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**Eschatological Metaphysics**  
**of Nicolai Berdiaev**

**Abstract**

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## Abstract

One of most famous Russian philosophers and certainly the most prolific of them, Nicolai Alexandrovici Berdiaev<sup>2</sup> (1874-1948) was characterized as “an unclassifiable man”<sup>3</sup>. A remarkable character and a faithful of the philosophical circles of his time, a solitary writer that avoided each and every trend of thought that may have assimilated him, involved in the political movements of the time but decrying the inconsistencies of all the political doctrines, ready for self-sacrifice when caring for the suffering of those around him, but not understood and left out for the radicalism of his convictions, a sincere and enthusiastic defender of a renewed and renewing Christianity, but often maintaining a difficult relationship with the representatives of a Church he criticized and loved in equal measure, Berdiaev was, first and foremost, a free man. The freedom to think and express his convictions sincerely, without restrictions, was one of his main features, which brought the appreciation of readers around the world and also creating animosities on ideological, philosophical or religious grounds.

He was aware, already from the outset, of this feature of his works, saying that “the academic philosophers chose to call

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<sup>2</sup> For the most faithful transcription of the name, Бердяев in Russian, we opted for the variant Berdiaev (the most common for the texts published in Romanian), read with the accent on the last syllable. For the French language, this was settled by Marko Marković: “We should write the name Berdiaev, but spell it Berdiaeff” (v. Marko Marković, *La philosophie de l'inégalité et les idées politiques de Nicolas Berdiaev*, Nouvelles Éditions Latines, Paris, 1978, p. 9). We also opted for Nicolai, for it is more faithful to the Russian original.

<sup>3</sup> Marie-Madeleine Davy, *Nicolas Berdiaev, l'homme du huitième jour*, Éditions de Félin, Paris, 1964, p. 12. In the present thesis, all translations into Romanian from the French, English and Italian languages are mine, unless they were extracted from previously published texts.

me a *thinker* (emphasis mine), meaning by that, I assume, a philosopher of a freer, less methodical type”<sup>4</sup>. Such a philosopher “of the freer type” will naturally attract the attention of any other living spirit, eager to broaden the scope of his knowledge beyond the philosophical systems of the “academia”. Moreover, when the preoccupation of such line of thought aims, irrespective of the issue originally tackled, to the Man, that “eternal man” which however “manifests himself as the earthly man, a servant to the development of time”, the man which is seen in the most concrete aspects of his existence, then the reading of a text by Berdiaev becomes an encounter with one’s own uncertainties<sup>5</sup>. One can agree with Berdiaev, or not, one can consider his ideas sound, or not, but one cannot remain indifferent.

Nicolai Berdiaev is a well-known name in the Romanian cultural milieu, as no less than fifteen of his books were translated after 1990<sup>6</sup>. However the interest in his work is much earlier than that, though, true, of an age mostly interested in, and even irritated by, his vision on several purely Christian subjects<sup>7</sup>. As a matter of fact, Christianity is a constant mark of practically every phrase, to be distinguished either in letter or in spirit. This is probably why, even though it was read attentively,

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<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Cunoașterea de sine. Exercițiul de autobiografie filosofică*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Idem, *Adevăr și revelație*, Editura de Vest, Timișoara, 1993, pp. 140-141.

<sup>6</sup> A complete bibliography of Nicolai Berdiaev, published in 1978 by Tamara Klepinine, enlisted 483 books and articles by the Russian philosopher, without the texts that were his but were not signed or were signed with a pen name (v. Tamara Klepinine, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Nicolas Berdiaev*, YMCA Press, Paris, 1978). This bibliography was updated later with articles found in Russian journals published before 1922.

<sup>7</sup> Still useful even after close to 70 years since its publication, one of the most solid critical evaluations of the main themes of Berdiaev’s thought is Isidor Todoran, in *Filosofia religioasă a lui Nicolae Berdiaeff*, Editura Arhidiecezană, Sibiu, 1943.

his work was mostly overlooked, even though the appeal to his ideas could have brought more consistency to the research carried out in the fields of philosophy, sociology or history. The philosophers avoided him, politely or indifferently, mostly blaming his vocabulary, which included too many theological terms, while the theologians did the same, stunned by Berdiaev's venture into tackling topics on the brink of heresy.

Neither did other cultural departments benefit from any of Berdiaev's ideas. In aesthetics, for instance, there has been no response to the proposal to change the emphasis from the "product" of creation to a metaphysical foundation of the act of creation, while the historians have not been convinced to appreciate the historical events as secondary to their eschatological stimuli. One could say, thus, that we meet, in the Romanian cultural milieu, a paradox: a philosopher's work that is read, even by the broader public, but rather neglected by the academic literature, or, at the very least, truly underutilized. This paradox constituted a first incentive for this research.

A second element that motivated the research behind this doctoral thesis was the original *mélange* of philosophical concepts and purely Christian terms. "I am not a theologian, the way I ask the questions and the solutions I give them are not at all of a religious nature. I am a representative of the free religious philosophy", the Russian philosopher wrote in his autobiographical essay<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, the working manner that one can observe in his writings is not the one of the theological handbooks, but the language is (certainly for the key concepts), the same<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Cunoașterea de sine*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> In the sphere of Western Christianity there exists as well a point of view which is similar to the one offered by the perspective of Eastern theology. For instance, the Jesuit theologian Jean-Louis Segundo says: "I have observed, however, following in the footsteps of Berdiaev himself, that his thought had a strong bond with, I should not say straightforwardly, theology,

Not even the label of “Christian philosophy”, which is debatable from the very start, cannot help us decipher the character of Berdiaev’s works<sup>10</sup>. That is because, even within this framework, the emphasis should still be on “philosophy” and not on its attribute, of it being “Christian”<sup>11</sup>. In the case of the Russian thinker, as in the case of other authors, according to Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, “one should rather start from the perspective of Christianity, so that one can be able to justify the idea of a Christian philosophy. This is what Berdiaev tries to do, remarkably, twice: first by inverting the perspective, then by invoking the Eastern, orthodox point of view. In the historical appearances, the distinctions are stark: the Areopagitic corpus is a state of philosophy, while the Augustinianism is philosophy; the same rather with the Palamism versus the Thomism,

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but with an experience lived within Christianity. Therefore, if in an experience that is absolutely religious, we should not mix the point of view of the theologian with that of the Christian man, it is still impossible to dissociate them. This, even if we want to forget that, in Berdiaev, certain philosophical notions, and of the most important significance, are nothing else than theological categories that were, so to call them, secularized. Even if we omit the first systematization of the thought of Berdiaev, from the time of *The Sense of Creation*, the Catholic theologian will undoubtedly be surprised to see the alterations that Berdiaev sometimes applies to the central dogmas of the Christian tradition (cf. Jean-Louis Segundo, *Berdiaeff. Une réflexion chrétienne sur la personne*, Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, Paris, 1963, p. 379).

<sup>10</sup> Gheorghe Vlăduțescu highlights this aspect in the “Afterword” of *Spirit și libertate*: „So that we do not take it form too afar and concern ourselves with more history that is necessary, in the session of 21 March 1931, the «French Philosophical Society» debated on the notion of «Christian philosophy». Reports were given by Etienne Gilson and Emile Bréhier. The first started by saying that «such a philosophy existed», while the other replied that «if such a philosophy exists, it is of no importance to the philosopher» (cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Spirit și libertate*, Editura Paideia, București, 2009, p. 379).

<sup>11</sup> As it may result from an application of the “sentence”: „The Philosopher «believes» in reason and, if he is a Christian, he believes also in God” (cf. Sabin Totu, *Apofatică și ontologie*, în *Dialogul dintre teologie și filosofie*, vol. 1, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2008, p. 289).

however solely the examples, crucial as they may be, cannot reflect, as many as they could be, the whole. Berdiaev is, from this perspective, a sure guide towards «the warm heart of the well-rounded truth», to say it in the manner of an ancient”<sup>12</sup>.

Works get even more complicated if we consider what Berdiaev himself means by *Christian philosophy*<sup>13</sup>. Since 1928 already, he had been emphasizing that the “authentic Christian philosophy is a philosophy of freedom and an authentic resolution of the problem of freedom is possible to construct, only by proceeding from the idea of God-manhood”<sup>14</sup>. We have here an extremely clear and telling statement about the way Berdiaev used to slide from the area of the confessions of faith to the area of the philosophical thinking and back. This mobility is actually a feature noted by most of his exegetes, who have acknowledged how difficult it has been to systemize the convictions of a thinker whose concepts appear to reflect chameleonic virtues, rather than the crystal clarity cut off from the depths of the philosophical thought.

However, aside from these aspects that needed clarifications in our thesis, we might say, together with one of the most dedicated students of his work, Jean-Louis Segundo, that, since Berdiaev “would think of himself as a philosopher, the analysis will focus chiefly on the *philosophical* aspects of his thought”<sup>15</sup>. This, nevertheless, not because he want himself

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Spirit și libertate*, Editura Paideia, București, 2009, p. 381.

<sup>13</sup> The concept of “Christian Philosophy” has constituted a preoccupation for the Romanian philosophy too, especially during the interwar period (v. Sabin Totu, *Filosofia creștină în concepția lui Mircea Vulcănescu*, în *Dialogul dintre teologie și filosofie*, vol. 2, Editura Basilica, București, 2009, pp. 109-123; Dan Chițoiu, *Nae Ionescu și filosofia în înțeles răsăritean*, în *Dialogul dintre teologie și filosofie*, vol. 2, Editura Basilica, București, 2009, pp. 130-139).

<sup>14</sup> N. A. Berdyaev, *The Metaphysical Problem of Freedom*, în „Journal Put”, nr. 9, 1928, at [http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd\\_lib/1928\\_329.html](http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1928_329.html).

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Louis Segundo, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

to be one, but because he *is* a philosopher, and not a theologian. Aside from his many references to philosophical concepts, of the clear influence that various philosophical authors instilled on him, his starting point (and his entire orientation) is not the certainty of faith, even though that is not missing, but his relentless wish to taste from the immovable truths of the man. His discourse, aside a few very rare confessional notes is essentially philosophical, with all its particulars, somewhat disconcerting to the academic philosophy, as his thought was characterized as “careless about logic, eclectic but monothematic, Christian in spirit but with a tinge of Gnosticism, mystic-prophetic, volitional-affective, full of pathos and rhetoric, catastrophic and eschatological”<sup>16</sup>.

Berdiaev himself acknowledges a certain negligence as to the formal aspects of his philosophical discourse, which is not by chance: “My thought is intuitive and aphoristic. It misses the discursive development of the idea. I am unable to develop and demonstrate something properly. And I believe it is not actually necessary”<sup>17</sup>. This manner of doing philosophy, easily noticeable in his works, was a perfect match to the manner he behaved in concrete situations, especially on the occasion of the many, and sought after, debates of ideas he had in Russia and the exile – imposed by the Bolsheviks in 1922 – in Germany, than in France. Marie-Madeleine Davy, who knew him closely and who left us notes about Berdiaev the man and the philosopher, thought that he “was suffocating inside everything resembling even a little a system. His free creation needed absolute independence. He suffered no disruption, wherever that may have come from”<sup>18</sup>.

One of the explanations for this particular manner of philosophizing resides, probably, precisely in the orientation of

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<sup>16</sup> Marek Styczyński, *Berdjaev: authentic existence or a negative sociology*, în „Studies in East European Thought”, nr. 62, 2010, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Cunoașterea de sine*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Marie-Madeleine Davy, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

his metaphysics. “I was always interested not by the world as it is, but by the destiny of the world and by mine, I searched for the end of things. Its orientation makes my philosophy not a scientific one, but one that is prophetic and eschatological”, said Berdiaev toward the end of his life<sup>19</sup>. To this original eschatological metaphysics he would actually dedicate one of his most important works, *Essay of Eschatological Metaphysics*, having as subtitle *Act of Creation and Objectification*<sup>20</sup>. Here, the Russian thinker tries to concentrate the most important aspects of his philosophical thought, as this is one of the most systematical (and, if one may say so, one of the most “philosophical”) of the books he wrote. His meditation begins from the fact that “the man is a being that has its end, as it is limited, which comprises in himself the infinite that he longs for as the end, he is a temporal being that bears in itself the eternity and longs for eternity”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, according to Berdiaev, “inevitably metaphysics becomes eschatological. The weakness of all the earlier metaphysics was precisely that they were not eschatological”<sup>22</sup>.

Even though he wrote himself a book dedicated to his eschatological metaphysics, I thought that to undertake research on this topic was not without merit. That is, on one hand, that in this book one cannot find the entire problem discussed, but only a synthesis, as many other elements of eschatological metaphysics are present also in his other books and articles. On the other hand, it is interesting to follow the context in which such a metaphysics is brought out, beginning with elements of his personal biography (with biographical digressions that are

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>20</sup> Published in 1946 as *Essai de métaphysique eschatologique. Acte créateur et objectivisation* (Aubier-Montaigne, Paris). In Romanian, it was published by Editura Paideia, București, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Încercare de metafizică eshatologică. Act creator și obiectivare*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 252.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

relevant to the topic), moving to those of the cultural or historical contexts and milieus, as well as to note the (re)sources on which the eschatological thought of Berdiaev was based. Last but not least, it was necessary to situate his thought in contemporary context, making notes of those aspects that require criticism, exposing certain weaknesses of his metaphysical system.

Of course, any systematization and attempt to clarify the conceptual apparatus of such a philosophical discourse has its limitations: “Berdiaev was anything but a systematic thinker, and all attempts to «squeeze» him into a system necessarily mutilate him”<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, in order to minimize the risks of such a misrepresentation, we shall first present in our thesis the most important elements of eschatological metaphysics, as they surface in the writings of Berdiaev, while leaving for the last part the presentation of a few critical points. Actually, the specifics of his work asks for such an approach. Reading a text by Berdiaev can be positively compared to the listening of a symphonic concerto. The way one cannot stop at each musical movement to express aloud an impression, in the same way one cannot stop to the passages of Berdiaev’s works, for that would interrupt the rhythm of words, which, conducted by his baton, gain musical inflections. Jean-Louis Segundo notes that “the rhythm should be observed first, for it bears the key to Berdiaev’s philosophy. It originates, in fact, from the driving core of his life: his combative temper, his radical incapacity to declare himself satisfied with something that wasn’t up to the exact standards he came to expect, the absolute need to negate where a different type of thought would limit itself to making a distinction. *Quod potest distingui potest negari*, said the scholastics, and we have to acknowledge that Berdiaev observed

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<sup>23</sup> This is the opinion of Alexander Schmemmann as argued in his review of C.S. Calian, *The Significance of Eschatology in the Thoughts of Nicholas Berdiaev*, in „St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly”, vol. 10, nr. 4, 1966, p. 213.

fully this statement, both in his day-to-day life and his philosophical work. However, this need to negate, so particular to him, it's an exercitation as well against his own thought, of which extremism could have, once fully grown, to lead him to objectification, to slavery. And only by taking into consideration these two aspects of the same movement one could come to understand his true line of thought. One would avoid thus the misunderstandings that often appeared as to his thought, about which he complains, accusing himself for them<sup>24</sup>.

A first step that is needed when one comes near to the philosophical thinking of Berdiaev, is to investigate those aspects from his personal and social life that created or made stronger his convictions on the limitations of this world and the immediacy of a salutary end for the man that sees himself "tossed" into a space and a time that generate existential unsettling. The hereditary legacy of a family that included characters of an impressive religious fervor, but also minds that feared nothing in expressing their ideas, explains to a certain degree the independence of Berdiaev's line of thought, which is doubled by a spiritual asceticism, that purifies everything limited and transitory. The fact he lived in an age characterized by serious social movements, by revolutions of Marxist origin, by a desacralized humanism which was, at the same time, degrading to the human person, by a alienation of the man facing his own technical creations, but mainly by the tensions created by the two World Wars, represent, undoubtedly, other elements that predisposed him to search for a transfiguring end for this agonic world. He would have structured his ideas about the necessary death of the world into the birth of another that is brought out of eternity, also because he would have wanted to promote a rejuvenation of Christianiy, which stood affected by pharisaic mannerism. He put to extensive work his encounter with German philosophy – the mystical one and the one having

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<sup>24</sup> Jean-Louis Segundo, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

Kant as a turning point – with Kierkegaard’s existentialism and, moreover, and more profoundly, he took over the problematic of Dostoyevsky’s literature followed by a selective reclamation of certain themes of the Russian philosophy written after the revolutionary (in a spiritual key) Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

The second chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the very concept of eschatology, which, even though was born and grew within the heart of theology, is beginning, either in the guise of a revolutionary ideology, or as totally imaginable utopias, a nice career in the secular sphere<sup>25</sup>. And, before tackling the way Berdiaev himself understands eschatology, with his metaphysical foundations, it was extremely useful to present the manners in which this concept is expressed, with the variants to be found in the writings of the Russian thinkers. Even though the Russian eschatologism can be identified in its forms as utopian or catastrophic, as progressive or anamnestic, we noticed that, strictly speaking, he knows but two versions: of the active and passive natures. Berdiaev commits himself to the active variation.

Moving to the actual considerations about metaphysics, we found that Berdiaev is a thinker who, while using an aphoristic and declamatory manner, in a dynamics that cannot suffer terminological fixations and textbook definitions, can however be “pinned down” by means of a few key concepts. “The metaphysics of the object is impossible, but not the one of the subject”, claims Berdiaev<sup>26</sup>. Within the framework of such metaphysics we saw first how an active knowledge of the truth

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<sup>25</sup> „The man hurt by the evil of the surrounding world feels the need to imagine a perfect, harmonious order of the social life. Proudhon, on the one side, and Marx, on the other, must be considered utopians in the same way Saint-Simon and Fourier are. Utopian as well was J.-J. Rousseau” (cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Împărăția lui Dumnezeu și împărăția cezarului*, Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 137).

<sup>26</sup> Idem, *Încercare de metafizică eshatologică*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 66.

is possible and which is the relation between this attempt and a critical confrontation, yet from the inside, on the revelation. The symbol and the myth gain in Berdiaev a different content that is normally accepted, becoming images (in iconic acception) of spiritual realities having a decisive role in the metaphysical orientation of man, while the dogmatism, seen as an alternative to an enslaving doubt, denotes “integrity of spirit, creative trust in its power”<sup>27</sup>. All these aspects were tackled in chapter 3.

Another particularity of Berdiaev’s metaphysics, introduced in chapter 4, is the emphasis on the tragicalness specific to the two states of the world, which one can notice in the rupture between subject and object. “The fall into the world of the object happened in the early life” and has as a result, in Berdiaev’s vision, “the lack of recognition as reality but for the secondary, reasoned, objectified element”, leading to “the doubt as to the first, unobjectified, unreasoned reality”<sup>28</sup>. Objectiveness is a fruit of objectification and “the evil of objectification, that is, the necessity for alienation, of depersonalization” can be defeated only in a dualist system<sup>29</sup>. Faithful to the Christian conceptualization, Berdiaev says that it is “impossible any monism within the limits of this objectified world”, but not also from an eschatological perspective<sup>30</sup>. Even though he claims to hail from a “philosophy of spirit”, this is, in Berdiaev, “different from the traditional spiritualist metaphysics. The spirit is not understood as a substance, or of a different nature that were comparable to the material nature. The Spirit is freedom and not at all nature”<sup>31</sup>. And freedom has an uncreated character, seen not as the possibility to choose between

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<sup>27</sup> Idem, *Sensul creației*, Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, *Încercare de metafizică eshatologică*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, *Cunoașterea de sine*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 335.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Încercare de metafizică eshatologică*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.

something and something else (v. free will), but as a meonic, pre-originary freedom. This way to see freedom becomes decisive in a theogony and anthropogeny that absolves God of the responsibility for the existence of evil in the world. God and man become the characters of a historical drama in which each of them is overwhelmed by the need for the other, and their encounter becomes possible in the God-Man. The dignity of the person is maximized, in Berdiaev, in communion, in the *sobornost* that is not “a collective reality in man that orders him, is a superior spiritual quality of men, a bonding with the quick and the dead”<sup>32</sup>.

To this considerations dedicated to the problematic of metaphysics in Berdiaev will follow, naturally, those that will describe the manner in which this philosophical discourse is materialized as eschatological. In chapter 5, we notice that “the evil of objectification”, a generator of slavery for man, “is nothing else but the result of his fall and his sin”. The state of fall and of sin presupposes a certain structure of the conscience and cannot be defeated only through sorrow and penance; this victory asks for the intervention of all the creative forces in man. Only after the man will fulfill what is according to his vocation, the second coming of Christ will happen, a new heaven and a new earth will appear: the kingdom of freedom”<sup>33</sup>. Berdiaev proclaims a liberation from fear, especially from the old fear of God, and positively evaluates nostalgia as “an orientation toward the heights of being” which “turns into anxiety when it reaches the ultimate intensity, its limit”<sup>34</sup>. The reflection on death shows, in the Russian philosopher, a prominent connotation for this transit to eternity and not a heart-breaking drama, as it is for the man who is confined within the boundaries of this world.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

<sup>33</sup> Nikolai Berdeaeu, *Despre sclavia și libertatea omului*, Editura Antaios, Oradea, p. 263.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, *Despre menirea omului*, Editura Aion, Oradea, 2004, p. 235.

“Death exists not only because the man, in this world, is a mortal being, but also because he is an immortal being, and the plenitude, the eternity and the immortality are incompatible with the conditions of this world”<sup>35</sup>. The inferno may be accepted for me, as a person, but never for others, which leads the Russian philosopher to proclaim the inevitable, finally, universal restoration of all (apocatastasis). The end of history cannot be accepted but in the framework of history, not as its exhaustion, as the eternity does not result, in Berdiaev, from the infinite sum of moments, but as an elevation to another existential level. Eternity erupts in time by means of every act of creation. A central concept in Berdiaev, by creation one should understand “not the manufacturing of products of culture, but the shock and the élan of the entire human being, oriented towards another, superior life, towards a new existence. (...) The exercise of creation does not mean reflection on its own imperfection, but the orientation towards the transfiguration of the world, towards a new heaven and a new earth, which man should prepare”<sup>36</sup>. In the tension between the Kingdom of Spirit and the kingdom of Caesar a third spiritual age is expected to come, therefore “the only possible metaphysics is the prophetic metaphysics, in the sense given to the term by Jaspers”<sup>37</sup>. These latter aspects of Berdiaev’s philosophy are analyzed in chapters 6 and 7.

The current thesis could not be complete without including, in a separate chapter (the eighth), an overview of the main “accusations” that Berdiaev faced, with respect to those said in the chapters above. As a matter of fact, during his life, according to one of his close friends, G. P. Fedotov, “Berdiaev finds himself continuously in the situation to reject something, a

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<sup>35</sup> Idem, *Dialectica existențială a divinului și umanului*, Editura Paideia, București, 2010, p. 89.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Cunoașterea de sine*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *Dialectica existențială a divinului și umanului*, Editura Paideia, București, 2010, p. 6.

certain lie, to elucidate on his own truth”<sup>38</sup>. We tackled the objections that mostly come out either of an erroneous reading of his concepts, from a biased position or because of forcing the interpretation outside the spirit in which Berdiaev wrote. We also noted the difficulty resulted, for instance, from the concept of “meonic freedom” and we present the reception that his works received with a few contemporary philosophers (in the last section of chapter 8).

In chapter 9 we attempted to draw a picture of the Christianity that Berdiaev claims to commit and we highlighted some of the consequences that his philosophical view inflicted within the sphere of dogmatics. This was also the opportunity to clarify the rapport between his eschatological metaphysics and Christian theology, assuming he had good intentions and remarking that the revolt of the Russian philosophers was against the proliferation of “undignified and false ideas about God” and that his fight was carried on “in the name of a superior, freer idea”<sup>39</sup>. It is possible that, in the end, one wouldn’t retain too many of these “free” ideas, to use in the philosophical debates or in the construction of the theological discourse, but the problematic that his work lays out, as one can easily observe, cannot be overlooked.

Berdiaev’s meditations on the destiny of man, on his anxiety or even his fear (in front of a world that exhibits more and more fragility) appear more contemporary with the day passing<sup>40</sup>. The progresses of a technology that occupies more

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<sup>38</sup> See the article *Berdiaev the Thinker*, published by Fedotov in the year of Berdiaev’s death (1948), included also in the Romanian edition of the volume *Cunoașterea de sine. Exercițiu de autobiografie filosofică*, Humanitas, București, 1998 (quote from this volume, p. 450).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Cunoașterea de sine*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 67.

<sup>40</sup> „Today Berdyaeв’s writings should also make us more aware of a radicalized New Moral Order in which any longing for transcendence and the pursuit of virtue is betrayed by the false prophets and false gods touted by a new hegemony and a geopolitical consciousness divorced from spiritual

and more the space and time – that cannot be used anymore, thus, for our spiritual edification – reminds us of a warning of several decades ago, in texts such as *Man and machine*, that one cannot live in a mechanized rhythm. In Berdiaev's philosophical thought, this power of the technical constitutes a last metamorphosis of the kingdom of Caesar, a sort of last temptation or last test that humankind would take before the end of the world would absolutely come.

How contemporary indeed is today a theory such as of the creation that has the power to stimulate the light in man (to whatever degree it is present) to shine, instead of criticizing his darkness that feeds on, and grows because, this sort of judgement! "Nicolai Berdiaev symbolizes the man of the eighth day", he is the symbol of the highest dignity that the man was called to by his Creator, i.e., to be co-creator of the new world<sup>41</sup>. And this fact assumes already the manifestation of a love relationship, which "burns every necessity and gives freedom. Love is the content of freedom, love is the freedom of the New Adam, the freedom of the eighth day of the Creation. The World is under the spell of evil and this spell can be undone only through love"<sup>42</sup>. Yet, the word love has come to designate a great variety of things – from the divine love to the one in which name an abnormal sexuality is cultivated – that one may feel a certain bashfulness one thinking of using the word, which otherwise has sacred significance. Berdiaev makes himself a teacher of the self-giving love, in which he respects to the other, continuously, the quality of person, of divine image<sup>43</sup>. In the

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roots" (cf. George A. Panichas, *Revisiting Nikolai Berdiaev*, în „Modern Age”, nr. 4, 2006, p. 376).

<sup>41</sup> Marie-Madeleine Davy, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>42</sup> Nicolai Berdiaev, *Sensul creației*, Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 148.

<sup>43</sup> „To reach the most profound truth of life means to understand that only to the one that gives and self-sacrifices, and not to that that claims and take, will be given to know the true blessing. Therefore the true mystery is concealed in love, capable of self-sacrifice, to give, to create. And every creation, as I said before, is love, the same every love is a creation. If you want to receive, give’

day-to-day life, love and freedom can clash and limit one another. True love gets, in the work of the Russian philosopher, inflections apparently long forgotten, as “the authentic act of love is eschatological, it means the end of this world, of this world of hatred and enmity, and the beginning of the new world”<sup>44</sup>. For Berdiaev, “love is creation”<sup>45</sup>, and freedom does not circumscribe the ethical perimeter of choice between good and evil, but accounts for the incommensurate possibility of man to love or not. Creation is the choice of love, and the fall is precisely its rejection.

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if you want to know satisfaction, don't look for it, don't ever think of it and don't consider it as the scope in itself; if you want to gain power, do it and use it in the service of the others” (cf. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Despre menirea omului*, Editura Aion, Oradea, 2004, p. 190).

<sup>44</sup> Idem, *Încercare de metafizică eshatologică*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 204.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, *Sensul creației*, Humanitas, București, 1992 p. 148.

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<sup>46</sup> Since there are several ways to write Berdyaev's name (such as Berdiaeff, Berdyaev, Berdeaev) or its first name (Nicholas, Nicholas, Nicholas, etc.), all referring, of course, to the same author, we will structure the bibliography largely ignoring the existing these name's variations, but applying the test only the alphabetic ordering of titles of his works (and the books we ordered first according to year of first editions, no matter when translated into Romanian and other languages).

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