

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

TOB 63, General Audience of May 6, 1981

Introductory Remarks

- Question: can the naked body be a model and the subject of audiovisual technology?
- Matt. 5:27-28 is the key for answering this question
- Terminology
 - Pornography and pornovision are more modern terms
 - *Obscaena*, Latin, indicates “everything that must not find itself before the eyes of spectators, that must be surrounded by fitting discretion, that cannot be presented without any choice to human view” TOB 63:2, (p. 374)
- Over history, the human body has been the subject and model of culture and works of art
 - The reciprocal self-giving between man and woman has likewise been a subject of literature and Scripture

The Duty of the Artist

- “The artist who takes up this subject in any sphere of art or by audiovisual technologies must be conscious of the full truth of the object, of the whole scale of values connected with it; he must not only take them into account abstractly, but also live them rightly himself. This requirement corresponds also to that principle of “purity of heart,” which must in determinate cases be carried over from the existential sphere of attitudes and forms of behavior to the intentional sphere of artistic creation or reproduction.” TOB 63:4, (p. 375)

The Process of Creating Art

- The process of creation intends
 - 1) The objectification of the model outside of the interpersonal sphere of communion of persons
 - 2) The expression of this objectification of the model as the artist's creative idea
 - 3) This expression manifests the artist's inner world of values and his way of living the truth
- This process is a transfiguration of the model
 - This transfiguration of the model is distinct from the the reproduction of the model in photography and film
 - There is an essential difference between painting and sculpture in comparison with photography and film
- The viewer communicates with the art piece in two ways
 - 1) With the objectification, the piece itself
 - 2) With the truth of the object the author has expressed through his work

Works of Art

- Many great works of art have the naked body as their subject, allowing the viewer to concentrate on the whole truth of man, eg, dignity, beauty, value, mystery of masculinity and/or femininity, suprasensual beauty
- These works bear within themselves an element of sublimation that leads the viewer through the body to the integral mystery of man
- In these works the viewer is not pushed to look with concupiscent desire
 - These works of art are therefore in conformity with the purity of heart and New Testament ethos

Objectionable Works

- Some works are objectionable, not because of nakedness itself, but because of the variables in the reproduction, depiction, and representation of the body
- Through these variables the same fundamental intentionality of the work becomes accessible to the viewer/reader/listener
- If one's personal sensibility reacts to a work, this is due to this fundamental intentionality that has interpreted the body as an object to be enjoyed for concupiscent desire
 - Such an intentionality is fundamentally opposed to man's dignity within the aesthetic sphere

Humanæ Vitæ 22

- “We take this opportunity to address those who are engaged in education and all those whose right and duty it is to provide for the common good of human society. We would call their attention to the need to create an atmosphere favorable to the growth of chastity so that true liberty may prevail over license and the norms of the moral law may be fully safeguarded.

Everything therefore in the modern means of social communication which arouses men's baser passions and encourages low moral standards, as well as every obscenity in the written word and every form of indecency on the stage and screen, should be condemned publicly and unanimously by all those who have at heart the advance of civilization and the safeguarding of the outstanding values of the human spirit. It is quite absurd to defend this kind of depravity in the name of art or culture or by pleading the liberty which may be allowed in this field by the public authorities.”

Duties towards a Culture of Chastity

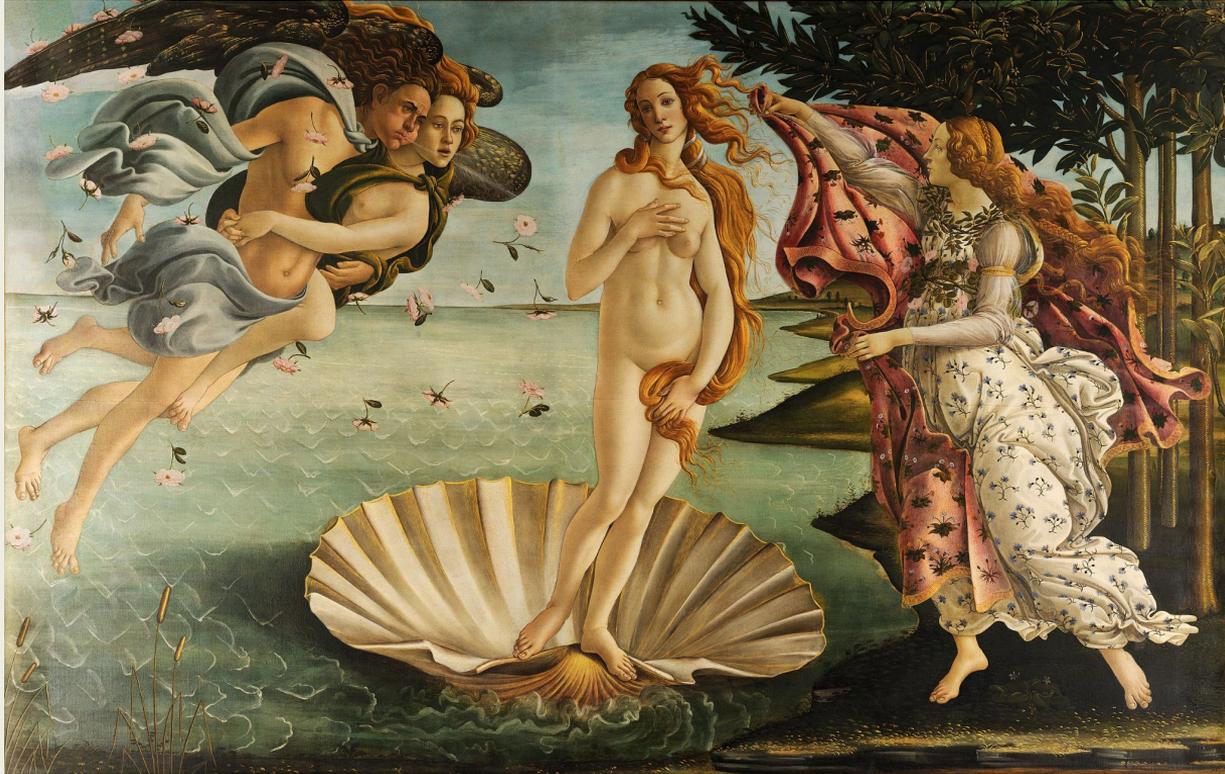
- Culture has the task of ennobling everything properly human, and this includes art
- In regards to art, there are two aspects for moral consideration
 - 1) The ethos of the image and the duty of the artist in creating a work of art
 - 2) The ethos of the viewer and the duty in looking at an art piece
- The truth of man, the body, and his dignity is the task for both creators and viewers
 - The task of the creator is conforming his artistic intentionality to the truth of man
 - Authentic artistic activity overcomes the anonymous objectification of the body
 - The task of the aesthetic viewer is to draw towards truth and avoid becoming a superficial consumer

Giorgione's Sleeping Venus



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Sandro Botticelli's The Birth of Venus



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Michelangelo's David



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Gian Lorenzo Bernini's Apollo and Daphne



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Gian Lorenzo Bernini's The Rape of Proserpina



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