

## **Editors' Introduction**

*The thought of P.A. Florensky is a peculiar expression of Russian philosophy and, more generally, of Russian cultural identity. At the same time, it can nevertheless be regarded as a legitimate heir to the cultural tradition which from its powerful Ionian roots unfolds through the peaks and abysses of Western philosophy stricto sensu, up to the ultimate crises of contemporary thought.*

*Florensky, a physicist, mathematician, electrical engineer, theologian, epistemologist, semiologist, historian of ideas, art theorist, fine artist, himself, of words and conceptual architectures, killed in 1937, after a long imprisonment in a Gulag on the Solovetsky Islands, embodies not only an incisive synthesis of different scientific disciplines, but also a singular and effective overlapping of cultural terrains – a fertile, luminous borderline between Russia and the West.*

*In the first two decades of the 20th century, the flowering of Russia's intense cultural life reverberates in the formation and evolution of Florensky's thought. The ideas of noble and passionate masters – from the mathematical studies of N.V. Bugaev to the symbolist visions of V.I. Ivanov, from the historical-philosophical analyses of S.N. Trubetskoy to the acute artistic intuitions of V.A. Favorsky – nourished the widespread feeling if not of an imminent epochal change, then certainly of an approaching new beginning in philosophical and scientific knowledge. Florensky, in particular, on the one hand highlights the manifest dissolution of modern Western thought, perceived as a vain extension of its 'worn-out' Renaissance premises. Yet on the other hand, he discerns the first appearance of a «new ae-*

*on» in the history of thought, the fervent dawn of a philosophy of the future – the latter conceived not as an abstract innovation or vacuous liberation from the past, but as the renewed sprouting of an ancient root: a root kept deep down, right at the heart, if we look closely, of that very tradition that, between Russia and the West, seemed then destined to die out (in its 'modern' outcomes, and certainly only in those).*

*This vigorous tension towards the future, perceived nonetheless as a clear opposition to modernity lato sensu, has at times been interpreted by critical literature – if not entirely erroneously, certainly, in our opinion, one-sidedly – as a sort of stubborn 'regressivism', as an esoteric closure to the most vibrant European cultural instances, as a syncretistic archaism re-circulating in an abstract ontological immobility: finally, as indifference or detachment from the major historical, scientific, technological changes gradually emerging outside the Russian borders. An attempt has been made, in other words, to read the work of a great exponent of Russian culture, which is undoubtedly P.A. Florensky, as an external event, somehow isolated, exclusive, insensitive to European innovations, such as to evade, in an impermeable anti-modernism, the most advanced research of Western scientific and philosophical thought.*

*The articles presented in this issue show the inconsistency of such assessments, highlighting the multiplicity and density of the lines of convergence between Florensky's philosophy and authoritative exponents, schools and perspectives of that thought.*

*Of Florensky's fruitful passage through the history of scientific thought stricto sensu, Silvano Tagliagambe's article highlights the innovative results in the fields of art, physics, biology and mathematics. In the same perspective, Francesco Vitali Rosati specifically investigates the philosopher's 'technical works', i.e. the works of Florensky*

*as an engineer and scientist, collaborator of Glavelektro and Director of the Department of Materials Science at GEEI (the State Experimental Electro-Technical Institute).*

*The breadth of Florensky's philosophical ideas also reverberates in the possibility of significant comparisons with essential 20th-century European thinkers: thus, Florensky's interest in the philosophy of language allows Domenico Burzo to grasp profound convergences with Heidegger's reflection on the nature of the poetic word, albeit in the divergence of the two authors' fundamental perspectives. On the other hand, moving from the history of philosophy and religion, Lubomir Jozef Žak's article illuminates the pregnant analogies between the thought of P.A. Florensky and that of S. Weil; more precisely, Žak's work reveals the two authors' affinity of judgement on the 'crisis of the West' on the one hand, and on the need for a vigorous rethinking of its Greek roots, on the other. In an article devoted to the first appearance, in Miletus, of philosophy, Andrea Dezi investigates the genetic link between F.W.J. Schelling's research on the nature of the divine and Florensky's insights into the origin and destiny of philosophy.*

*There follows an articulate reflection by Marisa Mosto on the challenge that Florensky's thought poses to our age, to its dominant culture, to the opacification, so to speak, of its outlook. Likewise, the main theme of Gilberto Safra's article is the moral as well as epistemological challenge – in its actual relevance – of Florensky's thought.*

*The issue closes with the 'Miscellaneous' section (Varia), which unfolds in the articles by Roberto Masiero, Martín González Fernández and Gaspare Mura.*

Editorial Board of the series 'Legacy of Pavel Florensky' (Mimesis, Milano – Udine), directed by Silvano Tagliagambe

