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# Death and Immortality in the Ideas of the “Godseekers”: Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev

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## ABSTRACT

Humanity has always been interested in the problems of Death and Immortality. Since the beginning of human history man has strived to continue his existence forever and to win over the Death. Ways to accomplish this are sought for in religion. Religious knowledge is thought to show the path, the rules and the principles that can help reach eternal life and victory over Death. Philosophy and philosophers also ponder the meaning of life and try to explain the purposes of human existence and to understand what Death is – an end, a beginning or just a transition from one state to another.

In the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century there is was very interesting movement in Russia – Godseeking. This was a cultural and philosophical trend which aimed to reach God. Its exponents were highly educated people, and at the same time they were true Orthodox Christian believers. The Godseekers strived to defeat Death and reach eternity using Orthodox dogma and also their philosophical knowledge as their bases. Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev are two of the most interesting and original representatives of this movement. They trod similar paths of spiritual perfection – from socialism and ideas close to atheism, they turned to Orthodox Christianity. Their main goals were two – one personal, to find the path and reach God, and one universal, to help bring about the rise of God’s kingdom on Earth.

*Проблемите за смъртта и безсмъртието винаги са вълнували човечеството. Още от най-древни времена човека се стреми да продължи съществуването си вечно и да победи смъртта. Отговор на тези въпроси хората търсят в религията. Тя е нещото, което сочи пътя, правилата и насоките, които могат да помогнат на хората да достигнат вечността. Философията и философите са другите, които разсъждават за смисъла на живота, опитват се да обяснят целите на човешкото съществуване и да разберат какво представлява смъртта – край, начало или просто преход от едно състояние в друго.*

*В Русия през XIX, началото на XX век съществува едно много интересно явление – Боготърсачеството. Това е културно и философско течение, което се стреми да достигне до Бога. Представителите му са високо образовани, но едновременно с това и силно вярващи православни християни. Те се стремят да победят смъртта и да достигнат вечността, като за постигането на тази цел използват православната догма и я допълват с философските си познания. Фьодор Достоевски и Николай Бердяев са двама от най-интересните и оригинални представители на това течение. Те извървят подобен път на духовно развитие – от социализъм и идеи граничещи с атеизма, достигат до Православието. Основните цели, които поставят пред себе си, са две – една лична, да намерят правилния път и да достигат Бога, а друга общочовешка, да помогнат за идването на царството Божие на земята.*

Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev are two of the most important and original representatives of Russian religious philosophy. They followed a very similar course, particularly as regards their stages of mental and spiritual development. Both passed from socialism to conservatism and explained their intellectual transformation as the result of acquired knowledge and life experience, and also overcoming the delusions of youth.

These Russian philosophers were interested mainly in the connection between Christianity and the people of Russia. They believed that faith is an important progressive power, and their ambition was to get as close as possible to God and deliver this knowledge to their own (i.e. Orthodox) people. Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev had as their final aim the creation of God’s kingdom on Earth, i.e. the founding of such a system of government as would help people attain spiritual perfection and immortality of the soul.

This is why they call themselves “Godseekers” (in Russian, *bogoiskateli*). The whole of Russian society, from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the empire, showed interest in this question. As Berdyaev wrote: “The main question of our time is the quest for God; it is part of our literature; the newspapers and magazines write about it; in society and at meetings people speak loudly about God-seeking”<sup>1</sup>.

There is strong similarity between Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev, which is to be expected, as they shared many ideas and beliefs. Of course, there are differences, and normally the influence goes from Dostoevsky to Berdyaev (who does not deny this, and in fact is even proud of it). This is why I have devoted my research to both of them. Each one deserves special attention, and so they are treated separately. At the end I will compare and summarize their ideas.

## FEDOR DOSTOEVSKY

There is so much research dedicated to Fedor Dostoevsky that Valentina Tvardovskaya has claimed: “There are a hundred times more works about Dostoevsky than his literary legacy”<sup>2</sup>. This is why this research focuses primarily upon the works of Dostoevsky himself.

Nikolay Berdyaev dedicated a special book to his predecessor, *Mirogledat na Dostoevski* [The Ideology of Dostoevsky], in which he pays homage to his great compatriot. He also wrote books about other intellectuals, but he admits that he separates them into “the ones who understand Dostoevsky and those who are alien to his spirit”<sup>3</sup>. According to Nikolay Berdyaev, Russians tend to be either apocalyptic or nihilist – there is no middle ground. He finds in Dostoevsky something of the ancient philosopher Heraclitus – fire, eternal movement, and spirit created from fire, turned towards the future – while at the same time he remained a *pochvenik* [a man who is keen on his people’s traditions]<sup>4</sup>.

Nikolay Berdyaev considers that human beings are the most important aspect of Dostoevsky’s works. That is why he does not remove the responsibility of freedom from his characters, and the right of free choice. In *The Russian Idea* Nikolay Berdyaev says that: “The whole *weltanschauung* of Dostoevsky is connected to the idea of personal immortality”<sup>5</sup>.

The Russian philosopher does not hide his admiration of Dostoevsky as an authority on the Russian soul. He says: “In Dostoevsky you can find all Russian humility and self-importance, Russian universality and exceptionality, as he reveals himself to be a preacher of the Russian idea”<sup>6</sup>. In Dostoevsky’s works you can: “...understand the Russian soul”<sup>7</sup>. As a whole, the philosopher manages to capture and show the *weltanschauung* of the great author. Nikolay Berdyaev admits that he has learned from many great thinkers (from Karl Marx to Friedrich Nietzsche) but that the greatest influence, born from the similarity in their way of thinking, was Dostoevsky.

Lev Shestov is another philosopher that has written a special book about the great Russian: *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche; Kierkegaard and Existential Philosophy*. There are many books dedicated to the connections and the similarities and differences in the ideas of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche. One of the main reasons for this resemblance is provided by the German philosopher himself, who confesses: “Dostoevsky is the only psychologist from whom I have learned something; I consider my acquaintance with him as one of the luckiest fortunes in my life”<sup>8</sup>.

Being interested in the ideas of Dostoevsky, Lev Shestov studied the different periods of his life and work and tried to find the landmarks which built his character and his *weltanschauung*. Undoubtedly one of the moments which changed Dostoevsky was his exile and life in a convict prison. He had the opportunity to think over his ideas there and it is possible to say that he experienced something of a catharsis. As Shestov noticed, Dostoevsky was reborn after exile; he stopped writing about the damaged and the humiliated, and began to create works on a totally different idea, dedicated to other problems – about crime and punishment. After his return from exile, the Russian author was already a conservative and had overcome his juvenile socialist ideas. The accent on the mental development of Fedor Dostoevsky makes the work of Shestov a very important book for everyone who wants to understand the Russian thinker better.

The complexity of Dostoevsky’s psychology, as well as his sincere opinions and firm positions on everything, have meant that his researchers have developed different opinions

of him. One of them, Nikolay Mihaylovsky, calls the author a “cruel talent”. Another – Nina Dimitrova, in her book *Dostoevsky and the Russian religious and philosophical Renaissance from the 20th century* – offers an interesting take on his philosophy: “many think of Dostoevsky as an atheist, passionately searching for faith without finding it”<sup>9</sup>.

Fedor Dostoevsky believes that the fact that Russians are Orthodox Christians is their greatest virtue. For him there is nothing more valuable than faith. It is a central question, which forms the character and ideas not only of the individual but also of the whole nation. Religion creates values and ideas of good and bad, and also provides orientation as to how to achieve immortality and salvation. The Orthodox variety of Christianity is the official religion in the Eastern Roman empire. Because of this fact the Orthodox claim that their faith is the closest to the original Christianity. For Dostoevsky religion is “...not just about the Church and rituals but something that is alive, and which has forged our people into a powerful living force, without which nations die”<sup>10</sup>.

#### IMMORTALITY AND THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL

Fedor Dostoevsky had a strong Christian faith, which was why questions of immortality and the salvation of soul were really important to him. They are discussed throughout his entire work, in his novels, newspaper and magazine articles, and also in his personal correspondence. “The damned questions”, as he describes them, do not give him peace throughout his whole life and the quest for answers to them becomes the central purpose of his life. The complexity of this matter makes it difficult to give a final solution to these problems. Fedor Dostoevsky, of course, is guided in his quest by the principals of Orthodoxy, but makes very interesting interpretations of it. He asks himself many questions and gives different answers to them. He also tries to explain the reasons for the existence of Evil. He emphasizes the individual’s right to choose, and gives special attention to the process of penitence and catharsis through which man purifies himself and returns to the righteous path.

It is these deep provocative psychological moments that create great interest in his work. His research into the different kinds of evil acts committed by humans are used in Criminology and they have caused some authors, like Nikolay Mihaylovsky, to call him “cruel talent”. Nietzsche’s opinion also warrants special attention: he confesses that Dostoevsky is the only psychologist from whom he has learned something. Usually the German philosopher is very parsimonious in his commendations and rarely speaks of someone without criticizing them.

Because of his never-ending quest and varying points of view, opinions and solutions, some authors, like Nina Dimitrova, doubt his faith and think of him as an atheist who desperately seeks God without being able to find him. Such ideas seem original and are not entirely senseless; however, when we consider the time and the place in which

Dostoevsky lived, they seem less reliable. Nikolay Berdyaev describes the situation perfectly: this was a time when the whole of Russian intelligentsia was searching for God.

Without “the supreme idea” the existence of humans and nation is impossible. “The supreme idea” on Earth is only one, and it is exactly that of the eternal human soul, because all the other “supreme ideas” in life, with which human being can exist, result from it<sup>11</sup>.

After defining the main idea of human life, Dostoevsky tries to achieve it through “God-seeking” and spiritual wandering. Orthodox Christianity is the religion he follows but it provides only the main ideas, leaving him free to choose how this “supreme idea” is realized. Dostoevsky explains this in terms of the great trust that has been placed in man because of his potential. “Declaring Man to be a responsible creature, Christianity recognizes his freedom.”<sup>12</sup> This freedom is to transcend yourself and your will with the aim of attaining a state of mind in which you have true mastery over yourself for eternity. Having won this hardest battle, a human being can give himself over entirely to the pursuit of Truth. And “...everyone who really yearns for Truth already has tremendous strength”<sup>13</sup>.

The main problem for Dostoevsky was not whether God and Immortality existed, but rather how to reach them and unite with God and Eternity. “If faith in eternity is so necessary for the existence of man, then it is the normal state for Humanity; if so, the immortality of the human soul doubtlessly exists.”<sup>14</sup> But the achievement of immortality and recognition of God are very difficult and complicated problems, exacerbated by the tendency to wander and be assailed by temptation. Because of this, man will probably turn from the righteous path. However, the important thing is for him to realize this and correct his mistake. Dostoevsky thinks that this will not make him weaker; on the contrary, he will become stronger as a result. Redemption through suffering is often a theme in the works of this author influenced by his own destiny – his exile, where he believes that he paid for his sins against to his motherland and became aware of his mistakes. Using his own experience as an example, the philosopher shows that everyone has a second chance and can pass through catharsis and be saved.

This feature of Dostoevsky’s philosophy has led many authors to find resemblances between him and Nietzsche. One of them is Lev Shestov, who has noticed that *purification through suffering and pain and the character-strengthening effect of this are also examined by the German philosopher, who says: “Suffering strengthens the spirit and virtue”*<sup>15</sup>. *This proximity in thought is very interesting if we consider that one of them is a committed Christian, while the other one is anti-Christian, possibly even an atheist. The other resemblance between them is that Dostoevsky speaks about Mangodhood and Nietzsche about Godmanhood.* Shestov believes that the two conceptions are opposites, though both generally share the same idea – a belief in man’s perfectibility and his ability to reach God.

Immortality and the salvation of the soul are final aims, according to Dostoevsky. His quest in this direction is based on Orthodox principles and also results from his rich mental and spiritual life experience. The search for God is the reason for his will to create God’s kingdom on Earth – the final goal of every Christian believer.

## NIKOLAY BERDYAEV

Nikolay Berdyaev's work has provoked a wide range of different responses, and his originality and incompatibility have made him many friends and enemies. A. Ermicheiv understands the philosopher's complex personality and his *Weltanschauung* very well. In order to illustrate the philosopher's mentality, he describes him using his own words:

I have always been in opposition and conflict. I have always been in opposition to the *dvoryan* [Russian aristocratic] society, the revolutionary intelligentsia, the literary world, the orthodox circles, Communism, emigration, French society... I have always been nobody's man, I am devoid of followers for my ideas, my destiny, my search of Truth<sup>16</sup>.

According to Ermicheiv, Berdyaev was concerned primarily with the struggle for inner freedom of personality and its dependence on outer circumstances. The Russian philosopher devoted his work to searching for the meaning of life, which alone is enough to make life reasonable.

The Russian religious thinker Evgenij Trubetskoy gives another interesting opinion about Nikolay Berdyaev. He engaged in a long-lasting newspaper debate with the philosopher, in which both revealed mutual respect, despite the differences in their views. For example, in his article "New and old national messianism"<sup>17</sup> Trubetskoy criticizes the religious romanticism of the philosopher, which he considers irrelevant and untenable.

There is undoubtedly a great deal of valuable information about Nikolay Berdyaev in the first volume of the research project on the philosopher undertaken by the Russian Christian Humanity Institute. It contains memoirs, opinions and articles, by Vasilij Rozanov, Lev Shestov, Simeon Frank, Peter Struve, Lev Karsavin, amongst others. The different opinions offered by religious philosophers, liberals, Euro-Asians, and communists give a complete portrait of the Russian thinker. Of course, many criticize him because of his originality and he is often accused of belonging to the opposing side, while others try to draw dividends from his name speaking of him as one of themselves.

## THE "GODSEEKING" OF NIKOLAY BERDYAEV

Nikolay Berdyaev describes his time as a period when everyone was interested in religious questions, especially concerning the path to God. Even the common people had opinions on these issues, a position based on natural logic rather than systematic knowledge. But it is exactly this that is of interest to Nikolay Berdyaev because these opinions present a different point of view, that of the common believer. The philosopher liked to speak with such "popular Godseekers", as he calls them, and he would listen to their opinions with real interest. They had different theses but one of the most interesting and curious was that of the sect of the Immortals. The followers of this sect believed that humans died because they believed in Death and not in the Christ's victory over it, and that Jesus was not going to resurrect the dead and the followers of this sect were not going to die. If someone did die in fact, it is because he has not really believed truly.

Thus, the philosopher named his generation the “Godseekers”. He believed that there were not just physical but also mental wanderers, such as the Russian intelligentsia, who never stopped searching. These Godseekers themselves are the spiritual wanderers who roam on the paths of knowledge and wisdom, searching for Truth and Perfection.

The problems of Death and Immortality are very important for Nikolay Berdyaev, and he devotes a special chapter to the issue in his book *The Destiny of Man*<sup>18</sup>. According to him, the ancient Greeks were the first to initiate the struggle for Immortality. Their mysteries and Orphic teaching were created with precisely this purpose. The Greeks reached the conclusion that the human soul has a divine element which has to be freed from the chains of matter to gain immortality. The Russian philosopher assumes that this is a good beginning but that only Christianity knows how to win over Death. With his resurrection Christ shows the way to Eternity. Nikolay Berdyaev believes that: “Jesus Christ with his death reformed Death”<sup>19</sup> and “The deed of Christ is a victory over Death and preparation for resurrection and eternal life”<sup>20</sup>.

The “Godseeker” thinks that the end of life comes, according to Christianity, from Sin and that Death is the last enemy that must be defeated. He declares that the meaning of life and moral experience, collected during one’s lifetime, is to prepare man to be strong enough when the time comes to meet Death, to have the proper attitude to it.

For Nikolay Berdyaev, Death is not merely evil: “Death is the deepest and the most important fact of life which lifts even the last mortal out of the daily grind and the banality of life”<sup>21</sup>. By ending life, man reaches immortality and eternal life. The Russian philosopher believes that the existence of this world makes sense only because of Death and if it did not exist, there would be no sense in human existence. Death shows that people are part of Eternity and it is not just fear but also hope. It exists only in Time and Space. And for Nikolay Berdyaev: “Eternity and everlasting life are not in the future but at the moment, i.e. in the absence of Time, transforming into an eternal projection of life in Time”<sup>22</sup>.

The philosopher considers that victory over Death through birth is an illusion because it only leads to another death. And man is immortal and eternal only as a spiritual being. The struggle with Death in the name of eternal life is the main task for everyone. On the other hand, man attains Eternity and Immortality only through Death...

According to the Russian philosopher, perfect love drives back fear, and fearlessness is a supreme state of mind. And if man is defeated by the fear of Death he starts to kill and tries to master everyone. That is why the meaning of life is victory over the fear of death and over Death itself. This is the way to Eternity – the body dies but the personality does not. The idea of Immortality is in life itself...

Nikolay Berdyaev examines Death as the most painful problem of the human mind. He says that the end of life leads to the breaking-up of a person’s non-identity and not to a loss of identity. “A human being does not vanish; he becomes divine but inherits his humanity in the Eternal life.”<sup>23</sup> The Russian philosopher does not believe in the ex-



istence of Hell as a place of endless suffering. Everlasting pain would render conscious life senseless. Instead, he considers that Hell represents man's wanderings on the way to Eternity and his inability to reach it. This is the hardest thing for anyone to bear; indeed, the difficulties, woes and feelings of loneliness and neglect may be understood as the greatest suffering of the soul and therefore as Hell.

This philosopher considers Immortality as something concrete, not abstract. For him, man does not lose his individuality after death and does not disintegrate into a mortal body and abstract energy. Nikolay Berdyaev believes that "Christianity approves the true Immortality of the whole man, everything human in him, except his mortality created from Sin and Evil"<sup>24</sup>. This idea is inspired by Orthodox anthropology in which the main idea is the belief that man is created in the image and likeness of God, i.e. a human is created as a spiritual being. Thence the Russian thinker brings out the idea of the meaning of human existence: "The main purpose of life is the regeneration of the mysteries of the Spirit in which God is born in human and man is born in God"<sup>25</sup>. And precisely the existence of a part of God in humans gives them a chance to develop and enlarge it and thus – to reach Immortality.

#### ETERNITY AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF TIME

Nikolay Berdyaev defines three main types of Time: Cosmic, Historical and Existential. Cosmic time is represented as a circuit. It is connected to Nature and we as natural beings are also bound to it. In this kind of Time there is an alternation of days, months, years, centuries. It is separated from the Present, the Future and the Past. In Cosmic time, Death and Resurrection succeed each other, but in the spring a new life is born and the old is gone forever. The Present is imperceptible because it is closely connected with the Past and the Future. In this Time there cannot be a victory over Death and that is why the personality is useless.

The second kind of Time is Historical. It is represented by a straight line pointing ahead. That is because this kind of Time is directed like this. Thus, although there are repetitions in events, they are not exactly the same and every one of them is unique. For Historical time, the Present does not exist. It creates illusions – a conservative one about the great Past, and the illusion of Progress, about a great Future.

The third kind of Time, Existential time, is represented as a point, and is in fact the Present. The Present is outside time and it is Eternity. Existential time is a subjective experience that cannot be calculated, divided or summed. The happy moments in the human life cannot be measured, only the bad ones can be counted. Historical time is a mediator between the Cosmic and the Existential and it exists in both of them. The Existential interferes with the Historical during great creative acts which are outside Time. Historical time is endless but does not lead to Eternity. The problem with this kind of time, according to Nikolay Berdyaev, is that it does not lead to the Kingdom of God – the ultimate goal for every Christian.

The Apocalypse and the coming of God's Kingdom take place in Existential time and normally the end of History is part of this. The Russian philosopher considers two conceptions of the Apocalypses. The first – which is passive, is connected to Christianity – it is expected when God decides for it to happen. This state of temporization brings horror to the people. Often when changes arrive and historical epochs come to an end (as with the French revolution in 1789 and the Soviet one in 1917), an Apocalypse is expected. The second opportunity is the Active Apocalypse which is a death of God but also of Man and will happen when people bring about a spiritual revolution and claim victory of the personality over universalism and of Freedom from Slavery. This is a victory of Existential time over Historical time. Then God's Kingdom will come and a new world will be created. Nikolay Berdyaev believes that the path of human beings passes through the suffering of the Cross but also through resurrection – victory over Time, the Past and the Future.

### FEDOR DOSTOEVSKY AND NIKOLAY BERDYAEV

The “Godseekers” Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev studied very difficult questions and problems. They wanted to discover and reveal the right way to salvation and Immortality. And a man who wants to go that way has to have a real personality. The creation of such a man is a very difficult process, because only someone like this is able to transcend daily life and dare to walk through the labyrinth of the Spiritual and to seek Immortality without fearing the unknown, the unexplicable and the incomprehensible, using faith alone as a guide. Fedor Dostoevsky and Nikolay Berdyaev explain that a man walks in the right way only if he is devoted to spiritual wandering and becomes a Godseeker. He must continually ask himself “the damned questions” and search for answers to them. The best guide during this wandering and pursuit of God, according to both of them, is Orthodoxy. It offers the best basis and directions for reaching God. This is the way of creating a truly free personality – Godmanhood, as Nikolay Berdyaev calls it, ready to deal with every kind of challenges.

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Filosofiq na svobodata* [Philosophy of Freedom], Sofia 2002, p. 206.
- <sup>2</sup> V. Tvardovskaya, *Dostoevsky v obshtstvenoy zhizni Rosii: 1861-1881* [Dostoevsky in the social life of Russia: 1861-1881], Moscow 1990, p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Mirogledat na Dostoevski* [The Ideology of Dostoevsky], Sofia 2005, p. 35.
- <sup>4</sup> “*Pochvenik*” is a Russian 19th-century term which means a man who is keen on his people's traditions. Nowadays it is used also for an extreme conservative.
- <sup>5</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Ruskata ideya* [The Russian idea], Sofia 2007, p. 417.
- <sup>6</sup> Id., *Mirogledat* cit., p. 134.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- <sup>8</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Zalezat na kumirite* [Twilight of the Gods], Sofia 2004, p. 46.

- <sup>9</sup> N. Dimitrova, *Dostoevsky i ruskiat religiozno-filosofski renesans ot XX vek* [Dostoevsky and the Russian religious and philosophical Renaissance from the 20th century], Sofia 1994, p. 49.
- <sup>10</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik na pisatelya* [Diary of the author], Sofia 1986, vol. X, p. 466.
- <sup>11</sup> Berdyaev, *Mirogledat* cit., p. 97.
- <sup>12</sup> Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik* cit., vol. X, p. 19.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. XI, p. 73.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. X, p. 558.
- <sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *Zalezat* cit., p. 5.
- <sup>16</sup> A. Ermichiev, *N.A. Berdyaev: pro et contra*, Saint Petersburg 1994, p. 9.
- <sup>17</sup> See E. Trubetskoy, *N.A. Berdyaev pro et contra*, Saint Petersburg 1994.
- <sup>18</sup> See N. Berdyaev, *Prednaznachenieto na choveka* [The task of Man], Sofia 2005.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.
- <sup>23</sup> N. Berdyaev, *Samopoznaniето* [Self-knowledge], Sofia 2002, p. 676.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 796.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 809.

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Dostoevsky's literary works explore human psychology in the troubled political, social, and spiritual atmospheres of 19th-century Russia, and engage with a variety of philosophical and religious themes. His most acclaimed works include *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *Demons* (1872), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). They sentenced the members of the circle to death by firing squad, and the prisoners were taken to Semyonov Place in St Petersburg on 23 December 1849 where they were split into three-man groups. Dostoevsky was the third in the second row; next to him stood Pleshcheyev and Durov. Dostoevsky distinguished three "enormous world ideas" prevalent in his time: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Russian Orthodoxy. Nikolai A. Berdyaev quotes Showing 1-30 of 40. "Every single human soul has more meaning and value than the whole of history." Nikolai Berdyaev. tags: meaning, soul, you. "Each one of us shares in the destiny of the world and humanity, and must accept his own portion of the general responsibility." Nikolai Berdyaev. tags: destiny, philosophy, responsibility. 3 likes. Even as Nikolay Berdyaev doesn't seem to fit easily into any single philosophical or theological current, it is clear that he has influenced the spiritual and intellectual landscape of Europe and, even more importantly, has become the focal point for the formation of new communities which have both religious-philosophical and social significance. In the same year, Berdyaev becomes Editor-in-Chief of "Putj", on the pages of which he again brings together many of the former participants of the evening discussions that had taken place at Vyacheslav Ivanov's "Tower" apartment (a Silver Age cultural phenomenon). Jacques Maritain, Paul Tillich, Henri Massis and other western thinkers also join the discussion. PDF | In Berdyaev's notion of freedom the borders between theology and philosophy seem to fall down. The same existential concern for spiritual freedom | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. image within. We can find a similar idea also in the thought of Nicolai Hartmann, a thinker with which Berdyaev. debated much on the notion of freedom. He says that "freedom is the rising of initiative above the blind happenings." death that Christ saved us from. Berdyaev is well aware of the tragic dimension of freedom within man, where. one is called to reach the divine or spiritual freedom, but also because of freedom he can alienate and enslave his. being.