

Late Middle Ages and Renaissance: the forgotten contribution of Max Dvořák¹

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When mentioning Max Dvořák today, most scholars think of the concept of art history as intellectual history (*Geistesgeschichte*)² which dedicates particular attention to the inner and ideological drives of artistic creation. This phenomenon, developed from the 1890s onwards in the philosophy of thinkers such as Wilhelm Dilthey or Ernst Troeltsch, had a significant impact on other academic disciplines in the following decades.³ However, Dvořák's contributions, known under the suggestive title *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, actually represent only part of his last works which were brought together after his death in 1921 by two former students, Karl Maria Swoboda and Johannes Wilde, and published three years later under this title in order to emphasise Dvořák's *geistesgeschichtlicher* approach in these studies. It is therefore neither an explicit method nor a title formulated personally by the author. Julius von Schlosser remarked: '[The title] reflects the shift that occurred in German intellectual life around 1900 on the basis of the distinctions between the humanities and the natural sciences as they were drawn by [Heinrich] Rickert and [Wilhelm] Dilthey',⁴ thus indicating that this is not a phenomenon peculiar exclusively to

¹ This article emerges from a talk under the title *Spätmittelalter und Renaissance: Max Dvořáks vergessener Beitrag* held at the conference *The Vienna School of Art History III. Origins, Modifications, and Influences of its Theoretical Concepts*, 19-20 April 2023, organized by the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague.

² The term *Geistesgeschichte* and its variants will be used preferably to describe Dvořák's approach and the intellectual movement described below.

³ Henry Stuart Hughes suggests 'neo-romanticism or neo-mysticism' as possible definitions for this period (Henry Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930*, New York: Vintage Books, 1958, 34-5).

⁴ [Dieser Name zeichnet gut die Wendung der deutschen Geistigkeit um 1900, wie sie in Rickerts und Diltheys scharfer Abgrenzung des geschichtlichen vom naturwissenschaftlichen Denken zutage getreten war.] Julius von Schlosser, 'Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 13: 2, supplementary volume, 1934, 199 (transl. by Karl Johns, 'Julius von Schlosser, The Vienna school of the history of art – review of a century of Austrian scholarship in German', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 1, December 2009, 41-2 (<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/karl-johns-schlosser-trans-wienerschule-revised.pdf>)). Artur Rosenauer is somewhat sceptical of the title, which has become a buzzword, and claims that it has obscured rather than illuminated Dvořák's image (see Artur Rosenauer, 'Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck – Max Dvořák und seine Stellung zu Wickhoff und Riegl', in Stefan Krenn and Martina Pippal, *Wien und die*

Dvořák. The present article is in no way intended to claim that Swoboda's and Wilde's choice of title, allegedly influenced by Felix Horb,⁵ was a mistake or even a banality, nor is its purpose to question the fact that Dvořák evolved and therefore changed in the course of his career. The intention of this contribution is rather to shed new light on the scholar's early writings and to relate them to his later work.⁶ A too severe separation of the scholar's *œuvre* may lead to a lack of understanding of his thought. Even Swoboda and Wilde emphasised that although his late writings are a highly significant contribution, they are only an epilogue to his entire intellectual creations.⁷ It would therefore be a pity to only partially comprehend the valuable art-historical insights that Max Dvořák made throughout his life.

On this occasion, a few works of Dvořák's early period up to 1903 are briefly discussed. There is not enough space for a detailed analysis here,⁸ so the presentation is limited to a concentrated summary, with special attention to works that focus on the transition-period between the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance as well as their significance in the historical context. The aim is to show that Dvořák's early writings are perhaps closer to his *geistesgeschichtliches* thinking than is often assumed. Subsequently, these works will be placed in relation to the broader art-historical discussion in the period of their publication, namely the never-ending debate about the definition and delimitation of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as well as that of Van Eyck studies. While Dvořák's works are largely mentioned and appreciated in writings of his time, they have been almost completely forgotten after only a few decades. By means of a comparison with other contemporary studies – in this case the exemplary *Autumn of the Middle Ages* written by Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) –, it will be shown that Dvořák's contribution has more weight than is often assumed today. To better assess the reception of his works in the debates of the time, the analysis will primarily consult contemporary

Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode. Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte. Wien, 4.-10. September 1983, Vienna/Cologne/Graz: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf. Gesellschaft 1984, (45-52) 45).

⁵ Horb was another of Dvořák's pupils. See Hans Sedlmayr, 'Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte' (1958), in *Kunst und Wahrheit. Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Mittenwald: Mäander 1978, 81. It is interesting to observe that Horb was not a vehement defender of the *geistesgeschichtliche* method, but also tied in with Dvořák's initial approach (see Peter Gillgren, 'Felix Horb: Notes in the margins of Max Dvořák, Hans Sedlmayr and Erwin Panofsky', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 21, December 2019 (<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/gillgren.pdf>)).

⁶ For an international readership, it is difficult to trace most of Dvořák's written output, since, apart from a few exceptions, no translations into other languages exist. The text translated into most languages is *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei* (see footnotes 53 and 80).

⁷ See Karl Maria Swoboda and Johannes Wilde, 'Vorwort', in Max Dvořák, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Karl Maria Swoboda and Johannes Wilde, Munich: Piper 1929, VII.

⁸ The early work of Max Dvořák and his reading of the development of modern art is the subject of my dissertation project at the University of Salerno, which will be completed by the end of 2025.

reviews, which confirm how important Dvořák's thesis still was in the 1920s, albeit nobody appears to connect it to these topics nowadays.

Therefore, it is useful to look back at the beginning of his career,⁹ which the Viennese professor pursued so brilliantly and resolutely from the very outset – at least from an external point of view¹⁰. In 1892, Dvořák graduated from high school in his hometown Roudnice nad Labem in the Bohemian district of Litoměřice, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. He then studied in Prague for two years,¹¹ the nearest major city, where the Charles University had a distinguished faculty of philosophy. His teachers include Jaroslav Goll (1846-1929), Josef Emler (1836-1899) and Antonín Rezek (1853-1909), who were formative for his conception of history and methodological approach. Especially Goll, with whom Dvořák had remained in contact after his move to Vienna,¹² left a deep impression on his academic practices. The Czech historian is known for his method of working from the minor to the major, i.e., 'connecting partial problems with large historical perspectives' and for his gift of 'enlivening and visualising past events. Dvořák undoubtedly took over from Goll the fundamental direction of his aim, which manifested itself in the fact that he studied every artistic problem in connection with the general development'.¹³ Under Goll's influence, the young Dvořák opened

⁹ On Dvořák's childhood and the circumstances in which he grew up, see above all Karl Maria Swoboda, 'Vortrag zum 30. Todestag von Max Dvořák. Gehalten an der Universität Wien' (1951) and Hugo Rokyta, 'Max Dvořák und seine Schule in den Böhmisches Ländern', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 28: 3, 1974, 73-81 and 81-9. More recent and very informative is also Hans H. Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák (1874-1921). Von der historischen Quellenkritik zur Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte', in Karel Hruza, ed., *Österreichische Historiker. Lebensläufe und Karrieren 1900-1945. Band 2*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag 2012, 169-200 (for a general more extensive bibliography see footnotes 5-7 of the cited volume).

¹⁰ Jaromír Pečírka, a former student of Dvořák, published his correspondences with his teacher Jaroslav Goll and his former colleagues Josef Pekař and Josef Šusta, which attests to Dvořák's emotional states and concerns about his early career (Max Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění*, ed. by Jaromír Pečírka, Prague: Vyšehrad, 1943). Unfortunately, there is still no German or English translation of this publication, which is why I was able to solely read passages that appear in English articles (see Jindřich Vybíral, 'Why Max Dvořák did not become a professor in Prague', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 17, December 2017, 1-2 (<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/vybiral.pdf>); and Ingrid Ciulisová, 'Dvořák's Pupil Johannes Wilde (1891-1970)', *Umění/Art*, 60, 2012, 101-8). Pečírka is also the most important translator of Dvořák's German works into Czech.

¹¹ The biographical information is taken from Dvořák's *curriculum vitae*, written by his teacher Franz Wickhoff in 1904. It is kept in the archives of the Institute of Art History at the University of Vienna (Franz Wickhoff, *Curriculum vitae des Dr. Max Dvořák, vom 8. 3. 1904*, IKG, estate Dvořák, box 15, folder 8) and has recently been transcribed by Friedrich Polleroß (Friedrich Polleroß, 'Materialien zu tschechisch-österreichischen KunsthistorikerInnen im Archiv des Instituts für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien', *Umění/Art*, 67, 2019, (565-85) 570-1).

¹² Vybíral 2017, 4.

¹³ [Teilprobleme mit grossen historischen Perspektiven zu verbinden [...]sowie für seine Gabe], das vergangene Geschehen zu beleben und zu vergegenwärtigen. Die grundlegende

himself to the study of medieval history and learned to integrate Bohemian and Austrian local history into a universal European conception. The methodological applications of an exact source criticism as well as an objective interpretation of historical facts were already presupposed by Goll and logically retained the highest importance also in Vienna.

In Dvořák's curriculum, Franz Wickhoff reported: 'In 1894 he came to the University of Vienna and entered the preparatory course of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research, and in 1895 he was accepted as a full member of the said Institute'.¹⁴ After two years of study in Prague, Dvořák thus moved to the capital of the Habsburg Empire and transferred to the Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, where he initially continued to study history, although he became increasingly interested in art history, stimulated above all by his teachers Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905). While the relationship with the latter remained on a professional level and his influence bore fruit in later years,¹⁵ between the Bohemian student and Professor Wickhoff had developed a close friendship as well as an intensive collaboration, which is expressed by Dvořák's appointment as his assistant in 1898, and had been decidedly beneficial for his career. Wickhoff, to whom the exact philological study of sources was just as important as to Goll,¹⁶ is gladly described as a true humanist; his preferred periods were the Renaissance and classical antiquity,¹⁷ and his success of the *Wiener Genesis* (1895) was based more on an interest in the latter than in the early Middle Ages.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Wickhoff's influence on Dvořák was fundamental to his career, as can

Zielrichtung, die sich darin geltend machte, dass er jedes künstlerische Problem im Zusammenhang mit der allgemeinen Entwicklung studierte, hat Dvořák zweifellos von Goll übernommen.] Jaromír Neumann, 'Das Werk Max Dvořáks und die Gegenwart', *Acta Historiae Artium*, 8: 3-4, 1962, (177-213) 185 (translation is mine; this also applies to the following translations for which no further bibliographical reference is given).

¹⁴ Wickhoff 1904, cited after Polleroß 2019, 570.

¹⁵ See Otto Benesch, 'Max Dvořák. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der historischen Geisteswissenschaften', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 44, 1924, (159-97) 166-8.

¹⁶ See Schlosser 1934, 161, 170-3.

¹⁷ Schlosser refers to Wickhoff as a humanist and speaks figuratively of a 'Renaissancezeitalter der Wiener Schule' (see Schlosser 1934, 185 and 161); the description is also apt from this point of view.

¹⁸ Dvořák's first art-historical publication was a detailed and enthusiastic review of this work, as the title *Ein bahnbrechendes Werk* (A groundbreaking work) already suggests. He emphasised here that the manuscript had still grown out of ('noch emporgewachsen ist') the history of Roman art written by Wickhoff (see Max Dvořák, 'Ein bahnbrechendes Werk', *Politik*, 35: 311, 11 November 1896, 1-2).

be seen from his initial occupations with miniature painting, especially the *Gospel of John of Troppau*,¹⁹ and Dvořák's own words in Wickhoff's obituary.²⁰

In these years, Dvořák could be described as torn between historical and art-historical research:²¹ While his dissertation *Quellenuntersuchungen zu Cosmas von Prag* (Source research on Cosmas of Prague, 1897)²² and an article on the forgery of documents by the fifteenth-century Imperial Chancellor Kaspar Schlick (1901)²³ were still sternly historical and based on the application of diplomatic, during the same period he published several articles on art-historical topics. As already mentioned, Dvořák had remained in contact with Jaroslav Goll even after his move to Vienna. The latter was editor of the *Český časopis historický* (Czech Historical Journal), founded in 1895, which was one of the most important Czech humanistic media of the time. Thus, Dvořák wrote several times in this journal publishing his first art-historical studies. Between 1899 and 1902, he contributed with four articles that were significant precursors to his further research.²⁴ *The Library of the Augustinian Monastery in Roudnice. A contribution to miniature painting* (1900),²⁵ is from special importance for the present discourse²⁶ because it investigates a topic, on which Dvořák wrote contemporarily in German. In this article, he attempted to

¹⁹ Wickhoff mentioned it as the subject of his institutional work (Wickhoff 1904, cited after Polleroß 2019, 570). It is worth noting here that the focus on the study and cataloguing of miniature painting was an initiative taken by Wickhoff, although he otherwise hardly engaged with the northern European Middle Ages (see Schlosser 1934, 180).

²⁰ See Max Dvořák, 'Franz Wickhoff' (1909), in Dvořák 1929, 299-312 (originally published in *Biographisches Jahrbuch und deutscher Nekrolog*, 14, 1909 (1912), 317-26).

²¹ In his monograph published in German and Czech, Jakub Pavel emphasised that Wickhoff's appointment as his assistant indirectly 'enabled him to embark on the actual career of an art historian' [die eigentliche Laufbahn des Kunsthistorikers ermöglichte]. (Jakub Pavel, *Max Dvořák*, Brno: Edice Medailony, 1972, 37).

²² The dissertation has never been published.

²³ Max Dvořák, 'Die Fälschungen des Reichskanzlers Kaspar Schlick', *MIÖG*, 22, 1901, 51-107.

²⁴ Unfortunately, no researcher has yet undertaken the work of translating these texts into German or English, so it is very difficult for anyone who does not speak Czech to access them. In the above-mentioned article *Why Max Dvořák did not become a Professor in Prague*, Vybíral discusses the four publications in more detail. My reflections on them are therefore largely based on his summaries and my own limited attempts of translation (see Vybíral 2017, 5-7).

²⁵ Max Dvořák, 'Knihovna Augustiniánského kláštera v Roudnici. Příspěvek k dějinám malířství miniaturního', *Český časopis historický*, 6, 1900, 118-31.

²⁶ The others are *On the History of Bohemian Painting in the Age of Charles IV* (Dvořák, 'K dějinám malířství českého doby Karlovy', *CCH*, 5, 1899, 238-48); *The Ancient Beginnings of Medieval Illustration* (Dvořák, 'Antické počátky středověké ilustrace', *CCH*, 7, 1901, 13-30); and *Last Renaissance* (Dvořák, 'Poslední renaissance', *CCH*, 8, 1902, 30-51), not to be confused with a lecture given by Dvořák in 1912 at the Vienna Museum of Art and Industry (now MAK), published and commented by Hans Aurenhammer (see Hans H. Aurenhammer, ed, 'Die letzte Renaissance. Vortrag, gehalten am 22. Februar 1912 im österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie von Max Dvořák' and Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák und die moderne Architektur. Bemerkungen zum Vortrag „Die letzte Renaissance“ (1912)', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 50: 1, 1997, 9-21 and 23-40).

trace the origin of Bohemian painting during the regency of Charles IV and has found it in French art, which, however, didn't come to Prague as a consequence of the migration of artists themselves, but thanks to the circulation of French manuscripts that reached the North by contacts with Papal Avignon. In the aforementioned curriculum, Wickhoff named *Byzantine Influence on Trecento Miniature Painting* (1900)²⁷ as Dvořák's first art-historical publication, completely ignoring or overlooking *The Library of the Augustinian Monastery in Roudnice* and in general his Czech publications on art-historical topics, although they thematically fit into his career.²⁸ This biographical lacuna is decisive, in my opinion, for the lack of attention with which Dvořák's activity during his youth has been treated.²⁹

The long article *Byzantine Influence* represents the first major contribution in German by which Dvořák participated in current art-historical debates. Wickhoff intended to compile a catalogue of miniature painting in Austria and guided his student in this direction from the beginning.³⁰ Dvořák already had a trained eye and a precise vision, as he had proved in the antecedent Czech articles as well as in his former merely historical research, and was therefore on fertile ground. Wickhoff did not exaggerate when he called him 'one of the best experts on the miniatures of the late Middle Ages, at any rate the best in the field of German art research'.³¹ In this work published in 1900 in the *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, which continued the line of investigation taken by Wickhoff in the *Wiener Genesis*, Dvořák proved his brilliance: As in the following works,³² he applied his already established method, starting from basic facts, which he then brought together on the grounds of questions and individual observations. Dvořák

²⁷ Max Dvořák, 'Byzantinischer Einfluss auf die Miniaturmalerei des Trecento', *MIÖG*, 6, supplementary volume, 1900, 792-820.

²⁸ Vybíral draws attention to this, as well as to the thematic connection with his later studies. He also notes that the four articles are not mentioned in '[the] entire international research on Dvořák' (see Vybíral 2017, 7).

²⁹ In particular, Rosenauer and Aurenhammer have repeatedly drawn attention to this error (see Rosenauer 1984, 45; Rosenauer, 'Max Dvořák – Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte', in Max Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur Abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag 1995 (277-83), 283; Hans H. Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák, Tintoretto und die Moderne: Kunstgeschichte „vom Standpunkt unserer Kunstentwicklung“ betrachtet', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 49: 1, 1996, 9-40 (esp. 29-30); Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák und die Revision der Mittelalter-Kunstgeschichte', in Wojciech Bałus und Joanna Wolańska, eds, *Etablierung und Entwicklung des Faches Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland, Polen und Mitteleuropa*, Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN 2010, 291-313; but also Peter F. Barton, 'Marginalien zur Kunst- und Kirchengeschichte des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich*, 98, 1982, (21-58) 22; as well as Polleroß 2019, 570).

³⁰ See on this also Benesch 1924, 161.

³¹ [einer der besten Kenner der Miniaturen des späten Mittelalters, jedenfalls der beste im Bereich der deutschen Kunstforschung]. Wickhoff 1904, quoted after Polleroß 2019, 571.

³² In *The Illuminators* and *The Enigma* (see below), too, Dvořák worked 'from the concretely conceived minor into the summarising, powerful historical spaces encompassing major' [aus dem konkret erfaßten Kleinen ins Große, Zusammenfassende, mächtige geschichtliche Räume Umspannende]. (Benesch 1924, 162).

wanted to show – as the title suggests – that Byzantine painting has had a decisive influence on miniature painting in Italy.³³ Initially focusing on the three great book-making centres Bologna, Siena, and Naples, he observed that through the influence of Siena, which had been in close contact with France and sending painters throughout the peninsula, a fundamental lesson passed from Byzantine to Occidental art. While major innovations in thirteenth-century miniature had been coming from French artists, this suddenly changed in the following century:

[In the East,] depictions used to decorate manuscripts never ceased to be free creations of the artist's imagination without reference to a specific text passage. [...] This was different in the West. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, genre inventions were used either purely ornamentally or merely as a representation of a specific theological content. It was not until the Romantic ornamentation was dissolved and transformed in France that fantastic and bucolic figures once again assumed an independent and narrative value. In this context, late medieval Latin drollery is not only the manifestation of a local and temporally limited taste, but also and far more the product of a general change that took place in the West. And so, almost simultaneously and to a certain extent independently of France, we also find novelistic figures and scenes in Italy.³⁴

In the East, the ancient conception of the image as a closed section of nature had been retained and never abandoned. It is no coincidence, then, that this heritage had been adopted at a time when French artists of late Romanesque and early Gothic sculpture were attempting to create their sculptures in an overt, three-dimensional way. According to Dvořák, medieval European art had abandoned this view of the image over the centuries and was therefore unable to take over anything from Byzantine art. It was not until the Duecento, when it opened again to a conception of the image in the ancient (and modern) sense, that it could find useful

³³ This position is partly in accordance with Carl Friedrich von Rumohr's earlier assertions, who interprets the influence of Byzantine art on Italian art in consequence of the Fourth Crusade as an Italian Proto-Renaissance in his *Italienische Forschungen* (1827), but his theory was based on an interpretation of ethnopsychology, which Dvořák rejected (see Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen. Band I*, Berlin/Stettin: Nicolai'sche Buchhandlung, 1827, 282-355).

³⁴ [Man hörte nie auf [im Osten] zum Schmucke der Handschriften Darstellungen zu verwenden, welche ohne Bezug auf eine bestimmte Textstelle freie Schöpfungen der Phantasie des Künstlers gewesen sind [...]. Anders im Westen. Im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert wurden da genrehafte Erfindungen entweder nur rein ornamental oder nur als Darstellung eines bestimmten theologischen Inhaltes verwendet. Erst als in Frankreich das romantische Ornament aufgelöst und umgestaltet wurde, bekamen phantastische und bukolische Figuren wiederum einen selbstständigen und erzählerischen Wert. In dieser Beziehung ist die spätmittelalterliche lateinische Drolerie nicht nur die Manifestation einer lokal und zeitlich begrenzten Geschmacksrichtung, sondern daneben und weit mehr das Product einer allgemeinen Wandlung, welche sich im Westen vollzogen hat. Und so finden wir auch in Italien fast gleichzeitig und zum Theil unabhängig von Frankreich novellistische Gestalten und Scenen.] Dvořák 1900, 803.

inspiration in the East. This happened contemporarily in Italy and in France: in the former case, led by the Sienese, in miniature painting, where Dvořák observed the sudden appearance of ‘naked figures that ride on various animals, warriors dressed only in fluttering cloaks and fighting or hunting, then again deer drinking from a fountain, parrots swaying on the tendril ornament, strange allegorical figures in antique costume and with antique attributes, putti climbing around on the mouldings’.³⁵ In France, instead, the change had its beginning in sculpture, where it ‘is perceivable in Burgundy and Languedoc, in Poitou and Bamberg, thus in those regions that can be considered the centres of the new art movement, not at all in regions directly connected to the trading routes towards the East’.³⁶

In his next work, which can be seen as a continuation of these investigations, Dvořák proceeded in a similar way. It was his habilitation treatise *The Illuminators of John of Neumarkt* (1901).³⁷ Here, too, his approach was ‘typical of an art historian trained in the methods of historical science’, through an ‘advancement in concentric circles to international interweaving, starting from a group of Bohemian manuscripts’.³⁸ Dvořák first wanted to prove the influence of French miniature painting on late medieval Bohemian book-writers, who clumsily orientated themselves on the works brought to them by purchases. The thesis formulated in *The Library* was thus taken up here again. At the beginning of the essay, he described the political and social connections between Prague and Avignon and emphasised the sudden importance of both cities in the fourteenth century. In the chapter describing the introduction of a “new style” in the Bohemian lands, Dvořák left plenty of room for political, social, and cultural excesses under the reign of Charles IV.³⁹ He meticulously described political and social changes between Italy and northern as well as southern France to explain the stylistic consequences in the

³⁵ [Nackte Figuren, welche auf verschiedenen Thieren reiten, Krieger nur mit flatternden Mänteln bekleidet und kämpfend oder jagend, dann wiederum Hirsche, welche aus einem Brunnen trinken, Papageien, welche sich auf den Rankenblättern wiegen, merkwürdige allegorische Figuren im antiken Costüm und mit antiken Attributen, Puttos, welche auf den Zierleisten herumklettern] Dvořák 1900, 804.

³⁶ [... in der Bourgogne und Languedoc, in Poitou und Bamberg bemerkbar, also in jenen Gegenden, die als Mittelpunkte der neuen Kunstbewegung gelten können, keinesfalls in Gebieten, die unmittelbar an den Handelsstrassen nach dem Osten gelegen sind.] Dvořák 1900, 819.

³⁷ Max Dvořák, ‘Die Illuminatoren des Johann von Neumarkt’, *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 22, 1901, 35-127.

³⁸ [typisch für einen in den Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft geschulten Kunsthistoriker[, durch ein] Vordringen in konzentrischen Kreisen zur internationalen Verflechtung, ausgehend von einer Gruppe böhmischer Handschriften]. Irma Emmrich, ‘Max Dvořák und die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte’, in Max Dvořák, *Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by Irma Emmrich, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun. 1989, (311-58) 327.

³⁹ For a more detailed vision of the cultural and political meaning of emperor Charles IV as well as his relations to other European rulers see Pierre Monnet, *Charles IV : un empereur en Europe*, Paris: Fayard, 2020; Jiří Kuthan and Jan Royt, *Charles IV: Emperor and King of Bohemia – visionary and founder*, Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2018; and Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt, eds, *Prague: the Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437*, exhibition catalogue, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006 (esp. the first three chapters).

miniatures. In these reflections was also space for *geistig* (as in *geistesgeschichtlich*) observations: 'Scholasticism overcame the medieval syncretism in thinking and writing, and things found and thought disseminated by virtue of their own content, connecting strangers just as closely as social and political affiliations. As a result, books and schools acquired the immense importance that is characteristic of the modern era'.⁴⁰ The humanistic and intellectual interests of the imperial chancellor John of Neumarkt assumed a prominent role too.⁴¹ One could almost think that the most decisive factor for Dvořák was not the artistic one per se, but external influences, as a result of which stylistic developments appeared. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that Dvořák, especially in his younger years, always emphasised the independence of art studies and, while he drew on explanations from other disciplines, never presented them as the core thesis of his theories.⁴² In fact, Dvořák tended to anticipate the socio-cultural situation of his research area, but eventually found convincing formal arguments for his thesis:

The emergence of an independent decorative style from purely calligraphic motifs is reminiscent of old things and proves that at the beginning of the fourteenth century in Bohemia, at least where people were most concerned with the production of manuscripts, no technical tradition existed. There was no routine and no colour recipe. [...] The use of naturalistic motifs as well as the striving for a less primitive technique can be attributed to the French influence. Naturally, at first only motifs that could be easily executed in a calligraphic pen painting were used. But from one manuscript to the next, there were more and more attempts to imitate the entire decorative ornamentation of the French models in ornaments and colours.⁴³

The third chapter of *The Illuminators* was rather detached from the context of Bohemia. It could nearly be seen as an introduction to his next work on the art of the Van Eyck brothers, for it explored the question so important to Dvořák about the

⁴⁰ [Die Scholastik hat den mittelalterlichen Synkretismus im Denken und Schreiben überwunden und das Gefundene und Erdachte verbreitete sich kraft des eigenen Inhalts, fremde Menschen ebenso eng verbindend wie soziale und politische Zugehörigkeit. Dadurch erlangen Bücher und Schulen jene ungeheure Bedeutung, welche für die Neuzeit charakteristisch ist.] Dvořák 1901, 43.

⁴¹ See Dvořák 1901, 85-8.

⁴² In this context, it is worth thinking of the distaste with which Dvořák spoke of Henry Thode's monograph on Giotto (see Dvořák 1901, 105; and Aurenhammer 2012, 189).

⁴³ [Die Entstehung eines selbstständigen decorativen Stils aus rein kalligraphischen Motiven erinnert an alte Sachen und beweist, dass am Anfang des XIV. Jahrhunderts in Böhmen wenigstens dort, wo man sich nun am meisten mit der Herstellung von Handschriften beschäftigte, keine technische Tradition vorhanden war. Man hatte keine Routine und keine Farbenrecepte. [...] Dem französischen Einflusse ist die Verwendung der naturalistischen Motive wie auch das Bestreben nach einer weniger primitiven Technik zuzuschreiben. Naturgemäß werden zunächst nur Motive verwendet, welche in einer kalligraphischen Federmalerei leicht ausgeführt werden konnten. Doch von einer Handschrift zur anderen mehren sich die Versuche, den gesamten decorativen Schmuck der französischen Vorlagen in Ornamenten und Farben nachzuahmen.] Dvořák 1901, 50.

origin of the “new” art that permeated all northern Europe. This should, in the scholar’s opinion, not simply be dismissed with the explanation of Italian influences arising from the papal residence in Avignon or the interest of some Nordic sovereign in Italian humanism. Even the new sense of religiosity that developed in the late Middle Ages and moved from philosophical-dogmatic contemplation to a more subjective and sentimental level was not sufficient as an explanation for the author. Reaffirming his theory from *Byzantine Influence*, he found the origin of a new artistic feeling and new painterly problems in the migration of the antique image-conception through Byzantine art, at first in Siena, and then in Naples, Avignon, and the rest of Europe. While French miniature until the middle of the fourteenth century maintained ‘that austere stylised style which emerged in the thirteenth century’,⁴⁴ Italian painting was freeing itself from the medieval heritage of a monumental and pompous style by the inventions of Giotto, who found the way from a gothic-graphical style to a plastic-pictorial style inspired by the antique tradition. This new conscious depiction of each figure resulted in ‘not only designing each individual figure as a consequent three-dimensional impression, as faithful a repetition of nature as possible, but also in the entire picture as a section of nature’.⁴⁵ In his detailed necrology of Dvořák, Otto Benesch noted that in this work he ‘presents one of the greatest problems of late medieval art: The spread of the Giottesque style in the North, in an entirely new and surprising light’.⁴⁶ These transformations permeated French art during the papal period in Avignon and joined in a unique way in Bohemian miniature, as stated by Dvořák in the fourth chapter:

Towards the middle of the century, in Bohemia and Moravia, eclectic, accidental models were still being copied everywhere; the technical skills on which these imitations are based are primitive, the artistic vision and intentions are medieval. But at this time, the rapid, almost feverish reception of foreign culture begins, and about ten years later we find illuminators who master an art taught in one of the most important art centres of the West. It cannot be said that there was a successive penetration and transfer of foreign artistic styles; for the first works in the new style are as distinctly imitative in every respect and at the same time as personal as the endeavours of those people who possessed a European education in Bohemia and in the East in general at that time.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ [jenen strengen stilisirenden Stil, welcher im XIII. Jahrhundert entstanden ist] Dvořák 1901, 61.

⁴⁵ [nicht nur jede einzelne Figur als consequent auf dreidimensionalen Eindruck hinausgehende, möglichst treue Wiederholung der Natur sondern auch das gesamte Bild als einen Ausschnitt aus der Natur zu gestalten.] Dvořák 1901, 62.

⁴⁶ [eines der größten Probleme der Kunst des späten Mittelalters: die Verbreitung des giottesken Stils im Norden, in ganz neuem, überraschendem Lichte darstellt] Benesch 1924, 161.

⁴⁷ [Um die Mitte des Jahrhunderts wurden in Böhmen und Mähren noch überall eklektisch zufällige Vorlagen nachgemalt; das technische Können, welches diesen Nachahmungen zu Grunde liegt, ist primitiv, das künstlerische Sehen und Wollen mittelalterlich. Doch in dieser

After more than twenty years since *The Illuminators'* publication, Benesch remarked that 'even if a later time may correct its results in detail, shift them with new factual material, the basic outlines of historical knowledge seized with ingenious intuition remain untouched and the work will preserve its imperishable validity as a self-contained intellectual document for all time'.⁴⁸ Like other critics,⁴⁹ Benesch saw especially in this work, which bore such an inconspicuous title, 'that broadness and universality of spiritual orientation which constitutes the deepest basic trait of his being and characterises his spiritual trajectory from beginning to end'.⁵⁰ As can be seen, the richness of Dvořák's early thinking was very well recognised by his contemporaries. The much more exigent question is, why this perception changed over the last hundred years, but it must be left to another occasion to discuss these complicate dynamics.

For a comprehensive understanding of Dvořák's early work, his major writing from this period must not go unmentioned. It was his soon after published and longest essay *The Enigma of the Art of the Van Eyck Brothers* (1903),⁵¹ in which he extended the universal-historical problem examined in *The Illuminators*.⁵² While the interrelationship between northern and southern European art during the Trecento was the main focus of the two articles mentioned above, *The Enigma* concentrated on

Zeit beginnt bereits die rasche, geradezu fieberhafte Reception der fremden Cultur und etwa zehn Jahre später finden wir Büchermalere, welche über eine Kunst verfügen, die in einem der wichtigsten Kunstcentren des Westens erlernt wurde. Von einem successiven Eindringen und Herüberleiten von fremden Kunstrichtungen kann keine Rede sein; denn die ersten Werke in dem neuen Stile sind so ausgesprochen in jeder Beziehung imitativ und zugleich persönlich wie die Bestrebungen derjenigen Leute, welche damals in Böhmen und im Osten überhaupt eine europäische Bildung besessen haben.] Dvořák 1901, 94.

⁴⁸ [mag auch eine spätere Zeit seine Resultate im einzelnen berichtigen, durch neues Tatsachenmaterial verschieben, die mit genialer Intuition erfaßten Grundzüge der geschichtlichen Erkenntnis bleiben unangetastet und das Werk wird seine unvergängliche Geltung als in sich geschlossenes Geistesdokument für alle Zeit bewahren] Benesch 1924, 161. This statement is confirmed by Aurenhammer (see Aurenhammer 2012, 173).

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Köhler speaks of a 'germ of a new conception' [Keim einer neuen Auffassung] (Wilhelm Köhler, 'Max Dvořák', *MIÖG*, 39, 1923, (314-20) 319) and Pavel of 'hitherto unimagined connections in the sweeping panorama of the medieval art history of western Christianity' [bisher nie geahnte Zusammenhänge in dem weitausladenden Panorama der mittelalterlichen Kunstgeschichte des westlichen Christentums] (Pavel 1972, 37).

⁵⁰ [jene Weite und Universalität der geistigen Orientierung, die den tiefsten Grundzug seines Wesens ausmacht und seine geistige Bahn vom Beginn bis zum Ende kennzeichnet.] Benesch 1924, 162.

⁵¹ Max Dvořák, 'Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 24, 1903, 160-317. It continued to be his most famous work until the third decade of the twentieth century (see Campbell Dodgson, 'Max Dvorak', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 38: 217, April 1921, 205). This essay has not yet been translated into another language. In the frame of my master's thesis, I made a partial translation into Italian (see Sabrina R. Buebl, *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck di Max Dvořák: un tentativo di correzione dei canoni storico-artistici ottocenteschi*, master's thesis, University of Salerno, 2022).

⁵² See Schlosser 1934, 199.

the construction of a genetic chain, which in the second half of the fourteenth century was characterised by an intermingling of ancient formal values with those of the time, and through the North-South exchange led to results from which the style of the Van Eyck brothers emerged. In this context, Swoboda emphasised that the strictly historical method to which that investigation was subject still formed the basis of art-historical research in the 1960s⁵³ (and in some respects even today). What was new, was Dvořák's view on European art of the fourteenth century and especially that north of the Alps. It was that aspect that made this "trilogy" seminal for the state of research at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ As can be seen, *The Enigma* was the outcome of research that Dvořák had already been engaged with for several years; the art of the Van Eycks was also the subject of his habilitation lecture of 15 May 1902, entitled *Die Grundlagen des Stiles des Jan van Eyck* (The Foundations of the Style of Jan Van Eyck).⁵⁵ Dvořák addressed various aspects in his thorough investigation and wrote a crucial text for the then still juvenile discipline of art history. In the introduction of *The Enigma*, Dvořák examined the historiographic reasons that had given birth to the myth of the novel naturalism of the Van Eyck brothers. Doing so, the art historian not only demolished traditional chroniclers such as Giorgio Vasari or Carel van Mander, but also harshly criticised more contemporary colleagues such as Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Carl Schnaase, Jakob Burckhardt or Louis Courajod. Besides the randomly underlined individualistic and realistic representations in Van Eyck's works, Dvořák excoriated:

Nature and individuality! In these two words the answer to the problem of the emergence of modern art was sought, an answer so familiar to us today from Burckhardt's poetic apotheosis. Through a simple changez-passez, the problem of the history of development was given a somewhat broader cultural-historical wording, with which it was thought to be solved. And since paving stones can be found for every new road, volumes were soon written of variations on the theme: "the world and man were discovered" or "a new ability to enjoy life and nature developed" without more being said about the actual historical problem than is contained in these main sentences. We owe a mass of artistic descriptions and witty ideas, much stimulation, and even more entertainment to the literature relevant here; but scientifically it is still on the level of, for example, the "Travels of Anacharsis the Young". These are descriptions of customs and culture that were created half as a

⁵³ See Karl Maria Swoboda, 'Preface', in Max Dvořák, *Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Art*, ed. and transl. by Randolph J. Klawiter, Notre Dame (IN): University of Notre Dame Press 1967, (XIX-XXX) XXIV.

⁵⁴ See Hans H. Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák (1874-1921)', in Ulrich Pfisterer, ed, *Klassiker der Kunstgeschichte. Von Winckelmann bis Warburg. Band I*, Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck 2007, (214-26) 215.

⁵⁵ The corresponding manuscript is collocated in Dvořák's estate at the Institute of Art History of the University of Vienna. I am currently working on an examination and publication of this text which has been presented for the first time during the annual meeting of the Arbeitskreis Niederländischer Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte held on 29-31 October 2023 in Aachen.

lamentation of the present for the past, half as an echo of new ideas on the philosophy of the history of mankind.⁵⁶

He thus opened his article on a strictly scientific level and clearly defined the conditions under which the discipline should have been exercised.⁵⁷ As a reviewer of the new edition of *The Enigma* from 1925 observed: 'It is the methodological questions that give the book its importance'.⁵⁸ Incidentally, Dvořák also pursued this goal in the *Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen*, a supplement of the *MIÖG* published by his teacher Franz Wickhoff from 1904.⁵⁹ The aim of this platform was, in Wickhoff's words, 'to place art history in the ranks of the other historical sciences by treating the topics scientifically. For this has by no means happened yet'.⁶⁰ In connection with *The Enigma*, these words are fundamental, for they shape the intentions of its writer. It is easy to understand why Dvořák devoted himself precisely to such an 'enigmatic' and much disputed topic, because in his eyes it has not previously been

⁵⁶ [Natur und Individualität! In diesen zwei Worten suchte man die Antwort auf das Problem der Entstehung der modernen Kunst, eine Antwort, die uns heute aus der poetischen Apotheose Burckhardts so geläufig ist. Man hat durch ein simples Changez-passez dem entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Problem einen etwas weiter gefaßten kulturhistorischen Wortlaut gegeben, womit man es gelöst zu haben vermeinte. Und da man für jede neue Straße Pflastersteine finden kann, wurden bald Bände geschrieben von Variationen über das Thema: „man entdeckte die Welt und den Menschen“ oder „es entwickelte sich eine neue Fähigkeit, das Leben und die Natur zu genießen“, ohne daß zumeist über das eigentliche geschichtliche Problem mehr darin gesagt worden wäre, als in diesen Hauptsätzen enthalten ist. Wir verdanken der hier einschlägigen Literatur eine Fülle kunstreicher Schilderungen und geistreicher Einfälle, viel Anregung und noch mehr Unterhaltung; doch wissenschaftlich steht sie noch auf der Höhe etwa der «Reise des jungen Anacharsis». Es sind Sitten- und Kulturschilderungen, die halb als eine Klage der Gegenwart um die Vergangenheit, halb als ein Echo neuer Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit entstanden sind.] Dvořák 1903, 164.

⁵⁷ Rosenauer observes that the introduction anticipates many of the approaches presented in the ten years older essay *Über die dringendsten methodischen Erfordernisse der Erziehung zur Kunstgeschichtlichen Forschung* (On the Most Urgent Methodological Requirements of Education in Art-historical Research, 1914) (see *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 27: 1, 1974, 7-19; and Rosenauer 1984, 46).

⁵⁸ [Die methodischen Fragen sind es, die dem Buche seine Bedeutung verleihen.] Klaus Berger, 'Max Dvořák. Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck' (review), *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Kunstwissenschaft*, 22: 3, 1928, (361-3) 362.

⁵⁹ Under Wickhoff's direction, Dvořák published fifteen contributions. After his teacher's death in 1909, he himself took over the editorship. I had the possibility to present the dynamics of the creation and the main objectives of this methodological institution under the title *Defining a Discipline: «Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen» as a Critical Institution for the Vienna School* during the conference *Art History and Its Institutions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*, organized at the Department of Art History of the Jagiellonian University of Cracow and held from 28-30 September 2023.

⁶⁰ [durch wissenschaftliche Behandlung der Themen die Kunstgeschichte in die Reihe der übrigen historischen Wissenschaften einzuordnen. Denn das ist noch keineswegs geschehen.] Franz Wickhoff, 'An die Leser!', *Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen. Beiblatt der MIÖG*, 1: 1, 1904, 1.

confronted by anyone in an objective and scientific manner.⁶¹ The choice using the term 'enigma' in the title might almost be interpreted as a sarcastic note, because for Dvořák there was no enigma to solve, just a succession of different influences and developments to retrace.⁶² This also explains the sometimes very rigid way in which he tried to separate Jan's hand from that of his older brother Hubert at the *Ghent Altarpiece*. To do this, he applied the method developed by Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891), which Wickhoff greatly appreciated and through whom the practice was disseminated in the Vienna School.⁶³ Likewise, the second part of the study is strictly divided into four periods or 'styles', which are intended to explain logically and causally how art changed from the idealistic Gothic style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to the naturalism typical of Jan Van Eyck. While his realistic depiction of forms had been seen by Dvořák's predecessors as a sudden leap, an innovation or, in some cases, even a miracle of artistic genius, the young scholar drew an evolutionist chain of development in whose elements the formal changes went hand in hand and could be traced continuously. From a general point of view, Dvořák stated: 'Under the influence of exact research methods we gradually learned – consciously or unconsciously – never to regard a fact in scientific investigations as an isolated occurrence but always as a link in a certain sequence of facts of the same or related kind'.⁶⁴ Still, this chain was by no means linear, but had the most diverse ramifications, like the course of a river.⁶⁵ In the essay, he tried to reconstruct this sequence of facts to arrive at the art of Jan Van Eyck. In this specific case, he concluded:

⁶¹ The historiographical context in which *The Enigma* originates will be discussed more in detail below. For a sketch of the debate on the art of the Van Eyck brothers between the nineteenth century and the time of Dvořák, I refer to Bernhard Ridderbos, 'From Waagen to Friedländer', in Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne Van Buren and Henk Van Veen, eds, *Early Netherlandish Painting. Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2005, 218-51; for the evolution of the debate in the twentieth century see Anne Hagopian Van Buren, 'Thoughts, Old and New, on the Sources of Early Netherlandish Painting', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 16: 2/3, 1986, 93-112.

⁶² In his 1902 opening lecture on Jan Van Eyck, Dvořák critically referred to Oskar Eisenmann's *Die Brüder van Eyck*, where he indicated the painters as an 'unsolved enigma' [ungelöstes Räthsel] (see Oskar Eisenmann, 'Die Brüder van Eyck', in Robert Dohme, *Kunst und Künstler des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit: Biographien und Charakteristiken, Erste Abtheilung. Kunst und Künstler Deutschlands und der Niederlande bis gegen die Mitte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Folge No. 5 und 6*, Leipzig: E. A. Seemann 1875, (5-23) 5; for Dvořák's lecture see footnote 55).

⁶³ See Schlosser 1934, 160-1 and 164-7. For a more detailed discussion of the Morellian method in connection with the Vienna School, see Gianni Carlo Sciolla, 'Il metodo morelliano e la "Scuola di Vienna". 1880-1915: una traccia di ricerca', in Giacomo Agosti, ed, *Giovanni Morelli e la cultura dei conoscitori. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Bergamo, 4-7 giugno 1987. Volume 2*, Bergamo: Pierluigi Lubrina Editore 1993, 371-87.

⁶⁴ [Unter dem Einflusse der exakten Forschungsmethoden lernten wir nach und nach – bewußt oder unbewußt – in wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen eine Tatsache nie als eine vereinzelt erscheinende sondern stets als ein Glied in einer bestimmten Aufeinanderfolge von Tatsachen derselben oder verwandter Art zu betrachten.] Dvořák 1903, 167.

⁶⁵ Dvořák 1903, 265.

The secret of this principle, the secret of the new art, lies in the development of art among the new cultural civilizations [*Kulturvölker*] that have taken over the ancient heritage in Central Europe. [...] If we look at the history of these civilizations, we can observe that their spiritual [*geistig*] life and their whole culture developed in a completely continuous way. What was founded in the universities and in the higher social classes in France matured in the first centuries of modern times in the Netherlands and in Germany, but from the Netherlands this cultural legacy of modern times came to England, where it is still preserved today. Almost all currents that have given new content to the spiritual life or material culture of the Middle Ages and modern period north of the Alps are a fruit of this unified and progressive evolution.⁶⁶

With these convictions, Dvořák, who had just begun as a private lecturer at the University of Vienna, had been strongly influenced by his two teachers Wickhoff and Riegl.⁶⁷ While the former was convinced of an art-historical development that can be traced through the evolution of naturalism and saw its completion in contemporary Impressionism, Alois Riegl had striven for a theory of art history as a genetic-progressive evolution of forms that developed in an immanent way similar to natural-historical phenomena. Certainly, Dvořák had been strongly affected by the ideas of his teachers and did not doubt their validity, yet an independent core already seeped through in this work as well as in the preceding ones. Although he consistently applied the methods of his masters here, Dvořák nevertheless went beyond these and paid particular attention to the cultural, historical and *geistige* situation in which the works analysed were created. As much as he tried to explain the stylistic transformation through autonomous development, he sometimes contradicted himself and tried to 'support it with excursions into political, and above all into economic and cultural history'.⁶⁸ One repeatedly encounters

⁶⁶ [Das Geheimnis dieses Prinzips, das Geheimnis der neuen Kunst besteht in der Entwicklung der Kunst bei den neuen Kulturvölkern, die in Mitteleuropa das antike Erbe übernommen haben. [...] Wenn wir die Geschichte dieser Völker betrachten, so können wir beobachten, daß sich das geistige Leben und die ganze Kultur bei ihnen vollkommen kontinuierlich entwickelte. Was auf den Universitäten und in den höheren sozialen Schichten in Frankreich begründet wurde, reifte in den ersten Jahrhunderten der Neuzeit in den Niederlanden und in Deutschland, aus den Niederlanden kam aber dieses kulturelle Vermächtnis der modernen Zeit nach England, wo es noch heute bewahrt wird. Fast alle Strömungen, die dem geistigen Leben oder der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit nördlich der Alpen einen neuen Inhalt gegeben haben, sind eine Frucht dieser einheitlichen und fortschreitenden Evolution.] Dvořák 1903, 316. This opinion is indicative for Dvořák's conviction that the art of the past is connected to the present.

⁶⁷ Rosenauer points out that *The Enigma* is created 'still under the eyes of the two art historians' [noch unter den Augen der beiden Kunsthistoriker] (see Rosenauer 1984, 45).

⁶⁸ [durch Exkurse in die politische, vor allem aber in die Wirtschaft- und Kulturgeschichte zu stützen.] Rosenauer 1984., 48. Aurenhammer too observes this ambivalent attitude (see Aurenhammer 2012, 189-90). Although Neumann sees *The Enigma* as an 'outsider' in

depictions 'of the *geistesgeschichtliche* currents that move the times'. Yet, as in *The Illuminators*, these were still parallels, not overlaps, with the representations of the development of art.⁶⁹

However, this dichotomy should not be regarded as a weakness or an obstacle to better understanding Dvořák's career or measuring the scientific validity of his work. It rather underlines how important it is to always analyse not only works of art but also art historians in their historical context. The fact that Swoboda and Wilde reprinted *The Enigma* in the second volume of his collected works, directly after *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, emphasises the prominent position it still held for art-historical research in the mid-1920s.⁷⁰ In this regard, it should be stressed once again that when *The Enigma* appeared in 1903 in the *Jahrbuch* of the imperial collections, Dvořák was a young scholar in the early stages of his academic career. He was not yet thirty years old, Wickhoff's assistant for five years and had only just been admitted as a private lecturer. His professional career owed an immense debt to *The Enigma*, for it opened the doors to continental prestige and active participation in scholarly debates.⁷¹ He therefore couldn't write his work with the freedom reserved for a respected and experienced scholar. Moreover, the changes between the last years of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century had been drastic, not only in the academic sphere, but also from a socio-political as well as psychological point of view. In 1903, the discipline of art history was still in a less independent phase than ten years later. At the same time, the Bohemian scholar's affinity with the cultural and *geistige* aspects of history had been perceptible to many during Dvořák's lifetime. It was not without reason that Wickhoff, to whom he was very close, claimed that 'it was perhaps a pity that Dvořák had become an art historian and not a cultural historian'.⁷² And Wilhelm Köhler, who shared this anecdote with posterity in his necrology of Dvořák, stated himself that Dvořák was a historian through and through, for his *Weltanschauung* grew out of his preoccupation with history.⁷³ And even Dvořák himself continuously revisited *geistesgeschichtliche* questions during his art-historical

Dvořák's thinking, he also notes the 'inner dialectic' already present (see Neumann 1962, 202).

⁶⁹ See Köhler 1923, 319.

⁷⁰ In the preface to his collected writings, the editors underlined that Dvořák's conception of the Middle Ages, as presented in *The Illuminators*, *The Enigma*, and several other essays, has certainly been supplemented and partly corrected in the course of time, but by no means replaced by a different picture of development. His draft of history avoided any schematics and considered individual turns and achievements (see Swoboda/Wilde 1929, VIII).

⁷¹ The positive reception of *The Enigma* in francophone countries is observed by Fantoni (see Matthieu Fantoni, 'De l'histoire des formes à l'histoire des idées. Les premières « traductions » des textes de Max Dvořák, entre citation, reprise et plagiat', *Revue germanique internationale*, 22, 2020, 45-55 (esp. 46-8); and Pavel notes that the work 'caused a worldwide sensation in specialist circles' [erregte weltweites Aufsehen in Fachkreisen] (see Pavel 1972, 38).

⁷² [es wäre vielleicht schade, daß Dvořák Kunsthistoriker und nicht Kulturhistoriker geworden sei.] Köhler 1923, 316.

⁷³ Köhler 1923, 314.

enquires, as can be seen in some of his letters to Wickhoff. Writing to his teacher on 5 August 1902, while he was working on *The Enigma*, Dvořák reflected:

The art-historical process of development of the new painting from the French seems clear to me and evident and provable in every direction, and also the attribution of the works to individual painters is certain, as far as certainty is possible, but the question that continues to occupy me immensely, although it has no inescapable connection to the essay, is that of how the parallelism to the completely analogous contemporaneous appearances in art, as in literature, in the world view [*Weltanschauung*], in the political system, etc., can be explained. Up to now, a causal connection has been constructed, but if this does not exist, that is, if the transformation of art cannot be derived from the transformation of cultural conditions, as is my firm conviction, then how can the junction that exists between these and the former, and which certainly goes beyond external influence, be explained? Perhaps the evolution lies rather in this.⁷⁴

This inclination pervaded all his works and almost leaves the impression that Dvořák felt constrained under Wickhoff's and Riegl's strict methodological models,⁷⁵ applying them simply from his current position, whereas he was actually drawn much further beyond their boundaries.⁷⁶ However, this influence should not be considered in a negative way, because Dvořák, together with his teachers and few other European art historians, felt destined to establish the discipline

⁷⁴ [Der kunstgeschichtliche Verlauf der Heranbildung der neuen Malerei aus der französischen erscheint mir klar und in jeder Richtung ersichtlich und belegbar und auch die Zuweisungen der Bilder an einzelne Maler gesichert, soweit da eine Sicherheit möglich ist, doch die Frage, die mich jetzt immens fort beschäftigt, obwohl sie in keinen unausweichlichem Zusammenhange zu dem Aufsätze steht, ist die, woher der Parallelismus zu den ganz analogen gleichzeitigen Erscheinungen in der Kunst, wie in der Literatur, in der Weltanschauung, im politischen System etc. zu erklären ist. Man hat ja bisher einen kausalen Zusammenhang construiert, doch wenn der nicht existirt, d.h. wenn die Kunstwandlung nicht aus der Wandlung der kulturellen Verhältnisse abgeleitet werden kann, wie es meine feste Überzeugung ist, wie ist dann das Junctim, welches zwischen jenen und diesen besteht und welches sicher über äussere Beeinflussung hinausgeht, zu erklären? Vielleicht liegt eher darin die Evolution.] (Letter from 5 August 1902 from Dvořák to Wickhoff, estate Wickhoff, archive of the IKG, University of Vienna).

⁷⁵ Kalinowski describes *The Enigma* as a break with methodological dogmatism, in which he proves the organic connection between the art of the Van Eycks and their Gothic predecessors (see Lech Kalinowski, *Max Dvořák i jego metoda badań nad sztuką*, Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974, 19; and Ciulisová 2012, footnote 3).

⁷⁶ This is also Rosenauer's opinion, who sees Wickhoff's and Riegl's theses as a potential 'compulsion' [Zwang] and in his cultural-historical excurses already an announcement of his *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (see Rosenauer 1984, 48 and footnote 23). He expresses the same assumption also in his afterword to the new edition of *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (see Rosenauer 1995, 282-3).

scientifically⁷⁷ and to free it from infatuation and romantic-nationalistic interpretations. In order to scientifically confirm his convictions, he used tools such as the exact study of sources as well as Morelli's connoisseurship, which was highly esteemed at the time, or Riegl's principle of causality. Nevertheless, he never abandoned his intuitive universal-historical view. Exemplary for such a dichotomous relationship were the several parenthetical explanations of individual strands of development that strayed from the actual issue,⁷⁸ or the embryonic formulation of the dichotomy of idealism and naturalism that had characterised Gothic art since its inception,⁷⁹ which was the subject of his best-known late work, the long essay *Idealism and Naturalism in Gothic Art* (1918).⁸⁰ From today's perspective, the young Dvořák was very courageous, for before him no one had dared, as Swoboda noted, 'to present the works of art of the Gothic period as equal in rank to those of Antiquity or the Renaissance, and even as equally comprehensible. For art historiography, they were outside the vital contexts leading to the art of the present'.⁸¹ Although he followed the practice of his time and was certainly convinced of it, Dvořák was concerned to integrate late medieval art into a historical continuity and to lead it out of the shadow of the Renaissance. Even if he perhaps raised more questions than providing clarity with the examined writing, it was a fundamental step for the development of the art-historical discipline and the research of northern European art as well as that of the periodisation of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.⁸²

⁷⁷ See Hans-Bertold Busse, *Kunst und Wissenschaft. Untersuchungen zur Ästhetik und Methodik der Kunstgeschichtswissenschaft*, Mittenwald: Mäander, 1981, 91-3.

⁷⁸ Such as the history of landscape painting, spatial representation, or Dutch colouring.

⁷⁹ See Dvořák 1903, 269-74. Köhler emphasised that the dialectic naturalism-idealism had always been present in his thought, but that his heart initially still beat for the former and that he only took a more objective approach in later years (see Köhler 1923, 318).

⁸⁰ See Max Dvořák, *Idealismus und Naturalismus in der gotischen Skulptur und Malerei*, Munich/Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1918 (reprinted in Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur Abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, ed. by Karl Maria Swoboda and Johannes Wilde, Munich: Piper, 1924, 41-147). For an analysis of the work in its historical context, see Riccardo Marchi, 'Max Dvořák e la storia dell'arte come parte della Geistesgeschichte', in Max Dvořák, *Idealismo e naturalismo nella scultura e nella pittura gotica*, ed. by Riccardo Marchi, Milan: FrancoAngeli 2003, 107-97; and Swoboda 1967; these volumes also contain the respective Italian and English translations of the text.

⁸¹ [die Kunstwerke der Gotik als denen der Antike oder der Renaissance gleichrangig und gar als gleichverständlich hinzustellen. Sie waren für die Kunstgeschichtsschreibung außerhalb der lebenden, zur Kunst der Gegenwart hinführenden Zusammenhänge]. Swoboda 1951, 77.

⁸² The scholarly importance of this work was also emphasised by his former student Otto Pächt at the beginning of his monumental study of Van Eyck (see Otto Pächt, *Van Eyck and the Founders of Early Netherlandish Painting* (1989), ed. by Maria Schmidt-Dengler, London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1999, 19). Eugene Kleinbauer also remarked on the relevance of Dvořák's conclusions after almost fifty years, as well as to the authoritative influence the work had on Erwin Panofsky (see Eugene Kleinbauer, *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History. An Anthology of 20th-century Writings on the Visual Arts*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971, 397). The latter observation is shared by Michael Ann Holly (see

These reflections provide a suiting transition to a second issue that shall be briefly taken up to highlight the fact that although Dvořák's early work was highly regarded throughout his life, it very quickly fell into oblivion after his death. To what extent do Dvořák's views embed in the art-historical debates of his time? On the one hand, he was seen by contemporaries as a pioneer and celebrated as one of the most brilliant figures in his field. On the other hand, hardly anyone remembers his early contributions today, even though they precede the publication of other seminal works by more than fifteen years. In this regard, one publication that particularly shaped the question of periodising the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance comes to mind, namely Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919).

The question of the periodisation of the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era has always preoccupied the historical sciences. When did the first end and the second begin? Was there an abrupt break or was it a gradual transition? Were the humanists of the Duecento responsible for a renewed view of the world? Or perhaps the aesthetic cult of ancient forms? Was the invention of printing the decisive factor? Or the Reformation? These are all questions that have not yet been clarified and, especially in the early years of the historical and art-historical discipline, were interpreted by intellectuals in a very subjective and not always historically grounded manner. The definition of the Renaissance itself, and specifically of northern European art during this period, had a fundamental impact in this context. It would, of course, go beyond the scope of the present study to pursue this definition in all its richness of facets,⁸³ so only a few points will be made, which are by no means intended to be complete, but were selected to reinforce the present argumentation. The focus is therefore particularly on those dynamics of the periodisation of art in which the Van Eyck brothers play a key role:⁸⁴ As one of the few Nordic artists, Jan Van Eyck had already been mentioned by Giorgio Vasari, who had presented him as the inventor of oil painting and thus assigned him a prominent role. An even more important part had been reserved to him by Carel Van Mander, who praised Van Eyck as the father of septentrional art. After this had fallen into the shadow of the Italian Renaissance for several centuries, Friedrich

Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 1985, 103).

⁸³ For more background reading on the Renaissance question, I recommend, among others: Alexander Lee, Pit Péporté and Harry Schnitker, eds, *Renaissance? Perceptions of Continuity and Discontinuity in Europe, c. 1300-c.1550*, Leiden/Boston (MA): Brill, 2010; Hubert Locher, 'Renaissance', *Kritische Berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften*, 35: 3, 2007, 31-4; and Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought. Five Centuries of Interpretation*, Boston (MA): Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948.

⁸⁴ The following discourse approximately follows the explanations of Francis Haskell, 'Huizinga and the 'Flemish Renaissance'', in *History and its Images. Art and the Interpretation of the Past*, New Haven (CT): Yale University Press 1993, 433-95; Ridderbos 2005; and Wessel Krul, 'Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism', in Ridderbos/Van Buren/Van Veen 2005, 252-91. See also the introduction of Sandra Hindriks, *Der »vlaemsche Apelles«. Jan van Eycks früher Ruhm und die niederländische »Renaissance«*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2019, 13-22.

Schlegel (1722-1829) was among the earliest to appreciate the expression of peace and tranquillity of northern art.⁸⁵ The philosopher's most important contribution in this regard was the distinction between a Cologne and a Flemish school, because previously northern European art had been seen as a whole and not divided into different schools or stylistic groups. At the same time, however, this distinction allowed the schools to become tools of a construction of the various national folk characters: for Schlegel, Hans Memling became the symbol of the German spirit. This direction shaped the study of northern art for almost a century. Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794-1868), a fundamental figure in the formation of the discipline of art history,⁸⁶ sought to distance himself from Schlegel's romantic raptures and based his research on source studies and diplomatic. He related the art of the Van Eyck brothers to miniature painting of the late Middle Ages, as Dvořák did later, but he had limited himself to connecting it to the advent of oil painting, ignoring completely the rich tradition miniature painting already had in Burgundy.⁸⁷ Two points are particularly important in this context: 1) Waagen's contribution was, to one extent, essential for the future of art history, as he addressed the need for an argumentation supported by facts and documents. Nevertheless, his postulates were ultimately based on the assumption that the artistic character of an individual corresponds to that of his community (*Volk*).⁸⁸ He therefore did not attempt to interpolate the facts in such a way that the Van Eyck brothers could be celebrated as German national heroes but was, all the same, convinced of the principle of a national character which *de facto* could not correspond to actual fifteenth-century sentiment. 2) His thesis saw the art of the Van Eyck brothers as the *beginning* of a completely new art, without connecting the stylistic elements of the painters to the Burgundian art works that preceded them.

As a result, the debate on the so-called *primitifs flamands* increased immensely during the nineteenth century. Only a few brief insights shall be given here. German-speaking intellectuals such as Heinrich Gustav Hotho (1802-1873), a pupil of Hegel, and the jurist and art historian Karl Schnaase (1798-1875), as well as French scholars like the archaeologist and nobleman Marquis Léon de Laborde (1807-1869) and the Parisian art historian Louis Courajod (1841-1896), confronted the issue. While Hotho refuted connoisseurship as a method in favour of an

⁸⁵ See Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gemäldeschreibungen aus Paris und den Niederlanden in den Jahren 1802-1804', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Band 4*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1959, (8-152) 42-3.

⁸⁶ See Gabriele Bickendorf, *Der Beginn der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung unter dem Paradigma »Geschichte«*. *Gustav Friedrich Waagens Frühschrift »Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck«*, Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1985; and Bickendorf, 'Gustav Friedrich Waagen und der Historismus in der Kunstgeschichte', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 37, 1995, 23-32. Schlosser recalls that Waagen was appointed the first professor of art history in Berlin only a few years before Eitelberger (see Schlosser 1934, 155-6).

⁸⁷ See Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Ueber Hubert und Johann van Eyck*, Wrocław: Josef Max und Komp, 1822, 68-70

⁸⁸ See Waagen 1822, 25-7 and 56-7.

aesthetic-historical approach, Schnaase⁸⁹ captured Nordic art through a spiritual lens, seeing the emerging naturalism as an attempt to make the divine visible.⁹⁰ Instead, within the French scholars the nationalist undertone was much stronger: After having seen the closed side panels of the *Ghent Altarpiece* with the naked figures of Adam and Eve, Laborde was overwhelmed by the naturalism of the Van Eycks, which for him was an absolute novelty.⁹¹ Courajod then incorporated Laborde's thoughts into his theory, being convinced that naturalism, which initially showed itself in northern Europe – precisely in a culturally French environment –, was the key element of modern painting. This is why, in Courajod's belief, art history owes the advent of naturalistic representation, and hence of the Renaissance itself, to France.⁹²

With this debate as a background, several exhibitions on northern European art were organised at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their protagonists were presented in a different light each time. At the famous exhibition *Les primitifs flamands* held in Bruges in 1902, they appeared as the founding fathers of a typically Belgian national style,⁹³ while at the exposition held two years later in Paris, they were portrayed as *primitifs français*, focusing on the French characteristics of the painters. While these exhibitions drew the attention of many experts to the artworks

⁸⁹ After travelling to Austria in 1861, Schnaase entered in contact with the first generation of the Vienna School and got engaged in writing an essay on the history of Austrian fifteenth-century painting, which was published in the *Mittheilungen* of the Imperial commission for monument conservation (see Karl Schnaase, 'Zur Geschichte der österreichischen Malerei im XV. Jahrhundert', *Mittheilungen der k. k. Centralcommission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*, 7: 8/9, August/September 1862, 205-11 and 238-47).

⁹⁰ Schlosser observed that Dvořák, who had criticised Schnaase in *The Enigma* for his generally spiritual (*geistige*) interpretation of art (see Dvořák 1903, 164-5), approached Schnaase's view in his later writings (see Schlosser 1934, 200), while Rosenauer emphasised that although Dvořák, like Schnaase and Burckhardt, devoted himself to cultural-historical phenomena, 'however, in them the individual areas would run alongside one another without any real relationship, while he also allows the interlocking, the "transmission belt" to become visible'. [bei diesen die einzelnen Bereiche [jedoch] ohne wirkliche Beziehung nebeneinander herlaufen würden, während er auch das Ineinandergreifen, den „Transmissionsriemen“ sichtbar werden lässt.] Rosenauer 1995, 279-80.

⁹¹ Two of the Marquis' studies deal with this issue: *Les ducs de Bourgogne* (1849-52) and *La renaissance des arts à la cour de France* (1851-55). He was thus one of the first historians to dedicate particular attention to the flourishing period of the Duchy of Burgundy.

⁹² See Louis Courajod, *Les origines de la Renaissance en France au XIVe & au XVe siècle. Leçon d'ouverture du 2 février 1887*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 1888. For Courajod's rigorously separate vision of a *race latine* from a *race germanique* see Eric Michaud, 'Races latines versus races germaniques: un paradigme de longue durée dans le champ de l'histoire de l'art', in Claudia Cieri Via, Elisabeth Kieven and Alessandro Nova, eds, *L'Italia e l'arte straniera. La storia dell'arte e le sue frontiere. A cento anni dal X Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte in Roma (1912). Un bilancio storiografico e una riflessione del presente (Roma 23-24 novembre 2012)*, Rome: Bardi Edizioni 2015, 265-77.

⁹³ For an analysis of the distinction between Belgian and Netherlandish art, see Lisa Deam, 'Flemish versus Netherlandish: A Discourse of Nationalism', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 51: 1, Spring 1998, 1-33.

of northern European painters, whose *connoisseurship* was to be encouraged in order to clarify questions of attribution, at the same time they led to an intensification of national-identifying interpretations,⁹⁴ which often impeded an objective investigation (as is the case with Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, who interpreted the Van Eyck brothers in several writings as the founders of an independent Belgian style). Even those art historians who approached the problem in an unbiased way, had one thing in common: They saw a break between the late Gothic art of the Trecento and that of Jan Van Eyck, whose works they acclaimed as a radical innovation and the *beginning* of modern art.⁹⁵

It is only at the end of the following decade that Johan Huizinga's remarkable work *Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919)⁹⁶ appeared, often seen as a turning point in the study of the northern European transitional period between the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance,⁹⁷ for Huizinga claimed that the art of the Van Eyck brothers was not the beginning of a new era, but rather the final stage and decay of an old tradition. Although Huizinga was historian and not art historian, his thesis was based on the Van Eycks, whose art he was extremely fascinated by and engaged with in various occasions.⁹⁸ Critics noted that there is a

⁹⁴ For example, the 'alternative' exhibition catalogue of Georges Hulin de Loo, thought as a correction of all the wrong attributions presented in W. H. James Weale's official catalogue, or the contributions of Max Friedländer and Karl Voll.

⁹⁵ The exhibitions mentioned, on the other hand, still saw the presented art as part of the Middle Ages. They were not primarily concerned with the innovative character but with the artists' national affiliation (see Krul 2005, 277).

⁹⁶ See Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen. Studie over levens- en gedachtenvormen der veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden*, Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1919 (I worked with the first German version, which is referred to below: Huizinga, *Der Herbst des Mittelalters. Studien über Lebens- und Geistesformen des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts in Frankreich und den Nederlanden*, Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1924). Since this multifaceted author can only be briefly discussed on this occasion, I recommend the following works for further reading: Werner Kaegi, *Das historische Werk Johan Huizingas*, Leiden: Universitaire pers, 1947; Rosalie L. Colie, 'Johan Huizinga and the Task of Cultural History', *American Historical Review*, 69: 3, April 1964, 607-30; Wim R. H. Koops and Ernst Heinrich Kossmann, eds, *Johan Huizinga 1872-1972: Papers Delivered to the Johan Huizinga Conference Groningen. 11-14 December 1972*, The Hague: Nijhof, 1973; Wessel Krul, 'In the Mirror of van Eyck. Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27: 3, Autumn 1997, 353-84; Jo Tollebeek, 'Renaissance' and 'Fossilization': Michelet, Burckhardt and Huizinga', *Renaissance Studies*, 15: 3, September 2001, 354-66; and Edward Peters and Walter P. Simons, 'The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 74: 3, July 1999, 587-620 (for the translations of *Autumn* see esp. 588-94).

⁹⁷ Directly after its publication, *Autumn* was viewed rather sceptically, especially by Huizinga's Dutch colleagues, while in literary circles it encountered immediate success. Nevertheless, it was soon translated into several languages, including English, German and French, even before 1939. From the 1960s onwards, Huizinga gained a more solid academic appreciation and his most famous work from then on has been regarded as a classic (for its reception, see Frits W. N. Hugenholz, 'The Fame of a Masterwork', in Koops 1973, 233-45).

⁹⁸ As can be seen from the quotation below as well as from a 1916 lecture on the Van Eyck brothers (Johan Huizinga, 'De kunst der Van Eyck's in het leven van hun tijd', in *Verzamelde Werken. Deel 3*, Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1949, 436-82. For Huizinga's correlation with art

lack of supporting scholarly literature in Huizinga's works and that he hardly referred to art historians.⁹⁹ However, he was well aware of his contrary opinion to that of art historians discussing ancient Netherlandish art: It is very likely, for one, that he visited at least the 1902 exposition in Bruges,¹⁰⁰ if not others, and, for another, he noted so himself in his autobiographical narrative *Mijn weg tot de historie* (My path to history):¹⁰¹ 'This thought [...] circled above all around the art of the Van Eyck's and their contemporaries, which at the time extremely occupied my mind. In those years, in the wake of Courajod, and following Fierens-Gevaert and Karl Voll, it was becoming a habit to see early Netherlandish art as the coming of a northern Renaissance. My thoughts were radically opposed to this'.¹⁰² Huizinga was thus aware of the debate on Old Netherlandish art but in his publication hardly referred to other scholars. Among the few names cited, the only art historians were Émile Durand-Gréville, Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert and Émile Mâle. While he chose the former's words for a simple description of a painting, he mentioned the second negatively when rejecting his opinion, stated in *La Renaissance septentrionale et les premiers maîtres des Flandres* (1905), that Sluter and Van Eyck must be seen as part of the Renaissance. To Mâle he referred on four occasions:¹⁰³ twice to explain the emergence of macabre death motifs in the Gothic period, and the others in relation to Mâle's theory about Gothic art and its relation to contemporaneous dramatic representations. Mâle stated that theatrical representation had a considerable impact on pictorial motifs, which it significantly preceded and shaped. Huizinga disagreed with this theory and was convinced of the contrary, except in the case of the *danse macabre* motive.¹⁰⁴

But where did the young Max Dvořák position himself in this debate?¹⁰⁵
Unlike many other art historians, Dvořák, as already seen, was one of the first

history, see Horst Gerson, 'Huizinga und die Kunstgeschichte', in Koops 1973, 348-64; and Diane Wolfthal, 'Art History and Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages*', in Peter Arnade, ed, *Rereading Huizinga. Autumn of the Middle Ages, a century later*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2019, 123-41.

⁹⁹ Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs. Volume I*, New York: Braziller, 1974, 40.

¹⁰⁰ Which is incidentally also visited by Dvořák on 31 August 1902, as he reports in a letter to Franz Wickhoff from Gand. The letter is conserved, together with the one above cited, in Wickhoff's estate in the archive of the IKG in Vienna.

¹⁰¹ Johan Huizinga, 'Mijn weg tot de historie', in *Verzamelde Werken. Deel 1*, Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink 1948, 11-42.

¹⁰² [Die gedachte, als men van gedachte spreken mag, cirkelde bovenal rondom de kunst der Van Eyck's en hun tijdgenooten, die mijn geest destijds ongemeen occupeerde. Het werd in die jaren juist gewoonte, om op voetspoor van Courajod, met Fierens-Gevaert en Karl Voll, de Oud-Nederlandsche kunst te zien als een aanbreekende Noordelijke Renaissance. Mijn denkbeeld ging daar lijnrecht tegen in.] Huizinga 1948, 39.

¹⁰³ See Huizinga 1924 (Fierens-Gevaert, 383; Durand-Gréville, 389; Mâle, 184, 190-1 and 431). Huizinga also referred to Paul Durrieu, but only in the footnotes and without expressing an opinion on his theses.

¹⁰⁴ See Huizinga 1924, 191.

¹⁰⁵ Only the contribution from the works presented above will be considered here, while the later study *Idealism and Naturalism*, as well as the 1918 article *Die Anfänge der holländischen*

scholars to confront artistic creations in a manner as neutral as possible, from both a nationalist and aesthetic point of view. He owed this, of course, to his teachers and above all to Alois Riegl,¹⁰⁶ who had left traces in Dvořák's Renaissance conception: although he engaged with it more than his teacher, he never did so in a worshipful attitude. On the contrary, Dvořák opposed the historiographical 'Renaissance cult' of previous centuries and always had a critical approach to it. Likewise, the Bohemian art historian did not assume a strict North-South division; his concern was therefore not to propose a 'Northern Renaissance' that differs from the Italian one, but rather to create a general universal-historical picture.¹⁰⁷ In this opinion, he coincided with Huizinga. Another common element between the two scholars is the preferred vision of the examined epoch as a continuity rather than a turning point. Dvořák sought to prove a continuity of decades, if not centuries, in the evolution of artistic forms up to the Van Eycks. Huizinga, too, repeatedly spoke of the continuity of medieval tradition.¹⁰⁸ But the most important ideological connection that can be made between *Autumn of the Middle Ages* and Dvořák's *Enigma* is the following: Both saw Jan Van Eyck as the last representative of a dying tradition, that of the late Middle Ages, and therefore contradicted the common idea of the artist as innovator or genius opening a new generation. Furthermore, both observed that although there was a renewal, this was entirely based on form, while the content followed the timeworn tradition. In the above-mentioned review of the new edition of *The Enigma*,¹⁰⁹ Klaus Berger observed that Dvořák, in Riegl's vein, eliminated the gap between the medieval and modern periods and placed the Van Eyck brothers stylistically in line with the prior medieval development.¹¹⁰ Adolph Goldschmidt summarised this insight as follows: 'Dvořák undertakes to unroll the prehistory of Eyckian painting from the thirteenth century onwards. Jan's paintings are the end of a steady development, the finite victory, not the sudden unmediated appearance. Such a link with the past has been sought, but no author has yet clarified the stages

Malerei (The Beginnings of Dutch Painting, *Jahrbuch der preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 39, 1918, 51-79) will not be included in the study for reasons of space. For a comparative study of Huizinga's *Autumn* and Dvořák's *geistesgeschichtlichem* thought see Ivan Gerát, 'Johan Huizinga and Max Dvořák on images: A shared interest in medieval images in and around 1919', *World Literature Studies*, 9, 2017, 31-40.

¹⁰⁶ In his obituary for the teacher, Dvořák recalled Riegl's words: 'The best art historian is the one who has no personal taste, for in the history of art it is a matter of finding objective criteria of historical development'. [Der beste Kunsthistoriker ist der, welcher keinen persönlichen Geschmack besitzt, denn es handelt sich in der Kunstgeschichte darum, objektive Kriterien der historischen Entwicklung zu finden]. Max Dvořák, 'Alois Riegl', *Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentral-Kommission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und Historischen Denkmale*, 3: 4, 1905, 255-76.

¹⁰⁷ For the problematics that can arise concerning the definition of a 'Northern Renaissance', see Hanno Wijsmann, 'Northern Renaissance? Burgundy and Netherlandish Art in Fifteenth-Century Europe', in Lee/Péporté/ Schnitker 2010, 269-88.

¹⁰⁸ See Colie 1964, 623.

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 58.

¹¹⁰ See Berger 1928, 362.

of development as systematically as Dvořák does'.¹¹¹ It might be objected here that their theses do not entirely coincide. While Huizinga assumed an ending in Jan's painting, the artist's position in *The Enigma* is to be seen as a transition. For Dvořák, naturalism had already been an integral part of Gothic art, while the 'new' should be seen as a consequence of the recovery of the ancient conception of a self-contained section of space, which was disseminated through Byzantine painting in the Occident.¹¹² At this point, the disciplines which the scholars represented might be considered as an explanation for this 'disagreement'. As a historian who looked at the inner, mental, and spiritual events of humanity, Huizinga saw form only as a shell; it had no further significance for him and for his exploration of the sensibility of an epoch. In contrast to the young Dvořák, who in the first years of the twentieth century was still concerned with defending the autonomy and scientific value of art history. Form therefore became a type of 'unit of measurement' for him and his colleagues, a neutral and exact criterion on which they could base their observations. Yet, apart from that, the two academics shared the same basic idea.

Now arises the question of whether Huizinga knew about Dvořák or had ever read *The Enigma*. *Autumn* does not mention it and it is not possible to verify whether Huizinga knew the essay or not.¹¹³ Of course, as a cultural historian, it was not his duty to follow art-historical debates closely, but since art, and especially painting, plays such a central role in his theory, it is surprising not to find a dialogue with the discipline in this work. Nevertheless, the absence of the essay in *Autumn* should by no means be seen as evidence of a lack of knowledge. Interestingly, even some German-language reviewers of *Autumn* referred to this connection. The art historian Hans Huth (1892-1977), a former student of Dvořák and Schlosser in Vienna, wrote in a review of the first German translation of *Autumn*: 'If the author's intention was to place the art of Van Eyck not at the beginning of the Renaissance,

¹¹¹ [Dvořák unternimmt es, die Vorgeschichte der Eyckschen Malerei vom 13. Jahrhundert an zu entrollen. Jans Bilder sind das Ende einer stetigen Entwicklung, der endliche Sieg, nicht die plötzliche unvermittelte Erscheinung. Nach einer solchen Verknüpfung mit der Vergangenheit hat man gesucht, aber kein Autor hat bisher die Entwicklungsstadien so systematisch klargelegt, wie dies Dvořák tut.] Adolph Goldschmidt, 'Dvořák, Max: Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck' (review), *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 29, 1906, (367-9) 368. An unknown reviewer, who signs with the monogram J.J. (perhaps Johannes Jahn?), also emphasised that Dvořák did not look ahead, but saw the *Ghent Altarpiece* as the product of a long-standing development. (see J.J., 'Dvořák, Max: Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck' (review), *Annalen der Philosophie und philosophischen Kritik*, 5: 5, 31 December 1925, 156).

¹¹² See Dvořák 1903, 302. As seen previously, he already held this position in *Byzantine Influence* from 1900.

¹¹³ In the article *Renaissance and Realism*, based on a lecture given in London in 1920 and published for the first time in Dutch in 1929, Huizinga mentioned Dvořák in the fifth footnote of the text citing his essay *Idealism and Naturalism* from 1918 in relation to the incapacity of the definition of realism in the case of sculpture (see Johan Huizinga, 'Renaissance and Realism', in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance. Essays*, transl. by James S. Holmes and Hans Van Marle, New York: Meridian Books, Inc. 1959, (288-309) 295, footnote 5). Unfortunately, this doesn't implicate that he was in the know of *The Enigma*.

but at the end of the Middle Ages, on the basis of his *geistesgeschichtliche* research, he had to deal first with Dvořák and his efforts to solve the “enigma”; unfortunately, he does not seem to know his work at all.¹¹⁴ In two reviews (of a total of seven), both also from 1925, Franz Arens (1880-1946)¹¹⁵ drew attention to the similarity with Dvořák’s theory. On one occasion he remarked: ‘What could be said about the problem of the Van Eycks from the point of view of an ingenious art historian oriented towards cultural history had already been formulated exemplarily by Max Dvořák (again one of the long line of those who have passed away all too soon!) in his important monograph’.¹¹⁶ According to Arens, Huizinga had broadened this picture to include literature and science, religious life and law, politics and economics. From his formulation, though, it can be understood that the art-historical basis for his analysis had already been written by Dvořák. And so, he mentioned him again on another occasion, in connection with the art of the period as a ‘blossoming middle age of courtly direction. Incidentally, Dvořák’s writing on the Eycks [...] develops an ingenious anticipation of these connections: On the basis of the suggestions given there, one may certainly assume that the Viennese art historian would have had sympathy for Huizinga’s way of working’.¹¹⁷ It is rather improbable that Dvořák learned of Huizinga’s theory as early as after the publication of the first Dutch edition of *Autumn*. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the first German-language translation in 1924, as he had already died in February 1921. Conversely, despite the similarities in content just described, other arguments speak against Huizinga’s engagement with Dvořák’s works. Above all, methodologically, the Dutch historian precisely opposed those elements for which the Viennese School was famous, namely the exact study of sources and intensive archival study as well as positivist tendencies. These aspects are true of Dvořák’s early works. The scientific nature and methodological debates that characterise the formal aspects of *The Enigma* may have led to a reluctance or a general absence of interest on the part of Huizinga, who, after all, operated as a cultural historian and

¹¹⁴ [War es die Absicht des Verfassers, auf Grund seiner geistesgeschichtlichen Forschungen die Kunst der van Eyck nicht an den Anfang der Renaissance, sondern an das Ende des Mittelalters zu stellen, so mußte er sich zunächst mit Dvořák und seinen Bemühungen, das »Rätsel« zu lösen, auseinandersetzen; leider scheint er dessen Arbeiten gar nicht zu kennen.] Hans Huth, ‘Huizinga, J.: Herbst des Mittelalters’ (review), *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik*, 54, 1925, (252-5) 254.

¹¹⁵ Arens was born in Vienna but completed his history studies in Leipzig with Karl Lamprecht and then in Paris and Prague, where he earned his doctorate. His writings concerned mainly the history of art and culture.

¹¹⁶ [Was sich vom Standpunkt eines geistvollen, kulturgeschichtlich orientierten Kunsthistorikers über das Problem der van Eycks sagen ließ, hatte ja schon Max Dvořák (auch wieder einer aus der langen Reihe der allzufrüh von uns Gegangenen!) in seiner bedeutenden Monografie mustergültig formuliert.] Franz Arens, ‘Westeuropas Quattrocento’, *Hochland*, 23: 1, 1925/26, (105-9) 105.

¹¹⁷ [ausblühendes Mittelalter höfischer Richtung. Eine geniale Vorahnung dieser Zusammenhänge entwickelt ja übrigens Dvořáks Schrift über die Eycks [...]: auf Grund der dort gegebenen Anregungen darf man bestimmt annehmen, daß der Wiener Kunsthistoriker Huizingas Arbeitsweise mit Sympathie gegenübergestanden wäre.] Arens, ‘J. Huizinga. Herbst des Mittelalters’ (review), *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 58, 1924/25, (94-6) 95.

could therefore work in a methodologically freer manner. However, the question of whether it is really a lack of knowledge of Dvořák, who was famous even beyond Austria during his lifetime and regarded as a Europe-wide expert especially in relation to late medieval and northern art,¹¹⁸ or whether Huizinga deliberately did not address him and the Viennese School, cannot be answered here. This would only be possible after a profound investigation of Huizinga's estate, for only a direct mention of him could resolve this doubt. Since there are hardly any contemporary scholars who notice a connection between the cultural historian and the art historian, it can be assumed that no reference to this has been found in Huizinga's estate.

These brief insights into Max Dvořák's varied early work are intended to give an understanding of how profound and multi-faceted his ideas were even at a young age. For this occasion, they will have to suffice and cannot be analysed in more detail. Nonetheless, his throughout universal-historical efforts as well as the constant inclusion of aspects outside the formal can be well observed. The broad vision for which the scholar has always been so esteemed was present in his complete work. Still, as a young, not yet established academic, Dvořák had been bound to the methods and requirements of his school and adapted to them accordingly. It is also very easy to understand that a young scholar sought a foothold in method, while a more mature academic could draw on his years of experience and move with greater freedom. Besides, the changes that characterise Dvořák's famous late work were not only due to an inner, personal transformation, but had also been influenced by external factors.¹¹⁹ There should hence be no discussion of a rupture, but rather of a continuing development. Dvořák never failed to confront formal problems, source criticism and stylistic evidence; they were merely enriched by a more intuitive and subjective approach, which he could ultimately allow himself thanks to his connoisseurship and his prestigious position. Likewise, the discussion of Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, albeit very terse and concise, should encourage to see Dvořák's early works in a new light and in connection with other art- and cultural-historical productions of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

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¹¹⁸ Fantoni points out that his writing style and choice of subject matter are very appealing and easy to understand for contemporary French art historians and that he receives much attention from them (see Fantoni 2020, 46-8).

¹¹⁹ For the influence of cultural factors of his time on Dvořák, see Matthew Rampley, 'Max Dvořák: art history and the crisis of modernity', *Art History*, 26: 2, April 2003, 214-37; Marchi 2003; and Edwin Lachnit, 'Eine idealistische Kulturvision vor hundert Jahren oder der Krieg und die Kunstgeschichte. Ergänzende Bemerkungen zur wissenschaftlichen Genese Max Dvořáks', *ars. Journal of the Institute of Art History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences*, 44: 1, 2011, 9-13.

scholarship from the Athenaeum by the end of the same year. Since October 2023, Sabrina's doctorate is also being supported by the University of Vienna in form of a *cotutelle*. Her dissertation project focuses on the early work of the art historian Max Dvořák up to the First World War and his position in the art historical discipline of his time. The project pays particular attention to his view of the transitional period between the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance and the related question of periodisation at the beginning of the 20th century.

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