

The House of Berdyaev - A Place of Convergence between Cultures, Religious Practices and Philosophical Ideas

The name of Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev has attracted the attention of many thinkers, philosophers, religious scholars, and historians. While many papers have been written about Nikolai Alexandrovich's philosophical treatises, we don't have many resources on how and where they were created. So, today we will talk about the philosopher's home in Clamart called "Berdyaev's House". Here we find the philosopher's office preserved with his personal belongings, books and icons in tact. All this has acquired a special value and significance over the years.

At the age of 50, Nikolai Alexandrovich came to Clamart and lived out his last years. With a lifetime of enquiry and creative output behind him, Nikolai came to Clamart as an already formed philosopher, writer and publicist. He did not consider his eviction from the Soviet Union and arrival in France as years of exile, but as a time of revelation, acquaintance with a new culture and new people. He was driven by a constant, feverish craving for creative writing, and new discoveries. He couldn't live a day without writing a few lines. In Self-knowledge, he explains this craving for writing in this way: "I had an irresistible need to fulfill my vocation in the world, to write, to leave an indelible mark of my thought in the world. If I didn't constantly expressed myself on paper, then I probably would have burst my blood vessels."¹. That is to say, the philosopher lived out his vocation and wrote prolifically.

Others noticed it too. Nikolai Alexandrovich was almost constantly on a creative upswing. His wife, Lydia Yudifovna, testified to this state, recounting it in her diary. For example, on June 10, 1936, she wrote down the words of Nikolai Alexandrovich: "I broke away from the table. I'm walking down the street with so many thoughts in my head that I'm afraid I'll lose it while I'm writing." She goes on to explain: "He's been writing a book about the spirit all this time. When I persuade him to rest, go for a walk, he always says the same thing: "Don't you understand that for me the best rest, the best calm is to sit at the table and write"»². Berdyaev's sister-in-law, Evgenia Yudifovna, also spoke about this unusually high productivity: "He could write for several hours in a row without even drinking a cup of tea. But before sitting down at the table and starting some work, he would walk around the apartment and think for a long time. Otherwise, he would go to the cupboard, take the first book he finds and start reading it. And suddenly joyfully exclaim: "Gosh, how well the rascal writes! And I thought so once, but that was then. Who is it? Haha, that's my writing. I had forgotten." Everyone who knew Berdyaev intimately was surprised by his ability to think and write several books or articles at the same time»³.

Before settling in the house on 83 rue du Moulin de Pierre, Nikolai Alexandrovich spent a short time living at: 2 rue Martial Grandchamp, 92140, Clamart, and from 1928: 14 rue de Saint-Cloud, Clamart.

It was only in 1937 that the Berdyaev family acquired and settled in a house that became associated with the name of the philosopher. Berdyaev got the house through inheritance. A family friend, Florence West, who, anticipating her death, bequeathed the property to Nikolai Alexandrovich. Lydia Berdyaeva describes this moment as follows: "She (Florence) distributed

¹ <https://www.litres.ru/book/nikolay-berdyaev/samopoznanie-177249/chitat-onlayn/page-3/>

² Лидия Бердяева. Профессия: жена философа. Москва, 2002. Стр. 151.

³ Окулов Василий Николаевич. Архив Бердяева. <https://biography.wikireading.ru/126154>

the large fortune coming from her husband among her relatives and friends for charitable purposes. For us, this will was truly a way out of a critical situation. In June last year, we had to leave the apartment where we had lived for 10 years, as we could no longer afford it due to the rise in the cost of living. And it was at this time that we got this house»⁴.

And so, the way of life of the Russian philosopher continued here. He continued to write new articles, books, to prepare for conferences, organize meetings and literary evenings. All this came together naturally in this new space, which was ideally suited for philosophizing and receiving guests. Lydia Berdyaeva described their new home as follows: "The house is very cozy, with a small garden, large chestnuts. I like it because it resembles an old Russian manor»⁵.

What was written in Clamart? Who visited Berdyaev? To whom does he owe the living arrangements? Has Nikolai Alexandrovich's will and testament been preserved? These and other questions are often asked by visitors and guests of the Berdyaev House.

About everything in order.

Here, there are some of the books that Nikolai Alexandrovich wrote and published in Clamart: "The New Middle Ages" (1924), "On the appointment of man. The Experience of paradoxical ethics" (1931), "On slavery and human freedom. The Experience of Personalistic Philosophy" (1939), "The Russian Idea" (1946), "The experience of eschatological metaphysics. Creativity and Objectification" (1947). The books "Self-knowledge" were published posthumously. "The Experience of philosophical Autobiography" (1949), "The Kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar" (1951), which were also written in Clamart. According to Eugenia Rapp, the last book, The Kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar, was completed two weeks before his death. The philosopher already had a plan to write a new book, but he was not destined to fulfil this goal.

To establish a creative atmosphere, the philosopher was helped in everyday life by his companions: his wife Lydia, his sister-in-law Eugenia and his mother-in-law, Irina. Writer, Teresa Obolevich, in comparing the families of Jacques Maritan and Nikolai Berdyaev noticed an interesting similarity in the organization of the philosophers' lives: "In both families, the house was run by a sister-in-law (Vera Umantseva (1886-1960), a Roman Catholic in the case of the Mariten family, and Eugenia Rapp (1875-1960), who was an Eastern Orthodox like Nikolai Berdyaev). Both the Russian and the French thinker had Martha as their stewardess, and Maria as their wife»⁶. (Reference to Luke 10:38-42). In recent years, due to the illnesses of his mother-in-law and his wife, Nikolai Berdyaev, hired a housekeeper. Lydia was sympathetic towards her; even mentionin her in her diary.

Nikolai Aleksadrovich's will and testament has been preserved: "Here is my will: I, the undersigned Nikolai Berdyaev, a writer and professor living at 83, Rue Moulin de Pierre, Clamart, declare that I bequeath to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Eugenie Toucheff, widow Rapp, also living in Clamart, all movable and immovable property, tangible and intangible, copyrights to

⁴ Лидия Бердяева. Цит. Соч. Стр. 172.

⁵ Там же.

⁶ Тереза Оболевич, Бернар Маршадье. Великая дружба: переписка Жака и Раисы Маритен с Н. А. Бердяевым. Зелена Гура, 2022. Стр. 9.

it, including those that will remain at death, for which I appoint her as my universal heir. Made and written by my hand in Clamart on June 20, 1946 N. Berdyaev»⁷.

After the philosopher's death, his sister-in-law Eugenia Rapp took care of preserving the house and its heritage. All the manuscripts of her brother-in-law, which fit into 17 boxes, Evgenia initially planned to temporarily transfer to the library of Cambridge University, but then transferred them to the National Library of France for safekeeping. In 1959/1960 the Archive of Berdyaev was sent to the State Archive of Literature and Art of the USSR, where it has remained to this day. All the correspondence concerning the above arrangements has thankfully been preserved. These letters have now been used for the first time in this article and presentation. We learn that on June 29 1949, an agreement was signed with the YMCA PRESS publishing house, giving the publisher the exclusive right to publish all Berdyaev's works, both the Russian texts and translations into all foreign languages. This exclusive right, was granted until the deadline set by French law in accordance with the International Copyright Convention. However, the YMCA PRESS did not take Berdyaev's manuscripts for safekeeping.

On May 18, 1951, a message came from Cambridge librarian H. R. Kreswick that the University agreed to host the manuscripts, "before they are sent to Russia"⁸. While no letters from Cambridge University have been located from this period, perhaps they did not survive, we do however find correspondence from the National Library of France, dated 1953, confirming that it would be very pleased to accept the philosopher's manuscripts for 30 years. Accordingly, the owners would have the right to view the manuscripts or take them away at any time, but after the expiration of the period they would become the property of the Library⁹. On December 6, 1954, Nikolai Berdyaev's manuscripts were transferred to the National Library of France. Their receipt was confirmed and signed-off by the same Mr. Porchier¹⁰.

⁷ Архив Дома Бердяева. Завещание. «Testament de M. Berdiaeff. Ceci est mon testament: Je soussigné Nicolas Berdiaeff, homme de lettres et professeur, demeurant à Clamart 83, rue du Moulin de Pierre, déclare léguer à ma belle sœur Mme Eugénie Toucheff, veuve Rapp, demeurant aussi à Clamart, tous les biens meubles et immeubles, corporels et incorporels, droits d'auteur y compris que je délaisserai en mourant, à l'effet de quoi je l'institue donc ma légataire universelle. Fait et écrit entièrement de ma main à Clamart, le 20 juin 1946. N. Berdiaeff ».

⁸ « Dear Madame Rapp,

Dr. Raven of Christ's College, Cambridge, has asked me whether we would store in the University Library documents of your late brother-in-law, Nicolas Berdyaev.

I should be glad to do this for you and would propose that the papers should be stored in the Library in boxes or parcels marked « The property of the personal representatives of Nicolas Berdyaev which may eventually be transferred to Russia, temporarily deposited in the Library ».

If this is satisfactory to you, I will be glad to hear from you and then know when we may expect to receive the papers.

Your very truly, H. R. Creswick, librarian. 18 May 1951. »

⁹ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Национальной Библиотеки Франции гже Рапп.

« Madame,

La Bibliothèque Nationale prendra très volontiers le dépôt des archives de Nicolas Berdiaeff. Conformément au contrat-type qui a été établi pour les dépôts de ce genre, ces papiers seront déposés chez nous pour une période de 30 ans, avec faculté pour la Bibliothèque d'en prendre copie : Durant ces trente ans le déposant ou ses ayant droit auront toute la liberté pour en faire ce qu'ils jugeront bon. Mais, passé ce délai, les papiers resteront en toute propriété à la Bibliothèque Nationale.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, l'hommage de mes sentiments très respectueux, J. Porcher 26 novembre 1953».

¹⁰ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Национальной Библиотеки Франции гже Рапп.

« Je soussigné, Conservateur du Cabinet des Manuscrits, déclare avoir reçu de Madame Eugénie Rapp, Clamart, 17 (dix-sept) paquets scellés contenant les manuscrits de Nicolas Berdiaev :

Ces paquets sont déposés à la Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Manuscrits, pour une période de 50 ans.

Durant ce délai, Mme Rapp et ses ayant droits : Mlle Romana Klarchkine, M. Michel Enden et Féodor Pianoff et leurs ayant droits pourront les retirer définitivement, quand bon leur semblera : La période de 50 ans écoulée, ils

After 4 years, Nikolai Alexandrovich's manuscripts, sparked interest from the Soviet Union. On May 6, 1958, a letter arrived in which the director of the Pushkin House in Leningrad, A.S. Bushmin, assured the Berdyaev estate, that "the archive, if it enters the Pushkin House, would not only be safe from destruction, but that it would be accepted with deep gratitude, having taken its rightful place"¹¹. On July 22, 1958, another letter was sent to Evgenia Rapp from the Soviet Union, in which it was reported that the Pushkin House had petitioned "the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences for the allocation of funds for the transfer of the Archive to the USSR." On August 29 of the same year, the Director of the Pushkin House informed Berdyaev's sister-in-law that he had asked the Soviet Embassy in Paris to facilitate the transfer of the archive to the Soviet Union. "Thank you for taking great care of N.A. Berdyaev's archive. You can be sure that in the Pushkin House it will be properly appreciated and preserved for history."¹².

pourrons en reprendre possession. La Bibliothèque Nationale étant autorisée à en faire une copie – sinon les papiers deviendront la propriété de la Bibliothèque Nationale ipso facto et sans condition. Signé J. Pocher. 6.12.1954 ».

¹¹ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Пушкинского Дома в Ленинграде гже Рапп.

« Многоуважаемая Евгения Юдифьевна,

из письма, присланного проф. М.П. Алексееву Наталье Викторовне Резниковой, дирекции Пушкинского Дома стало известно, что в Вашем ведении находится архив покойного Николая Александровича Бердяева и что он временно помещен Вами в Парижскую Национальную Библиотеку и что Вы озабочены его дальнейшей судьбой.

Архив Н.А. Бердяева представляет большой интерес для истории русской общественной мысли первой десятилетия нашего века. Институт русской литературы (Пушкинский Дом) собирает в своем Рукописном отделе всевозможные материалы, касающиеся не только литературы и общественной мысли прошлого времени (с особенностью по Пушкину и Пушкинской эпохи), но и бумаги наших современников, независимо от их воззрений. Так, здесь находятся отдельные части архивов Д.С. Мережковского, Н.М. Минского, З.А. Венгеровой, А.М. Ремизова, Р.В. Иванова-Разумника и многих других. Все эти материалы бережно хранятся, описываются и исследуются специалистами. Рукописный отдел Пушкинского Дома – архивохранилище всеобщего значения, и составляет часть одного из центральных литературоведческих институтов, состоящих в ведении Академии Наук СССР.

Из этого Вы видите, что Пушкинский Дом очень заинтересован в том, чтобы архив Н.А. Бердяева, вернувшись в Россию, поступил в него. Мы можем Вас заверить, что архиву в случае поступления в Пушкинский Дом, не только не грозит опасность распыления или уничтожения, но что он будет принят туда с глубокой признательностью и займет там подобающее ему место.

Мы были бы рады узнать от Вас, каким образом и на каких условиях Вы могли бы предложить Институту русской литературы (Пушкинскому Дому)» АН СССР архив Н.А. Бердяева. В конце текущего года в Париж должны поехать некоторые наши ученые, которые смогут вступить с Вами в личные переговоры, но предварительно в ожидании этой возможности, мы были бы очень признательны Вам, если бы Вы сообщили, считаете ли Вы возможной такую передачу, а также – хотя бы в самой краткой и общей форме – какие материалы включает в себе архив.

Будем ожидать Вашего ответа на это письмо в адрес Института – Ленинград, Набережная Макарова, д. 4. Институт Русской Литературы (Пушкинский Дом) АН СССР. С уважением к Вам А.С. Бушмин, директор Института. 6 мая 1958».

¹² Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Пушкинского Дома в Ленинграде гже Рапп.

« Глубокоуважаемая госпожа Рапп !

В дополнение к письму к Вам Института русской литературы (Пушкинский Дом) АН СССР от 22 июля с.г., в котором сообщалось о нашем ходатайстве в Президиум Академии Наук о выделении средств для пересылки архива Н.А. Бердяева, сообщаем, что в настоящее время мы обратились с аналогичной просьбой в Советское посольство в Париже, которое и свяжется с Вами в ближайшие дни.

Благодарим Вас за большую заботу об архиве Н.А. Бердяева. Можете не сомневаться, что в Пушкинском Доме он будет должным образом оценен и сохранен для истории.

С уважением, академик М.П. Алексеев, замдиректора Института, ученый Секретарь В.П. Вильчинский. 29.08.1958. номер: 338-405.

On February 28, 1959, confirmation was received from the director of the YMCA PRESS, P. Anderson, that there were no "formal obstacles" to the archive being transferred to the Pushkin House in Leningrad¹³.

The following year, on May 31, 1960, a few months before her death, Evgenia Yudifovna received a letter from the Pushkin House informing her that the archive of Nikolai Berdyaev had not been placed in the Pushkin House, but in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow¹⁴. Thus, we see that the archive of Nikolai Alexandrovich, after many and long negotiations, still found a worthy place. There are 1007 storage units in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Russian: Государственный архив литературы и искусства (РГАЛИ), or RGALI) in the collection n° 1496¹⁵. The House of the Russian Diaspora in Moscow also has a separate Berdyaev foundation: collection n° 60, Inventory 1. It contains 126 units of books; 1902-2002¹⁶. There is also a small archive in the Berdyaev House in Clamart consisting of 50 Cases and folders in total. In addition to the archive folders, there is also a library with more than 1,500 books, brochures, and magazines.

The house in which the philosopher lived and which, according to his will, also belonged to Eugenia Rapp was re-registered with the Orthodox religious association specifically with the Church of the Three Saints Doctors in Paris, of which Eugenia Judifovna was a member. On January 16, 1955, Eugenia Judifovna and Archbishop Nikolai Yeremin, the rector of the church, signed the "Réalisation de Promesse de vente" (transl.: Fulfillment of the promise of sale), according to which, after the death of the owner, the house would become the property of the

¹³ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Пушкинского Дома в Ленинграде гже Рапп.

« Госпоже Е.Ю. Рапп, Кламар.

Дорогая Евгения Юдифовна,

Вчера мы с Михаилом Николаевичем Энден еще раз внимательно рассмотрели вопрос об архиве Николая Александровича и пришли к заключению, что нет формальных препятствий к тому, чтобы этот архив был Вами передан в Институт Русской Культуры (Пушкинский Дом) в Ленинграде.

Будем надеяться, что в недалеком будущем труды Николая Александровича будут оценены на его родине.

Очень был рад повидать Вас и от души желаю Вам сил и здоровья. Сердечно переданный Вам П. Андерсон. 28 февраля 1959».

¹⁴ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо от Пушкинского Дома в Ленинграде гже Рапп.

Глубокоуважаемая Евгения Юдифовна,

Институт русской Литературы (Пушкинский Дом) АН СССР с глубоким удовлетворением и благодарностью Вам сообщает, что архив Н.А. Бердяева, переданный Вами в Советское посольство в Париже для пересылки в СССР в настоящее время получен. Рассмотрев имеющиеся в архиве материалы, главное архивное управление при Совете Министров СССР установило, что местом их постоянного хранения и научной обработки должен быть не Пушкинский Дом, а Центральный Государственный архив литературы и искусства в Москве, куда архив Н.А. Бердяева и передан.

Рузумеется, что обязательства, которые взял на себя наш Институт во время переговоров с Вами об условиях публикации архива Н.А. Бердяева, будут соблюдены Главным архивным управлением. С уважением Директор Института, доктор филологических наук А.С. Бушмин, ученый секретарь, кандидат филологических наук В.П. Вильсинский. 31.05.1960. »

¹⁵

<https://rgali.ru/fund/search?fundNumber=&opisNumber=&literalOpis=&storageUnitNumber=&literalDeal=&fondName=%D0%91%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B4%D1%8F%D0%B5%D0%B2+%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B9+%D0%90%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%87&personaName=%D0%91%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B4%D1%8F%D0%B5%D0%B2+%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B9+%D0%90%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%87&yearDocumentFrom=&yearDocumentTo=&simpleSearch=true&personId=&fondType=1>

¹⁶ <https://www.domrz.ru/collection/guide/fond-60-berdyaev-nikolay-aleksandrovich-1874-1948-filosof/>

church¹⁷. There are some noteworthy terms in the document: "To preserve intact in its current state, the study of Mr. Nikolai Berdyaev and to provide access to this office to those who study his life and work. To, as far as possible, allow Russian and French writers who are interested in the work of Nicolas Berdiaeff to live in the building as far as possible and do not have the means to afford housing»¹⁸. This prescription, remains to this day, encouraging researchers, students and those who honor Berdyaev to stay in the House, work in the philosopher's office and study the remaining books.

The poet and publicist, Kirill Dmitrievich Pomerantsev (1906-1991), in his article "Through death. Evgenia Judifovna Rapp" recounts his visit at the house and his final interaction with Mrs. Rapp: "Saying goodbye to Evgenia Judifovna, I, as usual, said: "So, until next Friday." — no. I won't be here anymore. I'm leaving. I've put the entire N.A. archive in order. Everything he bequeathed to do, I did. I'm not needed here anymore. (I quote these words almost verbatim, they are so clearly reflected in my memory»¹⁹. This brief sketch from Ms. Rapp's life shows how dear her brother-in-law was dear to her. On November 5, 1960, Evgenia Yudifovna died. She was buried in the same grave with her family at the cemetery in Clamart.

The library

The library of the Berdyaev house consists mostly of books and magazines published in the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the books were purchased by the philosopher himself or presented to him by authors or admirers and they are mostly philosophical and religious in content. Even a cursory acquaintance with the library reveals Berdyaev's special inclination of analyzing and highlighting his favorite expressions and quotations. The value of the library is that its owner has personally studied the books that comprise it. Now, Berdyaev's admirers can clearly trace the sources of the where the philosopher's inspiration. Herewith, follows some examples:

The library has books by various authors who were Berdyaev's contemporaries, both friends and colleagues. Here are some examples of books that were personally dedicated and autographed by their authors: "A Nicolas Berdiaeff, à Madame (de) Nicolas Berdiaeff tres affectueusement leur ami Jacques Maritain" (Transl.: "To Nikolai Berdyaev and Mrs. Berdyaeva with love, friend Jacques Maritain")²⁰, «Pour Nicolas Alexandrovitch avec la

¹⁷ Архив Дома Бердяева. «Réalisation de Promesse de vente». «Il est expressément stipulé que jusqu'au jour de son décès Madame Trouscheff conservera l'usage d'une chambre à coucher, de la salle à manger, du cabinet de travail de feu Monsieur Berdiaeff, de la cuisine et du jardin attenant à l'immeuble, et que Madame Sophie Berdiaeff occupera également jusqu'au jour de son décès, une autre chambre à coucher avec la jouissance en commun avec Madame Trouscheff de la salle à manger, du cabinet de feu Monsieur Berdiaeff, de la cuisine et du jardin. De cette façon l'entrée en jouissance totale ne se fera qu'au jour du décès de la survivante des deux Madame E. Trouscheff et Madame Berdiaeff, les parties voulant que cette clause vaille stipulation au profit d'autrui en ce qui concerne Madame Sophie Berdiaeff» (Перев.: «В нем (документе) прямо оговаривается, что до дня своей смерти мадам Трушефф сохранит за собой право пользования спальней, столовой, рабочим кабинетом покойного г-на Бердяева, кухней и прилегающим к зданию садом, а также что мадам София Бердяев также будет занимать до дня своей смерти другую спальню с общим использованием с мадам Трушефф столовой, кабинетом покойного господина Бердяева, кухней и садом. Таким образом, вступление в полное пользование произойдет только в день смерти оставшихся в живых этих двух дам Э. Трушефф и С. Бердяев. Стороны, желают, чтобы этот пункт был принят в интересах другого, в данном случае касающиеся мадам Софии Бердяев»).

¹⁸ Архив Дома Бердяева. «Réalisation de Promesse de vente». «De conserver intact dans l'état où il se trouve le cabinet de travail de Monsieur Nicolas Berdiaeff et de permettre l'accès à ce cabinet à ceux qui étudient la vie ou l'œuvre de Nicolas Berdiaeff. De laisser habiter dans l'immeuble dans la mesure du possible des écrivains russe et français s'intéressant à l'œuvre de Nicolas Berdiaeff et n'ayant pas les moyens de se procurer un logement ».

¹⁹ http://www.radashkevich.info/KD-Pomerancev/KD-Pomerancev_138.html

²⁰ Jacques Maritain. Distinguer pour unir ou les degrés du savoir. Paris, 1932.

profonde amitié de Jacques Pavlovitch» (Transl.: "For Nikolai Alexandrovich with deep friendship from Yakov Pavlovich») ²¹, «Pour Nicolas Alexandrovitch avec la fidèle affection de son ami Jacques Pavlovitch, Paris, 5 juillet 1935» ("To Nikolai Alexandrovich with faithful love from his friend Yakov Pavlovich, Paris, July 5, 1935») ²².

Herewith a few more examples: for instance, H. M. Fere in the book "The Revelation of St. John. Christian vision of History" wrote: "A M. Nicolas Berdiaeff en souvenir de nos rencontres chez notre amis M. Maré en en respectueux témoignage d'une communion chrétienne plus profond que toutes les divisions. Auteur Féret. 8.09.1943». (Transl.: "To Mr. Nikolai Berdyaev in memory of our meetings at the house of our friend Mr. Mare as a sign of respect, testifying to Christian communion deeper than any separation. The author is Fere.") ²³. Priest Glasberg wrote: "A Monsieur N. Berdiaeff en hommage de refendu, amitié, abbé Glasberg" (Transl.: "To Mr. Berdyaev with respect to the sufferer, amicably, Priest Glasberg») ²⁴, «A Nicolas Berdiaeff. Hommage de l'auteur André Deboscq» "To Nicolas Berdiaeff. Tribute from the author André Deboscq») ²⁵, Claude Bourdet Pasi wrote: "A Monsieur Berdiaeff de la part de Claude Bourdet Pozzi " Peau d'âme " qui essaie d'éclaircir certaines paradoxes " (Transl. : "To Mr. Berdyaev from Claude Burdette Pazi "The Veil (skin) of the soul" trying to illuminate some paradoxes (illogicality, incomprehensibility») ²⁶ and another dedications.

Naturally, all these books were collected gradually from day to day and now constitute the treasury of the philosopher's past life.

Berdyaev's admirers during his lifetime and after his death

Not only Christians, but also persons of other religions, agnostics and atheists often visited Nikolai Alexandrovich's house. Lidia Berdyaeva describes meetings with Archpriest Sergiy Bulkov, Archimandrites Cyprian Kern and Stefan Svetozarsky, Hieromonk Kassian Bezobrazov, the Romat Catholic priests Augustine Yakobusik and Vladimir Abrikosov, as well as other Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests and theologians (Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel, Lesin, Shestov, etc.). Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov may have met with the philosopher also. On March 23, on the 10th anniversary of the philosopher's death, he sent a letter to Eugenia Rapp: "With all my heart I am with you on this day of memory of the unforgettable and dear Nikolai Alexandrovich. In our corner, we constantly remember him. With gratitude and in the hope that he inherited paradise – the Kingdom of the Lord's freedom and eternal truth, to which he attracted people and does not cease to attract them with his brilliant word» ²⁷. Hieromonk Theodosius (Aksenov) in his article "The concept of "creativity" in the religious philosophy of N.A. Berdyaev and the theology of Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov): comparative analysis» ²⁸, points out the intertwining of ideas in both thinkers, as well as similarities and differences.

So, we observe that while living in Clamart, a thriving circle of theological and philosophical contacts sprang up around Berdyaev. Ideas, proposals, and issues were discussed at the meetings, which were then implemented. The development of the ecumenical movement is largely due to Berdyaev's evenings and meetings, the "Orthodox Cause" of the mother of the

²¹ Jacques Maritain. *Humanisme intégral*. Paris, 1936.

²² Jacques Maritain. *Frontières de la poésie et autres essais*. Paris, 1935.

²³ H.-M. Féret. *L'apocalypse de saint Jean. Vision chrétienne de l'histoire*. Paris, 1943.

²⁴ L'abbé A. Glasberg. *A la recherche d'une patrie. La France devant l'immigration*. Paris, 1946.

²⁵ André Duboscq. *Unité de l'Asie*. Paris, 1936.

²⁶ Catherine Pozzi (C.K.) *Peau d'âme*. Paris, 1935.

²⁷ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо архимандрита Софрония (Сахарова) Евгении Рапп.

²⁸ <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ponyatie-tvorchestva-v-religioznoy-filosofii-n-a-berdyaeva-i-bogoslovii-arhimandrita-sofroniya-saharova-sravnitelnyy-analiz/viewer>

Holy Martyr Maria Skobtsova was also created with the participation of Berdyaev "the name was proposed by Berdyaev»²⁹.

Further afield in Mexico, under the influence of Berdyaev's books, a whole trend has been created associated with his ideologies (free Christians)³⁰ as well as other initiatives, had come about.

Meetings of theologians and philosophers of different faiths were held at an informal and unofficial level. This allowed those involved in the discussions and dialogues to be open, direct, and sincere. No one pursued any political or opportunistic interests and goals. Communication was based on the pursuit of Truth and freedom. All this, has revealed the value of such meetings not only to contemporaries, but also to subsequent generations. Lydia, the wife of Nikolai Alexandrovich very clearly defined what his popularity and value by stating that. "Ni has the gift of articulating the most difficult topics clearly. There are no fewer readers, but their composition is difficult to determine: all ages and positions: drivers, students, monks, doctors, ladies...»³¹

And in another place, she reflects: "Almost daily someone. People are very diverse: students, writers, pastors, ladies – from different countries»³². This note characterizes the circle of people who communicated with the philosopher. It would be difficult to list everyone with whom Nikolai Alexandrovich communicated, corresponded, even argued. Lydia Judifovna, tried to convey this in part, but as it was not the main purpose of her journals they only cover a period of 11 years (1934-1945).

Letters from admirers of Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev came after his death. Evgenia Judifovna has preserved many of them and even translated them into Russian. On March 21, 1955, a letter was received from Jacques Courtoise, who wrote under the pseudonym J.A. Tragostel, in which he addresses Nikolai Alexandrovich as "My dear Mentor." Then he writes: "I want to tell you with what deep joy I read your last book, Verité et Révélation, Truth and Revelation (published in 1954 in Paris). I do not know all your works, but the last book made a huge impression on me...»³³

The author, also, expressed a desire to meet with the philosopher. Another admirer of Nikolai Alexandrovich, who wanted to get acquainted with him was John Lazer. On March 3, 1956, he insisted in his letter: "My dear Sir (meaning Nikolai Alexandrovich), it is possible that my previous letters that I wrote to you during the past year did not reach you. Therefore, I will allow myself to write to you again in the hope that this time the letter will reach you. In case you did not reply to letters at all or did not send signed photos, I ask you to forgive my persistence and only confirm receipt of this letter so that I know that it has reached you. Let me

²⁹ Лидия Бердяева. Профессия жена философа. Москва, 2002. Стр. 253.

³⁰ Там же. Стр. 151.

³¹ Там же. Стр. 122.

³² Там же. Стр. 164.

³³ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо Г-на Трагестела. «Ce 21 mars 1955

Mon Cher Maître,

Je tiens à vous dire quelle puissante et profonde joie j'ai éprouvée à lire votre dernier ouvrage sur la Tradition et la Vérité.

Je ne connais probablement pas toutes vos œuvres, mais, la dernière surtout, elles éveillent un immense retentissement en moi. Dans un de mes derniers livres, je vous cite à propos du Royaume de César et du Royaume de Dieu.

Mais, maintenant que je pénètre mieux votre pensée à la clarté aveuglante de votre lumière, je ne peux que vous dire combien je communique, dans les idées que vous montrez essentielles, avec l'Esprit tel que vous le voyez.

Si vous accordez des rendez-vous, j'aurai un grand désir de m'entretenir avec vous puisque moi-même je creuse dans la même voie, mais hélas ! je n'entends pas le russe !

Je vous prie de croire, Mon Cher Maître, à ma profonde et très sincère admiration Jacques Courtois (J.-A. Tregastel)»

say that no words can express how deeply I appreciate your works, which mean more to me than I will ever be able to tell you, Mr. Berdyaev. The first book that I read was for me exactly what I had been looking for for many years and everything that I read later from your works was for me a source of inexpressible inspiration»³⁴.

Further in the letter, Mr. Lazer asks Nikolai Berdyaev to send him a photo and tries to arrange a meeting with him during the summer holidays. He agrees to go anywhere in Europe, "any country, wherever you are at this time»³⁵.

On July 1, 1957, a letter came from Mr. Ge in which he confessed to Nikolai Berdyaev that thanks to his labors he had gained faith. "I have recently regained faith in Christ partly thanks to your work *The New Middle Ages*, which has opened up unexpected horizons for me regarding a faith more free than the faith of the Catholic Church, which I parted with after graduating from seminary five years ago. If I allow myself to express to you my opinion about your philosophy, it is because I greatly appreciate your strong and unshakeable faith, steeped in exile and suffering»³⁶.

In her diaries, Lydia Yudifovna mentions Nikolai Berdyaev's correspondence with a woman whom he saved from suicide³⁷. And in another place, she conveys the words of another English woman: "This book (meaning Berdyaev's book "On the Appointment of Man") was a revelation to me. It first revealed Christianity to me, genuine Christianity, and not the one that has been presented to us, distorting it, for two thousand years»³⁸. Of course, in part these enthusiastic statements of the believers are not doctrinal axioms, although for us they may be common evidence of their personal faith and encounter with Christ.

Even to this day, letters come to the name of Nikolai Alexandrovich. True, we no longer receive them at our home address, but from time to time you can find notes addressed to the philosopher in the cemetery. So at the beginning of the year, I found a letter on the grave with the following content: "Dragul meu Berdiaev, De luni ingregi mă pregătesc să-ți scriu. Acam, de Toussaint știu că esti aici și-mi ești aproape... Valentina Moț..." "My dear Berdyaev. I have been preparing to write to you for many months. On the day of remembrance of All Saints, I know that you are close to me... Valentina Motz»³⁹. As we can see from these letters, people continued to turn to Berdyaev and thank him for the hard work he left behind. These brief excerpts from the letters help us to understand how significant Nikolai Alexandrovich's work was and remains. We try to keep letters, books and everything related to the philosopher's work in the Berdyaev House-Museum. Everything that is in Clamart can be valuable for researchers of Berdyaev's legacy.

³⁴ Dossier 46. Папка 46. Письмо Джона Лейзера. Архив Дома Бердяева. «Chicago 40, Illinois 915 West Gunnison St. 3 March 1956. Esteemed Sir, It is possible that my precious letter, which I have been writing you during the past year, may not have reached you. Therefore, I am taking this privilege of writing you again, hoping that this will reach you for sure this time. In even that you do not reply to letters, nor send autographed photographs, I trust you will pardon my persistence, for until I have some sort of acknowledgement I shall feel that you may not have heard from me. Let me say first that no words I could write you would convey to you my profound appreciation for your writings, which mean more to me than I can ever tell you, Mr. Berdyaev. The very first book or yours I read was to me just what I had been seeking for years, and all I have read since have been more inspiring than I can ever tell you...»

³⁵ Там же.

³⁶ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо Veay de Lanouvelle Guy. «J'ai retrouvé la foi au Christ depuis peu en partie grâce à votre ouvrage «Un Nouveau Moyen-Age» qui m'a ouvert des horizons insoupçonnées sur une foi plus libre que celle de l'Eglise catholique dont je me suis séparé après ma sortie du séminaire il y a cinq ans. Si je me permets de vous donner un point de vue sur votre pensée c'est que j'apprécie beaucoup votre foi forte et sure, trempée par l'exil et la souffrance ».

³⁷ «Есть еще одна женщина которая уже много лет переписывается с Ни, скрывая свое имя. Говорит, что письма Ни спасли ее от самоубийства». Лидия Бердяева. Профессия жена философа. Москва, 2002. Стр. 133.

³⁸ Там же. Стр. 142.

³⁹ Архив Дома Бердяева. Письмо Валентины Моц.

In addition to the museum room, Berdyaev's House now houses a Chapel-Temple in honor of the Holy Spirit. It should be emphasized that during the lifetime of Nikolai Alexandrovich, a priest was invited to the house for regular worship services. Soviet diplomat Vasily Nikolaevich Okulov, who was involved in transporting Berdyaev's archive to the USSR, wrote in his memoirs: "In the house (i.e., in Berdyaev's house), in addition to residential and utility rooms, there was a house church — the pride of the hostess (Evgenia Rapp). A Russian priest served there three days a week, and on holidays more often»⁴⁰.

Lydia Berdyaeva in her diaries repeatedly mentions Orthodox and Catholic priests who visited their homes. It is unknown what the house temple looked like during the life of Nikolai Alexandrovich, but after the death of Eugenia Rapp, this temple was destined to be decorated with a beautiful iconostasis, the work of monk Gregory Krug and iconographer Leonid Uspensky. Priests and clerics of the Korsun diocese began to live in the House, and regular Divine Liturgy services were held in the house church. Initially, it was planned to serve the Divine Liturgy in French, for the Orthodox community of the Western rite. However, services began to be celebrated in the Slavic language mainly for the religious intelligentsia. The head of the parish was the artist Andrey Lansky (+1976). The first rector was Archpriest Ilia Polyak +1966. Bishop Alexei (van der Mensbrugge) (+1980), Archpriest Nikolai Ozolin, Archimandrite Varsonofy (Ferrier), Archimandrite George Vostrel and others lived in the house. For many years, nun Elena (Hungern) sang in the choir, under the abbots of Priest Vladimir Feodorov, Archimandrite Siluan (Strizhkov) (+1995) and others.

Currently, a general Divine Liturgy service is held in the church on the day of the patronal feast – Monday of Pentecost. The residents of the house perform daily statutory services, but behind closed doors. On European Heritage Days, the second weekend of September, as well as on the day of the Holy Spirit, the Berdyaev House opens to visitors and guests of Clamart.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can rightfully say that the years spent in Clamart were among the most fruitful for Nikolai Alexandrovich. Here he lived a full, eventful life as a philosopher, writer and family man. His comprehensive activities were supported by family, friends and admirers. Death did not overshadow the works of this philosopher, but even more so revealed his philosophical legacy. While his works, were already known during his lifetime, they began to be published to an even greater degree in different languages and distributed in even more countries after his death. And so, the Berdyaev's house in Clamart is a place where the philosopher's legacy is cherished and preserved, offering people, who are either studying his works or merely interested in viewing some of his personal possessions.

Panteleimon Pavlinciuc

⁴⁰ <https://biography.wikireading.ru/126154>