

# 13 The notion of universal bisexuality in Russian religious philosophy

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## Introduction

Homosexuality and bisexuality have been a sensational and hotly discussed topic in the post-Soviet media. The tenor of these discussions proves that despite its decriminalization in 1993, homosexuality has remained a controversial and problematic issue for the Russian public. Addressing this topic, contemporary Russian policy-makers, journalists, writers, and scholars find themselves having to consider religious taboos, scientific explanations, philosophical interpretations, and moral judgements attached to same-sex love. Moreover, the debate that is taking place today is shaped and informed not only (and not so much) by the social and political vocabulary produced by the gay movement in the West, but also by the interpretations developed around the notion of homosexuality in Russia in the early twentieth century. At that time, important religious thinkers, such as Vasily Rozanov, Pavel Florensky, Nikolay Berdyayev, and Sergey Bulgakov, examined the spiritual meaning of same-sex love. As Brian Baer has noted:

the enduring figure of the spiritual homosexual suggests at least one way in which homosexuality in Russia today is imagined: not as an ‘otherness’ but rather as the very embodiment of traditional Russian values, underscoring the complex relationship that obtains between local and increasingly global discourses on the subject of homosexuality.

(Baer 2009: 93–94)

The terms in which today’s Russian intellectuals tend to conceptualize homosexuality may strike a Western observer as pre-modern. However, these terms are rooted in a number of specific modern and modernist philosophical ideas that preoccupied the Russian intelligentsia in the *fin de siècle*. The present chapter addresses the sexual theories developed by the Silver Age philosophers, to whose authority participants in today’s debates frequently appeal. I believe that accounting for the intellectual roots of today’s ideological discussions helps to create a better understanding of the cultural specificity of the attitudes to (homo)sexuality common among post-Soviet Russia’s educated elite. In that spirit, I offer a study of the three uses of a single sexual motif that gained prominence in Russia a hundred years ago,

regained its role in the post-Soviet sexual discourses, and remains significant even today.

### **Bisexuality (*dvupolost'*) in Weininger and Rozanov**

My investigation begins in the period between 1906 and the years of the First World War, when the debate of the 'sexual question' (*polovoy vopros*) in Russian society coincided and overlapped with increasingly prominent modernist trends in literature and the arts.<sup>1</sup> The understanding of sexuality as both a crucial aspect of human existence and an all-important field for exploration became a characteristically modern artistic and journalist phenomenon. Among the multiplicity of new voices that addressed sexual themes at the time, the most expressive and provocative one belonged to Vasily Vasil'yevich Rozanov (1856–1919). A widely read author, Rozanov articulated the modern preoccupation with sexuality in an idiosyncratic and strikingly lyrical literary manner. His contemplation of sexuality led Rozanov to critique the official Orthodox church (and Christianity as a whole), state institutions as well as various social and intellectual movements in Russia. The theme of sex also gave him material for building his peculiar, unsystematic metaphysics. Although leading figures of the Silver Age acknowledged their intellectual debt to Rozanov as a philosopher of sex, the mechanisms of his influence have not yet been studied in detail.

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which one ideological motif developed and advocated by Rozanov (although not 'invented' by him) generated consequential philosophical and theological responses from three major Russian thinkers who came from the Symbolist intellectual background, namely, Pavel Florensky, Nikolay Berdyayev, and Sergey Bulgakov. The motif in question is Rozanov's notion of universal bisexuality (*dvupolost'*), that is, the idea that every human being is a combination of masculine and feminine elements. With his trademark stylistic brilliance, Rozanov presented this concept in his 1911 *Lyudi lunnogo sveta: metafizika khristianstva* ('People of the Moonlight: Metaphysics of Christianity', Rozanov 1990a) and returned to it in many subsequent works.

In *People of the Moonlight*, Rozanov employed the idea of bisexuality to explain what he named 'spiritual sodomy', that is, certain people's lack of sexual desire for the opposite sex, and the role of this lack in religion and culture. Rozanov claimed that a small but enormously influential part of humanity – 'spiritual sodomites', 'people of the moonlight', or the 'third sex' – experienced (often unconsciously) predominantly same-sex desire. According to Rozanov, though largely failing to act on their desire, 'spiritual sodomites' feel the same aversion to the heterosexual act as that which the 'normal' person feels towards the *actus sodomicus*. Excluded from reproductive existence and the satisfaction it provides, people of the moonlight sublimate their inverted sexuality in spiritual, cultural, and political activity. Rozanov credits them, for instance, with creating Christianity and the ascetic Christian civilization. At the same time he accuses them of suppressing natural heterosexual expression: spiritual sodomites fill the universe with their animosity toward procreation and the world of biological reproduction.

According to Rozanov, Christianity is sodomitic inasmuch as it ignores the sexual, reproductive core of being. Rozanov sees the sexual division not only as the most fundamental feature of human ontology but also as part and parcel of divinity: ‘there are two Gods – His *masculine* side and the *feminine* one’ (*Dva Boga – muzhskaya storona ego, i storona – zhenskaya*) (Rozanov 1990a: 31, Rozanov makes this significant remark only in passing, which is typical of his rhetorical strategy).

In Rozanov’s view, the omnipresent and culturally prominent ‘third sex’ possesses a peculiar psychological and sometimes biological constitution. While the feminine and masculine elements coexist in every person, a person of the moonlight is distinguished by a stronger presence of the opposite sex in his or her psyche and possibly body. The moonlight person is not necessarily a strongly effeminate male or masculinized female. Between such extremes as the virile man and the man-maiden (*muzhedevo*) stands a continuum of men, in whom the degree of heterosexual desire progressively decreases and the degree of sodomitic inclination progressively increases.

Rozanov’s notion of gender/sex fluidity and his vision of homosexually inclined people as a separate intermediate gender/sex (*trety pol*) were not of his own making: they reflected authoritative contemporary opinions in the emerging medical field of sexual psychopathology. Books by this field’s leading authors, such as Richard Krafft-Ebing, Iwan Bloch, August Forel, and Magnus Hirschfeld, were translated into Russian and read widely by the intelligentsia in the period between the revolution of 1905 and the onset of the First World War.<sup>2</sup> The reading public absorbed these works within the framework of the ‘sexual question’ that dominated the Russian print media at a time when the newspaper *Novoye vremya* (‘New Time’), for which Rozanov was a leading author, diagnosed all of Russian society as experiencing an epidemic of ‘sexual psychopathy’ (I.I.V. 1908). In *People of the Moonlight*, Rozanov generously quoted case studies of sexual pathology, borrowing from classic works of early sexual science, such as Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, as well as confessions of contemporary Russians. He subjected these biographic narratives to philosophical analysis, and by doing so acted both as a modernist thinker and a journalist, producing a metaphysical interpretation of this highly sensational material.

Formulating his theoretical views on sexuality, Rozanov drew on many sources and contexts, though none as important as the ideological trend dubbed, by Nikolay Berdyayev, as *veyningerianstvo* (the Weininger movement, or even the Weininger mania) (Berdyayev 1909: 104). In this respect, Rozanov’s interest dovetailed the popular mania for Otto Weininger’s best-selling *Sex and Character: A Principled Study* (1903; 1908, the first complete Russian translation).<sup>3</sup> Not only were Weininger’s ideas a likely source for parts of Rozanov’s theory, but they also conditioned the Russian reception of Rozanov’s notion of ‘people of the moonlight’.

Between 1908 and 1914, Weininger’s *Sex and Character* was required reading for every self-respecting educated Russian. As new translations and printings of it continued to come out, the very discussion of the book became an industry. In the capitals and provincial cities, scholars lectured on Weininger; pedagogical,

medical, and philosophical analyses of his ideas filled periodicals and pamphlets; and the humour magazine *Satirikon* satirized the spread of *veyningerianstvo*. 'Everywhere is Weininger, Weininger, Weininger', the critic Korney Chukovsky declared in January 1909 (Chukovsky 1909: 7).

In *Sex and Character*, Weininger attempted to construct a philosophical anthropology based on sexual categories. Boldly mixing scientific and metaphysical arguments with popular beliefs and the results of his personal introspection, he saw sex as a psychological and metaphysical element that defined every human being. Writing before the scientific discovery of sex hormones, Weininger claimed that every person was bisexual, that is, had elements characteristic of the ideal masculine and feminine types. Translating Weininger's sexual terminology into the language of today, one can say that his feminine and masculine archetypes are the categories of 'gender', 'sex', and 'sexual orientation', understood as a unity. Weininger sees his 'ideal types' as always coexisting in the human world. No one is an absolute man or an absolute woman, he claims, but each individual person is located somewhere on the continuum running between these two poles. Mutual attraction takes place not between biological males and females, but between their masculine and feminine elements: the manlier a given biological male, the more feminine is the partner that he desires, and vice versa. Biological women in whom the male element exceeds fifty per cent tend to be lesbian, or they seek effeminate male partners. Weininger proposed a mathematical formula for his 'law of sexual attraction'. According to this formula, sexual attraction was highest in those couples in which the combined totals for femininity and masculinity reached one hundred per cent.

Weininger arrived at the definition of his ideal types in a speculative manner, and his view of the feminine type was fiercely negative. According to him, *W* (that is, the absolute woman) is amoral and antisocial, she lacks a self, her life is much less conscious than a man's, and she cannot act as an autonomous subject or possess genius. Her whole being is defined by sexuality and built around the sex act. Unlike the man, the woman experiences continuous and overwhelming sexual desire but she does not know love. Love is a spiritual state, and the woman has no access to the realm of spirit. The woman's 'ugly' body is designed for the purposes of procreation, and being a slave to her body, she only strives to belong to man. Socially, two functions come naturally to her: that of a mother and that of a prostitute. The man created the family and monogamy, while the woman cannot control her desire for the penis.

The sexological part of Weininger's book reflected a scientific trend of the time.<sup>4</sup> His opinion that male homosexuality was often, if not always, caused by physiological and psychological effeminization was common in *fin-de-siècle* European medical science: it was shared by Richard Krafft-Ebing – Weininger's professor at Vienna University – whose *Psychopathia Sexualis* laid the foundation of the scientific study of sexual deviation. It was also supported by Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, the leading early advocate of homosexual rights, who popularized the term 'the third sex' to designate those who had female souls trapped within their male bodies. However, Weininger's book had a number of distinctive features,

such as his strikingly personal intonation; his premonition of the coming collapse of culture, caused by its loss of masculine creative ability; his sexually based anti-Semitism (he regarded Jewish men as effeminate); and his peculiar mystical discourse supplanted with mathematical equations and examples taken from the natural sciences. In addition, important for the book's history and its success was the fate of the author, who committed a theatrical, staged suicide soon after the publication of his work, at the age of twenty-three.

Rozanov's model of fluid gender/sex and Weininger's calculus of desire had many similarities (see Laura Engelstein's brilliant comparative analysis of the two theories in her *Keys to Happiness* (1992: 310–33)). Yet the social and philosophical prescriptions that Weininger and Rozanov drew from their analyses differed dramatically. While Rozanov advocated the sexualization of culture (he famously demanded that sex be sanctified by placing the marital bed in the church), Weininger saw abstinence as the only path to salvation of civilization and the spirit (Rozanov 1990b: 100–3). Weininger believed passionately that masculinity was threatened in the modern world: becoming effeminate, men not only stopped feeling natural disgust at coitus, but also started defining themselves through sex, an entirely feminine feature. Weininger's call for the masculinization of culture found no sympathy in Rozanov, who described it as merely the symptom of the Austrian writer's own 'sodomitic' nature (Rozanov 1990b: 98–99). It is necessary to note that despite the fact that the cultural prescriptions suggested by Weininger and Rozanov pointed in opposite directions, contemporaries perceived the two thinkers' models of sexuality as 'related by blood' (*rodstvennyie*), to use Pavel Florensky's expression (Florensky 1990b: 281). More often than not, Russian opponents of Rozanov also had to address Weininger's speculations.

The concept of bisexuality (*dvupolost'*) as presented by Weininger and Rozanov cannot be seen simply as a modification of the visions of androgyny that Symbolist culture borrowed from Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian mystical sources.<sup>5</sup> While images of the androgyne – mythological, philosophical, or (in the thinking of Vladimir Solov'yev) prophetic – referred either to the primordial, mythological past or the post-apocalyptic future of transfigured flesh, the phenomenon of universal bisexuality was understood as a scientifically observed reality of the current human condition. Androgyny revealed itself to mystical philosophers; bisexuality to medics and social scientists. Despite multiple exchanges that took place between the mystical and scientific discourses of the time, the notions of androgyny and bisexuality did not merge: each retained its own distinct epistemological function and set of connotations.

### **Case study one: Pavel Florensky and people of the moonlight**

Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky (1882–1937), the Russian theologian, philosopher, art theoretician, and scientist, studied Weininger's book with great attention. In the endnotes to his main work, he even compared its two different Russian translations with the German original.<sup>6</sup> Florensky's own extensive comments on gender and sexuality, specifically those on mechanisms of same-sex desire, were

influenced by both Weininger and Rozanov (the latter was Florensky's friend and correspondent).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, his views contained a cohesive theory of same-sex love, which was both critical of his predecessors' models and derivative from them. I will argue that Florensky's sexual theory helps illuminate some crucial ideas in *Stolp i utverzheniye Istiny* ('The Pillar and Ground of the Truth', 1914), his seminal theological work written in 1906–14.

In 1909, Florensky had just finished his degree at the Moscow Spiritual Academy and began teaching courses in the history of philosophy in his *alma mater*. That year his friend Aleksandr Yel'chaninov, who had known Florensky since their Tiflis childhood and remained close to him in Moscow, made several entries in his diary. In these entries, he recorded his conversations with Florensky about the latter's 'indifference to ladies and his frequent infatuations with young men':

The conversation was long, and I only remember the main points. We talked again about Pavlusha's indifference to ladies and his frequent infatuations with young men; we struggled with explanations for a long time, and only at the end P[avel] came across the following hypothesis. Man seeks for himself an object which is passive enough to accept his energy. For most men, such an object will be women. There are men whose nature is hypo-masculine, who seek their complements in masculine men. However, there are hyper-masculine men, for whom the feminine is too weak, just as a pillow is too weak for a steel knife. Such men seek and love either simply men or hypo-men.  
(cited in Keydan 1997: 201–2)

Yel'chaninov made this entry on 7 July 1909. Around that time the Russian press was full of heated discussions about Weininger's book; its Russian translation had just hit the shops several months earlier and become a major bestseller. Not that the erudite Florensky needed a Russian translation to read Weininger's famous work. However, its wide popularity precisely at that time made it the immediate intellectual background against which Florensky built his own polemical theory of same-sex love. Moreover, he applied this theory to himself.

As noted by Yel'chaninov, Florensky claimed that along with the model of male same-sex attraction, recognized in science and described by Weininger, there is another model, in which same-sex desire was caused by one's hyper-masculinity. He repeated and developed this idea in his 1913 *addenda* to the second edition of Rozanov's *People of the Moonlight*. In his commentary to Rozanov's work, Florensky (or the Anonymous, introduced by Rozanov as 'a person competent in such matters') politely noted 'the profound correctness' of Rozanov's theory and proceeded to attack it, along with Weininger's, as insufficient (Florensky 1990b: 281). Florensky suggests his own 'theses' on the subject, and notes that he is convinced of their 'unshakeability' (*v nepokolebimosti kotorykh ya uveren*) (ibid.). He claims that along with the inferior type of same-sex attraction, typical of effeminate 'psychopaths', there is a superior type, characteristic of hyper-masculine men and races (as was the case with the Ancient Greeks). While 'the third sex' is doomed to eternal wretchedness, the superior type is actually

gifted with genius and ‘incessant satisfaction’. Florensky names Oscar Wilde as an ‘appalling example’ that fits well with Rozanov’s collection of the ‘third sex’, and opposes him to Goethe, Socrates, and Plato, who exemplify the genius that is always both hyper-masculine and bisexual at the same time (Florensky 1990b: 281–82). As for Rozanov’s central point, the sodomite character of Christian asceticism, Florensky acknowledges that ‘the conditions of everyday life’ often drive those ‘who are incapable of marriage’ into monasteries but argues that Christianity ‘elevates’ one above sexuality (*pol*) and ‘distracts’ from sexuality, doing so by ‘the songs of paradise but not in the least by intermediate [sexual] forms. A true monk does not become a woman, but he ceases being a man’ (ibid.: 284).

Florensky’s theory of same-sex attraction based on hyper-masculinity has a parallel (and possibly a source) in the works of the French scholar Marc-André Raffalovich. Raffalovich was a prolific author on the subject and, in the 1890s and 1900s, the leading contributor to *Archive d’anthropologie criminelle*, a scientific periodical that had become at the time a major European forum for the discussion of sexual deviation. In his 1896 book *Uranisme et unisexualité: étude sur différentes manifestations de l’instinct sexuel* (‘Uranianism and Unisexuality: A Study of the Different Manifestations of the Sexual Instinct’). Raffalovich claimed the existence of the superior type of male inverts (or ‘Uranians’, a synonymous, although more poetic term): they are more masculine than ‘normal’ men and for this reason abhor femininity. The sexual attraction that these ‘superior inverts’ experience is rooted in the principle of similarity, not difference:

*Les invertis ne se contentent pas du tout de la vieille explication de l’âme féminine dans un corps masculin. Certains sont plus masculins que les hommes habituels, et se sentent portés vers leur propre sexe en raison de la ressemblance. Ils disent qu’ils méprisent trop les femmes pour être efféminés.*

(Raffalovich 1896: 15)<sup>8</sup>

Raffalovich presents the superior type of Uranians as a respectable alternative to the criminal urban subculture of inverts: the superior type have a more generalized and more controllable sexuality, they can remain chaste and sublimate their sexuality into religion and art (*‘le génie le plus sensuel, le plus sexuel, peut toujours se reprendre après s’être abandonné’* (ibid.: 27)).<sup>9</sup> Raffalovich names Goethe, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare as examples of men of genius who belonged to this superior type of Uranian. Oscar Wilde, to whom Raffalovich devotes a spiteful, although informative chapter, represents the base and criminal type of the effeminate ‘invert’. In contrast to him and to other immoral effeminate inverts, Raffalovich’s ‘unisexuals’ of the superior type are not inclined to practice anal or oral sex (cf. Oscar Wilde who, as Raffalovich writes, *‘pratiquait la succion pénienne et payait des galopins qui se laissaient adorer de cette façon’* (ibid.: 119n)). They find sexual satisfaction in platonic love and virtuous friendship-passion (*‘l’amitié passion vertueuse’* (ibid.: 121)). Raffalovich devotes a large section of his book to friendship, noticing how difficult it is to differentiate between platonic love and ‘virtuous friendship-passion’. The boundary between the two (as well as between the platonic and the physical) is

extremely fine: for example, kissing the beloved as well as sleeping in his embraces in the same bed is ‘the physical goal of platonic love, according to Plato’, says Raffalovich (*‘Coucher dans le lit de l’aimé, avec caresses, mais sans actes sexuels, est le but physique de l’amour platonique selon Platon’* (ibid.: 120n)).

The life story of André Raffalovich sheds interesting light on the image of the ‘superior type’ of Uranian, which he sketched so sympathetically in his book.<sup>10</sup> Raffalovich was born in Paris in 1864 to a fabulously wealthy family of Jewish bankers, natives of Odessa. Raised in France, he settled in London in 1884 and began a literary career as a novelist and poet of Decadent persuasion. He also hosted a literary salon in his fashionable home, where dandies and men of art dined lavishly, and where Oscar Wilde made frequent appearances. In London’s high artistic society Raffalovich was seen as somewhat of a *parvenu*; this judgement was reflected in Wilde’s famous *bon mot* about ‘poor André’, who ‘came to London with the intention to open a *salon*, and ... succeeded in opening a *saloon*’ (quoted in Ellmann 1987: 392).<sup>11</sup> By 1892, Wilde’s personal relationship with Raffalovich was already so hostile that Wilde refused ‘to sit next to him in the hairdressing establishment in Bond Street which they both patronized’, citing as the reason his former friend’s ugly looks (Ellmann 1987: 392).

This relationship was not helped by the fact that at that time Raffalovich developed an intimate friendship with the young and extraordinarily good-looking poet John Gray, a literary protégé of Wilde and possibly his former lover. Wilde himself pronounced Gray, who wrote and published homoerotic Decadent poems, including one entitled *Passing the Love of Women*, the model for his Dorian Gray. The friendship between Gray and Raffalovich turned into a life-long relationship. In February 1896 (several months after Oscar Wilde’s scandalous trials and spectacular fall), Raffalovich followed his friend into the Catholic Church. In 1898 Raffalovich entered the Dominican Third Order under the name Brother Sebastian. John Gray was ordained a priest in 1901. Together they moved to Edinburgh where Raffalovich funded the construction of St Peter’s cathedral. Father John Gray became the First Parish priest of St Peter’s. The two spent a long life by each other’s side in a chaste union. They died only days apart in 1934.

Raffalovich continued to publish scientific articles on male homosexuality for many years after his conversion. The idealized image of the ‘hyper-masculine’ Uranian whose respectable life is given up to religion, art, science, and to that special kind of chaste male friendship, is clearly autobiographical. Together, Raffalovich’s life story and his writings represent an attempt to create a respectable homophile identity that would be different from the emerging gay identity symbolized by the effeminate, flashy, immoral, and wretched Oscar Wilde.

Wilde’s fate had direct relevance for Florensky as well. In the 1900s Florensky’s emotional life focused on a series of passionate friendships with young men. The intensity of his friendship with Vasily Giatsintov is described in Yel’chaninov’s diary:

He has a lot of tenderness, devotion, love ... If he falls in love with someone, he will give away everything for this friendship, he wants to involve his friend



in all the details of his life, and he enters wholeheartedly into his life and interests; he will abandon his business, his acquaintances, urgent matters if his time is needed (or he thinks that it is needed) by his friend. He eats from the same cup with Vasen'ka [Giatsinov]; he will never sit down for lunch without him, even if the latter is not coming till the evening; he goes to talk to his [i.e., Giatsintov's] doctor; helps him write a paper, in general he [that is, Florensky] gives him [i.e., Giatsintov] 'neither rest nor time'.

(Keydan 1997: 212)

Living together with an intimate male friend in a chaste and family-like way seemed to be the established pattern of life for Florensky in the 1900s. This pattern ended in a crisis at the end of the decade, when Florensky had to face a choice between his long-time intention to take monastic vows and the call to the priesthood which, in the Orthodox tradition, required marriage. We do not know many details about Florensky's spiritual crisis of 1908–10 but we do know that his friends communicated intense worries about his well-being in their correspondence. Around this time he was reported to break into desperate loud crying during a service at the monastery Zosimova Pustyn' (Berdyayev 1949: 212). The January 1910 entry in Yel'chaninov's diary reveals Florensky's torments:

He [Florensky] replies to all reasoning with the same: 'I want real love; I only understand life together; without "together," I don't want even to be saved. I am not rebelling, I am not protesting, I simply have no taste for either living or saving my soul while I am alone. If others attempt to save me, I will not protest; but I myself don't want it'.

(Keydan 1997: 222)

The above passage reflects Florensky's difficult dilemma, as his *dukhovnik* ('spiritual mentor') Bishop Antony Florensov insisted that he abandon the idea of taking monastic vows and advised that he marry instead. Florensky obeyed: in the summer of 1910 he married Anna Mikhaylovna Giatsintova, the sister of his friend Vasily Giatsintov. 'This happened ascetically ... without any romantic element', Sergey Bulgakov reported in a private letter (Keydan 1997: 284). 'Through joyful quietness, deep sadness transpires in him', Vladimir Ern described the newlywed Florensky (Keydan 1997: 278). In April 1911 Florensky was admitted to the priesthood.

*The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* was written over a long period of time – between 1906 and 1914. *The Pillar* is composed of twelve letters, many of which are full of almost painful and overtly erotic tenderness. Most of the letters are addressed to an anonymous male friend (likely, a cross between Vasily Giatsintov and Florensky's previous 'friendship-passion', Sergey Troitsky (who died in 1910)) (Trubachev 1990: 828–31). The book reaches its emotional culmination in the eleventh letter, deemed the most important and the most controversial by critics. The letter is entitled 'Friendship'. To use the expression of Sergey Bulgakov, Florensky writes in this letter about the 'burning thirst' (*raspalennaya zhazhda*) for

friendship (Bulgakov (1997: 693), note the erotic connotations of the Russian adjective used by Bulgakov). He argues that a pair of male friends, in love with each other, is the minimal unit, the molecule of the Christian community, ‘just as the family was this kind of molecule for the pagan community’ (Florensky 1997: 301). The task of this and any true friendship is the ‘mutual penetration of personalities’ (*vzaimnoye proniknoveniye lichnostey*) (Florensky 1997: 447). ‘Marriage is “two in one flesh,” while friendship is two in one soul’ (*brak yest’ dva v plot’ yedinu’, družhba zhe – dva v dushu yedinu*) (Florensky 1997: 455).

Florensky’s voice is both lyrical and dramatic as he argues for the mystical and ontological role of male friendship in a Christian community. He draws on examples from the Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers, Plato, Schiller, the Orthodox liturgy of adelphopoiesis (*chin bratotvoreniya*), and (his favourite device) linguistic etymologies. To convey the supreme meaning of male friendship, he not only uses the words ‘friendship’ and ‘love’ (also ‘friends’ and ‘lovers’ (*lyublyashchiye*)) interchangeably, but also employs bold sexual imagery. Florensky’s male couples are ascetic. However, there is one act, somewhat physical, that is allowed to them. This act is kissing. Just as Raffalovich was convinced of the admissibility of kissing on the lips, Florensky makes a similar point and defends it with an etymological proof:

the very word for ‘kiss’ in Russian (*potseluy*) is close to the Russian word for ‘whole’ (*tseby*), and the Russian verb for ‘to kiss’ (*tselovat’sya*) signifies that friends are brought to a state of wholeness (*tselnost’*) or unity. A kiss is a spiritual unification of the persons kissing.

(Florensky 1997: 316)

Florensky’s theology was ‘not scholastic but experiential’, as Nikolay Berdyayev noted in *Samopoznaniye* (published in English as *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*). Some readers who could not relate to Florensky’s individual emotional experience responded negatively to *The Pillar*. Berdyayev added: ‘In him [Florensky], Plato’s ideas acquired an almost sexual character. His theologizing was erotic. This was new in Russia’ (Berdyayev 1949: 173–74). The same Berdyayev, in the review entitled ‘Stylized Orthodoxy’, sharply rebuked Florensky for his treatment of friendship, saying that he ‘Orthodoxizes the classical emotions’ (*opravoslavlivayet antichnyye chuvstva*) (Berdyayev 1996: 282). ‘The book by the priest Pavel Florensky is a document of the soul that is running away from itself’ (*dokument dushi ot sebya ubegayushchey*), concluded Berdyayev (1996: 283). Georgy Florovsky, a historian of Russian Orthodox thought, echoed this judgement when he accused *The Pillar* of containing ‘the dark sediment of erotic temptation’ (*mut’ eroticheskogo soblazna*) (Florovsky 1983: 498).

Florensky and Raffalovich, two deeply religious aesthetes, saw the explanation of their sexuality in their own hyper-masculine nature. Raffalovich limited himself to the creation of a socially respectable homophile identity. Florensky’s treatment of friendship pursued a task which was as personal as that of Raffalovich, but vastly more ambitious. In *The Pillar*, he ontologized his experience of same-sex

love. Florensky's utopian ideal of an Orthodox community composed of chaste, loving male couples shared common traits with a similar trend in European Catholic Decadence that manifested itself in Raffalovich's life and work. Yet it differed sharply from the model of tragic homosexual desire posited by the Russian Symbolists. The Symbolists commonly saw the inverted and wretched Oscar Wilde as a saint, martyred for his love and art (Bershtein 2010). As Vyacheslav Ivanov put it in 1909: 'the whole life of the noble singer and humble martyr of Reading Gaol has turned into the religion of a universal Golgotha' (Ivanov 1994: 164).<sup>12</sup> Florensky (and Raffalovich) had little sympathy for Wilde's sorrowful fate: he interpreted the British writer's Decadent Golgotha as resulting from his defective sexual constitution.<sup>13</sup> It is in contrast to this kind of constitution that Florensky developed the alternative ideal of same-sex love, modifying the bisexual model of gender and sexual desire. Florensky's ideal Orthodox community looked very much like a male monastery where the mutual desire of masculine monks translated into Platonic friendships and shared spirituality. Purified of physical sexuality and women's presence, this imagined community promised erotic intensity, spiritual comfort, and social respectability to its members, all in the service of God.

### **Case study two: the gender of the Russian soul**

The second 'moonlight' episode that I will examine stemmed from Rozanov's proclivity to present his theories performatively. More specifically, Rozanov produced a form of narrative that enacted the theoretical premise of universal bisexuality in the figure of the narrator. This playful adoption by Rozanov of the Weiningerian view of the human psyche triggered a curiously formulated rebuttal from Nikolay Berdyayev, which contained one of the most memorable metaphors generated by Russian religious philosophy. A look into the rhetorical mechanism of this debate reveals how the Weiningerian notion of universal bisexuality was employed in social and political polemics.

In January 1916 Nikolay Berdyayev published a scathing critique of Rozanov in the newspaper *Birzhevyye vedomosti*. He entitled his essay '*O "vechno bab'yem" v russkoy dushe*' ('On the "Eternal Bab'ye" in the Russian Soul') where the untranslatable *bab'ye* stands for coarse and even evil femininity and thus puns on Eternal Feminine. Berdyayev took aim at Rozanov's 1915 book *The War of 1914 and the Russian Revival* (*Voyna 1914 goda i russkoye vozrozhdeniye*) as well as Rozanov's literary output as a whole. In the final chapter of his book, published earlier as a newspaper column, Rozanov described the storm of erotic desire that overtook him at the site of a squadron of mounted soldiers riding in the street: 'A strange thing happened: the exaggerated *masculinity* of what was before me changed the structure of my constitution, as it were, and threw it away, transforming it into a feminine one' (Rozanov 2000a: 339). Rozanov depicted his feeling as 'a purely feminine sensation of the lack of will, of obedience and the insatiable desire to "be near for a while", to see, to keep her eyes glued to him ... Certainly, it was the beginning of a girl's infatuation' (ibid.). He concludes patriotically: 'the essence of

the army is that it turns us all into women – weak, trembling, air-embracing women. Some experience this more, some less, but everyone does *to some extent* (no *skol'ko-nibud'* – kazhdy) (ibid.). In Rozanov's model, the proportion of the feminine to masculine in an individual is not constant: it fluctuates depending on the situation; he shows the feminine element taking over in himself at the moment of patriotic ecstasy.

In his response, Berdyayev rejects this model. Instead, he suggests a particular quality of the Russian national psyche – '*vechno bab'ye*' – one disturbing expression of which he found in Rozanov. In his view, Rozanov had *always* been distinguished by the '*bab'ye*' that deprives him of a self, makes it impossible for him to function as an autonomous subject, and ties him down to the natural, biological, and intuitive at the expense of the intellectual, individual, and active. Berdyayev accuses Rozanov of *always* being irresistibly attracted to and aroused by power – be it the power of the state, revolution, Decadence, political reaction, or war. Rozanov's shifting opinions are merely the infatuations of his feminine soul that is devoid of a firm core and self. Most importantly, Berdyayev claims that this feature of Rozanov's sexual constitution directly reflects a particular defect of the Russian national psyche: it lacks masculinity. This defect threatens catastrophic consequences for the Russian people who need to forge 'masculinity' and the 'active spirit' in order to 'create life in a manly way' (*muzhestvenno tvorit' zhizn'*) (Berdyayev 1995: 51).

Berdyayev, a leading proponent of Weininger's work in Russia, uses definitions of the feminine straight out of *Sex and Character*.<sup>14</sup> In *Smysl tvorchestva* ('The Meaning of the Creative Act'), Berdyayev energetically embraced Weininger's understanding of the feminine element as completely sexual and biological and therefore opposed to creativity. In '*O "vechno bab'yem"*', he applies Weiningerian concepts to the analysis of Russian patriotic frenzy, expressed by Rozanov's text and manifest in society as a whole. In his analysis, he finds the forms of Russian wartime patriotism to be feminine and therefore entirely sexual and biological; as such, they receive Berdyayev's unambiguous condemnation.

Rozanov had the last word in this literary duel, although it is unlikely that Berdyayev was aware of it. In *Posledniye list'ya. 1916 god* ('The Final Leaves, 1916'), never published during his lifetime, Rozanov included a record of his trip to the public baths on a fine July day of 1916 (Rozanov 2000b: 177–79). Vasily Vasil'yevich went to the bathhouse on Basseynaya Street where he was served by a seventeen-year-old bathhouse attendant (*banshchik*) Ivan. Ivan was distinguished by a powerful youthful physique and an unusually large sexual organ. With much pleasure, Rozanov reports that as Ivan was washing him (that is massaging his prostrate body with soap), Ivan's enormous member was touching his body, hanging over his eyes and capturing all his attention. Almost obsessively, Rozanov describes the boy's penis in the finest of detail: it was slightly engorged and touched on Vasily Vasil'yevich's cheek, causing both pleasurable sensations and fantasies of how this penis could bring 'seven maidens' great joy. In his characteristic combination of pornographic description and metaphysical reflection, Rozanov suggests that a penis of such size has great value; it is a thing of

‘exceptional beauty’. Before Rozanov ordered a second washing, he read to himself a line from *The Song of Songs*: ‘Oh, my beloved!’ (*O, moy vozlyublenny*) – the very line that he quoted at the end of his army essay in *The War of 1914*. Rozanov had told us that the *banshchik* Ivan was about to be conscripted into the army and almost certainly killed. The boy was practically a soldier.

Rozanov’s bathhouse entry clearly develops the very motifs from his earlier army essay that so outraged Berdyayev. There is good reason to think that Rozanov wrote it with Berdyayev in mind and intended it to be polemical. In *The Final Leaves. 1916*, the bathhouse entry (dated 17 July) is preceded by a passage devoted to Berdyayev (dated 16 July). In this passage, Rozanov ridicules Berdyayev as ‘a Frenchman from Algeria’ who is understandably ‘out of place’ (*ne na meste*) among the Russian public (Rozanov 2000b: 176). The two entries link Rozanov’s feminine and patriotic infatuation with the soon-to-be soldier’s powerful masculinity to his ironic contempt for Berdyayev’s awkward lack of national spiritual roots.

The scene with the young *banshchik* had solid literary and scientific pretexts. Medical researchers of sexual pathology – most notably Vladislav Merzheyevsky and Veniamin Tarnovsky, whose books on sexual deviance Rozanov read and quoted – depicted young St Petersburg bathhouse attendants (*banshchiki*) as an informal guild of male prostitutes (Merzheyevsky 1878: 208–9, Tarnovsky 1885: 70–71). Rozanov’s acquaintance the poet Mikhail Kuzmin created quite a scandal by portraying St Petersburg bathhouses as institutions of commercial homosexual sex in his novel *Kryl’ya* (‘Wings’, 1906). When Rozanov reviewed *Kryl’ya* in 1907, he attacked Kuzmin for his tastelessly naturalistic depiction of homosexual commerce: ‘Hadrian and Antinous would probably throw up from the disgusting bathhouse attendant Boris [sic!] and the bathhouse adventures: can it be that the ancients liked that?!?’ (*Adriana i Antinoya veroyatno stoshnilo by ot omerzitel’nogo banchshchika Borisa i bannykh priklyucheniy: neuzheli drevniye eto lyubili?!?’*) (Maestro [Rozanov] 1907: 56). Later *Novoye vremya*, for which Rozanov wrote, was among many newspapers that fumed over Kuzmin’s representation of *banshchiki* as male prostitutes.<sup>15</sup> While we find references to sexual activities taking place in public bathhouses in the diaries of many homosexual artists of the *fin de siècle* (Pyotr Tchaykovsky, Konstatin Romanov, and Mikhail Kuzmin – to name just a few), it took the happily married procreationist Vasily Vasil’yevich Rozanov to reverse his previous judgement and produce the graphic report on precisely how the interaction between bathhouse attendants and their customers took place. I suggest that Rozanov’s bathhouse entry should be read at two intertextual levels: while Berdyayev is sharply rebuked for refusing to accept the (bi)sexual roots of patriotic feelings, Kuzmin receives a belated homage for his daring in introducing the theme of homosexuality into Russian letters.

### **Case study three: Father Sergius Bulgakov on the bisexuality of God**

Sergey Nikolayevich Bulgakov, Florensky’s and Berdyayev’s philosophical ally and friend, met a remarkable fate. A prominent political economist and writer, Bulgakov

became a priest in 1918 and was exiled abroad by the Bolshevik authorities in 1922. After a brief stay in Constantinople, and a period of work in Prague, Father Sergius Bulgakov settled in Paris, where he helped establish the only Russian Orthodox Theological Institute in Western Europe. The St Sergius Institute provided Bulgakov with an outlet for developing and spreading his own controversial theological system – Sophiology.

It took Bulgakov some twenty years (from the mid-1910s into the 1930s) and several thousand pages to develop his sophiological teaching. Summarizing it in a few paragraphs cannot do justice to a doctrine that included highly technical treatments of the most complex issues in Christian dogmatics.<sup>16</sup> What has become clear with recent publications of Bulgakov's diaries, letters, and unfinished manuscripts is the fact that the themes of bisexuality and sexual division in the creation was continuously on Bulgakov's mind as he refined his theory.

As early as 1912 Bulgakov briefly discusses Weininger's and Rozanov's views on sexuality while analysing Tolstoy's posthumously published works (Bulgakov 1912: 86–87). The same year he wrote to Rozanov, suggesting that *People of the Moonlight* was 'the most central and significant' of the latter's works (Kolerov 1992: 153). It is in response to this book that Bulgakov develops the idea that was to become exceptionally important for him: 'Equating sex [*pol*] and sexuality [*seksual'nost'*] is completely false because sexuality is only an expression of sex [*pol*], in a certain sense its sickly mask [*v izvestnom smysle yego bolezennaya maska*]' (Keydan 1997: 423). In *Svet nevecherny* ('Unfading Light', 1917) his first major theological treatise, Bulgakov repeats this thought almost verbatim. He also introduces the central notion of his own theological treatment of sex: 'spiritual bisexuality' (*dukhovnaya dvupolost'*) as a fundamental anthropological feature (Bulgakov 1917: 292–305). The Russian theologian adopts the notion of universal bisexuality in a very specific sense, admitting that the feminine and masculine coexist in creation at the level of every individual's spiritual constitution. Affirming the existence of a universal 'spiritual bisexuality', Bulgakov insists that one should not equate this phenomenon with androgyny or link it to sexual desire (as did his predecessors): biological sex as well as physical sexuality are occasioned only by creation's fallen state. Bulgakov defines the essence of the masculine and feminine in a Weiningerian key: the masculine element is 'solar, that of genius, logical' while the feminine is productive, it is the 'soil of the soul' (*zemlya dushi*) (Bulgakov 1917: 303). In later works, Bulgakov – just like Weininger before him – would make a special effort to disassociate the feminine as an ideal archetype from actual human females and their psychological character: by femininity he only means 'a certain spiritual element' 'a state of response, passivity, passive love, entirely unrelated to [ ... actual] women' (Bulgakov 1999: 318).

Opponents have criticized Bulgakov's sophiological system for being 'anthropocentric' (Lossky 1936: 41). Indeed, it is the observation of human 'spiritual bisexuality' that raises for Bulgakov the issue of the bisexuality of God. In 'The Masculine and the Feminine in the Divinity' (*Muzhskoye i Zhenskoye v Bozhestve*, 1921) and 'The Masculine and the Feminine' (*Muzhskoye i Zhenskoye*, 1921), Bulgakov argues that, created in the image and likeness of God, bisexual human

beings reflect the differentiation and coexistence of the masculine and feminine in Divinity (Bulgakov 2003a, 2003b). Moreover, Bulgakov considers the trinitary structure of God and concludes that ‘the Masculine and the Feminine are distinguished in the Divinity as properties ... of the Second and Third Hypostases’, that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Bulgakov 2003a: 359).<sup>17</sup> As for the categories of feminine and masculine, Bulgakov keeps insisting that these notions refer to the transcendental properties that are expressed in *pol* (‘sex/sexuality’) but not derived from it (Bulgakov 2003b: 369).<sup>18</sup>

The transcendental feminine takes centre stage in Bulgakov’s system. He finds its expression in the person of the divine Sophia – the Wisdom of God – a crucial character in his dogmatic theology. Mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, the Wisdom of God had been traditionally understood in theology as an allegory. For Bulgakov, however, Sophia is a Divine Person who links God with His creation. In *Unfading Light* Bulgakov comes close to seeing Sophia as the Fourth Hypostasis equal to the Three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity.<sup>19</sup> However, in his later works he suggests for her a special status as the feminine passive essence of God (Bulgakov 1999: 318). As a matter of fact, it is her feminine passivity that Bulgakov cites as the explanation for her non-hypostatic status. Sophia lacks an active element, and therefore she is not on an equal footing with the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Despite his insistence that Sophia not be understood as a reflection of actual human womanhood, Bulgakov nevertheless uses a strikingly sexualized language to describe her essence: she ‘gives herself to love’ (*otdayetsya lyubvi*), she is a ‘receptive and responsive, passive love’ (*priyemlyushchaya i otvetstvyushchaya, passivnaya lyubov*), God ‘possesses her’ (*Bog yeye imeyet*), and the ‘ability to be taken’ (*obladayemost*) is her fundamental feature (Bulgakov 1999: 318). The language he uses to describe Sophia’s status in the Divinity is reminiscent of the one used to denote the ‘feminine’ role in sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, Bulgakov presents Sophia as ‘the eternal feminine’ that is paradoxically and emphatically unrelated to the physical women of this world.

Bulgakov was all too aware that in his system the divine Sophia could potentially be confused with an earthly, sexual femininity. The grave danger of such confusion was exemplified for him by the worship of the eternal feminine as had been practised by Vladimir Solov’ev and the Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok. Both recognized Sophia in the image of earthly women. Though mystically motivated, Solov’ev and Blok sought out earthly love affairs with these women. Bulgakov sternly condemns what he calls the ‘heresy and spiritual lechery’ (*yeres’ i blud dukhovny*) of his ideological predecessors. In his diary, he takes credit for ‘overcoming’ sexuality in his sophiology and creating a truly ecclesiastic concept of Sophia (Bulgakov 1998: 195, 199).

Vladimir Solov’ev famously had ‘three encounters’ with the divine Sophia. These meetings were in addition to at least two more mundane affairs with earthly women of the same name. Bulgakov had two transformational mystical experiences of his own, which he described on several occasions. One of them took place in 1898 when Bulgakov – then a young Russian Social Democrat studying in Germany – saw Raphael’s Sistine Madonna for the first time. He was

then a Marxist, but the contemplation of Raphael's Madonna brought him into a state of religious ecstasy. Day after day he returned to the Zwinger Gallery where he looked at the painting, cried, and prayed. It was then, claims Bulgakov, that the seed of his future return to Orthodoxy was planted in his soul. He came back to Russia a changed man (Bulgakov 1917: 7–9). In 1924, Bulgakov, by then an exiled priest and theologian in Prague, revisited Dresden (Bulgakov 1996: 389–96).<sup>20</sup> He looked forward to a second encounter with the Sistine Madonna, and hoped to experience again the mystical revelation that had descended upon him twenty-five years before. But no such revelation came. Instead of the sophianic icon, he only saw the lovely, masterful representation of a beautiful woman. Unlike Russian icons of the Mother of God, Raphael's Madonna was a mere woman of the flesh. In the painting, the disappointed Bulgakov even detected the traces of the artist's prurient gaze: too much uncovered body, too sensual a turn of the neck. In a special essay with a Solov'yevian title '*Dve vstrechi*' ('Two Encounters', 1924), Bulgakov likened Rafael's Catholic attitude toward the Mother of God to the Russian mystics' eroticism; to him, their 'impure' sexual approach to the divinity represented 'artistic Arianism' – a heretical overestimation of the human element in the divine incarnation (Bulgakov 1996: 393, 395). He condemned as sinful the introduction of the carnal and material into the spiritual sphere. In his view, artistic Arianism reflected the *oplotyaniye* ('turning into flesh') of humankind, which had caused the 'religious decline of the modern age' (Bulgakov 1996: 395).

Bulgakov wrote in his diary about the political dimension of this decline: 'the mysticism of the Beautiful Lady ... has led straight to Bolshevism' (*'mistika Prekrasnoy Damy, kotoraya privela pryamekhon'ko k bol'shevizmu'*) (Bulgakov 1998: 122). This striking thought becomes clearer in the context of his revised appraisal of the Sistine Madonna. Bulgakov saw the sexual element in such disparate phenomena as Russian erotic mysticism, Western Christianity, and Rafael's art as reducing the divine to the earthly, and therefore as heretical. In this reduction, all these phenomena shared the fundamental sin of godless Bolshevism. One remembers that Vasily Rozanov, Bulgakov's teacher, friend, and opponent, came to a diametrically opposite conclusion in his *Apokalipsis nashego vremeni* ('Apocalypse of Our Time', 1917–18). In this work – his last – Rozanov put the blame for Bolshevism and the collapse of the Russian state on Christianity. He believed that Christianity had failed to manage properly the affairs of *this* world, of life in the flesh (Rozanov 2000c: 12–13).

Bulgakov interpreted his path to sophianic theology as an obliteration of all traces of sexuality from his vision of Sophia.<sup>21</sup> He was convinced that he succeeded completely in banning sex from sophiology. The Church disagreed. In his 1935 decree condemning Bulgakov's theology on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchy, the Moscow Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky specifically denounced Bulgakov for bringing sexual differentiation into 'the simple Divine Being' (*prostoye sushchestvo Bozh'ye*) (as reprinted in Yeneyeva 2001: 116). Through the Moscow Metropolitan, the official Russian Church found a grave and dangerous temptation in Bulgakov's 'divinization of sexual life, as had been done ... by some of our secular writers, such as V.V. Rozanov' (Yeneyeva 2001: 116). The edict proclaimed that



'Bulgakov's teaching has nothing to do with the ecclesiastical tradition and does not belong to the Orthodox Christian Church' (Yeneyeva 2001: 116).

## Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tried to show how some of the most influential twentieth-century Russian religious thinkers were 'infected' with modern European ideas of sexuality, and specifically with the notion of bisexuality. This concept had its origins in medical discourses, but it proved to be exceptionally productive in Russian religious philosophy. It made its way into Berdyayev's contemplation of the Russian national psyche, Florensky's model of the ideal Christian life, and Bulgakov's theology of Sophia. While Weininger and Rozanov were the first to give the notion of bisexuality its metaphysical interpretation, their Russian successors completed the job of ontologizing and transcendentalizing this notion. In a way, the biography of this idea repeats the trajectories of our philosophers' intellectual development: from their early materialist and scientific worldview to extreme idealism. Yet even in its most far-reaching mystical interpretations, the notion of universal bisexuality retained some of its original epistemological flavour as both modern and scientific. This peculiar modernism in the works of Russian religious philosophy accounts, I would argue, for its continuing impact as well as for its sceptical and often hostile reception by the official Orthodox Church.

In the context of today's discussions of (homo)sexuality, the Silver Age philosophers are commonly referenced as a Russian national philosophical authority and their views are cited as being dramatically different from the commonplaces of Western liberalism. Yet a deeper look into the genealogy and structure of those views reveals a substratum that is positivist and Western European in its origin. Striking and idiosyncratic as these philosophical positions appear to today's Russian reader, they are closely linked to the European tradition of thinking about sexuality. As I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, the leading Russian thinkers of the Silver Age both actively partook of this tradition and energetically tried to distinguish themselves from it. Rediscovering the Russian erotic philosophers today, after the censorship of the communist era, we need to carefully consider the question of where their scientific anachronism ends and their original philosophical contribution begins.

## Notes

- 1 See the examination of the Russian debates on sexuality in the early twentieth century in Laura Engelstein's groundbreaking study (Engelstein 1992); Dan Healey has recently investigated the scientific and legal treatments of homosexuality in modernizing Russia (Healey 2001, esp. 21–125). See also my analysis of the literary reflections of the sexual question in the Silver Age (Bershtein 1999).
- 2 On the discourses of the emerging sexual science in the Symbolist culture, see Matich (2005) and Bershtein (1999).
- 3 For the editions of Weininger's main work, see Weininger (1903), Veyninger (1908). On the history and significance of the 1908 translation, put out by the publisher Posev, and for the analysis of the Weininger cult in Russia, see Bershtein (2004).

- 4 For instance, the notion of bisexuality, crucial for Weininger, figured in contemporary medical and sexological literature and was popularized by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Weininger's professor at Vienna University. In his book, Weininger referred to Magnus Hirschfeld's *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* as the authoritative source on the topic. The concept of bisexuality, while mentioned already in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, was hotly debated in the circle of young psychologists in Vienna in the first years of the century. This circle included Sigmund Freud and his co-author Wilhelm Fliess. Weininger's closest friend Hermann Swoboda underwent therapy with Freud and discussed the latter's ongoing research with him. After Weininger's suicide and the book's subsequent popularity, the question of the authorship of the notion of bisexuality led to painful tensions in Freud's circle. The most comprehensive analysis of Weininger's book and its sources can be found in Sengoopta (2000). See also Abrahamsen (1946), Le Rider (1982), Harrowitz and Hyams (1995).
- 5 See Olga Matich's examinations of androgyny in sexual ideologies of the Silver Age (Matich 1979a, 1979b, 1994).
- 6 Florensky (1990a: 715); other page references to this edition of Florensky's *Stolp* appear in the main text. Florensky's young friend, Vasily Giatsintov (see more about his role in Florensky's life later in the chapter) studied Weininger under Florensky's guidance; Giatsintov examines Weininger in his student composition 'Transcendental and Empirical Subject' written at the Moscow Spiritual Academy where Florensky taught (see Florensky's review of Giatsintov's work (Florensky 1911: 198)).
- 7 The voluminous correspondence between Florensky and Rozanov was published after I completed this chapter (see Rozanov 2010: 9–412). It contains a wealth of information indispensable for a deeper understanding Florensky's emotional life. I believe that Florensky's 'confessional' letters to Rozanov lend additional support to my reading of his personality. Another recent publication that adds to our knowledge of Florensky is Avril Pyman's biography of this Russian thinker. Informative and well-written, it does not address Florensky's sexual theories and his eros in much detail (Pyman 2010: esp. 41–84).
- 8 Further page references to this work are in the main text. On Raffalovich's scientific works, see Rosario (1997a, 1997b).
- 9 On problematic relationships between respectability and 'abnormal sexuality' in modern European culture, see Mosse (1985).
- 10 On the life of Raffalovich and his friendship with John Gray, see Sewell (1963) and Hanson (1997).
- 11 Also see Ellmann (1987) for a detailed history of the animosity between Raffalovich and Wilde.
- 12 Even the official Orthodox press found great religious meaning in Wilde's sufferings: the theologian Vasiliy Uspensky wrote in *Khristianskoye chteniye*, the official organ of the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy: 'Wilde suffered a lot and he suffered deeply ... His blood joined the currents of blood, through which humanity was acquiring deep religious thought' (Uspensky 1906: 225).
- 13 Immediately after the London court sentenced Wilde to hard labour, Raffalovich published a pamphlet highly critical of Wilde and his sexual proclivities. He saw Wilde's activities as typical of effeminate inverts. He reprinted this text in *Uranisme et unisexualité*. In 1908, the translation of this essay was included in the first Russian scientific and popular anthology devoted to homosexuality (Ushakovsky (Pseudonim): 1908).
- 14 See Eric Naiman's analysis of the Weiningerian stratum in Berdyayev (Naiman 1997: 39–45).
- 15 In his *Diary*, Kuzmin relates an episode in which *banshchiki* show knowledge of his literary depiction of their trade in *Wings*: they have read about the novel in *Novoye vremya* (Kuzmin 2000: 343). I am grateful to N.A. Bogomolov for helping me locate this passage.

- 16 See a survey of Bulgakov's theological ideas and his bibliography in Kazaryan (2003: 340–57).
- 17 See also A.P. Kozyrev's thoughtful essay on the evolution of Bulgakov's thinking on bisexuality (Kozyrev 2003: 333–43).
- 18 Bulgakov's use of the polysemous Russian word *pol*, which can mean biological sex, sexuality, and gender, complicates his definitions. I believe that his *muzhskoye* and *zhenskoye* are the categories of gender which he understands not as socially constructed but as ontological and transcendental.
- 19 Bulgakov has been much criticized for this suggestion, which he himself characterized as heretical in his later works; see Yeneyeva (2001: 29–33).
- 20 See also S.S. Averintsev's study of this essay (Averintsev 2003: 251–65).
- 21 In her study of Bulgakov's early theological writings, Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal correctly notes the great role played in it by his 'metaphysics of masculinity and femininity'. However, I see a certain exaggeration in Rosenthal's claim that 'his positive view of sex distinguishes Bulgakov from Fedorov and Berdyayev' (Rosenthal 1996: 169). I believe that even in his early works, Bulgakov understood the feminine and the masculine as abstract principles, and nowhere did he approve of 'sex' in the English meaning of the word. In his works from the 1920s, Bulgakov's tendency to anathematize even the slightest trace of sensuality in the spiritual sphere became quite extreme.

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