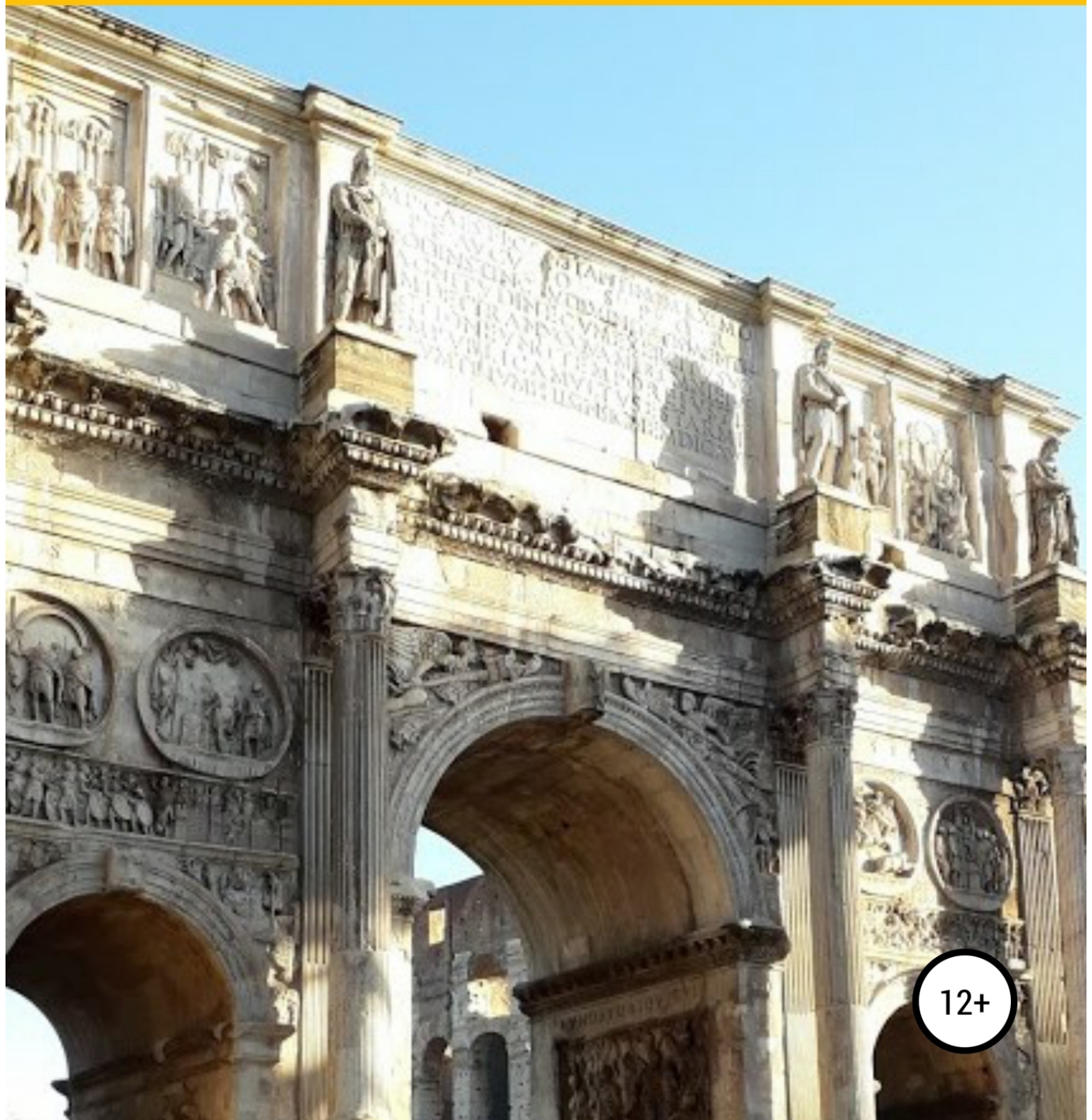


Anna Masliakova

The History of Philosophical Ideas
And Their Expression in Art



12+

Анна Маслякова

**The History of Philosophical
Ideas and Their Expression in Art**

«ЛитРес: Самиздат»

2020

Маслякова А. И.

The History of Philosophical Ideas and Their Expression in Art /
А. И. Маслякова — «ЛитРес: Самиздат», 2020

ISBN 978-5-532-04940-6

It seems to me that there is something Mysterious about Art. The History of Art is closely connected with Philosophical Ideas of the time. In this book we are going to scrutinize the way in which Philosophical Ideas have been expressed in Art from Antiquity to the Present Day. We are going to visit a lot of cities - Rome, Florence, Munich, Barcelona, Berlin, Riga, Tallinn, Prague, Helsinki, Stockholm, Saint Petersburg... That is to say, we are going to Travel throughout the Whole History of Humanity and I hope that at the end of our Journey we will know more not only about Art, but also about ourselves.

ISBN 978-5-532-04940-6

© Маслякова А. И., 2020
© ЛитРес: Самиздат, 2020

Содержание

Introduction	6
The Healing Power of Art	7
The Big History of Art	9
Musical and Aesthetic Concept of Alexander Scriabin	10
Chapter I	11
There is No Place Like Rome	11
Literary Essay I	12
Philosophical Issues I	13
Dialog of Arts I	15
Temples of Culture I	18
How to Understand a Work of Art? Step I	19
Chapter II	20
Once Upon a Time	20
Literary Essay II	21
Philosophical Issues II	22
Dialog of Arts II	24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

*To my dear parents
“Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*

mi ritrovai per una selva oscura

che' la diritta via era smarrita”
(Dante. “La Divina Commedia”).¹

“Puesto nombre, y tan a su gusto, a su caballo, quiso ponérsele a sí mismo, y en este pensamiento duró otros ocho días, y al cabo se vino a llamar “don Quijote”; de donde, como queda dicho, tomaron ocasión los autores desta tan verdadera historia que, sin duda, se debía de llamar “Quijada”, y no “Quesada”, como otros quisieron decir”. (Miguel de Cervantes. “El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha”).²

“Must I show you a place to sleep? Are you not at home here?”. “I understand that you take me for one of the tiny folk,” said the midget, “but I’m a human being, like yourself, although I have been transformed by an elf.” “That is the most remarkable thing I have ever heard! Wouldn’t you like to tell me how you happened to get into such a plight?” The boy did not mind telling her of his adventures, and, as the narrative proceeded, she who listened to him grew more and more astonished and happy. “What luck to run across one who has travelled all over Sweden on the back of a goose!” thought she. “Just this which he is relating I shall write down in my book. Now I need worry no more over that matter. It was well that I came home. To think that I should find such help as soon as I came to the old place!” Instantly another thought flashed into her mind. She had sent word to her father by the doves that she longed for home, and almost immediately she had received help in the matter she had pondered so long. Might not this be the father’s answer to her prayer?”. (Selma Lagerlöf. “The Wonderful Adventures of Nils”).

¹ “Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / for the straightforward pathway had been lost” (Dante. “Divine Comedy”).

² “Having got a name for his horse so much to his taste, he was anxious to get one for himself, and he was eight days more pondering over this point, till at last he made up his mind to call himself “Don Quixote,” whence, as has been already said, the authors of this veracious history have inferred that his name must have been beyond a doubt “Quixada”, and not “Quesada” as others would have it” (Miguel de Cervantes. “The History of Don Quixote”).

Introduction

It is generally accepted that there are Turning Points in our lives that Change Us Forever. So, let me tell you My Story.

I remember my mother sitting at the piano and playing the “Swan Lake”. It was then that I decided to become a Musician. I had no fear of performing in front of the audience and I could play the piano without even looking at the keyboard.

When I was studying at the Music College in Smolensk, fate, once again, intervened on my behalf – one of the professors recommended me to read a book about Alexander Scriabin. And from that time on, the creativity of this composer has captured my imagination.

In Minsk I have met with Dr. Elena Polyakova – my Master’s supervisor who has eventually become my best friend ever. She taught me how to write articles and we used to talk a lot about Art and Education.

We attended conferences in Vitebsk, Mogilev, Moscow and, finally, we visited Saint Petersburg where I have made an acquaintance with another professor – Dr. Alexander Klujev – who has also played a significant part in my scientific career. He has never interfered with my Ph.D. research, on the contrary, he encouraged me to develop my own creativity.

And last but not least, I strongly believe that it is absolutely impossible to study Art without Travelling. You can read a lot about the Sistine Chapel or the Sainte-Chapelle, and yet, not until you see them will you realize the real Power of Art. Among the masterpieces that have impressed me most are Claud Monet’s “Waterloo Bridge”, Dürer’s “Self Portrait”, Raphael’s Lodges, Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers”, the Gates of Paradise by Lorenzo Ghiberti, etc. That is why my research is complemented by the so-called “Impressions of the Cities”. *Although all the Chapters of the Book are in Chronological Order, each of them has its own Form and I encourage you to Choose the Sequence of the Chapters according to your personal preferences.* Taking into account the fact that the Beauty of the World is Endless, this research will be continued.

The Healing Power of Art

It seems to me that there is something Mysterious about Art. On the one hand, you could be a spectator and go to Concert Halls, Theaters and Museums and, as for me, I could spend hours walking around exhibitions, looking at Paintings and Sculptures and contemplating the Power of Art. I am virtually certain that nothing could be better than Live Concerts, especially when an Author is sitting in the audience, since when the curtain opens and conductor goes on stage, Magic happens and you feel a sense of Unity not only with humanity, but also with the whole Universe.

On the other hand, you could take Your Story and Paint it, Sing it, Dance it or Write about it and thus enhance the Healing Power of Art. Since you have everything you need inside you, you should Open up your Heart, Honor the Light inside you and Bring the Gifts of Your Creativity to the World. One should not forget that There Can Be No Mistakes in Art, that is to say, you should Release the Inner Critic within you and Be Who You Are. And I must say that for me it has been one of the most challenging problems because I have been suffering from self-doubt all my life.

I am virtually certain that Eastern Culture and Philosophy may be helpful. According to “Dao De Jing”, sometimes when you want something to happen you have to do the opposite. “Dao ever-constantly practices non-action, / Yet nothing is left undone. / If nobles and kings could maintain it, / The ten thousand creatures would naturally transform. / Transform, and if desire arises, / I would restrain it by means of the nameless uncarved block. / In the state of the nameless uncarved block, / Men also would be without-desire. / Not desiring, thus they would be still – / And the world would naturally settle”. And Basho’s Haiku Poems which often have multiple meanings are fascinating – “Temple bells die out. / The fragrant blossoms remain. / A perfect evening!”. I absolutely adore the Mysterious sound of Guzheng – a very old Chinese plucked string instrument tuned in a major pentatonic scale. There are the so-called Talking Drums and by changing the pitch of the drum you can imitate African speech patterns and send Musical Messages over long distances. Singing Bowls, on the other hand, are widely used in Buddhist Temples or Pagodas since not only can you produce a tone by striking the edge of the bowl, but you can also create residual vibrations which have Healing properties. In India they know how to lead a happier life as well, suffice it to mention Holi – an ancient festival during which people laugh, dance and spray bright colors on each other. Their Temples look Magnificent (for example, the Lakshmana Temple) and nothing can be compared with Indian Music which is not fixed and stable but, on the contrary, relies on improvisation and is characterized by sliding or gliding from one Svara (tone) to the next (“Sarasiruha” – “To the Goddess Saraswati” starting from the free-flowing exploration of the Raga – an Indian equivalent of Scale). And despite the fact that Indonesian Music, the entire system of which is based on a sense of pitch that is outside our twelve tone realm, may sound strange, it has its own Beauty.

As a matter of fact, I have always tried to create “Sacred Spaces” – artistic compositions consisting of porcelain statuettes, postcards, toys, artificial flowers – and put them all over my flat so as to feel comfortable and safe. But when the virus started spreading around the world and they told us to stay at home, I became afraid and could do nothing. Then I decided to finish my Book on Art and when I was writing about my previous trips around Europe, I felt as if I was visiting those places once again. Or, even more, as if I had never left them. And after a while my mother asked me to create some illustrations for her new book. I hesitated at first since I am a Musician and not a Painter. And yet, it was so exciting that I ended up writing Poetry so as to make it easier for children to learn Musical Language. It was fun and these “jobs” helped me to overcome stress. Interestingly enough, I did not use dark colors in my paintings, on the contrary, I chose yellow, blue, red, green and pink.

Suddenly I realized that My Mission in life is to Explore the Beauty of the World and Share my Knowledge with People. I do believe that Art as a whole and This Very Book in particular could help you to overcome pain and darkness and Transform your Soul. All in all, Life is nothing but a

Dream and like Zhuangzi who “didn’t know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi” you might never find final solution to this problem.

The Big History of Art

I have been studying the connection between different branches of Art for a long time and was delighted to know that there is a significant basis for my research. That is to say, the carbon, nitrogen and oxygen atoms in our bodies, as well as atoms of all other heavy elements, were created in previous generations of stars over 4.5 billion years ago. This idea that We are all Made of the Same Staff as Stars took me by surprise. So, we all have the same birthday – the Beginning of the Universe.

Interestingly enough, the Earth is a Closed System and it must obey the Second Law of Thermodynamics according to which the Universe has a consistent amount of energy; and when some energy is lost in any operation, it ultimately leads to the Rise of Entropy and the inevitable Heat Death of Matter in the Universe. It implies that the Universe is destined to get simpler and simpler, even though its “pockets” still enjoy concentrations of energy, energy flow, and therefore complexity. On the other hand, there are a lot of Open Systems on Earth to which this Law cannot be applied and Art, being one of them, interacts with the environment and conveys Great Ideas of Humanity in Sound, Color, Shape, etc. Different branches of Art (Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, etc.) are in constant Dialog with each other and, from time to time, they Unite their forces (Opera, Ballet, Happening, Installation, etc.) so as to make it easier for us to appreciate the Beauty of the World. And yet, we may never understand what is a Piece of Art-in-itself since all we know is the way in which Art appears For-Us in different interpretations.

According to the Big History Project, there are Eight Main Thresholds – major phase-shifts leading to the beginning of the Universe, the First Stars, new Chemical Elements, the origin of Planets and the Solar System, the Beginning of Life, the Evolution of Collective Learning, the Emergence of Agriculture, and the Beginning of the Modern Revolution. *In this book we are going to scrutinize the way in which Philosophical Ideas have been expressed in Art from Antiquity to the Present Day.* If the predictions are true and life on Earth will be destroyed, all we can do is try to postpone this event by developing new technologies enabling us to travel through the Universe and find another planet on which we could live and Create New Art.

Musical and Aesthetic Concept of Alexander Scriabin

Many years ago one of my College Professors recommended me to read a book about Alexander Scriabin. And from that time on, Scriabin's creativity has captured my imagination. It goes without saying that Alexander Scriabin is one of the most Mysterious Figures of the 20th century. Not only did he compose Music, but he also wanted to Transform the World by using the Power of Art. In other words, he believed that the Performance of his "Mysterium" comprised of different branches of Art could cause Dematerialization and Rebirth of Humanity.

Alexander Scriabin was an extremely versatile person and his Literary and Philosophical works correspond to his Music. The Early period of his creativity (up to 1900) has very much in common with Romantic tradition and then (from 1900 till 1910) the Center of his Aesthetic interests starts shifting towards the Personality of the Artist who is able to Bring Beauty to the World. This "reorientation" triggered radical changes in his Musical Style, namely Functional Inversion, the Emancipation of the Dissonance and the Compression of the Form. During the Late period of his creativity (from 1910 till 1915) Scriabin was fully occupied with the Realization of his Project and most of his last works could be viewed as "splinters" of the Ideal Piece of Art – the "Mysterium". "Prometheus: The Poem of Fire" is a fine example of the expression of the Idea of the Total Unity since here Music is complemented by the Color Organ Part (Luce) whereas Melody is derived from Harmony and vice versa ("Prometheus Chord"). Interestingly enough, during the last years of his life his Musical Language was changing towards Simplicity and it seems to me that the so-called "Style of Black Line on White Background" (Prelude op. 74 No. 2) fully expresses Scriabin's Passion for Unity and Beauty.

In this Book the idea of which appeared when I was writing my previous monograph on the creativity of Alexander Scriabin I am going to scrutinize the way in which different Philosophical Ideas have been conveyed in Art. That is to say, we are going to Travel throughout the Whole History of Humanity and I hope that at the end of our Journey we will know more not only about Art, but also about ourselves.

Chapter I

There is No Place Like Rome

As a matter of fact, I have always wanted to travel around the world, explore cultural diversity. In particular, I have read a lot about Wonders of Italy; hence, it is no surprise that my first destination was Rome. Actually, it was my mother who forced me to go there, metaphorically speaking. So, there I was, flying to Italy on my own. The truth is that, being proud of myself, at the same time I was trembling and thinking – “Is it worth it?”

Little did I know what would come next.

Firstly and most importantly, you could talk endlessly about the charm of Rome as many prominent scientists and artists have done before. And yet, only when you arrive there will you realize what is this all about. On the one hand, Rome is without any doubt the Spiritual Center of the Christian World. It seems to me that even the sun shines more brightly there than anywhere else. On the other hand, Rome has some dark pages in its divine history. It is hard to believe, but before Constantine the Great made the Roman Empire Christian in 313 A.D. Christians were arrested and tortured at the Colosseum.

Secondly, it is extraordinary that, despite all the obstacles, they did manage to preserve the achievements of the past till the present day. Rome is like a multi-storey building and it has its foundation – Antiquity. What I am trying to say is that the Whole History of Art lies in front of you, right under your feet – literally speaking. All you need to do is walk along the curvy streets of the city and look around.

Last but not least, the influence of the Roman Culture has been so huge that one can find a lot of replicas of Italian Architecture in many other countries. I presume, there are two main ways of studying the History of Art. The first one is the shortest and the hardest – you may start from the beginning and go to Rome. Or you could travel around Europe trying to put the puzzle – “pieces of Rome” – together.

To sum it up, it was love from the first sight. I will never forget the ringing of the bells of Santa Maria Maggiore at 9 P.M. If you ask me, I am virtually certain that this Mysterious Sound really is the Essence of the Roman Spirit.

Literary Essay I

It is undeniable that Ancient Philosophy has had a tremendous impact on Western Culture. Since Socrates, Plato and Aristotle lived before Christianity and could not enter Paradise, Dante had nothing to do but put them in Limbo, which is the first circle of Inferno in “The Divine Comedy”. And even there they were having a perpetual seminar and discussing their works with each other.

Some may argue that Ancient Philosophers were not always right (for example, Ptolemy’s Geocentric model of the Universe has become obsolete), but the fact that they were trying to find out the First Principle of All Things – or Arche – is awesome.

It is no wonder that artists tend to insert “quotations” from Ancient sources in their paintings. Let us have a look, for example, at “The Spinners” by Diego Velázquez where he combines two subjects – one from Classical Mythology and the other from the era in which he lives. That is to say, in the background we can see Jupiter’s Rape of Europa waved by Arachne who was turned into a spider by Minerva since she could not find any flaws in Arachne’s carpet. While in the foreground there are real women from Velázquez’s time involved in tapestry manufacturing.

There is the Crown Fountain in the Summer Gardens in Saint Petersburg surrounded by busts of Ancient Philosophers – Diogenes, Heraclitus, Democritus, Aristotle, etc. So that people wandering around in search for some shade could stop for a moment and admire their dedication and commitment in the pursuit of knowledge. Surprisingly enough, Ancient method of “thinking while walking” has not lost its effectiveness nowadays. I practice it all the time especially when I am writing an article or a book since it helps me to concentrate and organize my thoughts.

In the famous “Allegory of the Cave” Socrates tells us about prisoners who live under the earth and can see nothing but shadows projected on the wall from objects being carried along in front of a fire. What I am trying to say is that in order to gain freedom we need to break the chains and walk towards the Light. It may hurt our eyes at first, but we will get used to it in the end.

Philosophical Issues I

Pre-Socratic philosophers were asking questions about the nature of things. And their answers were really amazing, for example, the qualitative monism of the Milesians who believed that everything could be reduced to, derived from, one or several elements (water – Thales; air – Anaximenes; fire – Heraclitus; water, air, fire, earth – Anaximander, etc.). According to the double-aspect theory of Pythagoras and Heraclitus, everything is in the process of change and, at the same time, everything is in order which, by the way, could be of different kinds – mathematical order (Pythagoras) or Logos (Heraclitus). Moreover, there was the absolute monism of the Eleatics, the pluralism of Democritus (Mechanism) and Anaxagoras (Teleology), etc. In other words, Pre-Socratics were formulating the philosophical agenda that Western Philosophy has worked with ever since.

While the Sophists were skeptical of the possibility of knowing the truth about reality and turned from the pursuit of knowledge to the practice of Rhetoric trying to persuade people by non-logical means, Socrates, on the contrary, was interested in the cultivation of souls and developed his own method of achieving this result which was called Dialectic. The way in which Dialectic uncovers the truth is very much like the way in which we recollect something. And the object of knowledge is not the world of Particulars (the world of time and change), but rather the reality of Forms, the first patterns that everything else follows.

In “The Symposium” Plato suggests that since Forms are universal and unchangeable and Particulars are always changing and temporal, we should distinguish between the essence of the Ideal Beauty which could be grasped only “with the eye of the mind” and particular beautiful things. We should “begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is”.

Earthly life ought to be harmoniously ordered and unified following the example of the Cosmos, including a human individual who is a microcosm, a part of the whole. Society should encourage the development of the capacity of mind to love and know the ideal order, especially when the training of heroes is concerned. Socrates asks in “The Republic” – “And what shall be their education? Can we find a better than the traditional sort? – and this has two divisions, gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul. True. Shall we begin education with music, and go on to gymnastic afterwards? By all means”. Besides, Plato writes that “musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful; and also because he who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art and nature, and with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why; and when reason comes he will recognize and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar”. And yet, adding that “the musician is wise, and he who is not a musician is foolish”, he excludes harmonies expressive of sorrow (Lydian), softness and indolence (Ionian) from the educational process and advises to use Dorian and Phrygian harmonies since they stimulate courage and temperance.

Aristotle is a follower of Plato and he is also quite critical of Plato. For instance, Plato believes that Art should imitate transcendent Forms, hence Art that imitates Particulars is twice removed from Reality. As far as Aristotle is concerned, Art is not an imitation of Forms but a representation of

life and characters with their emotions and actions. And a good tragedy must be such as to produce Catharsis “through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions” (“Poetics”).

Being more “down to earth”, Aristotle suggests that we do not have to think of transcendent Forms but of imminent forms since forms are the forms of Particular things. And any Particular is a composite of form and matter (Hylomorphism); it has an inherent Potential that can be Actualized. Natural potential is in everything and what an artist does is not to create but to Discover natural potentials in the physical elements of this world. That is to say, a sculptor does not create sculptures – he Discovers the possibilities of wood or stone (in this sense, Michelangelo in his “David” managed to actualize the potential of the block of marble abandoned by his predecessor), whereas a musician Discovers potential in the physical sounds. “For from the potentially existing the actually existing is always produced by an *actually* existing thing, e.g. man from man, musician by musician; there is always a first mover, and the mover already exists *actually*”, – says Aristotle in “Metaphysics”.

Moreover, Plato writes dialogues, tells stories, while Aristotle is more like an objective scientist analyzing and systematizing facts. As we have mentioned before, Plato thought that certain knowledge is innate. Aristotle, on the contrary, says that thinking processes correlate with the nature of reality and mind contributes to knowledge since it brings a capacity to organize, to structure nature and get the unchanging truth of it. For example, in “Metaphysics” he says that “the white is musical and the latter is white, only because both are accidental to man. But Socrates is musical, not in this sense, that both terms are accidental to something else. Since then some predicates are accidental in this and some in that sense, those which are accidental in the latter sense, in which white is accidental to Socrates, cannot form an infinite series in the upward direction; e.g. Socrates the white has not yet another accident; for no unity can be got out of such a sum. Nor again will ‘white’ have another term accidental to it, e.g. ‘musical’. For this is no more accidental to that than that is to this; and at the same time we have drawn the distinction that while some predicates are accidental in this sense, others are so in the sense in which ‘musical’ is accidental to Socrates; and the accident is an accident of an accident not in cases of the latter kind, but only in cases of the other kind, so that not all terms will be accidental”.

To sum it up, we have mentioned several conceptions introduced by Ancient Philosophers. And yet, the question – “Whether or not this Quest for Certainty is ever going to be satisfied?” – remains open.

Dialog of Arts I

The Greco-Roman civilization extended from the glorious Age of Pericles when Greek Culture reached its height, witnessed the expansion of Greek settlements under Alexander the Great, saw the Rise of Roman Power and the grandeur of the Roman Empire and concluded with its decline and fall in 476.

Greek and Roman traditions are completely different, suffice it to mention the Venus of Tauris and Roman Portrait Sculpture executed in realistic manner. The Greeks with their city-states, meetings at Agora, philosophical discussions at the Platonic Academy and Classical Orders have been considered as an example to be followed. The Romans adopted their ideas (for instance, they used to gather at the Forum located at the intersection of the two main roads – Cardo and Decumanus), and yet, they were more interested in technical developments and built a lot of roads and aqueducts bringing water into cities and towns (Devil's Bridge at Tarragona). Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in his "Lectures on Architecture" says that "The genius of the Roman people differs materially from that of the Greeks. The Roman is essentially an administrator and a politician; he is the founder of the Modern Civilization: but is he, like the Greek, an Artist? Certainly not". The Romans erected temples on artificial hills made of concrete, whereas the Greeks were fond of Nature and tried to find special places for their structures (the Temple of Segesta in Sicily). Moreover, columns were no longer used as constructive elements and became purely decorative (the Colosseum). "Greek architecture may be best compared to a man strip of his clothes, the external parts of whose body are but the consequence of his organic structure, of his wants, of the framework of his bones, and the functions of his muscles. The man is so much the more beautiful as all the parts of his body are in harmony with their purpose, and, with nothing superfluous, they yet suffice for their functions. Roman architecture, on the other hand, may be compared to a man clothed: there is the man, and there is the dress; the dress may be good or bad, rich or poor in material, well or ill cut, but it forms no part of the body".

The Greeks and the Romans were not satisfied with white color, on the contrary they used to paint their sculpture and architecture so as to accentuate their Beauty. Viollet-le-Duc writes that "So necessary was this application of color to the exterior of the buildings in a country where the atmosphere is of marvelous transparency, that if we view the Temple of Theseus at Athens (for instance) in full sunshine, now that it has lost its paintings, we shall find it impossible to distinguish the lights of the columns from those shed of the walls of the cellar; – these lights on different planes mingle together and appear as if thrown upon one single surface".

Life and thought in those days were bound up with the Arts and the Greeks were very well-rounded people. The great Philosophers were men of action who serve Athens at battlefields as well as in public places and Theaters since one of the main responsibilities of a citizen was to foster the Arts. Art in Greece became a generating force by which the Athenians identified themselves with their fellow-citizens and with the entire rhythm of life around them. And through Art human experience has been raised to its highest level. Not only did they use Music in their system of Public Education, but they also incorporated it in their incredible Dramas and Tragedies (let us mention, for example, "Oedipus Rex" by Sophocles – one of the most successful playwrights of the time). Aristotle in his "Poetics" says that "Be that as it may, Tragedy – as also Comedy – was at first mere improvisation. The one originated with the authors of the Dithyramb, the other with those of the phallic songs, which are still in use in many of our cities. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped". "Comedy is, as we have said, an imitation of characters of a lower type, not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. It consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain".

Not only did they believe that Poetry and Music are the same, but they also had the Chorus that often put interesting commentaries on the drama and unified it. Friedrich Nietzsche writes that “If music, as it would seem, was previously known as an Apollonian art, it was, strictly speaking, only as the wave-beat of rhythm, the formative power of which was developed to the representation of Apollonian conditions. The music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in tones, but in merely suggested tones, such as those of the cithara. The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general) is carefully excluded as un-Apollonian; namely, the thrilling power of the tone, the uniform stream of the melos, and the thoroughly incomparable world of harmony”. “According to this view, we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus, which always disburdens itself anew in an Apollonian world of pictures. The choric parts, therefore, with which tragedy is interlaced, are in a manner the mother-womb of the entire so-called dialogue, that is, of the whole stage-world, of the drama proper. In several successive outbursts does this primordial basis of tragedy beam forth the vision of the drama, which is a dream-phenomenon throughout, and, as such, epic in character: on the other hand, however, as objectivation of a Dionysian state, it does not represent the Apollonian redemption in appearance, but, conversely, the dissolution of the individual and his unification with primordial existence. Accordingly, the drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian perceptions and influences, and is thereby separated from the epic as by an immense gap. The *chorus* of Greek tragedy, the symbol of the mass of the people moved by Dionysian excitement, is thus fully explained by our conception of it as here set forth” (“The Birth of Tragedy”).

As we have mentioned before, the Romans adopted Greek inventions and developed them on a much larger scale. In Ancient Roman Villas – country houses of nobility rectangular in their shape – they combined Perystilium (a garden surrounded by columns reminding of the Medieval Cloister) and Atrium (the most important part where the guests were greeted) complemented by Compluvium (a square roof opening) and Impluvium (a pool for rainwater). Villas in Pompeii were richly decorated with frescoes of different styles – creating the illusion of marble or panoramic view (like “a window”), emphasizing the flatness of the wall with figures “floating” on it or reintroducing architecture and jumbling together fragments of buildings – and all of them can be seen at the House of Vettii.

And yet, there was a tendency in Roman Philosophy towards individualism and agnosticism (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism). People were more interested in entertainments, such as Gladiatorial Fights, executions of Christians at the Colosseum and Nero’s singing. It is said that Nero ordered to burn Rome in order to clear the space for his new palace – Domus Aurea designed by Fabulus. It was embellished with gold and decorated with Grotesques which inspired Raphael to create his Loggias in Vatican (and we also have their copies at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg). After the Emperor’s death the Golden House was filled with earth and built over (Flavian Amphitheater, Baths of Trajan, etc.). By the way, the plan of the Trajan’s Forum reminds of the embracing arms of the Bernini Colonnade, while the structure of Caldarium – a special room with hot water pool at the Roman Baths which had a dome with an opening or oculus – calls to mind the Octagonal Room of the Domus Aurea and the Pantheon. Surprisingly enough, there even was an Ancient Roman Baroque Style, in other words, architects used traditional vocabulary in a different way including too ornate decoration, projections, recessions and broken pediments in their projects (for example, the Market Gate of Miletus in Berlin).

Homer is considered to be the father of Western Civilization and Vergil’s “Aeneid” as an epic traces the general form of “The Iliad” (which tells us about Achilles who managed to overcome his rage and returned Hector’s body to his father Priam) and “The Odyssey” (in which the main hero Odysseus is going back home after the Fall of Troy and experiencing different kinds of hospitality – Cyclopes, Nausicaa, Dionysian Music performed by Sirens, etc.) but in the reverse order. That is to say, the wanderings of Aeneas and his people come first (“Odyssey”) and then the war starts (“Iliad”). J.L. Borges in one of his lectures at Harvard said that “The Geeks had no use for books or no great use for them, it is a fact indeed that most of the great teachers of mankind have been not writers but

speakers”. “However, we need not worry too much about the fate of the Classics because Beauty is always with us”. Suffice it to mention the Mysterious smile of Ancient Kore.

Temples of Culture I

The most extraordinary thing about Ancient Greek architecture is their idea about the Sight, that is to say, the organization of space is based on special viewpoints. Here were are in the Theatre of Delphi looking down and all the buildings arrange themselves in such a way as to be viewed obliquely as fully plastic objects.

Basically, the Greek Theater (the Theater at Epidaurus, the Ancient Theater in Tauric Chersonesus, etc.) is an open-air structure composed of a partial circle (Theatron) organized around the Orchestra where action takes place and a backstage (Skene) behind it. And one of the most powerful things is that like in the case of temples – for example, the Temple of Segesta in Sicily – they find a special place that needs to be clarified and make visible its uniqueness that otherwise would be lost.

The Romans, on the contrary, prefer free standing structures frontally oriented and densely packed into a city. Let us have a look, for instance, at the Theater of Marcellus in Rome. Typologically, it conserves quite a lot from the Greeks, but the architectural edge closes the space off. Moreover, the Flavian Amphitheater – a giant object in the city of Rome – consists of two semicircles merged together and is by no means open-ended. Another allusion to the Greek architecture is that the décor of the Colosseum combines different orders – Doric, Ionic, Corinthian – and yet, the columns are not free standing (the Parthenon in Athens) but they are engaged in the walls (like in the Maison Carrée in Nimes).

The Romans were absessed with technology and that allowed them to build in a very different way. The arch became the fundamental element of Roman architecture enabling them to erect bridges (The Alcántara Bridge), aqueducts (Devil's bridge in Tarragona) and even the Pantheon – a temple to all the gods with a lot of altars.

The Romans were more interested in entertainment than in dramatic performances. And yet, the situation has been changing and not long ago they have started to organize concerts at the Colosseum, such as “The Three Tenors” in 1994.

How to Understand a Work of Art? Step I

There are places and works of Art that could change your life right away.

“The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa” by Gian Lorenzo Bernini located at Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. It was a rainy day and when I entered the church there it was – glowing in the dark, Mysterious and unreal.

“The Moses” by Michelangelo Buonarroti at San Pietro in Vincoli which differs greatly from the other sculptures decorating the Tomb of Pope Julius II. I came to the church early in the morning and there was nobody inside it but me.

Michelangelo’s “Pieta” which I noticed during my second visit to Saint Peter’s Basilica. By the way, despite the fact that it is located rather far from the isle and you need a very good camera to take a photo, the sculpture is absolutely amazing.

Argentine Tango full of passion and sensuality also will not leave you unchanged.

Nevertheless, from time to time it could be helpful to make an effort and use our imagination in order to find out how monuments of the past might have looked like in those days when Roman Culture reached its height.

On the one hand, during my first visit to Santa Maria Maggiore, the interiors of which are richly adorned with mosaics in Byzantine style, I tried to “deconstruct” it, metaphorically speaking, so as to appreciate the Beauty of the original church which dates back of the 5th century A.D.

On the other hand, while wandering around the Roman Forum, the place where people used to gather and discuss important issues, I had to “reconstruct” half-destroyed or even missing buildings.

To sum it up, on the whole, there is a variety of possibilities for those who are determined to succeed in studying Art. And if one of the methods mentioned above do not appeals to you, you should try another one.

To be continued...

Chapter II

Once Upon a Time

I decided to go from Minsk to Vilnius. Surprisingly, it turned out that it was not a tourist trip as I had expected, but a pilgrimage tour.

Firstly, when I passed through the Sharp Gate or Ostra Brama and entered the old part of the city, it dawned on me that there are a lot of churches in Vilnius. Suffice it to say that while walking from the Gate to the Vilnia River I visited Roman Catholic Church of St. Teresa in Baroque style, Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas in Neo-Byzantine style, Roman Catholic Church of St. Anna in Flamboyant Gothic and Brick Gothic styles and even Choral Synagogue in Moorish style, etc.

Moreover, there is a marvelous Roman Catholic Church of St. Peter and St. Paul on the other bank of the Vilnia River. Built in Baroque style, the church is richly decorated with sculptures and stucco reliefs inside and outside and thus it looks like a gorgeous porcelain casket. Needless to say, it completely took my breath away.

Secondly, despite the fact that the Memorial Museum of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis is a little off the beaten track, it is definitely worth visiting. To cut a long story short, Čiurlionis' Mysterious Paintings complemented by his Music which was being performed at the Museum made a strong impression on me.

Finally, when I returned to Minsk, I saw everything in a different light. Pardon me for mentioning it, but in spite of the fact that I had been studying in Minsk for about six years, I had never been in most of its churches until then. Wandering around the Church of Saints Simon and Helena, I realized that it bears striking resemblance to the Church of St. Anna in Vilnius. Furthermore, one day my friend took me to the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul and showed the place where the choir is standing during the service. I will never forget how enchanting it was.

To sum it up, it seems to me that nothing happens accidentally; on the contrary, everything has its purpose. All you need to do is believe in yourself and you will live happily ever after, I presume.

Literary Essay II

Now when most parts of the world are on lockdown because of the virus and I have to work from home, my flat reminds me of Monastic Cell and I imagine myself being a Medieval Scholar who describes historical events and ponders the future.

As we all know, religious issues were of utmost importance in those days. Suffice it to mention “The Confessions” of Saint Augustine in which he is examining his own life, talking about his yearning for truth and his struggle with worldly desires, discussing the nature of sin and telling us about his conversion to Christianity.

At the same time, Chivalric Romances describing adventures of knight-errant and praising Courtly Love for idealized lady were extremely popular in the Middle Ages. For instance, “Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart” by Chrétien de Troyes or “Roman de la Rose” two parts of which were written by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun respectively. When I saw highly detailed miniature from illuminated manuscript depicting the Lover entering the walled garden in search of the Rose symbolizing his lady’s love, I was dazzled by its refined Beauty.

As for love, it is said that there were the so-called “Lovers of Teruel” who lived in the 13th century and died young since the father of the bride-to-be was against their marriage and made his daughter marry another man. One can find their tombs in the Mausoleum of the Amantes in Teruel – a city in Aragon where, by the way, there are a lot of buildings designed in the Mudéjar style bearing traces of Islamic Art. Rumor has it that William Shakespeare may have been inspired by this story of forbidden love when writing “Romeo and Juliet”.

During the Carnival of Venice, which also dates back to the Middle Ages, people could do what they liked and wear what they wanted hiding their faces behind elaborate Masks so that nobody could find out their identity. After all, life is a dream and only death “organizes” it, gives it shape and meaning.

And yet, let us hope for the best and continue our “investigation” following the example of Franciscan friar William of Baskerville, the main character of Umberto Eco’s novel “The Name of the Rose”.

Philosophical Issues II

The importance of Neoplatonism is that it provided the philosophical framework that dominated Medieval thought until the 11th-12th centuries. And it continued to be a powerful instrument after the Reformation, during the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, etc. That is to say, it has been tremendously influential.

Firstly and most importantly, Neoplatonists thought of the Hierarchy of Being with Emanations from the One, the Divine Being, to Nous or Intelligence, Logos, then to the World Soul and, finally, to the Phenomenal World. Moreover, there was an upward movement, parallel to this downward Emanation, known as *Epistrophê* (conversion, turning back). And inasmuch as everything flows out from and returns to the One, this is the form of monism and pantheism.

To some extent there are also traces of the idea of the Divine Trinity in the Neoplatonic Cosmology. Plotinus says in “The Enneads” – “There exists a Principle which transcends Being; this is The One, whose nature we have sought to establish in so far as such matters lend themselves to proof. Upon The One follows immediately the Principle which is at once Being and the Intellectual-Principle. Third comes the Principle, Soul”. As for the problem of evil, according to Neoplatonism, there is no absolutely bad that has emanated from the One. Primary (natural) evil arises in the process of Emanation (certain levels are lower than the other), while secondary (moral) appears when people insert their affections on things below and follow their appetites rather than reason. In order to ascend to the Good, climb back up the ladder, one should start from contemplating nature so as to see the Order, unity and good in it then contemplate Form within one’s soul, proceed to the contemplation of Nous, the Cosmic Intelligence itself, the Form of all Forms and, finally, achieve the Ecstatic Reunion with the One. In this sense we should mention “The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa” by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

As far as Beauty is concerned, their approach is quite similar. Plotinus writes that “Beauty addresses itself chiefly to sight; but there is a beauty for the hearing too, as in certain combinations of words and in all kinds of music, for melodies and cadences are beautiful; and minds that lift themselves above the realm of sense to a higher order are aware of beauty in the conduct of life, in actions, in character, in the pursuits of the intellect; and there is the beauty of the virtues”. “Let us, then, go back to the source, and indicate at once the Principle that bestows beauty on material things. Undoubtedly this Principle exists; it is something that is perceived at the first glance, something which the soul names as from an ancient knowledge and, recognizing, welcomes it, enters into unison with it. But let the soul fall in with the Ugly and at once it shrinks within itself, denies the thing, turns away from it, not accordant, resenting it”. “All shapelessness whose kind admits of pattern and form, as long as it remains outside of Reason and Idea, is ugly by that very isolation from the Divine-Thought. And this is the Absolute Ugly: an ugly thing is something that has not been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by Reason, the Matter not yielding at all points and in all respects to Ideal-Form. But where the Ideal-Form has entered, it has grouped and coordinated what from a diversity of parts was to become a unity: it has rallied confusion into co-operation: it has made the sum one harmonious coherence: for the Idea is a unity and what it moulds must come to unity as far as multiplicity may. And on what has thus been compacted to unity, Beauty enthrones itself, giving itself to the parts as to the sum: when it lights on some natural unity, a thing of like parts, then it gives itself to that whole”.

Ambrose, an Archbishop of Milan, introduced Saint Augustine to Neoplatonism and that provided the vehicle for his thinking his way beyond dualism towards a consistent Christian Theism. As we have mentioned before, the Greeks in various ways seem to say that we are ruled by Reason, while St. Augustine thinks that we are not ruled by what we know – we are ruled by what we Love. God illumines the human mind, sheds light on it so as to enable us to see the Form, the nature of things in the world of Particulars. He writes in his “Confessions” – “And what did it profit me, that all the books I could procure of the so-called liberal arts, I, the vile slave of vile affections, read by

myself, and understood? And I delighted in them, but knew not whence came all, that therein was true or certain. For I had my back to the light, and my face to the things enlightened; whence my face, with which I discerned the things enlightened, itself was not enlightened”. The difference from Plato is that we do not grasp Forms in their transcendent status, whereas the difference from Aristotle is that we do not abstract Forms from our experience of Particulars.

The main lasting contribution of this early Medieval period is in defining and exploring philosophical issues having to do with the relationship between Religious Faith and Philosophical traditions of Antiquity. The basic distinction is between creation that Emanates from the very being of the Divine and Creation that have been brought into being out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. Thomas Aquinas, feeling that there is a potential in Aristotle’s “Metaphysics” for being compatible with Christianity, insists that God is not an essence, a form of all forms, but the source of existence. That is to say, it is not form or matter that courses existence (*materia signata*), but God is giving the Actuality of existence to a combination of form and matter which otherwise would be pure potential (*materia prima*).

Among the alternatives to Platonism one should also mention Nominalism and Conceptualism. What Nominalists are saying is that the classic kind of metaphysical explanation for the orderliness of nature and for cosmic justice that goes back to Anaxagoras’ *Nous*, Heraclitus’ *Logos* and the developing theory of forms is false. There are no real forms of transcendent or imminent sort, no abstract general ideas, no universal concepts and only Individuals exist (Roscellinus, William of Ockham). Conceptualists, on the contrary, insist that Universal Concepts exist within our minds and that we do think them separately from particulars (Peter Abelard).

There is a question as to whether or not we think of a Piece Art as an abstract object. It seems to me that Masterpieces of Art and Music cannot be viewed as a “collection of particulars” simply because one could compose a fugue according to the rules or press the keys correctly, and yet, the result could be rather disappointing. There must be some Form of Eternal Existence that “illuminates” artists, inspires them so that even their Particular “mistakes” contribute to the Beauty of their work.

Dialog of Arts II

The Middle Ages started from the Fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 A.D. With the process of destruction (wars, migrations, upheavals) came the opposite process of creation – the Emergence of the Cristian Religion. And one should not forget that the Early Christians had been persecuted and had had to hide in secret places – catacombs – until Constantine the Great legalized Christianity in 312 A.D. And as the Church organizes itself, a new world appears.

There were nobility living in their castles, peasants and the clergy – educated people who monopolized learning for a very long lime. That is to say, literature (scholarship) was kept alive by Monks in isolated Monasteries. The Church was the center of life and the main function of Music at this point was to Enhance the Spirit of Worship. That is why they preferred to use Vocal Music and were very careful about taking an instrument into the Church. Beautiful Body praised by the Greeks gives way to Spiritual Beauty and heresy becomes very real. In order to appreciate Medieval self-denial one might compare, for example, the Venus of Tauris and the Apse Mosaic from the Church of San Michele in Africisco in Ravenna depicting flat figures of Saints wrapped up in clothes (now in Bode Museum in Berlin).

It was Pope Gregory I (590-604) who organized Music and Texts for the Church and the so-called Gregorian Chant – Monophonic Liturgical Music accompanying Latin words of the Mass – appeared (for instance, “Alleluia: Vidimus Stellam”). Not only does the Liturgy establish the annual Religious Calendar, but it also regulates the order of service and provides specific words for every occasion. The text that parishioners hear every Sunday is called the Ordinary (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) and the opposite of the Ordinary is the Proper which consists of texts appropriate for special days such as feasts – Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, etc.

Music flourished not only in Churches but it was also sung and played outside it, in Courts. By the 12th and 13th centuries we have trouvères and troubadours travelling from kingdom to kingdom and entertaining people. Since the majority of actors and musicians in the Middle Ages were moving from place to place, their performances were staged on carts in public spaces and they used Magnificent Medieval Architecture as Theatrical Scenery, as it were. Interestingly enough, Secular Songs in the Middle Ages were performed not in Latin but in the Vernacular; they were Monophonic, and probably had an improvised accompaniment, and their main themes were not Spiritual Beauty and Self-Denial, but rather Love, War and Chivalry. And there was Instrumental Music and Dance Music, such as Estampie which was written in a triple meter and had a strong, fast beat.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.