presents the heart of Florensky's work as Christ, not just, as it might be judged, a procession of profound and varied theological probings, but rather a vision of all science and knowledge, all investigation and research, indeed of all church and cultural life as rooted in the God become human, inspired by the Incarnation, by the mystery of what Solov'ev and the rest of Russian theologians have called “the humanity of God” (Bogochelovechestvo). Perhaps no other theologian followed up on Florensky's lead here but his friend and “disciple,” or colleague, Sergius Bulgakov. I have in mind here in particular Bulgakov's great trilogy, also in translation by Boris Jakim. The first two volumes, The Incarnate Word and The Advocate are forthcoming but the final volume is already published: The Bride of the Lamb (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2001)

Žust provides Western readers, especially non-Russian specialists, with important biographical and historical material in this study. Not only are we allowed to encounter the man, we discover through recently available documents, more of his family of origin, his education and personal evolution both as a scholar and as a Christian, and also gain a reliable account of his brief career as professor and priest. Like several notable others in the “Russian religious renaissance,” as Nicolas Zernov called it, Florensky came to Christianity later in life, having been given virtually no religious instruction or experience by his family during his childhood. His embrace of Christianity occurred, then, as an adult phenomenon, after considerable trial and searching. That his path led through science and philosophy made his assimilation and then expression of the Gospel all the more rich and grounded. Sadly, the last two decades of his life, carefully chronicled here constituted an unbroken series of arrests, trials and imprisonments. That he sustained his creative energies almost to the end, that he somehow endured the separation from his beloved wife and five children and for the most part from the exercise of his priestly ministry – these are miracles and very moving parts of Fr. Florensky's tragic story. What more might he have been able to contribute to the opening up of the Eastern Church to culture, to the West, to the world? What more might his veritable genius have been able to create if not imprisoned for the best years of his life?

One hopes that this fine study will be translated into English for an even broader readership. It not only introduces us to the marvel of Pavel Florensky's person and life but connects the experiment of his writing to that of his quest for truth and beauty in God.

Michael Plekön


This fascinating book, focused on the architecture of the 1930s to 1950s, examines the cultural and socio-political environment of this period within the broad Russian historical context. Born in Moscow, Vladimir Paperny worked as stage and film designer before starting his research on the theory and history of architecture. He had
access to abundant archival materials, both public and private, to underpin his theoretical construction based on structuralist analysis. Complex and contradictory phenomena are organized in binary opposites between Culture One (the 1920s) and Culture Two (1932-54) and are often related to similar cyclical processes in Russian history.

The book is subdivided into three chapters. Chapter 1, entitled “Melting-Hardening,” discusses four binary antonyms. Beginning-Ending describes Culture One as negating the past and looking forward toward a distant future, and Culture Two as the inheritor of past traditions at “the end of history.” Movement-Immobility demonstrates the government attempts to control the movement of the labor force and to direct architecture “from above.” Horizontal-Vertical defines the international spread of the modern movement as hailed by Culture One and the “vertical impulse” of Culture Two evident in the closing of the borders of the Soviet Union – barrier “between good and evil.” Changes in the attitude towards foreign architects and visiting or working in the Soviet Union during the early 1930s are supported by comparisons between their original statements and the published Russian translations. Uniform-Hierarchical expands the ideas of the previous part by focusing on the hierarchy of space (social, geographical, and architectural) and the hierarchy of people (political leaders, institutions, professional organizations). Noticeably, political leaders like Lazar Kaganovich, head of the “supreme tribunal for questions of architecture” (Arplan), were “the most competent,” while Josef Satlin, the “First architect and builder,” had the final say (pp. 96-98). Throughout the text Paperny refers back to similar events in Russian history (from the sixteenth through early twentieth centuries) in order to demonstrate the Russian roots of his thesis.

The second chapter, “Mechanism-Humanity,” continues to define binary opposites: Collective-Individual, Mechanical-Living, Abstraction-Name, and Good-Evil. Culture One is identified with projects for collective living arrangements, equality between men and women, and enthusiasm for technological innovations – the latter equated with mechanical. Culture Two, however, is concerned with individual choices, “but this gift could be used only by those few with the right and the means to use it . . . The allocation of the individuality represents the repetition of the very structure of hierarchy described in Uniform-Hierarchical” (p. 109). While Culture One replaced the names of geographical places (regions, towns, streets) with symbolic names of the new ideology, Culture Two used personal manes of political and cultural leader according to a hierarchy of importance. Bad cities inhabited by bad people had only a code name “(like P. O. Box 27-652, a typical mailing address for a labor camp)” (p.146). While for Culture One criminality and abnormality are seen as illnesses stemming from horrible social conditions, Culture Two condemns them as infectious and incurable, intentional and personal. Paperny illustrates the concept of good and evil in architectural terms by examining the design and construction of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition between 1937 and 1959.

The last chapter, “Lyrical-Epic,” is subdivided into five parts: Mutism-Word, Improvisation-Notation, Efficacious-Artistic, Realism-Truth, and Business-Miracle. The visual arts, searching during the 1920s “for their inherent nature” or specific means to communicate, are defined as mute. In Culture Two, a “hierarchy of the arts based on