of a carpenter making drawers. No matter what kind of style the artist wishes to identify himself with, if he is going to make a chest of drawers, he will need to learn to make drawers. Thus, a community can adopt a level of excellence for good drawer making. Artistic skill is necessary for aesthetic excellence.

33 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 91.

34 The tough and often difficult to work with wood was used as a moniker for President Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory," which he received due to his presence on the battlefield.

35 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 92.

36 *Ibid.*, 92.

To use a different analogy, we do not let potters continue to fashion bowls out of Playdough and consider them to be excellent potters. For a potter to achieve a level of aesthetic excellence in his work, he needs to learn how to throw the clay, spin the wheel, and operate a kiln. Yet these are only the basics of pottery work. If one were to throw away levels of excellence in regards to aesthetics, then any level of craftsmanship becomes irrelevant.³⁷

The goal of an artist is his *masterpiece*. Traditionally, after serving as an apprentice or journeyman, an artist would work on producing his finest piece in the hopes that it would be worthy enough to be considered a mastery—both of his skill, and the material. It would then be judged before the guild of his trade, and if considered a true piece of excellence, it would be retained by the guild and he would be awarded his *mastery*.³⁸ However, mastery of one's craft does not immediately assume creativity and genius on the part of the artist. This is why aesthetic excellence cannot depend solely on craftsmanship. Something more is required. The kind of creativity Michelangelo delivered in pushing the boundaries of what he had to work with is perhaps a bit what we are looking for.

Wolterstorff speaks of the *tour-de-force*, the “achievement of something which stretches the abilities of the materials to the uttermost.”³⁹ The eastern wall of the Gloucester Cathedral is incredibly vast, terribly thin, and filled with glass. It is a daring feat that for its time seems impossible. Yet it stands, inspiring awe and perhaps a bit of fear in the admirer. The artists stretched the possibilities of their materials to its absolute limits. The exploration of creativity and ingenuity are the internal goals of an artist. Even in the boundary-pushing Gloucester Cathedral there is order and symmetry that defy the odds of the execution. Walls should not be that thin, hold that much glass, and still remain standing. But the artist behind Gloucester decided to try, and did so in a way that has both excellence in mastery and excellence in innovation. It is a masterpiece in every sense of the word.

For the Gloucester artist to be able to stretch his materials to such lengths, he had to have an understanding, or as Wolterstorff claims, a love, for his materials. “The potter loves clay, not so much indeed for what it is as for what

37 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 92-93.

38 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Guild,” accessed November 26, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/guild-trade-association>.

39 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 93.

it can become; he or she longs to nurture it into pots.”⁴⁰ Just as any teacher seeks to push and mold his student to become more than what the student imagines himself capable, an artist understands and knows his materials to such a degree that he can push and stretch them to their extremes while still maintaining the integrity for the piece. The artist loves his materials. He desires them to grow in potential, not to shatter in failure.

Here, though, Wolterstorff reminds the reader it is possible for an artist to not love his materials. Bemoaning the modern art movement, he recalls Duchamp’s abhorrence of his materials. Duchamp’s *Fountain* has no craftsmanship imputed in it. If anything, it shows an abundant *lack* of care. When craftsmanship is stripped from the creative process, Wolterstorff worries that there will be little left to satisfy us.⁴¹ Scruton agrees, detailing modern art as “deliberately antagonizing gestures of defiance toward the traditions that make art loveable.”⁴² Scruton considers much of public art today to be loveless, which is not surprising when considering Duchamp’s own disregard toward his materials. By deliberately predicating the “unlovely and unlovable,” Duchamp, among many others, has made it popular to dispose of any sort of judgment or standard for beauty, let alone excellence.⁴³ In this kind of culture, aesthetic judgment is seen as an affliction.

Aesthetic judgment should be a guide to greater appreciation, even joy, in the object. If an object must be in our field of perception, it is considered a better, more preferred object if it is aesthetically excellent as well.⁴⁴ A house made of cinderblocks may shelter someone but the house is not as good as it could be. It is not an excellent house. “Something is missing, something of the joy that rightfully belongs in human life, something of the satisfaction that aesthetically good housing would produce in those who dwell there.”⁴⁵ What is required in the construction of a house is not absent from the aesthetic judgment of it, much the way Michelangelo worked with the location of the pillars, but the beauty of the house is intimately connected with the artistic intention in the house’s design.⁴⁶ A house’s function is considered

40 Ibid., 95.

41 Ibid., 96.

42 Roger Scruton, “Art, Beauty, and Judgment,” *The American Spectator*, July/August 2007.

43 Scruton, “Art, Beauty, and Judgment,” 2.

44 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 170.

45 Ibid., 170.

46 Scruton, *Beauty*, 66.

within the aesthetic judgment of it, yet the architectural function is bound up in the aesthetic goal.

[The] column is there to add dignity, to support the architrave, to raise the building high above its own entrance and so to give it a distinguished place in the street... In other words, when we take beauty seriously, function ceases to be an independent variable, and becomes absorbed into the aesthetic goal.⁴⁷

Function is included in a consideration of beauty, but is not the standard of beauty in its entirety. Beauty must be approached as the end goal, one that qualifies and limits any other intentions for a piece.⁴⁸ For Scruton, this is the ultimate end. While this might seem to exclude many pieces of great art that do not outright conform to a semblance of conventional harmony or order, Scruton's aim does not appear to be a broad sweep of condemnation. Rather, this understanding is rooted in a greater view of the metaphysical necessity of beauty in the role of human flourishing.

THE NECESSITY OF BEAUTY

In seeking to give greater clarity to a standard of aesthetic judgment, Scruton connects excellence with a moral standard. Aesthetic judgment concerns what one ought and ought not to like, which carries with it an implicit moral weight.⁴⁹ Borrowing from David Hume, Scruton connects the judgment of art with the character of the one who judges it. The character of a critic points to the virtues vital to moral life and not just discrimination as regards aesthetic critique. Beauty is just as firmly rooted in virtue as goodness, and thus both in human fulfillment. They are reflective not of the things we want, but of what we ought to want, because they are essential to us.⁵⁰ Scruton appeals to the experience of the sacred as the universal puzzle anthropologists have tried to understand for centuries.⁵¹ His tone is religious in nature:

47 Scruton, *Beauty*, 18.

48 *Ibid.*, 18.

49 *Ibid.*, 84.

50 *Ibid.*, 123.

51 *Ibid.*, 43.

Sacred things are not of this world: they are set apart from ordinary reality and cannot be touched or uttered without rites of initiation or the privilege of religious office. To meddle with them without some purifying preparation is to run the risk of sacrilege. It is to desecrate and pollute what is holy, by dragging it down into the sphere of everyday events.⁵²

This is where Wolterstorff's confession of the Christian faith collides with Scruton's side-stepping around it. Wolterstorff claims that the Platonist is committed to avoiding the aesthetic delight in this world of objects. The Platonist, properly understood, separated the sacred from the realm of things, and therefore cannot truly delight in a world that is only mere copies of the sacred forms.⁵³ For the Christian, his aesthetic delight fuels a joy over this present life that is right and godly. The presence of beauty in the world is a gift from God to his children, and as Mumford said, "To starve the eye, the ear, the skin, the nose is just as much to court death as to withhold food from the stomach."⁵⁴ Much like Scruton referred to this ultimate reality as Eden, beauty is meant to be the sacred call to a time long past, a time of perfection. To Christians, beauty should be another reminder of the ultimate reality. For Scruton, the ultimate reality ends there, but for believers, the ultimate reality is found in Christ.

Scruton's use of the sacred nature of beauty as connected to the world beyond is correct, but he runs close to connecting art as a religious experience in itself. In speaking of beauty, Scruton uses the word "desecration," which calls to mind a spoiling of something set apart.⁵⁵ For Scruton, despoiling art is nothing less than an act of sacrilege.⁵⁶ It offends polite society, and something intrinsic within us. Kant and Plato also saw this feeling of the sacred in beauty as similar to the religious mindset of hoping to arise to the transcendental.⁵⁷ There is a depth and rightness to Scruton's concept of the sacred, especially in regards to art and a higher ultimate reality. However, Scruton runs the dangerous risk of falling into an "art as religion" mindset, unconsciously referencing Schopenhauer.⁵⁸

52 Ibid., 43.

53 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 82.

54 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1961), 344.

55 Scruton, *Beauty*, 145.

56 Dooley, *Roger Scruton*, 111.

57 Ibid., 146.

58 *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, sum12 ed., s.v. "Schopenhauer's Aesthetics," accessed November 24, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer-aesthetics/>.

Many other philosophers have also followed this line of thinking. In *Art Rethought*, Wolterstorff gives two examples of the movement within art in the early twentieth century for art to work as a replacement for God.⁵⁹ Wilhelm Wackenroder in particular describes art galleries as temples, the great artists as the highest among mortals, and aesthetic pleasure as more like prayer than simple contemplation.⁶⁰ Philipp Moritz calls aesthetic pleasure akin to self-sacrifice, an almost nirvana-like attainment of higher transcendence.⁶¹ While Moritz and Wackenroder regard works of art as god-like surrogates, and worthy of veneration, Wolterstorff mentions the work of Clive Bell, who, perhaps reminiscent of Scruton, does not consider works of art god-like, but as objects of revelation through which the divine might be known.⁶² While he doesn't worship at the altar, Bell is clear in how he views art. "[In] my giddier moments I have been tempted to believe that art might prove the world's salvation." Like Scruton, Bell sees art as a byway to that ultimate reality that transcends this world of things.⁶³ Bell is blatantly Platonic even if his language is ripe with religious symbolism. He might claim to only think so in his giddier moments, but many others have proclaimed it while sober. In so doing, they fashion altars and idols for themselves out of art. For them, "art harbors the potential of saving us from what we need saving from; therein lies its religious significance."⁶⁴ Wolterstorff goes a step further: art has begun to compete with religion in the business of salvation.⁶⁵

With the rise of postmodernism and secularism, religion has been stripped from art, and likewise art has been stripped from the church. Where once art used to be predominantly religious, the twentieth century became known for the desecration of religion in art, to use Scruton's term. Andres Serrano's *Immersion (Piss Christ)* is a famous example. A crucifix submerged in a jar of the artist's own urine, it is offensive and crude. Yet the piece is considered one of the foremost pieces of modern art. Thousands flock to see such pieces, selling for outrageous sums, and the veneration given by critics and fellow

59 Additionally, in *Art in Action*, Wolterstorff expands greatly on the use of art as "surrogate gods" that is worth the read, though I did not have the room to here.

60 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 35.

61 *Ibid.*, 34-35.

62 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 45.

63 *Ibid.*, 47.

64 *Ibid.*, 49.

65 *Ibid.*, 49.

artists is mind boggling. In their own way, postmodernism has set up an altar in the art gallery and bid all to come and worship. Instead of inspiring awe and otherworldly recollections, modern art purposefully shocks and disturbs. It has only continued to do so into the twenty first century.

In Scruton's *Beauty*, he describes a 2004 production of the opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. The original was written by Mozart, with the themes of chastity and faithful love evident everywhere in the music. The 2004 adaptation, however, is horrific in its contrast.

Even during the most tender music, the stage was littered with couples copulating, and every excuse for violence, with or without a sexual climax, was taken. At one point a prostitute is gratuitously tortured, and her nipples bloodily and realistically severed before she is killed. The words and the music speak of love and compassion, but their message is drowned out by the loudly orchestrated scenes of murder and narcissistic sex that litters the stage.⁶⁶

Unlike Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, no one condemns this scene. There is only disgusting, gleeful perversion. It is desecration; it is sacrilege. For Scruton, modern culture is hell-bent on a flight from beauty, delighting in spoiling any semblance of the sacred.⁶⁷ In their bid to throw out religion, they have left a void that science cannot fill. But with the cultural tendency toward art as a metaphysical experience, postmoderns solve this for themselves by superimposing a religious order on their own creation.⁶⁸ Their desperate flight from religion has left them blind to the irony of their own actions. Set free from their supposed chains, postmoderns wave the banner of liberation, declaring their ability to define art as they see fit. Some, like Barnett Newman, are "completely denying that art has any concern with the problem of beauty and where to find it."⁶⁹ To liberate art from the need for beauty is to liberate from artistic traditions. Suddenly, the act of art was more important than the result. When the boundaries for what is called art are done away with, it opens the floodgates for anything to be considered art without exception.⁷⁰

66 Scruton, *Beauty*, 144.

67 *Ibid.*, 145.

68 It bears striking resemblance to Isaiah 44:9-20.

69 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 54.

70 *Ibid.*, 55.

What exactly is seen in modern art today hints at what Scruton describes here:

Imagine now a world in which people showed interest only in Brillo boxes, in signed urinals, in crucifixes pickled in urine, or in objects similarly lifted from the debris of ordinary life and put on display with some kind of satirical intention—in other words, the increasingly standard fare of official modern art shows in Europe and America. What would such a world have in common with that of Duccio, Giotto, Velazquez, or even Cezanne? ... it would be a degenerate world, a world in which human aspirations no longer find their artistic expression, in which we no longer make for ourselves images of the ideal and the transcendent, but in which we study human debris in place of the human soul. It would be a world in which one whole aspect of the human spirit—the aesthetic—would have become stunted and grotesque. For we aspire through art, and when aspiration ceases, so too does art.⁷¹

These people Scruton describes are systematically rebelling against the very tradition that allowed them to create their anti-art in the first place. Scruton calls this a repudiation.⁷² They ask neither for acceptance nor assimilation. Rather, they desire a complete surrender of one's self to the vision these so-called artists are proclaiming.⁷³ It is, admittedly, horrifying. A calculated "de-aestheticization," they purposefully avoid bringing any semblance of aesthetic satisfaction into their pieces.⁷⁴ Like *Die Entführung*, there contains within them a desire to spoil beauty.⁷⁵ Despite all this, it is remarkable that a philosopher like Herbert Marcuse, whose thoughts on aesthetics are dissected in much greater detail in *Art In Action*, should find such a salvific approach to art. Vehemently against religion, his own language in describing the arts is exactly that. Dedicated to art as a path to liberation, art represents to him a pure transcendence of the realities of man's social existence. His cries for liberation give us nothing less than a surrogate for the Christian gospel.⁷⁶ Art, for Marcuse, is the perfect transcendent thing that rises above man's

71 Scruton, "Art, Beauty, and Judgment," 2.

72 Scruton, *Beauty*, 141.

73 *Ibid.*, 142.

74 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 62.

75 Scruton, *Beauty*, 144.

76 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 154.

existence, but this message seems to strike him with a note of despair.⁷⁷ Art may promise redemption and the rise of human happiness, but art alone is incapable of redeeming that promise.⁷⁸ Art has no power beyond the intention of the artist. Scruton gently reminds that wherever beauty is to be had, there lies quietly a small voice behind the roar of desecration. “For beauty makes a claim on us: it is a call to renounce our narcissism and look with reverence on the world.”⁷⁹ There is a hope in this mindset that is relieving to the despair ridden soul. Marcuse’s despair in particular lies in the fact that he does not think the world was made for the sake of man. Art has limits, made only more painfully aware at how lacking a savior it is.⁸⁰ Scruton believes that beauty guides mankind along the path that tells him he is at home in this world, that the earth is already fit for the lives of human beings. Yet, man only becomes at home in this world by acknowledging his fallen state. This is why the experience of beauty is vital in pointing mankind beyond this world “to a kingdom of ends in which our immortal longings and our desire for perfection are finally answered.”⁸¹ In this way, Scruton relates the still small voice of beauty to the transcendental longing in man and the art he creates. Rather than following this to its metaphysical implications, Scruton stops short. In fact, he moves on to a character study of nature landscapes. It is left to Wolterstorff to follow Scruton’s implication to its natural conclusion.

At the end of the chapter, following the despairing words of Marcuse, Wolterstorff admits to the inability of art to provide the kind of comfort for which Marcuse is looking. Without lambasting religion, Wolterstorff affirms man’s home on earth, like Scruton, but confirms the frustration Marcuse is expressing. “It is the Christian tradition that the world and history are for mankind. For at the foundation of the world and history is God; and God is for man. In that lies our hope.”⁸² Perhaps unknowingly, Scruton reveals himself at this point. He admits the religious points to his argument and gives credence to Christian tradition, but at the end of the day Scruton’s hope for the recovery of beauty and thus the recovery of man lies in man.

77 Ibid., 155.

78 Ibid., 155.

79 Scruton, *Beauty*, 145.

80 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 155.

81 Scruton, *Beauty*, 145.

82 Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 155.

Without the confessional requirement of fallen man and almighty God, Scruton is doomed to find his answers in his fellow man, or at least in a resigned hopeful attitude toward his fellow man. Wolterstorff is honest in his Christian understanding of the world, yet seems to suffer from a faulty understanding of a reformed view of man. Convinced of the fallen nature of mankind, and man's dependence upon God to ever hope to be good, he proceeds to approach art as a field open to reformation. In moving forward, the arts progress. "[The] City of God, full of song and image, remains to be built."⁸³ This views the modern art movement as simply another step in the steady upward climb of society. Reform the community, and one helps contribute to building the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is telling that Wolterstorff embraces a much more fluid understanding of art in his newest book, *Art Rethought*. While tradition places emphasis on the finer art genres of music, painting, prose, sculpture, poetry, and architecture, Wolterstorff goes beyond a mere inclusion of television or movies to completely redirect our attention from the fine arts altogether.⁸⁴ He proposes a new way of understanding art as through the lens of a social practice. By relativizing the methods in which those engaging with a work of art experience it, Wolterstorff opens the doors of what can be considered art by leaving the interpretation open to the audience, the artist, and the presenters. There is a reason a child's finger painting, though much loved, is not placed alongside the *Mona Lisa*.⁸⁵ When the limitations are broadened, the requirements boil down to the sheer ability of a medium to be engaged aesthetically, whether by the artist or the audience.⁸⁶ If one can think critically about a piece being art, it is art; no standards or level of excellence required. Doing so allows the artist to display anything he desires as long as anyone, even if it is just the artist, can engage it aesthetically. In the case of the presenter or art curator, the mere act of displaying a piece in an institutional setting of an art show or gallery justifies it as art and allows it to gain credibility among viewers. What proves the pieces deserving of such attention is simply the act of being

83 Ibid., 198.

84 Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Review of *Art Rethought*," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, May 7, 2016, 1, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/66812-art-rethought-the-social-practices-of-art/>.

85 Korsmeyer, "Review of *Art Rethought*."

86 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 217.

displayed. Aesthetic quality, let alone beauty, is of no consideration.⁸⁷

Wolterstorff's main reason in writing *Art Rethought* is to toss out the old understanding of art through contemplation of a transcendental end, what he calls the "Grand Narrative", and no longer restrict the judgment of art to the aesthetic.⁸⁸ The arts are progressing, and as "the arts are coming into their own ... seldom do the practitioners appeal to beauty as a consideration."⁸⁹ In the twenty plus years between *Art in Action* and *Art Rethought*, Wolterstorff's once scathing view of Duchamp's *Fountain* is now described as an evocative intellectual experience.⁹⁰ What was once treated with disgust is now thought provoking. By relativizing the standards for art, Wolterstorff relativized the moral underpinnings of objective judgment and taste.

Wolterstorff opened the door to memorial art, work songs, and protest art, but as one review says, why stop there? Nothing is saying that pornography, propaganda, hate art, even video games cannot be considered art as well.⁹¹ Already there are art exhibits specializing in the public display of the explicit.⁹² This detail makes Scruton's rigid view of art more appealing: "The pornographic image is like a magic wand that turns subjects into objects, people into things—and thereby disenchanting them, destroying the source of their beauty... It is not a tribute to human beauty but a desecration of it."⁹³ Wolterstorff's new and improved "non-standards" open up a dangerous playing field, yet he is considered progressive and considerate of where art is going. Scruton might seem opinionated in his antiquated standards toward modern art, but he draws definitive moral lines that are sorely needed. Wolterstorff's new understanding of art may allow for the absence of beauty being considered, but Scruton makes it clear how necessary the role of beauty is in art, and especially life:

Art, nature, and the human form all invite us to place [beauty] in the centre of our lives. If we do so, then it offers a place of refreshment of which we will

87 *Ibid.*, 276-277.

88 *Ibid.*, 277.

89 *Ibid.*, 321.

90 *Ibid.*, 278.

91 Dominic McIver Lopes, "Review of *Art Rethought* by Nicholas Wolterstorff," *Philosophy In Review*, May 2016, 1, accessed November 12, 2016, <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/pir/article/view/16053/6900>.

92 New York's 'Museum of Sex.'

93 Scruton, *Beauty*, 136-138.

never tire. But to imagine that we can do this, and still be free to see beauty as nothing more than a subjective preference or a source of transient pleasure is to misunderstand the depth to which reason and value penetrate our lives. It is to fail to see that, for a free being, there is right feeling, right experience and right enjoyment just as much as right action. The judgment of beauty orders the emotions and desires of those who make it. It may express their pleasure and their taste: but it is pleasure in what they value and taste for their true ideals.⁹⁴

RESCUING BEAUTY

Scruton and Wolterstorff's philosophies of beauty find much to agree on in their writings. Yet it is in their respective differences that they are strongest. In Scruton's metaphysical treatment of beauty, he restores a sense of the sacred to the everyday and to art. His understanding of beauty and art restores inherent value in the world of things. He gives a rational and moral defense for the existence of beauty and art in the life of man. Through the lens of beauty, man is able to see glimpses of the ultimate reality that lies beyond. Art is one of the major windows to that world, but Scruton's treatment of beauty allows man to find beauty in art galleries, in office building, and quaint living rooms without sacrificing standards of judgment and taste. Perhaps one could say that beauty is not a set thing, but a window into a metaphysical world that moves and breathes alongside man's physical reality. There is potential for beauty in all things, and man bears the responsibility to see it actualized.

For the Christian, a narrow position needs to be understood. Scruton's understanding of potential beauty and proper conservatism should ring true for a people commanded to steward the world their Creator has given them. However, proper stewardship does not carry the assumption that the Kingdom of God is to be actualized by man on earth. This is where Wolterstorff's view of man in light of the historical progression of art is flawed. As a professed Christian, Wolterstorff should have an understanding that the Kingdom of God is not ushered in by man, but by God. Mankind has

94 Scruton, *Beauty*, 163-164.

the ability to create and foster virtue on this earth, but he is incapable of redeeming the whole of society through his own works. This is why his new theory of art as social practice could be seen as dangerous. Art as social practices strips art as being transcendental. It becomes grounded in reality and no longer meant as a relay sign between the physical and the metaphysical. Additionally, art as social practice allows art to be a social construct that varies from place to place. In relativizing itself, art loses any standard for judgment. As previously mentioned, this allows the doors to open for many other things to necessarily be considered art as well. By that definition, one loses any need to label things as art at all.

Another point of contention is the loss of craftsmanship this encourages. As pop art and abstract art rise in popularity, the commonality of prints and multiple copies skyrockets. Instead of well written songs that stay as classics through the decades, the modern age is filled with one-play-wonders that are easily forgettable. Yet this is the kind of art that sells, that makes records, that publicizes to the point of inanity, and that criminally drowns out the voice of many more talented and less funded artists. When standards are not highly maintained, the next level of importance is the ability to sell. Modern art has become a marketing issue, sponsoring or showcasing only what will draw the masses and crank in the dollar signs. If Wolterstorff sees this as a sign of artistic progression, then it is rather depressing for the unknown artist who has actually mastered his craft to levels of genius.

In such a world, rather than seeing the arts as an upward progression of man's ability, as in the case of Wolterstorff, the ornery stubbornness of Scruton's particular view of the arts could be seen by some as a breath of much needed fresh air. Art does not need to move forward into an utter breakdown of any level of excellence, but a restoration to the principles that determined art for the past century. Wolterstorff is quick to toss out beauty in relation to the arts as only a recent construct born out of the eighteenth century.⁹⁵ Scruton, on the other hand, lists a long line of philosophers throughout ancient and medieval history that contradict Wolterstorff's claim.⁹⁶ If Wolterstorff only wants to specify the arts as regarding those created for contemplation, Scruton makes mention of Chinese tapestry, Japanese woodcuts, and the

⁹⁵ Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 310-311.

⁹⁶ Scruton mentions Plato, Aristotle, Bharata, Confucius, Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas in *Beauty*, 54.

poems of Confucians and Basho as evidence that this method of viewing art is not relegated to the eighteenth century and beyond.⁹⁷ Scruton will admit to the use of the word aesthetic being a recent invention, but the human universal which it represents is not. His frustration with modern art brushing this off is telling:

If you want to dismiss the concept of aesthetic interest as a piece of bourgeois ideology, then the onus is on you to describe the non-bourgeois alternative, in which the aesthetic attitude would be somehow redundant, and in which people would no longer need to find solace in the contemplation of beauty. That onus has never been discharged. Nor could it be.⁹⁸

If one takes Scruton's view of beauty as a transcendental value, it is not surprising that he responds in such a way. Regardless of how modern art is labeled as the next stage in human creativity, it has not stopped the crowds from silently walking through the bewildering modern exhibits to stand and gaze in the galleries of Van Gogh, Botticelli, Vermeer, and Raphael. The works of Michelangelo are no less relevant simply because Damien Hirst sells millions. The lasting quality of the work of these classic artists relates to Scruton's view on architecture. "Beautiful buildings change their uses; merely functional buildings get torn down."⁹⁹ Modern buildings are not built to last through multiple re-uses. Yet classical architecture is in high demand by a generation that is thriving on renovation and restoration. Entire city squares are being restored to maintain their original charm and function anew as shops, cafes, and apartments. These buildings were built to last in a transcendent way. Traditional craftsmanship in the details and design continue to place value on a building despite its need for updates in regards to stability or utilities. When modern buildings prize the usage of steel and glass to make it timeless, they have rendered the aesthetic nature that makes it timeless down to physical stability.

One could view this as an issue of stewardship. Linked to Scruton's well-loved conservatism, stewardship is simply the careful and responsible

97 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 310-311.

98 *Ibid.*, 310-311.

99 Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18.

managing of something within one's care.¹⁰⁰ When it comes to art, stewardship is the fostering of artists, the encouragement of skill growth, development in the quality and availability of materials, and the patronage of true talent. Patronage does not have to look like the sponsorship of old. Instead, the right use of public relations, encouragement, and possible monetary support goes a long way in an age where true talent is often overlooked in the desire for artists who already have a following. Putting money where real skill is will go a long way in the support and credibility of those who do deserve the recognition. The top tier of popular art has been monopolized for far too long.

In the same line, access to education and the ability to increase their skill set is vital for artists. Much like the guilds of years past, artists should be encouraged to develop their medium and talents in ways that are new and innovative and demonstrate their capability and mastery of the medium. An artist may be able to sing just fine, but the greater appreciation should go to the one who sings, plays their own instruments, and writes their own songs, all with excellence. The first may have a one-hit-wonder, but the second is the true artist and deserves the accolades and praise for the time and effort he has placed in his work. Perhaps music awards should judge their nominees more like applicants to Juilliard or City University of New York, and not by radio plays. As an observer, this means rewarding artists who do put the hard work into creating masterpieces and not fostering the sense of irreverence and sloppiness that dominates modern art installations today. Art should never be an afterthought. For the artist, stewardship means learning to foster their own talent, taking steps to grow in their skill set, and never settling for "just good enough." As the patron, stewardship means buying the tickets to the galleries, exhibits, operas, and concert halls of artists who understand the care and reverence that comes in following such a glorious tradition. It means buying the pieces, buying even prints, and raising children to understand and appreciate quality and skill in art, not just originality and innovation. It means being educated as an observer as well, seeking to grow in understanding and appreciation of art.

¹⁰⁰*Miriam Webster*, s.v. "Stewardship," accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stewardship>.

The Wolterstorff of twenty years ago would agree.¹⁰¹ As a Christian, his understanding of stewardship is tied to his faith, even in relation to art. Man's understanding of himself as artist lies in light of his understanding of God as artist. This is a common understanding of artists in the historical tradition, who saw art as a kind of communion with their Creator.¹⁰² But this response is not a free pass to create moralizing mid-level art, a result often found in the church today. Rather, if Christians are to abide by their own scriptures in response to stewardship, stewardship of this world includes stewardship of the arts. The faithful servant who stewarded what he was given was the one rewarded in the end.¹⁰³ If anything, Christians have a higher responsibility to see art stewarded well and to encourage the pursuit of excellence in art. Even as artists, Christians should be the foremost in seeking excellence at their craft; a beacon of mastery, not mediocrity.¹⁰⁴

While the goal of the Christian is not to bring the Kingdom of God down to earth by way of reformation—no matter how much one might want to reform modern art—the Christian can see art as Scruton does. Beautiful art brings consolation in sorrow, and affirmation in joy. It makes human life worthwhile.¹⁰⁵ When modern art becomes obsessed with the ugliness and alienation that surrounds them, that is just the time to make beautiful art that offers glimpses of the beauty that transcends. Plato said that beauty is the sign of another, higher order. For Scruton, and for many, “one way of glimpsing that heavenly sphere here below, is by experiencing beauty.”¹⁰⁶ Regardless of one's religious stance, beautiful works of art have the power to transport one beyond the chaos and pain that inhabits life. For the artists of old, beauty was their outlet, their way of escape. Beauty has been, and will continue to be the anchor in the present that sustains, and the call to beyond that gives us hope of a better way.

CONCLUSION

101 Perhaps the Wolterstorff of today would as well, but I cannot really know from the source with which I am working. While *Art In Action* is full of the relation of the Christian to art both as artist and observer, *Art Rethought* does not concentrate there and has not shed light on this matter.

102 Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 51.

103 Matthew 25:14-30.

104 Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

105 “Why Beauty Matters” (video), 2009, accessed November 26, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/128428182>.

106 “Why Beauty Matters,” 2009.

When so much of modern art is determined to showcase the same horrors and atrocities reported in the papers, beauty should be a reminder of the hope that lies beyond. This is why the methods of both Scruton and Wolt-erstorff are so important. If there is any hope of restoring beauty, excellence and mastery to art, it lies neither in man nor in the reformation of man, but in those brief glimpses of the higher realm. Beauty is what ties man to the transcendental, to the sacred. It reminds man that there is more than wars, more than bombs, more than riots in the streets. Beauty is in the starry night, the face of a child, the kiss of a lover. Beauty is in a field of irises, in water lilies, and sunflowers. Beauty is not only the execution, the skill, or the message. Beauty is in the hope that imbues each piece that this life is worth living, even though it is not the end. It is simply one more road to truth.

Pablo Picasso was capable of shocking feats of artistry, usually in reference to social injustice or war. Yet, he knew the power of the softer touch when it was required. His painting, *Olga* is simple and beautiful in its stillness. There is no hint of Picasso's later frantic and displaced nature, chaos and confusion. It simply sets aside as a calm breath in the middle of the anguished world he chose to portray. Picasso gives back the hope for humanity that he so often chose not to portray by simply painting his wife with reverence and love. It is beautiful.

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