

**MAN AND THE CHURCH
IN THE CHRISTIAN THOUGHT OF NICHOLAS BERDYAEV**

An international scholarly conference on the 150th anniversary of the philosopher's birth

Workshop

N. A. Berdyaev's Historiosophical Discourse: Russia and Europe

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Historiosophical issues were always definitive within N. A. Berdyaev's thought. Even in his earliest works he raises the issue of Russia's and Europe's divergent fates with firm and whole-hearted alarm. Given his eschatological perspective, Berdyaev constantly correlated his central interest of cultural creativity with the final phase of historical process.

History in our homeland has always had a "volcanic" character, as Berdyaev's would have it, and therefore failed to arrive at the revolutionary faultlines of 1917 by way of a more stable stream of creative continuity. "Schism" and "unsubstantiated nature", Berdyaev believed, are the authentic driving forces and constants of life in Russia; he was ready to name both negative and positive connotations of these manifestations, which reflect deep contradictions within the Russian soul. In a broader sense, Berdyaev understood Russia's revolutionary catastrophe as "the impoverished foundation of a new era" and the onset of "a new Medieval era".

In the emigration, Berdyaev devoted a great number of pages to the phenomenon of totalitarian regimes or, as he put it, "inverse theocracies". Nor did his attentive historiosophic eye neglect two world wars, which left the old Europe behind. In the emigration, Berdyaev only redoubled his criticism of "historical solid states", exposing the weaknesses of both "reactionary romanticism" and "revolutionary demoniacism". Berdyaev's keen discernments regarding the historical building blocks and prospectives of communist totalitarianism have not lost their relevance, even today. He considered both pseudodemocratic "power by wealth" and "bourgeois seduction" to be temptations of the "kingdom of Caesar". In the main, Berdyaev's historiosophical position was directly determined by the fact that as a Christian he was opposed to reducing priceless treasures such as the human spirit and freedom to the status of mere social instruments.

Moderator:

Viktor Vladimirovich Ganovskij, PhD candidate in Philosophy, Senior Lecturer at SFI

Questions for Discussion:

1. What, according to Berdyaev, is the hallmark of Russia's historical development? What is Russian "totality" and what will it lead to in history? What is the primary danger of Russian nihilism?
2. Where does Berdyaev think the basic contradictions of the new European humanism come from? Would it have been possible to avoid a "new Medieval era"?
3. How might we define Berdyaev's socio-historical ideal? In what ways is his critique of far right and far left ideology still relevant today? How does Berdyaev believe one

should live and think within history, if we understand history within an eschatological context?