

THE CULT OF MODERN UGLINESS

By N. Stephan Kinsella

"And Keating, I want the house to be ugly. Magnificently ugly. I want it to be the ugliest house in New York."

"The . . . ugliest, Miss Cook?"
"Sweetheart, the beautiful is so commonplace!"

"Yes, but . . . but I . . . well, I don't see how I could permit myself to . . ."

"Keating, where's your courage? Aren't you capable of a sublime gesture on occasion? They all work so hard and struggle and suffer, trying to achieve beauty, trying to surpass one another in beauty. Let's surpass them all! Let's throw their sweat in their face. Let's destroy them at one stroke. Let's be gods. Let's be ugly."

-- From *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand

Does the attitude portrayed in this passage remind you of anything in today's society? Unfortunately, there's a good chance it does. Look around you. The world is full of beauty -- both natural beauty and man-made. But lurking in the shadows are the enemies of beauty and goodness; the worshippers of ugliness.

You can be walking one day on the beautiful LSU campus, with its "stately" oak trees, lush greenery, and lovely young ladies. And then, from nowhere, there appears two or three Ugly People. Chime Rats. [Urban Bohemians] Stairway Urchins. Leukemia deathbed impressionists. Undoubtedly liberals.

You know who I'm talking about. These dregs are dressed in tattered black & white, or in tattered paisley mottled gray. Their hair is dyed jet-black or mange-orange. It is usually shaved close to the scalp in abrupt patches; other than that the hair flops unevenly on one side of the liberal head, creating a dizzy, lopsided, goofy look. The girls wear no makeup and no bras. The guys look like homosexual punk rockers. There are ragged holes all throughout the clothes.

And the shoes are always death-black, liberal occult leather.

But the Cult of Modern Ugliness does not consist merely of Ugly People. It also consists of Ugly-Makers (who usually are Ugly People too). The Ugly-Makers are the modern artists -- the anti-artists. When they are

in a good mood, they paint abstract art, which is really non-art. When they are in a bad mood, we get the modern horrors of today: the paintings of dark, depressed human animals surrounded by seas of despair; the explicit photographs of the guts of an animal that was killed on a road; the harsh metal sculptures that show a man being pulled apart by chains while a steel spike is driven into his skull.

All around us there is beauty, yes. Why, then, do these people seek to destroy it? Surely, there is nothing wrong with being ugly on accident; but it is sick and evil indeed to *intentionally* become ugly (as the Ugly People do) or to create ugliness (as the Ugly-Makers do).

We all see these freaks in our lives, and usually casually wonder about them. We usually assume their weirdness is some form of individual expression or protest. But there are many ways to protest, and many ways to express one's individuality. Why do the Ugly People specifically choose *ugliness* as their motif?

It is because of the bankruptcy of moral philosophy today. The chief philosophy of today is *subjectivism*. Subjectivism is the belief that "no one can know anything for sure," that "everything is relative," that "there is no absolute truth," that "what is true for you may not be true for me."

Subjectivism is rampant in today's society. Which seems strange, given that it is so laughably easy to refute. For instance, it is a chief tenant of subjectivism that "There is no absolute truth." But look. Think about it. The subjectivist is saying, in effect, "I know, for a fact, that there is no absolute truth." The subjectivist contradicts himself with every assertion! He cannot claim to have *knowledge* that knowledge is impossible. He cannot be certain that certainty is unachievable. Subjectivism cannot be true.

Why, then, is it so popular? Well, if people believed that there are objective, non-arbitrary truths out there, then they would have to go out and *find* them, wouldn't they? But it's a lot easier to simply make up "your own" truths. Further, in the subjectivist world, people needn't take responsibility for their actions -- after all, nothing is objectively, absolutely *wrong*, now, is it?

So this explains the popularity of

the false doctrine of subjectivism. But what are its effects? What are the symptoms of this disease?

A primary effect is *egalitarianism* -- the belief that all things and people should be treated the same. Since the subjectivists think it is impossible to be certain about anything, they believe it is inappropriate for people to make *moral judgements*. They believe it is "unfair" to reward and praise one person over another, because you cannot *know* if he is actually, truly, *objectively* better than other people.

Thus, instead of wishing to see criminals declared evil and punished, these subjectivist-egalitarian-liberals oppose treating criminals harshly. And instead of letting intelligent, honest, hard-working men and women profit from their labors, growing rich in the process -- these liberals want to make everyone *equal*, making the poor richer by making the rich poorer.

And this subjectivist egalitarianism applies also to the field of aesthetics and art. Where one man looks at, for example, a beautiful painting of a man triumphing over nature and proudly succeeding at life, the liberal feels threatened. He feels threatened merely by the passing of judgement over the painting -- merely because men look at it and say "this is good." Similarly, when a clean, nicely-dressed, pretty woman (or handsome man) is complimented or viewed favorably, the liberal feels threatened. Because, you see, this conflicts with his subjectivist egalitarianism -- with his view that *everything* should be treated the same. No one should be treated better than another -- because there simply is no "better."

Thus these liberals step into their Ugly Cocoons, and emerge as Ugly People and Ugly-Makers. And their main goal is to destroy the validity of moral and aesthetic judgment. "So, you think that the Mona Lisa is good, do you?" sneers the Ugly-Maker. "Well, here's art. Take this art. Art on this!" he says, as he violently and brusquely paints a portrait of a tortured man -- a grotesque, naked lump of meat, surrounded by clouds of doom and vultures of despair.

And the Ugly Person sees the cute, nice preppy girls on the LSU campus. Or the impeccably groomed

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businessman or businesswoman in their three-piece suits and ties. So the subjectivist liberal -- who hates seeing these people *praised*, judged favorably over dirty, unwashed bums -- dresses to shock. He puts pins in his nose and ears. He rips his clothes. He wears black and white as a joke to show that there are really *no* black and white truths -- only limp-wristed subjective grays. He cuts his hair till he looks like he's undergoing chemotherapy. Then he steps out in public and says, "Here! How's *this!* You want acceptable -- *here's* acceptable! Accept *this!*"

So the next time you see an Ugly Person, remember that you are seeing -- in the flesh -- the results of the bankrupt philosophy of subjectivism. And maybe you will be reminded of the ultimate results of following that wrong philosophy. Maybe you will realize that truth, and knowledge, and certainty are possible -- that we can distinguish beauty from ugliness, truth from lies, and good from evil. Man is not a helpless, drooling hunk of flesh, unable to discern right from wrong. Man is a proud being, able to look at reality, able to understand it, and competent to *judge* it. And once you realize all this, you can see that it is possible for man to master reality and mold it to his wishes; that man can be proud and righteous, certain and successful -- and happy. And then you will see why The Cult of Modern Ugliness is so unnecessary, and so futile.