

Le Nouvel Esprit:
A Video Series on the Theology of
the Body

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The Problem

- The question is the ethos of the body in works of art
- The body has its meaning in the gift of person to another person
 - The dignity of the person means that the body in its nakedness has reference to this, the spousal meaning of the body, the communion of persons, and the freedom of gift
- Artistic objectification of the naked body as a model takes the body outside of this interpersonal domain
 - Through this objectification, the body becomes the object of possession outside of this personal meaning
 - Possession
 - By the the artist who makes the body the subject for artistic transfiguration in painting or sculpture or reproduction through photography or film
 - By anyone who looks at the art piece
- The fact of this objectification and possession
 - 1) Does not mean that the body cannot become the subject of works of art
 - 2) Does not mean that art is morally indifferent

Back to the Beginning

- The fact that man experiences shame in the state of original sin means that there is a specific need for intimacy and privacy with regard to the body
 - This need ensures the body is treated as gift and the possible source for self-giving
 - From this, it informs man's actions concerning the treatment of the body as an object of culture
- The cultural tendency to cover nakedness is not something merely environmental, but a process, a growing consciousness of **personal sensibility**
 - Personal sensibility motivated by shame is a right way of acting towards the body in light of its meaning and value
 - The process of sharpening personal sensibility is a factor and fruit of culture
 - Shame and the privacy of the body is a norm of the gift that is ordered to the depth of the human subject and reciprocal self-giving
 - This speaks then of a continuity between the spousal meaning of the body from the “beginning” to the processes of culture
 - Personal sensibility is the right way of living out of this norm of the gift
 - Distinction between anonymous nakedness of man versus this culture of purity and morality

Personal Sensibility

- Personal sensibility means that the
 - Self does not want to become an object for others in this capacity of anonymous nakedness
 - Do not want others to become such an object for oneself
 - Wants to be desired in accordance to the dignity of the human person and not in terms of concupiscent desire
- The various impulses of concupiscence leads man to act contrary to personal sensibility in a variety of ways, including through culture, art, mass media, etc
- Question: when does the works of culture become pornovision and pornography?
 - A work becomes such when it oversteps the limits of shame and personal sensibility with respect to the human body and its nakedness
 - When this occurs, this natural right to intimacy is violated
 - This violation is in the order of gift and reciprocal giving of self
 - This problem is significant for the task for creating a culture of purity

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