

# Pavel Florenskij. Afterthoughts to a Biography

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Хорошая мысль приходит опосля  
(Russian saying)

In 2010, my book *Pavel Florenskij – A Quiet Genius* was published in English and Italian. Since that time, there has been a lively reaction from reviewers and readers and the splendid 2012 CSAR Conference in Venice and Vicenza provided me with a golden opportunity to enlarge on three subjects more specifically than seemed suitable within the framework of the biographical narrative, making use of fresh material which had become available since I had given in the text for publication and seeking to address questions, criticism and some unsolved problems.

Three subjects demanded attention: Florenskij's homoeroticism, about which I have received more personal queries than on any other subject; the vexed question of anti-Semitism, which I have been criticized for glossing over and which has been foregrounded in recent works by other scholars; and the question of "reverse perspective", which has been illuminated by later research. This paper is not intended as a polemic or as self-justification, but as an attempt to explore further controversial issues raised by my readers and to clarify my own viewpoint and share the way in which this has been modified by subsequent reading.

1. Let us proceed, then, to the question of Florenskij and homoeroticism, a term I prefer to homosexuality in this context because of the importance of the classical Eros, Eros the bridge builder, Eros the tragic lover of Psyche, for the whole mind-set of the Silver Age. I am thinking specifically of Viatcheslav



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Ivanov, but also of Vladimir Solov'ëv, Berdiaev, and others, who perceived sexual love as compatible with and in some ways complementary to, even conditional on virginity: virginity understood not as something asexual, but as a burning wholeness, complete in itself: *čselomudrie*. Florenskii was at home in this ideological climate, although, in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, he subjects the Platonic ethos to a Christian critique, noting the absence of the word "Eros" from the Gospels and writing rather of "philia", brotherly love. This he distinguishes sharply from the homosexuality Rozanov saw as characteristics of the "moonlight" Christian tradition and, in his correspondence with the younger thinker, quite simply and shockingly calls: "sodomy". But to distinguish between "Eros" and "philia" was not necessarily, for Florenskii, to reject the former, nor was his disassociation of homosexuality from Christianity an unqualified condemnation. He never suggests that to live according to the scriptures is easy, although for him as a Christian it was surely obligatory. Yet the idea (or ideal) of "Eros" as an essential component of creativity (and, indeed, of "philia") was not just dear to him, it was fundamental.

It is a widespread assumption that Florenskii was Rozanov's spiritual adviser, an *éminence grise* who discouraged the philosopher's "judaising" philo-Semitism and deployed the authority of the Slavophile tradition of the Russian Church, to which Rozanov was also deeply emotionally attached, to pull him up on sexual questions and also to foster the blood curdling anti-Semitism which was the obverse side of Rozanov's interest in Jews and Jewish religious practice.

This was not so. Florenskii, introduced to Rozanov, as to the Merezhkovskys and other St. Petersburg intellectuals, by his friend El'chaninov who was studying at the University of St. Petersburg while he and Ėrn (all from the same school in Tiflis) were undergraduates at Moscow University, looked up to Rozanov as a famous literary figure who was kind enough to take a warm, human interest in him and his friends and contemporaries, for which he was grateful – though this did not stop him from engaging "most respected Vasilii Vasil'evich" in sparky intellectual debate on the subject of his *Liudi lunnogo sveta* [The Moonlight People]. Defiantly, Florenskii, having switched from mathematics to study theology in the Moscow Academy at Sergiev Posad, takes up Rozanov's term – "sodomy" – but maintains that he was quite wrong to associate it with Christianity. On the contrary, it "was very widespread" in the ancient world "and was always and everywhere associated with a certain kind of refinement, "spirituality", something more lofty, noble or, at any rate, completely permissible and, frequently commendable".

"Surely – he continues – most respected Vasilii Vasil'evich, you of all people, must see that Hellenism is a sodomite flower, not to men-

tion the Eastern cultures”.<sup>1</sup> The only exceptions, he maintains, were Egypt, the Old Testament and Christianity; Rozanov must be blind to identify Christianity with sodomy. Historically, the Church has checked and banned the tendency. Spiritually, Christ offers a compassionate alternative – the possibility of transfiguration and of life after death in a new and glorious body. Nettled by Rozanov’s attempts, by confessing to recent homosexual experiments of his own, disappointing because he found he did not have the taste for such practices, to provoke a more intimate discussion of the problem, Florenskii refers his correspondent to his own article *Types of Growth* and to those chapters of *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* not yet in print (presumably those on Hell, Philia and Jealousy) as expressions of all he intends to confide on the subject:

I don’t have anything of importance to say, even about what sailors do: you trumpet everything to all the world, whereas I have kept silence, keep silence and will continue to do so. [...] The secret of my soul I will confide to Him [Christ, A.P.] and to Him alone, because He is the only one who will weep with me.<sup>2</sup>

Rozanov, however, continued to probe and eventually elicited a clearly formulated reply:

Everybody has a particular tendency of life, everything he does is seen in relation to this tendency which runs like a red thread through his whole life. By this I mean precisely an earth-bound tendency in everyday life. After long self-examination, I have eventually understood my own tendency. The image for it would be the “school of antiquity” [the philosophical circle, A.P.]. You would call it “S”. That appellation is correct only in the most metaphorical sense, but have it your own way, call it what you will. The essential thing is that it should constitute a close circle, ultimately united in feelings, interests, scholarly and practical undertakings, enamoured of one another and so on and so forth – a circle which encloses and educates its members and, equally, new-comers. Ever since I remember myself (and I remember myself from the age of two or so, if not earlier), this idea, this work, this tendency towards ideal human relationships has been indwelling in me, pulsating in time with my very heart; I breathe it, it nourishes me, it is so much a part of my organism, physical and spiritual, that to

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 21 December 1908, in V. Rozanov, *Literaturnye izgnanniki. P.A. Florenskii, S.A. Rachinskii, IŪ.N. Govorukha-Otrok, V.A. Mordvinova*, edited by A. Nikoliukin, Moskva, Respublika, 2010, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 6 April 1909, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 18.

have it removed would kill me, even rot me from within, because this organic need permeates every atom of my being. Symbolically, it finds expression in Greek sculpture and Beethoven's music. I have no idea whether all this is "moral" or "immoral" [...]. I am prepared to talk to God about that and to answer to Him. But as to what other people many think... To speak vulgarly, I don't give a damn [*mne napelevat'*].<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, he admits an element of renunciation. The true "Eros", for Florenskii, remains unattainable, is not to be embodied in individual human relationships in the everyday world, because it is rooted in physical passion as roses are rooted in the dark earth [an expression of Vladimir Solov'ev's much quoted by Blok, A.P.].

Passion, Florenskii continues, is ephemeral but, if deliberately suppressed and sublimated, can lead mere mortals "to such a pinnacle of creativity that they would be unable to bear the rapture of it"; so, yes indeed, "I inwardly renounce Eros for the sake of God but, by doing so, I die". This, he confess, is why he is always sad, even "with Christ".<sup>4</sup>

As a dying man in Sergiev Posad, Rozanov summed up this correspondence in a poem addressed not to his spiritual father (he chose to make his last confession to another, in his view, more traditional priest) but to his *friend* Pavel F...:

- My lands are warm...
- My lands are ancient...
- I am in part from Phrygia...
- And in part from Lydia...
- That was the realm of Croesus and there was gold...
- And they bowed down to Atis...
- I remember Atis...
- And in part Cibebe, Mother of Being...
- For I am from Armenia. From Rus' and from Armenia...
- And my bloods are mixed...
- And I love my new homeland,
- My beautiful Kostroma...
- And my rainy Armenia.
- That is, my rainy Kostroma and hot Armenia.
- My blood is hot
- And a little bit cold.
- Ok, I don't know myself... I love and I love...
- And dream dreams, and wander...

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 19 April 1909, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 20-7.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 19 April 1909, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 18, 21.

- I deny nothing. But what business of yours are my ancient dreams...
- Which, after all, no one knows about...
- And it is just my heart that sings about them...
- Sings and weeps...
- But as things are I just seem like an ordinary man and simply a priest.<sup>5</sup>

“No one loves Father Pavel, except for me –, his wife Anna is remembered as saying – To love him you have to know how to pity him”. She uses that wonderful Russian word “pozhalet’”, which also implies tenderness and comfort.<sup>6</sup> When in 1910 Florenskii told Rozanov of his marriage “without being in the least in love”,<sup>7</sup> the older man replied warmly: “You did right to marry. I think it really was a sign. I thought of you as “S” and impotent. Feeling arises from the body and perhaps it will all come right and feeling will grow and grow...”.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Florenskii’s next letter is a poem of praise to his wife: “She was given to me by God – he writes, and quotes Othello – She loved me for the dangers I had passed / And I loved her that she did pity them”.

As he falls asleep in her arms, he confides, he hears her murmur endearments as to an unhappy child. She is his Mother-Earth. He is sure they are having a son.<sup>9</sup> The letter may sound sentimental but is an attempt to express a relationship of strength and beauty which, though it lacked the glamour of the erotic ideal to which Florenskii had so long aspired, was sealed by sacrament and, at the same time, was human, homely and steadfast; a relationship which was to insure the preservation of his life-work by a loving family.

Anna understood and did not condemn her husband’s essential loneliness and impossible aspirations: “The desire of the moth for the star / of the night for the morrow”.

2. Evidence on the question of anti-Semitism is, as we have seen, also linked to Rozanov and the exposure of Florenskii’s authorship of letters which that maverick thinker published, at his correspondent’s urgent request anonymously, in the exceptionally unpleasant *Olfacto-*

<sup>5</sup> V. Rozanov, *Apokalipsis nashego vremeni*, edited by A. Nikol’iukin, Moskva, Respublika, 2000, 279. See also Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 221 and 32.

<sup>6</sup> O. Bessarabova, *Dnevnik (1915 – 1925)*, in *Marina Tsvetaeva – Boris Bessarabov. Khronika 1921 goda v dokumentakh*, Moskva, Ellis Lak, 2010, 946

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 16-17 September 1910, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Rozanov to Florenskii of 20 September 1910, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 250. Rozanov is referring to Florenskii’s story of his finding of a four-leafed clover in the same letter in which he breaks the news of this marriage.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Rozanov of 9 October 1910, in Rozanov, *Literaturnye*, 44-5.

ry and Tactile Sensibility of the Jews. This was exposed by Nikolīukin, editor of Rozanov's *Collected Works*, in notes to the volume entitled *Sakharna*,<sup>10</sup> as was Florenskii's likewise anonymous authorship of the preface to Novoselov's symposium on *Israel, Past, Present and Future*,<sup>11</sup> and subsequently publicised in the West by Michael Hagemeister, for many years the authority on the scientist-priest's slowly emerging literary heritage, in an angry and pain-filled article, *Wiederverzauberung der Welt: Pavel Florenskij's Neues Mittelalter* [Reenchantment of the World. Pavel Florenskii's New Middle Ages] in *Pavel Florenskij. Tradition und Moderne*, a volume for the Potsdam Symposium of 5-9 April 2000 published by Peter Lang, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2001.<sup>12</sup> This "outing" of Florenskii appeared to confirm Zinaida Gippius's hints at a "darker side" of his nature and his sinister influence on Rozanov, hints dropped in her 1925 reminiscences *Zhivye litsa*, where, not wishing to expose the embattled priest at a time when, unlike herself and many of their closest friends, he was still resident in the Soviet Union, she had not chosen to enlarge on. From the genuinely "stomach-turning" (to steel a phrase from Dominic Rubin's *Holy Russia. Sacred Israel*<sup>13</sup>) contents of Florenskii's letters about the Jews and blood sacrifice as published by Rozanov, it has been concluded that, as a priest, he wished to inflame his friend against the whole ethos of the Old Testament which he had formerly so overtly preferred to the new. Leonid Katsis's *Krovavyy navet i russkaia mys'l'. Istoriko-teologicheskoe issledovanie dela Bejlisa*<sup>14</sup> makes a case even more hostile to Florenskii and the Orthodox Church. The sterner critics of my biography have implied that it is time that Florenskii was "called to answer" not just for his opinions but for the sneaky anonymity he assumed in expressing them...

To begin with the question of "anonymity": Florenskii, for all he could not resist exploring controversial themes in his correspondence with Rozanov, genuinely had no wish to go public either on questions of his own intimate feelings or with his speculations on blood sacrifice; not only did he, as bread-winner for an ever-increasing family, fear for his position at the academy, something he admitted frankly

<sup>10</sup> V. Rozanov, *Sakharna. Oboniatel'noe i osiatatel'noe otnoshenie evreev k krovi*, edited by A. Nikolīukin, Moskva, Respublika, 2001, 488.

<sup>11</sup> P. Florenskii, *Sochineniia*, edited by Igumen Andronik (A. Trubachēv), P.V. Florenskii, M. Trubachēva, Moskva, Mysl', 1995, vol. 2, 705-7.

<sup>12</sup> M. Hagemeister, *Wiederverzauberung der Welt. Pavel Florenskij's Neues Mittelalter*, in *Pavel Florenskij. Tradition und Moderne*, edited by N. Franz, Frankfurt-am-Main, Peter Lang, 2001, 21-42.

<sup>13</sup> D. Rubin, *Holy Russia. Sacred Israel. Jewish Christian Encounters in Russian Religious Thought*, Brighton MA, Academic Studies Press, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> L. Kačsis, *Krovavyy navet i russkaia mys'l'. Istoriko-teologicheskoe issledovanie dela Bejlisa*, Moskva, Mosty kul'tury, 2008.

to his friend, but he disliked polemics and had no wish to be attacked “from all sides” for touching on the Jewish question in any way whatsoever. As a young man, he had, in a letter of 18 July 1904, confided to Andreĭ Belyĭ his dream of a journal, the authors of which would remain anonymous like medieval craftsmen,<sup>15</sup> and he had been only too happy to refrain from identifying himself in his preface to another controversial Novoselov publication in defence of the *Imĭaslavtsy*,<sup>16</sup> for the Novoselov circle of Seekers after Christian Enlightenment and his Library of Christian thought, which came close to realising the cherished dream of a philosophic circle in which identity would be merged in a high-minded, loving collective. So, on the one hand, we have to deal with a reticent personality who felt no compulsion, as did Rozanov, to publicise every movement of his soul, and on the other, with a priest reluctant to claim the authority of the church for every tentative opinion he was prepared to express to a friend in a private letter or, indeed, to venture in print by way of an anonymous challenge.

Having said this, there is no denying that the discussion of sacrifice and the sacramental qualities of blood took Florenskii far beyond the limits of polite academic speculation. The sister he was engaged in weening from the influence of Gippius and Merezhkovsky's religious circle told Gippius that he had once said to her that, had he been a priest in ancient Israel, he would have had no hesitation in performing blood sacrifices (Gippius does not say whether on animals or human beings!).<sup>17</sup> Florenskii's account of how a bee appeared to him as a messenger from a dead friend he had forgotten to commemorate at the altar, buzzed around the chalice and “drank the blood” is almost as offensive as are his evocations of Old Testament sacrifice in the letters to Rozanov. Florenskii's prose occasionally betrays a Rabelaisian touch which ill assorts with the refined neo-Platonic Orthodox Christianity to which he aspired. From such lapses of literary taste, Hagemester posits a “scurrility”, Gippius a cruel sensuality – which we do not find in the man himself. Contemporaries recall Florenskii as a retiring man, essentially solitary in his concentration, but a kind and attentive, if demanding, friend, an able scientist, a reverend celebrant; his letters show him to have been a dutiful son and elder brother and a loving father, full of imaginative empathy for young children, and, in his last years, a forgiving victim. Un-

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Florenskii to Andreĭ Belyĭ of 18 July 1904, in *Pavel Florenskii i simvolisty*, edited by E. Ivanova, Moskva, Īazyki slavĭanskoĭ kul'tury, 2004, 464.

<sup>16</sup> A. Bulatovich, *Apologiĭa very vo Imia Bozhie i vo Imia Iisus*, Moskva, Religiozno-filosofskaiĭ Biblioteka, 1913.

<sup>17</sup> Z. Gippius, *Zhivye litsa*, first published Prague, 1925, but quoted here from *Stikhotvoreniĭa. Zhivye litsa*, series “Zabytaĭa kniga”, Moskva, Khudozhestvennaiĭ literatura, 1993, 251.

doubtedly, Florenskii's feeling for the materiality of the sacraments, which he shared with Rozanov, was something which, unlike the latter, he never knew how to express, and his letters to the older writer are not only politically ill-timed but, from a literary point of view, often disastrously inept. Nevertheless, far from glorying in a sinister Slavophile dream of racial purity, Florenskii was perfectly happy to concur with Rozanov's assessment of him as an Oriental and southerner in love with Russia, a psychological replica of his Armenian mother's love for his Russian father, and what we know of his life and loves supports this assessment.

The Jewish question as such was peripheral to Florenskii's sphere of interests: he wrote to Rozanov that he had no idea whether Beilis was actually guilty and he makes clear in his preface to the rather mixed options expressed in *Israel, Past, Present and Future* that "we here are not advocating any political or economic measures"<sup>18</sup> The passions raised by the Beilis case and Florenskii's conviction that Old Testament religion is steeped in the ethos of blood sacrifice did not, as Kačis gives us to understand, reverberate on through later articles intended for *Na vodorazdelakh mysli* [On the Watersheds of Thought].<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, Florenskii, unlike a great many of his fellow-monarchists and churchmen in Russia, did not ascribe the Bolshevik seizure of power to the Jews, but saw it rather as the "logical conclusion of bourgeois culture".<sup>20</sup> His later writings are primarily concerned with being a good steward of God's world, furthering the pursuit of science and technology and preserving and explaining the insights and artefacts of the Age of Faith.

3. It is these artefacts, this study of the way in which material culture can express the immaterial, which brings me to Florenskii's use of the term "reverse perspective" [*obratnaia perspektiva*]. I had assumed, on the authority of Nicoletta Misler,<sup>21</sup> far more learned in the history of art than myself, that this was indeed a term borrowed from a "German" scholar – to wit – Oskar Wulff. Not being particularly interested in questions of intellectual "priority" or, indeed, "property", I did not even ask myself why Florenskii himself had failed to acknowledge this. However, it turns out that the term was common currency amongst Russian theoreticians of art when Florenskii gave his paper on the subject in 1920, but had simply been forgotten by the time that paper was first published in 1962. "Die umgekehrte Perspektive" was,

<sup>18</sup> Florenskii, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, 707.

<sup>19</sup> Kačis, *Krovavyi*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Florenskii, *Sochineniia*, 1999, vol. 3, 367.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. P. Florenskii, *Beyond Vision. Essays on the Perception of Art*, edited by N. Misler, London, Reaktion Books, 2002.



most probably, Wulff's translation of the Russian "obratnaïa perspektiva" introduced by Dmitriï Ainalov, a pupil of Nikodim Kondakov, as early as 1903 in a dissertation for the University of St. Petersburg, which Wulff reviewed. This is, of course, a minor detail, but an interesting one brought to light – for me – by Charles Lock in a groundbreaking essay which may well have escaped the notice of both art historians and Florenskii specialists. The article, published in *Sobornost'* and entitled *What is Reverse Perspective and Who was Oskar Wulff?*, is far more than the review it purports to be of my biography and Clemena Antonova's *Time and Presence in the Icon. Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*.<sup>22</sup> Basing his findings on an unpublished dissertation in Swedish by Walman Nyberg, *Inverted Perspective in Visual Art and Controversy: a History of a Critical Concept from the Past Century*, Uppsala University, 2001, Lock points out that Wulff, although he taught at the Universities of Leipzig and Berlin and was, after the Revolution, based in Germany, was in fact a Baltic German from Estonia, educated at the Dorpat (now Tartu) and St. Petersburg Universities, who maintained contact with Russian friends and colleagues throughout the 1920s, collaborating with Mikhail Alpatov on a 1925 book entitled *Denkmäler der Ikonenmalerei in Kunstgeschichtlicher Folge*. Alpatov mentions that, before the First World War, Wulff had actually been employed by the Russian Government at the Russian Institute at Constantinople. He cites Hans Belling's assertion that Wulff was instrumental in procuring Russian icons for Berlin museums before 1914 and that, in 1926, he visited Russia to facilitate a major icon exhibition in Germany featuring works from the Soviet Union. Both Alpatov and Wulff are silent about this latter undertaking in their respective memoirs, unwilling, presumably, each from his own perspective, to draw attention to earlier cross-border contacts in the intolerant nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties.

Lock concludes that interest in iconic perspective was primarily a Russian phenomenon which coincided with the radical Cubist reworking of West European ideas on the subject which, in turn appealed to Russian collectors, many of whom came from an Old Believer background and recognised "some kinship, even a common cause" with Braque, Picasso and Matisse (who, of course, had been enthused in his turn by the flat surface of the icon when he visited Russia in 1911).

The essay in which Wulff is deemed to have first introduced the term "reverse perspective" was published in 1907 in a Leipzig Fest-

<sup>22</sup> Both Lock and Misler name this publication (Cf. Ch. Lock, *What is Reverse Perspective and Who was Oskar Wulff?*, in *Sobornost'*, 1, 2011, vol. 33; Misler, in Florenskii, *Beyond*).

schrift for his teacher, professor Schmarsow,<sup>23</sup> and was conceived in direct opposition to Schmarsow's view that post-Renaissance perspective was the culmination of an evolutionary progression of ideas and should be considered, in every way, even morally, superior to the 'childish' concept of pictorial space found in the Trecento and in Byzantine Art. Interestingly, Wulff championed not only iconic space but was also, like Florenskii's great friend and collaborator, Vladimir Favorskii, who, in 1922, enlisted him to lecture on pictorial space at VKhUTEMAS, intrigued by children's art and the problems of perspective *per se*, not only as a historical or ideological phenomenon.

Whether or not Florenskii knew Wulff personally, there is no doubt that the Russian-German's ideas were common currency in the Favorskii-Florenskii circle around "Makovets", as well as among the art historians and Byzantologists for whom Florenskii wrote his famous piece. The term "reverse perspective" was not new and did not necessarily imply an exact inversion or reverse of pictorial space, but rather the freedom to use spatial concepts in terms of what you know as well as what you see, the possibility of depicting objects from multiple viewpoints and, indeed, of showing various moments of time within the framework of a single picture. Reversed perspective in other words, is objective and embodies not only the subjective point of view of the artist, but the mindset of whole civilisations.

The point I would make from Lock's quite new, for me, angle on the provenance of the term "reverse perspective", apparently long forgotten by the time Florenskii's article resurfaced in Wulff's home university of Tartu, is that Father Pavel was writing not only as a priest and a mathematician, and certainly not as a reactionary *magus* who wishes to "reenchant the world", but as a man closely involved with the art and archaeology of his time. Just as Favorskii, as an artist, was capable of producing images which present "a synthesis of individual expressions", where "each point is stretched out before us like a map and unites separate moments, each of which is seen from a different angle",<sup>24</sup> so Florenskii, in his articles for *On the Watersheds of Thought*, expressed with grace and vigour the renewal of the creative impulse stimulated by contemporary physics and mathematics, the topsy-turvy relativity of time and space in that sphere which his father had long since defined as peculiarly his own: on the borderline between diverse disciplines.

Murdered, like so many others of his century, by a regime of monumental human stupidity and savagery that set no value on the complex miracle of life, Florenskii does not deserve to be "called to an-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Weizsäcker et al., *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge August Schmarsow gewidmet*, Leipzig, Hiersemann, 1907.

<sup>24</sup> M. Alpatov, *Vladimir Favorskii*, Moskva, Progress Publishers, 1967, 15.

swer” by a judgemental posterity, whether for his sexual tendency or for ill-expressed opinions on *faits-du-jour* essentially peripheral to his interests. Rather, it seems to me, we should be grateful for the example he sets us of fidelity and courage in adversity. If he is a magician, he is no wicked wizard, but one gifted with the conjurer’s ability, so felicitously remarked on by his translator Boris ĪAkimov, “to pull doves of the spirit from the hat of science”.

