

Saving Beauty

The Challenges of the Liturgical Arts

Tomislav Ćurić*, Boris Vulić**

Summary

This paper engages with the thought of the Korean–German philosopher Byung–Chul Han, but with a focus on the complexity of postmodern conceptions of beauty and the various challenges this notion poses to Christian artistic and cultural expression. The author has developed the critical programmatic principle of “saving beauty” through a series of interrelated analyses, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary cultural moment. In the first section the authors analyze the phenomena of displacement of beauty which is evident in the transition into the digital realm. In the second part, the authors argue the reproduction of the “inner void” as being the result of nihilistic narcissism. Han returns to the conception of beauty in the classical metaphysical sense invoking its original nature: self–enclosure, otherness, festivity, reminiscence and event of truth. Thirdly, the authors develop a critical review of the challenges to Christian liturgical aesthetics by focusing on three interrelated points: the return to the truth of beauty on the fundament of God’s visibility in Christ which is the core of liturgical art; the return to the cultural heritage which is inextricably linked to its evangelization and is deeply rooted in the tradition of the Church and finally, the return to the liturgy as “the wellspring and summit” of all Christian life. These reflections suggest that Christian communities are invited to engage critically and creatively with their own cultural heritage, while continually pursuing new ways to proclaim the truth of beauty within contemporary culture.

Keywords: Byung–Chul Han; postmodern culture; beauty; arts and Christianity; cultural heritage; liturgical arts

* Tomislav Ćurić, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Address: Lorenza Jäger 9, HR–31000 Osijek, Croatia. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009–0000–3122–7521>. E-mail: tcuric@ffos.hr

* Boris Vulić, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Address: Petra Preradovića 17, HR–31400 Đakovo, Croatia. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000–0002–3517–2502>. E-mail: vulic@me.com

Introduction

The prevailing consensus among numerous critics of contemporary “hyper-culture” is that beauty is currently in an irresolvable state of crisis. The concept and lived experience of beauty have undergone significant disruption, distortion, and fragmentation. The decadence of beauty, in conjunction with broader social, cultural, and existential crises, has manifested itself in various forms within the domain of artistic expression (Scruton, 2009, 10). The postmodern “liquid” condition (Bauman, 2000, 5–20) has given rise to a paradigm of cultural relativism that initially casts doubt on the capacity of aesthetic experience to mediate the truth. An overwhelming and pervasive subjectivism, rooted in the principle of awakened sensitivity, demands a break with authority and tradition, including religious traditions. This rupture has profound ramifications for the cultural life of religious communities, which cannot relinquish artistic expression as one of their most intrinsic resources for conveying the experience of sacred tradition. The correlation between the sacred and the aesthetic is not merely a vestige of cultural history; rather, it is a contemporary phenomenon that maintains its pertinence. Nonetheless, the evolution of digital society and culture, the proliferation of consumerism, the deterioration of aesthetic sensibility, and the substantial impoverishment of the arts have collectively engendered a series of formidable challenges for Christian communities.

On the one hand, the field of the arts continues to thrive in postmodern societies; on the other hand, the aesthetic experience increasingly becomes the target of relativizing deconstructions. The concept of beauty is thus reduced to a subjective phenomenon, determined by individual preferences or prevailing trends. However, within the context of premodern culture, the concept of beauty was predominantly regarded as a metaphysical dimension of human experience, rather than being viewed through a psychological lens. Christianity, in its historical development, has not only adopted but also integrated beauty into its metaphysical significance and sensible expression, particularly through the arts in liturgical form. However, within the postmodern context, Christianity and its institutions encounter challenges in engaging with their artistic heritage and practices. They face difficulties in establishing a meaningful dialogue with contemporary culture and its diverse artistic expressions. Moreover, the function of the Church as an incubator for artistic creativity is diminishing (Ratzinger, 2001, 129–130). Despite this critical diagnosis, many theorists contend that beauty and the arts should, in the truest sense, be “saved.” The concept of “salvation” inherently encompasses a call to rejuvenate beauty and the arts by drawing inspiration from religious sources and traditions. Could this not be an opportunity to rediscover the religious origin of arts, as revealed in the “soteriological” dimension of artistic expression, or perhaps an opportunity for the renewal of the religious arts within a contemporary context?

This paper proposes to examine the complexity of the postmodern conception of beauty and the cultural challenges for specifically Christian artistic expression.

ssion, particularly for art integrated into Christian liturgy. The paper is based on the central positions of thought of the Korean–German philosopher Byung–Chul Han in his work *Saving Beauty* (2018). Consequently, the imperative to “save beauty” is primarily directed towards Christian communities, compelling them to revitalize their artistic expression within the context of liturgical life. In essence, the responsibility to “save beauty” is a call for Christian communities to critically and creatively engage with their cultural heritage and present reality. This entails the continuous exploration of novel pathways for announcing the truth of beauty in the contemporary culture.

1. Displacement of Beauty: On the Path of Deconstruction

Contemporary culture has displaced beauty from its original place rooted in truth. This assertion constitutes the primary thesis of the Korean–German philosopher Byung–Chul Han’s seminal work, *Saving Beauty*. The concept of beauty has undergone a transition into the digital realm, characterized by a synaesthesia of smoothness (*Glatt*). A smooth digital device, such as *smartphone*, reflects all areas of life on its surface, from body depilation to artistic creation. The smoothness imposes itself through immediacy, efficiency, and formal perfection. Seeing and touching become ways to demystify the world. The digital effect creates a narcissistic subjectivity that invents itself through self-mirroring. Otherness is bridged through the simple act of touching and viewing the panoptical subject. Beauty, once affected by its immortality and greatness, as well as its otherness and sacredness, today undergoes *liking* — and as such, it has become frozen and anesthetized. »The smooth is something one just likes. It lacks the negativity of *opposition*. It is no longer an *opposing body*. (...) The positivity of smoothness accelerates the circulation of information, communication and capital.« (Han 2018, 17). This “society of positivity”, namely a society driven by the imperative of “needing” results in “depressive people and losers”. »The 21st-century society is superficial due to its absolute lack of negativity — its edges are smoothed, and everything is filtered (from water and air to technological gadgets and interpersonal relationships).« (Šokčević, 2022, 197, 206) The ‘negativity of the Other’ is replaced by the ‘positivity of the Same’ (Knepper, Stoneman, Wyllie, 2024, 66).

The pathology of the contemporary subject affects all areas of life, including the pursuit of beauty, resulting in radical alienation. The second element of the disintegration of beauty is self-mirroring. The author argues that the *selfie* is the most evident way of reproducing the “inner void.” This is negative or nihilistic narcissism reduced to the announcement (of the self). The classical notion recognizes “sublimity”, “wondrousness,” and even “agitation” (Plato, 1997, 493), i.e., radical otherness in the experience of beauty. This otherness is unbearable in postmodern culture because the subject hopes for and takes pleasure in oneself. »The beautiful is an autoerotic feeling. It is not an object-feeling, but a subject-feeling. Beauty is not the *other* by which the subject would allow itself to be swept away. The pleasure in beauty is the pleasure of the subject in itself.«

(Han 2018, 30). In the digital age, relationships are replaced by connectivity, which isolates individuals in their comforting self-mirrors. On the other hand, beauty has always been associated with the experience of sublimity, that is, radical otherness that exists outside the subject and its world, approaching it with full grandeur. The concepts of beauty and the sublime have the same roots and belong to one another. However, in the case of postmodern flat aesthetics, they are absorbed into self-erotic subjectivity, which dwells within and finds pleasure within oneself.

By necessity, digital beauty is consumerist and informational. It distances itself from “natural beauty” and its ontological basis, closing itself into the horizon of absolute subjectivity and the absolute present in a digital medium that accesses everything “here and now.” There, everything becomes hyper visible, exposed, objectified, under the gaze, and demystified. Conversely, beauty in its most primal form is concealed. It is shrouded in mystery, and it is this mystery that makes it attractive. Beauty captivates through what is unseen. Moreover, beauty points, wounds, and disturbs, which is unacceptable in contemporary postmodern society because everything is smoothed to be liked and deprived of negativity. Digital photography offers no experience of beauty. The digital medium is “*the medium of affect*” (Han 2018, 54).

According to Han, “colocation” negates beauty by producing absolute beauty based on taste and usefulness. By reducing beauty to a consumerist object, contemplation ends, and calculation begins. Consumerist culture reduces beauty to attractiveness and excitement, making it subjective. For example, this is how the ethical calling of beauty is replaced by sexualization (*sexiness*). The final result of disintegration of beauty is the loss of its relationship to truth. Beauty used to be *splendor veritatis* — now, it is nothing more than clean, smooth announcement, which we witness in the world of advertising, where everything is about pleasure and ownership. Neoliberal colonization is therefore fully focused on attraction, and “the freedom of art submits itself to the freedom of capital” (Han 2018, 79). These conditions further anthropological erosion disrupting narrative, emotional depth, imagination, and creativity.

2. *The Calling of Beauty*

Han’s critique draws inspiration from Hellenistic philosophy. In *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Plato links beauty to the erotic desire to create art, laws, and philosophy. Beauty wounds the ego and draws it out of its own world. Beauty is an exercise in otherness. In contrast, the digital era develops an auto-referential aesthetic of sameness, creating a flat, smooth surface that generates compulsive actions of self-satisfaction within an egocentric universe that “produces itself” through the practice of “self-enclosure” (Han 2018, 8). All forms of the sublime and otherness are erased. This results in the agony of eros and the distortion of beauty. Han argues that beauty is a declaration of otherness which approaches

and invites. Beauty invites one to rest on her chest. Beauty liberates one from the absolutistic self, bringing serenity despite interruption by the other.

»*The saving of beauty is the saving of the other. Art saves the other by resisting its identification with its givenness (Vorhandenheit). Beauty as that which is wholly other suspends the violence of time. The crisis of beauty today consists precisely in the fact that beauty is reduced to its givenness, to its use or consumer value. Consumption destroys the other. The beauty of art is a form of resistance to it.*« (Han 2018, 94).

According to this understanding, in its purest form, beauty is incompatible with the contemporary trends of egoistic consumption and the erasure of otherness. Beauty is connected to eros. This connection allows beauty to be transformative, transcending eros, which wounds the ego but also brings one closer to the other. The paradox of beauty's nature is that it wounds but also brings peace. Beauty is disinterested and contemplative; it arouses desire and fulfils. Beauty transforms.

As Nietzsche mentioned (Nietzsche, 2001, 89), the road to finding the primordial calling of the arts is through holiday celebrations—blissful moments in the life of a culture—in which time is paused and transformed into “high times” (*Hoch-Zeit*). Works of art are the “monuments of heydays” (Han 2018, 94). They are a festive pause in time that establishes a different world of life. Art reaches the religious spring precisely in its poetic, holiday roots: its celebrative nature reaches true sacredness, pausing time and dedicating itself to contemplation. However, these frames have fallen apart. The experience of beauty has been ripped from its original context and transformed into a consumerist spectacle.

»Works of art lose their cult value the moment they are exhibited. Their value as objects to be exhibited replaces their cult value. The works of art are no longer displayed on the festival road, but in museums. Exhibitions are not festivals, but spectacles. The museum is their Golgotha. Here, things only acquire a value if they are seen, if they meet with attention, while cult objects often remain hidden. Their hiddenness even increases their cult value. A cult has nothing to do with attention. The totalization of attention destroys the cultic.« (Han 2018, 81)

The value of artwork is determined by trade, or economic speculation. Since contemporary society is an “achievement society” and a “primarily economic” society, its supreme rule is achievement and acquisition. Works of arts lose their artistic value but gain economic value. It is precisely the economic factor that diminishes the value of artwork by turning it into capital.

Alongside the loss of the “festive,” beauty loses its “past”, as well as memory. Through its hunger for novelty, consumerism has suppressed its mnemonic dimension, which demands contemplative attention instead of fast, superficial scrolling. In the dimension of remembrance, narration is born, and narration calls for truth. This is why beauty demands “repayment” of time and establishing relationality. »Beauty is a relational event. A specific temporality is inherent to it. It evades being enjoyed immediately because the beauty of a thing only appears much later, in light of another, as a *reminiscence*« (Han 2018, 102–103). Eventually, by losing its relation to truth, beauty loses its spark, its *splendour*. This corre-

lates with Heidegger, who describes beauty as the *manifestation of truth*. “Beauty, as the advent of truth, is *generative*, creative, even *poetic*. It *gives* something to see. This given *gift* is beautiful. The work is not beautiful as a product but as the *shining through* of truth.” (Han 2018, 108).

As the manifestation of truth, beauty requires certain *initiation*, an introduction that has completely disappeared from the contemporary “liking” culture, which is fed by the imminent and the useful. Beauty demands duration, contemplation, and slow pondering of its essence, which is critical in a world of immediacy and speed. The invocation for the salvation of beauty is, at its core, an invocation for the salvation of one’s humanity, in which beauty’s wholeness plays an irreplaceable role. An excerpt from a Paul Celan’s poem mentioned at the beginning of Han’s *Saving Beauty* is fitting for evoking new hope for the salvation of beauty. »Once, // I heard him, // He was washing the world unseen, // nightlong, real. // One and Infinite, annihilated yet. // Light was. Salvation.« (Han 2018, 5)

3. Han’s Critique as a Challenge to the Christian Liturgical Aesthetic

Echoes of Han’s critique have had profound consequences for Christian theology and artistic liturgical practice. The cultural history of Christianity, its institutions, traditions, liturgical and theological doctrines all bear witness to the idea that truth is imbued with beauty. According to Han, beauty is critically affected in all its aspects. New cultural trends profoundly impact society, as well as the lives of Christian communities. In the cultural climate of the West, there is an interest in liturgical arts and Church culture in general. This favourable reflection is only temporary: simultaneously, there is growth in visits to churches and sanctuaries, as well as interest in the cultural history of Christianity and its artistic heritage, while the authorities, beliefs, and morals of ecclesiastical institutions are declining.

However, this new-found interest carries the risk of exhausting the initial religious meaning of sacred arts and reducing them to “feel-good” products, as described by Han in his critique of aesthetic consumerism. According to him, the postmodern condition is reflected in religion as the pursuit of comfort, usefulness, and consumption. However, comfort is characterized by shallowness and consumerism. It must correspond to subjective taste, which is why the quality of beauty is replaced by its quantity. This leads to the artificial construction of reality. Within this framework, many contemporary art trends integrate religious motifs, but not to actualize religious experiences or messages. Rather, they do so to create artificial joy and encourage commercial consumption.

3.1. Return to the Truth of Beauty

Beauty is intimately and inseparably connected with truth. In Christianity, truth is not just a term; it is a person, God’s proclamation in Christ that illuminates humanity. Throughout the centuries, the visibility of beauty in artistic works

has converged in the representation of the Truth–Word, which is the essence of God’s visibility in Christ. The beauty of these works is rooted in the truth proclaimed in Christ. In Christianity, the truth is therefore not only a crucial metaphysical question, but also a theological one. In the current historical moment, contrary to contemporary trends, a return towards truth in all its aspects, as Han claims, can renew Christian art. In doing so, Christian art can rediscover its mission: to use beauty to mediate the Word that became Flesh. »Post–modern beauty does not require truthfulness; on the contrary it happens in the conflicting relation towards truth. Therefore, beauty is not the shine of the truth, but shine of particular aesthetic value. Aesthetics becomes a synonym for ludic and hedonistic experience in which there is dramatic aversion to the horizon of truth.« (Žižić 2014, 110)

The Church is familiar with the role of arts in evangelization. The late antique style has been used by the Church since the third century to express the truths it witnesses, believes in and celebrates in its liturgy. This fruitful encounter with the world of arts continued to intensify throughout history. The Church will dominate artistic activity during certain periods. Until the 19th century, the Church used arts as a useful means of dogmatic teaching. »Works of art have, among other things, been visual expressions of gospel and theology—by no means exclusively intended for that social class that lacked basic education.« (Prcela, 2003, 5).

However, as a result of cultural upheavals in modernity, the Church, as a keeper and sponsor of arts, stopped being an exclusive space of artistic creation. Even when they decide to portray Christian themes, artists struggle for recognition of their autonomy. In the 20th century, there was no confrontation between the Church and the arts. However, a gradual distancing became noticeable, which led to a highly pressured relationship of mutual ignorance or even distrust. The institutionalized religion’s apologetic regression and the artistic freedom within the spirit of modernity’s longings did not result in a dialectical encounter but rather a distant coexistence.

The moment of reconnection took place precisely when artists had completely abandoned religious topics. The Church initiated contact with the artists. The Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII, signified the Church’s desire to engage in dialogue at all levels, particularly with the contemporary world and culture. The Church is convinced that its mission of spreading the Gospel can only be achieved through friendliness, kindness, and respect, even towards those who do not accept it. Throughout history, the Church has been one of the main supporters and purchasers of art. However, this does not mean that the Church has ever viewed art as a mere product, but rather as a gift of inspiration and observation (Ratzinger 2001, 133–134). The Christian proclamation of Jesus Christ, in its dimension of beauty, relies on the truth of human salvation, which saves us from sinking into the ugliness of evil. In this context, Christianity takes a critical stance toward contemporary trends that highlight beauty ideals in and of themselves. Christianity proclaims the truth that is relational, permanent, and eternal; it is not subject to personal taste, which is limited. In this regard, Han’s

notion of beauty as an event, which correlates to Heidegger's (Han 2018, 106; Heidegger, 2000, 29), can fruitfully engage with the Christian idea of beauty. In Christianity, the question of what beauty is becomes a question of who beauty is.

3.2. *Return to the Cultural Heritage*

The evaluation, preservation, study, and public offering of churches, collections, and other cultural goods inherited by the communities of the Church are all processes of significant importance. Nevertheless, its public presence is not impartial. The cultural heritage of the Church is inextricably linked to its evangelization and is deeply rooted in its tradition. Consequently, it cannot be reduced to a "consumerist product" nor can it be integrated into trends of consumable and functional arts. These works, which can be considered true artistic creations, are produced in response to the Gospel's contemplation, thereby continuously redefining the relationship with the truth experienced, witnessed, and documented by generations over time. In contrast to the postmodern aversion to tradition, the Church fosters a creative relationship to its artistic heritage, which is continually reinforced as part of its mission of proclamation. The artistic heritage of the Church constitutes a significant component of its overall legacy. However, its continued relevance and appropriateness within the contemporary liturgy is a matter of debate. Church communities are confronted with the responsibility of articulating their heritage, a task made particularly challenging in the context of conveying spiritual values and experiencing faith through artistic mediums. In response to Han's critique, it can be posited that reestablishing beauty in its traditional context represents a strategy for transcending the superficial consumerist trends that predominate in contemporary society. This approach aims to restore the depth and sublime character of beauty, which has the potential to positively influence humanity in a noble manner.

The reduction of art to *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) devalues it by removing its capacity to transform the world and humanity through beauty. Art, in its capacity to elicit an experience of wonder, compels us to maintain an openness to the transcendent. The aesthetic qualities it embodies are inextricably linked to spiritual and transcendental forces that elevate the human spirit. The pursuit of emotional gratification through the medium of the arts invariably leads to a state of consumerism. This is one assumption of Han's analysis of the commercialization of arts with which we can surely agree. Church communities endeavour to cultivate a conscious relationship with their cultural heritage, thereby facilitating the communication of their eternal values. The commitment exhibited by Christian communities to their cultural heritage is not driven by nostalgia or ideology; rather, it is a call for the Church to evolve into a space that fosters creativity and facilitates meaningful interactions. In the midst of the multifaceted intricacies that define the contemporary postmodern era, the cultural heritage of the Church has the potential to facilitate the emergence of novel forms of intercultural communication. In the context of the marginalization of Christianity and Christian institutions, this cultural heritage can assist contemporary church

communities in reclaiming their cultural relevance and utilizing art as a medium to articulate their presence in the global landscape. Ultimately, the impetus is for ecclesiastical communities to embrace the evangelical “human host who brings both old and new to the treasury room.” (Mt 13, 52)

3.3. *Return to the Liturgy*

Throughout its long history, liturgy has evolved through interactions with different cultures and artistic styles. This ongoing dialogue continues in the modern era. Since the beginning of Christianity, the liturgical celebration has been the primary defining feature of the church as a holy space. Sacral spaces and art can be marked as significant liturgical spaces because they are defined by their ritual programs. The liturgical celebration and its space presume and shape the ritual celebration of the religious community. It is there, in that space, that the Christian community is recognized and acknowledged as a church. This is how art holds specific meaning and unique value in Christianity. Sharing its “sacramental nature” with liturgy, art establishes a connection between the visible and invisible, the material and the spiritual. In short, art is where faith and culture meet and intertwine tightly (Estivill 2012, 34–35).

Liturgy-infused art speaks the language of “holy symbols” and becomes a symbolic reflection of liturgy. It is also a form through which liturgy occurs. The crucial question is the intention of sacred art. Since it is “pro” liturgy, it is “of” liturgy; therefore, it qualifies as “liturgical art.” Being defined by liturgy does not diminish its artistic value, freedom, or inventiveness; rather, it fosters them, even though it reflects a ritual pattern. One could argue that, due to the permeation of liturgy and theology with art, the construction of a church should symbolize the living Church, the collective of believers who celebrate within the realm of beauty (Bianchi 2007, 8). However, one could argue that art fosters liturgical culture within the Church and elevates Christian communities in their contemporary existence.

Han’s call for a renewal of the holiday nature of the arts (Šokčević & Živić, 2021, pp. 915–941) can also encourage the renewal of the artistic life of the Church, which finds its “wellspring and summit” in liturgy (SC 10). Renewing the festive nature of the arts through liturgy means revaluing the arts as an important component of the liturgical event. This new paradigm consists of a transition from understanding art as accidental, ceremonial, and external to understanding art as an important and integral part of the liturgical event. The Church accepts and establishes a dialogue with artists because the essence of Christianity is reflected in art inspired by religion. Art can play a critical role and positively impact the discovery of the liturgical spirit. Church and Christianity are beginning to discover a clearer dimension of aesthetics and see themselves through the sign of beauty.

Conclusion

The concepts proposed by the German–Korean philosopher Byung–Chul Han, who is overtly Roman Catholic, present a series of critical elements and prospects within the context of the aesthetic life of Christian communities. Saving beauty is a cultural project of considerable magnitude that cannot avoid religious experience; rather, it finds its sources of authenticity in that experience. Christianity has cultivated, promoted, and enriched a variety of values, including “otherness,” “wondrousness,” “sublimity,” and “festivity.” These values are derived from the inexhaustible source of the gospel.

Han’s critical analysis of contemporary beauty standards and modern social environments prompts several inquiries, chiefly whether Christian communities are also part of a “tiredness society”, left to the lethargy of a lack of creativity and imagination, exhausted from justifying their social influence. These critical phenomena include the disappearance of the sense for sacred beauty and the contemporary, as well as the devastating return to dissolution of beauty and kitsch. Moreover, the “festive nature” of the liturgy is challenging to align with contemporary church architecture, which is characterized by a secular and detached aesthetic, an unappealing and functional design. The question thus arises as to whether these phenomena in fact diminish the veracity and authenticity of Christianity and its liturgy. The demand for the “salvation of beauty” thus appears to be twofold: the Church is called to support the renewal of beauty and arts by drawing inspiration from the wellspring of the gospel, Church tradition, and liturgical practice; also, the Church is called to renew beauty and art within its own inner field, nurturing its spiritual and cultural heritage and generously communicating it into the present cultural reality.

Bibliography

- Bauman, Zygmunt (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bianchi, Enzo (2007). Discorso di apertura del Convegno. U: Goffredo Boselli (Ed.). *Spazio liturgico e orientamento*. Atti del IV Convegno liturgico internazionale, Bose, 1–3 giugno 2006 (pp. 7–14). Magnano: Qiqajon.
- Estivill, Daniel (2012). *La Chiesa e l’arte secondo il Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II*. Roma: Lateran University Press.
- Han, Byung–Chul (2018). *Saving Beauty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Han, Byung–Chul (2015). *The Burnout Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin (2000). *Zu Hölderlin*. Frankfurt: M. Klostermann.
- Plato (1997). Symposium. In: Alexander Mehmias and Paul Woodruff (Transl.). *Complete Works* (pp. 457–505). Cambridge: Hackett.
- Scruton, Roger (2009). *Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Šokčević, Šimo (2022). Samoizrabljivanje pod krinkom slobode. Byun–Chul Hanova kritika neoliberalnog kapitalizma. *Crkva u svijetu*, 57(2), 195–212.
- Šokčević, Šimo; Živić, Tihomir (2021). Byung–Chul Han and Josef Pieper on Festivity: An Attempt to Rehabilitate the Culture of Festivity in the Time of Mere Survival. *Bogoslovska smotra*, 91 (5), 915–941.

- Knepper, Steven; Stoneman, Ethan; Wyllie, Robert (2024). *Byung-Chul Han: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (2001). *The Gay Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prcela, Frano. Uvod, (2003). In: Frano Prcela, Vesna Kusin (Ed.), *Sumnja kao krepost. Dijalog teologije i umjetnosti: razgovor teologa Ivana Šaška i slikara Dimitrija Popovića* (pp. 5–9). Zagreb: Dominikanska naklada Istina.
- Ratzinger, Joseph (2001). *Duh liturgije. Temeljna promišljanja*. Mostar–Zagreb: Ziral.
- Žižić, Ivica (2014). *Ars liturgica: teološki pristupi umjetnosti*. Split: Crkva u svijetu.

Spašavanje ljepote

Izazovi za liturgijsku umjetnost

Tomislav Ćurić*, Boris Vulić**

Sažetak

U ovom se radu bavimo promišljanjima koreansko-njemačkoga filozofa Byun-Chula Hana tematizirajući kompleksnost postmodernoga poimanja ljepote, kao i raznovrsne izazove koje taj koncept predstavlja za kršćansko umjetničko i kulturno izražavanje. “Spašavati ljepotu”, kao kritičko programsko načelo, autor izlaže nizom međusobno povezanih analiza, ukazujući na izazove i prilike u aktualnom kulturnom trenutku. U prvom dijelu je analiziran fenomen izmještanja ljepote prepoznatljiv u prijelazu u digitalno stvarnost. U drugom dijelu, autori razlažu pojavu reprodukcije “nutarnje praznine” kao ishoda nihilističkoga narcizma. Han se vraća na klasičnu metafizičku koncepciju ljepote prizivajući njezinu izvornu narav: sebeotvaranje, drugost, svetkovanje, sjećanje i događaj istine. U trećem dijelu autori razvijaju kritički pregled izazova kršćanskoj liturgijskoj estetici izdvajajući tri međusobno povezane točke: povratak k istini ljepote čiji je temelj Božja vidljivost u Kristu kao jezgra liturgijske umjetnosti; povratak kulturnomu nasljeđu, koje je nerazdvojivo povezano s evangelizacijom i duboko utkano u crkvenu predaju; povratak liturgiji kao “vrelu i vrhuncu” svega kršćanskoga života. Razmišljanja sugeriraju da se kršćanske zajednice pozivaju na kritički i kreativni odnos prema vlastitomu kulturnomu nasljeđu, kao i da neprestano pronalaze nove puteve navještaja istine ljepote današnjoj kulturi.

Ključne riječi: Byun-Chul Han; postmoderna kultura; ljepota; umjetnost i kršćanstvo; kulturno nasljeđe; liturgijska umjetnost

* Doc. dr. sc. Tomislav Ćurić, Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku, Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku. Adresa: Lorenza Jägera 9, 31000 Osijek, Hrvatska. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3122-7521>. E-adresa: tcuric@ffos.hr

** Izv. prof. dr. sc. Boris Vulić, Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Đakovu, Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku. Adresa: Petra Preradovića 17, 31400 Đakovo, Hrvatska. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3122-7521>. E-adresa: vulic@me.com