

Pavel Florensky

Beyond Vision

Essays on the Perception of Art



EDITED BY
Nicoletta Misler

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CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements	7
Notes to the Reader	9
Translator's Note	12
Pavel Florensky: A Biographical Sketch	13
Pavel Florensky as Art Historian	29
Essays by Pavel Florensky:	
The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts (1922)	95
Celestial Signs (1922)	113
On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre (1925)	123
The Stratification of Aegean Culture (1913)	137
On Realism (1923)	175
Explanation of the Cover (1922)	183
Reverse Perspective (1920)	197
References	273
Bibliographical Sources	307
Index	311

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Choosing the seven essays here has been a difficult assignment, for Florensky wrote a great deal on the history and theory of art, especially during the 1910s and 1920s, often in response to the cultural, social and political events of his time. Among the principal criteria governing the selection have been originality and actuality of idea and previous inaccessibility of the text in English. However, the essays are organically connected to the many other facets of Florensky's career and should be read as complements to his researches into ecclesiastical history, geology, mathematics, engineering, physics and archaeology, all of which could provide equally fascinating anthologies of critical and theoretical essays. Such intellectual versatility was characteristic of Florensky, of his generation, and of the evanescent synthesis that distinguished Russia's cultural renaissance in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Verifying Florensky's copious bibliographical references to both humanistic and scientific literature (he was a voracious reader), following his intellectual sallies into his numerous and often opposing fields of research (from the Italian Renaissance to industrial Bakelite, from the Orthodox liturgy to Aegean culture) has been a daunting and exacting task, and many people and institutions have helped bring the project to fruition

Above all, I must express my deepest thanks to Wendy Salmond, translator of the essays. Without her linguistic expertise, constructive advice, common sense and constant good humour, this book would not exist.

I am also very grateful to the immediate members of Florensky's family, Pavel V. Florensky, Igumen Andronik (Aleksandr Trubachev) and Mariia Trubacheva, who have now transferred his archival legacy to the Florensky Foundation in Moscow (The Centre for the Study, Preservation and Restoration of the Legacy of Father Pavel Florensky). They have been unhesitating in their support of this project and generous in furnishing information about Florensky's life and work, and in allowing me to consult original documents, photographs and other archival materials.

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NOTES TO THE READER

Transliteration

The transliteration follows the Library of Congress system. However, many Russian writers and artists spent part of their lives in Western Europe or the United States and often spelt their names in ways that diverged from or even contradicted standard systems. When a variant of this kind has long been established and recognised, e.g., Alexandre Benois, not Aleksandr Benua; El Lissitzky, not Lazar' Lisitsky, this has been retained in the main text.

Dating the Essays

Dates in parentheses on the Contents page refer to date of public lecture, actual publication or intended publication.

Names and Titles

The first name and surname of an individual are given in full when he or she is first mentioned in a given section or essay. Subsequent references to the individual are by surname.

Titles of books, catalogues, journals and newspapers are italicised; titles of articles, manuscripts and exhibitions are in quotation marks, but names of societies and institutions are not. When first mentioned in the main text, the title of a Russian book, exhibition catalogue, journal or newspaper is provided in the original language with English translation in brackets; subsequent references in the main text are in English only; those to a journal or newspaper are in the original language.

Florensky's own endnote References are often schematic or incomplete. Where appropriate, in the interests of clarity and accessibility I have updated and amplified his bibliographical references.

Times and Places

Dates referring to events in Russia before January 1918 are in the Old Style. Consequently, if they are in the nineteenth century they are twelve days

behind the Western calendar, whereas if they are between 1900 and 1918 they are thirteen days behind.

The city of St Petersburg was renamed Petrograd in 1914, Leningrad in 1924 and St Petersburg again in 1992. However, both the names Petrograd and Petersburg continued to be used freely in common parlance and in publications until 1924. As a general rule, however, Petrograd has been retained here as the official name of St Petersburg for the period 1914-24.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used:

d. *dello* (archival dossier or item)

ed. khr. *edinitsa khraneniia* (archival unit of preservation)

f. *fond* (archival fund)

GAIS Gosudarstvennaia Akademiia istorii iskusstv (State Academy of the History of the Arts, Leningrad)

GAKhN Gosudarstvennaia Akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk (State Academy of Artistic Sciences, Moscow), from 1921-5 known as RAKhN

GEEI Gosudarstvennii eksperimental'nyi elektrotekhnicheskii institut (State Experimental Electrotechnical Institute)

GlavELEKTRO Glavnoe upravlenie ekektrotekhnicheskoi promyshlennosti (Chief Administration for the Electrotechnical Industry)

Glavnauka Glavnoe upravlenie nauchnykh, muzeinykh i nauchno-khudozhestvennykh uchrezhdenii (Chief Administration of Scholarly, Museum and Art-Research Institutions)

GOELRO Gosudarstvennaia komissiia po elektrifikatsii Rossii (State Commission for the Electrification of Russia)

GOKhRAN Gosudarstvennoe khranilishche (State Depository)

INKhUK Institut khudozhestvennoi kul'tury (Institute of Artistic Culture, Moscow)

l. list (sheet)

MIKhIM Moskovskii institut istoriko-khudozhestvennykh izyskaniia i muzeovedeniia (Moscow Institute of Historical and Artistic Researches and Museology)

NARKOMPROS Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia (People's Commissariat for Enlightenment)

op. opus (archival corpus)

RAKhN Russkaia Akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk (Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences, Moscow), after 1925 known as GAKhN

RANION Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia nauchno-issledovatel'skikh institutov obshchestvennykh nauk (Russian Association of Scientific-Research Institutes of the Social Sciences)

RGALI Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow)

RGL Russian State Library, Moscow (formerly Lenin Library, Moscow)

RM State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

SVOMAS Svobodnye gosudarstvennye khudozhestvennye masterskie (Free State Art Studios)

TG State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

VEI Vsesoiuznyi elektrotekhnicheskii institut (All-Union Electro-technical Institute, Moscow)

VKhuTEIN Vysshii gosudarstvennyi khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskii institut (Higher State Art-Technical Institute, Moscow)

VKhuTEMAS Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskije masterskie (Higher State Art-Technical Studios, Moscow)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Florensky's style of writing, his grammatical constructions and often oblique vocabulary make translation into any language a challenging task. His use of language reflects a deep erudition and diverse interests, ranging from the Bible and the classical repertory to the latest sciences of non-Euclidean geometry and psycho-physiology. Mixing archaisms and mathematical formulae, Florensky is by turns lyrical and stringently logical.

The distinctive rhythm of Florensky's prose relies in part on the unusual length and density of his sentences, with their long secondary clauses, parenthetical digressions and idiosyncratic repetitions. I have attempted to retain the sense of his voice, particularly in those essays originally presented as public lectures. Thus, in their original Russian the published texts adopt a complex system of emphasis (underlining, italics) to convey the degrees of importance which Florensky wished to give specific words and phrases and, whenever possible, this method of emendation has been maintained. Where the complexity of Florensky's language threatens to make his ideas inaccessible to a non-Russian reader, however, exceptionally long and unwieldy sentences have been divided into more manageable lengths.

PAVEL FLORENSKY:
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicoletta Misler

Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky (1882-1937), priest, philosopher, historian and mathematician, was one of the most paradigmatic and influential scholars of the Russian Silver Age.

In spite of his erudition and expertise in many disciplines, the full measure of Florensky's impact on the culture of his time has still to be determined and assessed. True, the rediscovery of Florensky's philosophical, literary and art historical *œuvre* began in the late 1960s with the publication of his writings in the Soviet Union, at first with hesitancy and then with increasing boldness; and as these writings became better known (thanks to the courage of his family, most of the texts had been preserved throughout the Stalin era), their intimate connection with the most diverse fields of the humanities and sciences also became apparent.

Florensky's rich intellectual and spiritual legacy is intricate, contradictory and often confusing, something manifest in the very iconology of Florensky that has come down to us; and since this book concerns his perception of the fine and applied arts rather than his status as a representative of the Orthodox church, visualising this iconology might help us to understand the complexity of the living person. On the one hand, for example, we have the 1934 memoir by Andrei Bely, poet and philosopher, who refers to the 'angular and nosey' Florensky 'galvanised to your socks with his perspicacious gaze' and 'babbling away through the nose' - certainly, a sarcastic, if not caricatural portrait.¹ On the other hand, there is the affectionate and reverent description that Florensky's friend and fellow priest, Sergei Bulgakov, penned in emigration: 'For me Father Pavel was not only a phenomenon of genius, but also a work of art, so harmonious and beautiful was his image. We would need the words, the brush or the chisel of a great master to tell the world about him.'² In fact, several artists did take up their tools to try and evoke the emblematic image of Florensky, especially those who were in close contact with him throughout the 1920s, such as Vladimir Favorsky (illus. 1) and Aleksandr Uittengoven (illus. 2). Other artists 'engraved' Florensky in the ecclesiastical robes so characteristic of his distinctive profile - as in the profile silhouette by Nina Simonovich-



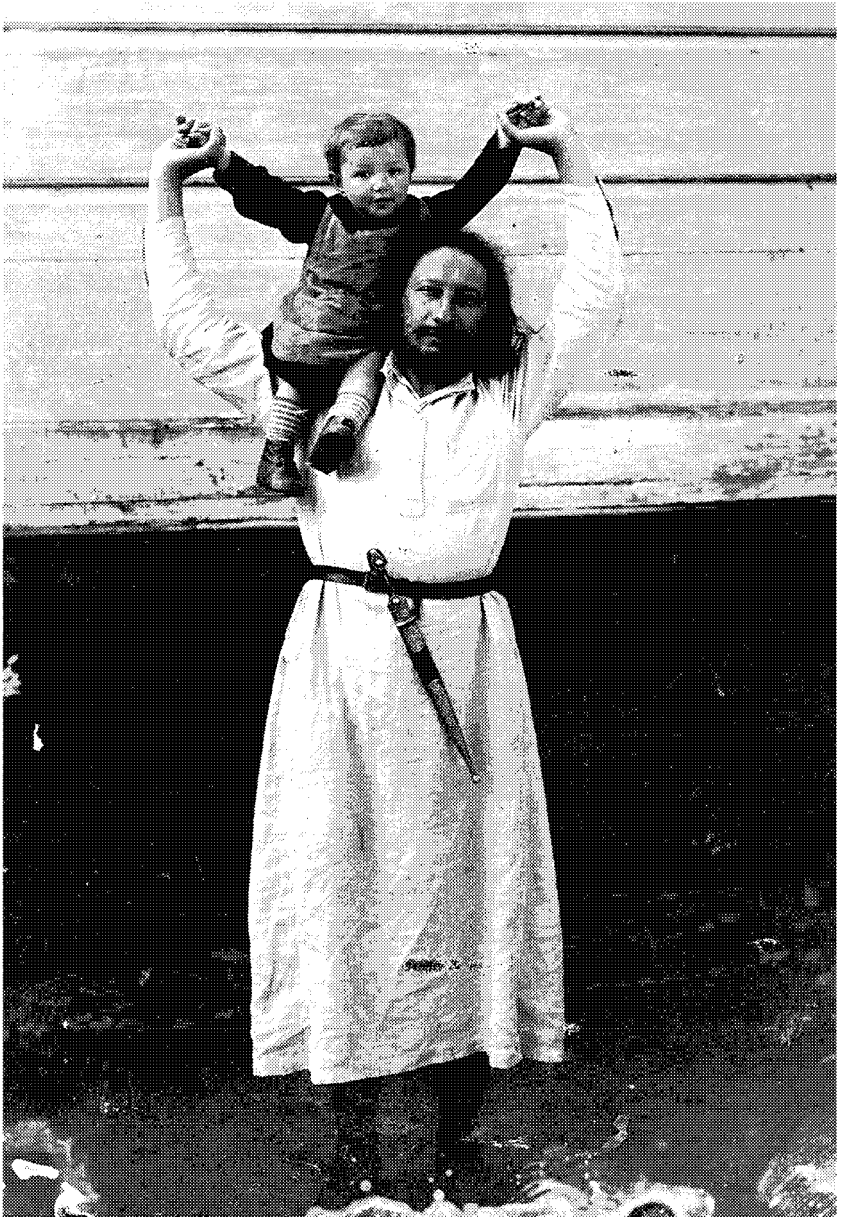
1 Vladimir Favorsky, *Pavel Florensky*, 1922, pencil on paper, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



2 Aleksandr Uittengoven's ex-libris design for Florensky, 1924, woodcut. Collection of Marina Chuvanova, Moscow

Efimova of 1926 (illus. 48). Such images, together with the extensive collection of family photographs preserved in the Florensky Foundation in Moscow, provide a very human and concrete image of Florensky's personality: here is the dashing young man in a kaftan sporting a Caucasian dagger in his belt and the young father carrying his baby daughter (illus. 3); here is the family man in Sergiev Posad in 1922 sitting on the wooden steps leading from his home into the garden (illus. 4);³ here is the humiliating police ID photograph taken after his arrest in 1928 together with his colleague Pavel Kapterev (illus. 5).

The eldest of six children, Florensky was born on 9 January 1882 in the village of Evlakh in Azerbaidjan, into an educated and united family. From his father, Aleksandr Ivanovich, a railroad engineer, Florensky inherited a positivist passion for science, while his more artistic talents derived from his mother, Ol'ga Pavlovna (*née* Saparian), an intelligent and cultivated woman of ancient Armenian lineage. Florensky's two brothers also inherited their father's more practical nature, Aleksandr (1888-1938) becoming a professional geologist and Andrei (1899-1961) a shipbuilder and rocket engineer. Their mother's penchant for the arts manifested itself in the activities of Florensky's



3 Florensky and his daughter Mariia (Tinatin) in the garden of their home in Sergiev Posad, 1926



4 Florensky, his wife Anna Mikhailovna, and their children Vasilii, Kirill, Ol'ga and Mikhail sitting on the wooden steps of their home in Sergiev Posad, 1922

5 Police ID photograph of Florensky and Pavel Kapterev, Camp Freedom, Eastern Siberia, 1928



6 Ol'ga Florenskaia,
Pavel Florensky, 1907,
oil on cardboard.
Private collection



three sisters, all painters, Elizaveta (1886-1959), Ol'ga (1890-1914: her portrait of Florensky is illus. 6) and Raisa (1896-1932), the latter two achieving solid reputations in the 1920S. For Florensky the family was the essential nucleus in the history of any individual, and throughout his life he gathered and preserved genealogical materials, even the most casual detail, which he intended to pass on to future generations. The Florensky Foundation, established in 1996 by Florensky's grandchildren in the family apartment on Burdenko Street in Moscow, is living testimony to this familial continuity, as his descendants have also made commendable contributions to their particular fields: Florensky's grandson, Aleksandr Trubachev (Igumen Andronik, Father Andronik), also serves the cause of the Orthodox Church; his granddaughter, Mariia, is a specialist in Russian icons, another grandson, also Pavel, is a celebrated mineralogist, while some of the younger and perhaps less rever-

ent progeny are members of the Mit'ki group of avant-garde artists and poets in St Petersburg.

Florensky maintained that his real schooling derived not from institutions of learning, but from nature, and later on he recalled with great fondness the walks or 'expeditions' that he and his father used to undertake in the environs of Tiflis in their search for shells, stones and fossils. The young Florensky would observe and study these natural phenomena, even drawing and photographing them, something that stimulated his lifelong interest in geology and meteorology. True, Florensky attended the Second Classical Gymnasium in Tiflis between 1892 and 1900 (at various times the philosophers Aleksandr El'chaninov and Vladimir Ern and the artist David Burliuk were also enrolled there), where he received the traditional grounding in languages, literature and the sciences, but he preferred to read and think outside of the school curriculum and never regarded his tenure at the Gymnasium as fundamental to his intellectual formation.

Florensky regarded life as a constant experiment, and to this end recorded countless facts, major and minor, that he then annotated in the form of the 'objective' diaries he began to write in 1916, as well as in the many letters to members of his family.⁴ Every detail in this chronicle is related to an ontological reality, but a reality perceived within a context that is both universally accessible and very private. An illuminating example of Florensky's 'detailisation' is his childhood reminiscence of Venetian glass beads offered by Turkish merchants in Batumi, Georgia,⁵ which left such a vivid aesthetic impression on him that he later used it as a graceful image to explain the concept of space and time in a work of art.⁶ Indeed, in his memoirs, Florensky recalled Batumi and Tiflis, the cities of his youth, with extreme vivacity, rendering them even more exotic in their temporal remoteness. In reconstructing the psychology of his childhood, Florensky demonstrated an exceptional sensibility, which later manifested itself in his relationship to his own five children, Vasilii (1911-56), Kirill (1915-82), Ol'ga (1918-97), Mikhail (1921-61) and Mariia (b. 1924, nicknamed Tinatin). For his beloved Mikhail, Florensky composed and illustrated a historical saga while he was in prison camp during 1934-7, the poem 'Oro' dedicated to the *Orochony* (a people of the Russian Far East). His death left the poem unfinished?

In 1899, poised between infancy and manhood, Florensky experienced a profound spiritual crisis, after sensing the inadequacy of what he called the 'knowledge of physics'. This was the first of three crises that signalled major turning-points in his life, the others occurring in 1909-10 on the eve of his

marriage to Anna Mikhailovna Giatsintova (1889-1973) and in 1924 (a private episode that he never really clarified).

Florensky's family regarded his sudden decision to embrace Orthodoxy as a very radical conversion. He recalls that for his laical, if tolerant, family, religion was an embarrassing, almost taboo, subject, like any other non-scientific truth, even if for Florensky proximity to religion did not entail rejecting science. Graduating from the Gymnasium in Tiflis in 1900, he enrolled in the Department of Physics and Mathematics at Moscow University. In attending the courses offered by the mathematician Nikolai Bugaev, Florensky hoped to resolve the apparent contradiction between his scientific interests and his spiritual quest. Bugaev supported the theory of discontinuous or discrete functions in mathematics, even extending this idea to other fields of enquiry and, not surprisingly, became supervisor of Florensky's graduating thesis 'Ob osobennostiakh ploskikh krivyykh kak mestakh narushenii preryvnosti' [On the Peculiarities of Planar Curves as Loci of Disruptions of Continuity] (1904). During this period Florensky also attended Sergei Trubetskoi's lectures on philosophy and became especially close to Andrei Bely, Bugaev's son, a liaison reinforced by their common interest in new and controversial mathematical ideas or, rather, the philosophy of mathematics, and their common devotion to Bugaev's arithmology. True, the Bely-Florensky friendship was of rather short duration,⁹ although, in spite of intermittent silences, their intellectual exchange and spiritual consonance lasted many years. Both made sure, for example, to send each other congratulatory letters on the publication of their respective books, Bely's *Simvolizm* [Symbolism] in 1910,¹⁰ and Florensky's *Stolp i utverzhenie istiny* [The Pillar and Ground of the Truth] in 1914,¹¹ and both frequented the Symbolist literary circles of Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont and the eccentric couple Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius. Florensky's commitment to Orthodoxy did not diminish, and in 1904, after debating with Elder Antonii (Bishop Antonii of Donskoi Monastery), whether or not to take monastic vows, he decided to enrol in the Moscow Theological Seminary (actually located in Sergiev Posad), which he did in September of that year (illus. 7). Florensky graduated in 1908 and entered the priesthood; four years later he submitted his thesis for Master of Theology, and in May 1914 received the degree.

Once embarked on his religious quest, Florensky met a number of idealist and Orthodox philosophers, including El'chaninov and Ern (his old classmates from Tiflis) and especially Sergei Troitsky, the friend to whom he dedicated the twelve fundamental letters of his theological dissertation - which



7 Florensky at the Moscow Theological Seminary, Sergiev Posad, 1912

then developed into *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*. At this time Florensky was much influenced by the eschatological beliefs and philosophical constructs of Vladimir Solov'ev and other cultural heroes of the time, such as Nietzsche and Wagner. Myth and primitive culture, the correlation between good and evil, *Gesamtkunstwerk* and similar concepts were the subjects of long and ardent discussions among the Symbolists, especially at Viacheslav Ivanov's sixth-floor apartment, the so called 'Tower' in St Petersburg, where every Wednesday between 1905 and 1907 the Symbolist intelligentsia would meet. As Ivanov's daughter, Lidiia, recalls, 'Another memory - a young student in a worn uniform with brown hair and a very long nose. He kept silent, concentrating intensely on his thoughts, with his nose down near his plate. Throughout the meal he never raised his head. This was Pavel Florensky.'¹² But not all of Florensky's friendships were enduring, and after 1906 he distanced himself from Ern and Vladimir Svetsitsky of the 'Apocalyptic Troika', dissatisfied with their politically committed Christianity.

The Symbolists were driven by a consuming desire to discover the essen-

tial meaning of religion, literature and art, and Florensky drew his philosophical inspiration from the same sources. Florensky's intellectual curiosity and spiritual exploration informed his intense pedagogical activity as a lecturer both in mathematics and cosmography at the Women's Gymnasium in Sergiev Posad, 1908-9, and in philosophy at the Moscow Theological Seminary there, 1908-19. As far as his ecclesiastical duties are concerned, between 1912 and 1921 Florensky served as priest to the Sergiev Posad Church of Mary Magdalene attached to the shelter for Nurses of the Russian Red Cross. For three years (1914-17) he was also chief editor for the journal *Bogoslovskii vestnik* [Theological Herald] in which he published several of his fundamental essays such as 'Razum i dialektika' [Reason and Dialectics] (II/9, 1914) and 'Privedenie chisel' [Induction of Numbers] (II/5, 1916). The year 1914 also saw the publication of his book *Smysl idealizma* [The Meaning of Idealism].

With the onslaught of the Great War and the Revolution, Florensky, like many other Russian writers and artists, heard the trumpets of the Apocalypse sounding through the noise of time - just as the writer and philosopher Vasilii Rozanov was compiling his pamphlets on *The Apocalypse of Our Time* with their millenarian interpretation of the revolutionary events.¹³ We can understand why, in that fateful year of 1917, Florensky was especially supportive of the sick and sorrowful Rozanov,¹⁴ and why Bely still referred to him jokingly as a active member of the 'Apocalyptic Troika'.¹⁵ Aleksei Losev recalled:

At the beginning of the Revolution innumerable voices spoke of the fall of the whole of European culture [...] At the beginning of the Revolution [...] the Orthodox and mystical Florensky used to deliver public papers and lectures whose principal idea was of an imminent and inevitable catastrophe. In a muffled and hardly audible voice, his eyes eternally cast down, this engineer predicted that nothing would remain **in** place, that everything would lose its structure and form and everything would disintegrate, be destroyed and atomised completely. Until the old was liquified in total chaos and reduced to dust, it would be impossible to speak of new and stable values. I myself attended these terrifying lectures.¹⁶

It is difficult to reconcile the apocalyptic turbulence of war and revolution with the intimate domestic photographs showing Florensky **in** the bosom of his growing family - his wife, Anna and their three young children - not to

mention the various aunts, babies and other relations. The house in Sergiev Posad that Florensky acquired in 1910 was a haven of peace and apparent immutability, and it remained his even after the October Revolution. Of rather modest proportions, but with a large kitchen garden, the house has not changed to this day and the street in front still leads off to the golden cupolas of the Churches of the Lavra (illus. 8).

After the Revolution Florensky intensified his pedagogical activity, placing his scientific qualifications at the service of the new Soviet regime, a practical application that saved him, at least temporarily, from the first repressive measures, arrests and summary executions that the Bolsheviks took against the Church and its supporters. In 1920 he collaborated with the biologist Ivan Ognev on the development of a special ultramicroscope at the Istological Institute in Moscow.¹⁷ As a specialist in electricity, in January 1921 he began to work for GOELRO (Soviet Electrification Plan) and then for GlavELEKTRO at the Karbolit Works, developing new insulation materials (illus. 9).

From 1918 to 1920 he served on the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius,¹⁸ where, with militant zeal and side by side with art historians, restorers and conserva-



8 The Florensky home in Sergiev Posad, near the Church of the Trinity at the Troitse-Sergieva, photographed in 1996

9 Nina Simonovich-Efimova's cover design for Florensky's book *Karbolit* (published in 1928); indian ink and crayons on paper. Efimov Archive, Moscow



tors, he tried desperately to safeguard the spiritual values and precious material treasures of the Orthodox faith from atheist dictatorship and ruthless nationalisation. Thanks to this connection he was invited to teach Byzantine art at MIKhIM. One of the most significant results of Florensky's involvement in the Commission and his preparations for the Byzantine course was his cycle of publications on early Russian art, including the fundamental essay *Ikonostasis*.¹⁹

Florensky's close collaboration with the Commission and his previous contacts with the Moscow Symbolist milieu - and with young art historians such as Aleksei Sidorov and Aleksandr Larionov - heightened his interest in the visual arts and in particular artists such as Favorsky, who shared Florensky's vision of a Holy Russia, one that was Orthodox, humble and immaculate. Like Florensky, Favorsky was interested in how the practising artist could benefit from the exact sciences such as physics, mathematics and psycho-

physiology. Not surprisingly, in his capacity as Chairman of the Department of Polygraphy, he invited his friend to teach a course at VKhUTEMAS during (1921–24),²⁰ Moscow's progressive art school, which had substituted and integrated the pre-Revolutionary schools of fine and applied arts. This course ignited a passionate polemic between the more moderate artists such as Nikolai Chernyshev and Konstantin Istomin on the one hand and the Constructivists such as Liubov' Popova and Aleksandr Rodchenko on the other. Incidentally, the former were closely associated with the Makovets group of writers and artists, a curious and disparate assembly of rightists and leftists (Natal'ia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov were also members, even though by then they were living in exile) who insisted both on the messianic purpose of art and on the artist's right to personal expression, a cultural claim that, of course, appealed to Florensky.

From 1921 onwards Florensky was also associated with the Russian (later State) Academy of Artistic Sciences (RAKhNjGAKhN) in Moscow, an institution that attempted to stimulate interaction between scientific thought and artistic creativity by bringing together art historians, physicists, philosophers, psychologists and mathematicians. Initiated by Vasilii Kandinsky, RAKhN attracted the pre-Revolutionary intelligentsia, especially the apologists of Symbolism such as A. Larionov, with whom Florensky projected a dictionary of symbols or 'Symbolarium', one of the many theoretical endeavours that RAKhN sponsored in the field of the artistic sciences.

In the mid- and late 1920s Florensky devoted even more time and energy to his scientific investigations, contributing 127 entries to the *Tekhnicheskaiia entsiklopediia* [Technological Encyclopedia] between 1927 and 1934,²¹ and working as an insulation specialist in various institutions, especially for GEEI (later VEl; illus. 10). But his unabating religious commitment, reflected in the priest's cassock and cross that he still wore to work, made him an easy and constant target for ideological attack, leading to his exile to Nizhnii-Novgorod for three months in 1928 (illus. 11). Even there, however, he continued to work as a researcher for the Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич Institute of Radiology. Returning to Moscow, he was reinstated at GEEI, even becoming deputy director in 1930.

He continued to participate in scholarly conferences and to publish (illus. 12 and 13), his last professional publication, 'Fizika na sluzhbe matematiki' ['Physics in the Service of Mathematics'] appearing in 1932 in the journal *Sotsialisticheskaiia rekonstruktsiia i nauka* [Socialist Reconstruction and Science]. But in spite of his prestigious reputation as a scientist, Florensky was arrested on 26 February 1933, accused of criminal conspiracy and other fictitious acts



10 Florensky in his office at the State Experimental Electrotechnical Institute (GEEI), Moscow, 1925



11 Florensky in exile, Nizhnii-Novgorod, 1928

and condemned to ten years in a prison camp, first at Camp Freedom in Eastern Siberia and then (early in 1934) at the Experimental Permafrost Station in Skovorodyno. The cruel deprivations notwithstanding, Florensky pursued his scientific investigations, his only formal complaint being a written protest to the OGPU (secret police). In this poignant petition Florensky requested that the library and manuscripts that had been confiscated during the search of his house be restituted to him or his family:

For me the confiscation of my books and of my scholarly and philosophical researches [...] has been a severe blow, depriving me of any hope at all for the future and reducing me to total apathy in my work.... For me the destruction of the results of my life's work is far worse than physical death.²²

The absence of his library and of the barest necessities notwithstanding, Florensky never hesitated in his devotion to religion and science. With the biologist Pavel Kapterev, for example, his old friend and colleague from the Commission days, Florensky even wrote two essays on 'How Water Freezes'



12 Florensky in the family house, Burdenko Street, Moscow (now the premises of the Florensky Foundation), 1931



13 Florensky collecting mushrooms near Sergiev Posad, 1932

and delivered lectures on the subject. But despite his scientific utility and pressure from Ekaterina Peshkova (Maxim Gorky's ex-wife), in November 1934, after seeing his family for the last time, Florensky was denied further visitor rights and sent to Solovki, the ancient monastery now transformed into a concentration camp. Here he courageously gave lessons in mathematics to the camp's Mathematical Circle and worked on scientific issues such as the properties of iodine, analysing them in the camp's own iodine factory and discussing them in his lectures to the iodine workers there.²³ The terrible circumstances in which he lived are manifest from the letters that he wrote home to his wife or children, sometimes to the entire family, each one long and intense as if to make up for the imposed infrequency. This amazing correspondence, which continued until 3-4 June 1937, radiates with Florensky's unremitting memories and, as with all his texts, published and unpublished, is an integral part of a cohesive whole, drawing purpose and strength from the single denominator of religious faith.

On 25 November 1937, the NKVD (secret police) reconfirmed Florensky's guilt and condemned him to death. He was transferred to Leningrad Region and on 8 December 1937 was executed by firing squad at Levashovo, near Leningrad.

PAVEL FLORENSKY AS ART HISTORIAN

Nicoletta Misler

Beyond Vision is the first English-language collection of statements on art by Pavel Florensky. The book, consisting of seven essays, reflects Florensky's fundamental attitudes to the vital questions of construction, composition, chronology, function, and destination in the figurative work of painting, sculpture and design.

The essays are grouped thematically rather than chronologically, although they could be arranged in a variety of sequences. The first two, 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' and 'Celestial Signs', even if written after the October Revolution, forge an immediate link with the Symbolist movement to which Florensky was strongly indebted for his intellectual and philosophical formation. Symbolist concepts such as the inner perception of the wholeness of a work of art and the transcendental nature of things lead us into Florensky's examination of the Efimovs' puppet theatre, which, for him, was both an organic aesthetic performance and an attempt to recapture the fantasy and spontaneity of childhood. In this light, 'The Stratification of Aegean Culture' of 1913 (the earliest of the contributions here), with its assessment of pre-Christian artefacts, assumes particular importance for understanding Florensky's philosophical world view. It relates, in turn, to the wider discussion of the 'primitive' among artists in early twentieth-century Europe and Russia, from Picasso to Kandinsky, and also enters Florensky's succinct, but provocative discussion of Realism. In turn, elements of Symbolism and the avant-garde, as well as new mathematical and geometrical concepts, also inform Florensky's explanation of Vladimir Favorsky's book cover, a complex imagery that, consciously or unconsciously, Florensky opposes to the abstract and mechanical forms of the Moscow Constructivists. The last essay presents Florensky's analyses of linear and reverse perspectives, while subsuming and developing some of the ideas set forth in the preceding statements.

Beyond Vision is concerned with the complex and simultaneous application of optical vision, intellectual reason and historical experience with which, inevitably, we approach the work of art. Like all of us, Florensky possessed this faculty of synthetic perception, but it is the sharpness of focus,

clarity of argument and open inquisitiveness with which he embellished his evaluations of religion, the natural sciences and cultural monuments, that astonishes and intrigues today. Florensky's ideas appeal to many audiences-philosophers, theologians, Slavists, scholars of political and cultural ideology, and art historians.

Why this selection?

Erudite in many disciplines, Pavel Florensky has often been described as the Leonardo of his time, a comparison which, however forced, emphasises his relevance to both the sciences and the humanities, especially the visual arts. But what makes Florensky unique in the field of art history is that in some sense he was an intruder, being first and foremost a fervent believer **in** the Christian faith and an Orthodox priest - as well as a stellar contributor to the development of Soviet science.

At the same time Florensky's theoretical positions and professional duties of the 1910s-20s are also distinguished by a profound interest **in** art history, art appreciation and art education (witnesses to which are his supervision of the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra **in** 1918-20,¹ and his professorship at VKhUTEMAS in Moscow **in** 1921-4). Making a summary judgement of his various fields of endeavor towards the end of his life, Florensky once affirmed that in art history he had established '1) A methodology for describing and dating ancient Russian artifacts; and 2) A theory of spatiality **in** the work of art, especially visual art.'² These two achievements can be regarded as the guiding force of his entire academic career - surely reason enough for devoting this book to Florensky's study of the figurative arts and the problem of artistic space.

Several anthologies of Florensky's writings on art have already been published, but this particular collection brings together the essays that pertain specifically to the meanings and modalities of aesthetic perception, ranging from the synaesthetic contemplation in the church rite ('The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts') to symbolic apperception of the colours of a sunrise ('Celestial Signs'). The collection also contains Florensky's interpretations of the mathematical concept of a particular engraved representation ('Explanation of the Cover'), a recomposition of the archaeological relics of Aegean culture into a philosophical treatise on the matriarchate **in** early historical times ('The Stratification of Aegean Culture'), perspective as 'symbolic form' ('Reverse Perspective'), the intimate ritual of puppet theatre ('On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre') and a programmatic essay on the term Realism ('On Real-

ism'). True, Florensky considered the ideal model or synthesis of the visual arts to be the Russian and Byzantine icon, an identification that is crucial to any understanding of Florensky the art historian and one that cannot be emphasised enough. However, Florensky's several essays on icons and other Orthodox artistic and architectural objects have been excluded from the current collection either because - as in the case of *Iconostasis* - they are already accessible in English translations or because in their thematic coherence they would constitute a complementary, but independent, anthology. The focus of this collection, then, is on Florensky as an art historian rather than on his more familiar role as priest and religious philosopher.

Indeed, Florensky's art historical writings demonstrate a keen awareness of the latest European scholarship: his analysis of spatiality betrays a close resemblance to the theories of Ernst Cassirer, Erwin Panofsky and Alois Riegl; his investigations into iconography and anthropology bring to mind the conclusions of Fritz Saxl and Aby Warburg, while his personal elaboration of what could be called a Formalist methodology indicates a clear recognition of Conrad Fiedler, Heinrich Wölfflin and Wilhelm Worringer. Even in the field of museum studies Florensky was at the forefront, arguing, for example, for the establishment of the living and organic museum in his desperate bid to save the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius, the great monastery in Sergiev Posad near Moscow. These fine thematic intersections, constant cross-references and rich strata of bibliographical sources prove that Florensky, like many other Russian philosophers, writers and artists of the 1900s through to the 1920s, lived and worked not in isolation, but in a well-equipped and efficient laboratory of cultural enquiry and experiment that turned late Imperial and early Soviet Russia into a unique incubator of original ideas, utopian projects - and sometimes cataclysmic applications.

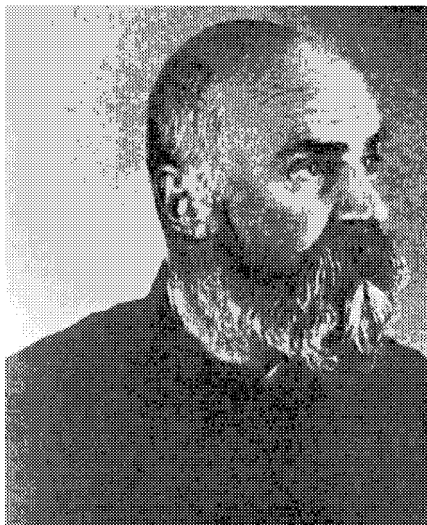
Moreover, studying Florensky's written *œuvre* on the visual arts prompts us to correct the serious misapprehensions and prejudices that often accompany our conventional understanding of culture and the October Revolution. Florensky and other thinkers and artists of his time constitute an 'alternative tradition' in the 1920s that coexisted with and, in some measure, countered the louder claims of the avant-garde on the one hand and the proto-Socialist Realists on the other. At the twilight of the Symbolist era, Florensky and his colleagues were the last representatives of the Russian Silver Age: adducing scientific criteria, he pleaded for the retention of the Orthodox ritual; recognizing Cubism and abstract painting, he championed the values of figurative art, and at a time of state nationalization and confiscation, he argued for the

preservation of icons, of churches and of those who served the Christian faith. Discussing reverse perspective, pictorial deformation and primitive folklore - the very issues that also excited the avant-garde - Florensky came to conclusions diametrically opposed to those of the new and anarchical artists who, in turn, censured him for his alleged mysticism and idealism.

Florensky was able to indulge in such varied exercises not only because of his factual knowledge in many disciplines, his creative fantasy, his intellectual acumen and his captivating combination of wisdom and ingenuity. He was able to move effortlessly from art history to biology, or from Futurist literature to linguistic etymology, because he regarded all these conditions as inter-related parts of a single whole, over which presided God. Until his tragic death in 1937, Florensky was an Orthodox priest, an unflinching supporter of the Christian church and a seeker of the divine truth, whither for him all branches of knowledge and cognition led. He interpreted the arts and humanities as celestial signs and elements of a cultic act pointing to the ulterior Realism and the luminous vision that, for him, existed beyond the visible.

An extraordinary knowledge of diverse arguments notwithstanding, Florensky was a cultivated dilettante rather than a professional art historian - a status shared by other intellectuals of Russia's cultural renaissance just before and after the October Revolution, including close friends such as the poet Andrei Bely, the semiotician Aleksandr Larionov,³ the icon specialist Yurii Olsuf'ev (illus. 14),⁴ the biologist Pavel Kapterev (illus. 15),⁵ and the art and military historian Pavel Muratov.⁶ Of course, the word 'dilettante' is being used here in the sense that Florensky intended it, for in applying a wide array of professional instruments to investigate a specific art-historical subject he did not hesitate to transcend the immediate boundaries of a discipline in order to reach a thematic intersection of broader resonance. The result is always a synthetic investigation reflecting Florensky's own aspiration to approach his subject from many points of view. Consequently, while following a single line of enquiry, each of the essays presented in this volume may touch upon 'peripheral' problems or develop into a rich alloy of personal experiences and observations, which Florensky - being a scientist and a philosopher - often transmutes into an 'experiment. Remarks such as 'Suppose we went out into the open, preferably at sunrise' ('Celestial Signs', p. 119 or 'The lambent green of groves in spring stirs unease in the heart' ('Explanation of the Cover', p. 190) serve both to engage the reader and the live audience (after all, Florensky was a brilliant teacher and preacher) and to demonstrate that he was interpreting reality in the tradition of the great scientists of his time. Like Hermann Weyl,

14 Yurii Olsuf'ev in the late 1920s



15 Florensky with his son Kirill and Pavel Kapterev in the garden at Sergiev Posad, 1917



for example? Florensky was eager to replace the objective and passive observer with the subjective and active one who integrates and retains the data of consciousness as the true point of departure for interpreting reality.

In fact, Florensky the scientist recorded both visual and physiological reactions. He accentuated, for example, the sensory undertones of the Symbolist world view in his description of the physical pleasures embedded in the Orthodox ritual (smell, touch, hearing, taste); the delight experienced in touching an ancient medallion; the intensity of the restrained gesture; the tactility of brushing the surface of an object; the acute physical sensation of the density of space on a cold winter's day or the almost hypnotic state induced when we look at something while standing absolutely still.⁵ With their varied subjects and approaches, his writings often evoke a sense of fragmentation, and such attention to minutiae might produce the impression of a randomness of thought. But abstract speculation was foreign to Florensky, for whom reference to the isolated fact of an event or a phenomenon within the discussion of a particular artistic theme could often become the integral part of a long and involved theoretical text.⁹

Many portions of the essay on perspective, for example, as well as Florensky's references to his favourite bibliographical sources, are encapsulated in his long treatise called *Analysis of Spatiality and Time in the Works of Visual Art* (published posthumously in 1993). Likewise, ideas and concepts that Florensky explored in these essays return in a more 'didactic' form in the course on perspective that he conducted at VKhuTEMAS.¹⁰ Consequently, some essays in the collection, such as those on reverse perspective and Realism, carry more concrete references to Florensky's pedagogical and theoretical activities. Others such as 'Celestial Signs', 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', and the examination of Aegean culture are linked more immediately to Florensky's Symbolist evolution during the 1910s, in spite of their variety. All seven essays should be read as an organic totality, because, ultimately, the thread that interconnects these statements is the symbol, the true meaning of which - logical, mathematical, artistic, literary, philosophical, spiritual and, above all, religious - Florensky sought throughout his life.¹¹ For him the symbol was a 'gaze into the mystery: because 'the mystery of the world cannot be veiled by the symbol, but, on the contrary, manifests itself in its authentic substance, i.e., as mystery'(illus. 16).¹²

The Symbolist Aura: Sophia and the Gesamtkunstwerk

Florensky developed his concept of the symbol in concert with the ideas of the

16 Ol'ga Florenskaia,
Pavel Florensky, 1907,
pencil on paper.
Private collection



Symbolist poets and thinkers, and in the early 1900s especially was supportive of their desire to link aesthetic enquiry to the establishment of new spiritual-read Neoplatonic - values. While a student, he attended meetings of the various religious and philosophical societies that flourished in Moscow, St Petersburg and Kiev in the 1900s, and was in touch with Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovsky. He even published his ground-breaking essay 'The Symbols of Infinity' in their journal *Novyi put'* [New Path], wherein he proposed a philosophical interpretation of the symbol on the basis of the mathematical theory of discontinuity,¹³ a tenet that reinforced the editors' wish to promote discussion between the intelligentsia and the Church.

Florensky's efforts to use scientific knowledge as a tool with which to fashion a new philosophical and spiritual consciousness brought him espe-

cially close to Bely, with whom he explored other important avenues of research favoured by the second generation of Russian Symbolists. Chief among these was the Wagnerian notion of the synthesis of the arts which lies at the basis of 'The Church Ritual as Synthesis of Art', and the philosophy of Sophia which assumes its conclusive elaboration in 'Celestial Signs'.

It was the philosopher and poet Vladimir Solov'ev who had turned to the theme of Sophia in the late nineteenth century, accepting the doctrine of the Holy Wisdom (as formulated by the Eastern Church) as being crucial to the universal love and eschatological rebirth promised by the new millennium. Many Symbolists, from Bely and Aleksandr Blok to Valerii Briusov and Viacheslav Ivanov, then offered their own personal interpretations of Sophia, particularly as a key to the enigma of the Eternal Feminine. For the religious thinkers, too, Sophia represented a specific field of theological investigation within the Orthodox Church, Sergei Bulgakov, friend of Florensky and fellow priest, for example, emphasising the direct relevance of Sophia to the Russian faith.¹⁴ Over the long course of his own research into Sophia, Florensky studied two aspects in particular, the religious and the iconological, and merged both of them in the basic argument of his 'Celestial Signs'. Meditation on the subject of Sophia was also Florensky's real departure-point in his *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, a synthetic work of vast scientific and humanistic erudition in the form of a collection of letters to a friend written between 1908 and 1914. Letter No. X was dedicated entirely to Sophia and contains the results of the painstaking iconological, theological and philosophical researches that Florensky had been conducting in the preceding years.

Just as other Russian Symbolists such as Blok and Briusov were also discerning the genesis of Sophia in the then fashionable doctrines of theosophy and anthroposophy, so, in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, Florensky commented on the coloured auras surrounding Sophia in the icon of that name] – not only because anthroposophy was a major subject that he had been discussing with Bely, but also because he manifested a strong intellectual curiosity about the various fashionable brands of *fin-de-siècle* mysticism. With its cultural references to anthroposophy and to 'the magnificent colour reproductions' in Annie Besant's and Charles W. Leadbeater's theosophical treatises,¹⁶ Florensky's description of Sophia extended the Symbolist debates on the Divine Feminine, which from the standpoint of Orthodoxy must have seemed impious, to say the least. Even in its more strictly theological aspect the intense engagement with the image and meaning of Sophia was something new in the Orthodox doctrine and not altogether welcome. In fact, the

letter on 'Sophia' was omitted from the first publication of *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* in 1908 under ecclesiastical pressure because of its alleged impropriety.¹⁷

The rough notes that Florensky jotted down in the summer of 1904 towards a full review of Bely's cycle of poems, *Gold in Azure*, highlight the motif of the sunset so prominent in 'Celestial Signs' and evoke the nostalgic reminiscence of his own 'We loved the autumnal sunset . . .'.¹⁸ Three years later, in 1907, Florensky dedicated an entire book of poetry entitled *In Eternal Azure* to this celestial colour - a belated response to Bely's book.¹⁹ In his further writings, Florensky paid attention to the symbolism of the colour azure in the halo of Sophia, for in the icon of the Sophia the concentric spheres around the female image are all azure, each with a different gradation indicating 'air, sky and the world above',²⁰ while azure and gold are the dominant tonality of the 'Woman Clothed in the Sun' of Solov'ev's vision, to which Florensky is alluding in 'Celestial Signs'. Solov'ev identified this spiritual colour as a halo surrounding the female image, 'As azure filled my soul and fills the air. Transpierced throughout by rays of golden azure.'²¹ Florensky saw an anticipation of this vision in the evocations of Mikhail Lermontov, the early nineteenth-century Romantic poet, to whom he assigned a prophetic sensitivity:

*The sun is setting: it is twilight in the park . . .
Her eyes are beautiful, befilled with azure light.
Her smile is luminous, as roseate and bright . . .
As brilliant sunrays in the morning.*²²

For Florensky, azure, as captured in Lermontov's transparent luminosity of a sunset, was also the dominant tonality of the icon of the Trinity, perhaps the noblest monument of Russian icon painting (which Andrei Rublev had painted specifically for the Church of the Trinity at the Trinity and St Sergius Lavra), because azure imparted a special tone to its religious interpretation:

Here is the inexplicable world that flows in a vast torrent straight into the soul of whosoever contemplates Rublev's Trinity. Here is an azure that has no equal on earth, it is more celestial than the very sky of our earth, it is verily a celestial azure, the unspoken dream of Lermontov who so yearned for it.²³

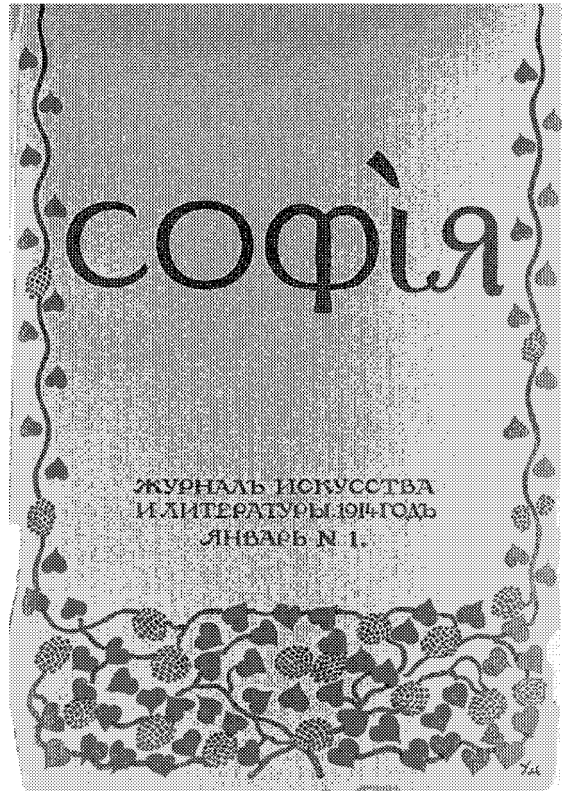
In 'Celestial Signs' Florensky also contended that the physical conditions of a sunrise in Sergiev Posad confirmed that the real meaning of phenomena

lay beyond phenomena themselves and that the correlation of physics and metaphysics (or, rather, metaphysics and physics) was intimate and profound. According to him, the entire chromatic scale is accommodated within the relationship of Sophia to the Creator and it is the metaphysical aspects of colour that determine psychological perception - which becomes, in turn, psycho-physiological perception.

In many other aspects, Sophia, which to a Western reader might seem an esoteric and elusive image in 'Celestial Signs', represented the interweaving of many different approaches to Russian culture of the Silver Age. From an art-historical viewpoint, Sophia even served as the aegis for the rediscovery of the patrimony of Ancient Russian art and indicated an urgent need to readjust hierarchies in art historical evaluation. In fact, it was the aesthete Pavel Muratov, an eminent Russian cultural historian and a pioneer in the serious study of the Russian icon,²⁴ who in 1914-15 edited *Sofiia* [Sophia], one of the most important and relevant journals of the time (illus. 17). *Sofiia* was an elegant and elitist periodical that in format and design followed the graphic *fin-de-siecle* traditions of the deluxe art journals *Mir iskusstva* [World of Art] and *Zolotoe runo* [Golden Fleece], even if its focus was on very different subjects and methodologies. Unlike those reviews, however, *Sofiia* granted a cultural primacy to Early Russian art, a central subject which it promoted *vis-a-vis* Eastern archaeology, the art of the Italian Renaissance and even the latest trends in contemporary art, such as Cubism and Picasso's paintings.²⁵ In his art-historical discussions, Florensky often mentioned Muratov, connoisseur of the Italian Renaissance and champion of the radical cleaning that had revealed the true splendour of icons at the grand 'Exhibition of Ancient Russian Art' organized by the Moscow Archaeological Institute in 1913.²⁶ For his part, Muratov held Florensky in high regard, encouraging him to accept an academic appointment at MIKhlM and attending his lecture on perspective there in 1920.

Certain aspects of Florensky's essay on 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', above all, the concern with artistic synthesis, would seem to be in sympathy with the current 'art historical' appreciation of the religious rite and it could well have been published in *Sofiia*. Yet Florensky was fully aware of the dangers of a purely aesthetic approach to the artefact, because for him the ideal perception and reception of the Orthodox religious rite was a 'childish' and oblivious immersion, one with which he endowed both the simple Russian folk and himself. Here was the childhood perception of mystery that Florensky's well-intentioned and positivist father had denied his children.

17 Nikolai Ul'ianov,
Cover design for the
journal *Sofiia* [Sophia],
1(1914)



Describing a mass, conducted by Bishop Gavriil Golosov, to his friend Aleksandr El'chaninov,²⁷ Florensky once exclaimed:

Well, you know my opinion of [Golosov]. All sounds so false and theatrical . . . He knows the church service well and loves it. He pronounces the words, but you feel that the tone of his diction is affected and that he is waiting to see what impression it makes. But this sense of frank, this artificiality, is not the Orthodox way of doing things . . . On the contrary, to us the church service is near and dear, and in just the way it's conducted everywhere in Russia – ugly, with people stumbling around, etc. We like the way slaves look, whereas you want even their rags to have a lining, to be unreal. What I'm saying is evangelical and not just Orthodox.²⁸

In 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' Florensky reinforced his preference for the humble, awkward, but sincere participation in the liturgy (both by the faithful and the clergy), affirming that there was an undeniable difference between the liturgical style of the simple 'black' or celibate monks, even 'bad monks', and that of the more suave 'white' or married priesthood. While we should take account of the special context, Florensky's declaration would seem to be in striking contradiction to the general aestheticism that, nonetheless, pervades 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts'. The Orthodox liturgy itself was an aesthetic action that, for example, prompted Florensky to try and establish a parallel between the perceptual, consubstantial 'accidents' of icons, such as the smoke of incense and the dark interior of the church, and the analogous 'accident' of rose petals scattered upon a classical statue that Muratov described in his *Images of Italy* ('The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts': p. 103).

Yet in the same essay Florensky seems to be casting aspersions on his Symbolist colleagues when he mentions that in the recent past aesthetes had pooh-pooed the Russian icon, whereas now they had opened their eyes to the purpose and meaning of religious art ('The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', p. 107) - those very aesthetes who had also experienced a revelation at the 'beauty' of the icons after the tentative efforts to analyse and exhibit them as 'works of art' within the World of Art group (we think of Igor Grabar's early appreciations and Sergei Diaghilev's inclusion of icons in his Russian section for the 'Salon d' automne' in Paris in 1906) and especially after their cleaning in 1913. On the other hand, and still in the spirit of the Symbolist tradition, Florensky was eliciting their notion of the theurgical function of art.

Of course, the synthesis of the arts had long been a favourite topic of discussion among European and Russian Modernists, not least Franz Kupka and Vasilii Kandinsky.²⁹ But the fact that after the October Revolution Florensky ventured to place this concept at the very foundation of the religious performance, to demonstrate its theatrical totality, and thereby to argue for its survival and perpetuation, was an extremely provocative gesture toward the new regime. In fact, in order to reach a broader consensus from both the simple populace and the sophisticated intelligentsia, the Soviet government had encouraged the latter to organise so-called mass-actions (theatrical re-enactments of grand social events), which depended at least implicitly on the mystical involvement of the audience. In one of the typewritten versions of his lecture on 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' (missing in the defin-

itive text) Florensky concluded with a direct appeal to such intellectuals: 'I do hope that the refined instinct of our contemporary specialists in this or that branch of art has already penetrated to the very core of Art as a primordial unifying activity. . . . Perhaps the mob has need of such a pointer, but not the enlightened organiser of Russian art.'³⁰

Florensky was also underlining the ritualistic aspects that integrate spectators and officiators. In his opinion, in prehistoric times, when art and religion were not differentiated, there had been a theurgical, theatrical gesture that emotionally involved all the senses (visual, olfactory, aural and tactile) and which could have constituted the *Prefatory Act* (or Action) that the composer Aleksandr Skriabin had envisioned as the first step in his unfinished *Misterium*.³¹ That Florensky invoked Skriabin in his appeal to preserve the cultic act is not surprising, given the composer's proximity to V. Ivanov with whom skriabin had discussed the first draft of his Prefatory Act,³² and we should remember that in the Revolutionary Petrograd of 1919 Ivanov himself served as consultant to the organisation of the mass actions or, from his standpoint, *misteria*)³

Again, the reference to Skriabin, crucial to 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', seems curiously out of place because, although Skriabin was highly esteemed by most of the Symbolist poets and philosophers, Florensky professed a dislike for his music, preferring that of the 'infantile', and for that reason authentic, genius of Mozart. Discussing Skriabin and Tchaikovsky in a letter to his daughter Ol'ga, Florensky called the two composers equal in their 'unreality', however major their differences: 'Both live in illusoriness. Undoubtedly, these ghostly shadows are attractive, but I cannot call them beautiful, for the beautiful is not only attractive, but also sincere.'³⁴ He spoke disparagingly of the 'illusionism' and 'magic' of their approaches, terms that he would use later on in a similar argument against the pseudo-scientific baggage of the theosophists, the pentacles of the occultists and the anti-Realism of the avant-garde)⁵ He was curt in his judgement of Skriabin:

This is not music. skriabin was wrapped in his dreams. He proposed creating a composition that was to have been performed somewhere in the Himalayas and would have produced such a concussion in the human organism that a new being would have come forth, and he composed a rather pathetic libretto for his world shattering *Misterium*. But that's not the

point. What is important is that he did not wish to reckon with the reality of the musical element as such.³⁶

This passage is a clear demonstration of how Florensky was ready and willing to examine fashionable phenomena, while refusing to accept them mechanically as sincere, true or essential. For him Scriabin's music was little more than a mere play of outward device that lacked substance and originality whether as 'musical element' or as a path to the world beyond.

Sanctuary of the Sacred or Repository of the Profane?

Museology and the Preservation of Spiritual Values

Like the essays 'Reverse Perspective' and 'Celestial Signs', 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' represents yet another path leading us to Sergiev Posad, the Lavra and Makovets - 'not a geometrical centre and not an arithmetical intersection of various trends, but a living bond, its threads stretching forth'.³⁷ Makovets and this entire ambience were crucial to Florensky's private and professional life in Sergiev Posad during the years immediately following the October Revolution.

The 'spiritual revisiting' of the holy site that Florensky undertook with such earnestness was closely connected to his fervent campaign within the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra to protect its values and valuables. At a time when the new Soviet regime was launching a concerted drive to eradicate religion, Florensky's call to pragmatic action carried a special resonance among the Orthodox believers and intellectuals who were living in or near the Lavra. For many of them the Commission represented a last chance to safeguard the world of Old Russia with its ancient and profound religiosity, and each brought to the Commission a particular expertise or skill. In 1918-20 the Commission hastened to inventorise the sacred objects of the Lavra, trying desperately to preserve both its material and spiritual/historical values. But for his part and true to his character, Florensky dedicated his time and energy not only to the urgent and practical task of saving the monastery from enforced closure and requisition of property, but also to developing an appropriate theoretical system of art historical appreciation, and even to composing lyrical compositions such as 'Celestial Signs'.

With his multifaceted approach Florensky found a sympathetic supporter in Yurii Olsuf'ev, especially in their collaboration on the scholarly inventory and assessment of the Russian icon. Like Florensky, Olsuf'ev, a leading member

of the Commission, was conducting rigorous and methodical analyses of the icon, while also regarding it as an intersection or synthetic formula that expressed the spiritual world view and perception of an entire people.³⁸ No sooner had the first inventory of the Lavra icons been published in 1920, than Olsuf'ev and Florensky embarked upon an essay on *simvoly gornego* [symbols of the beyond], also based on the analysis of icons.³⁹ In 1918 Olsuf'ev and Florensky had also elaborated their topical 'iconic scheme',⁴⁰ with the aid of which it was possible to identify the personal styles of more than one hundred icon painters. That, at least, is what Olsuf'ev boasted in a letter to Petr Neradovsky, one of the curators at the Russian Museum in Petrograd, appending a copy of Florensky's lecture on 'The Church Ritual' with an enthusiastic appreciation.⁴¹ Certainly, Florensky needed this kind of support, since the apparent contradictions within his lecture for the Commission must be seen in the light of his zealous defence against the anti-religious campaigns being mounted by the new regime. As a result of the Government decree of 23 January 1918, 'On the Separation of Church and State', most ecclesiastical seminaries and elementary schools were closed down. Furthermore the decree generated a rapid sequence of anti-clerical measures that permitted the confiscation of monasteries and Church lands, precious objects and monetary funds. In this way, between 1918 and 1922, more than half of all of Russia's monasteries (722) were nationalised. This was accompanied by the arrest and frequent execution of monks, priests and other Church workers.⁴²

It is important to remember, however, that the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra was one element of a much broader and more complex Government mechanism intent upon the inspection, nationalisation and re-evaluation of works of art in institutional and private collections throughout Soviet Russia. For example, from the very first, Grabar', the highly respected art historian, played a vigorous role in the various state institutions devoted to the practical aims of registering, inventoring and restoring - and, therefore, of resolving what exactly constituted a monument or work of art.⁴³ Enforced nationalisation often led to a former owner being appointed director of a collection, as was the case with Aleksei Bakhrushin, Ivan Morozov and Sergei Shchukin.⁴⁴ As far as the physical place and environment in which the saved object had to be preserved, Soviet museology was less certain, for even more progressive opinion regarded the museum as a mirror of the past and not as a living entity. For example, in his *Muzei kak proizvedenie iskusstva* [The Museum as a Work of Art] of 1923 Boris Shaposhnikov declared that the single aim of a museum was 'to demonstrate

the life-style of a bygone era' and that even 'the museum of everyday life ... strives to show objects of the past in the settings for which they were intended.'⁴⁵

It was against this harrowing background that Florensky gave his lecture, mustering all the logical arguments at his disposal without accepting political compromise in order to justify the preservation of the icons and liturgical arts in the 'natural' environment of the religious rite and the everyday life of the monastery. But in spite of all the tactical expediences, Florensky's museological conception of the Lavra was not subordinate or secondary to his obvious will and desire to save the faith and the artefacts of Orthodoxy as organic parts of a very specific place rich in spiritual value. To fulfil its aim of preserving Sergiev Posad as a whole territorial entity and as the core and quintessence of the real Russia, the Commission operated on an interdisciplinary level, even taking account of the surrounding hills, the skyline, the general topography of the landscape and the geological and stratigraphical qualities of the terrain itself as major components of this unique potential museum.⁴⁶ The various activities performed *in situ* - from the religious service to the painting of icons and the production of carved wooden toys and souvenirs - were also deemed essential elements.⁴⁷ In turn, this concern with the habitat of the object prompted Florensky to propose his audacious comparison with the revolutionary design for the Hagenbeck Zoo in Hamburg, where for the first time the beasts were allowed to wander freely in a landscape imitating their real habitat ('The Church Ritual', p. 102).

The idea of rooting the collections of the Lavra in their own 'territory' was also supported by the biologist Kapterev, one of Florensky's immediate colleagues in the Commission, who co-signed the plan for a new Museum of the Lavra (one of the Commission's many unrealised projects). Kapterev's formative role in the Commission has yet to be evaluated, but the fact that he, a biologist, worked in close collaboration with Olsuf'ev, a self-taught art historian, and with Florensky, a priest, philosopher and mathematician, demonstrates the extent to which the Commission members were interdisciplinary and how significant a common religious faith was to their enterprise. Son of a noted church historian who had also been a leading figure in the elite circle of Sergiev Posad Orthodox intellectuals, Kapterev moved closely with Florensky, thanks to mutual interests in the natural sciences, especially biology,⁴⁸ the cosmos,⁴⁹ and more exotic fields such as dreams⁵⁰ and hypnotism.^Y Before the Revolution Florensky had dedicated a copy of his book *The Meaning of Idealism* to 'Dear Pavel Nikolaevich [Kapterev], from one who always remembers

him with a sense of pleasure and joy at his progress. 1915. III. 2. Sergiev Posad'.⁵² Discussing his ideas with Kapterev the naturalist, Florensky compiled his museological project, whose 'guiding principle [was that it should] conserve, if possible, each object in its concrete relationship with the locus in which it had started life, according to the principle of the organic wholeness of the Lavra.'⁵³

Florensky's impassioned appeal to continue the celebration of the divine liturgy as an essential part of the Lavra also found support in the endeavour to undertake a systematic inventory of the sacred objects there. True, the Commission was fulfilling a government mandate to identify and preserve works of art, but Florensky and his colleagues were driven by much more than a bureaucratic directive. 'We [the members of the Commission] remember so well how we had to crawl up stepladders in order to examine this or that icon, to rummage in old clothes so as to draw forth a sometimes first-class piece of embroidery, to come across really interesting monuments after going through a pile of junk, and to drag out portraits, icons, embroideries, utensils, etc. from the dusty attics, mouldy lumber-rooms and darkest corners of the Lavra.'⁵⁴ But it was far more than some kind of 'retrospectivism' or Symbolist nostalgia that inspired Florensky and his colleagues to bring out the icons and other precious artifacts from the Lavra attics and to catalogue them⁵⁵ - and to do so with a dedication and scrupulous attention that helped prevent not only vandalism and theft, but also official sale and export.⁵⁶

This process was soon followed by the pressing need to publish catalogues of the vast collections of the Lavra, and it was fortunate indeed that Olsuf'ev was able to offer his experience and knowledge. Working closely with Florensky, Olsuf'ev (who also fell victim to the Stalin purges in the 1930s) deemed his mission to be the scholarly registration, systematic selection and publication of the objects at the Lavra and he manifested a remarkable energy in this endeavour, compiling and editing most of the twelve catalogues published between 1920 and 1926.⁵⁷ Perhaps the speed with which Olsuf'ev and Florensky produced their inventory was dictated by the rapaciousness with which GOKhRAN was trying to appropriate the treasures of the Lavra between 1918 and 1922.

In March 1922, in response to the famine which ravaged the Volga region, a special subcommittee was convened by the Lavra Commission and charged with the task of examining the vexed questions of appraisal, estimate and acquisition within the complicated procedure of the state's confiscation of church valuables. That the issue of apportioning valuables to GOKhRAN was

an especially acute one can be seen from Mikhail Gorev-Galkin's booklet entitled *Tserkovnye bogatstva i g%od v Rossii* [The Treasures of the Church and Famine in Russia]. Gorev-Galkin, legal executive for Sergiev Posad, assessed the overall quantity of gold and silver in the Lavra at 'several hundred *poods*' [several thousand kilograms], including, for example, the sixteenth-century gold *riza* of Andrei Rublev's *Trinity* with its host of precious stones. 58 Florensky's timely reference in 'The Church Ritual' (p. 104) to those who on past occasions had evaluated the artefacts in the inventory of the Lavra Sacristy according to their material value (a certain quantity of marble equals a certain monetary value) was no less applicable to GOKhRAN. 'Nomine mutato de te fabula narratur' [under a different name the story tells of you] was Florensky's wistful comment in the same essay.

In spite of the valiant battle that Florensky and his immediate colleagues waged within the Commission to keep the Lavra intact, all ecclesiastical activities there were suspended in November 1919, just one year after he had delivered his lecture 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts'.⁵⁹ Early 1920 saw the reorganisation of the Commission itself, a move that stripped it of administrative authority, though members such as Florensky and Olsuf'ev were retained for the general reorganisation of the Lavra into a state museum, the former as a specialist in metals, the latter in miniatures and painting. Later on the Lavra was indeed transformed into a conglomerate of museums, but according to very conventional criteria. The most precious icons and related artefacts were distributed between national institutions such as the Moscow Kremlin and the State Tretyakov Gallery.

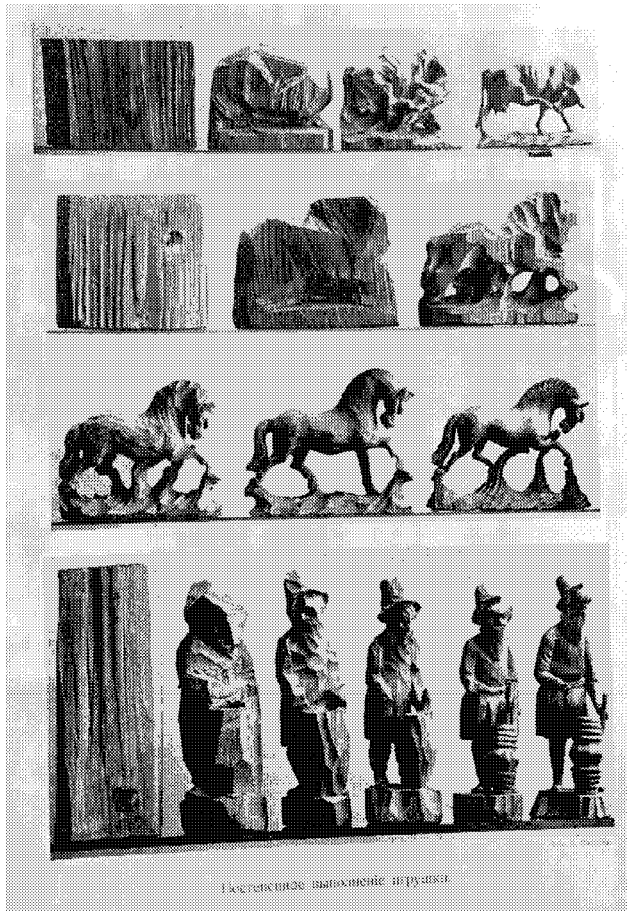
The fact that in 1920 Florensky was already on the MIKHIM faculty as a Byzantine specialist might explain why he delivered his third lecture there - on perspective - and not to the Commission. With its ambitious teaching and research programmes and brilliant faculty (including art historians Muratov and Nikolai Shchekotov, soon destined to be replaced by self-seeking bureaucrats), MIKHIM was typical of many early Soviet 'think tanks'. The first Russian centre devoted specifically to the science of museology, MIKHIM drew upon the invaluable knowledge and experience that the Lavra Commission had already acquired and, obviously, Florensky played a vital role in this alliance.

Florensky and the World of the Primitive

In his approach to museology, Florensky anticipated many of our own current interpretations. He considered the work of art in its ontological reality,

destroying hierarchies and placing together - on the same level- the rags and tambourine of a shaman,60 precious ecclesiastical objects from the Lavra and Sergiev Posad, and wooden toys made by Russian peasants (sold during the Lavra festivities). Fascinated by the popular crafts, Florensky even referred to this kind of wooden toy in his treatise on spatiality in the work of art (illus. 18). He offered it as a model for a space-time unit, noting that its

hypercylindrical forms can be compared to the blocks of wood in the form of irregular cylinders whence figurines of people and



18 Page demonstrating the various stages in making a wooden toy, from Nikolai Bartram's *Igrushki* (1910)

animals are obtained by transverse cutting - a process common to the mass production [methods] used by toy-makers . . . the customary scenes of people and animals [that are obtained] from carving blocks of wood render these sections closer and more comprehensible to us than the actual cylinders from which they are cut.⁶¹

Florensky felt a close bond with what he regarded as the spiritual authenticity of the Russian people - the peasant, the craftsman, the monk and the country priest - and he expressed this sympathy from many standpoints and on many occasions. Not surprisingly, then, Florensky was especially fond of Abramtsevo (Savva Mamontov's artistic retreat near the Lavra) since it was closely linked to Sergiev Posad by its geographical proximity and its eager promotion of popular arts and crafts.⁶² Established in the 1880s by the railroad tycoon Mamontov as an artistic retreat, Abramtsevo had developed into a centre for the rediscovery and refurbishing of media such as woodcarving, pottery and icon painting. Abramtsevo also attracted professional artists such as Il'ia Repin and Mikhail vrubel' who studied local folk art and often applied its methods to their paintings and designs, a confluence that distinguishes much of early twentieth-century Russian art. Indeed, before the Revolution many of Russia's new artists drew inspiration from the proximity of Abramtsevo to the Russian folk and folklore, so that by the time Florensky was serving in the Lavra Commission, Abramtsevo had become an organic part of the artisan and peasant tradition. Sharing a common landscape and spiritual mission with Sergiev Posad, Abramtsevo, then, needed to be protected no less than the Lavra did. On 30 July 1917, Florensky wrote to Aleksandra Mamontova, Savva Mamontov's daughter:

What's going on around us is, of course, agonising. However, I do believe and hope that once this Nihilism has exhausted itself and has demonstrated its impoverishment and everyone is fed up with it, our hearts and minds will then turn to the Russian idea, to Russia, to Holy Russia, after the collapse of all this abomination. But they will do so not as they used to do sluggishly and circumspectly, but with keen appetite . . . 'Abramtsevo' and your Abramtsevo [in particular] will then be valued and appreciated. People will go and take care of even the tiniest log in the Aksakov house, of every painting, of every behest of Abramtsevo and of the Abramtsevans. . . . Worse: if Abrantsevo were to be physi-

cally destroyed and, in spite of the enormity of such a crime, the idea of Abramtsevo were to continue to live, well, not everything would be lost for the Russian people.⁶³

The Mamontovs viewed Abramtsevo as an attempt to create a haven of genuine peasant creativity. Florensky too, was aware of the continued threat of Russia's new industrialisation and urbanisation: 'The railroad, factories, technological improvements, libertarian ideas and the pernicious influence of newspapers - these factors are putrid microorganisms that are decomposing everyday life with ever greater rapidity'.⁶⁴ Florensky's desire to defend the Russian soul was no less sincere - and scientifically serious - than his desire to defend the Russian icons and rituals. In fact, between 1905 and 1908 Florensky had made several trips to the environs of the village of Tolpygino in Kostroma Region together with a curiously motley group of people, including his close friend from the Theological Academy, Sergei Troitsky, folklorists, the local priest and a peasant. The goal of these expeditions was to record *chastushki* (improvised quatrains often sung in factories), some of which he then used for a professional ethnological publication. Even here Florensky's approach was not that of a mere dilettante, but of an involved scholar. To some extent, his brief critical essay, 'On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre', can be interpreted as a practical extension of his research on *chastushki*:

This is precisely the way to study popular life monographically. Here we are confronted with the task of trying to understand the processes of popular life within life itself and not from external and alien phenomena or, similarly, from the simple verification of isolated cases. Reading a vital phenomenon within the context of life, understanding its sense and meaning for life not from the general tenets of science (which do not in themselves need to be verified) and not in the light of subjective interpretations, but in life itself. Herein lies the task of studying everyday life monographically. However, for this we need to study this or that corner of life, one that is more or less typical, and to study it with all our heart right down to the finest interlacings of the fabric of life and, moreover, comprehensively. This is a micrology of popular life.⁶⁵

One such 'micrology of popular culture' was the world of the puppet theatre directed by Ivan Efimov and Nina Simonovich-Efimova, to which the

latter dedicated her 1925 collection of essays dealing with their experiences in this field. For Simonovich-Efimova, especially, the puppet theatre was a major activity parallel to, and perhaps even more important than, her career as a studio painter. The initiative came from a public appeal issued by TEO NKP (Theatre Section of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment) for help in establishing a new kind of puppet theatre under Natal'ia Sats.⁶⁶ The appeal generated a ready response from other artists close to Florensky, such as Vladimir Favorsky, Konstantin Istomin and Pavel Pavlinov, although their involvement was more marginal.⁶⁷ The most intense period of this new vocation was 1918-24, when the Efimovs organised more than 600 puppet productions in Moscow and other cities.

As he implies in his brief essay, Florensky's intention was to try and comprehend from within the life of the simple folk, children and adults alike, by surrendering to the mystery, the magic and the secret ritual of a puppet show. Identifying magic and mystery with the foundations of religious faith, aesthetic perception and scientific intuition, Florensky claimed that an innocent gaze and a mystical disposition were the prerogatives of all great artists and scientists:

The secret of creativity lies in the preservation of youth. The secret of genius lies in the preservation of something infantile, an infantile intuition that endures throughout life. It is a question of a certain constitution that provides genius with an objective perception of the world, one that does not gravitate towards a center: a kind of reverse perspective, one that is, therefore, integral and real.⁶⁸

It was Simonovich-Efimova herself who spoke of the mystery of the marionette theatre, contending that the genre was an artistic manifestation of 'high' theatre, and she did all she could to raise it to a more professional status. She herself made the puppets, often of enormous dimensions and of the most diverse materials and forms, depending upon the character that each puppet was supposed to embody (see illus. 38). Besides this, she studied the technique of the puppeteer's gestures and took lessons in declamation. The Efimovs' puppet theatre found itself at the crossroads between the automaton or the self-reconstructing organ that so fascinated Florensky on the one hand,⁶⁹ and the simple ritual of the popular spectacle implemented with the barest means, on the other: 'The few beautiful scraps of old fabric which the Efimovs had tenderly brought to the puppet theatre from the chests of grandmothers ...

dolls made of rags, pieces of wood and papier mâché' acquired a soul and came alive ('On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre', p. 133). For all its good intentions, the Efimovs' puppet theatre, however, was not 'folk art', but rather a measured, intellectual revival that drew inspiration from the folk tradition, while creating something new – much in the way that Blok borrowed and adjusted the *chastushka* in his poem 'The Twelve' of 1918.

But ritual, even the simplest one, needs a space within which it can be conducted, and one separated from the everyday world – as in the shamanistic circle where the *kamlanie* – the seance – takes place. That Florensky cultivated an anthropological interest in popular rituals, whether derived from shamanism or from the deep antiquity of pre-Christian civilisation, is shown by his articles on these subjects in the journal *Bogoslovskii vestnik* while he was its chief editor. A specific example of this kind of research is his scientific description of a phallic monument close to the Kotakhevi Monastery near Tiflis, Georgia, where he hypothesised that ancient pagan fertility rituals had continued into local folklore rituals of *phallophories* and had allied, in turn, with the Orthodox faith.⁷⁰ Of course, the meaning which Florensky attributed to the term anthropology is rather distant from the conventional one. He even spoke of a philosophical anthropology: 'Anthropology is not a self-assured and independent knowledge, but a concentrate ... reflecting the being of an enlarged totality; the microcosm is just a small image of the macrocosm and not something in itself: 71

For Florensky the event that unfolded during the Efimovs' spectacle at Sergiev Posad assumed the dignity of a popular micro-liturgy similar, in its wholeness, to the mystical totality of the religious liturgy and to the 'orgies' of antiquity. V. Ivanov had referred to the latter a decade before,⁷² and Florensky himself alluded to them when he remarked that the spectators had turned into actors, thus implementing the original form of Greek tragedy. Simonovich-Efimova also asserted that in her puppet theatre the animals played primary roles, just as in ancient Dionysian rites where the goat, for example, was often the protagonist.⁷³

Florensky appreciated Efimova as a painter, too, so much so that he allowed her to make several oil and pencil portraits and silhouettes of him, in which she succeeded in capturing his physical resemblance and personality. In turn, Florensky appreciated her faculty for expressing the souls of the 'simple people' with the same kind of dedication with which he had gathered his *chastushki*:

In N. Y. Ef[imova] there is a love of Russia, of the land, of the baby

[peasant women], and of nature. It is a love that is free of any tendentious imposition of concepts from outside (as with the *peredvizhniki* [nineteenth-century Realist painters]), an understanding of the Russian man and woman not as ethnographical material for scientific study and not as material for social experiments, but [as material] of their very own life itself. What I see in the works of N.Y. Efimova elicits not sorrow for our people, but rather recognition of our people as it is. For Russia to be loved she does not have to be cosmeticised.⁷⁴

In Florensky's opinion, Efimova demonstrated an analogous attitude towards the artefact and its ambience. In fact, he was so taken by Efimova's creativity that he even donned the mantle of the art critic to analyse one of her pictures, *The Tavern on the Volga River*, 1915 (present whereabouts unknown), once again *vis-a-vis* the symbolics of colours:

Your paintings are always symbolic. Apart from what they depict they also contain another meaning of which you may not even be aware. Here we have the symbolics of colours. In general, all colours mean something, apart from their conditional designations. They do, indeed, mean [something].

Pink chairs. Pink means kindness, hospitality, something that is peculiar to you, to this room, a shelter.

Blue (wallpaper) [means] loyalty to an ideal, faithfulness. Again this is very appropriate. At the same time, perhaps the populist ideals of your parents, the ideal of serving the people, are coming through here.

Brown - the colour of the doors - [means] weariness, but not in a negative [sense]. No doubt, that's how the person coming in feels.

The sunlit room in the background - good thing that it's yellow, not white. Good that it doesn't take up much space in the picture. Even so, it's central.

Orange is a stable colour. In general, it's a colour that summons [attention], marking a desire to show off to its advantage and force you to accept it.

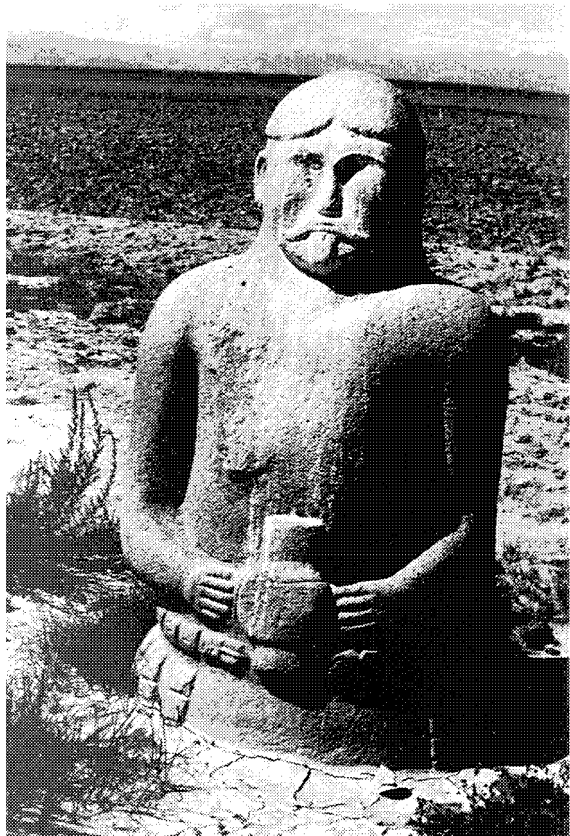
You have compressed all these colours, because, after all, this is a tavern and these properties occupy a lower section.

All this makes your painting symbolic, but not in a superficial

sense (as, for example, we have with Maeterlinck), but, rather, in genuine substance.⁷⁵

Florensky remained friends with the Efimovs, especially with Simonovich-Efimova, throughout the 1920s and at least until 1932 before his fatal arrest.⁶ In a letter to her husband of 1931, Simonovich-Efimova spoke of Florensky's ongoing scholarly interest in the archaeological specimens of the Russian steppes,⁷⁷ and in the *kurgany* (burial mounds). Over these archaic monuments watched the mysterious and inscrutable *kamennye baby* [stone women] (illus. 19) - the distant *Urmutter* of those same Russian *baby* that Simonovich-Efimova represented in the bright colours of her own pictures. The incorporeal Sophia had long ceased to preoccupy Florensky, but he was

19 Grave monument:
the so-called 'Stone
Woman' (*kamennaia
baba*), Barlyk steppes,
Tuva, fifth to seventh
century AD



still fascinated by the Mother figure, the prototype of the Mother and the Platonic idea of the Mother, subjects that never ceased to intrigue him.

Mother Earth

Florensky touched upon the image of the Mother as Platonic idea in *The Meaning of Idealism*, where he discussed the existence of a four-dimensional perception of the world. According to Florensky, the philosophers of antiquity had come to this conclusion, as demonstrated by the myth of Plato's cave: 'But Ideas - the Mothers of everything existing - live in the depths, i.e., in the direction which in our three-dimensional world, is depth. Consequently, any discourse about them, however distinct, is a mere buzzing in our three-dimensional ear.'⁷⁸ Florensky had formulated his conception of the Platonic idea through his reading of Goethe's *Faust*, in which the 'dark corridor' (at the end of which is the abyss where the Mothers stand) is the Platonic grotto:

Goddesses throned in solitude, sublime
set in no place, still less in anytime ...
I mean the Mothers.⁷⁹

In the chthonic image of Plato's grotto/abyss and in Goethe's use of the primitive Mothers Florensky saw the obscure and unknowable bond forged between maternity and nature,⁸⁰ the encounter of two myths and perhaps - on an unconscious and private level - his own unease with the mystery of motherhood in his relationship with his mother as a child.⁸¹

The text on Aegean culture included in this collection revolves around the meaning of the matriarchy and female power (to use current terminology which, however, is not especially appropriate to what Florensky had in mind) and also constitutes the introduction to his more general essay, *Pervye shagi filosofii* [The First Steps of Philosophy] (1917).⁸² Florensky asserted that the archaeological discoveries on Crete were central to our understanding of the birth of Greek culture and were a last link with the mythical Atlantis. Once again Florensky called upon the intuition of a visual artist - Lev Bakst - to illustrate his synthesis: 'It is not surprising that for one of the most cultured of Russian artists, Lev Bakst, the destruction of Atlantis became a source of inspiration for his painting *Terror Antiquus*, surely the most significant work that our history painting has produced in recent years' (illus. 20).⁸³

In 'The Stratification of Aegean Culture', too, Florensky uses an approach that is at once historical, culturological, anthropological and philosophical. The theme of stratification with its various semantic levels and viewpoints as



20 Lev Bakst, *Terror Antiquus*, 1908, oil on canvas. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

a philosophical departure-point is also a vivid metaphor. In fact, each of Florensky's essays could be interpreted and analysed as a constant layering of different attitudes and angulations - which may not always form a single chronological sequence. Towards the end of his life, Florensky meditated on his intellectual career, wondering, 'What have I been doing all my life?' His response was:

I investigated the world as a whole, as one picture and one reality. More precisely, at each given moment or at each step of my life I made this investigation and from a particular angle of vision. I would investigate the relationship of the world by dissecting it in a particular direction, on a particular plane, and would strive to

understand the makeup of the world and from the plane that interested me. Each plane was different, but one did not contradict the next. One simply enriched the other. This resulted in a perpetual dialectic of thought, an exchange of planes of observation, while at the same time the world was still being viewed as one.⁸⁴

Florensky is also articulating an ulterior stratification here, the rhythmical alternation of nocturnal and diurnal epochs in human culture,⁸⁵ an interpretative model that other religious thinkers of Russian culture would also come to apply. Georgii Florovsky, for example, referred to this specific combination of two cultures in his argument that 'day cultures are the cultures of soul and intellect ... night cultures are the regions of dreams and imagination.'⁸⁶

Within the framework of such an intricate philosophical deliberation Florensky could surprise his reader not only by the breadth and topicality of his knowledge of a particular subject (indicated by his rich bibliography on Mycenaean archaeology and his copious Greek sources), but also by the eccentricity, broadmindedness and unexpected turns in his discourse. In 'The Stratification of Aegean Culture' he approaches, for example, the subject of female fashion (not fortuitously, woman is the discrete, but constant, protagonist here) in a 'feminine' manner, demonstrating competence and expertise in his use of the various terms for items of female clothing. Once again we recognise Florensky's unflagging intention to detect a deeper or at least psychological meaning even in the most frivolous of subjects. Several years earlier, for example, Florensky had established a parallel between hypnotic procedures and the 'bridal veil of innocence' in a discussion with his friend EI'chaninov on Kapterev's hypnotic experiments: 'Did I tell you about Kapterev's experiments on suggestion? Sometimes it turns out that to hinder the hypnosis all you need is a thin veil. Herein lies the profound meaning of the *Jaw* [Russian bridal veil] - a woman wearing a *Jata* cannot tempt.'⁸⁷

Florensky goes still further in his identification of various forms of clothing, especially women's, with the *Zeitgeist* of a particular era: 'Ladies' fashions are one of the most subtle reagents of any culture: he affirms ('The Stratification of Aegean Culture', p. 149). From these lighthearted remarks on the fashions of Minoan ladies (recent archaeological discoveries had brought them to public attention), Florensky plunges into the primordial depths of civilisation and to the ancient images of (presumed) female fertility - the *kamennye baby* rooted firmly in the earth, the petrified presence of archaic and immortal

cults. Florensky's cardinal reference to the German philosopher Jacob Bachofen places the discussion of the stone women in a scientific context, one that differs markedly from how the artists of the avant-garde regarded them. For Natal'ia Goncharova, for example, the *kamennye baby* were the source to which the 'new barbarians' of her generation were to return,⁸⁸ while the critic Yakov Tugendkhol'd identified them with *The Dryad* (1908, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg),⁸⁹ the wild feminine figures of Picasso in the collection of Sergei Shchukin in Moscow. Tugendkhol'd saw them as a universal stylistic metaphor corresponding to the canons of both primitive monumentality and Cubism, and recognized this in Picasso's paintings such as *Peasant Woman (La Fermière)* and *Three Women (Trois Femmes. Etude pour le grand tableau de Stein)* (both 1908, now in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg).⁹⁰ But in developing a philosophical criticism still based on the Symbolist tradition, Tugendkhol'd censured *The Dryad* for its total absence of metaphysical cohesion and spiritual sanctity - the qualities that kept the African idols erect, those same idols that Picasso favoured and that graced the Picasso room in the Shchukin collection (illus. 21).⁹¹

Florensky, too, encountered the Picasso paintings in the Shchukin collection and the trenchant, if succinct, observations that he made in *The Meaning of Idealism* concurrently with his essay on Aegean culture are essential for under-



21 The Picasso Room of the Shchukin Collection, Moscow, in the 1910s

standing his attitude towards the extreme artistic trends of his time - and for avoiding facile generalisations about the philosopher's alleged proximity to the Russian avant-garde. At first glance, Florensky's unexpected approach to Picasso might seem arbitrary and remote, but he often undertook such excursions so as to accommodate a specific argument within a larger philosophical context.

Florensky, Picasso and the Russian Avant-Garde

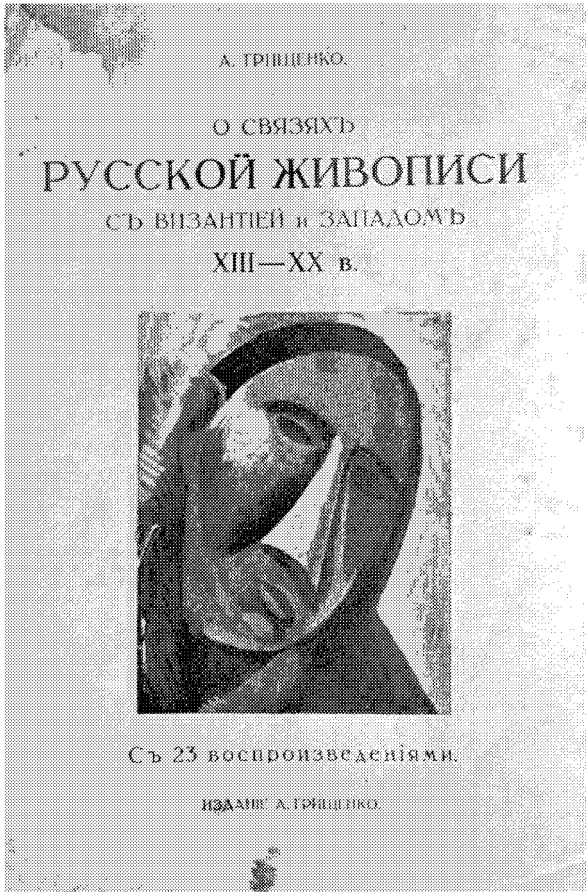
Even though Shchukin's collection had been accessible to the public since 1907, when he established his open 'Sundays', welcoming artists and critics to examine his latest acquisitions,⁹² Tugendkhol'd's curatorial listing evoked an immediate response, especially among critics and philosophers of the Symbolist persuasion. The chronological coincidence of the exhibition of ancient icons at the Archaeological Institute in Moscow and the publication of the Tugendkhol'd catalogue with all the Picasso works did not pass unnoticed and prompted intellectuals to embark upon the most diverse interpretations and collocations of the antique and the modern. It was Muratov's journal, *Sofia*, that commenced the debate with Nikolai Berdiaev's article on Picasso,⁹³ to which Florensky's remarks on Picasso in *The Meaning of Idealism* of 1914 can be construed as a timely response.⁹⁴ The Idealist philosopher Berdiaev and the critic and writer Georgii Chulkov identified a common emblem of the crisis of their time with Picasso's demonic ability to destroy the integrity of the human body, because Picasso was swayed by 'Satan himself' and by the idea that 'woman is an idol and what an idol! Here is woman in the lap of nature with a savage cynicism and presented as flesh only.'⁹⁵ Bulgakov went on to describe Picasso's nudes as 'corpses of beauty' that elicited both an 'atmosphere of mystical terror verging on horror'⁹⁶ and an apocalyptic prediction of the First World War.

Berdiaev, Bulgakov and Chulkov were especially disturbed by Picasso's works of 1907-9, in which they saw a violence done to the human body created by God, to the female body in particular and to the Eternal Feminine, universal symbol of Sophia and the divine wisdom. As Berdiaev said, 'Beyond the captivating beauty of woman [Picasso] sees the horror of decomposition and pulverisation. Here are the demonic grimaces of bechained spirits of nature.'⁹⁷ No less explicitly, he also underscored the perverse fascination of the Cubist works, associating them with what he regarded as the crisis of Western civilisation, senile and corrupt. Perhaps taking the disturbing *Dryad* as the model for what he called a 'black icon', Bulgakov rejoined that in the

Picasso room in the Shchukin villa, you 'find yourself in front of black icons that emit a blinding and almost physically tangible light'.⁹⁸ But it is to Florensky that we should turn for a more sober and articulate argument against Cubism.

In contrast to other Symbolist voices, Florensky, in *The Meaning of Idealism*, limited his discussion to Picasso's paintings of musical instruments of 1912-13, arguing that such geometric experiments 'transmitted the images of a four-dimensional perception from the poisoned soul of a great artist'.⁹⁹ Accordingly, these experiments also signified that Picasso was trying to follow Charles Hinton's theory of the fourth dimension automatically and that this visual representation wrought violence upon an act of contemplation that strove to accommodate the work of art as an organism within a transcendental whole.¹⁰⁰ In Florensky's opinion, Picasso, for all his genius, was to be censured for the mechanical and cold rationality with which he undertook his four-dimensional deconstruction of the object of representation. Actually, Florensky was making conscious use of the same sources on which the avant-garde artists were also relying. i.e., Hinton and Petr Uspensky (Mikhail Matiushin referred to Uspensky in his 1913 review of *Du Cubisme*,¹⁰¹ and Kazimir Malevich placed similar ideas at the basis of his theory of Suprematism), except that Florensky was now negating the 'ontological' validity of the Cubist experiment.

At the same time and still in the context of Picasso,¹⁰² Florensky referred to Aleksei Grishchenko's fundamental essay of 1913 on the relationship of the new art of Russia to the art of Byzantium and the West (illus. 22), in which the author examined the formal qualities of the new Russian painting in the light of its indigenous tradition (especially the icon) - and the formal revolution in Western art.¹⁰³ While acknowledging the importance of the icon for Russian Cubism and selecting the same Picasso works in the Shchukin collection that Florensky was discussing, Grishchenko, nevertheless, refused to adopt a more radical position, avoiding, for example, Goncharova's rejection of the West and her nationalist stance.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Grishchenko even went so far as to assert that, in his 'musical instruments', Picasso was actually a Realist painter: 'The 'Realism' of Picasso's violin merely displaces inherent, new potentialities; similarly, Realism is now being sustained by principles no less profound and authentic than those of Cezanne, El Greco and the ancient Roman [sic] artist (Giotto): In turn, Grishchenko examined Picasso and the Cubists from a technical, professional standpoint, analysed their formal procedures, and concluded that 'Picasso is not a supernatural phenomenon. He is simply a



22 Cover of Aleksei Grishchenko's *O svyazakh russkoi zhivopisi s Vizantiei i Zapadom XIII-XX v. Mysli zhivopitsa* (On the Connections of Russian Painting, Byzantium and the West: Thoughts of a Painter), Moscow, 1913

talented artist who has painted a number of genuine paintings that, in the first place, correspond profoundly to our conception of painting and, secondly, Picasso's painting is the natural fruit of the organic growth and evolution of the artistic consciousness.'¹⁰⁵

One of Grishchenko's immediate colleagues, the philosopher Pavel Popov, brother of the avant-garde painter Liubov' Popova, hosted weekly gatherings in their Moscow home from 1912 to 1914. Regular visitors included artists Grishchenko, Vera Pestel', Vladimir Tatlin, Nadezhda Udal'tsova, Aleksandr Vesnin and critics and philosophers Fedor Stepun, Boris Ternovets, Aleksandr Toporkov, Boris Vipper - and Florensky.¹⁰⁶ However, the fact that

Florensky attended these meetings does not mean that he accepted their interpretations of the Cubist idea. Rather, he expanded Berdiaev's and Chulkov's critical template and, while also speaking of the fragmentation of form in contemporary art - for example, in his *Iconostasis and Reverse Perspective* - emphasised that it derived from Impressionism. Curiously enough, their censure of the destructive force of the avant-garde (from Impressionism onwards) would return in the 1930s-50s in the Socialist Realist critique of artistic experimentation: 'Behind the mathematical conceptions outlined above and quite independent of mathematics, it is easy to discern the 'principles' of divisionism, complementarism, etc., discovered by leftist art. With the help [of these principles] leftist art has destroyed the forms and organisation of space, sacrificing this to volume and thingness' ('Reverse Perspective', p. 258). In the second edition of his book on the fourth dimension (1914), Uspensky also dismissed the pictorial endeavours of the 'Futurist' artists to rely upon an intuitive capacity so as to divine a superior order (in his *Tertium Organum* he called this quality artistic intuition).¹⁰⁷

To suggest that Florensky exerted any significant influence on the avant-garde, even from the standpoint of a hypothetical relationship between the new geometries or new mathematics and artistic perception - is a grave error. Whatever the ostensible proximity, it can be explained away by coincidence, intersection and even personal acquaintance. In *The Meaning of Idealism*, for example, Florensky relied on the same esoteric sources that we find in Kandinsky's personal library. He refers to Johann Carl Friedric Zollner's *Die transcendentalen Physik* of 1878, to the chemist and spiritualist Aleksandr Butlerov, and, as we might expect, to Annie Besant and Rudolph Steiner.¹⁰⁸ Florensky's intense curiosity aside, there is no real evidence to assume that his theories were central to the investigations into abstraction of those years. There are many analogous situations, such as the bewilderment that Wilhelm Worringer voiced when he discovered that his *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* had become a manifesto for the first generation of German Expressionist painters or Uspensky's sharp rejection of any immediate association with the Russian Cubo-Futurists.

Though Florensky used a formal methodology in his structural analysis of the work of art (both mathematical devices and ones drawn from German *Kunstwissenschaft* and Gestalt theory), he not only failed to see any spiritual coherence in the visual experiments of the avant-gardists, but also accused them of simply doing conjuring tricks and fooling around with magic. He concluded that their endeavours were oriented toward the following:

things that are not things in a physical sense. In its own way, any work of art like this is a machine, a magic machine, an instrument for diffusing a magical influence on reality. But this kind of instrument already exists. For example, the political manifestoes of propaganda are conceived precisely so as to egg on anyone looking at them to certain actions and, indeed, to force people to look at them. In this case, the effect on those present and the [resulting] change in their spiritual life should come about not via meaning, but via an immediate presence of colours and lines. In other words, these manifestos are basically suggestion machines and suggestion is the lowest rung [on the ladder] of magic ... There's absolutely no point in enquiring how well or adequately these machines fulfil their function in reality. Such a test is no more an exigency than a testing of the technical quality of mechanical machines invented by an artist. Good or bad, a machine is always a machine and not a representation. Let us suppose that it doesn't even work, well, it will still not be a representation, but merely a machine, albeit a useless one. In the same way, a magic machine - whether it functions or not - confers the title of magician, but certainly not of artist, upon its inventor powerful and powerless. Unwittingly, the Suprematists and other artists who follow the same direction are conducting experiments in the field of magic and were these experiments more successful, their works would be the effective stimulus to spiritual vortices and tempests. They would engulf and twirl the spiritual organism of all who entered the sphere of their activity and would prove to be centers of potent unions. Magic machines of this kind can be expanded rationally in power and effectiveness and we can imagine them (beyond physics) as infernal machines. Nevertheless, they will always be merely machines and not works of art, and the activity that creates them is a magic technique and not art.¹⁰⁹

Between Realism and Symbolism: The Case of Makovets

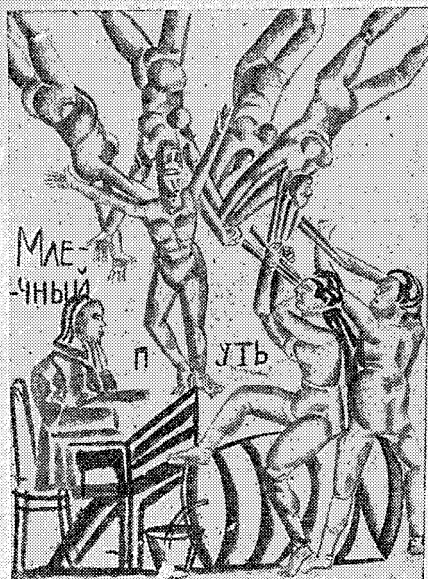
If Florensky's attitude towards the abstract geometry of Suprematism and the machine aesthetic that came to be identified with Constructivism was less than enthusiastic, he enjoyed a much closer bond with the association of

artists and writers known as Makovets, active in the early 1920s. Favouring more traditional styles, Makovets celebrated the values of Realism and Symbolism and the function of figurative art, rather than highly experimental or abstract approaches. It was in the two issues of the group's journal, *Makovets* (illus. 23), that Florensky published his two fundamental articles on the church rite and its fitting sequel on the symbolics of colours: he also prepared a brand new essay, 'On Realism', for the third, unpublished issue. When the *makovchane* founded their society in December 1921, their first impulse had been to call the group 'Art-Life'. In 'On Realism', too, Florensky emphasised that his particular conception of Realism in art was inseparable from the realism of life. All three essays, included in this collection, testify to Florensky's organic connection with the Makovets artists in particular.

Florensky's sympathy for the Makovets group and its journal is reasonable if we take into account his radical philosophical juxtaposition of illusionism and realism as the two conceptions of the world that he outlined in his essay on *The Meaning of Idealism* and in his brief passage on Picasso. Not that Florensky dismissed the artistic avant-garde out of hand, for he seemed especially tolerant of literary experiment: for example, he met the poet Velimir Khlebnikov in Sergiev Posad before the Revolution, listened to his poetry and acknowledged his manipulations of words as being childish perhaps, but still parallel to his own free lexical interpretations. Yo Khlebnikov also contributed to the poetical section of both issues of *Makovets*,¹¹ and the poet and critic Amfian Reshetov prepared an article on him for the third, unpublished issue—which was also scheduled to contain Florensky's short but dense essay on Realism.^m

A frequent visitor to the Makovets gatherings, Florensky was invited to serve on the literary board of the journal,¹¹³ and thus was very much aware of the various suggestions for the title which reflected, by and large, the spiritual orientation of the journal: *Seraflm* [seraphim] proposed by Sergei Romanovich, *Muzei* [museum] and *Syny* [sons] by Vasilii Chekrygin and *Kovcheg* [ark] by Konstantin Zefirov and Artur Fonvizin.¹⁴ But the ultimate choice fell on *Makovets*, because of the immediate Orthodox association with the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius (St Sergius of Radonezh had founded the Lavra on the hill called Makovets in the fourteenth century). Florensky liked the reference to the physical location of the Lavra, for it emphasised how strong this magnet still was for much of Russian culture and how rich it was in symbolic value. That a group of writers and artists, steeped in the tradition of Russian religious and philosophical thought, gravitated towards the hill of

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ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО МЛЕЧНЫЙ ПУТЬ

Makovets suggests an analogy with the magic attraction that the Monte Verita near Ascona in Switzerland in the early 1900s had for intellectuals of mystical inclination such as writer Hermann Hesse, artist Heinrich Vogeler and dancer Rudolph von Laban.¹¹⁵ Florensky himself seemed to be aware of this parallel:

Makovets has taken possession of the hill of Makovets, has assumed the correct position and desires to retain this ... Anyone else who desires a unity of culture must proclaim Realism, and at that point, even if he be a great genius, that person will have to join Makovets, because, I repeat, the position of the true recognition of the summit of life has already been seized.¹¹⁶

Taking the brief text on Realism as a departure-point, we can better understand Florensky's affiliation with the heterogeneous group of artists associated with Makovets, even if their aesthetic levels were uneven and their ideologies various - from the Realist Sergei Gerasimov with his solid *muzhiki* to the visionary Chekrygin (illus. 24) who, prompted by the ideas of the



24 Vasilii Chekrygin,
Self-portrait. 1918.
pencil. State Tretyakov
Gallery, Moscow

philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, intended to reconstruct his cosmic VISIONS within the rational equilibrium of Renaissance frescoes, from Nikolai Chernyshev and Istomin with their representations of Victorian young ladies now dressed in the tattered uniforms of Communist students and *pionerki*, to Lev Zhegin (illus. 25), a more theoretical artist fascinated by the relationship of art to mathematics, who later on returned to Florensky's ideas on perspective. Zhegin's close friends, Goncharova and Larionov, by then ensconced in Paris, were also listed as members of the journal's editorial board.

Certainly, Florensky was thinking of Realism neither as unembellished representation of the social achievements of the new regime, nor in terms of nationalist revival, and the fact that for Florensky the meaning of Realism coincided neither with figurative art nor with naturalism is demonstrated by the critical remarks that he made about Mikhail Nesterov's painting *In Russia (Soul of the People)* of 1914-16 (illus. 26). Nesterov worked on this subject for almost ten years, attempting to synthesise the spirit of Christian Russia into a grandiose historical and religious fresco, which was to have borne testimony to the burgeoning self-consciousness of the Russian people. Here we see a young peasant lad, a group of women surrounding a holy man, a Metropolitan, a Patriarch, a Great Prince or Tsar, etc., figures, in other words, who in Nesterov's opinion, embodied the 'adolescence' of Christian Russia. The choice of imagery, Nesterov's own Neo-Nationalist stance and the fact that he was preparing to paint his double portrait of Florensky and Bulgakov, might lead us to assume that Florensky would have been pleased with *In Russia*, but he was not. Using the picture as a model for discussing the representation of time in a work of art, he criticised it for an apparent failure to integrate the different personae in a temporal unity inasmuch as each of them seemed to be functioning in a separate time-frame in spite of Nesterov's emphasis on the communality of spiritual symbols. Florensky contrasted *In Russia (Soul of the People)* not with icons (which would have been an obvious reference for this exercise in temporal integration), but with the frivolous Arcadian image of Antoine Watteau's *Pilgrimage to Cythera* (1718-19, Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin), offering this and not *In Russia* as an authentic poetical representation of the temporal dimension in art and as a more tangible representation of his own perception of Realism.¹⁷

For Florensky the real 'soul of the people' drew nourishment from the primitive world of folklore and from its proximity to nature, evident in the pre-Christian and simple Christian rites, so distant from Nesterov's descriptive narrative. In this particular case, as in his approach to Picasso's works,



25 Tatiana Aleksandrova, *Lev Zhegin*, 1928, **oil** on canvas. Private collection



26 Mikhail Nesterov, *In Russia (Soul of the People)*, 1914-16, oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Florensky was expressing the sobriety and independence of his own ideological convictions and personal aesthetic preferences. However, Florensky's judgement of Nesterov's picture was an exception within his intellectual circle at Sergiev Posad - his friend Vasilii Rozanov, for example, identified Nesterov as a 'religious phenomenon', referring to *In Russia (Soul of the People)* with particular delight.¹¹⁸ The diffidence with which Florensky approached the religious painting of Nesterov and Viktor Vasnetsov contrasted with the enthusiasm that he manifested towards the apocalyptic work of Chekrygin (a fellow member of Makovets) - although he often polemicised with him. Zhegin remembers bringing Florensky a portfolio of Chekrygin's drawings after the latter's death in 1922 in the hope that Florensky would write an appreciation:

Florensky suggested laying out the drawings on the table, while he climbed up on to a stool and illuminated them with the electric light hanging from the ceiling. As always, he was in his white cassock with a large silver cross on his breast, all in all, a rather unusual spectacle. Difficult to tear yourself away from Chekrygin's drawings, they engulf you. At the same time you want to break loose from this captivity. Such was the sensation that I also had, even though I had already seen them several times. 119

Florensky used the term 'Realism' philosophically rather than aesthetically but, considerations of private taste aside, what did it mean for him? In his own words, he was juxtaposing Realism with illusionism, subjectivism and

psychologism, because he equated it with a 'trans-subjective reality of being, a being that reveals itself spontaneously to knowledge'.¹²⁰ Indeed, Florensky intended his essay on Realism to be a statement of ideological intent and of solidarity with the Makovets group as a whole, even if it did relate more to the visual arts than to literature, since for him Realism was both in tandem with, and in opposition to, illusionism. That is why the most diverse approaches could converge within a single conception of the world that revolved around these two antithetic poles. Accordingly, Florensky found it quite in order to contrast the Efimovs' puppet theatre (essentially anti-illusionistic inasmuch as puppets do not claim to be 'the real thing') with the perspectival illusionism of Ancient Greek scenography. He also opposed the linear perspective of the Renaissance with its aspiration to represent the third dimension ('Reverse Perspective'), the perceptual illusion of the naturalistic work of art 'just as it is in reality' ('On Realism', p. 181) and the claim - made by Picasso and other avant-gardists - to be able to represent the fourth dimension. At first glance, these conditions may seem very different but, according to Florensky, they derive from the single notion that we are all prisoners of the Platonic cave and that we all confound our subjective perception of the shadows cast on the wall with the 'true' perception of reality.

It is a specific kind of disintegrated culture, whether the Renaissance, the late Minoan age or his own contemporary Western culture (as in the case of the avant-garde), that Florensky equates with this subjective perception. In contraposition he places the 'reality' or the realism of a culture expressed by the Middle Ages: 'The pathos of medieval man is an affirmation of reality both within himself and without, which is, therefore, objectivity. Illusionism is characteristic of the subjectivism of modern man' ('Reverse Perspective'; p. 217). For Florensky the Middle Ages meant medieval Russia, while the ideal work of art was the icon, the result of an aesthetic exercise inspired by a collective religious impetus. Subservient to iconographic canons and, therefore, to the most abstract of representations, the icon was also the most Realist work of art inasmuch as it adhered to a transcendental and objective truth (*istina*).

Given the authority that Florensky enjoyed among the Makovets group, his essay on Realism carried a special resonance among them, the more so since the second issue of the journal published an article on Realism by Sergei Romanovich,¹²¹ in which the author, albeit more schematically, demanded that Realism should first and foremost be identified with a search for the truth: 'Ultimately, the struggle for Realism is the struggle for the truth' (i.e., a religious truth). However, Romanovich went on to affirm that a 'love of reality can also

be present in abstract art',¹²² an attempt on his part to reconcile the figurative preference of most of the *makovchane* with that of their less moderate (if now, more distant) colleagues such as Goncharova and Larionov. The latter, with Chekrygin, Romanovich and Aleksandr Shevchenko, had been among the most militant of the avant-gardists during the 1910s. In 1914, for example, Chekrygin had elaborated his theory of Centrism, contributing highly experimental works to Larionov's 'No. 4' exhibition in Moscow.¹²³ Romanovich had also taken part in Larionov's exhibitions, sometimes with Rayonist works, and had co-signed the statement on 'Futurists, Rayonists, the Primitive' in 1913.¹²⁴ Shevchenko, too, had published his two manifestos on Cubism and Neo-Primitivism in 1913,¹²⁵ and in 1919 co-founded Zhivskul'ptarkh (abbreviation for 'Paint[ing] Sculpt[ure] Arch[itecture]'), one of the more serious experiments in artistic synthesis.¹²⁶ (As a matter of fact, the other leaders of Zhivskul'ptarkh - Anton Lavinsky and Aleksandr Rodchenko - were among the most ardent opponents of Florensky and of his supporters at VKhUTEMAS). Also relevant to the avant-garde phalanx within Makovets was Pestel', who had started her career as a Cubist painter, frequenting the meetings in Popov's apartment and those in Tatlin's studio and taking part in the radical exhibitions '0.10' (1915-16) and 'Store' (1916) - only to return to Realism or, at least, to the new figuration of her colleagues within Makovets.¹²⁷

There was a kind of Realism that, even at its most delirious (as in Chekrygin's drawings of Apocalyptic orgies), bordered on the conventions of figurative painting as opposed to the non-figurative experiments of the avant-garde. One of the more conservative *makovchane*, Chernyshev, recalled that the group hoped to find a common language in the practice of painting, without engaging in purely formal and theoretical research. Chernyshev and his colleagues wished to find

a way out of the cul de sac, but without the scandals that were so fashionable in those years.

A group of individuals emerged, united beneath [the banner of] realism and by the [need] to create an objective art that would represent objects as we understood them ... Their consensus was to commence with their mutual attitude towards the world - with reality before anything else.¹²⁸

Obviously, the realism that the *makovchane* were seeking was neither the naturalistic mimesis of the Heroic Realism supported by the politicised Associa-

tion of Artists of Revolutionary Russia,¹²⁹ nor the more provocative definitions that the Constructivists Naum Gabo, Anton Pevsner and other avant-gardists bestowed upon the term.¹³⁰

Makovets may have welcomed repentant avant-gardists, but its roots still lay in the second wave of Russian Symbolism, represented by the Blue Rose group of Moscow Symbolist artists closely allied with the journal *Zolotoe runG* in the mid-1900S. *Makovchane* such as Petr Bromirsky and Fonvizin had been members of the Blue Rose and their evanescent, almost immaterial visions had much in common with the early Symbolist paintings of Larionov and Shevchenko;¹³¹ and while at VKhUTEMAS, Raisa Florenskaia (illus. 27), Florensky's youngest sister, studied under Pavel Kuznetsov, leader of the Blue Rose. For his part, Florensky dissociated his brand of Realism not only from Naturalism, but also from Symbolism, thereby anticipating objections that his Realism was a vehicle for understanding 'realities that are inaccessible to our senses'



27 Raisa Florenskaia,
Self-portrait, 1931, oil
on canvas.

('Realism', p. 181) - not that these realities were any less concrete, just that they could no longer be identified with the fleeting *realiora* of the Symbolists.

In any case, Florensky believed that his generation had attained a new, post-Kantian and post-Euclidean conception of life and art, one that corresponded more closely to the vision of the Ancient World and the Middle Ages than to that of post-Renaissance Europe, including nineteenth-century Realism. Florensky's mission, therefore, was to discard the remnants of the mimetic convention and to draw on the most varied sources if they were genuinely new and potential and reinforced his own perspective, even on the ideas of the avant-garde.

The Emblematics of a Book Cover

The Symbolist legacy endured well into post-Revolutionary Russia, witness to which was the continued influence of Fedorov on the art of Chekrygin, Blok's transubstantiation of his Beautiful Lady into Christ in 'The Twelve' (1918), and Bely's eschatological identification of the Bolshevik coup with total revolution; not surprisingly, the publishing-house responsible for the journal *Makovets* also bore a cosmic title, Milky Way (*Mlechnyi put'*).¹³² Moreover, in the early 1920s Florensky and colleagues such as Favorsky and A. Larionov continued to elaborate Symbolist ideas in their theoretical and creative endeavours. At the new Soviet institutions Florensky approached his teaching and research from a Symbolist standpoint, presenting his course on perspective at VKhUTEMAS as a 'symbolic form' and collaborating with A. Larionov at RAKhN (Larionov was also a professor at VKhUTEMAS) on an ambitious dictionary of symbols or 'Symbolarium'.

Many of the *makovchane* were professors or students at VKhUTEMAS, so it is difficult to separate Florensky's involvement in the journal from his own research and teaching. Chernyshev, for example, taught monumental painting, Romanovich painting and drawing and Istomin colour theory for the Basic Course at VKhUTEMAS,¹³³ while Raisa Florenskaia was a student,¹³⁴ Florensky's connection with VKhUTEMAS became even closer with the promotion of his friend Favorsky, then Secretary of the Department of Polygraphy, to Chairman of the Department of Xylography in 1921 and to Rector of VKhUTEMAS in 1923 (a post that he held until 1926).¹³⁵ The cover of the third issue of *Makovets* that Favorsky designed the same year, with its compact aggregate of symbols, became another visual emblem of their friendship and collaboration and also of their continued engagement with pre-Revolutionary culture. The symbolic content of the cover that Florensky explained is also a

key to his worldview, cryptic, but decipherable (illus. 44). Here the might of the *Urmutter* occupies the entire space within the frame, subsuming the protoimages and/or ideas, horse, dove, sun, tree and thistle - which are duplicated in the 'real' world outside. The man issuing forth from the *Urmutter* rests divided between the two spaces, an allusion to his double engagement with the world of abstract ideas and the world of material things.

The intricacy of Florensky's philosophical discourse notwithstanding, the concreteness of the images that he suggested for Favorsky's cover indicates a new orientation in his research on the symbol. It was, after all, also in 1923 that Florensky and A. Larionov embarked upon their 'Symbolarium'.¹³⁶ This dictionary was to have embraced the various writing systems in their historical evolution from the symbological sign system of the Christians of the catacombs down to the commercial logo, the numismatic emblem and the plastic language of gesture, in other words, all the essential ideographic signs of human communication. During their tenure at RAKhN, Larionov and Aleksei Sidorov developed this sign system in their researches on the gestural expression of the body,¹³⁷ while much later Aleksei Losev elaborated their initial investigations into his ideography of the symbol, even of the political emblem.¹³⁸ But in the 'Symbolarium' Florensky also signalled his detachment from the aesthetics and definitions of the Symbolists, which he regarded as being limited to the field of literature and poetics, arguing that their symbols were mere mental constructs or 'individual expositions of indefinite mystical disturbances'.¹³⁹ For Florensky the symbol was a transparent intermediary between the antinomies that dominate the reality of being as well as the central platform for his theory of cognition.¹⁴⁰

Florensky in Perspective: Teaching at VKhUTEMAS

In his essay on Realism, Florensky describes the cover of a book or journal as being analogous to a coat of arms that guides and edifies the bearer in all circumstances of life. The same could be said of the ex-libris design - for what else is an ex-libris design if not a dedicatory coat of arms, a symbolic image of the patron to whom the artist is addressing himself? This 'genre' was especially popular with Florensky's immediate circle of artists and art historians. His colleagues, the artist Favorsky and the art historian Sidorov, both produced ex-libris designs for him, with almost identical contents, representing, like a coat of arms, the iconic quintessence of the owner with their semblance of a medieval horseman, an arrow in his heart (illus. 28 and 29). Sidorov even entitled his accompanying sonnet 'Coat of Arms', suggesting,



28 Vladimir Favorsky, ex-libris design for Pavel Florensky, 1922, woodcut



29 Aleksei Sidorov, ex-libris design for Pavel Florensky, 1922, woodcut

albeit in a symbolic and initiatory language, that the image was the horseman and protector of Christ,¹⁴¹ presumably, an allusion to the chivalric order that Florensky and his young friends had dreamed of establishing in 1904.¹⁴² Florensky's order was also to have founded a journal dedicated to religion, 'which we can approach from different standpoints with philosophical, mystical, scientific or historical opuses and even include poetry'.¹⁴³

Although never implemented, the primary intent of this order still retained its validity in the 1920S, echoing the call to 'conduct a synthesis of ecclesiastic and profane culture, to integrate with the church, but without compromise and with honesty, to apprehend the positive doctrine of the church, the scientific and philosophical worldviews, art and so on'.¹⁴⁴ Florensky, of course, must have appreciated the image of the medieval knight, given his self-identification as a 'man of the Middle Ages' who, as we read in Zhegin's memoirs, supported a 'medieval world view'.¹⁴⁵ That both Favorsky and Sidorov dedicated ex-libris designs to Florensky also tells us of other associations: his mutual alliance with two very important cultural institutions of the early Soviet period - VKhUTEMAS and RAKhN - of which, respectively, Favorsky and Sidorov were leading members.

A strategic bridge interconnecting Florensky's activities in both VKhUTEMAS and RAKhN is his monumental essay 'Reverse Perspective', which derived from his course at VKhUTEMAS on the theoretical analysis of perspective (as opposed to its practical application). A unique innovation in the history of the teaching of art, Florensky's provocative concept of perspective was discussed avidly by colleagues at RAKhN,¹⁴⁶ which also sponsored lectures on other issues that Florensky was investigating at that time, including art and biology, space and time in the work of art and portraiture. To the latter Florensky dedicated an important section of his 'Analysis of Spatiality and Time in Works of Visual Art' and at least one of his lessons at VKhUTEMAS; while RAKhN also published a collection of essays on the subject.¹⁴⁷ As in the case of other specialists at RAKhN and VKhUTEMAS, Florensky based his approach on recent German publications on the theory and methodology of art (in fact, many Russian art historians had trained in German universities in the 1910S), such as Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, Heinrich Wölfflin's formal analyses (which Sidorov advocated with particular zeal),¹⁴⁸ Adolf von Hildebrand's *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (translated by Favorsky in 1914),¹⁴⁹ and the latest discoveries in the psycho-physiology of perception such as Hermann von Helmholtz's and Ernst Mach's studies of optical response.

The bibliographical sources that both Favorsky and Florensky used for their respective courses at VKhUTEMAS bear strong witness to their awareness and appreciation of German scholarship. A case in point is 'Reverse Perspective', published here.

As far as language and the analysis of the work of art are concerned, Florensky not only borrowed concepts from other thinkers, but also modified or even 'reversed' their interpretations.¹⁵⁰ For example, in the connection that he established between the graphic arts, gesture and tactility, Florensky, with his Symbolist sensibility, went beyond the schematicism which German scholars had used to develop their own conceptual pairs of Pure Visibility - Hildebrand (visual/motor representation), Riegl (tactile/optical) and Wofflin (linear/pictorial). In his emphasis on tactile value, Florensky always underlined his own persistent attention to the perceiver, the body and physiological processes and, in general, allied his acute sensuality with the objective recording of the scientist.

Florensky delivered his course on perspective in the Department of Polygraphy at VKhUTEMAS between 1921 and 1924 and his first lectures on the analysis of perspective in 1921-2 (illus. 30). Concurrently, Favorsky was commencing his own course on the theory of composition,¹⁵¹ which, together with A. Larionov's history of the visual forms of writing,¹⁵² constituted the theoretical nucleus of a newly restructured curriculum at VKhUTEMAS. In other words, Favorsky, Larionov and the engraver Pavel Pavlinov were members of a group of instructors that had much in common with Florensky, one that Favorsky, as department chair, tried to forge into a single, integrated instrument of teaching. In turn, this professorial bloc was to have counteracted the more radical tendencies of the Constructivists and Productivists in the same school. The VKhUTEMAS archives contain a number of syllabi (undated, unfortunately) for the students of the Department of Polygraphy, which demonstrate that the three mandatory courses offered by Favorsky, Florensky and Larionov made up a unit of theoretical disciplines. That Florensky's lessons on perspective and Favorsky's on composition were closely interrelated is indicated further by the fact that they taught back to back on the same days and that in 1923 both courses were open to the Department of Monumental Art within the Department of Painting, where Chernyshev, Mikhail Rodionov and other *makovchane* were also teaching.¹⁵³ Although Florensky avoided assuming an openly 'political' position, the young leftists of VKhUTEMAS regarded his lectures on perspective as the reflection of an idealist and reactionary tendency. Quite reasonably, critics also referred to the

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ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННО-ТЕХНИЧЕСКИЕ
МАСТЕРСКИЕ
15/Х-1924 г.
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30 Two of Florensky's ID passes for VKhuTEMAS, 1921 and 1924

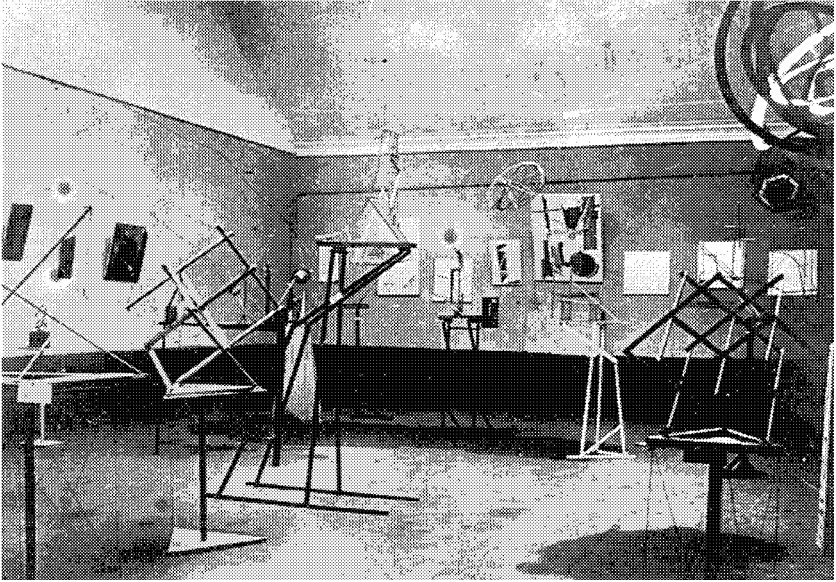
eccentricity of Florensky's philosophical position and to the fact that students found it difficult to follow. But paradoxically and for these very reasons, Florensky's courses continued to attract an intimate group of devoted students and professors, so that the leftists were soon condemning him for the mystique and charisma of his teaching methods. Increasingly, Florensky was forced to defend himself against such attacks, claiming that his starting-point was always realism and that his arguments were meant to be logical and lucid. Actually, in his essay on reverse perspective he even forestalled the accusation of mysticism by adducing the testimony of Ernst Mach, that 'most positivist of positivists' ('Reverse Perspective', p. 253).

Construction and Composition

That Florensky discussed 'construction' and 'composition' in his course at VKhUTEMAS must have seemed especially provocative to the hotheaded Constructivists for, albeit unwittingly, Florensky was contributing to the ardent discussions that Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova and their Working Group of Objective Analysis had been conducting from January to April 1921.¹⁵⁴ These radicals formed the initial core of the Constructivist and productivist camp, attracting converts to the faith at their theoretical and practical centres, INKhUKh and VKhUTEMAS (illus. 31). However, from the very first, differences in interpretation of the meanings of 'composition' and 'construction' forced the camp to split into two factions - headed by the Rationalist architects (Nikolai Dokuchaev, Nikolai Ladovsky, etc.) and by the productivists (Aleksei Gan, Rodchenko, etc.).¹⁵⁵ Advocating the death of studio painting, the Productivists published a fierce attack against the Department of Polygraphy in the journal *Lef* in 1923, accusing it of being at the centre of a 'mystical Productivism':

A curious subgroup of 'mystical Productivists' has formed among the 'decorative' painters (Pavlinov, Favorsky and the priest Florensky). This intimate company has declared war on all other groups and claims to be the only authentic group of Productivist art. They go around the Department of Polygraphy, filling the heads of students with the following kind of problem: 'The spiritual meaning of the images of letters of the alphabet' or 'The struggle of white and black spaces in graphics'.¹⁵⁶

In a second and even more virulent attack the Productivists concluded that the only thing distinguishing Florensky and his disciples from the old Stroganov



31 The third exhibition of the oBlvloKhu Constructivists (Society of Young Artists), Moscow, 1921. The Rodchenko - Stepanova Archive, Moscow

Institute of Applied Art was their *mystical* interpretation of artistic laws.¹⁵⁷

The debate soon assumed the proportions of a partisan and cruel vendetta inasmuch as the professors in the Department of Polygraphy, especially the 'mystic' Florensky, were now being attacked for undermining the integrity of VKhuTEMAS and causing it to 'collapse'. That the Productivists did, indeed, regard the Department of Polygraphy as a closed and esoteric sect is clear from the Rodchenko caricature (illus. 32) in which Rector Favorsky, as Father Vladimir, is wearing a cassock (at a time when Florensky was still wearing his cassock). Another, even more explicit, caricature that Rodchenko drew for the VKhuTEMAS in-house journal *Nash gaz* [Our News[paper]] shows a priest with the Bible and a halo in the form of an 'O' ('O' for *Otets*, 'Father'), holding the initial 'F' (clearly, Florensky) in the palm of his hand (illus. 33). In his capacity as Rector, an indignant Favorsky responded to the second attack, soliciting a letter of formal apology from the co-signatories.¹⁵⁸ These included, incidentally, the avant-gardist Popova, whose home in the 1910s had been the scene of many an affable meeting for Florensky. She now seemed to regret her involvement, lamenting: 'Florensky- 'well known for his metaphys-



32 Aleksandr Rodchenko, *The Real Rectoris Father Vladimir*. Caricature for the vKhuTEMAS in-house journal *Nashgaz*, 1923. Both MUS. 32 and 33 are courtesy of The Rodchenko - Stepanova Archive, Moscow

icall lectures'! - \What an unfortunate, vulgar, obtuse, anti-artistic and defamatory leaflet' (even though she also signed the second LEF attack of 1924).¹⁵⁹

Florensky tried hard not to become too involved in these acrid polemics and chose not to attend the various organisational initiatives of VKhuTEMAS (his name is missing from the minutes of the general and departmental meetings). However, such reticence does not mean that he was deaf to these objections or was shirking his responsibilities, for he did react to the accusations and without fear of compromising the integrity of his own ideas. For example, on 24 January 1924 he jotted down: 'Explanation regarding LEF on the mystical interpretation of artistic law'.¹⁶⁰ In his essay on perspective - and just as curtly - he again anticipated the criticism of the radicals, censuring them for having



33 Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Rector Favorsky as Father Vladimir Holding the Initial 'F' for Florensky*, a caricature for the vKhUTEMAS in-house journal *Nashgaz*, 1923

'destroyed the forms and organisation of space, sacrificing them to volume and thingness' ('Reverse Perspective', p. 258) and he continued to hammer home this viewpoint in his essay on iconostasis. As if responding to what the Productivists were promoting, he even dedicated an entire lesson to the subject of 'construction' and 'composition' in his VKhUTEMAS course.¹⁶¹

The general issue of 'composition' in the work of art was of major concern to the Department of Polygraphy and, in particular, to Favorsky and Florensky, who imbued the concept with a much broader sense than the one accepted by the traditional academies of art. They did so because they wished to emphasise the importance of the painting, the engraving and the drawing - in contrast to the Productivists - as being a virtual image on a two-dimen-

sional support, an autonomous semantic structure, a model and departure-point for examining the figurative work of art 'as such'. In this way, Florensky would invite his students to consider 'construction' and 'composition' as infeasible components of the work of art - intended as objects of experimental analysis - and as physical 'fields' in which the viewer and the viewed interacted in reciprocal correlation, constituting a dynamic unity.

In the dialectic between the perceived object and the subject that produces the work of art, the reality of the object (the section of the world that is expressed in the work of art) acts upon the artist by superimposing a certain structure or 'construction'; while, in turn, the artist also superimposes his own design - the 'composition'. Regarded from this standpoint, the productivists' concept of 'construction' was reductive, for they maintained that studio painting per se could not create 'construction' and, therefore, had to be rejected, whereas a functional structure such as an object designed by an engineer expressed 'construction', at least aesthetically and, therefore, was the only acceptable artistic embodiment. In his classes Florensky contended that the artist could, indeed, create 'things that do not exist in nature, i.e., machines', although in this context the artist was merely 'competing with the engineer' and 'working in the capacity of engineer rather than of artist'.¹⁶²

Here Florensky, the theoretical engineer, supported by the artist Favorsky, was polemicising with artists pretending to be professional engineers. This was certainly a logical conclusion to Florensky's rejection of the notion of linear perspective and the Renaissance artist-engineer whose 'bitter Kantian fruits' ('Reverse Perspective', p. 216) had matured into Productivism and Constructivism. Florensky's polemic with the Constructivist 'engineers' was destined to last several years, for even as late as 1926 Favorsky was still asserting that students in the Department of Graphics should graduate with artistic, not technical, expertise: 'No more engineers at VKhUTEMAS! If we do need engineers (and there is such a need), then we should go and find them at MVTU [Moscow Higher Technical Institute]!' ¹⁶³ Looking back at the VKhUTEMAS interlude in 1932, Favorsky identified one of the reasons for the pedagogical failure as the vain attempt to play the role of engineer and 'purely mechanically to transfer all the practical standards of industrial production, etc. from technical institutes to an art institute'.¹⁶⁴ Florensky also argued that what he defined as a 'Productivist methodology' - classifying the arts according to technique alone - was totally inadequate.¹⁶⁵

Of course, this does not mean that Favorsky and Florensky were indifferent to the material aspect of the work of art, its mode of production, the tech-

nique of artistic production, or the need to overcome the distinction between the fine and the applied arts. Once again for Florensky the ideal model here was the icon and its metal cover and the requirement that the icon painter be first and foremost a craftsman. During his preservation work for the Lavra Commission Florensky had the chance to study innumerable objects of religious art, including illuminated manuscripts, metal utensils, tapestries, textiles and wooden sculpture.¹⁶⁶ In his preliminary class notes for VKhUTEMAS he listed technical details about the production of niello and enamelling that were no less erudite than his pedagogical observations on graphic technique.¹⁶⁷ Florensky's minute attention to both technique and material was reflected in many of the entries that he published for the *Tekhnicheskaia entsiklopediia* [Technical Encyclopedia] in 1927-34 on the latest plastic and industrial products such as Bakelite, linoleum and insulation materials. 'The science of materials is linked to histology: declared Florensky in 1925-6: 'The science of materials as a field of application in the study of manifolds and the theory of functions can be linked to the histology of materials.'¹⁶⁸

Looking Through a Book Cover

In the 1920s Favorsky and Florensky were united by a close friendship as well as by mutual interests in particular intellectual and spiritual issues. Emblematic of their long and intricate dialogue was Favorsky's endeavour to visualise Florensky's philosophical and mathematical ideas in three synthetic images or, more exactly, three engravings for cover designs. These were for the unpublished third issue of *Makovets*, for the unpublished treatise *Chislo kak forma* [Number as Form] (illus. 46) and for the booklet *Mnimosti geometrii* [The Imaginaries of Geometry] published in 1922 (illus. 45), which Florensky wrote just after Favorsky (by then chairman of the Department of Polygraphy) had invited him to join the faculty. In concert with Favorsky and Sidorov, Florensky argued that the book was a special artistic form with its own intrinsic and organic unity,¹⁶⁹ and Favorsky intended his cover for *The Imaginaries of Geometry* as an illustration of this concept. Florensky's attentive response to this cover design bears a direct relationship to this personal and creative interconnection.

Commenting on the Favorsky cover design in the appendix to *The Imaginaries of Geometry*, Florensky addresses the question of a new non-Euclidean geometry that derived from the 'real' and 'imaginary' sides of a plane and that could be represented by graphic means. Florensky proceeded to analyse Favorsky's image on the basis of its congruence with the theory elaborated in

the book itself, offering it as a concrete visualisation. Florensky seems to be hypothesising that a new bidimensionality can be conceived if not duplicated in its front and back sides. True, it is a space whence the perspectival illusion of the third dimension has been banished, but, in spite of this and like the Ptolemaic system, it is neither limited, nor closed. The archetype of this space is, once again, the plane of the icon.

Favorsky's woodcut engraving for *The Imaginaries of Geometry* and Florensky's explanatory text constitute an implicit manifesto of the intrinsic value of two dimensions in the work of art, in the sense that the figurative work cannot but occupy a plane, whether the concrete plane of an engraving, the board of an icon, or the virtual plane upon which the image is represented symbolically. On this level the rigorous medium of the woodcut was especially relevant inasmuch as it proscribed any fanciful flight into the iridescent charm of colour or any potential delight in the refined texture that a different engraving technique would have allowed. Florensky dedicated an important part of his course at VKhUTEMAS to the engraving technique, identifying it as a specific medium that expressed the artist's will to organise space on a plane (in contrast to the hedonistic passivity of the painting). This will manifests itself in the formal autonomy of the graphic work, which is the representation of a pure gesture or movement in space, one that is abstract and, by its very nature, intellectual. Such severity coincided with the predilections of Favorsky himself, who was drawn to 'composition' precisely because of its aesthetic articulation of, and restriction to, white and black. He felt that the rough, but regular grain of the wood allowed for a manipulation of the hatching, the preferred expressive medium that accentuated the movement of the hand.¹⁷⁰ That Favorsky's graphic art illustrated Florensky's appendix was especially clear from his specific use of white, of the background and the empty spaces as an element of colour, so that the density of the background (what Florensky called the 'filmy space of the representation' in 'Explanation of the Cover', p. 193) is perfectly integrated to the extent that both the real side and the corresponding 'imaginary' side are completely exposed. Here again, Florensky is constructing his entire argument via the apparent contradictions or, to use his own term, antinomies, so typical of his thought process.

Florensky commences his essay by examining 'transparent' vision, a vision that passes through a spyhole in the wall, the pane of a window, a glass object, water or the visual fluidity of a multitude of blades of grass. But while looking through the concrete *realia*, Florensky reaches the converse conclusion that to view a work of art is to view an opaque body in its essence, and this

opaque body can become transparent only via our spiritual consciousness. The work of art, the pictorial plane, acquires the qualities of a signifying diaphragm between the internal and external worlds, between linear and reverse perspectives and, in this immediate context, between the real and the imaginary sides of geometry (imaginary in the mathematical sense). 'The transparent is apparitional' - it is a ghostly image and an illusion ('Explanation of the Cover', p. 190). As he points out in 'Celestial Signs' (p. 121), Sophia, symbol of the cognition of God, is also opaque, even if she is 'not the crude inertness of matter, she is not matter's crude opacity', for that is also impermeable and transparent. In this regard, the icon, in its physicality and in the formal, but symbolic abstraction of what it represents, becomes the ideal screen upon which we focus our gaze, but which separates and/or unites the believer and the world beyond.

In 1922 Florensky was also busy writing *Iconostasis*, in which he concentrated on the diaphragmic role - both concrete and abstract - that the iconostasis played in the Orthodox church.¹¹¹ From an anthropological standpoint, the iconostasis was the threshold separating terrestrial from celestial space while the icon was the window open to the higher world. But the gilded opacity of the iconic plane was now countering the transparent glass of the Renaissance aperture, the illusionist window on to space that had been created by linear perspective.

Reverse Perspective

While fulfilling his duties as a member of the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra, Florensky explored the iconostasis and the perception of the icon via religious rite and also elaborated his treatise on reverse perspective. Florensky's conceptual inversion - according to which 'pure painting' as opposed to the linear perspective of stage design, is a 'window opened wide on reality' ('Reverse Perspective', p. 210) - is highly significant. In Florensky's opinion, Alberti's 'window' and Euclid's geometric opening on to the world were reversed into a passage through reality, both empirical and spiritual, a process, however, that was not abstract inasmuch as it was founded on ulterior certainties. Florensky was identifying two opposing conceptions of perspective (reverse versus linear and realist versus illusionist) with alternating historical epochs (medieval versus Renaissance) that had always used these conceptions, albeit as symbolic manifestations.

Although Florensky had prepared his lecture on reverse perspective for the Commission, he opted instead to accept Shchekotov's invitation to deliver

it at MIKhIM in 1920. The audience was distinguished, comprising eager and erudite representatives of the fledgling discipline of Russian art history that included Mikhail Fabrikant (a specialist in the Renaissance and German Expressionism), the ethnologist and archaeologist Boris Kuftin, the psychologist Nikolai Lange (who had studied perception psychology under Wilhelm Wundt at Leipzig and had organised one of the first laboratories of experimental psychology in Russia), Muratov, Nikolai Romanov (founder of the first Department of Art History in Russia at the University of Moscow in 1907-8 and then director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, 1923-6),¹⁷² and Sidorov. Unfortunately, some of those present were about to emigrate and by extension to become 'traitors to the motherland', while others were to fall victim to the Stalinist repression, a fact that undoubtedly hindered the timely publication of Florensky's lecture. Even so, the manuscript was saved, circulated widely and continued to be a subject of ardent discussion among art historians during the following decades.

For those who attended Florensky's lecture at MIKhIM, therefore, or his lessons on perspective at VKhuTEMAS - which extended to the larger issue of spatiality and temporality in the work of art - the topic of perspective was pivotal in determining the meaning of a work of art and its relationship to the real world. The attitude of the European avant-gardes to the issue of canonical perspective, for example, was one of abrupt rejection. In debating the academic model, they questioned the traditional teaching of perspective, the application of linear perspective in their own works and, above all, the very concept of Euclidean space whence the notion of linear perspective derives. Florensky voiced similar objections against linear perspective, although he reached very different conclusions.

In his text on reverse perspective Florensky limits himself to stating that the theory of linear perspective consists of a long list of justifications for the need to digress from basic norms, to go beyond the oneness of the point of view, the oneness of the horizon and the oneness of the scale of proportion. Florensky chooses not to analyse the technical or historiographical aspects of so-called reverse perspective or even the idea itself but, rather, tries to elaborate the 'ethical' value of the work of art, calling for the rejection of linear perspective altogether. In contrast to the avant-garde, he offers his arguments not in support of the new artists who were identifying their genesis with the formal and 'primitive' language of the icon, but in defense of the artistic autonomy of the icon against the anti-religious vandalism threatening the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius.

Hitherto, Florensky had confined himself to 'describing' the perspectival process - and with an encyclopedic knowledge and competence that overshadowed his occasional factual errors. Nonetheless, openly receptive in his use of sources, he anticipated key discoveries, including the assumption that the first scientific application of linear perspective was to be found in the cartographic theory of the projection of a sphere on a plane that Ptolemy had proposed in his *Geography* (considered to be a principal departure-point for subsequent developments in Renaissance perspective even today).¹⁷³ Remarkable for its time is the observation that theoreticians such as Biagio da Parma could have influenced Brunelleschi in his researches on perspective.¹⁷⁴

As for the historical dimension, Florensky's selective bibliography is of major importance, since, for example, it contains the very same citation from Vitruvius on the birth of scenography that Erwin Panofsky used later on in his own comprehensive analysis of perspective.⁵ Strangely enough, however, Florensky disregards Oskar Wulff who, in *Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Niedersicht* (1907), was the first to develop a clear and reasoned explanation of the concept of 'inverted perspective', a publication that was well known in Russia at that time.¹⁷⁶

One reason for this bibliographical omission may be that Florensky felt it more important to discuss the two most recent Russian manuals on perspective, Nikolai Rynin's *Nachertal'naia geometriia. Metody izobrazheniia* [Descriptive Geometry: Methods of Representation] and *Nachertal'naia geometriia. Perspektiva* [Descriptive Geometry: Perspective], both of which dismissed the constructions of spatial depth in ancient icons as being 'perspectival aberrations'.^m Rynin's assertion was categorical:

Under exceptional circumstances one may use more than one viewpoint or horizon so as to draw objects placed on a given plane (a floor, ceiling, wall) as long as one realises that such deviations from the rules of perspective do not correspond to the real conditions of vision.¹⁷⁸

For Florensky such conclusions were a source of both inspiration and contention and he was quick to challenge them. Other critics, too, hastened to pronounce on the issues of perspective, not least Anatolii Bakushinsky,¹⁷⁹ who responded to Florensky with a long essay - 'Linear Perspective in Art and in the Visual Perception of Real Space' - that he published in the first issue of *Iskusstvo* [Art], the RAKhN art-historical journal.¹⁸⁰ In concert with an unidentified mathematician friend, Bakushinsky delineated a new conception of an

organic and synthetic perspective - 'profane' as much as 'spiritual' - that was to become the basis for new researches towards an integration of linear perspective (the expression of a monocular perception germane to Western cultures) and reverse perspective (the expression of a binocular perception germane to Eastern cultures). In defining his own linear (or synthetic) perspective, Bakushinsky was pursuing a rather subjective approach to the idea of integration, although he both criticized Rynin's limited technical approach and questioned the scientific value of Florensky's affirmations on the basis of the same criticisms that had been levelled at Wulff.¹⁸¹ As far as Bakushinsky was concerned, Florensky had summarised Wulff's 'paradoxical conception' founded on the 'theory of empathy'. He continued:

The observer is, as it were, transferred to the position of the central figure in the picture and perceives space from his viewpoint. Via this transfer Wulff tries to transform reverse perspective into linear perspective.

Which is not to mention the great complexity, in a purely Ptolemaic sense, and the artificiality of this theory that would require a radical and inexplicable restructuring of the observer's psychology.¹⁸²

Presumably, Bakushinsky's Ptolemaic allusion was to the justification of Dante's interpretation of the cosmos that Florensky had discussed in his *Imaginaries in Geometry* the year before. But Bakushinsky also implied that there was a direct political thrust underlying the 'mystical' aspects of Florensky's opinions:

With his formulation of reverse perspective as the empirical and illusory projection of space from the viewpoint of the world situated on the other 'side', P. Florensky is developing Wulff's opinion and bringing it to a significant conclusion. Florensky's mystical interpretation corrects the weakness of Wulff's position and establishes a single and continuous point from which the projection departs. This point transports Wulff beyond the picture in a direction contrary to the viewer, which makes the perspectival construction arise from the earth of chance and chaos and which each time must redefine itself *vis-a-vis* the principal figure in the picture.¹⁸³

Even though he did not attend the lecture on reverse perspective at MIKhIM, Bakushinsky did audit Florensky's course at VKhUTEMAS and, of course, as fellow members of RAKhN they were personally acquainted. But by 1923, as the Bolshevik government consolidated, RAKhN began to lose its political autonomy – and to 'relieve' some of its most important members of their duties only a few months before the Bakushinsky publication.¹⁸⁴ These included Berdiaev, Bulgakov, Semeon Frank and Fedor Stepun,¹⁸⁵ idealist philosophers and among Florensky's acquaintances who had been exiled from Russia in the fall of 1922 in the wake of the first systematic, repressive measures taken against the intelligentsia by the new regime. Consequently, Bakushinsky had to perform intellectual acrobatics so as to dissociate himself from Florensky's radical, religious affirmations, so dangerously close to those of the philosophers now in emigration. Specifically, he attempted to reconcile idealist philosophy, the academic support system of realism and the methods used by primitives and children to render artistic representation by bringing them under a single theoretical rubric. At the same time, although now speaking from a Soviet platform, Bakushinsky still reaffirmed the superiority of Russian culture with its spirituality to the corrupt materialism of the capitalist West, a juxtaposition that echoed the earlier philosophical debates on Picasso conducted by Berdiaev, Bulgakov and Florensky:

This crisis [in the visual arts] has led us to an inevitable revision of the laws of artistic perception and expression of space ... New ideas of construction and composition have come forth, especially in contemporary art ... On the other hand, the logical need for a truly synthetic perspective is a striking echo and presentiment that resounds across the centuries, one reflected in the art of certain great cultures. It can render great help in the organization of the artistic design of the imminent rupture in the spiritual and material world of human kind.¹⁸⁶

Bakushinsky undertook yet another convoluted compromise so as to justify 'moderate' experimentation in art: on the one hand, he proposed what he called a 'synthetic' perspective that was the objective and rational expression of visual perception and that could still allow deviation from the norm; on the other hand, he censured the avant-garde artists who had destroyed linear perspective and thus the spatial unity of the work of art, an opinion that Florensky had also expressed in his VKhUTEMAS lectures. Florensky had

done so in the name of the organic nobility of icon painting and, therefore, of 'reverse perspective'. Now, however, Bakushinsky developed his mandatory accusations against Florensky into a discourse subtler than that of the young champions of Constructivism (Rodchenko and his disciples) so as to highlight the curious mix of mystical and positivist elements in the philosopher's perspectival theories.

A coda to this polemic is to be found in the paper on 'Eccentric Space and Hyperspace in Painting' that the art historian Nikolai Tarabukin gave to a meeting of the Theory Subsection of the Spatial Arts Section at RAKhN on 2 November 1927. Here he mentioned Bakushinsky's and Wulff's articles, but avoided any reference to Florensky, either because of his personal sympathy with the Constructivists and Productivists or because the authorities were becoming ever more suspicious of Florensky's philosophical position. Even if Tarabukin was not the most extreme of critics, he did underline the formal possibilities offered by reverse perspective, relating it to Oriental art in general and to what he defined from an avant-garde position as 'eccentric space':

We are deleting the term 'inverted perspective' and, in Oriental art, are calling space eccentric, because it unfolds from within outwards in contradistinction to perspectival space, which folds inwards. Eccentric space is constructed according to radiuses in all directions. It is centrifugal and intense.¹⁸⁷

Bakushinsky's 1923 statement anticipated Panofsky's essay on 'Perspective as Symbolic Form' - by a year, although from a philosophical viewpoint Florensky's 'Reverse Perspective' (conceived in 1919) was even closer. In any case, Bakushinsky and, after him, Tarabukin were maintaining the new and fashionable Russian interest in the philosophy of perspective - an interest, however, that transcended the academic discipline to assume ideological or political connotations to the effect that traditional Russian art was nobler or more authentic than its Western counterpart. Conversely, for Western critics such as Panofsky, the question of reverse perspective was hardly one of ideology or science, but rather a technical and secondary one.¹⁸⁸ In any case, they were quite unaware of the specific nature of the Russian approach to reverse and linear perspective, even if Panofsky did quote El Lissitzky's essay on 'A[rt] and Pangeometry' published in Potsdam in 1925,¹⁸⁹ which reflected the spirit of the Russian debate. Panofsky refers to this as a model of the 'most modern scientific thinking',¹⁹⁰ citing Lissitzky's assessment of Malevich's Suprematism.¹⁹¹

Panofsky could not have done much more for, as with most of his European colleagues, he was unfamiliar with the proud emphasis that the Russian academic community had placed on the autonomous value of the language of the Russian (Byzantine) icon before the Bolshevik coup. This particular interpretation had constituted a true Copernican revolution amongst both scholars of Russian art such as Florensky, Grabar' and Muratov (not necessarily advocates of the avant-garde) and Russian artists, especially of the avant-garde, such as Goncharova, Grishchenko and Larionov, even if the points of aesthetic contact between the two factions were few and far between. The points of ideological contact, however, were much more numerous, if complex and oblique, indicating an alliance wherein the common rejection of linear perspective served as a primary intersection of ideas. This alliance may not have been entirely involuntary for it was imposed very much by the *Zeitgeist*, the polemics were acerbic and many of the avant-garde turned either to applied art or photography or to figurative painting - not, however, a traditional Realism, but a more stylised and 'iconic' form. In other words, Florensky communicated with the avant-garde, but their conclusions were very different.

First and foremost, there was the idea of the division of the Orient and the Occident and the proximity of Russian culture - via Byzantium - to the East rather than to the West (from the standpoint of religious ideology). For Florensky, the foundation of the centre of Russian Orthodoxy, the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius, contained the emblematic and chronological coincidence of the life of its founding saint, Sergius, with the final cultural flowering of the Palaeologos dynasty and the fall of Constantinople - which, traditionally, marked the departure-point for the history of Russian culture.¹⁹² Bakushinsky, too, opened his essay on linear perspective with an analogous assertion - that the culture of the Occident, mercantile and positivist, had become stifled and stifling. That is why Russia was manifesting (or should have been manifesting) an ever deeper concern with the Orient, whence came everything that bore the imprint of spiritual strength and autonomy.¹⁹³ Tarabukin, representing a more leftist position, also turned to reverse perspective as a 'distinctive form of spatial organisation' related to the East.¹⁹⁴

Presumably, this attitude was also influenced by the ideas of Oswald Spengler, for his fundamental text on the decline of the West in its relation to the figurative arts had just been introduced into Russia by Viktor Lazarev, a specialist in Russian and Byzantine icons and a member of RAKhN.¹⁹⁵ Spengler's conjecture that Kant's a priori Euclidean space was merely one of infinite

possible spaces was essential both to Lissitzky's essay on pangeometry and to Florensky's on reverse perspective, which he then developed in his *Analysis of Spatiality and Time in Works of Visual Art*.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Spengler affirmed the importance of the invention of zero in mathematics, a concept that Lissitzky elaborated in his deliberation on perspective, arguing that, for the twentieth century, Malevich's discovery of the black square - a 'plastic value as 0 in the complex body of art' - had been tantamount to Cardano's and Tartaglia's discovery of the value of 0 as a number in the sixteenth century.¹⁹⁷

The semantic value of the mathematical zero, now attributed to the pictorial plane, represents a third point of contact between the academic theorists and the artists of the avant-garde. Malevich had also emphasized this new meaning of the pictorial plane, announcing that he had transformed himself in the zero of form via the black square,¹⁹⁸ and, as if to prove this, contributed blank canvases to two public exhibitions.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Florensky attributed a perverse dimension to a device (linear perspective) that he considered too rational and abstract, the child of an immanent and laical conception of the world that had generated the mechanistic experiments of French Cubism and Russian Suprematism and Constructivism. For Florensky the vanishing-point was a zero, a 'disembodied punctum',¹⁰⁰ that bifurcates into two valences, one positive, the other negative, in both the mathematical and the spiritual sense:

In particular, the vanishing-point tends to be presented as a negative point and at this point the schemes fundamental to perspectival representation converge - which becomes the compositional center of the picture. [The viewer] thinks that the composition is extending and growing. However, for its spatial or depictive function the vanishing-point is not the source of representation, but its conduit, not the beginning, but the end. The surface perpendicular to the central visual ray is seen as sucked into the endless depth of the Euclidean extension, always constant in its monotone movement without hold, arrest, or obstacle. In receding, the surface rakes over everything that it encounters in its path, cleansing the space of any possible reality. The latter seems to rush headlong along the tracks of non-being, along the lines of escape until it reaches the point, i.e., until the fullness and diversity that fill space concentrate in a zero - a homogenous and isotropic space, beyond quality, and indifferent

to its own content, remains empty and, in turn, transforms into a pure zero. *Linear perspective* is a machine for annihilating reality, an infernal yawn that swallows everything wherein the vanishing-point functions. Conversely, *reverse perspective*, like a fountain of reality spurting into the world, serves to generate reality, extract it from non-being and advance it into reality. Point of darkness and point of light - such is the correlation of the centers of inverse [and linear] perspective.²⁰¹

This quotation comes from Florensky's entry on 'Point', his first and only surviving entry for the 'Symbolarium', and demonstrates that, statements to the contrary notwithstanding, his aesthetic was still closely linked to that of the Symbolists. The apocalyptic tones so dear to the Russian Symbolists and to Florensky himself now return in the metaphor of science, so that the perspectival vanishing-point becomes a 'black hole' that swallows up and destroys reality. For Florensky the 'Point' is antinomically a monadic and closed whole and is also its opposite, nothing, absence, zero, emptiness, which is perversely active like a vanishing-point.

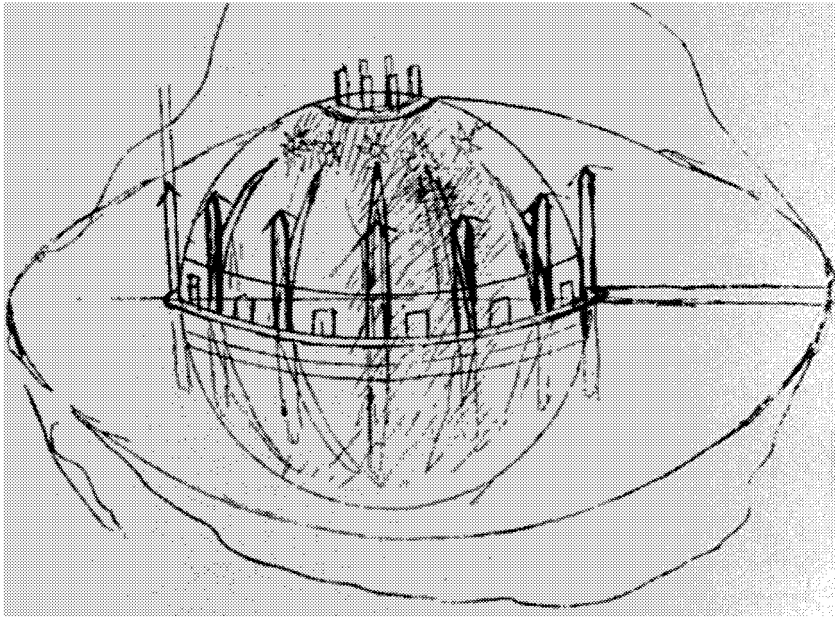
*The Church Ritual as a
Synthesis of the Arts*

Introduction

Florensky wrote 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' in October 1918, as the text of a lecture he was invited to give to the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra. This Commission had been organised immediately after the October Revolution by the new government in an effort to counteract the vandalism and pillaging that threatened the property and treasures of the Lavra, the vital centre of Russian Orthodoxy.² In spite of its Bolshevik initiative, the Commission owed much to the participation of Orthodox believers and art historians, a combination of forces that reflected the ambiguity of the revolutionary regime towards religious matters. But, inevitably, the Commission was short-lived, and as soon as the Party decree 'On the Confiscation of Church Valuables' was issued in 1922, it became apparent that the Lavra would cease to exist in its current form, one reason why Florensky hastened to publish his essay as soon as he could, in the first number of the journal *Makovets*, in 1922.

By then life in the Lavra had changed dramatically: in March 1919 the Moscow Theological Academy, located in Sergiev Posad, was discontinued; on 3 November 1919 the monks' dormitory was also closed; and on 31 May 1920 the Cathedral of the Trinity was closed down and sealed off. How curious, then, that just a short while after these disastrous measures, the *Makovets* group of artists and writers, champions of the spiritual in art, took up the banner of Orthodoxy, invoking the name of *Makovets*, the hill on which St Sergius of Radonezh had built his cell and founded the Lavra of the Trinity in the fourteenth century. That Florensky decided to publish both 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts' and 'Celestial Signs' in the journal *Makovets* gives them special emblematic import.

As with many of Florensky's other essays, the title of 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts', *Khramovoe deistvo kak sintez iskusstva*, contains nuances and references that challenge the expertise and ingenuity of any translator and commentator. A case in point is the word 'act' (*deistvo*), the normal word for 'action on stage', which Florensky seems to be using here for its immediate connotation with the catharsis of ancient tragedy. In this way,



34 Aleksandr Scriabin, Untitled drawing (sketch for the *Misterium*), c. 1914

Florensky is implying that the liturgy is a religious ritual, the enactment of a religious performance. At the same time, he is evoking the 'Prefatory Act[ion]' (*Predvaritel'noe deistvie*) of the composer Aleksandr Scriabin, whom Florensky mentions at the end of his text. Scriabin's 'Prefatory Act' is an experimental opus that he developed just before his death in 1915, parallel to his grandiose *Misterium*, a mystical ritual of poetry, declamation, mime, dance, light and colour play that was to have taken place beneath a 'Temple [*khram*] of Celebration' (illus. 34). Similarly, 'The Prefatory Act' was intended to be a total ritual and Florensky appears to be deliberately substituting the word 'action on stage' (*deistvo*) for 'act' (*deistvie*) as in 'Act III', because, according to the Scriabin critic Leonid Sabaneev, 'in his search for a method of realising the *Misterium*, Scriabin came to the idea of the final step, to the Prefatory Action (*deistvie*) which, however, should have been performed not in the form of a concert, but as a kind of act (*deistvo*) for the initiated.'⁴

There also seems to be a reference to Scriabin in the very title of Florensky's lecture and publication, the adjective *khramovoe* ('cultic', 'ecclesiastical', 'liturgical' - from the word *khram* [temple]). Presumably, Florensky was trying

to supplement the strictly religious connotations of the Orthodox rite and liturgy, even if the word *khram* does relate to the building where these events take place, a church. Indeed, '*khramovoe deistvo*' could well be translated as 'cultic act', especially if we recall a telling sentence that Florensky included in his lecture notes, but excluded from his definitive version:

I am talking now in the name not of religious, but of cultural interest, since, from a purely religious viewpoint, it might be more useful, speaking somewhat aphoristically, to liquidate the Lavra and to organise a museum inside its empty walls: there is a profound truth to what the late Metropolitan Vladimir said, again, aphoristically, in response to the deep concern about church antiquities - that they ought to be gathered up and burnt.⁵

Indeed, intellectually Florensky distinguished religion or cult (*kul't*) from culture (*kul'tura*) since the former 'can be fathomed from top down and not from bottom up'; on the other hand, 'a cult that is examined from bottom up is a kind of human activity, yes, a type of activity that coexists with other kinds'.⁶ Even so, and despite these very strong reverberations, the primary emphasis of Florensky's title seems to be on the components of the Orthodox Church service and, for this reason, the translation 'Church Ritual' rather than 'Cultic Ritual' or 'Cultic Act' has been used throughout.

THE CHURCH RITUAL AS A SYNTHESIS OF THE ARTS

I would like to share with you some thoughts of a rather general nature. Once ideas are taken out of the vital context that produced them, however, they are easily misinterpreted. Think of my remarks as just 'random' thoughts, therefore, speculation both theoretical and concrete on what may well be the single most important living museum of Russian culture, and of Russian art in particular. At the same time, we can only arrive at a systematic solution to the problems which historical reality has bequeathed to us by properly exposing their general principles - and most importantly, only after we have reached consensus in defining the basic characteristics of cultural, as well as more specifically artistic, activity. It is absolutely essential that colleagues involved in a given project develop their practical work hand in hand while paying close attention to theoretical refinement and elaborating theoretical questions about art on site, at the very heart of artistic production. It must be admitted, moreover, that in the area that concerns us - namely, religious art conceived as the highest synthesis of heterogeneous artistic activities - theoretical questions remain virtually unexplored. If it were permissible to leave our immediate tasks aside and allow our imagination to stray in the realm of possibilities - and not particularly remote ones, incidentally - I would lay before you an idea about the need to create a total complex of research and teaching institutions attached to the Troitse-Sergieva Lavra. This would be a model institution as well as a truly miraculous and historic attempt to bring into being that ultimate synthesis of the arts for which our modern aestheticians yearn.

I imagine the Lavra as a type of experimental centre, a laboratory for the study of fundamental problems in contemporary aesthetics, a kind of modern Athens, for example, where the theoretical discussion of the problems of religious art would occur, not in isolation from the actual realisation of these artistic goals, but in the presence of the very aesthetic phenomenon that controls and nurtures such discourse. In the ensuing discussion it will perhaps become apparent that a museum - to bring my idea to its conclusion - a museum that functions autonomously is false and essentially pernicious to art, because although the work of art is classified as an object, in no sense is it

merely an *object*. It is not an ἔργον, an immobile, stagnant, dead mummy of artistic production. It should be understood as an unquenchable, eternally beating flow of creativity itself, as the creator's living, pulsating activity. Even though it is removed from the artist in time and space, it remains inseparable from him. It still radiates and plays with the colours of life, it still flows with the ἐνέργεια of the spirit.

A work of art is a living entity and requires special conditions in which to live and particularly in which to flourish. Detached from these concrete conditions of its existence, specifically its artistic existence, it dies, or at least it enters a state of anabiosis. It ceases to be perceived, and at times it even ceases to exist, as a work of art. And yet the museum's aim is precisely to isolate the work of art, which it misrepresents as an object that can be removed or transported at whim from place to place and installed anywhere, and ultimately to destroy it as a living entity (I am taking this idea to the extreme). Metaphorically speaking, the museum substitutes a mere outline for the finished painting, and we can count ourselves lucky if even that is not distorted.

What would we say of an ornithologist who, instead of observing birds wherever possible in their natural habitat, concerned himself exclusively with collecting beautiful plumage? The natural scientists of our day have clearly understood the importance of studying nature as much as possible under concrete natural conditions. Wherever feasible, the actual museums of natural history are being transformed into zoological and botanical gardens equipped, as far as possible, with natural living conditions instead of cages, to the degree that this can be achieved. The famous zoological garden in Hamburg comes to mind here.⁷ But for some reason this same concept, which is of infinitely greater importance for the study of mankind's spiritual activity, has hardly been put into practice by the disciplines in question. A few museum rags or a shaman's tambourine are essentially just that - rags and a tambourine - and have as little value for the study of shamanism as Napoleon's spur for modern military history. The loftier the human activity and the more definitively it involves an element of value, the more prominent does a functional method of comprehension and study become and the more futile the homegrown collecting of rarities and freaks. These ideas are as incontrovertible as they are rarely mentioned when the time comes to apply them. I realize that I am trying your patience with these overly simple truths, but I feel compelled to do so in view of a far from rare inability or unwillingness to grapple with them that is encountered all too frequently - that elementary artistic and archaeological predatoriness, that *rabies museica*, that seems prepared to carve off a piece of a painting, all

for the sake of installing it in one particular building on one particular street, called a museum. Verily, *lucus a non lucendo*.

But the Muses cannot be forced to wear flounces. In the interests of culture a protest should be made against attempts to tear a few rays from the sun of creativity, stick a label on them, and put them under a bell-glass. This protest, it must be hoped, will not be without repercussions - if not now, then in the future - because museum affairs are clearly moving in the direction of concretisation, of saturating the work of art's environment with life and the plenitude of life's wholeness. In the writings of Pavel Muratov I find some pages that I would be prepared to include in a legislative codex on museum aesthetics.⁵ The author of *Obrazy Italii* [Images of Italy] writes:

Perhaps it is not in the light of the museums at all that one must seek the source of a genuine enthusiasm for the ancients. Who would be prepared to claim that he truly appreciated Greece within the four walls of the British Museum and retained its image in his soul once he had gone out into the eternally wet Strand, or down to the dreamy, romantic, smoky groves of Hyde Park, so typical of the North? The genius loci of London is clearly alien to the genius of those places where the marbles of the Parthenon and of Demeter of Cnidus first saw the light of day; nor is it any more like the air on which these beings of the ancient world sustained their invisible life, the air that each one of us breathes in the spacious courtyard of the Museo delle Terme, despite its lack of first rate objects.... As he inspects the ancient reliefs here, the visitor can sometimes hear an overripe pear fall to the ground, or the paw-shaped leaves of a fig tree tapping on the window as it sways in the wind. Among the old cypress trees in the middle of the yard a fountain plays, and ivy entwines the sacrificial white bulls. The abundance of fragments and sarcophagi that have been placed here are flooded with sunlight that turns the travertine blue and transparent, the marble warm and vibrant. Give me the splendid existence of these objects any day, rather than the perfection of a masterpiece carefully preserved in a stuffy room. The scattered rose petals that have become lodged in the folds of a woman's dress, sculpted who knows when and by whom, are a far greater adornment than all the connoisseurs' opinions and scholars' arguments. These petals, these shadows cast by leaves and branches across the marble, these

lizards scurrying among the fragments, are as it were a link between the ancient world and our own, the only way in which our heart can come to know it and believe in its life.⁹

Further on Muratov writes of a superb idea on the part of the Keepers of the British Museum, to display part of its ancient collections out of doors in the sunlight:

A museum is more destructive to antique sculpture than a picture gallery to the paintings of the Renaissance. . . . Sculpture needs light and shade, the expanse of the sky and the tonal contrast of vegetation, perhaps even spots of rain and the movement of life flowing past nearby. For this form of art the museum will always be a prison or a cemetery. . . . A profound emotion grips the traveler in a quiet corner of the Forum near the spring of Iuturna, where the Dioscuri watered their horses.¹⁰

But, we ask ourselves, would the stones from this same spring be as precious if they were transplanted to the Berlin Museum and arranged on shelves along the walls, however well dried those walls might be?

Is it not the way life goes on around these stones, the functional contemplation of them, that disquiets and ennobles our soul? What frightens me most about the activity of our Commission and all other commissions and societies alike, regardless of their country of origin, is the potential for transgressing against life, for sliding on to the oversimplified, easiest path of stifling and soul-destroying collecting. For isn't that what happens when an aesthete or archaeologist regards the signs of life in some organism, a functionally unified whole, as self-sufficient objects, severed from the living spirit, outside of their functional relationship to the whole.

In the Inventory of the Lavra sacristy we are already encountering attempts at such stifling. Thus, in discussing the famous chalice of reddish-yellow marble donated by Grand Duke Vasili Vasil'evich Temnyi, the compiler of the Inventory has made the note: 'And the marble weighs this many pounds at so much per pound, a total of 3 rubles 50 kopeks.' Let's not be deceived by the naive candour of this note: *nomine mutato de te fabula narratur*. Even when it appears in a more complex and refined form, the formula 'marble valued at 3 rubles 50 kopeks' may be considered canonical for those who support the abstract collecting of objects that have no, or almost no, meaning outside the totality of specific conditions of life. In the words of Pavel

Muratov, 'We can only dream that some day all the reliefs and statues that have been found **in** the Forum and on the Palatine will be returned here from the museums of Rome and Naples. Some day we will understand that, for an ancient object, an honourable dying at the hands of time and nature is better than lethargic slumber **in** a museum: 11 Decentralising the museums, bringing the museum out into life and bringing life into the museum, creating a living museum for the people that on a daily basis would educate the masses that streamed about it (and not the collecting of rarities for art gourmets only); a thorough assimilation of human creativity into life, for all the people, not for isolated pockets of one or two specialists, who often have a weaker understanding of the artistic whole - these are the slogans of museum reform that should be set against what was worst in the culture of the past, against what truly deserved the title 'bourgeois'.

But let us return to our theoretical discussion.

In one of his lectures Yurii Olsuf'ev defines style as the result of amassing homogeneous artistic perceptions (I would add to this our own creative reactions) from a given epoch. 'Therefore', he says, 'the pledge of true artistic worth, that the art of that period is genuine, lies in the harmony between style and content:¹² In this way the vitality of art depends on the degree of unity between impressions and the means by which they are expressed. True art is a unity of content and the means of expressing that content, but these means of expression can easily be understood simplistically, by excising some single facet from the content-laden function of embodiment. Then just one side of an organic unity, one side alone, is taken as something self-sufficient, existing in seclusion from the other facets of embodiment, even though it is really a fiction that has no reality outside of the whole, just as paint scraped off a painting or the sounds of an entire symphony played all together are not an aesthetic reality. And if on the basis of this simplistic insensitivity the aesthete attempts to sever the threads or, more accurately, the bloodbearing arteries linking that facet of the work of art under examination to those other facets which the aesthete fails to notice, then he destroys the unity between the content and the means of expression, he annihilates the style of the art object or distorts it, and in distorting or annihilating style, in de-styling that work, he thereby deprives it of genuine artistic content.

Let me repeat that a work of art is artistic precisely by virtue of the completeness of the conditions essential for its existence, on the basis of which and in which it was engendered. By removing a part of these conditions, by rejecting or replacing some of them, the work of art is deprived of its

vital play, it is distorted and even made an anti-work of art. The traits of heterogeneous styles introduced into a work with a specific style are often repulsive, unless a new creative synthesis is effected. Aphrodite in a farthingale would be as insupportable as a seventeenth-century marquise in an aeroplane. But if the wholeness of a work of art expressed in this primitive form is generally acknowledged, the general binding force and scope of this precondition for artistic content is by no means so clear to everyone. Of course, everyone knows that the aesthetic phenomenon of a painting or statue needs light, that music needs silence, and architecture space. But not everyone remembers with an equal degree of clarity that these general conditions should have in addition several qualitative determinants and that these determinants in no way constitute a service beyond the call of duty, or an act of charity on the viewer's part. Rather, they become a constitutive part of the actual organism of the work of art and, having been foreseen by its creator, they form its continuation, although that too lies beyond the bounds of what we call, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, the work of art proper.

A painting, for example, should be illuminated by some specific sort of light, diffuse, white, sufficiently bright, uniform and not coloured or mottled, etc. Outside of this required illumination it does not live as a work of art, i.e., as an aesthetic phenomenon. If a picture was painted for white lighting, then illuminating it with red light means killing the aesthetic phenomenon as such, for the frame, canvas and paint are in no way the work of art. Similarly, placing a piece of architecture in a foggy space, or listening to a piece of music in an auditorium with poor acoustics also means distorting or destroying the aesthetic phenomenon.

But more than that, there are conditions for perceiving works of art that are, so to speak, negative. One cannot, for instance, listen to a symphony or look at a painting in a setting filled with unbearably stinking gases. These negative conditions, if not kept within certain tolerable bounds, burrow their way into the style of the work, annihilating the unity of form and content, and thereby destroying the work as such. For better or worse, the work of art is the center of an entire cluster of conditions, which alone make possible its existence as something artistic; outside of its constitutive conditions it simply does not exist as art. In the case of studio painting we choose the frame and setting, for a statue it is the drapery, for a building the totality of colour patches and airy spaces, for music the overall character of the impressions simultaneously experienced with it. The more complex the conditions in which a particular work lives, the easier it is to distort its style, to make a wrong move that would imperceptibly lead

away from the plane of genuine artistry towards absence of style.

This general condition applies particularly to religious art. In the recent past [upholders] of aesthetic standards felt justified in looking down on the Russian icon. Now the eyes of the aesthetes have been opened to this aspect of religious art. But this first step, unfortunately, is so far only the first, and one frequently finds an aesthetic shallowness and insensitivity that perceives the icon as an independent object usually found in a church, located by chance in a church, but capable of being successfully transferred to an auditorium, museum, salon, or who knows where else. I permit myself to label as shallowness this isolation of one of the aspects of religious art from the whole organism of church ritual as a synthesis of the arts, that artistic environment in which alone the icon possesses its true artistic meaning and can be contemplated in its true artistic nature. Even the briefest analysis of anyone of the aspects of religious art will show that this aspect is connected to others - I am personally convinced, to them all - but for the moment it is enough to point out just a few interdependent facets of religious art, selected almost at random.

Let us take, for example, this same icon. Of course, the way it is **lit** is by no means irrelevant and, of course, for the icon's artistic existence its illumination should be exactly that under which it was painted. In this instance, the illumination is quite unlike the dispersed light of the artist's studio or the museum gallery, rather it is the uneven and irregular flickering, one might almost say winking, light of the icon lamp. Calculated [to be seen] in the play of a flickering flame that moves with every breath of wind, making allowance ahead of time for the effects of coloured reflections from the bundles of light passing through coloured, sometimes faceted glass, the icon can be contemplated as such only in the presence of this current, only in this flood of light, fragmenting, uneven, seeming to pulsate, rich in warm prismatic rays - a light which all perceive as alive, warming the spirit, emitting a warm fragrance. Painted under more or less the same conditions, in a half-darkened cell with a narrow window, **lit** with several kinds of artificial lighting, the icon comes to life only in corresponding conditions. Conversely, it grows numb and distorted in conditions which, in abstract and general terms, might seem the most favourable for works of the brush - I am speaking of the even, calm, cold and strong lighting of the museum. And many peculiarities of the icon which tease the sated gaze of modernity - the exaggeration of certain proportions, the accentuation of lines, the profusion of gold and gems, the frame and the haloes, the pendants, the brocade and velvet veils sewn with pearls and precious stones - all this, seen in conditions natural to the icon, exists not at all

as piquant exoticism, but as the essential, absolutely unremovable, one and only means of expressing the spiritual content of the icon, Le., as the unity of style and content, in other words - as authentic artistry. Gold, which by the diffused light of day is barbaric, heavy and devoid of content, comes to life in the flickering light of the icon lamp or candle, for it sparkles with a myriad flashes in every direction, conveying a presentiment of other, unworldly lights, filling a heavenly space. Gold, which is the conventional attribute of the celestial world and which in a museum is something contrived and allegorical, in a church with flickering icon lamps and a multitude of burning candles is a living symbol, it is representation. In exactly the same way the icon's primitivism, its at times bright, almost unbearably bright colouring, its saturation and insistency, are most subtly calculated on the effects of church lighting. Here, in the church, all of this exaggeration is softened and conveys a power unattainable by ordinary methods of representation. In this church lighting we can make out the faces of the saints, their countenances, i.e., heavenly aspects, living phenomena of another world, proto-phenomena, *Urphänomene* we would call them, following Goethe's example. In a church we stand face to face with the platonic world of ideas, whereas in a museum we see not icons but merely caricatures of them.

But let us go further, and move from the art of fire, an indispensable component of the synthesis of church ritual, to the art of smoke, without which once again this synthesis does not exist. Need we point out that the finest blue veil of incense dissolved in the air brings to the contemplation of icons and frescoes a softening and deepening of aerial perspective, such as the museum neither knows nor can dream of. Need we recall that, through this constantly moving atmosphere, this materialized atmosphere, this atmosphere visible to the gaze, like some very fine granularity, absolutely new achievements in the art of air are introduced into icons and frescoes? They are new, however, only for secular art that is abstracted and isolated, not for religious art, whose creators took them into account ahead of time, and consequently without them their works cannot help but be distorted.

No one will deny that electric light kills colour and destroys the balance of colour masses. If I say that icons should not be looked at in electric light, with its wealth of dark blue and violet rays, few people would argue with me. Everyone knows that, like a burn, electric light also destroys psychic receptivity. This is an example of a negative condition for the artistic content of religious art. But if there are negative conditions, there are even more positive ones, which in their totality define not only church ritual as something whole, but

also each aspect of it as organically coordinated to all the others. Style requires that the circle of conditions be in some degree complete, that the special world that is the artistic whole be in some sense self-contained. Its infiltration by alien elements leads to the distortion of both the whole and the separate parts that have their centre and source of equilibrium in the whole. Generally speaking, in a church everything is interlinked: church architecture, for example, takes into account even so apparently minor an effect as the ribbons of bluish incense curling across the frescoes and entwining the pillars of the dome, almost infinitely expanding the architectural spaces of the church with their movement and interlacing, softening the dryness and stiffness of the lines and investing them with movement and life, as if melting them.

But we have been talking so far only of a small part of church ritual, and one that is comparatively very homogeneous. Let us recall the plastic, rhythmic movements of the officiating priests, as when they swing the censer, the play and modulation of folds in the precious fabrics, the aroma, the particular fiery waftings of the atmosphere, ionised by thousands of burning flames. Let us further recall that the synthesis of church ritual is not just confined to the sphere of the visual arts, but encompasses the art of singing and poetry, all kinds of poetry, church ritual being itself a musical drama on the aesthetic plane. Here everything is subservient to a single goal, to the supreme effect of this musical drama's catharsis, and so everything here that is coordinated to everything else does not exist if taken separately, or at least it exists falsely. Therefore, leaving aside the mysticism and metaphysics of the cult and focusing exclusively on the autonomous plane of art as such, I am nevertheless astonished when I happen to hear speeches about preserving a monument of high art such as the Lavra, in which attention is limited to one single aspect while remaining anti-artistically and anti-culturally indifferent to another.

If the lover of vocal music started pointing out to me that in church melodies, so closely linked to the ancient world, we have high art, and perhaps even the highest vocal art, comparable in the instrumental realm only with Bach; if in the name of this cultural value he began demanding that the vocal component of the liturgy be preserved, referring particularly to the distinctive local chants preserved by Lavra tradition, then to be sure I would shake his hand. But I would find it difficult to refrain from bitterness in reproaching him: 'Is it really all the same to you that the vaults of outstanding architectural achievements are going to ruin, that frescoes are flaking off and that icons are being repainted or plundered?' Similarly, I could not but contrast to the lover of singing and also the connoisseur of the visual arts my own concern about

the preservation of works of ancient church poetry, which up to now has preserved the characteristics of the ancient chanting manner of singing and ancient scansion, and about the preservation of manuscripts from bygone centuries, full of historical significance, which have brought to perfection the composition of the book as a total object. I could not help reminding all these connoisseurs of the arts that have been forgotten or half-forgotten by the modern world, those arts that are even more auxiliary and yet are absolutely essential to the organisation of this ritual as an artistic whole: the art of fire, the art of smell, the art of smoke, the art of dress, etc., up to and including the utterly unique Trinity holy bread (*prosfora*), with its mysterious and secret recipe, the distinctive choreography that emerges in the measured movements of the priests as they come in and out, in the converging and diverging of their countenances, in their circling around the throne and the church, and in the church processions. He who has tasted the charm of antiquity knows well how ancient all this is, how it lives as an inheritance and the only direct branch of the ancient world *ta* have survived, particularly of the sacred tragedy of the Hellenes. Even such details as the specific, light touching of various surfaces, of holy objects made of various materials, of the icons anointed and saturated with oil, fragrances, and incense - and touching besides with the most sensitive parts of our body, the lips - become part of this total ritual, as a special art, special artistic spheres, as for example the art of touch, the art of smell and so on. In eliminating them we would deprive ourselves of the fullness and completeness of the artistic whole.¹³

I will not discuss the occult element that is characteristic of any work of art in general, and of church ritual in particular. This would take us into a realm that is too complex. Nor can I talk here about the symbolism that is inevitably present in any art, particularly the art of organic cultures. For us even the external, we might say the superficial consideration of style as a totality of all means of expression is enough to speak of the Lavra as an entire artistic and historical monument that is unique anywhere in the world and that requires infinite attention and care. The Lavra, considered in a cultural and artistic context, should, like a single entity, be a real 'museum' without losing a single drop of the precious liquid of culture that has been gathered here with such style, in the very midst of the stylistic multiplicity of epochs, throughout the Moscow and Petersburg periods of our history. As a monument and a centre of high culture, the Lavra is infinitely necessary for Russia, and in its entirety, what's more, with its day-ta-day existence, its very special life that has long since disappeared into the realm of the distant past. The whole distinctive organisation of this

vanished life, this island of the fourteenth-seventeenth centuries, should be protected by the state with at the very least no less care than the last bison were protected in the Belovezh Forest.¹⁴ If an institution for Muslims or Lamas comparable to the Lavra came within the state's purview, even if it was alien to our culture and remote from our history, could the state resist the idea of supporting and protecting such an institution? How much more attentive, then, should the state be towards this embryo and centre of our own history, our own culture, both scholarly and artistic?

For all that, I consider the idea of transferring use of the Lavra from the monks to parochial societies to be thoroughly lacking in empathy and aesthetic sensitivity. Anyone who has thoroughly investigated the incommensurability and qualitative difference between the life-style, the psychology, and finally the liturgical style of monks - even bad monks - and people who live outside the monastery - even though they be extremely virtuous - cannot but agree with me that it would be a great breach of style to grant service in the Lavra to the white priesthood.¹⁵ Even in terms of colour, the patches of colour in the churches or on the grounds of the Lavra, the substitution of black figures, with their distinctive monastic gait, with any others, whether different in style or entirely lacking in style, would immediately destroy the totality of the Lavra's artistic impression and would transform it from a monument to life and creativity into a dead storehouse for more or less random objects.

I could understand a fanatical demand to destroy the Lavra and leave not a stone standing, made in the name of the religion of socialism.¹⁶ But I absolutely refuse to understand a *Kulturtriiger* who, on the basis of nothing more than a fortuitous overabundance of specialists in the visual arts in our day, fervently protects the icons, the frescoes and the walls themselves, and remains indifferent to other, no less valuable achievements of ancient art. But most importantly he doesn't take into account the highest goal of the arts, their ultimate synthesis, so successfully and distinctively resolved in the church ritual of the Troitse-Sergieva Lavra, and sought with such insatiable thirst by the late Skriabin.

It is not to the arts but to Art that our age aspires, to the very core of Art as a primordial unifying activity. And for Art it is no secret, where not only the text, but the entire artistic embodiment of the *Prefatory Action*¹⁷ is concealed.¹⁸

Sergiev Posad

24 October 1918

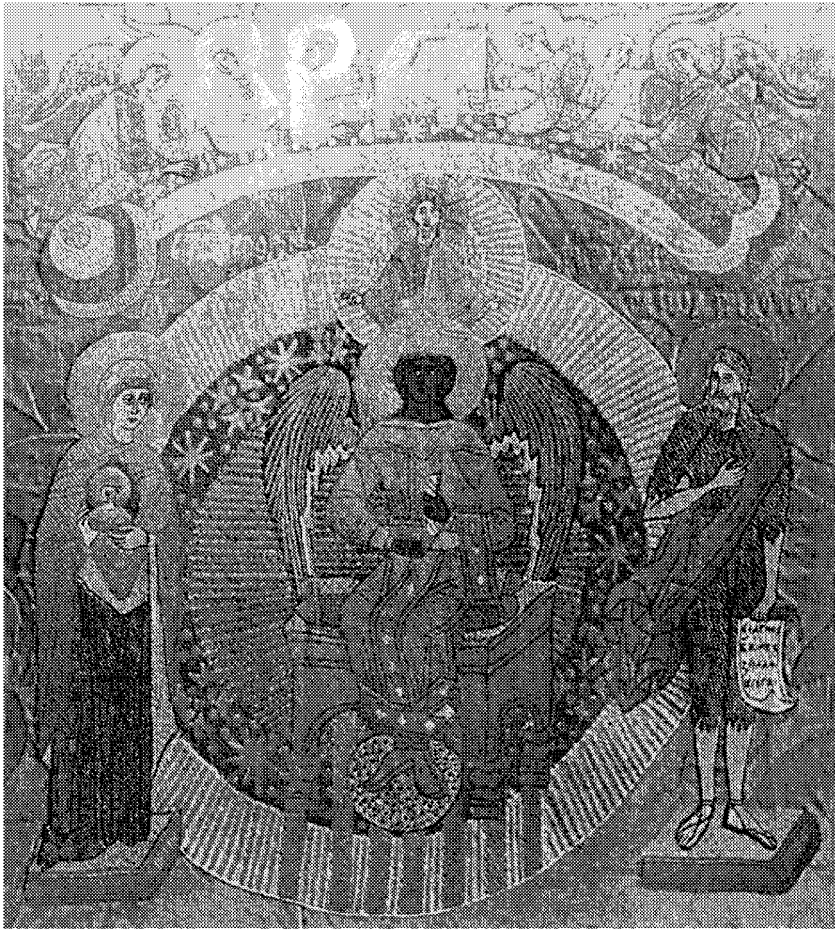
Celestial Signs

Introduction

This is the second essay that Florensky published in 1922 in the journal *Makovets* (second and last issue) following 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts'. Just as the written version of the latter antedates the actual publication by four years, so Florensky also wrote 'Celestial Signs' three years beforehand, developing it as the organic, if metaphorical, extension of a concrete location, the small town of Sergiev Posad, physically and spiritually close to the Lavra.²

At dawn and dusk Florensky would stroll on and around the hill of Makovets, exploring, observing, contemplating, and in the introductory essay entitled 'On Makovets' that he wrote for his unpublished collected works *At the Watersheds of Thought*, he offered an analysis of his spiritual responses to this special place. For him there were two different, but complementary, sensations that the unicity of the Evening Star and the Morning Star symbolised - 'two names, but one star, birth and death - beginning and end - but yet a single star' } Only there, on that sacred hill, and at those two special hours of the day that so appealed to the Symbolists could Sophia, the Wisdom of God, have appeared in all her splendour (illus. 35). Florensky also imbues his 'Celestial Signs' with this mood, even if his description of the colours of the spectrum during a sunrise or sunset might appear at first glance to be merely an analytical and scientific observation which any textbook on the physics of light could have provided. But Florensky maintains that, according to the particular perspective of our visual contemplation of colour changes, Sophia appears as the 'fourth hypostasis' of God which assumes one or another 'shadow'.

In fact, the very title, 'Celestial Signs', bears an immediate reference to religious apparitions, a mystery that, from the initial use of *znameniia* (heavenly bodies or phenomena) rather than *znaki* (semiotic indicators), pervades the whole text. The Russian *Znamenie Presviatoi Bogoroditsy*, for example, means the 'miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary' and connotes one of the different visages of Sophia - of Sophia, the 'true sign of Mary Full of Grace in Her Virginity, the Beauty of Her soul'.⁴ Consequently, the word 'signs' could also



35 Anonymous, *St Sofia*, needlework, late 15th century. State Historical Museum, Moscow

encompass the different apparitions of Sophia to which Florensky refers in his footnotes to 'Letter No. X' on the concept of Sophia in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*.⁵ The experience of these religious apparitions was long, starting with the Holy Fathers and ending with the Symbolist philosophers and poets such as Vladimir Solov'ev and Viacheslav Ivanov, and the theme of Sophia fascinated Florensky, too, inspiring his recourse to religious meditation in the 1910s and the thesis of his magistral dissertation, a major contribution to Orthodox

theology.⁶ Originally, Florensky subtitled 'Celestial Signs' 'Meditation'.

As early as 1905 Florensky had begun to gather materials pertaining to the image and meaning of Sophia. As his correspondence with Bely reveals, in his initial approach to the idea of Sophia he emphasised her link not only with the Apocalypse, but also with the Symbolist identification of her as the Beautiful Lady and specifically with Liubov' Blok (Mendeleeva) who inspired Aleksandr Blok's 'Verses about the Beautiful Lady' and was revered by Bely and Sergei Solov'ev in particular:

Over recent times I have been collecting materials on Sophia. It's not easy to collect them, because I have to read through a pile of raw material, examine lots of icons, drawings, etc. so as to catch a few pearls. But I do have a totally apocalyptic icon (and that's one of my pearls), i.e., The Woman clothed in the Sun, the Mother of God, the beast and the abyss, etc. It will still be a while before I finish my research ... Recently, I finished [working on] types of growth. This is preparing me (mathematically and psychologically) for the issue of individuals enjoying the special patronage of S[ophia], as, for example, your Lady and the other Lady that I know from Aleksei Sergeevich J

This kind of iconological research, and 'Celestial Signs', contains specific references to the Beautiful Lady, even though by the time the essay was published in 1922 the intimacy of Florensky's friendship with Bely had waned. Nevertheless, the subtitle of 'Celestial Signs', 'Reflections on the Symbolics of Colours', elicits the Symbolist vocabulary, especially that of Bely, who, in his own considerations of sacred colours, had subjected 'colour correspondences' to a very personal interpretation.⁸

CELESTIAL SIGNS

(Reflections on the Symbolics of Colours)

Suppose we went out into the open, preferably at sunrise or at least when the sun is almost at the horizon, and made a note of the correlation of colours.

Directly opposite the sun is violet, lilac and, above all, sky blue. On the side of the sun is pink or red, and orange. Overhead - transparent emerald green.

Let us be aware of what we are actually seeing. We see light and only light, a single light from a single sun. Its varied colouring is not its own intrinsic attribute, but rather results from its correlation with that terrestrial, and perhaps in part with that heavenly environment, that is filled with this one light.

Undivided light, continuous light, is in truth continuity. In a space filled with light it is impossible to single out an area that does not communicate with any other region. It is impossible to isolate part of the light space, impossible to excise part of the light. (This is a beautiful example of the fact that extension is not a sufficient condition for divisibility and that divisibility does not follow analytically from extension.) But when opaque bodies intercept light in space, this isolation always occurs one-sidedly, from one side, and is thereby incapable of enclosing a separated light mass.

And so, light is continuous. But it is not the optical environments, filled with light and transmitting light to us, that are continuous. They are granular, they consist of some sort of extremely fine dust, and they themselves contain another dust, so fine that no microscope can detect it, yet nevertheless consisting of separate granules, separate particles of matter. Those gorgeous colours that adorn the vault of heaven are none other than the means by which inseparable light and fragmented matter interact. We can say that the colouration of sunlight is the foretaste, the modification that inserts the dust of the earth into the sunlight. It is the very finest dust on earth and perhaps it is the even finer dust of heaven. The colours violet and light blue are the darkness of emptiness, yet a darkness that is softened by the reflection of a veil of the finest atmospheric dust seemingly cast over it. When we say that we see a violet light or the azure of the firmament, we are seeing darkness, the absolute darkness

of emptiness, which sheds no light and is not illumined by any light. But we see it not in and of itself, but through the finest, sunlit dust. The colours red and pink are the same dust, but seen not against the light but from the same side as the light, not softening the darkness of interplanetary spaces with their illumination, not diluting it with light, but on the contrary subtracting a portion of light from the light, shading the light from the eye, and because this dust stays between the light and the eye and is not illuminated, it adds darkness to the light. Finally, the colour green, perpendicular in orientation, the greenness of the zenith, is the balance of light and dark, it is the lateral illumination of the dust particles, the illumination as it were of one hemisphere of each speck of dust, so that each one of them could just as well be called dark on a light ground as light on a dark ground. The green colour above one's head is neither light nor dark.

And so there is only the energy of illuminating light and the passivity of the matter that is illumined and that therefore does not absorb light, i.e., does not allow light to pass beyond itself. And finally there is that about which we can say that it exists only in a grammatical sense, for it is nothing, an empty space, i.e., it is light, whose intensity is conceived as equal to zero, a pure potential of shining light that is not, however, there. These two principles, and the third that is nothing, define all the manifold colours of heaven. From these sensory images thought is directed of its own accord towards their symbolic meaning. But here, once and for all and with the utmost insistence, it must be stated that the metaphysical meaning of this symbolics, like any other authentic symbolics, is not built upon sensory images but is contained within them, defining them through itself. These sensory images are themselves rational, not simply as physical, but specifically as metaphysical images, bearing these latter ones in themselves and being enlightened by them. In this particular instance, their continuous transition from the sensible to the supersensible is so gradual that, in saying the words light, darkness, colour, matter, you really don't know to what degree at this very moment you are involved with the physical and to what degree with the metaphysical. For all these words are in essence primordial words, from which physics and metaphysics alike - or more accurately metaphysics and physics - develop and ascend as from common roots, all the while remaining parallel and all the while maintaining a vital correlation. Indeed, the correlation described here between the origins of the physical world possesses their complete correspondence in the correlation between the principles of metaphysical being. Both analogous correlations are exact repetitions of each other, like a form and the casting made from

it, or like two impressions from a single stamp. Hence there is also established the symbolic meaning in the supersensible world, of that which is the result of the correlation of the origins of the sensible world, i.e., the symbolics of colours.

'God is light.'⁹ God is light, and not in a moral sense, but as a judgement established by perception, a spiritual, yet concrete, direct perception of the glory of God. In contemplating it we behold one continuous, indivisible light. Light has no further definition other than that it is unalloyed, pure light, in which 'there is neither darkness nor singleness'. The definition of light is only that light is light, containing no darkness, for in it all is made bright, and all darkness from long ago is vanquished, overcome and enlightened.

In relation to colours we call light white. But white is not a positive definition, it refers only to its unalloyed nature, to the fact that it is 'neither this, that, nor another colour', just that it is pure, unalloyed light. 'White light' is only a designation of light as such, a purely analytical emphasis on its integrity. Whether it be light or God, it is fullness, not one-sided, for any sort of one-sidedness arises from obstacles. It contains no curtailing, no limitation. Only a limitation, a curtailing, an obstacle, a dilution of the pure energy of light with an alien passivity could force light to be not simply light, not simply itself, i.e., one-sided, inclining to one side or the other, the side of one or other colorations. This passive medium, in its finest and most tender manifestation, is a creature, not however a crude earthly creature, crudely destroying the spirituality of light, but a most lofty and delicate creature, a creature which, so to speak, in its original state serves as the medium that adds colour to light. This metaphysical dust is called Sophia. She is not the actual light of the Divinity, she is neither the Divinity itself, nor what we usually call a creature, she is neither the crude inertness of matter, nor its crude opacity. Sophia actually stands on an ideal border between divine energy and creature passivity. She is as much God as not God, as much creature as not creature. One can say of her neither yes nor no - not in the sense of strengthening one or the other as antonyms, but in the sense of her liminal ability to pass between the two worlds. Light is the activity of God, while Sophia is the first thickening of this activity, its first and finest work, but one which nevertheless breathes her, and is so close to her that, if one does not take them in correlation to one another, not even the finest line can be drawn between them. And we wouldn't be able to distinguish between them, if it weren't for the correlation: light as the activity of the Divine, and Sophia as the ur-creature or the ur-mother. Only from the correlation of the two principles do we establish that Sophia is not light, but a

passive supplement, while light is not Sophia, but illumines her. This correlation defines colouring. Contemplated as a work of divine creation, as the first clot of being, relatively independent of God as the darkness of nothingness moving forward to meet the light, i.e., contemplated as moving from God towards nothing, Sophia appears as blue or violet. Conversely, when contemplated as the result of divine creation, as inseparable from the divine light, as the foremost wave of divine energy, as the power of God moving to overcome darkness, i.e. when seen [moving] from the world towards God, Sophia appears as pink or red. she appears pink or red as God's image for his creature, as the manifestation of God on earth, as that 'rosy shadow' to which Vladimir Solov'ev prayed. Conversely, she is seen as blue or violet as the world soul, as the spiritual essence of the world, as a blue veil that curtains off nature. In Viacheslav Ivanov's vision she is like the fundamental element of our existence in the mystical immersion of the gaze within itself: our soul is like a blue diamond.¹⁰ Finally, there is also a third metaphysical direction, neither towards nor away from the light, Sophia outside of her definition or self-definition towards God. It is that spiritual aspect of being, one might call it a paradisaical aspect, according to which there is as yet no knowledge of good and evil. There is not yet a direct aspiration either towards God or away from him, because these very orientations do not yet exist, neither the one nor the other, there is only movement around God, a free playing in the presence of God, like the little greenish-gold snake in Hoffman,¹¹ like the Leviathan, 'whom thou hast made to play therein' [Psalms 104:26], like the sea playing in the sun. And this is also Sophia, this aspect of Sophia appears golden-green and translucent emerald.¹² It is that aspect which was fleetingly glimpsed, but could not find expression in, the initial projects of Lermontov. The three principal aspects of the *Urkreatur* are defined by the three primary colours of the symbolics of colours, while the meaning of the others is established as being intermediary. But no matter how diverse, these colours speak of the relationship, however different, of one and the same Sophia to one and the same divine Light. The sun, the finest of fine dust, and the darkness of emptiness in the sensory world, are also God, Sophia and the infernal darkness, the darkness of metaphysical nonbeing in the spiritual world. These are the principles on which the variety of colours depends, both here and there, always in perfect correlation to each other.

Sergiev Posad

11 December 1919

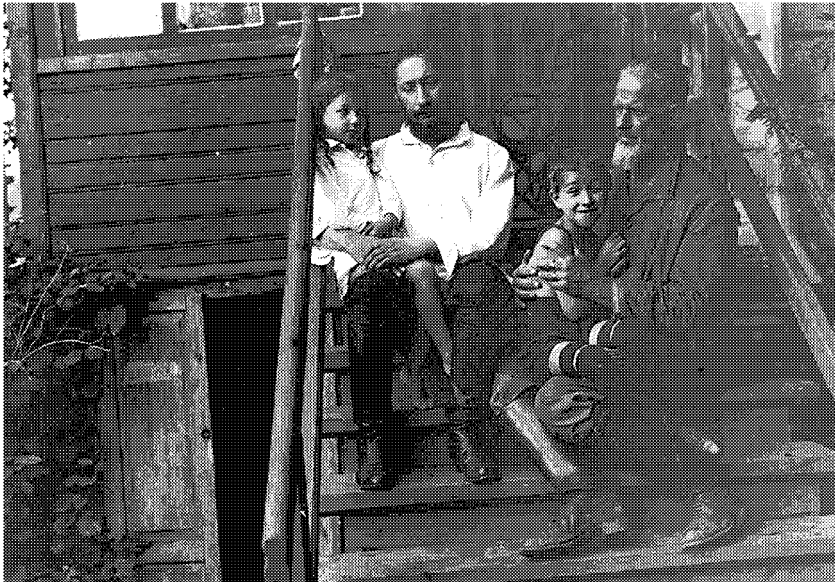
On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre

Introduction

Florensky wrote 'On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre' in the form of an essay-cum-letter as the introduction to Nina Simonovich-Efimova's *Zapiski Petrushechnika* [Notes of a Puppeteer] published in 1925 (illus. 36), the account of her practical involvement in the puppet theatre.² Florensky's text was not published either then or in the later edition of Simonovich-Efimova's book,



36 Vladimir Favorsky's cover for Nina Simonovich-Efimova's *Zapiski petrushechnika* [Notes of a Puppeteer], published Moscow, 1925.



37 Florensky with his daughter Mariia and Ivan Efimov with his son Adrian in the Florensky garden in Sergiev Posad, 1932

but appeared - almost surreptitiously - in 1977 in a monograph on Simonovich-Efimova's husband, the sculptor Ivan Efimov, also a good friend of Florensky (illus. 37).

Florensky met the Efimovs, Nina Yakovlevna Simonovich-Efimova (illus. 38) and Ivan Serneonovich Efimov, at VKhUTEMAS in 1921, where Efimov was teaching sculpture. Frequenting their home in Moscow, Florensky sat for several pencil and oil portraits by Simonovich-Efimova, meetings that inspired her to keep a vivid record of their informal conversations (illus. 39, 40 and 41).³

Once the entire Florensky family attended a one-off performance of the marionette theatre that the Efimovs staged 'in a grove in Sergiev Posad' on 27 August 1922.⁴ In the following text Florensky reminds us of the 'terror' and 'chaos' of those years, but in spite of such inclemency, the Efimovs gained practical experience from the intense tournees of their little theatre and were even inspired to develop and refine their new artistic language - and thus to build a psychological defense against the violence and famine of those terrible years. They also gave philanthropic presentations, for example, in children's



38 Nina Simonovich-Efimova
holding her Baba-Yaga marionette,
early 1920s. Efimov Archive, Moscow



39 Nina Simonovich-Efimova,
Florensky in his Study in Sergiev Posad,
1925, pencil on paper. Efimov
Archive, Moscow



40 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Florensky and his Daughter Mariia in his Study in Sergei Posad, 1928*, silhouette, paper on board. Efimov Archive, Moscow. Mariia is holding a wooden toy.



41 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Pavel Florensky Wearing a Felt Cloak after Returning from Exile in Nizhnii-Novgorod, 1928*, pencil on paper. EHMov Archive, Moscow.

hospitals and even, **in** 1921, **in** a lunatic asylum. In this way Simonovich-Efimova maintained a family tradition (and Florensky refers to this) inasmuch as both her parents - the father as a doctor, the mother as a schoolteacher - had dedicated much time and money to philanthropic causes, especially to healthcare and primary education.

ON THE EFIMOV'S PUPPET THEATRE

Dear Nina Yakovlevna,

I did want to make a contribution to your book along with many others pinned [sic] into your collection. But the more I thought about the proposed preface, the more difficult its realisation seemed. What I want to say about the puppet theatre is too much for a preface and, without keeping to the mould of your book, involuntarily I would begin to hinder the author and to speak to the point. Yet if I am not to speak in this way, I find it difficult to assume a formal tone in relation to the subject, as such, and to the book about it, both of which, as I see it, are indisputable in their own right, without me. The puppet theatre in general and your activity in particular, just like your book, speak for themselves, and they more than suffice to make any external recommendation seem ridiculous. You yourself are quite aware of the success of your puppets, I have no doubts at all about the success of your book - so let us acknowledge that the preface is superfluous.

However, I still wish to make a written response to your book. To this end, therefore, I enclose the following reflection concerning one of your performances. I leave it to you to do whatever you wish, to publish it at the beginning, middle or end of the book, or not at all. One reservation must be made, however: I wanted to be lavish in expressing my delight, but I'm afraid that my subtle praise has proved too subtle. What if some simple-minded person were to think I was delighted, not by you, but by the little grove of trees in Sergiev Posad. So I hasten to explain to you without any subtlety whatsoever that this entire reflection must be understood allegorically, to wit: that the Efimovs have been able to make use of the pond and the grove in their performance, turning all the spectators into actors, that the original form of Greek tragedy has been realised here, that it's not at all a question of trees, but of the ability to make people look at an enclosed patch of nature as they would a holiday orchestra and that, in short, the Efimovs have succeeded in overcoming the crisis of the theatre towards which our era is heading, and in introducing the theatre into the daily life of ordinary people. I hope this will be clear.

And now to what is not clear.

A summer rain was spitting. We began to think that the planned open-air puppet show wouldn't take place. Nevertheless, those who had been invited, including ourselves, pushed their way between the beds of the small kitchen garden. Then we had to climb down to a deep ditch with slippery, clayey sides and cross over it using a pole. But, in fact, it was essential to overcome these difficulties. An abandoned garden with a birch avenue and a little pond had been selected for the performance, situated on a slope and secluded, virtually cut off, from the already isolated Krasiukovskaia Street, cut off from the general life of Sergiev Posad. Children and adults thronged the slope, and in the clusters of all age groups, from babes in arms to old folk, one felt some sort of festiveness, expectancy, such as happens on the eve of extraordinary days in families with a settled rhythm of domestic habits.

One's cheery excitement - the wine of unexpected freedom - is related to this isolation from normal conditions and living habits. Walking along the streets of an unfamiliar town, being alone with nature or in war - this too is a holiday, when it is recognised as being a qualitatively new and blessed time - all this acts in a similar way. It breaks the fetters of the countless petty cares of everyday and opens the way for the unrestricted lines by which life, even in its naturalistic sluggishness, is transformed into art. And then the deeper forces of our existence, usually overloaded with trivia, and too significant and perhaps just as hostile to the tedium of everyday, declare themselves. Holiday (*prazdnik*) comes from the word *prazdnyi*, which means 'empty, idle'. And very frequently it is enough to remove the load of usual and trivial everyday things for there to appear the face of prophetic knowledge, suffocated by trivia and the sense of a deep-rooted connection with the world, and a joy in being that verges on the aesthetic. Contrary to what people usually think, as they torment themselves, a holiday doesn't need cares, but rather freedom from them. And this freedom first and foremost is achieved through a strict isolation from the workday world. By now all peoples have forgotten about the commandment concerning the sabbath and the impenetrable divisions between sabbath and the other six days have been removed. On the other hand, only the frame, the border, and the immaculate edge can reveal the *distinctive* space of artistic creativity. This space is idle in the evaluation of external space, which is, however, saturated with joy and important meaning and which every working day pulsates with the springs of life. Out of humaneness we do not stone people for breaking the sacred precinct of the sabbath, but out of vapidness we have preferred to replace the stone wall with an uncommitting string rope. On the other hand, we have ceased to see the sun, life has

grown dim and dried up and the world has become poisoned with boredom.

So we all turned up here in this fenced off space and discovered an isolating frame. It is true that man needs very little to experience thrilling joy. A few dozen trees and a sturdy high fence, together with a ditch and places to cross it, proved an adequate isolation from all kinds of terrors, the weariness of life, and the countless cares of existence in these difficult times. The Revolution, the ruin of the year 1922, the poverty and unreliability of life in all its aspects—all this remained on the other side of the fence. And when the sky suddenly cleared and the washed sun, descending into evening, lit up the birch trees, the brightly coloured crowd, and a few beautiful scraps of old fabric that the Efimovs had tenderly brought to the puppet theatre from the trunks of grandmothers, a living fairytale lit up in the consciousness like a sunbeam. The puppet booth, the puppets and the children surrounding the theatre, everything together was fashioned into a single art form, one that was more than an art form, because apart from the pre-existing intention of the performers there sounded the prophetic voices of the soul, and the mysterious forces of nature crept in. Words, which in other circumstances would probably have gone unnoticed, when spoken in this setting by the puppets acquired an unexpected weight, and the popular sayings really did sound like the condensed wisdom of life. Dolls made of rags, pieces of wood and papier mâché came to life as clear as can be and acted independently. They no longer followed the movements of the hand that directed them, but on the contrary they themselves directed the hand, they had their own desires and tastes, and it became perfectly obvious that in a certain setting special forces were acting through them. This performance started out as a game, but later on it grew into the very core of life and verged on either magic or mystery.

Of course, the puppeteers, who bear a crusading responsibility and are carried away by the whirlwind of the action, have no time to think about what is happening, and it would be a hindrance to split themselves in two, in order to compare their puppet consciousness with their usual one. But as the present book shows, even they recognise the puppets as 'wanting' or 'not wanting' this or that, as 'approving' or 'disapproving' the setting in which they have turned up. As for the spectators, or more precisely the co-participants in this puppet ritual, for them it is even more patently evident that the puppet theatre is something incomparably greater than the Efimovs plus the puppets, that in this ritual some third element takes part, and this third is the thing for which theatre itself exists.

Cut off from everyday existence by a fence, together with their choir made

up of spectators, the puppeteers raise higher still the potential of mysterious forces acting within them, through a second isolation, their own puppet booth. And finally, in clothing their hand with the persona of the puppet and permitting the reason of their hand to take on an independent face, they liberate it [the reason of the hand] from its subservience to intellectual reason, which conversely becomes a subservient organ of manual [reason]. Thrice removed from the external world by three successive degrees of isolation, the hand becomes a body, a transmitter and organ for the influence of forces other than those that are known in our everyday consciousness. In the puppet theatre there appear the principal devices of imitative magic, which always begins with play, with imitating, with teasing, to make way later for the other forces that have thus been attracted, which accept the challenge and fill the receptacle that has been offered them.

No one, of course, is taken in by the illusion. The puppet theatre has the great virtue of not being illusionistic. But while they are not 'like the real thing' and make no claim to appear so, the puppets do in fact bring to life a new reality. It enters into the space it has liberated and fills the holiday frame of life. The choir of spectators is united by the puppet and the choir itself nurtures it, via the puppeteer, with its own profound emotions, which have no place in the everyday world. Most profound and cherished for us is our childhood, which lives in us, but is tightly screened off from us. We have forgotten about it, about this primordial proximity to all existence, when we still nestled close to the life of nature. We have forgotten it, but it continues to live in us and it declares itself unexpectedly at certain times.

So, American psychology has elucidated well enough that the psychological process of religious conversion is nothing less than a return to childhood, the surfacing of the most profound strata of the personality that have formed during the very early years. 'If you don't convert yourself (i.e., do not overturn your personality) and do not become as children (i.e., not just children in general, but precisely as the children you once were), then you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'⁵ Indeed the Kingdom of Heaven is 'peace and joy through the action of the Holy Spirit'.⁶

So, the spiritual harmony, which is suddenly revealed in religious conversion, lives in those same layers of the personality that the puppet awakens in us. The puppet theatre is the hearth that is nourished by the childhood submerged within us and which in turn awakens within us the slumbering palace of the childhood fairytale.

Once united in this 'paradise', now we are divided from one another,

because this 'paradise' has become hidden from the eye. But through the puppet theatre we see once more this lost Eden, even if only dimly, and so we embark upon an intercourse with one another in what, like a secret, we cherish most, what each of us guards within ourselves - and guards not just from others, but from ourselves too. Shining in the rays of the setting sun, the theatre opens like a window onto an eternally living childhood.

The Stratification of Aegean Culture

Introduction

Florensky wrote his essay 'The Stratification of Aegean Culture' as part of the cycle of lectures he delivered on the philosophy of antiquity to the Moscow Theological Seminar between 1908 and 1918, specifically, for the academic year 1909-10. The text was published in *Bogoslovskii vestnik* in 1913.¹

This essay is a vector along Florensky's path to issues concerning art, since it is his first autonomous text to treat of the artistic object and initiates the philosophical thread that he would develop into his more general assessments of the visual arts. A philosophical approach to the concrete analysis of particular visual forms is the common denominator of Florensky's art-historical methodology, and in his preparatory notes for the course on the philosophy of antiquity he even provides a factual motivation for his topic, emphasising that the latest excavations at Knossos and Mycenae had quite changed our vision of the philosophy of the ancients. Florensky accompanied his argument with numerous illustrations from a variety of sources that he reproduced mechanically or copied by hand, creating the visual and verbal dialogue repeated here. Referring to the most disparate images and drawing on a broad arsenal of figures and details was a characteristic strategy of his art-historical writings, and the Florensky archive (Florensky Foundation) has many examples of the drawings, designs and photographs he collected as potential illustrative material for this essay.

That Florensky considered this essay to be especially important for him is shown by the fact that he soon republished it, together with two other lectures ('Lectia and Lectio' and 'Forefathers of Philosophy'),² as a separate book, *Pervye shagi filosofii* [The First Steps of Philosophy]. Printed by the Lavra in 1917, *The First Steps of Philosophy* carried a dedication to his friend of long standing, Sergei Bulgakov,³ a spiritual bond that was immortalised by the Neo-Nationalist artist Mikhail Nesterov in his celebrated double portrait of Florensky and Bulgakov of the same year (illus. 42). After *The First Steps of Philosophy* Florensky hoped to continue publishing all the lectures that he had delivered at the Theological Seminary. Unfortunately, by force of political circumstances, this and many other good intentions remained unfulfilled.



42 **Mikhail** Nesterov, *Philosophers (Double-portrait of Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov)*, 1917, oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

THE STRATIFICATION OF AEGEAN CULTURE

Why is the study of Aegean culture essential for the historian of ancient philosophy? - The vertical cross-section of layers in Aegean culture. - The unity of Aegean culture. - Ceramics. - Clothing and fashion. - Portrait painting. - Realism. - Archaism. - Religion. - Stone women. - 'The Naked Goddess.' - The interaction of ancient cultures with Aegean culture. - 'Double vessels.' - Homer's δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον. - The Nautilus ornament.

Why is the study of Aegean culture essential for the historian of ancient philosophy?

We have now seen that the age of Homer coincides with the end of the Greek Middle Ages, while that which until recently was considered the beginning of Greek history corresponds to the early Greek Renaissance.⁴

In the cultural position it occupies and in all the conditions under which it emerged, Ionian Naturphilosophie is vividly reminiscent of the philosophy of the early Italian Renaissance that began twenty centuries later (6th century BC - 14th century AD). As we proceed you will have numerous occasions to satisfy yourself that the former is vividly reminiscent of the latter in essentials too.

Having noted this similarity in advance, we can ask ourselves the following methodological question. Philosophy is, in its essence, the fruit of 'daytime' consciousness, a matter of the incisive clarity of daylight. Should we not conclude, therefore, that the philosophy of every period continues the work, not of the period immediately preceding it, i.e., that of 'nocturnal' consciousness, but of the period before that one, also a period of 'daytime' consciousness?

Rising from our nocturnal couch, our thoughts turn not towards the dreams we have only just experienced in our sleep, but towards the ideas and concerns of the day, the past, swaddling into one big whole the thread of daytime consciousness and seeming not to notice the snatches, zones and regions of night-time consciousness that have been cut out of life. Life goes by in two parallel sequences - days and nights - which, though they alternate, seem oblivious of each other, compacting into two parallel lines of life - black and white. This is what the Singer of Psalms meant when he wrote: 'Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge' (Psalms 18:3).

This is precisely how it is in history. The zones of daytime consciousness 'uttereth speech', i.e., they possess the continuity of tradition, the one reason of culture. They are contiguous, not with the zones of night-time consciousness, but with other zones cut off from it by a nocturnal culture. Nocturnal culture, too, 'sheweth knowledge' directly to a nocturnal culture, and not to the adjacent daytime culture.

In particular, the philosophising of a cultural 'age', the entire life-understanding of a cultural eon, borders not upon the age of night that preceded it, but upon the age of day two ages removed, and compacts all days into one sequence as nearly continuous as possible. Here 'day unto day uttereth speech'. Thus is the thread of philosophy spun.

This is why there is some point to the tendency of historians to ignore the philosophy of the entire Middle Ages - a branch of culture, it has been said, that is essentially nocturnal. I say this, not because the Middle Ages lacked culture - a fantasy that objective investigators of ideas have long since rejected - but because it is other-cultural, because it has its own culture and its own life-style. The beginning of a new philosophy, that of the Renaissance, is associated, not with medieval thought, but with the twilight of thought in antiquity. It is in Alexandrine philosophy - Neo-Platonism, Neo-Pythagoreanism and so on - that we must seek its origins. By contrast, the ensuing twilight of thought that clearly is already blowing chill above our own heads, and the evening shadow of a new culture that is swiftly approaching us obviously represent a break with the traditions of the daytime culture of the New Age that directly preceded it. Society's invisible arteries and nerves are being nourished and stimulated by the thought of the Middle Ages, which until quite recently was thought dead and buried.

The restoration of Thomism in the West, the search for a new ways of adhering to the church here in the North, the resurrection of medieval disputes about energy and the essence of the Deity in the East, the general revival of religious interests and the growing general fascination with mysticism, the inexorably advancing destruction of rationalism in all realms, along every avenue, and in all its fundamentals, and finally the disillusionment with exact science as a system for understanding life, the doubts expressed concerning humanism, etc., etc. - surely all of this demonstrates the rise of something new, absolutely new - but something that has long existed. And in fact the work that has been done in systematising the knowledge we have accumulated, the efforts made to create reference books on all branches and spheres of science, the very consolidation of what has been gained - surely it is

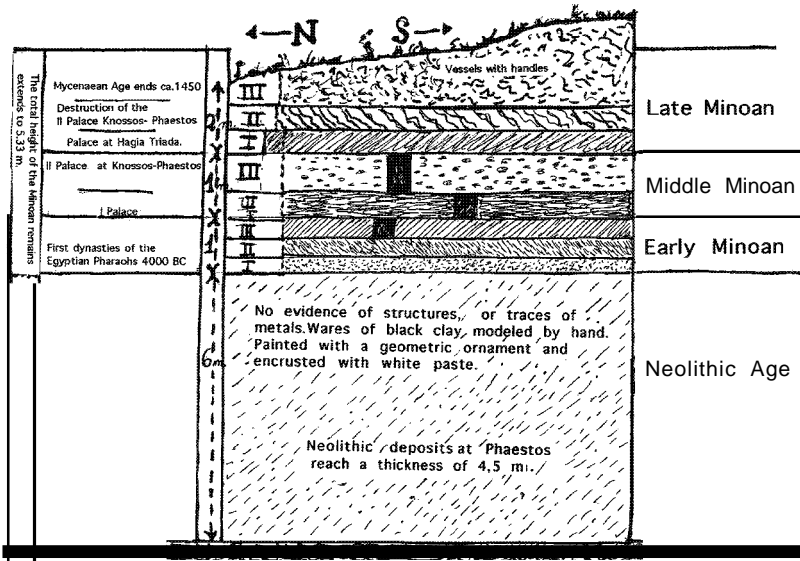
nothing but the accumulated results of a culture that is over, an inventory tally that points to a feeling of death spreading everywhere, a sense that a culture is dying. All of these encyclopedias, reference books and dictionaries - are they not just the deathbed wishes of that culture which emerged in the fourteenth century? To comprehend the life-understanding of the future, we must turn to its roots, to the life-understanding of the Middle Ages; the Middle Ages of the West and especially the East. To understand the philosophy of the New Age, we must turn to the philosophy of Antiquity.

If, in turn, we wish to understand the rise of the philosophy of the Ancients, if we intend to penetrate the philosophy of the Ionian renaissance, then we must turn our thoughts, not to the receding night of the Greek Middle Ages, but to the guttering day of pre-Antique Alexandrism. Of course, the forebears of the Thalesians and Anaximandrites were not the Achilles and the Agamemmons, but the distant, half-ghostly shades of the Minoses and Pasiphaes, the shades of those who bore the most ancient daytime culture of the pre-Hellenic world. It is to them that we turn now.

The vertical cross-section of layers in Aegean culture

We have already discussed how the excavations at Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns, Knossos, Phaestos, Hagia-Triada and many other centres of the most ancient layers of Greek culture, have revealed layer upon layer of epochs of ever greater antiquity. But in our present survey we will move in an opposite direction, beginning with the most ancient layers and those remains that were last to be found, specifically those of the Neolithic period. We will then examine consecutive stratifications of the Minoan period, subdivided into three distinct layers, or ages, those of the Early Minoan, Middle Minoan and Late Minoan periods. As you will see from the attached table (illus. 43), which shows a schematic vertical cross-section of these cultural stratifications, the thickness of the Neolithic deposits extends to 6.43 metres, although in Phaestos it is 2.07 metres less. As for the timespan of this Neolithic culture, which left such thick deposits on the virgin cliff of Crete, researchers admit they don't have the information to determine it. In any case it lasted for over two thousand years, judging by the growth of deposits from the Minoan period. According to Evans, the Neolithic culture of Crete and Greece dates to the eighth-sixth millennium BC, while Carl Vollgraff believes it to be younger. But all of these numbers are fantastical.

This is why the sallies of some individuals, quick to make use of this undefined chronology to mock the Bible, and who let fly observations about



43 The stratification of Cretan Culture (according to Evans)⁵

'Cretan princesses contemporary with Jehovah's creation of the world', are premature, to say the least.

The total height of the Minoan remains that follow extends to 5.33 metres, while the period in which they were formed can be dated with greater certainty than those of the preceding layer. According to Evans, the total duration of Minoan culture is about 2,500 years. This would put its beginning in the fourth millennium BC, the epoch of the first dynasties of the Egyptian Pharaohs, and its end, i.e., the Mycenaean Age - to around 1450 BC. But even these dates should be accepted only with the greatest caution. I cite them, not as being in any way trustworthy, merely as a basis for comparison in establishing the antiquity of various stratifications.

The deposit of the Early Minoan period reaches a depth of 1.32 metres, that of the Middle Minoan period 1.50 metres, and that of the Late Minoan period 1.50 metres.

The unity of Aegean culture

Given our immediate purpose, which is historical and philosophical, there is no need for us to engage in more detailed subdivisions of the Minoan cultures,

or to relate them to other, analogous cultural layers in other regions of the Mediterranean. Suffice it to point out that, thanks to the works of Christos Tsountas, Wilhelm Dorpfeld, William Ridgeway, Joseph Holle, Evans, Salomon Reinach, Gaetano De Santis and others, and, following in their footsteps, thanks also to more recent researches sufficient to stock an entire decent library, these questions have been carefully investigated. Despite a few isolated, feeble voices of protest (Thomas E. Peet, Alan Wace, M. S. Thompson), the oneness of Aegean culture, which encompassed the vast territory 'from Crete to Kiev, from the Jordan in the East of Asia Minor to the shores of Spain', can be taken as generally agreed upon. It is true that the process of its dissemination is unclear. Whereas Hubert Schmidt and Ernst von Stern suggest that this culture moved south from Central Europe, Vosinsky posits a reverse movement, while Evgenii Kagarov thinks that the similarity of cultural remains can be explained, not by an actual movement, but merely by 'the identity of the creative apparatus, i.e., the psychology and aesthetics of primitive man'.⁶ On the other hand, a formal similarity has been established between these corresponding layers from different localities. The beginning of the Bronze Age in Crete, according to Evans, dates to the first half of the third millennium, and coincides in time with the very ancient culture of the Cycladic Islands and the first and second Trojan layers in Asia Minor. The Middle Minoan age corresponds to the latest Cycladic culture, and so on.

We will turn now to an archaeological description of the different epochs. We will deal first with the material culture, in order to gradually penetrate its beliefs and general world view.

Ceramics

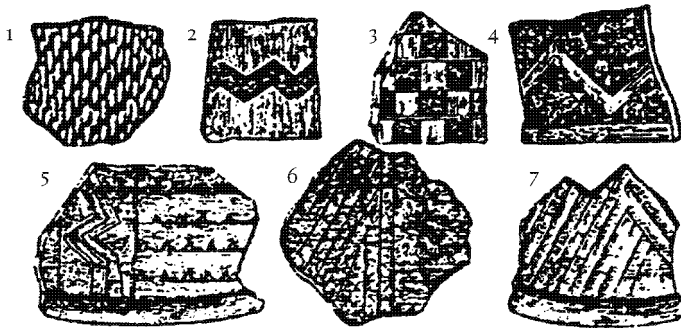
The Neolithic layer, it has already been pointed out, is approximately 2 metres thicker than all the rest put together. Thus, a 6-metre layer of soil, full of the remains of Neolithic *bucchero* utensils, formed and settled on the site of a prehistoric stone settlement before the potsherds of pre-Mycenaean *kamares* (as the ceramic wares of the most ancient Greek cultures are called) appeared. In this amazing layer we will find neither evidence of structures, nor traces of metals. The crude *bucchero* ware made of black clay shows no familiarity with the potter's wheel. Modelled by hand, it is painted with a so-called geometric ornament, consisting for the most part of various combinations of broken lines incised on the unfired pot and encrusted with white paste.

Yet, however primitive these decorations on pottery shards may be, the incredible uniformity of patterns throughout the whole Mediterranean and

beyond establishes the fact that there was a lively exchange with Egypt.

The Aegean (in the narrow sense of the word) or Early Minoan (also called Old Trojan and Island) culture that followed the Neolithic Age can be described as the Calcolithic - Bronze-Stone - culture. It stands midway between the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. Vases and bowls found in structures belonging to the Pre-Mycenaean annex of the Palace at Knossos already exhibit extraordinary subtlety and refinement of form and a delicate coloration that, to quote Evans, 'have probably never been surpassed in the entire history of ceramics? On the subject of ceramics from this ancient period Duncan Mackenzie claims that, in their delicacy and colour effects, they are more perfect than old Venetian wares. We can trace a gradual transition from Neolithic vessels decorated with a crude geometric pattern of white encrustations on a black, hand-polished ground, to these perfect examples of ceramic manufacture.

An intermediate stage can be seen in the first attempts at polychrome and animal reliefs on vases, characteristic of the beginning of the Minoan Age. The term *kamares* or *kamaress*, pertaining primarily to the Middle Minoan Age and derived from the name of the Kamaress cave on the southern slope of Mount Ida, characterises the flowering of ceramics which we have just discussed.



Examples of Neolithic shards with geometric ornament, shown life size, and white incrustations.⁸

The colours red, cinnabar or carmine, orange and white are combined with great success on the blackish ground of the vases. 'If this full-bodied combination of colours seems a little affected: notes one scholar, M. J. Lagrange, 'then we can unreservedly admire several bowls - white on black or

black on white - a creamy white on a brilliant black - the taste for which was supplanted. Several cups, probably in imitation of metal objects in the style of gold goblets from Vaphio, are so delicate that they can be compared to the finest Chinese porcelain. There are all manner of shapes, sometimes strange, but in the main enchantingly graceful. The broken geometric lines have completely disappeared, giving way to spirals, rosettes, fat little crescents, and flowers.⁹

This is the period of the destruction of the First Palace. The palace probably fell as a result of some sudden catastrophe and was replaced only after a considerable period had elapsed, in the third period of the Middle Minoan Age. Quite significant changes take place in ceramics with the appearance of the Second Palace.



Knossos Vase in the 'Palace style', with white ornament on a mauve ground.¹⁰

Polychrome has almost completely disappeared, but the art has advanced in terms of the imitation of nature. In the same period the Second Palace is erected at Phaistos. The culture of this period differs quite dramatically from that of the preceding era. In the Late Minoan period all the vases have a bright yellow ground, with a rust or reddish ornament of amazing realism. To decorate a one-metre tall vase the potter needs only a row of lilies or papyrus, or perhaps an octopus whose tentacles seem to be alive. Leaving our survey of ceramics aside for a moment, it must generally be said of this realistic art that both the best frescoes of the period and its admirable steatite vases were found in Hagia Triada. Steatite, or soapstone, is a variety of talc and its softness makes it ideal for the creation of sculptural objects, even

small relief details being executed consummately. Thus a small vessel of black soapstone, the so-called 'reapers' vase,' depicts 'a happy procession and the end of field work. Evidently, the procession signifies religious thanksgiving, as we can see for example from the rattle (sistrum), which one of the participants in the procession holds in her hand. The details of the costumes, the head-dresses, the short aprons, the three-pronged pitchforks are all portrayed with extraordinary clarity and expressiveness. The representation of the sistrum¹¹ points to dealings with Egypt.¹² We may also add that several archaeologists claim to see a phallophoria in this procession.¹³ Such is the realistic tendency of the archaic artist.

But little by little, art loses its naturalness. Flowers and octopi are treated as conventionalised ornaments. Vases of that period recall the 'decadent vases' fashionable among us today. But be that as it may, here from a technical point of view the art of vase making reaches its height. Then suddenly, it disappears, swept away by some catastrophe. The Palace was systematically pillaged, then razed. All the wooden parts fell victim to the flames. The last period of the Late Minoan Age can be described by its burial grounds. Ceramics are clearly in decline. The clay is coarse, the ornament highly conventionalised, consisting of separate or concentric circles and broken, interwoven, parallel or other, tangled variations of lines. The Iron Age emerges. The ornamentation of vases once more becomes geometric, the so-called Dipylon style, named after the vase's original location at the Athenian cemetery of the Δίπυλον or *Double Gate*. 'In vases of this type even people and animals are stylised. The endlessly varied and whimsical lines of nature move closer to geometric design.'¹⁴ This is proto-Hellenic Gothic. The Greek Middle Ages have begun.

The study of vases again shows a revival of dealings between Crete and Egypt. In Abydos Petrie found vases that were not Egyptian in origin, but which were uncannily similar to vases from Knossos in their colour, their red decoration and even their shape. Conversely, Egyptian-made vases were found in Knossos. It has been established that exchange occurred in later periods as well. An opinion has been expressed that Crete was the site of extensive vase production for the entire Mediterranean. The undoubted similarity in style has been explained variously, with some insisting on the cultural hegemony of Egypt, others that of Crete, and still others conciliatorily agreeing with both camps by relating the claims of the first to a more ancient period, and the claims of the second to a more recent time.

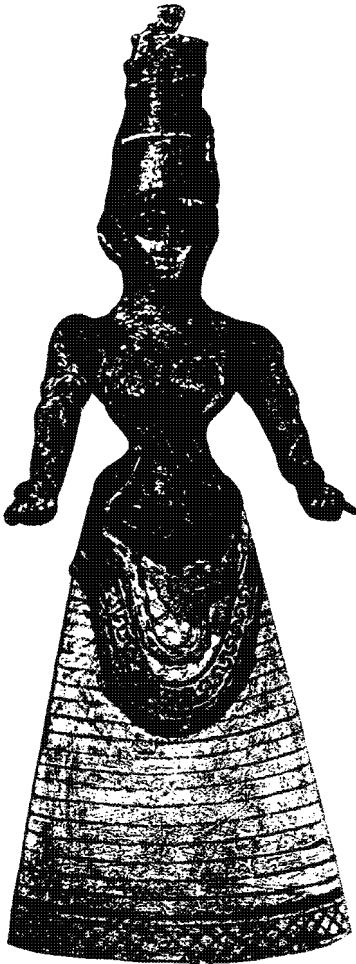
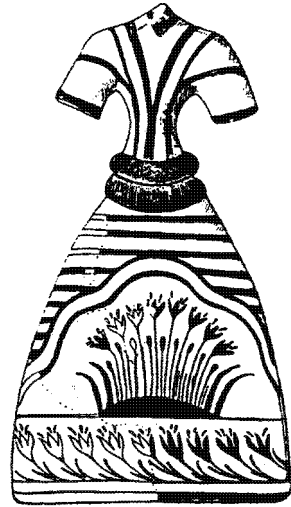
Clothing and fashion

As we have just seen, ceramic remains from the various layers of the excavations that interest us provide a quite precise picture of the overall course of history in Aegean culture. And by examining these ceramics, we have already had an opportunity to satisfy ourselves that some of the culture's stratifications - especially that of the Minoan period - reveal a degree of technical excellence and a highly developed appreciation for elegance that bear no resemblance to current opinion on the 'crudity' of ancient culture. But I will take the liberty of presenting my thesis regarding the refinement of this culture in the most decisive way possible. Taking as my point of departure the proverb 'clothes don't make a man' I will support my thesis with an example taken from material culture, from that aspect of culture where refinement or coarseness are most directly observed and are judged, so to speak, almost palpably. You will probably have guessed that I have clothing in mind. Ladies' fashions are one of the most subtle reagents of any culture. It is enough just to glance at a woman's dress to understand the dominant spirit and tone of the entire culture in which such a fashion is permissible. The link between the wigs, beauty-spots, farthingales and refined affectations of the age of Louis XIV, on the one hand, and the rationalism, artificiality and elegant atheism of this century, on the other, is as firm as it is between the pseudo-antique, chilly and simple costume of the Directorate and the similarly pseudo-antique enthusiasm for universal citizenship. The bustles of the 1880s definitely show the deformity of soul that developed in this moribund era, weighed down by the censorship of positivism; and so on, and so on.

And if, bearing in mind this correspondence between the spirit of a culture and female costume, we turn to the miniature frescoes and statuettes discovered on Crete, we will see something quite unexpected in the remnants of daily life that they reveal. As early as the fifth century BC women were wearing a simple chiton, covered by a noble himation - the simplest kind of clothing, the only alternative to which would be to go without clothing entirely. But as an artist who specialises in the costume of different epochs puts it, in more ancient times archaic princesses 'wore corsets, skirts with flounces, jackets open at the breast, with long leg-of-mutton sleeves, and short tails behind like on a half tail-coat. Their hair they wore slightly frizzed on their forehead, hanging long down the back and tied with wide ribbons.'¹⁵

Look, for example, at this fragment of a female statuette - probably votive, i.e., dedicatory in function - which has magnificently preserved for us the image of one of these dresses.

Votive garment found in the Second Knossos Palace and dating to the third period of the Middle Minoan Age. The figurine is flat and has an opening from which it can be suspended (after Evans).¹⁶



'The Snakes Goddess' or according to others 'The Bayadere'. The statuette was found by Evans in the Second Knossos Palace and dates from the third period of the Middle Minoan Age. Height: 0.342 m (from a photograph).¹⁷

It is not a female figure [from which the head and arms have been] broken off, but an actual dress. Flat and with an opening at the top, this image was intended to be hung up. You probably feel that it could easily be passed off as a pattern from a fashion magazine. Such a dress could only be made using extremely complicated patterns and a variety of expensive materials, while more than one contemporary follower of fashion would break the tenth commandment for the sake of its magnificent embroidery in the Egyptian style, depicting lotus shoots. This is just one example of this kind of dress. You can see others like it in the hall of Greek archaic art in the Alexander III Museum in Moscow.

Or here we have the so-called 'Knossos Snake Charmer' (*charmeuse de serpents de Knossos*) as some have called her,¹⁸ the 'Berlin Bayadere' (*bayadere de Berlin*) as she has been christened by others,¹⁹ or by others still the 'Snakes Goddess' (*deesse aux serpents*).²⁰ We will not debate the actual significance of the statuette, since all we require here is a simple and quite incontrovertible description of her toilette. The statuette is 0.342 m tall. On her head you see a tall hat that seems to be made of cloth, which you definitely feel is stretched over a spiral frame beneath. Researchers have called it a tiara, but of course that is too inflated a title, and clearly, if it were a tiara - if it were made of metal or wood, that is - it would be unbearably heavy to wear on the head, and even more so while dancing. In short, this tiara is constructed the way any woman's hat would be. On the dancer's neck is a necklace. The jacket of this well-dressed personage is richly embroidered and is worn over a tightly laced corset, while the skirt, which falls in narrow folds and has a criss-cross 'edging' around the hem, is provided with a double, embroidered, oval 'apron', which ladies call a 'polonaise'. The sleeves of the jacket, known as 'Japanese' sleeves, are seamless and very short, leaving the arms half bare. The breasts of this fashion-plate are also bare and thrust forward, lifted by the corset. The hair, gathered at the front and concealed by the tiara, at the back falls to the shoulders. This is not visible in the drawing included here, however, which shows the statuette en face. In her right hand she holds the head of a snake that climbs up her arm, falls from her left shoulder, encircles her hips, rises up once more and again descends so that its tail ends in the elegant creature's left hand. Two intertwined snakes form her belt, the head of one in front of her body and its tail around her right ear. The head of a third snake rises above the tiara. But fear not, these are imaginary terrors, no more terrifying than ladies' boas, muffs and winter hats trimmed with the snarling jaws of polecats and other wild beasts. It is true that Eastern itinerant or temple dancers do on occasion

drape themselves with snakes, for the most part tame and defanged, and sometimes actually magnetically subdued. Far more often, however, snakes used in dances are made of fine silver wire. I fancy the snakes of our bayadere are equally harmless.

Below is an image from a small engraved piece of soapstone. The stone was first published by Evans and was subsequently rendered with greater accuracy by P. Savignac, in a reproduction published by Dussaud. It is his drawing which is reproduced here.



Soapstone gem (from a drawing by P. Savignac published by Dussaud).21

We will not go into the content of this image now and will deal only with the appearance of the richly dressed female shown here in profile. You see that her skirt consists of what look like two parts, the upper part wrapped tight around the body while the lower half is arranged in a broad flounce whose plentiful folds create an effective contrast to the upper portion. Her coiffure is arranged very low in a 'Greek' knot. But the stone's most remarkable feature is the quite unnatural pose of her whole torso. However, this is surely not an acrobatic caper, but a particular kind of corseting, much in vogue among ladies several years ago, incidentally, and even now not entirely disappeared from use, especially under 'Directoire' dresses. Just take fashion store catalogues or illustrated advertisements for 'anti-corsets' that brighten up many newspapers and popular journals, and you will see numerous devices designed to give the body exactly this distinctive pose.

Simply by leafing through any fashion magazine one can easily be convinced of how much this figure, with its characteristic twist, its clothing, its whole spirit of cultural refinement and even affectation, tallies with the figures of our contemporary women. But not trusting my own eyes and judgement, on several occasions I showed this and similar drawings to various ladies and, without explaining their source, asked where they were from and

what they meant. Invariably I received the same answer, that this was a rather badly done illustration from a fashion magazine - 'some decadent miss or other' and so on. But to a significant degree our fashions resemble those of the eighteenth century. And here, in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries BC we come up against the fashions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries AD. One cannot but recall Nietzsche's speech on 'the eternal return' of everything that has ever happened in history. On the subject of these outfits one modern scholar has written: 'What archaeologist or artist, imagining to himself Phaedra or Pasiphae, would think of connecting her image with that of his grandmother in a ball dress, dancing at the court of Charles x or Louis Philippe?'²²

Portrait painting

But if clothing and all that the French call 'tournure', if the very deportment of the figures in the period under study testify to the maturity and, so to speak, the ultra-refinement of the culture it produced, and consequently, to the state of the soul as it then was, so far from primitive simplicity and patriarchal naivete, then the face - 'the mirror of the soul' - demonstrates those same qualities even more definitively and precisely. We will not even begin to attempt to survey and understand the many artefacts that have survived. Such an undertaking would be both too lengthy and too complex in terms of the methods needed to carry it out. We will confine ourselves to just one small fresco miniature depicting a female of indeterminate age. This fresco was discovered in the palace at Knossos, the palace which archaeologists have compared to Versailles. Who is she, this personage shown here? Her profile, to quote S. Reinach, 'is so modern in treatment that we should hesitate to attribute it to the sixteenth century BC, if there were any room for doubt in the matter.'²³ But, nevertheless, that is in fact where it belongs. We have before us, scholars maintain, 'une demoiselle de la Cour - a lady-in-waiting at the Minoan Court'. In this careless and hastily made sketch the artist succeeds in conveying a vivid impression of his elegant model. There is no doubt that it is a portrait, a living person, not a schema, and in the very defects of the drawing one can scarcely help recognising the peculiarities of the original, exaggerated in the pursuit of stylisation to the point of caricature. Before us is the bust-length portrait of some lady. The folds that fall in two opposite directions hint at a train falling from the neck. She is evidently dressed in what seems to be a careless, 'princesse'-cut peignoir. One can see that the train ends in a magnificent bow, gathered at the neck like a noose that continues further down,

whether as an embroidered collar edging, or as a *biais* (bias) it is difficult to ascertain.



'A Lady-in-Waiting at the Minoan Court.' Fresco from Knossos (after Evans).²⁴

This costume, despite the scant suggestions we have given, produces a very specific impression of consummate refinement. Note that, though rich, it remains within the bounds of a certain simplicity. The lady is *décolleté*, but within the bounds of decency; she is well-dressed, but not blatantly so. Everything else reinforces this impression. Undoubtedly, the hair of the female in question is frizzed, but not tastelessly so, and the elegant curl that falls carelessly in front like a 'bang' leaves no room for doubt that this apparent negligence has been produced through the efforts of the court hairdresser and a lady's maid, after many consultations, considerations and long hours before the mirror. If I am not mistaken, the effect of this refined hairstyle is enhanced by two snakes - artificial, not real, of course - twined among the snake-like curls and lifting their heads above the lady's crown. The hair above her ears is cut in short curls. The thinly pencilled eyebrows, extended out to the temples, are meant to make the eyes seem greatly enlarged and wide-set. The enormous

eye, also outlined, the aristocratic nose with its slight hook, the painted lips, pursed into a little heart shape, the impeccably straight, almost unusually straight forehead, the somewhat unnaturally shaped and excessively smooth line of the neck without the slightest angle at the collar-bone - all are additional features of this female, who is able to seem incomparably younger and fresher than she in fact is. At first glance anyone would put her age at about 20, but on closer inspection would raise it to 25 and perhaps even 30. This female seems naive and simple-hearted, but ... don't be taken in. She is a thoroughly experienced and cunning temptress. Her toilette, her face, her expression, her entire look all show that we have before us the representative of a culture with a great past, a culture that is refined and in its ultra-refinement already headed towards decline, a culture of the 'decadence' type. There is no doubt that this female belongs to an old-world aristocratic family and that she combines an outward elegance with frivolity and lax morals. The plump lips of this archaic marquise are accustomed to furtive kissing, the eyes to darting sideways glances. 'There is in this Cretan culture that refinement of forms and that consciousness of the sweetness of living that link it to the French eighteenth century: it has been said. 'With this waning of prehistoric day the smallest of corners is slightly lifted from some, perhaps only local, golden age, of a country that has already lived for centuries in the lull of a profound peace, forgetting the existence of warriors and weapons, because in the images of Crete there is never the slightest allusion to soldiers and arms.'²⁵

Realism

In another miniature fresco high society is depicted. 'Having gathered, apparently in front of the temple, the women sit and chat among themselves. Their relaxed poses, their irregular but charming faces, their frizzed hair caused first amazement, then joy among the important archaeologists who saw this fresco. Underneath classical art, so simple in its forms, was found the contemporary world with its elegance that was at once more ordinary and more artificial.'²⁶ No less amazing is the realism we find imprinted on the many complex compositions that depict processions, various kind of combat, hunting and other forms of sport to which the inhabitants of the Minoan kingdom gave themselves. The observer is astonished by the outstanding modelling of limbs and muscles, the vitality and naturalness of poses, the handling of details, the profound knowledge of the animal world and finally the training of the slim-waisted male bodies, represented here. The art of this period is the ultimate synthesis of many separate trends. And

while the bearers of Neolithic culture were tribes of non-Greek origin - the so-called Mediterranean race - the Mycenaean culture was in fact developed by the Greeks, who had absorbed a former population and culture, and had been stimulated by the East. 'The flower of Mycenaean art could only have flourished in soil fertilised by the East: wrote Furtwangler. 'Contact with the East was essential for the European spirit to acquire its full artistic expression.'²⁷ Mycenaean art, by which we can judge the spiritual culture of the people who created it, is Greek art that already possesses all the distinctive features, all the intimate peculiarities that distinguish it from Eastern art - freedom and spontaneity, creative freshness and the absence of stylisation. Whether we look at ceramics or glyptics, architecture, the rudiments of painting and sculpture, artistic jewellery or metal goods of artistic quality - everywhere these peculiarities are manifest. The assimilation from the East of technical inventions, while preserving complete spiritual independence, is again a purely Greek quality that became a condition of Greek art's perfection. 'No matter what the Greeks borrowed from the Barbarians: writes Filipp Opunsky, 'they surpass them, carrying their borrowings to perfection.' 'Here is quite a different spirit from that of the East', continues Furtwangler. 'Here there reigns a joy in life and a joy in representing and reproducing reality. The heavy, dulling atmosphere of the East has given way to pure, clear air. If in the East only symbolic types could be engendered, full of inner significance, but for all that untruthful and tied to conventions, here the life-like communication of reality flourishes. Even the demonic and the divine are depicted here, not in exaggerated supernatural form, but in simple human terms. Here man does not stand before the powers of heaven and earth in fear and trembling, in mute obedience, as in the East. His gaze is trusting and free, taking pleasure in the joy of life and reflecting it.'²⁸

Archaism

But one feature in particular characterises this period of ultra-refinement. It cannot but seem strange to find, in the vast Cretan palaces with their highly complex architecture, objects of an unexpected coarseness alongside things of the finest workmanship, and stranger still, very crude depictions of highly refined products of the culture. If one comes across such a blatant contradiction in exactly the same site in exactly the same cultural layer, it is impossible not to discern a certain premeditation, an intentional dissonance capable of making exhausted perceptions more acute. The crude workmanship of the figures one comes across is a premeditated archaism, a stylisation based on

antiquity, and it should be viewed as a *raffiné* sophistication. If you examine the 'primitive' objects from this period of culture more closely, you will sense beneath their crudeness a spiritual disquiet very similar to that which left its mark on the late nineteenth century of the new history.

And so, having elucidated the complex and highly developed nature of this Aegean (broadly speaking), or Cretan culture, let us turn now to an examination of its inner content.

Religion

What were the religious and philosophical ideas that this multi-layered and centuries-old culture espoused? How can archaeology help us to comprehend the spirit of this period so distant from us, yet so similar in the external forms of peoples' lives? And is it not natural to ask ourselves whether their understanding of life was in fact as distant from ours as the contemporary philistine might assume before he has made any study of the matter, naively thinking his century and his decade the summit of cultural progress?

Stone women

Each of you may have seen more than once the so-called 'stone women' (*kamennye baby*) - or *Steinmütterchen* in German - brought from the steppes of Russia. These naked female figures, squeezing their breasts, or holding between their breasts a bird (probably a dove) in one hand and with the other pointing towards their lap, or again holding a small bowl-shaped vessel near their navel or lower down - were erected on burial kurgans by the populations of the South Russian steppes and were obviously a religious symbol connected in the closest and most intimate way with the idea of death. Where we erect a cross on a grave, these prior inhabitants of our land, who were also perhaps our ancestors, placed these 'women' on their graves. The region in which this symbol was used is vast - from the foot of Altai and the basin of the Enisei and Ob river sources, right up to the Volga and the Caspian Sea. The majority are found in the steppes around the Don and Azov rivers, and in Galicia. In Ekaterinoslav province alone some 428 such figures are known. \When they were erected and by whom remains to be explained.²⁹ It is very probable that many of them are by no means as ancient as some archaeologists would like to believe. At least, several peoples preserve almost identical customs up to the present day. One French traveller, who in 1253 was sent among the Tatars as the ambassador of Saint Louis, had this to say about the Kumans: 'Comani faciunt magnum tumulum super defunctum et erigunt ei

statuam tenentem scyphum in manu sua ante umbilicum' [The Kumans construct a large mound above the deceased and erect a statue that holds a cup in front of its navel].³⁰ (In antiquity the word *scyphus* or σκύφος was used to describe a two-handled bowl for drinking wine, but it most closely resembles our tea-cup with a small base.)

It would scarcely be premature to identify this statue as the 'stone woman'. Indeed, several ethnographic observations have provided grounds for thinking that the vessel which she holds in front of her bosom or below, deliberately associated with the idea of birth, was intended to contain part of the cremated deceased's ashes, the rest of which were placed at the foot of the statue.³¹ In other words, the symbol signifies that the deceased is entering the bosom of the mother, who squeezes her breasts to release milk to suckle her newly presented child. This mother holds a bird, a dove, between her breasts. It is well known that the bird in general, and the dove in particular, is a universal symbol for the soul.³²

Who is this mother, who adopts, feeds and warms the soul of the deceased? Clearly she is the Earth, Mother Earth,³³ or in the language of Greek mythology, Gaia-Earth who gave birth to everything living and is the great-mother of all mankind; it is she who once again takes to herself everything living when the period of earthly existence is over for each of us.³⁴ In the words of Hesiod,

Γαί' ἐρύστερος, πάντων ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεί.³⁵

Broad-breasted Gaia, the secure lap of all

Not one of the stone women's features noted above is fortuitous. Holding a vessel in front of the lower half of the lap is a very ancient religious motif that occurs as early as the Bronze Age in Scandinavia.³⁶ Squeezing the breasts and holding a bird to the bosom are even more widespread motifs, even more canonical, so to speak, for Mother Earth. She is Death and she is also Birth. She is generatrix and also destroyer. From her broad bosom she produces everything living and everything returns there. She brings forth the shoots of life and hides its seeds. Such is the one universal goddess, Aphrodite-Nature, 'the bee with her honey and her sting'.³⁷

Whether in the Scythian steppes, in sultry India or the tragic Iliad, the cult of chthonic divinities, no matter what they are called, always combines 'the idea of the blessed birth of Mother-Earth with the idea of the horror of death, whose place is likewise in the depths of the earth'.³⁸ 'These ideas are

woven together in an extraordinary way: says Preller, 'such that, from the very beginning, this interweaving could not be clearly and definitely understood and so of its own accord must have lead to mystic searches for explanations **in** a secret conception disguised by symbolism.'³⁹

Hörnes calls the cycle of ideas that grew out of this fundamentally dualistic core of the Mother 'Geotropism' or 'Chthonism'.⁴⁰ 'This mother, generatrix, nurturer and, conversely, devourer of her own offspring, could take only one form, that of a woman. It is one of the surprising, but understandable, phenomena in primitive religious thinking that in all forms of tradition woman enjoys a certifiable superiority over man in the spiritual world. The material basis for the cult of the mother is maternal right (*Mütterrecht*) - succession through the maternal line **in** primitive tribes. Just as the souls of the deceased are generally thought to remain the same after death as they were in life, and as a man who was well-to-do during his lifetime becomes just as powerful in the kingdom of the dead, so, if a woman occupies first place as a mother on the known scale of the social structure, it is only natural that a higher being in the world of the spirits would also be imagined as a woman and a mother. It is on this level that woman stands, as the generatrix at the beginning of things, as the nurturer who feeds people with plants, as dominatrix of the soil in which the dead are interred, the dead whom she considers her own. The hierarchy of souls and spirits in the underground world, led by the Ur-Mother, is replaced by the anarchic demonism of the hunting period, which is in turn replaced by the heavenly hierarchy, with Father-Heaven at its head.'⁴¹

But whether this concept of the One World Goddess emerges from a form of human life or from something else, one fact at least is certain: 'Any investigation of the history of female deities, by whatever name the Many-named is called, whether Artemis or Aphrodite or Athena or Astarte or Isis, puts us on the trail of the original thelymonotheism, a female monotheism. All female divinities are **in** essence facets of the one goddess, and she is the female principle of the world, one sex elevated to the absolute.'⁴²

Understandably, the male principle is trampled, lost, and disappears. 'The male correlate to the absolute goddess acquires the features of the suffering god, such as Dionysus and Osiris. The martyrdom and murder of the male god is a fundamental motif in female religions (such as the religion of Dionysus), which have their roots in the everyday structure of those forgotten societies where woman was both mother and empress.'⁴³ In their essence, our stone women are that same all-victorious Aphrodite.

*she wings her way through the air; she is in the sea
in its foaming billow; from her everything,
that is, is born. For she engenders us
and sows the seeds of desire whereof we're born,
all we her children, living on the earth*⁴⁴

- Euripides testifies, citing an instance of her unlimited power. Yes, in the ancient interpretation she is twice omnipotent, twice triumphant over all - passion and death - and twice she receives into herself each man - at birth and at burial.

But in ancient belief there was no such splitting of the Earth into Death-destroyer and Love-generatrix. She was at once one and the same. With her eternal smile, mysterious and sweet, Earth was both at once - in short, she was Fate, universal Necessity, Time.⁴⁵

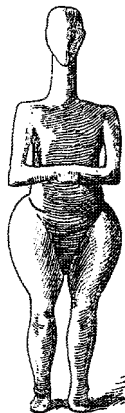
*Know me, so sang Death. I am Passion.*⁴⁶

Now, however, only the sensitive souls of poets clearly comprehend this duality in nature, understanding that Generatrix-nature conceals death within her, while Temptress-death conceals destruction.⁴⁷

The naked goddess

This same idea also lay at the core of the religious and philosophical belief system of the bearers of Aegean culture.

Tombs from the Aegean culture contain an abundance of statuettes, which explorers have called 'the naked goddess'. In composition, crudeness of



Idol of the 'naked goddess' found on the island of Amorgos (after Perrot and Chipiez).⁴⁸

workmanship and finally in body-type, they vividly recall the stone women, although they are considerably smaller in size. They have been found over a wide-ranging territory that stretches from upper Egypt above the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean, including both Malta and Greece, and encompassing the Thracian-Ilyrian Northern Balkan peninsular as far as the Ukraine and Western Galicia. Researchers acknowledge their great antiquity, dating back to the early Iron Age in the South and in the North to the pure Stone Age - according to some - or to the Chalcolithic Age according to others. If we were to name this whole area of culture and the race that created it, Hornes considers it should be called 'die jungere Steinzeit' (the earlier Stone Age), or approximately the 'Neolithic Period.' i.e., the culture should be called 'the Bronze-Stone' Age and those who created it the 'Mediterranean race.'⁵⁰

Let us take a closer look at this statuette of the 'naked goddess.' First of all one notices the preference for female



Archaic Aphrodite of Cyprus, Le., from the island of Cyprus (after Roscher).⁴⁹

Image of the 'naked goddess' with doves in gold leaf, found by Schliemann in Shaft Grave III on Mycenae.⁵¹

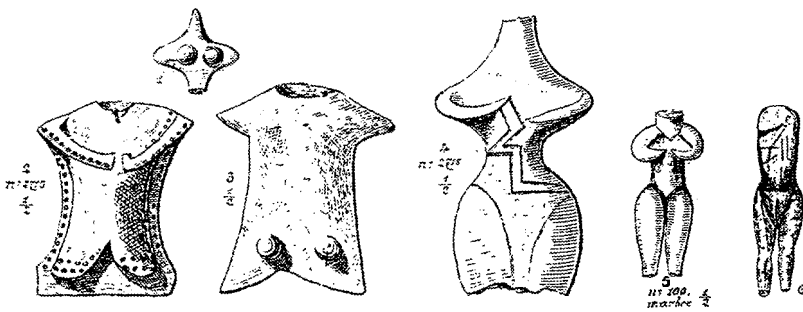


Idol of the 'naked goddess', found near Sparta (after Permt and Chipiez).⁵²



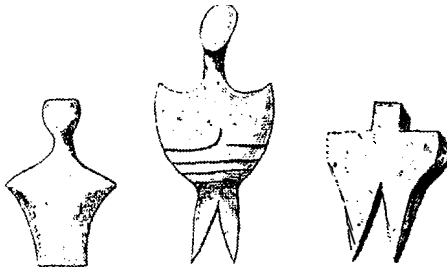
figures over males in creating idols that are placed in the tombs of the dead or erected in sanctuaries. But not only do we see a pronounced inclination to use female figures for idols. In these figures the female characteristics - breasts, thighs and adjacent areas - are emphasised, even exaggerated, so emphatically that there cannot be the slightest doubt that this exaggeration is not fortuitous.⁵³ What might at first seem simply the result of the sculptor's lack of technical finesse is in fact a completely conscious effort to express a particular idea - that of woman as generatrix. So-called *steatopygia*,⁵⁴ an extreme accumulation of fat in the area of the buttocks, is also characteristic of the vast majority of statuettes of 'the naked goddess'. Ethnic parallels show us that this is a particular conception of female beauty and that this peculiarity, which is highly characteristic of modern-day Hottentots, was probably also an attribute of the Mediterranean race that left numerous depictions of steatopygic goddesses.

At times the accentuation of the female characteristics even exceeds the bounds of caricature, so that the statuette represents a headless female torso



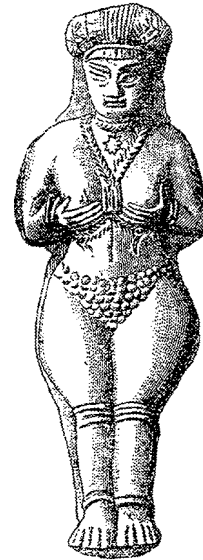
Neolithic idols of the 'naked goddess'. 1,2,3,4,5, found on Knossos (from a sketch by Lagrange made in the Museum of Candia; 556, figurine from Laugerie (after Mortillet).⁵⁶

in which the thighs and breasts are especially singled out. The ultimate degree of simplification is the statuette that consists entirely of breasts - the pure reality of birth and nurturing, without the slightest reference to thought. This is the most ancient manifestation of the idea of 'the eternal feminine'.



Neolithic idols of the 'naked goddess' found in the grave of 51 Onufrius near Rhaestos (from a sketch by Lagrange made in the Candia Museum).⁵⁷

Clay statuette of Babylonian Astarte (after Roscher).⁵⁸



The interaction of ancient cultures with Aegean culture

A comparison of statuettes of the 'naked goddess' from the Archipelago and Crete with those from Egypt once again confirms the interaction of the Egyptian and Cretan cultures. But more striking still is their similarity to Babylonian statuettes of Astarte. Moreover, the more refined elaboration of the Astarte type suggests that Babylonian art was the original source from which Mediterranean art produced pale and anaemic copies. At the very least, the methodological practice of accepting more refined work as earlier and original, and more corrupted work as derivative, is (in spite of evolution) often used in archaeology with as much success as in exegesis, which requires that the more difficult reading be preferred to the more simple in an explanation of variant readings. 'And if', writes one researcher, 'we compare this to the extraordinary diffusion of the cult of the Great Mother, which migrated from millennium to millennium, from people to people, then it is highly probable that in the statuettes of the 'naked goddess' we have one of the crests of the migrational wave of religion that came from Babylon.'⁵⁹

A further argument for Babylonian influence, albeit at a later period, is the striking similarity in the clothing of the Cretan and Babylonian goddesses. Both have a distinctive skirt of wide flounces that are sometimes thickly pleated. Sometimes we also find on the Babylonian figures noose-shaped

ribbons at the back of the neck, similar to the one we saw on the 'court lady' from the court at Knossos.⁶⁰

Linguistic facts have also been cited as proof of the existence of cultural interaction between the Indo-Europeans and the Semites (Othannes Schmidt). For example, parallels have been drawn between the ancient Indian *paraçú* and the Greek πέλεκυς, the Sumerian *balag* and the Babylonian-Assyrian *pillaku* - meaning an axe; between the ancient-Indian *lohás*, *lohám* - copper - and the Slavic *rouda*, the Latin *raudus* and the old-Scandinavian *raudu*, the Sumerian *urud* - copper. The importance of the number sixty in the counting system, as a dividing line between ἑξήκοντα and ἑβδομήκοντα, can also be considered a reflection of the Babylonians' system of counting in sixties.⁶¹ But in any event, we do not know exactly what epoch these influences date from, although they are certainly extremely ancient.

All of the above makes it even more probable that the 'naked goddesses' are in fact some prefiguration of the Great Mother, already discussed above, whose cult flourished in the Near East. And if it is permissible to construct out of these analogies between the goddesses an analogy between their cults, then we must conclude that the cult of our goddesses was full of abrupt contradictions between unbridled behaviour and self-torture.

'This goddess [the Great Mother] is the embodiment of nature's generative powers - *natura naturans*, as the ancient peoples of Asia might have imagined her in a concrete divine image, as the goddess of sexual love, reproduction and fruitfulness. In the elemental life of nature, life and death, summer and winter, the periodic dying and reviving of vegetation, alternate. And, accordingly, in the cult of the Great Goddess joyful and funereal rites alternate, sacred prostitution and cruel self-torture; more than that, self-castration, as the extreme contrast to sexual orgies, as the highest sacrifice to the goddess of elemental orgasm.'⁶² Numerous other features common to all cults are joined together here. The most noteworthy is the finding of statuettes of the 'naked goddess' in tombs and their association with burial, which perhaps is in some way related to the myth of Ishtar's journey into Hell in search of Thammuz.⁶³

Double vessels

Among the sacred symbols of the Chalcolithic culture, the beginning of the Early Minoan Age, is one whose meaning researchers have to this day been unable to fathom. We know neither its name nor its function. It seems to me, however, that we will be able to attach some name to this nameless cult object,

a name that till now had no object attached to it; a name whose corresponding object has been lost in the depths of time, and was apparently already unknown in the age of Aristotle.⁶⁴ We may suppose that this lost object, while not identical to our nameless symbol, is nevertheless related to it and physically resembles it.

'Double vessel' from the village of Veremia, Kiev Province and district. (Collection om. I. and V. I. Khanenko).⁶⁵



By nameless object I mean a vessel of a particular shape that is frequently found in the tombs of the so-called *Ukrainian cultural group*,⁶⁶ or again of the *Tripol'e culture* in the Dnepr river region, and conventionally called a 'double vessel' or 'binocular-shaped vessel'. In the Kiev Museum there are examples of objects that go under the generic title of 'vessels from ritual burial *pisé* structures'.⁶⁷



Vessels from ritual and burial *pisé* structures in the Dnepr river region (sketches made in the Kiev Museum).⁶⁸ 1. Example of a crudely made 'double vessel'; 2. Example of a single 'vessel'; 3. Example of a more finely made 'double vessel' with ornamentation and thinner walls.

There is also a specimen of such a vessel among the Bronze Age finds in the Moscow History Museum.⁶⁹ All of these objects, moreover, were discovered in the environs of Kiev and Tripol'e. What exactly does 'double vessel' mean? It is a vessel consisting of two identical glasses in the shape of hyperboloid rotations or, if you like, approximately reminiscent of two bobbins standing side by side. They are joined together at the upper edge by a linking and lower down by either a small cylinder or a plate with holes cut in it, in some form or

another, evidently so that the fingers of the hand holding the vessel can fit between the two parts. It is 1 to 2 times taller than a tea cup, or of about the same height. But the most remarkable feature of these 'vessels: if we may so call them, is that they have no base, nor did they have from the very beginning, to judge from the undamaged condition of both rims. Made of clay, these vessels are in varying degrees ungainly. In general, their handiwork is crude, although according to one archaeologist 'they do have a characteristic expressiveness'.⁷⁰ The surface of the 'double vessels' is decorated with a geometric ornament consisting of a linear incision in a dark colour on a red ground. We should also add that sometimes 'vessels' come to light that are similar in shape and in other particulars, but are single not double, with two small handles. This shows that what we in fact have here is the doubling of a single vessel. What then is the vessel's function? It is undoubtedly sacred, and specifically associated with the cult of a subterranean deity. The chthonic meaning of the cult in which the 'double vessel' was used is also confirmed by the discovery of such vessels along with clay statuettes of the 'naked goddess'. It is worth noting that, in these Ukrainian statuettes, steatopygia and particularly a sexual emphasis is even more significant than in the statuettes from other regions.

'In all probability', the cataloguer of B. I. and V. I. Khanenko's collection of antiquities concludes, 'these vessels had a votive function and were used during burial'.⁷¹ But even this meagre conclusion seems unconvincing to Hörnes, who writes of the double vessel, which he called 'ein binokelförmiges Gerät' as an object 'of unknown determination' – *unbekannter Bestimmung*.⁷³

Let us try to explain, to the best of our ability, the significance of this enigmatic object. First of all we note that two vessels, that would normally be used separately, are joined into one. The doubling of religious symbols is a clear sign of their particular sacredness. Here, for example, are several symbols which parallel the 'double vessel': a double ax, double hammer, double thunderbolts, a double layer of fat on sacrifices, etc. The double dordzha of the Buddhists also belongs here, and so on.⁷⁴ But there seems to be a deeper connection between the 'double vessel' and the Egyptian double *dudu* or *djed* that closely resembles it.⁷⁵

The doubling of an ideographic sign in Assyrian cuneiform, and in Mayan, Mexican, Indian and other hieroglyphs, signifies plural, and sometimes double. But this *plumlis* is not always a separate quantity; for in religion it signifies, rather, *plumlis majestatis*, *plumlis magnitudinis*, *plumlis dignitatis*. In symbolics doubling generally indicates a plenitude of creative potentialities,

the multiplicities of what is being generated, the plenitude contained in creative force and, finally, simply multiplicity.

I will even hazard a guess that doubled symbols are chiefly associated with those cults whose basic idea is that of the feminine, while tripling characterises the male. It should be noted that in symbology even numbers, especially the number two, are essentially female, while the uneven numbers are male.⁷⁶

I won't insist on this conjecture, the more so since it would be difficult to prove. But that notwithstanding, there is no doubt that the sacred 'double vessel' was used in the cult of a female chthonic deity. How exactly it was used remains unknown.

Homer's δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον

The double vessel is so characteristic of the early Bronze Age, at least in certain areas of its dissemination, that it would seem extremely strange if Homer's poems made no mention of it. It is true that the culture depicted there is a later one. But can such an important aspect of the cult really have disappeared without a trace? No. It is plausible that this trace is none other than the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον,⁷⁷ which Homer frequently mentions and which remains a mystery for researchers. This term occurs in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, though more frequently in the former, perhaps because the culture depicted there is more archaic in nature. δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον is clearly a sacred vessel, and it is mentioned in connection with especially important actions of both gods and men. Thus Hephaestus, in comforting Hera whom Zeus had insulted, brings her a δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον (*cl.* 1. 584), which further on Homer simply calls a κύπελλον (*Il.* 1. 596). With this goblet Hephaestus 'serves sweet nectar ladled from a bowl' - οἰνόχοεῖ γλυκὶ νέκταρ, ἀπὸ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσω (*Il.* 1. 598). At the suggestion of Pisistrata, son of Nestor, Athena disguised as a wanderer performs a libation to Poseidon with 'honeyed wine' (μελιθεῖος οἴνου, *Od.* 3.46) or 'sweet wine' (ἡδέος QI"VOU, *od.* 3. 51), from just such a δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον. Homer calls this same δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον simply a δέπας (*Od.* 3. 46,53). In other words, δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον is evidently just an aspect contained in the genus δέπας and the genus ἀμφικύπελλον, and can also simply be called by those names. There are also names which are apparently synonymous,⁷⁸ such as a goblet (*cham*), and ἄμφωτον ἄλεισον, a two-handled or, more accurately, a double-handled goblet.

This same vessel was used during burial rites. Before the fire flared up during the cremation of Patroclus' body, Achilles, in order to propitiate the

winds and persuade them to inflame the fire, made numerous libations of wine, 'χρυσέῳ δέπαι', with a gold goblet (ll. 23, 196). Finally, the fire burst into flame:

Ο δὲ πάννουχος ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεὺς
ΧΡΥΣΕΟΥ ἔκ κρητηρος, ἔλων δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον
οἴου ἀφυσσαμενος χάμαδις χέε, δεῦε δὲ γαίαν,
ψυχὴν κικλήσκων Πατροκλέεος δειλοῖο

*And all nightfi-et-jooted Achilles
ladles wine from a golden vessel with a two-bottomed [I] cup
he made a libation around the fire and . . .
still summoning the soul of his poor friend Patroclus (ll. 23, 218-21)*

Both the cup and the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον are described here as gold while the name of the vessel that interests us, καλὸν δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον (Od. 3. 68), probably refers to its ornamentation. At the sacred games in memory of the deceased Patroclus, as fifth prize for speed in the chariot race Achilles places among the other awards a 'ἀμφίθετον φιάλην' of which it is said that it has not yet been in the fire (ll. 23, 270). This same 'ἀμφίθετος φιάλη', (ll. 23, 516) was given by Achilles to the elder Nestor. What kind of vessel was it? Apparently, it too was in some way double, like the goblet mentioned above. It was this δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον (ll. 23, 656, 563, 699) that was awarded to the defeated Euryalus for his participation in a fist fight, while the victorious Epeius took a sturdy mule.

Finally, Homer also describes a 'δέπας of Nestor' which perhaps in part resembles an ἀμφικύπελλον. This vessel was so large that only Nestor could lift it when it was full of wine. It was decorated with gold studs and had four handles with two gold doves perched atop each one (let us not forget that doves are the birds of Mother-Earth): 79 'δύω δ' ὑπὸ πυθμένεσ ἦσαν- from below it had two bottoms (ll. 11.635).

So the Homeric δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον is undoubtedly some kind of sacred vessel from which the gods drink; moreover, libation to the gods was thought of specifically as drinking by the gods.⁵⁰ What was the shape of this vessel? Even in antiquity various suggestions were offered. Thus Aristotle, writing of honeycombs, calls their cells 'ἀμφίστομοι', 'mutually-mouthed', and explains his definition thus (obviously using the preposition ἀμφὶ in an unorthodox sense): 'περὶ μίαν γάρ βάσιν δύο θυρίδες εἰσὶν (:)CITEP T(;)I' ἀμφικύπελλων, ἥ μὲν ἐντὸς ἢ δ' ἐκτος',⁸¹ 'because the sides of a single

base have two openings, like the openings of the ἀμφικύπελλον, one on each side'. It has often been concluded from this that the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον was a vessel created by joining together two cups that leaned against each other at the bottom, so that one of the cups acted as a receptacle for the wine, the other as the base, like that of chalices or so-called 'Roman' goblets.⁸² The most powerful argument against this idea is the impracticality of such a vessel. After all, they ladled wine or nectar out of the bowl. If it was in fact chalice-shaped, then the ladler would have to plunge his hand sloppily into the wine, with the high base interfering with the immersion. Undoubtedly, a vessel for ladling should not have a high base and should have a handle on the upper rim. Referring to the practical function of the ἀμφικύπελλον, namely ladling wine, A. May suggests that it would certainly have had a handle or handles,⁸³ and in support of his view points to the synonymous expression ἄλεισον ἄμφοτον - a two-handled cup (*Od.* 12. 9.17). Furthermore, despite Aristotle's interpretation, to call both the base and the cup by the same name, as if they were equivalent parts, is extremely strange. Most important is just how fantastic this explanation is. To the present day there has been nothing resembling this hypothetical chalice, either in representations of vessels or among those that have been found.⁸⁴ Finally, the non-historical nature of Aristotle's explanation is borne out by the very different interpretations of other ancient authors. Thus, Aristarchus takes δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον to be a two-handled cup,⁸⁵ others a concave or simply a round cup, ἀμφίκυρτον ἐξ οὐ^ρ τὸ περιφερές - with a curled rim'.⁸⁶ Winckelmann read both δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον and ἀμφίθετος φιάλη to mean a bowl encircled by another.⁸⁷ In short, the diversity of opinions weakens each of them to such an extent that they can all safely be disregarded. Nothing prevents us from thinking that the ἀμφικύπελλον is in some way similar to the 'double vessel' described above. This similarity is further confirmed by an etymological analysis of the word ἀμφικύπελλον. Ἀμφι', a co-root with the Latin *ambo* and the Russian *oba*,⁸⁸ which strictly speaking means *on both sides*, then *from all sides*, and finally *around*. But in contrast to ΠΕPL'; which chiefly implies circumference in a vertical plane, or sometimes the whole surface, ἀμφι'; signifies symmetry in a horizontal plane, or a complete horizontal circumference.⁸⁹ Ἀμφικύπελλον could mean what Aristotle thought it to mean, only in a horizontal position, a position unnatural for a goblet. And in fact, objects whose names contain the prefix ἀμφι are symmetrical in regard to the vertical, not the horizontal plane. Examples of these are:

ἀμφι-γυήεις -lame in both legs; ἀμφι-δέξιος - ambidextrous; ἀμφισυμος - with a double exit; ἀμφιέλισσα and ἀμφικυρτος - declinate at both ends (of a ship); ἀμφίζευκτος - unified on both sides (by a bridge); ἀμφίθυρος - double-doored with front and back entry (subsequently, ἀμφι-ενπα is how the draw-curtains above the altar under the cupola were called); ἀμφίκρανος and ἀμφίκέφαλος - double-headed (hence ἀμφίκέφαλος κλιν - an ottoman with cushions at both ends; ἀμφιπυλος - double-gated or a double folding-door); ἀμφίπυργος - bearing a torch in either hand (one of Artemides' epithets); ἀμφίβαίνα - a species of snake that can slither backwards and forwards, with head or tail; ἀμφίστομος - double-mouthed; also of two-handled drinking-vessels; ἀμφίφαλος - with a double peak. used of a helmet that has a peak in front and behind; ἀμφιφορέυς and ἄμφωτος - a vessel with two handles. etc., etc.⁹⁰

In conclusion, we will mention once more that δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον must be recognised as something akin to 'double vessels', but of a somewhat later period and more carefully worked - perhaps even made of gold. if only Homer, that restorer of an antiquity not of his own time, was not making a rather epic exaggeration.⁹¹ But though related to approximately the same culture and serving the same religious idea, the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον and the 'double vessel' were of course used in different ways.

Some might ask whether it is possible to find traces of the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον in the life of later times. New influences drove both the ancient cult of Mother-Earth and her double vessels underground. Representatives of the new patriarchal religion openly broke with antiquity which, for them, and from their point of view (because they had already completely ceased to understand even the possibility of a female enotheism⁹²), was embodied in Chronos.

Οὐκ αἰίδω τὰ παλαιά, καινὰ γὰρ ἐμὰ κρεισσώ.
 νέος ὁ Ζεὺς βασιλεύει,
 τὴν πάλαι δ' ἦν Κρόνος ἄρχων.
 ἀπίτω μουσα παλαιά.

*I do not sing the old songs - mine are younger and stronger.
Young Zeus is our sovereign
but of yore Chronos was king
Flee, old-time muse!⁹³*

the admirer of the new religion sings defiantly. Only in the Orphic mysteries, a remnant of female enotheism, do we seem to find some hint of the double bowl of Mother-Earth. 'In the Orphic mysteries two bowls (κρατήρ) and a mirror were used as symbols of the fall and restoration of the soul. To partake of the drink of oblivion from one cup was a sign that the soul, looking at the sensual world reflected in its consciousness as in a mirror, becomes enamoured of its seductive images, loses its memory of the heavenly and sinks into the bonds of the body. Drinking from the other cup, as it were, restores and acts as a token of the soul's resurrection, [to recapture] a lost bliss.'⁹⁴

The Nautilus ornament

The idea of the 'naked goddess' is intimately intertwined with yet another symbol from a later period, one that is chiefly widespread in the culture associated with half of the Minoan Age. Specifically, one of the distinctive hallmarks of the Mycenaean style is the nautilus ornament⁹⁵ that entwines vessels and all manner of utensils - gold, glass vessels, vases. Its chief element is 'the scroll of a sea-wave' or, more accurately, the tentacles of a purpura mollusc.

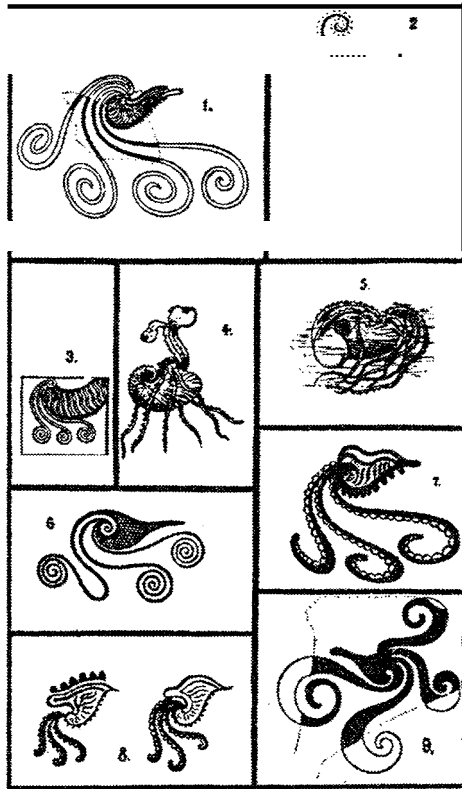
Here are examples of this ornament, distributed in time throughout the entire Aegean sea and reaching as far as Egypt [see illustration overleaf].

These examples show once again the oneness of culture that corresponds to the periods of these great dominions.

However, as we have already noted, something more can be seen in the nautilus ornament - a phenomenon which to some extent is equivalent to the idols of the 'naked goddess'; a phenomenon which, even more accurately, defines exactly where the productive power of Fate was destined to coincide in the consciousness of the ancient proto-Hellenes.

In fact, the nautilus mollusc, or argonaut, from a stylisation of which the ornament is derived, was called in antiquity 'the shell of Aphrodite', 'Veneris concha', and was considered a sacred animal dedicated to Aphrodite. **In** some regions it was sacred to Poseidon, a modification of chthonic Zeus, 'the hospitable Zeus of the dead' - Ζεὺς τῶν κεκμηκότων πολυξενώτατος⁹⁶ - in whose vast dwelling-place there is room for all. Thus, Poseidon, to whom the

Examples of nautilus ornament in Mycenaean art and, for comparison, depictions of the nautilus mollusc (chart compiled after Tümpel).⁹⁷



purpura was dedicated, was a male, a later aspect or offshoot of that same Mother-Fate.

Nautilus-Nauplius (πομπίλος) is Homer's ἱερὸς ἰχθύς, to judge from Aristonikos' interpretation of *the Iliad*, 2.407 - καὶ αὐτὸς (ἐσ' ἔτι) γέγονος ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ αἵματος ἅμα τῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ, ἔστι δ' ὁ πόμπιλος ζῶον ἐρωτικόν (And he himself being sprung from the blood of Uranus together with Aphrodite, the pompilus [the argonaut] is an animal of love.) Ancient myth has it that, when Zeus castrated his father Uranus, the severed sexual organs fell into the sea and a foam formed around them, from which Aphrodite emerged. From that same blood, spattering the sea, there emerged her kindred τὸν ζῶον ἐρωτικόν - her love animal, the sacred nautilus.

Aphrodite-Fate is essentially associated with the sea, and the sea is perceived as the birth-giving womb of life, that same womb which accepts the

fructifying power of the Heaven-Father. Aphrodite born of the foam is, as it were, the soul of the birth-giving sea, and the argonaut molluscs are her sisters, of one womb and one blood. In the words of Euripides in his tragedy *Hippolytus*, the work closest to the Cretan themes, Cypraeda is 'Lady of the sea – ΠΟΥΤΙΔΑΣ'.⁹⁸

The same should be said of Astarte, whose connection with the sea is usually shown on coins by the fact that her left foot tramples on the stern of a ship.⁹⁹ On Tyrian coins her connection with the shell is shown by the fact that a murex shell and a small figure of Silenus with another murex on his shoulders is placed next to Astarte with her cuirass and civic crown.¹⁰⁰

And so, in fact, the nautilus is an animal of Aphrodite and a symbol of Aphrodite. But ancient ornament was never merely ornament. It had a magical and religious significance, it protected from evil powers, warned of misfortune, and promoted happiness. Thus, the nautilus ornament is not decoration, but a sacred symbol of life, and perhaps its dissemination is one further proof of the widespread cult of Aphrodite-Astarte, Fate or Time.

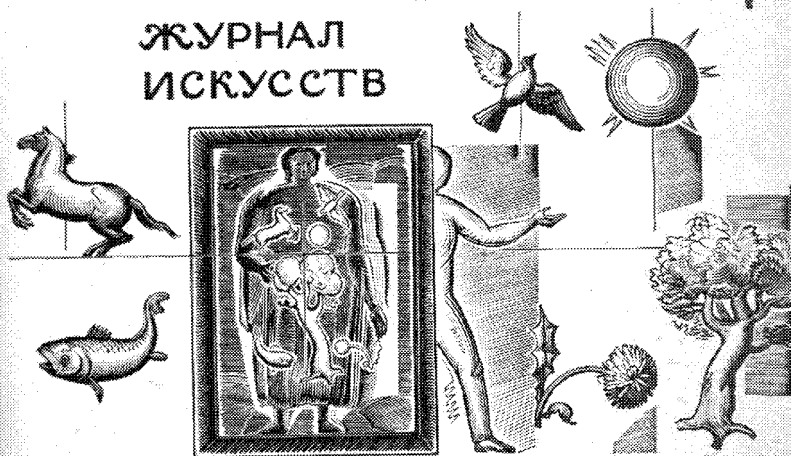
Such is the most ancient understanding of the primordial origins of all being. It forms a substratum **in** the thickness of stratifications on which Greek philosophy was later to emerge. Our future task will be to understand the next layer, to move from the universal proto-environment of the female to the universal primal power of the male.

May 1913

On Realism

МАКОВЕЦ

ЖУРНАЛ
ИСКУССТВ



МОСКВА

N 3

1923

44 Vladimir Favorsky, Unpublished cover for the journal *Makovets*, III, 1923, woodcut. Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Introduction

After 'The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of Art' and 'Celestial Signs', 'On Realism' was the third article Florensky wrote for the *Makovets* journal.¹ Announced in the second issue as forthcoming, 'On Realism' did not appear since the journal ceased publication, even though the contents for no. 3 were ready and Vladimir Favorsky had again been invited to design the cover.

The first lines of 'On Realism' indicate that Florensky intended to discuss the topic much in the same way as he had done in his 'Explanation of the Cover', because a 'cover is obliged to be the seed of the journal' ('On Realism', p. 179) Florensky may well be alluding to the symbology of the new cover which Favorsky, with his cooperation, was projecting for *Makovets* no. 3 (illus. 44), although Favorsky admitted to not having fully understood Florensky's conception: 'I wanted to show the outer and the inner man and the way in which external objects internalise. Nevertheless, the result is not very clear. Pavel Aleksandrovich [Florensky] is guilty of [possessing] a knowledge which he has expressed in words, but which I am not capable of expressing.'² Presumably, the cover for *Makovets* no. 3 was to have illustrated Florensky's notion of Realism, a metaphorical representation of Platonic ideas, the 'real' entities which stand behind the transient reality of the human being.

Obviously, there could be many interpretations of the cover and of its relationship to Realism as understood by Favorsky and Florensky. What exactly is 'internalising' and 'externalising' is not entirely clear, although the *Urmutter* in the frame would seem to be the central image to and from which all the symbols of life (tree, flower, bird, fish, man) proceed. In any case, it is important to remember that Favorsky and Florensky were very close at this time and their individual ideas were nourished by each other's attitudes, especially towards the art of the book and the printed page. Both disliked the mimetic and illusionistic attributes of Realism and called for a deeper, if more metaphorical, application - as in the cover for *Makovets* no. 3. The fervent discussions of style, form, composition and construction that the two friends conducted at VKhUTEMAS, worthy of a separate appreciation, relate directly to this specific elaboration of Realism.³

ON REALISM

The cover of a journal should in some respect be organically linked to the [actual] issue of the journal as an integral work of book art. But the content of separate issues is fluid and cannot, moreover, be predicted, even by the editor. To express that content through the cover would mean satisfying the requirements of a separate issue, perhaps even several of them, but in any event not those of the journal in all its facets. What is needed here is to express the actual connection between the issues of the journal, regardless of how many there are or what their contents are. This connection is the fundamental goal which the journal serves and the 'direction' that this goal assumes. Then the cover of a periodical will be a schema of its unity. If well conceived it can and should become a visible first-embodiment of the vital impulse that unfolds in the rhythm of the publication. One may say that the cover is the journal itself. Just as a seed already contains the complete cycle of living phenomena of the tree that grows from it, so the cover is obliged to be the seed of the journal. For then it brings about a living connection between the separate articles that, if taken separately, may be in utter disagreement, may polemicise with each other. In it we are contemplatively confronted with the journal's spiritual form with all its multifaceted content. The cover elucidates with one [content] and suggests with the other. Are we not familiar with the full-blooded power of graphic symbols that nurture us as we meditate on them? Do we not know the wisdom of symbols, which frequently turns out to be immeasurably greater and more profound than that which the artist was able, and consciously desired, to invest in it? Do we not know the wisdom of the Ancients, which invariably produced something new, a wisdom consolidated in the pictures of tarot cards? As for coats-of-arms, they were supposed to accompany their owners in all the circumstances of life, on campaigns and at feasts, in the bosom of the family and at church. Every object was emblazoned with the coat-of-arms, so that the owner, in ceaselessly gazing at it, would reflect on his own edification and be guided by it. Why then might the cover of a journal not provide a similar passage into the depths, as the undertaking of

an entire group of people's most cherished aspirations? It seems natural to demand that a cover be an internal authentication for a specific tendency of thought and the source of new projects.

II

The journal *Makovets* is, or at least wishes to be, an organ of realism - realism in art, to the extent that it is concerned with questions of the arts. But art is inseparable from the make-up of an entire culture, and an understanding of art cannot be established outside a general understanding of life. Realism in art and a realistic understanding of art necessarily develop in the general organism of realistic culture, and outside it they vegetate and die like sickly shoots. A realistic journal of the arts must not omit, even peripherally, the realism of life and the realism of culture.

And so, just what is realism? But this term itself is too valuable for the most varied tendencies of thought and creativity not to be tempted to encroach upon it.

What sensible person does not want to be, and to be considered, a realist? But when you take a closer look at just what lays claim to this quality, it most frequently transpires that such claims are in direct contradiction to the most natural meaning of the word 'realism', which derives from *res, realis*. Thus, one quite often finds the terms realism and naturalism confused, and even realism and illusionism, just as on the other side of the coin realism and idealism, realism and symbolism, realism and mysticism are normally contrasted to each other.

Obviously, realism is in any event a kind of tendency that affirms some kind of *realia* or realities - in contrast to illusions - in the world, in culture, and particularly in art. In realism that which genuinely exists is opposed only to what seems to exist, the ontologically solid to the spectral, the essential and stable to the easily scattered conglomeration of random encounters. Law and the norm on one hand, whim and caprice on the other.

If this opposition does not exist, then nor does realism, although the plane of existence on which realities are acknowledged may be quite diverse, and, depending on this realism, it itself acquires a diverse character. We can speak even less of realism when the phenomenon of authentic reality is generally rejected in art; yet exactly how can it [art] exist if there is no real existence in the world? Realism in art has as its necessary prerequisite the realism of an entire world-understanding.

But to go further, can we express a worldwide reality, if we ourselves

stand outside it and do not come into contact with it? Obviously our living remoteness from reality must again destroy realism in art as well. There are realities in the world; one comes to know them by coming into living contact with them through work in the worldwide sphere. This cognition may be expressed by means of art; works of art can unite us with realities that are inaccessible to our senses - such are the formal prerequisites of any artistic realism, and a tendency that rejects even one of them thereby forfeits its right to be called realism.

III

The prerequisites for realism I have outlined may seem so natural and formally to be taken for granted that it would seem scarcely anyone would object to them. But this holds true only until we look more carefully at them. Viewed point blank they are by no means so neutral and indifferent. After all, for most people a work of art in and of itself stands side by side with images of the imagination and, far from leading us to reality, takes us away from it, creating an illusion of reality. From this point of view the activity of art, or at least of visual art, which we will primarily be discussing, tends specifically towards the creation of simulacra, of 'aesthetic appearances' (*Schein*), that are devoid of material essence, but that appear to be essential. That the essence of art is a hoax is a conviction held by far more than just one individual.

'Just as it is in reality' - this usual praise for a naturalistic work of art surely bears witness to the fact that 'like in reality' is something that, without being reality, wants to stand beside the phenomena of reality. The illusion that comes closest to reality is in essence the furthest removed from it. 'You want to reach out and touch it; when what is before us is a flat canvas - isn't this triumph of naturalism a fraud that temporarily succeeds and shows what does not in fact exist? And why arouse in the spectator an unsatisfiable desire to take hold of the painted apple, when this can successfully be done with a real one? Illusionistic art wants to be a match for, only a match for, sensory reality, but for all its tricks it never attains reality and at best, if it did attain it, it would become unnecessary as art. It only attempts to deceive us that it is a match for reality.

It is a strange thing that the tendency which is always shouting about truthfulness is permeated with falsehood in its own tasks. These naturalists wanted to present unembellished reality ... and therefore they painted from models or mannequins posed into *tableaux vivants*. They mechanically combined studies from various locations, without taking into account the

organic character of the landscape. They depicted sincere feelings according to roles that were performed, and falsified reality twice over - the first time with objects, models, artificially imparted poses etc., the second by creating an illusory image of this ruffraff. And after this they dared to talk about truth to life. They were only concerned in life with what was on show, with what purported to be reality itself - winning roles, high-faluting noble words, artificial feelings. There is nothing further removed from realism than these tendencies and others like them that also, even exclusively, lay claims to be realistic.

IV

Meanwhile, this deception of naturalism runs far deeper than I have just outlined, although in a general context of deception, the former may seem less noticeable. For naturalism usually pits the artist's activity against the process of cognition. Whereas the scientist exposes the unreality of perceptible images as subjective, the artist on the contrary strives to secure them in their subjectivity. Consequently, art does not express a cognition of the truth of things, it obscures it. Furthermore, cognition of reality is made available, possibly, to a passive, cold and indifferent attitude to the world, that takes nothing from the individual, whereas a vital attitude, one that is personal and fiery, is subjective. Finally, in the world itself reality is denied by this tendency of thought. There is nothing genuinely essential, everything in the world is illusory, everything merely seems, all is conventional and deceptive.

If this is so, then of course it is not reality - which doesn't exist - that is the subject of art, nor the cognition of reality - which is hostile to the practice of representation - that achieves visible form in artistic images. Between art and the actual concept of reality a deep fissure opens wide, after which the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism' can only be combined as a form of word-play.

But on the basis of positivism and materialism and, in general, of trends of thought that reject the essential reality of form, there is no place for realism.

28 March 1923

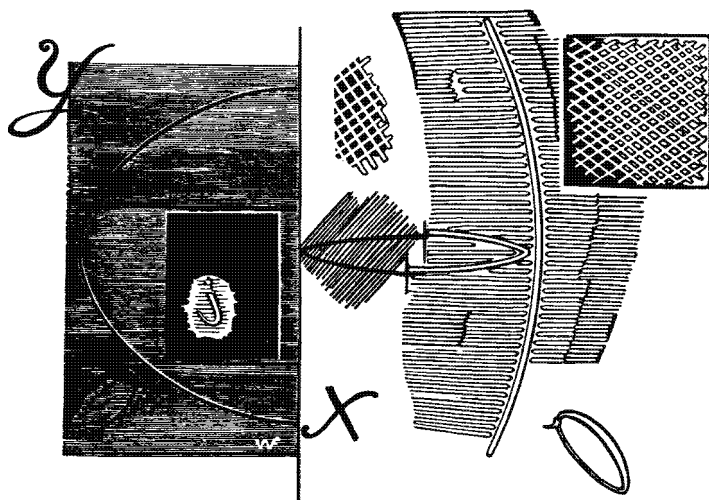
Explanation of the Cover

нАВЕИ

ФЛО РЕНСКИИ

МНИМОСТИ

В ГЕОМЕТРИИ



"нОМОРБЕ."

45 Vladimir Favorsky, Cover design for Florensky's *Mnimosti v geometrii*
[The Imaginaries of Geometry], Moscow, 1922

Introduction

Florensky appended his succinct and scientific 'Explanation of the Cover' to his book *Mnimosti v geometrii* [The Imaginaries of Geometry] (Moscow, 1922; illus. 45), convinced it could extend the concept of 'imaginary numbers' to the field of geometry.¹ As for the content of *The Imaginaries of Geometry*, Florensky regarded it not as an independent unit, but as an organic part of a theoretical tract that was to have been published under the auspices of GlavELEKTRO, the chief Soviet administration for electricity. Drawing upon the latest discoveries in physics and mathematics (illus. 46), especially in topology and electromagnetic theory, Florensky once again confronted the issue of space and spatiality and, as the subtitle indicates, saw the real subject of the book as 'An Extension of the Field of the Two-Dimensional Images of Geometry (An Attempt at a New Interpretation of the Imaginaries)'. After a rigorous scientific explanation, he reaches an unexpected philosophical conclusion: from the viewpoint of the theory of general relativity, the immobile earth within the rigid and solid universe can be assumed to be a system of reference, the Ptolemaic system, central to the cosmology of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This is not as incongruous as it might seem because, in the context of the ultraspeed of light, the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems are of equal validity.²

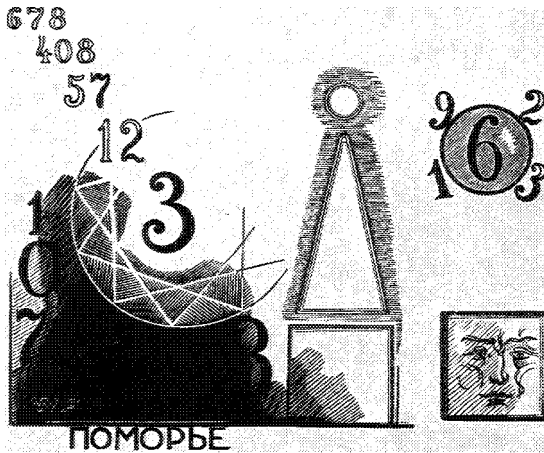
Florensky invited the artist Vladimir Favorsky (illus. 47), his close friend and fellow teacher in the Department of Polygraphy at VKhuTEMAS (illus. 48), to design the cover of the book. A unique achievement, the cover won not only the high praise of the Department, but also a Silver Medal at the 'Exposition des Arts Decoratifs' in Paris in 1925, for which it was reproduced in the catalogue.) In other words, the cover was a strategic link in the collaboration between Favorsky - artist, teacher, and theorist of composition - and Florensky - historian, philosopher and mathematician.

As a sign of appreciation and as further witness to this creative dialogue, Florensky included 'Explanation of the Cover' in the very book for which Favorsky designed the cover. The philosopher comments on the artist's imagery and 'explains' it as a summation of the kind of iconic, but highly

ПАВЕЛ
ФЛОРЕНСКИЙ

ЧИСЛО

ФОРМА



46 Vladimir Favorsky, Unpublished cover design for Florensky's *Chislo kak forma* [Number as Form], 1923, woodcut. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg

47 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Vladimir Favorsky*, 1920, silhouette, paper on board. Efimov Archive, Moscow



48 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Pavel Florensky at his Desk*, 1926, silhouette, paper on board. Efimov Archive, Moscow



abstract, structure that the Department of Polygraphy was promoting in opposition to - or, rather, beyond - the more radical graphic designs of the Constructivists and Productivists such as El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko.

EXPLANATION OF THE COVER

The cover to the present book was engraved on wood by Vladimir Andreevich Favorsky. It is characteristic of the artist that even here his engraving does not simply *decorate* the book, but is an integral part of its spiritual makeup. Therefore, this work by Favorsky is an art steeped in mathematical thought,⁴ and is, perhaps, the first experiment of its kind in the art of engraving, which has undergone such a revival in our era. Incidentally, here is an artistic trend that promises a rich harvest in the culture of the future, with its general synthetic bent. Out of gratitude to the artist for his sensitive collaboration, but also to address the very essence of the cultural aspirations of our era, the author of this book thought it might be useful to provide some explanation of the cover in question, together with certain suggestions as to the possible meaning of the proposed theory of the imaginaries as applied to art, set forth [in this booklet].

Let us review some of the phenomena of the psychology of vision.⁵

If you look at a space through an aperture that is not too wide, while standing to one side of it, especially if the wall with the aperture is not too brightly lit, then the plane of the wall will also fall within your field of vision. But the eye cannot adapt itself simultaneously both to the space seen through the wall and to the plane of the aperture. Therefore, by concentrating on the illuminated space, in relation to the actual aperture, the eye both sees and does not see it at the same time. It saw it when it peered through it into the space beyond, but once it had penetrated it the eye ceased to see it, yet the memory of what it had seen could not leave the consciousness. A vague, almost tactile impression of this wall ceaselessly conjures up in your consciousness what you had seen earlier. Your consciousness is inevitably split between a direct visual image and an indirect, passively indirect, visual image, conveyed by something akin to the sense of touch. Under these conditions of perception two elements, or two layers of elements, are available to the consciousness, homogeneous in content but essentially heterogeneous in their *position* in the consciousness, and in this sense uncoordinated and mutually exclusive.

The view through a pane of glass produces this same dichotomy even

more cogently. Together with the actual landscape, we also have available in the consciousness the glass which we saw before the landscape, but which we no longer see, even though it has been perceived by our tactile vision or even simply by the sense of touch, for example when we brush our forehead against it. Hence the painterly and architectural problem of the modern-day, the glazed window, as a sort of pseudo aperture and pseudo wall. In buildings that have large glass coverings and even glass walls, this problem has become quite persistent.

When we examine a transparent body of considerable thickness, such as an aquarium full of water, a solid glass cube (an inkwell), and so on, the consciousness is split with an exceptional sense of unease between the perceptions of both facets of the transparent body, which occupy different positions in the consciousness, but are homogeneous in content (this last circumstance being the cause of the unease). The body fluctuates in the consciousness between a reading of it as *something*, a body, and as *nothing*, visually nothing insofar as it is transparent.⁶ This *nothing* to vision is *something* to the touch; but this something is transformed by visual memory into something that *seems* visual. The transparent is apparitional.

The lambent green of groves in spring stirs unease in the heart, not only because it appears 'in early spring', but also for a simple optical reason - its transparency. By providing a stereoscopic spatial depth with the points of its leaves, tiny though by no means 'viscous', this foliage suggests deep points in space and, since it is thickly distributed, it does so with appreciable psychological forcefulness. As a result, the entire space is substantiated and acquires the visual character of a glass-like thickness. Again: it both is and *is not*, truly - the Platonic τὸ μὴ ὄν is presented visibly. Here is one more example that is particularly vivid. I once happened to be standing in the Sergiev Posad Church of the Nativity, almost directly facing the closed royal doors. Through their carving the throne was clearly visible, while I could see the gates themselves through a fretwork brass grille on the pulpit. Three layers of space, but each of them could be clearly seen only by a special accommodation of vision, such that the two others would then acquire a *special* place in the consciousness, and in consequence would be considered half-existing by comparison with the one clearly visible.

So, in the visible representation of the world it is essential to distinguish, side by side with images that are actually visible, images that are abstractly-visual, yet that are insurmountably present in perception through peripheral vision, touch and other perceptions that are not available to pure visuality, yet

lead to it and allude to it. In other words, in visual perception there are both visual and also *apparent* visual, images. It is not difficult to recognise in this duality of visual perception the dualistic nature of a geometric plane,⁷ whereby the intrinsically visual images correspond to the real side of the plane, and the abstractly visual images to the imaginary.⁸ For the two-sidedness of a geometric plane is also a symbol of the bi-differentiated positions that visual images have in the consciousness, but only considered to the utmost limit, when the thickness of the separated layers of space is infinitely small, and the disunity of those and other images is great within limits. If we *see* the front side of the plane, then we only *know* about its reverse side abstractly.

But to know in the abstract about some visible image whose essence actually lies in its visibility means to perceive it by some *other*, non-visual method, adapted to visuality through an abstract concept or a mnemonic image. *Reality*, in this sense, is the embodiment of the abstract in the visible material whence the abstract was obtained, whereas the *imaginary* is the embodiment of that same abstract [concept], but in a visible, heterogeneous material. Reality, if you like, is the adequacy of the abstract and the concrete (tautology), while the imaginary is the symbolical (allegory). In this sense it is also necessary to speak of *concepts of sensations* as *imaginary sensations* or *sensations of the imaginary*. This is the imaginary taken to its limit. In fact, the only content of sensation is its own sensory presence. Conceivable sensation, however, is not simply *nothing*, but yet another sensation (because every concept is connected with some sensory substratum which is the point of its application), perceived as a heterogeneous concept. It is appropriate to recall Meinong's term *Pseudoexistenz*,⁹ without however alluding to its particular significance for Meinong. These sensory elements and imaginary figures that have been in a specific way established in the consciousness fully conform to the imaginary geometric figures of a surface. Indeed, the presence of imaginary perceptions in every concrete experience prompts the art historian to consider the *imaginary*. Consequently, it behoves the theory of the fine arts to somehow say its piece on the proposed interpretation of the imaginaries in geometry. Let us now turn to Favorsky's attempt to utilise the distinction between two kinds of visual images, in order to express the theory of imaginaries in artistic terms.

The first task facing the engraver was to preserve and confirm the integrity of the fundamental plane, because without an intact plane it would have been impossible, not only to depict images on its sides, but also to distinguish the sides themselves. This first task was realised by *inscriptions* that

restrained the fundamental plane of the depiction on the surface of the page, as well as by designating the axial coordinate points by the letters X, O, Y and a vertical passing through X. The actual letters X, O, Y were weighty enough to serve the same purpose. The stability of the main vertical was further reinforced by the raising up, compared to the author's first name, of his surname located above the vertical.

The page as such is not of course white, but colourless. It is an abstract potential for representations. It would be a mistake to see in this page a sheet of paper, a substance which in itself is neither a plane nor anything else geometric. The page must be understood as an infinitely thin representational space, like a transparent film laid on top of the sheet. In itself this film is not yet this or that *side* of the representational plane, but the entire plane, including both its sides and its entire thickness, even if in reality it is infinitely thin. This surface is created by the artist.

Now the artist must show visibly both sides of this film-like space and their qualitative tonality. Since it is immediately visible, the front side of the plane possesses the warmth of a sensory perception and projects forward, yet in no way is it closer to the viewer than the basic plane of the inscriptions. [It is] the large black-hatched rectangle [that] conveys the image of the front side of a plane, of something warm, because of the blackness of the hatching rendered horizontally. *On* the rectangle, projecting outwards, are shown a half-ellipse and a small solid black rectangle, as purely real images - the warmest and most prominent parts of the film-like space. The thin white edging demonstrates their thickness and in the process makes them project still further towards the viewer. All are strictly visual images. Contrasted to them is the side of the drawing to the right of the vertical, engraved almost entirely with white hatching. This is the imaginary side of the plane, the reverse of the film-like space, and not *just any* random place on it, but that very spot that lies *beneath* the hatched rectangle on the left portion. The principal line on the imaginary side is the arc of the straightened-out hyperbola - the imaginary appendage of the actual ellipse, which appendage must be imagined to be tangential to the ellipse at its top.

To convey the chromatic value of this line, the engraver has squeezed it within a series of horizontal white strokes - and on the abstract colourlessness of the film-like space there appears a cold *white* line. Such a colour in contrast to the warm black of the front side of the plane represents the reverse. The white colour of this reverse side is successfully shown at top right, where the white lattice is placed.

One might ask why the reverse side is white. Of course, since it had to be some residual trace of the sensorially perceived - of the black - it was essential that it be white, as a complementary image or a residual trace. Moreover, visuality, as a substratum of the real images, is expressed through the presence of warm black. Consequently, the absence of visuality, i.e., some *other* perception formulated *as* visual, is necessarily to be imagined as a negative - both visually, by its form, and non-visually, by its content. The white hatching is called upon to express this. It is like a hatch stroke, a black one, but without its blackness, empty inside, at once a stroke and not a stroke. In this way this first part is depicted, not as if it were drawn, but as if it were pressed out, in relief, presented not to the sight as such, but to the touch. The impression of the *reverse* which this right side represents is compounded by the letter O, drawn in mirror-image and also with white hatching, in its lower right corner. This is not some new letter, but that same black-hatched O visible in the lower left corner, only perceived *through* the plane. The interrelationship between the right and the left O can be explained as follows: let us imagine that an O that would stand out in relief on the other side of the sheet was written in pencil on the paper. This letter would consequently be both visual and tactile. Further, suppose this sheet is stationary. If someone was then invited to draw this sheet, looking at it from in front and touching it from the back with his hand, then the result would be a drawing similar to Favorsky's cover, and with the same layout. For after gauging the width of the sheet from O to X *with his eye*, the draftsman would continue his observations *with his hand*, and specifically from the point where his eye refused to function, i.e., he would move his hand *from* the point X to O. Consequently, the points of the plane, gradually moving away from the vertical which passes through X, would appear in the drawing also to be moving away from the vertical, but this time not to the left but to the right. The movement of the hand over the sheet would be recognised as an extension of the movement of the eye. Therefore the point O, being tactile, would appear in the representation as furthest from the point O, being visual. The interrelationship of them both would be approximately in mirror-image-approximately, because the measure of tactile space is not identical to the measure of visual space.

The same should be said of the entire drawing, which on the right gives a visual mirror transposition of the tactile structure of the reverse side of the plane. In other words, one is obliged to think of the filmy space of the representation as if it were splintered into two sides, with a rotation from underneath the plane like the page of a book, at 180° near the vertical axis, passing through X.

And now begins the solution to the engraver's main difficulty - to show clearly that both sides of the drawing, right and left, are not simply abutted to each other, even if they are qualitatively different, one purely visual, the other visually tactile, but that they actually constitute the two sides of a *single* plane. It fell to the engraver to show visibly that the right side of the drawing is only a cognitive, and *not* a material splitting of the plane. This is achieved in the first place because each of the two separated sides contains an indication of the other - in the form of a small *breach* to the other side - and through these two breaches the mutual connection between the sides is once more restored. The breach through to the front side of the plane is produced in the place where it projects out the furthest, where it is most convincingly real. This is achieved visibly, through some sort of clairvoyant transference of the perceiving center of consciousness over to the other side of the plane. Then we perceive there this same negative-white colour of the reverse side, which has depicted on it in relief the mirror symbol of the imaginary *i*, similar to the mirrored *0*. From that side this *i* would evidently be drawn right way round, but from here it is perceived in mirror-image. From here this is a visual representation of the *i* traced *there*, or from there the tactile trace in release of the *i* traced *here*. Rendered by a white stroke, this *i* is clearly another character than the letters *X*, *O*, *Y* on the front of the plane and, besides, it is whiter than the white reverse side of the plane, i.e., it is even more abstract. This breach to the front is a view, or a visually transposed relief, of the reverse side, *that same side* that is represented by the right half of the drawing. But this breach is not coordinated with the front of the plane and is at once closer than the black rectangle and further away from it. It is impossible to coordinate something homogeneous but which occupies an opposite position in the consciousness.

Both sides of the plane are linked together on the right side of the drawing, too, by a reversed breach from the imaginary to the real. But the nature of the breach here is no longer visual, but abstract, not an exact clairvoyance, but a vague memory of an abandoned visual space, surfacing in the first moments of its entry into a tactile space. As just such a memory the section of the narrow black-hatched ellipse is represented against the black-hatched background, but one that is diagonally hatched. Such is the scrap of the real side, although it is also on the border with the imaginary side. Though it is situated amidst an imaginary space it is not coordinated with it. This scrap, combined with the white-hatched filling-in of the ellipse on the white-hatched ground, conveys the fluctuation of the geometric figure in its fall through the plane, when it has not yet been defined, being both imaginary and real at the same time.

Let us return to the breach on the left side of the drawing. The sharp contrast between the grounds, black and white, makes this i the visual centre of the entire page, irresistibly focusing the gaze upon it, as a result of which the whole left side of the drawing is contemplated through *direct* vision and therefore stands on the page and in its plane with extreme stability. But then the right side of the representation, especially its edge, is inevitably seen very vaguely, with the peripheral vision that is extended by the breach on the left. The entire right side, which is essentially abstract, by the way the wood is cut, finally loses its concreteness and stability. The hazy plane of the right side of the representation, separated from the plane of the page, sways as it rotates around the main vertical, and comes up against the viewer, like a book slammed in his face with its left cover stationary. This impression that the right side is mobile is extraordinarily enhanced, in the first place by the three levels of its plane (the lattice, above it, closer to the viewer, the horizontal hatching, and higher still the second lattice inside a square), and secondly by an apparently perspectival merging of the parallels of both grids with the horizontal hatching beneath to the left, which again raises the idea that the entire right section is leaning, as if the sheet of the cover were bent back along the vertical and had begun to open all by itself. Thirdly, this same compositional, and at the same time functional, idea is assisted by a certain broadening of the whole right side of the engraving, as if by dint of bringing its right edge closer to the eye.

Finally, a few more words remain to be said about the inscriptions. We began by pointing out that it is they that establish the actual plane of the representation. But they could not have established the plane if they had been only *on* its front side, for then the space of the page, excised from the front side, i.e., bounded from the front, would recede limitlessly into the page and there could be no mention of the reverse side of the plane. Consequently, the inscriptions ought to establish not only the front boundary of the plane, its front side, but also the lower boundary, its reverse side, gathering into itself the whole flat space, as if squeezing it between two sheets of glass. It is the inscriptions that must define the whole thickness of the plane. Favorsky achieves this by assigning the letters or their elements to *different* sides of the plane, so that MH, for example, is clearly located on the front side, as is also shown by the horizontal hatching that unites the space of these letters to the left rectangle of the composition. M, T and I in the word '*geometriia*' (geometry) are related to the reverse side, since they are drawn with white strokes, while I, T and I in the word '*mnimosti*' (imaginary) fluctuate, partly turned to the front, partly turned

inside out, as if they were *sewing* or quilting together the thickness of the plane. The last letter of the word 'mnimosti' is especially expressive in conveying this function.

But the cover would not have entirely attained its prescribed purpose if the inscriptions only served the purpose of graphics, while their actual graphics were foreign to their meaning. Obviously, the graphic peculiarities of the inscriptions should not only hold the plane, but also convey the sound space of the voice's intonations and express the sound coordination of the words. One example of how Favorsky approaches this goal is the placement of the author's surname above his christian name, to convey a corresponding international emphasis. Furthermore, in the word '*mnimosti*' its first, stressed part is emphasised, while the stressed part in '*v geometrii*', which has an elucidatory meaning and is pronounced in an undertone, falls in the cover on the imaginary, the semi-visual part of the plane.

Such, in its basic outlines, is the interpretation of Favorsky's geometric composition.

29 August (11 September) 1922

Reverse Perspective

Introduction

As Florensky mentions in his first footnote, the essay on 'Reverse Perspective' derives from a lecture that he had intended to give to the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra in October 1919.¹ However, invited by Pavel Muratov, director of MIKhIM, Florensky ended up delivering the lecture in 1920 to its Byzantine Section where he was already teaching the history of Byzantine art.² Florensky borrowed not only the title and the concept of reverse perspective, but also two key examples, Raphael's *Vision of Ezekiel* and Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* from Oskar Wulff's essay 'Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Niedersicht'.³

Essentially, Florensky's lecture was related to the study of icons within the Russian Church and drew upon his practical experience as a member of the Commission. Starting with the issue of reverse perspective in general, Florensky developed his ideas on space and spatiality in the work of art - which were to become the main topic of his three years of classes at VKhUTEMAS in 1921–24. That is why substantial parts of 'Reverse Perspective' are also to be found in his treatise 'Analysis of Spatiality and Time in works of Visual Art'.⁴ As a matter of fact, Mlechnyi put' [Milky Way], the Moscow publishing-house of the journal *Makovets*, announced the forthcoming publication of Florensky's VKhUTEMAS lectures on the analysis of perspective as a book - and as being the most comprehensive treatise on space and art to date.

Florensky held 'Reverse Perspective' in high regard and, not surprisingly, listed it as the primary essay on his cover design for the proposed first volume of his magnum opus, *At the Watersheds of Thought*, in 1922.⁵ Sad to say, this project was not implemented, Florensky was denied the publicity that he deserved, and the fruits of his brilliant research remained out of reach so that as late as 1971, for example, a contemporary Western study of reverse perspective still omitted reference to the essay.⁶ 'Reverse Perspective' appeared in print in the Soviet Union only in 1967, and even then the official censure of Florensky's religious and philosophical legacy was still so strong that the publication did not enjoy wide circulation.

Full restitution and recognition of Florensky's lecture came with the

publication of Lev Zhegin's treatise, *Yazyk zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia* [The Language of the Work of Painting] in 1970. A close colleague of Florensky within Makovets, and much indebted to him, Zhegin developed his own ideas on perspective and spatial representation in art, specifically within the context of the Russian icon.⁷ Subsequent discussion of Zhegin's *The Language of the Work of Painting* in Soviet intellectual circles also initiated a broader appreciation of Florensky's own ideas and his name now came to be mentioned publicly both by protagonists and antagonists, especially in the context of the essay on perspective.⁸ Interestingly enough, the ideological arguments that were advanced for and against Florensky in the 1920s and 1930s continue to recur in Russian culturology, irrespective of the prevailing political regime, and can still be found in contemporary Russian studies on perspective in Byzantine and Western art, such as those of the mathematician Boris Raushenbakh.⁹ Drawing a parallel between the concept of reverse perspective and that of 'perceptual perspective' (Byzantium and Medieval Russia), Raushenbakh asserts that this category (in contrast to linear perspective) is 'freer' from the inevitability of projective geometry, it is also more 'scientific', because it expresses, albeit unconsciously, the artist's conception of non-Euclidean space (especially as formulated by the celebrated mathematician, Nikolai Lobachevsky).¹⁰

REVERSE PERSPECTIVE"

I *Historical Observations*

I

Those who become acquainted with Russian icons of the fourteenth, fifteenth and part of the sixteenth centuries for the first time are usually astonished by the unexpected perspectival relationships, especially in the depiction of objects with flat sides and rectilinear edges, as for instance buildings, tables and chairs, and especially books, specifically the Gospels which the Saviour and the saints are usually shown holding. These particular relationships stand in glaring contradiction to the rules of linear perspective, from whose viewpoint they can only be considered examples of crudely illiterate drawing.

On a closer scrutiny of icons it is easy to note that bodies bounded by curved surfaces are also rendered with foreshortenings that are ruled out by the laws of perspectival representation. Whether the bodies depicted are curvilinear or faceted, the icon often shows parts and surfaces which cannot be seen simultaneously, as one can easily find out from any elementary manual on perspective. So, given a viewpoint perpendicular to the facade of the buildings depicted, both lateral facades are apt to be shown simultaneously. Three or even all four sides of the Gospel are shown at the same time. A face is depicted with the crown of the head, the temples and the ears turned forward and, as it were, spread out on the surface of the icon, while the planes of the nose and other facial features, which should not have been depicted, are turned towards the viewer, and, moreover, while planes that should have been turned forward are turned backward. Also characteristic are the hunched backs of the stooping figures in the *Deesis* row, the back and chest of Saint prochoros shown simultaneously, as he writes under the direction of Apostle John the Theologian, and other analogous instances where the surfaces of a profile and a face view, the back and frontal planes, are combined, and so on. In regard to these supplementary planes, lines that are parallel and do not lie on the plane of the icon, or lines that are parallel to it which should be shown converging on the horizon, are instead shown in an icon diverging from each

other. In a word, these and similar infringements of the perspectival unity of what is represented on the icon are so evident and explicit that even the most mediocre pupil with just a cursory, third-hand experience of perspective will immediately point them out.

But it is a strange thing that these 'illiteracies' of drawing, which apparently ought to throw any viewer who understands the 'obvious absurdity' of such a depiction into a rage, on the contrary arouse no such feelings of annoyance and are perceived as something fitting, even pleasing. Nor is that all: when the viewer has the chance to put two or three icons from about the same period and painted with approximately equal skill side by side, he perceives an enormous artistic superiority in that icon which demonstrates the greatest violation of the rules of perspective, whereas the icons which have been drawn more 'correctly' seem cold, lifeless and lacking the slightest connection with the reality depicted on it. It always transpires that the icons that are the most creative in terms of immediate artistic perception are perspectivally 'defective', whereas icons that better satisfy the perspective textbook are boring and soulless. If you allow yourself simply to forget the formal demands of perspectival rendering for a while, then direct artistic feeling will lead everyone to admit the superiority of icons that transgress the laws of perspective.

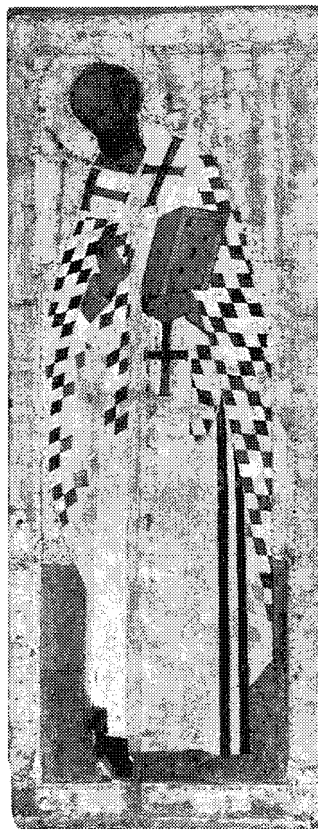
It may be suggested here that it is not actually the means of depiction as such that are found pleasing, but the naivety and primitive quality of the art, which is still childishly carefree in regard to artistic literacy. There are even connoisseurs inclined to proclaim that icons are charming childish babbling. But no: the fact that icons which violate the laws of perspective are actually the work of first rank artists, whereas a less extreme transgression of these same laws is primarily characteristic of second- and third-rate artists, prompts one to consider whether the opinion that icons are naive is not itself naive. On the other hand, these transgressions against the laws of perspective are so persistent and frequent, so systematic I would say, and so insistently systematic moreover, that the thought involuntarily arises that these transgressions are not fortuitous, that there is a special system for the representation and perception of reality as it is represented in icons.

No sooner has this thought arisen than the firm conviction is born and gradually strengthens in the minds of observers of icons that these transgressions of the rules of perspective constitute the application of a conscious method of icon painting, and that for better or worse they are entirely premeditated and conscious.

This impression that the aforementioned transgressions of perspective

are conscious is immeasurably strengthened by the emphasis placed on the particular foreshortenings under discussion - to which particular coloured glazes (*rastsvetki*) or, as the iconpainters say, *raskryshki*,¹² are applied. In this case the peculiarities of drawing, far from slipping past the consciousness through the application of neutral colours in corresponding places, or of colours muted by the overall colour scheme, on the contrary issue a challenge as it were, almost shouting against the general painted ground. So, for instance, the additional planes of the buildings, far from hiding in the shade, are on the contrary often painted in bright colours that, moreover, are quite different from the planes of the facades. The most insistent in declaring itself on such occasions is the Gospel- (illus. 49) the object which, even without this, pushes itself closest to the foreground by various devices and attempts to be the painterly center of the icon. The Gospel's edge, usually painted cinnabar, is the brightest spot on the icon and thereby emphasises its additional planes with exceptional sharpness.

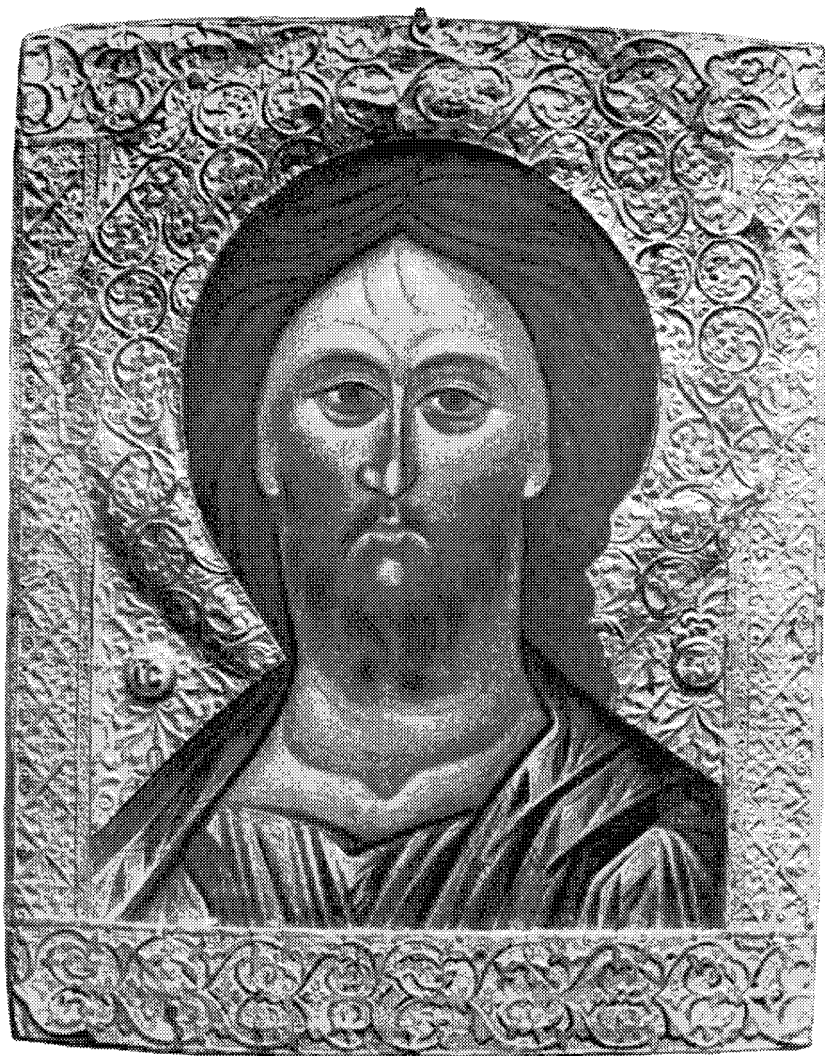
Such are the methods used for emphasis. These methods are all the more conscious in that they are, as it were, at odds with the usual colouring of objects and, consequently, cannot be explained as the naturalistic imitation of things as they normally are. The Gospel did not usually have a cinnabar edge, while the side walls of a building were not painted in colours different from the front, so that it is impossible not to see in the diversity of their colouration on icons an aspiration to emphasise the fact that these planes are supplementary and that they do not submit to the foreshortenings of linear perspective as such.



49 Anon., *St Nicholas the Miracle Worker*, 1425-7, tempera on board. *Deesis* of the Iconostasis of the Trinity Church, Lavra of Sergiev Posad

H

The methods mentioned above are generally termed *reverse* or *reversed perspective*, or sometimes also *distorted* or *false perspective*. But reverse perspective does not exhaust the varied peculiarities of an icon's drawing and also of its chiaroscuro. The closest dissemination of the methods of reverse perspective to be noted is the use of *polycentredness* in representations: the composition is constructed as if the eye were looking at different parts of it, while changing its position. So, for example, some parts of buildings are drawn more or less in line with the demands of ordinary linear perspective, but each one from its own particular point of view, with its own particular perspectival centre; and sometimes also with its own particular horizon, while the other parts are, in addition, shown using reverse perspective. This complex elaboration of perspectival foreshortening occurs not only in the depiction of buildings (*palatnoe pis'mo*), but also in countenances, although it is usually applied without any great insistence, with restraint and moderation, and can therefore be passed off as 'mistakes' in drawing. And yet in other cases all the schoolroom rules are overturned with such daring, their violation is so masterfully emphasised, and the resulting icon conveys so much about itself and its artistic achievements to a spontaneous artistic taste, that there can no longer be any doubt: the 'incorrect' and mutually contradictory details of drawing represent a complex artistic calculation which, if you wish, you may call daring, but by no means naive. What will we say, for instance, of the icon of Christ Pantocrator in the Lavra sacristy (illus. 50),¹³ in which, although the head is turned slightly to the right, the right side has an additional plane, and the foreshortened left side of the nose is smaller than the right, and so on? The plane of the nose is so obviously turned to one side, and the surface of the crown and temples so opened out, that it would be easy to reject such an icon, if it were not for its astonishing expressiveness and completeness, in spite of its 'irregularities'. We become fully and definitively aware of this impression if we examine another icon of this appellation in this same sacristy,¹⁴ similar in design, transcription, dimensions and colours, but painted much more correctly and pedantically, almost without the deviations from the rules of perspective noted above. Compared to the first, this second icon proves to have no content, to be expressionless, flat and lifeless, so that there can be no doubt that, for all their striking general similarity, the transgressions against perspectival rules are not a permissible weakness on the icon painter's part, but are his positive strength. They are precisely what makes the first of the icons examined immeasurably superior to the second, the incorrect superior to the correct.



50 *Christ Pantocrator*, 16th century, tempera on board. State Museum of the Lavra of Sergiev Posad

Further, if we turn to chiaroscuro, here we also find in icons a distinctive distribution of shadows that emphasises and singles out the icon's lack of correspondence to a representation demanded by naturalistic painting. The absence of a definite focus of light, the contradictory illuminations in different parts of the icon, the tendency to project forward masses that should be in shadow - these factors are once again not accidental, not the blunders of a primitive painter, but artistic calculations which convey a maximum of artistic expressivity.

To the number of similar methods used in icon painting must also be added the lines of the so-called *razdelki*, which are painted in a colour different from that used to paint the corresponding place on the icon (*raskryshka*), most often using metallic paints - a gold or very rarely a silver *assist*, or slaked gold. By thus emphasising the colour of the lines of the *razdelka*, we wish to say that the icon painter pays conscious attention to it, although it does not correspond to anything physically seen, to any kind of analogous system of lines on clothing or a seat, for instance, but is only a system of potential lines, a given object's structural lines, similar, for instance, to the lines of force of an electric or magnetic field, or to systems of equipotential, isothermic or other such curves. The lines of the *razdelka* express a metaphysical schema of the given object, its dynamic, with greater force than its visible lines are capable of, although they are themselves quite invisible. Once outlined on the icon they represent in the icon painter's conception the sum total of the tasks presented to the contemplating eye, the lines that direct the movements of the eye as it contemplates the icon. These lines are a schema for reconstructing the perceived object in the consciousness, and if one were to look for the physical bases of these lines, they would be force lines, tension lines, in other words, not folds formed under tension, not yet folds, but potential folds, in potential only - those lines along which folds would lie, if they were to begin to fall into folds at all. The lines of the *razdelka* that are outlined on the additional plane reveal to the consciousness the structural character of these planes. Consequently, without limiting one to a passive contemplation of these planes, they help one to understand the functional relationship of such lines to the whole. This means that they provide the means for noticing with special acuteness that such foreshortenings are not subject to the demands of linear perspective.

We will not discuss other, secondary methods used in icon painting to emphasise its immunity from the laws of linear perspective and its consciousness of its perspectival transgressions. We will mention only the contour that outlines the design and thereby emphasises to an extreme degree its peculiar-

ities, the *ozhivki*, the *dvizhki* and *otmetiny*, and the *probely*, too, that reveal areas in relief and thus accentuate all the irregularities that should not have been visible, etc.

I have said enough, one may suppose, to remind all who look closely at icons, and who already possess a store of impressions, that these deviations from the rules of perspective are not fortuitous and, moreover, that such violations are aesthetically fruitful.

III

And now, after this reminder, we are confronted by the question of what these transgressions mean and whether they are legitimate; in other words we are confronted by the related question of the meaning of perspective and the limits of its application. Does perspective in actual fact express the nature of things, as its supporters maintain, and should it therefore be always and everywhere viewed as the unconditional prerequisite for artistic veracity? Or is it rather just a schema, and moreover one of several possible representational schemas, corresponding not to a perception of the world as a whole, but only to one of the possible interpretations of the world, connected to a specific feeling for, and understanding of, life? Or yet again, is perspective, the perspectival image of the world, the perspectival interpretation of the world, a natural image that flows from its essence, a true word of the world, or is it just a particular orthography, one of many constructions that is characteristic of those who created it, relative to the century and the life-concept of those who invented it, and expressive of their own style - but by no means excluding other orthographies, other systems of transcriptions, corresponding to the life-concept and style of other centuries? Transcriptions, furthermore, that are perhaps more connected to the essence of things by the vital truth of the experience they expound - in any case, such that a violation of this perspectival transcription interferes with the artistic truth of images to the same inconsequential degree that grammatical mistakes do in the letter of a holy man.

To answer our question, let us provide first of all some historical references; let us prove historically to what extent representation and perspective are in fact inseparable from each other.

Babylonian and Egyptian low reliefs show no evidence of perspective or, incidentally, show what would be called reverse perspective. However, it is well known that the polycentrism of Egyptian representations is exceptionally great and is canonical in Egyptian art. Everyone remembers Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings where the face and feet are in profile, with the shoulders

and chest turned frontally. But in any event they contain no linear perspective.¹⁵ However, the astonishing veracity of Egyptian portrait and genre sculpture demonstrates the Egyptian artists' enormous powers of observation, and if the laws of perspective do actually form part of the truth of the world, as its proponents claim, then it would be completely incomprehensible why the refined eye of the Egyptian master did not notice perspective. On the other hand, the celebrated mathematical historian Moritz Cantor points out that the Egyptians already possessed the basic geometric understanding necessary for perspectival representations. Specifically, they knew about geometric proportionality, and furthermore had advanced so far in this respect that they were able, where necessary, to apply a variable scale of magnitudes. 'One can scarcely fail to be amazed that the Egyptians did not take the next step and discover perspective. As is known, in Egyptian painting there is not a trace of it, and although religious or other reasons can be adduced for this, the geometric fact remains that the Egyptians did not make use of this method of conceiving of a painted screen as if it were placed between the observing eye and the object depicted, and of using lines to connect the intersecting points of this plane with the rays directed towards this object.'¹⁶

Cantor's passing remark about the religious bases for the lack of perspective in Egyptian depictions deserves our attention. In fact, Egyptian art, with a past that spans millennia, became strictly canonical and set in immutable theoretical formulae, not too far removed in their internal meaning, perhaps, from hieroglyphic inscriptions, just as the inscriptions were in turn not too far removed from metaphysical representational meaning. Of course, Egyptian art had no need of innovations and gradually became increasingly self absorbed. Even if they had been noticed, perspectival relationships could not have been permitted within the self-contained circle of canons that constituted Egyptian art. The absence of linear perspective among the Egyptians, as also in a different sense among the Chinese, demonstrates the maturity of their art, and even its senile overripeness, rather than its infantile lack of experience. It demonstrates the liberation from perspective, or a refusal from the very beginning to acknowledge its power - a power which, as we will see, is characteristic of subjectivism and illusionism - *for the sake of religious objectivity and suprapersonal metaphysics*. Conversely, when the religious stability of a Weltanschauung disintegrates and the sacred metaphysics of the general popular consciousness is eroded by the individual judgement of a single person with his single point of view, and moreover with a single point of view precisely at this specific moment - then there also appears a perspective,

which is characteristic of a fragmented consciousness. But besides, this initially happens not in pure art, which is essentially always more or less meta-physical, but in *applied* art, as an element of decoration, which has as its task *not the true essence of being, but verisimilitude to appearance.*

It is noteworthy that Vitruvius attributes the invention of perspective to Anaxagoras, the same Anaxagoras who tried to turn the living divinities, the Sun and Moon, into burning hot stones, and to substitute for the divine creation of the world a central whirlwind in which the heavenly bodies emerged; and that he locates its invention specifically in what the Ancients called scenography, i.e., theatre decoration. According to Vitruvius,¹⁷ when Aeschylus staged his tragedies in Athens around 470 BC, and the famous Agatharcos provided him with sets and wrote a treatise about them, the *Commentarius*, it was this that prompted Anaxagoras and Democritus to explain the same subject - the painting of stage sets - scientifically. The question which they posed was how lines might be traced on a plane such that, given a centre in a definite place, the visual rays conducted towards them corresponded to the rays conducted from the eye [of someone standing] in the same place to the corresponding points of an actual building - so that the image of the original object on the retina, to put it in modern terms, would coincide completely with the same image representing this object on the decoration.¹⁸

IV

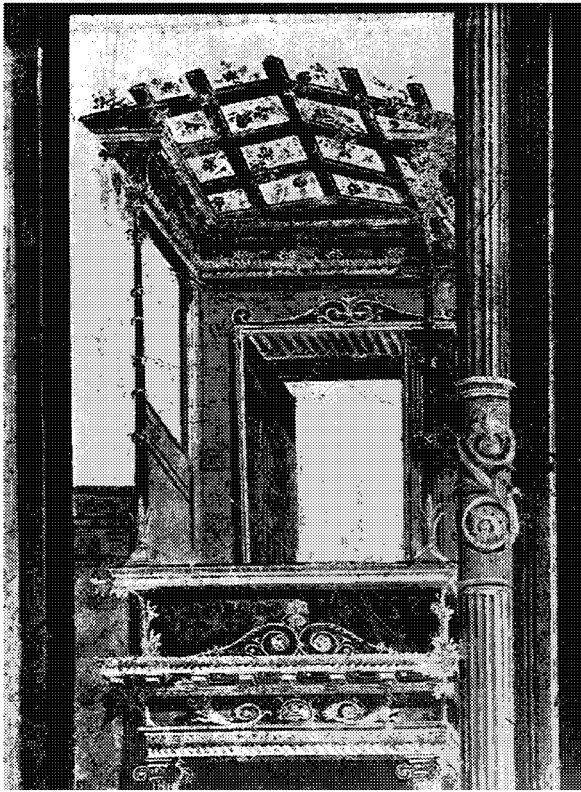
And so, it was not in pure art that perspective arose. According to its very first task, far from expressing a vital artistic perception of reality, it came out of the applied art sphere, or more precisely the field of technical theatre, which enlisted painting in its service and subordinated it to its own purposes. Whether these purposes correspond to the purposes of pure art is a question that need not be answered. For the task of painting is not to duplicate reality, but to give the most profound penetration of its architectonics, of its material, of its meaning. And the penetration of this meaning, of this stuff of reality, its architectonics, is offered to the artist's contemplative eye in *living contact* with reality, by growing accustomed to and empathising with reality, whereas theatre decoration wants as much as possible to replace reality with its outward appearance. The aesthetics of this outward appearance lie in the inner connectedness of its elements, but in no way is it the symbolic signifying of the prototype via the image, realised by means of artistic technique. Stage design is a *deception*, albeit a seductive one; while pure painting is, or at least

wants to be, above all *true* to life, not a substitute for life but merely the symbolic signifier of its deepest reality. Stage design is a screen that thickens the light of existence, while pure painting is a window opened wide on reality. For the rationalising mind of Anaxagoras or Democritus representational art as a symbol of reality could not exist and there was no demand for it. Which is what the 'Wanderers'19 thought, too, - if I may make an historical category out of this minor phenomenon of Russian life - for they demanded not the truth to life that provides penetration, but an external likeness, pragmatically useful for the most immediate functions of life; not life's creative foundations, but the imitation of life's surface. Before that, the Greek stage was simply sketched out by 'pictures and fabrics';²⁰ now people felt the need of illusion. And so, presupposing that the spectator or the stage designer was chained fast, like the prisoner of Plato's cave, to a theatre bench and neither could nor should have a direct vital relationship to reality, these first theoreticians of perspective provided rules for a deception that ensnared the theatre spectator as if he were separated from the stage by a glass barrier and there were just one immobile eye, observing without penetrating the very essence of life and, most important, with his will paralysed, for the very essence of a theatre that has become mundane demands a will-less looking at the stage, as at some 'untruth', something 'not really there: some empty deception. Anaxagoras and Democritus replace the living man with a spectator, paralysed by *curare*, and so they thereby make clear the rules for deceiving this spectator. Now there is no need for us to contend that, in order to create a visual illusion for this ailing spectator, almost totally deprived of the general human feeling common to all men, these methods for the perspectival truly have their own meaning.

Consequently, we should take it as given that, at least in fifth-century BC Greece, perspective was known, and if on this or that occasion it was still not applied, then obviously this was not at all because its principles were unknown, but because of some other, more profound convictions, arising from the *loftier demands of pure art*. And it would be highly unlikely and inconsistent with the state of the mathematical sciences and the advanced geometric powers of observation which the Ancients' refined eyes possessed, to suggest that they did not notice the perspectival image of the world that is supposedly an intrinsic part of normal vision, or were unable to deduce the corresponding simple applications from the elementary theorems of geometry. It would be very difficult to doubt that, when they did not apply the rules of perspective, it was because they simply did not want to apply them, considering them superfluous and anti-artistic.

Indeed, in his *Geography*,²¹ written around the second century AD, Ptolomeus examines the cartographic theory of the projection of a sphere on a plane. In his *Planisphere* he discusses various ways of making projections, primarily the projection from a pole to the equatorial plane, the projection which in 1613 Aquilonius dubbed *stereographic*, and also solves other difficult projective problems.²² Can it possibly be imagined that, given such a state of knowledge, the simple methods of linear perspective were unknown? And indeed, wherever we are dealing not with pure art but with theatrical illusions, applied deceptively to enlarge the space of the stage or to break up the flat surface of an interior wall, we are invariably confronted with the use of linear perspective as a response to the task in hand.

In particular this is observed in those instances when life, distancing itself from its deep-seated sources, flows through the shallow waters of frivolous Epicureanism, in the atmosphere of bourgeois frivolity that surrounded the Greek manikins - the *graeculori* as the contemporary Romans called them, diminished men lacking the noumenal depth of the Greek genius who failed to attain the majestic scale of the Roman people's moral and political thought with its universal scope. What I have in mind here are the elegantly vapid decorations in the houses of Pompeii, the architectural wall decorations of Pompeiian villas (illus. 51).²³ Transplanted to Rome primarily from Alexandria and other centres of Hellenistic culture in the first and second centuries, this *barocco* of the ancient world was preoccupied with purely illusionistic tasks and strove specifically to *deceive* the viewer, who as a consequence was assumed to be more or less immobile. This sort of architectural and landscape decoration is perhaps clumsy, in the sense that it cannot be realised in actuality,²⁴ but it nevertheless wishes to deceive, as if playing with and teasing the viewer. Other details are rendered with such naturalism that the viewer can only convince himself of the optical illusion by touch. This impression is aided by the masterly use of chiaroscuro, applied so as to coincide with whatever light source illuminates the room, whether a window, a hole in the ceiling, a door.²⁵ The notable fact that even from this illusionistic landscape there once again extend the threads connecting it to the architecture of the Graeco-Roman *stage* merits the closest attention.²⁶ Perspective is rooted in the theatre not simply because historically and technically perspective was first used in the theatre, but also by virtue of a deeper motivation: the theatricality of a perspectival depiction of the world. For in this consists that facile experience of the world, devoid of a feeling for reality and a sense of



51 Architectural wall decoration in the Triclinium of the House of Vettii at Pompeii, IV Style, fresco

responsibility, that sees life as just a spectacle, and in no sense a challenge. And that is why, if we return to Pompeii, it is hard to discover in these decorations authentic works of pure art. Indeed, the technical glibness of these house decorations still cannot make art historians forget that what we are looking at is 'just the work of virtuoso craftsmen, not of true inspired artists'.²⁷ It is exactly the same with the landscape backgrounds in genre paintings, which are painted 'always very approximately', quickly and skilfully sketched out. 'Whether the backgrounds in the famous paintings of the masters were painted in this way remains open to question.'²⁸ These artifacts 'suffer from the artist's approximate way of solving perspectival goals, goals that he confronts as if in an exclusively empirical way,' writes Benois. Nevertheless, the question is an important one. 'Do these traits mean that the laws of perspective really were unknown to the Ancients? Do we not see at the

present time this same forgetting of perspective as a science? The time is fast approaching when we too will reach "Byzantine" absurdities in this area and will leave behind us the lack of skill and the approximations of late classical painting. Will it be possible on these grounds to deny that the preceding generation of artists knew the laws of perspective?'²⁹

Indeed, in this semi-accuracy of perspectival accomplishments one can make out the embryonic disintegration of perspective, which soon begins in the Eastern and Western Middle Ages. But it occurs to me that these inaccuracies in perspective are a compromise between essentially decorative goals-illusionistic painting - and synthetic goals - pure painting. For it must not be forgotten that a residence, no matter how frivolous its interiors, is still not a theatre, and that the inhabitant of a house is by no means as chained to his place and as confined in his life as is the spectator at the theatre. If the wall painting in some House of the Vettii complied with the rules of perspective accurately, it could claim successfully to be a deception or a playful joke only if the spectator did not move and, moreover, stood in a strictly defined place in the room. Conversely, any movement on his part or even more, a change in his position would produce the repulsive feeling of an unsuccessful deception or an unmasked stunt. It is specifically to avoid crude violations of the illusion that the decorator refuses to apply it with uncompromising obtrusiveness to each separate viewpoint and therefore provides a certain synthetic perspective, something approximate, for each separate point of view, a solution to the problem, yet one that expands out into the space of the *entire* room. Figuratively speaking, he resorts to the tempered order of a keyboard instrument that is sufficient within the limits of accuracy required. To put it another way, he partially rejects the art of simulacra and embarks, if only to an extremely small degree, on the path of a synthetic representation of the world. Le., from being a decorator he becomes something of an artist. But, I repeat, the artist in him is recognisable not because he clings, and even clings in great measure, to the laws of perspective, but because and to the extent that he deviates from them.

VI

Beginning in the fourth century AD illusionism breaks down and perspectival space in painting disappears. Rejection of the rules of perspective becomes evident, and proportional relationships between individual objects, and sometimes even between their separate parts, are ignored. This break-down of the perspectival essence of late classical painting (which is essentially perspec-

tival) proceeds with extraordinary speed, and then with each century grows deeper, right up until the early Renaissance. Mediaeval artists

have no conception of making lines converge towards a single point, or of the significance of the horizon. It is as if late Roman and Byzantine artists had never seen buildings in nature, but were acquainted only with flat, toy-like cut-outs. They were equally unconcerned with proportions and, with the passage of time, became even less so. No relationship existed between the height of the figures and the buildings intended for them. To this must also be added the fact that, with the centuries, a growing retreat from reality is noticeable even in details. Some few parallels between real architecture and painted architecture can still be discerned in works of the sixth, seventh and even the tenth and eleventh centuries, but beyond that date that strange type of 'building painting' [*palatnaia zhivopis*] where all is arbitrariness and convention asserts itself in Byzantine art.³⁰

This characterisation of medieval painting was taken from Alexandre Benois' *History of Painting*, but only because I happened to have it to hand. It is not hard to catch the devaluation of medieval art in Benois' complaints, especially as regards its 'blindness' to perspective, that we have long since grown tired of. This view can be found in any book on the theory of art, with its usual references to the depiction of houses 'with three facades' in mediaeval art, as children draw them, to the conventionality of its colours, its parallel lines diverging towards the horizon, its lack of proportion, and in general to every perspectival and other spatial ignorance. To complete this characterisation of the Middle Ages we should add that, from this viewpoint, matters were no better in the West, and were even significantly worse: 'If we compare what was being created in the tenth century in Western Europe with what was taking place at the same time in Byzantium, the latter will seem the pinnacle of artistic refinement and technical magnificence.'³¹ It goes without saying that this way of understanding Byzantium can be reduced to the following resumé: 'The history of Byzantine painting, for all of its fluctuations and temporary upsurges, is a history of decline, of regression to a state of savagery and numbness. The models of the Byzantines grow further and further removed from life, their technique becomes more and more slavishly traditional and craftsmanlike.'³² It matters little whether this summing up is done by Benois or by a host of others. We're already thoroughly sick of its countless repetitions,

which go hand in hand with even more wearisome shouts from the cultural historians about the 'gloom' of the Middle Ages.

It is well known that, beginning with the Renaissance era and almost up until our own day, the schema of art history and of cultural history in general has remained invariably the same and, what's more, exceptionally simplistic. It is rooted in an unwavering belief that the bourgeois civilisation of the latter half of the nineteenth century (an orientation that is Kantian though not directly derived from Kant) has unconditional value and represents ultimate perfectibility, and could, so to speak, be canonised in a way that verges almost on the metaphysical. In truth, if it is possible to speak of the ideological superstructures on the economic forms of life it is surely here, with the cultural historians of the nineteenth century, who blindly believed in the petit bourgeoisie as an absolute value and reevaluated universal history according to how closely its phenomena paralleled those of the latter half of the nineteenth century. So it was in the history of art: everything that resembled the art of this period, or that moved towards it, was acknowledged as positive, while all the rest was decadence, ignorance, savagery. In the light of such an appraisal, the delighted praise frequently bestowed by respected historians becomes understandable: 'utterly contemporary', 'they couldn't have done better even in such and such a time', said with reference to some year close to the historian's own time. Indeed, having come to believe in contemporaneity, for them complete faith in their contemporaries was inevitable, much as provincials in matters of science are convinced that this or that book is 'recognised' as the ultimate scientific truth (as if there were some ecumenical council for formulating dogmas in science.) And one can then understand why ancient art, in its transition from the holy archaics via the beautiful to the sensual and, finally, to the illusionistic, appears to such historians to be developing. The Middle Ages, which made a decisive break with the goals of illusionism and took on the task of creating, not simulacra, but symbols of reality, seems a decline. And finally, even here the art of the New Age, that began with the Renaissance and straightway decided, by a silent wink and by some current of mutual agreement, to substitute the construction of simulacra for the creation of symbols, this art, having led by a broad avenue to the nineteenth century, seems to historians indisputably moving towards perfection. 'How could it possibly be bad if, by an immutable inner logic, it led to us, to me?' — this is the true thinking of our historians, if they were to express it without coyness.

And they are profoundly right in recognising a direct, transcendental link between the premises of the Renaissance age and the life-understanding of the

most recent past, a link, moreover, that is not only externally historical, but also internally logical. In precisely the same way they are most profoundly right in their feeling that mediaeval premises are completely irreconcilable with the *Weltanschauung* I have just described. If one sums up every charge that is leveled against mediaeval art on formal grounds, it amounts to the criticism: 'There's no understanding of space,' and this criticism, if openly expressed, signifies that there is no spatial unity, no Euclidean-Kantian schema of space leading, within the limits of painting, to linear perspective and proportionality, or more precisely, to a single perspective, for proportionality is merely a corollary of it.

On this basis it is suggested (and what's most dangerous is suggested unconsciously) as quite self-evident or absolutely proven somewhere or by someone, that no forms exist in nature, in the sense of each form living in its own little world, for in general no reality exists that has a centre within itself and is therefore subject to its own laws. Therefore, it is suggested, everything visible and perceptible is only simple material for filling in some general regulatory schema imposed on it from without, a function fulfilled by Euclidean-Kantian space. Consequently, all forms in nature are essentially only apparent forms, imposed on an impersonal and indifferent material by a schema of scientific thought, i.e., they are essentially like squares on the graph paper of life, nothing more. And finally, what is logically the first premise posits a space that is qualitatively homogeneous, infinite and boundless, a space that is, so to speak, formless and devoid of individuality. It is not hard to see that these premises reject both nature and man in one fell swoop, although by an irony of history they are grounded in the slogans called 'naturalism' and 'humanism' and crowned by the formal proclamation of 'the rights of man and nature'.

This is not the place to establish or even to clarify the connection between the sweet Renaissance roots and their bitter Kantian fruits. It is fairly well known that Kantianism, by virtue of its pathos, is actually a more profound form of the Renaissance's humanist and naturalistic life-understanding, and in its grasp and profundity represents the self-awareness of that historical background that calls itself 'the new European enlightenment', and that with some justification still quite recently preened itself on its virtual supremacy. But in recent years we are already beginning to understand the imaginary completeness of this enlightenment and we have discovered that, in science and philosophy, as well as in history and especially in art, all those mock horrors with which they scared us away from the Middle Ages were invented by the historians themselves. In the Middle Ages there flows a deep and

substantive river of genuine culture with its own science, its own art, its own system of governance, in general with everything pertaining to culture, but specifically its own kind, and one that, moreover, comes close to the genuine spirit of antiquity. And the premises that are considered indisputable in the life-understanding of the New Age, now, as in ancient times (yes, even as in ancient times!) are not only disputable, but are even rejected, not because of an insufficient awareness, but essentially by an effort of will. The pathos of modern man is to shake off all realities, so that 'I want' establishes the law of a newly constructed reality, phantasmagoric even though it is enclosed within ruled-out squares. Conversely, the pathos of ancient man, and of mediaeval man too, is the acceptance, the grateful acknowledgment, and the affirmation of all kinds of reality as a blessing, for being is blessing, and blessing is being. The pathos of medieval man is an affirmation of reality both in himself and outside himself, and is therefore objectivity. Illusionism is characteristic of the subjectivism of modern man, whereas nothing could be further from the intentions and thoughts of medieval man, with his roots in antiquity, than the creation of simulacra and a life spent among simulacra. For modern man – let's take his frank acknowledgment as expressed by the Marburg school³³ – reality exists only when and to the extent that science deigns to allow it to exist, giving its permission in the form of a fictitious schema. This schema is bound to advance special pleading to prove the totally admissible right of this or that phenomenon to existence according to an established graph of life. As for a patent on reality, it can be ratified only in the office of H. Cohen, and without his signature and seal it is invalid.

That which the Marburgians express openly constitutes the spirit of Renaissance thought, and the whole history of the enlightenment [spirit] is to a significant degree preoccupied with a struggle against life, its goal being to completely stifle it with a system of schemas. But it is worthy of note and of the most profound inner laughter that modern man forcibly palms off this distortion, this corruption of a natural human way of thinking and feeling, this re-education in the spirit of nihilism, as a return to naturalness and as the removal of some kind of fetters, supposedly imposed on him by someone or other, whereas in actual fact, in trying to scrape the characters of history off man's soul, he pierces the soul itself.

Ancient and medieval man, on the contrary, knows above all that, in order to want one must be in reality and moreover among realities in which one must be grounded. He is profoundly realistic and stands firmly on the earth, unlike modern man who considers only his own desires and, of necessity, the

most immediate means of realising and satisfying them. Hence it is understandable that the prerequisites for a realistic view of life are and always will be as follows: there are realities, i.e., there are centres of being, something in the nature of concentrates of more intense being, that submit to their own laws, and each of which therefore has its own form. Therefore, nothing that exists can be seen as indifferent and passive material for fulfilling whatsoever kind of schemas, still less taking into account the schema of Euclidean-Kantian space. And so forms should be apprehended according to their own life, they should be represented through themselves, according to the way they have been apprehended, and not in the foreshortenings of a perspective laid out beforehand. And, finally, space itself is not merely a uniform structureless place, not a simple graph, but is in itself a distinctive reality, organised throughout, everywhere differentiated, possessing an inner sense of order and structure.

VII

And so: the presence or absence of perspective in the painting of an entire historical period can in no sense be considered equivalent to the presence or absence of artistic skill, but rather lies far deeper, in the decisions made by a radical will possessing the creative impulse towards one or the other side. Our thesis, to which we will frequently return, maintains that, in those historical periods of artistic creativity when the utilisation of perspective is not apparent, it is not that visual artists 'don't know how' to use it, but that they 'don't want to'. More accurately, they want to make use of a representational principle other than perspective, and they want this because the genius of the age understands and feels the world by a means that also includes, immanent within itself, this method of representation. Conversely, during other periods people absolutely forget the meaning and significance of non-perspectival representation and lose their feeling for it, because the life-understanding of the age, having become utterly different, leads to a perspectival picture of the world. In both instances there is an internal consistency, a compulsory logic that is essentially very elementary, and if it does not come to full strength with exceptional speed, it is not because this logic is complex, but because the spirit of the age fluctuates ambiguously between two mutually exclusive self-definitions.

For in the final analysis there are only two experiences of the world - a human experience in a large sense and a scientific, i.e., 'Kantian' experience, just as there are only two attitudes towards life - the internal and the external, and as there are two types of culture - one contemplative and creative, the other predatory and mechanical. All of which amounts to a choice between

one or the other path - between mediaeval night or the enlightened day of culture; and thenceforth everything proceeds as it has been written, according to a total sequentiality. But as they alternate in history, these polarities can in no sense be immediately distinguished from each other, because of the fluctuating condition of the spirit itself in the corresponding ages, having already grown tired of the one while not yet taking hold of the other.

Without dealing for the present with what the violation of perspective means - we will return to an assessment of this question later with greater psychological cogency - let us mention with regard to mediaeval painting that the violation of perspective by no means emerges at different periods, now this way, now that, but is subject to a definite system. Receding parallel lines always diverge towards the horizon, and the more obviously they do so the more clearly the object they outline must be singled out. If we see in the peculiarities of Egyptian reliefs not the randomness of ignorance, but an artistic method, since these peculiarities occur not once or twice, but thousands, tens of thousands of times, and are consequently premeditated, then for similar reasons we must also admit precisely a method in the characteristic violation of a perspectival system in mediaeval art. It is psychologically inconceivable, moreover, that in the course of centuries strong and thoughtful people, the builders of a distinctive culture, would have been incapable of recognising such an elementary, indisputable, and one might say glaringly obvious fact as the converging of parallel lines toward the horizon.

But if this does not suffice, here is further evidence. The drawings of children, in their lack of perspective and especially their use of reverse perspective, vividly recall mediaeval drawings, despite the efforts of educators to instil in children the laws of linear perspective. It is only when they lose their spontaneous relationship to the world that children lose reverse perspective and submit to the schema with which they have been indoctrinated. This is how all children behave, independent of each other. This means that it is not mere chance, nor a wilful invention by one of them putting on Byzantine airs, but a representational method that derives from a characteristic perceptual synthesis of the world. Since the way children think is not weak thinking but a particular type of thinking³⁴ which, moreover, is capable of unlimited degrees of perfection, including genius, and indeed is primarily akin to genius, it must be admitted that the use of reverse perspective to depict the world is also far from being an unsuccessful, ill-understood, imperfectly learned linear perspective, and is rather a distinctive grasp of the world that should be reckoned with as a mature and independent representational method. One can perhaps hate it as

an alien method, but at all events it cannot be spoken of with patronising condescension or compassion.

VIII

Indeed, in the fourteenth century a new worldview was adumbrated in the West and with it a new attitude towards perspective.

As we know, the first faint whiffs of naturalism, humanism and the Reformation were emitted by that innocent 'lamb of God', St Francis of Assisi, who was canonised as a form of immunisation, for the simple reason that it didn't occur to them in time to burn him. But the first instance of Franciscanism in art was Giottism.

The art of Giotto is usually associated with the concept of the Middle Ages, but this is a mistake. Giotto looks in a different direction. His 'happy, even gay genius of the Italian order', fruitful and light, was inclined towards a superficial outlook on life in the spirit of the Renaissance. 'He was very ingenious: writes Vasari, 'very agreeable in his conversation and highly skilled in sayings of wit, the memory of which is still preserved in this city.'³⁵ However, those of his witticisms that are repeated to this day are indecent and crude, and many are impious into the bargain. Under the cover of religious subjects can be discerned a secular spirit, satirical, sensual and even positivistic, hostile to asceticism. Nurtured by the mature past that preceded his era, he nevertheless breathes another air. 'Although born in a mystic century he was not himself a mystic, and if he was the friend of Dante he did not resemble him: writes Hippolyte Taine of Giotto)⁶ Whereas Dante smites with sacred anger, Giotto ridicules and censures, not the destruction of the ideal, but the ideal itself. The man who painted *St Francis' Betrothal to Poverty* in his poem ridicules the very ideal of poverty. It is hard to believe that a friend of Dante could openly prefer worldly power to self-discipline. But so it was, and in addition to Dante he also had friends who were Epicureans, who rejected God. Giotto created for himself an ideal of universal and humanitarian culture, and imagined life in the spirit of the free thinkers of the Renaissance, as earthly happiness and the progress of mankind, with the subordination of everything else to a dominant goal, the complete and total development of all natural forces. Pride of place goes here to those who invent what is useful and beautiful, and he too wishes to be one of them, a prototype for the most typical genius of the period, Leonardo. 'He was very studious', Vasari writes of Giotto, 'and always wandered about contemplating new objects and inquiring of nature, so that he merited to be called the disciple of nature and of no other. He painted

diverse landscapes full of trees and rocks, which was a novelty in his day.³⁷ Still full of the noble juices of the Middle Ages and not himself a naturalist, he already experienced the very first, dawning breeze of naturalism and became its herald.

The father of modern landscape, Giotto emerged with a method for drawing architecture that 'fools the eye' and solved bold perspectival problems by sight with a success that is astonishing for his time (illus. 52). Art historians have their doubts about Giotto's knowledge of the rules of perspective. If this is true, it proves that, when the eye began to be controlled by an inner search for perspective, it found it almost immediately, though not in a clearly elaborated form. Not only does Giotto not make crude perspectival errors, but on the contrary he seems to play with perspective, setting himself difficult perspectival problems and solving them shrewdly and completely, particularly the converging of parallel lines towards a single point on the horizon. On top of all this, in the frescoes of the upper church of San Francisco in Assisi Giotto begins with the assumption that his painting has 'the significance of something independent from, and even in competition with, the architecture'. Fresco is 'not wall decoration with a subject', but 'a view through the wall onto all manner of activities'.³⁸ It is noteworthy that in later life Giotto rarely resorted to this, for its time overly daring method, and the same is true of all his closest followers, whereas in the fifteenth century this kind of architecture became the rule, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries endowed flat and simple apartments lacking any kind of real architectural fixtures with *trompe l'œil* architectural painting.³⁹ Consequently, if the father of modern painting did not subsequently resort to a similar method, it was not because he was ignorant of it, but because his artistic genius, fortified, made aware of itself in the realm of pure art, recoiled from illusory perspective, at least from its obtrusiveness, just as his rationalistic humanism subsequently was tempered.

IX

But what was Giotto's point of departure? Or in other words, where did his ability to use perspective come from? Historical analogies and the inner meaning of perspective in painting suggest an answer we already know. When the certainty of theocentrism becomes suspect, and along with the music of the spheres there sounds the music of the earth (I mean 'earth' in the sense of the affirmation of the human 'I'), then begins the attempt to replace realities that are growing muddied and obscured with simulacra and phantoms, to



52 Giotto di Bondone and studio, *Legend of St Francis, Confirmation of the Rule*, 1297-9, fresco. Upper church, San Francesco, Assisi

replace theurgy with illusionistic art, to replace divine actions with theatre.

It is natural to think that Giotto acquired his habit and taste for perspectival optical illusions by working on *theatre decoration*. We have already seen a precedent for this in Vitruvius' report about a staging of Aeschylus' tragedies in which Anaxagoras took part. The transition from theurgy, such as the Ancient Greek tragedies had, to a secular vision, progressively abandoned the

mystical, or more exactly the mysterial reality of the tragedy of Aeschylus, then Sophocles and, finally, Euripides. The mystery plays emerged in the evolution of the theatre of the New Age, and out of this thorough airing the new drama was produced. Art historians think it likely that Giotto's landscape did in fact develop from decorations for what were then called 'mysteries', and so could not but conform, I would add, to the principle of illusionistic decoration, perspective. So as not to make unfounded allegations, let us confirm our idea by citing the opinion of an art historian whose way of thinking is alien to ours. 'In what way was Giotto's landscape dependent on mystery play decorations?' Alexandre Benois wonders, and replies: 'In places this dependence is expressed to such a degree (in the form of tiny prop-like houses and pavilions, and cliffs like flat stage flaps neatly cut out of cardboard) that it is simply impossible to doubt that his painting was influenced by productions of religious spectacles. In some of his frescoes we are probably seeing scenes from these spectacles captured directly. It must be said, however, that in the paintings which undoubtedly belong to Giotto's hand, this dependence is less pronounced, and each time it appears in a radically reworked form, according to the conventions of monumental painting.'⁴⁰

In other words, as he matures as a pure artist, Giotto gradually moves away from decorations which, being done by a *bottega*, could scarcely have been the work of a single hand. Giotto's innovation was, consequently, not in the use of perspective as such, but in the painterly application of this method, borrowed from the applied and vernacular branch of art, much as Petrarch and Dante introduced the vernacular into poetry. The conclusion can be drawn that the knowledge of, or at least the ability to use, perspectival methods, what Dürer called 'the secret science of perspective',⁴¹ already existed, and perhaps always had existed among the painters of mystery play decorations, although painting strictly speaking shunned these methods. Or could it have not been aware of them? The contrary is hard to imagine, once Euclid's 'Elements of Geometry' were known. As early as his *Unterweisung der Messung*,⁴² published in 1525 and containing a study of perspective, Dürer begins the first book of his treatise with a statement clearly showing that the theory of perspective is far from new compared to elementary geometry, and far from new in the consciousness of people at that time. 'The most sagacious thinker, Euclid, has assembled the foundation of geometry', Dürer writes. 'Those who understand him well can dispense with what follows here.'⁴³

And so: elementary perspective had been long known of, although it had progressed no further than the entrance hall of high art.

But, as the religious *Weltanschauung* of the Middle Ages became more secular, pure religious ritual reinvented itself as the semi-theatrical mystery plays, while the icon became so-called religious painting, in which the religious subject increasingly became just an excuse for depicting the body and the landscape. From Florence there emanated a wave of worldliness, and it was in Florence, too, that the Giottoites found and later propagated the principles of naturalistic painting as artistic maxims.

Giotto himself, Giovanni da Milano after him, and especially Altichieri and Avanzo, created daring perspectival constructs. It is natural that these artistic experiments, just like the traditions borrowed in part from the works of Vitruvius and Euclid, should form the basis of the theoretical system in which the study of perspective has been required to be fully expounded and well grounded. Those scientific foundations which, after a century of elaboration, produced 'the art of Leonardo and Michelangelo' were discovered and elaborated in Florence. The works of two theoreticians from that time - Paolo dell'Abaco (1366) and later Biagio da Parma - have not come down to us. But it is possible that it was they who in the main prepared the ground for the principal theoreticians working on the study of perspective from the early fifteenth century on:⁴⁴ Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and Paolo Uccello (1397-1475), then Leon Battista Alberti, Piero della Francesca (c. 1420-1492) and, finally, a number of sculptors, most notably Donatello (1386-1466). The influence and impact of these experimenters was determined by the fact that they not only developed the rules of perspective theoretically, but that they also applied their achievements practically, in illusionistic painting. Instances of this are the wall paintings in the form of monuments that were executed with an extensive knowledge of perspective on the walls of the Florence Duomo, painted in 1436 by Uccello⁴⁵ (illus. 53) and in 1435 by Castagno (illus. 54).⁴⁶ A further instance is the stage-like fresco by Andrea del Castagno (1390-1457) in Sant'Apollonia in Florence (illus. 55).⁴⁸ Its whole severe decor - the chequered floor, the coffered ceiling, the rosettes and panels on the walls - are depicted with an obsessive precision designed to convey a complete impression of depth (we would say, "stereoscopic vision"). And this impression is so successful that the entire scene looks, in its frozenness, like a group from a panopticon - a brilliant panopticon, it goes without saying,⁴⁹ as one supporter of perspective and the Renaissance ironically notes, with a slip of the tongue. Piero also left a manual on perspective, entitled *De perspectiva pingendi*.⁵⁰ In his three-volume treatise *De Pictura*, written in 1446 and published in Nuremberg in 1511,⁵¹ Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) developed

the bases of the new science and illustrated them through their application in architectural painting. Masaccio (1401-1429)⁵² and his pupils Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-1498) and Fra' Filippo Lippi (1406-1469) aspired to utilise the same science of perspective in their painting, until finally these same problems were taken up in both theory and practice by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), and Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) brought the development of perspective to its close.

X

We will pursue no further the stages in the theoretical and practical development of perspective in the era immediately preceding our own, the more so since its study passed primarily into the hands of mathematicians and became far removed from the immediate interests of art. The few facts I have briefly sketched out here are intended not as generally known historical facts as such, but as something quite different. Specifically, their purpose was to recall how complex and long that development had been, brought to completion only in the seventeenth century by Lambert, and later as a branch of descriptive geometry in the works of Loria, Aschieri and Enriques in Italy; Chasles and Poncelet in France; Staudt, Fiedler, Wiener, Kupfer, Burmeister in Germany; Wilson in America; and others who formed part of the general current of that extremely important and widespread mathematical discipline, projective geometry.⁵³

From this it follows that, however much we might appreciate perspective in essence we have no right to understand it as some simple, natural way of seeing the world that is directly related to the human eye as such. The fact that over several centuries many great minds and very experienced painters, with the participation of first-class mathematicians, found it essential to hammer out a study of perspective, even knowingly *after* the principal indications of a perspectival projection of the world had been noted, forces one *to* think that the historical elaboration of perspective was in no way the simple systematisation of something already pre-existing in human *psycho-physiology*, *but was the forcible re-education of this psycho-physiology in the sense of abstract demands made by a new worldview*, essentially anti-artistic, essentially outlawing art, especially the visual arts.

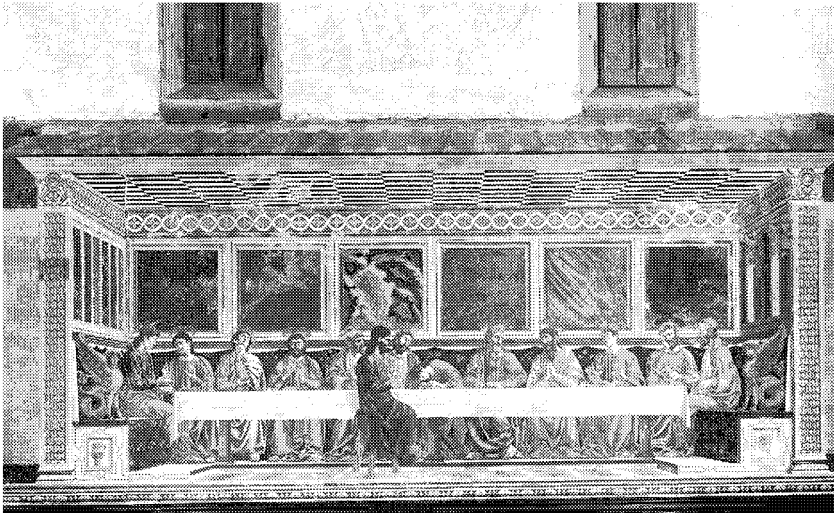
But the soul of the Renaissance, of the New Age in general, was fragmented and divided, dualistic in its thinking. In this respect art was at an advantage. Fortunately, vital creativity was still not subject to the demands of reason, and in actual fact art followed quite a different path from those



53 Paolo Uccello, *Monument to Giovanni Acuto (John Hawkwood)*, 1433, fresco transferred to canvas. Church of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence



54 Andrea del Castagno, *Monument to Niccolò da Tolentino*, 1456, fresco transferred to canvas. Church of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence



55 Andrea del Castagno, *The Last Supper*, 1455-6, fresco. Refectory of the Convent of St Apollonia, Florence

proclaimed in abstract declarations. One circumstance deserves our attention and our laughter. Even those artists who were theoreticians of perspective, as soon as they stopped talking about the laws of perspective they had prescribed - even though they already knew its secrets and surrendered to a direct artistic feeling in their representation of the world - would make crude 'mistakes' and 'blunders' against its requirements, every single one of them! But a study of the corresponding paintings reveals that their power lies precisely in these 'mistakes' and 'blunders'. This is when, truly, 'und predigen öffentlich Wasser'.⁵⁴

There is no time here for a detailed analysis of works of art, and we must be content with just a few typical examples, pointing out the idea expressed and treating them superficially, without explaining the specific aesthetic meaning of their nonconformity to a perspectival schema. But, for the sake of complete clarity, let us recall (and in the words of another, moreover) what the purpose of perspective is - the much vaunted 'perspectival unity'.

In the 1870s, at the height of the faith in, and reverence for, perspective, Guido Schreiber compiled a primer on perspective, the second edition of which was edited by the architect A. F. Viehweger, a professor of perspective at the Leipzig Academy of Arts, and with a forward by the Academy's director,

Professor Ludwig Nieper.⁵⁵ Seemingly all very solid and authoritative! But this is what the primer contained in the chapter on 'perspectival unity':

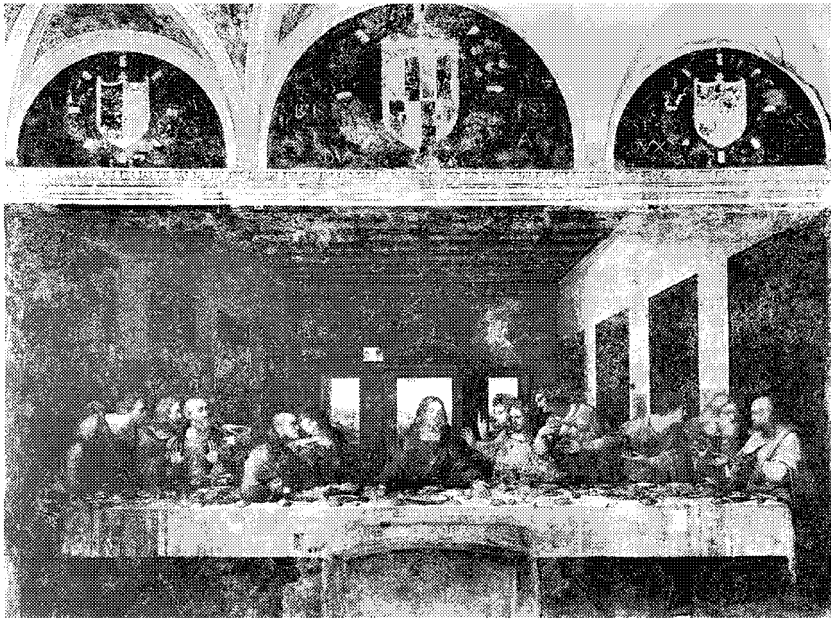
Any drawing that pretends to a perspectival effect should start with the specific position of the draftsman or the viewer. The drawing should therefore have only one viewpoint, only one horizon, only one scale. All receding perpendicular lines, moreover, that run into the depth of the representation, should also be directed towards this *single* viewpoint. Similarly, the vanishing points of all other perpendicular lines should also lie on this *single* horizon. The correct *proportion of magnitudes* should dominate the entire representation. This is what we should understand by *perspectival unity*. If a painting is done from nature, only a little attentiveness to these conditions is needed, and everything will follow more or less of its own accord.⁵⁶

This means, then:

A violation of the single viewpoint, the single horizon, the single scale, is a violation of the perspectival unity of the representation.

Now:

If anyone was a practitioner of perspective it was Leonardo. His *Last Supper* (illus. 56) an artistic ferment from the latest theological *Lives of Christ*, aims to remove the spatial demarcation between that other, Gospel world, and this secular one, to show Christ as having only a specific *value*, but not a specific *reality*. What we see in the fresco is a stage set, not a particular space that cannot be compared to our own. And this stage is nothing more than an extension of the room's space; our gaze, and with it our entire being, is drawn by this receding perspective that moves towards the right eye of the principal Persona. We are not seeing reality, but we are experiencing a visual phenomenon; and we spy on it as if through a chink, with cold curiosity, with neither reverence nor pity, even less with the pathos that distance lends. The laws of Kantian space and Newtonian mechanics reign on this stage. Yes. But if it were only that, then finally there would be no *Supper*. And Leonardo indicates the special value of the unfolding event by violating the unity of scale. A simple measurement is enough to show that the chamber is barely the height of two men and the width of three man-lengths, so that the space cannot possibly accommodate the number of people in it or the grandeur of the occasion. However, the ceiling does not seem oppressive and the cramped space of the room gives the painting a dramatic saturation and fullness. Imperceptibly yet accurately, the master

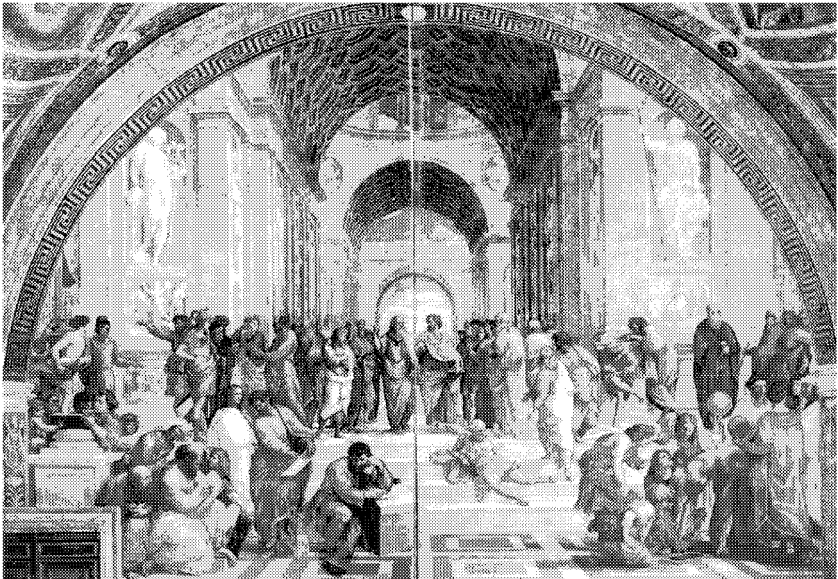


56 Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper*, 1495-7, tempera on plaster. Refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

resorts to the violation of perspective,⁵⁷ well known since Egyptian times. He applies differing units of measurement to the inscriptions and to the setting and, by reducing the proportions of the latter differently in different directions, he thereby magnifies the people and imparts to a simple farewell meal the significance of an historic, universal event, and the centre of history to boot. Perspectival unity is violated, the dualism of the Renaissance soul revealed, and yet the painting acquires an aesthetic persuasiveness.

We know what a magnificent impression is produced by the architecture in Raphael's *School of Athens* (illus. 57).⁵⁸ If we were to pinpoint from memory the impression made by these vaults, we would want to compare them, for example, with the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. The vaults appear to be equal in height to those of the church. But measurement shows that the pillars are only a little more than two man-lengths, so that the whole building, which appears to be so splendid, would be quite insignificant and negligible if it were actually built. The artist's device in this case is also quite straightforward:

He selected two viewpoints placed on two horizon lines. The floor and the entire group of people are painted from the upper viewpoint, the vaults and the whole upper portion of the painting from the lower one. If the figures of the people shared the same vanishing point as the lines of the ceiling, then the heads of those positioned further back would be lower down and would be covered by the people standing in the foreground, to the painting's detriment. The vanishing point of the ceiling lines is centered in the right hand of the central figure (Aristotle), who holds a book in his left hand and with his right seems to be pointing to the ground. If we trace a line to this point from the head of Alexander, the first figure to the right of Plato (with the raised hand), it would not be hard to notice how much the last figure of this group must have been reduced. The same goes for the groups to the viewer's right. To conceal this perspectival



57 Raffaello Sanzio, *School of Athens*, 1509-10, fresco. Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome



58 Raffaello Sanzio, *The Vision of Ezekiel*, 1518, oil on panel. Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence

inaccuracy, Raphael also placed characters at the back of the painting, thereby masking the lines of the floor that converge on the horizon.⁵⁹

Of Raphael's other paintings we might recan *The Vision of Ezekiel* (inus. 58). Here there are several viewpoints and several horizon lines. The space of the vision does not coincide with the space of the earthly world. It was absolutely essential to do this, for otherwise He who is seated among the cherubim would seem a mere mortal who, despite the laws of mechanics, does not fall from the heights. (In this, as in other paintings by Raphael the balance of two principles, the perspectival and non-perspectival, corresponds to the calm co-existence of two worlds, two spaces.) This soothes rather than stuns us, just as if a curtain had noiselessly opened on another world to reveal not a stage, an illusion in this world, but a genuine other *reality*, though one which does not encroach on *our own*. Raphael alludes to this aspect of his treatment of space with the parted curtains in his *Sistine Madonna* (illus. 59).⁶⁰

As an instance of the complete opposite to *The Vision of Ezekiel* one might cite, for example, Tintoretto's painting in the Accademia in Venice, *The Apostle Mark Uberating a Slave from a Martyr's Death* (illus. 60).⁶¹ St Mark's apparition is presented in the same space as all the participants, and the heavenly vision seems to be a bodily mass that might fall at any minute onto the heads of those witnessing the miracle. Here one cannot help but recall Tintoretto's naturalistic working methods, hanging wax figurines near the ceiling, so as to convey a naturalistically accurate foreshortening. And the heavenly vision did in fact turn out to be nothing more than a wax cast on a hanger, like a Christmas-tree cherubim. This is the kind of artistic failure that occurs when heterogeneous spaces are merged together.

But the simultaneous use of two spaces, perspectival and non-perspectival, is also encountered, and by no means infrequently, especially in the representation of visions and miraculous occurrences. Such is the case in several works by Rembrandt, although we can only speak of perspectival systems and their components with many reservations. This device was a hallmark of Domenico Theotokopolus, called El Greco. *The Dream of Philip If* (illus. 61), *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (illus. 62), *The Descent of the Holy Ghost* (illus. 63), *A View of Toledo* (illus. 64) and other works by him are each manifestly broken up into at least two spaces, such that the space of spiritual reality is definitely kept apart from the space of sensory reality. It is this that imparts to El Greco's paintings their particular persuasiveness.



59 Raffaello Sanzio, *Sistine Madonna*, 1512-13, oil on canvas. Gemaldegalerie, Dresden



60 Jacopo Robusti (Tintoretto), *The Miracle of St Mark (The Apostle Mark Liberating a Slave from a Martyr's Death)*, 1547-8, oil on canvas. Galleria of the Accademia, Venice



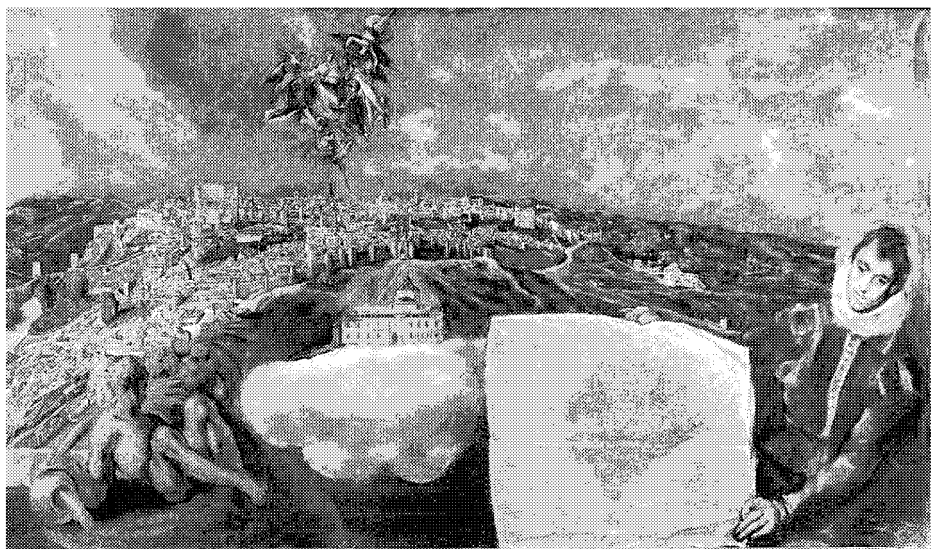
61 Domenico Theotokopolus (El Greco), *Adoration of the Holy Name of Jesus (Allegory of the Holy League; The Dream of Philip II)*, 1577-80, oil on canvas. San Lorenzo Monastery, Escorial Museum, Madrid



62 Domeniko Theotokopolus (El Greco), *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, 1586-8, oil on canvas. Church of San Tomé, Toledo



63 Domeniko Theotokopolus (El Greco), *The Descent of the Holy Ghost (Pentecost)*, c. 1600, oil on canvas. Prado Museum, Madrid



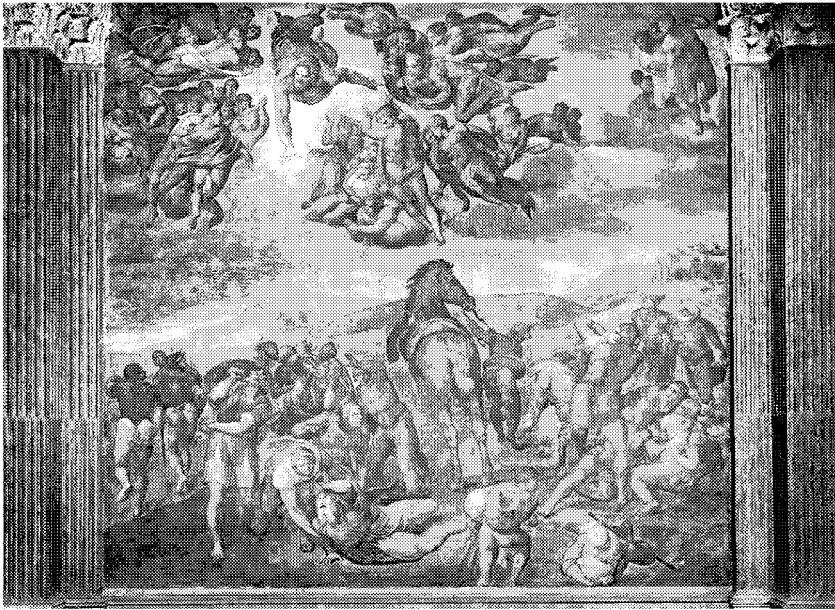
64 Domeniko Theotokopolus (El Greco), *A View and Map of Toledo*, 1610-14, oil on canvas. El Greco Museum, Toledo

However, it would be wrong to think that only mystical subjects require the rejection of perspective. Let us take, for example, Rubens' *Flemish Landscape* (illus. 65) in the Uffizi Gallery.⁶² The central section is approximately perspectival and its space draws one in, while the sides are in reverse perspective, their spaces pushing away the perceiving eye. As a result, two powerful visual vortices are created that marvellously fill the prosaic subject.

There is the same balance between two spatial principles in Michelangelo's *Conversion of the Apostle Paul* (illus. 66). But this same artist gives an entirely different spatial treatment in his *Last Judgment* (illus. 67). The fresco represents a slight slope: the higher up on the picture a particular point is, the further away the image depicted in it is from the viewer. Consequently, the higher the eye travels, the smaller the figures it encounters become, in accordance with the law of perspectival shortening. Incidentally, this can be seen by the fact that the lower figures obstruct those higher up. But as for their proportions, the magnitude of the figures *increases* as they appear further up the fresco, i.e., the further away they are from the viewer. This is a characteristic of that other, spiritual space: the further away something is, the bigger it is; the closer it is, the smaller. This is reverse perspective. Examining it, especially



65 Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape. Returning from the Fields*, 1632-4, oil on canvas. Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Piui, Florence



66 Michelangelo, *Conversion of the Apostle Paul*, 1542-5, fresco. Cappella Paolina, Vatican, Rome



67 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, 1536-41, *fresco*. Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome

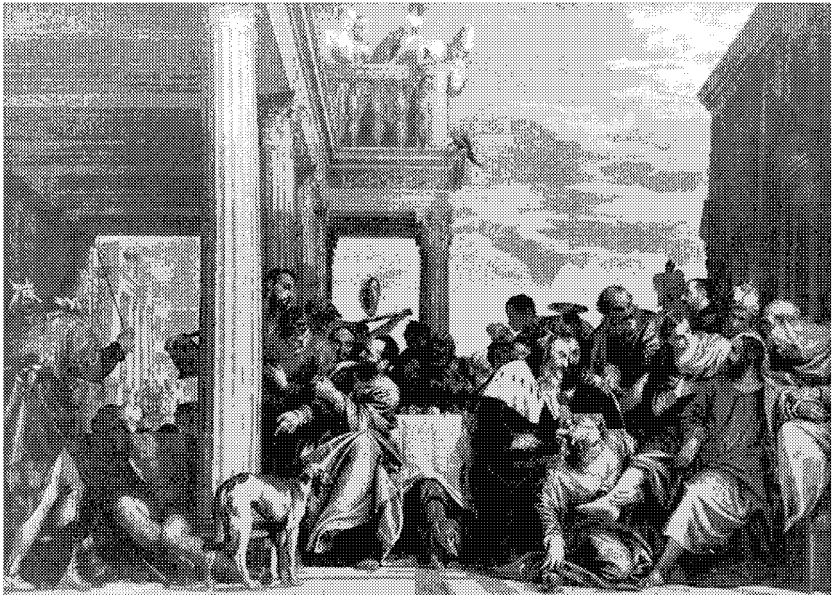
when so consistently applied, we begin to experience its complete incommensurability with the space of the fresco. We are not drawn into this space; on the contrary, it repels us, as a mercury sea would repel our bodies. Though visible, it is transcendental to us, who think according to Kant and Euclid. Although he lived in the Baroque era, Michelangelo belonged to a Middle Ages that was neither entirely of the past nor of the future; he was contemporary with, yet certainly not a contemporary of, Leonardo.

XI

When people first come across deviations from the rules of perspective, they regard this absence of perspectival unity as a chance slip-up on the artist's part, a kind of sickness in his working. But even the most cursory attention quickly reveals a similar transgression in almost every work, and absence of perspective now begins to be valued not as the pathology, but as the physiology of visual art.

Inevitably, the question arises: can art actually dispense with the transformation of perspective? After all, its purpose is to convey a kind of spatial wholeness, a specific, self-contained world that is not mechanical, but is contained within the confines of the frame by internal forces. Whereas a photograph, being a sliver of natural space, a piece of space, cannot in essence avoid leading us beyond its borders, the limits of its frame, because it is a part mechanically separated from something larger. Consequently, the first demand made of the artist is to reorganise the sliver of space he has selected for his material into a self-contained whole, to abrogate perspectival relationships, whose primary function is the Kantian unity of experience as a totality, manifested in the necessity for each single experience to turn into others, and in the impossibility of encountering a self-sufficient realm. Whether perspective exists in actual experience is another question, and one that cannot be debated here. But whether it exists or not, it has a definite purpose that essentially contradicts the practice of painting, so long as painting does not sell itself to other activities that require an 'art of simulacra', that require illusions of the imaginary prolonging of sensory experience, when in truth it does not exist.

\With these points in mind, we will now no longer be surprised when we see two points of view and two horizon lines in Paolo Veronese's *Feast in the House of Simon* (illus. 68), at least two horizons in his *Battle of Lepanto* (illus. 69), several viewpoints placed along a single horizon line in Horace Vernet's painting *The Capture of the Smala of Abd-El-Kader*, numerous perspectival inconsis-



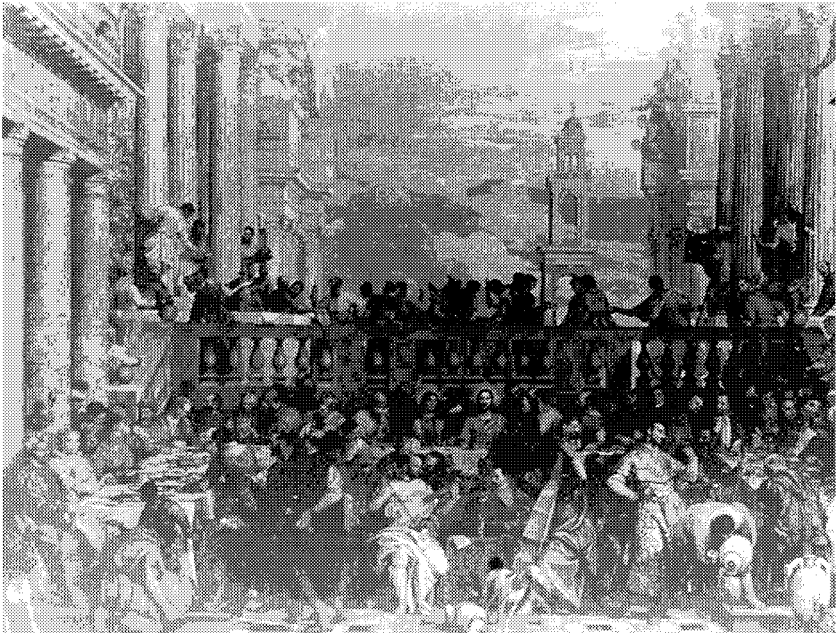
68 Paolo Veronese, *Feast in the House of Simon*, 1560, oil on canvas. Galleria Sabauda, Turin

tendencies in a landscape by Swanevelt, as well as by Rubens, and in many other paintings. And we will understand why clever primers on perspective even give advice on how to destroy perspectival unity without making it too obvious (evidently for its more enthusiastic supporters?), and in what instances it is essential to resort to such 'lawlessness'.⁶³ In particular, it is recommended to place the vanishing points of lines perpendicular to the picture plane on a slight curve, for instance, along the line of a normal surface to a certain ellipse.⁶⁴ And artists, even those who are far removed from the goals which intrinsically authentic art sets itself, have long applied similar deviations from perspectival unity.

An example of this is the celebrated *Marriage at Cana* by Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) in the Louvre (illus. 70). According to specialists, this painting has seven viewpoints and five horizon lines.⁶⁵ Fr. Bossuet has attempted to give a sketch of the architecture in this painting from a 'correct', i.e., a strictly perspectival representation, to find that it retained 'essentially the same order and the same beauty'.⁶⁶ What a fine concept of first class works of art, that can be so easily 'corrected'! Would it not be more correct to check and adjust one's



69 Paolo Veronese, *The Battle of Lepanto*, 1573, oil on canvas. Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice



70 Paolo Veronese, *Marriage at Cana*, 1563, oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris

own aesthetic views in accordance with historically existing works of art? But if in actual fact the strict submission to perspective of a non-perspectival painting does not in itself destroy its beauty, does this not mean that both perspective and its absence are, in aesthetic terms at least, by no means as important as the supporters of perspective presume it to be?

It will be recalled that, towards the end of 1506, Albrecht Dürer rushed from Florence to Bologna to find out about the 'mysterious art of perspective'.⁶⁷ But the secrets of perspective were jealously guarded and, after complaining about the reticence of the Bolognese, Dürer was obliged to leave, having found out precious little, thereafter to busy himself at home with the independent discovery of those same methods and to write a treatise on them (which did not, however, prevent him from falling into perspectival 'blunders').

Without embarking on an evaluation of Dürer's oeuvre in general, let us recall his most accomplished work, of which F. Kugler writes⁶⁸ (in an essay described by a Dürer scholar as 'the most complete and successful descrip-

tion⁶⁹Of the work) that 'an artist who had completed such a work might take his leave of the world, having attained his goal in art. This work indisputably places him in the ranks of the greatest masters the history of art justly prides itself on.' The work in question is, of course, the diptych known as *The Four Apostles*, painted in 1526 (illus. 71), after the publication of his *Underweisung der Messung* and two years before his death in 1528. And so, in this diptych the heads of the two figures in the background are bigger than those of the foreground figures, as a result of which the basic ground of the Greek relief is preserved, although the figures are not detached from this ground. As one art historian has correctly pointed out, 'Clearly, we are dealing here with so called 'reverse perspective: according to which objects further back are shown as bigger than those in front.'⁷⁰

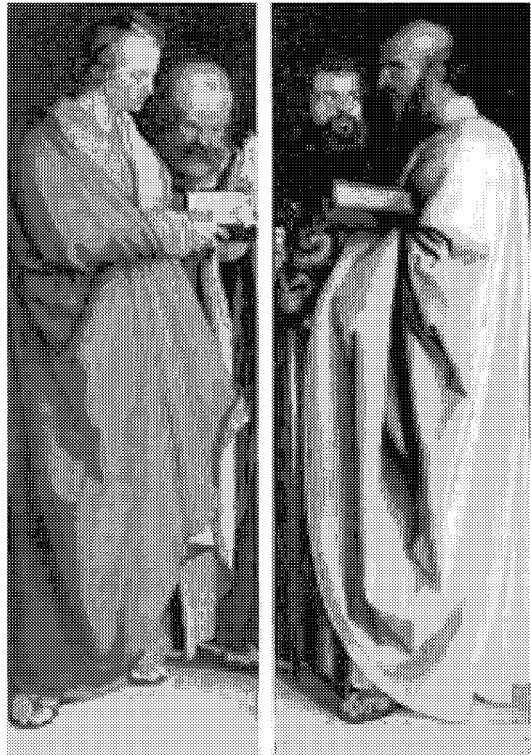
Of course, this application of reverse perspective in the *Apostles* is not an oversight, but the courage of a genius who intuitively overturns the most rational theories, even his own, inasmuch as they demand a completely conscious illusionism. In actual fact, what could be more definite than his instructions on chiaroscuro, which begin, 'If you wish to paint paintings in such relief that vision itself might be deceived . . .'⁷¹ Such is his illusionistic theory, but his art is not illusionistic. This contradiction in Dürer (a characteristic one for people living in a transitional age!) between theory and artistic practice prefigured his general inclination for the mediaeval style and mediaeval turn of spirit, for all the new structure of thinking.

XH

All this notwithstanding, even the theoreticians of perspective did not observe, or consider it necessary to observe, a 'perspectival unity of representation'. How then after this can one speak of a perspectival image of the world as natural? What kind of naturalness is it that must be obeyed, to then avoid despite the most extraordinary efforts and constant alert vigilance - [making mistakes against] the rules that have been unlearned? Are these rules not rather reminiscent of a convention-bound conspiracy against a natural perception of the world, undertaken in the name of theoretical concepts, a fictional picture of the world which, according to a humanistic Weltanschauung, one is required to see, but which, in spite of all its training, the human eye doesn't see at all, while the artist blurts out his ignorance as soon as he moves from geometric constructs to that which he actually perceives.

The extent to which a perspectival drawing is not something directly understood, but is on the contrary the product of many complex artificial

71 Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Apostles*, 1526, oil on panel, Alte Pinakothek, Munich



conditions, can be seen with particular persuasiveness in the devices of that same Albrecht Dürer, as he marvellously depicted them in the woodcuts to his *Underweisung der Messung*. But, as good as the actual engravings are, with their confined, constricted space, the meaning of the instructions they provide is anti-artistic in equal measure.

The purpose of the devices is to make it possible for the most unskilled draughtsman to reproduce any object in a purely mechanical fashion, without an act of visual synthesis and, in one case, without using the eye at all. Without ambiguity the candid Dürer demonstrates with his devices that perspective concerns everything but vision.

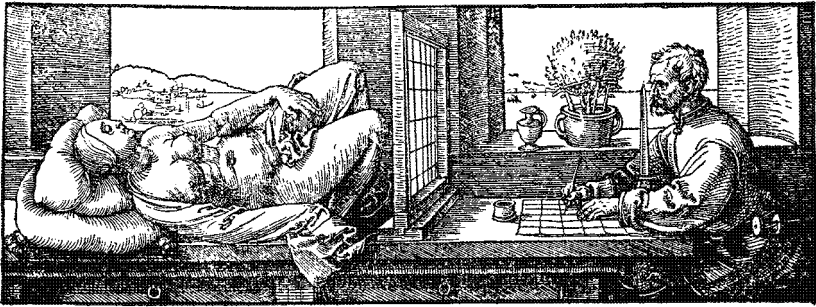
One of these devices is as follows (illus. 72).⁷² At the end of an elongated rectangular table a quadrangular frame with a pane of glass is attached perpendicular to the surface. On the opposite, narrow end of the table, parallel to the frame, a wooden bar is attached to the table, the middle of which is hollowed



72 Albrecht Dürer, *Man Drawing a Seated Figure*, reproduced from *Underweisung der Messung*, Nuremberg, 1525

out and contains a long screw, With the aid of this screw a perpendicular bar can be moved and into it is inserted a wooden rod with ratchets that allow one to adjust it at various heights. and with a small board in which a small hole [has been drilled, attached] on the upper end. It is quite clear that such a contraption provides to a certain extent a model of perspectival projection from the hole in the board onto the surface of the glass pane, and that by looking at an object through the aforesaid hole one can trace its projection on the glass.

In another device (inus. 73)⁷³ a fixed point of view is established, also by using a special pointer, where the plane of the projection is realised by a [frame with a] grid of threads that intersect at right angles, and the drawing is transferred to a squared-off sheet of paper that lies between the pointer and the vertical grid on the table. By using the squares to measure the coordinates

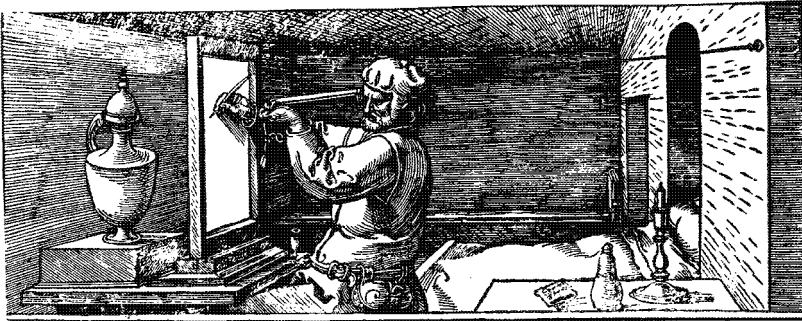


73 Albrecht Dürer, *Man Drawing a Reclining Woman*, reproduced from *Underweisung der Messung*, Nuremberg, 1538

of the projection points, the corresponding points can also be found on the squared paper.

A third Dürer device (illus. 74)⁷⁴ no longer has any relationship to sight. The centre of projection is now established not by the eye, however artificially reduced to a motionless state, but by a certain point on a wall in which a ring with a long string tied to it has been attached. The string almost reaches the frame containing the pane of glass that is fixed vertically on the table. The string is stretched tight and a scanner attached to it, directing the 'visual ray' to that point of the object that is projected from the spot where the thread is anchored. Then it is not hard to mark on the glass with a pen or brush the corresponding point of projection. By successively viewing various points of the objects, the draughtsman will project them on the glass, not however 'from the point of vision' but from 'the point on the wall'. Vision, then, plays an auxiliary function.

Finally, with the fourth drawing device (illus. 75)⁷⁵ there is no need for vision at all, because touch is sufficient. It is constructed as follows. A large needle with a wide eye is hammered into the wall of the room in which a given object is to be traced. A long, stout thread is threaded through the eye and a plumb bob attached. A table with a quadrangular frame installed vertically on its surface is placed against the wall. To one side of the frame is hinged a small door that can be opened and shut, and [two] intersecting threads that can be tightened in the frame opening. The object to be depicted is placed on the table in front of the frame. The first thread is passed through the frame and a nail attached to the end of it. That is the device. The apparatus is used as follows. An assistant holds the nail, and stretches the long thread, with instructions to



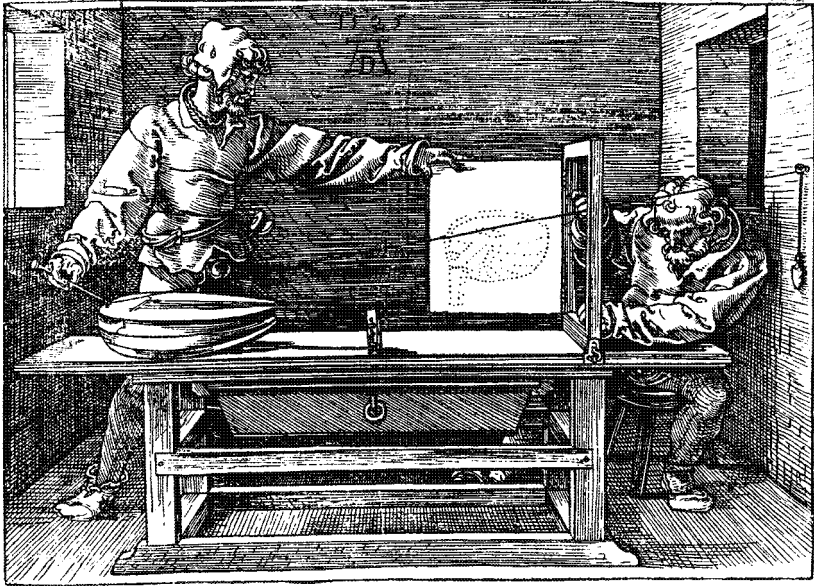
74 Albrecht Dürer, *Man Drawing a Jug*, reproduced from *Undenveisung der Messung*, Nuremberg, 1538

touch with the point of the nail all the prominent spots on the object to be depicted one after the other. Then the 'artist' moves the [two] crosswise threads in the frame until they coincide with the long thread and he marks with wax the point where they intersect. Then the assistant relaxes the tension of the long thread while the 'artist' closes the door of the frame and marks on it the spot where the threads intersect. By repeating this action many times the principal points of the required projection can be marked on the door.

After examining these devices, need we offer any further proof that a perspectival view of the world is not in the least a natural method of observation? It has taken more than five hundred years of social training to accustom the eye and the hand to perspective. But without deliberate schooling neither the eye nor the hand of a child, or of an adult for that matter, will submit to this training and reckon with the laws of perspectival unity. Even those with a specialised education make stupid mistakes as soon as they are deprived of their auxiliary geometric schema and trust their own vision, the conscience of their own eyes. And finally, entire artistic movements consciously express their protest against submitting to perspective.

After this unsuccessful experiment over five hundred years of history, it remains only to be admitted that a perspectival picture of the world is not a fact of perception, but merely a demand made in the name of certain considerations which, while they may be very powerful, are absolutely abstract.

And if we turn to psycho-physiological data, then it is essential to acknowledge that artists not only have no basis for depicting the world according to a perspectival schema, but that they dare not do so, once they admit that their aim is truth to perception.



75 Albrecht Dürer, *Man Drawing a Lute*, reproduced from *Underweisung der Messung*, Nuremberg, 1525

2 Theoretical Premises

XIII

In the preceding sections I compared a number of historical interpretations. It is time now to sum up and speak more to the point, although I will leave for another book the elaboration of related questions concerning the analysis of space in visual art.

So then, both historians of painting and theoreticians of the visual arts aspire, or at least did so until recently, to convince their audience that a perspectival depiction of the world is the only correct one, since it is the only one that corresponds to actual perception, because natural perception is presumed to be perspectival. According to such a premise, deviation from perspectival unity is thereupon regarded as a betrayal of the law of perception, a perversion of reality itself, whether because the artist lacks training in drawing, or because drawing has been consciously subordinated to decorative, ornamental aims or, in the best case scenario, compositional aims. Either way, according to this estimation, deviation from the norms of perspectival unity appears as unrealism.

However, both the word and the concept reality are too weighty for proponents of this or that world view to be indifferent to, whether [reality] remains theirs or passes to the adversary. A good deal of thought is required before making such a concession, should it prove inevitable. The same applies to the word *natural*. who does not find it flattering to consider his own selfreal and natural, i.e., resulting from reality itself, without deliberate intervention? Proponents of the Renaissance view of life seized on these cherished words, stolen from Platonism and its mediaeval heirs, and bandied them about. But this does not give us grounds for leaving the precious values of language in mouths that misuse them. One must demonstrate reality and naturalness by actions, not declare one's naked pretensions to them. Our goal is to restore them to the grandchildren of their rightful owners.

As I explained above, in order to draw and paint 'naturally', i.e., perspectively, it is essential that one learn to do so. This applies both to entire peoples and cultures, and to individuals. A child does not draw in perspective, nor does the adult who picks up a pencil for the first time, without being trained on specific models. But even a person who has studied a great deal can easily fall into error, or to put it more accurately, the prim proprieties of perspectival unity are overcome by the sincerity of spontaneity. In particular, hardly anyone will depict a sphere as an elliptical outline or a receding colonnade that runs parallel to the picture plane as progressively widening pillars, although this is precisely what perspectival projection demands.⁷⁶ Do we so seldom hear even great artists criticised for making mistakes in perspective? Such errors are always possible, especially where the composition is complicated, and they can really only be avoided when drawing is replaced by technical drawing done with the aid of auxiliary lines, or in other words when the artist depicts not what he sees outside or inside himself - images that while they may be imaginary are nevertheless visible, rather than abstractly conceived images - but what in his opinion, supported by an inadequate knowledge of geometry, is demanded by the *calculation* of geometric constructions - the natural, and therefore the only permissible calculation. Can we really call natural those methods of representation that even those who have spent many years stringently training their eye and world view with, cannot master without the crutches of geometrical drawing? And do not such mistakes in perspective show at times not the weakness of the artist, but on the contrary his strength, the strength of his authentic perception, breaking the fetters of social pressure?

The study of perspective is precisely that, training. Even when the beginner voluntarily endeavors to submit his drawing to its rules, this in no way always indicates that he has understood the meaning, the artistic, inventive meaning, of perspectival requirements. Looking back to their childhood, will not many people recall that they perceived perspective in drawing as something incomprehensible, though also for some reason as a generally accepted convention, an *usus tyrannus* to which they submitted not at all on the strength of its truthfulness, but because everyone does it that way?

An incomprehensible, frequently ridiculous convention - that is how perspective appears to a child's understanding. 'You think it's child's play looking at a painting and detecting its perspective', writes Ernst Mach. And yet it took thousands of years before mankind learned this trifle, not to mention that many of us arrived at this point only under the influence of education. I remember clearly,' Mach continues, 'that at the age of about three all perspectival drawings appeared to me as distortions of objects. I could not understand why the painter depicted a table so wide at one end and so narrow at the other. A real table seemed to me just as wide at the far end as it did closest to me, since my eye made its calculations without my help. The fact that the representation of a table on a plane surface was not to be looked at as a surface covered with colours, but signified a table and should be presented as receding - this was a trifle I did not understand. I comfort myself with the knowledge that entire peoples haven't understood it either.'⁷⁷

Such is the testimony of the most positivist of positivists, one it would seem who could never be suspected of a weakness for 'mysticism'.

Thus, the whole matter comes down to the fact that the representation of an object is not the same object in its representational capacity, it is not a copy of a thing, it does not duplicate a little corner of the world, but points to its original as its symbol. Naturalism, in the sense of external truthfulness, as the imitation of reality, as the manufacture of doubles of things, as an apparition, is not only not necessary for life, to quote Goethe's phrase about the beloved dog and its representation, but is also simply impossible. Perspectival truthfulness. if it exists, if it even is truthfulness, is so not on the strength of its external resemblance, but by virtue of its deviation from resemblance, Le., its inner meaning - in so far as it is symbolic. And what resemblance can there be between, for example, a table and its perspectival depiction, if outlines which we know to be parallel are depicted by converging lines, right angles by angles that are acute and wide, if the segments and angles which are equal are represented by unequal sizes, and unequal sizes by equal ones? A representation is

a symbol, always, every representation, whether perspectival or non-perspectival, no matter what it is, and works of art differ from each other not because some are symbolic and others are ostensibly naturalistic, but because, since all are equally non-naturalistic, they are symbols of various aspects of an object, of various world perceptions, various levels of synthesis. Different methods of representation differ from each other, not as the object differs from its representation, but on the symbolic plane. Some are more crude, some less so; some are more or less complete; some are common to all mankind, some are less so. But all are symbolic by nature.

Moreover, the perspective of representations is not by any means a property of things, as vulgar naturalism might make us think. It is just a method of symbolic expression, one of the possible symbolic styles, whose artistic value is subject to a specific judgement, but specifically as such, outside of terrifying words about its truthfulness and claims to a patented 'realism'. Consequently, in discussing the question of perspective, whether linear or reverse, with one or many centres, from the outset one must absolutely proceed from the symbolic tasks of painting and the other visual arts, in order to understand the place which perspective occupies alongside other symbolic methods, what exactly it signifies, and to what spiritual feats it leads. The task of perspective, as with other artistic methods, can only be a certain spiritual excitement, a jolt that rouses one's attention to reality itself. In other words, perspective too, if it is worth anything, should be a language, a witness to reality.

What then is the relationship between the symbolic tasks of painting and the geometric premises of its possibilities? Painting and the other visual arts must submit to geometry, to the degree that they deal with extended images and extended symbols. So here, too, the question is not whether linear perspective is *a priori* acceptable by means of a simple deduction -

If geometry is true, then perspective is indisputable.

Geometry is true -

It follows that perspective is indisputable - in which both premises raise millions of objections. Rather, the question is: what sort of demarcations in its applicability and interpretations of its activity are essential to precisely establish the geometric premises of painting, if we want lawfulness, inner meaning and a limit to the application of one or another method and representational means to find grounds for their foundation?

Putting aside a more in-depth examination for treatment in a specialised book, for the moment let us merely note the following about painting's geometric premises. Painting has at its command a certain slice of a plane

(canvas, panel, wall, paper, etc.) and paints, i.e., the possibility of endowing various points on the surface with various colourations. On a scale of significance, [colouration] may not have a perceptible meaning and should be understood abstractly. In an engraving, for example, the blackness of the printer's inks is not read as black, but is just a sign of the engraver's energy or, conversely, his lack of energy. But in psycho-physiological terms, i.e., on the basis of aesthetic perception, it is colour. For the sake of simplicity of argument we can imagine that there is only one pigment - black - or pencil. The painter's task, then, is to depict on a given surface with given colours the reality that he perceives or that he imagines he perceives.

Just what does it mean in geometrical terms to depict a certain reality?

It means drawing points of a perceived space to correspond with the points of some other space, in this instance a plane. But reality is at least three dimensional, even **if** we forget about the fourth dimension, time, without which there is no art. But a plane is only bi-dimensional. Is such a correspondence possible? Is it possible to make a four-dimensional or, let's say for the sake of simplicity, a three-dimensional image on a bi-dimensional surface? Does the latter have enough points to correspond to the points of the former or, in mathematical terms, can the power of a three-dimensional image and that of a bi-dimensional image be comparable? The answer that immediately comes to mind is 'Of course not.'

'Of course not, because in a three-dimensional image there is an infinite number of two-dimensional sections and consequently its power is infinitely greater than that of each individual section.' But a close investigation of the question as presented in point set theory shows that it is not as simple as it seems at first glance and that, moreover, the apparently natural answer proffered above cannot be considered correct. To be more precise, the power of any three- and even multi-dimensional image is exactly the same as the power of any two- and even one-dimensional image. It is possible to depict a four- or three-dimensional reality on a plane, and not even just on a plane but on any segment of a straight or curved line. Moreover, the resulting map can be established by an infinite number of correspondences, arithmetical or analytical, as well as geometrical. Georg Cantor's method may serve as an example of the arithmetical/analytical correspondence, Peano's curve or Hilbert's curve as an example of the geometrical.⁷⁸

To explain the essence of these investigations and their unexpected results as simply as possible, we will confine ourselves to the case of depicting a square using one of its sides as a unit of length, on a rectilinear segment, equal

to the side of the above-mentioned square, i.e., depicting the entire square on its own side. All other cases can easily be examined on the basis of this model. This is just how Georg Cantor demonstrated the analytical method by means of which the correspondence between each point of the square and each point of its side is established. This means that, if we designate the position of any point on the square by the two coordinates x, y , then, using an analogous method we will find the coordinate z defining a certain point on the side of the square, i.e., the depiction of the aforementioned point on the square itself. And conversely, if an arbitrary point is marked on the segment - the depiction of the square - then we will also find the point on the square itself that is represented by this point. Consequently, not a single point on the square remains unmapped and not a single point of the depiction will be void and corresponding to nothing. The square will be projected on its own side. In a similar manner a cube, hypercube and in general a quadrangular geometric figure (polyhedron, prism) of any number of dimensions, even an infinitely great number, can be represented on the side of a square or on a square itself. Generally speaking, any continuous figure of any number of dimensions and with any perimeter, can be mapped on any other figure also with any number of dimensions and with any perimeter: anything you like in geometry can be depicted on anything you like.

On the other hand, to return to our initial case, different geometric curves can be constructed in such a way that the curve passes through any randomly selected point of the square, and the correspondence between the points of the square and the points of the curve are thereby geometrically established. It will now be quite easy to bring the points of the latter into correspondence with the points of the square as one-dimensional spaces, so as to project these points of the square on its side. Peano's curve and Hilbert's curve have one essential advantage over the innumerable number of other curves with similar properties (for example, the trajectory of a billiard ball launched from the corner to the edge which is incommensurable with a straight line; open epicycloids, where the radii of both circumferences are incommensurable; Lissajous' curves; matrixes, etc., etc.) They bring about a correspondence of points between a two-dimensional and one-dimensional image on a practical level, such that the corresponding points can be easily located, whereas the other curves establish a correspondence in principle only, and it would be difficult to actually find just which point corresponds to which. Without going into the technical particulars of the curves of Peano, Hilbert and others, let us merely note that such a curve fills in the entire surface of the square, with

its meander-like bends, and that any point of the square, given this or that finite number of meanders for this curve, systematically accumulated, i.e., in accordance with a specific method, will unfailingly be touched by the bends of the curve. Analogous processes can be applied to projection, as explained above, using whatever you like on whatever you like.

Thus, continuous sets are equipollent. But while they possess an identical power, they do not have the same 'mentally attainable' or 'ideal' numbers in Cantor's sense, they are not 'similar' to each other. In other words, one cannot be used to map the other without affecting its structure. In establishing a correspondence, either the continuity of the image represented is broken (as when there is a wish to maintain a one-to-one correspondence between the thing represented and the representation) or the one-to-one correspondence of both (as when the continuity of the thing represented is maintained).

With Cantor's method the image is conveyed point for point, such that any point of the image corresponds to only one point of the representation and, conversely, each point of the representation corresponds to only one point of what is represented. In this sense the Cantorian correspondence satisfies the accepted conception of representation. But another of its properties places it very far from this latter concept. Like all other one-to-one mappings in the area under discussion, it does not preserve relationships of contiguity between the points, it does not spare their order and connections, i.e., it cannot be continuous. If we move even a little inside the square, then the representation of the path we have travelled can no longer in itself be continuous, and the representing point will jump around the whole area of the representation. The impossibility of providing a one-to-one yet continuous mapping between the points of a square and its side⁷⁹ was proved by Thomé, Netto and G. Cantor, and as a result of several objections by Lüroth in 1878, it was demonstrated anew by E. Jürgens.⁸⁰

Jürgens relies on the postulate on intermediate value: 'Let points P of a square and P' of a rectilinear segment correspond to each other. Then the whole connected segment on the linear segment that contains the point P' should correspond to a certain line AB on the square that contains the point P. Therefore, on the strength of the supposed one-to-one correspondence between the remaining points of the square, in the vicinity of the point P, no point on the line bordering the point P' can correspond to it any longer. From this it obviously follows that a one-to-one and continuous mapping between the points of the line and the square is impossible.' Such was Jürgens' proof.

On the other hand, as Luroth, Jurgens, and others showed, the correspondences of Peano, Hilbert and others cannot be that of one-to-one mapping, so that a point on a line is not always represented by a single point on the square and, moreover, this correspondence is not entirely continuous.

In other words, the representation of a square on a line, or of a volume on a plane or a line, really does communicate an points, but it is incapable of communicating the form of the thing represented as a whole, as an object whose structure is internally defined. The content of space is transmitted, but not its organisation. In order to represent a given space with all of the points that comprise its content, figuratively speaking one must either grind it into the finest of powders and then, having carefully stirred it, sprinkle it over the depicted surface so that no trace of its initial organisation remains. Or else one must cut it up into many layers, so that something of its form remains, but position these layers with repetitions of those same elements of form, while at the same time mutually interpenetrating these elements among each other, causing several elements of the form to become embodied in the same points of the representation. It is not difficult to discern behind the mathematical conceptions outlined above, quite independent of mathematics, the 'principles' of divisionism, complementarism etc. discovered by leftist art. With their help leftist art has destroyed the forms and organisation of space, sacrificing them to volume and thingness.

To sum up. It is possible to represent space on a surface, but only by destroying the form of the thing represented. Yet it is form, and only form, that visual art is concerned with. Consequently, the final verdict is proclaimed for painting, as for the visual arts in general, to the degree that it claims to provide a likeness of reality: naturalism is once and for all an impossibility.

Then we immediately embark on the path of symbolism and renounce the whole content of points extending in three directions, the stuffing, so to speak, of the forms of reality. In a single blow we renounce the actual spatial essence of things and concentrate - inasmuch as we are discussing the rendition of space through points - only on their skin. Henceforth, by things we mean not the things themselves, but only the surfaces that demarcate regions of space. In the naturalistic order of things this is, of course, a decisive betrayal of veracity's motto. We have substituted for reality its rind, which has only a symbolic significance, one that only alludes to space without in any way presenting it directly, point for point. Is it now possible to represent such 'things', or rather the skin of things, on a plane?

Whether we answer yes or no depends on what we mean by the words *to*

represent. It is possible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between the points of the form and the points of the representation, so that the continuity of both will by and large be maintained. But only 'by and large: i.e., for the 'majority of points' - it would hardly be appropriate here to discuss the precise meaning of each expression in detail. But given this correspondence, regardless of how it has been devised, certain ruptures and certain infringements of the one-to-one correspondence of the connection are inevitable in points that stand in isolation, or that form certain continuous configurations. In other words, the sequence and relation of the majority of points on the image will be maintained in the representation. But this is still very far from indicating the permanence of all properties belonging to the object represented, even simply its geometric properties, when the object is transferred by correspondence to a plane. It is true that both spaces, both the represented and the representing space, are two dimensional, and in this respect resemble each other. But their curvature is different, and even in the represented space it is impermanent, changing from point to point. It is impossible to place one over the other, even by bending one of them, and any attempt to bend them will inevitably result in rupturing and creasing the surface of one of them. There is simply no way that an eggshell, or even a fragment of it, can be laid over the surface of a marble table. To do so we would need to obliterate its form by grinding it into the finest powder. For the same reason it is impossible to represent an egg, in any exact sense of the word, on paper or canvas.

The correspondence of points on spaces of different curvature certainly presupposes that some of the represented object's properties - of course we are speaking here only of its geometric properties - are sacrificed for the sake of communicating certain others on the representation. There is no way that the sum total of the represented object's geometric attributes can be available in the representation, and while it may in certain respects resemble its original, the representation inevitably differs from it in a great many other ways. The representation is always more unlike the original than like it. Even the simplest case, the depiction of a sphere on a plane, which is the geometric schema of cartography, proves to be extremely complex and has provided grounds for inventing many dozens of the most varied methods, both projective, using rectilinear rays proceeding from a certain point, and non-projectional, implemented by means of more complex constructions or based on numerical computations. And yet, each of these methods, intended to communicate on a map some property of a territory to be reproduced, with its description of geographical objects, neglects and

distorts a great many others that are in no way less important. Each method is good as applied to a strictly defined problem and inappropriate as soon as other problems arise. In other words, a geographical map both is and is not [a representation]. It does not replace the original image of the Earth, not even as a geometrical abstraction, but only serves to indicate a certain token of it. The map represents to the extent that through it and by means of it we turn in spirit to the actual thing depicted, and does not represent if it does not carry us beyond its own confines, but instead detains us in itself as in some pseudo-reality, in a likeness of reality, if the map lays claim to a self-sufficient significance.

The case mentioned here was a very simple one. But the forms of reality are infinitely more varied and complex than a sphere, and the methods for representing each of these forms are correspondingly infinitely more diverse. If we take into account the organisational complexity and diversity of this or that spatial realm in the real world, the mind becomes lost in the innumerable possibilities for communicating this realm through representation. It becomes lost in the abyss of its own freedom. To normalise the methods for representing the world mathematically is a task of insane presumptuousness. And when such a normalisation, which also adduces a mathematical proof, and even worse the only, the exclusive proof, is adapted without any further examination to a single case of correspondence, the most particular of the particular, then it seems that perhaps it is done for a joke. A perspectival image of the world is nothing more than one of the methods of technical drawing. If it pleases someone to defend it in the interests of composition or some other purely aesthetic meaning, then the discussion will be a particular one. I might note in passing, however, that it is precisely in this arena that not a single voice has been raised in defense of perspective.

But there is no point citing either geometry or psychophysiology in its defense. There is nothing to be found here but the refutation of perspective.

XIV

And so, regardless of the principle by which a correspondence is established between the points of the thing represented and the points of the representation, inevitably the representation only signifies, indicates, alludes, leads to an idea of the original. But in no way does it present this image as a sort of copy or model. There can be no passage from reality to a picture, in the sense of resemblances. There is a yawning gulf here that is bridged in the first instance

by the creative intellect of the artist and then by the intellect that co-creatively reproduces the picture in itself.

I repeat, not only is this picture not a duplication of reality in its entirety, but it is incapable even of providing a geometrical likeness of the skin of things. It is necessarily the symbol of a symbol, insofar as skin itself is only the symbol of a thing. From the picture the beholder moves on to the skin of a thing, and from thence to the thing itself.

For all that, an unlimited field of possibilities opens up to painting, in principle. This breadth of scope depends on the freedom to set up, on extremely varied grounds, a correspondence between the points on the surfaces of things and the points on the canvas. There is not a single principle of correspondence that produces a representation, even geometrically adequate to the thing represented. Consequently, a variety of principles, not one of which possesses the single possible advantage of being a principle of adequacy, is each applied in its own way, with its own benefits and its own shortcomings. Depending on the inner need of the soul, however, a certain principle of correspondence is selected by an epoch, or even by an individual creator, no longer under forced external pressure, but in correspondence with the problems of a specific work, and then all of its peculiarities, positive and negative, will automatically follow. The totality of these peculiarities forms the first layer of what we call in art style and manner. The primary character that defines the creating artist's attitude to the world, and thus the innermost depth of his philosophy and perception of life, are expressed in his choice of the principles of correspondence.

A perspectival representation of the world is one of the countless methods possible for establishing the aforesaid correspondence, but it is a method that is extremely narrow, extremely limited, hampered by a host of supplementary conditions that define its potential for application and the limits to which it can be applied.

To understand that orientation in life from which the perspectival treatment of the visual arts must necessarily derive, requires an itemization of the perspectival artist's premises that are silently implied in each movement of his pencil. This is the essence of them:

First: a belief that the space of the real world is Euclidean space, i.e., isotropic, homogeneous, infinite and boundless (in the sense of Riemann's differentiation),⁸² with zero curvature, three-dimensional, affording the possibility of tracing one and only one parallel to any straight line through any of its points. The perspectival artist is convinced that all the geometrical

constructions he learned as a child (and has since happily forgotten) are in essence not simply abstract schemas (moreover, some of many possible, but essentially realisable, constructions of the physical world), but on the contrary exist as such and are also observable. An artist of this mindset believes that the rays which travel in a bundle from the eye to the outline of an object are straight - a notion that derives, incidentally, from a very ancient view that light travels not from the object to the eye, but from the eye to the object. He also believes in the immutability of a measuring rod when transported in space from place to place and when turned from one direction to another, etc., etc. In short, he believes in the construction of the world according to Euclid and in its perception according to Kant. That's the first premise.

Second: this time, out of Euclid's absolutely equal points in an infinite space, the artist conceives of a single, exclusive, so to speak, monarchical point of particular value, its only defining feature being that this point is occupied by the artist himself, or more precisely by his right eye - the optical centre of his right eye. What is even worse is that the artist attains this in the spirit of a Kantian worldview with its transcendental subject reigning over the illusory world of subjectivity - in spite of Euclidean logic. According to this conception, all positions in space are essentially lacking in quality and are equally devoid of colour, with the single exception of this absolutely dominant one, because in it resides the optical centre of the artist's right eye. This position is declared to be the centre of the world; it claims to reflect spatially the Kantian absolute, gnoseological significance of the artist. Truly, he looks at life 'from a point of view', but without any further definition, for this point, elevated into an absolute, is definitely no different from all the other points of space, and its elevation over the rest is not only unjustified, it is unjustifiable, given the entire world view under discussion.

Third: this 'from his own point of view', this tsar and lawgiver of nature, is imagined as being monocular like the Cyclops, for the second eye, competing with the first, destroys the oneness, and consequently the absoluteness, of the point of view and thereby exposes the fraudulent nature of a perspectival picture. Essentially, the whole world is related not even to the observing artist, but only to his right eye, conceived, what's more, as a single point, its optical centre. **It** is this centre that legislates the universe.

Fourth: the above-mentioned lawgiver is thought of as for ever inseparably chained to his throne. If he quits this absolutised place or even stirs slightly on it, then the whole unity of the perspectival construction is immediately shattered and the whole perspectival system falls apart. **In** other words, in this

conception the viewing eye is not the organ of a living creature, who lives and labours in the world, but the glass lens of the camera obscura.

Fifth: the entire world is thought to be completely static and wholly immutable. In a world subject to a perspectival depiction there can be neither history, nor growth, nor dimensions, nor movements, nor biography, nor development of dramatic actions, nor the play of emotions - nor should there be. Otherwise the perspectival oneness of the picture disintegrates yet again. It is a world that is dead, or gripped in eternal sleep, invariably one and the same, a picture frozen in its ice-bound immobility.

Sixth: all psycho-physiological processes in the act of vision are excluded. The eye looks motionlessly and dispassionately, the equivalent of an optical lens. It does not stir itself, it cannot, it has no right to stir, in spite of the fundamental condition of vision, its activeness, the active reconstructing of reality in vision as the activity of a living creature. Moreover, this looking is accompanied by neither memories, nor spiritual exertions, nor recognition. It is an external-mechanical process, at the most a physio-chemical one, but in no way is it that which is called vision. The whole psychic element of vision, and even the physiological one, are decisively absent.

And thus, if the six aforesaid conditions are observed, then and only then does that correspondence which a perspectival picture wants to convey between the points on the skin of the world and the points of a representation become possible. But if even one of the aforementioned six conditions is not observed in its entirety, then this aspect of the correspondence becomes impossible and the perspective will then inevitably be destroyed to a greater or lesser extent. A picture approaches perspectival correctness inasmuch as, and to the degree that, the aforesaid conditions are observed. And if they are not observed even partially, if the legitimacy of even their local violation is admitted' as a result the perspective too ceases to be an unconditional demand hanging over the artist and becomes just an approximate method of conveying reality, one among many others. Moreover, the degree of its application and the place of that application in a given work are defined by the special aims of the given work and its given place, but by no means generally for any work as such and under all circumstances.

But let us suppose for a moment that the conditions of perspective are satisfied completely, and, consequently, that an exact perspectival unity is also achieved in the work [of art]. The image of the world conveyed under such conditions would resemble a photograph, momentarily imprinting a given correlation between the photosensitised plate and reality. Digressing from the

question of the properties of space itself and of the psycho-physical processes of vision, we can say that, in relation to the actual observation of real life, this instantaneous photo is a differential, and a differential of a higher and, to a lesser extent, a second order. To receive a genuine picture of the world therefrom, it is essential to integrate it several times, using the variable of time, on which both changes in reality itself and the processes of observation also depend, and also using other variables like the changeable mass of apperceptions, etc. However, even if all this were done, the resulting integral of the image would still not coincide with a truly artistic image, as a consequence of the disparity between the concept of space that it implies and the space of the work of art, which is organised as a self-contained, complete unit.

It is not hard to recognise in such a perspectival artist the embodiment of a thought that is *passive* and doomed to every kind of passivity, that for an instant, as if by stealth, furtively spies on the world through a chink between subjective facets, that is lifeless and motionless, incapable of grasping movement and laying claim to a divine certainty, specifically about its own place and its own instant of peeking out. He is an observer who brings nothing of his own to the world, who cannot even synthesise his own fragmentary impressions; who, since he does not enter into a living interaction with the world and does not live in it, is not aware of his own reality either, although in his proud seclusion from the world he imagines himself to be the last instance. Yet on the basis of his own furtive experience he constructs all of reality, all of it, on the pretext of objectivity, squeezing it into what he has observed of reality's own differential. This is precisely how the world view of Leonardo, Descartes, and Kant grows out of the soil of the Renaissance; this is also how the visual art equivalent to this world view - perspective - arises.

Artistic symbols should be perspectival here, because perspective is a method for uniting all notions about the world, such that the world is understood as a single, indissoluble and impenetrable net of Kantian and Euclidean relationships, having their focus in the I of the observer of the world, but in such a way that this I is itself inactive and mirror-like, a certain imaginary focus on the world. In other words, *perspective is a method that of necessity results from a Weltanschauung in which the real basis for half-real, things-notions is admitted to be a certain kind of subjectivity, which is itself devoid of reality.* Perspective is an expression of meonism⁸³ and impersonalism. And this trend of thought is usually called 'naturalism' and 'humanism' - the trend that emerged with the end of mediaeval realism and co-centrism.

XV

But, one asks, in what measure is it possible to doubt the soundness of the six premises of perspective listed above? I.e., while a perspectival representation is one of many methods for representing the world that are possible in the abstract - this is irrefutable! - is it in actual fact the only one, given the viable presence of the demonstrated conditions which make it possible? In other words, is the Kantian, Renaissance world view vital? If it transpired that the conditions of perspective were violated in actual experience, then the vital significance of this concept would be refuted along with it.

And so, let us examine step by step the conditions we have laid out.

First: on the issue of the space of the world it should be said that, in the actual concept of space, we can distinguish three layers that are quite distinct from each other. They are: abstract or geometric space, physical and physiological space, which can in turn be subdivided into the space of vision, the space of touch, the space of hearing, the space of smell, the space of taste, the space of a sense generally organic, etc., each with their own more subtle subdivisions. In abstract terms one can think in a totally different way about each of these designated divisions of space, the large and the minuscule. To imagine that an entire series of extremely complex questions can be deflected simply by referring to a geometric doctrine about the similarity of figures in three-dimensional Euclidean space would mean not even touching on the difficulties of the issue here. First and foremost, it should be noted that the answers given to various aspects of the posed question of space turn out, quite naturally, to be extremely diverse. In abstract geometric terms, Euclidean space is just a particular instance of diverse, utterly heterogeneous spaces, with the most unexpected characteristics vis-a-vis the elementary teaching of geometry, characteristics that are highly revealing for a direct relation to the world. Euclid's geometry is one of countless geometries, and we have no foundation for saying that physical space, the space of physical processes, is specifically Euclidean space. It is just a postulate, a demand that we think of the world thus and adapt all other notions to this demand. The actual demand itself arises from an *a priori* belief in physico-mathematical science of a specific stamp, involving the principle of continuity, absolute time, absolute solid bodies and so on.

But let us suppose for a moment that physical space does in fact satisfy the geometry of Euclid. It still does not follow from this that the direct observer of the world perceives it to be just like that. No matter how he would like to think of the physical space he inhabits, no matter how essential he thinks it is that

the construction of all his other notions should fit the main one - the Euclidean composition of external space, subsuming physiological space within a Euclidean schema - nevertheless physiological space cannot be made to fit within it. Leaving aside the olfactory, gustatory, thermal, aural and tactile spaces that have *nothing in common* with Euclidean space, so that they're not even subject to discussion in this sense, we cannot overlook the fact that even visual space, the least removed from Euclidean space, turns out on closer inspection to be profoundly different from it. And it is in fact [visual space] that lies at the core of painting and the graphic arts, although in various instances it can be subject to other aspects of physiological space too, in which case a picture will be a visual transposition of non-visual perceptions.

'If we now ask just exactly what physiological space has in common with geometric space, we will find only a very few points in common,' says Mach. 'Both spaces represent a three-dimensional manifold. For every point A, B, C, D of geometric space there is a corresponding A', B', C', D' of physiological space. If C lies between B and D, then C also lies between B' and D'. We can also say that, for a continuous motion of some point in geometric space, there is a corresponding continuous moment of a corresponding point in physiological space. That this continuity, chosen for convenience sake, should in no way be obligatorily real and unalterable for the one or the other we have already demonstrated elsewhere: 'And if we accept that physiological space is innate to us, it displays too few resemblances to geometric space to allow us to see in it sufficient basis for a developed *a priori* geometry (in the Kantian sense). On this foundation we can at the very most construct a topology:⁸⁴ 'If this dissimilarity between physiological and geometric space doesn't seem obvious to people who do not specialise in such investigations, if geometric space doesn't seem to them somehow monstrous, a kind of falsification of innate space, then this can be explained by an intimate examination of the conditions under which man lives and develops:⁸⁵ But, 'even given its greatest approximation to Euclidean space, physiological space still differs from it substantially. A naive person easily overcomes the difference between right and left, before and behind, but it is not so easy for him to overcome the difference between above and below, on account of the resistance shown by geotropism in this regard:⁸⁶

In another work the same thinker outlines some of the characteristics of this difference. 'We have already repeatedly had occasion to notice how very different the system of our space-sensations - our physiological space, if we may use the expression - is from geometrical (by which is here meant

Euclidean)... Geometrical space is of the same nature everywhere and in all directions; it is boundless and (in Riemann's sense) infinite. Visual space is bounded and finite, and what is more, its extension is different in different directions, as a glance at the flattened "vault of heaven" teaches us. Bodies shrink when they are removed to a distance, when they are brought near they are enlarged and in these features visual space resembles the many constructions of the metageometricians rather than Euclidean space. The difference between "above" and "below", between "before" and "behind", and also, strictly speaking, between "left" and "right", is common to tactile space and visual space, but in geometrical space there are no such differences.⁸⁷ Physiological space is neither homogeneous, nor isotropic, and this is expressed in the varying estimation of angular distances at varying distances from the horizon, in the varying estimation of lengths, subdivided and not subdivided, in the varying sensitivity of perception on varying parts of the retina, and so on.⁸⁸

And so, we can and should have doubts that our world exists in Euclidean space. But even if we were to dismiss this doubt, nevertheless we probably do not see, and in general do not apprehend, the Euclidean-Kantian world; we only talk about it as a theoretical requirement, as if it were something visible. Whereas the artist's task is to paint pictures, not abstract treatises, to depict what he really sees. What he sees, given the structure of the seeing organ, is not at all a Kantian world, and consequently he must depict something that in no way obeys the laws of Euclidean geometry.

Second: there is not a single person in his right mind who thinks that his point of view is the only one and who does not accept every place, every point of view as something of value, as giving a special aspect of the world that doesn't exclude other aspects, but affirms them. Some points of view are more full of content and characteristic, others less so, each in its own respect, but there is no absolute point of view. Consequently, the artist attempts to examine the object he depicts from various points of view, enriching his observation with new aspects of reality, and acknowledging them as more or less of equal meaning.

Third: since he has two eyes, i.e., since he has at one and the same time at least two different points of view, the artist possesses a constant corrective to illusionism, for his second eye is always suggesting that perspectival vision is a deception, and what's more an unsuccessful illusion. In addition, the artist sees more with two eyes than he could with one, and with each eye he sees in a particular way, so that the visual image takes shape in his consciousness synthetically, like a binocular image. In any event it is a psychological synthesis, but it can in no way be

likened to a monocular, single-lens photograph on the retina. Nor is it for the defenders of perspective and the supporters of Helmholtz's theory of vision to cite the negligible difference between two pictures produced by the left and right eye. This difference, according to their own theory, happens to be sufficient [to create] a sensation of depth, and without it this sensation would not be registered. Consequently, by pointing out the difference between representations made with the right and the left eyes, they destroy the reason that would explain why space is perceived as three dimensional.

However, this difference is by no means as small as it might seem at first glance. Let's take as an example a calculation I made. A sphere 20 cm in diameter is viewed from a distance of half a metre, with the distance between the pupils of the eyes being 6 cm. Assuming that the centre of the sphere is at eye level, then the addition of the sphere's equatorial arc that is perceived by the left eye not by the right, is equal to approximately one third of that same arc's equator, seen by the right eye. On a closer examination of the sphere, the proportion of what is seen by the left eye, when added to what is seen by the right eye, will be even greater than one third. These are quantities we must deal with under the usual conditions of vision, for example, when looking at a human face, and even at the smallest degrees of accuracy they cannot be evaluated as quantities that we can afford to disregard.

So in general, if s is the main distance, r is the radius of the sphere under examination, and f is the distance of the sphere's centre from the midpoint of the interocular distance, then the relationship x of the additional equatorial arc, added by the left eye to the same arc of the right eye, to the arc seen by the right eye, is expressed with sufficient accuracy in the equation:

$$x = \frac{s}{2r} \arccos \frac{r-f}{s}$$

Fourth: Even when he sits in one spot an artist is always moving. He moves with his eyes, his head, his torso, and his point of view is ceaselessly changing. This is the visual artistic image as it should be called. That is, the psychic synthesis of infinitely many visual perceptions from various points of view, and double ones at that, is an integral of such two-in-one images. To think of it as a purely physical phenomenon is to have no conception of the processes of vision and to confuse *quadrata rotundis* - the mechanical and the spiritual. He who has not assimilated the spiritual-synthetic nature of visual images as axioms, has not yet even embarked on a theory of vision, still less of artistic vision.⁸⁹

On the other hand, and *fifth*, objects change, *move*, turn their various sides towards the viewer, grow and shrink. The world is life, not frozen stasis. And consequently, here again the creative spirit of the artist should synthesise, forming integrals of the partial aspects of reality, of its instantaneous cross-sections along the coordinate of time. The artist depicts not an object, but the life of the object, according to the impression he receives of it. And thereby, in general terms, it is a great prejudice to think that one should contemplate, in a state of immobility and while the object being contemplated is motionless. For the issue is, just what perception of an object needs to be depicted in a given situation - that from a chink in the prison wall or from [the window] of an automobile. In itself, not a single means of relating to reality can be rejected in advance. Perception is defined by a vital relation to reality, and if the artist wishes to depict the perception he receives when both he and the object are mutually moving, then he must summarise his impressions while in motion. Moreover, this is actually the most common and most true-to-life perception of reality - as one goes along. It is this perception that gives the most profound cognition of reality. The painterly expression of such cognition is the artist's natural goal. Is it a feasible one?

We know that movement [can be] conveyed, if only that of a galloping horse, the play of feelings across a face, the developing action of events. Consequently, there is no basis for acknowledging that the vital perception of reality cannot be depicted. This differs from the more usual situation, in that the artist is moving relatively slowly and objects are more often depicted in motion, whereas here the movement of the artist, too, is also considered significant, then reality itself can be almost or entirely motionless. As a result, we have depictions of houses with three and four facades, heads with extra surfaces, and suchlike phenomena familiar to us from ancient art. This kind of depiction of reality will correspond to the unmoving monumentality and ontological massiveness of the world, activated by the cognising spirit that lives and labours in these strongholds of ontology.

Children do not synthesise even the instantaneous image of a person, placing the eyes, nose, mouth and so on separately and uncoordinated on the paper. The perspectival artist is unable to synthesise a series of instantaneous impressions and places them in an uncoordinated way on the various pages of his sketchbook. But in both cases this demonstrates only the passivity of a thought that comes unravelled into elementary impressions, is incapable of grasping in a single whole act of contemplation - and consequently in a corresponding single form - any kind of complex perception, and of cinemato-

graphically distributing it into instants and moments. However, there are instances when such a synthesis cannot but be produced, and then the most zealous perspectivist rejects his own positions. There's not a single naturalist artist who can stop a spinning top, the wheel of a speeding train or a skidding bicyclist, a waterfall or a fountain in his representation, but he can convey in summary form a perception of the play of impressions fading into and criss-crossing each other. However, an instantaneous photograph or the sight of these processes illuminated by an electric flash reveals something quite different from what the artist depicted. Now it becomes evident that a single impression halts the process, provides its differential, while a general impression integrates these differentials. But if anyone would agree with the legitimacy of such an integration, then what is there to stop us applying something equivalent in other situations too, when the speed of the processes is somewhat less relevant?

And finally, *sixth*: The defenders of perspective forget that artistic vision is an extremely complex psychic process of merging psychic elements, accompanied by psychic resonances. In the image reconstructed in the spirit there accumulate memories, emotional echoes of inner movements, and around the dust motes of all the above the effective psychic content of the artist's personality is perceptibly crystallised. This clot grows and acquires its own rhythm, and it is this rhythm that expresses the artist's response to the reality he depicts.

In order to see and examine an object, and not only to look at it, it is essential progressively to translate its depiction on the retina in separate sections to the retina's sensible macula. This means that the visual image is not presented to the consciousness as something simple, without work and effort, but is constructed, pieced together from fragments successively sewn one to the other, such that each of them is perceived more or less from its own point of view. Furthermore, facet is synthetically added to facet by a particular act of the psyche, and in general the visual image is shaped in succession, not produced ready-made. In perception the visual image is not viewed from a single viewpoint but, in accordance with the very essence of vision, it is an image of polycentric perspective. In uniting together here the additional surfaces as well, combining the image from the left eye with the one from the right, we should acknowledge the resemblance of any visual image to the buildings in icons. Henceforth we can debate the degree and desired extent of this polycentric perspective, but no longer that it should be allowed **in** principle. Thereafter begins either the demand for an even

greater degree of mobility in the eye, for the sake of an increasingly intense synthetic vision, or the demand for anchoring the eye, to the degree possible, when a 'scattered' vision is sought. In this case, perspective stands on the path of this visual analysis. But man, as long as he's alive, cannot be completely accommodated within a perspectival system, and the very act of seeing with a motionless, fixed eye (ignoring the left eye) is psychologically impossible.

People will say, 'But all the same now, you can't see three walls of a house at once!' If this objection were correct, one would have to continue it and be consistent. It's impossible to see not just three, but two walls, and even one wall of a house all at once. All at once we see only a minutely small fragment of the wall, and even that we don't see all at once. All at once we see literally nothing. But not all at once we definitely receive an image of a house with three and four walls, as we conceive the house to be. A continuous pouring, overflowing, changing, struggle takes place in the living conception. It is continuously playing, sparkling, pulsating, but never does it founder in the inner contemplation of a thing like a dead schema. And it is just with such an inner pulsing, sparkling and play that a house lives in our imagination. The artist should and can depict his idea of a house, but he absolutely cannot transfer the house itself to canvas. He grasps this life of his idea, whether it be a house or a human face, by taking from the various parts of the idea the brightest, the most expressive of its elements, and instead of a momentary psychic fireworks it provides a motionless mosaic of its single, most expressive moments. During contemplation of the picture, the viewer's eye, passing step by step across these characteristic features, reproduces in the spirit what is now an image extended in time and duration of a scintillating, pulsating idea, but now more intense and more cohesive than an image deriving from the thing itself, for now the vivid moments observed at different times are presented in their pure state, already condensed, and don't require an expenditure of psychic effort in smelting the clinkers out of it. As on the incised cylinder of a phonograph, the sharp point of the clearest vision slips along the picture's lines and surfaces with their notches, and in each spot arouses in the viewer corresponding vibrations. And these vibrations constitute the purpose of the work of art.

That is the approximate path of thought that travels from the premises of naturalism to the perspectival peculiarities of icon painting. It may be a quite

different understanding of art from that which applies in naturalism, one that derives from the fundamental precept of spiritual independence. For the author personally this latter is closer. But on the basis of this understanding the question of perspective doesn't come up at all, and remains just as remote from creative consciousness as do the rest of the forms and methods of technical drawing. In this present analysis the limited nature of naturalism had to be overcome from within, showing how *fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt* to liberation and spirituality.

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 - 16 Aleksei Losev, 'Gibel' burzhuaznoi kul'tury i ee filosofii (posleslovie)', in Artur Khiubsher, *Mysliteli nashego vremeni* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo inostranoi literatury, 1961), p. 17.
 - 17 Ivan Frolovich Ognev (1855–1928), a professor of biology at Moscow University, moved to Sergiev Posad in 1919. Florensky dictated many of his texts, including 'On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre', 'On Realism' and 'Analysis of Spatiality', to Ognev's wife, Sofiia Ivanovna Ogneva (1857-1940).
 - 18 See Mariia Trubacheva, 'Iz istorii okhrany pamiatnikov v pervye gody sovetskoii vlasti. Komissiiia po okhrane pamiatnikov stariny i iskusstva Troitse-Sergievoi

- Lavry 1918-1925 gg.', in *Muzei*, 5 (1984), pp. 152-64.
- 19 Written between 1918 and 1920, *Iconostasis* was published only in 1972. For English translations see John Lindsay Opie, ed., 'Archipriest Pavel Florensky: "On the Icon"', *Eastern Churches Review*, VIII/1 (1976), pp. 11-37; Sheehan and Andrejev, *Iconostasis* (1996).
 - 20 Florensky exhibition (1989).
 - 21 For bibliographical details of Florensky's entries for the *Tekhnicheskaiia entsiklopediia* see Andronik, 'K 100-letiu' (1982), pp. 299-306.
 - 22 The original petition is in the Florensky Foundation. Whether it was sent is unclear. See Pavel V. Florensky, 'Pamiati o Pavla Florenskogo. Istoriia ego gibeli v pis'makh i dokumentakh', *Russkaia mysl'*, 3908 (13 December 1991), p.13.
 - 23 Florensky's nephew, Pavel Vasil'evich, has published a detailed account of the imprisonment and execution. See Pavel V. Florensky *et al.*, P. A. *Florensky, Arest i gibel'* (Ufa: Grado-Ufimskaia Bogorodskaia tserkov', 1997).

Pavel Florensky as Art Historian

- In 1918-20 Florensky was Secretary for Academic Affairs and Curator of the Sacristy within the Commission. In this capacity he wrote the opening essay 'Troitse-Sergieva Lavra i Rossiia' for the collection *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra*.
- 2 Letter from Florensky to his son Kirill, dated 13 May 1937, in *Sochineniia*, IV, p. 702. After graduating in mathematics and physics, Aleksandr Illarionovch Larionov (1889-1958) cultivated a serious interest in many academic disciplines and subjects - Indo-European languages (learning Sanskrit, for example), archaeology, ethnography, art history, creative literature, linguistics, gymnastics and choreography - and he even offered a course in cinematography for NARKOM-PROS. Like Florensky, Larionov was much indebted to the Moscow Symbolists. For an English translation of one of his texts and commentary see Nicoletta Misler, 'Aleksandr Larionov', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), pp. 267-8.
 - 4 Count Yurii Aleksandrovich Olsuf'ev (1878-1939) was a connoisseur of early Russian icons. With Florensky he played a critical role in the Commission for the Preservation of the Lavra, preparing catalogues raisonnées of the icons and other ecclesiastical objects in the Lavra collections. For information on Olsuf'ev see Gerol'd Vzdornov: 'Zabytoe imia', in *Pamiatniki Otechestva*, 2 (16) (1987), p. 85. Pavel Nikolaevich Kapterev (1889-1953), son of the theological historian Nikolai Kapterev (1847-1917), graduated in biology in 1911 and in philosophy in 1916. In 1924 he was appointed Director of the Hypnosis Society in Moscow and the following year Director of the Commission for the Study of Artistic Creativity at RAKhN. Kapterev also worked in the Psycho-Physical Laboratory there, conducting research on 'artistic creativity under hypnosis'. In the late 1920s he gave increasing attention to the natural sciences. See Pavel Kapterev, 'Lichnoe delo', RGALI, Call No.: f. 941, op. 10, ed. khr. 268; also his 'Iz istorii Troitskoi Lavry', in Florensky, *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra i Rossiia*, pp. 30-45.
 - 6 After graduating as an engineer in 1903, Pavel Pavlovich Muratov (1881-1950)

- volunteered for the Russo-Japanese War and subsequently for the First World War. Along with creative writing, criticism, translating, and art history, military history was one of his principal interests. During his long sojourns in Rome and Florence in 1908 and 1911 he wrote the first and second volumes of his *Obrazy Itali* (published by Nauchnoe slovo, Moscow, in 1911 and 1912 respectively) The book was published in its entirety (three volumes) only in 1924 (Berlin: Grzhebin) and then again in 1993 (vol. I) and 1994 (vols II and III) by Viktor Grashenkov with Galart, Moscow. After the October Revolution Muratov assumed important responsibilities in the new institutions that Lenin established for the protection of antique monuments and art objects. In 1922 he emigrated to Berlin and later on to England and Ireland.
- 7 Boris Biriukov refers to Weyl in the immediate context of Florensky. See Yuri Danilov, ed., *German Veil, matematicheskoe myshlenie* (Moscow: Matematika, 1989), pp. 337–9, 345, 349–52, 358.
 - 8 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, pp. 166–70, 81–2, 239.
 - 9 As Aleksei Losev asserted, 'Florensky was an enemy of pure logic ... Florensky could not bear pure logic ... Florensky was not at all fond of abstract philosophy.' Aleksei Losev, 'Vspominaia Florenskogo...!', in *Literaturnaia ucheba*, 2 (March–April 1988), p. 176.
 - 10 The Russian texts of the eleven lectures which Florensky delivered at VKhUTEMAS in the academic year 1923–24 are published as 'Prilozhenie 1). Lektsii P. Florenskogo. Analiz perspektivy (zapis' Verevinoi-Stroganovoi 1923–24', in Andronik (2000), pp. 296–386. For an Italian translation of eight of the lectures see Misler (1995), pp. 241–331.
 - 11 For a comprehensive analysis of Florensky's idea of the symbol see Vyacheslav Ivanov, 'Florensky: A Symbolic View', in *Elementa*, II (1995), pp. 1–22.
 - 12 Florensky, *Detiam maim*, p. 158.
 - 13 Pavel Florensky, 'O simvolakh beskonechnosti (Ocherk idei G. Kantora)', in *Novyi put'*, 9 (1904), pp. 173–235.
 - 14 Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov (1871–1944), priest, philosopher and economist. Born into a priest's family, he studied at the Theological Seminary in Orlov where he also moved closely with the Social Democrats. However, in 1903, with the collection of essays *Ot marksizma k idealizmu* [From Marxism to Idealism] (St Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1903), he declared his new-found religious and philosophical orientation. Close to Nikolai Berdiayev, Bulgakov published in the Symbolist religious journal *Put'* in 1911. Ordained in 1918, he was exiled from Russia in 1922. In emigration he lived in Prague and then Paris and was one of the very few Russian intellectuals to keep the memory of Florensky alive. For an overview of his religious ideas see Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1997). Bulgakov published his early ideas on Sophia in his book *Svet nevechernii. Sozertsaniia i umozreniia* (Sergiev Posad: Put', 1917), which he then developed in emigration.
 - 15 Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, pp. 400–401.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 583.
 - 17 In 1908 parts of *The Pillar and Ground* were published as two offprints of the

- journals *Voprosy religii* and *Religiia i zhizn'*. Three years later the letter in question appeared separately as 'Sofia (Iz pisem k drugu)' [Sophia (From Letters to a Friend)] in *Bogoslovskii Vestnik*, *II/5* (1911), pp. 135-61; *II/7/8*, pp. 582-613. For commentary on the sequence of the first publications of these letters see Andronik (1982), pp. 284-91.
- 18 Florensky neither elaborated nor published this brief text. See Pavel Florensky, 'Zoloto v lazuri Andreia Belogo. Kriticheskaia stat'ia', in *Sochineniia*, 1, pp. 695-9. Bely's book, *Zoloto v lazuri*, was published by Skorpion (Moscow, 1904).
 - 19 Pavel Florensky, *V vechnoi lazuri. Sbornik stikhov* (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1907).
 - 20 Pavel Florensky, 'The Turquoise Environment of Sophia and the Symbolism of Sky-Blue and Dark-Blue' (Appendix xxiv in *The Pillar and Ground*, pp. 391-406). This citation is on p. 398.
 - 21 Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, trans. and intro., 'Vladimir Solovyov, 'Three Encounters', in *The Silver Age. Russian Literature and Culture* [88]-[92], vol. II (Idyllwild, CA, 1999), p. 33. Solov'ev had three visions of the Divine Sophia - one in Russia when he was nine, the second in the Reading Room of the British Museum in London, and the third in the Egyptian desert.
 - 22 Mikhail Lermontov, untitled poem (dated 1 January 1840), in Anatoly Liberman, trans. and intro., *Mikhail Lermontov, Major Poetical Works* (Minneapolis, 1983), p. 183.
 - 23 Florensky, *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra i Rossiia*, p. 230.
 - 24 See, for example, Pavel Muratoff, *Thirty Five Russian Primitives* (Paris: A la Vieille Russie, 1931).
 - 25 For commentary on *Sofia* see Vasilii Sakharov, 'Zhurnal sobiratel'stva i okhrany pamiatnikov "'Sofia"'', in *Pamiatniki Otechestva*, 1 (1983), pp. 152-5; and V. Vel'iashev, "'Sofia." Po stranitsam starykh zhurnalov', in *Nashe nasledie*. 4 (1988), pp. 110-13.
 - 26 Pavel Muratov, intra., *Vysfávka Drevne-russkago iskusstva* (Moscow: Tipografiia P.P. Riabushinskago. 1913).
 - 27 According to Nikita Struve, who published El'chaninov's memoirs, the bishop in question was Bishop Gavriil Golosov of Omsk (1839-1916). See Aleksandr El'chaninov, 'Iz vstrech s P. A. Florenskim', in *Vestnik russkogo Khristianskogo dvizheniia*, *11/142* (1984), pp. 68-77.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, p. 74. Also see *Sol' zemli* (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1908) translated into English by Richard Betts as *Salt of the Earth* (Platina, CA: St Hermann Brotherhood of Alaska, 1987).
 - 29 See Nicoletta Misler, 'Per una liturgia dei sensi: Il concetto di sinestesia da Kandinskij a Florenskij', in *Rassegna Sovietica* (March-April 1986), pp. 37-44. For a valuable survey of the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* see Waiter Scheel *et al.*, *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk. Europäische Utopien seit 1800* (Aaran, 1983).
 - 30 Pavel Florensky, 'O khranovom deistve kak sintez iskusstv.' Manuscript Section, GTG, Call. No.: f. 31/1130.
 - 31 The *Misterium* remained unfinished because of the composer's sudden death in April 1915. See Boris de Schloezer, 'Acte prealable', in Nicolas Slonimsky, trans., and Marina Scriabine, intro., Scriabin, *Artist and Mystic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), pp. 291-306.

- 32 Viacheslav Ivanov appreciated Skriabin and his theories. See 'Vospominanie O A. N. Skriabine. Pamiati Skriabina', in Viacheslav Ivanov: *Svet Vechernii* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 51-52, 92-3.
- 33 See Viacheslav Ivanov, 'Mnozhestvo i lichnost' v deistve', in *Vestnik teatra*, 62 (1920), p. 5.
- 34 Pavel Florensky, Letter to Ol'ga Florenskaia, dated 23 March 1937, in Sergei Trubachev, 'Muzykal'nyi mir P. A. Florenskogo', *Sovetskaia muzyka*, 9 (September 1988), pp. 99-102. This quotation is on p. 99.
- 35 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, p.127.
- 36 Trubachev, 'Muzykal'nyi mir P. A. Florenskogo', p. 100.
- 37 Pavel Florensky, 'Pis'mo v dostokhval'nyi "Makovets"', in Mira Nemirovskaia and Evgeniia Iliukhina, eds, *Makovets 1922-1926. Sbornik materialov po istorii ob'edineniia*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (1994), p. 60. For further detailed information on the history of the Makovets group and its journal see Vladimir Lapshin, 'Iz istorii zhizni khudozhestvennoi Moskvy 1920-kh godov. "Makovets"', in Vadim Polevoi *et al.*, eds, *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie '79*, 2 (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1980), pp. 355-n
- 38 Yurii Olsuf'ev, *Ikonopisnye formy kak formuly sinteza* [Iconic Forms as Formulae of Synthesis] (Sergiev Posad: Izdanie Gosudarstvennogo Sergievskogo istoriko-khudozhestvennogo muzeia, 1926).
- 39 The essay was never published. See Vzdornov, 'Zabytoe imia', p. 85.
- 40 'Skhema opisaniia ikony vyrabotannaia chlenami Komissii po okhrane Troitskoi Lavry', in Florensky, *Ikonostas* (1995), p. 222-3.
- 41 Letter from Olsuf'ev to Neradovsky dated 14 December 1918, Manuscript Section, TG, Call No.: f. 31/1130, l.1.
- 42 Igumen Damaskin (Orlovsky), 'Goneniia na russkuiu pravoslavnuuiu tserkov' v sovetskii period', in *Pravoslavnaiia Entsiklopediia. Russkaia Pravoslavnaia tserkov'* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 179-89.
- 43 Under the aegis of the Committee for the Preservation of Artistic Treasures, Grabar' published the pamphlet: *Dlia chego nado okhraniat' i sobirat' sokrovishcha iskusstva i stariny* (Moscow: Kushnerev, 1919).
- 44 Viktor Kuchin, ed., *Iz istorii stOitel'stva sovetskoi kul'tvy 1917-18* (Moscow, 1964). For useful contextual discussions of such collectors and their collections see Beverly Kean, *All the Empty Palaces* (London, 1983) and Nadezhda Polunina and Aleksandr Frolov, *Kollektsionery staroi Moskvy* (Moscow, 1997).
- 45 Boris Shaposhnikov, 'The Museum as a Work of Art', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), p. 233.
- 46 The idea of a museum centred in the Lavra was crucial to the project that the Sergiev Posad Society for the Study of the Local Region entertained in 1918: 'It would be a mistake to view the Lavra simply as a museum. The Lavra is a living diamond, the foundation of which is the whole territory in question. The Lavra lives as an enormous historical and artistic organism.' In addition, the Society planned a Natural Sciences Section so as to study the 'topography of the region, its water system, tables of meteorological data, and so on; geographical materials in general, the geological structure of the region ... its flora and fauna'. The mandate encompassed the local woods, birds, reptiles and even butterflies. See

- Pavel Kapterev, 'O zadachakh Sergievo-posadskogo Obshchestva Izucheniia mestnogo kraia. Sostavleno po porucheniiu Obshchestva' (25 October 1918) in Trubacheva, 'Komissiiia po okhrane', p. 160. See also Florensky, 'Stat'i i doklady po okhrane pamiatnikov i organizatsii muzeinnogo dela', in Andronik (2000), pp. 47-78.
- 47 'Proekt muzeiia Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry, sostavlennyi chlenami Komissii po okhrane Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry, professorami P. A. Florenskim i P. N. Kapterevym po porucheniiu Komissii', in Trubacheva, 'Komissiiia po okhrane', pp. 161-2.
- 48 In 1933 Pavel Kapterev, his brother Sergei and Florensky were arrested simultaneously, accused of being members of the same (fictitious) anti-Soviet organisation. See Pavel V. Florensky, 'V.!. Vernardsky i sem'ia Florenskikh. Pis'ma Florenskogo iz ssylki', *Novyi zhurnal*, 186 (1992), pp. 226-61. At the Skovorodino camp Florensky and Kapterev still managed to collaborate on research into the permafrost and their findings were even published (but without Florensky's name as co-author). See Pavel Kapterev and Nikolai Bykov, *Vechnaia merzlota i stroitel'stvo na nei* (Moscow: Tranzheldorizdat, 1940).
- 49 During his last months Florensky wrote from prison camp: 'No, and even if! were in Moscow I would not take part in the contemporary research in the field of physics. Rather, I would study cosmophysics and the general principles of the structure of matter as it manifests itself in real experience and not as it is reconstructed abstractly from formal premises.' See Florensky's letter to his family from the Solovki camp, dated 23-25 April 1936, in Sergei Trubachev, 'Blizhe k zhizni mira', in *Sovetskaia kul'tura* (3 November 1988), p. 6. Kapterev also discussed the infinity of the universe in several popular pamphlets. See, for example, his *Vseleniia i ego zhizn'* (Moscow and Leningrad: Doloi negrafnotnost', 1927).
- 50 Florensky was interested in the perception of time during the dream process. Referring to the investigations of Du Prel, he alluded to the possibility of a reverse direction in time experienced during dreams. See Karl Du Prel, *Die Philosophie der Iviystik* (Leipzig: Giinther, 1887). See also Florensky, *Ikonostas* (1995), p. 38; and *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, p. 222.
- 51 See Pavel Kapterev, 'Programma eksperimental' noi raboty nad problemami khudozhestvennogo vospriatiia i tvorchestva pri primenenii gipnoza i vnusheniia', in RGALI, Call. No.: f. 941 (GAKhN), op. 12, ed. khr. 10, l. 4.
- 52 Now in the possession of the Florensky Foundation.
- 53 'Proekt muzeiia Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry', in Trubacheva, 'Komissiiia po okhrane', p. 153.
- 54 Pavel Florensky, 'Doklad v Komissiu po okhrane pamiatnikov iskusstva i stariny Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry. Ob izdanii katalogov Lavrskogo Il'uzeia', in Trubacheva, 'Komissiiu po okhrane', p. 162.
- 55 Alexandre Benois once accused his colleagues of 'going around in gladrags that they had dug out from their grandmothers' chests'. See il'ia Zilbershtein, *Aleksandr Benua razmysliaet* (Moscow, 1968), p. 131.
- 56 For information on these sales see Ol'ga Vasil'eva and Pavel Knyshevsky, *Krasnye konkvistadoly* (Moscow, 1994).

- 57 Vzdornov, 'Zabytoe imia', pp. 83-9.
- 58 Trubacheva, 'Komissiiia po okhrane', p. 157.
- 59 Mikhail Gorev (Galkin), *Troitskaia Lavra i Sergiei Radonezhsky. Opyt istoricheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Izdanie narodnogo Komissariata lustitsii, 1920), pp. 37-9.
- 60 For a list of sources that Florensky may have consulted see Vladimir Basilov, *Shamanstvo u narodov Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana* (Moscow, 1992). For a comprehensive examination of shamanism in Russia and the Soviet Union see Marjorie Maldelstam Balzer, ed., *Shamanism. Soviet Studies of Additional Religion in Siberia and Central Asia* (New York, 1990).
- 61 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, pp. 197-8.
- 62 See Wendy Salmond, *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); and Alison Hilton: *Russian Folk Art* (Bloomington, IN, 1995).
- 63 Pavel Florensky, 'Pis'mo A. S. Mamontovoi', *Sochineniia*, n, pp. 409-10. Florensky wrote the letter, dated 30 July 1917, in response to her letter of the day before.
- 64 Pavel Florensky, *Sobranie chastushek nerekhetskago uezda* (Kostroma Kostromskaia Gubernskaia Arkhivnaia Komissiiia, 1909), p. 62. Some of the *chastushki* that Florensky recorded in 1908 have been included in a recent collection. See Fedor Selivanov, ed., *Chastushki* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1990). A *chastushka* is a secular folk lyric, sometimes coarse, sometimes political, formed by a two or four-line rhyming ditty often on a humorous theme and often interpreted in the form of dancing, dialogue, duetto, monologue or a combination thereof. Florensky listed the *chastushki* that he had found and discussed them in his *Sobranie chastushek nerekhetskago uezda*. Bely also researched primitive rituals as subjects for his novels, for example, drawing upon the rites and traditions of the *khlysty* (a self-flagellating religious sect) in his novel, *Serebrianyi golub'* (Berlin: Epokha, 1922).
- 65 Florensky, *Sobranie chastushek nerekhetskago uezda*, p. 61.
- 66 Natal'ia Il'inichna Sats (1903-1993), niece by marriage of Anatolii Lunacharsky, then head of NARKOMPROS, was the Director of the Moscow Children's Theatre.
- 67 Of the three artists, Vladimir Andreevich Favorsky (1886-1964) was especially close to Florensky. Both members of the Makovets group and professors at VKhUTEMAS in the early 1920s, Favorsky and Florensky shared a common belief in the 'Realist' function of the figurative arts, regarding the experiments of the avant-garde with suspicion. Trained in Moscow and Munich, Favorsky achieved his reputation as a book illustrator and theorist of the graphic arts, contributing much to the development of the Russian and Soviet school of the printing arts. For information on Favorsky in English see Yurii Molok, ed., and Mikhail Alpatov, intro., *Vladimir Favorsky* (Moscow, 1967), trans. Avril Pyman.
- 68 Letter from Florensky to his daughter Ol'ga, sent from Solovki on 13 May 1937, in Florensky, *Detiam moim*, pp. 438-9.
- 69 Pavel Florensky, 'Organoproektsiia', in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, 145 (1969), pp. 39-42. Written in 1922, this was one of several chapters that Florensky planned for his unpublished collection, *At the Watersheds of Thought*.
- 70 Pavel Florensky, 'Fallicheskii pamiatnik Kotakhevskogo 1110nastyria', in *Zhivaia starina*, 1 (1908), pp. 56-8. See also Andronik (2000), pp. 49-50.

- 71 Pavel Florensky, 'Filosofskaia antropologiiia', in *Sochineniia*, m/I, p. 41. Also see his 'Zametki po antropologii' and 'Filosofskaia antropologiiia v dukhe Baadera', *ibid.*, pp. 44-5.
- 72 'The spectator must become the actor, a coparticipant in the action - the crowd of spectators must fuse into the choral body, like the mystical community of the ancient "orgies" and "mysteries"' (Viacheslav Ivanov, 'Predchustviia i predvestiia. Novaia organicheskaia epokha i teatr budushchago', in his *Po zvezdam* [St Petersburg: Ory, 1909], pp. 205-6).
- 73 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Zapiski petrushechnika* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925), p. 162.
- 74 Pavel Florensky, 'Pis'mo v dostokhval'nyi "Makovets"', p. 61. The *peredvizhniki*, known in English variously as the Wanderers, the Ambulants or the Itinerants, because of their link with the Association of Wandering [or Travelling] Exhibitions, were artists who countered the classical traditions of the Academy of Arts in the 1870s onwards by emphasising the social obligations of the work of art. The most celebrated *peredvizhnik* was the painter Il'ia Repin.
- 75 Adrian Efimov *et al.*, eds, *N. Ya. Simonovich-Efimova: 'Zapiski khudozhnika'* (Moscow, 1982), p. 65.
- 76 In a letter to her husband dated 22 November 1932, Simonovich-Efimova mentions having seen Florensky at a meeting of the Central Museum of Folk Studies in Moscow. See Efimov, *N. Ya. Simonovich-Efimova*, p. 143.
- 77 Letter from Simonovich-Efimova to her husband dated 6 August 1931, *ibid.*, p. 142.
- 78 Florensky, *Smysl idealizma*, pp. 46-7.
- 79 Viktor Lange, ed., *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust* (New York, 1994), Part n, Act 1, p. 165.
- 80 Florensky, *Smysl idealizma*, pp. 47-8.
- 81 In his memoirs Florensky admits to possessing a neurotic hypersensitivity and, as a child, to having maintained a reverent 'distance', almost unease, towards his mother. See Florensky, 'Mat', in *Detiam moim*, pp. 36-8.
- 82 Pavel Florensky, *Pervye shagi filosofii* (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1917).
- 83 Pavel Florensky, 'Forefathers of Philosophy', *Sochineniia*, 11, p. 84. Bakst's painting is in the Russian Museum, St Petersburg.
- 84 Pavel Florensky, letter to his son Kirill from Solovki, dated 21 March 1937, quoted in Slesinki (1984), p. 12.
- 85 Florensky provides a synthetic explanation of this world view in the autobiographical data he wrote in 1925-6. See Pavel Florensky, 'Po Florensky. Avtoreferat. Biograficheskie svedeniia', in Sergei Polovinkin, P. A. *Florensky: Logos protiv khaosa* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 4-11.
- 86 Georgii Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris: YMCA, 1937). Quoted in Valerii Mil'don, 'GAKhN and the Legacy of Russian Culture', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), p. 31.
- 87 El'chaninov, 'Iz vstrech s P. A. Florenskim', p. 70. Struve, editor of these memoirs, assumes that the initial 'P' denotes Petr Fedorovich Kapterev, cousin of Pavel Nikolaevich, but the more probable reference is to Pavel Nikolaevich Kapterev to whom Florensky was very close at the time.

- 88 Natal'ia Goncharova, 'Kubizm' (1912) in Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoroglazyi strdets* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo pisatelei, 1933), pp. 80-81. Another, longer, version of this text has been published by Thea Durfee as 'Nataliia Goncharova: Two Letters', *Experiment*, 1 (1995), pp. 159-68.
- 89 The first title given to this painting was *Paysage avec une nue flminine*. See Yakov Tugendkhol'd, 'Katalog kartin frantsuzskikh khudozhnikov iz sobraniia S. L. Shchukina', *Apollon*, 1-2 (1914), pp. 38-46. Also see anon" *Katalog kartin sobraniia Sergeia Ivanovieha Shehukina* (Moscow: Levinson, 1913). The current title of this painting, *Dryade (Nue dam laforet)*, seems to have been first used in the Shchukin catalogue published in 1923 after the nationalisation of the collection. See Tugendkhol'd, *Pervyi muzei novoi zapadnoi zhivopisi* (Petrograd, 1923). Also see Georg-W. Koltzsch *et al.*, *Morosow und Sehtsehukin - Die Russisehen Sammler. Monet bis Picasso*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Museum Folkwang (Essen, 1993).
- 90 Tugendkhol'd, 'Frantsuzskoe sobranie S. L. Shchukina', *Apollon*, 1-2 (1914), pp. 5-37.
- 91 See Vilgel m Mirimanov, *Iskusstvo tropicheskoi Afriki* (Moscow, 1986), illus. III, XII, XIII, XXXI and XXXVII.
- 92 Pavel Muratov, 'Shchukinskaia galereia (Ocherk iz istorii noveishei zhivopisi)', *Russkaia mys!*, 8 (1908), pp. 116-38.
- 93 See Nikolai Berdiaev, 'Pikasso', in *Sofiia*, 3 (1914), pp. 57-62. For a German translation see Felix P. Ingold, ed., *Picasso in Russland* (Zurich, 1973), pp. 39-47.
- 94 Florensky, *Smysl idealizma*, pp. 44-6.
- 95 Georgii Chulkov, 'Dellony i sovrellennost' (mysli o frantsuzskoi zhivopisi)', *Apollon*, 1-2 (1914), p. 67. Shchukin himself attempted a 'Mephistophelian' reading of Picasso's work, his wife's death in 1907 prompting him to acquire the artist's most radical and 'diabolical' works. For information see Anatoly Podoksik, *Picasso. The Artist's Works in the Soviet Museums* (New York, 1989).
- 96 Sergei Bulgakov, 'Trup krasoty', in *Russkaia mys!*, 8 (1915), pp. 91-106.
- 97 Berdiaev, 'Pikasso', p. 58.
- 98 Bulgakov, 'Trup krasoty', p. 93.
- 99 Florensky, *Smysl idealizma*, p. 45. Florensky was referring to nos 178, 226, 227, and 228 in the 1913 Shchukin catalogue, *Le violon*, 1912 (now Pushkin Museum, Moscow), *La guitare*, 1912, *Les instruments de musique*, 1912 and *La flute*, 1912-13 (all in the Hermitage, St Petersburg).
- 100 Charles Hinton, *A New Era of Thought* (London, 1888) and *The Fourth Dimension* (London, 1904). For commentary see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).
- 101 Mikhail Matiushin, 'O knige Metsanzhe-Gleza 'Du Cubisllie', in *Soiuz molodezhi*, 3 (1913), pp. 25-34. For a detailed account of the sources relevant to Matiushin's text see Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, pp. 368-75.
- 102 Florensky, *Smysl idealizma*, p. 46.
- 103 Aleksei Grishchenko, *O sviaziakh russkoi zhivopisi s Vizantiei i Zapadom XIII-XX v. Mysli zhivopistsa* (Moscow: Gorodskaiia tipografiia, 1913).
- 104 In 1917 Grishchenko described Goncharova's anti-Western declarations of 1913 as a 'national-demagogic buffonade'. See Aleksei Grishchenko, '*Krizis iskusstva*' i *sovremennaia zhivopis'* (Moscow: Gorodskaiia tipografiia, 1917), p. 23.

- 105 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 106 See Lev Zhegin, 'Vospominaniia o P. A. Florenskom (1959-nachalo 1960-kh. gg.)'. in Nemirovskaia and Iliukhina, *Makovets 1922-1926*, pp. 99-108; also see Ekaterina Drevina and Vasilii Rakitin, eds, N. A. *udal'tsova. Zhizn' russkoi kubistki. Dnevnik, Stat'i, Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1994), p.172.
- 107 See Petr Uspensky, *Chevertoe izmerenie*. Quoted in Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension*, pp. 278-80.
- 108 See Sixten Ringbom. 'Art in The Epoch of the Great Spiritual: Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxix (1966), pp. 386-418, and *The Sounding Cosmos. A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting* (Åbo, 1970).
- 109 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, pp. 127-8
- 110 Steven Cassedy, 'Florensky and Philosophy of Language in the Twentieth Century', in Hagemester and Kauchtschischwili (1995). pp. 289-94.
- 111 Velimir Khlebnikov, 'Noch' v Persii', in *Makovets*, 1 (1922), p. 7, and untitled poem in 2 (1922), p.18.
- 112 Pseudonym of Nikolai Nikolaevich Bariutin (1889-1961). Nikolai Khardzhiev published Reshetov's article as 'V Khlebnikove est' vse!', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 27 (1 July 1992) pp. 540-44.
- 113 See Pavel Florensky, 'Pis'mo N. N. Bariutinu' (1922) in RGALI, Call no.: f. 2283 (Nikolai Bariutin [Amfian Reshetov]), op. 1, ed. khr. 107, 11.
- 114 Vladimir Lapshin, ed., N. M. *Chernyshev* (Moscow, 1978), pp. 176-8.
- 115 See I-larald Szeeman *et al.*, eds. *Monte Verita*, catalogue of the exhibition at Casa Anatta and elsewhere, Ascona, Switzerland (Milan, 1978).
- 116 Florensky, 'Pis'mo v dostokhval'nyi "Makovets"', in Nemirovskaia and Iliukhina, *Makovets 1922-1926*, p. 60.
- 117 For a discussion of the two paintings see Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, pp. 252-3.
- 118 Vasilii Rozanov, 'Vechnoe preobrazhenie', *Minushee, Istoricheskii al' manakh*, 6 (1988), pp. 207-12; 'M. V. Nesterov', in N. K. Gavriushin, ed., *Filosofiia russkogo religioznogo iskusstva. Sokrovishchnitsa russkoi religiozno-filosofskoi mysli* (Moscow, 1993), pp. 151-63.
- 119 Zhegin, 'Vospominania o P. A. Florenskom'. p. 105.
- 120 Florensky, 'Po Florensky. Avtoreferat', p. 7.
- 121 Sergei Romanovich, 'O realizme', *Makovets*, 2 (1922), pp. 28-9.
- 122 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 123 Vasilii Chekrygin and Lev Zhegin, 'Khronologiia', in Lev Zhegin, 'Svedeniia o khudozhnike Chekrygine V. N.', in Manuscript Section, Tretyakov Gallery. Call number: f. 9/761. ed. khr. 1, l. 4.
- 124 Mikhail Larionov *et al.*, 'Budushchniki i luchisty. Manifest', in Mikhail Larionov *et al.*, *Oslinyi khvost i mishen'* (Moscow: Miunster, 1913), pp. 9-48. The presence of Romanovich in the group photograph accompanying the manifesto would indicate that he was one of the co-authors. See Natal'ia Romanovich and Viktor Skvortsov, eds, S. M. *Romanovich. Sbornik materialov. K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia khudozhnika. Zhivopis', Grafika*. catalogue of exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow, 1994), p.17.

- 125 Aleksandr Shevchenko, *Printsipy kubizma i drugikh sovremennykh techenii v zhivopisi vseh vremen i narodov* (Moscow, 1913); *Neo-primitivizm. Ego teoriia. Ego vozmozhnosti. Ego dostizheniia* (Moscow, 1913). For an English translation of the latter see John E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde. Theory and Criticism 1902-1934* (London, 1988), pp. 41-54.
- 126 In May 1919 NARKOMPROS established 'Sinskul'ptarkh', a commission to explore the possibilities of a synthesis between painting, sculpture and architecture. Composed initially of one painter and seven architects, it became 'Zhivskul'ptarkh' at the end of the year after other painters joined. See Selim Khan-Magomedov, 'Pervaia novatorskaia organizatsiia sovetskoi arkhitektury (Sinskul'ptarkh i Zhivskul'ptarkh 1919-1920 gg.)', *Problemy istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury*, 2 (1976), pp. 5-9; and *Zhivskul'ptarkh (1919-1920) - Pervaia tvorcheskaia organizatsiia sovetskogo arkhitekturnogo avant-garda* (Moscow, 1993).
- 127 Boris Berman, 'Zhivopis' i grafika V. E. Pestel' v muzeinykh sobraniiaakh', *Muzei*, 2 (1981), pp. 76-81.
- 128 Nicoletta Misler, interview with the art historian Vladimir Kostin, Moscow, 24 February 1977. Kostin was quoting Chernyshev's remarks from notes that the critic had made shortly before the artist's death.
- 129 The Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR), founded in 1922 by artists such as Isaak Brodsky and Evgenii Katsman, favoured a simple, narrative style of painting and sculpture that gave prominence to the achievements of the Revolution, the proletariat, the peasantry and the Red Army.
- 130 See, for example, Naum Gabo and Noton Pevzner (Anton Pevsner), *Realisticheskii manifest* (Moscow, 1920). English translation in Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 207-14.
- 131 Zhanna Kaganskaia et al., eds, *Aleksandr Schevchenko. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow, 1980); Nina Barabanova, *Aleksandr Schevchenko. 1883-1948*. Catalogue of exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery, 1978.
- 132 Directed by Aleksandr Chernyshev, brother of the painter Nikolai, the publishing-house Milky Way derived its name from the homonymous journal (1914-16). In tone and purpose *Mlechny put'* had much in common with *Makovets*.
- 133 See Konstantin Istomin, 'Metodika prepodavaniia na Osnovnom otdelenii po zhivopisi VKhUTEMASA', in Miuda Yablonskaia, K. N. *Istomin* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 135-53.
- 134 Florensky exhibition (1989).
- 135 Natal'ia Adaskina has written extensively on the Department of Polygraphy at VKhUTEMAS. See, for example, 'VKhUTEMAS, Poligraficheskii fakul'tet', *Voprosy russkogo i sovetskogo iskusstva*, 3 (1974), pp. 350-55; 'V. Favorsky pedagog-teoretik (O kurse teorii kompozitsii)', *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie* '17, 2 (1978), pp. 210-32; 'V. Favorsky i proizvodstvenniki', *Tekhnicheskaiia estetika*, 7 (1980), pp. 17-n ; 'Stankovoe i proizvodstvennoe v poligrafii', *Sovetskaiia grafika*, 79/80, 6 (1981), pp. 298-370; and 'RAKhN, VKhUTEMAS and the Graphic Arts', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), pp. 76-90.
- 136 See Ekaterina Nekrasova, 'Neosushchestvlennyi zamysel 1920-kh godov sozdaniia "Symbolarium'a" (Slovaria simvolov) i ego pervyi vypusk "Tochka"', in

- Iraklii Andronikov *et al.*, eds, *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia*, 1982 (Leningrad, 1984), pp. 100-115.
- 137 Aleksei Alekseevich Sidorov (1891-1978), artist, art critic, art historian, poet and balletomane, played a major role at RAKhN in the early 1920s. For more information on him see Aleksei Sidorov, 'The Artistic Creativity of Dreams', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), pp. 176-80. On Larionov's and Sidorov's investigations into movement and gesture see Nicoletta Misler, 'A Choreological Laboratory', *ibid.*, 2 (1996) pp. 169-99.
- 138 Aleksandr Larionov, for example, analysed the colour red and the hammer and sickle. See his 'Coats of Arms', *Experiment*, 3 (1997), pp. 271-2.
- 139 Pavel Florensky and Aleksandr Larionov, "'Symbolarium'". Predislovie. Tochka', in Nekrasova, 'Neosushchestvlenyi zamysel 1920-kh godov', p. 103.
- 140 On Florensky's philosophical idea of the symbol see Aleksandr Kazarian's valuable commentary on the 'Symbolarium', *Sochineniia*, 11, pp. 795-6.
- 141 Sidorov designed his ex-libris emblem in 1918, Favorsky his in 1922. Both designs and Sidorov's sonnet are published in Andronik (1982), p. 277. The critic and bibliophile Pavel Ettinger wrote of Favorsky's ex-libris, 'Among the four ex-libris designed in 1922 [by Favorsky] we are particularly drawn to the exceptionally refined and skilfully engraved plate for the philosopher and mathematician Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky, the only one, I believe, in which Favorsky has used a heraldic motif: Quoted in Pavel Ettinger, *Knizhnye znaki V. A. Favorskogo* (Moscow: Kniga, 1933), p. 28.
- 142 I.e., Aleksandr El'chaninov, Vladimir Ern and Vladimir Svetsitsky. Bely was also invited to join the group. See Ivanova and Il'iunina, eds, 'Iz nasledii P. A. Florenskogo', pp. 5, 9, 24-5.
- 143 Letter from Florensky to Andrei Bely dated 21 May 1904, *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 144 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 145 Zhegin, 'Vospominaniia o P. A. Florenskom', p. 99.
- 146 See, for example, Anatolii Bakushinsky, 'Lineinaia perspektiva v iskusstve i zritel'nom vospriiatii real'nogo prostranstva', *Iskusstvo*, 1 (1923), pp. 213-61.
- 147 Aleksandr Gabrichevsky, ed., *Iskusstvo portreta* (Moscow: GAKhN, 1928).
- 148 Sidorov was already well known in the 1910s, pursuing his diverse interests in philosophy, art history, the psychology of visual perception and psychoanalysis. Together with Aleksandr Larionov, Sidorov co-directed the Choreological Laboratory at RAKhN and headed the Section of Polygraphic Arts there. In his unpublished memoirs, 'Iz vospominanii sovetskogo iskusstvoveda i knigoveda' [From the Memoirs of a Soviet Art Historian and Book Lover], Sidorov mentions Florensky, Kandinsky and other 'unorthodox' individuals who were excluded from the Soviet appreciations of Sidorov.
- 149 Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (Strasburg: Heitz, 1893).
- 150 Steven Cassedy, 'Pavel Florensky's Philosophy of Language', *Slavic and East European Journal*, xxvj4 (1991), pp. 537-52.
- 151 Vladimir Favorsky, 'Lektsii po teorii kompozitsii', in Elena Murina and Dina Chebanova, eds, Vladimir Favorsky. *Literaturno-teoreticheskoe nasledie* (Moscow, 1988),

- pp. 71-195.
- 152 Aleksandr Larionov, *Konspekt kursa 'Istorii pis'men' (chitannogo v 1920-21 uchebnom godu)* (Moscow; VKhUTEMAS, 1921).
- 153 This is borne out by the schedules of the two courses dated 7 December 1923. See RGALI, Call no.: f. 681 (VKhUTEMAS), op. 2, ed. khr.n8, l. 48 (verso).
- 154 For a comprehensive discussion on Productivism and Constructivism see Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven, 1983); Richard Andrews *et al.*, *Art into Life. Russian Constructivism 1914-1932*. Catalogue of exhibition at the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (1990).
- 155 Selim Khan-Magomedov, 'Raboचाia gruppya ob'ektivnogo analiza INKhUKa', *Problemy istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury*, 4 (1978), pp. 53-6; 'Diskussiiia v INKhUKe 0 sootnoshenii konstruktssii i kompozitsii (yanvar'-aprel', 1921 g.)', in his *INKhuK i rannii konstruktivizm* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 36-88.
- 156 Anon., 'VkhUTEMAS', in *Lef*, 2 (April-May 1923), p. 174.
- 157 Osip Brik *et al.*, 'Razval VKhUTEMASa', *Lef*, 4 (1924), p. 27. The Central Stroganov Institute of Technical Drawing, Moscow (also known as the Stroganov Art and Industry Institute) was one of Russia's leading design schools. After 1917 it merged with the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture to form SVOMAS and then VKhUTEMAS.
- 158 See Vladimir Favorsky, memo dated 31 January 1924, in RGALI, Call no.: f. 681 (VKhUTEMAS), op. 2, ed. khr. 86, l. 20. In their letter the group of 'Productivist' professors declared that they saw no infractions of the VKhUTEMAS disciplinary rules in the *Lef* article. See letter dated 6 February 1924 in RGALI, Call no.: f. 681 (VKhUTEMAS), op. 2, ed. khr. 86, l. 28.
- 159 Liubov' Popova, undated note in Manuscript Section, TG. Call number: f. 148 (L. S. Popova), ed. khr. 60, l.1.
- 160 Oleg Genisaretsky, 'Konstruktssiiia i kompozitsiiia v ikonologii P. A. Florenskogo', *Trudy VNIITE*, 59 (1989), pp. 44-58. This quotation is on p. 56.
- 161 This was his ninth lecture for the academic year 1923-4. In Andronik (2000), pp. 359-69. For an Italian translation see the seventh lecture in Misler (1995), pp. 307-15.
- 162 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, pp. 126-7.
- 163 Murina and Chebanova, *Vladimir Favorsky*, pp. 457, 565.
- 164 Vladimir Favorsky, 'Zabyt' igru v inzhenera', *Brigada khudozhnikov*, 4/5 (1932), pp. 10-n.
- 165 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, p. 69.
- 166 On wooden sculpture see Pavel Florensky and Yurii Olsuf'ev, *Amyrosii, troitskii rezchik XV veka* (Sergiev: Izdanie Gosudarstvennogo Sergievskogo istoriko-khudozhestvennogo muzeia, 1927).
- 167 Archive of Florensky Foundation.
- 168 Florensky, Po Florensky. Avtoreferat', p. 9. Florensky made fundamental discoveries in this area. See his *Karbolit. Ego proizvodstvo i svoistva* (Moscow: Izdanie nauchno-tekhnicheskogo upravleniia VSNKh, 1928).
- 169 In his treatise on spatiality Florensky explained his idea in the context of the 'art of the book' and the meaning of time. See Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*.

- 170 A. Vetrov (David Arkin), 'Favorsky-graver', *Teatr i studiia*, 1-2 (1922), pp. 48-50.
- 171 For a detailed discussion of the concept of the iconostasis in the Orthodox Church see Aleskei Lidov, ed., *Ikonostas. Proiskhozhdenie, razvitiie, simbolika* (Moscow, 2000).
- 172 See Viktor Lazarev, 'Nikolai Il'ich Romanov', in Polevoi, *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie* '75 (1976), pp. 312-28.
- 173 See Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York, 1976), pp. 91-123.
- 174 See Alessandro Parronchi, 'Le due tavole prospettiche del Brunelleschi', *Paragone*, 107 (1958), and 109 (1959), pp. 3-32, 3-31.
- 175 See Note 19 in Erwin Panofsky, 'Die Perspektive als "symbolische Form"', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 1924-25, 6 (1927), pp. 258-330. For an English translation see Christopher S. Wood, ed. and trans., *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York, 1991), pp. 100-101.
- 176 Oskar Wulff, 'Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Niedersicht. Eine raumschauungsform der altbyzantinischen Kunst und ihre Fortbildung in der Renaissance', in Heinrich Weizsäcker, ed., *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge, August Schmarsow gewidmet zum fünfzigsten semester seiner akademischen Lehrtätigkeit* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1907), pp. 1-40.
- 177 Nikolai Rynin, *Nachertal'naiageometriia. Metody izobrazheniia* (Petrograd: Kollins, 1916); *Nachertate'naia geometriia. Perspektiva* (Petrograd: Kollins, 1918).
- 178 Rynin, *Perspektiva*, p. 89.
- 179 Anatolii Vasil'evich Bakushinsky (1883-1939) was close to Kandinsky during the formation of RAKhN, sharing his interest in primitive and children's art. After Kandinsky left for Germany at the end of 1921, Bakushinsky replaced him as Director of the Psycho-physiological Department there.
- 180 I.e., Bakushinsky, 'Lineinaia perspektiva v iskusstve i zritel'nom vospriiatii real'nogo prostranstva.'
- 181 See Richard Hamann, 'Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge: August Schmarsow gewidmet, Leipzig 1907. Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Niedersicht von Oskar Wulff', *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, v (1910), pp. 469-75; and Karl Doehlemann, 'Zur Frage der sogenannten "umgekehrten Perspektive"', in Henry Tode, ed., *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXIII (1910), pp. 85-7.
- 182 Bakushinsky, 'Lineinaia Perspektiva', p. 227.
- 183 *Ibid.*, p. 228.
- 184 The RAKhN Presidium ratified this decision at the session for 17 August 1922. See RGAL!, Call No. f. 941 (GAKhN). op. 1, ed. khr. 5.1. 42.
- 185 Semeon Liudvigovich Frank (1877-1950); Fedor Avgustovich Stepun (1884-1965). On Frank see Yu. Senokosov, ed., *Semeon L. Frank. Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1990).
- 186 Bakushinsky, 'Lineinaia Perspektiva', p. 260.
- 187 Nikolai Tarabukin, 'Eksentricheskoe prostranstvo i giper-prostranstvo v zhivopisi', in RGAL!, Call No.: f. 941 (GAKhN), op. 3, ed. khr. 98, ll. 3-4. For an English translation see *Experiment*, 3 (1997), pp. 288-94. This quotation is on p. 290.

- 188 Panofsky reduced Wulff's article on reverse perspective to a footnote, deeming it sufficient simply to mention Doehlemann's objection. See Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. n4, note 30.
- 189 El Lissitzky, 'K. und Pangeometrie', in Carl Einstein and Paul Westheim eds, *Europa Almanach* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1925), pp. 103-13. For an English translation see Sophie Lissitzky-Kiippers, *El Lissitzky: Life. Letters. Text* (London, 1968), pp. 348-54.
- 190 Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 71. Also see Larisa Zhadova, 'El Lisitskii, Iskustvo i pangeometriia', *Trudy VNIITE*, 17 (1978), pp. 62-76.
- 191 Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 154, note 73.
- 192 Florensky, *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra v Rossii*. However, Florensky also saw Byzantine civilization as the ultimate expression of Hellenic culture.
- 193 Bakushinsky, 'Lineinaia perspektiva', pp. 213-14.
- 194 Tarabukin, 'Eksentricheskoe prostranstvo', p. 290.
- 195 Viktor Lazarev, *Osva'd Shpengleri ego vzgliady na iskusstvo* (Moscow: Mironov, 1922).
- 196 See Yves-Alain Bois, 'From - 8 to + 8. Axonometry or Lissitzky's Mathematical Paradigm', in *El Lissitskij. Architect, Painter, Typographer, Photographer*, catalogue of exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1990), pp. 27-34.
- 197 El Lissitzky, 'A. and Pangeometry', in Lissitzky-Kiippers, *El Lissitzky: Life. Letters. Texts*, p. 350. Lissitzky returned to the idea in 1922 in his lecture *New Russian Art: 'In 1913 [sic] Malevich exhibited a black square on a white canvas. Here a form was displayed which was opposed to everything that was understood by "pictures" or "painting" or "art". Its creator wanted to reduce all forms, all paintings, to zero. For us, however, this zero was the turning point. When we have a series of numbers coming from infinity ... 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 ... it comes right down to the 0, then begins the ascending line 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.'*, *ibid.*, pp. 333-4.
- 198 Kazimir Malevich, at *kubizma k suprematizmu. Novyi zhivopisnyi realizm* (Petrograd, 1915, 1916 on the cover). Republished in Aleksandra Shatskikh and Dmitrii Sarab'ianov, eds, *Kazimir Malevich. Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* (Moscow, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 27-34.
- 199 This according to Aleksandra Shatskikh in her 'Kazimir Malevic. La vita e le opere', in *Kazimir Malevic. Una retrospettiva*, catalogue of exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (1993), pp. 245-61.
- 200 Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven, 1983), p. 107.
- 201 Florensky and Iarionov, 'Symbolarium', p. n2.

The Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts

INTRODUCTION

Pavel Florensky, 'Khramovoe deistvo kak sintez iskusstv', in *Makovets*, 1 (1922), pp. 28-32: republished in Naslednikov (1993), pp. 283-90: in Struve (1985), pp. 41-55: in Andronik (1996), pp. 201-15: and in *Sochineniia*, n, pp. 370-82. The latter gives

indications regarding the various sources for the original typescript entitled 'O Khramovom deistve kak sintez iskusstv' and dated 'Sergiev Posad, 1918,24/25 October, 617 November during the days of the anniversary of the October Revolution'. This translation is from the text published in *Makovets*, An Italian translation, 'Il rito ortodosso come sintesi delle arti', is in Misler (1983), pp. 57-67. For two French translations see 'Le spectacle liturgique, synthese des arts', in Troels Andersen et al., *Art et poésie russe 1900-1930. Textes choisis* (Paris, 1979), pp. 110-17: and 'La liturgie comme synthese des arts', in Lhoest (1992), pp. 54-66. For German translations see 'Die Kirchliche Liturgie als Synthese der Kiinste', in Sikojev (1989), pp. 111-25: and 'Der Kultakt als Synthese der Klinste', in Bubnoff (1991), pp. 107-12. For a Japanese translation see 'Geijutsu no sogo toshitenno seidogirei', in Kuwano (1998), pp. 113-34.

- 2 Three of the Commission members, Sergei Durylin, Mikhail Ivik and Sergei Mansurov, were ordained. Florensky even requested Patriarch Tikhon's benediction for the success of the Commission. See Igumen Andronik's commentary on Florensky, *Troitse-Sergieva Lavra i Rossiia*, p. 237. Nicoletta Misler, 'The Religious Ritual as Social Event', in Stephen C. Foster, ed., *'Event' Arts and Art Event* (Ann Arbor, 1987), pp. 159-74.
- 4 Leonid Sabaneev, A. N. *Skriabin* (Moscow: Rabotnik prosveshchnii, 1922), p. 25. On Skriabin, Florensky and Sabaneev see Dmitrii Sarab'ianov, 'Kandinsky i russkii simvolizm', in *Akademïia nauk. Serïia literatury i yazyka*, LIH/4 (1994), pp. 16-26. From Igumen Andronik's commentary on Florensky's 'Kramovoe deistvo kak sintez iskusstv', *Sochineniia*, H, p. 770.
- 6 *Ibid.*

ESSAY

- 7 The Hagenbeck Zoo, founded in 1907 by Carl Hagenbeck in Hamburg, pioneered in the use of the natural habitat as opposed to the traditional enclosed cage for its animals.
- 8 See Reference 6 of Misler, 'Pavel Florensky as Art Historian'.
- 9 Muratov, *Obrazy Italii*, vol. 2 (1994), pp. 27-8.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 12 Olsuf'ev wrote the first scholarly catalogue raisonne of the icons of the Lavra even before the opening of the Historical and Art Museum of Sergiev Posad (April 1920). See Yurii Olsuf'ev, *Opis' ikon Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry do XVIII veka i naibolee tipichnykh XVIII i XIX vekov* (Sergiev Posad: Komissiia po okhrane pamiatnikov iskusstva i stariny Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry, 1920)
- 13 The veneration of icons (*ikonopochitanie*) or, rather, the particular ritualistic form that this assumes is a vital part of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, for the icon, unthinkable without the wooden board, is venerated both as a thing in itself and as an object indivisible from the cultic totality. The iconic image is incorporated into the liturgy, kissed by the faithful on arrival and departure, blessed by the incense, and physically present in many ritualistic events. For further informa-

- tion see Sergei Bulgakov, *Ikona i ikonopochitanie: dogmaticheskii ocherk* (Paris, 1931); George Galavaris, *The Icon in the Life of the Church: Doctrine, Liturgy, Devotion* (Leiden, 1981); and Waite Christopher, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London, 1982).
- 14 The Belovezh Forest, covering parts of Lithuania, Poland (today a national park) and Russia was the habitat of the last European bison.
- 15 The reference is to unmarried Orthodox monks, who wore black, as opposed to married Orthodox priests, such as Florensky, who wore white cassocks.
- 16 At this juncture of the original typescript Florensky had included the passage quoted in the introduction to this essay (see note 5 above), which, however, was omitted in the published version.
- 17 The reference is to Aleksandr Skriabin's composition of the same name. See Sabaneev, *Skriabin*, p. 25.
- 18 The end of the first typewritten version is slightly different. See Reference 30 of Misler, 'Pavel Florensky as Art Historian'.

Celestial Signs

INTRODUCTION

- Pavel Florensky, 'Nebesnye znamenii', in *Makovets*, 2 (1922), pp. 14-16. This text corresponds to the original typescript preserved in the Florensky Foundation where it is dated and titled '1919 x. 7,11 [sic]. Ksimvolike tsvetov (meditatsiia)' (Towards a Symbolism of Colors (Meditation)). Also see Naslednikov (1993), pp. 307-16. The essay was republished in Struve (1985), pp. 57-62, in Andronik (1996), pp. 279-84; and *Sochineniia*, 11, pp. 414-18. For an Italian translation see 'Segni celesti', in Misler (1983), pp. 68-71. For a French translation see 'Les signes celestes', in Lhoest (1992), pp. 63-66. For a German translation see 'Himmlische Zeichen. Gedanken iiber die Symbolik der Farben', in Mierau (1995), pp. 288-92. For a Japanese translation see 'Ten no araware', in Kuwano (1998), pp. 135-44.
- 2 Mariia Trubacheva and Sergei Trubachev, 'Sergiev Posad v zhizni P. A. Florenskogo', in Hagemeister and Kauchtschischwili (1995), pp. 17-37. See also Aleksandr Grekov, 'Khudozhestvennaia zhizn' Zagorska', *Pamiamiki otechestva*, 2 (1987), pp. 33-43; and 'Favorsky v Zagorske', *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, 8 (1986), pp. 17-19.
- 3 Florensky, 'Na Makovtse', *Sochineniia*, !11/1, pp. 28-33.
- 4 Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground*, p. 253.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 540-63.
- 6 The debate regarding Sophia and sophiology is highly complex both in the world of Orthodox scholarship and among Slavists, and its theological aspects in particular lie outside the scope of this book. For a general discussion see Jean-Claude Marcade, 'La Sophie chez le père Florensky', in *Le combat pour l'âme du monde. Urgence de la sophiologie*. Cahiers de l'Universite Saint Jean de Jerusalem, vo! 6 (Paris, 1980), pp. 101-16. For essential bibliographical references in English see Gustafson and Jakim (1997), p. 230.
- 7 See Ivanova and Il'iunina, 'Iz naslediia P. A. Florenskogo', pp. 37-8.

- 8 Andrei Bely, 'Sviashchennye tsveta' (1903) in his *Arabeski* (Moscow: Musaget, 1911), pp. 115-29. Also see Samuel D. Cioran, 'A Prism for the Absolute: The Symbolic Colors of Andrey Bely', in Gerald Janacek, ed., *Andrey Bely. A Critical Review* (Lexington, 1978), pp. 103-14.

ESSAY

- 9 John 1:5.
 10 Viacheslav Ivanov, 'Pokrov', in his *Cor Ardens* (Moscow; Skorpion, 1911), p. 77.
 11 Florensky is referring to E.T.W. Hoffmann's story *Del' Goldene Topf* (The Golden Pot) (1814).
 12 For a theological interpretation see note 7* to Florensky, 'Troitse-Sergieva Lavra', in *Sochineniia*, H, p. 766.

On the Efimovs' Puppet Theatre

INTRODUCTION

The translation is of the text 'O kukol'nom teatre Efimovykh' that Florensky wrote in 1924 as an untitled preface for the book, *Zapiski Petrushechnika* (Moscow, 1925), by the artist and puppeteer Nina Yakovlevna Simonovich-Eflmova (1877-1948). Not published at the time, the preface appeared only much later in Adrian Efimov and A. Matveeva, eds, *Ivan Efimov, 'Ob iskusstve i khudozhnikakh'* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 170-72, from which the present title (not Florensky's) has been taken. The preface was also republished as 'O kukol'nom teatre Efimovikh' by Struve (1985), pp. 383-6. For a German translation see 'Ober del' Puppentheater del' Jeflmows', in Bubnoff (1991), pp. 129-36. The preface is also included in *Sochineniia*, H, pp. 532-6. The original manuscript that Florensky dictated to Sofiia Ogneva and the fair copy typescript, dated 1924, are now in the archives of the Florensky Foundation.

- 2 Nina Simonovich-Efimova, *Zapiski Petrushechnika*. Also see Anna Nekrylova, ed., *Nina Simonovich-Efimova, 'Zapiski petrushechnika i stat'i o teatre kukol'* (Moscow, 1980); and the English abridged translation published in 1935, Paul McPharlin, ed., and Elena Mitcoff, trans., *Nina Efimova, 'Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theatre'* (Birmingham, MI: Puppetry Imprints, 1935).

The record, in the form of a diary, is preserved in the archive of the Efimov family, Moscow. Part of this record was published by Ol'ga Kovalik as 'Ya--kak korabl', vrezaiushchiisia klinom ...', *Obshchaia gazeta*, XXXVI:61 (9-15 September 1994), p. 16; 'Kak khorosho dlia kazhdogo, chto on est', *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 45 (9 November 1994), p. 6; and 'D nas byl neobychnyi vecher ...', *Muzikal'naia zhizn'*, 6 (December 1994), pp. 30-33. Simonovich-Eflmova made fourteen drawings and

three oil portraits of Florensky. See Trubacheva and Trubachev, 'Sergiev Posad v zhizni P. A. Florenskogo', pp. 29-30.

- 4 The only Sergiev Posad performance mentioned in the list compiled by the artists themselves carries this date. See Nekrylova, *Nina Simonovich-Efimova, 'Zapiski petrushechnika i stat'i o teatre kukol'*, p. 86. However, in a letter to her son Adrian, dated 20 December 1920 from Sergiev Posad, Simonovich-Efimova mentions that while 'on vacation' there, they had been invited to give twenty performances in twelve days. See Efimov, N. Ya. *Simonovich-Efimova: 'Zapiski khudozhnika'*, p.134. Simonovich-Efimova recorded her ideas on the technique of the puppet theatre in her *Kukly na trostiakh* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1940).

ESSAY

- 5 Matthew 18:3.
- 6 Romans 14:17. Florensky is rephrasing the passage that reads: 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

The Stratification of Aegean Culture

INTRODUCTION

This translation is from Pavel Florensky, 'Naplastovaniia egeiskoi kul'tury', in *Bogoslavskii vestnik*, H/6 (1913), pp. 346-89. Republished in Florensky, *Pervye shagi filosofii. Iz leksiï po istorii filosofii*. vol. 1 (Sergiev Posad: Tipografiia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1917), pp. 33-75, and *Sochineniia*, H, pp. 91-130.

- 2 Pavel Florensky, 'Lektsiia i Lectio' and 'Proshchury liubomudriia' [Forefathers of Philosophy] in Florensky, *Pervye shagifilosofii*, pp. 1-7 and 8-25. Both essays have been reprinted in Florensky, *Sochineniia*, H, pp. 61-89. Florensky copied the introductory schema from a drawing by Arthur Evans. See note 4 below.

Bulgakov seems to have first met Florensky in 1906, the date of his earliest letter to Florensky (now in the Florensky Foundation), just as he was elaborating his own Sophiological conception.

ESSAY

Numerals with asterisks added indicate Florensky's original notes to this essay; the remainder are mine. N. M.

- 4* On the question of Creto-Mycenaean and in part of other ancient cultures (in addition to the articles cited in note 23 to 'Forefathers of Philosophy' on pp. 27-8), see the following works in Russian: Robert Vipper, *Drevnii Vostok i egeiskaia kul'tura* (Moscow: university course textbook, distributed by Spiridonov & Mikhailov, 1913); Boris Turaev, *Istoriia drevnego Vostoka* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia V. Bezobrazova & Co., 1912); Salomon Reinak [Reinach], *Apollon. Istoriia plasticheskikh iskusstv* (Moscow: Problemy estetiki, 1913); Gaston Kun'i [Cougny], *Antichnoe iskusstvo. Gretsiiia-Rim. Sbornik statei*, trans!. by V. Smirnova (Moscow; Tikhomirov, 1898), pp. 19-38; Ivan Tsvetaev, intro., *Muzei iziashchnykh iskusstv imeni Imperatora Aleksan-*

- dra III v Moskve. Kratkii illiustrirovannyi putevoditel'*, Part I, 6th edn (Moscow; Levenson, 1913); Evgenii Kagarov, *Kul'tfetishei, rastenii i zhivotnykh v drevnei Gretsii* (St Petersburg: Senatskaia Tipografiia, 1913).
- 5* The cross-section was based on that of Arthur Evans (cf. *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, x (London, 1910), p.19, fig. 7. Cf. vol. IX, p. 26, fig. 26, which is taken from Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne* (Paris, 1908), p. 123, fig. 87. The cross-section passes through the Western courtyard of the Knossos complex at the meridian. [The illustration here is a tentative reconstruction of Florensky's graphic rendering. N.M.]
- 6* Evgenii Kagarov, 'Noveishie issledovaniia v oblasti krito-mikenskoii kul'wry', in *Germes*, nos 17-20 (1903), p. 4; published separately (St Petersburg, 1909).
- 7* In *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, XXI (1901), p. 78. Cited in Sergei Trubetskoi, 'Etudy po istorii grecheskoii religii', in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, II (Moscow: Lissner & Sobko, 1908), p. 456. Trubetskoi here also refers to a citation in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, XIII (1901), pp. 172 and 174 by David Mackenzie.
- 8* Reproduced from Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 26, fig. 10.
- 9* See *ibid.*, pp. 28-29, and 28-31 for several illustrations of Cretan vases.
- 10* Reproduced from *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, x (1910), fig. 1; also in Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 29, fig. 14.
- 11 The sistrum is a musical instrument from Egypt, a symbol of the Goddess Isis. It was shaken by priests and priestesses at ceremonial events.
- 12* Muzei iziashchnykh iskusstv imeni Imperatora Aleksandra III v Moskve, pp. 56-7.
- 13* Gustave Fougeres expressed this opinion in 'Les vases des moissonneurs et les phallophories égyptiennes' in *Comptes rendus du Congrès International d'archéologie classique*, II Session (Cairo, Imprimerie Nationale, 1909), pp. 232-3. See also Kagarov, *Kul'tfetishei*, p. 35, note 4.
- 14* Reinak, *Apollon*, p. 82.
- 15* Maksimilian Voloshin, 'Arkhaizm v russkoii zhivopisi', in *Apollon*, 1 (October 1909), p. 47.
- 16* Reproduced from *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, IX (1909), fig. 58; also in Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 73, fig. 46.
- 17* Reproduced from Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, plate VI, pp. 72-3.
- 18* Adolphe Reinach, 'Untitled [commentary on, and analysis of a series of publications about Crete]', in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, LX/2 (1909), pp. 226-47.
- 19* René Dussaud, 'Questions Myceniennes', in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1 (1905), p. 29.
- 20* Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 73.
- 21* Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 93, fig. 74.
- 22* Vladislav Buzeskul, *Vvedenie v istoriiu Gretsii* (Kharkov: Darre, 1907), p. 510.
- 23* Reinak, *Apollon*, p. 34.
- 24* Reproduced from *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, VII (1907), fig. 17; the same reproduction is in Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 42, fig. 22.
- 25* Voloshin, 'Arkhaizm v russkoii zhivopisi,' p. 47.
- 26* Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 41.
- 27* Adolf Furtwangler, *Antike Gemmen. Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*, III (Leipzig and Berlin, 1900), pp. 13ff; Filipp Opuntsky, *plato, Epinomis*,

987. D (cited in Trubetskoi, 'Etiudy po istorii grecheskoi religii', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, II, p. 465.
- 28* Furtwangler, *Antike Gemmen*, p. 14.
- 29* Moritz Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, vol. 2 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1905), p. 425, note 1. This contains references to several authors whose opinions are mutually contradictory.
- 30* *Ibid.*
- 31* *Ibid.*
- 32* Vit. Klinger [Witold Klinger], *Zhivotnoe v antichnom i sovremennom suevoerii* (Kiev: N. T. Kopchak-Novitskii, 1911); Kagarov, *Kul'fetishei*.
- 33* Albrecht Dietrich, *Mutter Erde. Eine Versuch über Volksreligion* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1905); Sergei Smimov, 'Isповed' zemle. Sergiev Posad, 1912 g.', in *Bogoslovskii vestnik*, XI (November 1912); Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht. Eine Untersllchung über die Gynokratie der Alten Welt und ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart, 1861). There is also a more recent edition.
- 34* Aeschylus, *Choefori* 119 f. (Elektra's speech).
- 35* Hesiod, *Theogonia* 117 ff.
- 36* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*.
- 37* Euripides, *Hippolyws* 568-9.
- 38* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*.
- 39* Ludwig Preller, 'Eleusinia', in August Pauly, *Real-Encyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol' 3 (Stuttgart, 1844), pp. 83-109 (108).
- 40* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, pp. 584-7.
- 41* *Ibid.*, p. 586.
- 42* Viacheslav Ivanov, 'Drevnii uzhas', in his *Po zvezdam* (St Petersburg, 1907), p. 413.
- 43* *Ibid.*, p. 414.
- 44* Innokentii Annensky, trans., *Teatr Evripida* (St Petersburg, 1907), 'Ippolit', Act I, Scene 5, pp. 286-7:
 φοιτᾷ δ' ἄν' αἰθέρ', ἔστι δ' ἐν θαλασσῷ
 κλύδωνι Κύπρις, ΤΙΤΙΝΤΑ δ' ἐκ ταύτης ἔφυ·
 ἦδ' ἔστιν ἡ σπεύρουσα καὶ δίδουσα ἔρον,
 οὗ πάντες ἐσμέν οἱ κατὰ χ8CIV' ἔκγονοι.
 = verses 452-5 in *Euripides.Tragoediae*, vol. 2 (Lipsiae, 1828), p. 258. [The English translation is from David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, eds., *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol.3, *Euripides, Hippolytus* (Chicago, 1955), p. 182. N.M.]
- 45* Cf. Ivanov, 'Drevnii uzhas', p. 410. For a more detailed discussion of fate and time see the section on 'Vremiia i rok', in Florensky, *Stolp i lltverzhdenie istiny*, pp. 530-34.
- 46* Arsenii Golenishchev-Kutuzov, *Serenada* (St Petersburg, 1878) was part of a cycle of three poems called 'Smert'. See Grigorii Bialyi, ed., *Poety 1880-1890-kh-godov* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1972), PP.236-7.
- 47* The conjugality [*paramost'*] and essential indivisibility of sexual love and death have long been noted in belles lettres. Ancient tragedy is permeated by this duality, but modern writers, too, provide profound insight into the mystery, for example, Shakespeare, Pushkin, Guy de Maupassant, Merezhkovsky, Rodenbach,

- Mel'nikov-Pechersky, Bal'mont, Briusov and particularly Turgenev, Tiutchev and Golenishchev-Kutuzov. I mention the names that first spring to mind.
- 48* Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1882-1914), p. 741.
- 49* Wilhelm Heinrich Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1884-90), col. 407.
- 50 Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, pp. 563-4.
- 51* Reproduced from Karl Schuchhardt, *Schliemanns Ausgrabungen in Troja, Tiryns, Mykenii, Archomenons, Ithaka in Lichte der heutigen Wissenschaft*, 211d edn (Leipzig, 1891), p. 230, fig. 189; also in photographic form in Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 92, fig. 73, where the sexual characteristics are especially clear.
- 52* Reproduced from Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*, vol. 6, p. 741.
- 53* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, p. 563.
- 54* Johannes Ranke, *Chelovek*, transl. from the second German edition and ed. by Dmitrii Koropchevsky (St Petersburg, 1901), vol. 2, p. 75; Charls Darwin [Charles Darwin], *Proizkhozhdenie cheloveka i polovoivo podbor*, part 2, chapter XIX (St Petersburg: Gubinsky, 1871), p. 397.
- 55* Reproduced from Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, p. 75, fig. 48.
- 56* Reproduced from Gabriel and Adrien de Mortillet, *Musée préhistorique* (Paris, 1903), no. 229: also in Lagrange, *La Crète ancienne*, *ibid*.
- 57* *Ibid.*, p. 77, fig. 51.
- 58* Reproduced from Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon*, vol. 1, col. 647.
- 59* Trubetskoi, 'Etiudy po istorii grecheskoi religii,' p. 447. Trubetskoi (p. 461) bases his views on the work of Ernst Diimmler, Max Hermann Ohnefalsch-Richter, and Eduard Meyer. However, the sceptical Reinach 'strives not only to defend the independent "Aegean" origins of this goddess, but even to prove that the type of the "naked goddess" was alien to Babylonian art' (*ibid*, note on p. 461).
- 60* Fulcran Gregoire Vigouroux, ed., *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Paris, 1907-12), vol. 1, col. 1161, fig. 323 shows a human oblation before the goddess, who wears a skirt with seven flounces and a loop at the back of her head.
- 61 Viktor Porzhezinsky [Porzezinski], *Vvedenie v yazykovedenie. Posobie k lektsiiam* (Moscow, 1907), p. 197.
- 62* Trubetskoi, 'Etiudy po istorii grecheskoi religii,' p. 447.
- 63 According to Evans, the goddess Ishtar 'to procure the \Vaters of life for her "wounded Thammuz" descended mother-naked to the Nether World'. See Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, vol. 1 (London, 1921), p. 51.
- 64* Heinrich Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum*, vol. 1 (Lipsiae, 1885), p. 106. 'Forma [i.e., ἀμφικύπελλον] nota quidem fuit inferioris aetatis hominibus, cf. Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 9. 40.V, sed ipsa pocula non amplius in usu fuerant.' And as if in refutation of the first half of his thesis the author of the note, Bernhard Gizeke, introduces several mutually contradictory opinions on the form of the ἀμφικύπελλον, opinions expressed by ancient grammarians.
- 65* The image, reproduced here in a much reduced form, is taken from Bogdan Khanenko, *Sobranie B. I. i V. I. Khanenko. Drevnosti Pridneprov'ia. Kamennyi i bronzovyi veka* (Kiev, 1899), no. 1, plate VIII, fig. 46. The description is on p.13.

- 66* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, p. 437. A depiction of one of these vessels is also reproduced here.
- 67* Kiev City Museum, cupboard VII (four examples); cupboards VIII and IX, *et al.*
- 68* Kiev City Museum. 1) cupboard VII 1, vitrine no. 6 at the bottom; 2) ditto; 3) cupboard VI, no. 12338.
- 69* Moscow History Museum, Bronze Age hall, vitrine no. 23 near the entrance; the vessel is broken.
- 70* *Sobranie Khanenko*, no. 1, p. n.
- 71* *ibid.*
- 72* Homes, *Natur- und Urgeschichte des Menschen*, p. 437.
- 73* *ibid.*
- 74* I shall mention these objects in my subsequent lectures.
- 75* The *dudu* or *djed* pillar was a sacred symbol among the Egyptians that was used during burial. Interpretations of its significance vary. One explanation sees in it a model for a nilometer, a tool for measuring the height of the water in the Nile. It is far more probable, however, that *dudu* means 'spine of Osiris'. The image of a *double dudu*, in general quite rare, can be seen for instance on the sarcophagus (on the foot end) of the Egyptian Makhu, contemporaneous with the eighth dynasty (16-15 centuries BC) in the Alexander III Museum in Moscow (Hall 1, no. 4167).
- 76* The 'unlimited duality' of the Pythagorians was considered the feminine principle and the 'limited unit' the male principle. On this basis even numbers in general were considered female and uneven ones male.
- 77* Philipp Buttmann, *Lexilogus, oder Beiträge zur griechischen Wort-Erklärung, hauptsächlich für Homer und Hesiod*, vol. 1, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1825), no. 40: ἀμφικύπελλον, pp. 160-62.; Jakob Terpstra, *Antiquitas Homerica* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1831), 3, 2, §5, pp. 142-4; Gottlieb Christian Crusius and Ernst Eduard Seiler, *Vollständiges Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch über die Gedichte des Homeros und der Homeriden*, 6th edn (Leipzig, 1863), p. 45; Johannes Friedreich, *Die Realien in der Iliaden und Odyssee* (Erlangen, 1851), vol. 3, §73, pp. 255-6; Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum*, p. 106; A. Manu 'δέπας' in Wissowa, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie*, revised edn, half-vol. 9 (Stuttgart, 1903), cols 228-31; Pierre Paris and G. Roques, *Lexique des Antiquités grecques* (Paris, 1909), p. 27.
- 78* Wissowa, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie*, p. 229, cols 13-16; Buttmann, *Lexilogus*, p. 143, lines 1-4 et seq.
- 79* Kagarov, *Kul'tfetishei*, pp. 284-5; Klingor, *zhivotnoe v antichnom i sovremennom suevoenii*, p. 72. According to Aelian 'white doves are sacred to Aphrodite and Demeter' (Aelian, *Natura animalium* 8. 22; Dionysios, *De avibus* 1. 31.), etc. On the nature and functions of oblations see Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Mélanges d'histoire des religions* (Paris, 1909).
- 80* Nikolai Kharuzin, 'Verovanie', in his *Etnografiia. Leksii, chitannye v Moskovskom universitete*, Issue 4 (St Petersburg, 1905), pp. 356 et seq.
- 81* Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 9. 40. (9. 27,4 in Johann Schneider, *Aristotelis de Animalibus Historiae. Libri x* (Leipzig, 1811). Quoted in Buttmann, *Lexilogus*.
- 82* Crusius and Seiler, *Vollständiges Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p. 45.
- 83* Wissowa, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie*, cols 229, lines 16-22, col. 230, lines 63-70.

- 84* Johann Krause, *Angeologie, Die Gefässe der alten Völker* (Halle), p. 58 (the reference is borrowed from Crusius and Seiler, *Vollständiges Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, p.45).
- 85* Aristarchus, *Etymologicum magnum* 90.42 et seq. Several other grammarians shared Aristarchus' interpretation. Athenaeus, 11. 7836. 482 passim; Eustathius, *Odyssey* 15. 20. According to this reading the ἀμφικύπελλον should be seen as the predecessor of the later *kantharos*. This explanation has its advantages: the existence in Troy and other places of such *proto-kantharoi* is proven by Schliemann's excavations (Pauly-Wissowa, *Pauly's Real-Encyclopiidie*, col. 229, lines 23-65). On the other hand, such a vessel really would be suitable for ladling liquids from a krater. Finally, the compound part of its name - ἀμφί - is correctly interpreted. Quite incorrect in this explanation, though, is the substitution of one notion of handle (κύπελλον) by another. Surely these are not one and the same thing?!
- 86* Schliemann.1.. 584 (*Ebeling*, p. 106 with further references to Ar. 25.18; Hes. Ath. 11.783).
- 87* Johann Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, vol 11, part. 1, § 15 in *Werke* (Stuttgart, 1845), vol. 1, p. 450. Quoted in Friedreich, *Die Realien in der Iliade und Odyssee*, pp. 255-6.
- 88* Emile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire ethymologique de la langue grecque* (Heidelberg and Paris, 1907), vol. 1, p. 58. Ditto in dictionaries compiled by Georg Curtsius. Alois Vanicek et al. See also Alois Walde, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2nd edn (Heidelberg, 1910), pp. 31-2.
- 89* Anton Dobiash [Dobias], *Opyt semasiologii chastei rechi i ikh form na pochve grech-eskogo yazyka* (Prague, 1893), section 4, pp. 301-4. In several cases the 'idea of a distinction between the position of a circle, i.e., the idea of verticality in one preposition and horizontality in another. may fade or even disappear entirely. In such cases περί and ἀμφί become so equalised that they may replace each other, except for the meaning 'higher', where 'nEpI' reasserts its original meaning and which 'ἀμφί' cannot attain, as mentioned above (*ibid.*, p. 303).
- 90* A great many similar examples could be cited. See the Greek dictionaries by Gustav Benseler, Johann Ernesti, Vizantii, Anfim Gazis, Sophocles, etc.
- 91* This view of Homer is established, for example. by Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (Oxford, 1907). For a review of this book see ZhMNP [Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosvshcheniia] (February 1910), p. 404 et seq.
- 92 Enotheism. a term invented by Max Müller (1823-1900), the historian of language and comparative mythology, indicates a pre-monotheistic attitude toward divinity: whereby the believer imparts all divine qualities to a single god.
- 93* Dmitrii Shestakov, 'Persy' Timofeia', in *Uchenye zapiski Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, LxxI'n (1904), pp. 1-90.
- 94* I. Miloslavsky, *Drevnee yazycheskoe uchenie o dushe, o stranstviiakh i pereseleeniakh dush* (Kazan, 1873), p. 183, note 1.
- 95* Karl Tiimpel, 'Die Muschel der Aphrodite', in *Philologus*, vol 51, new ser., vol 5 (1892), pp. 382-4.
- 96* Eshkil *Umolaiushchiia* 157-8 (i.e., Aeschylus. *Supplices*).
- 97* *Ibid.*, pp. 384-5.) Vase from Mycenae, considerably reduced (Adolf Furtwangler

- and Georg Loeschke, *Mykenische Vasen: Vorhellenische Thongefässe aus dem Gebiete des Mittelmeeres* (Berlin, 1886), plate xxvi, 20); 2) Vase from Shaft Grave I, the upper reproduced from Schliemann, the lower from Furtwangler and Loschke, *Mykenische Thongefässe* (1879), plate III, 12a (reduced); 3) Stone specimen from Mycenae (Heinrich Schliemann, *Mikenae Bericht über meine Forschungen und Entdeckungen in Mikenae und Tiryns* (Leipzig, 1878), p. 121 fig. 164); 4). For depiction of a nautilus for purposes of comparison see Lorenz Oken, *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte für alle Stände*, Atlas, vol. 5 (Stuttgart, 1833-41), plate XIII, 7 (reduced); 5); ditto, from Alfred Brehm, *Tierleben* (Leipzig, 1876), vol. 6, p. 770, 1 (reduced); 6) Vase from the Island of Rhodes (Furtwangler and Loschke, *Mykenische Vasen*, VOL. I, p. 80, fig. 38; 7) Egyptian vase (*American Journal of Archaeology*, VI (1890), plate 22; 8) Mug from Mycenae, now in Marseilles, after a sketch by Furtwangler; 9) Glass from Mycenae, from Εφημ. Αρχαιολ., 1887, no vol. number, p. 13, fig. 2.
- 98* Euripid, *Ippolit*, 420 (Euripides, *Hippolytus*): 'ὦ δέσποινα ποντίᾳ Κίμρ[ι] and elsewhere. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. 1, col. 1200-2, fgs 342-5. Atargatis (= Derketo), fig. 343. A sacrifice of doves to Astarte. Derketo is half-woman, half-fish, who holds a fish in her hand. The other side of the coin carries a galley and a sea monster.
- 99* *Ibid.*, col. 1898, fig. 497 *et al.*
- 100* *Ibid.*, col. 1184, fig. 332.

On Realism

INTRODUCTION

- The translation is of Pavel Florensky's 'O realizme', intended originally for *Makovets*, 3 (announced in *Makovets*, 2, p. 32), but published only in *Sochineniia*, II, pp. 527-31. Florensky dictated the original text to Sofiia Ogneva. The fair copy, dated 28 March 1923, is in the archives of the Florensky Foundation.
- 2 Letter from Vladimir Favorsky to Nikolai Chernyshev, dated 4 December 1964, quoted in Lapshin, 'Iz istorii zhizni khudozhestvennoi Moskvyy 1920-kh godov', p. 374.
For other commentary see 'Pavel Florensky as Art Historian'. For a selection of Favorsky's statements in English see Molok, *Vladimir Favorsky*.

Explanation of the Cover

INTRODUCTION

The translation is of 'Poisnenie k oblozhke', in Pavel Florensky, *Mnimositi v geometrii* (Moscow: Pomor'e, 1922), pp. 58-65 (reprinted in Struve (1985), pp. 369-79 and in 1991 with introduction by Leonid Antipenko [Moscow]). According to the date at the end of the typescript, Florensky completed the text on 11 August 1922. An earlier English translation exists, Kirill Sokolov, intro. and Avril Pyman,

trans., 'Father Pavel Florensky, "Explanation of the Cover"', in *Leonardo*, xxnj2 (1989), pp. 239–44. A reprint of the original Russian edition has been published in Germany with an introduction by Michael Hagemeister: P. A. *Florenskij: 'Mnimosti v geometrii'* (Munich: Sagner, 1985; Specimina Philologiae Slavicae, Supplement, vol. 14). For an Italian translation see 'Spiegazione della copertina', in Misler (1983), pp. 136–43.

- 2 Florensky's preliminary lecture notes for VKhUTEMAS contain a bibliographical reference to John L. E. Dreyer, 'The Cosmology of Dante', in *Nature*, cvnj2692 (2 June 1921), pp. 428–30. On this scientific interpretation see Antipenko's valuable commentary in the 1991 reprint of *Mnimosti v geometrii*. Also see Lena Szilárd, 'Andrej Bely i P. Florensky (Mnimaia geometriia kak vstrecha novykh konseptsii prostranstva s iskusstvom)', in *Studia Slavica Hungarica*, xxxmj1–4 (1987), pp. 228–38. Petr Kogan, ed., *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Union des Républiques Soviétiques Sodalistes*. Catalogue of exhibition at the Grand Palais (Paris, 1925) p. 174.

ESSAY

- 4 Referring to the 'specificity of structure', in his father's texts, Bely also talks about 'art steeped in mathematical thought (if, in this case, we may use Florensky's words regarding the work of Favorsky.)', See Bely, *Nachalo veka*, p. 249. Florensky was especially interested in these phenomena. He devoted his 'Laws of Illusion' to the psychology of vision, a text which he then refashioned for his *Analiz prostranstva*. See "Zakon illiuzii [Otryvok iz raboty 'Analiz prostranstvennosti v izobrazitel'no-khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniiakh sostavelennyi po kursu leksii v VKhUTEMASe v 1921-1924 gg.]", in *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, vj284 (Tartu, 1971), pp. 513–21, and Andronik (2000), pp.259–71.
- 6 That Florensky equated transparency with the imaginary (as illusory) and that this concept was for him both optical and aesthetic is clear from the late commentary that he made in a letter to his family (dated 21–25 March 1936) on Bely's novel *Petersburg*: 'Well, the essence of *Petersburg* lies in its transmission of the sensation of the transparency, the illusoriness of Petersburg.' See Ivanova and Il'iunina, eds, 'Iz naslediiia P. A. Florenskogo', p. 98.
- 7 In *The Imaginaries of Geometry* Florensky differentiates between even-sided and odd-sided surfaces, a distinction which he also explained in his course on the Encyclopedia of Mathematics at the Institute for Popular Education at Sergiev Posad in 1919–20. See *The Imaginaries of Geometry*, p. 38.
- 8 Discussing the meaning of the 'Point' in his 'Symbolarium', Florensky proposes an antinomy parallel to the one described here, even in its more metaphysical essence: '[The point] is conceived as being on the border of existence and non-existence ... two worlds unite, the one of actuality and the other of the imaginary.' See Nekrasova, 'Neosushchestvlennyi zamysel 1920-kh godov', p. 111.
- 9 Alexius Meinong (1853–1920) was an Austrian philosopher and professor at Graz University. Founder of 'Neo-Realist philosophy', Meinong developed a theory of objects (*Gegenstandstheorie*), according to which the object was to be understood not as material object, but as the influence of the object on the emotions; in other words, the object acquired its reality only via the act of knowledge.

Reverse Perspective

INTRODUCTION

- The translation is based on the latest version of Florensky's 'Obratnaia perspektiva', in *Sochineniia*, m/I, pp. 46-101, published on the basis of the typewritten and handwritten variants preserved in the Florensky Foundation. Delivered as a lecture, 'Reverse Perspective' was not published at the time, even though Florensky himself prepared the text, dictating it, in part, to Aleksandra Rozanova, daughter of his friend, the writer Vasilii Rozanov. The printed proofs are preserved in Manuscript Section, RGL, f. 218, op. 1304, d.12. The first Russian publication was 'Obratnaia perspektiva', in *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, m/198 (1967), pp. 381-416; Struve then published it in *Stat'i po iskusstvu*, pp. 117-87; an abridged version, edited, annotated and introduced by Nikolai Gavriushin, appeared in his *Filosofia russkogo religioznogo iskusstva. Sokrovishchnitsa russkoi religiozno-filosofskoi mysli* (Moscow: Progress-Kul'tura, 1993), pp. 247-464; also in Naslednikov (1993), pp. 175-281; a new version, revised and annotated by Andronik, appeared in Andronik (1996), pp. 9-72. For an Italian translation see 'La prospettiva rovesciata', in Misler (1983), pp. 73-135. For a French translation see 'La perspective inversee', in Lhoest (1992), pp. 67-120. There are three German translations, 'Die umgekehrte Perspektive', in Sikojev (1989), pp. 7-79, in abridged form in Bubnoff (1991), pp. 124-128; and extracts in Mierau (1996), pp. 126-36. For a Japanese translation see 'Gyakuenkinh', in Kuwano (1998), pp. 11-111.
- 2 I would like to thank Igumen Andronik (Aleksandr Trubachev) for this information. Also see Anon., 'Moskovskii Institut Istoriko-khudozhestvennykh izyskaniia i muzeevedeniia', in *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn'. Biulleten' Khudozhestvennoi sekti NARKOMPROSA*, 2 (1920), pp. 11-12.
Oskar Wulff, 'Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Niedersicht'. See note 176 of Misler, 'Pavel Florensky as Art Historian', in this volume. The term 'reverse' rather than 'reversed' or 'inverted' is being used here to translate 'obratnaia', although the latter two renderings are permissible. A key argument for preferring 'reverse' is that of Christopher S. Wood, in his masterful translation of Panofsky's essays on perspective, who makes a very convincing case for rendering 'umgekehrte' as 'reverse' (see Wood, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*).
 - 4 Florensky, *Analiz prostranstvennosti*, and Misler (1995).
 - 5 On the philosophical structure of Florensky's anthropodicy and on how he wished to organise and elaborate his own collected works (never published as such) see Igumen Andronik, 'Istoriia sozdaniia tsikla "U vodarazdelov mysly"', in *Sochineniia*, m/I, pp. 5-24.
 - 6 Anders Almgren, *Die umgekehrte Perspektive und die Fluchtachsen-Perspektive* (Uppsala, 1971).
 - 7 Boris Uspensky, ed., L.E Zhegin. *Yazykzhivopisnogo proizvedeniia* (Moscow, 1970).
 - 8 Aleksandr Zaitsev maintains that Uspensky, in his appreciation of reverse perspective, juxtaposes the two perspectives incorrectly and prejudicially. Lev D'iakonitsyn, in turn, welcomes Zhegin's book, although he, too, is critical of

- Uspensky's commentary on Florensky. See Zaitsev, 'Chto takoe obratnaia perspektiva?': and Lev D'iakonitsyn, 'Krupnoe otkrytie v drevnerusskom iskusstve', in *Iskusstvo*, 3 (1972), pp. 67-70 and pp. 70-71. The same issue contains other, less ideological reviews, e.g. Irina Glinskaia, 'Ob izuchenii yazyka zhivopisi', pp. 60-63: and Gerol'd Vagner, 'Khudozhestvennyi yazyk drevnerusskoi zhivopisi', pp. 63-8.
- 9 See, for example, Lev Mochalov, 'Obratnaia perspektiva. Mifi versiia real'nosti', in V. Polevoi et al., *Sovetskoe iskusstvoznanie* '75 (1976), pp. 255-73: and Baris Raushenbakh, *Prostranstvennye postroeniia v drevnerusskoi zhivopisi* (Moscow, 1975): *Prostranstvennye postroeniia v zhivopisi. Ocherk osnovnykh metodov* (Moscow, 1980). Two short essays in English provide a summary of Raushenbakh's complex elaboration: Baris Raushenbakh, 'Perceptual Perspective and Cezanne's Landscape', in *Leonardo* XVI:1 (1982), pp. 28-33, and 'On My Concept of Perceptual Perspective that Accounts for Parallel and Inverted Perspective in Pictorial Art', *ibid.*, XVII:1 (1983), pp. 28-30.
- 10 Abe Shenitzer, trans., *Bonds Rosenfeld: 'A History of Non-Euclidean Geometry. Evolution of the Concept of a Geometric Space'* (New York, 1988).

ESSAY

Numerals with asterisks added indicate Florensky's original notes to this essay; the remainder are mine. N. M.

- 11* This article was written in October 1919, in the form of a lecture for the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius. However, for various reasons it was delivered not to the Commission, but to a session of the Byzantine Section of MIKHM on 29 October 1920. The debate that followed the lecture was long and intense. As I recall, those who took part were Pavel Muratov, B. Kuftin, N. Romanov, A. Sidorov, N. Afrikanov, N. Shchekotov, M. Fabrikant and N. Lange. Once again the liveliness of the discussions brought home to me that the question of space was one of the fundamental ones in art and, I would go even further, in the understanding of the world in general. But this question of space in visual art is not discussed in the present article and is the subject of my lectures on the analysis of perspective, which I delivered to the Printing and Graphics Department at the Moscow Higher Art Workshops, the so-called KhUDEMAST [=VKhUTEMAS] in 1921-3 and which are being prepared for publication. This article merely presents a sort of concrete historical approach to understanding an organic idea of the world. The author in no way intends to construct a theory of reverse perspective and wants only to point out with sufficient energy the *fact* of an organic idea - in one particular sphere. To conclude this introduction I want to gratefully acknowledge the late Aleksandra Mikhailovna Butiagina, who transcribed the first half of this article from my dictation.
- 12 *Rastsvetka or raskryshka, razdelka, assist or assist, ozhivka, dvizhka, otmatina, probel (probelka)*. Apart from *razdelki* (folds or creases in vestments) Florensky defined

these terms as follows (parentheses, underlinings, bold script, quotation marks and italics are Florensky's; words in square brackets are the translator's) copying freely from Sergei Prokhorov, 'Ob ikonopisi i ee tekhnike', in *Svetil'nik*, 1 (1914), pp. 33-48 and other sources (Florensky, '[Podgotovitel'nye materialy po ikonopisi]', in Florensky, *Ikonostas* (1995), pp. 213-29):

V. *Ikonopisets raskryvaet* [The icon painter exposes]

19) The icon-painter 'exposes', i.e. paints over the background of the dress and accessories with *uninterrupted spots* of paint (the *raskryshka*) [exposure], but without any shadows or half-tones. He may not use *lessirovka* or *mazok* [light brushstroke], so he replaces the *lessirovka* with *pripleska* [sprinkling], i.e. covers a given place with a very thin tone (in the case of an old icon where a lot of fillings are being made as it is being restored resulting in a kind of multicoloured variegation, the painter destroys it by *sprinkling* all the vestments or background with a thin tone which produces the 'filling in' of the spots). After this, but still during the restoration process, he paints over the old folds and inserts *probely* [highlightings] ...

VI. *Rospis'* [Painting]

20) When the *raskryshka* has dried, the outlines of the folds that had been made earlier with *tegrafia* [point] can be seen ... Painting for the all over painting of the folds is done in the same color, but in a darker tone ...

VII. *Probelka* [Highlighting]

22) Highlightings are applied wherever there has to be light (- on the shoulder or the chest, from the shoulder to the end of the sleeve, on the stomach, the thigh and lower down -) which is done with tempered gold or paint. The highlightings are applied in three *postily* [spreads] - the first, second, and then the third which is the *otzhivka* [left-over] ... the thinnest and lightest ...

VIII.

25) [*Asist*] ... 'I know nothing' about the derivation of the word *asist*. The substance of *asist* is a thick and compact mass prepared from the juice of a head of onion or sometimes from black and thickened beer. Either is then diluted with water in a spoon so as to 'dissolve' and is used to cover the places on the dress or background where gold is going to be applied ...

Razdelka [Fold]

... 'Folds on dress' (early Novgorod icons) 'consisting of straight lines or markings prepared with ink and eggwhite' ...

Dvizhki [Lines]

Dvizhki are the thin, short lines or *otmetiny* [markings] which are traced with eggwhite in the upper sections of the icon: beneath the eyes, beneath the lips, on the forehead, and on the joints of the hands and feet ...

13* The fifteenth -or sixteenth-century icon No. 23/328 (32 x 25.5 cm), for example, donated by Nikita Dmitrievich Vel'iaminov in honor of Tsarevna and nun Ol'ga Borisovna in 1625, was cleaned in 1919 and published by the Lavra Preservation Commission (see *Opis' ikon v Troitse-Sergievoi Lavre* [Sergiev Posad, 1920] pp. 89-90). [The icon is now in the Historical-Artistic Museum of Sergiev Posad, inventory no. 375. See: Tat'iana Nikolaeva, *Drevnerusskaia zhivopis' Zagorskogo*

Muzeia (Moscow, 1977) p. 130.]

- 14* The eighteenth-century icon no. 58/160 (31.5 x 25.5 cm) had been donated by Ivan Grigor'evich Nagov in 1601 (*Opis'ikon*, pp. 102-3). [Present whereabouts unknown.]
- 15* One opinion sees the depiction of warriors or horses emerging one from behind the other and following a single line perpendicular to the direction of their movement as being an embryonic form of perspective. Of course, this is a certain projection of a military, axonometric, or similar type of perspective, i.e. the projection from an infinitely distanced centre, and it has significance as such, in and of itself. To see it as the embryo of something else, as an imperfectly comprehended perspective, means not taking into consideration the fact that any representation is a correspondence and that many representations are in essence projections, without being perspectival. Essentially, they are no more the embryos of perspective than reverse perspective or many others are. In turn, [linear] perspective is an embryo of reverse perspective and so on. Evidently, in such cases researchers are simply not paying proper attention to the mathematical aspect of the matter and that is why they divide up all the countless methods of representation into correct, perspectival ones and incorrect, non-perspectival ones. However, non-perspectival [representation] in no way signifies incorrectness. With respect to Egyptian representations specifically, particular attention is required, for here tactile sensations predominated over visual ones. What kind of correspondence between the points of the thing represented and the representation was being used by the Egyptians is a difficult question, one that has yet to receive a satisfactory answer.
- 16* Moritz Cantor, *Vorlesungen über Geschichte der Mathematik*, vol. 1, 3rd edn (Leipzig, 1907), p. 108.
- 17* Vitruvius Pollio, *De architectura libri decem*, VII, praefatio, 11. We read the same in the life of Aeschylus. However, from what Aristotle indicates in his *Poetica*, 4, the first to provide a reasonable explanation for scenography was Sophocles.
- 18 This is a free paraphrasis of the original Vitruvius text, 'Namque primum Agatharcus Aeschilo docente tragoediam scaena fecit et de ea commentarium reliquit. Ex eo moniti Democritus et Anaxagoras de eadem re scripserunt, quemadmodum oporteat ad aciem oculorum rariorumque extensionem certo loco centro constituto linea ratione naturali respondere, uti de incerta re certae imagines aedificiorum in scenarium picturis rendere speciem, et quae in directis planisque frontibus sint figurata, alia abscondentia alia prominentia esse videantur.' (Vitruvius, *De architectura libri decem*). See Herbert Langford Warren, ed., *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture* (New York, 1960), p. 198.
- 19 See note 74 of Misler, 'Pavel Florensky as Art Historian', in this volume.
- 20* Ivan Semenov, trans., *G. Emikhen: 'Grecheskii i rimskii teatr'* (Moscow, 1894), pp. 160-61.
- 21* Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Γεωγραφικὴ ὑφήγησις*. See Cantor, *Vorlesungen*, p. 423.
- 22* Rynin, *Melody izobrazheniia*.
- 23* Numerous reproductions, both photographs and line drawings, of the Greco-Roman architectural landscape and the archaeological study of this landscape

can be found in the detailed investigation by Mikhail Rostovtsev, 'Ellinisticheskoro-rimskii arkhitekturnyi peizazh', in *Zapiski klassicheskogo Otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*, VI (Segiev Posad, 1908). Unfortunately, Rostovtsev's work completely ignores the art historical and theoretical aspect of the matter and in particular contains absolutely no discussion of spatiality in the Hellenistic-Roman landscape. We might point out, incidentally, that the landscapes Rostovtsev reproduces are partially presented in linear perspective - though not a completely rigorous one - and partially using other methods of projection related to perspective, like axionometry - a projection from an infinitely distanced point. In any event, the general nature of the representations is fairly close to a system of perspective.

- 24* 'However, the question of the Greco-Roman architectural landscape, its origins and history, its realness or its fantasticness, has not been broached in scholarship to this day. From the first days of my acquaintance with Pompeii I have personally long been involved with it. I saw immediately that the limits of real fantasising in Pompeian landscape are extremely restricted and are encompassed entirely within the framework of the *illusionistic* transmission in part of motifs from surrounding nature, in part of landscape and architectural originals coming from outside. In general, I find the term fantastic architecture difficult to understand. Details of an ornamental kind can be permeated with fantasy, the combination of motifs can be capricious and unusual, but the motifs themselves and their general character will without fail be real, if not with the relief of a portrait (we are not confronted with architectural projects and photographs), then real in a typical way. Investigation from this viewpoint of utterly fantastic-seeming architectural motifs in the so-called architectural style of wall decoration has already succeeded in providing a number of unexpected and extremely important results. The connection between *this fantastic' architecture and the architecture of the Greco-Roman stage* has been, or is being proven, and, of course, further research will provide even more, especially now, when in Asia Minor monuments of genuine Hellenistic architecture are being discovered one after another. I arrived at the same results after many years of research on the architecture of Pompeian landscapes. Here everything seems real, to an even greater degree than in architectural decoration, and conveys the *types* of real Hellenistic architecture. There is even less room here for pure fantasy, than in the architecture of Pompeian walls.' (Rostovtsev, 'Posleslovie', *Ellinisticheskoro-rimskii arkhitekturnyi peizazh*, pp. IX-X.). The author connects this landscape with views of Roman villas, Egyptian landscapes, etc.
- 25* Aleksandr Benua, *Istoriia zhivopisi* (St Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1912), vol. I. part], pp. 41 et seq.
- 26* See Rostovtsev, *Ellinisticheskoro-rimskii arkhitekturnyi peizazh*.
- 27* Benua, *Istoriia zhivopisi*, p. 45.
- 28* *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46.
- 29* *Ibid.*, p. 43, note 24.
- 30* *ibid.*, p. 70.
- 31* *Ibid.*, p. 75.

- 32* *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 33 The Neo-Kantian school at Marburg University, directed by Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) and represented also by Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer, was especially popular among Russian philosophers and intellectuals in the early twentieth century.
- 34* D. M. Bolduin, *Dukhovnoe razvitiie detskogo individuuma i chelovecheskogo roda*. Translated from the 3rd US edn (Moscow: Moskovskoe knigoizdatel'stvo, 19U). [See James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the child and the Race. Methods and Processes* (New York and London, 1895)].
- 35 Vasari's original text is 'Fu, come si è detto, Giotto ingegnoso e piacevole molto e ne' motti argutissimo, de' quali n'è anco viva memoria in questa città.' See Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari* (Florence, 1973), p. 406.
- 36* Petr Pertsov, trans., *I. Ten [Hyppolite Taine]: 'Puteshestvie po ItaliC vo!*. 2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1913-16), II, pp. 87-8.
- 37 Vasari's original text is 'E perche, oltre quello che aveva Giotto da natura, fu studiosissimo, ed andò sempre nuove cose pensando e dalla natura cavando, merito d'essere chiamato discepolo della natura e non d'altri ... Perche oltre a certi paesi pieni di alberi e di scogli che fu cosa nuova in quei tempi.' See Milanesi, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, pp. 378-80
- 38* Benua, *Istoriia zhivopisi*, p. 100.
- 39* *Ibid.*
- 40* *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.
- 41* Cf. Aleksei Mironov, 'Al'brekht Diurer, ego zhizn' i khudozhestvennaia deiatel'nost. Kkharakteristike epokhi v nemetskom iskusstve', in *Uchenye Zapiski Imperatorskogo Moskovskogo Universiteta. Otdel istoriko-filologicheskii*, 31 (1901), p. 375.
- 42* Albrecht *Diurer, Underweysung der Messung mit dem Zirkel und Richtscheit* in Linien, Ebenen und gantzen Corporen durch Albrecht Durer zusammen getzogen und zu Nutz aller Kunstliebhabenden mit zugehörigen Figuren in Truckgebracht im Jahr MDXXV (Nuremberg, 1525). There are no fewer than five later editions.
- 43* Mironov, *Al'brekht Diurer*, p. 380, note 1.
- 44* Excerpts from several of these tracts have been published by Gustav Johannes von Allesch in his *Renaissance in Italy* (translated into Russian by Evgenii Grigorovich as *Allesh. Renessans v Italii'* (Moscow: Sabashnikov, 1916).
- 45 Paolo Uccello painted his *Monument to Giovanni Acuto* (John Hawkwood) in 1433.
- 46 Andrea del Castagno painted his *Monument to Niccolo da Tolentino* in 1456.
- 47 Andrea del Castagno was born in 1421.
- 48 Andrea del Castagno painted his *Supper* in 1445-50 in the Church of S Apollonia in Florence.
- 49* Benua, *Istoriia zhivopisi*, p. 381.
- 50 The correct title is *De prospetiva pingendi*.
- 51 Today it is generally accepted that the Latin version of *De Pictura* was written in 1435 and the one in vernacular Italian in 1436. The original Latin edition was published in Basle in 1540.
- 52 Masaccio died in 1428.
- 53* An extensive bibliography on these issues can be found in Rynin, *Metody*

- izobrazheniia, pp. 245-64.
- 54 'I know they tiddled wine on the quiet/while *publicly preaching water*' (T. J. Reed, trans. and intro., Heinrich Heine: *'Deutschland. A Winter's Tale'* (London, 1986), p. 57.
- 55* Guido Schreiber, *Lehrbuch der Perspektive mit einem Anfang über den Gebrauch geometrischer Grundrisse*, 2nd edn, ed. A. Viehweger, intro. Ludwig Nieper (Leipzig, 1874).
- 56* *Ibid.*, § 32, p. 51.
- 57* *Ibid.*, § 34, p. 56.
- 58* *Ibid.*, § 34, p. 57.
- 59* Rynin, *Perspektiva*, § 8, pp. 72-3.
- 60 Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1512-13, Gemaldegalerie, Dresden) was and is one of the most revered paintings in Russian culture, particularly in the philosophical and religious circles that Florensky frequented.
- 61 Tintoretto (1518-94) made his reputation with this work in 1548.
- 62 The Uffizi Gallery does not possess a *Flemish Landscape* by Rubens. Presumably Florensky is referring to Rubens' *Landscape. Returning from the Fields* (1632-4) in the Galleria of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.
- 63* Rynin, *Perspektiva*, §. 8, pp. 70-82, 89: Schreiber, *Lehrbuch der Perspektive*.
- 64* Rynin, *Perspektiva*, §. 8, p. 75, fig. 144.
- 65* Friedrich Schilling, *Über die Anwendungen der darstellenden Geometrie insbesondere über die Photogrammetrie* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1904), pp. 152-3: Rynin, *Perspektiva*, p. 74. Rynin, *Metody izobrazheniia*, p. 111.
- 66* Schilling, *Über die Anwendungen*, p. 153, note 1.
- 67 The only journey that Albrecht Dürer undertook in 1506 was from Venice (not Florence) to Bologna.
- 68* Frants Kugler [Franz Theodor Kugler], *Rukovodstvo k istorii zhivopisi so vremeni Konstantina Velikogo*, 3rd edn (Moscow, 1874), p. 584.
- 69* Mironov, *Al'brekht Diurer*, p. 347.
- 70* Aleksei Sidorov, *'Chetyre Apostola' Al'brekhta Diurera i sviazannye s nimi spomye voprosy*. Offprint of *Zapiski Klassicheskogo Otdeleniia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Obshchestva*, IX (1917), p. 15.
- 71* From one of Dürer's manuscripts now in the British Museum, London, and comprising the artist's working sketches for projected future printed works. Published by A. von Zahn in 1868 and William M. Collway in 1889 [William Conway, *Literary Remains of Albrecht Durer* (Cambridge, 1889)] reprinted in Konrad Lange and Franz Louis Fuhse, *Dürers schriftlicher Nachlass auf Grund der Original-Handschriften und theilweise neu entdeckter alter Abschriften* (Halle, 1893), p. 326.
- 72 The woodcut for the First Perspective apparatus or *Man drawing a seated figure* was published in the first edition of the *Unterweisung der Messung* (Nuremberg, 1925).
- 73 The woodcut of a Perspective apparatus called *Man drawing a reclining woman* was included only in the second edition of the *Unterweisung der Messung* (Nuremberg, 1938).
- 74 The woodcut of a Perspective apparatus called *Man drawing a jug* was also included in the second edition of the *Unterweisung der Messung*.
- 75 The woodcut for the Second Perspective apparatus or *Man drawing a lute* was

- published in the first edition of the *Underweisung der Messung*.
- 76* Rynin, *Perspektiva*, § 8, pp. 75-8; *Metody izobrazheniia*, § 15, pp. 113-17.
- 77* Ernst Makh, *Dlia chego cheloveku dva glaza*. *PopuliarniO-nauchnye ocherki*, trans. Gedel' Kotliar (Moscow: 'Obrazovanie', 1909), p. 64. [For the English see Ernst Mach, 'Why Has Man Two Eyes?', in *Popular Scientific Lectures*, 3rd edn, trans. Thomas McCormack, pp. 66-88 (Chicago, 1898); this citation on pp. 76-7. N.M.]
- 78* An elementary explanation of the terms of 'study on sets' used here - set, correspondence, power, equivalent relation, similarity or conformity, etc. - can be found in Pavel Florensky, 'O simvolakh beskonechnosti', in *Novyi put'*, 9 (September 1904), pp. 173-235.
- 79* On how the correspondence of the points of the square and its sides has been established see Georg Cantor's own proof. [Original source and quotation missing in the manuscript. N.M.]
- 80 Original source lost.
- 81* See Rynin, *Metody izobrazheniia*.
- 82 Georg Friedrich Bernhard Riemann (1826-66), German mathematician. In *Analiz prostranstvennosti* Florensky further developed the ideas that Riemann had put forward in his fundamental text, *Ueber die Hypothesen, we/che der Geometrie zu Grunde liegen*, Habilitationsschrift: von10 Juni 1854, Gottingen, Abhandlungen der Wissenschaften, 13, 1866, pp. 133-52.
- 83 The term Meonism derives from the Greek (μηδ̄ ὄν, unbeing) and lies at the basis of the philosophical theory of the poet and philosopher Nikolai Minsky (1885-1937). According to him every human effort towards the ideal is destined to fail, such as the knowledge of God which, paradoxically, is unattainable - for God is dispersed within Eternity. Minsky was also one of the organisers of the Religious-Philosophic Gatherings that Florensky frequented.
- 84 Original source lost.
- 85* Ernst Makh [Mach], *Poznanie i zabluzhdenie. Ocherki po psikhologii issledovaniia* (Moscow: Skirmunt, 1909), p. 346.
- 86* *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- 87* Ernst Makh ([Mach], *Analiz oshchushchenii* (Moscow: Skirmunt, 1908), p. 354 [For the English original see Ernst Mach, *The Analysis of Sensations And the Relation of the Physical to the Psychological*, trans. C. M. Williams (New York, 1959), pp. 181-2. N.M.]
- 88* *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.
- 89* *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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INDEX

- Abramtsevo 48-9
'Aegean Culture, The Stratification of'
 29,30,34, 54, 56,139-73
Alberti, Leon Battista 85, 224-5
Aleksandrova, Tatiana 25
Altichieri 224
Anaxagoras 2°9, 210, 222
Apocalyptic Troika 20, 21
Aquilonius 211
Art-Technical Studios, Higher State
 24,30,72,73-83,86,89
Artistic Sciences, Academy of
 24, 30, 38, 73, 75
Avanzo, Jacopo 224
- Bachofen, Jacob 57
Bakst, Lev 20, 54
Bakushinsky, Anatolii 87-8,89-90,91
Bal'mont, Konstantin 19
Bart, Viktor 23
Bely, Andrei 13,19, 21,32,36,37,72,117
Benois, Alexandre 212, 214, 223
Berdiaev, Nikolai 58, 61, 89
Besant, Annie 36,61
Biagio da Parma 87,224
Blok, Aleksandr 36, 51, 72, 117
Bossuet, Fr. 243
Briusov, Valerii 19,36
Bromirsky, Petr 71
Brunelleschi, Filippo 87,224
Bugaeu, Nikolai 19
- Bulgakov, Sergei 13,36,58,59,66,89,139
Burluk, David 18
Butlerov, Aleksandr 61
- Camp Freedom, Siberia 26
Cantor, Georg 255, 256, 257
Cantor, Moritz 208
Cardano, Girolamo 92
Cassirer, Ernst 31
Castagno, Andrea del' 54, 55, 224
Celestial Signs 29,30,32,34,36,37-8,42,
 85,97,115-22
Centrism 70
Cezanne, Paul 59
Chekrygin, Vasilii 24,63,65-6,68,70,72
Chernyshev, Nikolai 24, 66, 70, 72, 76
Chulkov, Georgii 58, 61
'Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts,
 The' 29,30,34,36,38,40-41,42,43,
 44,46,97-111 *see also* Lavra of
 the Trinity and St Sergius
Cohen, H. 217
'Colours, Reflections on the Symbolics
 of'*see* 'Celestial Signs'
Constructivism 24,31,71,76,78,82,9°,
 92,188
'Cover, Explanation of the' 29,30,32,
 83-5, 177, 184-96
Cubism 31,38,57,58-60,92
Dante 88, 185, 220, 223

- Dell'Abbaco, Paolo 224
- Democritus 2^o9, 210
- Descartes, René 264
- Diaghilev, Sergei 40
- Dokuchaev, Nikolai 78
- Donatello 224
- Dorpfeld, Wilhelm 145
- Diirer, Albrecht 71,72,73,74,75, 223,
245-6, 247-51
- Efimov, Ivan 49, 53,126
- Efimova, Nina Simonovich *see*
Simonovich-
- Efimova, Nina
- 'Efimovs' Puppet Theatre, On the' 29, 30,
49-51,69, 125-35
- El Greco 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 233
- El'chaninov, Aleksandr 18,19, 39, 56
- Ern, Vladimir 18,19, 20
- Eternal Azure, In* 37
- Euclid 85,92, 223, 224, 242, 261-2, 264,
265-7
- Evans, Sir Arthur John 143,145,146,150,
152,154
- Experimental Permafrost Centre,
Skovoro dyno 26
- Fabrikant, Mikhail 86
- Favorsky, Vladimir 1,13,23-4,28,29,36,
44,45,46, 50,72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 81,
82,83,84,177,185,189,196
see also 'Explanation of the Cover'
- Fedorov, Nikolai 66,72
- Fiedler, Conrad 31,225
- Florenskaia,Ol'ga 6,16,17
- Florenskaia, Raisa 27, 71, 72
- Florensky, Pavel
'Aegean Culture, The Stratification of'
29,30, 34, 54, 56,139-73
- 'Celestial Signs' 29,30, 32, 34, 36, 37-8,
42,85, 97, 115-22
- 'Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the
Arts, The' 29,30,34, 36, 38,40-41,42,
43,44,46,97-111
- 'Colours, Reflections on the
Symbolics of' *see* 'Celestial Signs'
- 'Cover, Explanation of the' 29,30,32,
83-5,177,184-96
- 'Efimovs' Puppet Theatre, On the' 29,
30,49-51,69, 125-35
- Eternal Azure, In* 37
- 'Forefathers of Philosophy' 139
- Geometry, The Imaginaries in* 83-5,88,
184,185
- Iconostasis* 23, 31, 61, 81, 85
- Idealism, The Meaning of* 21, 44, 54,
57-8,59,61,63
- 'Infinity, The Symbols of' 35,43
- 'Lectia and Lectio' 139
- 'Letter No. X' 36, 116
- 'Makovets, On' 115
- 'Meditation' *see* 'Celestial Signs'
- Number as Form* 83, 186
- 'Numbers, Induction of' 21
- 'Oro'18
Philosophy, The First Steps of 54,139
Physics in the Service of Mathematics 24
Pillar and Ground of the Truth, The 19,20,
36,37,116
- 'Planar Curves as Loci of Disruptions
of Continuity, On the
Peculiarities of' 19
- 'Point' 93
- 'Realism, On' 29,30-31, 34, 63, 72, 73,
176-82
- 'Reason and Dialectics' 21

- 'Reverse Perspective' 29,30,34,42, 61,
69,75,76,78,81,82,85-93,
199-272
- Spatiality and Time in the Works of Visual
Art, Analysis of* 18,34,75,92,199
- 'Symbolarium' 24,72,73,93
- Technological Encyclopaedia* 24, 83
- Theological Herald* 21
- '\Water Freezes, How' 26
- Watersheds of Thought, At the* 115,199
- Florovsky, Georgii 56
- Fonvizin, Artur 63,71
- Forefathers Of Philosophy 139
- Frank, Semeon 89
- Furtwangler, Adolf 156
- Gabo, Naum 71
- Gaetano de Santis 145
- Gan, Aleksei 78
- Geometry, The Imaginaries in* 83-5,88,184,
185
- Gerasimov, Sergei 65
- Giotto 52, 59, 220-24
- Giovanni da Milano 224
- Gippius, Zinaida 19,35
- Goethe, J. W. von 54,108, 253
- Golosov, Bishop Gavriil 39
- Goncharova, Natal'ia 24,57,59,66,70,91
- Gorev-Galkin, Mikhail 45
- Gozzoli, Benozzo 225
- Grabar', Igor' 40, 43, 91
- Grishchenko, Aleksei 59-60, 91
- Hagenbeck Zoo 44,102
- Helmholtz, Hermann von 75, 268
- Hilbert 255, 256, 258
- Hildebrand, Adolf von 75,76
- Hinton, Charles 59
- Holle, Joseph 145
- Homer 141,167-71
- Hörnes, Moritz 159,161,166
- Iconostasis* 23,31,61,81,85
- Idealism, The Meaning of* 21, 44, 54, 57-8,
59,61, 63
- 'Infinity, The Symbols of' 35,43
- Isotological Institute 22
- Istomin, Konstantin 24, 50, 66, 72
- Ivanov, Viacheslav 20,36,41, 51,116,122
- Jurgens, E. 257-8
- Kagarov, Evgenii 145
- Kandinsky, Vasiliï 24,40, 61
- Kant, Immanuel 91, 215, 216, 218, 242,
262,264-7
- Kapterev, Pavel 14, 26, 32, 44-5, 56
- Khlebnikov, Velimir 63
- Kuftin, Boris 86
- Kügler, F. 245
- Kupka, Franz 40
- Kuznetsov, Pavel 71
- Ladovsky, Nikolai 78
- Lagrange, M.J. 146,162,163
- Lange, Nikolai 86
- Larionov, Aleksandr 23,32, 66, 70, 71, 72,
73,76, 91
- Larionov, Mikhail 24
- Lavinsky, Anton 70
- Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius 22-3,
30,31,37,42-6, 63, 83, 91 *see also*
'Church Ritual as a Synthesis
of the Arts, The'
- Lazarev, Viktor 91
- Leadbeater, Charles W. 36

- 'Lectia and Lectio' 139
- Leonardo da Vinci 56,224, 225, 229-30, 242,264
- Lermontov, Mikhail 37,122
- 'Letter No. X' 36,116
- Lippi, Fra' Filippo 225
- Lissitzky, El 90, 92, 188
- Lobachevsky, Nikolai 200
- Losev, Aleksei 2], 73
- Liirtoth 257, 258
- Mach,Ernst 75,78,253,266
- Mackenzie, Duncan 146
- Makovets 24,42, 62-72, 83, 97, 115, 177, 199, 200 *see also* 'Realism, On';
- 'Symbolism'
- Malevich, Kazimir 59,90,92
- Mamontov, Savva 48-9
- Marburg school 2]7
- Masaccio 225
- Matiushin, Mikhail 59
- 'Meditation' *see* 'Celestial Signs'
- Meinong 19]
- Merezhkovsky, Dmitrii 19,35
- Michelangelo 66,67, 199,224,225, 239-42
- Mit'ki group 18
- Moscow
- Academy of Artistic Sciences 24, 30, 38, 73, 75
- Art-Technical Studios, Higher State 24,30,72,73-83,86,89
- Isotological Institute 22
- Shchukin Collection 43, 57, 58, 59
- Theological Seminary 19, 2], 97, 139
- Muratov, Pavel 32,38,40,46, 58, 86, 91, 103-4, 199
- Nautilus ornament 171-3
- Nesterov, Mikhail 26,42,66, 68, 139
- Netto 257
- Nietzsche 20, 153
- Nizhnii-Novgorod 24
- Number as Form* 83, 186
- 'Numbers, Induction of' 21
- Ognev, Ivan 22
- Olsuf'ev, Yurii 32,42-3,44,45,46,105
- Opuntsky, Filipp 156
- 'Oro'18
- Panofsky, Erwin 31, 87, 90, 91
- Pavlinov, Pavel 50,76,78
- Peano, Giuseppe 255, 256, 258
- Peet, Thomas E. 145
- Pestel', Vera 60,70
- Petrarch 223
- Pevsner, Anton 71
- Philosophy, The First Steps of* 54,139
- Physics in the Service of Mathematics* 24
- Picasso, Pablo 38, 57-60, 63, 69, 89
- Piero della Francesca 224
- Pillar and Ground of the Truth, The* 19,20, 36, 37, 116
- 'Planar Curves as Loci of Disruptions of Continuity, On the Peculiarities of' 19
- 'Point' 93
- Popov, Pavel 60, 70
- Popova, Liubov' 24, 60, 79-80
- Preller, Ludwig 159
- primitive art 47-9
- see also* 'Efimovs' Puppet Theatre, On the'
- Productivists 76,78-82,188
- Ptolomeus 87,88, 185,211

- Raphael 57,58,59,199, 225, 230–33
- Rationalists 78
- Raushenbakh, Boris 200
- 'Realism, On' 29,30-31,34, 63,72, 73, 176–82 *see also* Makovets
- 'Reason and Dialectics' 21
- Reinach, Salomon 145,153
- Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn 233
- Repin, Il'ia 48
- Reshetov, Amfian 63
- Ridgeway, William 145
- Riegl, Alois 31,76
- Rodchenko, Aleksandr 24, 32, 33, 70, 78, 79,9°,188
- Rodionov, Mikhail 76
- Romanov, Nikolai 86
- Romanovich, Sergei 63, 69,70,72
- Rozanov, Vasilii 21, 68
- Rubens, Sir Peter Paul 65, 239, 243
- Rublev, Andrei 37
- Russian Silver Age 31-2
- Rynin, Nikolai 87,88
- Sabaneev, Leonid 98
- Sats, Natal'ia 50
- Savignac, P. 152
- Saxl, Fritz 31
- Schmidt, Hubert 145
- Schreiber, Guido 228
- Sergeevich, Aleksei 117
- Sergiev Posad 14,21,22,37,42,126,19° *see also* 'Celestial Signs'; 'Efimovs' Puppet Theatre, On the'; Lavra of the Trinity and St Sergius
- Shaposhnikov, Boris 43-4
- Shchekotov, Nikolai 46,85
- Shchukin Collection 43, 57, 58, 59
- Shevchenko, Aleksandr 70,71
- Sidorov, Aleksei 23, 29, 73-5, 83, 86
- Simonovich-Efimova, Nina 9,13-14,39, 40, 41,47,48, 49-50, 51, 52-3,125,126 *see also* 'Efimovs' Puppet Theatre, On the'
- Skriabin, Aleksandr 34,41-2,98, 111
- Solov'ev, Vladimir 20,36,37, 116, 117, 122
- Solovki monastery 28
- Sophia 34-42, 58, 85, 115-17, 121-2
- Spatiality and Time in the Works of Visual Art, Analysis of* 18, 34, 75, 92,199
- Spengler,Oswald 91-2
- Steiner, Rudolph 61
- Stepanova, Varvaro 78
- Stepun, Fedor 60,89
- Stern, Ernst von 145
- stone women 53, 57, 157-64
- Suprematists 62, 92
- Sventsitsky, Vladimir 20
- Swanevelt, Herman van 243
- 'Symbolarium' 24,72,73,93
- 'Symbolism' 19,20-21,23-4,31,34-42, 35, 36, 115 *see also* Makovets
- Tarabukin, Nikolai 9°,91
- Tartaglia, Niccolo 92
- Tatlin, Vladimir 60, 70
- Technological Encyclopaedia* 24, 83
- Ternovets, Boris 60
- Theological Herald* 21
- Theological Seminary 19, 21, 97,139
- Thomé 257
- Thompson, M.S. 145
- Tintoretto, Jacopo 60,233
- Toporkov, Aleksandr 60
- Tower in St Petersburg 20
- Tretikov Gallery 46
- Troitsky, Sergei 19,49

Trubetskoi, Sergei 19
Tsountas, Christos 145
T'ugendkhol'd, Yakov 57,58

Uccello, Paolo 53, 224
Udal'tsova, Nadezhda 60
Uittengoven, Aleksandr 2,13
U'Iianov, Nikolai 17
Uspensky, Petr 59,61

Vasari, Giorgio 220
Vasnetsov, Viktor 68
Vernet, Horace 242
Veronese, Paolo 68,69,70,242,243
Vesnin, Aleksandr 60
Vipper, Boris 60
Vitruvius Pollio, Marcus 87, 209, 222,
224
Vollgraff, Carl 143
Vosinsky 145
Vrubel', Mikhail 48

\Vace, Alan 145
Wagner, Richard 20,36
Warburg, Aby 31
'Water Freezes, How' 26
Watersheds of Thought, At the 115,199
Watteau, Antoine 66
\Veyl, Hermann 32, 34
Wolfflin, Heinrich 31, 75, 76
Worringer, Wilhelm 31,61,75
Wulff, Oskar 87,88

Zefirov, Konstantin 63
Zhegin, Lev 66,68,75, 200
Zollner, Johann 61

