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Roger Scruton

True, Good and Beautiful

Let me say a few things about art and truth first of all. The enlightenment—by which I mean that mass of thinking and idea-mongering that began in the beginning of the 17th century and went on through the beginning of the 19th—that period in our intellectual history brought with it, as I'm sure you know, a certain loss of the religious anchor in everyday life. Maybe in this part of the world, that loss was not felt so much. But of course, there was nobody living in this part of the world just then. But there were your ancestors, lost somewhere on the way to this place, who did probably feel a residue of this great movement of ideas that began in Europe and recognized that the scientific worldview, which had come to the fore with Newton, was posing a certain threat to the more naïve of once religious beliefs.

Among educated people (especially in France and Britain and Germany, too) there was an attempt to find a rival source of meaning to the religious—to find that rival source of meaning in art because for various reasons, art struck people as having a different status from science. Science was a threat to religion. That's true, because it was undermining the old explanation of things in which God took such an important place. But art seemed to represent a different way of looking at the world from science, one which preserved the mystery of things and didn't undo the mystery. Since the mystery was so important, why not look to art as a source of meaning?

So art suddenly became prominent as a human enterprise, and with it the birth of the subject of aesthetics—aesthetics being the philosophy of art and the philosophy of beauty. There are three important figures that I mention there: Shaftesbury, Baumgarten, and Kant. Shaftesbury was an English philosopher, third Earl of Shaftesbury, who was a pupil of John Locke (who wrote very influential essays about the role of the beautiful in the formation of the human spirit). Shaftesbury was an educationist and somebody who felt that it was his

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duty to draw the attention of his contemporaries to the complexity of human life and to the consolations that we find in human life. Beauty is one of them. He was very influential though his theories are somewhat all over the place. Baumgarten was the person who invented the word "aesthetics" as a name for a discipline. He wrote a book called *Aesthetica*, which was about the art of poetry. "Aesthesis" is the original word, a Greek word for feeling. We have it in our word "anesthetic." The burden of his book, *Aesthetica*, was that poetry communicates truths about our condition, but communicates them not through abstract thought but through concrete feeling. Therefore, it's a different kind of truth, and it has a different role in our lives and a different value for us. He began the whole enterprise of distinguishing the artistic way of looking at the world from the literal-minded and possibly scientific way. Kant, who was much influenced by Baumgarten, took this up and wrote the first systematic work of aesthetics.

These great thinkers raise the question: what do we learn from art? Is what we learn from art a kind of truth—a truth that we, perhaps, couldn't learn from any other human activity? Well, for a start, art is not one kind of thing. There is abstract art and representational art. Abstract art is like music or abstract painting, abstract sculpture, it doesn't actually have a subject matter. That's the whole point of it. You're supposed to appreciate it for what it is in itself, for the harmony of lines and figures, for the ways in which things balance against each other. It's supposed to attract attention purely for its own sake and not for the subject matter that it represents. Already, that makes it rather difficult to say exactly what it is that we learn from art.

Then, of course, what about fictions? The realm of art includes things like novels, plays, films, poetry—all of which are about the world in some way, but they don't give you literal truths about the world. They are about fictional worlds, and it requires an effort of the imagination both to create a fiction and also to appreciate it. When you read a great novel, like Jane Austen's *Emma*, it's not in order to find out about some person called Emma Woodhouse. You know there is no such person. But you do know, nevertheless, that in the creation of this fiction, Jane Austen has put some part of herself, and some part of her deep observations of the human condition. But there aren't literal truths about a particular person's life. What kind of truths are they? Or, is there another kind of truth? That's one of the problems that we encounter in this area.

Then, there is the problem of the role of experience. If you read a poem to yourself, or recite a poem, you know that what matters is the sound of that poem, the structure of it, the way the verse unfolds, the form of it, but not what it literally says—or, at least, not what it literally says when extracted from that form. It is not like a textbook. If you are curious about nuclear physics, you might pick up a textbook of nuclear physics, read it, and having absorbed it and being diligent students, memorized the whole lot. You put it on the shelf and that's it, that's the last time you look at it, because you've extracted the information from it. But that's not the way that people appreciate poems, is it? It's not that they extract the information and then never visit it again. On the contrary, a good poem is one that gains from repetition, even when you know it by heart, and even when it says something that seems extremely light. Even if it touches with a light touch on the realities of this world, like say Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods." It doesn't say very much, but the form, the rhythm, and the way in which it seems to touch something deep in you, means that you will want to repeat it, want to go on reading it again and again. One thought, then, is that we don't actually go to art for information. The information content is not the primary thing, it's the experience. But, of course, not all truth is information. We have lots of different ideas of truth.

Christ said, famously, "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life."[1] He didn't mean "truth" in the sense that scientists use that word—that he is somehow a true representation of the world—he meant something deeper. He meant that you can trust in him, and by trusting in him, you come to know something about yourself: how far you can go in whatever direction and with what kind of hope. That use of the idea of truth, which brings in a notion of trust, perhaps is a more important one for considering art because we find support in the person we trust. It's like that with art as well. In many works of art, we feel that we are in the presence of a genuine spirit. Many people feel this, of course, about the works of Beethoven, who described his *Missa Solemnis*, in the preface, as "from the heart . . . to the heart." What he meant was that this was an utter, sincere outpouring of what he felt and he expected the audience to engage with it in the same spirit, as though trusting in him to be the guardian of their emotions for

[1] John 14:6

the hour-long experience that he was offering. That kind of an idea of truth is a very different one from the scientific one, but it still seems to be an idea of truth.

Now, this brings up the topic of desire and pleasure. I have to say that I'm talking here as a professional philosopher. I know many people in this audience are studying other subjects, are simply curious about the intellectual world, and are not used to thinking in this abstract, philosophical way, so I apologize. I just hope that I will inspire you to go on and pursue the matter further.

There is a connection between desiring something and feeling pleasure on obtaining it. If you really want a glass of water, then upon obtaining that glass and drinking, you feel pleasure—the pleasure of satisfying a desire. But it's not a simple connection, because we know that many things that we desire don't give us pleasure when we obtain them. This is one of the most important parts of moral education: to recognize the difference between those things that you desire which will bring satisfaction when you obtain them, and those things which you desire which, when you taste them, you push them away with revulsion. I won't go into that, but of course, you might think that maybe art has something to do with that, too. Maybe it can teach us in advance about the things which we won't enjoy when we possess them. There are many kinds of pleasure. There's pure sensual pleasure: you sink into a hot bath at the end of the day. This is a pleasure of the senses as the warmth spreads through your body. It doesn't tell you anything about the world. It's not based on any kind of thinking, but it's the kind of pleasure that animals have.

But we also have intellectual pleasures—pleasures which come from thinking things. The pleasure of reading a book is not a sensory pleasure at all, is it? It's a pleasure of the mind, the pleasure of following an argument, of playing with words, and so on. Then there's what I call intentional pleasures. The word "intentional" means directed outward onto the world, like the pleasure you take on somebody's giving you a present. Or the pleasure you take when you go to see your child take part in a hundred meter race (or in the long jump or whatever) and you see in the playing field—there he is! He's done it! He's got the first prize! That's a pleasure about something. When you have a pleasure about something that means you can make a mistake as well. The race was at the other end of the field, and it looked exactly as though your son had won it. Only later do you discover it was someone else, a look-alike. So was your pleasure real, or not? In a sense, it was real, but it was also a mistake. So there are mistaken pleasures, and

that's a very interesting fact. Pleasures can be *at* something. I can take a pleasure at the beautiful scene out of the window. I can take a pleasure about the triumph of my son in the long jump and so on.

Aesthetic pleasure is of the first kind. It's pleasure *at* something. It's not like pleasures of taste. When you eat strawberry ice cream and take pleasure in it, that's a pleasant taste in the mouth. When you look at a profound picture and are moved by it, that's not a pleasant feeling anywhere in you, is it? It's not a sensation of pleasure. You're pleased *at* this thing that you're looking at, and pleased by it, maybe pleased about what it's saying. It's completely different from a sensory pleasure.

There's a great question, therefore, of what is the relation between tastes in food and drink, and tastes in music and painting? They're not the same kind of thing at all. You like strawberries, and I like blueberries, fine. There's no real disagreement between us, just different tastes. But you like Beethoven and I like heavy metal. This is a bit more like a disagreement, especially if you then go on to say, "Your liking heavy metal is a sign of the degeneracy of your soul." The argument can begin then. It may not be possible to resolve it. But the fact is, in matters of artistic and aesthetic judgment, we do argue, and the arguments are very important to us. Maybe you don't think this, because you're not interested in Beethoven or heavy metal, but there are always going to be areas where you are interested. Suppose you live in a little town which has beautiful houses and beautiful streets, and you're really pleased with it. Your neighborhood is charming and somehow consoling because of its orderliness. Then, someone puts in a planning application for a huge skyscraper in bright orange tiles. You start getting together with your neighbors to campaign against this. There will be arguments put forward as to who is right and who is wrong. These arguments matter enormously to people. Looking at the architectural mess between Salt Lake City and Provo, I suspect that Americans don't think about this as much as they should. But, on the other hand, anybody who has been to Europe will recognize that there, people *do* think about these things and argue about them all the time. And, as a result, all sensible tourists don't spend their holidays here, but in Europe. Anyway, that's another matter.

The great question, then, is: what is the value of this kind of pleasure—the pleasure that we feel in works of art and aesthetic objects? Can it be a vehicle of truth? It's very interesting that we can feel pleasure in works of art, even when

the works of art are sad or even tragic. We take pleasure in a sad story because the story does something to the sadness. The weepy movie may have enormous appeal. You may feel like it hasn't worked if you haven't had a bit of a weep during the course of it. The sadness is part of what was promised, it's part of the deal. And yet it can't be real sadness, because nobody voluntarily submits himself to that. It's something like sadness put in a frame. The story puts it in a frame and makes it such that it doesn't hurt you in the way that, for instance, the death of someone you love would hurt you. That framing of our emotions seems to be one of the things that works of art do for us, isn't it? We seem to be able to come to terms with the sadness of human life, partly because we can represent it in ways that make it more meaningful—framed and isolated. To pleasure, we always say "come again," but to knowledge, we say, "thanks." Once you've obtained the knowledge, that's it, you've got it. The pleasure, you've had it once, but you want it again. Especially in the case of works of art, the repeatability of the pleasure is what it's all about. But perhaps there is knowledge in repetition. Let's just think about that for a moment, though I want to say something first about art and virtue.

Moving on now from truth to goodness, what is the moral value of art? What kind of moral improvement can art generate in us? Has it got a particular role in presenting the moral world and improving our own engagement in it? Obviously, art is a source of moral examples, but the work of art does not merely present the example. There are lots of examples which prompt you to sketch for yourself ideas of good behavior and bad behavior. It puts us in a position of judgment. I mention here Henry James's portrait of Isabelle Archer (which I'm hoping you young people will be about to read, if you haven't read it yet) in *Portrait of a Lady,* in which Henry James presents to us a good woman who is also naïve and exploited by a cunning and evil man. James doesn't judge, himself, but he puts us in a position to make a judgment and to make the judgment through the eyes of Isabelle Archer. The reader gradually comes to understand her situation as she comes to understand it. That's real art. He never *says* anything, the writer. He makes you think it, but think it for yourself. That might have a special moral value. Rather than just telling you what to think, morally, making you think it for yourself so that it's a course of education in the emotions that he's directed at you.

That all looks quite plausible for fiction and for representational art, but what about abstract art? People think that abstract art—art which doesn't have a representational content—can also have some kind of moral value. That's what Beethoven was saying about his *Missa Solemnis*—and what many people say about music generally—that it is telling us something about our emotions by leading us to feel secondhand, so to speak, what those emotions are. There's a kind of emotional education going on there, too. But then, there are real problems. It's a very difficult one to talk about. What happens when you encounter a work of art that presents vice, but aesthetically in such a way as to make the vice attractive? I take the example here of *Salome*. Here is the problem, as you remember, of Salome, the story of the daughter of Herodias who danced before the king. She coveted the head of John the Baptist (perhaps because her mother had put her up to it), and had finally persuaded the king to give it to her. In other words, persuade the king to kill the prophet that he had been reluctant to kill up to that moment because of his manifest holiness. This was made into a play by Oscar Wilde, a rather clever play, and then that was set to music by Ricard Strauss. His music is full of a distraught lasciviousness, but it's very beautiful and seductive. I won't play it to you. I'll leave it to you to encounter it. It's all over YouTube, of course. This music kind of brings you to Salome's side. You feel that somehow she's in the grip of an emotion that she can't deal with. She's got to satisfy it, but as represented by Strauss and Oscar Wilde, Salome goes the whole hog and takes hold of the head and kisses it. Here's the kind of thing that you see in modern opera productions. Modern opera productions are designed especially to be offensive to members of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, so don't worry. They're usually much worse than this, but here is Salome, having sung her incredible Aria of sensual ecstasy over the severed head of John the Baptist, seizing it and kissing it in this unacceptable way. Well, most people would feel that's going too far, and perhaps people did think that it was going too far. This opera did have quite a bit of trouble in its early life, but now it's part of the repertoire. And yet, it seems to take a kind of ghoulish pleasure in artily perverted behavior, and the music seems to put that behavior in a kind of enchanting light, because the music is drawing you in all the time. You find similar things in other works of art of the mid-to-late 19th century, art that rescues evil by making it seem beautiful. Baudelaire's *Fleur Du Mal* (which I'm sure some of you who're doing French here will be reading and studying) is a

very good example of this. He takes the excesses and the degeneracies of life in a modern city and looks for a meaning that lies concealed within them. He does this through incredibly powerful imagery and beautiful verse forms that make it look as though there is a spiritual meaning behind all this that redeems it. The spiritual is revealed even though what is described denies the possibility of the spiritual. It's as though by denying things in the right way, we can affirm them. I think that's what Baudelaire himself thought, and often people have described him as a Christian poet, precisely for this: he rescues from the heart of corruption and despair that little germ of spiritual purity which lies in the imagery of his verse and which we take away and then make to grow within us. I'm not sure if that is true, but it's an interesting thought.

In Shakespeare, of course, there's a lot of evil—the evil of the character of Iago in *Othello*, for example, and also Macbeth, who is a self-doubting evil man. But it's straightforward. Shakespeare doesn't expect you to be on their side in any way. He certainly doesn't do a Salome on them, although at a certain point, there is a lot of sympathy for Macbeth. Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* is another very important example of an evil character who is so portrayed by the verse that you cannot fail to be on his side. His wounded pride is something you immediately identify with, and you come to see that there's a kind of nobility about it. This is what the verse is doing. Is this immoral verse, therefore, that's bringing you to the side of Satan? Blake, in his illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, seems to think that. So, there are some other examples that I give you there: Claggart, the Bosun in Herman Mellville's *Tale of Billy Budd* (another one that you're probably about to read), sexed and made into a brilliant opera by Benjamin Britten. Then there's Dimitri in *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Dostoyevsky. What do we think about him? Is he just confused, or are we being, again, brought into the world of a character who is unable to make moral judgments for himself? Are we also, perhaps, confused about whether we can make those judgments? One of the questions that will arise here is: what is the distinction between moral art and moralizing art? Here is a piece of Russian revolutionary art from the 1917 revolution, which is manifestly moralizing. It's telling you that these people are obviously mistreated. So what? Is it saying anything that helps you to understand that mistreatment, or to take a different stance towards it? Or is it just like a moral tale, just an illustration to something else? Many people feel that art shouldn't moralize as directly as this. It's too crude. It should be more like Henry James

in *The Portrait of a Lady*, making you do the moralizing rather than doing the moralizing itself. That may be so, but let's go on.

I want to say a little bit about beauty now. I've said some things about art's relation to truth, something about its relation to goodness. In both cases, it's extremely complicated, it seems that there's nothing simple that you can say. What about beauty? There's a certain kind of habit that arose, especially in the late 19th century—connected with people like Oscar Wilde—of putting aesthetic values first, saying that these are the things that matter. Wilde famously said, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing."[2] He lived his life, or at least pretended to live his life, as though that were his guiding principle: to be elegant and soothing to the eye and to ignore all those simple, old-fashioned moral values which got in the way of that. But in his works of art, he didn't think that. To put aesthetic values first is, or might be, a kind of immoralism. Osmond, who is the husband of Isabella Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady,* is somebody who really does put aesthetic values first, and his delight in collecting beautiful things and living this aesthetic way of life has led him to great pecuniary need. He needs money, and she has money, so he marries her in order to get ahold of that money, and also in order to collect her because she was beautiful, too. He collects her as a beautiful object, but doesn't love her. Oscar Wilde does a slightly cruder version of the same idea in the character of Lord Henry Wotton in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

There are two sides to the aesthetic experience. There's the kind of relishing side, and the exploring side. Relishing a beautiful work of art or a sublime work of music is something that you can do without necessarily exploring the depths of the human heart, even though the work of art touches on them. And, perhaps, this kind of aestheticism means forgetting the cognitive dimension of aesthetic pleasures and realizing that they're not just sensory pleasures. They're not just pleasures in the way you experience things. They're also directed toward a vision of the world. Each of those goals that I've talked about—truth and goodness and beauty—are important because they are what you're focusing on but they seem to reduce art itself to an inadequate means. They seem to leave out the aesthetic dimension. Only when combined in a unity—the kind of truth and the kind of

[2] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*: *A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, (L. Smithers: London, 1899), 3.1.19.

goodness of which beauty is the sign—do these values mark out a path for art. If beauty is the way in which truth is presented, the way in which goodness comes to your consciousness, then we seem to have something like an account of the value of art.

There's also a question here about meaning and form. The meaning of a work of art—and this goes back to Baumgarten—lies in the form and is not really detachable from it. If you try to translate a poem into straight prose, say what it means, and give its equivalent in simple language, then you lose the meaning. The meaning is not just what it says; it resides also in the form and is not detachable from that. This is a little bit like religion and revealed truth. In much religion, there's a promise of another way of seeing the world, what we might call a God's-eye perspective. It's not just that there are theological doctrines, such as God exists, Christ is the son of God, etc., although those are important to the Christian religion. There is also revealed truth when you meditate on these things, and suddenly you see the world in another way, as though from God's perspective. Perhaps in those circumstances, the form of the language that you're studying in a sacred text, for instance, is very important, just as it is in poetry. That's why those great texts have been preserved, not just for what they say but for their way of saying it. Again, in religion, as in art, repetition is very important. You repeat the service every week. You say the Lord's Prayer every day. If somebody said to you, "What a waste of time. You've said it once. Why say it again? You know what it means. You know the words. What's all this about?" You know that that's not what prayer is for. Prayer is about putting you back into the relation with God that you're constantly slipping out of. Therefore, it demands repetition. There are truths that have to be rehearsed if they are to be owned, to know exactly how to feel something and what to feel towards the world around you. You might feel you know it one moment, but you've lost it the next. Getting the right words helps you to recapture it. That idea of revealed truth that comes to you through repetition (as in prayer) is a bit like the aesthetic experience as I've been describing it. Perhaps it gives you a secular version of revealed truth. That's what people like Nietzsche and Wagner thought. They went further and thought that, actually, art could therefore be a substitute for religion, that's what we really should be now devoting ourselves to. We have art, as Nietzsche says, so as not to die of despair. Art is still there, giving us this meaning, even when we've lost faith.

Finally, some thoughts about the intrinsic values of art. Poetry and plays and paintings present imaginary worlds. Representational art gives us an opening onto the world of the imagination, and they all rescue their subject matter from a purely instrumental conception of its significance. Things portrayed in art are not portrayed as useful. They're portrayed as interesting for their own sake, so they're rescued from the instrumentality. That's why every allusion matters; the image is a distillation of the thing depicted. Poetry and painting work in the same way. Here is a landscape by Van Gogh, which everybody knows, probably. The brush strokes there imbue the landscape with an observing consciousness. They are marks of the moral being for whom this is not a thing, but a vision. To absorb that, you recognize that it's a very long way from the way a field of wheat with a flock of rooks above it would look. This doesn't look in any way realistic, but somehow it has a power that it wouldn't have if it were wholly realistic, because the brush strokes of the painter imbue that landscape with his own soul. It's as though the imagination of the painter had reworked the thing that he's painting so that it isn't just the thing. It's also that thing distilled into his own consciousness. In the imagination, we are thinking about absent and nonexistent things, but the consciousness involved is a creator of its own object as in that case of Van Gogh. The imagination is something that we can will. I can ask you to imagine some things. I can say, "Imagine a field of wheat." You won't be able to imagine it like Van Gogh did, but nevertheless, you will summon it up in obedience to that order. That is an interesting thing. Through works of the imagination, we bring distant things into close relation with each other. That's what we do in figures of speech, in poetry. We're bringing things into relation with each other. The brush strokes in the painting bring a human action into relation with a landscape.

These imaginary worlds that we create can strike us as true, or as false, and I want to contrast that Van Gogh with a painting by Thomas Kinkade. This is one of his visions of paradise. This is a controversial painter, as you know. Van Gogh died in poverty. Kinkade died leaving $53 million and died of drink. I think 1 in 20 American households have a Kinkade above their mantelpiece because it's a soothing thing. For some people, this is a vision of what painting should be. It's much truer to the appearance of things than Van Gogh, but there's a question about it. What is that question? Many people would say there's a falsification behind this kind of painting. I don't want to cast judgment on it, but just say a

few things about it, why does this strike so many people as false? In one sense, it's truer than the Van Gogh. It's closer to the way things actually look. But the falsification, if it exists, is the falsification of the observer rather than of the observed. It shows a world presented through a veil of self-congratulatory sentiment. That's at least what the critic would say. It tells you that you're a good person and no further efforts need to be made. Van Gogh is not telling you that at all. He's telling you that life is rough, and you need to make efforts even to see this. Kinkade tells you that no further efforts need be made, and that meaning lies in the forms and colors. There are pastel shades smeared over the landscape like a disease. Well, is that right? I'll leave it to you to think.

But this brings us back to the parallel between art and religion. Religion provides us with truth, but it's not just straightforward, literal truth about the way the world is. There are stories, all sorts of things that we believe, but there's a much more important dimension to it. A spiritual truth which tells us how things really are for us and what our position really is in the world of human relations and human emotions. In religion, we recognize that there's no redemption through falsehood. The same seems to be true of art. That's what those two pictures, I think, lead us to suppose. Art, too, has its own way of presenting the spiritual truth of things, and if it falsifies, then it doesn't produce the kind of redemptive consolation that we're looking for. This might explain sadness in the works of art. It might explain the power of tragedy. In tragedy, you go to the depths, but you find a kind of rescue there. Only if you go to those depths, however, will you be rescued. Enjoying sadness for its own sake, in just a sentimental and pretense of grief, is not going to help. But actually going to the full encounter with mortality and what it means, as in a real tragedy, maybe there is a help. Maybe that does take us to a point where we can learn something that we need to learn, and learn it in our hearts and in our emotions, learn to bear this thing. Perhaps that is why we want to go to tragedies again and again.

Art is certainly not going to be any help to us if it loses sight of what we are and what we need. And we do recognize that there is a distinction between true and false emotion. False emotion comes about when the "I" eclipses the "you." Most real love is about you, the other. Sentimental love pretends to be about you, but it's really about me—me feeling this wonderful thing and showing thereby my moral distinction. We find that kind of sentimentality in art, and also we find art which challenges that sentimentality. Thomas Kinkade is all about me being

a lovely person, whereas Van Gogh is all about the "you" that appears to him, even in a field of wheat—because, of course, that's God who's appearing to him.

As I go back to what I said about Henry James, real art doesn't judge; it opens the world to judgment and inspires that judgment in us. I wanted to finish with some difficult examples. In *The Brothers Karamazov* (another book that you might be on the verge of reading, or on the verge of not bothering to read) Dostoevsky doesn't judge. He invites us to judge in his stead, but what he's inviting us to judge is a whole community of people who don't judge, but just *do* in the most horrifying way. This is a very challenging book, therefore. Dickens, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the death of little Nell lays it on with a trowel, trying to make us weep over the death of this innocent little girl who's forgiving everybody for dying before her time. It's not only unrealistic and implausible, but real schmaltz. Oscar Wilde famously said about this, "A man must have a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of little Nell," which is a brilliant way of summarizing it. *Salome*, though, is a realization in imagined form of a grim state of mind—a really horrible state of mind—but realized without any negative judgment. That's the great problem: this is music of sublime power which simply happens to have been applied to this horrible situation. Strauss was able to do that. He once said that, "If you gave me a railway time table, I'd set it to the most beautiful music." Is this a fault?

Again, just to conclude, to get you to compare two portrayals of the crucifixion. Grunewald, is the famous Isenheim Alter Piece in Germany, gives a hyper-realistic portrayal of the horror of the crucifixion, such that nobody can say that he's denying the reality of this or that he's turning away, or falsifying. There's no falsification, but somehow it leaves you without hope. It's as though it really is just that: the death and destruction of a person. Whereas, in Tintoretto's case, you see the most extraordinary sequence of events in which, actually, not just of the resurrection of Christ, but the redemption of mankind is foretold in every detail of the painting. This, therefore, is not a horrifying painting at all, but a consoling one, and one in which you see just why it is that Christ had to be sacrificed. From Grunewald, you don't know why it is. It's just yet another inexplicable and horrifying accident of human degenerate life. Those are two examples that you might take away to think about, and I think I've gone on for long enough now.

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