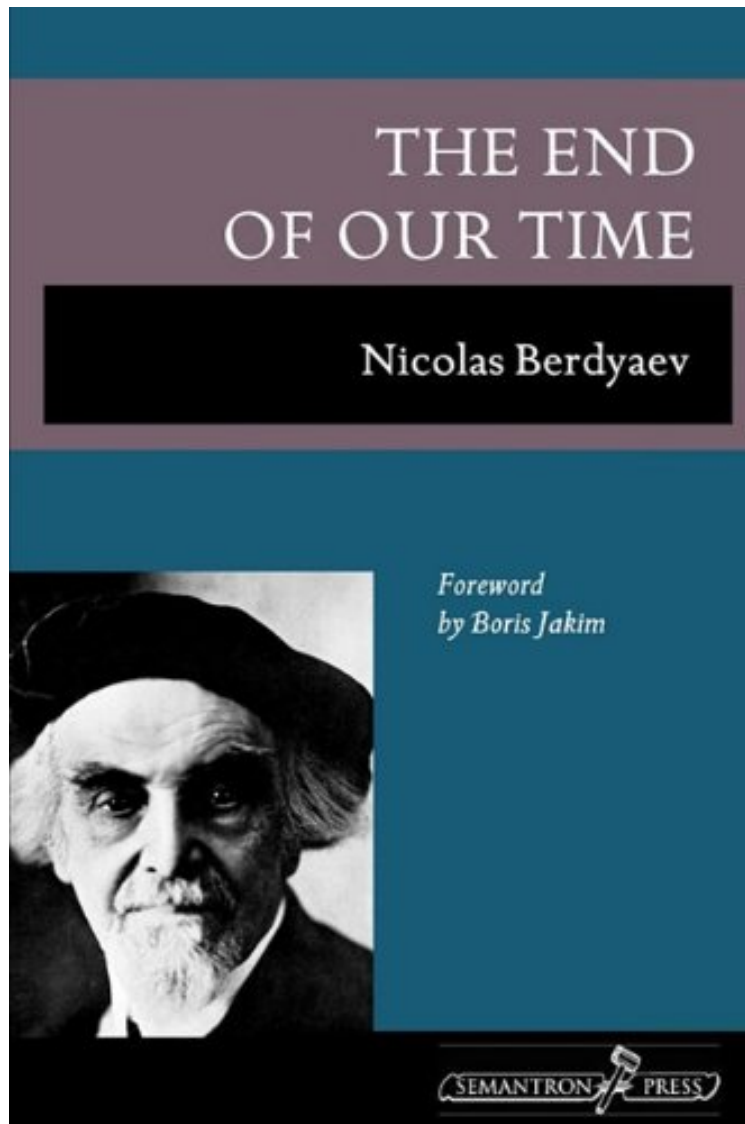


(Free pdf) The End of Our Time

## The End of Our Time

*Nicolas Berdyaev*

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**Nicolas Berdyaev : The End of Our Time** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The End of Our Time:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Amazing insight into our timesBy DECWritten about 80 years ago, Berdyaev seems to understand the plight of our culture better than most living pundits. I'm no expert in philosophy, theology, or history, but Berdyaev's initial essay, "The End of the Renaissance", provides a shape to the last 500 years of Western Civilization that I have never encountered before and makes more sense (to me, at least) than any other explanation I have yet come across.The problem, Berdyaev states, is the central paradox of the Renaissance: 1) Man is

connected to God, and 2) Man can do anything -- no God required. The Renaissance breaks down over the centuries as this paradox is revealed and responded to by great thinkers; finally, Nietzsche and Marx end the idea of man altogether, replacing humanity with the superman or the collective. World War I, a recent event at the time of this writing, was the final demonstration of the failure of the Renaissance. My summary of Berdyaev's argument is no replacement for the essay itself, and this essay is only the first of several in this book. I highly recommend this to anyone who seeks to understand how and why Western Civilization is disintegrating.<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Russian Conservatism Old and New  
By Edward Brynes  
Nicolai Berdyaev was a Russian Christian philosopher who has won new attention from Alexander Dugin and Vladimir Putin. 'The End of Our Time', published in 1924, is a volume of essays which envisioned the birth of a new Middle Ages. Beryaev might be described as a historical visionary. His aphoristic style can make it difficult to form a unified picture of his ideas. To Berdyaev, all of Europe, including Russia, was at the end of an epoch. "Modern history, now coming to an end, was conceived at the beginning of the Renaissance. We are witnessing the end of the Renaissance." Here was the final result of Humanism. After centuries of ascetic concentration on the inward and the spiritual, there was a bursting-out of human attention to the natural world. This exuberance lasted perhaps five hundred years, weakening as time went on. He wrote, "we have to pass through a new civilized barbarism, undergo a new discipline, accept a new religious asceticism before we can see the first light of a new and unimaginable renaissance." (In another book, 'The Meaning of History', the story of the decline is presented in full.) The author focuses on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with attention to Marx, Nietzsche, and Comte. They offered distortions of humanism which failed. Marx degraded humanity by dismissing every human consideration but material well-being. Nietzsche elevated one human of a hypothetical race, the Superman (whose values he did not state), and left humans to create their own values. Comte thought to create a Religion of Humanity, but such a faith had no divine potency and was naturally ignored. The Marxian denunciation was unsuccessful because "Man cannot support the loneliness into which the humanist epoch has cast him." In sum, the absence of any relation with the truly supernatural was for one reason or another unendurable. In the arts, the crisis took the form of meaningless content (collage art made out of junk) and philosophies in which the subjectivity of the individual perceiver went out of control. (Hermann Cohen and Husserl). It added up to a familiar story of decadence, but different from the version of Oswald Spengler because it was explicitly religious. Politically it adds up to two main outlooks: hyper-individualism (Nietzsche) or brutal collectivism (Marx). Russia is an especially acute case of this modern illness because she came to European modernity late, in the nineteenth century. "...we have not experienced the Renaissance itself and therefore have no memory of its richly creative past. ... The happiness of living freely among a free mankind has never been ours." In Berdyaev's third essay, the revolution is a cosmic event, caused partly by an inner religious failing. "Bolshevism has been embodied in Russia and triumphed there because I am what I am, because there was no real spiritual power in me ... it is my sin and an affliction that is visited on me. ... We can only receive it humbly, resisting its temptations to the utmost. being faithful to all sacred things. ... Morally it is wrong to suppose that the source of evil is outside oneself. ... A revolution is always anti-religious and anti-Christian but persecution has never been any danger to the Christian life. By persecution church will lose in numbers but gain in quality." "The most important concern in the social turmoil is religion. "Real religion is in the highest degree generalized and collective, and holds the first place in a society." (p.81) He goes on: "Communism proves it: it discards the modern independent and lay systems and demands a "sacred" society, the submission of all phases of life to the religion of Satan and Antichrist." Modern history is a process of emancipation and growing individualism, but based on no eternal principle, bringing on the egalitarian element, and producing a general leveling-down. Democracy became the right to error. Rationalism became confidence in individual reason, even when cut off from truth. Now no solid form of polity is left. The Reformation, and Protestant particularism, brought forth forms of nationalism of which the medieval world knew nothing, such as national independence movements and the atomization of Christendom. Nothing is left but the self as spiritual foundation. Because of this degradation to self, political discussion is reduced to crude alternatives -- Communism, Fascism, or capitalism, catering to material wants alone. The second essay, 'The New Middle Ages', give some idea of what the new society might be like. Berdyaev begins with a poem by Tyutchev on the evening, which the poet views as the beginning of the next day. The corrupted remains of the near past must be reintegrated into a new whole. Berdyaev appears to envision a process driven by long waves of expansion and contraction. Nothing could be more foolish than try to go back, even as little as the last hundred years. History follows a dialectical process whereby the developments of the past are incorporated into the future. The new realm, when finally it emerges from violence, will be hierarchically structured. The holding of power will be a duty rather than a right; government will be 'of the people' but not democratic; and work and self-denial will be basic values. Berdyaev does not align with a definite ideology, There is an essay, 'Democracy, Socialism, and Theocracy' which confirms in detail the dilemma. He points out the central problems of democracy: the concept of the popular will is oversimplified, and democracy is merely procedural, giving no idea of how the state is to be organized. Even Theocracy has so far proved inadequate because it arose from the states of the Reformation whose theocracy was merely symbolic. Berdyaev has recently been taken up by Alexander Dugin, who mentions this book in connection with his 'Fourth Political Theory'. Like Berdyaev, Dugin foresees a conflict between failed ideologies (although his are

different), with an eventual victory for something religious. Nonconforming religions are a basic part of the revival in conservatism both Russian and American.

This book is the philosophical fruit of Nikolai Berdyaev's first-hand experience of, and reflections on, the crisis of European civilization in the aftermath of the Great War and the Russian Revolution. Berdyaev tells us that the modern age, with its failed Humanism, is being replaced by a new epoch: "the new middle ages," an epoch of darkness, an epoch of the universal night of history. Berdyaev asserts that this night is a good thing: in this darkness, which is a return to the mysterious life of the spirit, the destruction inflicted by the previous period of "light" will be healed: "Night is not less wonderful than day; it is equally the work of God; it is lit by the splendor of the stars and it reveals to us things that the day does not know. Night is closer than day to the mystery of all beginning" (pp. 70-71, present volume).