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**The Joy of Flying: An Essay Concerning the History of Early
Modern Atectonic Misinterpretation of Exemplary Antiquities
(Apollo of Belvedere, Venus de' Medici, Flora Farnese)**

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*The Joy of Flying: An Essay Concerning the History of Early Modern Atectonic
Misinterpretation of Exemplary Antiquities
(Apollo of Belvedere, Venus de' Medici, Flora Farnese)*

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Key words: Greco-Roman sculpture, afterlife of antiquity, Early Modern literature, reception of Greco-Roman sculpture, misinterpretation of Greco-Roman sculpture, atectonic vision, history of art studies.

Abstract: Some opinions expressed mainly during the 18th and 19th c about figurative content of three famous Greco-Roman statues – Apollo of Belvedere, Venus de' Medici, Flora Farnese – and considered in this paper are only few of innumerable evidences of Early Modern unreadiness for the adequate comprehension and – as a result – adoption of antiquity's classical style. It is just the inadequacy of these opinions to their subject, what seems to be the most interesting in them. Of these opinions, the misinterpretations of Flora Farnese are especially noteworthy, helping to understand better the nature of their authors' predisposition to the atectonic effects and to recognize in it one of the multifarious manifestations of tendency towards the ambiguous, which is alien in essence to the ancient classical style, whose determining property is clearness.

Some judgements expressed mainly during the 18th and 19th c about figurative content of famous Greco-Roman statues and considered in this paper are only few of numerous evidences of early modern inherent unreadiness for the adequate comprehension and adoption of antiquity's classical style. It is just the inadequacy of these judgements to their subject, what seems to be the most interesting in them. An obvious predisposition to the atectonic effects is especially noteworthy, being the one of the multifarious manifestations of tendency towards the ambiguous, which, on the one hand, is alien in essence to the ancient classical style and, on the other, so kindred to the latent aesthetics of Early Modern Europe! So in imagination of the beholders, ancient statuary images receive an ethereal lightness, and sometimes even capacity to fly despite the indisputable evidence of statues themselves but in full compliance with the spirit of those beholders' own time. This phenomenon will be considered in detail below using, in capacity of corroborating instances, the different opinions on three statues – Apollo of Belvedere, Venus de' Medici, Flora Farnese — that were expressed in 18 and 19 c.



Probably Roman copy from the original of late 4c BCE. Marble. Museo Pio Clementino, Rome, Vatican (Picture author: [daryl mitchell](#))

Apollo of Belvedere. It seems that no one of canonical antiquities underwent so radical atectonic misinterpretation as this statue. Let us start, however, not with literary texts, but with one enough well known work of plastic art, previous in time to descriptions of Apollo Belvedere that are subject to our consideration and besides exemplify decisive style metamorphosis, to which the verbal image of Belvederian statue later was liable. I mean the sculptural group of Apollo and Daphne by G.L. Bernini (1622–1625; Galleria Borghese, Rome).



G.L. Bernini. *Apollo and Daphne*.

1622-1625. Marble. Galleria Borghese, Rome (Picture author: Architas)

Modelling the figure of Apollo, who has already reached Daphne and tries to bring her to a stop, Bernini closely rendered the peculiar appearance of Apollo Belvedere; similarity is too obvious to be denied. But the Italian *maestro* thoroughly changed the pose: while the ancient god stands, firmly resting his left foot on the ground, his barocco counterpart is represented as running, with the skidding of the trunk, i.e. its leaning ahead. In such a pose, it is impossible to stop and to remain on feet, save perhaps to fall on account of stopping. Or to fly up immediately after Daphne, which is already uplifting to the heaven.

The glory of Apollo Belvedere had reached its apogee in 18th c. This event was determined mainly by three different circumstances. One of them was considerably grown number of young men from noble and bourgeois well-to-do families, sent to Italy with educational aims. The program of those journeys included as one of its obligatory points the visit of the Vatican art collections with such a highlight as Apollo of Belvedere. The other cause of especial glory which had fallen to that statue's lot was the ideology of Enlightenment having at that time dominated Europe. Meanwhile the cult of reason typical for Enlightenment being traditionally personified in Apollo, this deity of light, became then closely associated with

Apollo's exemplary image, visible in papal art collections in Rome. However, about the middle of 18 c, another, main and decisive force creating the worldly cult of this statue enters in action. This force is the new classicism with its idealization of antique forms and images.

For the Enlightenment worship of Apollo, the emphasis on expression of Apollo's divine nature – as was then believed – by his Belvederian idol, is very significant. So, the British scholar Joseph Spence, which in his treatise "Polymetis" (1747) put into goddess Athena's mouth his own opinions on ancient art and literature, having noted Apollo down in the list of first-rate ancient statues, added the following:

...The air of the Apollo Belvedere, gives us an idea of something above human... As the excellence of the Apollo Belvedere consists in the expression of something divine, whereas the rest excel only in things that are common to men; this statue may, perhaps justly enough, claim the preference, even in this distinguished class of the best remains of all antiquity¹.

So, according to Spence, the preeminence of Belvederian statue consists in specific divinity of its image. As we shall see further, such an opinion had proved to be the most promising. Already William Hogarth in his "Analysis of Beauty" (1753) opposing Apollo of Belvedere to Antinous (another ancient Vatican statue known today as Hermes) characterizes the former by means of the notion of superhuman greatness (*an appearance of something more than human*).

Meanwhile, as the above quoted passage from "Polymetis" clearly shows, Hogarth was in this judgement by no means original. Moreover, long before Spence and Hogarth, the French abbé François Ragenet in his "Monumens de Rome" (1st ed. – 1700) had opposed divine magnificence of Apollo Belvedere to a solely human perfection of Antinous².

C'est, à la vérité un corps humain, mais on voit bien qu'il n'y a point d'homme si bien fait que celui-ci, & qu'il n'en eut jamais; & on demeure persuadé que si les Dieux sont corporels, ils sont assurément faits comme l'Apollon, non seulement pour les proportions du corps si justes & si régulières, mais encore plus pour l'attitude & pour l'air de toute la personne; car on ne vit jamais à aucun homme, à aucun Héros un air si noble & si grand que celui que le Sculpteur a donné à cette incomparable Statue.

Antinoüs est pour le moins aussi bien proportionné, & c'est peut-être un corps d'homme encore plus parfait que celui de l'Apollon; mais avec cela, il n'a rien que du naturel & d'humain; c'est le plus beau jeune homme du monde, mais c'est ne qu'un homme; au lieu que l'Apollon, par son

¹ Spence J. Polymetis. London: Garland Pub., 1747. P. 86–87.

² Hogarth W. *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*. London: W. Strahan, 1772. P. 86.

air de grandeur, vous enlève, vous pénètre, & vous fait sentir les traits & les éclats d'une majesté plus qu'humaine qu'il répand, pour ainsi dire, toute autour de lui. ("This is certainly a human body but one may clearly see that there is no man who can or ever could be so well built as this one; and everyone remains confident that, if the gods are corporeal, they are undoubtedly formed like Apollo, and not only as regards their body proportions, which are so precise and regular, but even more as regards the attitude and the general expression because one has never seen at any man or hero so noble and majestic expression that the Sculptor imparted to this peerless Statue.

Antinous is at least equally well proportioned and it is possibly the body of a man even more perfect than the Apollo's body but it has nothing except the natural and human; this is the most beautiful young man of the world but he is no more than a man, whereas Apollo with his expression of magnificence elevates you, penetrates you and makes you behold the irradiance of superhuman grandeur, whose rays he dissipates around himself far and wide.")³

As can be seen from this passage, Raguenet cautiously admitted the greater corporal perfection of Antinous. Hogarth, however, goes even further. He argues that it was just the rendering of Apollo's divinity, that had made the infringement of canonical proportions, – which is visible, according to him, in the statue, – necessary and expedient.

But it is great German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who must be considered as the main figure of Belvederian Apollo's glorification. In 1759, he wrote and published a separate and enough short work being the eulogistic description of Vatican statue and, to the greater extent, the effusion of feelings and impressions called forth by its contemplation⁴, Translated soon from German into the other languages of Europe, this inspired and rapturous but at the same time insightful description had found a broad and warm response among the art lovers and artists of that time, ready as never before to accept sympathetically such a praise. By all his eloquence, by all the power of his prestige that had become international at this time, Winckelmann persuades readers of his "History of the Art of the Antiquity" (1764) that *Die Statue des Apollo ist das höchste Ideal der Kunst unter allen Werken des Altertums, welche der Zerstörung derselben entgangen sind*; ("The statue of Apollo is the highest ideal of art among the works of antiquity that have escaped destruction.")⁵ Apollo of Belvedere had seemed to Winckelmann an embodied idea of divinity itself and beholder's reaction has been shown by him as the corporal and spiritual identification of beholder with deity in the ecstasy of contemplation.

³ Raguenet F. *Monumens de Rome, ou Descriptions des plus beaux ouvrages de peinture, de sculpture et d'architecture*. Paris, 1700. P. 298–299.

⁴ Winckelmann J.J. *Beschreibung des Apollo im Belvedere // Winckelmanns Werke in einem Band*. 2. Aufl. Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976. P. 62–63.

⁵ *Die Statue des Apollo ist das höchste Ideal der Kunst unter allen Werken des Altertums, welche der Zerstörung derselben entgangen sind* (Ibid. P. 62).

The lavish tribute of raptures and reflections has been paid to Belvederian statue by German art historian and writer, one of representatives of the Sturm und Drang generation, Wilhelm Heine in his intellectual novel “Ardinghello” (1787)⁶. According to his appraisal, Apollo of Belvedere belongs to a small number of best statues, which are known to the mankind and thus he fervently objected to the opinion of antiquarians that the Apollo is the product of Roman Imperial time⁷. Heine, on the contrary, is quite sure that this statue were not a copy but the authentic work of Greek origin created at a time the most favorable for arts, i.e. from the time of Pericles to that of Alexander the Great⁸. And, what is important here to underline, is that, following Ragueneau and Hogarth, he opposes Apollo to above-mentioned statue of “Antinous” (Hermes) as the perfect image of god to the equally perfect image of human being. Besides, like the same Hogarth, he motivates this imaginary opposition of divine nature to merely human one in particular with the difference of proportions – regular at Antinous and elongated in region of lower extremities at Apollo⁹.

Further, we shall see how this idea of Apollo’s participation in the realm of highest values called forth the levitation of Apollo’s image. And although such a result is quite expectable considering that so high ranking of the image took place at the post-antique time with its marked aesthetic proclivity to atectonic dreams, nevertheless the corroborating evidence of facts remains indispensable for turning expectability into certitude.

One of unambiguously corroborating instances is provided by the British writer John Durant Breval in his travel-book published in 1726:

*[Apollo of Belvedere] will be always known for the God, as well by the Aspect of Command, and the Majesty the Sculptor has given him, as by the Lightness of his whole Attitude; for Apollo scarce touches the Ground, and stands in a manner, if I may be allow’d to quote Milton..., as tho’
The passive Air upbore
His nimble Tread.*¹⁰

⁶ Heine W. *Ardinghello und die glückseligen Inseln*. Nikosia: Verona Publ., 2017. P. 164.

⁷ Ibid. P. 173.

⁸ Ibid. P. 174–177.

⁹ Ibid. P. 171.

¹⁰ Breval J. *Remarks on Several Parts of Europe: Relating Chiefly to the History, Antiquities and Geography of Those Countries through which the Author has travel’d, as France, the Low Countries, Lorrain, Alsatia, Germany, Savoy, Tyrol, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal*. Vol. 2. London: Lintot, 1726. P. 282. The citation from book 6 of J. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (72–73) slightly changed by Breval (*His* in place of *Their*) describes in the poem the flight of angelic host obedient to the Lord, making their way to the battle with angelic rebels. Thus it redoubles at Breval the atectonic effect of the whole passage by its literal meaning, as well as by the reference to this poem’s plot.

In the book of the French Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu entitled “Travel in Italy” (1728–1730), one can find very similar example of spiritualistic misinterpretation undergone by statuary image in beholder’s fantasy:

Il semble que l’Apollon est en air, tant il paroît léger (“It seems that Apollo is staying in the air, for he looks so light”)¹¹.

However, also in this respect the already mentioned F. Ragueneau having written in the same “Monumens de Rome” about “lightness of this statue [i.e. Apollo of Belvedere] swimming, as it seems, in the air but not dwelling on the earth” (*la légèreté de cette Statue qui semble nager dans les airs, & ne tenir aucunement à la terre*)¹². But the question arises: is this that famous *contrapposto*, which had been communicated by a Hellenic sculptor to the figure of Apollo, whereas by a Roman copyist conveyed it to the extent of his skill and ability? Most likely, we are dealing here with the frequent though unconscious substitution of the idea of lightness as an insignificant or no weight for that of lightness as the resilience of developed muscles.

The analogous example from the book of travel notes of British Thomas Broderick (1753) leaves even less chances to see behind the atectonic treatment only an aberration of individual vision:

*...There is... a lightness in all figure [of Apollo], that makes you forget that it is marble. It is the attitude that does this; but 'tis so finely done, that you seem to see the figure treading on the air, or scarce weighing down some light cloud, as he stands upon it*¹³.

A similar image, however with more pronounced idea of the flight, can be found also at one article of French encyclopedia of fine arts published in 1788:

“Apollo of Belvedere seems to soar without touching the earth” (*Apollon du Belvédère semble planer sans toucher la terre*)¹⁴.

And even though this effect is immediately interpreted here as the result of an extraordinary pace quickness resembling, in a certain sense, the lightness of flying, the only thing that remains in the content of the immediate verbal image, is “the lightness of flying” (*la*

¹¹ Montesquieu Ch.-L. de S. *Voyages de Montesquieu* / Publ. par le baron Albert de Montesquieu. T. I. Bordeaux: Imprimerie G. Gounoullou, 1894. P. 241.

¹² Ragueneau F. Op. cit. P. 303.

¹³ Цит. по: Coutu J. *Then and Now: Collecting and Classicism in Eighteenth-Century England*. Montreal; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015. P. 241 (note 120).

¹⁴ [Levesque]. *Mythologie* // Encyclopédie méthodique: Beaux-Arts, dédiés et présentés à Monsieur Vidaud de la Tour. T. I. Paris; Liège: Plomteux, 1788. P. 539.

légèreté du vol), whereas the “pace quickness” is added herein as a rational, physically based explanation. Meanwhile, the significance of this misinterpretation first of all is derived from the fact that its text – with exclusion of “pace quickness” indication – is, properly speaking, the translation from Winckelmann¹⁵, in whose perception, as can be seen, the new image of Apollo Belvedere had fully forfeited the tectonics of his adequate appearance, the latter being unambiguously represented as the stopped one.

The inclination to associate divine nature with something immaterial and ethereal not always brought about raptures. At least in one case, it could not prevent a critically distanced position towards Apollo Belvedere from appearing – and this having taken place in time of Apollo Belvedere’s highest glory! So A.R. Mengs, who as painter and theoretician was the most influential representative of early neoclassicism, estimated the statue as inferior in quality to Laocoön and Torso Belvedere, and the same Mengs, like the above-mentioned antiquarians, criticized by Heinse, defined it as the Roman copy of Greek bronze original¹⁶. Besides that, it was just Mengs who has expressed the opinion that the perfect statue must unite in itself merits of Apollo Belvedere with the presence of flesh, thus making it clear that from his point of view, the statue either does not possess this latter quality in full measure or absolutely deprived of it¹⁷. However, considered on the background of other opinions on Apollo Belvedere that were expressed in 18th c this view seems to be unusual and most likely unique.

19th c is marked by departure from the unconditional worship of Apollo Belvedere and even by the appearance of its negative estimation. Nevertheless also then the traditionally high respect and admiration for Apollo’s statue did not disappear anywhere, having been most apparent in first half of the century. At the same time as well as earlier, the high appreciation of Apollo not infrequently was combined with its atectonic vision.

Original interpretation of the Belvederian statue was given by prominent German philosopher A. Schopenhauer in his main work “The World as Will and Representation” (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 1818, 1844, 1859). Properly speaking, this interpretation concerns only the head of Apollo or – speaking more precisely – the peculiarities of its connection with the body. The nature of human being, as Schopenhauer argues, finds its outward expression in his set of head high lifted in the air instead of being turned to the earth in search of

¹⁵ *Der Schritt des vatikanischen Apollo schwebt gleichsam, ohne die Erde mit Fußsohlen zu berühren* (Winckelmann J.J. *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums // Winckelmanns Werke* in einem Band. S. 203).

¹⁶ This change in the appraisal of Apollo Belvedere by Mengs had taken place in 1779 i.e. shortly before his decease. (см.: Haskell F., Penny N. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982. P. 150; Nisi J.B. *Famous Works of Art – And How They Got That Way*. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. P. 56).

¹⁷ Anyway, Goethe in his *Italian Journey* witnesses to it. Here are his Words: *Mengs sagt irgendwo vom Apoll von Belvedere, daß eine Statue, die zum gleich großem Stil mehr Wahrheit des Fleisches gesellte, das Größte wäre, was der Mensch sich denken könnte* (Goethe J.W. *Italienische Reise: Vollständige Ausgabe beider Bände*. Berlin: Verlag der Contumax GmbH & Co. KG, 2016. P. 294).

subsistence like at animals (herein the philosopher sides with the tradition of classical Greco-Roman origin), as well as in the high grade of detachment of the head from the body; “that’s why the head seems to be freely laid on body and carried by but not serving it”¹⁸ (*...dessen Haupt dem Leibe frei aufgesetzt erscheint, nur von ihm getragen, nicht ihm dienend*; herein he develops the idea of St Augustine).

And further Schopenhauer notes:

Diesen menschlichen Vorzug stellt höchsten Grade Apoll von Belvedere dar: das Weitumherblickende Haupt des Musengottessteht so frei auf den Schultern, daß es dem Leibe ganz entwunden, der Sorge für ihn nicht mehr unterthan erscheint (“Highest grade of this advantage is represented in Apollo of Belvedere: seeing far and wide, the head of Apollo, the god of Muses, so easily holds on shoulders that it seems fully detached from the body (*dem Leibe ganz entwunden*) and being no longer held in servitude by the care for it”)¹⁹.

To understand better the meaning of this instance adduced by the philosopher, one must keep in mind that Supreme Good, according Schopenhauer, is a status of blissful contemplation achievable at the cost of giving up temptations of the will, which are dictated by the body. Thus the aspect of Belvederian Apollo, somewhat exaggerated, with his head, this residence of spirit *seemingly* separated from body, justly symbolizes the ethical ideal of Schopenhauer. Meanwhile, what concerns the exaggeration, which is apparent in the image of head separated from trunk, it is additionally accentuated by the motif of rotation i.e. associatively giddiness, vertigo: *entwunden* literally signifies “separated by sharp rotatory movement”. To be sure, in comparison with the image of Apollo sailing in air at Raguene, Montesquieu or Broderick (*v. above*), it is nothing more than a shade, but it also is characteristic in its own way

Two lines from the poem of Danish novelist and poet B.S. Ingemann *Den belvederiske Apollo* (1832) return us to the image of Apollo Belvedere as flying. The lyrical subject of this poem seems to refuse confidence in his own eyes, witnessing Apollo to stand, and relies upon his inflamed romantic imagination developing triple ascending gradation of pictures representing three stages of readiness for flight: a) reliable leaning on the earth at first; b) beginning of separation from the earth after that; c) and at last, the miraculous flight.

Der staaer han –nei, han neppe Jorden rører;

¹⁸ Schopenhauer A. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. 2. Aufl. / Hrsg. K.-M. Guth. Berlin: Hofenberg, 2016. P. 133.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

I evig Ungdomsskønhed han hensvæver (“Here stands he. Nay, he scarcely touches the earth; | Plenty of youthful beauty, he soars away ”)²⁰.

Here I will permit myself a short digression from former subject matter in order to show that the imagination of other romanticist authors with equal ease dematerialized the images of several other antique statues, which are similar to Apollo of Belvedere. So in a fit of rupture, P. B. Shelley says about hands of Ganymede’s statue in Uffizi:

*These hands and fingers are so delicate and light that it seems as if the spirit of pleasure, of life, light, and beauty, that lives in them, had lifted them and deprived them of the natural weight of mortal flesh*²¹.

Thus, if to judge in accordance with the cited fragment, without collating it with actual statue, one will have to conclude that the beauty of Ganymede’s statuary image is determined by the absence “of the natural weight of mortal flesh”.

Also the famous statue known as Apollino in the same Uffizi inspired Shelley and made him to write following lines;

*It was difficult to conceive anything more delicately beautiful than the Ganymede; but the spirit-like lightness, the softness, the flowing perfection of these forms surpass it... Through the limbs there seems to flow a spirit of life which gives them lightness... It is like a spirit even in dreams. The neck is long yet full and sustains the head with its profuse and knotted hair as if it needed no sustaining*²².

In what, according to Shelley, does Apollino surpass even the statue of Ganymede, highly praised by the poet, as we just have seen? First of all, it is “*the spirit-like lightness*” Shelley mentions before other two indications determining together with the first one the given excellence. “*A spirit of life*” becomes apparent in this lightness and renders the statue similar to “*a spirit even in dreams*”. And at last one can observe the coincidence with the treatment of Apollo Belvedere by Schopenhauer (v. *supra*) witnessing fundamental community of vision: the head of Apollino looks “*as if it needed no sustaining*”.

²⁰ Ingemann B.S. *Samlede Romanzer, Sange og Eventyrdigte*. 5. Bind (Reiselyre, Anden Deel). Kjøbenhavn: Bianco Luno, 1845. P. 26.

²¹ *Quoted after*: Hare J.C. *Florence*. 6th ed. London: Allen, 1904, P. 26.

²² *Quoted after*: Ibid. P. 29. The last sentence of given passage is noteworthy as containing analogy to the above mentioned argument of Schopenhauer about the head of Apollo Belvedere.

The widespread respect and admiration for Belvederian masterpiece remain valid also in the 2nd half of 19th c. Like many others laudably, though with some restraint, the prominent Swiss historian of art and culture Jacob Burckhardt estimates Apollo of Belvedere in his famous guidebook for museums and monuments of Italy, *Der Cicerone* (1st ed. – 1855). In this statue defined by him as Roman copy of the Early Imperial time²³, he had noted, however, the rare correspondence of its plastico-tectonic nature with the Ancient Greek mythopoetic image of the god Apollo²⁴. According to Burckhardt, this ideal prototype of the Vatican statue is

the common symbol of every order, every curative power, an image of supreme, – one could even say, ruling – youthful beauty, corresponding to Hellenic spirit”²⁵.

After that Burckhardt continues:

“Cithara, lyre, bow, quiver – all this remains no more than mere attributes; whereas the very distinctive feature of Apollo is the ideal form, which is free even of the slightest vestiges of concern and need and occupies a middle position not only between gymnastic Hermes and delicate Dionysus but also among all the gods. The slender build along with indication of precisely so much strength as necessary to perform the wanted movement (*mit so viel Anwendung von Kraft, als jedesmalige Bewegung verlangt*)..., traits of supreme beauty and clearness (*Klarheit*)...”²⁶

In light of the told here about the balance of strength and movement, one must comprehend also the tectonic estimation of Apollo statue expressed as follows:

“...divine lightness in walk and bearing” (*...das Göttlich-Leichte in Schritt und Haltung*).²⁷

”Lightness” (*das ...-Leichte*), as one must understand, is used here in the meaning of “ease”, i.e. freedom from redundant efforts that is conditioned by sufficient strength of locomotor system. However in the 9th, posthumous edition (Leipzig, 1904)²⁸, emended and broadened with the participation of W. Bode and C.V. Fabriczy, this description finds development in direction contrary to its primordial meaning. Either of the two editors has supplemented the text of late Basel professor with his own opinions on the Belvederian Apollo:

²³ Burckhardt J. *Der Cicerone*. Eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens. Basel: Schweighauser, 1855. P. 443.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibid. S. 442.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibid. P. 443.

²⁸ Burckhardt J. *Der Cicerone*. Paderborn: Salzwasser, 2015 (Nachdruck des Originals von 1904). P. 94.

“...the movement of god rather soaring than walking” (*die Bewegung des mehr schwebenden als schreitenden Gottes*)

comparing him on the grounds of alleged similarity (flight motif) to the statue of Ganymede kidnaped by the eagle, in Vatican collections and thus referring to the attribution of Belvederian Apollo by F. Winter²⁹ (*v. infra*) as if it would be quite reliable,

So the “divine lightness” mentioned by Burckhardt in spite of clear witnessing context was understood by the author of given interpolation not as the ability for assured and, in such significance, *light* overcoming of heaviness but as its minimum quantity or even its full absence. Let us note also this case adding it to the number of instances representing atectonic misinterpretation of the sculptural image, which is classically oriented and, as a whole, tectonically correct.

However, not all of Burckhardt’s contemporaries had shared his sober approach to this object. The spiritualization of Belvederian Apollo’s image motivating atectonic interpretation, remains valid as before. So, for example, the author of the world-famed novel *Moby-Dick*, American writer Herman Melville, giving lecture “Statues of Rome”, said about Vatican Apollo the following:

The statue which most of all in the Vatican excites the admiration of all visitors is the Apollo, the crowning glory, which stands alone in a little chapel, in the court of Belvidere of the Vatican. Every visitor to Rome, immediately on his arrival, rushes to the chapel to behold the statue, and on the quitting the Eternal City, whether after a few weeks or many years, always makes the farewell visit to this same load-stone. Its very presence is overawing. Few speak, or even whisper, when they enter the cabinet where it stands. It is not a mere work of art that one gazes on. There is a kind of divinity in it that lifts the imagination of beholder above “things rank and gross in nature,” and makes the ordinary criticism impossible. If one were to try to convey some adequate notion, other than artistic, of the statue which so signally lifts the imaginations of men, he might hint that it gives a kind of visible response to that kind of human aspirations of beauty and perfection that, according to Faith, cannot be satisfied except in another world.

The statue seems to embody the attributes, physical and intellectual, which Milton bestowed on one of his angels, “Severe in youthful beauty.” Milton’s description of Zephon makes the angel an exact counterpart of the Apollo. He must have been inspired to a great degree by his recollections of this great statue, once an idol of religion and now an idol of art...”³⁰

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Melville H. *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces 1839–1860*. Evanstone, Chicago: Northwestern Universityess and The Newberry Library, 1987. P. 402–403.

This excerpt from Melville's lecture is notorious not only as a corroboration of Vatican statue remaining immensely popular even in the 50th years of 19 c, but also as an evidence of consequent spritualisation of statuary image, which Melville decidedly brings outside the limits of material reality, having likened it to the creature incorporeal in principal, so the weightless one.

The instances of Belvederian Apollo's atectonic interpretation listed above, are at the same time instances of its emphasizedly positive, if not to say – enthusiastic, appraisal (the only exception is R. Mengs; *v. supra*). Meanwhile for a period of 19 c, the negative estimation of the Vatican statue makes itself felt more and more often, gradually becoming prevalent. However near to the end of this period an important event in its study process took place, giving occasion to its positive reappraisal. It was the attribution of the original to a prominent Greek sculptor of late classical time (4c BCE), Leochares. The said attribution firstly has been brought forward by Franz Winter in 1892³¹, and soon after received support from authoritative historians of Ancient Greek art, A. Furthwängler and M. Collignon. The main Winter's argument is a supposed resemblance between the walk of Apollo Belvedere and the flying pose of Ganymede borne by the eagle in the small marble group in Vatican considered by Winter as the Roman copy of Leochares' group mentioned by Plinius Maior (XXXIV. 79) Wherefrom two conclusion follow: a) that Leochares preferred to create flying figures; and 2) that Leochares communicated to his Apollo the flying pose that we supposedly see in its Belvederian copy. Meanwhile this assertion of Winter is based on two extremely doubtful premises: a) that the above-mentioned small group in Vatican is a copy of Leochares work and not a figured leg from a luxurious marble table as some people think; b) that the pose of Apollo Belvedere has something in common with flight. And besides, the main conclusion of this research – i.e. that Leochares is the author of Belvederian statue's original – seems unconvincing and forced.

So it is comprehensible enough, why for the majority of experts, Winter's opinion for a long time had remained unacceptable and R. Bianchi Bandinelli has given in 1935 its full-scale refutation, having dated the original to the Hellenistic time³². However it is difficult not to see that the popularity of the art work and its attribution to one or another famous artist (being not always correct) are mutually connected, the later assisting the former whereas the former looking for support in the later. Just the same is valid for the case in question: the wide reputation and fame of Belvederian statue, its symbolic function in the collective consciousness finally told upon its interpretation by scholars. Starting with 70th years of 20 c its rank was swiftly rising and

³¹ Winter F. *Der Apoll vom Belvedere* // Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts 7 (1892). S. 164–177.

³² Bianchi Bandinelli R. *Apollo del Belvedere* // Critica d'arte. 1935. P. 3–9.

at the same time its attribution became more prestigious: Winter's opinion of Leochares as the author of original decisively gained upper hand.

Not that the art-critical interpretation of Apollo Belvedere had been free from influence of 20th c society's tastes. But tastes having influenced it were not the tastes of general public; those were aesthetic attitudes of bohémian intellectuals, who had slighted it as a symbol of hateful routine of bourgeois society.

Both evaluating views opposed to each other are compromisingly combined together in the book of American historian of antique art Edmund von Mach, "*Greek Sculpture: Its Spirit and Principles*" (1st ed.–1902). Von Mach explains the already bygone success of Vatican Apollo as the result of absence then of genuine antique masterpieces, together with presence in educated society of the great demand for a visual incorporation of the ideal derived from Greco-Roman literature. The expression of Apollo that so ravished Winckelmann and his contemporaries with its unearthly greatness, seems to him virtually banal. And although *the conception of the Apollo is not noble, but the execution... is of surpassing beauty*. Further there follows the explication of what does here the *execution* mean:

The first sight of him upon entering the Belvedere Gallery where he stands, reveals this [i.e. surpassing beauty], though Stands is hardly the proper word – walks would be better. With an easy, noiseless step this figure of ethereal beauty is gliding along. Sunshine envelopes him, sunshine reflects from his supple body; and the longer one looks the more completely one is drawn under the spell of his physical charm³³.

Here we again (how many times it's already happened!) are running into the fact of atectonic misinterpretation. This has been produced in two stages. Already at the first, preliminary stage, the static moment (*stands*) is supplanted by the dynamic one (*walks*), while the choice of personal pronoun (*he* instead of *it*) animates the image, which, strictly speaking, is not quite correct, as in the given sentence, despite the improper use of personal pronoun, the question is of statue as such (*...upon entering the gallery where he stands*. (the god Apollo, of course, can be anywhere, while it is his sculptural representation that stands in the gallery). The second stage more decisively transferring attention from the representing to the represented, from the image of statue to statuary image of Apollo, gradually and for all that essentially atectonizes it (*with an easy, noiseless step; gliding along; of ethereal beauty*). And what is especially significant, that is the axiology of these expressions: the author has most likely used them in expectation to present Belvederian statue to readers from its most advantageous side.

³³ Mach E. von. *Greek Sculpture*. New York: Parkstone Press International, 2015 (chapter "The Belvedere Apollo and the Artemis of Versailles"; pagination is absent).



Emblem of American cosmic

mission Apollo-17

After von Mach the atectonic treatment of the statue in question had lost its attractiveness. However, there is at least one cause to assume that also in the 20 c the image of flying Apollo Belvedere had been conserved in the collective memory. I mean the widely known profile representation of Belvederian Apollo's head in official emblem of the American space mission of 1972, Apollo 17, which had brought about the landing of astronauts on the surface of Moon, being the last until now (design of emblem – Robert McCall with participation of the crew members). It is highly significant that the flight (in this case the cosmic one) is here symbolized by the head of Belvederian statue, while its profile is shown on the background of stylized picture that represents the flying American eagle, the main figure of the US coat of arms (properly *the bald eagle*).



Copy of 1c BCE from the original of 3c BCE. Marble. Uffizi, Florence (Picture author: Saiko).

Venus de' Medici. In 18th c the glory of this statue reached its height. And although beyond the chorus of eulogistic voices there were audible some critical notes, those as a rule represented something like cautious reservations, on whose background the eulogy sounds more distinctly and loudly. It becomes a custom to juxtapose Venus with Apollo of Belvedere as equivalent and besides the highest achievements of statuary plastic, which are embodiments of the ideal dignity and beauty – Apollo of male, Venus of female sex.

Nevertheless, Venus de' Medici had undergone the atectonic interpretation not so often as Belvederian Apollo. What should not seem strange, if we take into consideration that here Venus is too definitely represented as standing still and, consequently, the atectonic fancy here has – so to say – nothing to catch on. However, just because of its apparent arbitrariness, the verbal presentation of Venus if not as weightless at least as ethereally light is especially symptomatic.

Detailed description of Venus' statue is contained in the book of two representatives of British art, the father and son Jonathan Richardson "An Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-Reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy" (1722). In this description made by J. Richardson-minor

according to his personal impressions, are noted several drawbacks: the head are too little for this body, the fingers are too long etc.³⁴ However, immediately after having expressed these objections, Richardson introduces clarity in his personal position, adding:

*I confess, before I saw this Statue, I had some Prejudice against it, from what I had observ'd in the Casts; and it has Faults, but...*³⁵

Further a decisive change in the evaluation plane follows, corroborated by the comparison with neighboring statues of Uffizi's Tribuna:

*...it has too such a Fleshy Softness, one would think it would yield to the touch. It has such a Beauty, and Delicacy; such a Lightness; 'tis is such a Leggiadra Figure, that by it the other two Venus's look Robust; even the Faun is Heavy, tho' he is leaping off his Basis*³⁶.

Still further there is told about the reaction of the author upon the merits of Venus' statue, which are discovered by him:

*When I had spent above ten Hours in this Gallery, considering the Beauty of the Statues there, and perpetually found something new to admire, 'twas yet impossible to keep my Eyes off of this three Minutes whilst I was in the Room.*³⁷

Judging by these words, the Venus' statue had made on Richardson the greatest impression. To the qualities that had produced in his soul so attractive an image, one must ascribe also the transparency of statue material, mentioned so at the very beginning of Richardson's description:

*The Figure fronting the Door is the Venus of Medicis, of clear White Marble, turn'd a little Yellowish; a Beautiful Colour; the Effect of Time: When the Sun shines on it, (for I have seen it at all Hours of the Day, and in all Accidents of Light) 'tis almost transparent*³⁸.

As one can see, Richardson specially noted and underlined (and probably even exaggerated) the nearness of material to the transparency i.e. to the visual quality lessening the

³⁴Richardson J. An Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-Reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, &c. with Remarks. London: Knapton, 1722. P. 55.

³⁵ Ibid. P. 55–56.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ Ibid. P. 56.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 55.

effect of existential definitiveness (reality) of the object. Almost the equal influence diminishing the existential convincingness is exorable by the image property, which Richardson, overtly admiring it, ascribed to Venus de' Medici and which was marked by him as *Lightness*.

Meanwhile the context unambiguously speaks in favour of comprehending this word in its basic, literal sense of negligible weight, because when comparing Venus de' Medici with the Dancing Faun (s. above), Richardson clearly shows that he means superiority of the former just in regard of levity. Moreover, after going on below to the description of Faun, he emphasizes the levity of latter finding expression in the jump (...*'Tis so light, 'tis leaping off its Pedestal*)³⁹.

Consequently, if even the *so light* Faun in comparison with Venus is *Heavy* (as we could read above), the Venus must be extremely light! Here the considered already instances of atectonic misinterpretation of Apollo Belvedere involuntarily cross the mind. As we can see now, this anachronising procedure was applied to at least one more antique statue.

And other detail concerning the Venus' statue as it was perceived by Richardson may be considered here. I mean an effect of the soft flesh yielding to the gentle pressure; – a quality attributed by him to the number of advantages of this art work. Of course, one can and must see in such a praise firstly an additional corroboration of high value that is traditionally ascribed in Early Modern aesthetics to the life-likeness. But if we will rank this praise in one row with two other above mentioned and definitely positive appraisals by Richardson of such qualities, which definitely dematerialize the statuary image (since the transparency and lightness [levity] discredit the solidity of the solid's type image), so the quality denying the hardness of solid (i.e. softness, when it specially accentuated as in given case), will produce dematerializing effect. In a word, we have here an eloquent example of non-classical description of the classical statue; the time of this text composition has left on it the indelible trace.

The opinion on the same statue expressed by Goethe is unusual not only for his time but even for Goethe himself. To be sure, he had shared the common admiration for it. "Medici Venus exceeds all expectation and excels all probability"⁴⁰, so he wrote to duke Carl August on 6 May 1788. Later, in the year 1798/1799, he based his own estimation, by that time quite conventional, in such an original way. While commenting on the D. Diderot's work "Essay on Painting" (1760), Goethe objects to this thinker's opinion that the toe of the Venus' foot is a striking instance of aesthetic autonomy of different body parts:

"It is this toe that I have made myself, –so Goethe expresses his own opinion through the mouth of personified Nature, – for I taught the artist, who shaped it. I gave him a notion of this image

³⁹ Ibid. P. 57.

⁴⁰ *Die Medicäische Venus übertrifft alle Erwartung und übersteigt allen Glauben* (Goethe und die Antike: Eine Sammlung / Ed. E.Grümach. Vol. 1. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1949. P. 538).

character; out of this notion these proportions and forms are come into being In order that this art work... should be in accordance with itself, it is enough that this toe should fit only this and no other statue. I say you: this toe belongs to a beautiful, tender and bashful woman being in blossom of her youth. On the one foot should repose (*ruhen*) the worthiest of all women, the queen of gods, on the other should soar (*schweben*) light-headed Bacchante”⁴¹.

Let us stop for a while at the last sentence of given passage or, to be precise, at the tectonic side of its images. These are two: “the wordiest of all women, the queen of gods”, represented by Venus de’ Medici and a certain “light-headed Bacchante”, mentioned for comparison sake, the representative foot function of the former being defined as stance-supporting, whereas that of the latter featuring not even as propulsive, but as levitative (uplifting) one. In this paper, above, we more than once have had the occasion to ascertain different facts of atectonic misinterpretation of statuary image; here on the contrary, we have to do with twofold indication of statuary tectonics: firstly by direct establishing, then by confrontation with atectonic image of “light-headed Bacchante”.

Quite otherwise in its relation to the tectonics, Venus de’ Medici is represented by the French lawyer, writer and traveler Mercier-Dupaty. Being written by him and published in 1786, this book of letters from Italy for a long time remains highly popular, running into many editions. The letter XXX of this collection is totally devoted to author’s impressions of Medici Venus. In this enthusiastic and minute account, also the foot of Venus did not remain disregarded:

“How much I like the tender inclination of her body! With what a grace her bashful foot hides under the most charming knee! Venus is on the ground without being supported by it (*Vénus est sur la terre; mais Vénus n’y pose pas*)”⁴².

Taking into consideration exceptionally rhapsodic tone of this letter not disturbed even by particular critical remarks, quite usual in other descriptions of this statue, but here having not found place at all, one can comprehend, that indication according to which Venus’ feet are

⁴¹ *Ich habe diese Fußspitze selbst gemacht, denn ich lehrte den Künstler, der sie bildete. Ich gab ihm den Begriff vom Charakter einer Gestalt, und aus diesem Begriff sind diese Proportionen, diese Formen entstanden; es ist genug, daß diese Fußspitze zu dieser und zu keiner andern Statue passe, daß dieses Kunstwerk, daß du mir zu größten Theil zu verbergen glaubst, mit sich selbst in Übereinstimmung sei. Ich sage dir: diese Fußspitze gehört einem schönen, zarten, schamhaften Weibe, die in der Blüthe ihrer Jugend steht! Auf einem andern Fuße würde die würdigste der Frauen, die Götterkönigin ruhen, auf einem andern eine leichtsinnige Bacchantin schweben.* (Ibidem).

⁴² *Que la molle inclination de ce corps me plaît! Avec quelle grace se dérobe ce pied timide sous le plus charmant genou! Vénus est sur la terre; mais Vénus n’y pose pas.* Mercier-Dupaty C.M.J.B.M. *Lettres sur l’Italie en 1785.* Vol.1.Rome, 1792. P. 132.

deprived of supporting function, is produced to the reader as an undoubted appraisal and probably as a confirmation of divine nature of represented person.

Whereas 18th c had been an age of highest glory, which has fallen to Medici Venus' lot, the first half of 19th c became the time when begins the end of its reputation. However still then the secular cult of this statue remained valid, being confirmed by the praise of some celebrities as for instance G.G. Byron, who in his extensive poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–1818), along the whole length of five stanzas (nine lines each) displays the vivid and mobile image of beautiful goddess of sensual passion inspired by the Florentine statue.

If in the image of Venus de' Medici Byron combines together the divinity and the carnal love, another poet, Italian contemporary of Byron, Ugo Foscolo separates these two qualities leaving the former for Venus de' Medici and providing with the latter the famous *Venus Italica* by Antonio Canova. In his letter to Countess Isabella Albrizzi (15 October 1812) Foscolo writes, that if Medici Venus is *bellissima dea* ("most beautiful goddess"), *Venus Italica*, which he, according to his confession, stealthily caressed and kissed, is no more than *bellissima donna* ("most beautiful woman"); if the former *mi faceva sperare il paradiso fuori di questo mondo* ("inspired me with the hope of the Paradise beyond this world"), the latter *mi lusinga del paradiso anche in questa valle di lacrime* ("entices me with the Paradise even in this vale of Sorrow")⁴³.

There is a modest pocket dictionary of mythology (1824) that echoes the famous Italian poet. About Venus de' Medici it says only that, always reputed to be a masterpiece, it is marked by

"...the beauty and such an expression, which is more than [merely] human and characteristic of a goddess, even if she is naked (*di bellezza, e di aria più che umana, che anche nuda deve avere una dea*)"⁴⁴.

Taking into consideration already noted connection between the postantique vision of antique deity and the idea of the incorporeal lightness, one can comprehend what a conception of tectonics the descriptions like two cited above implies.

It was Henry Matthews that has shown considerably greater if not to say at most possible coherence in denial of Medici Venus' participation in carnal matters and at the same time the admiration of its pure spirituality in his travel book "*The Diary of an Invalid*" (1822). An

⁴³ Apolloni M.F. *Canova*. [Firenze:] Giunti. 1992. P. 25. (Dossier d'art).

⁴⁴ These are the closing words of the article *Venus* (*Dizionario portatile delle favole...* Vol. 2. Bassano: Tip. G. Remondini e figli editrice, 1824. P. 511).

account of impression produced on him by *the statue that enchants the world*⁴⁵, the *unimitated, inimitable Venus*⁴⁶, he begins with what many other visitors of Uffizi already have written earlier, namely with mentioning of his frequent returns to the statue and steadfast growth of admiring it⁴⁷.

But what kind of being appeared Medici Venus to Matthew's imagination? His book may tell it best:

It is indeed a wonderful work in conception and execution – but I doubt whether Venus be not a misnomer. Who can recognize in this divine statue, any traits of the queen of love and pleasure? It seems rather intended as a personification of all that is elegant, graceful, and beautiful; not only abstracted from all human infirmities, but elevated above all human feelings and affections; – for, though the form is female, the beauty is like the beauty of angels, who are of no sex. I was at first reminded of Milton's Eve; but in Eve – even in her days of innocence before 'she damned us all' – there was some tincture of humanity, of which there is none in the Venus; – in whose eye there is no heaven, and in whose gesture there is no love.

Immediately behind the statue, is the most famous of all famous Venuses of Titian, who has represented the Goddess of Pleasure in her true character... and the most bewitching picture it is. But the triumph of the statue is complete; there is an all-powerful fascination about it that rivets the attention, and makes the spectator turn away from the picture, like Hercules from the voluptuous blandishments of the Goddess of Pleasure, to devote an exclusive adoration to the celestial purity of her rival; for celestial she certainly is.

*The peculiar attribute of her divinity is, not its ubiquity, but its individuality. It seems impossible to transfer any portion of her 'glorious beauty' to a copy. None of the casts gives any idea of the nameless grace of the original. This incommunicable essence is always the criterion of transcendent excellence."*⁴⁸

In Matthews' discourse, almost all the points find their analogy in earlier or synchronous texts devoted to the same subject. As for the peculiarity and may be the uniqueness of his discourse, it consists only in that his main statement – i.e. of the divine character of Medici Venus image – is driven by him to its logical end, namely to the assertion that this image has transcendent, overworldly essence, that it is deprived of all connections with carnal and human matters, that it is an image of angel and consequently void of any sex and so there is reason to doubt the identity of Venus de' Medtci as the Venus' image.

⁴⁵ These words are quoted from the long poem *Seasons* (part *Summer* written in 1727) by British poet James Thomson (1700–1748). There they also are related to Medici Venus.

⁴⁶ Matthews H. *The Diary of an Invalid Being the Journal of a Tour in Pursuit of Health: a Tour Portugal, Italy, Switzerland and France in the Years 1817 and 1819*. 3rd ed. Vol. I. London: John Murray, 1822. P.136.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 146–148.

Expressing rather clearly, the author does not use any tectonic terms in description of perceived image of the statue, However, one may be sure that in a contrary case its description would be completely atectonic, because representing Medici Venus as an angel, Matthews already thus ascribed to it the literally incorporeal lightness.



Roman copy from the original of 5-4 c BCE. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (picture author: Ho Visto Nina Volare)

Flora Farnese. There are many authors that have written about extraordinary lightness as the principal merit of the Flora Farnese's image. But they have written about it not quite so as about lightness of Apollo Belvedere or Venus Medici. The seeming lightness of figure, which is represented by the statue of Flora, was praised by these authors not only as such but first of all as a member of a picantly contrasting pair of

indications, of which the other was the particular heaviness of Flora, if perceived as the stone. To all appearances, the rapture of authors was provoked just by this imaginary combination in subjective image of those two features incompatible in the physical reality as well as in the logical thought.

It was already mentioned François. Ragueneau, who became the first to begin speaking about Flora's extraordinary lightness coupled with the effect of huge heaviness, and doing it in laudator tone. So in his book on monuments of Rome, having noted in his account of Roman monuments of art (1700) the particular beauty and expressiveness of Flora's drapery, He adds:

Mais la légèreté de cette statue n'est pas moins admirable, que la délicatesse de la draperie; nos plus fines danseuses n'en font point tant voir en dansant, que cette Flore n'en a en marchant; elle ne tient point à sa base, elle n'y pose qu'un pied léger qui à peine la touche, elle ne fait qu'effleurer la terre, elle est emportée sur sa surface avec une légèreté semblable à celle des Zéphirs; plus on la regarde, moins elle paroît fixe; il semble qu'elle vole plutôt qu'elle ne marche: & ce qu'il y a de surprenant, c'est que cette statue est beaucoup plus grande que le naturel; car il n'est pas mal-aisé de

donner de la délicatesse à une petite figure; mais d'en donner à une masse de marbre aussi grande, aussi grosse, & aussi pesante que le bloc d'où a été tiré cette Flore, c'est assurément le chef-d'œuvre des plus grands Maîtres de l'Art: cependant il n'y a constamment nulle Statue au monde, quelque petite qu'elle soit, qui ait la légèreté & le dégagement de celle-ci. (“However, the lightness of this statue is worthy of no less admiration than the elegance of [her] dress-folds. Our most graceful female dancers show it not so much while dancing (*en dansant*), as this Flora while walking (*en marchant*). She does not stand on the base, but scarcely touches it with her light foot; she slightly brushes against the earth; she rises above the earth with lightness of Zephyrs. The more one regards her, the less she seems immovable; she seems rather flying than walking. But the most wonderful is that this statue considerably exceeds the life size, for it would not be any trouble to make graceful a little figure, but to impart elegance to a boulder, as huge, clumsy and heavy as that marble block, out of which Flora is hewn, that is an exploit, of which only great masters of art are capable. Meanwhile, it is doubtful whether in the whole world one can find another statue, however little it may be, which would possess lightness and freedom equal to that of Flora. ”)⁴⁹

On the occasion of this passage, I must note the following. Every object, being seen and sensed, is perceived as really existing. But in the limits of immediate, unreflected perception (including aesthetical perception as unreflected in essence), the lightness, if the object possesses this property, essentially lessens its existential definitiveness. The image of light object every time when it is aesthetically perceived, is to more or less extent ambiguous, for, on the one hand, it possesses the visibility and greater or lesser tangibility and so shows that it really *is*, while, on the other hand, it is deprived of ponderability, therefore its pretension to be perceived as a real one, seems to the aesthetically disposed eye doubtful.

Already according to how Raguenet has represented in his book the imaginative content of Apollo Belvedere (s. above), one can observe an especial propensity for the effect of ethereal lightness, making him see it even where it is not. Is it possible to wonder at such interpretation of Vatican Apollo and at the same time Flora Farnese, even if the horse of Capitoline Marcus Aurelius underwent in *his* description the compulsory levitation?⁵⁰

Similar to Raguenet but a quarter of century later, statue of Flora has been described by John Breval, already familiar to us by his judgement of Apollo Belvedere:

The Statue of Flora, so justly admir'd for its Grace, Lightness... She seems to tread as Vergil describes Camilla,

Illa vel intactae segetis per summa volaret

⁴⁹ Raguenet. Op. cit. P. 99–101.

⁵⁰ *A voir sa* [i.e. of Marcus Aurelius' horse] *légèreté, on dirait qu'il ne pèse point sur le pié-d'estal qui le soutient & qu'il n'a pas besoin d'appui.* Ibid. P. 43.

Gramina, ne teneras cursu laesisse aristas, &c. Æn. VII (“She could skim over the summit of crops | Without injuring delicate ears – Aeneis VII”.)⁵¹

The citation, in given context, of two lines of Virgil Aeneis, concerning the running of huntress and warrior maiden Camilla deserves to be considered as a peculiar case of substitution of the lightness-as-weightlessness notion for the notion of lightness-as-easiness. For, to judge at least by the more clear classical analogies, e.g. Ovid’s “Metamorphoses” or “Iliad” of Homer, Virgil says here about fantastically quick running, so quick that the feet of Camilla have no time to leave their footprints even on soft pliable objects like ears of the crop. In other words, the absence of vestiges must here be understood as a result of incredible speed and not of supernatural lightness; such a conclusion follows from the comparison with analogous passages of Greek and Roman poetry as for instance from Ovid’s Metamorphoses (X. 652–655)⁵². Meanwhile, Breval transfers the effect of extraordinary lightness, at the massive bodies naturally associated with super-high-speed motion, on the figure of Flora, which, even if she is represented in motion, moves quietly and with measured step; so he slightly pushes reader’s imagination towards a fairy-tale image of incorporeal weightless body.

The same combination of qualities as inherent in Flora’s image appears to a certain doctor Maihows. In his book of travel impressions (1763), this author, probably Englishman, notes, following Ragenet, two main advantages of Flora over other statues: the exemplary beauty of drapery and especial lightness combined with monumental dimensions:

Elle est plus grand que nature, & elle a ceci de singulier, qu’elle passe pour la statue la plus légère de tous les antiques de Rome; & qu’il n’y en a cependant aucune, au-dessous de la grandeur colossale, qui ait employé tant de marbre. («She [i.e. statue of Flora] exceeds the natural size and is admittedly notable as being the most light among all antiquities of Rome, whereas no one of them, even colossal, contains so much of marble, as she does”)⁵³.

⁵¹ Breval J. *Remarks on Several Parts of Europe: Relating Chiefly to the History, Antiquities and Geography of Those Countries...* Vol. 2. London, 1726. P. 300.

⁵² This is a passage from the story of race of nimble-footed Atalanta and her suitor Hippomenes: *...pronus uterque | emicat et summam celeri pede libat harenam: | posse putes sicco freta radere passu | et segetis cannae stantes percurrere aristas* (“...they both | rush headlong and with the quick foot touch the very surface of sand: | [so] you may believe [that they] can rush over the waters, without wetting their feet [literally: “by the dry pace”] | and run upon the ears of snow-white cornfield, without bending them.

⁵³ [Maihows]. *Voyage en France, en Italie, et aux isles d’Archipel, ou Lettres écrites de plusieurs endroits de l’Europe et du Levant en 1750, & c.* Ouvrage traduit de l’anglois. Vol. 3. Paris, 1763. P. 160. The quotation made here is taken from French edition representing itself as a translation from English; meanwhile original English edition (if it existed at all) remained inaccessible for me. I would like only to note that the French edition was registered as anonymous in the Directory: Barbier A.A. *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes*. Vol. 4: *Anonymes latins*. Paris: Daffis, 1879. Col. 1083–1084.

Thus, Maihows has shown full acceptance of the idea of Flora's extraordinary lightness advanced earlier by Raguenet and Breval. At the same time, he, by referring to generally accepted opinion, has noted in the image of Flora an ambiguous combination of extraordinary lightness with equally extraordinary heaviness, – a combination so pleasant to Raguenet.

Above, I have cited some instances of atectonic misinterpretation of three antique statues belonging to the Early Modern sculptural canon.

Are those instances numerous? At first glance, hardly at all. But they will seem strikingly numerous, if we esteem their significance by taking into account their demonstrative power. Because here we have to do with an obvious misinterpretation, which is a result of fantasy's arbitrariness in the process of perception and communication of statues' imaginative content, for *in spite* of what maintain the authors quoted here above, Apollo of Belvedere and Flora Farnese either stand having assumed the posture of step or slowly stepping and by no means fly, whereas Venus de' Medici evidently stands on the ground and not at all touches it slightly with her foot! Besides, if one succeeds in establishing of even a few but representative enough number of persons that are well known and authoritative in their own time (like f. ex. Montesquieu or Winckelmann and some others here mentioned), affirm the same idea, which is opposed to the evidence of their own eyes, one must regard it as an indication of something more important than simply a casual error and consequently requiring special culturally-historical examination.