

Phenomenon of Christian Art

Through the Prism of Ancient Russian Art

Marina Moiseenko

Department of Ethics

Faculty of Humanitarian and Social Sciences

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia

Miklukho-Maklay str., 10/2, Moscow, Russia, 117198

E-mail: mmv555@mail.ru

Abstract—The article deals with the specifics of the Christian art, which is based on the spiritual and moral values, through the prism of the features of the ancient art, the object of the national pride of the modern Russia. The author addresses the question of differences of the Christian art in general from the ancient one, conducts a comparative analysis of the Orthodox and Catholic art, reveals the specifics of the ancient art.

Keywords—Christian art; Ancient Russian art; icons; sculptures; Gothic art; Romanesque art; spirituality; morality

I. INTRODUCTION

At the present stage of social development, including educational development, the appeal to the spiritual and moral values is becoming particularly urgent because of their continuing relevance in the noble cause of the humanization of the social life. In this regard, an important role in the harmonization of the social relations and beneficial impact on the society is assigned to the humanistic art, including the Christian art, which is based on profoundness and spirituality.

II. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHRISTIAN ART AND ANCIENT ART

Identifying the specificity of the Christian art from the antique one, the founder of the national church archeology and museology N.V. Pokrovsky said that the center of gravity in the Christian art was transferred to the spiritual realm of a man. This material nature as a necessary element for the expression of ideas is important. The Christian art tends to spiritualization of nature, whereas the art of antiquity was based on the subordination of the spirit to this nature, sought to reconcile and even harmony of both natures (kalokagathia). Therefore, the antique art tended to plastic, and the Christian art "sided" to painting. A man in his full natural beauty without external cover is a favorite subject of plastics. Plastic, as N.V. Pokrovsky notes, reaches higher development only in those nations, where physical beauty prospers and is valued. Such was the Hellenic world.

In the Christianity, on the contrary, "spirit" comes to the fore and the material nature is only its instrument. Therefore, the nature of the Christianity more in line with the art of painting, which is by its nature less subject to the conditions

of the material world and gives more room for the expression of man's inner life. When compared with the Christian art, pagan art, in general, there is difference that the first has a universal character, and the second - the national. The Christian puts higher and unknown to the ancient world idea of "humanity" above the nationality, gives an overview of all the content of the art of the Christian peoples. At the same time, of course, a unity of source does not imply the identity in technical methods, artistic concept, and style. The Christianity gives a general outline on which "one can embroider various patterns." [5, p. 17-18].

The sculpture is the oldest form of art. Sensual, emotional impact on human sculpture is very large. The sculpture later became widespread in Catholicism, as the sensual experience of the Western church is built on the emotional and sensual basis. The Orthodox asceticism prohibits any sensuality in prayer, and is expressed in the symbolic language of the icon.

III. MAJOR TRENDS IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MAN IN THE CHRISTIANITY

E.G. Yakovlev highlights two major trends in the understanding of man in the Christianity: the first - a man is only an earthly, sinful creature. His earthly existence, the physical body is only a temporary shell, in which an immortal soul resides. Its real, physical existence is spiritless material. Only in prayer, communion with God its spiritual principle shines, that immortal soul that lives in his body. This position has influenced the art associated with the Western Christianity. Here is a disdain for earthly flesh, cultivation of human physical suffering, suffering of human sinful flesh. E.G. Yakovlev said that as a result there was a necessity for counter-movement in arts, in humanistic interpretation of a man, which was brought by the art of the Renaissance. The second trend: a person is earthly and divine being, these two faces can be connected in him. He is a bodily and spiritual being. Such an understanding of a human is characteristic for Byzantine Christianity and Orthodoxy in general. This position has influenced Byzantine art and the art of the Orthodox peoples. It combines harmony and even the spiritual and physical principles. [7, p.52-53].

If we turn to some differences in the details of the iconography of Orthodox art from the Catholic one (without considering the broad topic in detail), for example, the halo of the saint in the Catholic art symbolizes the divine reward from the above, and halo on Orthodox icons - the connection of two wills: the will of man, aspiring to holiness and God's will that match this aspiration and reborn the ever-burning light in every man. [1, p.54-55]). On the Orthodox icon of the Virgin and Child are necessarily dressed, they exposed only their faces, arms and baby's legs. Spiritual always prevails. The natives of spirituality are face and hands, their expressions and gestures. The Orthodox are against naming the Virgin Madonna. Catholic art cultivates the image of the Madonna, a lovely young woman in luxurious clothes, even in the interpretation of theme of the Assumption.

IV. SPECIFICS OF THE ANCIENT RUSSIAN ART

Turning to the specifics of the native Orthodox art, it should be noted, that the Orthodox art had its own specifics on the stage of Ancient Russia. E.N. Troubetzkoy in book 'Speculation in Colors' emphasized that the Ancient Russian art is a response to the question: "What is the meaning of life?" The universe itself must become the temple of God. In Ancient Russian icons the idea of world universal temple is expressed. The world universal temple expresses not reality, but ideal. The temple is approved by the internal catholic association, which should win a chaotic separation and enmity of the world and humanity. E.N. Troubetzkoy notes that the Byzantine dome of the temple represent the firmament covering the earth. Gothic spire expresses an irrepressible desire upward. And our domestic "bulb" embodies the idea of a deep moral burning to the sky, through which our earthly world is getting involved with otherworldly riches. This is the end of the Russian church - as if a fiery tongue, topped with a cross and tapering the cross. A bell tower of Moscow Ivan the Great resembles a giant candle burning in the sky over Moscow, many-domed church is associated with a huge multi-candle holder. Troubetzkoy raises the question of alignment in the Orthodox icon of asceticism with extremely vivid colors. What is the secret of combining the highest sorrow and supreme joy? Grieving, ascetic aspect is only of secondary importance. The most important in the icon, E.N. Troubetzkoy emphasizes, is of course, joy. But the person should be prepared to the joy through feat: he cannot enter into the temple of God as he is. Therefore, the icon cannot be written from living people. The icon is not a portrait, but the prototype of the future of mankind, its symbolic image. Thinning physicality in these images is a denial of biologism, raising the saturation of the flesh in the highest and unconditional commandment. E.N. Troubetzkoy emphasizes that icon painter owns the look of saint, the expression of his eyes. Comparing Vasnetsov's famous fresco 'The Joy of the Lord of the Righteous' in Kiev Cathedral of St. Vladimir with Andrei Rublev's fresco 'Procession of the Righteous in Paradise' of the Assumption Cathedral of Vladimir, Troubetzkoy stresses in the first case too natural character of the physical movement, in the second - the fact that an unusually concentrated force of hope is transmitted only with the eye movement. Movement, vanity, says Troubetzkoy, the

attributes of the earthy, 'otherworldly' world, the divine world is a stationary state of rest. [6 p.452-482]).

V. PHILOSOPHY OF ICONOGRAPHY OF THEOPHANES THE GREEK AND ANDREI RUBLEV

Philosophy of iconography of Andrei Rublev, the greatest Russian icon painter, is a harmony of spiritual and physical principles, philosophy of loving and forgiving people, sympathizers of the Savior. Godman, relieving contrast of heaven and earth, spirit and flesh; hymn of love, wisdom, humanity and beauty, in contrast to the concept of Byzantine icon painter Theophanes the Greek, who came to Russia in the XIV century and stay here forever. At the heart of the concept of Theophanes the Greek is Last Judgment, "deterrence" of sinful humanity, "meeting" drama, collision of two worlds: spiritual and physical. Salvation is only possible in extreme austerities. However, he softened at the end of life and images of saints became severely, but not as harsh. Valuing professionalism Theophanes the Greek, he was called a "philosopher", "great Greek", the Russian people could not accept his concept of relationship to the world. It was the reign of the Golden Horde. There was enough pain, fear and humiliation. So frightening motives of Theophanes' creativity found no response from the population. Andrei Rublev is a national phenomenon. Savior of Zvenigorod rite of Andrei Rublev is a creation that is the pride of the Tretyakov Gallery, appear before our eyes in the hall of the Ancient Russian art, it gives an idea of what God mother, wife, sister were praying - namely, merciful, giving hope and solace to Savior, easing the emotional pain. All Rublev's works are subordinate to the theme of the victory of good. In the famous Rublev's work "Trinity", three gentle angel prejudice the future destiny of the world in anticipation of sorrow, sacrifice and way of the cross. '... But it finds higher, final resolution in peaceful harmony. Some extraordinary purity radiates not only through the gazes of angels, but the whole structure of the painting... So beloved by our ancestors undulations and circular rhythms are brought here to the most perfect expression. Painting becomes almost music, theme of victory of good is perceived as music.' [2, p.137]).

VI. FEATURES OF ORTHODOX ICON

One of the essential features of the spiritual culture at the stage of Ancient Russia was the predominance of the irrational over the rational components. Because of the specific conditions of the historical development, the Ancient Russia has not developed a special attachment to the strict formal-logical way of development of being. It is no coincidence, that Ancient Russian icon of the late XIV - early XV centuries became, according to Troubetzkoy's witty note, a kind of philosophy, 'speculation in the colors'. The painters managed to bring unspeakable secrets of their world vision and spirituality. In figurative expression of G.P. Fedotov, Sophianic Russia is comparable with a dumb girl who sees so many secrets with her unearthly eyes and can tell them with signs only. The Russian icon is of something sophianic and sacred. [3, p. 44]). Turning to the subject of the icon, one can indicate the following levels of perception:

the first - a literal when a particular image is perceived; the second - a symbolic, which traced the main theological idea, implicit in the iconography; the third - didactic or instructive, where the moral and didactic aspect of perception enter into force; the fourth represents the highest stage - prayerful communion with the prototype [1, p.22]). In turn, there are the basic types of iconography of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, saints, angels, Orthodox holidays. The main types of the Saviour iconography are: Holy Face, Pantocrator, the Lord on the throne, Christ in Majesty, Christ Emmanuel. The main types of the iconography of the Virgin: Tenderness or Merciful (Eleousa) Guiding (Hodegetria), Praying (Oranta). All types of iconography are presented in the Russian Orthodox art.

VII. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ANCIENT RUSSIAN ART AND THE ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC ART

Describing the Russian culture, I.A. Ilyin, the Russian philosopher abroad, noted that the culture of the heart, the culture determined by the loving heart and contemplate. 'When I say a simple, living word 'heart', I remind thereby of the best and most accurate measure of the Russian soul and Russian culture' [4, p.399]).

In Ancient Russian art there were not acute dramatic features, characteristic for the Gothics, where images of saints, martyrs embodies the suffering, anguish, and pain. Sculpture of the apostles, the saints are full of passionate expression. As the N.A. Dmitriev notes: "gothics ... loved stories associated with martyrdom and torment: torture of Christ's by the executioners, crucifix, mourning, Job's suffering, massacre of the innocents. These violent scenes are full of grief expression, sometimes verging on exaltation. Artists do not spare the audience's peace of mind and neglect 'seemliness' without stopping in front of the naked, underlined image of misery' [2, p.108]).

In this art, a physical beauty, beauty as it was understood and expressed in antiquity, could not be given the former value. 'Gothics is alien to the love with the beauty of normal commensurate forms, harmonious proportions, and the desire to corporal lifelikeness, which are so characteristic of antique art. Gothics preferred expression of inspired ecstasy in ugly emaciated body.' [2, p.109]).

If we turn to the specifics of the Romanesque art, preceding Gothic, and sculptural images of saints and Savior, then we see, that the images of saints are rather harsh and vulgar, reminiscent the commoners. Jesus Christ represents the punishing force in the form of the formidable judge.

Ancient Russian Orthodox art is not peculiar of heart-breaking expression. The Russian art of the Middle Ages has no acute dramatic characteristic of the Gothics, nor its diversity of compositions, motifs, images of objects. The Russian art has more peace of mind, clarity. Bright starts, incorporated in the era of Kievan Rus, were persistent and passed through the centuries. The images of the saints, Jesus Christ produce a bright impression. They are beautiful and full of majestic dignity. The paintings of interiors of churches, in contrast to the Romanesque and Gothic churches have no frightening images of the animal fairytale

epic. Harmony and bright start are embodied in the architecture of the Russian Orthodox churches. Many churches were built in Russia and become a part of its landscape. The ancient architects chose the locations for the temples along the banks of waterways, on a hill, so that they are clearly visible to the travelers. The church organically entered the plains. They were not too high, gabled and extended, as the Gothic cathedrals. The temples were marked with the compactness of form, originality and uniqueness. It differed from the church of the Romanesque architecture, which created a temple-fortress, always ready to defend itself.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Amongst the masterpieces of antique art, pre-Mongolian icons occupy a special place - images of truly cosmic force: 'The Virgin Oranta' ('Inviolable Wall') in the apse of St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev. (The first half of the XI century) 'Angel with Golden Hair' - (12-early 13th cent.); 'Mother of God the Great Panagia' (the first third of the 13th century); 'Ustyug Annunciation' (1130-1140-ies), and many, many others. Not to mention the beautiful churches: Intercession on the Nerl (1165), Demetrius (90th of XII cent.) and the Assumption (XII cent.), cathedrals in Vladimir, St. George's Cathedral, Yuriev Monastery in Novgorod (1119), Saviour Church on Nereditsa near Novgorod (1198) and many other of more recent eras.

A deep spiritual and moral beauty of the Ancient Russian Orthodox art is a matter of national values and pride of the modern Russia.

Theme of love, as a method of approach to the world and deep moral burning, is enclosed in the Ancient Russian Orthodox art.

G.P. Fedotov, Russian philosopher abroad, stressed that 'The Face of Russia cannot be opened in only one generation, contemporary to us.' [3, p.44]).

It is necessary that the future closed in a living chain with the past.

Of course, the profoundness and spirituality are the basis of all the Christian art, but it has unique national specificities in the different cultures.

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