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DISSERTATION

A Critical Assessment of the Concept of a Person in the Thought of Nikolai Berdyaev and René Guénon

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The modern world[1] makes many demands on us. In a certain sense, it coerces us and people experiencing various globalizations in different spheres of life try to adapt themselves to these challenges. The constant changing of human lifestyle creates a vision in which nothing is stable. Similarly, the flexibility of time makes us believe that we are living in the veritable and alternative world, where there is no security, reliability, guarantees, etc. In a world deprived of the prospect of a new dawn and where there is no stable ground, it becomes increasingly difficult for man to find the meaning of life, recognize his own calling, maintain a healthy inner order, and harmonize with oneself, all while balancing interpersonal and social relationships.

In different eras, the calling of man and his essence have been defined in a variety of ways. The definition of man has depended on numerous factors, including politics, economy, geography, social issues, religiosity, and spirituality. *Homo politicus*, *homo sapiens*[2], *homo agricola*, *homo economicus*, *homo ludens*[3], *homo economicus*, *homo faber*[4], *homo hierarchicus*[5], *homo sociologicus*[6], *homo civicus*, *homo creator*[7], *homo moralis*[8], *homo reciprocans*[9], *homo duplex*[10],

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[1] In this context, I use the term 'modern world' to refer to the period after the end of World War II.

[2] Early E. Spamer, 'Know Thyself: Responsible Science and the Lectotype of Homo sapiens Linnaeus, 1758,' *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences* 1.149 (1999): 109–14 (p. 112).

[3] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1949).

[4] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1907).

[5] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, 2nd ed. (Louis: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[6] Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo Sociologicus: Ralf Dahrendorf on Class and Society*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2022).

[7] Gérald Quitaud, *Homo Créator: La création de l'homme par l'homme* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016).

[8] Elżbieta Neyman, 'Homo moralis', *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*, 39.40 (1977), p. 70.

[9] Thomas Dohmen, Armin Falk, David Huffman, and Uwe Sunde, 'Homo reciprocans: survey evidence on prevalence, behaviour and success', *IZA Discussion Paper*, 2205 (2006), p. 3.

[10] Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893).

homo hierarchicus[11], *homo sovieticus*[12], *homo religius*[13], *homo informaticus*[14] — are only a few of the titles that have been ascribed to human beings at different times by various thinkers. The question arises: which title or titles bring the truth to light?

The worldviews, systems, and concepts underpinned by contemporary ideologies are deeply embedded in the core of humanity. As a result, it becomes difficult to extract these influences from human consciousness, sometimes taking several generations to do so. Traditions, cultures, practices of belief, and many other values that have been passed down from one generation to another are losing trust, undergoing rigorous criticism, experiencing changes, and even being replaced by new visions or ideologies. In such conditions, philosophy, with its methods, critical analysis, criteria, and the ability to assess situations, as well as its capacity to address questions and solve problems, can be helpful in this search. Throughout history, philosophy has been aimed at discovering what is true, real, and immutable, assisting in filtering the information that reaches humans. If asked what a man is, I would answer that he is *philo-Sophia*.

The impact of globalization is felt in every area of human life, and adapting to crises has become a common norm. However, the limited foresight of the human mind often restricts our understanding of life's depth. By rejecting the Principle, the Highest Good, God, man creates these himself. As a result, this self-created assumption undergoes constant changes. Purposes, dreams, plans, and wishes are often influenced by the egocentric state of man. Life as a whole undergoes deconstruction, including humans who may struggle to comprehend themselves and their goals. This research does not aim to provide a definitive answer to who humans are, as this

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[11] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Louis: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[12] Aleksandr Zinovyev, *Homo Sovieticus* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Pr, 1985).

[13] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961).

[14] Michael Trimmel, 'Homo Informaticus — der Mensch als Subsystem des Computers', in *Res Rev Insights* (1998), p. 2.

would entail solving existential human problems. Rather, through this work, I aim to offer an essential perspective on these questions, which may resonate within the reader's heart.

In recent decades and even centuries, people have adopted a permissive attitude, which has greatly influenced their understanding and self-awareness. It is important to note that a human being has the freedom to decide for themselves the way they create or rebuild themselves at a fundamental level. The question that arises is this: who can be considered an example to follow? It is a common tendency in human psychology to always look for someone to imitate. Therefore, who is this universal person who meets all the criteria and can serve as an example for everyone? Is it possible for such an ideal individual to exist in all aspects?

Can humans imagine a perfect man? From a Christian perspective, the saints can be seen as examples to follow, but they follow the incarnate God — Christ, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Christ is fully human and nothing human is foreign to Him, yet He remains a perfect man and an example to follow. It is noteworthy that Christ is a Person. Therefore, does this imply that a human is also a person, or must become one? Or, could it suggest aspiring to be godlike?

In this work, I delve into the question of the conception of a person. I draw upon the perspectives of intellectuals such as Nicolas Berdyaev and René Guénon, seeking answers within the realm of religious philosophy, or if to be more precise metaphysics, mysticism and spiritual realism. Some may believe that spirituality is an outdated approach, no longer in vogue, I strongly believe that this is a topic of relevance that will endure. Despite the emergence of new technologies such as robots, AI, and nanotechnologies, questions regarding man as a mystery, man as a person, and man as a universe will always remain on the agenda. As humans continue shaping new world governance and order amidst emerging diseases and wars, I firmly assert that this topic will continue to be relevant. Regardless of how advanced and automated our society becomes, the relevance of these questions will never fade away.

The idea of a person has been studied by various schools and sciences throughout history. Some aimed to explore its original meaning, while others simply used it as a synonym for a

human being. However, some tried to introduce additional meanings in response to the demands or challenges of their times. This research focuses on critically assessing the concept of a person by analyzing the worldviews of two prominent 20th-century intellectuals: Nicolas Berdyaev and René Guénon. Both of these thinkers are recognized in the realm of philosophy and supported by historical, philosophical, religious, and theological convictions, as well as research from other fields. This thesis emphasizes the personalistic aspect of their worldviews. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a comparative analysis of the concept of a person proposed by Berdyaev and Guénon, showing the uniqueness of personalistic approaches and at the same time analyzing whether their concepts about the person have a common denominator, even if they are representatives of different philosophical trends. The relevance of the chosen topic lies in the fact that a comparative analysis of the personalistic intentions of Berdyaev and Guénon is being carried out for the first time.

In my study, the term 'person' has a special meaning that differs considerably from its contemporary interpretation. Distinguishing between a human and a person, Berdyaev and Guénon perceive the latter as a destiny for the former. This destiny can be fulfilled through a gradual spiritual human growth, as outlined in various religious traditions. I also draw attention to the historical development of the idea of a person, tracing its origins back to Ancient Greece and Roman cultures, and its subsequent reconfiguration into a concept by the Church Fathers. By historically investigating and synthesizing the patristic approach, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the foundation of the concept of a person, as well as clarify the analyses of Berdyaev and Guénon.

Both Berdyaev and Guénon were notable thinkers who made significant contributions to the field of philosophy during the 20th century. Berdyaev is considered one of the pioneers of existential and personalistic thought in Russia, while Guénon is known as the father of the Traditionalist school, which emphasizes the unity of all religions in the Principle (God). Their ideas had a profound impact on religious, cultural, political, and social domains in both the

Western and Eastern worlds. Berdyaev and Guénon were influential voices in addressing the existential challenges of their time, and their work remains relevant till today. They tackled complex issues such as the problems of modernity and the modern world, the calling of man, the decline of history, and the decay of human spiritual activities, among others.

I recently discovered a research paper by Robin Waterfield that compares the worldviews of Berdyaev and Guénon, noting some similarities between their perspectives. However, this research primarily focuses on Guénon's life and work. Therefore, I would like to conduct a comprehensive comparative study of the thoughts of both Berdyaev and Guénon on the concept of a person. It seems to me that such a research perspective would be the first of its kind, and I believe that it provides an opportunity not only to recognize their similarities but also to understand the diversity of both Berdyaev's and Guénon's worldviews. By analyzing their approaches, I hope shed light on certain aspects of their works that have remained obscure until now.

To conduct a research, I have focused on critical literature that encompasses authors from the lifetimes of Berdyaev and Guénon, as well as modern scholars who have delved into the works of Russian religious philosophy and the Traditionalist School represented by these distinguished intellectuals. Hence, the list of critical works centers around the lives and thoughts of Berdyaev and Guénon. This literature highlights both the similarity and diversity of perspectives among these thinkers, serving as a notable feature in critiquing their approaches. This method provides the opportunity to thoroughly explore the distinct viewpoints of Russian and French intellectuals on our subject.

In my research, I consider critical insights from authors such as John Zizioulas, Antoine Arjakovsky, Edward Moore, John Witte, Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, Sergey Horujy, Robin Waterfield, Paul Chacornac, Alexander Dugin, Mark Sedgwick, Harry Oldmeadow, Roland Lardinois, and others.

The study employs various methods to delve into the ideas of selected thinkers on the topic of personalism. The research makes use of techniques such as analysis, comparison, historical investigation, systematic examination, and hermeneutics (interpretation). These approaches help to demonstrate the thinkers' viewpoints, systematize their ideas, highlight the coherence of their positions, identify and explore the similarities and differences of their perspectives. At the same time, this methodology offers an attempt at rational and most possibly objective evaluation of the viewpoints of Berdyaev and Guénon, highlights potential areas of contention within their assertions, and provides a well-founded, impartial assessment of their stances.

The work is structured into three chapters, progressively guiding the reader to an understanding of the peculiarities of personalistic ideas and issues in the approaches of Berdyaev and Guénon. In particular, the first chapter, dedicated to the intellectual biographies of the thinkers, illustrates how the emphasis on themes gradually shifts, and the thinkers' views evolve. The main works of the thinkers are analyzed, along with the ones they focus on the most, highlighting those works directed towards personalistic themes.

A comparative analysis will be conducted on the common themes that Berdyaev and Guénon, two thinkers, have worked on. The analysis will reveal some points of convergence in their worldviews. It is worth noting that both of these thinkers lived in Paris during the same period, which could have enabled them to engage in personal discussions. This aspect will also be a subject of the research.

In the second chapter, I will investigate the origin of the term 'person' and its gradual adoption in Greek and Roman traditions. Then, I will analyze how it was borrowed and developed by Christian authors. The term's usage and interpretation are multifaceted and vary even within a single culture. The concept of a person is intricately linked to Trinitarian and Christological discussions. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of the meaning of 'person', the Church Fathers also incorporate another term, 'hypostasis', which contributes to a clearer understanding of the concept.

Additionally, in this chapter I will demonstrate that the interpretations of Christian authors, including the Church Fathers, have been doctrinally affirmed and have served as the foundation for the interpretation of the concept of a person by personalistic schools and their representatives from the 19th century to the present. However, there are many ambiguous moments in these interpretations that contemporary researchers still debate. At the end of the chapter, I will explore Berdyaev's and Guénon's familiarity with the views of the Holy Fathers and their assessment of the patristic perspectives.

In the third and final chapter of my research, I will focus on interpreting the personalistic concepts of Berdyaev and Guénon. While Berdyaev's personalism has been explored in a certain aspect by other researchers before, the investigation of this theme in Guénon's works is proposed perhaps for the first time in the research field.

The goal of this thesis is to explore its application, as seen through the perspectives of Berdyaev and Guénon. This comparative study aims to track the various interpretations of the concept of a person and to identify its common core. It also targets to discover the origin and application of this concept. As I demonstrate in the research, both thinkers often connect their explanations of this concept to patristic reasoning, emphasizing its universal significance.

Therefore, comparing the views of Berdyaev and Guénon can be the key to answering some important questions on the topic of personalism. After exploring and analyzing the concept of a person as viewed by Berdyaev and Guénon, my perspective will be transformed and renewed. I hope that readers will also discover intriguing aspects of these personalistic traditions that may have gone unnoticed before engaging with this research. I assert that drawing upon the perspectives of Berdyaev and Guénon's worldviews enables a deeper comprehension of the concept of a person. While working on this research, I encountered numerous unexplored questions in this area. I believe that this thesis will provide some guidance for future generations of researchers exploring the realm of personalistic inquiries.

CHAPTER I

BERDYAEV'S AND GUÉNON'S:

PERSONALITIES SHAPED BY CHALLENGING CENTURIES

1.0. Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to become acquainted with the figures of Nikolai Berdyaev and René Guénon, to overview their works that are important for our research, and to highlight the most significant topics to which they direct their attention. It is also worth emphasizing the atmosphere within which the worldviews of these thinkers were formed. The following section outlines the major lines of thought of both philosophers, enabling readers to identify the criteria and boundaries of their perspectives. By providing an analysis of significant

aspects in their works, I will, on the one hand, showcase the diversity of Berdyaev's and Guénon's personalities, and, on the other hand, explore the common elements of their worldviews.

1.1. The Atmosphere of Development in Berdyaev's and Guénon's Worldviews

Needless to say, every intellectual resides within a specific environment that is intricately connected to historical, psychological, and spiritual contexts. This environment plays a significant role in shaping their worldview and influences their responses to challenges and issues, often leading to attempts to assess or even resolve them. Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) and René Guénon (1886-1951), whose thought processes are intertwined with the historical periods in which they lived, are no exception to this pattern.

Both thinkers emerged at the cross of the 19th and 20th centuries, a time period that has bequeathed a legacy of events and experiences likely to constitute a significant part of the collective memory in future human history. While Berdyaev and Guénon hailed from different lands and belonged to distinct traditions, it is crucial to underscore the events that, in various ways, played a role in shaping their personalities and, consequently, their worldviews. It is evident that both thinkers bore witness to the First and Second World Wars, along with the revolutions that swept through different parts of the world. Ideas such as secularization, individualization, and materialization of society, as well as the tendency to profane various aspects of life, including human spirituality, prompted their responses to these challenges, which they articulated through their books and articles.

Change management in the governmental sector became a significant issue throughout the late 19th and the early 20th century. This period also saw the transformation of the Russian Empire and its shift towards different political regimes. Within the borders of the Russian Empire, numerous events unfolded, commencing with the Russian Revolutions in 1905 and 1907. These events led to the overthrow of the royal power and the rise of the Bolsheviks, subsequently

establishing a new political regime as Communism. This ideology found its stronghold in Russia and later extended its influence to varying degrees across Europe, China, Asia — particularly Cambodia — and partially Africa. Following its foothold in Russia and undergoing certain adaptations, the ideology of communism further extended its reach to China, where it has persisted as a governing system to this day.

Four dictators — Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco — created upheavals in the destinies of Russia, Germany, Italy, and Spain, thereby were leaving a significant mark on 20th-century history through the establishment of new and previously unprecedented regimes and ideologies. An analysis of European dictators indicates, firstly, the potential to unite populations under the leadership of a single individual to achieve specific, often ideological objectives, and secondly, the capacity to standardize cultural identity while also accentuating national distinctions.

When discussing dictatorships, it is important to acknowledge the accompanying ideologies that gained prominence in the transitional period between the 19th and 20th centuries. Remarkably, nearly all ideologies primarily target human understanding of oneself, one's role in society and the state, and one's purpose. The well-known notion that changing oneself leads to changing the world seems to have been embraced by ideologies aiming to renew individuals and create new human archetypes. These ideologies intended to unite people under a specific purpose crafted by their leaders. During this particular period, a variety of ideologies emerged, with some of the most influential being fascism, communism, socialism, and capitalism. Amidst these ideological currents, figures like Berdyaev, who engaged with the allure of socialism and communism, have made noteworthy contributions. Berdyaev, in particular, remarks that these forms of idolatry eclipse the human person through impersonal collectives[15].

Industrialization marked another significant stride in the evolution of human consciousness, consequently reshaping the world itself. The rapid integration of technology into

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[15] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, trans. by Donald A. Lowrie (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1935), pp. 71-83.

human life brought about swift transformations in everyday norms and objectives. Addressing the question of whether modern technologies contribute to human self-awareness requires careful consideration. It is important to note that we do not intend to provide a definitive answer to such an inquiry, as various perspectives may exist. Moreover, it is conceivable that in the next fifty to hundred years, a substantial majority of individuals may genuinely believe that technology alone provides the ultimate purpose in life. These shifts in perspective have implications for the diminishing emphasis on the spiritual realm in our contemporary world and the growing inclination toward materialism. This viewpoint is shared by the thinkers whose views are taken into account in this research.

Berdyaev and Guénon witnessed the mentioned transformations of societies and the world, and even more. Each of them cared about specific events more than others, which is reflected in their worldviews. Despite being Russian and French thinkers and often using different terminology, both emphasized that the 'modern world' is characterized by darkness. They both asserted that our world reached a certain limit, a period in which previous forms of life collapsed, and the worldview that had been constructed over more than a millennium was shattered. Guénon discussed this topic in several of his works, including "The Modern World" and "East and West". Throughout his works, he frequently emphasized that the world is undergoing a process of degradation. When referring to the modern world, Guénon used the term 'dark age'[16], which he believed began near the 6th century BCE. Regarding Berdyaev, he holds the belief that we are witnessing "the end of the new history and the beginning of a new Middle Ages"[17], which he identifies as starting in the late 19th century. While the vision on periodization of history varies among our thinkers, both Berdyaev and Guénon emphasize the regularity of rise and fall of

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[16] René Guénon, *The Essential: Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crises of Modernity*, ed. by John Herlihy, introduction by Martin Lings (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2009), p. 3.

[17] The concept of "The New Middle Ages", created by Berdyaev himself, has gained popularity and continues to be a topic of discussion. See: Nicolas Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time: Together with an Essay on the General Line of Soviet Philosophy*, trans. by Donald Attwater, contributor Boris Jakim, 2nd ed. (Kettering, OH: Semantron Press, 2009), p. 70.

history, and the concept of a "dark age" is not an exception in their viewpoints. They identify the 19th and 20th centuries as a stage marked by a significant decline in the history of humanity, clearly evidenced by the despiritualization of man. The thinkers agree that the crucial role in shaping life, including the life of a human being, belongs to the realm of the spirit. This significance is also reflected in the spiritual and religious aspects of human life.

Berdyaev and Guénon emphasize the significance of changes in the social system, which evidently marginalizes spirituality. They interpret external events as clear indicators of humanity's 'grounding' in material life, which reflects a rejection of the spiritual and fundamental sphere of life. Neglecting this sphere leads to its eventual destruction. When assessing the materialistic orientation of the world, secularization, and transformative global events such as wars, both Berdyaev and Guénon attribute the reasons to the degeneration of spiritual life in individuals and their growing distance from the Highest Principle, or God. Notably, a critical observation of the relationship between the inner and outer spheres of humans in the worldviews of Berdyaev and Guénon is essential, as deviations in various aspects, including the social and the religious, often serve as indicators of inner turmoil within individuals.

Berdyaev encountered the initial collapse on his own land, where the old monarchic regime experienced a collapse due to the rise of socialism and communism. Both regimes were marked by bureaucracy and corruption, yet the new one exceeded all expectations, becoming a living idol that demanded sacrifices for its establishment. This transition not only cost the lives of millions who faced the new regime's reality, but it also devalued the past along with its spiritual treasures. Institutions like the Church, hierarchy, tradition's sanctity, the intrinsic worth of humanity, and the unique calling of each man were all subjected to depreciation. In his work "Philosophy of Inequality", the Russian thinker directly critiques the falsehoods propagated by

socialist and communist regimes. He denounces the sacrifice of life for an illusory future — the so-called "a paradise of collectivism", signifying on the Earth "a godless desire"[18].

In terms of Guénon's life experience, he was born in the midst of the Western world, particularly in Paris. By the late 19th century, France, like a significant portion of the Western world, had embraced a secular identity. However, Guénon was not swayed by the allure of the material world; instead, he resisted it. In 1930, he moved to Cairo, where he resided until the end of his life. Despite his conversion from Christianity to Islam, his critical perspective on the Western world remained unaltered, and he continued his critical assessment of the modern world[19]. He discerned a significant contrast in the practice and preservation of religious traditions between the Occident and the Orient, a contrast that played a pivotal role in shaping his perspective. In his book "Crisis of the Modern World", Guénon highlights the disparities in the evolution of Western and Eastern civilizations. He addresses utilitarian, industry-focused, individualistic, and secular tendencies, along with other values centered on material and self-centered gains prevalent in the Western civilization's global landscape. Recognizing that this crisis is not confined to a specific geographic location but rather spreads like an affliction in various directions, Guénon observes that against the backdrop of a global shift and the decline of tradition, the Oriental world manages to preserve its distinctive identity — an observation that garnered appreciation from the French thinker[20].

Here, one is compelled to recognize the potential divergence in the intellectual upbringing of Berdyaev and Guénon, considering the influential challenges of their respective environments. Nonetheless, it is evident that both thinkers' perspectives are marked by a universal approach, as their critiques extend beyond the limitations of space and time. Remarkably, their works have, in some instances, garnered even greater popularity since their lifetimes. Additionally, their

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[18] Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Philosophy of Inequality: Letters to My Contemners, Concerning Social Philosophy*, trans. by Fr. Stephen Janos (Mohrsville, PA: frsj Publications, 2015), p. 188.

[19] Paul Chacornac, *The Simple Life of Rene Guenon* (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2005), p. 36.

[20] See: René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. by Arthur Osborne, Marco Fallis, Richard C. Nicholson (NY.: Sophia Perennis, 2001).

metaphysical approach and their perspectives on humanity's destiny continue to captivate the interest of new generations.

So, the events we have highlighted do not exhaust the list of catastrophes that marked the end of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century. Nevertheless, they serve as illustrative examples of the new character of this era. Such events led to shifts in human consciousness and values. Berdyaev, due to these circumstances, even concedes at times that humans can become "worse than a beast"[21].

Nonetheless, apart from their negative assessments of the so-called modern world, both Berdyaev and Guénon hold the belief that following the many failures and setbacks experienced by humanity, the 'dark age' must inevitably give way to an age of light, as it is a recurring pattern in human history. Guénon, referring to the transmission of religious traditions, emphasizes that humanity must traverse a gradual path of spiritual development to transform this somber picture. In his distinctive manner, Berdyaev prophesies by acknowledging: "I believe in the possibility of changing consciousness, reassessing values, and spiritually re-educating humanity. And a different world will appear before a different consciousness"[22]. So, in terms of their approaches, they not only echo each other, but also complement each other's opinions. As a result, Berdyaev and Guénon form an excellent pair for conducting a comparative study, particularly on the personalistic topic, which is the focus of our work.

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[21] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Divine and the Human*, trans. by R.M. French (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), p. 37.

[22] Nikolay Berdiaev, 'Na poroge novoi epokhi' [On the Threshold of a New Era], in *Istina i otkrovenie. Prolegomeny k kritike Otkroveniya*, sost. i poslesl. V.H. Beznosova, primech. E.V. Bronnikova (St. Peterburg, 1996), p. 179.

1.2. On Berdyaev's Outlook

1.2.1. Berdyaev's Personality

The Russian philosopher, the 'Philosopher of Freedom', 'the captive of freedom', the Kyivan thinker, the philosopher from Clamart, 'heretic', 'prophet', 'modernist', 'Bergakov' and 'Buldiaev'[23] — all of these and many more names and titles refer to one personality, the prominent thinker of the 20th century Nikolai Berdyaev[24]. The mentioned titles were given to the philosopher by his close relatives, friends and researchers. They not only show his fame in the public sphere, but also give a hint about the thinker's worldview. Berdyaev was one of the most prolific of the Russian religious philosophers, who is known through the course of history as the representative of the personalistic school and political philosopher, statesman, publisher. Furthermore, he is considered one of the pioneers of existentialist philosophy in Russia and emerged as one of the most widely translated philosophers of his time.

Nikolai Berdyaev's thought reflects the Russian Religious philosophy that emerged at the crossroads of the 19th to the 20th centuries. It possessed some distinctive features because of its environment and cultural aspects. The philosophical thought during this period was driven by the quest for a 'new religious consciousness', often referred to as "neo-Christianity". The proponents of this concept aligned themselves with the philosophical and religious movement known as the "God-seekers" (*Bogoiskatelstvo*)[25]. This phase in the development of Russian philosophy went by

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[23] These pairs of names are taken from Andrei Bely's memories. Berdyaev and Bulgakov were referred to as 'Bergakov' and 'Buldiaev' because they were often seen together in public at a certain time. See: Andrei Bely, *Nachalo Veka* [*The Beginning of the Century*] (Moskva: Hudozhestvennaya literatura, 1990), p. 493.

[24] In Western literature, Berdyaev's name is translated into English in two ways: Nikolay or Nikolai — as transliterations from Russian, or Nikolas as an English translation of the name. In this work, I use the version 'Nikolai' in the text, but in references I keep the translation of the name chosen by the authors.

[25] Svetlana Malimonova, 'Osobennosti "novogo religioznogo soznaniya" i pravoslavnoe verouchenie' [Features of the "New Religious Consciousness" and Orthodox Doctrine], *Gramota*, 12.9 (2019), pp. 160-166.

various names, including the Silver Age[26], *fin de siècle* (end of the century)[27], and the Russian religious Renaissance[28]. With these titles in mind, it becomes evident that philosophical thought during this period was defined by the exploration of the relationship between God and humanity in specific contexts. Also it morphed into one of the pivotal concepts — God-humanity, Godmanhood, or divine humanity.

Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) was born near Kyiv, in the village of Obuhiv and grew up in an aristocratic milieu. His family embraced the 'Western trend', with his father expressing great skepticism towards religion while his mother was a professed Catholic. Hailing from a well-known family of mixed French heritage, his mother established the tradition of speaking French at home, making French culture nearly as native to Berdyaev as Russian. Additionally, there were Polish roots on the maternal side. Growing up in an intellectually enriched environment with a blend of Ukrainian and Jewish cultures and having access to his father's library, Berdyaev delved into the works of Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Kant at the young age of fourteen, which subsequently led to his study of various languages. His initial exposure to religious customs came during his childhood; his grandmother on his mother's side and great-grandmother on his father's side both chose to become nuns[29].

At the age of twenty, Nikolai's intellectual pursuits led him to Kyiv University, where his passionate character drew him into a Marxist circle. Initially, he enrolled in the faculty of natural sciences, but a year later he transferred to the faculty of law. Berdyaev quickly immersed himself in political activity, a prevailing current among the Russian intelligentsia. His involvement led to

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[26] Andrei Ariev, 'The Intelligentsia without Revolution: The Culture of the Silver Age', in *UNLV University Libraries*, ed. by Dmitri N. Shalin (2012), pp. 1-27, https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/russian_culture/14 [accessed 23 September 2023].

[27] Mark Steinberg, 'Russia's *Fin de Siècle*, 1900-1914,' *The Cambridge History of Russia*, 3 (2006), pp. 67-93.

[28] Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 12-13.

[29] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 16-18.

multiple arrests by the police. In 1898, following four years of study, his political agitation resulted in his expulsion from the university and a three-year exile in Vologda, northern Russia. During his time there, Berdyaev engaged in regular discussions on social and philosophical matters with prominent figures such as Aleksey Remizov, Pavel Shchegolev, Boris Savinkov, and Erwin Madelung. Despite the challenges, the educated and spirited Berdyaev constantly pursued truth, earning him labels such "as a romantic, an 'aristocrat' and a 'black swan'"[30].

On the cross of the centuries, Berdyaev, much like the budding young Marxists, raised the doubts about truthfulness of Marxist ideology. He was particularly concerned about the absence of ethical and moral considerations in Marx's teachings. His article "The struggle for idealism" published in 1901, illustrates his transition from Marxism to Idealism. The evolution of his perspective is more intricately explored in his book "Christianity and Social Reality".

From 1903 to 1904, Berdyaev participated in the political group 'The Union of Liberation' (in Russian *Soyuz Osvobozhdeniya*), which advocated for political freedom and opposed the absolutism of the Tsar. However, he did not immerse himself deeply into their liberal-radical views. In due course, he gathered like-minded individuals around him, and his path intersected with figures such as Peter Struve and Semyon Frank. Together, they engaged in active publishing endeavors, culminating in the publication of the collection of articles "Problems of Idealism" in 1902. Their collaborative efforts also extended to the publication of collections "Vekhy" (1909) and "Iz Glubiny" (1918), in which they expressed critical perspectives on the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, as well as the role of the intelligentsia in these events.

On the 19th of February 1904, he met in Kyiv his future wife, Lydia, and the couple soon got married. Lydia not only assisted her husband with publications but also took on roles as his assistant, proofreader, and editor. The second pillar of support for Berdyaev came from his wife's sister, Eugenia, who also lived with them.

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[30] *Ibid*., p.130.

In 1904, the last legal restrictions on Berdyaev's choice of residence were lifted, and the new couple, Nikolai and Lydia, relocated to Saint Petersburg. At that time, the city was the epicenter of revolutionary, intellectual, and philosophical activity. In Saint Petersburg, Berdyaev fully immersed himself in intellectual and spiritual debates.

In 1913, Berdyaev became embroiled in a new dispute, this time with church authorities. The Russian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod condemned the movement known as *Imiaslavie*[31]. In response, Berdyaev penned an anticlerical article titled "The Dampers of Spirit", criticizing what he referred to as 'Police Orthodoxy'. The Church's reaction was swift — Berdyaev was accused of blasphemy, arrested, and subsequently sentenced to life in exile in Siberia. However, the outbreak of the First World War and the Revolution of 1917 intervened, preventing the execution of the sentence.

After the 1917 Revolution, Berdyaev established the "Free Academy of Spiritual Culture", a private institution that operated for three years from 1919 to 1922. Following the October Revolution, he was appointed to a philosophy chair at the University of Moscow in 1919. However, his independent political stance and differences with the institution's leadership quickly led to his fall from favor. His dissenting views also resulted in his arrest in 1920. In 1922, Berdyaev was arrested for the second time. Alongside other intellectuals, he and his family were transported from Soviet Russia to Germany on a ship named "Oberbürgermeister Haken", where they settled in Berlin.

The period of emigration proved to be highly productive for Berdyaev. He established the Religious-Philosophical Academy, where he both taught and published a series of works. Among these were "The Meaning of History" (1923), and "Dostoevsky: An Interpretation" (1923). Additionally, he published the work "The New Middle Ages" (1924), which garnered him fame and was translated into many European languages. During this time, Berdyaev had the opportunity to interact with eminent German thinkers, including Max Scheler and Oswald Spengler. It was

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[31] *Otets Ioann Kronstadtskii / mitr. Veniamin Fedchenkov* (Moskva: Palomnik, 2000), pp. 695-712.

also during this period that he became acquainted with the works of Jacob Boehme, the theosophist and mystic, whose philosophy played a significant role in shaping his worldview.

Due to the severe financial crisis in Germany, Berdyaev's family moved to France in 1924 and settled in Clamart. In Paris, he actively participated in inter-confessional congresses, discussions, meetings of the Brotherhood of St. Sophia, and the literary association 'Kochevye'. Collaborating with like-minded individuals, Berdyaev co-founded the Orthodox movement 'Russian Student Christian Movement' ('L'Action chrétienne des étudiants russes', ACER). This organization operated in other countries as well and received support from voluntary associations like YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). YMCA was the first to publish books by prominent Russian immigrants, including Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Nabokov, and later on Solzhenitsyn. From 1925 to 1948, Berdyaev served as the chief editor of YMCA, and his right-hand collaborator was Boris Vysheslavtsev[32]. Continuing a tradition he had started in Moscow, Berdyaev hosted philosophical discussions at his residence. Regular guests included Lev Shestov, Georgy Fedotov, Jacques Maritain, and other intellectuals. It is worth noting that the genius of Russian philosophy extended beyond the confines of his home, leading to an invitation for him to lecture at the Sorbonne in 1939.

In 1925, while in France, Berdyaev launched his own journal entitled 'Put'' ('The Way'), which would evolve into a significant platform for Russian religious and philosophical thought. Over its lifespan, the world witnessed sixty-one issues of this journal. It successfully featured the works of renowned thinkers such as Georges Florovsky, Basil Zenkovsky, Boris Vysheslavtsev, Semyon Frank, Vladimir Ilyin, Sergey Bulgakov, Georgy Fedotov, Nikolay Lossky, and others. Despite facing economic challenges, the journal managed to maintain regularity, producing at least four issues per year.

In 1922, when Berdyaev was exiled from the USSR, his friend Eugenia Gertsyk commented on the impossibility of maintaining communication with the philosopher, admitting:

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[32] Boris Vysheslavtsev (1877–1954) was a Russian religious philosopher.

"I miss him more than anyone else I lost"[33]. The final date of communication with the philosopher took place in 1948. Berdyaev passed away in a manner that characterized him — in devoted work at his table.

Berdyaev was a devoted defender and critic of the Church. This justified duality in his beliefs led to a common ground. Setting aside the duality, he states:

"The Church is not the Kingdom of God upon earth, and the existence within history of the Church of Christ, against which the gates of hell will not prevail, does not speak about the possibility of the Kingdom of God upon earth. The identifying of the Church with the Kingdom of God, with the city of God was an error, on the part of St. Augustine, which influenced the Catholic conception of church. Church is not theocracy. All the outward theocratic pretensions have been shattered by history. The fateful process of secularisation has not and will not vanquish the sanctities of the Church of Christ, but it is vanquishing the theocratic pretensions, it is shattering the great religious utopias regarding holy empires. […]. The Kingdom of God cometh unnoticed, the Kingdom of God is not of this world. The Kingdom of God is the perfective accomplishing of the transfiguration of the world."[34]

Thus, by distinguishing the Church from the Kingdom of God, Berdyaev avoids attributing a utopian nature to its existence in history, while still acknowledging the significance of its mission. Nevertheless, "The Kingdom of God cannot be comprised in any sort of kingdom of Caesar"[35].

Affirming the value of the Church's existence, the thinker believed that it has not only a "historical dimension" but also includes the "dimension of depth, in its hidden being."[36]. As an affirmation of this positive attitude, Berdyaev bequeathed his house in Clamart to the Russian

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[33] Evgeniya Gercyk, *Vospominaniya* [*Memories*] (Paris: YMCA-PRESS; 1973), p. 192.

[34] Berdyaev, *The Philosophy of Inequality: Letters to My Contemners, Concerning Social Philosophy*, pp. 278-279.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 279.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 278.

Orthodox Church, with the intention of transforming it into the chapel of the Holy Spirit. However, before the house could be acquired by the Church, the debts of the renowned philosopher had to be settled. Eventually, the house was converted into a home church, where daily prayers are conducted. The church holds a service only once a year, on the day of the Holy Spirit, allowing all parishioners to attend[37]. Berdyaev's office remains in its original state and now functions as a museum.

Lastly, it is worth noting that despite not completing a university degree, Berdyaev was nominated for the Nobel Prize. In 1947, he received an honorary Doctor of Theology (*Honoris Cause*) degree from Cambridge University. He authored over forty books and five hundred articles. Moving forward, we will provide an overview of his most significant works, focusing on those that are essential to our research.

1.2.2. Berdyaev's Central Topics and Works

Berdyaev actively participated in the revolutionary period and often criticized the events of that time. His theoretical and practical positions were shaped by his irreconcilable and impulsive character, which evolved in constant meetings and discussions. Despite being a skilled organizer who established academies (first in Moscow and later in Berlin) and overseeing the publication of journals like 'Put'' from 1925 to 1940, he never aligned himself with any particular group. He found it undesirable to be confined within a system that would restrict his own spirit, as he explained, and he also did not find any organization that fully aligned with his viewpoint[38].

Referring to Berdyaev's worldview, he was able to create an original philosophical vision and was recognized in the philosophical field. The precise influences on the formation of his viewpoint can be observed. Jacob Boehme, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Vladimir Solovyov can be

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[37] Elena Iakounine, 'Berdiaev à Clamart', trad. Morgan Malié, Interview, in *L'observateur Russe* (2014), https://rusoch.fr/fr/events/berdyaev-v-klamare.html [Accessed 21 September 2023].

[38] Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, pp. 296-97.

considered the ones who had the greatest impact on the formation of Berdyaev's thought, especially regarding the topics of freedom and the reason for evil in the world. Among the other authors who influenced his way of thinking are classical German thinkers, including Kant, Schopenhauer, Schelling, and partially Nietzsche. Kant was important in the sphere of ethics, which represents a curious and interesting part of Berdyaev's philosophy. Another component of the Berdyaevian view is the legacy of the Church Fathers. As a supporter of mystical Eastern Christianity, the Russian thinker references classical Christian authors, particularly John the Theologian, Athanasius the Great, Macarius of Egypt, Gregory of Nyssa, Seraphim of Sarov, and others. Berdyaev's love for the apostle Paul, whom he calls "the greatest of men", should also be highlighted. He often refers to the "apostle of all nations", especially when it comes to the idea of freedom and the god-humanity relationship. However, the influences of the Church Fathers on Berdyaev's thought are still awaiting deep research.

It would be incorrect to consider Berdyaev as a traditional religious thinker, as his thoughts do not align with the official doctrine promoted by the Russian Church of his time. It would also be a mistake to view Berdyaev solely as a Russian author and limit his philosophy to the challenges of this land. As he emphasizes, the teachings of the Church are not close to him, but rather those of "Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, and Angelus Silesius"[39]. He identifies more with "not the practical builders of the Christian Church, but Gnostics. Not the Apostles, but Origen and others like him"[40]. Berdyaev was not recognized as a mystic, but rather as a prophet and creator of the idea of the "New Middle Ages", as a critic and protector of Christianity, whose worldview surpasses the boundaries of Christian tradition. In any case, Berdyaev openly referred to himself as "*Homo mysticus*"[41]. Even Orthodoxy, which appeared to be closest to the ideals of the Russian

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[39] Alexandr Ermichev, 'Ya vsegda byl nich'im chelovekom' [I have always been nobody's man], in *Nikolay Aleksandrovich Berdyaev*, red. V. N. Porus (Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya (ROSSPEN), 2013), p. 150.

[40] 'Pis'ma Nikolaya Berdyaeva' [Letters of Nikolai Berdyaev], in *Minuvshee*, Vyp. 9 (Moskva: Feniks, 1992), p. 300.

[41] Ermichev, 'Ya vsegda byl nich'im chelovekom', p. 150.

thinker, did not fully satisfy his spiritual needs. The elders (Russian *startsy*), monks, and the Church hierarchy saddened and angered him due to their authoritarian and dogmatic nature[42]. However, it is worth noting that Berdyaev did systematically visit churches and sought guidance from a spiritual father. In Paris, he was a parishioner of the Orthodox Church that he attended until his death[43].

Berdyaev's works are saturated with prophetic and messianic ideas. Therefore, his philosophical teachings lean more towards "futuristic eschatology" rather than "realized eschatology"[44]. Additionally, the philosophy of this Russian thinker demonstrates a concept of "mystical realism" that aims to understand the integrity of the life process[45]. When it comes to the cardinal topic he developed, it is difficult to determine which one takes precedence. Critics hold different opinions on this matter. Firstly, this can be attributed to the non-systematic style of thought and the thinker's writing style. Lev Shestov's critique of some of Berdyaev's work comes to mind, where he identified instances of "*contradictio in adjecto*"[46] in his words. Such distinctions or dualities in the philosopher's work are common, occurring due to the Berdyaevian expressive manner of proving his arguments. Renowned Russian philosopher Vasily Zenkovsky

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[42] Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 166, 184-185.

[43] Alexei Kozyrev and Tihon Sysoev, 'Nikolai Berdyaev: zhizn' v poiske Bogoobshcheniya' [Nikolai Berdyaev: Life in Search of Communion with God], in *Foma*, https://foma.ru/nikolay-berdyaev-zhizn-v-poiske-bogoobshheniya.html [Accessed 23 September 2023].

[44] John F. Walvoord, 'Realized Eschatology', in *bible.org*, https://bible.org/article/realized-eschatology [Accessed 23 September 2023].

[45] Katarzyna Stark, 'Theosis and Life in Nicolai Berdiaev's Philosophy', in *Phenomenology/Ontopoiesis: Retrieving Geo-cosmic Horizons of Antiquity*, ed. by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 631-644.

[46] Lev Shestov, 'In Praise of Folly: On the Occasion of Nikolai Berdiaev's Book *Sub specie aeternitatis*', transl. by M. E. Sharpe, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, 39.1 (2000), p. 43.

identifies the problems of history as central to Berdyaev's worldview[47]. Dmitry Filosofov states that "the idea of unity" (*Sobornost'*) permeates his entire line of thought"[48].

Definitely, the idea of God-humanity, which is one of the fundamental topics in Russian Religious philosophy, also captures Berdyaev's attention. It is well known that Berdyaev continued the tradition of existential philosophy established by Dostoevsky, which they both represent. The questions about the reason for evil in the world are what clearly link them. However, for instance, Shestov denied that Berdyaev belonged to the school of existential philosophy or even to Christian philosophy in general. Instead, Shestov considered him as a "writer and preacher"[49].

Following the evolution of Berdyaev's views, Zenkovsky notes that at the beginning of the 20th century, it changed from Marxism to transcendent idealism, which is why he is listed among the so-called "repentant Marxists". This period became a turning point for the thinker. From 1907 to 1911, he was influenced by religious romanticism, and from 1916 onwards, by mystical-romantic views. According to Shestov, Berdyaev's change of emphasis occurred "from Marxism through idealism to mysticism and even to positive religion"[50]. The starting point for such evaluation was the work "Sub specie æternitatis" (1900-1906). Nevertheless, despite the philosopher's changed views, one thing remained constant: his faith.

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[47] Vasiliy Zenkovsky, *Russian Thinkers and Europe*, trans. Galia S. Bodde (Ann Arbor: American Council of Learned Societies, 1953), p. 180.

[48] Dmitriy Filosofov, 'Na rasput'e' [At the Crossroads], in Nikolay Aleksandrovich Berdyaev, *Sub Specie aeternitatis: Opyty filosofskie, sotsial'nye i literaturnye* (1900-1906 gg.) (Moscow: Kanon+, 2002), p. 562.

[49] James C.S. Wernham, *Two Russian Thinkers: An Essay in Berdyaev and Shestov* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 93.

[50] Shestov, 'In Praise of Folly: On the Occasion of Nikolai Berdiaev's Book *Sub specie aeternitatis*', p. 37.

Berdyaev himself speaks about his role as a philosopher in various ways. For instance, he states: "I considered my mission to be the struggle for the image of man"[51]. In other instances he makes a different emphasis: "The individual task of my life remains the same — to construct a system of religious and philosophical gnosis"[52]. Consequently, "It is not the practical builders of the Christian Church, but the Gnostics; not the apostles, but figures like Origen", who are spiritually close to Berdyaev[53]. This shift in the philosopher's priorities largely occurred due to changes in his worldview over his lifetime.

Berdyaev is among those thinkers whose worldview is a reflection of his spirit, or one might say, his personality and beliefs. As noted by Olga Volkogonova, Berdyaev's perspective is inseparable from his life, as he "completely poured himself onto the pages of philosophical books and articles"[54]. Due to the unsystematic style of Berdyaev's writing, it becomes challenging to categorize his works strictly based on precise topics, given that he often explores numerous ideas and concepts within a single work. Therefore, it is appropriate to conceptualize the evolution of his views in accordance with different periods of time and the events that shaped them. Nevertheless, upon an examination of his body of work, it becomes evident that Berdyaev held a deep commitment to a range of subjects including Christianity and Neo-Christianity, freedom, spirit and creativity, individuality, objectification, marriage, love, Church and Orthodoxy, God-humanity, and *sobornost'*. While he does delve into numerous other themes, it is undeniable that one of the core objectives pursued by the Kyivan thinker was the unraveling of the mysteries surrounding a mystery of a person.

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[51] The paragraph with this citation is absent in the translation of the book in English. See the original version in Russian: Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie (opyt filosofskoy avtobiografii)*, ed. by A. V. Vadimov (Moskva: Kniga, 1991), p. 195.

[52] "Pis'ma Nikolaya Berdyaeva", p. 300.

[53] *Ibid*., p. 300.

[54] Olga Volkogonova, 'N. Berdyaev. Intellektual'naya biografiya' [N. Berdyaev. Intellectual Biography] (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 2001), available at: http://philosophy1.narod.ru/www/html/library/volk/berd.html [Accessed 20 June 2023].

When evaluating Berdyaev's works, it is of utmost importance to consider the events that unfolded in the world as well as his personal life. This approach enables a reader to observe how the ideas presented in his books resonate with these events.

Berdyaev penned his first book, "The subjectivity and the individualism in social philosophy: Critical etude on N. K. Mikhaylovsky" (1901), after distancing himself from Marxism. Even as he prepared to embrace a new perspective, Berdyaev still held certain hopes for socialism in this work, albeit presenting it in a revised form that placed greater emphasis on the ethical component. In his subsequent article, "The Ethical Problem in the Light of Philosophical Idealism", published in the collection "Problems of Idealism" (1902), he continues his exploration of ethical issues.

During the first Russian Revolutions (1905-1907), Berdyaev authored "Sub Specie Aeternitatis" and "The New Religious Consciousness and Society". A bit later, he produced the work "The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia" (1907-1909), wherein he delved into problematic social issues while evaluating the revolutionary events. Through these works, Berdyaev established himself as a fully-fledged philosopher, showcasing his ability to develop a personal worldview, particularly against the backdrop of subjective-idealistic philosophy[55]. Ultimately, he transitions to the belief that human needs are rooted in spiritual transformation and, consequently, a spiritual revolution, distinct from a physical revolution marked by bloodshed and violence.

Preceding the second Russian Revolution, Berdyaev's following important works can be acknowledged: "Philosophy of Freedom" (1911) and "The Meaning of Creative Act" (1912). Through these works, the Russian thinker established and demonstrated himself as a philosopher deeply engaged with the subjects of freedom and creativity. This marked the initial step in the p Berdyaev's endeavor to develop the concepts of creativity and the essence of freedom. Once again, Berdyaev presented his distinctive perspective. In his philosophy, creativity emerges as a human endeavor resembling God's creative action in forming the world — an imitation of God's

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[55] *Ibid*.

creative act. Simultaneously, the notion of freedom became an integral facet of his philosophy, embodying profound significance within his philosophical reflections. This perspective introduced new original elements into Berdyaev's worldview during this period — a viewpoint also affirmed by Eugène Porret. Porret composed a critical work on Berdyaev's philosophy during the philosopher's lifetime, labeling this period of Berdyaev's thought as "Sturm und Drang"[56].

Hence, despite being influenced by various philosophers, theologians, and mystics, Berdyaev withstood the pressure of their authority and generated his own unique opinions. Even though his worldview does not fit neatly into any particular system and, in some cases, even conflicts with the dogmas of the Church, he remained steadfast in his position until the end of his life. During this stage, Berdyaev had already become acquainted with Jacob Boehme's philosophy, upon which he constructed his own concept of freedom. The Merezhkovsky spouses, Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1866-1941) and his wife Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945), as well as the philosopher Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919), had a temporary effect on him. Over time, their views diverged, but they once inspired romantic influences on Berdyaev. During the same period, Berdyaev was published in the journals "Novyi Put'", "Voprosy zizni" (1904-1905), and "Vekhy" (1909). These publications are collections of articles devoted to critiquing the vicissitudes of that period in Russia's social and political spheres. The criticism was not only aimed at highlighting the negative aspects of the revolution but also at revealing its underlying causes. Moreover, the philosophical articles, in one way or another, served as a reaction to those events, thus implicitly reflecting the contemporary state of society.

Under the influence of events such as the Second Russian Revolution and the First World War, Berdyaev worked on "The Fate of Russia" (1914-1916) and "The Russian Revolution" (a collection of articles, 1917-1918). In these works, he delved into socio-political questions, the role of humans in the revolutionary process, and the reasons behind the social transformation during

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[56] Eugène Porret, *La Philosophie Chrétienne en Russie: Nicolas Berdiaeff. Être et penser* (Neuchâtel: Ed. de la Baconnière, 1944), p. 19.

the revolutionary period. As a philosopher who stood on an idealistic position, Berdyaev firmly asserted that the problems of social upheaval have metaphysical roots. On one hand, he viewed the October Revolution as a national catastrophe; on the other hand, he attributed its cause to the spiritual degradation of people.

The next phase of Berdyaev's development as a philosopher commenced after his exile from Russia in 1922. Even though exile was a tragic event in Berdyaev's life, he found a sense of greater freedom in his work. The pivotal works from the outset of this period include "The Philosophy of Inequality" (1918), "The Meaning of History" (1923), "The End of Our Time [a.k.a. The New Middle Ages] (1924), "Freedom and the Spirit" (1927–1928). "The New Middle Ages" held particular significance in Berdyaev's life, making him a renowned thinker throughout Europe and resulting in translations into numerous languages. Today, we can characterize the style of the book as futuristic; this was not the first time Berdyaev demonstrated himself as a kind of prophet. The concept of the New Middle Ages was embraced by subsequent generations of thinkers, gaining popularity and resonating in contemporary discussions. As for the book "The Philosophy of Inequality", although Berdyaev had completed it in 1918, he could only publish it abroad after his exile. It is regarded as "his most outspoken anti-communist work"[57]. In this book Berdyaev continued to criticize the Marxist theory of social development, its utopian notion of universal equality, and he critically assessed various political and social theories. This period also marked the time when the theme of history was explored in eschatological light. Berdyaev's detailed exploration of the idea of the end of history is presented in the book "The Meaning of History", often listed among the most renowned works of the Russian thinker.

In particular, this list is enriched by works such as "The Problem of Man. Towards Construction of a Christian Anthropology" (1936), "The Destiny of Man" (1931), "The Fate of Man in the Modern World" (1934), "Solitude and Society (Myself and the World of Objects

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[57] *'Velykaia druzhba': Perepiska Zhaka i Raisy Mariten z N.A. Berdiaievym* [Great Friendship: Correspondence Between Jacques and Raisa Maritain with N.A. Berdyaev], red. i perevod Teresa Obolevitch, Bernard Marchadier (Zielona Góra: Universytet Zielonogórski, 2022), p. 20.

(1934), "The Fate of Man in the Modern World (1934), "Spirit and Reality" (1935), "The Origin of Russian Communism" (1937). Noteworthy are the works written during the Second World War, among which are "Slavery and Freedom" (1939), "Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Autobiography" (1941), "The Divine and the Human" (1944-1945), "Truth and Revelation" (1946-1947), "The Beginning and the End" (1947), "The Beginning and the End" (1947), "The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar" (1951). These mentioned works possess a clear metaphysical character, aimed at revealing the essence of history and humanity, human vocation, the relationship between man and God, and more.

Similarly, Berdyaev's books consistently raise the theme of personalism. It is not surprising that he is classified as a representative of the personalistic school. "The Origin of Russian Communism" aims to challenge the optimistic depiction of Western society's utopian view of communist reforms in Russia. In this book, Berdyaev presents an alternative vision of socialism, proposing his own version of 'personalistic socialism', characterized by the equality of all people as God's offspring. This vision asserts limited rights to private property and consumption. Volkoganova's commentary on this issue remains to be seen:

> "Berdyaev's personalistic socialism, as well as the broader shift towards the "new Middle Ages", envisaged limited consumption. The focal point was meant to transition from material consumption to spiritual pursuits. Therefore, within Berdyaev's framework, personalistic socialism was intertwined with a certain societal asceticism, entailing a deliberate restraint of needs"[58].

Thus, in Berdyaev's view, socialism becomes inherently personalistic. The same applies to history — it acquires purpose solely due to the presence of a person within it. This leads us to the conclusion that history, at its core, becomes inherently personalistic. The full understanding of what it means to be a person will be further elaborated in the upcoming chapters.

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[58] Volkogonova, 'N. Berdyaev. Intellektual'naya biografiya'.

However, it is important to acknowledge that Berdyaev's personalistic intentions differ from those of other representatives of this school. While each representative touched upon the idea of a person, they interpreted it from their unique perspectives. This differentiation becomes apparent in Berdyaev's view when compared to those put forth, for instance, by figures like Emmanuel Mounier[59] or Nikolai Lossky[60]. Regarding Berdyaev's worldview, although he was acquainted with many thinkers and occasionally referenced them, he was able to develop his own unique perspective. As a result, Berdyaev's interpretation of the concept of a person possesses distinct characteristics, which I aim to explore in greater depth in this work.

It can be observed that some of Berdyaev's earlier works were subsequently expanded upon in his later works. This is because he often felt dissatisfied with his initial writings, sensing that he had not fully expressed what he wanted to convey. In his own words, Berdyaev recognized this as an example of objectification. For instance, his work "The Philosophy of Inequality" (1918) led him to have doubts in the future, ultimately prompting him to renounce the opinions expressed in it. However, this is a rather unique example. On the other hand, in his book "Spirit and Reality" (1935), Berdyaev continued to develop his vision of the human vocation for creativity, which he originally explored in his 1916 work, "The Meaning of the Creative Act".

During the Second World War, Berdyaev developed a heightened sense of the end of history and began to explore eschatological ideas. These ideas are evident in his works "The Divine and the Human" (1944-1945) and "Truth and Revelation" (1945), which echo themes previously discussed in his work "The New Middle Ages" (1924). In these two works, Berdyaev presented his own theodicy, in which he absolves God of responsibility for the existence of evil in the world. His concept of freedom, which even his staunchest supporters criticized, is also closely tied to this theodicy. In the philosophy of the Russian thinker, the idea of freedom serves as a

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[59] Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) was a famous thinker, a representative of personalistic school in France.

[60] Nikolai Lossky (1870-1965) was a Russian philosopher, recognized as a representative of intuitivism and personalism.

striking example of his ability to establish an independent viewpoint, even if it contradicts to theories or dogmas.

When evaluating the main ideas in Berdyaev's works, it becomes evident that he addressed both the contemporary ideas of his time and timeless questions that are relevant to people in any era. Berdyaev not only reacted to the events he encounters but also delved into the underlying causes of these events.

Therefore, in the preceding discussion, we have attempted to highlight the main ideas and topics that Berdyaev presented in his works. While our focus has been on analyzing his concept of a person, it is important to provide an overview of his life and key ideas in order to better understand the background of his philosophy. It is worth noting that themes such as personhood, freedom, creativity, objectification, and the relationship between God and humanity are intricately interconnected in Berdyaev's philosophy, and I will touch upon them to some extent. By considering the foundations of Berdyaevian philosophy, our aim is to avoid one-sidedness in our research and thoroughly analyze the concept of a person, which is one of the objectives of the subsequent sections.

1.3. Formation of Guénon's Personality

1.3.1. Intellectual Biography of René Guénon

The French intellectual René Guénon (1886-1951) attracted numerous followers from around the world. Although Guénon is generally regarded as a key figure in Traditionalism, he did not set out with this as his primary goal. The Traditionalist movement, which emerged in the 19th century, aims to preserve and promote the world's religious traditions while asserting the transcendent unity of these traditions. Guénon's role can be precisely described by the following intentions:

"Guénon on the other hand was a preeminent expositor of the integral metaphysics of the perennial philosophy, who diagnosed the bankruptcy of the modern West that was due to its forgetfulness of the Absolute and in this sense, he could however be considered a pandit, someone who transmits spiritual doctrine but does not function as a spiritual master."[61]

Several detailed bibliographies have been written about Guénon[62], but despite this, he is often considered a "shadowy figure" who preferred to maintain an "outer anonymity"[63] especially during the second period of his life. In this sense, he was not a public personality; nevertheless, there are ample testimonies about his intellectual development.

As a man with rare intellectual abilities, Guénon chose not to be a spiritual master for others but rather a simple example of a spiritual man who practiced his religion. Nevertheless, his spiritual life did not contradict his intellectuality. In many cases, Guénon became an interpreter of Eastern religious Pietschtraditions for the Western mind[64]. Guénon consistently acknowledged the decline of Western religion, specifically Catholic Christianity, and he saw certain Eastern traditions as more vital and capable of preserving their own heritage. He believed that the spiritual stagnation of the West, in contrast to the vitality of the East, served as a powerful incentive not only to study these traditions deeply but also to undergo his own conversion from Christianity to Sufism. However, before delving into his intellectual life, let us first explore its background.

René Jean-Marie-Joseph Guénon was born into a Catholic family of the bourgeoisie in the small city of Blois. Following the Christian tradition, his parents baptized him with the name

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[61] Samuel B. Sotillos, 'René Guénon and Sri Ramana Maharshi: Two Remarkable Sages in Modern Times (Part I),' *The Mountain Path*, 51.2 (April/June 2014), p. 95.

[62] Paul Chacornac and Robin Waterfield have authored some of the most nuanced and profound bibliographical works on René Guénon. See: Paul Chacornac, *The Simple Life of Rene Guenon* (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2005); Robin Waterfield, *Rene Guenon and the Future of the West: The Life and Writings of a 20th Century Metaphysician* (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2005).

[63] Harry Oldmeadow, 'René Guénon', in *The Matheson Trust* (1994), p. 1, https://www.themathesontrust.org/papers/biographies/Rene%20Guénon%20H%20OLdmeadow.pdf, [Accessed 19 September 2023].

[64] Sotillos, 'René Guénon and Sri Ramana Maharshi', pp. 95-96.

René-Jean-Marie-Joseph[65]. His formal education began at the age of twelve when he entered a school, and four years later, in 1902, he enrolled at the College of Augustin-Thierry, where he studied rhetoric and graduated with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. Subsequently, a young Guénon moved to Paris to pursue studies in mathematics. Just as during his school years, he was highly regarded by all of his professors as a brilliant student[66].

During his university years, he visited his aunt, Madame Duru, who lived in the village of Montlivault, near Paris. It was here that he met Padre Ferdinand Gombault, a personality whose importance cannot be overlooked in Guénon's life. The friendly relationship between the young seeker of truth and the Catholic padre lasted for twenty-five years.

Padre Ferdinand was a Catholic priest with Thomistic knowledge, a quiet orthodoxy, and robust beliefs, but his contribution to the formation of the Traditionalist perspective is often underrated. Between 1894 and 1915, he published a series of articles related to the fields of philosophy, theology, and science, demonstrating the concordance between biblical and scientific knowledge[67]. In further research, exploring different systems of ancient religious traditions, including those of the Chinese, Egyptians, and Babylonians, Gombault came to the conclusion about their affinity at their core or a transcendental unity[68]. Given this fact, it is worthy of acknowledgment that Gombault deserves credit for laying the groundwork for the perennial outlook and providing a solid foundation for the development of Guénon's ideas and methodology. He also served as an inspiration for addressing the spiritual challenges of modern times, challenges that Guénon himself continued to develop[69].

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[65] Chacornac, *The Simple Life of Rene Guenon*, 7.

[66] *Ibid*., 13-16.

[67] Marie-France James, *Esotérisme et christianisme autour de René Guénon: Esotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et christianisme aux XIXe et XXe siècles: explorations bio-bibliographiques*, t. 1 (Paris: Lanore, 2008), p. 60.

[68] William H. Kennedy, 'René Guénon and Roman Catholicism,' in *Traditio et Restauratio*, http://traditioetrestauratio.blogspot.com/2012/04/william-h-kennedy-rene-guenon-and-roman.html [Accessed 19 September 2023].

[69] *Ibid*.

In 1905, Guénon abandoned his academic studies in favor of seeking a broader worldview. From that time onward, he placed great hope in uncovering the truth within several secret spiritualistic groups[70]. During this period, many secret organizations gained popularity, and Guénon, as a seeker of truth, could not resist participating in some of them. Among the groups he joined were the neo-Masonic Martinist Order, the Universal Gnostic Church, the Masonic Lodge "Humanidad" (which means 'humanity')[71], and finally, the Thebah Lodge of the Grande Loge de France. In 1912, within Thebah Lodge, Guénon received his final sixth initiation from this type of esoteric group.

During this period, Guénon had the opportunity to make important acquaintances. First and foremost, it is worth mentioning his meeting with Dr. Gerard Encausse, who is known under the alias Papus and who led the Martinist Order. Recognizing the talent of the young man, Papus invited him to join this group, but their relationship did not last long due to Guénon's discovery of the erroneous nature of this group[72]. In 1909, Guénon met Patriarch Fabre des Essarts of the Gnostic Church, who was famous under the alias Synesius. This personality ordained him as a bishop and gave him the name Tau Palingenius[73]. But this kind of service was only a brief part of his life. In the same year, under this alias, Guénon established a journal titled "La Gnose" based on occult teachings, where he also published his works[74]. Some of the published content in the journal was later included in his books, such as "The Metaphysical Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus", "Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta", "The symbolism of the Cross".

Guénon needed almost four years (from 1906 to 1909) to understand the nature of these secret groups. He recognized that they had nothing to do with their originally designed associations in the past, and as a result, they distorted and falsified the truth. In the book

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[70] Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 66-69.

[71] Waterfield, *René Guénon and the Future of the West*, 25.

[72] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, pp. 66-69.

[73] Chacornac, *The Simple Life of Rene Guenon*, p. 27.

[74] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 67.

"Perspectives on Initiation" he described an erroneous and often profane character of these secret organizations, whose knowledge was based on individualistic assumptions. These organizations stayed far from the goal of leading humans closer to the divine, which is the true aim of real initiation[75].

The following years marked a breakthrough in Guénon's understanding. Breaking away from these counterfeit spiritual organizations, the twenty-four-year-old Guénon delved deeper into the knowledge of Eastern traditions. His study followed a classical or traditional path, involving the transmission of knowledge from a teacher to a student. He received guidance from his teacher Sylvain Levi and Ananda Coomaraswamy, a renowned Indian philosopher and metaphysician. Based on the materials he gathered, Guénon wrote his book "Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta" in 1925. Swedish painter John-Gustav Ageli, also known as Abdul-Hadi, Leon Champrenaud, known as Abdul-Haqq, and Georges-Albert Puyou de Pouvourville, whose alias was Matgioi[76], were also important advisors to Guénon, introducing him to esoteric Eastern knowledge.

After several unsuccessful attempts to discover the mystical aspects of Catholicism, Guénon decided to seek new initiation by immersing himself in one of the Eastern religions. It is important to note the significant relationship that developed between Guénon and John-Gustav Ageli in 1910. Ageli was his new friend and a practitioner of Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam. Under Ageli's supervision and guidance, Guénon received initiation into Sufism at the age of 29, as some sources suggest[77]. However, some researchers argue that Guénon received his Sufi

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[75] René Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, ed. Samuel D. Fohr and trans. Henry D. Fohr (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), pp. 72-75.

[76] Patrick Laude, *Pathways to an Inner Islam: Massignon, Corbin, Guenon, and Schuon.* (NY: SUNY Press, 2010), pp. 13-14.

[77] "Sufism is Islamic mysticism, often referred to as the internalization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice. Sufis strive to constantly be aware of God's presence, stressing contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction." See: 'The Oxford Dictionary of Islam', in *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2260 [Accessed 19 September 2023].

initiation only after his arrival in Egypt in 1930. In Egypt, he was initiated into the Sufi Order of Shadhiliyya[78] and took the name Abdel Wahed Safia, which means "Servant of the unique"[79]. Paradoxically, Guénon did not actively practice Sufism until his time in Egypt[80].

It can be seen that in 1912, a new stage of life began, not only because of Guénon's initiation into a new religious tradition but also because he got married. His wife, Berthe Loury, came from a traditionalist Catholic family, and they became a couple following a Catholic service[81]. At this time, he enrolled at the University of Sorbonne to study philosophy and science[82]. However, his intellectual ability was acknowledged at the University, albeit informally and not within a scientific context[83].

Fortunately, it was Jacques Maritain who met an open-minded Guénon and brought him to the Institut Catholique de Paris, where studying had a different format than at the modernized Sorbonne. Moreover, at the Institut, knowledge about Oriental religions was welcomed, primarily due to the presence of the Dominicans, who, as it is known, were open to other religious traditions thanks to their mission of evangelizing different nations[84]. Guénon, who had already published a book about Hinduism by this time, which had attracted the attention of intellectuals, easily integrated into the institute's circle. Hence, Guénon met well-known intellectuals such as Father Émile Pélican and Father Antonin Sertillanges, as well as M. Milhaud. This exposure provided him with an opportunity to explore the Christian Catholic tradition[85]. Additionally, he became a member of the *secret Catholic group known as* the *Société du rayonnement intellectuel du Sacré*

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[78] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 76.

[79] Roland Lardinois, *Scholars and Prophets: Sociology of India from France in the 19th-20th Centuries*, trans. by Renuka George (London & NY: Taylor & Francis, 2017), p. 227.

[80] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, pp. 75-76.

[81] Muhammad Afzal Upal, Carole M. Cusack, eds., *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 594.

[82] René Guénon, *The Essential. Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crises of Modernity*, ed. by John Herlihy, introd. by Martin Lings (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2009), pp. 275-76.

[83] Lardinois, *Scholars and Prophets*, p. 230.

[84] *Ibid*., p. 231.

[85] *Ibid*., p. 230.

Coeur (Society for the Cultural Development of the Sacred Heart)[86] and contributed to the Catholic journal "Regnabit", which was published by this group.

During the time when Guénon sought a solution to recover the mystical essence of Roman Catholicism, his understanding of the idea of tradition took shape. Consequently, in 1916, Guénon earned a diploma in philosophy, dedicating his dissertation to the analysis of Leibniz's infinitesimal calculus[87]. Despite his involvement with the *Institut Catholique de Paris*, in 1927, he was expelled from it due to his disagreement with the Neo-Thomists in the intellectual realm[88].

However, there is no doubt that his primary focus remained on his publications. Despite his popularity, Guénon delivered only one public lecture in 1925, dedicated to Eastern metaphysics, which took place at the Sorbonne[89]. Nevertheless, the period from 1912 until 1930 is considered the most public phase of Guénon's life and the peak of his publishing activity[90]. In 1921, his first book, "Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines", was published, followed by the second, titled "The Spiritist Fallacy", in 1923. Among other notable works from this period are "Man and His Becoming According to Vedanta" (1925), "The Esoterism of Dante" (1925), "St. Bernard" (1929), and "Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power" (1929). The works published later, such as "The Symbolism of the Cross" (1931), and especially "The Crisis of the Modern World" (1927), and "The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times" (1945), constitute the quintessence of Guénon's writings.

Already famous among various intellectual circles, Guénon sought a quieter life. In 1928, his wife passed away[91]. In 1930, Guénon accepted an invitation from friends to come to Egypt. In 1934, he married for the second time, this time to the daughter of a Sheikh, with whom he had

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[86] *Ibid*., p. 231.

[87] *Ibid*., p. 227.

[88] *Ibid*., p. 231.

[89] Roland Pietsch, 'René Guénon's Doctrine of Metaphysics as the Foundation of Islamic Humanities,' in *Ukrainian Free University*, Munich, Germany, *Kom*, 2.1 (2013), pp. 1–15.

[90] Oldmeadow, 'René Guénon', p. 4.

[91] *Ibid*., 3.

four children (one of whom was born after Guénon's death). Three years later, the family moved to a small villa where, in peaceful solitude, he continued his intellectual work. He collaborated with journals, completed works such as "The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times" (1945), "Perspectives on Initiation"(1946), "The Great Triad" (1946). In 1947, Guénon relocated to Cairo (which is why researchers sometimes referred to him as the "Cairo hermit"), and despite declining health, he continued his work. Additionally, he initiated the process of obtaining Egyptian citizenship, which was successfully granted.

Guénon remained committed to Sufism throughout his life. His conversion should not be met with astonishment, and for a proper analysis of his work, Guénon can be regarded as a "Miscarriage" of Western postmodernism[92]. Guénon passed away in 1951, and until his final days, he diligently practiced *dhikr* — a meditative Islamic form of prayer aimed at achieving union with the Divine.

1.3.2. Gueonon's Ouvres and Leading Ideas

While possessing values such as modesty and prudence, Guénon never intended to create a new system of dogmas or concepts but rather aimed to bring existing ones into the light of the public. Commonly regarded as the founder of the Traditionalist School, Guénon (1886-1951) contributed to its emergence at the beginning of the 20th century, which sought to emphasize the transcendent unity found in world religions. Continuing the traditions of philosophers like

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[92] Natella Speranskaya, Kirill Benediktov, 'Ia polagaiu, chto put' Rene Genona byl bezoshibochnym' [I suppose that René Guénon's way was unmistakable], interview, *Russkaya Istina* (05 September 2016), https://politconservatism.ru/thinking/ya-polagayu-chto-put-rene-genona-byl-bezoshibochnym [Accessed 23 September 2023].

Shankara[93], Plato, Plotinus, and Meister Eckhart, metaphysics and mystical experiences became integral parts of this school[94].

The Traditionalist School is also known by various names, such as the Perennial Philosophy, Perennialist School, Religio Perennis, or Sophia Perennis. Its main idea revolves around the assumption of the existence of timeless truths that are fundamental to major religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The development of the Traditionalist school is attributed to the demands of its time. It emerged within the Western context as a response to the visible breakdown of the so-called modern world. The school's representatives sought to explain the reasons behind various societal disruptions worldwide and expressed strong criticism of dominant progressive ideologies[95].

As for the etymological origin of the word "*perennis*", it is derived from two Latin words: "*per*", meaning "through", and "*annus*", meaning "year", which collectively convey the notion of "lasting through the year or years"[96]. Among the famous followers and critics of Guénon are Ananda Coomaraswamy, Julius Evola, Martin Lings, Frithjof Schuon, Mircea Eliade, and many others[97]. Additionally, traditionalists share common beliefs on specific topics, such as the similarity of metaphysical concepts across world religious traditions, the idea of initiation, the process of secularization, the materialization of society, which is particularly evident in the Western world, the decline of history, and various other subjects[98].

It is appropriate to note that Guénon also had an influence among Orthodox Christian authors, particularly when recalling Seraphim Rose (1934-1982) and Jean Biès (1933-2014).

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[93] Adi Shankara or Adi Shankaracharya was an Indian philosopher of the 8th century who build up the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta.

[94] Harry Oldmeadow, *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy*, foreword by William Stoddart (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc, 2010), xii.

[95] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 23-24.

[96] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/word/perennial [Accessed 20 September 2023].

[97] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, xiii.

[98] Oldmeadow, *Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy*, p. 21.

Guénon's ideas held special significance for both of these Christian intellectuals, and they were even recognized as representatives of the Traditionalist school. However, this does not negate the criticism that these authors had of the perennialist tradition itself[99].

Of course, Guénon's traditionalist perspective did not develop overnight; it underwent transformations and took shape through his efforts to find his place amidst the Catholic tradition, occultist groups, and his contemplation and understanding of the modernistic influences among intellectuals.

Guénon left behind seventeen books published during his lifetime, and an additional eight were published posthumously. Apart from these, he wrote numerous articles, engaged in correspondence, and participated in recorded dialogues. When evaluating Guénon's body of work, it becomes relatively easy to gain a precise understanding of his standpoint. In general, his works can be categorized into the following themes: the idea of Universal Tradition and critique of the modern world, metaphysics and cosmology, gnosis, the spiritual realization of man, symbolism, esoterism, counterfeit spirituality, the nature of time, and various other topics.

Importantly, Guénon emphasized a contrast between the Orient and the Occident. He insisted that the Orient managed to maintain a connection with the universal or metaphysical Principle, which serves as the source of reality preserved through religious traditions[100]. Furthermore, in his works, Guénon demonstrated that Eastern traditions were more historically stable compared to the Western tradition, represented primarily by Christianity and, to be more precise, Catholicism, which had undergone transformation and degeneration. This situation led him to shift his religious affiliation from Christianity, to which Guénon had belonged since childhood, to Sufism, a conscious choice he made later in life.

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[99] See: Ieromonakh Serafim (Rovz), *Chelovek protiv Boga* [Man against God] (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Sretenskogo monastyrya, 2006).

[100] Julius Evola, *René Guénon: A Teacher for Modern Times*, trans., and introd. Guido Stucco (Edmonds WA: Holmes Publishing Group, 1994), p. 15.

Despite his conversion to Sufism, Guénon refrained from asserting the exclusive truth of any single religion, recognizing absolute true knowledge in other world religious traditions as well. In fact, despite his criticism of Christianity, he regarded it equally as one of the world's major religions. As a proof of it is his constant research and interest in Christianity.

As a critic of the modern world, Guénon, in a simple and polite manner, insisted on highlighting its precise problems and illustrating the errors in its current state. In his books, such as "East and West" (1924), "The Future of the West", "The Crisis of the Modern World" (1927), "The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times" (1946), Guénon endeavored to demonstrate that Eastern traditions were able to preserve their metaphysical foundations from the destructive influences of time, which the Western tradition failed to do. These works provide a comprehensive overview of Guénon's viewpoint and are an excellent starting point for understanding his perspective. Guénon described the erroneous tendencies of the modern era, which, as he argues, began with the Enlightenment and escalated through the Modern era. The author presented a clear comparison between modern and traditional civilizations, elucidating the reasons and consequences of this profound shift. This antithesis of the modern era has both internal reasons and external results. It can be simplistically attributed to the values of progressive, materialistic societies versus those that prioritize spiritual and moral development. Therefore, the primary reason for the emergence of a new, non-traditionalist society, which is characteristic of non-traditionalist societies, is the rupture with the Higher Principle, seen as the Creator and source of life. In his works, Guénon called "for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special references to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization"[101].

In his works such as "Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines" (1921), and the "Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta" (1925), "The King of the World" (1927), "The Multiple States of the Being" (1932), "Oriental Metaphysics" (1939), "The Metaphysical

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[101] Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, xi.

Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus" (1946), "Studies in Hinduism" (1966), and "Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism" (1973)[102], the "Cairo Hermit" defended the metaphysical foundations of world religious traditions and explained their perspectives on humanity, spiritual growth, practices, and the symbolic meanings embedded within these traditions. Guénon aimed to elucidate the realm and worldview of religious traditions, along with their metaphysical aspects, for Western audiences, using a modern language.

The period of Guénon's intellectual adventure in study process and communication with the Catholic intellectuals gained importance by relevant topics in the books he wrote further, devoted to the Christian tradition and, in particular, the Catholic tradition. Among these works are "The Esoterism of Dante" (1925), "St Bernard" (1929), "The Symbolism of the Cross" (1931), "The Great Triad" (1946), "Insights into Christian Esoterism" (1954), and "Symbols of Sacred Science"(1962). By these books the author elucidates the topics mostly of initiation and symbolism at the same time making comparisons with other traditions.

In addition to this, Guénon conducted a profound evaluation and analysis of various spheres of life, including initiation, counter-initiation, spiritual realization, esoteric and exoteric practices within different religions and spiritual groups. He expounded on these topics in his works such as "The Spiritist Fallacy" (1923), "Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power" (1929), "Perspectives on Initiation" (1946), "Initiation and Spiritual Realization" (1952). In these works, he provided explanations for moral dispositions and intentions of modern times. The author elucidated the relationship between spiritual and temporal powers in different traditions, drawing comparisons between these traditional lines.

The theme of symbolism, as presented in various religious traditions, is explored in a series of Guénon's works, including "The Symbolism of the Cross" (1931), "The Great Triad 1946", "Symbols of Sacred Science" (1962), "Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles" (1970), some of

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[102] As was noted before, some of Guénon's works were published posthumously, after his death in 1951.

which were previously mentioned. The uniqueness and value of these works lie in Guénon's ability to identify similarities in symbols across different traditions, interpreting and comparing them with great insight. While each tradition frequently utilizes a distinct interpretive style (employing language as a tool), the common meaning of symbolism, the presence of universally recognized symbolic signs, as well as mutual ideas and concepts, indicate the fundamental unity among all religious traditions. This unity holds significant importance for Guénon, who is regarded as one of the founders of the Traditionalist school.

It is essential to highlight the significance of the work "The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times" (1945), which holds a pivotal place in Guénon's body of work. In this book, he explored a wide array of topics, including critiques of modern times, the skewed assumptions of modern sciences, the cyclical nature of time, quantitative and qualitative perspectives on life, initiation and counter-initiation, among others. While the book covers a broad spectrum of subjects, readers will discern that all of them are interconnected by underlying metaphysical principles.

Hence, the range of questions and topics in Guénon's works is quite extensive, and simultaneously, these themes interweave to create a distinct overarching Guenonian traditionalist perspective. Unlike Berdyaev, Guénon clearly defined the objectives in each of his books, following a clear line of inquiry. In this sense, the "Cairo Hermit" employed a more systematic style of explanation. Nevertheless, there are foundational ideas that serve as the basis and keys to understanding other topics, and these at the very least need to be briefly mentioned, a task that Guénon accomplishes in his written works.

Now, having a vision of the life, works, and mission of Berdyaev and Guénon, it is worthwhile to examine the topics common to these intellectuals and analyze the similarities and differences in the subjects they addressed.

1.4. The affinity of the Outlook of Berdyaev and Guénon

As shown above, the worldviews of Berdyaev and Guénon were shaped in specific atmospheres, which consequently influenced and nourished their critical thinking. It would be accurate to define both personalities as "aristocratic radicals", a description justified by their affiliation with the intellectual elite based on their own merits[103]. Their charismatic and uncompromising manners of expression bring them together, yet their lifestyles place them on opposite sides of the spectrum. Both can be called hermits, but with different connotations: while Berdyaev's ascetic principles coexisted with his marriage and social activity throughout his life, Guénon ultimately embraced a hermit's lifestyle. Additionally, Berdyaev firmly considered himself a Christian, viewing Christianity as the only true religion that embodies the highest Truth and guides humanity to salvation. In contrast, Guénon, despite his affiliation with Sufism, refrained from making rigid claims about the one true religion and acknowledged the presence of sacred Truth in other religious traditions as well. The former, in both theory and practice, displayed contradictions in his approach to social life and openly admitted: "I am unsocial who acts socially". Meanwhile, the latter tended to stay out of the public eye, especially during the second period of his life when he lived in seclusion in Egypt. The Russian philosopher abstained from sexual relationship and lived with his wife in celibacy, whereas the French thinker was concerned with continuing his family line. This list, of course, does not encompass all the features that illustrate the similarities and differences in the private lives and attitudes of these intellectuals, but it at least serves as a foundation for understanding their worldviews.

At first glance, the Russian and French thinkers contrast one another by their temperaments and attitudes towards life. One key aspect that sets them apart is the social challenges they faced, which were partly shaped by the historical context of their respective countries. Both moved and settled the place of life. Berdyaev experienced a dramatic shift from

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[103] Waterfield, *René Guénon and the Future of the West*, p. 93.

Russia to France due to the tumultuous events in his homeland. Conversely, Guénon, by his own choice, relocated from France to Egypt. Notably, France played a pivotal role in the lives of both intellectuals, and a closer look reveals that both Berdyaev and Guénon resided in Paris for a few years. According to bibliographical data, Guénon resided in Paris from 1904 until 1930. As for Berdyaev, Paris became his home from 1924 to 1948. Thus, both thinkers lived and worked in Paris concurrently for a six-year period, spanning from 1924 to 1930.

It would certainly be intriguing to discover whether these two intellectuals ever crossed paths during their time in the capital of France. Robin Waterfield, a researcher, shared this curiosity but was unable to find any direct evidence of Berdyaev and Guénon meeting in person. Nevertheless, he finds it reasonable to assume that they were aware of each other's work through their written works[104].

From 1924 to 1930, both Berdyaev and Guénon were actively engaged in intellectual pursuits in Paris. While it is difficult to assert whether they ever met in person, it is plausible that they at least heard about each other and exchanged ideas indirectly through interactions with fellow intellectuals. One noteworthy connection they did share was their acquaintance with Jacques Maritain, a prominent French Catholic philosopher. Berdyaev's friendship and meetings with Maritain are evident[105]. On the other hand, Guénon's introduction to Maritain was facilitated by Noëlle Maurice-Dheenis[106], and he maintained ongoing contact with Maritain through his interest in the neo-Thomist circle[107]. During that period, Guénon had extensive interactions with Maritain and other prominent Catholics, primarily through his involvement in this circle. He also

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[104] *Ibid*., p. 93.

[105] See: *Velykaia druzhba: Perepiska Zhaka i Raisy Mariten z N.A. Berdiaievym*, ed. and trans. by Teresa Obolevitch and Bernard Marchadier.

[106] Noëlle Maurice-Denis was a daughter of a French painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943). Noëlle was a French writer (1896-1969). See: Lardinois, *Scholars and Prophets*, p. 227.

[107] Antoine Faivre, *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*: *Selected Papers Presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995*, ed. by Antoine Faivre, Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1998), p. 292.

contributed 19 articles to the widely-read Catholic journal "Regnabit" from 1925 to 1927[108]. Additionally, in 1924, Guénon and Maritain both participated in a round table discussion titled "Le salut qui vient de l'orient?" organized by Frédéric Lefevre, providing an opportunity for direct interaction and exchange of ideas between participants[109].

What is intriguing is that despite Berdyaev's and Guénon's differing backgrounds and approaches, their worldviews, intellectual positions, and critiques of the modern world, the topic about the destiny of humanity, metaphysics, and more overlapped in significant ways. Rather than viewing them as mere repetitions of one another, it is more accurate to consider their ideas as complementary. By scrutinizing their outlooks, readers can draw valuable conclusions and insights. Analyzing and comparing their thoughts can yield meaningful perspectives. Furthermore, both intellectuals, through their well-formed worldviews and unique methods of thinking, established themselves as independent and *sui generis* thinkers whose ideas continue to captivate and intrigue researchers.

At first glance, Berdyaev and Guénon appear to represent entirely different schools of thought. One might question how it is possible to compare the views of a non-orthodox Christian with a rigorous and staunch traditionalist Sufi. Berdyaev's approach leans toward identifying gaps in the Christian tradition, rediscovering neglected elements, and embracing novelty. His affiliation with the stream of neo-Christianity is unmistakable. He is known for his willingness to create something new within the Christian context. In contrast, Guénon explicitly stated that he had no intention of founding a new school or movement. His primary objective was to convey ancient knowledge to a modern audience in a comprehensible language. Guénon's role was that of an interpreter, bringing different religious knowledge to light for contemporary seekers.

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[108] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 31.

[109] During the meeting, the profound Thomist Maritain disagreed with Guénon on the issue of the differences between Eastern and Western metaphysics. For more information, please see the following sources: 'Round Table: Ossendowski, Guenon, Maritain', in *Gornahoor*, https://www.gornahoor.net/?p=6593 [Accessed 12 June 2022].

Berdyaev presented himself as a representative of the personalistic school, engaging in existentialism, political and religious philosophy rooted in the Christian tradition, and also involved in journalistic activities to some extent. Guénon, on the other hand, is celebrated as the progenitor of the Traditionalist school, emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional wisdom in the modern age. At the same time, it would be inappropriate to consider Guénon as a passive interpreter or translator due to the depth of his interpretations and meditations in his writings. He is, indeed, an intellectual whose personality and wisdom capture the attention of researchers from various fields.

Additionally, Guénon's criticism is primarily directed towards the modern world with its ideologies, yet he rarely references other thinkers in his writings. In contrast, Berdyaev, in his works, relies mainly on his own intellect and intuition, even when his views may diverge from the dogmatic perspective of the Christian faith. While the Russian thinker frequently criticizes or interprets other philosophers or thinkers, he consistently reserves the right to draw his own conclusions.

Despite these noted differences, Berdyaev and Guénon share significant commonalities. The comparative analysis of specific aspects, ideas, conclusions, and criticisms advanced by these thinkers introduces a novel dimension to the realm of philosophical research. Indeed, comprehensive comparative studies focusing on the aspects of their worldviews have hitherto remained unexplored.

It is not accurate to claim that Berdyaev and Guénon simply echo one another's viewpoints; rather, they delve into many similar topics, and in some instances, their explanations resonate or complement each other's visions. When examining the intellectual contributions of Berdyaev and Guénon, it becomes evident that they share overarching outlooks while maintaining distinct ideas. Notably, their works converge on themes such as time and history, metaphysics, spirituality, and the transfiguration of a human. Moreover, the use of differing terminology should be taken into account in interpreting their perspectives on these subjects.

Both Berdyaev and Guénon hold unequivocal critiques of modernity. They share a lack of optimism regarding the modern world with its materialistic trajectory and progressive inclination toward secularism and pluralism. The disintegration of society, the devaluation of beliefs, and the erosion of what are often considered eternal values and spirituality compel these thinkers to respond to these societal shifts. In response, they take a stance on the degradation of history and the decline of time.

Against the backdrop of sacred knowledge from various religious traditions, Guénon espouses the cyclic theory of time, most notably expounded upon in the Hindu tradition. This theory often informs his explanations of history and time in general. Guénon asserts that the world has entered a phase known as the *Kali Yuga*, the last of the four cycles, characterized by the dark age marked by the decline of traditional values, deformation of tradition, despiritualization, and more. However, according to his perspective, after this dark age, a new golden era should emerge. This concept finds thorough exploration in his work "Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles". It is worth noting that Guénon briefly touches upon the idea of cyclic time in many of his works, underscoring its importance and relevance in his worldview.

In contrast to Guénon, Berdyaev offers a somewhat different perspective on time and history, although certain similarities do exist. The Russian thinker also acknowledges stages or periods in human history, a theme he explores extensively in his work "The New Middle Ages" (1924). In this book, he delves into the regularities of periodicity and rhythmicity of time and epochs, highlighting the cycles of ascent and descent in human life. He emphasizes that after the so-called "new history"[110] of humanity characterized by a decline in life, marked by despiritualization and the rejection of traditional values, a new era marked by the flourishing of spiritual life must inevitably follow. Furthermore, in his later work "The Destiny of Man" (1931), Berdyaev elaborates on the idea of three distinct periods or ages that humanity must traverse,

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[110] See: Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time: Together with an Essay on the General Line of Soviet Philosophy*.

drawing upon trinitology. These three periods are associated with the Trinity and are named the era of the Father, the era of the Son, and the era of the Spirit. Berdyaev explains these as the age of rules, the age of grace, and the age of freedom, corresponding to the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the anticipated third Testament that would replace the current one[111].

While these thinkers share some common ground in their perspectives on time and history, it is evident that their approaches and goals differ. A more in-depth study comparing Berdyaev and Guénon on this topic about time would undoubtedly yield valuable insights, and I leave this task to future researchers.

Similarities between the critical assessments of these thinkers extend to the realm of metaphysics. For example, both intellectuals explore ideas concerning the correspondence between the inner and outer worlds, the relationship between the celestial and terrestrial, the relation between the world and man, as well as between the internal and external man. Both thinkers adopt a metaphysical perspective from which they evaluate events in the world and the very essence of human existence. They attribute significant importance to the spiritual principle, neither Berdyaev nor Guénon completely dismisses the visible world; instead, they recognize its inherent value and role. It is inappropriate to label their views as adhering to strict dualism between spirit and matter, as they emphasize the interconnectedness between the two. After all, the aforementioned metaphysical considerations are foundational to the worldviews of both Berdyaev and Guénon. I would describe both thinkers as proponents of "healthy metaphysics", one that remains unswayed by the influences of Cartesianism or Kantianism.

The analysis of the concept of man and his destiny is a pivotal part of the vision shared by Berdyaev and Guénon. These thinkers hold a common view on the possibility and even the necessity of human transfiguration during earthly life. To varying degrees, each of them emphasizes the importance of belonging to a religion that serves as a repository of knowledge for human change. Interestingly, Berdyaev tends to be more conservative in this regard, as he

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[111] See: Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

emphasizes the possibility of such transformation exclusively within the Christian Church. In contrast, Guénon, being a researcher of different religious traditions, acknowledges the potential for human transfiguration within various world religions. I will delve into this topic in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this research.

It is valuable to note another connecting link between these thinkers: their affiliation with religious philosophy. While Guénon never identified himself as a philosopher, his works and worldview are typically associated with philosophy, or to be more precise, with Perennial philosophy, as acknowledged by his researchers and followers[112]. His significance in this field is undeniable. In contrast, Berdyaev, who is recognized as a philosopher, proudly considers himself one and defends philosophy against various criticisms. The uniqueness of his philosophy lies in its spiritual character. Berdyaev is acknowledged as a representative of Russian religious philosophy, serving as a bridge between philosophy and theology. It is worth noting that he was even honored with a Doctor of Theology *honoris causa* nomination, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, their importance and contributions to the field of religious philosophy introduce yet another aspect that unites Berdyaev and Guénon.

Therefore, I have introduced two personalities whose intellectual contributions have captured the attention of researchers for nearly a century. Born around the same time but in different societies, they both encountered remarkably similar challenges. What unites these thinkers includes their shared reactions to these challenges of modern time, their understanding of spirituality, their recognition of metaphysics as essential for comprehending the visible world, pursuit of Truth and true knowledge, shared perception of history as a period of decline, and concepts regarding the destiny of humanity. This common ground motivates to conduct a comparative study, focusing on specific ideas and topics. The fact that comprehensive comparisons of Berdyaev and Guénon's visions have not been conducted to date underscores the novelty of this study.

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[112] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 23.

Despite the abundance of intersecting ideas in the thoughts of both intellectuals, there is still a need and value in focusing on the idea of human destiny and the concept of a person as fundamental topics. Given the novelty of this research and the importance of personalistic investigation in the field of philosophy, I believe it is certain to contribute to this chosen topic.

Therefore, before delving into the detailed and concrete interpretations of the concept of a person as proposed by Berdyaev and Guénon, it is advisable to first explore the historical development of this concept, particularly its emergence in philosophical discourse, the various interpretations it has acquired, and the insights it offers. This historical investigation will provide us with a solid foundation for conducting a more comprehensive analysis of the chosen topic and understanding the significance of this concept.

CHAPTER II

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF A PERSON

2.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced to the personalities of Berdyaev and Guénon, as well as their areas of interest. In this chapter, my objective is to analyze the historical development of the term 'person' and how its meaning has evolved over time. Today, the term 'person' holds widespread significance and is used in various contexts. However, its most common usage in daily conversations pertains to humans. Consequently, it has become customary to treat the term 'person' as synonymous with a human being. To assess the validity of this approach, I need to delve into the term's origin and the historical significance attached to it.

I focus on two pivotal historical periods in the development of the term 'person': the ancient Roman and Greek eras, and the era of the Church Fathers. These two periods form the foundation for understanding the concept of a person. As I will demonstrate, this concept has its origins in both philosophical and theological realms. Consequently, the second chapter is constructed on the basis of the dialogue between philosophy and theology.

The 'anthropological turn'[113] of modern times demonstrates that personalistic tendencies

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[113] This idea is about the emergence of distinctive features of personalistic schools of the 20th century. See: *Bogoslovyie lichnosti* [Theology of Personhood], ed. Aleksey Bodrov, Mihail Tolstoluzhenko (Moskva: BBI, 2013), p. viii.

have continued to capture the attention of thinkers to this day. It is worthwhile to examine the worldview proposed by some contemporary authors, as it will provide an opportunity to observe in practice the value of the efforts made by ancient and Christian authors — whether their ideas were rejected, declined, or found a continuation. The overall assessments given by Berdyaev and Guénon regarding the value of the thoughts expressed by the early Christian authors, as well as their views on the concept of a person where applicable, will serve as the conclusion of this research.

2.1. The Development of the Idea About a Person in Ancient Times

First of all, it is worth noting that the idea of a connection between philosophical and theological anthropology is fully justified, as we will see. It was Gilson who acknowledged that the concept of a person in Christian thought arises from the dialogue between philosophy and faith, with a direct relation to Holy Scripture[114]. If we address the question of whether the concept of a person is purely a Christian creation, it seems quite uncertain. On one hand, it is undeniable that in ancient times, there was an understanding of what a person is; on the other hand, some authors emphasize that this concept acquired an existential meaning due to Christian authors, mainly the Cappadocians. The latter tendency is called *theologiegeschichte Legende*[115]. Regardless of the veracity of views on this topic, my aim is to explore its formation, focusing on precise periods of time.

No matter what meaning is attached to the usage of the term 'person' today, it has its own history and development. The analysis of the term points to an ancient rite that existed in the ancient Greek culture, specifically devoted to the worship of Dionysus. The celebration dedicated

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[114] Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connel, Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), p. 181.

[115] In English, "Theological legend". See: Niels H. Gregersen, 'Imago imaginis: Chelovecheskaja lichnost s bogoslovskoj tochki zrenija' [Imago Imaginis: A Human Person from a Theological Point of View], in *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, ed. by Aleksey Bodrov, Mihail Tolstoluzhenko (Moskva: BBI, 2013), p. 6.

to this god of harvest and wine occurred once a year and was accompanied by theatrical performances. To make the deity apparent, elaborate disguises were used: a masked man represented the deity and spoke on his behalf. The performance had, as we can now say, a theatrical form with masks, costumes, musical accompaniment, dancing, and playing[116].

Despite the visible effects, masks also had a different kind of significance. For example, here is how a modern researcher describes the use of masks using the example of Euripides, a renowned Athenian playwright, and his work "Bacchae", which also focuses on the character of Dionysus:

"Euripides has called our attention to the fact that the smiling mask of the god represents different identities to characters and audience. In addition, as the action of the play continues, the precise nature of what the mask represents to the audience becomes increasingly ambiguous. Certainly it continues to "represent" divinity to the audience. Yet the visual effect of the smiling mask has the same doubleness as the language of the play itself. […] Similarly, the god's mask remains smiling, but the visual effect of this smile does not remain consistent. The smile of the "gentle" stranger seems, from the human vantage point, to turn by the end of the play to a divine sneer, a ghoulish expression of inappropriate glee at a vengeance too easily executed. In short, Dionysus' mask, by becoming ambiguous, comes to owe its interest not simply to what it formally represents in a way characteristic of the normal tragic masking convention, but to "the further realities lying behind it," the invisible forces that unite the benign and destructive aspects represented by the single sign of the god's smiling mask. The mask, then, represents the god to the audience, misrepresents him to the characters and […] in the final scene the mask must be interpreted as an artifact or symbol representing the god, or as much as we, or the characters, can ever visually and directly experience of him."[117]

Hence, the meaning of the mask did not end with its visible manifestation, but it had a broader meaning, including being a symbol. Also taken into account was its perception by

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[116] Helene P. Foley, 'The Masque of Dionysus', *Transaction of the American Philological Association*, 110 (1980), pp. 107-8.

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

viewers. Another crucial point is that these Dionysian performances represent a reality beyond and show witnesses what is transcendental. The audience could experience the character of this reality through its symbolic expression.

Ancient Greeks continued to perform religious ceremonies in a theater, maintaining all their external appearances and settings. While the use of masks preceded religious rites, it is reasonable to state that masks in ancient Greek theater also took on a religious, or better to say, sacred meaning. Such a transfer of the use of masks from religious rites to theatre was the reason that the terms 'mask' and 'person' became inextricably linked.

If we investigate the etymology of the term 'mask', it originates from the Latin term *massa*, which is related to 'paste', and the word 'mask' means 'demon' or 'wizard'. However, the term 'mask' appeared later. In the religious rites and theatrical tradition of ancient Greek culture, the term 'πρόσωπον' was used instead of 'mask'. Πρόσωπον' consists of two words: 'πρός', meaning 'to', 'toward', 'before', and 'ὤψ', which literally means 'eye', 'face', 'facade', 'front', 'presence'[118].

Another interesting etymological interpretation of the term 'πρόσωπον' is offered by Rolnick, who connects it to the ancient Roman goddess Persephone (Greek Περσεφόνη, *Persephone*), the mistress of the underworld. According to mythology, this goddess spent part of the year underground and part of the year in the upper world. Thus, there were times when she was visible and times when she was concealed. The Romans adopted her name as 'Proserpina' (which also leads us to the Greek term 'persona' — '*prosopon*', *N.P.*), so Rolnick does not exclude the possibility that the word 'person' was a short form of her name[119]. Canadian philosopher Kenneth L. Schmitz acknowledges that the concept of a person existed as a synonym

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[118] Kenneth L. Schmitz, *Person and Psyche*, vol. 2 (Washington DC: CUA Press, 2009), pp. 35-36.

[119] Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, *Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Cambridge, 2007), p. 12.

with "phrase, *personare*, and *prosopon*" in various cultures. These terms can be unified under the term 'person', which has a similar meaning denoting intimacy and uniqueness[120].

In any case, the term 'πρόσωπον' found an equivalent of '*persona*' in Roman culture, adopting the same meaning[121], also connected with the mask on a human face. The word consists of two terms: '*per*' — meaning 'through', and '*sonare*'—meaning 'to sound', signifying coming from the inner side of the mask[122]. Thus, it was the ancient Roman world that created a corresponding term that has been in use up to the present day. While modernity associates the use of masks with entertainment and masquerade, in the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome, their usage was directly connected with religion, rituals, and mystery.

There is also room for conflicting viewpoints on the meaning of the term '*person*'[123], and it greatly depends on the era in which it was used and the circumstances that influenced its formation. It is not easy to trace the exact moment when the term fully transitioned from referring to a mask to representing the understanding of humans or their existential aspect. Nonetheless, the tradition of masks intertwined people's lives with theatrical appearances. In Greece, the saying 'the word is theater and people are actors' emerged. Aristotle emphasized this point by stating "*to geloton prosopon*", highlighting that human life exists both in the world as a whole and in the world of theater[124].

When evaluating ancient Greek philosophy, the interpretation of the term '*prosopon*' is not homogeneous. Scholars ascribe different interpretations to the term in ancient Greece and Rome, and its sacred meaning was not always emphasized. Most researchers discover the concept of '*prosopon*' and '*persona*' in ancient times in the sense of a mask, which represents a distinct

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[120] Schmitz, *Person and Psyche*, p. 36.
[121] Maurice Nédoncelle, 'Prosopon et persona dans l'antiquité classique. Essai de bilan linguistique', in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 22. 3-4 (1948), p. 282.
[122] Gregersen, 'Imago Imaginis', p. 8.
[123] See: Nédoncelle, 'Prosopon et persona dans l'antiquité classique', p. 282.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

feature or features of a human, something external to the individual. Another common interpretation refers to the ethical qualities of a person.

Many well-known thinkers have referred to the term '*prosopon*', so it is worth analyzing the meanings they considered. One widely-held understanding of '*prosopon*' among Greek thinkers emphasizes what is unique to an individual, setting them apart from others. For example, Plutarch (AD 46 - after AD 119) uses '*prosopon*' in various contexts. He distinguishes it from a persistent human identity, highlighting its temporal character, and its externality becomes apparent in the actions of heroes who assume roles[125]. Another possible meaning refers to a moral characteristic or a character that cannot be changed, although at other times, Plutarch suggests the possibility of change. Furthermore, the Platonist philosopher argues that '*prosopon*' can disrupt reality, being something external to human[126]. One of the most famous authors of ancient times, Homer (born c. 8th century BC), uses the term '*prosopon*' in his writings with multiple meanings: firstly, as a funeral mask; secondly, as an actor's mask, and thirdly, as the role or character of the hero[127].

The transition from the mask to the human itself was emphasized by the Greek historian Polybius (200-120 BC). He uses '*prosopon*' directly to refer to a human, emphasizing their role or discussing a specific personality within a group of people. The term also appears when it is important to highlight certain aspects of a human, such as moral dignity[128]. Aristotle's perspective is notable; he understands '*prosopon*' as the area between the head and neck. In his work *The*

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[125] Philip H. De Lacy, 'The Four Stoic Personae', *Illinois Classical Studies*, University of Illinois Press, (1977), p. 164.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[127] Tatiana Voropaeva, 'Rol 'osobystosti v ukrainskii istorii kriz 'pryzmu biohrafistyky' [The Role of Personality in Ukrainian History through Biographical Studies], in *Ukraïns'ka Biografistika*, 14 (2016), p. 53.

[128] Nédoncelle, 'Prosopon et persona dans l'antiquité classique', p. 281.

History of Animals, he states: "The part that lies under the skull is called the 'face': but in the case of man only, for the term is not applied to a fish or to an ox"[129].

In the late Roman Empire, known for its sufficiently developed legal system, the term '*prosopon*' was translated as '*persona*'. While it generally retained the same meaning, it underwent a renewal and acquired a defined status in accordance with the demands of that society. According to the research of Lydia Jaeger:

> "From the 3th century BC, *persona* came to designate the first, second, and third persons in grammar. Later the legal meaning, which was absent from the Greek term, was added: the human being is distinguished from things (*res*), he is a *persona*: humans have a special dignity and moral responsibility. The term can also be used in a public sense: the people, the senate. In society, a human can have several *personae*, that is to say, several roles in the fabric of society. *Persona* also came to designate the human individual in their particularity. This is certainly not unrelated to the legal meaning of the term: it is as conscious and free subjects, because of their words and deeds, that humans are responsible before the law and possess a specific dignity."[130]

As evidence of '*prosopon*' and its Latin counterpart, it is important to mention another Roman author, Denys d'Halicarnasse (circa 60–8 BC), who notes the analogy of using '*persona*' as 'persona' in official documents[131]. When discussing a more specific understanding of the term, it was Cicero (106-43 BC) who considered the features of '*persona*' based on the ethical doctrine of the Stoics. In his work *De Officiis*, he emphasizes such aspects of a person: 1) the nature capable of all humans, 2) the individual nature of a human, 3) a role determined by the circumstances of one's birth, influenced by time and place, and 4) the choices derived from a person's judgment of the life they wish to lead[132].

In fact, when analyzing the idea of '*prosopon*' or '*persona*', it is necessary to differentiate between the word with a specific meaning and the concept itself. As the Dutch scholar Cornelia J.

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[130] Lydia Jaeger, 'Christ and the Concept of Person', *Themelios*, 45.2 (2020), p. 279.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[132] De Lacy, 'The Four Stoic Personae', p. 163.

Vogel acknowledges, discussing the concept of a person during ancient times lacks a foundation, and the impetus for the concept was triggered by Trinitarian and Christological questions during the time of the Church Fathers[133]. However, specific distinctions, albeit varied, can already be found in Greek philosophers who viewed '*person*' as what differentiates a human from an animal, emphasizing rational and moral activities[134].

As Greek and Roman theater began to depict the lives of people, the stage became increasingly associated with real life, and actors in masks became synonymous with everyday individuals. It is natural that both theater and masks started to become intertwined with specific characters. Thus, '*prosopon*' evolved to represent a social personality or simply a human. However, the term originally referred to sacred reality and symbolically represented divinity here on Earth. Initially, it was just a term, not a fully-formed concept. It gained its final recognition and significance during the early Christian era, as analyzed in the following subchapters.

2.2. Transition to the Early Christian Era

An interesting perspective on the development of the '*prosopon*' concept is presented by scholar John J. Lynch in his analysis of Trinitarian theology. He writes: "The history of how *prosopon* and *hypostasis* came to the terms for '*person*' in the Trinity and in the doctrine of Christ has not been fully traced"[135]. Despite this, in the research, I will attempt to analyze the formation of the concept of a person. My focus is not so much on understanding the intricacies of Trinitology but on unveiling the aspects related to '*prosopon*'.

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[133] Cornelia J. De Vogel, 'The Concept of Personality in Greek and Christian Thought', in *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed. by J. K. Ryan, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2 (1963), pp. 22-24.

[134] *Ibid.*, 23.

[135] John J. Lynch, 'Prosopon in Gregory of Nyssa: A Theological World in Transition', *Theological Studies*, 40.4 (1979), p. 729.

When evaluating the early Christian authors, their process of forming the '*person*' concept was rather lengthy, and even the use of the term '*prosopon*' was not immediate. The meanings, and even multiple interpretations, of the term provided by the ancient Greeks were only the starting point for its conceptual development. While this term is associated with masks in religious cults or ancient theatrical traditions, such an understanding would be rather utilitarian. Here is what the researcher Lynch admits:

> "The Greek Fathers, for the most part, use prosopon in ways that reflect their biblical and pagan heritages. An awareness of these influences is invaluable background for an examination of prosopon as it came to be applied to the Father, Son, and Spirit. Clement of Alexandria refers to *to prosopon kyriou* (The face of the Lord, N.P.) and the OT idiom according to which God's showing and concealing His face signify blessings and evils respectively. Similarly, Athanasius describes Jesus as praying a psalm in order to turn in our direction *to prosopon to patros* (The face of the Father, N.P.)."[136]

The term had a strong association with its Greek interpretation as 'face'[137]. It is worth mentioning that ancient Greek and Roman thinkers were not the last to use the term '*prosopon*'. It is also used in Christian sources, as well as in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. '*Proposon*' is used 65 times in Genesis and is referred to either as human existence or human personality (20 times), or as the human face (7 times), as well as human mood (7 times). Additionally, this term is used to describe the manifestation of God Himself, which is an important point, as it shows that even in the Septuagint, '*prosopon*' is used not only for humans but also for God. Furthermore, the use of this term in the Old Testament was similar to the so-called 'pagan' perspective. The New Testament continued the idea of '*prosopon*' as face, for instance, relating it to the face of Jesus[138]. In the New Testament sources, it appears 76 times and

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[136] *Ibid.*, p. 730.
[137] *Ibid.*, p. 729.
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 730.

takes on a broader meaning, describing humans, their existence in time, or the sense of commonality among people[139].

The transition into the Christian era and the subsequent formation of the new concept of '*person*' require more detailed analysis. It is important to note that Western and Eastern Christianity, despite some differences in their dogmas, have developed distinct concepts of a person. In Western Christianity, the foundation was laid by Augustine, who drew an analogy between the three Persons of the Trinity and the faculties of the human soul — memory, mind, and will, often referred to as to be, to know, and to will. However, such an interpretation can now be considered exclusive, as it primarily focuses on the characteristics of the soul and overlooks interpersonal relationships. In the modern era, the Augustinian view, even in the West, especially with the emergence of the personalistic school, was acknowledged but seen as a partial understanding of a person[140]. Another influential figure in shaping Western thought was Thomas Aquinas. His understanding of a person drew from Boethius, a Christian thinker of the 5th-6th centuries, who defined '*person*' as "an individual substance of a rational nature"[141]. The ideas of Thomas Aquinas were highly regarded by Karol Wojtyla and applied in his personalistic philosophy, which remains influential in Western thought to this day[142].

The personalistic conception was most comprehensively developed by the Cappadocian Fathers, building upon earlier Christian authors who used and interpreted the term '*prosopon*'. For example, it is worth noting the perspectives of Origen and Tertullian, who contributed to the interpretation of the concept of a person before the Cappadocians.

The Greek word '*prosopon*' was first employed among Christian authors by Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–236) to distinguish between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. The Latin version

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[139] Yulia Dumitrake, 'Termin 'prosopon' — etimologicheskiy i kontseptualnyy vzglyad' [The term 'Ppocopon' — an etymological and conceptual perspective], *Diskussiya*, 3.44 (2014), p. 24.

[140] *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, vii.

[141] Francis Etheredge, *From Truth and Truth* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), p. 36.

[142] *Ibid*.

of the word, 'persona', was adopted by Tertullian (160–230 AD) in his work *Against Praxeas*, where he acknowledged the existence of three Persons in the Trinity while simultaneously emphasizing the singularity of Christ, who bears two natures, divine and human[143]. Thanks to Tertullian's intellectual contributions, the term '*persona*' made its debut in intellectual history with full significance[144]. He played a pivotal role in establishing the formula '*una substantia — tres personae*', signifying that God is 'one Being in three Persons'[145]. His interpretation of '*prosopon*' encompasses Biblical interpretation, including God's dialogue. Consequently, the concept of a person became associated with "the idea of dialogue and of God as dialogical Being"[146]. This emphasis on dialogue challenged Tertullian's own concept of the relationship between the Three Persons of God, as it implied that "in God there is nothing accidental, rather, only substance and relation"[147].

It is worth mentioning that Ratzinger, when evaluating Tertullian's view regarding the dialogue of the Divine Persons, notes that there is "God who speaks and man who is spoken to"[148]. The author also underscores the openness to dialogue not only for God but also for humans, a distinction that aligns with the Scriptural worldview. In this perspective, God and humans are seen as "*not* a self-enclosed substance, but rather the phenomenon of total relatedness, which can ultimately enter into its fullness only with the one who is God, yet which is signpost pointing the way for all personal being"[149]. Therefore, relatedness, or even "pure relatedness"[150], becomes fundamental in Tertullian's personalistic interpretation. His validation of the Trinitarian formula, including the term '*prosopon*', had a profound impact on the subsequent centuries.

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[143] Jaeger, 'Christ and the Concept of Person', p. 280.

[144] Pope Benedict XVI, *Dogma and Preaching*, p. 182.

[145] *Ibid*.

[146] *Ibid*., p. 185.

[147] *Ibid*., p. 187.

[148] *Ibid*., p. 185.

[149] *Ibid*., p. 188.

[150] *Ibid*., p. 189.

The vision of Origen (185-253 AD) is widely accepted as a foundational standpoint for the Nicene-Cappadocian thought[151], and his philosophy has had a profound and persuasive influence on Christian literature. This Christian thinker used two terms, '*hypostasis*' and '*persona*', interchangeably, particularly in the context of Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation[152]. Origen's thought is primarily related to Trinitology, as he was the first to use the "Three Hypostasis" formula, which would later acquire dogmatic significance. Origen's understanding of '*hypostasis*' was concrete but had a diverse range of meanings, such as "foundation", "existence", "constitution", "reality", and more, often in contrast to "conceptuality" or "appearance"[153]. Origen regarded '*hypostasis*' as an individual substance, and he asserted that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three hypostases sharing the same divine nature or essence (*ousia*)[154]. To distinguish '*hypostasis*' as something individual and concrete, Origen also used the expression "*idea hypostasis*", a term from the philosophical discourse of his time. It was used to distinguish a purely individual being, on the contrary to something general and common"[155].

Moreover, Origen's contribution is also seen in the use of the term '*hypostasis*' for human beings. Similar to the analogy of the concept of the Trinity, which describes the general nature of God, for him, every soul or rational being shares a common human nature but has a separate *hypostasis* or individual substance[156]. Origen stresses that the rational or human nature, along with the divine nature, is multiplied into individual substances, or, in other words, *ousia* is divided into *hypostasis*[157]. In her examination of the term *prosopon*, Ilaria L. E. Ramelli concludes that:

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[151] Ilaria Ramelli, 'Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of "Hypostasis"', *The Harvard Theological Review,* 105.3 (2012), p. 302.

[152] *Ibid*.

[153] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

[156] *Ibid.*, pp. 307-08.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

"Origen *never* used πρόσωπον as a synonym of ὑπόστασις in its Trinitarian meaning to designate a Person of the Trinity (whereas this usage is found in Hippolytus, roughly at the same time). In its many occurrences in his writings, even when it refers to God, Christ, or the Spirit, πρόσωπον means either "face/sight/presence," or "character" in a rhetorical-literary sense (the character who is speaking in a scene). […] Origen means that the Son is "the face [πρόσωπον] of the Father, as an impression of his individual substance," and not "the Person of the Father." He is the Father's "face" in that he is the image of the Father's substance […] and thus reveals the Father. The Son reveals the Father's Person, but is not that Person. Πρόσωπον in Origen *never* means "Person" of the Trinity, at least never directly, unlike hypostasis, which designates each Person's individual substance."[158]

Origen's attitude lacks a clear distinction between *hypostasis* and *prosopon*. In his Trinitarian vision, the Son and the Holy Spirit resemble the image or *prosopon* of the Father; then, Christ does not have his own *prosopon*. He is not a Person by Himself but is a bearer of the Father's Person or *hypostasis*. Thus, *prosopon* remains not well-formed, taken as a separate concept with its own sense. This shows Origen's monarchism, as the Son is an image of the *prosopon* of the Father, but the Son as well as the Holy Spirit neither have their own *prosopon* nor are each of them a Person by Themselves.

Therefore, interpretations by both Origen and Tertullian carry significant weight as they played roles in shaping the concept of a person. Origen introduced the idea of the three hypostases of God, while Tertullian is considered the first Christian author to describe the Trinitarian dogma of three divine Persons with one essence[159]. These interpretations continued to evolve through the contributions of the Cappadocian Fathers and later thinkers, including contemporary ones. However, a more profound concept of a person emerged within the context of Trinitarian discussions and the development of Trinitarian theology in the 4th and 5th centuries. This will be the focus of our next step in this research.

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[158] *Ibid.*, pp. 314-15.

[159] Dmitriy Matveev, 'Trynytarnyi personalizm sovremennogo pravoslaviia: pro et contra' [Trinitarian Personalism of Modern Orthodoxy: pro et contra'], *Stranitsy*, 18.3 (2014), p. 372.

2.3. The foundation of the Cappadocian Fathers

In the very first centuries of its existence, Christianity unavoidably encountered the issue of interpreting the term 'person'. When discussing the contributions of early Christian authors to the understanding of *prosopon*, fundamental questions arose regarding the explanation of commonalities and differences within the Trinity, as well as Christological questions[160]. One of the most significant contributions came from the Cappadocian Fathers, including Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. They operated with two terms: '*prosopon*' and '*hypostasis*', and the importance of using the latter term, as mentioned earlier, can be seen in Origen's interpretation of the Trinitarian God. While *hypostasis* received more attention at the beginning of Trinitarian discussions, the term '*prosopon*' also assumed significant importance in Cappadocian terminology. Although their terminology led to many moments of discussion and sometimes even opposition, their overall contribution is worth exploring.

One of the first Cappadocians who contributed to the development of Trinitarian theology was St. Basil the Great (330-379 AD). In his earlier work *Against Eunomius*, the term '*prosopon*' is seen simply as a face or mouth, similar to the Greek understanding. However, this meaning can also be found in the Septuagint and the New Testament, as mentioned earlier. In addition to this, St. Basil, referencing passage from Matthew, where it says: "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (18:10), uses *prosopon*. However, during his discussions, he also employs the term '*hypostasis*' as a synonym for 'person'. For instance, this was his position in the aforementioned work *Against Eunomius*, where he attempted to distinguish the three Persons of the Holy Trinity[161]. Later, in his Epistles 52 and 236, which are dated between 375-376, the term '*prosopon*' garnered more attention. Basil considered *prosopon* alone insufficient to explain

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[160] *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, p. vii.
[161] *Ibid.*, p. 381.

aspects such as the Persons of the Trinity, and instead, he uses the adjective 'τελεία' ('*teleia*'), meaning 'perfect'. In Epistles 236, there are some vague moments, with *prosopon* being used to mean 'a particular way of existence' or a synonym to '*hypostasis*'[162].

For Basil, the most important thing was to describe the life of the Trinity more precisely, where the difference between the three is very essential and cannot be outlined by a certain external manifestation, as it was proposed by Sabellius, with whom Basil engaged in a discussion. Sabellius was a Christian priest and theologian who actively sought, during the first decades of the 3th century, to put forward the idea of many faces (πολυπρόσωπον) used by one God for His expression[163]. Sabellius, in this case, identified the substance and the hypostasis, which Basil confronted. Even though Basil was not in favor of using the term '*prosopon*', instead using '*hypostasis*' to interpret the three Persons of the Trinity, *prosopon* did not escape his attention. His great effort lay in identifying *hypostasis* as *prosopon*, giving the latter an ontological meaning, which became the foundation of personalistic intentions[164].

Gregory of Nyssa (335–395 AD) made significant contributions to the formation of the concept of a person. Like his predecessor, he considered the term *hypostasis* as a kind of synonym for '*prosopon*'. His formulation, "God is one in nature or essence (*mia ousia*) in three individual substances", became the foundation of trinitology[165]. St. Gregory understood the term '*prosopon*' as something stable, static, and permanent[166]. This Father of the Church states that the Logos, the Son, is the 'prosopon of the Father'. For Gregory of Nyssa, *prosopon* functions like a "presentation", a "form" (gr. *μορφή*), or a "manner of presentation". Thus, the hypostasis of the

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[162] *Ibid.*, p. 388.

[163] *Ibid.*, p. 390.

[164] Ierotheos (Vlachos) Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. by Esther Williams (Levadia-Hellas: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1999), pp. 70-72.

[165] Ramelli, 'Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of "Hypostasis"', p. 302.

[166] Lynch, 'Prosopon in Gregory of Nyssa', p. 733.

Son is known as a *prosopon* (a manner of presentation) of the *hypostasis* of the Father[167], or, in other words: "*Prosopon* is a predicate of the *hypostasis* which is the Logos"[168]. Even if considering such a statement vague, its value is justified.

I must also mention St. Gregory's apophatic approach when investigating the concept of a person. The Cappadocian Father posited that it is possible to know God only as a Person or three Persons, including the knowledge of Christ as a Person. In this view, being Persons here confirms a positive aspect of God that is recognizable as distinct from the divine nature, which performs a negative aspect of God and is unrecognizable[169]. Hence, God can be known only as a Person. This differentiation between the unknown nature and the known person is reminiscent of the vision formulated by St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359 AD) regarding the possibility of knowing the energies of God. He acknowledges the impossibility of comprehending God in His nature or essence[170].

Daniel F. Stramara, in his thesis devoted to St. Gregory, concludes that his interpretation of the term 'person' has a rather modern meaning, as a "self-aware psychological agent", "the center of consciousness"[171]. Even when Gregory uses the term '*prosopon*' in the sense of a mask, he imparts a special sense that can be understood as a "psychological disposition"[172]. Stramara evaluates St. Gregory's vision on the basis of Trinitarian interpretation, especially concerning the relation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Prosopon* in this case is understood as relational and directional. Each Person of the Trinity does not exist separately from the other two but contains one another. This mystery is described by the Cappadocian Father as the idea of

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[167] *Ibid.*

[168] *Ibid.*, p. 734.

[169] Giulio Maspero, *Trinity and Man Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 96.

[170] Glenn Butner Jr., 'Communion with God: An Energetic Defense of Gregory Palamas', *Modern Theology*, 32.1 (2015), pp. 26-27.

[171] Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* (New York: Oxford University Press, New York, 2005), pp. 13-15.

[172] Daniel F. Jr. Stramara, *Unmasking the Meaning of προσωπον: Prosópon as Person in the Works of Gregory of Nyssa* (Ph.D. diss., Saint Louis Univ., 1996), p. 54.

perichoresis (from the Greek 'περιχώρησις' what means 'rotation'), demonstrating the unity of the Persons of the Trinity and their interconnected existence, interpenetration, but not mixture[173]. As Stramara brilliantly posits it, the Persons of the Trinity are "mutually inclusive" in the sense of "glorying in the other", or "falling in love"[174]. Moreover, F. Stramara maintains that St. Gregory uses the term 'person' concerning God as well as in relation to a human[175].

The vision of the youngest among the Cappadocians, Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 AD), had its own value. His insight led to the problem of the relation between two natures in Christ — the divine and human. Through discussions with Apollinaris, another Christian thinker of his time, he delved into the topic[176]. In Christiological issues Apollinaris brought the idea of *prosopon* directly from the nature or *physis* as well as *hypostasis*: while it is about one Divine nature, it is appropriate to speak about one divine '*prosopon*'. Thus the Second Person of the Trinity is seen as one nature and, therefore, one *prosopon*. This way the person is put in the "frame" of nature, and in Apollinaris' view it is a divine nature[177].

Due to the lack of distinction between *nature* and *prosopon*, the Christological problem occurred, particularly concerning the vision of the Incarnated Logos as one divine person or as two persons — divine and human. Gregory rejected the sameness of 'nature 'and 'person', adding that God is one nature, a single *ousia*, but it is it pertinent have to speak about 'three *prosopa* ' (*prosopa* is plural to *prosopon*) "according to the meaning of the names" of God[178]. However, it is not merely a mode of appearance. *Prosopon* signifies a concrete, individual existence, an entity,

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[173] Daniel F. Jr. Stramara, 'Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 52.3 (1998), p. 260.

[174] *Ibid*., p. 261.

[175] *Ibid*.

[176] Kenneth P. Wesche, 'The Union of God and Man in Jesus Christ in the Thought of Gregory of Nazianzus', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 28.2 (1984), p. 90.

[177] *Ibid*., pp. 85-86.

[178] Lynch, 'Prosopon in Gregory of Nyssa', p. 736.

and illustrates the qualitative meaning of every individual (divine or human, such as the Son or Peter, etc.)[179].

Additionally, in Apollinaris' theological framework, the flesh is that which man needs to be saved from. However, Gregory's perspective shifted the emphasis to the mind, or *nous*, which had been marred by original sin and required redemption. The *nous* encompasses the entirety of the human being, representing an incorporeal and divine aspect of humanity, the profoundest dimension of one's existence[180]. Importantly, the *nous* includes the salvation of the body as well, making it all-encompassing. Consequently, through the *nous*, the meeting of God and humanity occurs at the deepest and most intimate ontological level, serving as both mediator and a defining characteristic of both parties[181]. From this vantage point, the concept of a person emerges as the foundational mode of existence, encompassing one's nature. The ontological encounter between persons — divine and human — is made possible through the *nous* bestowed upon humanity. Thus, this meeting is primarily a meeting of the persons[182]. Furthermore, for Gregory, the Person is the guiding principle of existence, a more advanced interpretation that best describes Gregory's vision, although it was developed later in the 6st century[183]. Regarding Christological issues, it is important to note that St. Gregory understood the Logos as one person where two natures converge. This vision forms the basis of Nazianzus' anthropology, where humans are seen as persons called to meet with the divine nature. This meeting is essential for the possibility of transfiguration, which lies at the heart of St. Gregory's teaching.

As I have shown, the interpretations of *prosopon* and *hypostasis* provided by early Christian thinkers and the Cappadocians share both commonalities and distinctive elements. The relationship between the terms '*prosopon*' and '*hypostasis*' presented by these Christian

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[179] *Ibid*., p. 738.

[180] Wesche, 'The Union of God and Man in Jesus Christ in the Thought of Gregory of Nazianzus', pp. 91-93.

[181] *Ibid*., p. 95.

[182] *Ibid*.

[183] *bid*., p. 94.

intellectuals offers an opportunity to better characterize the understanding of the concept of a person. While these two terms are sometimes viewed as synonyms, or hendiadys, they still retain their individual meanings. As contemporary researcher Marcin Pobielski concludes, these two terms complement and expand upon each other, with what is personal often being characterized or even influenced by what is hypostatic[184]. Taking Saints Basil and Nazianzus as examples, they preferred the term '*hypostasis*' due to the usage of the term '*prosopon*' by Sabellians and Nestorians. Notably, the term 'hypostasis' is often absent from the terminological vocabulary of these heretical groups[185]. For a better distinction of the terms, the Polish author refers to the texts of St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662). During his discussions with Nestorius, this saint used both terms, although *prosopon* is employed cautiously[186]. Simultaneously, Saint Maximus used *prosopon* when referring to Christ and humans to describe them as "a composite, active, self-cognisant being"[187]. The concept of the term '*hypostasis*' serves to characterize each human *personally* or, in Greek, '*prosopicos*'. Therefore, *prosopon* as a personal feature relates to the *hypostasis* of every human being, differentiating each individual from the other. Another valuable definition attributed to *prosopon* based on Maximus' perspective includes terms such as character[188], "an extensional synonym of hypostasis"[189], "manifestation of being a hypostasis"[190], "the metaphorical meaning of 'face'"[191], and, in a different context, the use of *hypostasis* as a 'face' points to inner characteristics or capacities hidden within a human[192]. Other meanings encompass "representative"[193], "hidden place of the soul" which is "an intellectual kind"[194], and

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[184] Marcin Podbielski, 'The Face of the Soul, the Face of God: Maximus the Confessor and Prosōpon', *Forum Philosophicum* 19.1 (2014), p. 120.

[185] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[187] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[188] *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 130.

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[190] *Ibid.*

[191] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[192] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[193] *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.

the intellectual part of the soul capable of contemplating God[195]. It is important to emphasize that in Maximus' vision, *persona* is not identical to a kind of an 'inner man', but rather designates a part or characteristic of the 'inner man'[196]. In fact, this last point differs from the views held by Berdyaev and Guénon, as further elaborated in this work.

To sum up, it can be concluded that early Christian authors, especially the Cappadocians, assigned special significance to the terms '*prosopon*' and '*persona*', giving them with ontological meaning and formulating the concept. Orthodox personalistic thought in the 20-21st centuries has focused particularly on the Fathers' ideas about the person, not only interpreting them but also seeking to deepen their meaning. The next step in this research involves an examination of some of the modern personalistic approaches.

2.4. The Modern Perspective on a Person

Contemporary authors investigating the approaches and interpretations of personalistic questions among early Christian intellectuals conclude that their main task was not merely to define the terms *prosopon* and *hypostasis* but to formulate a specific concept of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while also exploring the similarities and differences between them[197]. This process involved conceptualizing Triadological and Christological questions. Nevertheless, dogmatic discussions about *prosopon* did not conclude the debates concerning the nature of a person. Christological questions, including the issue of the incarnation of Christ with two natures (divine and human), played a crucial role in this context. The well-known expression of St. Athanasius of Alexandria, "For the Son of God became man so

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[194] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[195] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[196] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[197] Philip Rolnick, 'Chelovecheskaia lichnost' v svete trinitarnykh analogiy' [The Human Person in Light of Trinitarian Analogies], in *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, ed. by Aleksey Bodrov, Mihail Tolstoluzhenko, (Moskva: BBI, 2013), pp. 65-66.

that we might become God", shapes the view of Christ not only as God-human but also as fully human and a person. This raises another question – whether a human is a person?

Speaking about the concept of a person in modern times, I consider not only terminology but also the broader personalistic vision. In the 20th and 21st centuries, philosophy discussions on personalistic topics often refer to the term 'selfhood'[198]. The key to understanding a person, especially the human person, becomes a topic of human dignity, ethics, and more. The contemporary scholar Niels Gregersen expressed the idea that a human is created in the image of the invisible God, Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Thus, *imago Dei* is transformed into *imago imagines*, signifying an "image of an image". Such an approach specifically emphasizes that a human is an image of a perfect being in Christ[199]. However, *imago imagines* is not yet fully realized; a human is called to fulfill this image and reveal it in themselves, which is possible through communication with God and others. The universal image of contemporary personalists depicts a person at the center of the universe, balancing between heaven and earth, connecting God and humanity. I will explore this vision further in my research.

Philip A. Rolnick, investigating the concept of a person, suggests that the understanding of a person in the Trinity can be applied in understanding of a human person. Also, as the author smartly notices, when the very idea of a person is related to God, who is the mystery Himself, we cannot arrive at a final and complete definition of personalistic interpretations[200]. Nevertheless, Rolnick defines three main features of a person: the one that divides unites and relates. He also emphasizes: "The Christian understanding of a person pays much attention to personal peculiarity, now and in eternity. This way every person is born with a whole network of relationship: with father, mother […] with God"[201]. However, there is a clear difference in the relationship between divine Persons and human persons. Unlike the divine Persons, each of whom represents the

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[198] Gregersen, *Imago Imaginis*, p. 2.
[199] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[200] Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, p. 10.
[201] *Ibid*., p. 67.

fullness of the divine Nature, there is an ontological unity between the Persons of the Trinity. In contrast, no human being is the bearer of the fullness of human nature and has no ontological relations to another human or to humanity in general. The realization of human nature and the full actualization of the human person, including relationships among humans and unity within humanity, can only be achieved through a relationship with God[202]. Furthermore, the difference between the Person of the Trinity and a human person is that the latter possesses changeability and development, capable of choosing "a greater reality", thus becoming himself[203]. One could say that Rolnick stresses the idea of theleology and the ability of a human person to achieve their *thelos*. Thus, such an approach can be called theleological personalism, where human can attain the level of becoming a person through his relationships with the Persons of the Trinity.

The British theologian George Pattison views a human person through the prism of prayer experience. Such an experience shows the personalistic element in humans. In prayer, a human acknowledges not only their activity but also their passiveness, which means that a human is controlled by a "super-natural being, and not by himself"[204]. Unlike God, who is '*actus purus,* ' passiveness is a feature of purely human existence. It presupposes an understanding that God, not humans, is the source of good. Such receptivity, a synonym for passiveness that Pattison uses, makes humans open to the perception of God and the world in general[205].

The Russian Eastern Orthodox thinker of the 20th century, Vladimir Lossky, describes a person as someone who lives within his nature, thus developing an approach of the Holy Fathers. In his work "In the Image and Likeness of God", he underlines that a person is "someone who is distinct from his own nature, […] soon who goes beyond his own nature while still containing

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[202] *Ibid.*

[203] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[204] George Pattison, 'Molitva i lichnost'' [Prayer and Personality], in *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, ed. by Aleksey Bodrov, Mihail Tolstoluzhenko (Moskva: BBI, 2013), p. 42.

[205] Matveev, 'Trynytarnyi personalizm sovremennogo pravoslaviia: pro et contra', p. 382.

it"[206]. Furthermore, a peculiar feature of the Orthodox personalistic approach is the "faith to the Fathers"[207]. In the 21th century, this stance is expanded upon by some features of existential philosophy and phenomenology. An example worth mentioning is the view of John Zizioulas.

The Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931-2023) offered a rather controversial personalistic view that is still discussed today. In his books *Being as Communion*, *Communion and Otherness* and some others he forms a personalistic concept, so called the *personalist trinitarian ontology*, which quickly became an object of discussions and criticism[208]. The basis for his view served patristic theology including the vision of the Cappadocian Fathers. At the same time his attempt is not considered purely universal, for except for answers it creates new questions and brings new thoughts about a person[209]. Zizioulas states that Greek philosophy lacked an ontological basis for understanding the person, in contrast to the Cappadocians who developed it by referring not to Greek thinkers but to Biblical sources[210]. As the Metropolitan of Pergamon considers, Greek ontology was not enough to create a full concept of a person while this paradigm described only a reason (*aition*), and the consequences were not viewed as ontological, thus the plurality of persons did not and could not have ontological ground. As the author states: "The personal ontology is the declaration of the metaphysics of peculiarity"[211]. Zizioulas understands a person through relation, which was taken into account by Cappadocians and creates a Trinitarian conception where the understanding of the Persons of the Trinity is defined through relation to other Divine Person. So

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[206] Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 120.

[207] Matveev, 'Trynytarnyi personalizm sovremennogo pravoslaviia: pro et contra', p. 371.

[208] Some interesting points of the personalistic vision of Zizioulas can be found at these works: Alexander F. Van Biezen, 'The Ontological Yoke of the Trinity: Zizioulas on the Cappadocian Turn', in *KULeuven* (2016), pp. 1-8; John G.F. Wilks, 'The Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas', *Vox Evangelica*, 25 (1995), pp. 63-88.

[209] Dana Bates, Review of '*Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*', by J. D. Zizioulas, *Transformation*, 27.4 (2010), p. 286.

[210] John Zizioulas, 'Chto znachit byt' lichnost'yu: k voprosu ob ontologii lichnosti' [What does it mean to be a Person], in *Bogoslovyie lichnosti*, ed. by Aleksey Bodrov, Mihail Tolstoluzhenko (Moskva: BBI, 2013), p. 202.

[211] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

the Father, as Person, is as He is because of His relation to the Son; the Person of the Son is as He is because of His relation to the Holy Spirit, and so on. In such a view the idea of *perihoresis* comes forth, which is fundamental for Zizioulas' personalistic conception[212].

In his examination, Aristotle Papanikolaou, a contemporary theologian and adherent to Zizioulas' perspective, acknowledges:

"To be is to exist in an eternal relationship with the loving God and only through such a relationship is created existence 'free 'to be eternally in loving union with this God. But in order for God to give this freedom from the 'given, 'Zizioulas argues that God's mode of existence, tropos hyparxeos, must itself be free from necessity and must be freely constituted. This freedom within God's very being is the condition for the possibility of the freedom of created existence from the 'given 'of its own nature, and this freedom within God's being can only be affirmed, according to Zizioulas, through the principle of the monarchy of the Father."[213]

As creations of God, humans are urged to embrace their limited freedom within the constraints of time and their own limitations. Although inherently different from God, people are able to find their identity through participating in the loving community of the Trinity. This concept can be seen as a restricted form of freedom that comes with being created beings. Due to Zizioulas' emphasize on the relationship of humans with God his outlook is described as relational ontology.

Zizioulas focuses on Christology, asserting that what distinguishes Christ as a Person is not His human or divine nature, but His personality. Such a position presupposes that being of a human person is realized not in relation to human nature, but is rooted "in the un-created relationship of the Father and the Son"[214]. As Zizioulas mentions, the Biblical vision shows that human receives his being from personal Adam. On the contrary, when one investigates Greek

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[212] *Ibid*., pp. 10-11.

[213] Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu', in *Modern Theology*, 20 (2004), p. 603.

[214] Zizioulas, '*What does it mean to be a Person*', p. 206.

philosophy, including Aristotle, it becomes evident that ontological personalization was absent. Humans received being not from the personal but from "general being" and were also isolated, lacking the importance of relationships[215]. Thus, in his conception Zizioulas underlines uniqueness of every human as person, whose very reason of ontological existence is the relationship to the other and so in interpersonal relations.

Therefore, the personalistic worldview continues to be relevant today, highlighting the enduring significance of the concept of a person. The renewed interest in this concept not only underscores the relevance of this research but also reflects the richness and dynamism of personalistic thought. As I have demonstrated, it is impossible to discuss the concept of a person without acknowledging the contributions of early Christian thinkers, whose ideas persist in contemporary interpretations. Berdyaev and Guénon also developed their personalistic concepts. Before delving into their specific approaches, it is important to examine their general evaluation of the inheritance from the Church Fathers. I will explore whether these thinkers held value for Berdyaev and Guénon, and how they may have influenced the worldviews of both authors in the next and final part of this chapter.

2.5. Berdyaev and Guénon's Vision About the Teaching of the Church Fathers

The relation of Berdyaev and Guénon to the Church Fathers and to the Christian Tradition in general is valuable to investigate, as the Christian writers of the early age laid the foundation for As I mentioned earlier, this concept has developed from early Christian times to the present day. Therefore, when researching the personalistic vision of both authors, it is necessary to pay attention to their perception of the teachings of the Church Fathers. While the reinterpretation of Christian thought and spiritual tradition is the focus of Berdyaev, the teachings of the Church Fathers, as one of the fundamental sources of Christian doctrine, are included in the scope of his

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[215] *Ibid*., pp. 208-209.

philosophical thought. Guénon, on the other hand, despite his conversion from the Christian tradition to Sufism, continues to investigate world religions, so the teachings of the Fathers, as a source of Christian thought, could not escape his attention.

As I mentioned earlier, this concept has developed from early Christian times to the present day. Therefore, when researching the personalistic vision of both authors, it is necessary to pay attention to their perception of the teachings of the Church Fathers. While the reinterpretation of Christian thought and spiritual tradition is the focus of Berdyaev, the teachings of the Church Fathers, as one of the fundamental sources of Christian doctrine, are included in the scope of his philosophical thought. Guénon, on the other hand, despite his conversion from the Christian tradition to Sufism, continues to investigate world religions, so the teachings of the Fathers, as a source of Christian thought, could not escape his attention.

Berdyaev's works are rich with references to the Holy Scripture, especially to the New Testament, as well as to the Fathers[216]. The "Apostle of freedom" is mostly interested in those Fathers where he finds mystical teachings. His attention is drawn to St. John the Theologian, Athanasius the Great, Makarios of Egypt, Gregory of Nyssa, Symeon the New Theologian, Maximus the Confessor, Seraphim of Sarov, and some others whom he mentions in his works many times. Berdyaev notes the ascetic experience of Saint Athanasius the Great (298-373), whose works open the real wisdom of life.

The words about the Christian truth Berdyaev finds in St. Makarios of Egypt (300-391), who witnesses the royal dignity of humans, given to us by Christ's sacrifice. An important role in the creation of Berdyaev's thought is played by the teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394). Berdyaev stresses that in his works, the Cappadocian makes a distinction between the soul and the spirit of a human. He understands the spiritual sphere as the "highest creative power of mind". It is an important part of Berdyaev's anthropology, which is created by the triad "spirit-soul-body". He

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[216] It would be interesting to explore Berdyaev as a theologian, but I leave such an opportunity for other researchers for now as this is not the aim of this research.

also takes into account the works of Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), through which one can explore the world of Christian mystics and the ways of mystical love[217]. The teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor is interesting to Berdyaev as it combines "practical asceticism and theoretical mysticism"[218]. He finds in it the ideas of human androgyny as well[219], which is a crucial part of Berdyaev's worldview.

The thoughts of the Fathers are important in the formation of Berdyaev's outlook. As the French theologian Olivier Clément (1921-2009) confessed to Jean Daniélou: "I would have lost my faith if I had not met Berdyaev and become acquainted with the Fathers of the Church through him"[220]. In fact, Clément himself converted to Orthodox faith from Catholicism precisely after reading Berdyaev's works. This shows that despite transcending dogmatic boundaries, Berdyaev's thought has a depth that can prompt readers to think. It is also interesting to ask whether Berdyaev is aligned with the so-called "return to the Fathers" movement. One can argue that, firstly, his method of thinking, which finds a way to perceive God and humanity, his theodicy, and Christology can be considered a continuation of the Fathers' thinking method. Secondly, his spiritual experience remains somewhat hidden behind closed doors but can be discerned in his biography and his philosophy, which is not devoid of mysticism. However, the topic of the relationship between Berdyaev's thinking methods and the idea of the "return to the Fathers" will need to be explored by other studies.

When investigating Guénon's relationship with the Fathers and Christian tradition in general, it is important to first consider his work "Insights into Christian Esoterism", in which he assesses the tradition. In his view, Christianity lost most of its esoteric aspects, undergoing a

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[217] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Salvation and Creativity (Two Understandings of Christianity)* [Spasenie i Tvorchestvo: Dva ponimaniya khristianstva], trans. by Fr. Stephen Janos (1999), available at: http://krotov.info/library/02_b/berdyaev/1926_308_eng.html [Accessed 2 October 2022].

[218] Nikolas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality* (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press), p. 79.

[219] Nikolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 175.

[220] Olivier Clément, 'Berdyayev i frantsuz'ka dumka' [Berdyaev and French thought], in *Duh i litera* 9-10 (2002), p. 301.

process of "exteriorization" and thus becoming an "exoteric" religion[221]. According to Guénon, the esoteric foundation of any religion demonstrates its authenticity and true connection with the Original Principle. However, he believes that Christianity lost this connection and underwent a process of profanation. Guénon provides several arguments to support this view, including the absence of a sacred language in Christianity. He does not consider Greek or Latin as sacred languages but instead emphasizes the importance of the original text of the Scriptures, which is often overlooked in Hebrew. Guénon views translations such as the Septuagint and Vulgate as secondary and not as valuable as the original text[222]. Another critical issue in Christianity, criticized by Guénon, is the alteration of the tradition of baptism. Originally, the Christian community was exclusive, and individuals had to undergo special preparations to join it. Later, this practice changed, and newborns were baptized[223]. Guénon refers to this innovation in the Christian tradition as "virtual initiation" as opposed to "true initiation"[224].

Guénon's assessment of the Holy Fathers is rather novel in the field of research. I could notice same intriguing but challenging ideas in Guénon's work. According to him, modern people cannot fully grasp the thoughts and interpretations of the Fathers because the Christian tradition was interrupted, causing the loss of something significant that the Fathers knew and which played a crucial role in the formation of the Christian tradition. Since this source, or sources, has been lost, we are unable to fully comprehend the Fathers in our time[225]. Additionally, due to the modern mind's misunderstanding of the Fathers, particularly the Greek Fathers, esoteric teachings within

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[221] René Guénon, *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, trans. by Henry D. Fohr, ed. by Samuel D. Fohr, Ghent, NY, Sophia Perennis, 2001, p. 13.

[222] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

[223] It is important to note that the practice of baptizing newborns was widely accepted as self-evident during the Christianization of Europe. Consequently, practically every newborn in Europe would "automatically" become a Christian.

[224] Guénon, *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, pp. 14-15.

[225] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

their works are often denied. When their mystical interpretations are accepted, some researchers go so far as to suggest that the Fathers made certain mistakes[226].

While one might consider that the points made by Guénon are not fully substantiated and remain somewhat unclear, it prompts us to question the validity of such a vision. Regardless of all his arguments, Guénon still acknowledges Christianity as one of the world's sacred religions and does not deny that it retains at least a partial semblance of authentic initiation. He emphasizes that this authenticity could potentially be preserved in branches of Christianity other than the Roman Catholic Church[227].

In accordance with Guénon's perspective, Christianity could regain its authenticity if an elite group emerged, consisting of individuals who undergo full initiation by entering the religion through systematic teaching and spiritual practices[228]. Despite his critiques, the "Cairo hermit" expressed an interest in researching the Christian tradition and attempted to decipher it as he did with other traditions. In fact, Guénon interpreted Christian symbols and compared them with those of other sacred traditions.

So far, I have discussed Berdyaev and Guénon's relationship with the Church Fathers and their perspectives on whether they were interested in the tradition of the Fathers, which is one of the pillars of the Christian tradition. Now it is evident that both thinkers were well-acquainted with the works of the Fathers. For Berdyaev, they were primarily mystics, and this perception was influenced by the spiritual experiences he found in some of their works. In the case of Guénon, it is clear that he was familiar with the works of the Church Fathers and, based on his comparative analysis, he concluded that Christianity had lost its connection to the original tradition. As an example, what exactly serves him is the Christian inability to understand the thoughts of the Fathers.

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[226] *Ibid.*

[227] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[228] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In the next chapter my attention will be drawn directly to research of the personalistic concept proposed by Berdyaev and Guénon. Formulation of the concept of a person given by these intellectuals, their comparison, similar and different moments and peculiarities of visions will be the basis of the last chapter of this work.

CHAPTER III

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE HUMAN

ACCORDING TO BERDYAEV AND GUÉNON

3.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to clarify the vision of a person in the light of personalistic philosophy developed by the Russian thinker Nikolai Berdyaev and the French philosopher René

Guénon. In order to describe the issue of a person more accurately[229], my analysis delves into its mystical understanding and interpretations considered by these thinkers. While in contemporary times, the term 'person' is used as a synonym for 'human', religious and philosophical literature presents different attitudes, some of which are articulated by Berdyaev and Guénon.

In Berdyaev's philosophy, personalistic ideas extend across metaphysical, social and spiritual spheres. He aims to clarify the anthropological question, particularly in its personalistic aspect. Moreover, certain personalistic interpretations of Berdyaev are, in some cases, still overlooked, a point I intend to underscore in this research.

Referring to the intentions conducted by Guénon, he acknowledges the belonging of humans to both natural and spiritual spheres, drawing insights from sacred texts across different traditions. In doing so, he illuminates the path that humans can traverse to acquire the qualities of a person. Consequently, the question of whether a human can fully become a person becomes a focal point in this chapter. Furthermore, as I examine the personalist thoughts of these philosophers, I observe commonalities in their interpretations, highlighting the universality and depth of the perspectives they offer.

3.1. Person and Individual: Social and Theological Narratives in Berdyaev's View

The problematic aspects of the idea of a person have been a subject of discussion for centuries, with heightened emphasis in the early 20th century. The word πρόσωπον, the Greek equivalent of *persona* originated in ancient theatre, was adopted by Roman law in Latin translation, and further developed by the Church Fathers. However, it is only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that we can speak of the philosophical interpretation of a person.

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[229] Referring to Berdyaev's works, the term *lichnost'* is prominent, while in Guénon's works, the reader encounters la *personnalité* and *la personne*. Translations of the works of both thinkers often use "person" and "personality" interchangeably. In line with these translations, I mostly employ the term 'person', though occasionally using 'personality'.

This historical period coincided with the emergence of industrial and social revolutions, wars, and global secularization, which collectively precipitated crises worldwide. Consequently, schools of thought such as existentialism, Marxism, philosophy of life, philosophy of mind, and others sought to address fundamental questions about humanity: Who is man? What is his destiny? In attempting to answer these questions, the personalistic school emerged as one of the perspectives that came closest to providing meaningful insights.

After Dostoevsky, whose existential philosophy opened a door to the mystery of human being, one of his most prominent followers, Berdyaev, endeavored to develop a personalistic vision of man[230]. Despite being a Russian thinker, his ideas garnered attention in the Western world[231], where he resided for many years after his exile from Russia to Europe in 1922. Due to the historical course of events, the philosopher found himself in France, a cradle of the personalistic movement. Nevertheless, one can safely assert that his intentions differ from those of Western thinkers who were evolving their views in this area, becoming an integral part of the tradition of Russian religious philosophy.

Throughout his life, the Russian thinker grappled with the erosion of spiritual values in society, dedicating a substantial portion of his works to exploring the fundamental questions of human calling and destiny. The depiction of man in his writings exhibits a dynamic character, and even a century after his death, scholars continue to delve into his personalistic intentions. For instance, contemporary scholar Antoine Arjakovsky identifies in Berdyaev's philosophy a termed "mytho-logy of the Person"[232]. Arjakovsky acknowledges that in 1931, Berdyaev undergoes a 'personalistic revolution' culminating in the work *The Destiny of Man*. Subsequently, from 1933,

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[230] Here, I use the term "man" (Russian *cheloviek*) as a general word for a human being, aligning with Berdyaev, who employs this specific term in his philosophy.

[231] From 1924 until his death in 1948, Berdyaev resided in France, where the personalistic movement was widespread.

[232] Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious thinkers of the Russian emigration in Paris and their journal, 1925-1940*, trans. by Jerry Ryan, ed. by John A. Jillions, Michael Plekon, foreword by Rowan Williams (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), p. 301.

armed with an existential philosophy, Berdyaev's personalistic perspective undergoes further refinement[233]. Crucially, in his personalistic views, attention must be drawn to the distinction between an individual and a person, and this distinction I will emphasize in the first instance.

Drawing on his experiences with societal readjustments in various parts of the world, Berdyaev acknowledges, "The spiritual life of man fell into slavery to material life"[234]. The thinker posits that the issue of 'social terror' in the 19th and 20th centuries stems from the manifestation of collectivism, reducing humanity to a state of servitude. He characterizes collectivism as an idol that sacrifices individuality for the collective good[235]. It is precisely within this sphere that the individual is conceived.

Addressing the distinction between an individual and a person, Berdyaev posits that an individual is shaped by social reality, in contrast to the nature of a person, who is given by God. It is important to explore the idea that the individual is primarily a social construct, subject to change over time. On the other hand, a person's life is deeply rooted in the spirit and possesses a dynamic character. When united with the divine, humans in their relation to the personalistic sphere cannot easily be categorized by external secular influences; instead, they undergo transformation in spirit.

Distinguishing between a person and an individual, Berdyaev associates the former with the spirituality and religiosity of humanity, while the latter is identified as a social and biological category[236]. The "philosopher from Clamart" emphasizes that in society, a human encounters obstacles that impede the revelation of his personalistic sphere. Within the social framework, an individual pursue his own interests, but he is also compelled to adhere to specific rules, often suppressing his vocation and relegating him to positions of servitude. This external life is defined by social reality, which Berdyaev refers to as the objectified world, or in other words, the world of

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[233] *Ibid.*

[234] Berdyaev, *The Philosophy of Inequality: Letters to my Contemners, Concerning Social Philosophy*, p. 238.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[236] Arjakovsky, *The Way*, p. 301.

necessity. This world is artificially constructed and based on agreements that presume temporary comfort and benefits, operating under established laws.

Berdyaev includes entities such as the state, institutions, groups, etc., in these social institutes marked by necessities. He views these entities as components of a socially obligatory system resulting from the process of objectification or, in other words, the alienation of spirit. While socially constructed life emerges as a consequence of the human fall, this necessity also has a positive aspect, serving as a protective measure in our fallen reality[237].

If we examine the meaning of the term 'individual', it emerges as a phenomenon separated from society. However, the key distinction that sets it apart from the personalistic character of humans is that an individual defines oneself from external perspectives, taking into account external encroachments. These encroachments, lacking any spiritual recognition, are selectively absorbed from social atmospheres and narratives, sanctioned as one's own, even when derived from the social construct. The foundation for the individual is laid by external factors, and, as the modern thinker Gilbert Simondon acknowledges, individualization is an ongoing process in the social world[238].

Berdyaev asserts that individualism is fundamentally hostile to Christianity; it represents "a tendency towards non-being"[239] and regards freedom as an alien notion. This exteriorization constructs freedom from outside, endorsing the artificiality of individuality, which, as a consequence, results in a self-confinement unit. Each individual, separated from others, is biologically and sociologically distinct, often likened to an atom — a standalone organism not subject to division. The presence of an external biological definition further underscores that this term is compelled by external factors and possesses an earthly and perpetual character. Equally

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[237] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 61.

[238] David Scott, *Gilbert Simondon's Psychic and Collective Individuation. Critical Introductions and Guides* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[239] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 142.

important is the distinction that an individual aims for preservation, while, conversely, a human on the path to revealing oneself as a person finds purpose in self-sacrifice and self-development[240].

For a better understanding of the differences between personalistic and individual spheres, it is valuable to consider the entities they give rise to. The individualistic formation, rooted in an atomistic state, is also referred to as *Gesellschaft*, or society, which stands in contrast to *Gemeinschaft*, or community. The former is deterministic, artificially constructed, and presupposes external constraints, often in the form of a social contract. The latter, characterized by holistic attitudes, is intrinsic to traditional communities and can be deemed natural. *Gemeinschaft* is built on inner relations, encompassing emotional connections and the acknowledgment of a traditional language that signifies an awareness of spiritual intimacy[241].

The aforementioned approach was introduced by the German sociologist and philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), who, for the first time in the Western world, expressed doubts about the progressive nature of societal changes. Tönnies posited that the urbanized industrial society had lost its sense of community, and the only means to prevent its collapse was through external, compulsory methods. According to Tönnies, over time, the communion or *Gemeinschaft* degenerates into *Gesellschaft*, which can take on various forms. In the modern era, this mutation has been integrated into social systems such as socialism, capitalism, or communism[242]. The pathos they introduced promised to establish a utopian institution, but instead gave rise to totalitarianism. Within this framework, the task of recognizing oneself primarily as a person becomes challenging. As Berdyaev acknowledges, any form of state is tainted by sin, characterized by passions, tyranny, and violence[243]. Consequently, society, especially modern society, severs its connection with the spiritual center around which all humanity is called to unite.

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[240] Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 56.

[241] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, ed. Jose Harris, trans. Jose Harris, Margaret Hollis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[242] *Ibid.*

[243] Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 196.

In this disconnection, spiritual or positive freedom is lost, replaced by a utilitarian one. Berdyaev articulates this idea with the following words: "Society has totalitarian pretensions and is inclined to say to man: 'You are my creation and you belong entirely to me'"[244].

In the case of Berdyaev, as with Tönnies, an attempt was made to separate ethics from sociology and politics, although their motivations differed. For the Russian philosopher, indicating a metaphysical level of ethics holds significance, distinguishing it from its social and normative types. Tönnies, on the other hand, does not aim to establish a metaphysical approach. However, it is noteworthy that, by highlighting the difference between these two entities, Tönnies develops the idea of two kinds of wills: essential and selective, forming their foundation. In *Gemeinschaft*, the essential type of will prevails, while *Gesellschaft* is dominated by the selective type. Tönnies, in his analysis in "Community and Civil Society" (published in 1887 as "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft"), seems to aim to elucidate the relationship between people and their preferences in these entities. In the first type, the primordial value belongs to the entire community, whereas in the second type, dominance is given to individual components. This, in fact, poses a challenge for achieving internal balance, necessitating external constraints[245].

Even with the inclusion of the idea of will, Tönnies does not aim to delve into the sacred sphere. In contrast, Berdyaev, familiar with the distinction between two types of entities, not only comprehends, but also embraces this idea. When he speaks about the notion of community, he specifically refers to *Gemeinschaft*. In his book *Slavery and Freedom*, the Russian thinker observes that in society, there is no place for a human person; instead, only an atomic unit, an individual, is recognized[246].

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[244] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, trans. by Donald A. Lowrie (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. 57.

[245] Gennadij Osipov, *Istoriya sotsiologii v Zapadnoj Evrope i SShA* [History of sociology in Western Europe and the USA], ed. Gennadij Osipov (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo NORMA, 2001), p. 8.

[246] Nicolas Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. by R.M. French, G. Bles (London: The Centenary Press, 1943), p. 25.

Berdyaev himself concludes that the rationality of individual existence leads to an inadequate awareness of one's being and leaves no room for metaphysical recognition:

"Man existing as a closed-off individual would have no means of knowing the universe. Such a being would not be of higher order than other separate things in the world, would not overcome this separate condition. The way of anthropology is the only way of knowing the universe, and this way pre- supposes man's exceptional consciousness of himself. Only in man's sense of himself and in his self-consciousness, are the divine mysteries revealed"[247].

An individualistic perspective restricts our understanding of humanity by confining people within their own incomprehensibility, bound by materialistic imperatives. However, this restricted view of human existence as an individual is not the only path to awareness. By transcending the socio-empirical, quantitative, and statistical frameworks of social life, it becomes possible to gain another experience based on the metaphysical level. This pertains to the recognition of humans in the personalistic perspective that Berdyaev investigates.

The Russian thinker reminds us that, in addition to natural and social realities, a human belongs to a higher one that serves as an intermediary between earth and heaven. He is considered a child of God, possessing a natural, visible part and an undetermined invisible spiritual essence. Berdyaev embraces the Trinitarian conception of a human as a unity of spirit, soul, and body. While soul and body represent the temporal aspects of a human, spirit signifies his connection to a higher reality. Through the former, a human is an individual, and through the latter, he is a person. The philosopher suggests that the tragedy of the world lies in the revival of the human person[248].

It is important to acknowledge that Berdyaev constructs his vision based on the mystical Orthodox Christian tradition, with the goal of illuminating the concept of the transfiguration of the human. This is why the human is considered an enigma and a non-determining being. By demonstrating the impossibility of fully defining a person, the Russian philosopher introduces the

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[247] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 57.
[248] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

idea of the spiritual essence of the human. Berdyaev contends that the recognition of oneself as a person is an integral aspect of the ongoing process of spiritual development. The realization of the human as a person becomes a pivotal moment, and this will be further explored in subsequent steps of this research.

To summarize, it is crucial to highlight Berdyaev's distinction between a man as an individual and a man as a person. In our world, Berdyaev emphasizes that humans are more like atoms, individuals subjected to norms and rules resulting from the fall. Consequently, the human spirit is suppressed. The philosopher refers to this normativeness and the various compulsory systems of our reality as the "world of necessity" or the "objectified world".

Nevertheless, humans are spiritually connected to each other, forming a universal community. Through this holistic attitude, a human becomes a person. The possibility and significance of such a spiritual and universal community are explored in the last subchapter of this research. In the next step, I will focus on highlighting the philosophical and theological intentions in Berdyaev's personalistic view.

3.1.1. The image and likeness of God in man in Berdyaev's interpretation

The fact that God is a personality is crucial to understanding the idea of a person. Berdyaev emphasizes that not only is God a person, but the encounter with Him is of a personal nature — it is a meeting of two persons[249]. Although God is beyond perception, the understanding of what a person is begins with the comprehension of the personal in the human. Personality, according to Berdyaev, is a divine feature, a divine seed sown in humans by God. To interpret the divinity in humans, Berdyaev turns to the Bible and Holy Tradition.

The biblical words stating that man is created in the image and likeness of God become key elements in Berdyaev's personalistic perspective on a person. Simultaneously, the Russian

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[249] Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 39.

thinker acknowledges the absence of a precise and fundamental interpretation of the idea of the image and likeness of God within Christianity[250]. There is a fundamental reason for this opinion. A look into Holy Tradition, particularly the teachings of the Holy Fathers, reveals a lack of a singular, common interpretation. Opinions on the definition of what constitutes the image and likeness vary, with several prevailing interpretations. For instance, some hold the view that the image of God is the spirituality of man or his intellect, as seen in the writings of St. Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Basil the Great. Others, including St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Macarius of Egypt, add freedom to this perspective. At times, the Church Fathers interpreted the image as human immortality as seen in the works of St. John Damascene, Clement of Alexandria, and St. Cyril of Jerusalem, as well as the capacity for spiritual growth and the path to holiness, espoused by St. John Chrysostom, St. Isaac the Syrian, and St. John Damascene[251]. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the perspective of St. Gregory of Nyssa, whom Berdyaev often references, especially in discussions on this topic. The Eastern Father of the Church believes that the image signifies the Primordial Image of God and includes the mind, freedom, immortality, unknowability, self-determination[252], with the likeness presupposing "growth in virtue and dispassion". Therefore, for this saint, the image is rather static, and the likeness is more dynamic[253].

Familiar with the diversity of opinions in the Church tradition, Berdyaev introduces the idea that the image of God signifies human ability to create. In the philosophy of this Russian thinker, human creativity holds particular importance. He conceptualizes creativity broadly,

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[250] Nicolas Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man (Towards the Construction of a Christian Anthropology)', *Journal Put'*, 50 (1936), available at: http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1936_408.html [Accessed 2 October 2023].

[251] Kiprian Kern, 'Antropologija svjatogo Grigorija Palamy' [Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas], (Moskva: Pilgrim, 1996), available at: https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Kiprian_Kern/antropologija-svjatogo-grigorija-palamy/2_3#sel=285:1,285:12 [Accessed 27 March 2023].

[252] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Soul and the Resurrection*, trans. & introd. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), pp. 39-44.

[253] Michael Azkoul, *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the tradition of the Fathers* (Lewiston, New York: The Edvin Mellen Press, 1995), p. 126.

viewing it as the vocation of every human being. Creativity, in his perspective, involves spiritual elation, leading to knowledge and a breakthrough into the higher, spiritual world[254]. This genuine process of spiritual growth leads to the knowledge of God and oneself as a human person.

Moreover, through spiritual creative elation, our fallen nature undergoes transformation, and man enters into communion with eternity, leaving the world of necessity. Human will unites with the will of God. The creative act necessitates spiritual freedom, acceptance of Christ as our Savior, and is impossible without repentance as the foundation of a new life — with God and in God[255]. Repentance, or *metanoia* as the Church Fathers call it, is a return to God and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of being without Him. Thus, through spiritual elevation, the darkened image and likeness are purified, paving the way for accepting oneself as a person. Consequently, being a person is connected with spiritual elevation and, secondly, presupposes one's transcendence into another spiritual world.

The thinker views creativity as a mystical way to know God. He writes: "The nature of creative act is bridal and is always meeting"[256]. Hence, it must always be seen as the cooperation of humans with God; it is synergistic in its essence. Humans come to know the image of God within themselves and continue the divine work in this world. Through the process of creativity, a human elevates oneself from earthly reality to the heavenly, or in other words, transcends the determined world or the world of necessity, lifting oneself up to the world of freedom. Through this, one comes closer to God.

The idea of creativity is crucial for understanding Berdyaev's personalistic view. According to the thinker, realizing oneself as a human person is possible during earthly life, precisely due to the ability to create. The potency of creativity is inherent in man. The thinker interprets the Biblical words: the image of God is freedom, and likeness is creativity. Human beings are created in the image of God, meaning that, like God, he is a person with the ability to

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[254] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 53.

[255] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[256] Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 127.

create. Berdyaev emphasizes that the world is not finished and requires creative spiritual acts from God's children. The real creative act has the force of transfiguration and always occurs in cooperation with God's Spirit[257].

It is important to note that the understanding of the God-likeness of man, as well as his vocation to creativity — continuing the work of God in the world, has already been emphasized by St. John Damascene, St. Theodore of Cyrus, Basil of Seleucia, and others. The mission of man is not only to be saved, as Christian thought often declares, but also to follow God and continue to create the world. While man is the bearer of the image and likeness of God, micro-theos, he is capable of conducting divine acts. The world is not complete; it strives from the Alpha to the Omega Point, and the final goal is the coming of the Kingdom of God. In essence, it is the calling of man — the achievement of this Kingdom, which is neither human nor divine but God-human[258]. Additionally, Berdyaev's worldview is characterized by an active eschatology, as the future Kingdom depends on the special activity of man, which is creativity.

But, as Berdyaev states in his book *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, the "human spirit is in prison"[259]. Being in the fallen, sinful world, man has to apply a considerable amount of power for spiritual elation. Creativity becomes the way to break free from the world of necessity and sin. The thinker declares:

> "The creative act is always liberation and conquest. It is an experience of power. The revelation of this creative act is not a cry of pain, it is neither passive suffering nor lyric effusion. Terror, pain, palsy, destruction, must be conquered by creativity. In essence, creativity is a way out, an exodus; it is victory."[260]

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[257] Berdyaev, *The Divine and the Human*, pp. 191-194.
[258] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, pp. 127-28.
[259] *Ibid*., p. 11.
[260] *Ibid*., pp. 12-13.

Therefore, creative acts are saving — they purify man from the bonds of the world. That is why creativity overcomes the depth between God and man and also restores the image and likeness of God in man. Creativity, as divine art, can change human existence existentially.

Continuing, due to the fact that man is the bearer of the image and likeness of God, he is capable of creativity. Because of this feature, the divine origin is awakened, and the possibility of a dialogue with the Creator opens. Man fulfills his calling through creativity because, on the one hand, he continues the work of God on earth, and on the other, he enters the path that leads to the Kingdom of God and, moreover, makes the coming of this Kingdom nearer. In Berdyaev's view, it depends on each man and actually on one's creative manifestations.

So, now a reader has a vision of how Berdyaev approaches the distinction between a person and an individual, as well as his references to biblical sources and the Church Fathers to explain his personalistic vision. Now, I will consider the critical view of the "Cairo hermit" regarding questions about a person and an individual and their relation.

3.1.2. Guénon's estimation of relation between "*Soi*" and "*Moi*"

The topic of person plays an important role in Guénon's meditations. Similar to Berdyaev, the "Cairo hermit" does not limit himself to one or two interpretations. He draws on various traditions, but as an interpreter of these traditions, he provides a deeper and more extensive explanation of this topic. The thinker describes it from different sources converging at one point, which gives him the opportunity to show the universality of the idea of person and how it relates to humanity.

In the difference between the characteristics of a person and an individual, Guénon delineates a distinct path that humans can traverse, thereby transforming themselves. With the aim of demonstrating the foundations rooted in traditions, Guénon elucidates a metaphysical sphere as

a universal means of clarifying the essence of humans, precisely in this light[261]. However, his vision diverges significantly from social, psychological, and even certain religious interpretations put forth by contemporary thinkers of his time, such as Karol Wojtyła, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, etc.

As Guénon stresses, a human can be seen with their metaphysical relation to another reality or even multiple realities, but these are often overshadowed by the worldly and material aspects, causing them to find themselves predominantly in worldly conditions. Guénon pays attention to both of these aspects. The latter refers to the individual, whom he defines as "a state subject to certain special and determined conditions of existence, and occupying a certain place in the indefinite series of the states of the total being"[262]. With its worldly modes, an individual posits a contingent plane, mutability, instability, determined, and limited status, which underscores its dependent position from the Principle or Absolute — the source of all beings.

However, while giving the individual a dependent character, Guénon does not strive to fully separate it from a person or to establish a superior status of one over the other, as often occurs in Western thought[263]. For Guénon, breaking the connection between a person and an individual is impossible because the latter does not have an independent existence and depends on the person — that is, on the Principle, which is the basis of its existence and of which the individual is a part. Evaluating both, the discussion has to be developed not in opposition but in their relation and differentiation. Indeed, the connection between a person and an individual gains clearer consideration in the comparison of their qualitative characteristics.

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[261] Guénon acknowledges that religious practices are merely the modes through which tradition makes metaphysical attempts. See: René Guénon, *The Essential. Metaphysics, Tradition, and the Crises of Modernity*, ed. by John Herlihy, introd. by Martin Lings (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2009), p. 94.

[262] René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, trans. by Angus Macnab, 3rd ed. (London: Sophia Perennis et Universalis, 1996), p. 2.

[263] René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, Collected Works of René Guénon, trans. by Richard C. Nicholson (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p. 22.

The foundational discussion on this topic is developed by Guénon in his works *Man and his Becoming According to the Vedanta* and *The Symbolism of the Cross*, where he distinguishes between '*Soi*' and '*Moi*'. In English, these terms can be respectively understood as 'Self' and 'Ego', reflecting the relationship between a person and an individual. What characterizes *Soi* or a person is the spiritual or universal realm[264], giving it a metaphysical status. The contemporary Russian thinker Karpets provides an example of *Soi*[265] in Church Slavonic translation, such as '*Syi*', taken from the Old Testament text "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). Also, in Church Slavonic, '*Syshchiy*', which corresponds to the Greek 'ὁ ὤν', can be hermeneutically understood as "the universal spirit"[266]. In the school of Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta indicates *Soi* as "Ishvara" in Sanskrit, meaning "lord", "ruler", "king", representing what is commonly called a person. Therefore, in Guénon's interpretation, the person is identified as an ontological, manifested principle, unlike Brahma, which is a metaphysical, unmanifested principle. Brahma and Ishvara are related as the principles of non-existence and existence, respectively[267]. The thinker places *Soi* outside the limited and manifested frame of the natural world, indicating the impossibility of its modification. This is because what is manifested is subject to mutability and conversion — precisely the characteristics of *Moi* or an individual. *Soi* is also characterized by the fact that it has a cause of existence in itself, i.e., it is self-sufficient and does not depend on anything else. In contrast, *Moi* finds its cause of existence in the principle; *Soi* exists only because of it and is unable to exist independently[268].

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[264] *Ibid*.

[265] Vladimir Karpets, 'Ontologiya i metafizika u Rene Genona (lekciya)' [Ontology and Metaphysics in the Discourse of Rene Guenon (Lecture)], available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbHX_KwH880&feature=youtu.be [Accessed 13 March 2022].

[266] Roman Zobkov, 'Universalnoe i individualnoe v diskurse Rene Genona' [Common and Individual in the Discourse of Rene Guenon], *Izvestiya Irkutskoho gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Seriya Politolohiya. Religiovedeniye, 31 (2020), p. 69.

[267] Karpets, "Ontologiya i metafizika u Rene Genona."

[268] Zobkov, "Universalnoe i individualnoe v diskurse Rene Genona," p. 69.

Continuing, the "Cairo hermit" underscores that the idea of a person and a human person, as represented by modern writers, carries a distorted meaning compared to what is defined in traditional sacred literature. In particular, he provides the following explanation:

"The personality, metaphysically speaking, has nothing in common with what modern philosophers so often call the 'human person', which is, in fact, nothing but the individuality pure and simple; besides, it is this alone and not the personality which can strictly be called human. In a general way, it appears that Westerners, even when they attempt to carry their views further than those of the majority, mistake for the personality what is actually but the superior part of the individuality, or a simple extension of it: in this circumstances everything of the purely metaphysical order necessarily remains outside their comprehension[269].

So, unlike Berdyaev, Guénon criticizes the use of the expression "human person", considering it a synonym for an individual. In explaining the concept of a person, Guénon refers to various traditions that employ variations in the denomination of the term "Person". The thinker suggests that there is no place for a person in our visible reality because it is an archetype. Thus, human existence in this world presupposes only the state of the individual, limited by the framework of the world. Still, akin to Berdyaev, the "Cairo hermit" also emphasizes the Kabbalistic tradition, providing the reader with an opportunity to compare their views and explanations, i.e., to assess this topic from different perspectives. Therefore, in the next subchapter, I will focus on Guénon's explanation of the idea of the universal man, including the explanation found in Kabbalah.

3.2. 'Universal Man'. The perspectives and interpretations

At the beginning of this section, I must delve into the grammatical nuances surrounding the use of the term "Universal Man" by Guénon and Berdyaev. Both thinkers share a common attempt

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[269] Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, pp. 22-23.

in interpreting the idea of the Universal Man. However, it is crucial to note some differences at the outset, as they are directly related to grammatical subtleties.

In Guénon's works, the term "Universal Man" is, in some instances, written in quotes — "Universal Man" (or, the same with "true man"). On the other hand, in Berdyaev's works, the reader encounters the term "universal man", but with small letters. It is not surprising that translators took these nuances into account while working on the text. Consequently, even this grammatical detail indicates that for Guénon, the term "Universal Man" is a model or a concept, whereas Berdyaev associates it with human nature itself.

A more striking difference in the use of terms by these thinkers is found in the synonyms for "Universal Man". In Guénon's works, the term "Transcendent Man" is employed, while in Berdyaev's oeuvre, we encounter the term "transcendental man" among other synonyms like "the new man"[270], "the Heavenly Man"[271] with uppercase letters, or "the Absolute Man" when referring to Christ[272]. It is noteworthy that these terms in Berdyaev's writings are accompanied by articles. To uncover the reason behind this terminological difference, it is helpful to turn to the philosophical vocabulary of Kant. Kant distinguishes between 'transcendental' and 'transcendent'. According to Kantian interpretation, the former establishes the limits of conditions and possibilities of knowledge or experience, while the latter tends to be associated with the metaphysical — that which lies beyond human knowledge or experience (such as God, soul, freedom, etc.)[273]. Based on the examination of the thinkers' works, it seems that the Russian philosopher employs the term 'transcendental' in alignment with Kantian terminology. However, it is crucial not to overlook the fact that he is a critic of Kant's philosophy[274]. But his choice of

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[270] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 187.

[271] *Ibid*., 63.

[272] *Ibid*., 13.

[273] Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist, eds., *The Transcendental Turn*, introd. Sebastian Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 35-36.

[274] The Russian thinker attempts to transcend the limits of human knowledge and address the Kantian problem of the unknowability of 'the thing in itself' by emphasizing the spiritual essence of

terminology becomes clearer if to examine his criticism of the Neo-Kantian school, especially its attempt to dissociate the ability of cognition from the anthropological sphere[275]. It is for this reason that he mentions both terms, "transcendental man" as well as "transcendent man", where the latter aligns with the Neo-Kantian school, suggesting a loss of human cognitive ability, while the former term combines the divine and the human[276]. I tend to assume that Berdyaev chooses the term "transcendental man" for this reason, indicating the mystery of the unity of the divine and the human.

Referring to Guénon, he uses the term "transcendent" in explaining "Transcendent Man", more in a general sense as an adjective derived from "transcendence", signifying going beyond the limits of visible reality. The subsequent section will delve into the specific meanings with which the idea of "Universal Man" is applied by the thinkers.

Additionally, it is important to stress that Berdyaev does not strictly adhere to the canonical and dogmatic line of Christian thought, despite his deep concentration within the Christian Orthodox tradition. While possessing knowledge of other religions and traditions, the Russian thinker refers to them because he perceives in them a deeper and more accurate explanation of certain ideas and phenomena. In unraveling the mystery of a person, Berdyaev draws insights from the Kabbalah. However, on this new ground, he endeavors to extract a vision inherent to the Christian tradition, one that is not fully expounded. It can be acknowledged that his thought is inseparable from the person of Christ, who serves as the central figure in his philosophy. On the other hand, the "Cairo hermit", representing the Traditionalist school, delves deeper into world religions. Despite the long history of the formation of worldviews and unique representations, he takes the position that these religions share similar aspects of interpretation, and the concept of a person is not an exception here.

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humans. See: N. Berdyaev, 'The Metaphysical Problem of Freedom', trans. by Fr. S. Janos, 2000 (*Journal Put'*, Jan. 1928, No. 9, pp. 41-53), http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1928_329.html.

[275] Berdyaev, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, p. 65.

[276] *Ibid*., pp. 65-66.

3.2.1. The Transition from Unity to Plurality:

Guénon's Representation of the "Fall" in Different Traditions

The idea of the Universal Man lies at the core of Guénon's thinking. While Berdyaev occasionally mentions this topic and dedicates a separate section in one of his works to explain the idea of the transcendental man — a synonym for the Universal Man — in Guénon's works, this topic is more figurative. Following the foundations of the school of religions, the "Cairo hermit" delves into the idea of man. In his book *The Symbol of the Cross*, he presents a profound outlook on this topic, describing the idea of the Universal Man. The name of this conception, as the thinker explains, is derived from Islamic esotericism. However, given his extensive knowledge in the field, he systematically explores features of other traditions related to this topic. The mentioned concept finds its equivalent with different names in various traditions: as the Cosmic Christ in Christianity, Cosmic Man or Self in Hinduism (Vedas and the Upanishads), Adam Kadmon in Kabbalah, and the King in Far-Eastern tradition[277]. The concept of Universal Man, resembling esoteric movements in Judaism and Islam, including Kabbalah[278], is quite similar. One reason why their viewpoints, in some cases, are mirrored is connected with the fact that these traditions are rooted in the Babylonian-Persian heritage, from which they drew theosophical intentions[279]. Regarding Kabbalah, as some researchers admit, it is influenced by Neo-Platonic ideas[280], but, as Guénon believes, it also offers some unique insights[281].

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[277] Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, p. 40.

[278] Guénon acknowledges elsewhere that Kabbalah is not a religion, but rather a form of wisdom or science that maintains a direct relation to the Tradition. See: René Guénon, *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles*, trans. by Henry D. Fohr, ed. by Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), pp. 33-37.

[279] Aleksandr Dugin, *V poiskakh temnogo Logosa (filosofsko-bogoslovskiye ocherki)* [In Search of the Dark Logos: Philosophico-Theological Outlines] (Moskva: Akademicheskiy Proekt, 2013), p. 82.

[280] Moshe Idel, *Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), pp. 319-52; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Printing House, 1974).

The concept of Primordial Man in the Kabbalistic tradition is captured by the idea of Adam Kadmon. According to Kabbalistic thought, Adam Kadmon represents a state of perfect unity, signifying the initial creation by God. Through the dismemberment of Adam's body, the entire universe unfolded, with all souls within it regarded as particles of a singular Adamic soul. This process of dismemberment serves as an analogy for manifestation, illustrating the transition from unity to plurality.

The resemblance of this idea is found in Hinduism. This tradition speaks of two poles: Purusha and Prakrity. Purusha (also Pumas) is characterized by activity, serving as the positive pole and symbolically represented by masculinity, while Prakrity is the passive feminine principle, forming the negative pole. Both are manifestations of the Supreme Principle, where one is active and the other is passive. Despite each being an unmanifested principle in itself, their relationship allows for manifestation. Purusha is also identified with the Divine Primal (Brahman), recognized as the sole absolute reality. Brahman is the singular absolute reality, and souls are understood as diverse modes of Brahman. The development and emergence of any state, encompassing the human individual, are realized through the existence of two interrelated poles of the Supreme Principle — a concept Guénon referred to as the "polarization of principal Being"[282]. Similar to the dismembering of Adam Kadmon, the dismembering of Purusha in Hinduism is perceived through the lens of sacrifice. The radiation or light emanating from Purusha brings all things into existence. In the "Upanishads", this relationship is reflected in the mention of two Purushas: the first is invisible, inviolable, and united, while the second is visible, destructible, and exists in plurality. Because of the manifested nature of this couple, the manifestation is referred to as the Divine Will, Cosmic Intelligence, Universal Legislator, or Manu. In each cycle of existence, these

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[281] Guénon, *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles*, pp. 38-46.
[282] Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, p. 39.

forms take different shapes and become equivalent to the manifested couple. In Islamic esoterism, the equivalent of Manu is referred to as "Universal Man"[283].

In these examples of creation, common features are evident. Firstly, there is the relation between the universal and the individual, where the latter is seen as merely a manifestation of the former — a single manifestation among many. For a simpler understanding, Guénon highlights the analogy between related terms of the macrocosm and microcosm, as found in the Western hermeneutic worldview[284]. Secondly, these examples illustrate the transition from unity to plurality. When exploring these traditions, it is worth emphasizing that the French thinker highlights the use of analogy and symbolism in their language, a practice particularly apt for describing metaphysical reality[285].

Considering the Christian tradition, a revisitation of Origen's ideas mentioned earlier in the second chapter is worthwhile. This Christian thinker offers a perspective on the creation of the world as a transition from unity to plurality. In Origen's view, God is revealed as the Eternal Creator, with all creatures existing in Him eternally and all souls in God existing in perfection, unity, and equality[286]. The fall, and consequently the departure of souls from God, results in their existence in plurality, leading to inevitable disagreement and contradiction among them. For Origen, this becomes the reason to conclude that plurality is a negative condition.

This problem finds resolution in the work of another Christian author, Maximus the Confessor (580-662), who builds upon Origen's ideas and, consequently, refines his predecessor's seemingly irrefutable and radical stance. Saint Maximus acknowledges the presence of difference and division in the world and the entire cosmos, recognizing that plurality inherently implies distance. However, this Christian author makes a crucial distinction between two types of

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[283] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[284] Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, p. 6.

[285] *Ibid.*, 7.

[286] Andrei Seriogin, *Gipoteza mnozhestvennosti mirov v traktate Origena "O nachalakh"* [The Hypothesis of the Multiplicity of Worlds in the Treatise by Origen 'On First Principles'] (Moskva: IF RAN, 2005), p. 29.

differences: difference or *diaphora* and division or *diaresis*. The first one (Greek: διαφορά) is positive, while the second one has a negative meaning[287]. This distinction allows for the understanding that difference can also be positive, a concept emphasized by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The council clarified that the incarnation of Christ does not negate the significance of difference; instead, it transforms *diaresis* into *diaphora,* illustrating a healing process. Christ, functioning as a mediator, assumes human nature, thereby coexisting with divine and human natures in a harmonious unity, devoid of differences in conflict. This concept, essentially a difference without conflict, is also employed by Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931-2023) to elucidate trinitarian questions. In his work *Communion and Otherness*, he emphasizes that there is no division among the persons of the Trinity; instead, a differentiation occurs[288]. The Metropolitan of Pergamum underscores the significance of a positive difference, affirming the value of the "other" and, consequently, promoting communion. Division, according to Zizioulas, results in the separation of people, leading to alienation. This perspective, as highlighted by Edward Moore, is inspired by Berdyaev's personalistic view[289] and, evidently, by the idea of objectification.

Hinduism and Kabbalah most clearly represent the idea of Universal Man as the community and unity of the entire cosmos. Simultaneously, the Christian author Origen, while speaking about the unity of all creation before its fall, emphasizes that this unity exists directly in God. In other words, we are dealing with the transition from unity in God to plurality outside of Him. Therefore, Origen does not mention a phenomenon like 'Universal Man' as the transitional link portrayed by Hinduism and Kabbalah. Nevertheless, Origen's thoughts bear a resemblance to the picture described by Guénon. As for the idea of Universal Man in Christianity, it has not gone

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[287] John Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness', *Orthodox Peace Fellowship Occasional Paper*, 19 (Summer 1994), available online at: https://jbburnett.com/resources/zizioulas/zizioulas-comm&otherness.pdf [Accessed 27 March 2023].

[288] Edward Moore, *Origen of Alexandria and St. Maximus the Confessor: An Analysis and Critical Evaluation of Their Eschatological Doctrines* (Florida: Universal-Publishers, 2005), p. 116.

[289] *Ibid*.

unnoticed by various Christian authors, including Berdyaev. References to the Kabbalistic tradition by the Russian thinker will be explored further. However, firstly I propose to focus on Guénon's interpretation of Universal Man.

3.2.2. Guenonian Interpretation of Universal Man

Guénon, drawing from various traditions to explain the concept of 'Universal Man', asserts that it is a manifestation of the First Principle. Notably, 'Universal Man' exists virtually; it is a matrix, as the author emphasizes. The idea of 'Universal Man' across different religious traditions shares a similar interpretation, presupposing an existence in its totality that encompasses all manifested and unmanifested states. 'Universal Man' can be considered a principle, *Soi*, with some general characteristics described earlier. To comprehend the entirety of 'Universal Man', Guénon suggests using the method of analogy, borrowed from the realm of mathematics. He proposes that, akin to how a geometrical point can be an analogy for total being and the source of all multiple states of being, 'Universal Man' could be seen as a virtual principle, with its manifested states being repetitions of it[290].

Guénon acknowledges that 'Universal Man', as the universal principle, is beyond determinations and conditions. An individual man, in contrast, is understood as a mode of existence bound by specific conditions — the synthesis of his existence involves the "kingdom of nature". Consequently, the individual man originates from the 'Universal Man' and signifies its finished expression, serving as the end-mode or 'end-product'[291]. Thus, an individual man, like any individual state, expresses and contains a whole being. Taking the individual man as an example, his existence reflects to some extent 'Universal Man', according to Guénon. He underscores that the relationship between 'Universal Man' and an individual man mirrors the

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[290] Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, p. 8.
[291] *Ibid*.

relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In discussing this topic, the 'Cairo hermit' also references Leibniz and his theory of monads, which is noteworthy given Guénon's infrequent references to Western philosophers. Guénon provides a critical analysis of some of Leibniz's views while acknowledging the closeness of his thoughts to the vision in Tradition[292].

It is worth noting that Leibniz portrays monads as "living mirrors of the universe". According to the German philosopher, each monad contains and reflects the entire universe, establishing a relationship between the macro- and micro-worlds. Every particle of the universe, for Leibniz, serves as an analogy of Oneness. Nevertheless, Guénon criticizes Leibniz for having an incomplete metaphysics grounded in aptitude but lacking exaltation[293]. The French thinker believes that in his theory, Leibniz avoided giving it a metaphysical meaning, suggesting that every individual substance is, so to speak, doomed to stagnation. Leibniz depicts the monad as a closed system that fully and absolutely reflects being but lacks the capacity for development. This implies that the individual substance cannot move away from or draw closer to the center, or in other words, to its archetype ('Universal Man')[294]. Nonetheless, building on this concept, Guénon acknowledges the possibility of discovering 'Universal Man' in a corporeal, individual man. According to him, the individual mirrors the entire cosmos and bears a resemblance to the Universal Man, with the ability to progress toward or retreat from this state[295].

The idea of the 'Universal Man' is inseparably linked to the symbol of the cross, as Guénon argues, a symbol found in every doctrine based on the Primordial Tradition. This symbol involves expansion in two dimensions — horizontal and vertical. The former implies "amplitude", while the latter represents "exaltation", signaling the realization of being in its entirety. Along the horizontal direction, individuality is realized, not only in terms of natural or physical expansion but also bound to the realm of specific conditions. This is the sphere of various modifications of

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[292] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[293] Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, pp. 12-13.

[294] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[295] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

being, or, in other words, the realm of the modalities of being. The vertical direction implies infinite states based on a hierarchical order, providing the means to understand higher Existence as the principle and primacy of one's own existence.

Guénon provides examples of other titles for 'Universal Man' in various traditions, including Transcendent Man, the divine man, the spiritual man (*shen-zhen*), and more. However, he emphasizes the need to distinguish between 'Universal Man' and 'true man'. This distinction will be explored in the next section.

3.2.3. The Relation Between 'Universal Man' and 'true man' in the Explanation of Guénon

In Guénon's works, the reader finds a consistent explanation about the possibility of human realization. The French intellectual describes this process through initiation, emphasizing that it takes place within the framework of world religious traditions. He outlines the gradual path to initiation and, consequently, to human realization. In the description of initiation, Guénon distinguishes between 'Universal Man' and 'true man', where the former represents the realization of the potentials of the latter. Guénon symbolically presents the image of the circle of being and illustrates two types of movement in the way of human initiation. The primary path is symbolized by the movement from the periphery to the center, signifying initiation into 'true man'. The secondary path involves reaching the highest initiation and realization, symbolized by the ascension from the center to the top, representing initiation into 'Universal Man'[296].

In describing the path of human realization, Guénon distinguishes between the initiation of 'true man' and 'Universal Man', as it implies that individuals settle at different stages of realization and hold different attitudes toward the Principle. Both positions — the center and the axis — are equally invisible "in the eyes of ordinary men"[297] and for a man on the path of

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[296] Guénon, *The Great Triade*, p. 126.
[297] *Ibid.*

initiation. Although Guénon speaks of the possibility of full realization for man, it is crucial to emphasize that this does not imply becoming Universal Man or an archetype, as it would lack meaning. The center cannot be identical with being, as Guénon admits:

> "the being who is established at the centre can effectively play the same role of 'mediator' in relation to the human state that 'Universal Man' plays in relation to the totality of the states; and this does not necessarily require that that being should be identified with the axis. On the other hand, the being who has transcended the human state by rising up the axis to the higher states is, so to speak, 'lost to view' to everyone remaining in that state who has not yet reached its centre (and this includes everyone who is an initiate, but at a lower grade of initiation than the grade of 'true man')"[298].

Simultaneously, for the individual who chooses initiation and remains on the path of spiritual growth, the center and the ascent become inseparable. As Guénon frequently emphasizes, from the point of view of individual, that is, from the periphery, there is no distinction between 'Universal Man' and 'true man'. Crucially, in this explanation, both positions represent a state that can be grasped through initiation and a state of non-activity. Guénon elucidates the initiation to 'true man' using the language of the Far-Eastern tradition, stating that reaching this position "means that the Master is being equated with 'true man' exercising the function of 'mediator' midway between Heaven and Earth"[299].

Therefore, the position of 'Universal Man', that is, which involves ascending from the center to the top (vertically), means a full initiation and the closest possible stay towards the Principle. However, such realization is possible only through the achievement of the center — the position of 'true man', achieved before by human. It is worth noting that indeed, we deal with a certain transfiguration of individual by initiation and, as the author himself adds, it will be

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[298] *Ibid.*
[299] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

mistakenly to call an initiated man just an earthy human, while he leaves an individual, contingent characteristics which are inherent to him.

Significantly, a parallel to the mentioned Guenonian explanation can be found in the Christian tradition, where Christ serves as the sole center and goal of contemplation, uniting mankind, or, more precisely, God-mankind. An illustrative portrayal of unity is offered by Orthodox saint Dorotheus of Gaza in his teaching, depicting God at the center emanating rays of light in all directions, with these rays representing humans. The closer people are to one another, recalling the original state of unity, the closer they are to God. Conversely, being close to the Creator is manifested in close relations with others[300]. This serves as a clear example of the initiation and realization of man in the Christian tradition, a topic that will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Returning to Guénon's perspective, it is worth noting that the positions of 'Universal Man' and 'true man' are invisible and indistinguishable to the periphery of being, and thus, to humans. The state of 'Universal Man' can only be manifested or realized through 'true man', who serves as a mediator or representative of the former. This implies that metaphysical laws do not permit one who has reached the level of 'Universal Man' to manifest directly in the world. As for 'true man', situated at the center, like 'Universal Man', he has approached the Principle and become invisible to the periphery but has transcended individual aspects of existence, assuming a position of inaction[301].

To illustrate this perspective, Guénon provides an example from Taoist doctrine, highlighting the capacity of man to reach the center of existence, referred to as the "Invariable Middle"[302], acknowledged as an act of wisdom[303]. Those who manage to occupy this central

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[300] Dorothee de Gaza, *Oeuvres spirituelles*, introd., texte grec, trad. et notes, D. L. Regnault et D. J. de Preville (Paris: Cerf, 1963), p. 78.

[301] Guénon, *The Great Triade*, pp. 126-27.

[302] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[303] Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, p. 34.

position share certain qualities with the Principles, including 'actionless activity' and an invisibility to the visible world, effectively shedding the contingency and temporality of the world. Guénon elucidates this vision by referencing the sage in "Tao-te-King", written by Lao Tzu, who imparts: "The Principle is always actionless, yet everything is done by It"[304]. The seemingly paradoxical position is explained by the "Cairo hermit" using the example of how an Emperor, representing the position of 'true man,' governs his empire, as he writes:

> "This influence is 'actionless', which means that it does not involve any external activity. The 'One and only Man' exercises his role as 'unmoved mover' from his position at the centre. He controls everything without intervening in anything, just as the Emperor maintains order in all the regions of the Empire and regulates the course of the annual cycle without ever leaving the Ming T'ang"[305].

Inactivity in the center possesses its own characteristics, as one aligns oneself with the Way of Heaven, engaging in the "activity" of contemplation. It is essential not to interpret inactivity as stagnation; rather, it implies the "fullness of activity"[306].

When assessing Guénon's anthropology and the concept of 'Transcendent Man' and 'true man', Alexander Dugin, primarily, notes its resonance with the Platonic vision. It presupposes shedding individual characteristics in favor of embracing universal ones, leading to the dissolution of the individual in the world soul[307]. Importantly, in Platonism, the individual encompasses the material and bodily aspects, while the mind (gr. νοῦς) is directly related to the World Soul. Thus, the Platonic approach signifies the emancipation of man from the material world through dissolution into a general principle of unity[308]. Dugin identifies Guénon's Platonic approach in his descriptions of initiation to 'true man' and 'Transcendent Man'. However, within neo-Platonism,

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[304] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[305] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[306] René Guénon, *Insights Into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism*, trans. by Henry D. Fohr, ed. by Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p. 59.

[307] Dugin, *V poyskakh temnogo Logosa*, p. 87.

[308] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

there is an alternate vision that places more value on the individual. Proclus the Successor, for instance, envisions the possibility for an individual to perceive ideas and worlds even higher than the World Soul. The individual, as the bearer of the mind (νοῦς), possesses the unique capability called "individual intuition" (gr. ἐπιβολή), allowing for a "deep speculation of transcendental abyss" through the mind[309]. Thus, the individual possesses something that cannot merely disappear and dissolve. In the classical pathway of neo-Platonism, the disappearance of the individual occurs through the creation of the eidos-man and the abandonment of the "awakened mind"[310].

If we examine the perspectives of Berdyaev and Guénon on the human individual, both advocate for the abandonment of certain earthly characteristics in one's approach to the principle. This is primarily achieved through initiation, according to Guénon, and the Sobornost' process, according to Berdyaev. According to Guénon, an individual is a by-product that lacks inherent purpose but derives meaning in relation to the Principle. Berdyaev sees the individual as the result of the objectification and alienation of spirit from the Creator, existing as a part of society within the natural world.

While numerous studies discuss the relationship of these authors to neo-Platonism, an absolute connection cannot be definitively asserted. For instance, some research criticizes Guénon's anthropology, describing it as a renewed version of neo-Platonism[311]. Guénon himself acknowledges positive aspects in this interpretation but emphasizes its incompatibility with ancient Greek thought. Moreover, while many perspectives agree that Kabbalah borrowed ideas from neo-Platonism, a claim that Guénon rejects, he views neo-Platonism more as an exoteric teaching[312].

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[309] *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

[310] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[311] Zobkov, 'Universalnoe i individualnoe v diskurse Rene Genona', p. 66.

[312] Guénon, *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles*, p. 39-40.

In the proposed section, my focus is on Guénon's description of 'Universal Man' and 'true man', exploring their relationship to the Principle. In the Kabbalistic tradition, they are referred to as Adam Kadmon, precisely representing the concept of Person. It is noteworthy that Berdyaev also considers the idea of Adam Kadmon in Kabbalah. Before delving into the analysis of Kabalistic and personalistic ideas of Berdyaev, I would like to conduct a brief exploration of the concept of initiation as described by Guénon in the Christian tradition.

3.2.4. Analysis of the Guenonian Interpretation of Initiation and Its Suitability to the Christian Tradition

Based on Guénon's interpretation of 'true man' and 'Universal Man', it will be quite interesting to conduct an analysis of such an approach in Christianity. In particular, I want to focus on the analysis of the qualities of 'true man', as evaluating the position of 'Universal Man' becomes impossible, since in this case, the initiated individual completely disappears from the world, leaving no connection with it.

Firstly, I want to draw attention to the tradition of Christians to pray not only to God but also to address their prayers to various saints, hermits, ascetics, martyrs, etc. (in general, they can be categorized as saints), who are numerous in the Christian tradition. The mentioned category of people has chosen a spiritual path of growth and has affirmed their spiritual unity with God through their lives, and the phenomenon of their existence does reflect the Guenonian depiction of initiation into 'true man'. These people gained their unique experience of spiritual growth, and even after death, they maintain a connection to our world in a special way. According to the Christian tradition, they are capable of influencing events in our world, evidenced by the existence of prayers, akathists, supplications, and other prayer practices dedicated to saints. These various glorifications and prayers to saints establish a unique form of communication with them and prove the connection that exists between the world and saints.

Every Christian saint is attributed a special status based on his life experience and work during his earthly life. This is why believers turn to the saints in prayers and requests for intercession and assistance, seeking healing both mentally (such as strengthening faith and hope) and physically (recovery from ailments and illnesses). For instance, Saint Apollinaris of Ravenna is believed to help people with epilepsy and gout. Saint Stylianos the Hermit, venerated in both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, taught people throughout his lifetime to be like children — simple, with pure hearts. Therefore, he is known as a defender of children and orphans. Another example is the martyrdom of Saints Adrian and Natalia — a married couple considered protectors of families. Additionally, the Orthodox and Catholic Churches shared the same saints until the schism in 1054 (the so-called Great Schism). Afterward, each of the churches canonized different saints who emerged within their respective traditions. In the Orthodox Christian tradition, seeking help from a specific saint or saints is manifested in rich iconography.

I would like to draw attention to the status of the Mother of God, who is endowed with a broader spectrum of qualitative properties. While saints are predominantly considered protectors in a specific spheres, the Mother of God has more universal and wide-ranging attributes. This is due to the existence of a variety of her images, each of which is aimed at alleviating specific ailments or assisting in particular life situations. This practice is based on historical events that gave rise to the richness of iconography, where spiritual life is manifested through symbolism. For instance, according to tradition, the Mother of God manifested herself during wars as a protector against enemy attacks. There were also instances of healing from deadly diseases near her icon. Consequently, specific healing properties were attributed to the image of the Mother of God on the icon. For example, the icon of the Queen of All is considered a healer of cancer, while the Quick to Hear is regarded as a helper in urgent matters and issues requiring immediate resolution, and so on. As a result, her status is similar to that of a saint, but her connection with the world and people is much broader.

Another interesting example pertains to God Himself, Jesus Christ, as His incarnation attests to His connection with the world. It is worth discussing the third person of the Trinity, Christ, as initiation relates to humans. Therefore, Christ can also be classified as 'true man' since He lived a human life, and His figure maintains a connection with the world.

In Christianity, two instances of initiation, as interpreted by Guénon, can be found, during which a human bypassed death and transitioned to a higher reality, drawing closer to God. In particular, this refers to Elijah, who was taken to 'Heaven' while still alive, as described in the Old Testament: "there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). Another case involves the prophet Enoch: "Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Genesis 5:24). In both instances, the events are described in the Old Testament and concern prophets, who in the Christian tradition are also considered saints. People less frequently direct their requests to the prophets (although this is not an exception), but they can also be classified into the category that Guénon refers to as 'true man'.

In other cases, humans were recognized as saints after death through the canonization process. Canonization is an essential condition since, through such recognition, Christians begin to address individual prayers to the saint. At the same time, this does not negate the fact that, despite canonized saints, there may exist saints unknown to us. After canonization, a specific day of the year is appointed to celebrate the saint's feast day, their hagiography is composed, and a tradition of intercession is formed according to the merits of their life.

So, by analyzing the relevance of Guénon's approach to the initiation of a human into 'true man', it can be concluded that such an approach is not foreign to Christianity. As Guénon states, 'true man', although departing from this world, is capable of influencing events within it in some way. The thinker does not specify whether this initiation process occurs purely during one's lifetime or if this status is obtained after death; nevertheless, such an approach is pertinent to the understanding of the phenomenon of saints, certain prophets, the Mother of God, and even Christ,

that is, the incarnate God. The mentioned categories of people have left this world, not only through death but continue to exert influence upon it. As evidence of this, there are prayers from believers to them with various requests and expressions of gratitude. In other words, believers request these individuals to exert influence on specific situations in their own lives, the lives of others, or events in the world.

The analyzed cases of initiation into 'true man', as well as the sense in which Guénon speaks of it, have a predominantly historical character. However, concerning Christianity, it is possible to speak of another type of initiation not mentioned by Guénon. Specifically, this refers to the universal initiation of all humanity, which in Christianity is revealed through the theme of Sobornost', which will be discussed further below.

3.2.5. The Idea of Adam Kadmon in Berdyaev's Interpretation

I want to draw the reader's attention to some Kabbalistic intentions of Berdyaev in his personalistic interpretations. The Russian thinker regards the idea of being a person as the destiny of every human, asserting that only in one's belonging to God can a human truly realize oneself as a person. This personalistic sphere connects humans with the Principle (Russian: *Pervoistochnik*, or literally, the primary source). Consequently, a person cannot be reduced to mere nature but needs to be discovered. Berdyaev claims:

> "Personality is not a congealed condition, it breaks up, it develops, it is enriched, but it is the development of one and the same abiding subject. That is its very name. The very change itself takes place for the preservation of this unchanging abiding thing […]. Personality is not a ready made datum, it is the posing of a question, it is the ideal of a man. Personality is self-constructive. Not a single man can say of himself that he is completely a person. Personality is an axiological category, a category of value. Here we meet the fundamental paradox in the existence of

personality. Personality must construct itself, enrich itself, fill itself with the universal content, achieve unity in wholeness in the whole extent of its life. But for this, it must already exist"[313].

From Berdyaev's intentions, we can infer that, according to his view, personality is not identical to an earthly man; rather, it is a state one must achieve. Berdyaev notes: "Personality creates itself and exists by its own destiny finding the source of its strength in an existence which surpasses it"[314]. Thus, a person exists before being, belonging not to an ontological but metaphysical reality. On the contrary, a human is seen as a fallen and objectified being, with the realization of self only possible through coming to God. In essence, spiritualization is the process of personification.

Berdyaev's reflections lead the reader directly to mystical texts. He critiques Christian approaches to understanding human nature, particularly due to an inability to move beyond Old Testament anthropological interpretations[315]. Instead, he finds a more suitable explanation for the mystery of humanity in the Kabbalistic tradition when interpreting the most precious aspects of human existence. For instance, he quotes the following idea from the book of Zohar:

"He (Adam Kadmon – *N.P.*) is not only an image of the world, a universal being, which includes Absolute Being as well: he is also, and principally, an image of God, with the inclusion of all His infinite attributes. He is divine presence on the earth: he is the Heavenly Man who, emerging from the original darkness, creates the earthly Adam"[316].

Such an explanation reflects the philosophical and personal outlook of the thinker, which he describes in his own spirit as well. Berdyaev refers to Adam Kadmon as 'transcendental man' or 'universal man'. In the book *Truth and Revelation*, he writes:

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[313] Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, pp. 22-23.
[314] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[315] Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 49-60.
[316] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 63.

"Transcendental man is not what is called unchangeable human nature, for it is not nature at all. It is creative action and freedom. Neither spirit nor freedom is nature."

And further:

"The nature of man changes, it evolves, but behind it is hidden the transcendental man, spiritual man, not only earthly man but heavenly man also, who is the Adam Kadmon of the Kabbalah. [...] "Transcendental man" is on the further side of the already objectified antithesis between the individual and the universal. He is both the individual man and the universal man. But he is not universal reason, nor the Kantian transcendental mind, nor is he the Hegelian world spirit. He is man"[317].

From here, it can be admitted that in his endeavor to explain the mystical idea of a person, Berdyaev refers to a spiritual or, in other words, metaphysical reality as the genuine realm to which a person belongs. Despite his unsystematic writing style (for instance, For instance, in the quoted text, Berdyaev freely uses the word 'individual' more as a term for a person), one can discern that, in the interpretation of the person by the Russian philosopher, it takes on a universal meaning. In our objectified reality, it serves as an example of the ideal man and a purpose for everyone. Humans strive to reveal themselves as persons not only for individual realization but also for recognition of their ideal, which can be achieved not in isolation but in connection with others.

Following Kabbalistic tradition, Adam Kadmon is an archetype; he is not merely a carnal human but the image of God in the full sense of the word, and, according to Kabbalah, he is Person. Simultaneously, it is a universal principle with an inclusive character, embodying all of mankind. In the Kabbalistic tradition, Adam Kadmon is symbolically depicted in the image of the Sephiroth tree. However, the question arises whether such a vision aligns with Berdyaev's worldview. Berdyaev, in reference to the Kabbalistic tradition, emphasizes its positive aspects in

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[317] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 19-20.

explaining the perfect unity of all beings. However, this does not imply that he proposes the same map for the Kingdom of God. His vision diverges from Kabbalistic descriptions, especially regarding the idea of a person. The philosopher takes the interpretation of Adam Kadmon as an example to illustrate the unity of mankind before the human fall and its relation to God at the end of time. Yet, the Russian thinker views a person differently from an archetype. According to Kabbalah, a person is represented by a perfect unity, i.e., Adam Kadmon. In contrast, for Berdyaev, within this unity, every human becomes a person. This distinction is crucial for the thinker because, on one hand, he aims to emphasize that every individual has the potential to become a person, realized in unity with others. On the other hand, he seeks to preserve each individual's creative ability, signifying that everyone is a creator akin to their Heavenly Father.

It is interesting to note Arjakovsky's observation about the presence in Berdyaev's worldview of ideas based on the myth of Adam Kadmon, or Heavenly Man. According to this researcher, it is Boehme who inspired the Russian thinker to take such a step, following some Kabbalistic views[318]. As for the 'Teutonic philosopher', whose opinion is highly valued by Berdyaev, he indeed elaborates extensively on the concept of man based on adamology, borrowing from Kabbala — the ancient Christian doctrine stating that humans were created in the image of God as the center of the world, and that they are little gods, the concentration of all creation. According to Boehme, man represents the unity of masculine and feminine principles. The first man is Sophia, and, as Berdyaev comments, this signifies primary integrity and purity. The loss of it means the loss of Virgin Sophia and the emergence of earthly Eva[319]. Boehme further comments that in man, three principles intersect — the divine, human, and luciferic. Due to the freedom and exaggeration of the dark in the luciferic principle, man loses his primary harmony. Death appears, as Boehme admits it: "Adam falls asleep". Subsequently, opposites arise,

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[318] Arjakovsky, *The Way*, p. 300.

[319] Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme. Etude II. The Teaching about Sophia and the Androgyne. J. Boehme and the Russian Sophiological Current,' trans. by Fr. S. Janos, 2002, *Journal Put'* 21 (1930), p. 34-62), available online at: http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1930_351.html#br (Accessed 14 July 2023).

along with the struggle between good and evil, history and time is born. Satan tempts a man, leading to conflicts with other people as well as with God. Therefore, the task of man is to recognize the divine within him and return to his original state[320].

It is not by chance that the Russian thinker draws inspiration from Boehme's ideas in his philosophical worldview, taking into account Boehme's Adamic intentions. Considering this, it is not surprising that Berdyaev's contemplation of Adam Kadmon, the universal man, or the transcendental man did not escape the attention of Kabbalistic philosophy. However, Berdyaev provides a different explanation, using Kabbalistic ideas only as a successful example of the unity of all beings.

Thus, Berdyaev emphasizes the relationship between the transcendental man and the world, as well as the connection between a person and humanity. He acknowledges:

> "Unlike Kant's thing-in-itself, transcendental man operates in this world, he reveals himself in every great creative man, when man has risen above himself as a purely natural being. Transcendental man acts in this world, but he comes out of another world, he is from the world of freedom. Transcendental man does not evolve, he creates. His existence is the condition upon which the possibility of religious and spiritual experience depends; it is, as it were, an a priori of that experience"[321].

This passage is truly controversial, but it precisely clarifies the essence of the person, which is dynamic and universal. Berdyaev rejects any alterations regarding the transcendental man because he is not associated with mutual, evolutionary, and deterministic nature. Instead, he possesses a spiritual essence. The entire world and humanity relate to the transcendental man as he embodies totality, making society a part of it. As Arjakovsky acknowledges, in Berdyaev's philosophy, a person "presumes a super-personal superior being, which it reflects, and super-

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[320] Ivan Fokin, 'Uchenie Byome o proiskhozhdenii i naznachenii cheloveka' [Boehme's doctrine on the origin and purpose of man], *Vestnik Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universitieta im. A.S. Pushkina*, t. 2 (2010) № 1, pp. 67-70.

[321] Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, p. 20.

personal values, which it realizes, constituting the richness of the content of its life"[322]. Further, the Russian-French researcher notes: "The person was not something already complete; rather, it creates itself, proceeding from itself towards others"[323]. Arjakovsky's interpretation is evidently connected with the undetermined characteristic of a person. Moreover, the last noted aspects of a person clearly reflect the aspect of the Divine Person, or rather Personalities — viewed from the perspective of Christian triadology. The person is created by itself in a spiritual sense and is present in a person as God's image.

It is important to emphasize the universal aspect of the person, as stressed by Berdyaev. In this context, he notes: "The general is an abstraction and does not have an existence. The universal however is concrete and does possess existence"[324]. Now, it becomes evident why Berdyaev takes Adam Kadmon as an example, as it has an inclusive character and encompasses all beings. Thus, Adam Kadmon, equal to the person in Kabbala, represents a universal and complex phenomenon. However, for Berdyaev, such a vision is not permitted, as the person is not merely a connection, category, or matrix but a specific task for the realization of human potential. As seen in the last quote, Berdyaev uses the term "over-personal" to underscore the divine status of the person.

Referring to Adam Kadmon, it is evident that Berdyaev diverges from the interpretation of the Kabbalistic tradition and provides his own. This may be done to emphasize the idea of a person in his philosophy. However, at no point does Berdyaev suggest that any man or mankind, in general, has to become Adam Kadmon at the end. As noted above, Adam Kadmon serves as a prototype for the ideal unity of all beings in reference to God. To support this perspective and to specify the idea of a person, one must consider the term "new man", which Berdyaev uses as a synonym for a person. The Russian thinker notes that the new man has to replace the old one. For instance, he writes: "The new man is connected with the eternal man, with the eternal in man. In the new man, there is hidden not only the eternal man Adam Kadmon but the old man, the old

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[322] Arjakovsky, *The Way*, x ff.
[323] *Ibid.*
[324] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

Adam"[325], and adds: "A new man, something new within man, predicates that man continues to exist, in his human quality"[326].

So, for a reader to fully grasp the personalism of the Russian thinker, an understanding of the terminology is crucial. The "eternal man" in Berdyaev's philosophy corresponds to Adam Kadmon, the unity of all being before the fall, and the new man is essentially a person in which the eternal man manifests. It represents the man after the fall, on the earth, in time. Therefore, the thinker insists that the new man includes not only a human but also history and the whole cosmos. The existence of a new man, a person, presupposes being in the new, yet unknown feature. It is not a return to the previous state before the fall but a re-creation in a new one.

It is worth stressing that in Berdyaev's philosophy, 'man' (or, better to say, an 'earthly man') and a 'person' cannot be accepted as synonyms. As Berdyaev admits: "to become person is the task of man" and at the same time a man can "altogether lose his personness"[327]. So, a person can be acquired as well as lost. Here one can see that a person is bound to the divine, uncreated, possessing a pre-existential character. A person is an image of God disfigured by the fall and the sin of man in earthly life, but it can be purified through creativity and spiritual ascension to God. For the Russian thinker, the realization of human as a person presupposes spiritual activity: "Genuine activity, defining the person, is activity of spirit"[328]. Undoubtedly, qualities of a person can be revealed in a human, but the final realization of man is possible only with unity with others. By delving into this idea of unity, the topic of Sobornost', which will be explored in the final pages of this research, is introduced. However, before that, the explanation of a possible way of initiation for man in the interpretations of Berdyaev and Guénon should be explored.

3.3. Human Creativity as the Imitation of God's Work

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[325] Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, p. 163.

[326] *Ibid.*

[327] Berdyaev, *The Problem of Man*.

[328] *Ibid.*

Previously explained was Guénon's description of human initiation, denoting the realization of human potential. Emphasized was a distinctive human activity known as contemplation, characterized by inactivity. Guénon speaks about initiation achieved by humans during the ascension to 'Universal Man' or 'true man'. His stance on this matter is grounded in various world religious traditions, with his interpretations drawing primarily from Muslim, Hindu, and Kabbalistic traditions. Now, I will elaborate on how Berdyaev articulates the possibilities of human realization, encompassing the concept of initiation.

For Berdyaev, as a religious thinker, the idea of human realization is grounded in the concept of creativity, which serves as the main foundation of his philosophy. Berdyaev views creativity as a spiritual act, distinct from a physical one, and describes it as a form of contemplation. The modern researcher John Witte emphasizes the similarity between creativity and imagination in Berdyaev's philosophy[329]. However, it is important to note that Berdyaev refers not to ordinary imagination but to transcendence toward a higher spiritual reality — what he terms the 'insight'. This poses a task of spiritual growth, achievable only within the realm of faith. Berdyaev underscores that not every form of imagination elevates humanity; without Christ, man is left alone and destined to fall, turning the Kingdom of Heaven into a utopian parody. The spiritual realism of Christianity protects humans from the ideological phantasms of the world, none of which can accurately describe the Haven[330].

In Berdyaev's view, humans possess the gift of imagination, but it differs in quality from secular imagination; it is sacred. Therefore, the creative act should be seen as overcoming the enclosure in the world and transcending into the spiritual dimension. In creativity, we observe the

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[329] John Witte Jr., Frank S. Alexander, *The Teachings of Modern Orthodox Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature*, ed. by John Witte, Frank S. Alexander, introd. Paul Valliere (NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 134.

[330] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

human thirst for another state of being[331], supporting the idea of external origination. Berdyaev considers the spiritual act as the source of mystical moments capable of transforming man. The purpose of such a creative elevation is to contribute to the onset of a new era and the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Similar to Guénon explaining the inactivity of man on the path of initiation, Berdyaev describes the spiritual dimension of creativity. That is why he distinguishes creativity from work. He writes:

"But creativity cannot be identified with work. Work belongs to the kingdom of necessity is the base of human life in this world, it belongs to the kingdom of necessity ("In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread"); it belongs to the realm Caesar […]. But creativeness belongs to the purposes of life, to the realm of freedom, which is that of Spirit. We dare not subject the purposes of life, its ends, to life's means: freedom cannot be subjected to necessity: the realm of Spirit cannot be subordinated to that of Caesar. Hence the religious truth in personalism"[332].

Berdyaev stresses that the potential of the creative act is inherent in every man. The ability to create is a sign that a human possesses a part of divine reality, being an image of God. As God creates the world and humanity, a human inherits creative abilities from Him. Man is a micro-theos capable of bringing something new into the world. This reality is not complete, and a human, as a representative of God, is called to contribute to the completion of the world through acts of creativity. Berdyaev describes creativity as a divine art, or, as the Kyiv thinker calls it, the "eight day of creation"[333]. The author helps us understand that the true creative act has a transfigurative power.

Berdyaev's view on human creativity, in some aspects, aligns with the idea of creativity proposed by Kant, who, as mentioned at the beginning of this research, greatly influenced the worldview of the Russian thinker. For the German philosopher, creativity transfigures the world;

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[331] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[332] Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, pp. 170-171.

[333] Berdyaev, *The Devine and the Huma*n, p. 191.

humans create something yet unseen, making the world more human. The Koenigsbergian thinker even proposes the idea of contemplation, but such activity, for him, is solely an outcome of the "pure mind". Margarita Raitina explains the meaning of creativity in Kant's philosophy in the following way:

"The ability to create is a characteristic of profound mind. The reconstruction of the nature of creative processes as the act of "pure consciousness" is immanent to the mind and, thus, represents the "transcendental method". A philosopher contemplating creativity can grasp it through the act of "intellectual contemplation". Additionally, the act of artistic creativity itself is an intellectual contemplation that attains objectivity"[334].

So, despite Kant's creativity possessing a contemplative character, such an activity still remains framed by the mind. Even though the mind relates to the higher transcendental mind, for Berdyaev, such an approach is incomplete because "Rationalism is something different from an abstraction of reason from the whole man, from humanity, and therefore it is anti-human"[335]. It is important for the Russian thinker to include the force of the human spirit in the creative act, and this activity is by no means limited to the mind. Creativity is a mystical way, opening a path to synergy with God, the world, and other people.

Kant's capacity for transcendental acts captures Berdyaev's attention, but he does not confine himself to the logical pathways of the mind. Instead, he seeks to delve into the spiritual sphere. Berdyaev perceives creativity as a mystical way to encounter God[336]. Therefore, the creative act must be understood in the context of the co-creativity of man and God, becoming synergistic in essence. On one hand, man recognizes his Creator in creativity; on the other hand, he undergoes transformation, along with the entire world. The power of this act is not limited to a

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[334] Margarita Raitina, 'Kontseptualizatsyia tvorchestva kak deyatel'nosti 'chistogo razuma' v ratsionalisticheskoj filosofii' [Conceptualization of Creativity as the Activity of "Pure Reason" in Rationalistic Philosophy], in *Filosofiya i kul'tura*, 8 (2018), pp. 14-22.

[335] Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, p. 22.

[336] N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 127.

specific individual or group; it is universal. This universality explains the qualitative nature of personhood that humanity achieves through the process of creativity.

Berdyaev posits that creative abilities are directly bestowed by God, making creativity one of the pillars of Christianity, intimately connected to the idea of Godmanhood. Through creative abilities, man establishes a connection with God, experiencing a kind of perichoresis. As the "Apostle of Freedom" writes:

"Man awaits the birth of God in himself, and God awaits the birth of man in himself. It is at this level that the question of creativity arises, and it is from this point of view that should be approached. The notion that God has need of man's response to him is, admittedly, an extraordinarily daring notion; yet in its absence the Christian revelation of God-manhood loses all meaning"[337].

This suggests that creativity is represented as a spiritual experience connecting God and man. However, Berdyaev stresses that not all creative acts, conducted in the spirit of truth, liberate man from the bonds of sin and lead to God; only those made in cooperation with God achieve this[338]. In his view, creativity is the same thing as catharsis (Greek κάθαρσις); it purifies and frees the spirit from the material and external, which are forced and applied by law[339]. Demonic forces of the world are destroyed in creative elevation, and man manifests in Divine Light. Moreover, Berdyaev represents creativity in the light of a spiritual revolution, its awakening from spiritual sleep and the breaking of boundaries that suppress spiritual activity after the fall[340]. So, the creative act must be viewed as overcoming closure in the world and transcending into the spiritual dimension. In creativity, the inclination of a human toward another state of being is acknowledged, supporting the idea of external origination.

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[337] Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 204.

[338] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[339] Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 126.

[340] *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

The creative act presupposes spiritual freedom, which entails accepting Christ as our Savior. This is impossible without repentance, the foundation of a new life — with God and in God[341]. Repentance, or metanoia (Greek μετάνοια), involves turning to God and understanding the impossibility of existence without Him. It brings the soul to life and grants the ability to communicate with God. Berdyaev asserts that the human spirit possesses contemplative powers, but to unlock these capabilities, one must first repent. Regarding contemplative activity (Greek θεωρία), it was well-developed in the spiritual practices of the Oriental tradition and generally implies the long journey of monks and hermits, presupposing unity with the personal Source of uncreated light of Tabor. In Berdyaev's philosophy, it takes on a universal meaning aligned with creativity, as the thinker acknowledges: "Contemplation of God is creative activity"[342].

Referring to creativity, Berdyaev also distinguishes between two forms of human realization based on the creative act: the renunciation of the world and the transformation of the world[343]. However, these two paths are considered partial realizations because after such an act, humans find themselves within the visible reality, the so-called Kingdom of Caesar, wounded by sin. Therefore, in the act of creativity, there is primarily an initial recognition of the destiny of man, the acknowledgment of one's own personality. Still, full realization is only possible in unity with others. This potential pertains not to our determined, objectified reality, but to the Kingdom to come. The realization of the future age depends on each individual and their spiritual elevation, which is found in creativity.

So, in the act of creativity, on the one hand, man continues God's work, and on the other — steps on the path to the divine realm. The creative acts can change not only humans but also transfigure the entire world, preparing the Kingdom of God to come. But such acts are rather the first step to the recognition of being a person. Creativity draws human realization nearer, for the coming of the Kingdom of God depends on all people, including their creative manifests. It is an

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[341] *Ibid*., pp. 167-68.

[342] *Ibid*., p. 152.

[343] Nicolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), p. 73.

important aspect of Berdyaev's personalism, while the realization of humans as persons is possible only together with all of mankind. The intentions of realizing all mankind are well developed in the idea of Sobornost', which I will analyze in the last chapter.

For the next step, I turn our attention to Guénon's writings and his explanation of the topic about initiation. The similarities and differences in the attempts of the thinkers shed new light on the vision of man and the possibility of his realization.

3.3.1. Human Realization on the Path of Initiation in the Explanation of Guénon

As I mentioned earlier, Berdyaev views the first step to realization of man in creativity. Creativity, as the effort of the spirit, draws man to God and during this particular activity human gets to know himself as a person and starts a way of self-realization. After describing Berdyaev's view it is worth exploring the approach to human realization proposed by Guénon.

As I noted above, both thinkers use a different terminology concerning the transfiguration of human. Berdyaev speaks mostly about realization of human and his destiny. Guénon, in turn, uses the term "initiation". Guénon puts the term "Principle" to the center, whereas Berdyaev follows Christ as the living example of the ideal man. It was also described Guénon's vision on 'Universal Man' and 'true man' as two ways of initiation one can achieve. Now I propose to explore Guénon's ways of initiation closer and compare them to Berdyaev's, focusing on key elements such as the role of principles, the concept of 'Universal Man' and 'true man', and their respective views on the ideal path to human realization.

Guénon extensively describes the process of initiation in many of his works, underscoring its paramount importance. In his dedicated work, *Perspectives on Initiation*, the thinker emphasizes the historical shift where initiatory practices gradually recede from religion, giving way to contemporary interpretations lacking metaphysical and esoteric depth. In our present era,

the term "religion" has taken on an exoteric character. Therefore, instead of examining modern religious practices, it is more insightful to delve into the tradition of the religion itself[344].

Guénon elucidates that initiation is a sacred act providing an individual with the opportunity to ascend to God through the "cosmic ladder"[345]. It involves a journey from an individual level to a universal one. The initiation commences with a human individual, and as the process unfolds, an increasing "non-human element" manifests within. Although this element already exists within the human, as one progresses toward the principle, the human 'ego' gradually dissolves into the 'Self'[346]. The individual loses distinctive characteristics, acquiring the universal features of Person[347].

The thinker stresses that initiation "incarnates the 'spirit' of a tradition, and is also that which allows of the effective realization of 'supre-human' states"[348]. It is easy to understand this approach by considering Christianity, which possesses such a "non-human" element. This can be seen in the belief that man is created in the image and likeness of God, and he needs to renew these qualities within himself to realize his true potential. If one separates himself from the tradition, he loses the path of initiation.

While emphasizing initiation, Guénon also acknowledges its relevance only in our reality, as it did not exist in primordial times. As the thinker underscores:

"for the men of primordial times initiation would have been useless and even inconceivable, since spiritual development in all its degrees was accomplished among them in an altogether natural and spontaneous way by reason of their proximity to the Principle; but as a result of the "descent" that

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[344] René Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, trans. by Henry D. Fohr, ed. by Samuel D. Fohr (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), pp. 69-70.

[345] Daniil Pivovarov, *Filosofiya religii. Prakseologiya religii. Uchebnoe posobie dlya akademicheskogo bakalavriata* [Philosophy of religion. Praxeology of religion. Study guide for the academic bachelor's degree] (Yurajt, Moskva, 2018), p. 68.

[346] Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, pp. 35-36.

[347] René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, trans. by Lord Northbourne (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p. 63.

[348] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

has occurred since then, in conformity with the inevitable process of all cosmic manifestation, the conditions of the cyclic period in which we find ourselves at present are altogether different, and this is why the restoration of the possibilities of the primordial state is the first of the goals that initiation sets for itself."[349]

In this course, Guénon mentions the "second birth", which is, in fact, the first stage of initiation and is included in all traditions. It is actually only a starting point, but it draws man into the tradition, which is vital for his spiritual growth. In Christianity, this vital second birth is the sacrament of baptism[350]. Despite this, Guénon often stresses the importance of a mentor or teacher on the path of initiation. And because he did not find such a teacher in Christianity for himself, it was also one of the reasons he changed his tradition from Christianity to Sufism.

All world religions, as the thinker emphasizes, assume the initiation of man, his subsequent spiritual growth, and his grounding in specific practices and esoteric teachings of his respective tradition. The thinker cautions against involvement in pseudo-initiatory circles, which are nothing more than distorted versions of genuine initiation teachings, representing an externalization and profanation of esoteric traditions. Such teachings often lack the necessary metaphysical foundation inherent in every authentic traditional teaching[351].

Initiation begins with a transformation of one's inner state but is not limited to it; it can also manifest outwardly. While everyone possesses this potential, an individual must discover and awaken it within himself. In line with Berdyaev, Guénon emphasizes self-knowledge as the primary foundation of initiation. He writes:

"If he (man – N.P.) succeeds in penetrating to the center of his own being, he thereby attains total knowledge with all that it implies in addition. […] 'he who knows his self knows his Lord'; and

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[349] Guénon, *Essential*, p. 252.
[350] Guénon, *Essential*, pp. 153, 253.
[351] Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, pp. 32-34.

then knows all things within the supreme unity of the Principle itself, outside of which there is nothing that can have the slightest degree of reality"[352].

Hence, initiation begins with self-knowledge, and through this prism, one comes to know God, for "man is a symbol of universal Existence"[353]. Here, it is hard to miss an analogy with Christianity, where the idea about the creation of man in the image and likeness of God means both knowledge of the divine part of oneself and the connection with the Creator. In other places, Guénon stresses that "pure knowledge" is, in fact, the peak of initiatic growth[354].

Guénon distinguishes the properties of man who has achieved a certain level of initiation from modern initiation groups which practice magic and can lead to spiritual confusion and delusion, then has nothing to do with the transcendental domain. First of all, when someone acquires certain capabilities in the course of spiritual elevation, he do not use them for their own benefit. It is, in fact, the wisdom of a follower of the initiatory way; their activity is marked by contemplation, which means inactivity. However, it is wrong to think of contemplation as human passiveness; it actually means the activation of the inner force of man. We must distinguish initiation from magic, which has been popularized in modern fashion, especially when such teachings go outside tradition. Guénon emphasizes that the essence of magic is profaned, as proven when it is used by different spiritualist and occult groups that propose a rather counter-initiatory way[355]. That is why modern mysticism, unlike initiation, is characterized by spiritual passivity, especially in self-knowledge. This passivity makes man open to external influences, and he himself seeks benefits in order to influence specific things in the world[356]. The most illustrative example of the difference between initiation and mysticism is the inability of man in magic to come outside an over-individual state.

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[352] Guénon, *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles*, p. 78.
[353] *Ibid.*
[354] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[355] Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, pp. 13, 226.
[356] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

It is notable, that Berdyaev's critic of magic is similar to Guénon's. The Russian thinker believes that magic is aimed to achievement of personal goals in the first place, not the common good of all the world and perception of truth. He writes: "magic promises man power but it leaves him fettered to the cosmic cycle"[357]. So, magic locks man in the circle of his own passions, including the wish to control elementals and spirits of nature, the way of things; he believes some of it is present in certain pagan cults.

The two thinkers also share similar views on spiritual growth, though their interpretations contain some controversial ideas. Guénon emphasizes that initiation requires inner deepening, which should not be confused with outward expressions like the "ecstasies" experienced by some mystics[358]. Berdyaev, on the other hand, describes human transcendence through creative acts, referring to them as "creative ecstasies", but he clarifies that this refers to transcendence into higher spiritual realms.

When comparing their perspectives, two key points should be taken into account: firstly, they analyze spiritual growth through the ideas of different traditions; and secondly, they both discuss the human journey of spiritual development, albeit using distinct terminology. Equally important is recognizing the distinct styles of their expressions.

Returning to Guénon's explanation of initiation, it should be noted that he specifically describes its origin. Initiation presupposes spiritual growth grounded in a step-by-step approach to the Principle. As I mentioned previously, the examples of "true man" and "Transcendent Man" illustrate different stages in human's approach to the Principle on the way of initiation. This picture reminds that man first approaches the so-called center of being, gaining the status of "true man", and then, if he possesses the necessary capabilities, elevates to the level of Transcendent Man. Therefore, spiritual growth has a hierarchical order, meaning that the source of human

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[357] Berdyaev, *The Devine and the Human*, p. 5.
[358] Guénon, *Perspectives on Initiation*, p. 21.

knowledge at each step of elevation comes from higher-level forces, not from within the individual[359].

Guénon contrasts true initiation with the counter-initiation and the pseudo-initiation[360]. While the two latter forms of initiation should not be confused, Guénon acknowledges their inherent similarity, calling them "counterfeiter with the counterfeit"[361]. However, they are not completely separate entities. As he points out, "the counter-initiation works with a view to introducing its agents into the pseudo-initiatic organizations"[362], which suggests that the pseudo-initiation acts as a breeding ground for the counter-initiation[363].

The "pseudo-initiation" focuses on external actions, which are formal and lack genuine spiritual power. In contrast, the counter-initiation represents a complete distortion of true initiation. It not only ignores the metaphysical domain that defines true initiation but also substitutes it with the psychic domain[364]. Therefore, pseudo-initiation serves as a transitional link to the counter-initiation. By misappropriating elements from tradition and using them in an erroneous way[365], the pseudo-initiation creates a conducive environment for the counter-initiation to operate. This ultimately leads to the resistance of traditional initiation, making the pseudo-initiation inherently "anti-traditional"[366].

Guénon emphasizes that initiation is present in all spiritual practices of world religions. As a result of this initiation, man first undergoes inner transfiguration, leading to a subsequent complete transformation. Initiation serves as the pathway to self-knowledge. The more one delves into self-discovery, the closer one comes to understanding God, aligning with the Christian concept of spiritual development. Additionally, Guénon mentions ascetic initiation practices in

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[359] Guénon, *The Great Triade*, p. 128.
[360] Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, p. 241.
[361] *Ibid*.
[362] *Ibid*., p. 243.
[363] *Ibid*.
[364] *Ibid*., p. 242.
[365] *Ibid*., p. 269.
[366] *Ibid*., p. 192.

some places. These practices involve active participation but, in his opinion, have limited goals. While ascetic practices are found in various religions, it is known that Guénon, in general, overlooks the practices and traditions of Orthodox Christianity in his critical assessment. In Orthodox Christianity, ascetics play a significant role in spiritual growth.

In this context, it is pertinent to address Guénon's critique of Christian initiation. Unfortunately, the thinker posits that Christianity underwent degradation from an esoteric to an exoteric religion, particularly post the Nicene Council in 361, evolving into a semblance of a religious organization[367]. Guénon scrutinizes the sacrament of baptism, which, at a certain juncture, began to be administered to newborns, evolving into an officially exoteric ceremony. He categorizes such initiation as 'virtual' and underscores the imperative of requisite preparation preceding such a rite. The philosopher deems this departure a profanation of Christian tradition, a derangement of its esoteric essence, given that in the formative centuries of Christianity, baptism was exclusively reserved for adults and only after a period of meticulous preparation. Guénon posits that a mere ritual devoid of individual confirmation falls short of genuine initiation. The 'Cairo hermit' briefly alludes to the potential for attaining initiation within contemporary Christianity. While not dismissing this prospect, he recommends pursuing it not within the Western liturgy but within the Eastern Churches, advocating for practices such as Hesychasm[368].

In addition to all that has been mentioned, it is worth noting that Guénon places a special emphasis on hierarchical elevation in initiation, which occurs in cycles. In the initial stage, man undergoes what alchemists referred to as "rotting", symbolized by the colour black. In Christian terminology, this phase is known as the "dark night of the soul". Subsequent initiations into higher

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[367] Guénon, *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, pp. 10-11.

[368] Timothy Scott, 'René Guénon and the question of initiation,' *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies* (2008), available at http://timothyscott.com.au/Assets/pdfs/Guenon_initiation.pdf, pp. 3-4 [Accessed 25 June 2023].

levels are marked by an intermediate "twilight" phase[369]. The closer one gets to the Principle, the more individual characteristics are replaced by universal traits.

Such a conclusion about initiation raises a few questions. As noted at the beginning of the third chapter, Guénon regards an individual as a by-product, evident in the dissolution of the individual during the course of initiation, where individual characteristics are supplanted by universal ones. Guénon focuses on the transformation of a particular individual but does not address the issue of the salvation of all mankind. To comprehend this exclusive approach to the interpretation of initiation, it is insufficient to solely evaluate his perspective on the initiation process. It is crucial to recognize that he is a representative of Sufism, necessitating the consideration not only of his vocabulary but also of his worldview. This aspect is highlighted by the Russian researcher of Guénon's legacy, Alexander Dugin, who attributes the exclusive approach of the 'Cairo hermit' to the anthropological perspective inherent in Islam, a perspective shared by Sufism as well. He notes:

> "Anthropology as such is the field of initiative and mystical teachings (like Sufism, Shiism, Ishrak, and partly Islam philosophy). The general context of Islam is concentrated of pure theology. Thus, an individual moment in Islam is almost equal to general humanity. God is radically transcendent, He is equally far and close to both an individual and a group of individuals, moving to the building of *sobornoy* personality. Even the most efficient *sobornaya*[370] (united) personality does not have any hierarchic privileges in relation to God. That is why between a human individual and a unity receives a kind of negative equality"[371].

This is why the lack of salvation for all mankind, as described by Guénon, requires careful consideration. It represents a divergence in the inner aspects of the religious tradition, ardently represented by Guénon, in terms of its thinking and consciousness. As Dugin elucidates, Islam

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[369] Guénon, *Essential*, p. 14.

[370] By some difficulty to translate the adjectives coming from *Sobornost'* I left the original, while sub-chapter 3.3.3. is devoted to the idea of *Sobornost'* and the reader can discover this topic.

[371] Dugin, *V poyskakh temnogo Logosa*, pp. 91-92.

indeed incorporates the idea of unity, albeit different from that in the Orthodox Christian tradition. In Islam, the potential for individual spiritual growth is deemed equal to the potential for the entire human race, and such a perspective is not foreign to the Christian tradition either.

Then, in Guénon's interpretation, initiation involves entering and mastering the practices of the tradition to which man belongs. Along this path, an individual relinquishes their individual characteristics and acquires universal ones. Spiritual growth, as the foundation of initiation, encompasses self-knowledge, where an individual, in their existence, reflects the Universal Principle. The "Cairo hermit" warns against "counter-initiation" and the "pseudo-initiation", which run contrary to tradition and lack true initiatory power. The thinker does not explicitly discuss the concept of universal salvation, while in Islam, an individual is seen as a representative of all mankind, endowed with its capabilities. As noted by Dugin, differences in religious perspectives may create an impression that Islam lacks the idea of the salvation of all humanity.

It is worth mentioning another point, overlooked by critics of the Guenonian perspective, precisely regarding the initiation of all humanity. Indeed, the "Cairo hermit" describes initiation as the path *here and now* for those individuals who embark on the path of initiation. In this case, initiation as an approaching the archetype of Persona is exceptional, so to speak, only for those who choose the way of initiation. However, the return of all creation to the Absolute is also possible and even a regularity due to the cyclical nature of time. This is a vision taken by Guenon from the Hindu tradition, according to which time moves in a circle and therefore all creation gradually departs from the Creator, then returns to Him again. Thus, the cycle passes through four eras or yugas, one of which is the golden era, when people are in close relationship with the Absolute. This phenomenon can also be called the initiation of all creation, similar to the idea of Sobornost' in Christianity, which I will discuss below. The thinker does not describe the idea of the golden era in detail, as the universality of such a phenomenon is rather beyond the understanding of human reason.

The exclusivity in Guénon's approach is expressed in that he does not allow the possibility for all of humanity to undergo initiation in any era; rather, it is relevant only *here and now*, but at the same time, this transfiguration is possible in the golden age when people are in a close relationship with the Absolute.

Examining the perspective on initiation and human transformation in the Guenonian interpretation, I now want to draw attention to the possibility of universal transformation in the worldview of Berdyaev. During this exploration of Berdyaev's concept of human realization through creative acts, which might initially appear exclusive, the thinker remains faithful to Christian doctrine and develops the idea of the salvation of all people. The next section of this work is dedicated to this theme.

3.3.2. Realization of Man in the *Sobornost'* Process

Previously, Guénon's description of the possibility of human realization through initiation was explored. As demonstrated, as a human approaches the Principle, individual characteristics are relinquished, and universality is acquired. An essential question arises in this context: does Guénon overlook the possibility of a return to the Principle, implying initiation for all of humanity?

Upon examination, it is found that the "Cairo hermit" discusses the initiation of the individual, and the topic of the salvation of all mankind is implicitly present. In the Islamic tradition, to which Guénon belongs, there exists an equality of potentials between an individual and all people. In this section, the focus shifts to describing the realization of all mankind through the prism of the Christian tradition. Therefore, the concept of Sobornost', focusing on Berdyaev's critical perspective, takes center stage in this subchapter.

In the Christian tradition, the idea of the unity of all humanity holds significant importance. This concept is embodied by the term "Sobornost'", which encompasses the salvation

of all people. Sobornost' became a core element of Church dogma, appearing in the Apostles' Creed of the Eastern Churches, approved at the First Council of Constantinople (381). The Creed declares the Church as "one, holy, universal, and apostolic", and the term "*sobornaia*" in Church Slavonic, derived from "*sobor*" meaning "gathering" and "church", translates the Greek "καθολικὴν" as "universal"[372]. Metropolitan John Zizioulas offers "καθολικός" (katholikos)[373] which originates from two words *kata* — referring to, and *holos* — full, meaning universal[374]. While the concept of Sobornost' flourished in the Orthodox Christian tradition, we find echoes of it in the Catholic Church, often expressed through the term "collegiality"[375].

Sobornost', a rich and complex idea, encompasses theological, soteriological, and personalistic dimensions. Within Christianity, it holds immense value for its direct connection to human fulfillment. To grasp the core meaning of Sobornost', we must delve into the 19th and 20th century Russian religious philosophy, where it found profound interpretations and widespread support. Christian Orthodox thinkers like Vladimir Solovyov, Aleksey Khomyakov, Evgenii Troubetskoy, Nikolas Berdyaev, Semyon Frank, Sergei Bulgakov, and countless others significantly shaped our understanding of this multifaceted concept. Their unique perspectives on Sobornost' continue to guide exploration into this vital aspect of Christianity in general.

The perspectives of these Orthodox thinkers share common ground, yet each infuses their own unique nuances into the interpretation of Sobornost'. Slavophile Aleksey Khomyakov, considered a leading voice in the discourse surrounding Sobornost', views it as a fundamental principle of connection and unification, characterized by freedom and love as its defining

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[372] Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, "Looking for Sobornost': Khomiakov's Ecclesiology as an Alternative to the Schmitt-Peterson Debate", in *Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost'*, ed. by A. Mrowczynski-Van Allen, T. Obolevitch, P. Rojek (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2020), p. 6.

[373] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 143

[374] Robert Beekes, Lucien Van Beek, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, ed. Alexandr Lubotsky (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010).

[375] Mrówczyński-Van Allen, "Looking for Sobornost': Khomiakov's Ecclesiology as an Alternative to the Schmitt-Peterson Debate", p. 7.

qualities[376]. This aligns with Berdyaev's approach, who builds upon Khomyakov's ideas in his own exploration of Sobornost'[377]. Father Sergei Bulgakov's interpretation of Sobornost' draws inspiration from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the Church. Just as God is one in three Persons, the Church, encompassing all humanity, represents the united essence of the Trinity. Bulgakov asserts, "in the integral unity of humanity there is already present the germ of the unity of the Church in the image of the Holy Trinity"[378]. Consequently, all humanity bears the image of the Church and is called to return to this state. The Church attains its fullness following the incarnation of God, yet it remains incomplete. It bears the responsibility of transforming from the Church of war into the Church of victory, where "God shall be all in all"[379].

What concerns the idea of *Sobornost'* for Berdyaev, here a reader find even more accents on personalistic dimension and, therefore, the possibility of realization of man. As I mentioned above, according to Berdyaev's view man can start realizing himself as a person already during the earthy life by the act of creativity, that is the spiritual step into divine reality. Berdyaev identifies two pathways to this fulfillment through creativity: renunciation of the material world and transformation of the fallen world[380]. Renunciation entails a deliberate withdrawal from the constraints of the earthly realm, seeking refuge in a higher, transcendent spiritual reality. The transformative path, conversely, endeavors to redeem and reconstruct the fallen world itself. While the act of spiritual creativity prepares humanity for the Kingdom of God, its inherent self-focused nature ultimately limits its liberative potential.

Therefore, Berdyaev proposes a third, more encompassing path: the path of Sobornost'. This approach transcends individual self-realization and seeks a transformation of all humanity and the cosmos towards union with the Divine reality. This shared effort, driven by love and

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[376] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[377] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 162.

[378] Sergei Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (London: The Centenary Press, 1935), p. 15.

[379] *Ibid.*

[380] Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, p. 73.

creativity, holds the potential for a more profound and meaningful transformation, encompassing all of creation.

In 'The Problem of Man', Berdyaev posits that true self-realization transcends the individual, occurring only within "a universal communaut" forged through connection and community[381]. This Sobornost', he argues, dissolves the socially constructed individuals, shaped by external norms, and reveals a holistic, universal existence. Importantly, the criterion for this "oecumenicity" is not mere numbers, but a qualitative shift in consciousness, mirrored in the awareness of a person[382]. This shared, universal consciousness becomes the foundation for true self-discovery.

Emphasizing the universal character of the person and his realization in Sobornost', Berdyaev asserts: "Person is likewise not part of the world, of the cosmos; on the contrary, cosmos is part of the person. […] Person is a whole, it cannot be a part"[383]. This perspective sheds light on Berdyaev's affinity for the Kabbalistic concept of Adam Kadmon, the Universal Man, encompassing the entire cosmos and all creatures[384]. While Adam Kadmon represents a complete unity and is itself a Person, Berdyaev integrates the idea of Sobornost' into this perfect unity. The distinction lies in Sobornost', where every individual realizes themselves as a person with creativity and freedom as core characteristics. Furthermore, in Sobornost', man not only finds unity with all beings and the cosmos but also with God[385]. This process actualizes the potential calling of man, leading to the transformation of the human into the god-human. Thus, in Berdyaev's philosophy, the person is considered god-human.

In his considerations of Adam Kadmon, Berdyaev does not subscribe to Kabbalistic philosophy, but rather employs it as a springboard to explore his own nuanced understanding of

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[381] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

[382] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 36.

[383] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

[384] N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

[385] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

unity. Within Sobornost', through the "existential we"[386], man is seen as "unity in multiplicity", revealing their potential as a person[387]. This concept emphasizes the unique calling of each human within the unified whole, expressed through their creative potential. Therefore, interpreting this concept as a unified entity, as in Kabbalistic teaching, would be misleading. On the contrary, for Berdyaev every man in unity with others is a person. He offers this idea in order to emphasize the special destiny of every man within the unity, expressed in creative features[388].

In his reflections on Sobornost', Berdyaev frequently references Khomyakov, an advocate for this concept who views it as a "virtual" universal community[389]. Berdyaev adopts this perspective partly due to his own firsthand experience with a distorted form of Sobornost' that gave rise to ideologies like communism and collectivism[390]. Following Khomyakov, Berdyaev notes that Sobornost' is higher than the church authority, earthly hierarchy, and freedom is its basis[391]. The "Philosopher of freedom" notes the following:

> "Sobornost' can in no way be regarded as implying an external authority, for here too absolute primacy belongs, at each and every moment, to freedom. […] But Sobornost' signifies a quality of life which affirms the reality of freedom by widening the scope of freedom and by revealing its transcendent, universal dimension. The recognition of the absolute priority of freedom does not, therefore, denote, as someone would like to make out, individualistic self-assertion. Freedom of the spirit has in fact nothing in common with individualism: to be free is not to be insulated; it is not to shut oneself up, but, on the contrary, to break through in a creative act to the fullness and universality of existence"[392].

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[386] *Ibid.*

[387] *Ibid.*

[388] *Ibid.*

[389] Stephanie Solywoda, 'Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost'. Khomiakov, Sacrifice, and the Dialogic Roots of Russian Kenosis,' in *Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost'*, ed. A. Mrówczyński-Van Allen, T. Obolevitch, P. Rojek (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2020), p. 58.

[390] Nicolai Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 157.

[391] Solywoda, 'Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost',' 58.

[392] Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, 63.

For Berdyaev, the idea of Sobornost' possesses a universal and unified character, rejecting all forms of individualism, collectivism, and privatization. He emphasizes that the spirit of Sobornost' cannot be captured by codified rules. As the thinker mentions further on, the unity of Sobornost' belongs to the sphere of spirit, therefore, freedom is crucial for it. Thus, it is in such a perfect unity that the realization of human as person occurs.

Berdyaev highlights another important aspect that sheds light on the idea of Sobornost'. The Russian thinker emphasizes this in the context of the Church, making a distinction between the Church as an organization and the "Mystical Body of Christ". The "philosopher from Clamart" observes that the institutional aspect of the Church in our world is marred by objectification and is compelled to uphold its own norms[393]. He understands that during the course of history the Church has taken certain steps, some of which he cannot fully accept, but he supports its divine calling on Earth[394]. If we speak about the metaphysical dimension of the Church, Berdyaev sees it as god-human process[395], and due to spiritual and creative elevation, man is capable of perceiving the mystery beyond the world[396].

The thinker aligns with Khomiakov, affirming that the growth of the Church stems from a living ecclesiological experience[397]. Berdyaev maintains that a person's entry into the "Mystical Body of Christ" requires their transfiguration and unity with others and the entire cosmos. This spiritual unity shifts the focus from individual, separated lives to a universal one[398]. It is crucial to note the interconnectedness of the Church and Sobornost' life, where the Church encompasses Sobornost' and serves as the arena for mankind's realization into the unity of Godmanhood.

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[393] Berdyaev, "The Problem of Man".

[394] Georgiy Kochetkov, 'Heniy Berdyaeva y Tserkov'' [Genius Berdyaev and the Church], Tezisy doklada, prochitannoho na 1-kh "Berdyaevskikh chteniyakh" v Kyeve (28 maya 1991), available online at: https://pravoslavnaya-obshina.ru/1992/no8/article/svjashchennik-georgii-kochetkov-genii-berdjaeva-i-cerkov/ [Accessed 27 March 2023].

[395] Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, p. 145.

[396] Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, p. 203.

[397] Mrówczyński-Van Allen, "Looking for Sobornost': Khomiakov's Ecclesiology as an Alternative to the Schmitt-Peterson Debate", x.

[398] Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, p. 145.

Furthermore, the Church exists both horizontally and vertically on Earth. Its purpose is to guide individuals toward universal community. The true essence of Sobornost' becomes evident when the Kingdom of Heaven arrives, replacing the Kingdom of Caesar[399]. In this context, the universal (Russian: *sobornaya*) community belongs to the Kingdom of God and forms the "Body of Christ".

Apart from that, the "Apostle of freedom", drawing upon the experience of "Church gnoseology", emphasizes that Sobornost' prompts man into the sphere of love, which can be existentially perceived. Following Khomiakov's vision of Sobornost', Berdyaev writes:

> "Love is recognized as the principle of apprehension; it guarantees the apprehension of truth; love is a source and guarantee of religious truth. Corporate experience of love, sobornost, is the criterion of apprehension. Here we have a principle which is opposed to authority; it is also a method of apprehension which is opposed to the Cartesian cogito ergo sum. It is not I think, but we think, that is to say, the corporate experience of love thinks, and it is not thought which proves my existence but will and love"[400].

As seen here, the emphasis is placed on unified knowledge where there are no opposites. This perception is universal and directed towards truth, unlike the particular and individual perception of "I", as demonstrated by the example of Descartes. Such a unified approach is crucial in understanding the concept of a person, where a united, spiritual kinship leads to the formation of a person. Sobornost' embraces a universal and holistic dimension as it encompasses unity not only among people but also with the cosmos and God. This unity bears witness to the transformation of all mankind into Godmanhood, where each man becomes a person.

To summarize, in Christian Orthodoxy, the concept of Sobornost' is dedicated to the ultimate unification of all people with the entire cosmos and their realization in divine reality. In Berdyaev's philosophy, this theme is intertwined with personalistic and ecclesiological ideas. According to Berdyaev, being a person involves a spiritual potency that manifests as well in

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[399] Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, p. 203.
[400] Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, p. 161.

creative acts. However, the creative act is temporal; after moments of creativity, man returns to the fallen world and continues the spiritual struggle for the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the full and ultimate elevation of a person, according to the thinker, is found in Sobornost'.

The foundation of Sobornost' lies in freedom and love, and Berdyaev acknowledges that only in spiritual unity can a human fully realize himself as a person. This spiritual kinship encompasses all individuals, the entire cosmos, and their intimate connection to God. This perspective aligns with Berdyaev's preference for the Kabbalistic idea of Adam Kadmon, a tradition that shares some similar ideas about the nature of creatures at certain moments. Furthermore, Sobornost' has become a vital aspect of the Church's life. It represents the universal (adj. *sobornaya*) Church, gathering all humanity as the "Mystical Body of Christ", leading to the transfiguration of man into God-humanity. In such a spiritual kinship, every man recognizes himself as a god-man, unveiling the mystery of being a person.

3.3.3. The Vision of Godhumanity in the Personalistic Philosophy of Berdyaev

Above, I have already mentioned the importance of the idea of creativity in Berdyaev's philosophy, emphasizing the ability of man to become closer to God through this act. Finally, I consider it relevant to introduce the topics of god-humanity and deification, which are directly associated with both the theme of creativity and personhood, revealing the culminating moment in the realization of a person.

The concept of god-humanity can be regarded as central in Eastern Christianity and is well-developed by Slavonic religious philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Through the idea of god-humanity, Christian intellectuals not only express the calling of man but also emphasize what is profoundly essential in humanity.

As I have already acknowledged, in Berdyaev's vision, a person is an ideal, and achieving this ideal presupposes, in a sense, the return of man to God but also the finding of man by God — a reciprocal action that anticipates the emergence of a new man. This new man is a god-man, simultaneously a deified being. Deification, according to Berdyaev, is neither a dual nor a unilateral process. It involves the transformation of man into god-man through cooperation with God, and discussing such a relationship in singular terms is rather challenging. What is fundamental in Berdyaevian philosophy is that the process of deification occurs only when all of humanity transforms into a god-humanity, where everyone is a god-man and, consequently, a person[401]. This vision is what distinguishes Berdyaev's approach from that of Guénon, as it upholds the concept of a person as an archetype.

Returning to Berdyaev's explanation, he asserts that the emergence of god-humanity is a universal calling and the destiny of all humankind. On the path of spiritual growth, man follows Christ. Berdyaev refers to Christ, the Son of God, as the "Absolute Man", adding that: "The way of Christ is the true birth of man"[402]. Christ is also the example of the purpose of man: "God-humanity of Christ brings truth about Godmanhood and human person in itself"[403]. Thus, Christ serves as the true image of God, and man must strive to become like Christ-Man.

In Arjakovsky's interpretation, Berdyaev distinguishes between two categories of persons: divine and human. Arjakovsky explains: "The human Person and the divine Person merge in eternity in the figure of the Heavenly Man and in time with Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, in whom the synthesis between human freedom and divine freedom is accomplished"[404]. It is crucial to understand that Arjakovsky employs the term "person" as a universal category that establishes a connection between God and man, realized through and in Christ. If God incarnates, the human task is to respond symmetrically — becoming like God, and thus undergoing

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[401] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

[402] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 127.

[403] Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man'.

[404] Arjakovsky, *The Way*, p. 301.

deification. The process of deification involves the revelation of the divine aspect within oneself, bestowed as a distinctive, qualitative feature not related to the world but to God, signifying a person. The human person, according to Berdyaev, represents "the disclosure within him of the image of God". Furthermore, he adds that this is "the product of a creative act, of free creative action"[405]. The existence of the personal, divine aspect in humans does not negate human existence but serves as proof of the divine seed, aiding in the realization of Godmanhood.

Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind that during earthly life, a human can recognize the connection between God and himself that leads to knowing himself as a person. However, the complete realization of man as a person is only possible with whole humanity, signifying the advent of the Kingdom of God[406]. This realization presupposes a transformation into god-humanity, synonymous with the deification of man. Consequently, the emergence of a person implies being a god-man, a prospect that Berdyaev reserves for the future, considering it as the destiny of humanity. Thus, his personalism is inherently eschatological, simultaneously reflecting the distinctive nature of Berdyaev's thought.

Therefore, in Berdyaev's philosophy, the concept of a person and human deification are directly related. To be a person and the realization of god-humanity pertain to the future quality of human life — it is about man being deified with all, living with God, and in God. During earthly life, through the creative act, a human can draw closer to his Creator. One could say that creativity is the process of human personification, the beginning of deification, leading humanity toward the future Kingdom of God and the final transfiguration into god-humanity. Then, it can be boldly stated that Berdyaev's personalism is directed towards the future, that is, it is eschatological, or in modern terms, it can be called futuristic.

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[405] Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, p. 76.
[406] Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, p. 203.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The current research on the topic "A Critical Assessment of the Concept of a Person in the Thought of Nikolai Berdyaev and René Guénon" has revealed the multifaceted nature of the subject of the concept of a person and its interpretations. The analysis of this research has shown various unresolved issues that warrant further exploration and investigation. The significance of this study is underscored by the distinct and divergent approaches taken by Berdyaev and Guénon in addressing the question of personalism, as well as the depth of their analysis and comparison. This comparative exploration of personalistic perspectives marks a groundbreaking examination in the field, shedding light on the unique insights and perspectives offered by these two influential thinkers.

My dissertation delves into the intellectual biographies of Berdyaev and Guénon, providing a comprehensive overview of the themes and ideas they explored in their works, as well as the external factors and influences that contributed to shaping their respective worldviews. A noteworthy discovery made during the course of my research was the revelation that both Berdyaev and Guénon resided in Paris concurrently between the years 1924 and 1930. This suggests the possibility of intellectual exchanges that may have occurred during this shared period of residency or that they were at least familiar with each other's work, although there is no direct evidence of their acquaintance. This temporal overlap not only enriches our understanding of their individual contexts but also raises intriguing questions about the intellectual exchanges that may have taken place during this shared period of residency.

However, it is worth noting that both Berdyaev and Guénon were acquainted with the famous French intellectual, Jacques Maritain, during this period. Maritain could have potentially facilitated their indirect acquaintance. However, their face-to-face meeting remains an open aspect for researchers interested in exploring the historical encounters of notable figures.

In my study on the idea of a person and its significance throughout history, I delved into the contributions of the Church Fathers to this concept. Through the analysis, it became apparent that the term 'person' acquired a central role within Christian dogma as it became intertwined with the Christian context. By examining the familiarity of the authors with Christian patristic thought, I was able to trace the roots of personalistic concepts, which have had a lasting impact even into the 20th century.

I examined Berdyaev and Guenon's familiarity with the perspectives of the Church Fathers, including the personalistic approach, and found interesting points. Berdyaev criticized the Fathers for what he perceived as a lack of a definitive interpretation on personalistic topics, while Guénon pointed out the misinterpretations of the Fathers' teachings by their contemporaries. As a representative of the Christian tradition, Berdyaev frequently referenced the works of the Church

Fathers in his own writings, highlighting the gaps in their understanding of the concept of a person which he sought to address.

However, the extent of Guénon's exploration of this topic in his own works remains largely unexamined. This highlights the intricate nature of the scholarly discourse surrounding the concept of a person and its theological implications, showcasing the ongoing dialogue and exploration that continues to shape our understanding of this fundamental concept.

Furthermore, I came across intriguing information about the intellectual's evaluation of the Greek Fathers, which demonstrates his familiarity with the patristic tradition. In this section, Guénon, a researcher of world religions and a representative of another religion, suggests that the reason for the misunderstanding of the Fathers is due to their access to a specific source. He believes that contemporary researchers do not fully understand them because they have lost access to this source, particularly since the beginning of the age of Enlightenment. According to Guénon, this loss of access to the spiritual core of people has been acknowledged during this period. Furthermore, this confirms Guénon's familiarity with the contemporaries' complete misunderstanding of the patristic tradition, which they themselves personally verify.

I have examined the philosophical and religious interpretations of Berdyaev and Guénon regarding the potential for humans to attain a higher status of being. Both thinkers have developed unique concepts of what it means to become a person and the characteristics of such a state. A comparison of the personalistic approaches of Berdyaev and Guénon reveals that they share certain commonalities. Firstly, they both believe that every human possesses the capacity for transformation. Secondly, they assert that this transformative process is the inherent purpose of human existence. Thirdly, both perspectives emphasize the spiritual foundation of this metamorphosis. Lastly, they believe that spiritual growth is a means of bringing humanity closer to the Creator and signifies a transfiguration of the visible reality.

It is crucial to highlight the contrasting interpretations of personalistic concepts put forth by Guénon and Berdyaev. Guénon emphasizes that spiritual development and growth lead to the

transfiguration of man, known as initiation, which does not necessarily equate to becoming a person. Initiation means that a human can elevate himself to the level of 'true man' or 'Universal Man', which approaches the Principle and too stays closer to an archetype. Both levels are archetypes that indicate the nomination of Person. Hence, initiation into Person — 'true man' or 'Universal Man' — is possible, but becoming Person that is a matrix is unreasonable. In this particular case, Guénon employs the term 'Person' without an article, which holds significant meaning.

In contrast, in Berdyaev's philosophy, becoming a person means achieving authentic existence and it is the vocation of every human being. However, Berdyaev outlines certain requirements that must be met in order to reach this state of existence. Berdyaev believed that man can partially achieve becoming a person during their earthy life, especially through creative acts as certain spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, becoming a person is only possible in connection with all of humanity, not individually. In Berdyaev's vision, the process of becoming a person encompasses the deification of humanity as a whole, revealing the interconnectedness and shared destiny of all people in their quest for spiritual fulfillment.

It is worth noting the transfiguration of humanity. Guénon suggests that transfiguration has occurred at various times throughout human history and is achievable for anyone who follows the path of initiation. Additionally, Guénon presents another type of transfiguration, namely universal, which is connected with the cyclicity of time. During the golden era, one of the four universal periods, everything approaches and communicates closely with the Creator. This period can also be compared with Sobornost' in Christianity, though there is a difference between these two concepts. The golden era repeats itself endlessly due to the cyclical nature of time, whereas Sobornost' is the omega towards which all creation comes and is accomplished only once at the end of time.

Accordingly, Berdyaev's personalism is inclusive, futuristic, and universal, while Guénon's is exclusive and historical, though in some cases also universal. A peculiarity of

Guénon's personalism is that it suggests a human does not become a person but rather approaches an archetype, which is Person. Berdyaev's personalism, on the other hand, proposes a process of human transfiguration into a person, albeit presently partial and based on eschatology, anticipating the upcoming arrival of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, this is why Berdyaev's personalism can be considered futuristic[407].

During the research process, I discovered some unexpected insights. While exploring initiation in different traditions, Guénon overlooks the similarity of Christianity with his description of initiation. This similarity is a new finding in this comparative study.

I analyzed Guénon's approach to the initiation of man and its potential acceptance within the Christian tradition. I specifically focused on the concept of 'true man', as the initiation into 'Universal Man' does not allow for analysis since it presupposes a complete loss of connection with the world. According to Guénon's interpretation of initiation, a man who attains the level of 'true man' can exist in this world and beyond it simultaneously. Initiation involves spiritual practices that lead to the approach of the Absolute and, consequently, the disappearance from this world while maintaining a connection with it.

After analyzing this approach, I have concluded that it does not contradict the Christian tradition. Christian saints are a perfect example of how a human can exist beyond this world while being close to God and simultaneously remaining connected to our visible world. Evidence for such a connection is found in the practice of people turning to saints who have physically left our world but are still believed to be present in this world, listening to people's pleas and capable of influencing events in the world. In addition to saints, certain prophets, the Virgin Mary, and even Christ himself fall under the category of 'true man'.

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[407] Categorizing eschatology as futuristic can serve as a framework for analyzing the works of researchers who integrate eschatological concepts into their philosophy. It is particularly intriguing, in my opinion, that even the Bible, when expressed in modern language, can, to a certain extent, be considered part of the futuristic genre.

Hence, the comparative analysis carried out in this study has shed light on the personalistic concepts of Berdyaev and Guénon, revealing different approaches to this topic. Using the personalistic approaches of both thinkers, I analyzed the similarities and differences between the personalistic approaches of both thinkers. Through this research, I have achieved – I hope – the goal of the thesis. Furthermore, the work has shown that the personalistic themes are extensive. Although these themes were mainly explored within the realm of European philosophical thought, as evidenced by the existence of personalistic schools, personalistic approaches beyond Christian thought also exist and can be examined both independently and in comparison with Christian authors working in the field of personalism. Thus, Christian and non-Christian personalism have unique aspects that require further exploration.

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Oświadczenie

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