
The Ideal of Beauty and Harmony in the European Fine Art

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Abstract

As a higher form of mastering the world following the laws of beauty, the best works of the European art do not just bring in some aesthetic pleasure but also help to understand (and create) the beautiful. In this research, using comparative, typological, descriptive, visual, philosophical, theological, and artistic analysis methods an analysis of the selected pieces, from the ancient times till present was made. It was traced that the ideal of beauty and harmony largely depended on the peculiarities of each historical period. Development of spiritual culture of the European continent nations underwent many stages: from primitive art through the ancient times and till modernism. In each period fixed rules and norms shaped up the ideal of beauty and harmony, which can be understood only through immersing into a certain epoch via analysis and study of a specific piece of art. Scientific novelty of the results obtained lies in the fact that materials about the ideal of beauty and harmony in the aesthetics of the European art are added to art criticism as universal general human values. The ideal of beauty and harmony over the whole historical period, as exemplified by preserved monuments, can be traced in all art forms, in particular, in sacral art.

Keywords: Aesthetics, beauty, harmony, culture, arts, moral.

Introduction

The first contemplations about art, in particular, about the ideal of beauty and harmony, can be found in the works by ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, as well as artists: ancient Greek sculptor and art theoretician Polykleitos (the second half of the V century B. C.) and the most distinguished Greek artist Apelles (circa 380 B. C.–300 B. C.). According to Plato, art is just a pale idea, a shadow of things that are just copies of eternal ideas. Aristotle considered art as imitation of nature, aimed at getting to know the outer world. Polykleitos wrote the treatise *Canon*, two fragments from which have survived. In it, under the effect of Pythagoreanism, he substantiated and implemented the law of ideal proportions in practice. His striving for the mathematically stable proportion of separate parts of the human body was visually manifested in the sculpture of the Greek warrior-spearman Doryphoros (circa 440 B. C.). In it the sculptor used the principle of chiasmus in which plastically opposite states of external quiet and latent movement and internal tension stay in an emphasized balance) (“Polykleitos,” 2020). Ancient Roman historian Pliny the Elder told about Apelles that the artist lived following the principle *Nulla dies sine linea* (Latin: Not a single day without a line) (“Apelles,” 2020).

To ancient authors there also belong the first of the now known descriptions of artistic monuments (ancient Greek writer Pausaniam, historian Flavium Filostrates), practical manuals on art (Roman architect Vitruvium). The main work by Pausaniam is *Description of Ellada* (Ἑλλάδος περιήγησις) in ten books, written in the 170s. The work contains precious data, primarily, in the history of ancient art, in particular, reference materials about Greek artists, sculptors, architects. Along with the detailed list of the most famous monuments of architecture and art of ancient Greece, Pausaniam provided important data from Greek history, mythology, religion, described local beliefs, rites, and customs. While writing his work, Pausaniam used not only his own observations but also works by historians, for example, Istr, and geographers Polemon of Ilion, Artemidor d’Efes, which have not been preserved till present. In his books, Pausaniam mentioned the Scythians and the Sarmatians (“Pausanias (geographer),” 2020).

In the ancient period, the ideal of beauty and harmony constituted the basis for the theory of art and architecture. Anthropomorphism and tectonics (correspondence between human and architectural proportions) constituted a special feature of ancient Greek art. In this case, relative division into three parts was applied: lower (massive), middle and upper (the smallest). Human body (legs, body and head) as well as the Greek order system and some of its elements, like column (pedestal, body of the column and capital), are built following this principle (“History of Art Timeline,” n.d.; Norwich, 1993).

In the Middle Ages, the first attempts to systematize art, to develop the theory of art in scholastics, to look for ideal beauty and harmony were made.

A significant contribution into the development of the future science was made by the medieval monks-philosophers Saint Augustine (IV–V century) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (XIII

century), French architect of the Gothic epoch Villard de Honnecourt (XIII century), in Rus'–metropolitan Ilarion (XI century), and others. Among the works of the Epoch of Renaissance one should point out the book by the Italian architect and artist Giorgio Vasari *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (“Le Vite de’ piu eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architetti”), published in Florence in 1550 (Vazari, 2008).

In the theoretical and practical works by such artists as Lorenzo Ghiberti, Leon-Battista Alberti, Piero della Francesca, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Leonardo da Vinci, and others there can be felt the search of beauty and the striving for the ideal and harmony in art works. With this in view, the masters of the Epoch of Renaissance try to master related sciences: chemistry, astronomy, physics, mathematics, medicine (anatomy), etc. Following Vasari, Karel van Mander in his paper *The Lives of Artists* (1604) provided the corpus of two hundred fifty biographies of Dutch artists. On the basis of those studies, the so called biographic method was launched in art criticism (Ilina, 2003, p. 6).

A new stage in the study of works of art was launched by the German archeologist and art expert, theoretician of neoclassicism and founder of the contemporary history of art Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). Of importance was his paper *Some Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755) (Shynkaruk, 2002, p. 92).

Thanks to Winckelmann, we can research the ideal of beauty and harmony of a certain historical epoch, since the scholar has launched art analysis and study of art styles in art criticism. He found and systematized many exhibits of the Vatican museums, starting with the works of art of the ancient Egypt and Etruscan art up to the Renaissance period. Guido Cornini, the curator of the exhibition in the Vatican museums, point out that “In those perfect times works of art were constantly found in the ground, and Winckelmann was present at all the excavations’ as well as states that the scholar marked not just the culture of his times, but of all times” (Dukhovych, 2018).

Having researched a huge collection of art works, Winckelmann wrote in Rome his largest piece *The History of Ancient Art* (“Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums”, 1764). His works launched European scientific archeology and history of art, developed the philosophical and aesthetic ground for applying comparative method, in which already not the artist, but the art work was at the forefront. The evolution of art process, flourishing and decay of art are represented in the paper at the example of ancient times (Shynkaruk, 2002, pp. 91–92).

Winckelmann was the first to pave the way to the understanding of cultural importance of the ideal of beauty and harmony of classic art, using analytical, rationalist method in his research. The core task of art must be ‘the beautiful’, the essence of which lies in depicting the type created by our imagination and nature. It is based on proportion, simplicity, grandeur and smooth harmony of contours. As Winckelmann taught, there is just one beauty that has non-temporal embodiment, since it is laid down in nature itself and is implemented by it where the

mercy of the heavens, the beneficial effect of political freedom and national character happily come together, for instance, in Greece of the period of Fidius and Praxiteles. The whole history of art of other nations was just the background for it, serving the goal of making this truth shine brighter (“Johann Winkelmann,” 2020).

In that time a great number of various researches in the history of art were published, authored even by artists themselves. This can be exemplified by the work written by the English artist, satirist and writer of the XVIII century William Hogarth *The Analysis of Beauty*, published in London in 1753. Hogarth describes his theory of ideal beauty and harmony. In this theory, importance is attached to the line in the form of the Latin letter “S” (snake line). In the author’s opinion, it captures the viewer’s attention and creates the illusion of life and movement in the picture (“The Analysis of Beauty,” 2020).

In his book Hogarth determines six principles independently affecting beauty:

- fitness, which in itself is not the source of beauty, but can be described as its material reason;

- variety, which is defined by Hogarth through the opposite–sameness, as absence of difference, affecting organs of senses;

- regularity is a form of “composed variety”: regularity is pleasant for us only when it implies fitness;

- simplicity that is similar to regularity, and it stresses satisfaction from variety since it is pleasant for the eye;

- intricacy is the principle according to which beauty of an object is uncovered piece by piece;

- quantity, associated with the principle of sublimity (“The Analysis of Beauty,” 2020).

Hogarth keeps writing not just about sublimity, but about greatness. He acknowledges that significant quantity has some aesthetic effect on the viewer, without any need for supporting variety or fitness, but warns against excessiveness leading to absurdity (“The Analysis of Beauty,” 2020).

German philosopher G.-E. Lessing in his book *Laocoon: an Essay on the Limits between Painting and Poetry* (1766) compares painting and poetry, defines the uniqueness of artistic language, beauty and harmony, dividing all art forms into spatial and temporal ones. Spatial ones, according to him, include painting, since it depicts objects located at hand. Temporal ones include poetry since it depicts events in movement, that is in their temporal sequence. Similar approach guided the artists of word not towards descriptiveness, but towards penetration into psychology, depiction of feelings and passions (Lessing, 1968). The scholar stressed that in both

cases beauty is the source of art, and noted that in one case poetry may assist painting with examples and explanations, but in the other case painting may help poetry (Lessing, 1953).

While in their works about painting Apelles and Protogen stressed the critical effect of poetry on it, in the works by Aristotle, Cicero, Horace and Quintilian painting laws and experience were applied to the art of eloquence and poetry (Lessing, 1953).

In 1915 Heinrich Wölfflin published a scientific paper *Basic Concepts of Art History*. In the book that has become classical in the study of the history of arts, the scholar analyzes beauty and harmony. For instance, analyzing a work of art using a linear method (painting is meant in this specific context) he states that the contour constitutes “a way smoothly bypassing form, along which the viewer can easily move” (Wölfflin, 2016).

The ideal of beauty and harmony in art constituted the object of research of the distinguished Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, French philosopher and theologian Jacques Maritain, and others. (Ortega y Gasset, 1925; Ortega y Gasset, 1968; Maritain, 1960).

In the study of sacral art of importance are the works by the famous art historian, Byzantinist and archeologist Nikodim Kondakov, who researched the ideal of beauty and harmony in icons—a special type of sacral painting. The scholar developed the iconographic method based on canonical principles, description and systematizing of typological and schematic features (doctoral thesis *The History of Byzantine Art and Iconography as Based on the Miniatures of Greek Manuscripts*, monograph *Iconography of the Mother of God*, and others) (Kondakov, 1910; Kondakov, 1914; Kondakov, 1915).

A well-known art historian and theoretician Max Dvořák in his paper *The History of Art as the History of Spirit* considered the ideal of beauty and harmony in the art of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. The scholar stressed that one may understand the importance of a piece of art only by grasping its connection with other forms of conscience and spirituality. He viewed the creativity of El Greco, Jakopo Tintoretto, Francisco Goya, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, impressionists, expressionists, and others from this point of view (Ilina, 2003, p. 69). M. Dvořák refuted the statement about the evolutionary development of art, and advocated the opposite view saying that a piece of art should be interpreted as the “bearer of the spiritual sense of the epoch” (Dvorzhak, 2001).

Better understanding of beauty and harmony in art, in particular, defining a specific historical epoch, style, school, masters by typical formal features (thanks to the iconological method) can be supported by the paper written by the German art historian and theoretician Erwin Panofsky *The Experiments in Iconology* (1939) as well as Germain Bazin’s *The History of Art History from Vasari till Present* (in 1986). This paper was translated and published in Russian (1995), with a perfect afterword where its author Ts. Arzakanian says the following about art history and histories:

“... art, and, in particular, its history can reveal a lot of secrets and unknown depths of the history of the people, to reveal which other sciences have to go a much longer way” (Bazin, 1994, p. 451; Ilina, 2003, pp. 9–10).

The understanding of the ideal of beauty and harmony in art as well as the view of the history of the European art have largely been changed by the tragic cataclysms of the XX century. New generations have brought about new ideals, both moral and ethical ones, and philosophic and aesthetic ones. Due to the fact that at the beginning of the XX century mass culture took the place of high art, it became necessary to address classical works (Ilina, 2003, pp. 9–10). In this context of importance is the paper by the Russian art expert Boris Vipper *An Introduction to the Historical Study of Art* where the author described the main art forms as well as their specificity and techniques (Vipper, 1985), as well as the papers by Ukrainian art experts, in particular, Volodymyr Sichynskyi, Sviatoslav Hordynskyi, Pavlo Zholtovskyi, Yakym Zapasko, Volodymyr Ovsyichuk, Liudmyla Miliayeva, Dmytro Stepovyk, and many others. Dmytro Stepovyk’s monograph *The Art of Icon: Rome–Byzantium–Ukraine* highlights the beauty and harmony of icon painting from the time of its establishment till present, as well as the core principles of theology, iconology and iconography in the countries of the Byzantine tradition (Stepovyk, 2007).

Nowadays there have been established two concepts of aesthetics: “the aesthetics of the real world” and “the aesthetics of the imaginary world of the arts” (Sepänmaa, 1993, p. 17). Delimitation line between these worlds is not clear (architecture, sculpture and landscape, etc. are the works of art that are a part of the environment) (Lyashko, 2015, p. 140). Aesthetic distinction between art and the environment has a purely ontological character. Art is the central aesthetic paradigm, while the environment forms the second independent paradigm (Mankovskaya, 2000, p. 245).

By extension of this point it is possible to give the general definition of aesthetics as a science of establishment and development of the sensual culture of man that arises from the organic unity of the two of its particular parts, namely: specific character of the aesthetic and values-based attitude of man to the reality and the artistic activity of man.

In many philosophical theories of the world aesthetics in art was closely connected with interpretation of such problems as the aesthetic sense of the beautiful, perfect, tragic or comic, etc. (Levchuk et al., 2010, p. 4).

Aesthetic and moral values of the European art to a great extent depended on the particularities of historical development and spiritual culture of the people who settled in this continent. Aesthetic theories can be studied in many aspects, but in this research, aesthetics is analyzed as the science of harmony and beauty in art.

The research was performed using a set of methods: comparative (to study and compare artistic and national traditions as well as their effect on culture and art), typological, descriptive,

visual (description of plot and artistic intention), philosophical (metaphysical, dialectal as well as formal logic methods: essence and phenomenon; content and form; necessity and randomness, etc.); theological (the effect of church dogmas and canons on the artistic image development; theology of icon); artistic analysis method (study of works of art, in particular, their content and form, theme and idea, plot, etc.). In this article, at the beginning, the analysis of the ideal of beauty and harmony since the ancient times till the norms of Christian faith and morale became the developing power is presented. And then, the analysis of the ideal of beauty and harmony from the Epoch of Renaissance, when masters of all art forms address ancient classics, up till modernism is conducted.

The ideal of beauty and harmony since the ancient times till the Epoch of Renaissance

Aesthetics of the Prehistoric art of the Stone Age (circa 35,000–10,000 B.C.) can be characterized on the basis of the preserved works of art, especially plastic art and cave-painting (Venus of Willendorf, 28,000 B.C., limestone, 6 cm., Natural History Museum, Vienna, and others), that reproduce the anthropomorphic female figures. They are way below the proportionately perfect and exquisite animalistic figures, masterpieces of the Magdalénien paintings found in the caves of France–Lascaux, Font-de-Gaume, Rouffignac (circa 18,000–15,000 B.C.) and Spain–Altamira (15,000–10,000 B.C.). The striking realistic pictures of animals (buffalos, horses, and deer) executed with charcoal, ochre, hematite and other natural colors in the monumental paintings in these caves were created with the aid of the spatial use of the natural contours of the wall giving the images a tridimensional effect (Kuzmina & Maltseva, 1971; Herder, 2006; Ilina, 2003, pp. 51–54; Chubova, 1980).

Prehistoric art was naturalistic and spontaneous. We do not know what impelled the prehistoric artists to the creative work, but are convinced that only man is endowed with such capability. Archeologists know right well that wherever any monuments of art were found, there definitely had been people. A tremendous period, over 15,000 years in the European art, separates monuments of naturalistic painting in the caves of Lascaux and Altamira from the masterpieces of art of the classical period (Erskine-Clement, 2008; www.visual-arts-cork.com; “History of Art,” n.d.).

In the art of Ancient Greece (from 3,000 B.C. to 100 A.D.) and in the art of Ancient Rome (from 800 B.C. to 500 A.D.) we observe the perfect aesthetic form and synthesis of various types and genres of art (“History of Art Timeline,” n.d.; Kuzmina & Maltseva, 1971). The aesthetic ideal of perfect beauty of the art works of the Ancient Greek art became the working standard for the art schools of subsequent epochs where the principal European styles and trends were formed (the art names are typical exclusively of the European culture before modernism of the twentieth century). It is worth mentioning that the notion “antique art” appeared in the period of Renaissance when the splendid masterpieces of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome were commonly regarded as exemplary, classical for the entire European culture.

The main distinctive feature of the Greek art lies in the harmonious unity of the norm and the ideal of beautiful and moral, sensual and spiritual.

Studying aesthetics of the ancient and contemporary art and technical principles of execution of the works of art inevitably poses the question as to what principles and methods are lie at the core of the harmonious construction of the works of art. Certain rules, or more accurately, mathematical calculations owing to which the works of art have the ideal harmonious forms, were applied in the European art of the classical period. There are an innumerable number of these rules and calculations, but we are particularly interested in the universal rules and calculations. In this context of interest is the principle of the harmonious proportion. The harmonious proportion (golden section) is the foundation of the compositional arrangement not only in the plastic (visual) forms of art, but in the temporal (verbal and musical) forms as well.

The golden ratio (ϕ) presented in the form of a line divided into two straight-line segments a and b is the ratio of the whole line to the large segment is the same as the ratio of the large segment to the small segment: $\phi = (a+b) : a = a : b$

Similar principle of harmonious proportion can be observed on the plane (golden spiral). If the length of the side of a square is equal to 1, then the subsequent smaller square has the sides of the length $1/\phi^2$, $1/\phi^3$ and so on.

There is the assumption, though not without reason, that the harmonious proportion in the best works of art their authors applied by intuition, under the effect of their artistic inspiration. An example of applying the harmonious proportion can be the architectural and sculptural works of the Ancient Greek art. The moral and aesthetical ideals were established and the ideal human image of the athlete, warrior, hero—a man physically and morally perfect, harmoniously developed, was formed in the Ancient Greek art of the classical period. The example of that can be the sculpture “Doryphoros” by Polykleitos (circa 450–440 B.C.). In his treatise “Canon” the sculptor presents the ideal proportions of the body parts (head is $1/7$ of the height of man, face and hand are $1/10$, foot is $1/6$, etc.).

Idealized and perfect were also the sculptural figures reproducing harmony of the female beauty, refined and more ethereal. This is the first figure of the naked woman body in the Greek art. The example can be the *Aphrodite of Knidos* (created by Praxiteles, circa 350 B.C.). Anthropomorphic is the tectonic profile of the entire Ancient Greek architecture, particularly its order system.

By contrast with the ancient Greek idealism (perfect beauty), in the Roman art there was a generally accepted principle of verism—the true realistic presentation. By contrast with the naked male body in the ancient Greek art, in the Roman sculpture the man is dressed in the so-called togatus (toga—garment of the Roman citizen with full rights). The examples can be the sculptural portraits: Togatus Barberini holding effigies, marble (late I century B.C.); portrait of

the old; the old Roman (middle I century B.C.), portrait sculpture of a patrician (circa I century B.C. etc.).

Classical Greek art remained to be exemplary in the Roman art and the sources of it were images and plots of the ancient Greek mythology.

A somewhat different principle of depiction we observe in the monumental, 12-meter tall sculpture of the Emperor Constantine (circa 310–320 A.D.). This effigy of the Emperor who established Christianity in the Roman Empire is unworldly, and the large eyes have an iconographic resemblance of the Fayum portrait (Cook, 1972; Martynenko, 2016, pp. 13–22; Kineva, 2017, pp. 33–35; Hrytsenko, 2009, pp. 39–51; Norwich, 1993).

It should be noted that culture and art of the peoples of the European continent, its aesthetic and moral ideals, were formed on the spiritual religious values of the Christian faith in the Middle Ages. The works of art, especially sacred works, were inspired by the books of the Holy Bible—the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Close ties could be felt in them with the life of the Church and the Holy Liturgy. Fathers of the Church pay considerable attention to the problems of art and artistic endeavor. The apologists regarded the world created by God as the perfect work of art in which the man, as the supreme creation of God created after His “image and likeness”, was endowed with the capability of creation (Martynenko, 2016, p. 26).

Aesthetic values of the sacred art and its establishment began in the first centuries A.D. in the early Christian art. Numerous monuments of visual and decorative applied art are found in the Roman Catacombs (underground galleries where divine services were conducted). We learn about an aesthetics of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) from the book by Mathew Gervase *Byzantine aesthetics* (Gervase, 1964).

Development of the Christian art and the cult of images led to the necessity of substantiation of the religious imagery. “Thinkers like John of Damascus and Nikephoros of Constantinople, and the Seventh Ecumenical Council argued for the possibility and legitimacy of the representation of the transcendence, that is, of the incarnated God” (Zografidis, 2011, p. 34).

Aesthetics of the visual culture of Byzantium, particularly, the solution of its most important problem is the icon and methodology of its representation as the condition of the “right” faith.

“Monumental picture programs of Byzantine churches exist within a spatial and liturgical setting of rituals that depend on circumstances that create a distinction from profane to sacred. The core theme of the incarnated Son, i.e., the image of God (eikon tou theou), acknowledged as indivisibly as much human as divine. In a Byzantine religious sense, images of God prove the incarnation, yet human salvation depends on faith in the incarnation but also in the transcendent unknowable God. In a Byzantine

religious sense, circumscribed by time and space, the human condition is inconsistent with cognition of what God is. Nonetheless, salvation depends on faith in that God is a “fact” acknowledged through holy images” (Karahana, 2016, p. 210).

The grandiose monuments of Byzantine art of the sixth century A.D. include the Saint Sophia in Constantinople (532–537, architects Anfimius of Thrall and Isidore of Miletus). Canonical rules of sacred art that along with the Christian faith were adopted by other European nations were formed in the Byzantine art of the IX–XII centuries (Skrypnyk, 2010; Jazykowa, 1998, p. 36; Hrytsenko, 2009, pp. 59–67, 69–81, 82–90; Rice, 1985).

Aesthetics of sacred art, particularly stylistic peculiarities of ancient and contemporary icons, was studied by the Ukrainian scientist professor Dmytro Stepovyk. In his work *Iconology and iconography* the scientist described importance of the sacred symbolic and canonical rules of icon painting (Stepovyk, 2004, pp. 195–96).

West European medieval aesthetics placed special emphasis on accommodation of the principles and categories of ancient aesthetics with the Christian aesthetics, actively draw upon experience of the early Fathers of the Church, for instance, St. Augustine (on beauty) and St. Bonaventure (Christological aesthetics) (Martylenko, 2016, p. 29). It should also be emphasized that theoretical works of St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican priest, philosopher and theologian, especially his work *Summa Theologica*, hold a prominent place in the medieval aesthetics (Martylenko, 2016, p. 31).

Somewhat different were the artistic principles of the West European medieval art. Thus, markedly different stylistic and functional principles that had been the cornerstone of the Classical and Byzantine stylistics came into widespread acceptance in the Roman and Gothic art, especially in the architectural and sculptural plastic (Dupont & Gnudi, 1979; Hrytsenko, 2009, pp. 39–51).

Of interest are the book miniature illustrations: illuminations with the advanced knowledge of the fundamentals of Byzantine iconography and the principles of harmonious proportion. The example of this can be the miniature using golden background God as Architect/Builder, The Frontispiece of Bible, Famously used as the first color illustration to Benoit B. Mandelbrot’s *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*.

The ideal of beauty and harmony from the Renaissance up till modernism

Renaissance era placed the beauty of art in the center of its aesthetic concepts and artistic practice. Developing the Greek principle of idealization, the masters of the Renaissance created a unique model of the wonderful world redeemed from the harmful consequences of the fall from grace in line with the Christian culture (Hartt, 1969). Thinkers of the Renaissance were convinced that only in art there can be revealed the “divine idea of beauty”—the true beauty of the world. In his treatise *On Architecture* Leon-Battista Alberti set forth the main principles of the

doctrine of beauty. By contrast with the aesthetics of the Middle Ages, where the beautiful was interpreted as the sum and substance of mathematical proportion and purity of color, this scientist saw the substance of the beautiful in harmony which is superior to mathematical determinacy (Martynenko, 2016, p. 33). Aesthetics of the Renaissance era did not see the relative character of advantage of one form of art over other forms, like it did not see the characteristic aspects of aesthetical and ethical concepts and their dissimilarities. The beautiful is equated with moral and just (Martynenko, 2016, p. 35).

Italian painter Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro, circa 1400–55) combined the religious style of the Middle Ages (500–1500) with the Renaissance era (the period of the renewed interest in the Greek and Roman cultures that began in Italy during the fourteenth century) (Tyle, 2003; Pope-Hennessy, 1974; Spike, 1996).

Fra Angelico was a highly professional painter, one of the most progressive in his time in mastering the new ideas of the Renaissance, such as the perspective. This exquisite depiction of the *Annunciation*, is one of the frescos, with which Fra Angelico decorated the friars' cells in San Marco, Florence. The cells are otherwise almost completely bare and the paintings seem to float on the walls like the miraculous visions. With their pale chaste colors, their inspired simplicity of composition; and their freedom from accidents of time and place they attain a sense of blissful serenity ("Fra Angelico," 2020; Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Arts, p. 16).

Russian philosopher, Professor Viktor Bychkov emphasizes the importance and significance of beauty. The scientist insists that understanding of the world as the supreme art work created by God in conformity with the laws of harmony, order and beauty brought up to the new level the problems of artistic endeavor (Novikov & Mankovskaya, 2012, p. 242).

Of interest is the compositional analysis of the work of Raphael Santi *The Transfiguration* (1519–1520, Vatican Museum) with the aid of Turner's geometric diagram (circa 1810).

Further development of the European art continued in subsequent epochs in the culture of Modern times (Baroque, Rococo, Classicism, Romanticism) right up till the early XXI century. The example can be the spiritually uplifting work of the outstanding Dutch master Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn *Return of the Prodigal Son* (circa 1666–1669, Hermitage). The theme of the painting is based on the S. Luke's Gospel parable (Audio Bibliia Ukrainskoiu, n.d.; The Jerusalem Bible, 1966, Luke 15:31).

The canvas shows an elderly father in the emotional moment of meeting his younger son. He tenderly embraces his son who having suffered bitter trials and the ills of the world returned home into the arms of his father. Although Rembrandt named his painting *Return of the Prodigal Son*, the main and dominating figure in it is not the son, but father, who typifies the merciful God, Our Heavenly Father. And the barefooted, dressed in rags son that "... was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Audio Bibliia Ukrainskoiu, n.d.; The Jerusalem Bible, 1966,

Luke 15:31), bends his shaved head (symbol of disgrace) onto the merciful breast of his loving father. He represents a man who has sinned but does not fall into despair and with repentance returns to his father saying: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Audio Bibliia Ukrainskoiu, n.d.; The Jerusalem Bible, 1966, Luke 15:31); he spiritually comes alive again, receiving forgiveness and mercy from Father. This painting perfectly illustrates the old Biblical story and symbolizes the love and grace of God that have no temporal and spatial limits.

Painting of Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn *Return of the Prodigal Son* (1663–1669) is not only the largest canvas on the religious theme but also the summing up of the entire life of the famous painter (Nyskohuz, 2013; “Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn,” 2020).

Characterizing aesthetics and style of Classicism, art historians point out that the ideas and principles of antique art in it are reduced to the cold academic formalism (Bychkov, 2012, p. 145).

Art and its aesthetic foundations, if nothing less, till Contemporary times were closely interconnected between the traditional cultural values and moral.

“However, this was not always so. For a long time, arguably until the end of the nineteenth century, beauty was commonly thought of as a crucial and important concept, one that we could hardly be without. Not only was there thought to be a connection between beauty and morality, but they were often considered being nearly inseparable, expressing similarly important matters from different perspectives” (Vuorela, 2020, p. 2).

Conducting art analysis of the works of art of the past centuries, art experts often apply the classical concept of the theory of beauty formed in the days of Ancient Greece.

“There have been many different theories of beauty throughout history, but none has had a more prominent position in aesthetics than the classical conception. Its prominence lasted for over two thousand years, starting from ancient Greece and ending only as late as the eighteenth century. According to the classical conception of beauty, beauty results from an arrangement of parts into a coherent whole, based on notions such as symmetry, harmony and proportion. One can see the influence of the classical conception of beauty in, for example, classical and neo-classical architecture, sculpture and literature. And even in the eighteenth century, when the classical conception started to come under attack, there were still many who subscribed to it. Francis Hutcheson is a notable example. According to him, beauty consists of uniformity amongst variety. The more complex something is, the more beautiful it is as well, if it still forms a coherent whole” (Sartwell, 2017).

It is important to remember that aesthetic and moral values of art are the reflection of universal human values that have spiritual foundations, while artistic endeavor is inseparable from human culture. Its designation is supreme spiritual existence wherein colors, sounds and words in the artistic image-bearing form transmit spiritual truths. In its fundamental substance any variety of art is a religious reality, because very seldom, if ever, he who has “touched” a piece of artwork remains “neutral”. One might even say that any work of art is some sort of the tree of knowledge. It is only a question: of good or evil (Nazar, 2016, p. 129)? It is appropriate to recall here the story of the British painter Aubry Beardsley (1872–1898) who, dying of tuberculosis at the age of 26 years, wrote to the publisher of his album asking him to destroy all copies of *Lysistrata* and other lubricious drawings. Early in March he wrote a short letter to Smithers that became his last letter (Crawford, 2004):

“Jesus is our Lord and Judge.

Dear Friend, I implore you to destroy all copies of *Lysistrata* and bad drawings... By all that is holy, all obscene drawings.

Aubry Beardsley. In my death agony” (Crawford, 2004).

This artist understood that his drawings may become a stumbling block for somebody. The poetess of Lviv Natalia Nazar wrote:

“Regretfully, in our contemporary hedonistic world with the drums beating and electric guitar sounds comes to the end the bloody dance of death similar to the dance of Herodias she danced on request of Herod that cost the head of the greatest amongst those born from women–John the Baptist...And then what is called for to elevate man and glorify the Creator, fails to fulfill its purpose, is not art but pseudo-art...” (Nazar, 2016, p. 131).

Thus, the mission of art and artist lies in serving the good, the truth and beauty. This in no small part refers to the visual arts that vividly reproduce spiritual and philosophical content of the work of art. The art of Contemporary times (modernism, anti-modernism, postmodernism of the twentieth century) paved the way for the new philosophy and understanding of ethical and aesthetical values of art. One of the first to declare their departure from the “classics” was the English Pre-Raphaelites. In a similar manner, the protest of the impressionists aimed at creation of the new forms. A little later there appeared other “non-classical” trends, such as symbolism, neo-romanticism, post-impressionism, modern (art nouveau), fauvism, expressionism, cubism, futurism, abstract art (the latter trends are often united under the name of “art avant-garde”).

José Ortega y Gasset, a distinguished Spanish philosopher and art expert, points out, that modernistic art is alien and hostile to people:

“Modern art, on the other hand, has the masses against it, and this will always be so since it is unpopular in essence; even more, it is anti-popular. Any new work whatsoever automatically produces a curious sociological effect on the public, splitting it into two

pans. One, the lesser group, is formed by a few persons who are favorable to it; the other, the great majority, is hostile. (Let us leave aside those equivocal creatures, the snobs). Thus the work of art acts as a social force creating two antagonistic groups, separating the masses into two different castes of men” (Ortega y Gasset, 1925, p. 66).

His assertion was based on the substantial changes that had taken place in the art of modernism towards subjective transformation that discarded all fundamentals and artistic rules of the preceding periods/dehumanization of art deals with elimination of human elements from these works of art, expelling the content but preserving the form (Halley, n.d.).

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) in his *Selected Writings on Aesthetics* (2006) including the main chapters of one of his great untranslated works *Kritische Wälder* (“Critical Forests”) analyzed cultural, historical, anthropological, ethical and theological aspects of art and the act of creation (Herder, 2006).

However, in the art of the twentieth century there are the works of art in which along with the modern techniques there are preserved aesthetic principles of art of the past periods (harmony, color, etc.) (Vanslov & Sokolov, 1987).

An example of contemporary sacred art can be the works of Oleksa Novakivsky *Mother of Mercy* (Fig. 1) and *The Sacred Heart of Jesus* (Fig. 2).

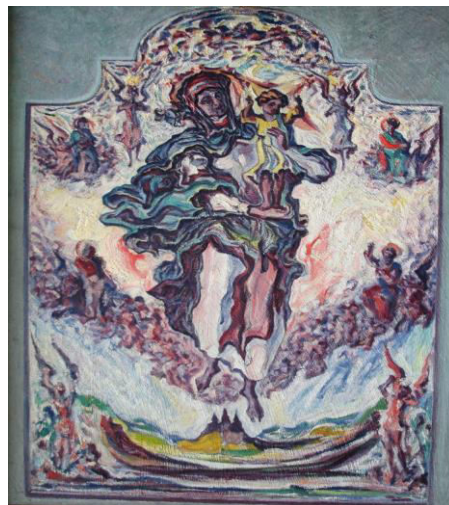


Figure 1: Novakivsky, O. (1935). Mother of mercy [Painting] (Rizun, 2018).



Figure 2: Novakivsky, O. (early 1930s). The Sacred heart of Jesus [Painting] (Rizun, 2018).

A unique artwork of contemporary sacral art is the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence. The architectural design, decorative design of the interior and the draft design of liturgical accessories (the altar, liturgical garments) were produced by the famous French artist Henry Matisse (Fig.3, Fig. 4).



Figure 3: The Chapel of the Rosary (Matisse, 1947).



Figure 4: Christmas Eve [Stained glass] (Matisse, 1952).

We learn about completion of the work and its importance for the artist from the letter of Henry Matisse to Monsignor Paul Remond, Archbishop of Nice:

“Your Eminence, with sincere humbleness I convey to you the Chapel of the Rosary of the Dominican nuns of Vence. I beg your pardon for not doing this personally because of my health condition does not permit it. The work on the Chapel took me four years of exclusively sedentary work, and this work is the result of my entire life, as long as I remember myself. Despite all its shortcomings, I am still confident that this is my best work. Let the future affirm such opinion by the growing interest in this monument, regardless of its higher purpose. I hope, Your Eminence, that with your knowledge of people and your great wisdom you will appreciate my efforts—the epitome of my life, fully devoted to the pursuance of truth” (“Henri Matisse,” 2020; Georgievskaya, 1993, pp. 99–100; “Henri Matisse,” n.d.).

During consecration of the Chapel on June 25, 1951, the text of this message of Henry Matisse was read out by Reverend Marie-Alain Couturier, one of the organizers of its creation.

In this work, the author conveys beauty and harmony using modern artistic means of form stylization. This particularly refers to stained-glass windows, the colour range of which shows a successful contrast between decorative ornament and colour oppositions.

Beauty and harmony can be traced in the creativity of the distinguished Lviv scene-designer Yevhen Lysyk who created a highly spiritual image of Madonna for Andriy Petrov's opera "*Creation of the World*" (Minsk, 1987). This image (Fig. 5) painted after the Chernobyl disaster raises the eternal general human topic of sacrifice and motherhood (Proskuriakov et al., 2016, pp. 81–82).

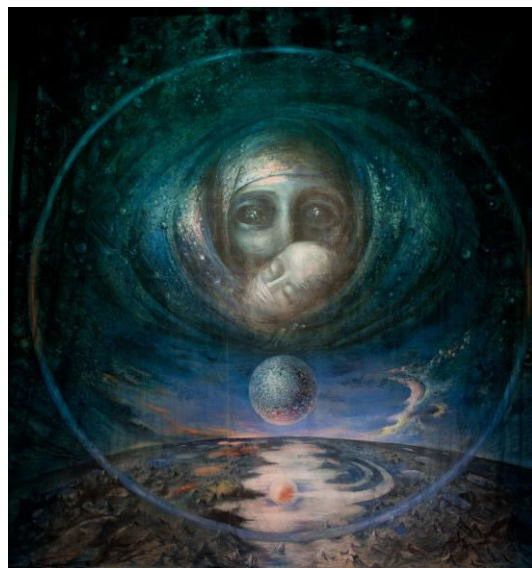


Figure 5: The image of Madonna with Child. Scenography for the ballet “Creation of the World” (Lysyk, 1987).

Describing his work on stage design for this theatrical performance, Yevhen Lysyk said: “Visual art, just like music and choreography, should be given the opportunity to do all, the most of possible for the performance. All or hold tongue” (Domanska & Proskuriakov, 1997, pp. 23–24).

The image of Madonna with Child is painted in the circle, a symbol of eternity. In other canvases there is arranged the evolvent of circle (a convoluted curve circumscribed by the straight line) (Proskuriakov et al., 2016, p. 82). According to the scientific studies of Professor Viktor Proskuryakov, the compositional construction of monumental symbolic-metaphorical horizons of Yevhen Lysyk (the 70s and 80s of the XX century) contains evolvent and golden section.

For better understanding of aesthetics of art, particularly contemporary art, it would be wise to quote the well-known French philosopher and theologian, Professor Jacques Maritain. In his work *The Responsibility of the Artist* the scholar presents criteria for evaluation of the works of art, particularly their ethical and aesthetical aspects. In the end of the first chapter (“Art and Morality”) the scholar asserts that moral is always above art:

“In other words it is true that Art and Morality are two autonomous worlds, each sovereign in its own sphere, but they cannot ignore or disregard one another, for man belongs in these two worlds, both as intellectual maker and as moral agent, doer of actions which engage his own destiny. And because an artist is a man before being an artist, the autonomous world of morality is simply superior to (and more inclusive than) the autonomous world of art. There is no law against the law of which the destiny of man depends. In other words, Art is indirectly and extrinsically subordinate to morality” (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 1.4).

At the beginning of the second chapter (“Art for Art’s Sake”) the scholar notes, that

“The motto Art for Art’s sake simply disregards the world of morality, and the values and rights of human life. Art for Art’s sake does not mean Art for the work, which is the right formula. It means an absurdity, that is, a supposed necessity for the artist to be only an artist, not a man, and for art to cut itself off from its own supplies, and from all the food, fuel and energy it receives from human life.

To tell the truth, art took to enclosing itself in its famous ivory tower, in the XIX century, only because of the disheartening degradation of its environment—positivist, sociologist or materialist attitudes. But the normal condition of art is altogether different” (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 2.1).

Further in chapter three (“Art for the People”) of the work the author dwells upon the motto opposite to the motto Art for Art’s sake, the motto that builds its affiliation to the spiritual comfort of obedience to social, political or humanistic instance. He says:

“Here we are confronted no longer with the motto Art for Art’s sake, but with an opposite motto which appeal today to many sociologically minded or humanitarian persons, and which is the motto: Art for the people, or Art for the community.

I am aware of the fact such formula may relate only to the intentions of an artist who is inspired by generous human purposes while his virtue of art is genuinely at play for the good of the work, especially to the intentions of an artist who is eager to have the joys of Beauty made available not only to a privileged class but to the under-privileged as well. Such a desire corresponds, I think, to a basic need and necessity. But let me observe parenthetically that it is best fulfilled when an artist is more concerned with the future generations and the spiritual community of mankind as a whole than with the common

people of his time, and when, on the other hand, the great works of art, once created, are made available to all through the channel of libraries, museums and other modern media of communication, and by making all members of the community capable of enjoying them thanks to a liberal education for all: these things are the job of the community, not of the artist himself. As a matter of fact, the attempts to put creative activity itself at the service of the common people have generally been a failure..." (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 3.1).

The scholar cautions against any autonomy of art, against total control or any ideological prejudice. Such art becomes deformed, appears to be the art of propaganda with its moral or anti-moral, social, political, philosophical, religious or antireligious goals. Art, like cognition, is subordinate to the values independent of the interests; even the most honorable interests of human life, for these values are values of the intellectual world. This is why the "prejudiced" artist betrays simultaneously his talent and vocation.

The theory of "art for the social group" does not care neither for any problems that arise before artists nor for the concept of autonomy of art. That is why the scientist makes emphasis on responsibility of the society before art:

"I have a few words to add to conclude this chapter. Theorists in aesthetics are usually concerned with the role of art in reference to the human community. But they should also be concerned with the role of the human community in reference to art. Since the community has certain duties toward them" (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 3.4).

It is hard to disagree with the unquestionable conclusions of the scientist. Criteria of evaluation of the works of art described in the scholar's work can be an asset for the researchers of ancient and contemporary art.

Also, art must not be the tool of propaganda for any totalitarian or ideological systems and diverse forms of racial intolerance and abuse, visible or disguised, as well as the tool for mockery of religious or national values.

It should be always remembered that aesthetic and moral image of the future depends on the formation and development of cultural and artistic heritage.

We shall note that the "crisis of aesthetics" in the post-modern world and, particularly, in art was the subject of discussion at the international meeting of estheticians in Krakow in 1979. Starting from that time it was officially declared about independence of aesthetics of the second half of the XX century from philosophy, and the course was taken towards establishment of totally independent aesthetics. The spotlight was turned on its interrelation with other allied sciences—ethics, art history, psychology and its commitment to the search for the purely aesthetic subject of the study (Martyntenko, 2016, p. 60).

Conclusions

Using the examples of works of art as well as contemplations of artists and art experts there have been identified the core principles that shaped up the ideal of beauty and harmony in the European art. The art of ancient Greece, architectural and sculptural works is based on the *principle of harmonious proportion* (*Doryphoros* by Polykleitos, *The Aphrodite of Knidos* by Praxitel, etc.). The art laid down the basics of ideal beauty and harmony that have become the benchmark of classic art. In ancient Roman art, unlike ancient Greek idealism (perfect beauty), the principle of verism was generally accepted—true realistic depiction (Togatus Barberini with the images of ancestors, etc.).

The understanding of beauty and harmony in the art of the Middle Ages was based on the spiritual aesthetic principles from the books of the Bible. In particular, sacral art was developed under the influence of canon (stable rules of depiction). In particular, that refers to icon painting that developed in the Byzantine art (monumental and machine). Not only iconography (rules and methods of depiction) were unique, but performance techniques as well (tempera painting based on natural pigments, application of gold leaf symbolizing the heavenly transcendental light, etc.).

The striving to combine the idea of celestial and earthly beauty of the world can be traced in the art of Renaissance and the Modern Times in the treatises of artists (Lorenzo Ghiberti, Leon-Battista Alberti, Piero della Francesca, Antonio Pollaiolo, Leonardo da Vinci, William Hogarth, etc.) as well as in numerous works (Fra Angelico, Raffaello Santi, Rembrandt, etc.). In the art of the Contemporary Times there can also be traced new approaches to art task solving (works by Henri Matisse, Oleksa Novakivskyi, Yevhen Lysyk, etc.).

Summing up the above, it is fair to say the aesthetic and moral values of the European culture and art by their nature are profoundly spiritual. They are inseparably connected with national identity and spirituality. The art, whose vocation is creation of beauty, devotion to the truth and goodness, ability to touch on senses and bring out positive emotions of the viewer brings about refinement (catharsis). Art scholars are of the opinion that in the creation of a professional work of art of great importance is not only the original individual style and the author's techniques but also a perfect wedding of the cultural national tradition and innovation. The essential, and probably number one attribute of a good work of art is its spiritual component that organically combines in its achievements of the generations before us, and the artistic style and techniques become the tool for a more profound revealing the artistic figure that raises man to the Creator.

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