EUROPEAN ART THROUGH THE AGES (I)

MIDDLE AGES TO THE RENAISSANCE

Timeline

500 BC

The Classical Period

Greek and Roman Civilizations

500 AD

The Medieval Period

Also known as the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages

Began with the fall of Rome

Attribution: SergeyAshmarin

1400 AD

The Renaissance

A rebirth in interest in Classical ideas

The end of the Dark Ages!

1650 AD

2017 AD

Today

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1348
The Black Death

1450
Printing Press

1400 AD

Attribution: SergeyAshmarin

The Renaissance

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The end of the Dark Ages!

1492
"Discovery" of America

1650 AD

2017 AD

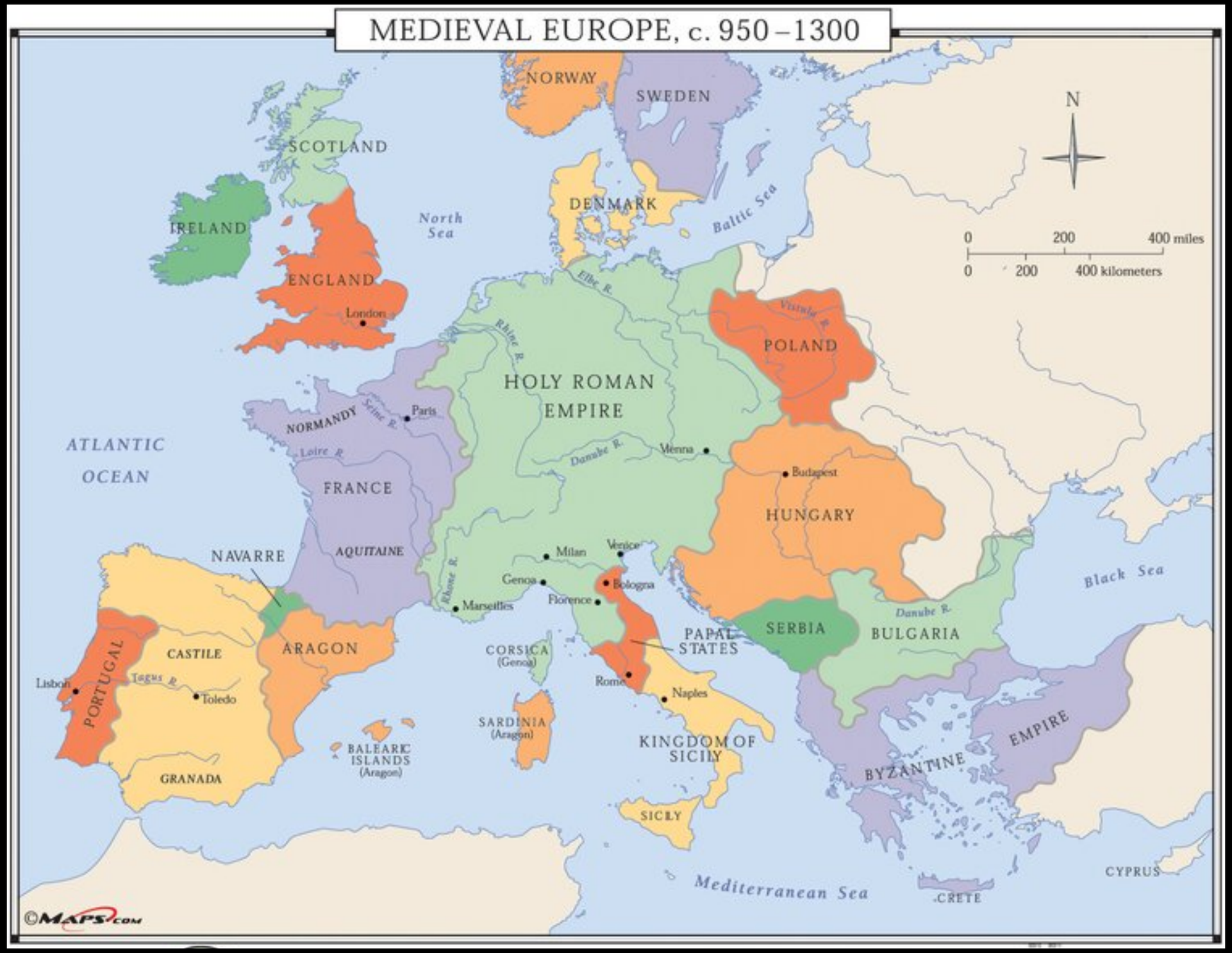
Today

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD / MIDDLE AGES / DARK AGES (500–1400)

What were the Middle Ages like? Where did this idea come from?

Ambrogio Lorenzetti
Allegories and Effects of Good and Bad Government
1337–39
fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

MEDIEVAL EUROPE, c. 950–1300



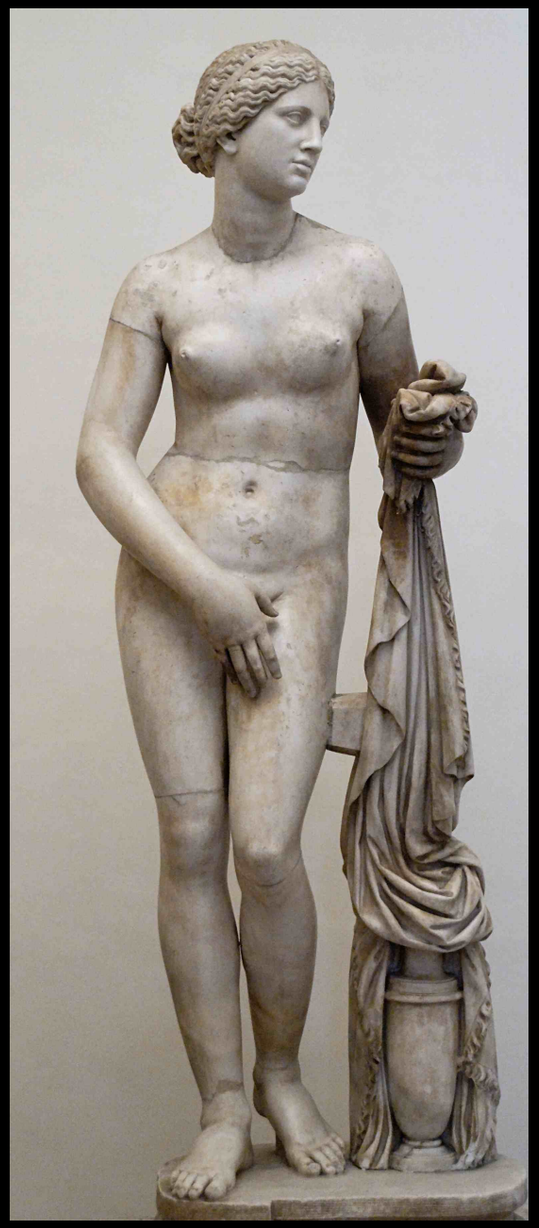
CHRISTIANITY AND ART

Madonna and Child
ca. 1290–1300
Duccio di Buoninsegna

- Wasn't entirely a period of no progress or changes: marked by **growth of Christianity** (Catholicism)
- After the fall of the Roman Empire, the **Catholic Church became the most powerful institution of the medieval period–** brought with it new views of life and the world that rejected the traditions and learning of the ancient world.
- **Visual art prospered**: manuscripts, church murals and ritual items created to spread Christian faith
- Wealthy members of society began to commission churches and artworks

The Problem of Realism in Medieval Art

In the ten commandments, God expressly forbade them from making any "**any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth**" (Exodus 20:4).



Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Cnidos, Roman marble copy after fourth century Greek original

Master of the Geneva Latini, *The Visitation*, c. 1470, France

- Christian writer, Augustine observes that **illusionary images, like actors, are lying**. An actor on a stage lies because he is playing a part, trying to convince you that he is a character in the script when in truth he is not. **An image lies because it is not the thing it claims to be.**

THE ART OF THE BOOK

Manuscript: a book or document written by hand rather than typed or printed. Manuscripts that survive from the European Middle Ages are generally religious books that reflect the practices of Christianity.

Bible, c. 1250–75, French

- Most common artistic medium that survives today– book made of pages bound between two boards- thus higher chance of survival
- The earliest manuscripts of the Bible do not survive- only exist because scribes made copies of them
- Recording and disseminating information is quick and easy today, but in the Middle Ages this process was slow and laborious- but was essential to the preservation of knowledge
- Manuscripts were important to the spread of Christianity- monks would travel and bring books with them to preach the religion

Manuscript Leaf with the Agony in the Garden and Betrayal of Christ, from a Royal Psalter, ca. 1270, British

Manuscript Leaf with the Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew, ca. 1340, Italian

THE BLACK DEATH (1347–53)

"In…1348 the deadly plague broke out in the great city of Florence…**Whether through the operation of the heavenly bodies** or because of **our own iniquities, which the just wrath of God sought to correct,** the plague had arisen in the east some years before, causing the death of countless human beings. It spread without stop from one place to another until, unfortunately, it swept over the west … **Such was the cruelty of heaven and to a great degree of man** that between March and the following July it is estimated that more than 100,000 human beings lost their lives within the walls of Florence." – Giovanni Boccaccio in *The Decameron*

Burying plague victims (from a manuscript, c.1350)

- Mysterious disease known as "black death" (bubonic plague)
- Killed 20 million people in Europe (30% of its population)
- Especially fast spreading in cities
- Consequence of trade, increased mobility, cities becoming more dense, bad sanitation, lack of medicine
- Political instability, people in power had to legitimise themselves

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE (1400S–1600S)

MAP 19-1 Italy about 1400.

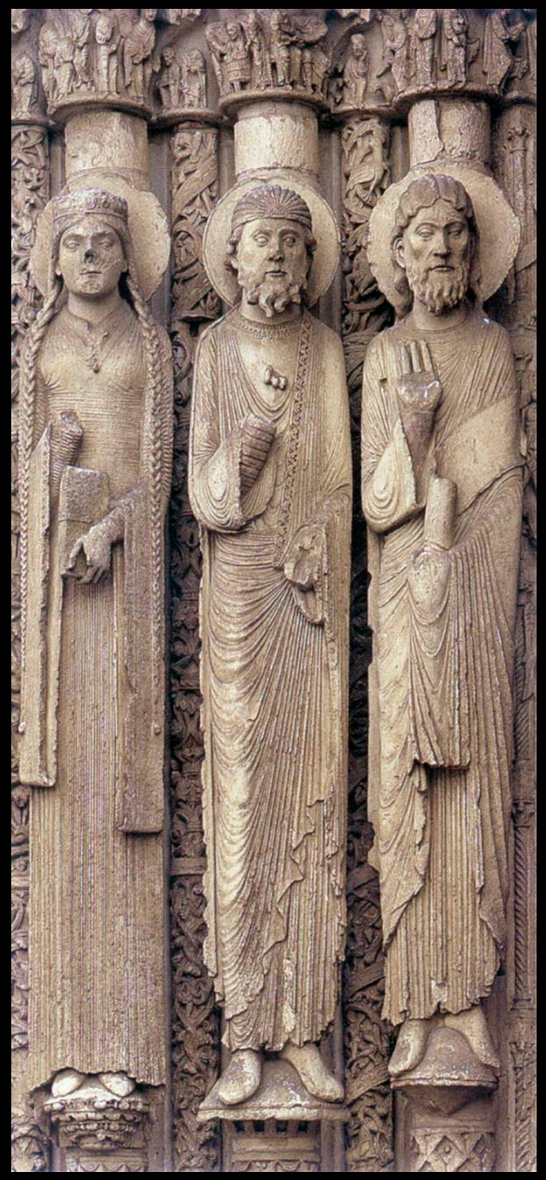
What was being reborn during this time?

Renaissance = rebirth

Ancient Greece, High Classical

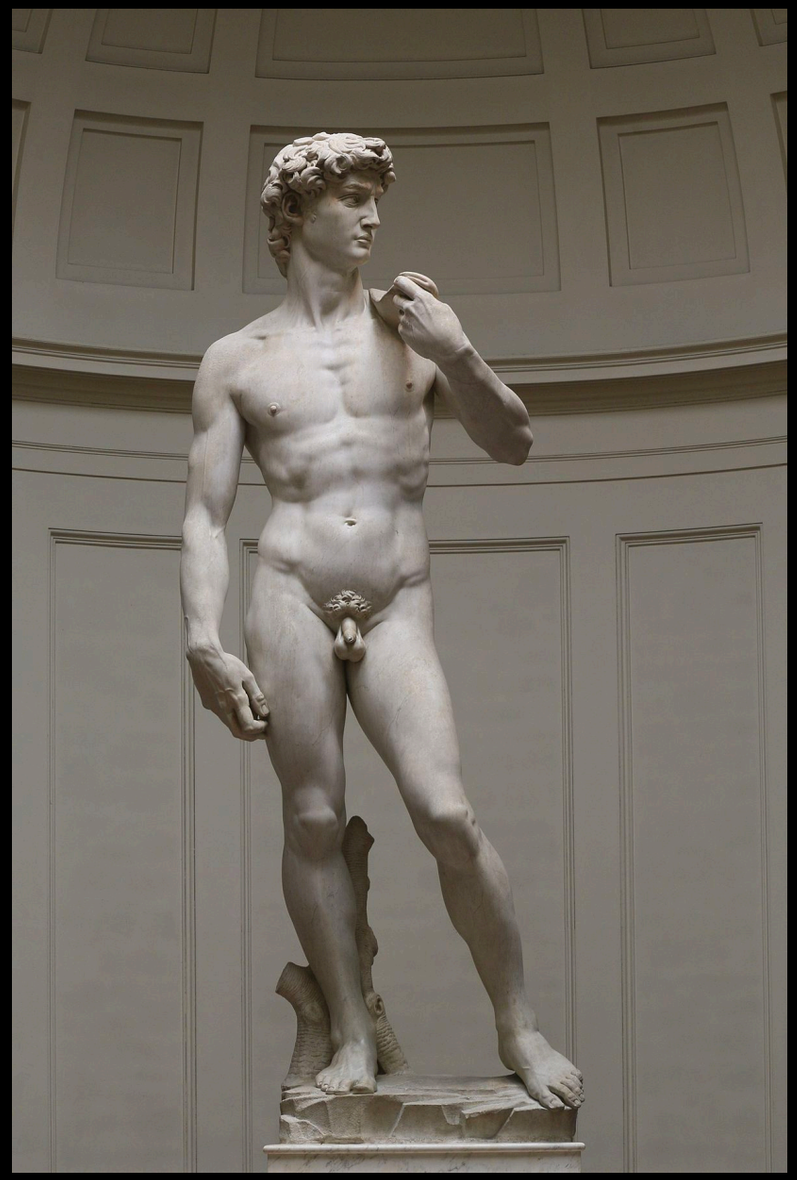
Polykleitos, Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)
450-440 BCE
Roman copy from Pompeii after Greek bronze statue, marble

Medieval



Jamb Statues on the west portal
1150-70 CE
Stone
Chartres Cathedral, France

Renaissance



Michelangelo,
David
Ca. 1501-1504
Marble
Florence

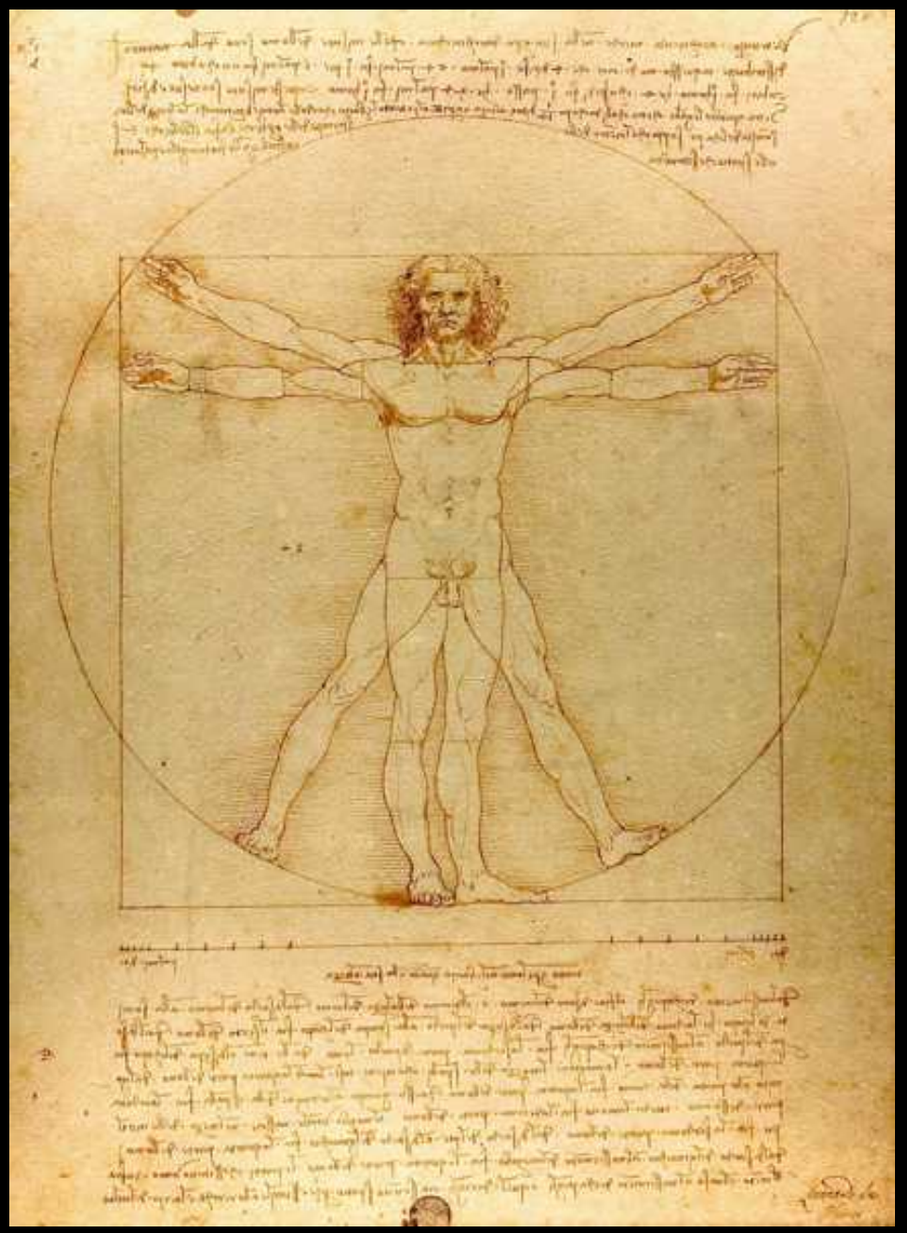
Key concepts of the Renaissance

- **Return to antiquity**: things that had gotten "lost" in the Middle Ages were rediscovered (contrapposto, naturalism, philosophy, sciences)
- **Humanism:** stresses the importance of the human rather than the divine; emphasis on education and on expanding knowledge (of classical antiquity)
- **Golden Age**: a self-conscious golden age bursting with culture, art, discovery, and competing with the ancient period for the title of Europe's most glorious age

Characteristics of Renaissance art

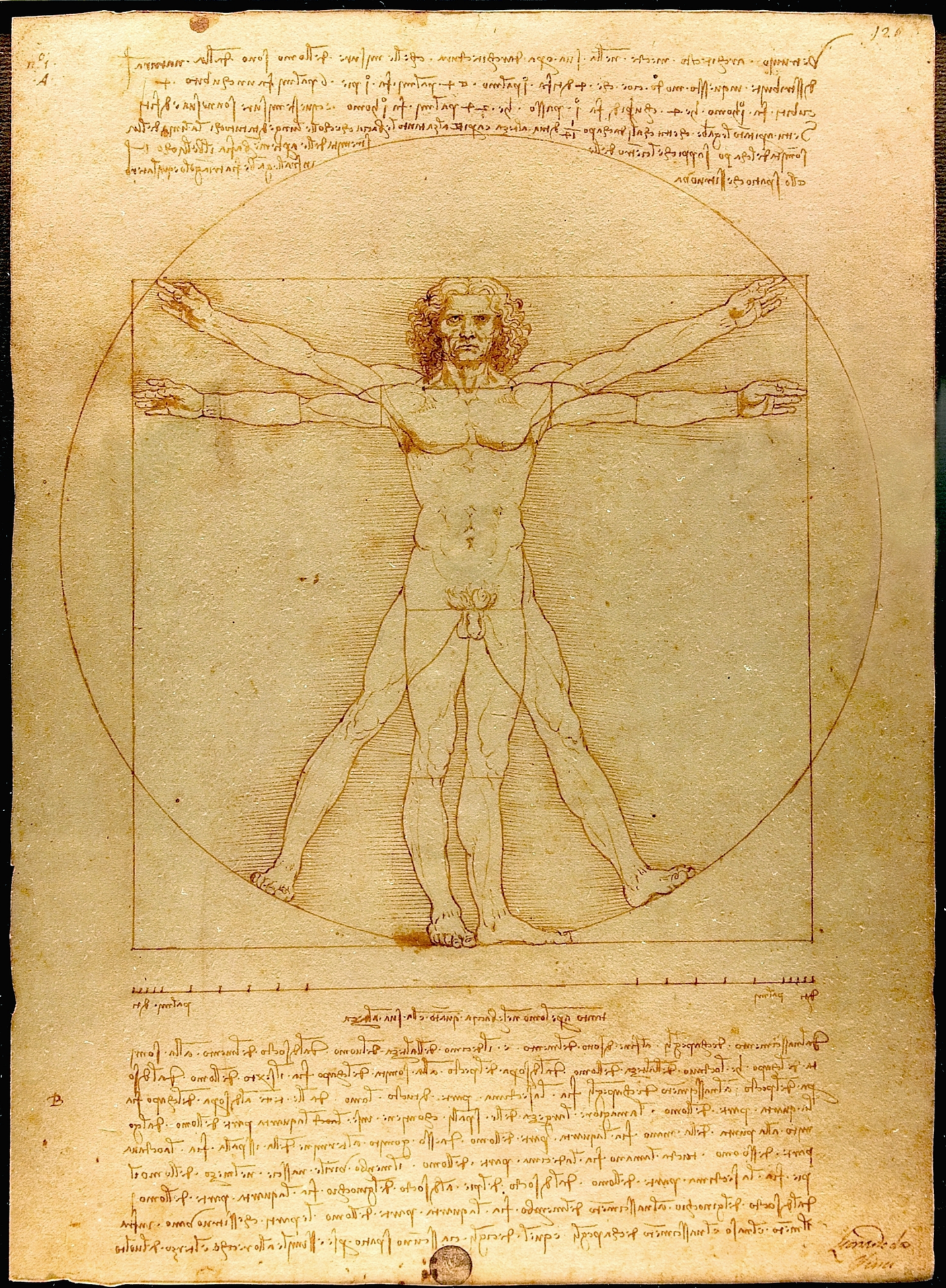
- Subject matter grew from mostly Biblical scenes to include portraits and events from contemporary life
- Realism in the depiction of the human form and space
- Linear perspective to accurately translate three-dimensional forms in a two-dimensional space.
- New art economies- making art seen as a legal, economic transaction
- Social status of artist elevated to that of a scholar

The philosophy of Humanism



Leonardo Da Vinci
The VItruvian Man
c. 1487

- Intellectual movement embraced by scholars, writers, and civic leaders in 14th century Italy.
- Emphasised "an education befitting a cultivated man," and saw the human individual "as the measure of the universe."
- The philosophy was connected to a vision in a new society: the individual's relationship to God was no longer exclusively defined by the Church.
- The subject matter of art was widened to include secular, rational subjects.
- exploration of individual potential and desire to excel



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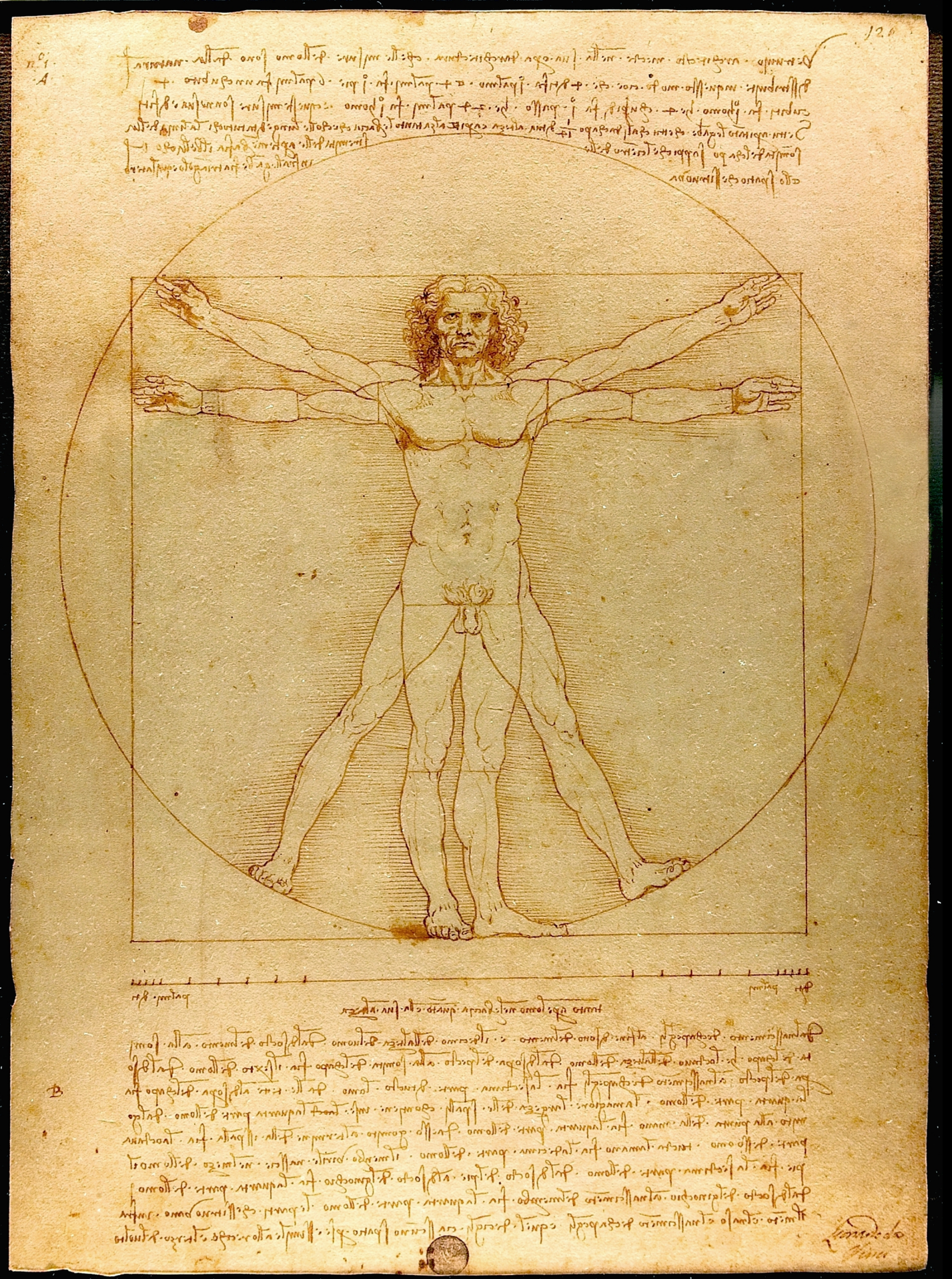
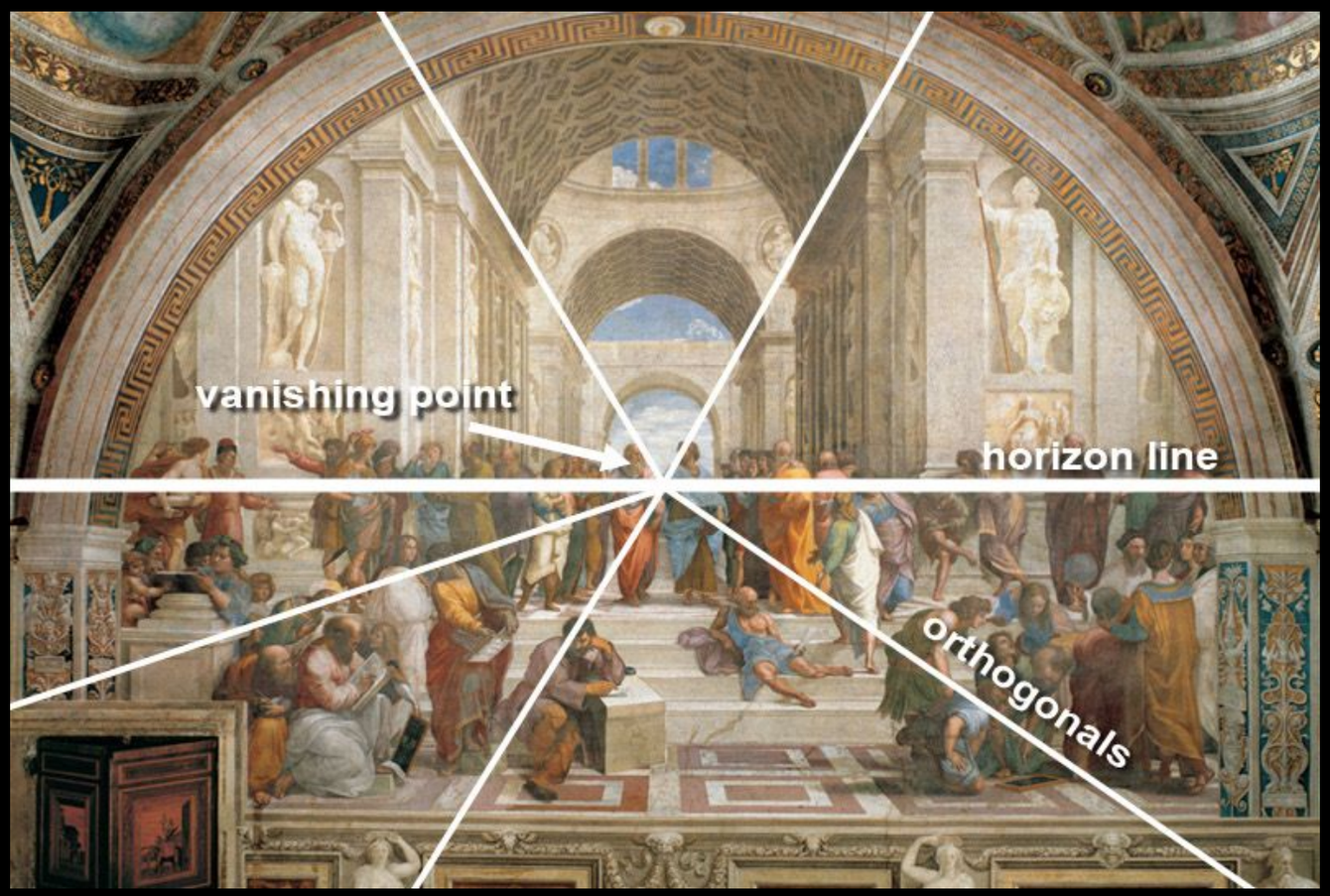
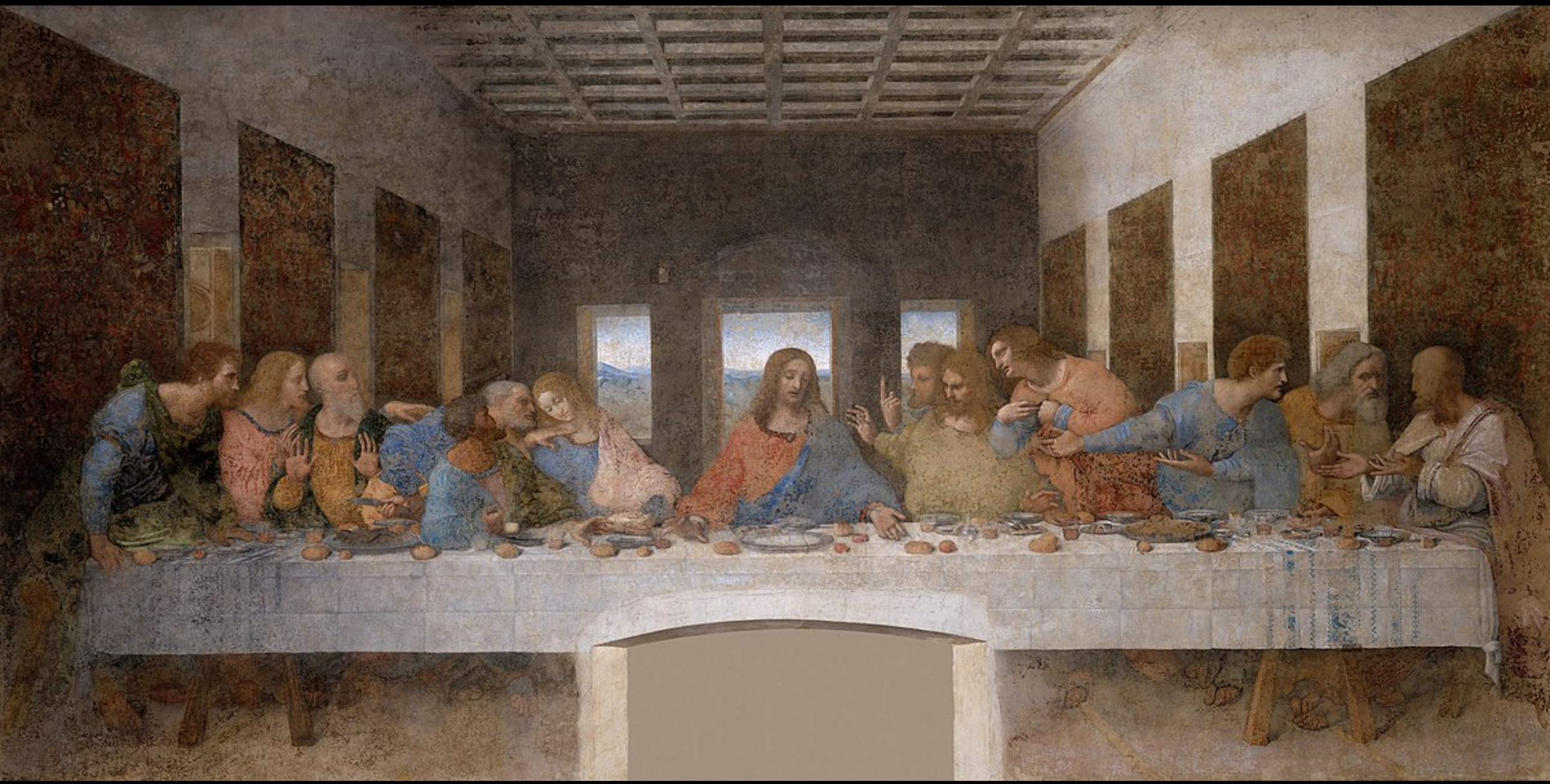


- Surrounded by notes based on the work of the famed architect, Vitruvius Pollio
- Emphasises qualities of balance, symmetry and proportion shared by God's creation (man) and man's creation of buildings
- The drawing and text are sometimes called the Canon of Proportions or, less often, Proportions of Man
- early example of the way in which his studies of proportion fuse artistic and scientific objectives

PERSPECTIVE

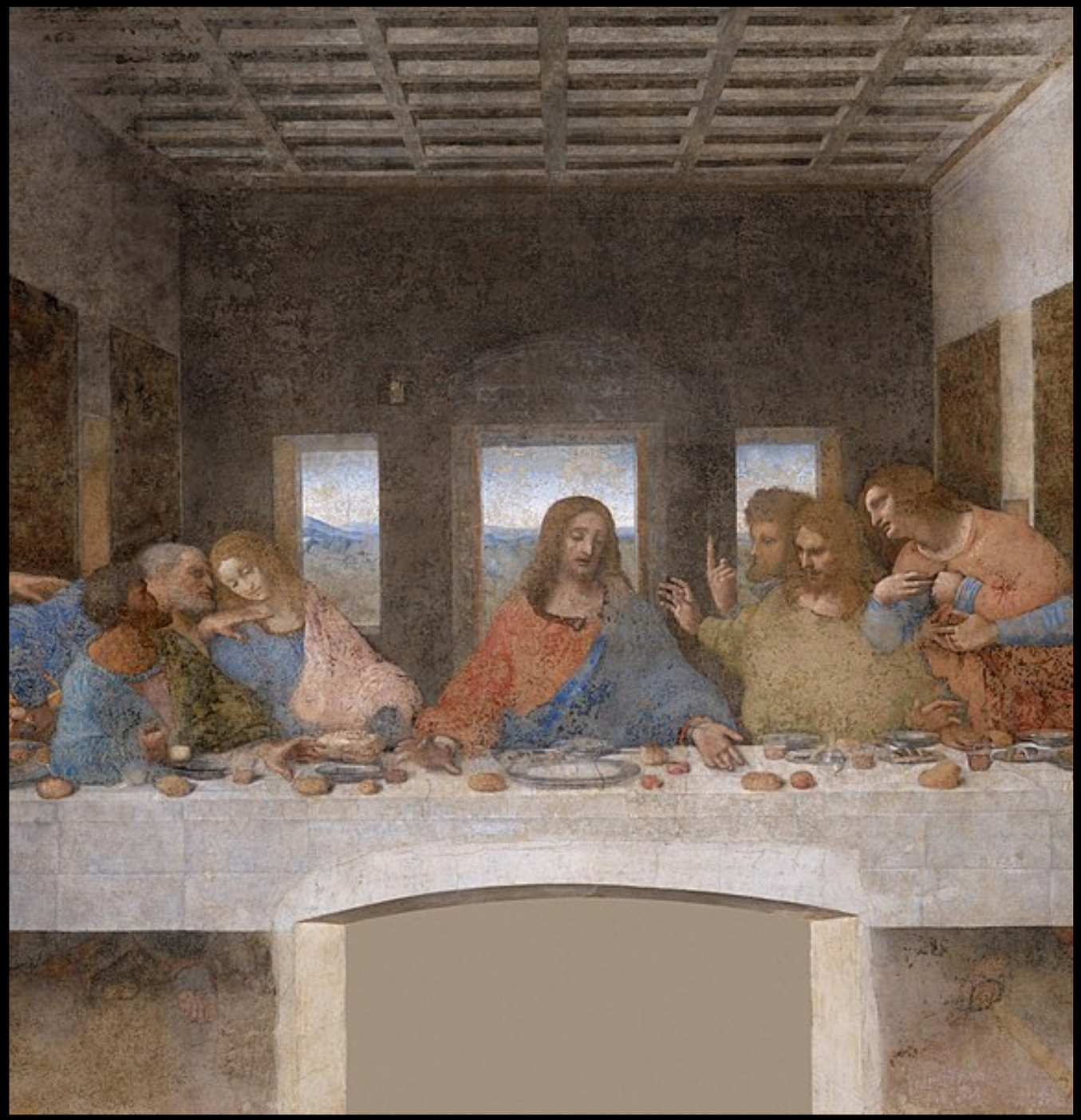
- **Vanishing point:** the point at which all the orthogonals meet.
- **Orthogonal:** name for architectural lines that head straight towards or away from the viewer.
- **Aerial perspective:** The use of dull or dark colours in the background of a landscape to convey depth
- **Linear perspective:** creating a sense of depth in an architectural space by using orthogonals and a vanishing point.



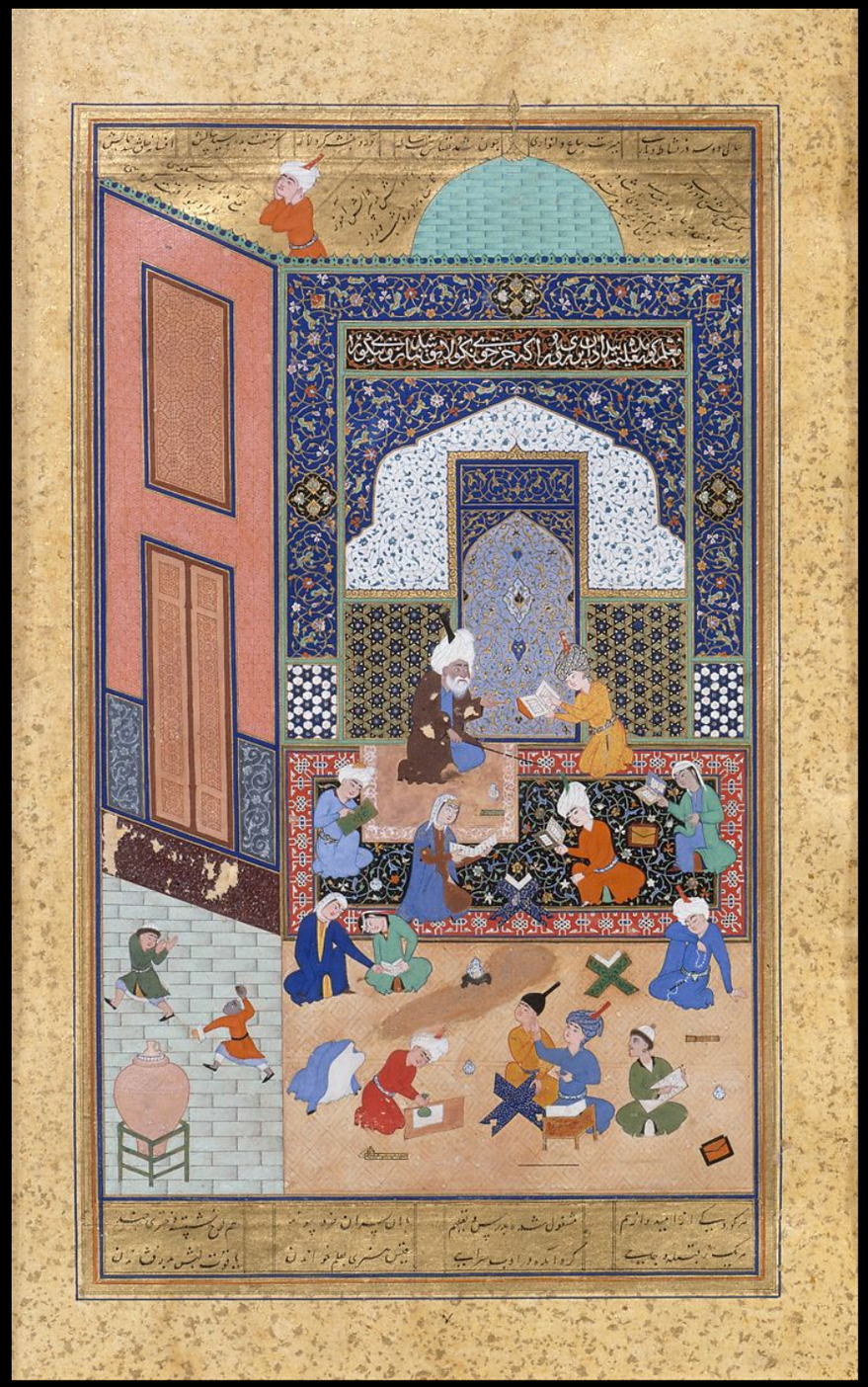


Leonardo Da Vinci
The Last Supper
1495-98

John Berger notes, “The convention of the perspective fit in perfectly with the ideals of Renaissance humanism because it structured all images of reality to address a single spectator who unlike God could only be in one place at one time.”



Leonardo Da Vinci
The Last Supper (detail)
1495-98



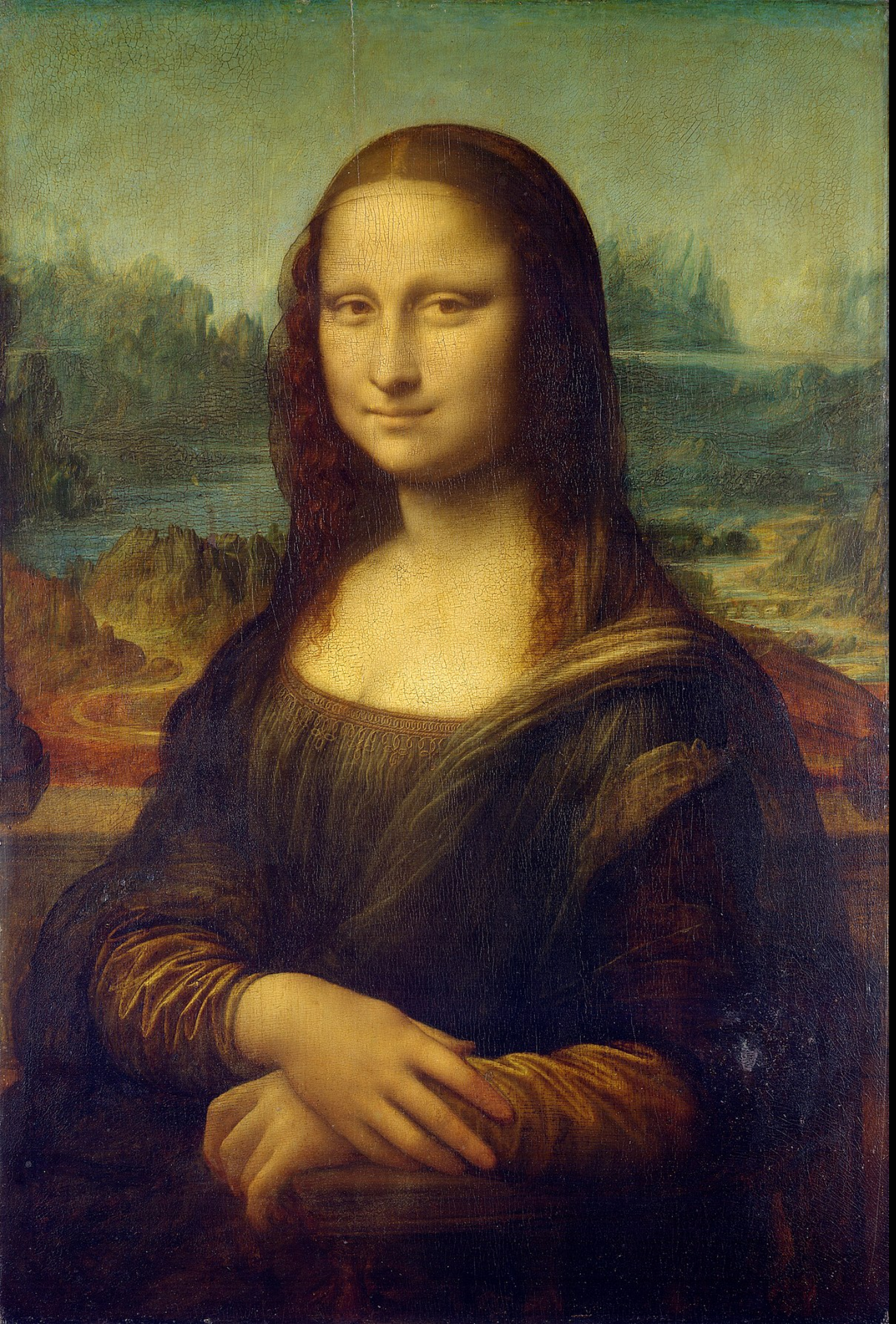
"Laila and Majnun in School", Folio 129 from a Khamsa (Quintet) of Nizami
A.H. 931/A.D. 1524–25

Raphael, *School of Athens,* 1509-11

Plato and Aristotle

Pythagoras

Raphael



LIGHT AND SHADOW

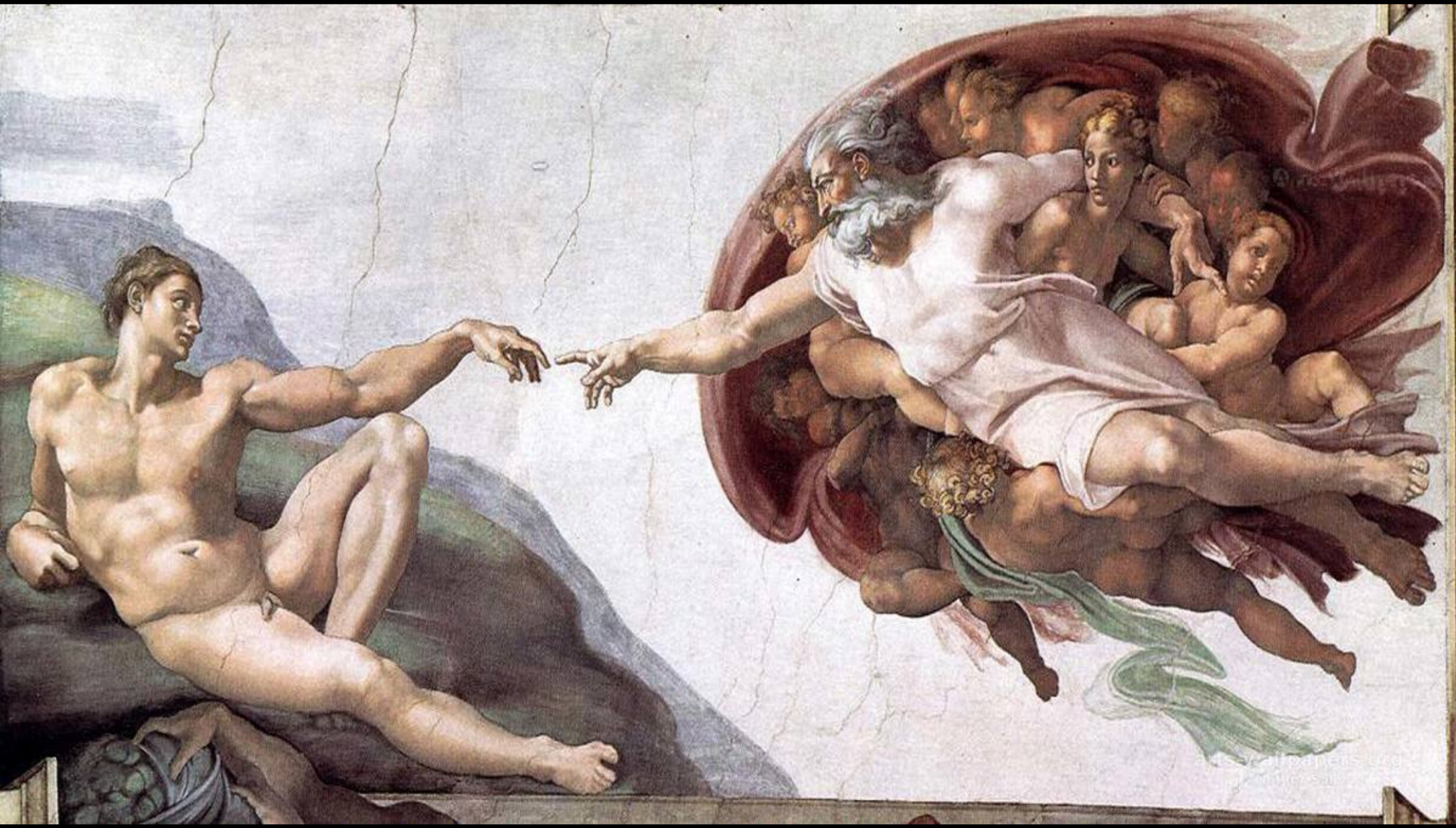
Sfumato = smoke: hazy quality that softens the outlines, removes the sharp outlines, makes it atmospheric and creates a sense of unity in the painting, makes the figure emerge out of the darkness

Mona Lisa
Leonardo da Vinci
oil on wood panel
c. 1503–19
Louvre, Paris.

Chiaroscuro: (from Italian *chiaro*, “light,” and *scuro*, “dark”) A technique employed in art to represent light and shadow to show the volume of three-dimensional objects.

The Cartoon of St Anne, Leonardo da Vinci, 16th century

Rebirth of Nudity

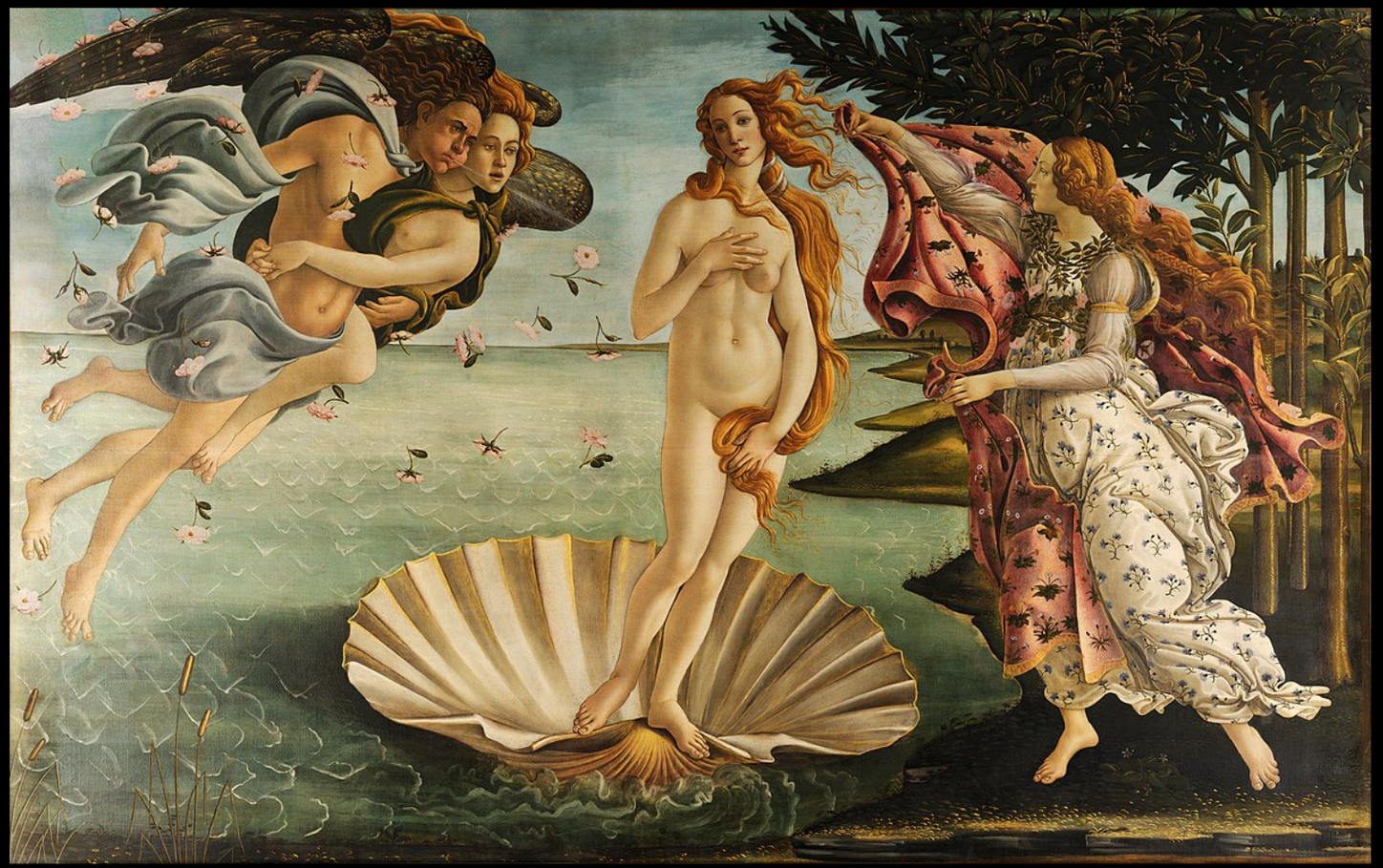


Michelangelo
The Creation of Adam (Sistine Chapel)
1512

The question of female nudity

Raphael
Madonna in the Meadow
1506 (Met Museum)

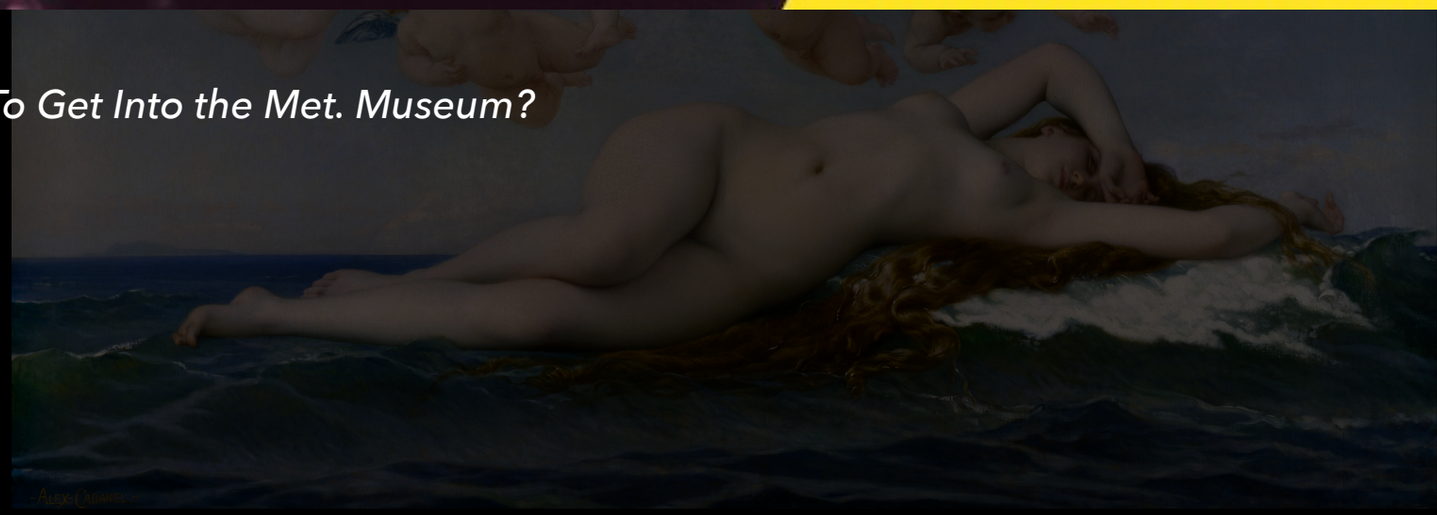
Titian
Venus of Urbino
c. 1532 (Uffizi Gallery)



Boticelli
The Birth of Venus
1484-86

Alexandre Cabanel
The Birth of Venus
1863

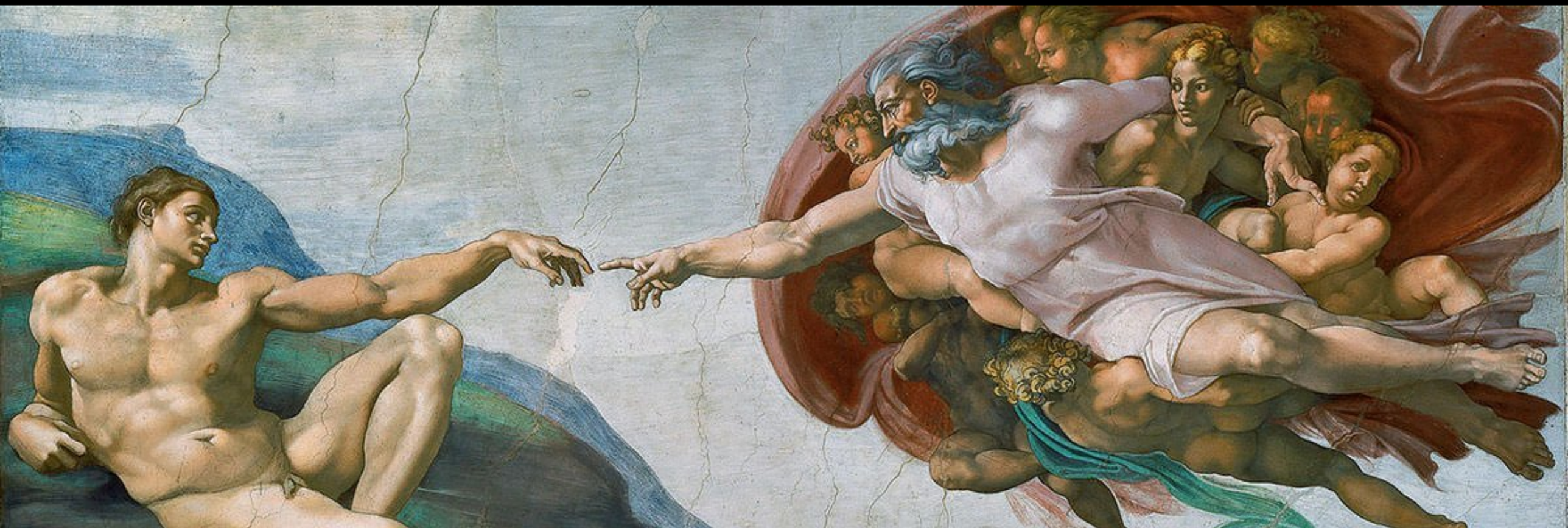
Guerrilla Girls
Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into the Met. Museum?
1989



A Golden Age?

(1) an era that achieved great things, art, science, innovation, literature, an era whose wondrous achievements later eras marvel at

(2) a good era to live, prosperous, thriving, stable, reasonably safe, with chances for growth, social ascent, days when hard work pays off, in short an era which—if you had to be stranded in some other epoch of —you'd be likely to choose.



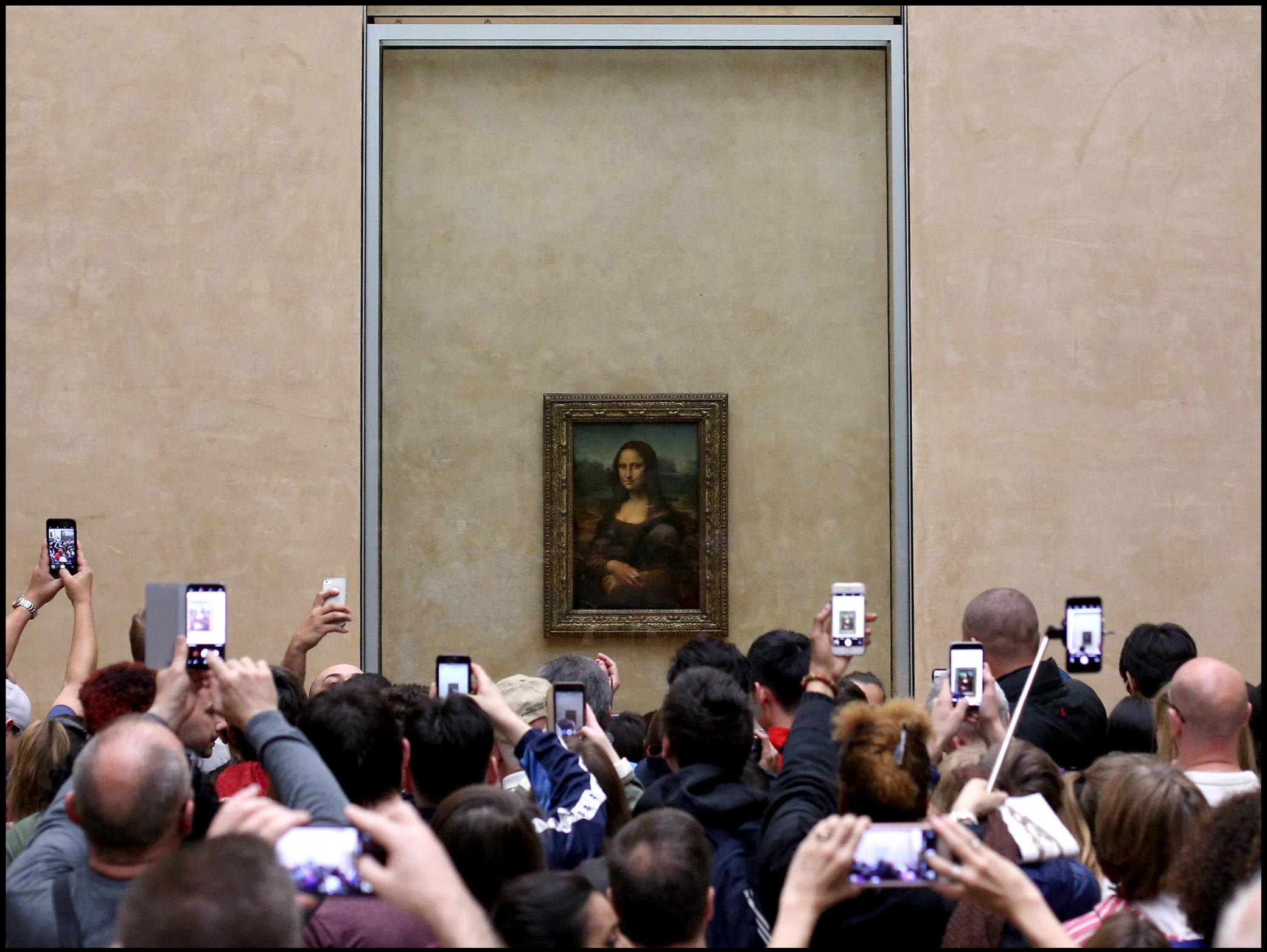
Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Triumph of Death*, c. 1562, Oil on panel

If the Black Death caused the Renaissance, will COVID-19 also create a Golden Age?

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Triumph of Death
Ca. 1562
Oil on panel

Photo edit from Ada Palmer's article of the Mona Lisa engulfed in flames

THE MONA LISA AS AN ICON: WHAT MAKES THE ART HISTORICAL CANON?



Women's Mona Lisa Socks Shoe Size 5-9 / Brown

$15.00
Good Luck Sock

Women's Fine Art Socks - Mona Lisa

$8.00
Shop PBS

★★★★½ (826)

Women's Da Vinci's Mona Lisa Socks

$4.20 ~~$7~~
Hot Sox

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Mona Lisa Tie by Wild Ties - Yellow Microfiber

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Ties.com

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GLOSSARY

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- **Sfumato:** (meaning vanishing like smoke) painterly technique for softening the transition between colors, achieved by applying paint in multiple thin layers
- **Glazing:** applying thin layers of oil paint that are almost translucent (10-15 layers) one on top of the other, softness, modeling enhances the sensuality
- **Humanism:** 14th century intellectual movement that stresses the importance of the human rather than the divine; emphasis on education and on expanding knowledge