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Возрождение (середина XIII – середина XVI столетия). Грани гуманизма. Часть I

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Аннотация. Эссе посвящено рассмотрению искусства и культуры периода Возрождения, открывающего Новое время, взятого в пределах от середины XIII до середины XVI столетия. В данной части работы отмечаются художественные достижения Среднего Востока в обозначенный период, в частности в области архитектуры, поэзии (в том числе возникновение гуманизма). Переходя к культуре европейской, автор отдельно останавливается на искусстве православного мира (главным образом на церковной живописи и в меньшей степени – на древнерусском знаменном пении), обозначая его влияние на веяния Ренессанса. Автор обращается к готическому стилю, несколько противостоящему привычным представлениям об эпохе Возрождения (своего рода «контркультуре»), во всем многообразии его воплощений – в изобразительном искусстве, музыке, литературе. Особое внимание в работе уделяется ядру искусства эпохи Возрождения, прослеживается его эволюция от Раннего Возрождения (шедевры скульптуры готических соборов) к Проторенессансу (картины и фрески итальянских мастеров, возникновение психологизма в живописи, литературное направление *Dolce stile nuovo*, ознаменовавшее переход от Средних веков к Новому времени, *Ars nova* в музыкальном искусстве). Раскрытие данной темы будет продолжено в следующей части эссе.

EN

The edges of humanism of the Renaissance in the mid-13th – the mid-16th century: Part 1

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Abstract. The essay is dedicated to exploring the art and culture of the Renaissance period, heralding Modern times, spanning from the mid-13th to the mid-16th century. This part of the work highlights the artistic achievements of the Middle East during the specified period, particularly in architecture, poetry (including the rise of humanism). Turning to European culture, the author specifically addresses the art of the Orthodox world (primarily focusing on church painting and, to a lesser extent, on the Ancient Russian Znamenny chant), noting its influence on the currents of the Renaissance. The author delves into the Gothic style, somewhat contrasting traditional notions of the Renaissance period (a kind of “counterculture”), across its various manifestations in visual arts, music and literature. Special attention is given to the central part of Renaissance art, tracing its evolution from the Early Renaissance (masterpieces of sculpture in Gothic cathedrals) to the Proto-Renaissance (paintings and frescoes by Italian masters, the emergence of psychologism in painting, the literary movement of *Dolce stile nuovo* marking the transition from the Middle Ages to Modern times, *Ars Nova* in musical art). The exploration of this theme will continue in the next part of the essay.

The historical science makes extensive use of the notion *Modern times*. This era in the life of humankind was preceded by the Ancient world (including the primitive communal system), Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The new chronology of Modern times begins with *the Renaissance*. This epoch was a transitional one because various manifestations of the traditions that had been formed in the Middle Ages went throughout its entire length.

The chronological boundaries of the Renaissance are usually determined by three centuries – from the 14th century until the 16th century. To be more accurate, one needs to move the dating about half a century down and to time this epoch from the middle of the 13th century until the middle of the 16th century.

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In the Middle Ages, the *East* was clearly ahead of Europe in many areas, including the field of artistic achievements. Moreover, the East developed the ideas that later would be defined as Renaissance ones earlier than

in Europe. The most tangible achievements of the Renaissance were those of *the Middle East*. Among the most striking phenomena of its art is *the architecture of Samarkand*.

At the end of the 14th century, Timur (Tamerlane), having had completed his conquests, made Samarkand the capital of the new empire, intending to turn it into the best city in the world. The architecture of Samarkand developed on the basis of the traditions of Muslim architecture and gave complete standards of various types of buildings typical of the Middle East.

One of the earliest standards is **Gur-Emir, the Mausoleum of Timur** (1403-1404). Assessing this construction, one can reasonably say that this is the Samarkand Renaissance because everything here is imbued with the spirit of loftiness, poetry, beauty and it is embodied in the forms of the dome structure that was persistently sought by the architects of the European Renaissance.

A high ribbed dome covers the monumental octagonal prism of the mausoleum, and it certainly dominates this structure being a point of visual attraction. It is compared to a blue tulip with tightly folded petals. The dome is covered with a pattern of dark blue and blue tiles that emphasizes it from the coloristic point of view.

A great advantage of the Middle East architecture is large and complex ensembles created during Timurid times. They were planned as the architectural centers of cities. The **Registan** square became such a center in Samarkand.

It is surrounded on three sides by the buildings of the madrasah. In its design, the complete symmetry is the principle that was subordinated to the architecture of the European Renaissance. Everything here is distinguished by an accentuated clarity, majestic character, and these are again exactly the features that were sought by European architects of that time.

In this ensemble, the building on the right – the **Sher-Dor** Madrasah – attracts special attention. It was built in the 17th century, but in all respects, it carries traditions of the previous epoch. The names of its creators are known – **Abdul-Jabbar** was the architect, **Muhammad Abbas** was the artist.

In its facade, one can find the above-mentioned principles and features: a majestic, monumental structure, complete symmetry – the arch of the portal, on the sides of which the plane of the walls, the towers of minarets and domes are located. The general character of moderation and balance supports the geometric clarity of the proportions. The same thing is observed in décor – the harmony of ornamental patterns, the unity of colors.

In the space of the courtyard, the classic character of Samarkand architecture is particularly well evident: the clarity and balance of forms, the light exterior of the white-stone building. Despite their monumentality and solemnity, such structures do not show dominating character. They are characterized by gracefulness, lightness and secular character (softness of forms, picturesqueness of general outlines and decoration), that is, everything here is associated with the idea of a human.

Architectural decoration also contributes to a similar feeling. Samarkand masters used a special technique of colored tiles and glazed ceramics. A remarkable example of facing work is found in the same ensemble of Registan – in **Ulugbek Madrasah** (1417-1420).

The exceptional ingenuity of the ornament (mainly the stylization of plant motifs) is obvious in it. However, for all the richness and variety of forms, there is strict logic, mathematically accurate calculation and geometricism. Turquoise-blue tones (the color of the sky) – the favorite colors of Samarkand buildings – dominate in this magnificent multicolor.

The splendor, generosity and elegance of the colors reflect the vitality of the human of that time, the sensual, joyous feeling of life inherent in him, which again was in tune with the tone of the European Renaissance.

Another example of the Eastern architectural Renaissance is the architecture of India at the time when the Mughal dynasty ruled here (from the 15th century). In the combination of the Middle East architecture with local traditions, the so-called *Indo-Muslim architecture* developed there, and it quickly acquired a truly classical shape.

One example is the **Agra Fort**. It is obvious that the fort turns from a military fortress into a building of a civil, secular purpose, resembling a palace. The emphasis is on the aesthetic side, the focus is on beauty, elegance, harmony of design.

The mausoleum **Taj-Mahal** (circa 1630 – 1652) became the true jewel of Indo-Muslim architecture. This is a building of a later time, but it follows the canons that developed since the 15th century and it is a brilliant analogue to the European Renaissance architecture with its characteristic type of central dome structure. The gracefulness and harmony of proportions are based on absolute symmetry:

- two tiers of niches with arches cut into the walls are located on the sides of the main arch of the portal;
- medium-sized domes are surrounded by small domes on four minarets at the corners;
- the domed rotundas on the minarets echo the rotundas of the middle domes.

The geometric strictness that underlies the layout is combined with the softness of the outlines. This feature is reflected in the general design of the building, which is amazing in its musicality, and in the fact that the arrow-shaped arches are softened almost to round ones and the central dome is raised on a high drum, which gives it special grace and lightness.

Let us now turn to *the poetry of the Middle East* – to those aspects of it that were in tune with the Renaissance trends of European literature.

The sign of this time was *humanism*, and in the East, it declared itself much earlier than in Europe – at least since the middle of the 13th century. At the same time, the term *humanism* itself appeared there, that is, two centuries before it appeared among Italian intellectuals.

Renaissance humanism meant affirming the dignity and power of the human person.



Illustration 01. *Taj Mahal (India)*

Already in the middle of the 13th century, the poet **Rumi** raises personality to the heights of deification. It is noteworthy that the poet mentions his name in his verses. It becomes a tradition, which served as evidence of the sharply increased self-consciousness of the creators of art and was one of the bright signs of the Renaissance.

The joyous ecstasy of life violently invades the human's perception of environment; there occurs a real revolt against all kinds of prohibitions imposed by the asceticism of religious morality.

For example, the character created by **Hafez** (a Persian poet of the late 14th century) rejects the promises of after-life; he wants to live a full life with its sinful pleasures. In particular, the poet introduces the word *hawra* (according to the Koran, it denotes fairy maidens who await the devout Muslim in paradise), that is what he calls his beloved.

Finally, the main thing in the poetry of the Middle East is what has become the main thing for the European lyrics of the Renaissance: the depiction of the *feeling of love* in many aspects. According to **Navoiy** (a great Uzbek poet, the late 15th century), only this feeling really gives a sense of purpose to a person's life.

In the atmosphere of spiritual emancipation and emphasized freedom of thought, the feeling of love and the beloved are often compared with faith, shrines, and God. So, an Uzbek poet **Khorezmi** interprets it in **The Book of Love** (the 14th century). On the same occasion, **Babur** (the poet-king, the founder of the Mughal dynasty) exclaims, "*Beloved, you are Mecca to me, I worship you*".

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The above-mentioned artistic phenomena are the most remarkable art achievements. Nevertheless, during the Renaissance, the East gradually lost ground, ceding the role of the leader to Western Europe.

Now, approaching this part of the continent, we will focus on *the art of the Orthodox Christianity*. For various historical reasons (Byzantium was invaded by the Turks, Russia for a long time was under the Mongol-Tatar Yoke), artistic development there slowed down, much remained within the medieval tradition.

Nevertheless, certain changes took place – although indirectly, but the art of the Orthodox Christianity in some way responded to the Renaissance trends. This is most clearly seen in church painting, the main genres of which were the icon and fresco.

If the Christian icon of the early Middle Ages passed from the image of a face and, hence, from a particular image to the conventional canon, already since the late Middle Ages the reverse movement begins: from the canon and holy face to a more specific, more living human face. Iconographic images seem to come alive, gaining naturalness and easiness.

This process is obvious in later Byzantine icons. One of the examples is **Theodore's** holy face, which one can find in the icon **Philip the Apostle, St. Theodore, St. Demetrius**. It is evident that quite real human faces appear in iconography; figures become three-dimensional, they are filled with movement.

The similar example is the Byzantine icon of the 14th century **The Twelve Apostles**, where a group portrait of the saints turns into a living scene, and each of the characters is presented as an individual image, with its own turn of the head, body. There is no single repetition, and each face is written in a masterly manner!

Among the masters of the time of the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, **Theophanes the Greek** (the late 14th century) stood out as a bright, stunning novelty of artistic solutions. He started in Byzantium, but Russia became his adopted country, where his work made a huge impression on Russian people (there he received the nickname *Greek*).

Theophanes brought passionate excitement, strong expression, dynamism and freedom of composition to Orthodox painting. His art gave an impetus to a new stage of development of Russian painting. One of the masterpieces is the icon **The Transfiguration**, made in the workshop of Theophanes the Greek (possibly, it is the work of the master).

Outwardly, everything in the icon corresponds to the gospel tradition – Christ on Mount Tabor appears transfigured: his face shone like the sun, his clothes became white as the light, and the Apostles fell down in fright, covering

their faces. However, in comparison with similar medieval icons, we find here complete freedom of poses and gestures, unexpected perspective, extreme enrichment of color.

It was in Novgorod, where **Theophanes** worked, that the departure from the established canon began in Russian iconography. Real life bursts into traditional schemes; animals, landscape backgrounds, buildings and everyday details appear in the images. One of the experiments of this kind is **The Miracle of Florus and Laurus** (the end of the 15th century), where everything in the foreground (white riders, grazing horses, landscape elements) is transmitted vividly, directly, colorfully, in a bright color scheme.

As we know, the pinnacle of Russian Renaissance painting was the works of **Andrei Rublev** (the early 15th century). In formal terms, his work seems to be subject to tradition and canon. However, the inner content of this phenomenon is completely different.

Rublev transforms the conventionality of the iconographic image into a high generality – this is the sign that defines the best works of Italian Renaissance painting (Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, and, by the way, these are the names that appeared a century later than Rublev).

Moreover, another fundamental feature brings his works closer to the art of Renaissance artists: a pronounced humanistic orientation. In his images, there is no trace of the inaccessibility of the saints as it was in the images of the previous time. All their being they address to people and bear the seal of deep humanity.

For example, in the image of **The Apostle Peter**, we find that the generality and humanistic orientation so characteristic of Rublev appear as a penetrating face of the suffering Russian man, growing to the image of the suffering face of Russia, the eternal unfortunate lot of the Russian land, doomed to hardships and sorrows.

Another high generalization we note in Rublev's icon **Crist the Redeemer**. The image of Jesus appears here as the personification of Russian spirituality: a strict, devoted, demanding face, not accepting anything vain and transient.

Even the severe damage caused by time to the famous icon in its own way accompanies the symbolism of the image: as if it reflects the disgrace, the persecution and flagellation, which is constantly exposed in Russia to truthful, righteous men. However, the most important thing remained – the face itself, as if confirming that the truth somehow miraculously lives.

This image carries another generalizing idea: Russia lives against all the odds. There is “*something*” in its roots that helps to survive in any circumstances. This “*something*” that can not be expressed in words is expressed in Rublev's **Trinity** (the early 1410s or 1422-1427).

The main, most famous of the master's works is perceived as the personification of the best sides of the Russian soul, a symbol of its peacefulness, kindness and long-suffering. Three angels hold a quiet, intimate conversation. It expresses another mentality, which is so characteristic of the Russian “Trinity”: faith, hope, love.

The artist says these are the foundations of the lyricism of the moods, soft and poetic lines, the movement of the circle, which is formed by the interrelationship of the figures, as well as harmony and purity of color (the combination of warm, subtle tones, creating a feeling of harmony and amazing clearness).



Illustration 02. “The Trinity” by Rublev (Ancient Russia)

A similar mood permeated the Znamenny Russian chant of that time. One of the Easter tunes of the 16th century is indicative – **The Hymn to the Theotokos**, a kind of Russian *Ave Maria* with its characteristic enlightened, harmonious sound system. The chaste and beauty of the song reflect the features of contemplation and depth of the Russian soul.

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Finally moving to Western Europe, let us begin the consideration of its artistic culture with *Gothic*, since the roots of this style go back to the late Middle Ages.

Largely because of its remote origins, the Italian humanists, who rejected the heritage of the Middle Ages, disapproved of this style. They considered it a product of the barbarians and pejoratively called it *maniera gotica*, although, in fact, it had nothing to do with the barbarian tribes of the Goths. The style reached its heyday just in the Renaissance and it was the defining architectural style of the Renaissance in most countries.

The features of this style could be also found in other forms of art. For example, in literature, Dante's **Divine Comedy** is identified with Gothic. Turning to music, let us first note that the monophony, which prevailed in the Middle Ages, is replaced by *polyphony*. From the Gothic point of view, the strivings of the composers of *the Dutch polyphonic school* are symptomatic.

This school was the leading one in the European musical art of the Renaissance, and its masters, like architects, combined in their compositions the rational-intellectual principle (strict mathematical calculation, constructive ingenuity) with the most whimsical imagination. They were distinguished by the sophisticated technique of multi-tiered sound layers and by the elaborate detailed sound writing.

One of the outstanding masters of this style is **Jacob Obrecht** (1450?-1505). Like for many other representatives of the Dutch school, the main genre of his work was the mass – the central service of the Catholic Church.

Listening, for example, to the music of **Gloria** from Obrecht's mass **Super Maria Zart**, we notice that polyphony appears here as an autonomy of sound lines, as if independent of each other. This "diversity" is aimed at proclaiming praise, and in the character of an extremely enthusiastic sermon. The "Gothic" of sound writing responds to the fervor of the tone: the multiplicity of lines rising up (resembling the "stone lace" of temples) and the sharp-angled, "lancet" contour of the general configuration.

Returning to Gothic architecture, we must first note the following. In the Renaissance, the initiative of universal progress passes to the cities where a new class is formed. Let us construct the corresponding etymological chain: *Burg* (town) – *the Burger* – *borgerstue* – *the bourgeoisie*.

With the appearance of this class, which happened just in the Renaissance era, the era of domination of bourgeois relations began, and the city became the center of business and spiritual activity, the center of intensive development of all aspects of human existence, including artistic culture.

It is then that cities begin to erect Gothic cathedrals as symbols of their power. The cathedral was the center of city life, the pride of the city.

It was true, if only because it was a miracle of construction technology, and extremely complex structure at its basis (the frame-nervure system) is one of the pinnacles of world architecture. This kind of design allowed spanning largely, to cut huge windows in the walls, to develop the interior space vertically.

The defining feature of Gothic architecture is an upward striving, all-round verticalism, which is realized through the elongation of all elements upward, through the pointed outlines of arches and openings and, as it were, a rising forest of columns, spires, sharp-angled towers and turrets. Grandiosity and solemn grandeur (some cathedrals stood above 150 meters tall – for example, in Cologne and Ulm, Germany) are combined with the elegance of the silhouette, with openwork and ease of forms (it is not by chance that Gothic buildings are compared to stone lace).

One can recall some typical buildings in France, which is the actual origin of the Gothic style: **Reims Cathedral** (Notre-Dame de Reims) and **Notre-Dame Cathedral** (Notre-Dame de Paris).



Illustration 03. Notre-Dame Cathedral in Reims (France)

Almost an integral component of the Gothic cathedral was *stained glass*. The art of stained glass reached its culmination in the Gothic period. Stained glass windows with their exceptional intensity and depth of color created a unique effect. Light, passing through the colored glass, fabulously transformed. It filled the room with an atmosphere of mystery.

The richness of forms and effects of Gothic architecture were further multiplied by the existence of its various regional variations. For example, English Gothic was characterized by massiveness, the horizontal extension of the building, the dominance of straight lines (which affected the construction of rectangular towers), multi-component structures – it consists of many independent volumes.

To verify this, it is enough to view the panorama of the **City** (the center of the UK capital) and **Westminster Cathedral** (Westminster is a historic area of London with the Royal residence, Parliament and government agencies).

England is the extreme West of Europe. By contrast, we give an example of Gothic architecture at its Eastern part, in the Baltic States. Let it be **St. Anne's Church** in Vilnius (Lithuania, the turn of the 16th century), which is impressive with its exceptional originality of appearance, its dynamism, sculpture and harmony. The main facade is strictly symmetrical, light and graceful. The elegance of the overall composition is emphasized by the extraordinary skill of decorative stone carving.

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Gothic is one of the most outstanding achievements of art of that time. And we must admit that in a number of its features, it is somehow contrary to our usual ideas about the Renaissance. In even greater opposition to the main line of artistic development of those centuries was the “*counterculture*” of the Renaissance.

The “counterculture” gave its interpretation to fine art. Even those who can be called absolute classics of High Renaissance sometimes had all sorts of “anomalies”. For example, it can be found among the engravings of the greatest German artist of that time, **Albrecht Durer** (1471-1528).

For example, the symbolic plot of his graphic composition **The Knight, Death and the Devil** (1513) in its own way illustrates the idea of the great humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam, “*In spite of all fears, go the chosen way*”. Indeed, a stern knight on a stately horse with a faithful dog firmly holds the way, despite the surrounding horror:

- in front of the rider is a skull with a snarl;
- next to him is Death on a skinny nag points to the hourglass as a reminder of the shortness of life;
- behind is the Devil in a frighteningly bestial guise;
- a vile reptile crawls under the horse's hoof.

When this horror was brought to the foreground (without a positive counterbalance), the “nightmares” of the Renaissance began. As an illustration, let us pay attention to the right part of the diptych **The Last Judgment** of the Dutch artist **Hans Memling**, which depicts the torments of sinners in hell and gives a colorful painting of the massacre of devils over lost souls. The contorted bodies, the pain-distorted faces, the dark blaze of the fiery hell – all this is designed to evoke a sense of horror at the coming retribution for the wrongdoing in the earthly life.

Using the terminology of the 20th century, we can talk about the expression of such scenes. This kind of *expressionism*, including the horror of life, its phantasm and absurdity, was the main content of the work of the younger compatriot of H. Memling – **Hieronymus Bosch** (about 1460–1516). As if ironically, the years of his life fall just at the time of the High Renaissance, when such masters as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Durer were working.

For example, Bosch's great triptych **The Garden of Earthly Delights** is a grand spectacle of the sinful life of people. In the center of this huge canvas, the Lord of Hell (bird-headed Satan) swallows and passes through the sinners, then falling into a bottomless pit under his throne, and around the throne, Satan's henchmen prepare for him another sacrifice (all this is transmitted with naturalistic details).

The triptych as a whole is a real phantasmagoria, a myriad of all sorts of out-thinking and chimeras, in the embodiment of which any surrealist of the 20th century could envy Bosch. The picture **The Temptation of St. Anthony** can give an idea of the artist's skill in describing such monsters and anomalies.

Creating the world of evil spirits, the world of monstrous creatures, Bosch masterfully combines in this work the incongruous (animal forms with objects of inanimate type), besides, he puts these “hybrids” in obviously improbable relations. However, for all that, he manages to give full credibility to the phantasmagoric scenes.

This kind of persuasiveness shows that behind the chimeras and phantoms of Bosch, there was a real world of low, ugly, irrational, satanic nesting in the bowels of the Renaissance. It belongs primarily to a human, which in particular proves the work **Christ Carrying the Cross**, where Christ is shown surrounded by a panopticon of unpeople. Grotesque, disgusting, brutish faces focused on the imprint of human bestiality. Thus, in Bosch's ideas, human faces distorted by malice, envy, hypocrisy are more terrible than the most terrible chimeras.

In addition to the above-mentioned, we can name a number of musical works creating the atmosphere that gave rise to moods that led away from the main line of the Renaissance sense of life, that is, from the ideals of light, harmony, beauty. Such moods almost dominated musical art, although it must be admitted that in those days it was still largely inferior to the leading types of artistic creativity and could not claim to express the fundamental ideas and attitudes.

One example is a **Motet** by the Spanish composer **Cristobal de Morales** (1500-1553). This term (from French ‘word’) was used to denote a multi-voiced vocal or vocal-instrumental work, most often with a spiritual text. Such music, with its slow monotony, sluggish pulse and faded colors, conveyed a state of joyless, darkly dreary existence, dull everyday life, bearing down with its tremendous weight. How far it is from that brilliant light that surrounds the Renaissance in our minds!

Based on such a state of mind, the “counterculture” of the Renaissance was just growing. The first of the bright figures of this artistic sphere is the French poet-rebel **Francois Villon** (the middle of the 15th century). The main line of his work was focused on disharmony and inner tensions.

The poet is tormented by glaring contradictions; he is characterized by oscillations between opposites. For example, he can create a hymn to the beauty of a woman and then attack her for her ability to indulge in dirty and venal love, based on lies and deceit.

Villon discovered “the lowlife” for art. Fully acquainted with the life of the Parisian lower classes, he describes the underside of life with virtuoso ingenuity. What is interesting, in such works as **The Ballad against the Slandereers of France** with its repulsive grotesque, it would seem that the positive message (castigation) turns almost into its opposite (scavenging the disgusting).

The phenomena of “counterculture” often appeared precisely because of such a metamorphosis. For example, in Germany, the so-called fool’s literature flourished. The poetic book **The Ship of Fools** by *Sebastian Brant* (1494) laid the beginning of it, where he attempted to gather all imaginable vices and weaknesses of human beings. As a result, the author sometimes fell into total denial.

There is no doubt that the “counterculture” of the Renaissance fixed its fact of life. It is harsh, sometimes even cruel and monstrous. It often recalls the impact of the medieval state of mind. This tone followed the Renaissance throughout its entire history.

The sound image of this imprint of austerity and self-denial can serve *Praeter rerum* – one of the compositions of the Dutch composer *Josquin Desprez* (about 1440 – 1521 or 1524, one of the greatest representatives of the leading polyphonic school of that time). The work is based on antiphonic singing (alternating sound of a choir of boys and men’s voices, accompanied by wind instruments).

The spirit of the modernized Middle Ages is felt here in the deliberate severity of the lines with their Gothic sharpness and angularity. So, there is an impressive scene of the procession of people ready for a sacrifice. Along with this reversion to the past, one can feel the prediction of the near future, when the fires of the Inquisition would begin to burn in Europe from the middle of the 16th century.

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All above-mentioned accompanied the Renaissance: the artistic culture of the East and Orthodox Christianity, Gothic and “counterculture”. Now let us turn to the central part and essence of Renaissance art.

This central part began to develop during the *Early Renaissance*. The features of Renaissance artistic thinking originated in the depths of medieval art and with sufficient certainty declared themselves by the middle of the 13th century. First in the sculpture of Gothic cathedrals, in which there was a real revolution, a rapid breakthrough in a new quality, anticipating the conquest of classical sculpture of the Renaissance.

Reliefs and statues acquire vitality; an interest is awoken in familiar forms, in physical beauty and in the feelings of a real person. Some statues from German temples can serve as examples of this kind.

The famous **Horseman** from the Cathedral in Bamberg refutes the popular opinion that after the only known equestrian monument of Late Antiquity (the monument to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the late 2nd century AD), such statues appeared only at the end of the 15th century in Italy (we mean the Monument of the condottiero Colleoni by A. Verrocchio (1479-1488)).

The main thing is that in the samples of this kind, the sculpture has acquired a naturalness of proportions, an excellent level of modeling of the human face and body, expressiveness and ease in the transfer of facial expressions and poses, and by means of voluminous plastic – the ability to convey the apparent true-to-life nature.

The themes of sculptural images are becoming more and more diverse. Along with biblical stories and characters, there appear authentic images of real people, primarily the representatives of the nobility. These sculptural portraits are impressive with their specificity of the embodiment of the image and the psychological depth of observation.

Among the original masterpieces are the statues of Naumburg Cathedral, each of which is endowed with a vividly individual character. One of the most remarkable is **Uta**, with a strikingly well defined, Germanic-type pretty face of a young woman who is blessed with a graceful, frail, exalted beauty. She wrapped her cloak around her; there is a crown on her head – a sign of high status in society. The features of a delicate girlish appearance are subtly conveyed, including through her full lips.

The figure of Uta together with her husband, Margrave Eckard II (a margrave is a lord of the border principality), comprises a sculptural group. Uta’s subtle femininity (emphasized by her elongated figure) is especially distinct in comparison with the manly character of her husband: a handsome German knight (the attribute of his military duty is a big sword) with a heavy strong face, at a mature age, the noble origin is evident in his image.

Another statue of Naumburg Cathedral that confirms the idea of a variety of images transmitted in the sculptures of that time is **Reglinda**. One can see a simple-hearted, smiling face of a young woman who is cheerful in character and whose appearance is portrayed very vividly and directly.

Later, from the last third of the 13th century, interest in the real world and the real man is awakened in Italian fine art, which was soon to become the highest expression of the culture of the Renaissance. The artistic movement called the *Proto-Renaissance* appeared in Italy too.

At the initial stage of its development, one can find a phenomenon that is already familiar to us from the art of Orthodoxy of the same time – the “living” icon. It begins the formation of the image of the Renaissance Madonna (from Italian *mia donna* ‘my mistress’).

The Italian masters, in comparison with the Byzantine ones, quickly gained even more freedom in their relations with the medieval tradition, and here they more actively declared themselves strong creative individuals. One such individual is *Simone Martini* (circa 1284 – 1344), a contemporary and friend of the poet Francesco Petrarca.



Illustration 04. *Uta (Naumburg Cathedral, Germany)*

His **Madonna** retains some iconic features. The artist paints the picture on a patterned gold background, preserving a certain flatness of the figure and the predominance of the contour line (signs of medieval images), but everything is full of ease and that refined elegance of the pose, which shows in the depicted woman rather a fine lady.

In the composition **Annunciation** (1333), Martini develops the plot that later would become one of the most common in the life of the Renaissance: the Archangel Gabriel brings the Virgin Mary “good news”. There is still some flatness and disembodied image, but this is a *picture* with a clear arrangement of figures and bright picturesqueness.

Moreover, one more extremely important quality is clearly observed in this work – the unique individuality of the artist, confirmed through the originality of his manner: exquisite decorative skill, the refined color of almost monochrome painting, the aristocracy of linear rhythms, and the high spirituality of the image. With all of these features, Martini anticipated the mannerism of the outstanding romanticist of the High Renaissance Sandro Botticelli almost two centuries before him.

The most significant phenomenon of the Proto-Renaissance was the work of **Giotto** (Giotto di Bondone, 1266 or 1267–1337). For the first time in his fresco painting, there was an unconditional break with medieval traditions for Italian art.

From the point of view of this break, the fresco **Exorcism of the Demons at Arezzo** is symptomatic. Arezzo is a city in Tuscany, and it should be mentioned that the main city of Tuscany is Florence, which became the cradle and center of the Italian Renaissance.

This is not just a fantastic plot and painting of evil spirits, as it was in the samples of “counterculture”. It sets a theme that resonates with future humanists with their negative attitude to the Middle Ages as a time of superstition, darkness and ignorance. The fresco takes on a symbolic meaning: chimeras and devilry have no place in a bright and intelligent life, and its personification is here elegant white stone city, and therefore the architectural background is almost the main thing in this painting.

Although in this work, there is still a great deal which is a matter of convention, there is a rejection of the planar image, a real three-dimensional space with the perspective. The master uses a bright, fresh, joyful color scheme, corresponding to a new, life-loving attitude.

In some cases, we can talk about a great love of life. Giotto generously fills his frescoes with landscape and household details, with almost pleasure he paints animals and birds, revealing keen interest in the earthly, material-object world. The most important thing is that he achieves vital authenticity in the image of a person, his feelings and experiences.

If one looks closely at the **Joachim Returning to his Shepherds** depicted in the fresco, one will notice that the clothes of the characters still somewhat resemble drapery. However, well-drawn folds completely convey the contour of the figure and his movements, and the artist already masters the light-and-dark modeling.

In this fresco, it is very clearly noticeable that with the work of Giotto, a new concept enters into painting – *psychologism*. It can be seen in strong contrast between Joachim’s condition and the reaction of the shepherds watching him. It is necessary to recall the situation: Joachim, the future father of the Virgin Mary, had no children for a long time, and here he returns from the temple, where he was severely humiliated – his gifts to the Lord were not accepted first, since he had no children.

Hence the mentioned contrast with the psychological background conveyed by the artist: a noble old man, slowly wandering sunk in thought and obvious depression (with the lowered head, wall-eyed), and the shepherds mystified and confused feel pity for Joachim.

Another example of Giotto's psychological contrast, but shown in a completely different way, is found in the fresco **The Kiss of Judas**. This scene is mastered in such a way that the crowd gathered in the center. Here two figures are highlighted: Christ, who knows about the betrayal, looking with calm, sharp eyes at Judas, who reaches up to give Jesus a kiss.

The dramatic meaning of the action is concentrated in their faces close to each other: the beautiful profile of Jesus in its nobility and clarity and the ugly, almost animal face of Judas. We also note the highest skill in building a complex multi-figure composition. The encounter between the Disciples of Christ and the guards is conveyed through an exceptional variety of faces, poses, and angles, which complements the forest of towering spears and torches. This is how *a narrative* is created, shown in colors and lines.



Illustration 05. 'The Kiss of Judas' by Giotto (Italy)

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Giotto's frescoes marked the beginning of Renaissance painting, and this is all the more significant because painting became the leading art form of the era. The same role for literature was played by the work of his contemporary Dante (Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321). The personality of the poet was formed in the literary environment called "*Dolce stile nuovo*", which means "*sweet new style*".

The word *new* is found in the early days of the Renaissance many times, denoting in comparison with the attitude of the Middle Ages the movement to other life horizons; *sweet* is the same thing as *pleasant*, *gentle*, *affectionate* (as contextual interpretation of the word *dolce*), in contrast to the severity and asceticism of the Middle Ages. In connection with the time and direction, this style is similar to the Proto-Renaissance in the pictorial art.

A group of poets of the second half of the 13th century (the first community in the history of literature) rejecting Latin (the main language of medieval literature) began to use their native dialect (its basis was the dialect of Tuscany, located in the center of Italy). Thus, they took a step towards an entirely secular culture of the Renaissance. This step was mainly connected with the chanting of love and with the mastering of the lover's psychology. In line with this aesthetic, Dante created his first book – **New Life**.

Its title can be interpreted as a significant one for the new era (the book was completed in 1292). Love is interpreted here as a huge force that renews the world. This autobiographical story (love for the young Beatrice, who died early) is considered the first psychological novel in Europe.

The second book of Dante is **Divine Comedy**. Such an exceptionally large-scale philosophical epic arose just at the turn of two historical eras, in connection with which F. Engels rightly noted that Dante is "*the last poet of the Middle Ages and at the same time the first poet of Modern times*". This landmark position is recorded in the opening lines of the poem, where the poet depicts the initial situation for himself and for humanity as a whole: from darkness, savagery, disasters (so the former life, the life of the Middle Ages was perceived) to a new life, in the world of harmony and justice.

On this way, the shadow of the Roman poet Virgil as the personification of wisdom and humanism becomes his guide (the choice of this figure outlines the worship of Antiquity characteristic for the Renaissance). With him, Dante descends to hell (the world of condemnation), then passes through purgatory (the world of redemption), and then, accompanied by Beatrice (the symbol of faith and ennobling love), ascends to heaven (the world of grace and bliss).

Hence, the author's title of the poem – "*Comedy*" – in those days every poetic work with an unhappy beginning and a happy end was called in such a way. In the late 14th century, the worshippers of the comedy added the epithet *Divine* as a tribute of their admiration.

Through the transcendent, "otherworldly", Dante, actually, models the earthly world with its contrasting movement from Evil and Darkness to Good and Light. This earthly essence is especially evident in the first part (Hell),

where the feelings and sufferings of people are clearly expressed through the torments of unrepentant sinners. Moreover, the poet shows tolerance remarkable for his time and a deep sympathy for the fate of the lost.

The process of renewal was also active in musical art, where a corresponding term appeared – *Ars nova* (new art). The novelty was reflected in the fact that from now on, music develops only as a polyphonic, acquiring a huge expressive means of harmony and polyphony. In addition, there is a liberation of the rhythm: it becomes flexible, diverse and dynamic. All this reflected a fundamental change in human psychology – a real, sensuous feeling of life was awakened in people.

The most famous representative of the Italian *Ars nova* is *Francesco Landini* (about 1325 – 1397). One of the characteristic samples of his music is *Ballata*. *Ballata* is a small strophic song of the 13th-15th centuries on a dance basis; later it began to mean the same as the ballad in Italian.

Two voices (female and male) hold a dialogue over the lute *pizzicato*. They sound very tender, intimate, like a mutual love confession of two hearts. The exquisite range of a lyrical emotion is reflected in the whimsicality of melodic-rhythmic pattern and in the free polyphonic weaving of lines.

In such music, it is easy to feel a very special style and color: purity, transparency, watercolor paints – like thin and fragile shoots of the initial time of life. It is no accident that Hegel called the Renaissance the “dawn” of contemporary culture.

Most of all, this can be attributed to the Early Renaissance, which became a kind of childhood, adolescence and youth of the rising era (let us recall that the Renaissance opened the period that is designated as the modern period in historical science).

What can be heard in Landini’s *Ballata* vividly recalls the mood of Dante’s above-mentioned youthful book *New Life*, where the feeling of love is touching in its frankness. The poetry of his fellows in “*Dolce stile nuovo*” is said to be “*fragrant with the freshness of spring*”.

This tone is often clearly visible in the music of the Early Renaissance: it is alike the sprouts of awakening life, the peculiar charm of early spring with its pristine purity of colors, the fragile outline of the first green.

The work of *Johannes Ciconia* (1335-1411) is also significant in this respect. He was one of those who stood at the origins of the Dutch polyphonic school. In the Renaissance, it considered the leading one in Europe.

In his vocal and instrumental miniature *O felix* (lat. *O happy*), in addition to the similar “spring freshness”, attention is drawn to the uniqueness of sound writing (including the combination of trombone with female voices) and the originality of the rhythm, which conveys a very dynamic sense of life (the richness in syncopated drawings).

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