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Ol'ga A. Zhukova

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OL'GA A. ZHUKOVA

The Philosophy of New Spirituality: The Creative Manifesto of Nikolai Berdyaev

The prominent Russian intellectual, Nikolai Berdyaev, is renowned for his metaphysics of creativity, which he founded on a unique concept of freedom. His unorthodox interpretation of human freedom and the reality of the Spirit became a kind of manifesto for religious existentialism. This article analyzes the social and metaphysical significance of Berdyaev's philosophy of creativity in the context of the European and Russian philosophical traditions.

Today, the methodological diversity of the approaches to the problem of creativity in contemporary philosophy reflects a polystylistic conflict. The metaphysics of creativity, which was a primary concern for Russian thinkers of the Silver Age, was never completely resolved philosophically, and today continues to be augmented by new conceptual terminology and experimental observations. To a large extent, the ontological, epistemological and axiological aspects of the phenomenon of creativity that were developed in the works of Andrei Bely, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Ivan Ilyin, Alexei Losev, Vladimir Lossky, Nikolai Lossky, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Vladimir Solovyev, Eugene

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Ol'ga Anatol'evna Zhukova, doctor of philosophical sciences, is a professor at National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE, Moscow). Email: logoscultura@yandex.ru

Translated by Peter Golub.

Trubetskoi, Sergei Trubetskoi, Nikolai Fyodorov, Pavel Florensky, and Semyon Frank, have significant theoretical potential, and constitute the philosophical core of the contemporary *ontology of creativity*.

A major focus of the Russian religious-philosophical Renaissance was the idea of culture as the creative experience of life, and creativity as the spiritual self-determination of personality [*lichnost'**]—*a means of justifying life*. Particular attention should be paid to the latent paradox of the problem of creativity in the European and Russian philosophical traditions, which developed the theme of creativity throughout the twentieth century—from modernism to postmodernism. This is clearly seen in the legacy of Berdyaev, who is representative of late modern philosophy in its existential form. Creativity is a central theme of Berdyaev's philosophy where it turns into a kind of high-pathos "epic." As the author of creative anthropodicy, he clearly shows the ontological meaning and limits of this phenomenon, that is, objectification, which he considers a mortal sin. However, having focused on personalist philosophy and the subject of creativity, Berdyaev says little about creativity itself. By contrast, the poststructuralist paradigm, in its striving to identify the mechanisms of creativity, says little about the subject of creativity, which leads to the absence of the ontological perspective of creative activity and eliminates the problem of personal self-determination with regard to the Absolute. Roland Barthes connected this with the disappearance of meaning.

Herein lies the central paradox of the theme of creativity. If we analyze the objectified results of creativity and begin to understand its mechanisms, we lose the subject of creativity—the creative person; creativity itself turns into a mechanistic process of deconstruction, into a combinatorial game of cultural texts and hypertexts. However, if we consider the subject of creativity as a living specific personality, focusing on the subject's spiritual and existential being, then little can be said about the mechanisms capable of illuminating the meaningful-structural features of the creative process (e.g., the process of creating a work of art). Our discourse here may be reduced to a description of biographical details and the cultural traditions that influenced the formation of the creative personality. Of course, creativity is impossible to formalize, but the rejection of the possibility of its rational comprehension leads to another paradox in the cultural-practical

*The word *lichnost'* is used throughout Berdyaev's work and Berdyaev scholarship. Its closest translation is "person." *Lichnost'* means a living human, with a unique composite of characteristics that make up an individual personality. In this article, *lichnost'* is translated as "personality."—Trans. & Ed.

field: if creativity should not be rationally studied, then, first, it cannot be taught, and second, it is not a means of developing the personality or society.

Also, the particularities of modern industrial production, not to mention postindustrial, make it so that a person not only is faced with the need to master a single operation, but must relate to the entire production cycle as a whole. The person is a kind of link in the technological chain of the process of production and its realization. In many respects, the practical bearing of the creative personality within the modern mode of production and the creative personality's corresponding type of social activity has raised the relevance of the problem of creativity and its philosophical discourse. The social demand for creative personality makes it possible to take a fresh look at the intellectual heritage of N.A. Berdyaev.

An original thinker and an outstanding representative of Russian religious philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century, Berdyaev presented the theme of creativity in the form of a modern spiritual manifesto. In his numerous works he outlined the contours of a new spirituality, distinguishing in it metaphysical and sociocultural perspectives.

In assessing Berdyaev's creative metaphysics, I will attempt to avoid using the common methodological move of juxtaposing conservative religious traditions and innovative creativity. It is often the case that when analyzing contemporary sociocultural reality, the juxtaposition of human intellectual activity as creative innovation and religion (and culture) as a protective tradition encumbers productive discourse. This opposition is especially unjustified when considering the problem of creativity as an *event of spiritual transformation*, as proposed by Berdyaev, who philosophically interpreted Russia's social and spiritual history and its tendency to conserve the religious meaning of creativity in its praxis of high-cultural.

In this context, ancient Russia's cultural assimilation of the Christian doctrine of the Creator and the created, eventually took on a specific meaning, in large part defined by its originality in the history of world culture, with many artists casting creativity in a messianic light. For these creators of Russian culture, creativity was the occasion for spiritual self-determination, and artistic creativity the unique method of comprehending and recreating the world, mediated through the manifestation of the image, which contributed to the formation of a distinct cultural archetype, when *creativity acted as an analogue of the religious idea of perfection and salvation*. Similarly, Christian existentialism, which either directly expresses Eastern Christian theology and mystical experience or indirectly expresses its connotations, in many ways is influenced by the role of

Byzantine religious art and political culture, and the means of its social existence in the process of the Christianization of ancient Rus.

The philosophical-aesthetic and moral-ascetic tradition—incorporated into Russian culture as a model of cultural creation—determined the principle of interaction and the semantic correspondence of art, religion, and politics, transferable and reproducible in the subsequent stages of the history of Rus and Russia. In ancient Rus, the assimilation of Christian philosophy occurred in the form of the artistic-aesthetic process of constructing the social and spiritual world according to ascetic teaching as the art of holiness and as culture itself—as its new image. In Russian history, Christian values and ideals—such as, mercy, compassion, self-sacrifice, devotion to faith, the pursuit of truth, justice, and love—translated into real and fictional characters (who in the present case are even more important). Lacking any traditional schools of philosophical thought, Russian scribes and painters turned their experience into a vernacular school of spiritual philosophy, and the artistic image, in the form of a detailed theory of being and knowledge, into a philosophy of culture and history.

In many ways, the lack of theological discourse in Russian culture provoked the dramatic development of a tradition, where old cultural forms—without the creative rethinking of the historical context—entered the traditional complex of cultural mentality through radical renewal of the social order. All this paved the way for the secularization of culture and a break with tradition; however, the experience of a *Christian existence turned out to be a link transmitting the Holy Tradition on the level of a motivating factor of creative personality*. It is no accident that Russian philosophical discourse construed creativity in terms of the spiritual foundations of culture, and the problem of the meaning of art and its correlation in terms of mystical experience. In Berdyaev's philosophy, the spiritual-creative schematic is embedded in a holistic worldview and takes the form of a relatively complete concept of creativity, which has a social (cultural) vector of realization.

Creativity has been reasonably well explored by Russian philosophers. Among these Nikolai Fyodorov is particularly important, because his theurgical project serves as one of the main sources of "Russian cosmism." To this can be added the cultural-philosophical project of the Symbolists, represented foremost by Andrei Bely and Vyacheslav Ivanov, and the metaphysical concept of "all-unity" developed by Vladimir Solovyev, who demarcated the development of the Russian religious-philosophical Renaissance, and portrayed creativity as the purpose of art and the spiritual realization of humankind. Berdyaev's existentially colored personalistic

philosophy was developed within this movement—the “new religious consciousness”—which was dominated by the idea of creativity.

The philosophical-aesthetic project of the Silver Age was devoted to finding a new type of creative experience, which would encompass artistic freedom, connected with autonomous cultural creativity, and simultaneously its religious meaning. In the secular world, this approach (based on the dialectics of the historical process, responsible for the creation of the foundations of Russian culture, with its Eastern Christian interdependence of art and religion) increasingly loses the sacred meaning of life and artistic creativity. However, it is precisely the philosophy of the Silver Age—and its reflection of the metaphysical manifestation of its culture in a period crisis—that necessarily brings us back to the issue of the specificity of *spiritual experience* in Russian culture, and to the potential realization of a new synthesis of art, philosophy, and religion.

Russian philosophy of the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, turning to the subject of creativity, considered creativity as primarily a problem of the ontology of culture. The historical-philosophical context is here extremely important. It is necessary to understand the philosophical discourse that served as the framework for Berdyaev’s concept of creativity and his existential religious manifesto. Russian philosophy gains its *theurgic concerns* largely from Nikolai Fyodorov—ascetic, original thinker, and the first of the Russian “cosmists.” In Fyodorov, this philosophical idea becomes an integral part of his creative program of action, where it functions as the concept of the grand work—the cosmic transformation of the world.

Despite the fact that Fyodorov’s philosophical system made prevalent use of Christian ideas and religious vocabulary, the merits of his philosophy constitute a profound break with the official Christian mindset of the church. This type of religious and mystical spirituality, existing outside of the church, marked a shift in Russian history from classical culture to postclassical and nonclassical culture, initially instigated by the success of positivism in science and philosophy. At this point, it is possible to address the *transformation of religious consciousness*. At its heart is the dialectical process of desacralization and mythologizing, which will become crucial for nonclassical culture, particularly during the revolution and the communist inversion of Russian religiosity, which Berdyaev witnessed and analyzed. The Russian revolution, which “demystified” the world and negated its ontology of the Miracle as the presence the Absolute Other, was accompanied—as Berdyaev showed in a number of works (including *The Origin of Russian Communism*)—by a parallel process of constructing

a new social mythology, which possessed all the features of faith and uncritical utopian consciousness.

In this context, Fyodorov's philosophy, characterized by its maximal rational reasoning, is a kind of naturalistic approach to the ideal world and to the ideal in general, while at the same time its moral fervor and utopianism can be seen as one of the forerunners of the new sociomythological consciousness. The fact of transcendence, like the Christian idea of spiritual perfection, functions not as the living reality of the Prototype, but as a projective model, which opens the way to *the social myth-creation of nonclassical culture*. The motifs of Fyodorov's aesthetically developed philosophy are present in the philosophy of Symbolism and the artistic world of the Russian avant-garde. Stylistically, Berdyaev would find himself alienated by Fyodorov's philosophy, as well as the art-myth of the avant-garde, but his metaphysics will clearly express the inherent idea of theurgy—the social transformation of the world through spirit and creativity.

Berdyaev's concept of new spirituality as the philosophy of creativity dovetails with *Russian Symbolism*. Regarding the reception of the religious meaning of creativity within Russian philosophical thought, Symbolism is interesting as it represents an initial synthesis of religion and art, which was understood by Bely and Ivanov as *the creative purpose of culture itself*. In this system, creativity and art are not so much the means as the inherent condition of human existence, and act as a kind of *religion of salvation*. Thus, the line between the creativity of life and the creativity of the artistic work are blurred. Life becomes a mystery, a creative project of remaking humankind, which is the purpose of culture.

Vladimir Solovyev's idea of "integral knowledge" was conceived of as the idea of an "integral worldview" existing as part of a syncretic, artistic and religious experience, in which Symbolism (as proposed by Andrei Bely) would be the worldview of the new era of creativity. It is significant that of all the meanings of the word "symbol," Bely gravitated toward the definition of "to connect." The verb here implies a fundamental synthesis of science, religion, and art as a single act of creative consciousness. Bely believed that the symbol functioned as a mediated integrity of the fundamental unity of the physical and artistic world. On the basis of his theory of the symbol, Bely tried to build a systematic philosophy of creativity, advancing Symbolism as the creative program of life. In this sense, his cultural-philosophical project again actualized Fyodorov's theurgic ideas. Life as creativity is the mystical content of the Symbolist cultural paradigm. Promethean fire is reflected by all the participates and demiurges of the new epoch involved with the global task of recreating humanity: "The final goal of culture is the remaking of humankind; in this final goal culture meets the teleological

purpose of art and morality; this culture makes theoretical problems practical; it forces value on the products of human progress, and changes life itself into the material from which creativity forges value.”¹

As a worldview, Symbolism opposed itself to materialism and positivism as a way of life. In the process of losing a sense of continuity with historical Christianity and acquiring a nonecclesiastical lifestyle, the identity of a person of Russian culture compensated for its lack of transcendental experience with creative mysticism, turning it into *an act of mystical identity* of the culture itself. Its transcendent goals were a part of world history where creativity was the only thing that bestowed life with value: “And where is value? Neither in the subject nor the object; it is in the creativity of life [A]ll theories breakdown, all reality passes like a dream; only in the creative act remains real value and the meaning of life.”²

The symbolist metaphysics of creativity not only transformed the artistic experience, but also represented a theory of knowledge, which in turn became a theory of creativity that would anticipate the onto-epistemological conclusions of Berdyaev’s own metaphysics of creativity. Therefore, the major thesis of Symbolism becomes clear: Symbolist unity is the unity of artistic form and religious content within a theurgic practice (i.e., in the practice of life itself). Symbolism constituted an attempt to restore humanity’s sense of the immediate integrity of being—initially present in the religious worldview—and to include free creativity, as it relates to cultural value, as *the autonomous region of human existence*. In its search for a unified theory of creativity, Symbolism came to the idea of a philosophy of life, where life was conceived of as the creativity of living forms. This allowed the Symbolists to see everything as the eternal creative renewal and self-actualization of life.

The Symbolists, who from the onset argued for the original integrity of art and religion as the superlative part of the tradition of any culture, rehabilitated the pagan, mythological, and pre-personal worldview within the pan-European Christian cultural tradition. Vyacheslav Ivanov said that a return to myth was a return to the “dark roots of being,” to the spontaneous [*stikhiinim*] aspect of life, to the cultural archetype of the Dionysian cults.* A similar return to the mythology of antiquity, as a means of eschewing the false system of Christianity, was adopted in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

*Ivanov uses the word *stikhiinim*, which refers to the important concept of *stikhiinost'*, which can be translated as “spontaneity,” “deviancy,” “elemental force,” and “chaos.” The indeterminacy of the term is in a way part of its definition. In Russian it is often opposed to consciousness (*soznatel'nost'*).—Trans.

This transformation of metaphysical systems proved to be central for European intellectual culture and the fate of Russian thought. Nikolai Berdyaev—whose philosophical thought began by mastering the terms and categories of materialism—came to his original metaphysics of creativity via existential experience, which consisted of living life as an extension of the mysteries of the Spirit. This internal personalist position made the process of philosophy contingent on personal meaning, “commensurable with one’s own fate,” and turned Berdyaev to the religious aspects of ontology and anthropology. The freedom of the creative spirit within God was understood by him as the last tragic mystery of the world, which existed in eschatological perspective:

Human freedom lies in the fact that besides the realm of Caesar, there is the realm of the Spirit. The existence of God is found in the existence of the Spirit in man. God is neither a force of nature nor the power of society or government. There is no analogy here. When applied to God, all analogies are falsely cosmomorphic and sociomorphic. God is freedom—not necessity, not power over humankind and the world, and not the supreme cause acting in the world. That which theology calls grace, likening it with human freedom, is the working of divine freedom within the human being. It can be said that the existence of God is the charter of human freedom, which is the internal vindication of the personal struggle with nature and society for freedom.³

It is here that the question concerning the limits of human freedom inevitably arises.

The tragic paradox of freedom lies in the fact that it can be a source of slavery—the slavery of sin. This is due to the temptation of pride, which results in false freedom and occurs when individual autonomy is asserted as absolute freedom outside the ontology of God. Berdyaev writes about this in *Freedom and the Spirit*: “Any claim to freedom is a lie. Freedom must be discovered and revealed in the spiritual experience of the spiritual life; it cannot be the subject of external declarations. This is why the revolutionary demand for freedom usually leads to new forms of tyranny and slavery. Freedom of the spirit cannot be demanded through violence—it must be attained from the inside.”⁴

Berdyaev’s ontological thesis is that humanity is not a self-sufficient entity; outside superlative reality—the reality of God—it does not exist, wherein lies the mystery and virtue of human life. Virtue does not lie in a demonic concept of freedom, but in the communion (participation) with God. “If there is no God in the form of Truth and Meaning, there is no higher Truth, and everything is made horizontal, there is nothing to which

or to whom to aspire. If man is God, then there is no hope; all that remains is the superficial and insignificant," concludes Berdyaev.⁵

In his interpretation of God and freedom, Berdyaev noticeably deviates from the patristic interpretation of the main dictates of the Christian doctrine. Berdyaev separates the reality of being and the reality of freedom, defining the latter as an "archetypal phenomenon" of the world. The primacy of freedom and volitional nature of the relationship between God and humankind creates the possibility of evil. "God's world is replete with evil, but his creation also bears the principle of the freedom of spirit, which is the greatest good and the sign of man's godliness. The problem of theodicy can be solved only through freedom," insists Berdyaev.⁶ Freedom is not merely ontological, it is also preexistent. The existence of good and evil is the result of the transcendental nature of freedom as the highest mystery of all existence: "The mystery of evil is the mystery of freedom. Without understanding freedom, the irrational existence of evil in God's world cannot be understood. . . . Freedom is not created, because it is not nature, freedom precedes the world, it is rooted in primordial nothingness. God is omnipotent over existence, but not over nothingness and not over freedom. And that is why evil exists."⁷ Good can be attained only by cognizing and abnegating the horrors of evil. The main question of the philosophy of religion and moral metaphysics now consists not in determining the nature of good and evil, but in determining the relationship between the freedom of God and freedom of humanity. The relationship between the creator and the created consists of the reciprocation of God's love (i.e., the free, personal turn toward God). This is what affirms the value of each person in the eyes of the creator.

Berdyaev's version of theodicy bears a peculiar imprint of immorality: freedom appears to be beyond good and evil, outside their qualitative distinctions. The romanticizing of Christian ethical categories occurs in Berdyaev's philosophical system. The presence of God is not demonstrated by history, but by the existence of the personality in communion with the mystery of the Spirit within the reality of unconditional, incongruous freedom. Thus, the world for Berdyaev is just an objectified existence, incapable of creative self-realization. Any product of social activity is automatically relegated to the objectified world, which threatens nothingness, death, and the loss of freedom. Escape from the world of evil can only be attained through the reality of the creativity of the human spirit. And here occurs Berdyaev's existentially motivated shift to a personalist metaphysics of creativity.

Spirit does not, according to Berdyaev, constitute objective reality and it cannot to be understood as a rational category of being. He addresses this

problem in *Spirit and Reality: The Fundamentals of Divine-Human Spirituality*. Therefore, “the philosophy of the spirit should not be a philosophy of being or ontology, but the philosophy of existence.”⁸

In an attempt to distinguish his metaphysics from Platonic determinism and the Hegelian monism of Absolute Spirit, Berdyaev (wary of naturalizing spiritual reality) rejects the existential universalism of Spirit: “Spirit is by no means an ideal, universal foundation of the world. Spirit is concrete, personal, and “subjective.” It is revealed within personal existence, where the concrete-universal of the Spirit is revealed. The concrete-universal does not exist in the abstract, ideal sphere, not in the generic existence of ideas, but in personal existence, in the preeminence and totality of personal existence.”⁹

Here Berdyaev sees the uniqueness of personality, its universal participation in the world, which it can “embrace with love and perception.”¹⁰

Spirituality is understood as the highest quality, value, and achievement of a person.¹¹ This raises the question of how the *new spirituality* is attained. Berdyaev casts doubt on the idea of personal salvation, conceiving it as a form “transcendental egoism.”¹² Instead, he posits the ideal of the holistic attainment of human divinity as a part of Christian history. Salvation in this case is possible only through unity with others. Berdyaev moral imperative is the following: “Every person should assume the anguish and torment of the all the world and its people, and to share their fate. Everyone is responsible for everyone else.”¹³ According to Berdyaev, the individualist strategy of salvation has traces of utilitarianism, which distorts spiritual life. Further, he seems to formulate the defining part of his metaphysics of creativity, reconciling the social and transcendental vectors of salvation by overcoming the boundaries of sacred and profane spirituality.

Berdyaev believed that it was precisely the reduction of spiritual life to the goal of personal salvation that led to the denial of creativity, which was condemned and relegated “to the nonspiritual sphere.”¹⁴ This makes creativity a product of secularization, profane spirituality is “merely tolerated,” while salvation is possible only within sacred reality. Berdyaev emphatically proclaims: “The new spirituality is the rejection of the salvation of the elite.”¹⁵ And concludes:

All the old Christian manuals for spiritual life taught that a person should bear the cross, but often forgot that the cross has a universal meaning and is extended across all of life. Not only is the individual person crucified, so is all of society, government, and civilization. This is connected with the discontinuity of the historical and social process, the inability to

understand it exclusively organically. The extension of the cross into social life implies the defiance of social norms, and the sanction of necessary catastrophes, revolutions, and radical changes in society. It is a mistake to construe the cross as conservative. It is a person's appeal not only for personal salvation, but also for social transformation that reveals the personal, deeply personal call to spiritual life. This call is annulled when spiritual life is commingled with personal salvation, for it is always connected with creativity, and creativity is turned out to the world and other people, to society and history.¹⁶

What aspect of historical Christianity does Berdyaev criticize? Precisely the one that *pushes creativity into the profane sphere, negating the creative act's transformative and redemptive metaphysical meaning*. Indeed, if in Eastern Christian anthropology, transcending the limits of existence is correlated with the concept of theosis (the deification of man), then the modern philosophical tradition frames the problem in terms of culture, where limitations are transcended through creativity, the results of which create the universe of culture through the pursuit of new knowledge, understanding, and creation. It could be argued that Berdyaev proposed to consider creativity (oriented toward innovation) and religious faith (determined by tradition) as *two sides of a single life experience, possibly of common origins*. He believed that his task was not to emphasize the commonly highlighted opposition of creativity and religion, but to consider the possibility of their synergy.

This approach was largely defined by the specifics of Russian history, which at its source was formed as a culture of faith. Berdyaev's philosophical intuition was attracted to the type of culture that represented the long historical mediation of mystical praxis, which included intellectual, artistic, and social experience. The cultural result of this mediation became a tradition, based on a specific experience of faith, which considers the possibility of spiritual-practical (not only aesthetic) union with God and His world in the form of special communication or contact with profound transcendental reality through individual perceptual-creative activity.

In Rus/Russia, aesthetic and ascetic practice developed along the Byzantine cultural model, which provided the content and form of creativity, and bestowed it with religious meaning. If in ancient Russian culture the highest personal goal was salvation, understood not only as individual transcendental perfection, but also as a cultural ideal in itself, then within the framework of secular salvation, the person who correlated themselves with tradition gained value through the *substantiation of creativity*, which is exactly what Berdyaev formulated in his philosophy.

This secular analogue of religion served as a special form of moral responsibility for the fate of humanity and society. In religious culture this was understood as salvation, and in the framework of a secular culture acquired the meaning of the substantiation of creativity. In Berdyaev's version this takes the form of bearing the cross—taking on the spiritual and social responsibility of all.

Berdyaev is one of the few philosophers who raised the issue of the internal boundaries of creativity, and who defined creativity as both human and divine, based on a Christian conception of creation. Is it even possible within the framework of religious traditionalism (for Berdyaev, historical Christianity), where all acts are associated with faith, to talk of the manifestation of human creativity, the prerequisite of which is the *freedom* needed to act as an independent creator? In the history of European culture this concept of creativity is associated with the Renaissance. Russia did not experience the Renaissance, but absorbed its effects as finished products in the legitimized forms of the Enlightenment, where parity with God had already been expressed in a moderate form.

During the reforms of Peter the Great, the understanding of freedom as an immanent personal capacity, expressed as a result of creativity in the unique work of the author, preserved at a deep, archetypal level of self-awareness the understating of creativity as the transcendence of personality at the level of the Absolute, which was central to the religious traditionalism of ancient Russia. The opposition of “holiness and genius” was translated by Berdyaev into the opposition of “religiosity and creativity” in order to describe the formation of the individual “I” out of the collective “we,” and reflecting the transition from religious to secular culture, but with the preservation of the sacred meaning of human creativity.

The central idea of Berdyaev's philosophy is the idea of saving humanity through creativity, as this is the answer of the created to the Creator. Tragedy and sacrifice are present in the creative act. The result of creativity is objectified by the world, alienated from the Creator (author), as the world, according to Berdyaev's ontology, knows no other state except fall and sin. Only creativity as a form of “liberation and ascendance,” as “exit, exodus, and victory” justifies human existence, for it is its anthropodicy.¹⁷

Human nature in its fundamental principle of Absolute Man—Christ has already taken on the nature of the New Adam and reunited with the nature of God, for it dares not feel alienated and alone. Disunion is in itself a loss of spirit and a sin against God's vocation of man, against the call of God, and God's need of man. Only having experienced in oneself all the world and through the world, only after defeating one's selfish desire for

self-salvation and proud reflection over one's power, only after freeing oneself from separateness and detachedness is one able to be a creator and a person. Only the liberation of man from himself leads him to himself. The path of creativity is sacrificial and full of suffering, but it always liberates from all oppression.¹⁸

In Berdyaev's philosophy, creativity is a metaphysical "bundle" of ontology and anthropology, which determines the possibility of human existence. Characteristically, his metaphysical project of creativity simultaneously polemicalizes and continues the theme of the philosophy of life, as advocated by Nietzsche. This tragic dialogue arises as a philosophical opposition to the Christian cultural tradition, and to the European cultural tradition in general. If Berdyaev's program of creative anthropodicy is meant to be an alternative to "elite salvation," then Nietzsche's philosophy formulated the type of person who lives according to the rules for "higher" beings. His ethics, freed from the "false" values of Christian civilization, is a new metaphysics of the cult of the "superman." The prototype of such a future hero is the genius of culture, who combines angelic and demonic features. In his pursuit of the truth, he is self-reliant in his attempt to overcome internal and external constraints. Nietzsche likewise described the genius of culture: "He would manipulate falsehood, force, the most ruthless self-interest as his instruments so skillfully he could only be called an evil, demonic being; but his objectives, which here and there shine through, would be great and good. He would be a centaur, half beast, half man, and with angel's wings attached to his head."¹⁹

These are the people who will forge the bell of culture. According to Nietzsche, any evidence of God will be futile, and everyone will have to determine their own understanding of what it means to be human. The task for future humankind is the following: "The earthly rule of man must be taken in hand by man himself, his 'omniscience' must watch over the further fate of culture with a sharp eye."²⁰

Obviously, Nietzsche's philosophy is a tragic version of the idea of the God-man, its autonomous morality alienating creation from Creator. Thus, he heralds the crisis of European nineteenth-century consciousness, and predicts the global turmoil of the twentieth century. Having existentially experienced the new epoch and resisted the total desecration of culture, Berdyaev also acted as a prophet, foreseeing the time when humanity, having accepted the "absence of transcendental help," discovers the "infinite immanent help in itself."²¹

Berdyaev raises the question of anthropodicy—the vindication of human creativity, which for him meant freedom from "depression" and attainment

of freedom as a condition of personhood. Not finding the creative spirit in contemporary culture or the Church, the Russian thinker proposed a new religion—the religion of finding vindication in the mysteries of the Spirit. For Berdyaev, the objectified existence of things as products of human creativity is evidence of an ontological crisis, and also the great failure of culture, which is impossible to overcome in history. Objectification, interpreted as a mortal sin, lies in the nature of man, and that is why alienation can only be overcome outside human history—within an eschatological perspective.

It should be noted that Berdyaev's idea is not, as is commonly portrayed, naïve. The concept of the end of history is present in Hegel's philosophy of history, and acquires a special meaning in Oswald Spengler's morphology of culture. Contemporary authors, such as Michel Foucault and Francis Fukuyama, have also used the idea in their cultural-philosophical systems. When Berdyaev makes this "eschatological turn" his reasoning is most sound. When he talks about the need to revise history, he defines it as the personal story of humankind, not as a state, national, ethnic, economic or supra-individual structure. Berdyaev's eschatological metaphysics of creativity brings together philosophical and religious experience, and is the culmination of an investigation of the universal ontology of creativity within the postclassical framework of Russian culture, revealing the transformational nature of the European philosophical tradition, while simultaneously addressing the question of the possible existence of humanity and culture.

This creative metaphysics bears the features of postclassical and nonclassical culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the immediate continuity of being was reproduced in the form of a transformed religious consciousness. At its core is the artistic-philosophical or mythological projection of the Christian idea of transfiguration. Creativity is understood as a means of transfiguring the world into a new metaphysical integrity of culture and humanity. In Berdyaev's philosophical interpretation, a person is an agent of their own self-worth, and standing before the absolute Agent, contemplates their personal immortality and transcendence beyond the bounds of culture, and maintains the original religious understanding of creativity as perfection, as the spiritual transfiguration of personality, which paves the path to a new spirituality.

It seems that the present, marked by a crisis of metaphysical consciousness, should not neglect the philosophical insight of Nikolai Berdyaev—apologist of freedom and culture. His intellectual heritage with its manifesto of transcendent life goals and human values may be a productive form of resolving the current crisis. Awareness of the creative

act as an *event in being*, providing the recreation of the ontological integrity of humanity, culture, and the Absolute reconstitutes the religious meaning of creativity and the idea that life is a way of salvation and vindication, where the existential parameters of personality are overcome by free, self-reliant, and transcendent purpose. Thus, the autonomous meaning of cultural creativity and the meaning of the religious idea of salvation—which in Berdyaev’s work is defined as the new spirituality—attains its sociohistorical vector of development.

Notes

1. A. Bely. *Simvolizm kak miroponimanie* (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), p. 33.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
3. N.A. Berdyaev, *Tsarstvo Dukha i Tsarstvo Kesaria* (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), p. 299. [In English: *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar.*]
4. N.A. Berdyaev, *Filosofia svobodnogo dukha* (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), p. 104 [In English: *Philosophy of the Free Spirit.*]
5. N.A. Berdiaev, *Tsarstvo Dukha i Tsarstvo Kesaria*, p. 299.
6. Berdiaev, *Filosofia svobodnogo dukha*, p. 112.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 369–70.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 446.
16. *Ibid.*
17. N.A. Berdyaev, *Filosofia tvorchestva, kul'tury, i iskusstva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1994), vol. 1, p. 40.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
19. F. Nietzsche, S.L. Frank (trans.). *Chelovecheskoe shlyskom chelovecheskoe Kniga dlya svobodnikh umov* (Moscow: Mysl', 1990) vol. 1, p. 368. [In English: *Human All Too Human.* R.J. Hollingdale (trans). Cambridge University Press, 2004.]
20. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
21. N.A. Berdyaev, *Filosofia tvorchestva, kul'tury i iskusstva*, p. 41.