

**NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**

As a manuscript

Ilia I. Pavlov

**The Influence of Secular and Anti-Secular Dimensions of the ‘New Religious
Consciousness’ on the Formation of N. Berdyaev’s Metaphysics**

Dissertation Summary

for the purpose of obtaining academic degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

Academic supervisor:
PhD, associate professor
Alexander V. Mikhailovsky,

Moscow

2021

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
<i>Research relevance</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Extent of prior research into the problem.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>The object and topic of investigation</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>The aim and problems of the investigation</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Theoretical-methodological basis for investigation</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Academic novelty of the current investigation</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Theses to be defended.....</i>	<i>22</i>
Main contents of the work	28
Conclusion	50
Approbation of the work.....	52

Introduction

Research relevance

The practical and theoretical relevance of a historical-philosophical investigation of Nikolai Berdyaev's religious metaphysics becomes evident if one pays attention to those processes in contemporary intellectual life which are linked with the notions of a post-secular society, characterized by the growing public role of religion¹ and by the need to find a rational basis for dialog between believing and non-believing citizens, as well as by discussions about the possible role which philosophy – including metaphysics – could play in solving the intellectual problems of a post-secular society.² Because attempts at theoretically comprehending the phenomenon of the post-secular take place predominantly in Western academic life, they are usually dedicated to Western models of Christianity, as well as to Islam, which forms a peculiar challenge for Western liberal democracies. The Russian material, however, is not sufficiently studied within the framework of contemporary discussions about the post-secular. This problem often goes without notice in Western theoretical circles, but there are more and more voices highlighting this omission and viewing it as one of the problems faced by contemporary Western scholarship.³

That said, turning to the Russian context does not only allow us to bridge the gap in our understanding of historically existing movements of secularization and desecularization – which is not the goal of this dissertation *per se* – but also permits

¹ For more details see: Habermas, J. “Faith and Knowledge” // in: Habermas, J. *The Future of Human Nature*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 101-115. Habermas, J. “A Post-Secular Society: What Does that Mean?” // Paper presented by the author at the Istanbul Seminars organized by Reset Dialogues on Civilizations in Istanbul, accessible from <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/a-post-secular-society-what-does-that-mean/>

² See: Uzlaner, D. A. “Introduction to Post-Secular Philosophy” (in Russian) // *Logos*. 2011. № 3 (82). Pp. 3–32. Bengtson, J. *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

³ In particular, ignoring the Russian experience is considered a difficulty by Evert van der Zweerde. Zweerde, E. van der. “Considering 'secularity'” (in Russian) // *Gosudarstvo, Religiya, Tserkov' v Rossii i za Rubezjom*. 2012, № 2 (30). P. 107.

us to discover in history those strategies of philosophical thinking which could be used productively within the framework of the problem, posed by J. Habermas, of finding various rational grounds for dialog between believing and non-believing citizens. According to Habermas, such a dialog demands that the believers develop a translation of the principles of religious tradition into the language of secular rationality.⁴ Here, the tradition of Russian religious philosophy⁵ and specifically the metaphysics of Berdyaev serves as one of the striking examples of a philosophical approach to this problem.

The tradition of Russian religious philosophy has reached the peak of its development in the XIX century under a clear influence of German idealism, leading then, in the XX century, to what, in the words of N. Zernov,⁶ is traditionally called the Russian Religious Renaissance. Throughout the entire existence of this tradition we see the ways in which Russian religious philosophers have attempted to unite the achievements of secular culture and rationality, which for many religious philosophers (examples are P. Chaadayev and V. Solovyov) also included social and political values of the enlightened West, with Christian teachings.

Many Russian religious thinkers understood that comprehending religious tradition in terms of modern concepts could not lie merely at the level of language. It is not enough to find new rational proof for traditional religious truths, as translating religious tradition into the language of modernity would necessarily imply a new interpretation of tradition – just like any translation of a text always presupposes its interpretation. The task of comprehending Christianity in light of the processes of secularization and modernization which took place around the end of the XIX –

⁴ Habermas, J. *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008. Pp. 114–147.

⁵ The potential of actualizing Russian religious philosophy within the post-secular context is clearly demonstrated in the article volume: *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism* / A. Mrówczyński-Van Allen, T. Obolevitch, and P. Rojek (eds.). Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016.

⁶ Zernov, N. M. *Russian Religious Renaissance of the XX Century*. Paris: YMCA-press, 1974.

beginning of the XX century has laid bare many problems. Some of the philosophers who understood the need not only for a superficial translation, but for a critical understanding of religious tradition were members of the “New Religious Consciousness” movement – D. Merezhkovsky, Z. Gippius, D. Filosofov, V. Rozanov, N. Berdyaev and other intellectuals who had joined the movement.

Furthermore, Berdyaev's legacy deserves special attention because, unlike many other members of the movement, Berdyaev did not only attempt to formulate a religious doctrine and express it in the language of artistic imagery (as was done predominantly by D. Merezhkovsky and V. Rozanov), but also developed ideas of “new religious consciousness” through consistent philosophical reflection. Moreover, he thought, in a more critical key than other theorists, about how the metaphysics of “new religious consciousness” could be expressed in certain real political actions and in the development of a socio-political program.

It should also be remarked that Berdyaev's rereading of traditional Christian metaphysics and theology in his existential philosophy, one that seeks ways of thinking about God which are alternative to the domineering discourse of the dogmatic theology of the Church, becomes especially interesting in the context of the strategies of “weak thought” developed in contemporary continental philosophy (for instance in the work of G. Vattimo⁷) and in post-metaphysical theology.⁸ Such approaches, while expanding on the characteristically post-structuralist critique of

⁷ Vattimo, G. *After Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

⁸ A clear example of a quest for ways of thinking God “after metaphysics” is John Manoussakis' book *God After Metaphysics*, written in the spirit of the phenomenological tradition and with reference to ideas by Jan-Luc Marion. Manoussakis, J. P. *God After Metaphysics: A Theological Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. An overview and analysis of this and other strategies see: Konacheva, S. A. *God After God. Paths of Post-Metaphysical Thought* (in Russian). Moscow: RGGU, 2019. On Russian religious philosophy in the context of thinking “post-metaphysics” see: Antonov, K. M. “Post-Metaphysical Thinking. Theology and Russian Religious Thought” (in Russian) // *Vestnik PSTGU. Seriya I: Bogosloviye. Filosofiya. Religiovedeniye*. 2021. № 93. Pp. 133–138.

metaphysics as related to power and violence⁹ and beginning from the critique of traditional metaphysics and theology in the works of Heidegger,¹⁰ take it as their task to rethink Christian theology through a rejection of a metaphysical discourse on God. With that, sharing the philosophical suspicions which these strategies have towards the domineering metaphysical discourse about religion, often indeed linked to relations of violence in history – it suffices to think of the inquisition, – Berdyaev certainly does not reject the opportunity to examine and develop Christian metaphysics as a philosopher, critical of religious violence. This further makes his thoughts relevant in the context of contemporary discussions about the place of metaphysics in post-secular philosophy.

Extent of prior research into the problem

The problem of undertaking a detailed analysis of the influence of secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics has never been posed. Moreover, as A. Chernyayev remarks, the philosophy of “new religious consciousness” has been traditionally relegated by historians of Russian thought to the periphery of scholarly attention,¹¹ which makes it necessary to turn to works belonging to other scholarly disciplines.

That said, scholars from various disciplines approach the phenomenon of “new religious consciousness” from different angles, viewing it either as an exclusively theoretical project¹² or conversely, detracting from the theoretical contents of this

⁹ On this critique and its philosophical grounds see: Gasparyan, D. E. *Introduction to Non-Classical Philosophy* (in Russian). Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2011

¹⁰ See Heidegger, M. “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” // Heidegger, M. *Identity and Difference*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. C. 42–74.

¹¹ Chernyaev, V. A. “Nikolai Bedyayev: A Reformer with No Reformation” (in Russian) // *Voprosy Filosofii*. 2014. № 11. P. 80.

¹² Sarychev, Y. V. *The Religion of Dmitriy Merezhkovsky: The “Neochristian Doctrine and its Artistic Realization* (in Russian) Moscow: Flinta, 2017. Moreover, another work by the same scholar

conception and putting in the foreground the tasks of practical “life-building”¹³ or its political dimension.¹⁴ Despite such a broad scope of the subject field, the question of analyzing the “new religious consciousness” within the context of secular and anti-secular tendencies in the history of Russian thought is not posed.

I. Vorontsova in her book *Russian Religious-Philosophical Thought at the Beginning of the XX Century*¹⁵ comes closest to the problem I pose in this dissertation. Vorontsova views Nikolai Berdyaev as one of the members of the “new religious consciousness” movement and clearly demonstrates that even in the late period of his work Berdyaev continued to develop key notions of this movement. But the analysis of the influence of “new religious consciousness” on Berdyaev's metaphysics, as presented by Vorotsova, could not be considered sufficient: the scholar compares individual statements by Berdyaev to individual statements by Merezhkovsky rather than posing the problem of determining the influence of discussions around “new religious consciousness” onto the inner logic of development underlying Berdyaev's metaphysics. She also does not offer a detailed reconstruction of the interconnection between political, religious, historical-cultural and metaphysical aspects of the “new religious consciousness”.

While turning to contemporary scholarly works dedicated to Berdyaev, we see a situation similar to that in “new religious consciousness” scholarship. Despite the fact that Berdyaev's metaphysics in general is rather well-studied,¹⁶ most scholars

is of great value for this dissertation: Sarychev, Y. V. *The Artistic Phenomenon of V. V. Rozanov and “New Religious Consciousness”* / doctoral dissertation in philology: 10.01.01. Moscow: 2008.

¹³ Matich, O. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.

¹⁴ Kuvakin, V. A. *Religious Philosophy in Russia. The beginning of the XX Century* (in Russian). Moscow: Mysl', 1980.

¹⁵ Vorontsova, I. V. *Russian Religious-Philosophical Thought at the Beginning of the XX Century* (in Russian). Moscow: PSTGU, 2008.

¹⁶ For instance, see: Motroshilova, N. V. *Russian Thinkers and Western Philosophy (V. Solovyov, N. Berdyaev, S. Frank, L. Shestov)* (in Russian). Moscow: Respublika, Kulturnaya Revolutsiya, 2006. Pp. 230–320. Silantjeva, M. V. *The Existential Dialectic of Nikolai Berdyaev as a Philosophical*

primarily pose the question of Berdyaev's philosophical conception. When the historical and political context is used to understand Berdyaev's views, it usually serves merely as a decorative framework, while a consistent scientific explanation of the interconnection between Berdyaev's ideas and a certain context is usually lacking. Moreover, the scholarship does not engage with the problem of analyzing, in detail, the influence which the process of secularization and religious reaction to it have had on the formation of Berdyaev's philosophy. Berdyaev's thought, usually, is not viewed diachronically, in its becoming, but synchronically, as a certain united finished conception, which gives rise to arguments about “what Berdyaev really said”. In this line of argumentation, all kinds of various judgments are pronounced even among the most authoritative scholars, proposing to read Berdyaev's philosophy as a personalism,¹⁷ as a peculiar current in the philosophy of life,¹⁸ as a gnostic religious doctrine,¹⁹ as a philosophy of culture.²⁰ The intellectual-historical approach developed

Method (in Russian). // doctoral dissertation in philosophy: 09.00.13. Moscow: 2005. Titarenko, S. A. *The Peculiarities of Nikolai Berdyaev's Religious Philosophy* (in Russian). // doctoral dissertation in philosophy: 09.00.03. Rostov-on-Don: 2006. Yermichev, A. A. *The Three Freedoms of Nikolai Berdyaev* (in Russian). Moscow: Znaniye, 1990. A critique of Yermichev's reconstruction see in Kazachenko, K. Y. “On the Question of Transcendental Freedom in N. A. Berdyaev's Philosophy (in Russian). // *Izvestiya TulGU. Gumanitarnyye Nauki*. 2019. №2. Pp. 12–23. On freedom in Berdyaev's metaphysics see also: Bodea R.-O. “Nikolai Berdyaev’s Dialectics of Freedom: In Search for Spiritual Freedom” // *Open Theology*. 2019. № 5. Pp. 299–308.

¹⁷ See: Lyamtsev, E. V. *N. A. Berdyaev's Existential Personalism in the Context of Russian and Western Philosophical Thought* (in Russian). // doctoral dissertation in philosophy: 09.00.03. Moscow: 2007. Pavlov V. “Personalism of Nikolai Berdyaev’s Philosophy and French Personalism” // *Russian Thought in Europe: Reception, Polemics, Development*. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum, 2013. Pp. 307–317. Ilyushenko N. “The Reception of Berdyaev’s Philosophical Ideas in Mounier’s Personalism” // *Russian Thought in Europe: Reception, Polemics, Development*. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum, 2013. Pp. 319–326.

¹⁸ Motroshilova. *Russian Thinkers and Western Philosophy*. Pp. 229–292.

¹⁹ Yevlampiev, I. I. “The Absolute as Freedom: N. Berdyaev” // *Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev* (in Russian) Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2013. Pp. 37–85. Linde F. *The Spirit of Revolt. Nikolai Berdiaev’s Existential Gnosticism*. Stockholm, 2010.

²⁰ Galtseva, R. A. “Nikolai Berdyaev – a Philosopher of Creativity and a Theoretician of Culture” (in Russian) // *Berdyaev, N. A. Philosophy of Creativity, Culture and Art, in 2 Volumes*. Vol. 1.

in this dissertation has as its goal the development of scientific grounds for an integrated analysis of Berdyaev's legacy, one that takes into account various dimensions of his work.

What is the extent of previous research when it comes to the question of the influence which “new religious consciousness” exerted on the formation of Berdyaev's thought? Although many scholars remark on this influence,²¹ its analysis is reduced to stating that the period during which Berdyaev communicated with members of “new religious consciousness” only affected his general intentions (in particular his critique of historical Christianity) and the usage, in his texts, of expressions pertaining to “religion of the Holy spirit” and, less frequently, of “the Third Testament”. But so far there has been no historical-philosophical work which would, as its explicit goal, thoroughly reconstruct the development of Berdyaev's philosophy in the context of the influence exerted on it by the ideas of “new religious consciousness” and on the basis of an integrated methodology – one that brings together an engagement with the intellectual-historical context of discussing “new religious consciousness” and a conceptual analysis of the theoretical contents of Berdyaev's metaphysics in its historical development. In light of this, there has been as of yet no investigation of the influence of secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness”, conditioned by the position of this movement in the dialectic of secularization, on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics. Nevertheless, two works, discussed below, come very close to solving this problem.

A volume of articles entitled *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-secularism* is dedicated to examining various aspects of Russian religious

Moscow: Iskusstvo, Liga, 1994. Pp. 7–36. Porus, V. N. “N. A. Berdyaev: The Eschatology of Freedom (in Russian) // *Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev* (in Russian) Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2013. Pp. 86–128. Zhukova, O. A. *The Philosophy of Russian Culture. A Metaphysical Perspective onto the Human and History* (in Russian). Moscow: Soglasiye, 2017. Pp. 571–589.

²¹ In particular, see: Polovinkin S. M. “N. A. Berdyaev and Orthodox Christianity” (in Russian) // *Vestnik RKHGA*. 2017. Vol. 18. №3. P. 143.

philosophy from a post-secular point of view. Generally speaking, the collection has a leading theme, outlined already in the introduction²²: it sets out to demonstrate the possibilities of invoking the ideas of Russian religious philosophers in order to develop means of thinking alternative to secular modernity, ones which are post-secular in the sense of overcoming the gaps between the natural and the supernatural, religion and culture, faith and reason, characteristic for secular modernity. Thus, most articles in the volume do not aim at the historical-philosophical task of explaining the dialectics of the ideas of Russian religious philosophers through the processes of secularization, occurring in social life as well as at the level of metaphysical ideas. This same point applies to articles on Berdyaev²³: in them, the authors uncover important post-secular aspects in the legacy of the philosopher's ideas, but they do not have as their goal the study of the influence these aspects have had on the formation of his metaphysics.

Among the articles in the volume, a work by Konstantin Antonov stands out. This article turns specifically to the contextual historical-philosophical perspective and offers a lot of very important material for studying the influence which the European dialectics of secularization exerts on the development of the ideas of

²² Mrówczyński-Van Allen, A., Obolevitch, T., Rojek, P. "Abel, Where Is Your Brother Cain? The Russian Way of Overcoming Modernity" // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. P. 1–9.

²³ Breckner, K. A. "Christianity in the Times of Postmodernism? A Reconstruction of Answers by Sergey Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev" // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 168–174. Rarot, H. "Religion in Public Life according to Nikolai Berdyaev" // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 186–198. 43. Woźniak, M. "Towards a New Understanding of Immanence and Transcendence. The Concept of Kairos in the Writings of Nikolai Berdyaev and Paul Tillich" // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 175–185. Tabatadze, O. "The Way Journal (1925–1941) and the Question of Freedom in the Context of European Post-Secular Culture" // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 225–237.

Russian philosophers.²⁴ This article, significantly expanded and reworked, became the concluding chapter in Antonov's two-volume study, entitled “How is Religion possible?”,²⁵ which appeared in 2020.

An important place in Antonov's work is given to comparing the ideas of Russian philosophers to Western thought, including the European discourse on modernity and the theories of secularization and post-secularism, as well as an invocation of “lay” theology, frequently juxtaposed by its authors to traditional academic theology, which allows to raise the question of suspicion that the former harbor towards the latter. To solve this question, Antonov finds it necessary to “expose the cultural mechanism” conditioning this opposition. He states that this situation arose “as a result of complicated interactions of secularization and counter-secularization processes”.²⁶

Explaining the influence of these interactions, Antonov writes that in a normal situation, the oppositions engendered through these processes of opposition have to be sublated²⁷, hence in this regard it is productive, when invoking Russian religious philosophy – including its theological topics – to examine philosophy of religion and its place “within the system of the reflexive structures of religious tradition”.²⁸ As a key phenomenon for the becoming of reflexive practices, Antonov looks at that of religious conversion.²⁹ From exhibiting the historical-cultural situation which had conditioned the emergence of philosophy of religion in Russian religious thought,³⁰

²⁴ Antonov, K. “‘Secularization’ and ‘Post-Secular’ in Russian Religious Thought: Main Features” // *Beyond Modernity. Russian Religious Philosophy and Post-Secularism*. Eugene (Oregon): Pickwick Publications, 2016. Pp. 25–38.

²⁵ Antonov, K. M. “How is Religion Possible?”: *Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Problems of Theology in Russian Religious Thought in XIX-XX Centuries*. In 2 volumes (in Russian). Moscow: Izd-vo PSTGU, 2020. Vol. 2. Pp. 316–352.

²⁶ Antonov, “How is Religion Possible?” Vol. 1. Pp. 7–9.

²⁷ Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 9.

²⁸ Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 24.

²⁹ Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 25, 65ff.

³⁰ Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 49–78.

Antonov moves to the central part of his work – to reconstructing the conceptions developed by various Russian thinkers within the strategies of philosophy of religion they propose.

Therefore, Antonov approaches the problem he posed from a somewhat different angle than the current dissertation, namely, from the angle of clarifying the disciplinary boundaries between the concepts of “theology”, “philosophy of religion” and “Russian religious philosophy” in order to present, based on the results of this differentiation, the various reflections carried out by Russian thinkers on religious topics, and present them at that as having not only historical-cultural value, but also philosophical value proper within the framework of certain disciplinary subdivision of European philosophy. Thus, Antonov, while rather thoroughly analyzing the historical context of Russian religious thought, still places the main scholarly accent not on this context, but on the theoretical reconstruction of the ideas of Russian thinkers, while at the same time pointing to the contextual groundedness of his chosen reconstruction strategy.

The object and topic of investigation

The object of this investigation is the philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev, viewed in the intellectual-historical context of the “new religious consciousness” movement led by Merezhkovsky.

The topic of investigation is the influence of secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics.

In order to reconstruct the topic of the investigation the following primary sources will be used:

— to reconstruct the context of discussion about “new religious consciousness”: materials of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Gatherings

(1901–1903) and of the Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (1907–1917), as well as a series of other works;

— to reconstruct the intellectual evolution of D. Merezhkovsky: his work *L. Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky* (1900–1902) and a volume of articles entitled *Not Peace, but a Sword* (1908), as well as a series of other works;

— to reconstruct the attitude of V. Rozanov to the problematic of the “new religious consciousness”: books *By the Church Walls* (1905) and *In Dark Religious Rays* (1910), published public talks from the meetings of the Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg, as well as a series of other works;

— to reconstruct the formation of the metaphysics of N. Berdyaev in the context of “new religious consciousness”: article volumes *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* (1907) and *The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia* (1910), treatises *The New Religious Consciousness and Society* (1907), *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1911) and *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1916), articles “New Christianity” (1916) and “New Religious Consciousness and History” (1916), as well as later treatises and a series of other works.

The aim and problems of the investigation

The aim of this investigation is to bring to light the influence of secular and anti-secular aspects of the “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics.

In order to attain the set aim, the dissertation will sequentially solve the following series of problems.

First of all, it will analyze the secular and anti-secular aspects of discussions about the “new religious consciousness” as the intellectual-historical context of formation for Berdyaev's metaphysics. To achieve this, I will look at whether the methodology of intellectual history and that of the theories of secularization is

applicable to a study of the history of Russian religious thought and demonstrate that it is precisely this kind of investigative frame that allows us to come closest to resolving the problem of scientifically explaining the phenomenon of Russian religious philosophy without reducing it to the social context, but rather by examining the ideas of Russian religious philosophers in their organic interrelations with global tendencies in the history of religion and secular modernity and by demonstrating the influence of these tendencies on the development of philosophical and metaphysical conceptions proper. Relying on the developed methodology, I will bring to light the secular and anti-secular aspects of those versions of “new religious consciousness” which directly influenced the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics. These two versions are namely that of Merezhkovsky, the author of the term “new religious consciousness”, as well as that of Rozanov; I will analyze the views of these thinkers in the context of the religious and social situation within the frame of which the movement appeared. This will let me demonstrate the grounds on which I find it possible to speak of secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness”. In this context, I will reconstruct the conceptions of Merezhkovsky and Rozanov which influenced Berdyaev, after which I will analyze the interrelations between the cultural-historical, metaphysical and political aspects of the post-secular dialectics, visible in these conceptions.

Second, I will reconstruct the philosophical evolution of Berdyaev in the period he spent developing his metaphysical conception, meant as a version of the “new religious consciousness” in the context of his relation to Merezhkovsky's movement, as well as that of his polemic with Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. To do this I will primarily analyze the articles which were part of Berdyaev's essay collections *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* and *The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia*, as well as his first independent philosophical treatise – *The New Religious Consciousness and Society*, where Berdyaev clearly proclaims that he belongs to the “new religious consciousness” and expands on key ideas of the movement, previously formulated by

Merezhkovsky. I will give special attention to the polemic between Rozanov and Berdyaev at the Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg. Furthermore I will demonstrate how the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics in *The Philosophy of Freedom* and *The Meaning of the Creative Act* was influenced by both the ideas of Merezhkovsky and Rozanov as well as by Berdyaev's critical reappraisal of these ideas. Then I will turn to a series of articles from 1916, which bring to a close the period during which Berdyaev presented his metaphysical theory as a conception of “new religious consciousness” alternative to that of Merezhkovsky's teachings. After this historical-philosophical reconstruction I will analyze how secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness” can be identified in these texts and discussions, as well as the role played, in the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics, by the post-secular dialectic of the idea of “new religious consciousness” in general, as well as by that version of it which he developed himself. Finally, I will briefly sketch the further fate of intellectual strategies of the “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's later metaphysics.

Theoretical-methodological basis for investigation

When it comes to the topic at hand, existing studies reveal a gap to be filled. This makes it necessary to posit a goal of reflexively developing the methodology for this investigation. In the first chapter of the first part of this dissertation I demonstrate that in order to solve the task at hand I need a methodological as well as a theoretical reflection concerning philosophy as an object of historical-philosophical investigation in order to answer the question of *how an integrated methodology, taking into account the context of philosophical utterance, can serve as an instrument for new understanding of philosophical conceptions proper*. In case of the investigation of this dissertation, the above general question is related to the central problem of this work –

how the context of discussions about the “new religious consciousness” could be used to deepen our understanding of the philosophical meaning of Berdyaev's metaphysics.

In order to solve these problems I will briefly turn to the idea of intellectual history proposed by R. Rorty,³¹ but will primarily use in my work the main principles, formulated as a result of reflexive philosophical development of the methodology of intellectual history within the framework of the Cambridge school.³² I turn to the Cambridge methodology because the approach it develops demonstrates the interconnection of the context of a philosophical utterance and the theoretical meaning of that utterance.

In order to resolve the problem of applicability of the methodology of intellectual history, developed primarily to work with the history of political thought, to the history of religious philosophy, the dissertation reconstructs the program for the study of secularization presented in C. Taylor's work *A Secular Age*³³, and argues why, in the broad field of secularization theories, Taylor's approach is the most suitable for historical-philosophical work.

In working directly with primary sources – an approach which constitutes a significant part of the dissertation – I used methods of historical-philosophical reconstruction of ideas, philosophical hermeneutics and comparative analysis traditional for research in the field of history of philosophy.

The main part of this dissertation begins with a brief sketch of the context of discussions around “new religious consciousness”, historical as well as semantic, related to practices of using this expression. While in a series of works dedicated to the “new religious consciousness” scholars preface their analysis by a formal

³¹ Rorty, R. “The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres” // Rorty, R., Schneewind, J. B., Skinner, Q. *Philosophy in History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1984. Pp. 49-76.

³² See: *The Cambridge School: The Theory and Practice of Intellectual History* (in Russian). Moscow: Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 2018.

³³ Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*. New York: Harvard University Press, 2018.

definition of what they take to be “new religious consciousness”,³⁴ this dissertation, following the principles of the Cambridge school, based on the ideas of philosophy of language developed by L. Wittgenstein and J. Austin, sketches existing ways of using this expression in the history of philosophy and reconstructs the semantic aspects of the concept of “new religious consciousness” from this context.

Thus “new religious consciousness” is understood in this dissertation as a concept that lies at the center of a struggle – a struggle between intellectuals as to the interpretation of this concept and its meaning.³⁵ In other words, an explanation of this concept does not precede the investigation undertaken in the dissertation, but is realized through the description of the ways this expression is used in discussions, its interpretations given by various thinkers, and polemic actions accomplished by practices of its usage.

In the dissertation, I take the secular aspects of “new religious consciousness” to be secular practices and logics – i.e. forms of life and means of thinking related therewith, which appeared in Russian history thanks to secularization – which underlie both the usage of this expression and the proposed conceptions of what “new religious consciousness” is according to its thinkers. I take the anti-secular aspects to be the strategies of secularization critique and overcoming, formulated from the standpoint of a religious worldview.

When the dissertation brings up the influence of some aspect of the “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics, the expression “new religious consciousness” is used in the above sense – not as a designation of Merezhkovsky's teachings or movement, external to Berdyaev, but as a concept

³⁴ For instance, I. V. Vorotsova chooses this strategy in the aforementioned book.

³⁵ This approach to the history of the concept of “new religious consciousness” turns out to be close not only to the Cambridge school, but to the German history of concepts, specifically to the idea of “struggle for nomination” [“Kampf ums Heißen”] in H. Lübbe. Lübbe, H. “Sein und Heißen. Bedeutungsgeschichte als politisches Sprachhandlungsfeld” // *Phänomenologische Forschungen* Vol. 3, *Phänomenologie und Praxis* (1976). S. 48–73.

which, as will be shown in the course of the study, at some point turned out to be proper to the internal logic of Berdyaev's metaphysics. That said, in the course of the historical discussions, the concept “new religious consciousness” was used also to signify the doctrine of Merezhkovsky's circle, by Berdyaev himself among others. The dissertation points to a change in the way the expression “new religious consciousness” is used in Berdyaev's texts, tracing the link between this change and the internal logic of becoming of Berdyaev's metaphysics as well as that between the change and the context of Berdyaev's relationship with the Merezhkovsky circle. Thus the subject of analysis turns out to be the influence which the various ways of using the expression “new religious consciousness”, as well as the flexible set of ideas pertaining to this expression, have on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics.

I take “formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics” to mean the process of forging key ideas and intellectual strategies within that very conception which is traditionally understood as Berdyaev's metaphysics and the main features of which, in its finished form, were presented by the philosopher in his treatise *The Meaning of the Creative Act*. In the course of the investigation I demonstrate that metaphysics, traditionally understood by historians of philosophy as an abstract conception with no relation to “hot” topics, in Berdyaev's case was logically and semantically linked to local discussions and philosophical writings on current affairs, dedicated to specific socio-political and religious questions. All of Berdyaev, Merezhkovsky and Rozanov linked together metaphysics, writings on current affairs, and religious polemic, also using metaphysical arguments and ideas in their texts on current affairs without denouncing the conception of metaphysics as *philosophia perennis*, but while thinking that general writings on current affairs can be written *sub specie aeternitatis*.³⁶ This dissertation demonstrates how concepts, ideas, arguments and intellectual strategies which surfaced in local discussions were used by Berdyaev in his large treatises.

³⁶ Berdyaev used this very proverbial expression as a title for his first article collection.

Thus, in correspondence with the topic of this dissertation, the investigation will speak of the “formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics” – in other words, it will carry out the task of identifying the genealogy of this metaphysics in the intellectual material which precedes it.

Thus, the basic theoretical-methodological idea of the dissertation consists in reconstructing the conceptual sense of Berdyaev's metaphysics. This reconstruction proceeds by reading Berdyaev's metaphysical texts as polemic actions, undertaken by Berdyaev in the context of the dialectic of secularizing and counter-secularizing tendencies in a broad intellectual field. The approach I choose allows me to demonstrate that such a reading is not at all external to the proper logic of Berdyaev's metaphysics, but permits us to better understand its internal philosophical content.

In order to reconstruct the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics, I choose the discussions about “new religious consciousness” as one of the most important contexts which shaped Berdyaev's metaphysics until the publication of his treatise *The Meaning of the Creative Act* in 1916. Furthermore, even in his later metaphysical treatises we see traces of him using, as well critically reappraising, the intellectual strategies of “new religious consciousness”. I operate on the idea, common to contextual approaches in the history of philosophy, that the reconstruction of a *solution* (or *answer*), proposed by a philosopher, is impossible without understanding that *problem* (or *question*), which the philosopher is discussing. Hence the reconstruction of Berdyaev's metaphysics as a conception with substantive philosophical value is impossible without understanding those specific discussions which acted as a frame to formulating the problems Berdyaev set out to solve in his metaphysics. As will be demonstrated further, when turning to the discussions of “new religious consciousness”, Berdyaev's metaphysics can be read as resolving two things: first, the problem of separating “flesh” and “spirit” in historical Christianity, as posed by Merezhkovsky (and supported by Rozanov), and second, the problem of developing a metaphysics of “new religious consciousness” free from religious and

political consequences of the conceptions formulated by Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. Applying the conceptual apparatus of secularization theories allows us to demarcate these problems in more analytic terms, when compared to how the Russian religious philosophers themselves formulated them.

As it was remarked when discussing the boundaries of this study, I am not at all claiming that the context of “new religious consciousness” is singularly important for the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics. Even in the period discussed in the dissertation, Berdyaev took part in other discussions and was influenced by other intellectual circles. It suffices to remember the influence of the group formed around the *Pout'* [*The Way*] magazine, of which the first and foremost was S. Bulgakov. In the post-revolutionary period, Berdyaev's thought underwent the influence of many other intellectual and socio-political contexts. Nevertheless, I consciously delimit the subject of this dissertation to the topic of “new religious consciousness” because, as I will demonstrate, the influence of “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics is very large and multifaceted, enough so to merit a separate detailed study. That said, I welcome the appearance of other studies which interpret Berdyaev's metaphysics in other contexts as complementing the conclusions of this dissertation.

Academic novelty of the current investigation

The academic novelty of this dissertation is first and foremost conditioned by the methodology used in it, whereby this methodology permits examining the phenomenon of “new religious consciousness” and Berdyaev's metaphysics in the context of not only philosophical-theoretical, but also social, political and institutional peculiarities of the process of secularization, taking shape not only as the dwindling of the role of religion in the life of a society, but also as changing the very image of religion and demanding religious thinkers take into account the social and intellectual

consequences of secularization, so that they can react to those consequences either by rejecting them or by fully accepting them, or still – as we see in the philosophy of “new religious consciousness” and especially in Berdyaev's late metaphysics – by posing the difficult task of understanding the changes at hand in the context of religious tradition and the transformation of religion itself in relation to changes in social life, the world-views of a large number of intellectuals and new philosophical currents. The dissertation undertakes the first attempt to consistently develop and ground the relevance of studying the history of Russian religious philosophy by applying to it the methodology of intellectual history, which includes the theoretical groundwork of the Cambridge school and Taylor's theory of secularization but also corrects the faults of the latter's methodology. It also, for the first time, argues for and demonstrates the applicability of the methodology of intellectual history not only to the socio-political aspect of the history of Russian thought, which was already done by M. Velizhev and T. Atanashev,³⁷ but also to the religious-philosophical aspect.

Despite the fact that, as was remarked, the works closest in topic to this dissertation tend to understand the legacy of Russian religious philosophers within the post-secular problematic (the “Beyond Modernity” volume), as well as to perform a historical-philosophical reconstruction of the ideas of Russian philosophers within the context of the dialectic of secularization (two-volume monograph by K. Antonov), a thorough analysis of secular and anti-secular aspects of the “new religious consciousness” and the metaphysics of Nikolai Berdyaev has not yet been undertaken. This dissertation is the first in this respect.

³⁷ Atanashev, T. M., Velizev, M. B. “The History of Political Languages in Russia: Towards a Methodology of a Research Program” (in Russian) // *Philosophiya. Zhurnal Vysshey Shkoly Ekonomiki*. 2018. Vol. II. № 3. Pp. 107–137. Velizhev, M. B. “Language and Context in Russian Intellectual History: Chaadayev's First “Philosophical Letter” // *The Cambridge School: The Theory and Practice of Intellectual History* (in Russian). Moscow: Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 2018. Pp. 500–521.

In the current investigation, a systematic historical-philosophical analysis of how the discussions about “new religious consciousness” influenced Berdyaev's intellectual evolution is undertaken for the first time. Although some of the aspects of this process were revealed by I. Vorontsova and K. Antonov, the dissertation undertakes a more consistent historical-philosophical reconstruction of Berdyaev's intellectual path, one that relies on a wider base of primary literature and a deeper analysis of Berdyaev's philosophical logic in its historical development. Thus, this analysis does not only let us conclude that certain distinct ideas of “new religious consciousness” are present within Berdyaev's legacy, but also explain their appearance and philosophical peculiarity as opposed to other versions of the development of this movement. Thus, this dissertation, for the first time, thoroughly reconstructs the development of the ideas of “new religious consciousness” in the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics, which has not been undertaken by other scholars so far.

Theses to be defended

1. An analysis of secularization and desecularization based on the conception of immanent logics, formulated by correcting Taylor's approach, allows one to uncover post-secular dialectics in intellectual history as the development, by intellectuals, of a certain constellation of immanent logics and religious thinking, which presupposes various consequences for the relationship of the intellectual to secular and anti-secular practices, discourses, ideas and processes. While working with the movement of “new religious consciousness”, linked to both real political struggle and discussions about the reformation within Christianity and the Orthodox Church, metaphysical ideas by the movement's members form various strategies for reconceptualizing the correlations of various immanent practices and logics related to those practices with religious thinking. In case of a transition from a historiosophical to a structural

understanding of post-secularity, the constellations developed by theoreticians of “new religious consciousness” can be evaluated as post-secular.

2. When turning to the intellectual history of the “new religious consciousness”, it is necessary to highlight the following meanings of this expression, determined by the practices of its use: a) one of the characteristics of social-historical transitions, associated with the spread of the achievements of secular culture, with the realization, by a socially significant group of intellectuals, of the value of those achievements and their metaphysical incompleteness, and of the incompleteness of historical Christianity and the official Church, as well as with the desire of this group of intellectuals to discover a new religiosity, one that contains within itself the secular achievements (in this sense the expression was used by Merezhkovsky in 1901 and by A. Meyer in 1916); b) the movement headed by Merezhkovsky and the teachings of Merezhkovsky himself (Berdyayev's strategy in 1916); c) all movements for a religious renewal, seeking not only to eliminate the historical and political shortcomings of the Church, but to also develop a new metaphysical theory, distinct from Christian theology (this understanding is proposed by S. Askoldov and Rozanov aligns himself with this view in his talks on “new religious consciousness”); d) a metaphysical conception, alternative to the teachings of Merezhkovsky, while at the same time solving the same religious-philosophical problems (the expression is primarily used in this way by Berdyayev up until 1916). That said, the main semantic meaning of “new religious consciousness” has been determined by the logic of opposition to the “old religious consciousness”, i.e. to historical Christianity and official Church, while within the context of polemic about “new religious consciousness” many of its members often accused their opponents specifically of being adherents of “old religious consciousness”.

3. The version of “new religious consciousness” developed by Merezhkovsky was based on the achievements of secular culture, while simultaneously seeking to overcome its detachment from religion and move to the religious. But Merezhkovsky

does not primarily criticize secularization as a historical phenomenon, but rather goes against its metaphysical cause – the polarization of “flesh” and “spirit”, the transcendent and the immanent, found in historical Christianity, which turns his critique of secularization into a critique of Christianity and the Church. The value of liberation struggle acquires special meaning for Merezhkovsky starting 1905; he contrasts it to the position of the official Orthodox Church, which supported Tsarist rule. That said, Merezhkovsky views the liberation struggle from a religious perspective, as serving the coming religious synthesis. Texts by Rozanov related to discussions about the “new religious consciousness” demonstrate that his thought was moving in the same direction, although Rozanov saw the cause for polarization between “spirit” and “flesh” as lying not in the historical mistakes of Christianity, but in the Gospel itself and in the personhood of Jesus Christ. Precisely because of this, Rozanov, unlike Merezhkovsky, for whom the desirable synthesis consisted in a unity of Christianity and paganism, strove to completely overcome Christianity and return to a religiosity of the Old Testament, which he understood as a religious consecration of flesh, sexuality and life.

4. When turning to Berdyaev's article “The Ethical Problem in the Light of Philosophical Idealism”, published in a collective volume entitled *Problems of Idealism* (1902), we see that even before a rapprochement with Merezhkovsky and the development of a theory of “new religious consciousness” Berdyaev distinguished between historical and “ideal” Christianity; in other words, the Berdyaev's critical attitude towards historical Christianity is not due to the influence of “new religious consciousness” taken as Merezhkovsky's teaching and movement. In this article, moreover, Berdyaev formulates those ideas upon which he later builds to revise Merezhkovsky's teaching, namely the idea of the absolute value of a free person and the primacy of personal freedom over economic, social and societal freedoms. In other words, Berdyaev develops his conception of “new religious consciousness under

Merezhkovsky's influence, but this development cannot be reduced to the above influence.

5. Already in the treatise *New Religious Consciousness and Society* (1907) we see that, while discussing the key problems of “new religious consciousness” in the spirit of Merezhkovsky and Rozanov, Berdyaev lays down the basis for his personalist metaphysics. In this period, Berdyaev adheres to the ideas of mystical anarchism, while also thinking that real anarchist and revolutionary practice in political struggle cannot lead to mystical revolution, which he takes to be the advent of that “synthesis” in the “religion of the Holy spirit” which Merezhkovsky teaches about. In other words, in this treatise Berdyaev revises the teachings of Merezhkovsky on the basis of a personalist metaphysics, which is among other things dictated by the philosopher's desire to move away from Merezhkovsky's political practice while retaining key ideas of his teachings.

6. In the collection of articles entitled *The Spiritual Crisis of Intelligentsia* (1910, containing articles from 1907-1909), which is traditionally read as a complete break from Merezhkovsky's ideas, we also discover important elements of the latter's doctrine. Despite a difference in style and tone, *The Spiritual Crisis of Intelligentsia* is conceptually not very different from Berdyaev's previous book, where he has *already* moved away from Merezhkovsky's political practice. Berdyaev's reflections on Orthodox Christianity in that period have a rather nebulous character, which lets us suppose that he views turning to the discourse of Orthodoxy as one of the possibilities to legitimate his version of “new religious consciousness”.

7. In the treatises *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911) and *The Meaning of a Creative Act* (1916) we see Berdyaev use the term “new religious consciousness”, as well as some ideas traditional to the conception of the “new religious consciousness” in general, namely ideas of the Third Testament, connections between the passing of historical ages and the persons of the Trinity, critiques of asceticism, the official Church and historical Christianity, et c. In those very same texts we see clear

references to Berdyaev and Rozanov's discussion concerning the “new religious consciousness” in 1907. The development of Berdyaev's metaphysical ideas in these treatises is built on reconceptualizing Merezhkovsky and Rozanov's conception, outlined already in 1907, as well as on radicalizing some of Merezhkovsky's ideas – in particular, on developing his idea about linking the ongoing revelation and three historical ages with the triadic character of God, following German mysticism. As a result of this development, Berdyaev comes to the idea of connection between historical ages and revelation on the one hand and the theogonic process within God on the other; he also constructs this thought based on basic concepts from Merezhkovsky's work and while discussing the problems which the latter has posed.

8. In *The Meaning of the Creative Act* Berdyaev presents his personalist metaphysics in its finished form, while offering it as an version of “new religious consciousness” alternative to Merezhkovsky's, namely by pointing out that the main problem of “new religious consciousness” is not solved by overcoming the dichotomy of “flesh” and “spirit” or religion and the societal, but by overcoming the conception of God as transcendent to man. The main strategy of emancipation from external religious control, according to Berdyaev, is not political struggle, but the liberation of the spiritual life of a person through a reconceptualization of Christian theology as describing the mystical processes unfolding within a person. In the polemic of 1916, all its sides reached a consensus in the perception of *The Meaning of the Creative Act* as a work which elaborates a theory of “new religious consciousness” alternative to Merezhkovsky's teachings.

9. While responding to criticism, Berdyaev develops individual ideas expressed in *The Meaning of the Creative Act* in his article “New Religious Consciousness and History” and constructs, in the same article, a consistent model of what in contemporary terms could be called post-secular metaphysics. Since Berdyaev takes it to be the task of “new religious consciousness” to emancipate human spirituality from external religiosity, he welcomes secularization in societal life not only as an

improvement of external social conditions, but also as an overcoming of the external control of religious institutions and doctrines over politics, art, science and philosophy – an overcoming which is not a goal in and of itself, but contributes to an ultimate emancipation of immanent spirituality. Nonetheless, Berdyaev thinks the very model of spiritual and secular mystically and understands the secular as the periphery of the spiritual, such that this periphery is to be thought as distinct from the mystical center without ceasing to be a moment of its internal dialectic. In building this model, Berdyaev is helped by a reconceptualization of Merezhkovsky's historiosophical idea about three Testaments linked to three persons of the Trinity, as a reflection of the internal dialectic of divinity in human history.

10. The difference in the projects of Merezhkovsky, Rozanov and Berdyaev when it comes to overcoming the opposition of the transcendent and the immanent is related to the difference in those immanent logics, on the basis of which they constitute those concepts of “flesh” (Merezhkovsky), “world” (Rozanov) or “man” (Berdyaev) which should not be opposed to the transcendent as polarities, but united with religious thought: if Merezhkovsky and his associates base their thought primarily on the idea of liberation struggle which can lead to the creation of a free society and, as a consequence, a free person, and Rozanov bases his thought on the value of the immediate lived world and sexual life in marriage, Berdyaev develops an existential logic for which both the idea of a transcendent God as well as the world empirically at hand and the sphere of current political struggle are equally transcendent to the spiritual life of a person. Hence Berdyaev understands the main task of “new religious consciousness” as the unfolding of a new anthropology in Christianity, one that overcomes the split between man and God and thinks their unity as given in the immanent mystical experience of the spiritual life of a person.

11. Although in his later texts Berdyaev does not give his thinking the name of “new religious consciousness”, he applies synonymous expressions using similar semantics, furthermore continuing to develop the key ideas of his own version of

“new religious consciousness”, formed under the influence of Merezhkovsky – i.e. he develops the historiosophical model of three ages related to the three persons of the Trinity; he formulates, more consistently and in greater detail, the immanent metaphysics outlined by members of the “new religious consciousness” movement in his theory of objectivation, which continues the reconceptualization of the categories of the immanent and the transcendent he begun during discussions about “new religious consciousness”; he criticizes Christian tradition for the exclusive emphasis it puts on ascetics, also relating his analysis of asceticism and traditional views of God to social and political critical reflection (which goes back to Merezhkovsky and Rozanov's critique of historical Christianity as essentially linked to the oppression of man and religious violence, as well as to Berdyaev's position on the asceticism question, formulated during his discussion with Rozanov in 1907).

Main contents of the work

The **Introduction** to the dissertation delineates its relevance, gives a short overview of the research literature dedicated to the investigated question, formulates the key aim of the investigation and the problems it is poised to solve. It also grounds the academic novelty of the investigation and the choice of research methodology, as well outlining the theses for defense.

The first part of the dissertation, entitled “The Dialectic of Secularization in the 'new religious consciousness' movement” is dedicated to the reconstruction of discussions about “new religious consciousness” as context for the formation of Nikolai Berdyaev's metaphysics.

The first chapter of the first part is entitled “Intellectual History and Theories of Secularization in the Contextual Study of N. Berdyaev’s Metaphysics”. It grounds the use of methodology of contextual analysis, employed in the dissertation, and its applicability to the history of Berdyaev's religious metaphysics. After a short analysis of problems faced by a contemporary scholar of this metaphysics, the chapter gives an overview of the approaches to intellectual history proposed by R. Rorty³⁸ and scholars from the Cambridge school of intellectual history.³⁹ Among the methodological ideas borrowed from intellectual history for this research especially fruitful are, first, rejecting the perception of the history of philosophy as based on our contemporary understanding of what philosophy is, and second, a contextual reading of texts by

³⁸ Rorty, R. “The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres” // Rorty, R., Schneewind, J. B., Skinner, Q. *Philosophy in History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1984. Pp. 49-76.

³⁹ Skinner, Q. “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” // *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969). Pp. 3-53. Skinner, Q. “Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts” // *New Literary History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972). Pp. 393-408

thinkers as acts, undertaken in order to have a real effect on the intellectual, political and religious historical situation. The developed approach is contrasted with classical studies in the history of Russian philosophy.

The chapter emphasizes that although the methodology of the Cambridge school was developed for working with the history of political thought, it is also applicable to the history of religious philosophy, because the religious-philosophical discourse is also linked to power relations, among other things, and because the utterances of religious philosophers, including the most abstract and theoretical ones, were at times made with a pragmatic goal in mind and were related to the struggle of ideas between members of competing currents.

The chapter argues for choosing the methodology of C. Taylor, presented in his book *A Secular Age*,⁴⁰ as the analytical toolkit for working with the “religiosity” of Russian religious philosophy. The advantage of Taylor's approach is that he lays open the possibility of a complex integrated analysis of interactions between the history of global social, political and religious transitions on the one hand and the thought of philosophers who form new world-view alternatives to traditional religious faith – as well as the free religious choices of individual people – on the other. The chapter briefly compares Taylor's methodology to alternative approaches to the intellectual history of secularization (M. Weber, J. Milbank and others) and underlines the methodological continuity of Taylor's approach which does not separate the analysis of social transformations from the question of the subjective sense of world-view choices, when compared with Weber's “interpretive sociology”.

The chapter demonstrates the possibility of combining Taylor's approach with the intellectual-historical approach, since the theoretical reaction of Russian thinkers to certain religious and secularizing processes could be read as an attempt to exert influence on these processes. It also demonstrates the similarity in the approaches of

⁴⁰ Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*. New York: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Taylor and V. V. Zenkovsky⁴¹ both when it comes to raising problems (since Zenkovsky, just like Taylor, aims to analyze the history of philosophy within the context of the dialectic of secularization and the problematic of developing alternative secular and religious world-views by philosophers) and historical-philosophical observations concerning the role of romanticism and German idealism in the intellectual process of secularization and the reaction of the religious world-view to this process, and also when it comes analyzing the tendency of metaphysics towards immanentization as the characteristic feature of alternative world-views which appear in the process of secularization (which, in Taylor's terminology, could be called the “Nova effect” – a reaction of world-view history to the emergence of “exclusive humanism”). The chapter points out the philosophical problems of Taylor's methodology: 1) the methodological gap between the historical part (dedicated to reconstructing the history of the becoming of the “secular age” as well as the socio-political changes and the formation of new world-views alternative to traditional religiosity) and the conceptual part (theory of the “immanent frame”) of his investigation; 2) the philosophical weakness of Taylor's claim that he identifies a “pre-reflective ontology” underlying his concept of “immanent frame”.

Bearing on this critique, the chapter argues for the relevance of replacing Taylor's “immanent frame” with the conception of “immanent logics”, which permits us to analyze the interrelation of religious thinking with concrete secular practices and discourses. The dissertation understands immanent logics as these rules of thinking which set the semantic capacities of a certain discourse (e.g. the logics of Freudianism, Marxism, et. c.) and related practices; those logics serve as rules to be followed (in the sense of late Wittgenstein's concept of rule-following) in relation to these discourses and practices. The framework of immanent logics allows to overcome both disadvantages of Taylor's approach, replacing a discourse about a

⁴¹ Zenkovsky, V. V. *A History of Russian Philosophy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953.

certain abstract and universal immanent frame, discovered by Taylor through philosophical speculation, with an analysis of the history of discourses and a related history of ways of thinking.

The methodology developed in this dissertation is analytically compared with the approach of K. Antonov, which is interpreted, on the basis of Rorty's typology, as a rational reconstruction.

The first chapter closes with an argument legitimating the interpretation of “new religious consciousness” as a post-secular phenomenon. Referring to Antonov's remarks, we see: contemporary ideas of the post-secular as a historical period which took place after the “secular age” are characterized as a meta-narrative, conceptually similar to the historical constructions of V. S. Solovyov and the theoreticians of “new religious consciousness”. As an alternative to the historiosophical understanding of the post-secular, the chapter develops a structural understanding, reading the post-secular not as a certain period which took place at the end of the XX century (in case of such an interpretation, the analysis of “new religious consciousness” as a post-secular phenomenon is an anachronism), but as a certain intellectual, cultural and political logic, uniting the achievements of the “secular age” with religious thinking and present also, among other things, in counter-secularizing tendencies, which can be found in that historical period traditionally characterized as the age of secular modernity. Such an interpretation of post-secularism is proposed based on a series of remarks by A. Mikhailovsky about the pendular character of modernity⁴², as well as a reflection about the meaning of the words “after” and the prefix “post-” in J. Manoussakis' work *God After Metaphysics*.⁴³

⁴² Mikhailovsky, A. V. *The Ontology of Fundrasing* (in Russian) // Sokrat. 2016. September. Pp. 90–91.

⁴³ Manoussakis. *God After Metaphysics*. P. 1.

The second chapter of the first part is entitled “New Religious Consciousness: The Intellectual-historical Context” and dedicated to the general context of discussions about “new religious consciousness”.

This chapter begins with the analysis of the historical preconditions to the emergence of the “new religious consciousness” movement. If we refer to studies by V. Zenkovsky and K. Antonov, we see a cultural polarization in Russia in the XIX century regardless of the way the official Church organized lay culture (within which there were religious thinkers as well, but they practiced theology in a language, different from that of the official hierarchs of the Church and sometimes opposed their theology to the discourse of the Church hierarchy), shaped by cultural, artistic and philosophical practices of European romanticism and German philosophy. The chapter points out the influence exerted onto the discussions about “new religious consciousness” by the political dimension of Russian religious life, within the frame of which Orthodox Christianity was the state religion, while deviation from it was considered a crime. This, due to the fact that most subjects of the Russian Empire were baptized in Orthodox Christianity meant state compulsion to a certain religious identity. For understanding discussions around marriage and sexuality, it is also important to pay attention to the practices of divorce in Tsarist Russia, regulated by church canons.

The chapter highlights V. Solovyov and F. Dostoyevsky as the most important thinkers, influencing the context of “new religious consciousness”. The dissertation uses a model developed by K. Antonov to characterize Solovyov's historiosophical model, describing the dialectic between medieval Christianity built on the principles of Church power and sacred statehood, secular culture which opposes itself to official Church, and the search for a new religious synthesis based on the ideas of freedom and humanism as a “metanarrative of the post-secular”. Dostoyevsky's main idea is pointed out to lie within his reflections on the Great Inquisitor, taken by theoreticians of the “new religious consciousness” not as a mere

literary image, but as a theological conception, opposing true Christianity to the principle of power, and as a guide to practical action.

Furthermore, the chapter presents a brief intellectual history of the very concept of “new religious consciousness”. This expression first appears⁴⁴ in Merezhkovsky's work *L. Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky* (1900–1902)⁴⁵, although he does not use it in this text as an extensive framework. He rather uses it as one of the characteristics of a new cultural and religious worldview and way of thinking, emerging among Russian intellectuals under the influence of reflections about Christianity in Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. Already in this work Merezhkovsky distinguishes between “new religious contemplation” in the sense of theory and “new religious action” as ecclesiastical and political practice presupposed by this theory and acting as its realization.

The expression “new religious consciousness” became a recognizable religious-philosophical concept most probably thanks to Berdyaev, who in 1905 published his article “On the New Religious Consciousness”⁴⁶, and in 1907 – his treatise *New Religious Consciousness and Society*.⁴⁷ After the publication of these works the concept of the “new religious consciousness” begins to actively feature in the public field as a designation for the conceptions of Merezhkovsky and Berdyaev, often perceived as intellectual allies.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Scherrer J. *Die Petersburger Religiös-Philosophischen Vereinigungen: Die Entwicklung des religiösen Selbstverständnisses ihrer Intelligencija-Mitglieder (1901–1917)*. Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin, 1973. S. 380.

⁴⁵ Merezhkovsky, D. S. *L. Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky* (In Russian). Moscow: Nauka, 2000.

⁴⁶ Berdyaev, N. A. *Sub specie aeternitatis. Articles Philosophical, Social and Literary*. Mohrsville: frsj Publications, 2019. Pp. 358-390

⁴⁷ Berdyaev, N. A. *New Religious Consciousness and Society* (in Russian). Moscow: Kanon+, 1999.

⁴⁸ For instance: Rozanov, N. P. “On the 'new religious consciousness' (Merezhkovsky and Berdyaev) (in Russian) // Berdyaev, N. A. *New Religious Consciousness and Society*. Moscow: Kanon+, 1999. C. 320–354.

For the intellectual history of the notion, an attempt at typologizing it by S. A. Askoldov⁴⁹, undertaken at the first meeting of Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg is also important, as it sets the tone for later discussions. The chapter underlines that, in solidarity with intellectual currents which critically assessed the ecclesiastical and political reality, contemporary to the discussion, Askoldov even in those currents distinguished between the “old religious consciousness”, adherents of which tend to reform the external ecclesiastical and political life based on Evangelical principles, and “new religious consciousness” proper, which reads Christianity as a theoretically incomplete or even false religion and tends to reexamine the primary maxims of Christian teachings.

In line with the methodology of intellectual history, the chapter analyzes the pragmatic semantics of the concept, built on the opposition of the “old religious consciousness” and the “new”. Within the frame of this opposition, the use of the very term turned out to be performative. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the semantics of the word “consciousness” in this formulation, which in many cases meant simply “worldview”, but presupposed a semantic possibility for constructing a philosophically reflexive gnoseology and a particular philosophy of mind constructed within the framework of “new religious consciousness”.

The third chapter of the first part is called “‘New Religious Consciousness’ as a Theory and Practice in the Merezhkovsky family” and is dedicated to reconstructing the religious-philosophical view of Merezhkovsky (and in part those of Z. Gippius and D. Filosofov), as well as the religious and political programme of the Merezhkovsky family, directed towards practical realization of ideas of the “new religious consciousness”.

⁴⁹ Askoldov, S. A. “On the Old and the New Religious Consciousness” (in Russian) // *The Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (Petrograd): A History in Materials and Documents, in 3 volumes*. Vol. 1. 1907–1909. Moscow: Russkiy put', 2009. Pp. 33–72.

The analysis begins from reconstructing the ideas which Merezhkovsky develops in his text *L. Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky* and which subsequently become associated with the concept of “new religious consciousness”. Key aspects here are as follows. First, there is Merezhkovsky's critique of ascetic Christianity for dividing “flesh” and “spirit”, as well as the opposition he poses between this divide and the idea of spirited flesh (Merezhkovsky understands spirited flesh a dialectical relationship between spirit and flesh: spirit is to be understood as distinguished from flesh, but distinguished positively and dialectically, which makes their synthesis possible, and not negatively and formally as a mere lack of flesh), i.e. we see here the unification of Christian spirituality with layman culture and politics (which Merezhkovsky at this point thinks as statehood), and also with sexuality. Second, there is Merezhkovsky's expectation that this unification be attained in the historical future. Finally, there is the interpretation, by Merezhkovsky, of the historical dialectic of “paganism” (religion of the flesh), ascetic Christianity (division between spirit and flesh: spirit is perceived as fleshless, while “flesh”, i.e. statehood, culture and the sphere of the sexual remain non-Christian, pagan) and the expected synthesis as historisophically necessary and providential.

As examples of a practical realization of the ideas of “new religious consciousness” at this stage, the chapter identifies the triadic union, effected between the Merezhkovskys and D. Filosofov as a “new church” with sacraments, resembling the Eucharist, as well as the initiation of Religious-philosophical gatherings in St. Petersburg. The chapter briefly highlights the main strategy of discussing key topics and ideas of “new religious consciousness” in the discussions of the gatherings based on gathering proceedings;⁵⁰ it also analyzes talks by Merezhkovsky and Filosofov and underlines the structural link between discussions about “truth of the heavens” and

⁵⁰ *Records of the Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Gatherings (1901–1903)* (in Russian) / ed. by S. M. Polovinkin. Moscow: Respublika, 2005.

“truth of the earth” at those meetings with the conception of “spirit” and “flesh” in Merezhkovsky's doctrine.

The chapter analyzes the change in Merezhkovsky's political position past 1905 and his transition to anarchism: now Merezhkovsky thinks the realization of the spirit in political flesh not as a Christian statehood, but as mystical anarchism, attained through real anarchic practice. Viewing the Tsarist government and the Orthodox Church which supported it as stemming “from the Antichrist”, Merezhkovsky finds atheist revolutionaries to be closer to true Christianity than followers of traditional Christianity. These ideas are developed by Merezhkovsky in his article volume *Not Peace, but a Sword*,⁵¹ which places its contemporary liberation struggle within the tradition of Russian political and religious free thinking, thus building up the myth of the unconscious religiosity of Russian revolutionary intelligentsia.

In that very same collection, Merezhkovsky forms his conception of the three testaments in its final form: he reads paganism as the “Testament of the Father”, Christianity as the “Testament of the Son”, fulfilling the promises of the “Testament of the Father”, while “new religious consciousness” and its practical realization in religious and political life are read as the advent of the “Testament of the Spirit”, which fulfills the promises of the “Testament of the Son”. Thus, the historiosophical dialectic of flesh and spirit is raised by Merezhkovsky to the conception of the Trinity.

The chapter moreover reconstructs, in broad strokes, the further intellectual and political evolution of Merezhkovsky's thought.

Upon completing the reconstruction of the “new religious consciousness” as a theory and practice created by the Merezhkovsky family, the chapter undertakes an analysis of the secular and anti-secular aspects of this phenomenon. It is underlined, that the theory of “new religious consciousness” was developed by Merezhkovsky

⁵¹ Merezhkovsky, D. S. “Not Peace, but a Sword” (in Russian) // *Not Peace, but a Sword*. Kharkov, Moscow: Folio, AST, 2000. Pp. 5–482.

with emphasis on cultural, intellectual, discursive and political secular practices, which lets us view it in terms of the remarks by K. Antonov and V. Zenkovsky about the influence of secular culture upon Russian religious philosophy when it comes to the latter developing strategies of religious thought alternative in relation to the discourse of the official Church. That said, “new religious consciousness” cannot be perceived as an exclusively secular phenomenon, since it encompasses the critique of a secular independence of culture and politics from God and the search of a new religious sociality and religious culture. The chapter reveals the post-secular logic of the conception which the “new religious consciousness” puts forth: while criticizing secular culture and secular political movements as independent from God and religion, Merezhkovsky sees the reason for this independence as lying within the divide, made by historical Christianity and the official Church, of “spirit” and “flesh” in the ascetic ideal; thus Merezhkovsky's critique of both secular culture as well as religious institutions is not paradoxical or contradictory, but logically follows from the genealogy of the secular he himself proposes. The conception of the “new religious consciousness”, proposed by Merezhkovsky, is read as a continuation of the “meta-narrative of the post-secular”, formulated by Solovyov and highlighted by K. Antonov. The key immanent logic here – one which, in its union with religious thought underlies Merezhkovsky's post-secular project – is that of liberation struggle.

The fourth chapter of the first part is entitled “New Religious Consciousness' Contra Christ: Rozanov's Strategy” and is dedicated to reconstructing the thoughts of V. Rozanov, logically adjacent to Merezhkovsky's ideas and influential when it comes to reflections about “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's oeuvre.

At its beginning, the chapter analyzes general features of Rozanov's religious philosophy characteristic for the period of discussions around “new religious consciousness”. The chapter cites and textually verifies remarks by K. Antonov concerning the peculiarity of Rozanov's methodology as identifying a “soteriological

logic”, proposed by historical Christianity, and criticizing this logic. Rozanov's reflections are viewed in the context of his project of analyzing Christianity as falling apart into “light” and “dark” “religious rays”; the integrated scope of this project is most clearly visible if we turn to two books by Rozanov: *By the Church Walls*⁵² and *In the Dark Religious Rays*⁵³. It is demonstrated that the combination of positive statements about Orthodox Christianity with a critique of Christianity in various texts by Rozanov in 1900–1910 is not contradictory or paradoxical. Rozanov himself divides the above texts into two books, using the prefaces to these books to point out the principles of this division: articles complimenting Orthodox Christianity describe “light religious rays” (the life of white clergy, the common Orthodox way of life and the like), while critical articles move to a deeper level of Christianity, to a religion of world-negation, established not only in monasticism, but in the Gospel itself. An analysis of Rozanov's talk entitled “Of Sweetest Jesus and the Bitter Fruit of the World” shows that Rozanov tended to understand the “light religious rays” as a trick of the “dark rays”, and he saw the latter as expressing the metaphysics of Christianity and Orthodoxy.

An analysis of Rozanov's project as a whole allows us to confirm the observation of K. Antonov, interpreting Rozanov's philosophy of sexuality as a continuation of his genealogy of religious power and religious violence. It has been demonstrated that the conception of “dark religious rays” was thought by Rozanov in relation to his critique of church violence in the history of Christianity and his contemporary reality.

The genealogy of religious power, accomplished by Rozanov, has been reconstructed on the basis of his talk “On the Foundations of Church Jurisdiction or On Christ – the Judge of All the Earth”, which was given at a meeting of the St.

⁵² Rozanov, V. V. *By the Church Walls* (in Russian). Moscow: Respublika, 1995.

⁵³ Rozanov, V. V. “In the Dark Religious Rays” (in Russian). // *In the Dark Religious Rays*. Moscow: Respublika, 1994. Pp. 95–435.

Petersburg Religios-philosophical gatherings.⁵⁴ Using the example of this article the sort of arguments Rozanov used to trace religious violence to the Gospel and Christ is presented.

Moreover, the chapter analyzes talks made by Rozanov at the meetings of the Religious-philosophical Society in St. Petersburg. In the talks made after that by Askoldov, where he proposed his understanding of the “new religious consciousness”, Rozanov explicitly presents his reflections as “new religious consciousness”,⁵⁵ according to Askoldov's classification, Rozanov's philosophy is really an expression of “new religious consciousness” *par excellence*. Rozanov formulated the most consistent version of his critique of Christianity in his talk “Of Sweetest Jesus and the Bitter Fruit of the World”, where he presented his understanding of Christianity and the person of Christ as the beginning of negating culture, the world and life – in other words, as the religion of death.⁵⁶ Rozanov opposed his reflections to the ideas of Merezhkovsky, who strove to synthesize Christianity with “flesh” and underlined that Christianity in its very metaphysics is wholly inimical to “flesh” and cannot be united with it.

Upon completing the reconstruction of Rozanov's position, its secular and anti-secular aspects are analyzed. The chapter emphasizes that Rozanov, just like Merezhkovsky, traced secularization to the metaphysics of Christianity, yet not only to its medieval forms, but rather to the Gospel and Christ. Rozanov, just like Merezhkovsky, undertook his critique on the basis of secular ideas and practices. The

⁵⁴ *Records of the Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Gatherings*. Pp. 462–474.

⁵⁵ Rozanov, V. V. “On the Necessity and Inevitability of New Religious Consciousness” (in Russian). // *The Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (Petrograd): A History in Materials and Documents, in 3 volumes*. Vol. 1. 1907–1909. Moscow: Russkiy put', 2009. Pp. 139–182.

⁵⁶ Rozanov, V. V. “On the Sweetest Jesus and the Bitter Fruit of the World (Concerning the Article by D. S. Merezhkovsky 'Gogol and father Matvey')” (in Russian). // *The Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (Petrograd): A History in Materials and Documents, in 3 volumes*. Vol. 1. 1907–1909. Moscow: Russkiy put', 2009. Pp. 139–182.

key immanent logic significant for Rozanov's project, is that of the value of the immediate lived world of a person and of the realization of sexuality in marriage.

The **second part** of the dissertation, entitled “The Dialectic of 'New Religious Consciousness' in the Formation of Berdyaev's Metaphysics” undertakes a historical reconstruction of the becoming of Berdyaev's metaphysics from 1902 to 1916 in the context of discussions about the “new religious consciousness” as well as the secular and anti-secular aspects of this latter.

In **the first chapter** of the second part, entitled “The Intellectual Evolution of Berdyaev during the Period of Exchange with the Merezhkovsky Circle” traces the changes in Berdyaev's philosophical position in 1902-1907, as influenced by exchanges and discussions with Merezhkovsky and Rozanov.

Using the example of the article “The Ethical Problem in Light of Philosophical Idealism”,⁵⁷ which was part of the collections *Problems of Idealism* (1902), the chapter highlights the main features of Berdyaev's views before his exchanges with the Merezhkovsky circle began. It is demonstrated that even before participating in discussions about the “new religious consciousness”, Berdyaev distinguished between “ideal” and “historical” Christianity, which permits us to say that Berdyaev's critical stance towards historical Christianity and the official Church was not due to the influence of “new religious consciousness”. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates that in this text already Berdyaev outlines the main features of his spiritualist personalist metaphysics on the basis of which he will later criticize variants of the “new religious consciousness” proposed by Merezhkovsky and Rozanov, as well as develop his own version of the doctrine.

⁵⁷ Berdyaev, N. A. “The Ethical Problem in Light of Philosophical Idealism” (in Russian). // *Problems of Idealism* [1902]. Moscow: Modest Kolerov, 2018. Pp. 113–164.

Berdyayev's interest in the topics of the “new religious consciousness” in 1903 (prior to his move to St. Petersburg in 1904 and before personal contact with Merezhkovsky) is reconstructed in the chapter on the basis of his article entitled “The Political Sense of Religious Agitation in Russia”, printed in the *Osvobozhdeniye* [Liberation] magazine and later printed in Berdyayev's collected works volume *Sub specie aeternitatis*⁵⁸. This article demonstrates Berdyayev's familiarity with Merezhkovsky's work *L. Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky*, as well as with the discussions of Religious-philosophical gatherings, the materials of which were printed in the *Novyy put'* [New Way] magazine. In the article, Berdyayev holds Merezhkovsky's religious-philosophical thought in high esteem, but already criticizes his position from this period as not anarchist enough.

As a text exemplary of the period characterized by the closest personal exchange between Berdyayev and Merezhkovsky, the chapter analyzes the article “On the New Religious Consciousness” (1905) mentioned above. In this work, Berdyayev expresses solidarity with the critique of historical church and asceticism for dividing “spirit” and “flesh”, presented by Merezhkovsky, and also with his conception of the three Testaments. That said, Berdyayev once again chides Merezhkovsky for being insufficiently anarchist and then points to the philosophical crudeness of the latter's conception. Berdyayev claims that the religious synthesis of “spirit” and “flesh” can be accomplished on the basis of a spiritualist ontology of a free person; so already in this article he outlines the main features of his own conception of the “new religious consciousness”. To this text, Merezhkovsky answers with an open letter entitled “On New Religious Action”, which was included in the aforementioned book “Not Peace, but a Sword”; in this letter Merezhkovsky accepts Berdyayev's technical criticism and expresses his readiness to accept the latter as the main philosophical theorist of the “new religious consciousness”, hoping that Berdyayev would join his group.

⁵⁸ Berdyayev, N. A. *Sub specie aeternitatis. Articles Philosophic, Social and Literary*. Mohrsville: frsj Publications, 2019.

After analyzing other articles from the collection “Sub Specie Aeternitatis”, important for the topic of the dissertation, this chapter reconstructs the conception of Berdyaev which he presents in his treatise *New Religious Consciousness and Society* (1907).⁵⁹ The continuity of this treatise in relation to the earlier critique of Merezhkovsky by Berdyaev is also demonstrated: while agreeing with Merezhkovsky's main ideas, Berdyaev nevertheless asserts that the core of the “new religious consciousness” must be occupied by the idea of the spiritual life of a person, transcendent in relation to the social order and political struggle. Taking into account that after 1905 Merezhkovsky moved on to seek an alliance with anarchists and terrorists, this treatise can be read as resolving the problem of maintaining anarchist theory in the domain of metaphysics while distancing oneself from anarchist political practice.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of Berdyaev's talk “Christ and World”,⁶⁰ which is a reply to Rozanov's talk “Of Sweetest Jesus”. In this text, Berdyaev points out that it is necessary to distinguish between the world as the fullness of genuine being and the world as everything that is at hand, and claims that Christ does not destroy the genuine world, but saves it. According to Berdyaev, Rozanov ignores the problem of death which exists in the world even without “sweetest Jesus” and from which Christ precisely saves man. He moreover interprets this ignoring as derived from Rozanov's under-appreciation of the personalist dimension of man's being. Berdyaev reads the negative manifestations of Tsarist power and the ascetic tradition not as a consequence of Christianity's transcendence with respect to the world, but as political tricks of the immanent world and its power relations. In his talk, Berdyaev demonstrates solidarity with the main ideas of the “new religious consciousness”, understood as a critique of the existing church and a

⁵⁹ Berdyaev, N. A. *New Religious Consciousness and Society* (in Russian). Moscow: Kanon+, 1999.

⁶⁰ Berdyaev, N. A. “Christ and World” (in Russian) // *The Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (Petrograd): A History in Materials and Documents, in 3 volumes*. Vol. 1. 1907–1909. Moscow: Russkiy put', 2009. Pp. 183–222.

tendency to synthesize Christianity with intellectual, political and artistic achievements of secular culture.

The second chapter of the second part is entitled “The Development of Ideas of 'New Religious Consciousness' in Berdyaev's works in 1909-1916” and is dedicated to clarifying the ideas and rhetorics of the “new religious consciousness” as well as the results of discussions with Merezhkovsky and Rozanov in those texts which are traditionally perceived as consequent on Berdyaev's break from the “new religious consciousness”.

The chapter begins with a brief analysis of Berdyaev's article “Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth,⁶¹ which was part of the *Vekhi: Landmarks* collection (1909); it demonstrates the continuity of the critique presented in it, with the strategy of critique developed by Berdyaev earlier to critique Merezhkovsky for insufficient philosophical sophistication of the ideas of the “new religious consciousness”; it is also underlined that Berdyaev adopts a rather amicable attitude towards Merezhkovsky in this text.

Subsequently, the chapter thoroughly analyzes Berdyaev's volume *The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia* (1910);⁶² it is pointed out that although, as was remarked by scholars,⁶³ in the introduction to the volume Berdyaev takes a radical step away from revolutionary political doctrines, in most articles of the collection he continues to develop ideas of “new religious consciousness” (using this very formulation, among other things), call for a synthesis between Christianity on the one hand and ideas of liberation struggle and humanism on the other, decisively critiques

⁶¹ Berdyaev, N. A. “Philosophical Verity and Intelligentsia Truth” // *Vekhi. Landmarks*. London: Routledge, 1994. Pp. 1-16.

⁶² Berdyaev, N. A. *The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia*. Mohrsville: frsj Press, 2015.

⁶³ For instance see: Kolerov, M. A. “*Not Peace, but a Sword. Russian Religious-Philosophical Printing from “Problems of Idealism” to “Vekhi”*. 1902–1909 (in Russian). Saint-Petersburg: Aletheia, 1996.

reactionary tendencies in the official Church and outlines an interpretation strategy which reads Orthodox Christianity as a religious teaching closest to the ideas of “new religious consciousness” in his own understanding of these ideas.

Furthermore the chapter points out strategies which Berdyaev adopted to develop his version of “new religious consciousness” in the treatise *Philosophy of Freedom* (1911).⁶⁴ The ideas and rhetoric of “new religious consciousness” presented in the treatise are analyzed in the chapter; it also demonstrates Berdyaev's radicalization of Merezhkovsky's idea of “the three Testaments” and the conceptualization of this idea through the dialectic of the triadic persons of God.

Finally, the chapter under discussion undertakes a thorough historical-philosophical reconstruction of Berdyaev's metaphysical conception, which is presented in a rather completed fashion in his treatise *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (written in 1912–1914, published in 1916).⁶⁵ The following aspects of influence, traceable to discussions about “new religious consciousness” are identified: first, the critique of ascetic Christianity and a search for an alternative “logic of salvation” which does not denigrate man before the transcendent God, instead synthesizing divinity with the cultural, artistic, political activity of man, and also with man's sexuality (understood, just like in Merezhkovsky's work and unlike in Rozanov, in a sublimated fashion); second, the use of the idea of “the third Testament” and the anticipation of a new revelation, that of the Holy Spirit; third, the historiosophical understanding of the dialectic of paganism, asceticism and new religiosity, hoped for by Berdyaev, as providential and related to the hypostases of the Trinity; fourth, the use of disparate concepts from Rozanov's thought (the thematization of Christ and world as the “two children” of God); fifth, maintaining a critical understanding of Christianity and the official Church based on the logic of liberation struggle; and finally, a critique of God's transcendence. The chapter demonstrates how the

⁶⁴ Berdyaev, N. A. *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Mohrsville: frsj Press, 2020.

⁶⁵ Berdyaev, N. A. *The Meaning of the Creative Act*. New York: Semantron Press, 2009.

metaphysics of creativity, developed by Berdyaev, where a free person immanently connects to divinity, resolves the problem of developing a version of the “new religious consciousness” (a synthesis of “flesh” and “spirit”, a critique of ascetic Christianity and the transcendent understanding of God withing religious authority and sacralization of power), alternative to Rozanov's metaphysics and Merezhkovsky's political practice.

Moreover, based on the treatise, Berdyaev's attitude towards secularization in this period is analyzed: while criticizing external religiosity and opposing it to mystical divine revelation in the creative experience of a free person, Berdyaev appraises secularization (using this specific term) of society positively, viewing it as a liberation of culture and politics from external religious control exerted by religious institutions, while also perceiving this secularization not as a goal in and of itself, but as a stage, necessary for the transition from the old religiosity to the new – free and immanent.

The chapter mentions that Berdyaev aspires to make his conception (as opposed to those by Merezhkovsky and Rozanov) the true expression of “new religious consciousness” and claims that true “new religious consciousness” is new religious anthropology.

The key immanent logic significant for Berdyaev's project of “new religious consciousness” is that of creative practices of the free person.

The third chapter of the second part is entitled “1916: Summing Up”, and is dedicated to formulating historical-philosophical and conceptual conclusions about the influence of discussions about “new religious consciousness” on the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics.

The chapter begins with reconstructing the attitude Berdyaev takes towards the version of “new religious consciousness” presented by Merezhkovsky, and which was formed by the end of intellectual dialog between the two thinkers. This

reconstruction is made based on Berdyaev's 1916 article "The New Christianity", which Berdyaev himself in 1944 planned to include, with only minimal revisions, in the collection *Types of Religious Thought in Russia*,⁶⁶ thus authorizing the claims of the article as his final judgment of Merezhkovsky's project. The chapter demonstrates that in this article Berdyaev begins to use the expression "new religious consciousness" as designating specifically the conception of Merezhkovsky and his circle in contrast to his own philosophy. In this very same work, Berdyaev criticizes Merezhkovsky's project of religious sociality as the very same kind of external consecration of politics, culture and life of the free person that, according to theoreticians of the "new religious consciousness" is offered by the traditional church. In his polemic with Merezhkovsky, Berdyaev once again turns to the topic of secularization and repeats his positive assessment of the process. Berdyaev also opposes his own personalist metaphysics, immanently united with divinity in the creative experience, to Merezhkovsky's project.

Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the critique of *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, presented in talks by Merezhkovsky and his intellectual comrades (foremost among them is A. Meyer) at a meeting of the Religious-philosophical Society in St. Petersburg dedicated to Berdyaev's work.⁶⁷ It is underlined that the harsh critique of the treatise by Merezhkovsky's circle was in many ways occasioned by Berdyaev's aspiration to become the thinker who articulates the most complete version of the "new religious consciousness". Turning to Berdyaev's reply⁶⁸ to the critique we see that this interpretation was not mistaken and that Berdyaev himself thought of his project of religious anthropology precisely in this manner.

⁶⁶ An experience of a partial reconstruction of this collection can be seen in the following book, edited by V. V. Sapov: Berdyaev, N. A. *Blurred Images. Types of Religious Thought in Russia* (in Russian). Moscow: Kanon+, 2004.

⁶⁷ Meyer, A. A. "New Religious Consciousness and the Work of N. A. Berdyaev" (in Russian) // *The Religious-Philosophical Society in St. Petersburg (Petrograd): A History in Materials and Documents, in 3 volumes*. Vol. 1. 1907–1909. Moscow: Russkiy put', 2009. Pp. 409–440.

⁶⁸ Article "New Religious Consciousness and History" in the aforementioned collection.

Subsequently the chapter examines the transformation of secular and anti-secular aspects of the “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's metaphysical conception. It is demonstrated that, while accepting the main ideas of Merezhkovsky's teachings about the “new religious consciousness” (his critique of ascetic Christianity and the official Church, his critique of the sacralization of power, his historiosophical idea of the “three Testaments” and its connection with the hypostases of the Trinity), Berdyaev reconceptualized them on the basis of his own personalist metaphysics of creativity, thus resolving the problem of distancing oneself from Rozanov's rejection of Christianity, as well as from the anarchist and religious practice of Merezhkovskys' “new Church”. Berdyaev, just like other theoreticians of the “new religious consciousness”, carried out his own critique of Christianity on the basis of secular values, practices and discourses. In his thought we also notice the post-secular dialectic characteristic for “new religious consciousness” – one that unites “spirit” and “flesh” with a critique of a secular independence from God. In this context, Berdyaev proposed an alternative to the transcendent understanding of God, namely, his religious anthropology, premised on the immanence of God in the creative experience of a free person, transcendent in relation to the material world, social order and political struggle. Taking the violent submission of human person, as well as culture and the political sphere to external religious power as the main problem of the “old religious consciousness”, Berdyaev appraised social secularization positively, taking it to be a stage on the way to the emergence of religious culture and sociality premised on an immanent unification of humanity with divinity in the creative experience.

The fourth chapter of the second part is entitled “Vectors of 'New Religious Consciousness' in Berdyaev's post-revolutionary metaphysics” and is dedicated to clarifying the ideas and strategies of the “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's

later metaphysical treatises.⁶⁹ The chapter underlines that, although after 1916 Berdyaev has stopped using the expression “new religious consciousness” as applied to his conception, he nevertheless continues to use the semantics of opposing the “new religious consciousness” to the “old”, replacing Merezhkovsky's expression with synonyms.

The chapter analyzes the development of the historiosophical model of “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's metaphysics of history and demonstrates the continuity of the latter with Merezhkovsky's doctrine of the “three Testaments”, as well as with its reconceptualization by Berdyaev as he distanced himself from the version of “new religious consciousness” proposed by Merezhkovsky. The chapter analyzes how Berdyaev's historiosophy relates to his position towards secularization, as well as to the reconceptualization of the categories of the transcendent and immanent in his personalist metaphysics.

Moreover, the chapter uncovers key ideas of the “new religious consciousness” in Berdyaev's later metaphysical treatises, namely: a critique of ascetic Christianity as lacking, a critique of external religiosity and the principle of sacralization of power, as well as the idea of the advent of a new eon and a new revelation of the Holy Spirit. Berdyaev's position on asceticism, as well as the political critique of ascetics is viewed as a development of those ideas he formulated in the polemic with Rozanov in 1907 and in the treatise *New Religious Consciousness and Society*.

The chapter undertakes a conceptual reconstruction of the relation between the aforementioned ideas of the “new religious consciousness” with the theory of objectivation developed by late Berdyaev, as well as the role played by discussions about the “new religious consciousness” in the formation of objectivation theory. In

⁶⁹ For instance: Berdyaev, N. A. *The Meaning of History*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006. Berdyaev, N. A. “The New Middle Ages” // *The End of Our Time*. San Raphael: Semantron Press, 2009. Berdyaev, N. A. *Freedom and the Spirit*. San Raphael: Semantron Press, 2009. Berdyaev, N. A. *The Destiny of Man. An Essay on Paradoxical Ethics*. San Raphael: Semantron Press, 2009. Berdyaev, N. A. *Spirit and Reality*. San Raphael: Semantron Press, 2009.

broad strokes, the chapter outlines the key positions of Berdyaev's late political philosophy, developed by the thinker on the grounds of his theory of objectivation, as well as his re-evaluation of Marx after the publication of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Berdyaev's views in this period are compared to his socio-political position from the time of discussions about “new religious consciousness”. The chapter demonstrates the key role that reconceptualizing the categories of the transcendent and the immanent – something undertaken by the philosopher in his personalist metaphysics within the framework of criticizing both traditional Christianity and alternative versions of the “new religious consciousness” in the period before 1916 – plays for his late social and political philosophy, which continues the main strategies of earlier texts.

That said, as is pointed out in the dissertation, in his later treatises Berdyaev stops referring to Merezhkovsky entirely and does not mention his name even in these passages where he is giving extensive lists of his intellectual predecessors.

Thus, the closing chapter of the dissertation points to the possibility of interpreting Berdyaev's late metaphysics as a continued endeavor to resolve the metaphysical problems posed by Merezhkovsky, as well as to formulate the conception of “new religious consciousness” alternative to Merezhkovsky and Rozanov.

Conclusion

The dissertation has examined the problem of applying the methodology of intellectual history and theories of secularization to a study of the history of Russian religious thought. It was demonstrated that precisely the use of such a framework is most productive for a scholarly explanation of the phenomenon of Russian religious philosophy. It was demonstrated how Taylor's theory of the “immanent frame” can be extended in the context of immanent logics, while the further course of investigation delivered an empirical confirmation of the developed methodology's scientific productivity. With reference to the above approach, secular and anti-secular aspects of those versions of “new religious consciousness” have been identified, which have directly influenced the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics – namely, the conceptions of Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. In order to outline the historical, religious, cultural and political situation, within the framework of which this movement was formed, the intellectual history of the development of ideas within this movement has been analyzed and the relation of this development to both concrete historical circumstances, as well as the institutional and discursive peculiarities of the discussions about “new religious consciousness” has been demonstrated.

Furthermore, the dissertation has reconstructed Berdyaev's philosophical evolution during the period when he developed his metaphysical conception as a version of “new religious consciousness”; this evolution was examined in the context of his relationship with the Merezhkovsky circle, as well as his polemic with Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. Through presenting the texts, written by Berdyaev during the period of clear dialog with Merezhkovsky and Rozanov, it was demonstrated how the formation of Berdyaev's metaphysics in his treatises *Philosophy of Freedom* and *The Meaning of the Creative Act* was influenced by the ideas of Merezhkovsky and Rozanov, as well as by the critical reappraisal of these ideas by Berdyaev. Using the example of the 1916 polemic, the main consequences of

Berdyayev's bread with Merezhkovsky were demonstrated. Finally, it was demonstrated how, within Berdyayev's metaphysics, one can identify secular and anti-secular aspects of “new religious consciousness” and which role was played, in the formation of Berdyayev's metaphysics, by post-secular dialectics – both as pertaining to the idea of “new religious consciousness” in general and to that version of this idea developed by Berdyayev himself.

Thus, the aim of the dissertation research – an integrated analysis of the influence of secular and anti-secular aspects of the “new religious consciousness” (understood both as Merezhkovsky's movement and his teachings as well as the concept proper to Berdyayev's philosophy) on the formation of Berdyayev's metaphysics – was attained.

The results, obtained in the course of a consequent resolution of the problems, posed in the current investigation, were summed up in the concluding sections of the dissertation. Those main conceptual conclusions of the dissertation which are of academic novelty have been formulated in the introduction as theses for defense.

Approbation of the work

Publications:

Articles which are published in journals indexed in international indexing and citation databases and included in the list of high-level journals by HSE

1. Pavlov I. I. “Christ and World: Metaphysical Argumentation in the Polemic between V. Rozanov and N. Berdyaev” // *Voprosy Filosofii*. 2019. № 10. Pp. 122-131.
2. Pavlov I. I. “The Dialectic of Secularization in Russia: Towards an Evaluation of Vasily Zenkovsky's *History of Russian Philosophy*” // *Gosudarstvo, Religiya, Tserkov' v Rossii i za Rubezhom*. 2019. Vol. 37. № 3. Pp. 253-276.
3. Pavlov I. I. “Contemporary Methodological Problems of Researching the Work of N. Berdyaev” // *Voprosy Filosofii* . 2021. № 10 [forthcoming].

Other publications on the topic of dissertation:

1. Pavlov I. I. “New Religious Consciousness' or Orthodoxy? Nikolai Berdyaev's Treatise *Spirit and Reality*”. // In collected volume: *Nikolai Berdyaev, the Great Kievan*. Kiev: Izdatelskiy Dom Dmitriya Burago, 2018. Pp. 311-326.
2. Pavlov I. I. “Three Centuries of Christian Enlightenment in Russia: the Becoming of Russian Europeanism (from Peter's Reforms to XX Century Neoreligious Renaissance)” (conference review) // *Voprosy Filosofii*. 2019. № 4. Pp. 213-219.
3. Pavlov I. I. “Around Frank: Context in Studies of the History of Russian Thought” // *Filosoficheskiye Pis'ma. Russko-yevropeyskiy Dialog*. 2020. Vol. 3. № 3. Pp. 220-229.

Conferences:

1. “Three Centuries of Christian Enlightenment in Russia: the Becoming of Russian Europeanism (from Peter's Reforms to XX Century Neoreligious Renaissance)” (Moscow, National Research University Higher School of Economics, 2018). Paper title: “Christ and World: The Polemic of Vasily Rozanov and Nikolai Berdyaev”.
2. “Russian Religious Philosophy in the Age of Post-secularism” (Moscow, National Research University Higher School of Economics, 2019). Paper title: “Religious Truth and Political Freedom: the Post-secular Philosophy of Nikolai Berdyaev”.
3. “Means of Thinking, Ways of Speaking” (Moscow, National Research University Higher School of Economics, 2020). Paper title: “The Problem of Christian Unity in the Philosophy of Vladimir Bibikhin: A Step Forwards or Backwards?”
4. “The Garden of Forking Paths” (Moscow, Russian State University for the Humanities, 2021). Paper title: “The Philosophy of Early N. Berdyaev in the Context of Discussions about the 'New Religious Consciousness': 1902-1916”.