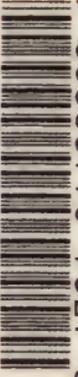


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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MODERN CHRISTIAN REVOLUTIONARIES

NICOLAS BERDYAËV
AND THE
NEW MIDDLE AGES

By
EVGUENY LAMPERT
Doctor of Philosophy

When the flight from God is over and the return to God begins, when the movement of aversion from God becomes a movement towards Satan, then modern times are over and the middle ages are begun. God must again be the centre of our whole life *N. A. Berdyaev*

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PREFACE

NICOLAS BERDYAEV is the first Russian philosopher (with the exception perhaps of the Russian novelists, whose work abounds in philosophical ideas) to have made himself heard not only in his native Russia, but in the West as well. His works have been translated into many languages, and have met everywhere with an appreciative and often enthusiastic reception. It would be no exaggeration to place his name beside those of the most outstanding modern thinkers, Henri Bergson, Max Scheler, Nicolas Hartmann, Heidegger, and others. It may be said that in the person of Berdyaev Russian philosophy first faced the judgment of Europe, and indeed of the whole world.

To anyone who has read Berdyaev's books the difficulties of writing about him or of systematizing the conflicting ideas of his rich and diverse thought are obvious. While writing the present short essay I constantly came across this difficulty. The only circumstance which seemed to lighten my task was a certain affinity with his thought, and above all with his problems.

I am no upholder of the well-known principle of enquiry *sine ira aut studio*, "detachedness", for the simple fact that it cannot be attained, at least in living human thought. It is scarcely possible to know and understand the mind of an author unless one is capable of entering into it sympathetically, and in some sense of *identifying* oneself with it; those who aim at "scientific objectivity" and an impersonal neutrality are threatened with intellectual barrenness. Hence this book, being an attempt at expounding Berdyaev's thought, bears with it some of my own convictions: otherwise I would never have ventured to write it.

I should like to make it quite clear that the limits imposed on me by the purpose and size of this book made it quite impossible to exhaust the whole content of Berdyaev's thought. I have been compelled to disregard some of its important aspects, and to single out only the decisive tendencies which have bearing on his general outlook. This applies especially to section 3, where I have endeavoured to do the impossible—namely, to describe in a few pages both Berdyaev's philosophy and theology as well as his teaching about man. Such a description has inevitably entailed a discussion of some complex problems which may seem hard of access to the average reader. It would, however, do little justice to Berdyaev to over-simplify them or to disregard them altogether. Moreover their relevance is not confined to Berdyaev's thought, but is actually of general importance.

I should like to express my gratitude to Father Victor White, O.P., who, while disagreeing with some of my conclusions, has helped me with many valuable constructive criticisms and suggestions, and above all to my wife, without whose help the book could never have been written.

I have the kind permission of The Centenary Press and of Messrs. Sheed & Ward to quote from the translations of Berdyaev's books published by them respectively.

E. L.

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* *The Origin of Russian Communism*. Published only in French and English. (English translation by R. M. French, The Centenary Press, 1937.)

* *Slavery and Freedom of Man*. Paris, 1940. (English translation by R. M. French to be published by The Centenary Press.)

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1

The Russian Spiritual Renaissance

THE personality and thought of Nicolas Alexandrovich Berdyaev takes us back to the spiritual movement in Russia towards the beginning of the twentieth century. This was a time of a stirring of creative forces, of great spiritual and intellectual awakening and searching. Whole new worlds seemed to be revealed in those years. It is now clear that this period marked a true cultural renaissance in Russia, a renaissance of philosophy, literature, art; and above all a very great intensification of religious consciousness. Russian culture has never burnt with such a flame as then. Men of extreme sensitiveness and openness to every breath of the Spirit appeared on the horizon of Russia's life. There occurred violent and sudden transitions from Marxism to Idealism, from aestheticism to mysticism and religion, from atheism to Christ and the Church, from materialism and positivism to Christian metaphysics and Christian philosophy. It is true that, alongside genuine religious searching and the awareness of deep spiritual crises, there was also a fashion for "bogus" mysticism, for occultism and all kinds of pseudo-religion. Yet there undoubtedly emerged a new type of man, with a tremendous realization of the depths of life. This inner reorientation was connected with the change from an exclusive concern with the "things of this world," prevalent for so long among the Russian intelligentsia, to a rediscovery of "other worlds" and other dimensions. And there began a passionate struggle in the name of this new vision.

The spiritual crisis was bound up in the first place with a disintegration of the traditional outlook of the Russian

intelligentsia, of its exclusively social bias: it was the final break with the Russian "Enlightenment," with positivism in the wide sense of the term. Minds began to be freed from the bonds of purely utilitarian values. During the second half of the nineteenth century a type of Russian became prevalent in whom the whole religious energy inherent in the people of Russia was concentrated in the social problem. There was a great truth in this concern: yet the spirit came to be too much absorbed in the waging of the social struggle. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, however, an almost sudden change took place: the wholeness of a merely social world-outlook was broken up, and war was declared for the rights of the spirit and the inner life, for the spiritual and spiritually creative nature of man, and his ultimate independence of social utilitarianism and social progress. Of course, this did not mean that the social problem ceased to disturb men's minds. On the contrary. But a kind of revaluation came about, as a consequence of which the social problem itself was faced in a freer and more creative way.

At the head of this movement were two outstanding men, who may without exaggeration be called the prophets of the spiritual renaissance in Russia: Nicolas Berdyaev and Sergius Bulgakov (the latter is now a priest and the most prominent theologian in the contemporary Russian Church). Berdyaev was born in Kiev in 1874 of an aristocratic military family and was educated in a military school. While a student he was expelled from the university owing to his socialistic views and activities. At the age of twenty-five he was exiled for the same reason from Kiev to the north of Russia, and early in 1917 was again threatened with banishment. He opened his literary career in 1900 with a work on *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy*. After the October Revolution he

was appointed to the chair of philosophy in the University of Moscow, but after twice undergoing imprisonment was expelled by the new government.

I would like to add to this biographical note a personal recollection, although this must of necessity be difficult since he is, I am assured, still alive, but has been arrested, this time by the German authorities of occupation in Paris.

Berdyayev seemed to have an almost irresistible personal charm; it was somehow quite impossible not to be delighted to meet him—a fact I observed in many people, even amongst those whose views were strongly opposed to his. This was due to the exceptional warmth of his heart, his great kindness and generosity, although personally he often seemed reserved and reticent. One never felt in him any sign of ambition and rivalry, which is such a rare quality in the literary world. Yet he never failed to advocate his own spiritual convictions strongly and even passionately. It was strange to think that beneath the outer calm and harmony there lay hidden a “wandering” soul, for ever agitated by moral and intellectual problems, by struggle and disquietudes.

Berdyayev's house in Clamart (Paris) was a model of cordiality and hospitality, and a real intellectual centre for French as well as Russian circles.

Berdyayev and Bulgakov first proclaimed their message, together with other Russian thinkers, S. Frank, P. Struve, M. Ternavtsev, M. Gershenzon and others, in a symposium of articles under the general title *Landmarks*. It was a kind of manifesto, and produced a real revolution in thinking Russian circles. Previously to this, on the initiative of the same persons and with close collaboration of the writer Dmitry Mereshkovsky (died 1940), a whole series of so-called “Religious Philosophical Societies”

were founded in Moscow, Petersburg (Leningrad) and Kiev. The meetings of these societies, at which extremely lively discussions on the most burning religious, philosophical and social questions took place, had a remarkable response and attendance, although the government looked with a great deal of suspicion on them.¹ The book *Landmarks* and these societies became one of the most vivid expressions of the spiritual ferment in Russian society, and the channel for the thought of that time.

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This spiritual renaissance had several sources. However strange it may seem, one of them was Russian Socialism and Marxism of the 'nineties—at first, critical rather than orthodox Marxism.² Berdyaev himself was a Marxist, and himself experienced a change from Marxism to Idealism, and then to Christianity. This Marxism of the 'nineties, as Berdyaev himself has explained, already presented itself as a crisis in the consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia. It revealed a great cultural intensification and awakening of spiritual and intellectual interests unknown to the older intellectuals, who were infected with many evils of West-European positivism.

¹ Berdyaev recounted how much later, after the October Revolution, the meetings of one of these societies, which had by then assumed a rather different character, attracted such a number of people that he as president received a warning from the authorities that the floor of the university hall in Moscow where they took place was threatened with collapse. Mereshkovsky gave his impressions of the meetings: "It was as if the walls of the hall dissolved, and revealed endless vistas; this comparatively small meeting became the threshold of the Universal Church. Speeches were made which sounded like prayers and prophecies. In this fiery atmosphere it seemed that all things were possible: a miracle was about to happen; the barriers dividing men would collapse, and the reunion and integration of all would come about. . . ."

² Cf., "Russian Religious Psychology" in *The Russian Revolution*. This is a very valuable essay, which discusses some of the processes described in the present chapter.

This became manifest above all in philosophy. Some of the Russian Marxists with a deeper intellectual culture had from the very first adopted the idealistic philosophy of Kant and the neo-Kantians, and tried to combine it with the social system of Marx. This line of thought was represented by Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Struve and several others. Marxism by its very nature cleared the way for the creation of broad and integral historical and philosophical conceptions. In his first book, *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy*, Berdyaev already tried to formulate a synthesis of Marxism and Idealism. And more than any other Marxist of his school he professed a kind of messianism of the proletariat. Nevertheless, although Berdyaev belonged sociologically and politically to the extreme left and revolutionary wing of the Marxists, he was in fact never a thoroughgoing materialist. "I never believed in a 'class-truth' or 'class-justice,'" he says. Then, as always, Berdyaev's attitude to truth was, so to say, an absolute one; and all his religious and philosophical aspirations are a search for the Absolute. Berdyaev is truly a *pèlerin de l'absolu*, "pilgrim to the Absolute," to use an expression of the Catholic writer Léon Bloy (whom, incidentally, Berdyaev greatly admires). "Truth and justice are absolute and are rooted in the transcendent; they are not of social origin," he wrote in one of his first books, *The Problems of Idealism*. But Berdyaev attempted to build up a theory according to which the psychological and social consciousness of the proletariat (as the class free from the sin of exploitation and itself exploited) is pre-eminently open to transcendent reality, to the realities of absolute truth and justice. This psychological consciousness, in its turn, was defined in his view by economic and class conditions. In this way he attempted to overcome the materialistic element in Marxism and to combine the

latter with a belief in the absolute truth and meaning of life. He had often on this account to defend himself against the attacks of his political collaborators, especially Lunacharsky, Bogdanov and Plekhanov, later outstanding leaders in the bolshevik revolution of 1917. He was accused of heresy, and it was predicted that he would end in religion and Christianity. These prophecies were fulfilled.

Another source of the cultural renaissance was literature and the arts. By the end of the nineteenth century the Russian public had changed its attitude towards art and aesthetic values. Nihilism in relation to art (*e.g.*, Pisarev and his school, who rejected art altogether or admitted it only as "useful for the purpose of educating a scientific intelligentsia") was finally overcome, and artistic creativity was freed from mere social utilitarianism. Volynsky, Mereshkovsky and Shestov were some of the first in this re-orientation. It expressed above all a new attitude to the Russian literature of the nineteenth century, which the earlier social and literary criticism was never able fully to appreciate. Philosophical and religious-philosophical criticism now became prevalent. The enormous importance of the work of Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky was realized, and their decisive influence on the Russian consciousness and ideological tendencies began. Berdyaev himself was greatly indebted to Tolstoy¹ and, especially, to Dostoevsky.²

The artistic revival very soon assumed a specifically Christian colouring. The main problem which had to be faced was that of the Christian justification of art and culture in general. In 1902 new societies were organized in Petersburg, at which there even took place meetings

¹ Cf., his article on Tolstoy in *Put* ("The Way"), No. 11. 1928.

² A very interesting study by Berdyaev of Dostoevsky has appeared in an English translation. See list of books.

between writers and the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹ Besides subjects relating to literature (in particular Tolstoy and Dostoevsky) a whole series of problems associated with the name of Rozanov were raised. Vassily Rozanov, the peculiar and original Russian counterpart of the English D. H. Lawrence, was a prophet of the religion of life, of vitality, and sought for a Christian justification of love, sexuality, culture, art—in short, of the “flesh,” as he called it.

At the same time the influence on Russian literature and on the Russian reading public of Western elements began to be felt: French Symbolism, Ibsen, Wagner, and especially Nietzsche. The last-named, interpreted in a peculiarly Russian way, was in fact one of the inspirers of this whole movement, which fact may have given it a certain amoralistic tinge.² Strangely enough, Berdyaeu was particularly influenced by Ibsen among the Western writers, not so much by his artistic genius (which is negligible) as by his general feeling for life. It was above all by Dostoevsky and Ibsen that the acute awareness of the problem of personality and the personal destiny of man was aroused in Berdyaeu. It may be noted here that from the very beginning these problems had a religious connotation for him and became the very heart of his whole outlook.

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Finally, the third source of the renaissance was the nineteenth-century Russian religious philosophy, to whose traditions many returned. This philosophy was repre-

¹ A specially prominent member of the Russian clergy was Sergius Starogrodsky, then archbishop of Finland, now patriarch of Moscow and head of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union.

² Cf., Shestov's *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* (German translation, Marcon Verlag, Cologne, 1924.)

sented primarily by the Slavophiles,¹ who in their turn were to some extent influenced by the German romantic philosophers, especially F. G. Schelling, F. Baader and others. The Slavophiles created the first original school of philosophy in Russia. This philosophy tried to overcome the abstract rationalism and idealism of Western thought, and aspired to build what may be described as a philosophy of concrete, organic realism. The names of Alexis Khomiakov and I. Kireevsky, Nicolas Feodorov and Vladimir Solovyev (the latter two being only indirectly associated with the Slavophiles) are perhaps the most outstanding in this connexion. At the beginning of the twentieth century the works of these philosophers began to be read again, and Khomiakov and Solovyev left a special mark on Berdyaev. Among the German philosophers, he was mainly influenced by F. X. von Baader, through whom he came to know Jacob Böhme, the German mystic of the end of the sixteenth century, the meeting with whose works, as Berdyaev himself repeatedly states, was a great event in his life. We shall see later that in some respects this meeting was the cause of considerable ambiguities in Berdyaev's Christian philosophy.

The age of positivism and hostility to metaphysics, still flourishing in the West, had closed in Russia. Much of what was later said by Max Scheler, N. Hartmann, M. Buber, and other so-called "existential" philosophers was expressed long before by Russian thinkers in the early

¹ The Slavophiles represented that movement in Russia which expressed the belief that Russia has a unique endowment and mission in world history, because she had received the pure tradition of Christianity and an essentially Christian culture. They did not consider Russia in any way superior to, but merely different from, the West, and Russia's universal duty was to be herself and not to imitate Western civilization, as their opponents the *Westerners* wanted her to do. Some of the Slavophiles saw in Russia the germs of a new culture that was to displace the disintegrating rationalized civilization of the West. They to a large extent anticipated the ideas of Oswald Spengler (cf., *Untergang des Abendlandes*), without however sharing his simplifications and onesidedness.

years of this century. Actually, positivism never had a really decisive import on the more important thinkers in Russia; but it was only from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards that Christian problems began to determine their whole manner and style of thought.

The thinking Russian returned to Christ: a real "pilgrimage" to the Church had begun. Yet the return was to the Church and to Orthodoxy as restated by Khomiakov rather than as represented in official theology. And this meant a kind of novelty in Russian Orthodox soil. Khomiakov was surely a "modernist," an innovator, even a reformer. His teaching on the catholicity (*sobornost*) of the Church is not strictly traditional, though his concern is deeply of and with the Church. His Orthodox and Russian consciousness had assimilated and absorbed the experience of European humanism, transcended and transformed: this is evident particularly in his teaching about freedom in the Church and in his rejection of external authority in Christian life.¹ All this is very close to Berdyaev's outlook, and is felt throughout his whole work.

Nevertheless the "modernistic" character of this whole

¹ Khomiakov's doctrine of the Church, so important for the understanding of the paths of Russian theology, is expounded exhaustively in Gratieux's admirable study, *A. S. Khomiakov et le Mouvement Slavophile*, vol. II, published in the series "Unam Sanctam," Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1939. Cf., also *The Church of God*, an Anglo-Russian symposium (S.P.C.K., 1934); Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (The Centenary Press, 1935); and Zernov, *The Church of the Eastern Christians* (S.P.C.K., 1942). The Russian word *sobornost*, which is a key-term in Khomiakov's ecclesiology and, indeed, in the religious thought of nearly all modern Russian thinkers, while roughly corresponding to the English noun "catholicity," contains a wealth of meaning not found in any equivalent English word. It suggests the idea of "all-togetherness," of "congregationalism," of catholicism as a spirit in which all work together creatively and to which all contribute. It is certainly not new, but rather a re-discovery of a fundamental Christian conception, but it is very important for the understanding of how Russian Christians approach the problem of the relations between the individual and society.

movement is profoundly different from Western Modernism or Liberalism in the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Churches. Its *motifs* were not to adjust Christianity to the level and demands of contemporary science, or even merely to translate it into the terms of modern thought. Its *motifs* were religious, mystical, and even eschatological. There was, above all, as it were an expectation of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world, and hence the revelation of a positive Christian attitude to culture and social life, the revelation of the truth about the "earth," and of the Christian meaning of human creativeness: it comprised a new vision of the mystery of God-manhood, of which Solovyev had already spoken, the vision of God in the world, in history, in man, and the vision of the world and man in God. And ultimately these aspirations sprang from a deep realization of complete rootedness in the life of the Church.

In the Russian philosophy of that day various trends and shades can be distinguished. There was in the first place a strong tendency to return to the tradition of Platonism and the Eastern church fathers, which had been to a large extent forgotten by official Russian theology. Actually Solovyev had already experienced a reorientation in the Platonic direction; but now there was an attempt at giving it a more patristic and Orthodox foundation. This trend was represented by P. Florensky, a brilliant theologian and mathematician,¹ and by Sergius Bulgakov, who began as a free religious thinker and publicist, but later gave his philosophy the character of a theological system. This school of thought expressed what may be termed a *cosmic* outlook, which is probably altogether typical of Orthodoxy, and in particular of Russian

¹ Cf., "The Successors of Solovyev" (Trubetsky, Bulgakov and Florensky), by N. Lossky in *Slavonic Review*, No. 7, London, 1924

Orthodoxy. So-called Sophiology is bound up with this cosmic orientation.¹ Its main concern is with the problems of the transfiguration and deification of the world, of the meaning of creaturehood, of God transcendent and immanent, etc.

Berdyaev did not actually range himself with this Platonic sophiological school. His thought was always *anthropological* rather than cosmological in emphasis: his fundamental problems are freedom, personality, creativeness. This was, however, strictly but a matter of emphasis, in so far as both points of view are quite inseparable and mutually dependent. It merely points to the fact that the new religious thought was in no way a uniform and finished "school," but a very complex movement. Most of the Russian thinkers of this time had several features in common. They were concerned with the problem of the cosmic destiny of man and his supreme relatedness to God. They all recognized that there is some kind of affinity and ultimate "commensurability" between God and man; they all visualized the drama of salvation as related to and linked up with the drama of divine and cosmic life. They all opposed to rationalism (which allows the expression of the mysteries of divine and human life through the medium of purely intellectual concepts) a kind of intuitive, mystical knowledge, and emphasized the great paradox and dialectical character of the Christian revelation.

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This religious renaissance had its limitations, and its weakness lay above all in the lack of a real social basis. It remained to a great extent within a cultural *élite*, without touching the broader masses of the people. And

¹ See Bulgakov's *The Wisdom of God* (Williams & Norgate, 1937) for a general introduction to Sophiology.

this solitude grew as time went on. Even in the past the path of Russian culture has been intensive rather than extensive: there has seldom been a broad enough cultural environment and tradition; each decade has usually taken a new direction. And though it seemed that the youthfulness of Russia's culture foreclosed any possibility of decadence, yet, owing to the gulf between the upper and lower layers and a kind of uprootedness of the cultural *élite*, it now became possible for decadence to manifest itself. Such disparity is equally, and perhaps even in a greater degree, true of modern Western Europe—a fact which, as we shall see later on, Berdyaev has shown in his diagnosis of West-European culture. A very typical representative of such decadence in Russia was the exceptionally brilliant writer and symbolist Vyacheslav Ivanov.¹ Even Berdyaev and his collaborators were carried away. People seemed to live in different, separated worlds, on different planets. There was, indeed, a tremendous intensification of thought and spiritual sensitivity, but no firm concentration of the will on a real transformation of life.

The Russian revolution at once revealed this terrible disparity. The masses of the people changed from a more or less naïve Orthodox faith to a naïve materialistic and atheistic one; and the cultural centre was simply overthrown. There occurred a disruption of Russia's cultural heritage, a break of cultural tradition, such as was unknown even in the French Revolution. It is only in the last few years that Russia has begun to rediscover her cultural sources and treasures. Many of the old *élite* were unable to withstand the spiritual crisis of the revolution: they veered wildly to the "right." All the complex

¹ See *Modern Russian Poetry*, an anthology chosen and translated by B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky (John Lane, 1922); *cf.*, especially the symbolists.

religious problems raised at the beginning of the century disappeared, and were replaced by very elementary reactions against the persecution of the Church and Christianity, which in point of fact, in spite of all its horrors, was to a great extent inevitable and providential. Reactionary and nihilistic apocalyptic moods began to hold sway among Christians. Many were unable to grasp the positive religious meaning of the revolution and its inmost inevitability in the destiny of Russia. Berdyaev was one of the few exceptions in this new predicament. Through the experience of the revolution he withstood all decadent leanings, and became aware of the new problems of social reconstruction; he came to realize that (in his own words) "the problem of bread is not only a material, but a spiritual one." And the discovery of the universal meaning of the revolution became one of the main themes in the subsequent development of his social thought.

In the autumn of 1922 Berdyaev, together with a group of professors and writers, was expelled from Russia. He went to Berlin, where he founded the Religious Philosophical Academy, which was meant to carry on the tradition of the "Religious Philosophical Societies" in Russia, but now in a completely new environment, in exile. A new epoch began. Russian religious thought came out, as never before, to meet the West-European spiritual world. The organic bond with the spiritual and cultural past of Russian thought was kept alive, so far as this was possible in the difficult conditions of exile, and at the same time something new emerged out of the catastrophic experience of the immediate past and the encounter with the West. In this new situation it was Berdyaev who played a most outstanding, indeed prophetic, part.

Thinker and Fighter

PHILOSOPHICAL works are of two kinds: some lead us through intricate systems, like hitherto unknown lands; others bring us into direct personal contact with the philosopher himself. The books of Nicolas Berdyaev have always been of the second kind. In all his intellectual approach and manner of thought he is nearer to such thinkers as Pascal, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche than to such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas or Kant. Every book of Berdyaev's (and there are twenty-seven of them, not counting essays and articles) is a kind of philosophical confession, in which the author expresses himself. Instead of separate themes, "objects" and fragments of reality, it presents an integral, vital, personal vision of the world in its relatedness to God and to man. To use Berdyaev's own language, all his books, and indeed all his thought, are not "objective," but "existential." Each one of them is a stage, the present moment of his own spiritual destiny. They are characterized less by any particular subject than by the angle of vision from which the author's living thought, ever moving, yet remaining fundamentally true to itself, views the world. That is why there is no more adequate and attractive introduction to Berdyaev's philosophy than himself; to understand him and enter his spiritual world one should read his books.

Thought such as this does not prompt "criticism." The reader of Berdyaev's books may be conscious of disagreeing with him in many things. He nevertheless will consistently feel the power and integrity of Berdyaev's philosophy and will realize that it is thought and lived out to the end, so that any particular affirmation which

may provoke disagreement is bound up with his fundamental feeling for life. Now, it is hardly possible to maintain that this feeling for life is actually wrong or unsound. It may perhaps be said that it is one-sided, as all human prognostications are. It may be opposed by another point of view, equally one-sided: but this will not render it less valuable or important. Berdyaev's thought is such that it imperatively demands a response, an answer: "demands," precisely because it presents a challenge to that indivisible part of us which is both *conscience* and *consciousness*. Perhaps no one among modern Christian thinkers arouses, moves and inspires us in this way more than Berdyaev.

His manner of thought is defined by the fact that in his own works he as it were discovers for himself that which God has bid him discover. "God expects from me a free creative act," he writes in the introduction to his *Freedom and the Spirit*. "My freedom and my creative activity are my obedience to the secret will of God, who expects from man something much more than what is usually meant when we speak of his will. . . . All the forces of my spirit and of my mental and moral consciousness are bent towards the inward understanding of the problems which press so hard upon me. But my object is not so much to give them a systematic answer, as to put them more forcibly before the Christian conscience . . ."

Thought, then, is above all the unfolding of the thinker's own awareness of life, of his own experience, and witnesses to his own relation to the sources of being: it is not a construction of concepts or ideas, but search and acceptance, question and response, challenge and counter-challenge.

Here Berdyaev not only follows the path of contemporary "existential" philosophy, but shows his affinity with the Russian philosophical tradition, which literally grew out of such questionings of the human spirit.

Berdyaev has emphasized more than once the "antinomic" and paradoxical character of his writings (*e.g.*, in *Freedom and Slavery of Man*), and thus expresses one of the fundamental characteristics of his thought. It often includes affirmations which appear to be logically contradictory; yet it is just this which seems to make it true to life, which is wholly pervaded by contradictions, conflicts and unevennesses. May it not be that the meaning of Christian life consists in the power to experience and resolve such tragedies and contradictions, and the task of Christian philosophy to give them expression? But neither the paradoxical character of Berdyaev's philosophy, nor, incidentally, the wide range of problems (religious, philosophical, ethical, sociological, political, historical, aesthetic, literary, etc.) which he explores in his books, breaks its essential unity. His books are not "scientific" works, nor are they written according to any specific philosophical or theological method. They belong to no school of theology or philosophy; they are, to use his own language, "prophetic" rather than "scientific." Berdyaev deliberately avoids the terminology of the schools. His work is what he calls "free prophetic philosophy," with all the partial and incomplete utterances of a prophet. "I have deliberately overstepped," he says, "the limits of philosophical, theological and mystical knowledge, so dear to the Western mind, as well in Catholic and Protestant circles as in the sphere of academic philosophy" (*op. cit.*). Altogether, if by philosophy be understood a systematic or historical inquiry into the nature of certain laws and principles of knowledge, of being, substance, cause etc., then Berdyaev is not a philosopher at all: which does not prevent him from being a great and original thinker.

This unsystematic character of his thought is enhanced by his peculiar style, which some have described as

“tautological”: he hammers out his thought by constant repetition of the same ideas and even the same words and phrases, which incidentally makes it extremely difficult to translate him adequately into any foreign language. Yet this style acts like the repeated blows of a sculptor’s chisel cutting out the complete and finished embodiment of an idea.

§

Berdyaev can hardly be described as a “Russian Orthodox theologian,” for which he is often taken in the West; neither is he an “official” representative of Orthodox church-doctrine. In the first place, it is extremely difficult to attach any meaning whatever to terms like “official representation” and “officially representative” of the Church, particularly from the point of view of the Orthodox conception of the Church. Moreover, the Orthodox Church has (maybe fortunately rather than unfortunately) no “official” philosophy. But above all Berdyaev philosophizes and speaks about God, about Christ, about man, and not as it were in the capacity of a “handmaid” of theology; he propounds philosophy not as a kind of instrument for use in pursuit of aims established by religious dogma—in other words, not as an apologist does, but rather as an advocate of the God-willed, creative cognitive activity of man, emphatically as an advocate of human philosophy, of human love for the truth, of the creative gift of man to surpass himself and partake of this truth. In Berdyaev this attitude is bound up with the fundamental idea of *God-manhood*, to which we shall return later on, which is for him a witness to the calling of man to creative inter-action with God both in life and thought. “No theology can regulate the process of my knowledge from outside and impose a norm: knowledge is free. But I

cannot any longer realize the purpose of knowledge without . . . undergoing a religious initiation into the mysteries of Being. . . ." (*The End of Our Time.*)

Thus he is neither a theologian who, as some have suggested, cannot get away from philosophy, of which he imparts more or less strong doses into his theology, nor on the other hand a secular or "pure" philosopher who probes into religious problems; he is a thinker who quests for and questions about ultimate realities: about God, man, and man's transcendent destiny.¹ Herein lies, I believe, a profoundly Christian characteristic of Berdyaev's thought, though some may contest this. For Berdyaev, as well as for many other Russian religious thinkers, Christian truth is the revelation of God's movement towards man and, simultaneously, of man's movement towards God, of the humanity or human likeness of God and the divine likeness of man, and, consequently, also of the supreme truth and justification of human questionings, of human problems and human philosophy.

Berdyaev's thought attains a great intensity where he turns to concrete problems of human life. It breathes love to man along with a passionate concern for his struggles, sufferings and tormenting quests, and at the same time faith in man's call to great deeds. Hence Berdyaev's bitterness against any smooth, comfortable and untragic interpretation of Christianity, so often based on the division of the world into those being saved in the bosom of the Church, where everything is supposed to be delightful, bright and happy, and those perishing in the world where all is darkness, misery and torment. Any sense of safety and security is for him equivalent to insensitiveness and indifference to the tragic fate of mankind²; it blocks

¹ Russian critics have called him (sometimes ironically) a "seeker after God" (*bogoiskatel*), a term very much in vogue forty years ago.

² I shall offer no apology for using here and elsewhere such seemingly vague and much misused words as "tragic," "tragedy," "tragic sense,"

the vision of life and of life's great and unforeseen possibilities. Hence also Berdyaev's strictures on "*bourgeois*" mentality, which he associates primarily not with any particular class—the capitalist class, for example—but rather with a particular spiritual attitude, with smugness, middle-way mentality and lack of courage, with general well-being and self-satisfied well-doing. "The *bourgeois* lives in perpetual fear that his assured and peaceful existence will be abrogated. He is above all an optimist and believes in happiness solidly achieved in a finite world; he inclines to pessimism only when it is a question of other people's misfortunes and sufferings or of improving the social condition of the worker" (*Spirit and Reality*). Berdyaev himself would probably feel exactly the opposite: he would feel "optimistic" about men's responsibility towards their fellow human beings and "pessimistic" about man's individual destiny: "pessimistic," because he is so much concerned to bring to light the tragic sense of life which the *bourgeois* so easily dismisses. Moreover, he believes that even Christianity has succumbed to *bourgeois* mentality and has become for many a means to "safeguard" and "consolidate" human life, and to cut man off from the supreme responsibility of sharing in the tragedy of stricken mankind.

In a novel of the French writer André Gide, *Le retour de l'enfant prodigue*, which is a free literary interpretation of the gospel parable, the prodigal son, to the question as to what he did while away from his father's house, replies "I suffered." This answer might equally be given by many to-day who are far, and probably farther,

and so forth, because their meaning is fundamental to a comprehension of Berdyaev's point of view. What is meant by these words is a kind of awareness of the polarity of human life, of tormenting opposites and cleavages which no human reasonableness and common sense can resolve, which must be experienced and lived through to the end in order to lead man to a higher, transcendent unity.

away from their Father's house than the son in the parable. Berdyaev warns Christians against indifference to the fate of these prodigal children, who in one sense or another are sharing in the agony of Christ himself. "Does he not also love a Nietzsche who fights against him?" he asks. I do not know of another Christian thinker (with the exception perhaps of Dostoevsky) who is such an untiring advocate of the unique and indeed tragic fate of man as is Berdyaev. Such advocacy evidently does not consist in a mere desire to bring man back to the truth, or to "convert" him to the Christian Church, but above all in a kind of identification with him and with the problems arising out of his predicament. In fact, Berdyaev believes that Christians can learn a great deal from man thrown into the raging storms of the world to-day. Christianity can and does save modern man, threatened as he is with destruction, only if it is acutely sensitive to all the experiences of his life, to his temptations and his questionings: but never as a mere *Deus ex machina*. To this end Berdyaev is prepared to accept openly and without reserve the whole content of modern life as at least a "negative revelation" of the Christian truth. He is not afraid of secularism; in fact, he prefers it to merely rhetorical ecclesiasticism and conventional Christianity.

Berdyaev does not stand on "solid ground," he does not know or believe in stable forms and patterns of life. The earth beneath him is on fire, he lives and thinks in all respects, spiritually and socially, in an age of revolution and carries within him the principle of some great overturn. This is manifest in the notably intense apocalyptic and eschatological tone of his thought. The Apocalypse, the last book of the Bible, the revelation of the things to come which will transform the universe, is a present reality to him no less than it is for Russian popular imagination: he is essentially concerned with the ultimate

issues of life, and is continually seeking to surpass the limits and boundaries of this world. Hence the anarchical element in his outlook, particularly in his social outlook—a desire to break away from all restraints and standards of society and civilization. If his books often abound in references to the historical past, his thought nonetheless turns constantly to the future, and it is not in the laws of gradual evolution and progress but in the ultimate transcendent realities that he sees the purpose and meaning of history. Yet, despite the value which he attaches to the last things, his mood is not a passive but an active and creative one.

§

Up to now I have endeavoured to characterize Berdyaev mainly as a thinker and philosopher. But there is another side to him: Berdyaev the *fighter*. This is partly due to the general tradition of Russian philosophical thought, which had but little taste for mere speculative and abstract knowledge, and is partly a matter of necessity, of the environment in which Berdyaev came to live during the time of his philosophical activity. But it is above all in keeping with the very style of his thought. Many of Berdyaev's books and almost all his articles are controversial and polemical: and he fights primarily for *freedom*. He defends that which is particularly threatened and everywhere defenceless to-day, even in the supposedly free Russian "emigration" in the midst of which Berdyaev spent the most mature years of his creative work. Whenever (especially within the bounds of the Russian spiritual world) there is a theoretical or practical onslaught on the freedom of man, of his spirit or thought, Berdyaev strikes relentlessly, giving full vent to his fighting temperament; and he delivers no foul blows. Many feel that he is, in fact, more convincing and penetrating in his destructive

than in his constructive judgements. He remorselessly pursues and exposes every violation of man and human freedom, every congealing and hardening of the spirit in all spheres of life—cultural, social, scientific, religious and ecclesiastical. In his fight Berdyaev often forgets the self-limitations laid on themselves by philosophers and theologians, and is occasionally capable of saying things which in the eyes of some may even place him outside the Church. In point of fact however even thus he is fulfilling an invaluable part of the Church's work. Such are, *e.g.*, his memorable utterances in connexion with the condemnation of Bulgakov's Sophiology by certain hierarchs of the Russian Church.¹ Such is his unceasing struggle in the Russian "emigration" for the value of spiritual freedom against the blind political reactionism of *émigré*-psychology. Such are his calls to national and social repentance, to awareness of the inner positive meaning of the events in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia, and to the realization of the new problems raised by the revolution. Much that has been said and written by him in this connexion recalls the bold French Catholic writer Joseph de Maistre, who regarded revolutions as a divine judgement and the French *émigrés* of his day as impotent mischief-makers—with the difference that Berdyaev lives in an age at once more radical, more complex, more tragic, and more intensely threatened by elemental forces.

This combination of philosopher and fighter in one man must be the despair of every lover of classification who still hopes to give Berdyaev's thought a formal definition. Yet it is in fact but a sign of the dynamism and vitality of his thought, which does not pertain to the realm of abstract speculations but presents a whirlpool of living and acutely relevant ideas.

¹ For all the documents relating to this controversy, including Berdyaev's comments, see *Orient and Occident*, new series, No. 1., March, 1936.

3

God-Manhood

THE title of this chapter summarizes the quintessence of Berdyaev's thought. He begins and ends his reasoning not with God or man, but with God *and* man, with the God-man, with Christ and God-manhood. This defines both the content and "style" of his thought. Without bearing this in mind it is hardly possible to discern the inner motives and trace the complex thread of his argument. "Both philosophy and theology should start neither with God nor with man, but rather with the God-man. The basic and original phenomenon of life is the meeting and interaction of God and man, the movement of God towards man and of man towards God" (*Freedom and the Spirit*).

Men have seldom been able to realize fully the fundamental fact of religion, namely, that God is both the wholly "Other One," transcendent and utterly beyond the world and man; and yet creates and reveals himself to man, enters into him and becomes the inmost content of man's very existence. How can that which is transcendent to man be equally immanent in him, and consequently in so far not transcendent at all? How can that which is immanent in man be transcendent and wholly beyond him? In face of such a dilemma there seems to be no other solution than to reject either the one alternative, viz., God-in-the-world and man (this view is sometimes called *dualism*); or the other, viz., God-beyond-the-world and man (*monism*)—with all the far-reaching and disastrous consequences of both points of view.

This paradox indicates how the problem of religion presents itself to Berdyaev. Both points of view he regards

as a witness to the limits and impotence of discursive reasoning, which is incapable of comprehending the mystery of the living correlation of God and man, of the transcendent and the immanent, of the absolute and the relative, of the one and the many, of the whole and the part, and so forth. If we understand all these concepts as static and immovable entities, as it were congealed into logical crystals, then God himself must needs appear to be a sheer misunderstanding, evident to anyone familiar with the elements of logic: he is, so to say, hot ice, bitter sugar or a round square. Yet logical contradiction and impossibility is no evidence of actual impossibility. Life itself is such a contradiction and impossibility to Berdyaev; and these contradictions, which he seeks to bring to light and to transcend in all their implications, point to the mystery of God-manhood, to the mystery of the vital meeting and all-pervading mutual penetration of God and man. God-manhood is in fact that *coincidentia oppositorum* (to speak in the terms of the mediæval theologian Nicolas of Cusa), the coincidence and unification of opposites, of God and man and God and the world, which unites what discursive reasoning is incapable of uniting, and renders every moment and atom of life and being a witness to the supreme simultaneous oneness and duality of God and man.

Berdyaev's intention is not to propound a metaphysical doctrine; he wants to describe as it were intuitively a mystery which belongs to the very depth of being and is revealed in existence itself. The mystery of God-manhood is, indeed, unfathomable, irrational, inexpressible in terms of the objectivized world, where one object displaces the other, where all things are extraneous to one another and mutually exclusive. And only in as much as the grip of this objectivized world is loosened, only in so far as man is freed from the world of divided and isolated

things and objects, can he become aware of true life in its unity and multiplicity, in its absoluteness and relativity, in its transcendence and immanence, in its agony and bliss—in other words, in its God-manhood.

The idea of God-manhood is clearly of primary importance for Berdyaev's teaching about God and man, on which we shall dwell in more detail presently. But it has also more general implications. It does not merely denote a special understanding of the relation between God and man, but in general expresses a particular feeling for an *ethos* of life; an *ethos* which above all finds itself up against any static attitude to life where everything tends to become fixed, divided and "extrinsic"; where all things remain impenetrable substances, opposing unsurmountable barriers to one another and creating estrangement and limitations. God-manhood is to Berdyaev the revelation of the way out of the isolated state of the "natural world." It gives birth to striving for the infinite, for fullness and boundlessness of life, where nothing is external or "extrinsic," as in the world of lifeless things and objects, but all is *within* and all is known from within. In fact, for Berdyaev nothing in life is "objective" at all, but all is profoundly "subjective," *i.e.*, all is inherent in the knowing, experiencing and living subject; in other words all is *existential*.

Thus the idea of God-manhood leads us to those elements in Berdyaev's thought which he himself describes as "existential," partly under the influence of certain modern philosophical currents.

So-called existential philosophy, as well as theology, goes back on the one hand to the phenomenological school (Husserl), and on the other to Soren Kierkegaard, and is without doubt one of the most significant movements in contemporary thought. To begin with, it breaks with the abstract tendency of philosophical thinking

and seeks a more immediate, concrete, "intuitive" vision of life. We have already noted that this was the concern of the Russian philosophical tradition in the early twentieth century and before, with its radical criticism of West-European abstract, idealistic thought and its claim to a more realistic, intuitive world-outlook. Modern existential philosophy moves on the same lines. Its main concern is to view the essence of being not in general, abstract principles and ideas, but immediately in man's own personal existence. The unusual categories with which it operates—anxiety, fear, anguish, triviality, death—are taken from the experience of human life and replace the categories of substance, cause, quality, quantity, etc., which are ultimately mere abstractions. Yet phenomenological and existential philosophy as it is expressed by its most brilliant representatives, like Hartmann and Scheler, either denies man, his activity and creativeness (*cf.*, Scheler's *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*)—the same, though in a different sense, applies to the school of so-called dialectical theology, which to some extent derives its origin from the "existential" movement—or denies God and is openly atheistic (*cf.*, Heidegger's sensational book *Sein und Zeit*, whose popularity, however, is due more to fashion than to real appreciation). Berdyaev is pre-eminently a *Christian*. Christ the God-man is the vital pivot of his thought. Furthermore he is a *humanist*, in the deepest and true sense of the word. He believes in and seeks for the truth of man.

§

In the first place it is important to elicit how Berdyaev's existential philosophy states the problem of knowledge. How do we approach reality? What is the relation between "thought" and "being?" Berdyaev's answer

may be summarized in the following way: as long as the knowing subject and the known object are conceived as divided, as long as reality presents itself to us "objectively," or rather in an objectivized way, so long must knowledge needs remain inadequate to reality, *i.e.*, a knowledge pertaining to disparate, disintegrated being (*cf.*, *Solitude and Society*, the title of whose Russian original is *I and the World of Objects*.) True cognition presupposes unity or oneness of "being" and "thought," a unity which transcends the very differentiation and opposition of subject and object. And this unity is initially present in the creative act of knowledge. Moreover, Berdyaev seems to deny the very problem of traditional epistemology in as much as it is concerned with the question as to whether one should or should not recognize the known object as a primary independent reality. As is well known, this problem finds its classical expression on the one hand in scholastic and Thomist "realism," for which the known object must have a primacy over the knowing subject; and on the other hand, in "Idealism," which tends to deny objective reality and reduce it to concepts or sensations arising in the mind of the knowing subject.

Berdyaev does not admit that knowledge is at all determined by the opposition of "subject" and "object," or of "thought" and "being," in as much as they face each other in an extraneous way. The very fact of cognition is for him an event in being, a revelation of its ontological nature. Being can never be objectivized or exteriorized, whether in theory or in practice; it is revealed in man's very existence, from within; it is co-inherent and co-existent in man.

We are naturally inclined to identify reality with objectivity; and to prove the reality of something usually means to prove its objectiveness and extrinsicality. While this may be true to some extent (in fact, to a very

limited extent) of purely external things accessible to our empirical perceptions, it cannot be applied at all to spiritual realities. "The discovery of reality," says Berdyaev, "depends on the activity of the spirit, on its intensity and ardour. We cannot expect that spiritual realities will be revealed to us in the same way as objects of the natural world, presented to us externally, such as stones, trees, tables, chairs, or such as the principles of logic . . . In the realm of spirit reality is not extraneous, for it proceeds from the spirit itself" (*Freedom and the Spirit*). Thus it is not objectivity which is the criterion of reality, but, paradoxically enough, the criterion is the reality itself as revealed in man's existence.

In this way Berdyaev hopes to guard knowledge from "ossification," from the conversion of its content into static "things," which to a large extent has come about in so-called scientific thought. He regards cognition as an integral, creative act of the spirit, which does not know anything external at all, for which everything is its own life, everything is *within*, "in the depth."¹

The question however arises as to whether such a theory of knowledge does not render cognition objectless altogether, and consequently devoid of content. Is it not threatened by "evacuation," and thus by becoming a knowledge of nothing at all? Does not Berdyaev assume that there is nothing transcendent to and beyond man, or, if so, only as an "object" or "thing," i.e., as something ultimately false and unreal? The inner logic of his thought in no way suggests such an inference, although some of his utterances, particularly in the discussion of the more practical implications of his epistemology, might lead to such conclusions. Berdyaev's theory of knowledge is

¹ Berdyaev is fond of the spatial symbol of "depth," which he seems to regard as the most fitting to express the enigma of life. This shows his tendency to mysticism, about which incidentally he has written some very striking pages (*cf.*, *Freedom and the Spirit* and *Spirit and Reality*).

indeed "objectless," in the sense that the object of knowledge is not fixed into "thinghood," that its content does not denote a "something" which exists on its own account, in isolation, out of vital relation with concrete human existence. But it is surely not objectless in the sense that it precludes anything but the knowing subject, which is actually one of the worst forms of Idealism and subjectivism, and which, as we have seen, Berdyaev explicitly repudiates. Moreover, his existentialism even presupposes man's self-transcendence—to God, to other men and to the world. Yet such self-transcendence is an *inward* process, not an outward one into the world of isolated, extraneous things. Man becomes aware of other reality than himself only in awareness of its relation to his own being, in self-awareness; and this latter is the initial fact of his self-determination to anyone or anything. The relation of man to God and to man is an event within his very existence, in his inmost profundity; it is an inherent part of his own destiny. "Return into oneself and self-awareness," says Berdyaev, "imply out-going to the other one and self-transcendence" (*The Meaning of Creativeness*). Such is the Copernican discovery of his existentialism, not less significant than the "Kopernikanische Tat" of Kant.

All this makes the fundamental difference of Berdyaev's thought from every kind of psychologism and solipsism. Psychology regards man as cast into the objectivized world: the "soul," "*psyche*," remains a solitary, self-contained unit, an unrelated and isolated being. To this Berdyaev opposed what he calls *pneumatology*, which considers man above all as a spirit, equally personal, free and self-determining, yet always open, continually surpassing itself, and vitally correlated with God, other men and the world at large. "Man's spirit is not an inert substance, self-contained and self-sufficient" (*Freedom*

and the Spirit). In fact Berdyaev does not recognize it as a "substance" at all, if substance means a limitable, finished, static reality. "Spirit is existence," *i.e.*, a reality which transcends all limitations and divisions, all fixity and immobility.

This theory of knowledge has far-reaching implications for Berdyaev's religious outlook and his philosophy of the Christian revelation.

In the first place, his existentialism precludes a thorough distinction between so-called natural and supernatural knowledge. This distinction in itself he regards as a product of objectivized thinking, in as much as it implies that men can think of God out of direct relation with and so to say in abstraction from, the Christian revelation. If the Christian revelation is an event within human existence, in the very depth of being, which it is indeed pre-eminently, it must be recognized as intensely relevant at the initial stage of our knowledge of God and the ultimate meaning of life. An act of faith is thus implied not only in the realm of "supernatural" revelation, but in all true knowledge. Only return to the ultimate depth of being renders philosophical thinking a possibility at all. The two ends of the chain of human thought must be integrated into a single existential intuition. "One cannot arrive at God, to him there are ultimately no 'ways'; one can only go out from God; he is not merely at the end: he is at the beginning" ("The Russian Religious Idea" in *Problems of Russian Religious Consciousness*). "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John xiv. 6).

In this sense Berdyaev almost identifies philosophy with mysticism. Their difference is as it were of a quantitative rather than qualitative nature. The true difference lies not so much between mystical and philosophical knowledge, as between what he calls the "mysticism of perfection," or "elevation of the soul to God," and the

mysticism of penetration into the mysteries of being, of divine and human life, or of philosophical *gnosis*, a kind of second-sight or insight into the supreme meaning of all things. In this latter sense Berdyaev regards as mystics such men as Jacob Böhme, Baader, Dostoevsky, Solovyev, Léon Bloy, who were, however, all more or less far from being "perfect." He even defines mysticism as "knowledge which has its source in vital and immediate contact with the ultimate reality . . . It is derived from the word 'mystery,' and must therefore be regarded as the foundation and source of all creative movement" (*Freedom and the Spirit*).

The other religious implication of Berdyaev's existentialism is his belief in the reciprocity of every act of God's revelation to man. "In as much," he says, "as revelation is an event within man, in the very depth of human destiny, it presupposes not only the one who reveals, but the one to whom the revelation is made too; in other words, it implies man's active and creative participation. Revelation cannot operate on man automatically and mechanically, independently of who and what he is" (*The Meaning of Creativeness*. Cf., *Freedom and Spirit*).

Berdyaev repudiates the traditional theological view that revelation is based on belief in the "moderately normal," unchangeable, natural human being, who belongs to an eternal natural order. Any idea of finiteness, of a finished objective order, be it supernatural or natural and social, he regards as primarily responsible for the false and disastrous conservatism of certain forms of Christian consciousness, wherein man is left with only one task—to conform to and obey this order, the very permanence of which is considered to be a preordained condition of revelation. Moreover, revelation itself is believed to be an entirely "objective" act, independent of any creative participation of man in it. To this view

Berdyaev opposes the idea of man's free creative relation to God and his call to interaction with him. Such opposition to any fixed permanence of both the "supernatural" and "natural" orders marks Berdyaev's revolutionary, dynamic, and active Christian consciousness, which looks to the things to come and expects man to change creatively the outer and inner conditions of life.

§

The idea of divine-human interaction brings us back to the fundamental assumption of Berdyaev's philosophy, that of God-manhood, which we shall now endeavour to analyse in its main elements.

It has already been noted that Berdyaev is not concerned to frame a rational doctrine of God and man, and that he does not attempt to co-ordinate or synthesize the divine and human principles in a rational system. He thinks of God-manhood not conceptually, but rather *mythologically*. "Christianity is entirely mythological, as indeed all religion is; and Christian myths express the deepest and most central realities of the spiritual world. It is high time to cease being ashamed of Christian mythology and trying to strip it of myth. No system of theological or metaphysical concepts can destroy Christian mythology and it is precisely the myths of Christianity which constitute its greatest reality; for it becomes an abstraction as soon as it is freed from them" (*Freedom and the Spirit*).¹ And he adds that materialism and positivism

¹ It is scarcely necessary to point out that here myth and mythology do not mean the inventions of human imagination or the delusions of primitive mentality, or, indeed, anything that is opposed to reality, as is suggested by the use of these words in common parlance. "Myth," says Berdyaev, "is the concrete recording of events and original phenomena of spiritual life symbolized in the natural world and engraved on the memory, language and creative work of man" (*op. cit.*). A myth represents within this world the realities which transcend the world; it brings two worlds together in images and symbols.

equally live by myths, whether they be those of material nature or of scientific knowledge.

What, then, is the content of the myth of God-manhood? This is described by Berdyaev as the "drama of love and freedom between God and man; the birth of God in man and the birth of man in God." "Spiritual experience shows us that man longs for God, and that God longs for man and yearns for the birth of man who shall reveal his image." This fact finds its fullest and most concrete expression in Christianity, in which "the humanity of God is revealed and the divine image of man."¹ Berdyaev sees the depth of true life in this primordial divine-human mystery, in the meeting and mutual relatedness of God and man. He does not conceive of religious life (just as in his analysis of knowledge) as a confrontation of an unchangeable, static and ultimately lifeless religious "subject" with an equally changeless and static religious "object," and is in consequence compelled to recognize a reciprocal relation and interaction between God and man, that is, precisely "the birth of God in man and the birth of man in God, and the revelation of God to man and of man to God."

"Within the depth of spiritual life there is unfolded before us the religious drama of God's dealings with man and man's with God. Without God and within human nature alone there can be no spiritual life. That quality of life which is called spiritual can only exist in man if there is something to deepen his life, something to which he can transcend himself . . . On the other hand, if there were nothing but the divine nature, if God had, as it were, no other self except himself, there would be no original phenomenon in spiritual life, and all would disappear into an abyss of divine

¹ I refer here for the most part to *Freedom and the Spirit*, as the most "theological" of Berdyaev's works.

selfhood and undifferentiated abstraction. God must limit himself and go out into the other self, that is into the being of man."

Berdyaev distrusts all systems of rational theology; he accuses them of disregarding the problem of God-manhood and thus leading to an objectivized, "idolatrous" conception of the relation between God and man. He describes in rather horrifying words the notion of God prevalent in some of these systems:

"God conceived as a metaphysical transcendent being, as an immutable inert substance, represents the latest form of idolatry in the history of the human spirit. Monotheism can in fact be a form of idolatry . . . Man in bondage to the objectivized world conceives of God as a great exterior force, as a 'super-natural' power in every respect comparable to a 'natural' power. God is merely the highest and most perfect of all forms of power, or in other words a projection of natural being. This supreme power demands to be appeased. The transcendent God avenges himself like the gods and man of the fallen world." But "Christianity appeared in the world to conquer decisively both idolatry and servitude. It affirmed the religion of the Trinity, in which God revealed himself as Love and the Beloved."

Berdyaev, then, does not think of God except in relation to man. Surely this does not imply that God *per se* is not at all, or that man supplies something which is lacking in God. Yet since God is Creator, since he created man, the living personal being related to him who is the living personal Creator, he cannot but be himself supremely related to man, for every living and personal act becomes real only in this relatedness. The fact that God "longs for man, for his other one, for the free response of his love," shows not that there is any in-

sufficiency or absence of fullness in the being of God, but on the contrary the superabundance of his plenitude and perfection (cf., *Freedom and the Spirit*). Just because God's life is "agreement of contraries," he embraces both the perfection of his eternal transcendent being and the distinct and vital experience of man's relation to him. In this sense every act of God's revelation to man, and of man's participation in it, does not concern and affect man alone but also God, *i.e.*, it is an essentially divine-human act. Berdyaev is even bold enough to refer to the amazing words of the Catholic mystic, Angelus Silesius, who says, "I know that without me God could not endure for a moment. Were I brought to naught, he would yield up the ghost for lack of me" (*Der Cherubinische Wandersmann*)—words which may well disturb and alarm us. But this utterance expresses for Berdyaev a truth of innermost spiritual experience—an existential truth, not a metaphysical proposition. As such it does not necessarily lead to pantheism (which has become the bogey of rationalist theologians). Hence the abundance of symbolic and mythological language in his theology, which is "safer" and indeed more adequate to express the mysteries of divine-human life than abstract metaphysics. "To speak of God-manhood, of God's reciprocal relation to man, is a mythological representation and not a philosophical proposition; it is to speak the language of the prophets of the Bible rather than that of the Greek philosophers."

§

Three fundamental problems are bound up in Berdyaev's thought with the idea of God-manhood: the problems of *creativity*, of *freedom*, and hence of *evil*.

God-manhood is the call to mankind to manifest the image of the Creator in human life. *Man is a creator,*

in virtue of his divine-human (theandric) nature and of the image and likeness of God in him. This is the ontological and ethical basis of Berdyaev's teaching about man. And he takes on the task of discovering, defining and justifying the image of the Creator in man. In the world to-day, in which the image of man is threatened with destruction, man-creator is and must become the supreme Christian ideal. Berdyaev is no doubt justified in his profound dissatisfaction with the traditional Christian attitude to this problem. Christians have too often reduced the whole issue to a mere submission of the creative act of man in all spheres of cultural and social life to religion and religious authority. Here the creative act—whether cognitive, artistic, ethical, social or technical—was regarded as of essentially secondary significance, as of inferior quality and even harmful from the religious point of view. A sharp distinction was drawn between the "sacred" and the "profane," which resulted to begin with in Christians living in two different rhythms, the religious rhythm of the Church, governing a limited number of days and hours in their life, and the unreligious rhythm of the world, governing a greater number—in other words in secularization; and finally this involved man's rise against religion as a tyranny, in an attempt to establish autonomy for his creative dignity and achievements. To the idea of a mere subordination of the creative act of man to a hierarchically superior power, Berdyaev opposes the idea of the *intrinsic* religious value of this act in its free realization, the idea of its existential meaning. "God expects from man a free creative act," for truly "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," and "the works that I shall do he [man] shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (John v. 7; xiv. 12).

It must be understood that Berdyaev's apologia for creativeness has little or nothing in common with the

modern ideas of "activism." The technical and economic processes of our civilization demand of man that he should always be "doing" something: a perpetual frenzied activity and the use of every moment of time for action. Such activism threatens to eliminate all contemplation from life. This means that man will cease to *pray*, that he will have no longer any relation to God, that he will no longer believe in the possibility of disinterested knowledge of truth. Yet man is determined in relation not only to time, but also to eternity. He cannot be absorbed in the flux of time, in a ceaseless actualization of every instant, in the mad precipitancy of the temporal process. Man is called to recollect and to bethink himself in utter silence, to realize the depth of life revealed in his relatedness to life eternal. In as much, then, as the creativeness of modern activism is a denial of life eternal, in as much as it *binds* man in time, Berdyaev rejects such creativeness. No doubt man is called to activity and work—he cannot and should not remain simply a contemplative, for neither God nor the world is a spectacle: he must continue God's own original creative act; he must transform and organize the world. Yet man is above all a meeting-point of two converging worlds, the eternal and the temporal, and hence is not only vitally related to time but also to eternity. This, too, pertains to the supreme existential truth about man. When man is turned into the tool or object of an impersonal activist process in this world he is no longer a free personal human being; in fact, he ceases to be creative. For true creativeness frees man from the flux of time; it turns his gaze to Heaven, it reunites human existence with its sources in Godmanhood, and modifies the natural configuration of things.

Many are alarmed and repelled by Berdyaev's exaltation of creativeness, and objections have been raised from all sides to the very understanding of man as creator and as

called to creativity. It may seem however that his critics, who accuse him of over-valuing and divinizing man, of "titanism" and humanism, have largely misunderstood the particular way in which he posits the whole problem. After all, to have a high idea of man as creator and as called to participate in God's creative action is in itself far from being an invitation to proud and egocentric independence, for man bears primordially and irrevocably the seal of God's creative power who made him "in the beginning." "It is strange to think," says Berdyaev, "that God could have created something small and insignificant as the crown of his creation. It is impious and blasphemous to have a low opinion of God's idea, and to hold it in contempt as despicable and of no account" (*The Meaning of Creativeness*). Man's creativeness is therefore not his autonomous right or claim, but rather his duty before God and the fulfilment of his will: not to be creator and not to live creatively, not to take part in God's unceasing creative action in the world, is disobedience to God, and in the last resort rebellion against him. Such is Berdyaev's approach to the problem. It may be asked whether Christianity has freed Prometheus from his fetters, or has chained him still more heavily. I believe that it has freed him, for he was chained not by God, but by the demons of nature with whose power he was wrestling.

Berdyaev himself wrote a great deal about the falsehood of humanism, in which man has asserted himself without and against God and has gradually cut himself off from the sources of being; moreover he has shown that this led in its turn to a denial and destruction of man, for "Humanism has destroyed itself by its own dialectic" (*The End of Our Time*; cf., *The Meaning of History*). But to the question as to where the falsehood of humanism lies, why it is impotent, why it is experiencing such an

overwhelming crisis to-day, he answers not that it has overstressed the dignity and calling of man to creativeness, but that it has not done this enough, and so has in fact resulted in man's degradation and denial. It did not give man his full dignity, which reaches to the heavens, to God, and this fatally under-estimated him. Berdyaev wants to overcome humanism, not against man, in order to degrade him, but in the name of the God-man, and hence in the name of man. Most of the anti-humanistic tendencies of to-day, on the other hand, imply derogation of man and dehumanization of life and thought. So-called dialectical theology (Karl Barth, E. Brunner and others, *see above*) is particularly interesting and significant in this respect. It has shown not only an acute and just reaction against humanism, but also a revolt, an almost demonic revolt, against any link and vital relation between the creature and his Creator: hence a revolt against the eternal mystery of God-manhood, which is revealed in Christ and must be revealed in Christ's humanity.

Berdyaev stands firm in his conviction that Christianity is *human*, that, in fact, herein lies its distinctness, though many Christians have maintained, and continue to maintain, the contrary. His vision of man in the light of the mystery of God-manhood has rendered his thought essentially and profoundly Christian.

The most important works of Berdyaev are devoted to the problems of ethics; and he once said that he considered his ethics to be Christian in as much as he has succeeded in showing them to be human. Even the *Destiny of Man*, one of his most abstruse, complex books, which is largely inspired by the themes of eschatology, by the agony of pondering on the problem of evil and Hell, is actually about the simple truth of *being human*, which many modern theologians are so much inclined to despise. He has shown the emergence of a morality which paves

man's way to Hell, paves it by its devotion to the "good," to moral principles and ideals, and heralds a path which would free man from this hell of goodness. And he is ready to place himself beyond good and evil in order to ask whether that which has long been held to be good and evil is really good and evil.

§

We turn to the second problem connected with the idea of God-manhood, that of *freedom*. This problem in general, as well as in the particular context of Berdyaev's philosophy, is bound up with very complex metaphysical presuppositions and implications, which in view of the nature of the present essay cannot be expounded: I shall therefore confine myself simply to a few hints as to how Berdyaev formulates the problem.

In common speech, and even in philosophies, the concept of freedom has two different connotations. There is freedom as a way, freedom as choice, choice between good and evil, freedom by which truth or God is recognized and accepted, but which in itself is undetermined by anything or any one. And there is freedom as an aim to be achieved, freedom in the truth, freedom that is in God and a gift of God. When we say that man has acquired freedom because his higher nature has conquered the lower, because reason has come to control his passions, we are speaking of freedom in the latter sense. It is the freedom of which the gospel says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John, viii. 32). Here truth brings freedom, and freedom is as it were not first but second. When, on the other hand, we say that man freely chose the path of life and in freedom came to truth, we are speaking of freedom in the former sense, of freedom which is "first" and not "second."

Now this first kind of freedom may issue not only in

good, but in evil as well. It bears no guarantee of goodness, no certainty that man will follow the right path and will come to God. Moreover, as Berdyaev says, this freedom has a "fatal tendency to destroy itself, to turn into its opposite and precipitate man into anarchy, which in its turn brings slavery and tyranny" (*Philosophy of Freedom*). "We know in our own experience that the anarchy of passions and the lowest impulses of our nature, which live each for its own ends, bring us into a real state of slavery, deprive us of the freedom of the spirit, and end in disintegration" (*Freedom and the Spirit*). This applies equally to personal and social life. Freedom which remains "formal," objectless, incapable of positive choice, indifferent to truth, leads to the disintegration of man and of the world. Thus, taken in itself, the first kind of freedom is powerless to preserve and maintain true freedom, and always threatens man with destruction.

Berdyaev maintains the distinction between the two freedoms. But the defectiveness, or rather the potential defectiveness, of the first kind of freedom does not lead him to an unqualified upholding of freedom in the second sense, of freedom that is in truth and goodness, of freedom which is regarded as identical with truth and reasonableness. For him the will to self-determination must have the primacy over reason. He is aware that a mere freedom of reasonableness too may destroy itself, may bring about the power of compulsory goodness and give rise to a religious and social life in which freedom turns out to be a child of necessity. If the first kind of freedom may lead to anarchy, the second may lead to theocratic or "totalitarian" despotism. This is witnessed to by innumerable pyres lit by Christians and non-Christians alike to burn heretics in the name of truth and its liberating power. Such freedom does not know what Dostoevsky expressed in the striking words of the Great Inquisitor

to Christ: "Thou hast desired the free love of man. The freedom of his faith has been dearer to thee than anything else . . . In place of the hard and ancient law, man was to decide for himself, in the freedom of his heart, what is good and what is evil." In these words Berdyaev's own faith may be discerned. Like Dostoevsky, he rejects "miracle" and "authority" as violations of human conscience, as the denial to man's spirit of his freedom.

"I can receive the supreme and final freedom from truth alone, but the truth cannot force or compel me: my acceptance of the truth pre-supposes my freedom, my free movement in it. Freedom is not only an aim but a path. . . . Freedom has brought me to Christ, and I know no other path leading to him. Nor am I the only one who has passed through this experience. No one who has left a Christianity based on authority can return to anything but a Christianity which is free . . . I admit that it is grace which has brought me to faith, but it is grace experienced by me as freedom. Those who have come to Christianity through freedom bring to it that same spirit of freedom" (*Freedom and the Spirit*). "A man who has achieved a definite victory over the seductive temptations of humanism, who has discovered the hollow unreality of the divinization of man by man, can never hereafter abandon the liberty which has brought him to God, nor the definite experience which has freed him from the power of evil" (*ibid.*). And finally: "When man returns to God after an experience of apostasy, he knows a freedom in his relations with him untasted by one who has passed his life in the peace and security of his traditional faith, and who has remained within the confines of his spiritual inheritance" (*ibid.*).

What, then, is Berdyaev's answer to the question of the

relation between the two forms of freedom? Sometimes their relation appears to him a continuous irreducible conflict, for "man moves from the first kind of freedom to the second, and from the second to the first, but everywhere freedom is poisoned from within and dies" (*Freedom and the Spirit*). Life itself is a proof of such constant conflicts.¹ In fact there is no solution *save in the coming of Christ the God-man*. "Only the New Adam can take from freedom its deadly effect without compromising freedom itself . . . The grace of Christ is the illumination of freedom from within and hence knows no outward restraint or coercion. It differs from the truths of this world and from the truths of the 'other world' as understood by sinful man, which all seek to organize life by constraint and end by depriving him of the freedom of the spirit. The light of Christ illuminates the dark irrationality of freedom, without, however, imposing

¹ The difficulty of the problem has led Berdyaev to what is probably the most disastrous conclusion in his whole philosophy; and one which seems in fact in no way warranted by his own fundamental presuppositions: I mean the doctrine of *Ungrund*, which he has taken over from Jacob Böhme. I cannot expound here this complex and even confused point. Berdyaev's main contention is that in a certain sense freedom is not created at all, but proceeds from the *Ungrund*—a kind of primordial void, non-being, which precedes both Creator and creation, over which no being has power: it remains impenetrable even to God. Hence the boundless and unforeseen possibilities of freedom. Thus man seems to be only "partly" related to God (as well as God only "partly" related to man); in other part he belongs to that void, to "nothingness" (which sometimes, in spite of all his reservations and qualifications, becomes for Berdyaev a "somethingness"): he therefore renders man capable of confronting God in utter independence on or rather unrelatedness to him. This view, which is put forward to explain the boundless good as well as evil possibilities of freedom, and man's rebellion against God, implies dualism and is ultimately a rationalization, against which Berdyaev himself wages such a righteous struggle. It appears to me to be thoroughly unexistential and un-theandric. If Berdyaev claimed to have built up a harmonious philosophical "system" this doctrine would be a real *rent* in it. Fortunately his philosophy is no such system, and this particular doctrine is a wrong answer to an intensely relevant and real problem. As such it may even retain its positive value. Side by side with the Böhman *Ungrund* we find in Berdyaev another answer, which is less rationalized but more satisfactory, at least from the Christian point of view.

limitations upon it." The very nature of Christ's grace is shown by Berdyaev as both divine and human, for it proceeds not only from God but from the God-man, from God's eternal God-manhood. Hence man has a part in it and shares it freely. In the power of the mystery of God-manhood God meets the beloved creature, and the reciprocation of his love is infinitely and supremely free. (It may be noted in parenthesis that this view has nothing in common with Pelagianism, which seems to be a typically Western heresy: its very approach to the problem of the relation between God and man is alien to Berdyaev, being as it is the result of an incipient disintegration of the Christian myth of God-manhood.)

Here are a few truly inspiring passages from *Freedom and the Spirit* where Berdyaev presents his Christian interpretation of freedom :

"It is Christianity alone which can comprehend the fundamental mystery of human freedom, which is inseparably linked with the union of two natures in Christ the God-man; a union which, however, does not in any way annul their distinction. The source of man's freedom is in God, and that, not in God the Father, but in God the Son, while the Son is not only God but man . . . that is, Eternal Man. The freedom of the Son is that in which and by which the free response to God is effected. It is the source of the freedom of the whole human race, for this freedom is not only that of the old Adam but also of the spiritual Adam, that is, of Christ. It is in the Son that the free response is given to the call of divine love and to God's need of his other one, a response which is heard in the heavenly and spiritual sphere and which is re-echoed upon earth and in the natural world . . . The whole generation of Adam is in the Son of God, and it finds

in him the inner source of its liberty, which is not only a freedom like God's, but freedom in relation to God and in its attitude towards him. To receive the freedom of Christ is not only to receive the freedom of God but to receive also, by partaking of Christ's human nature, that freedom which enables man to turn to God." And further, speaking about the Cross: "God the Son, veiled beneath the form of a crucified slave, does not force recognition of himself upon anyone. His divine power and glory are manifested in the act of faith and free love. The Crucified speaks to the freedom of the human spirit, for without a free act on the part of the spirit there can be no recognition of him as God. A crucified God is hidden as well as revealed. The constraint exercised by the natural world wholly disappears in the act of divine revelation, for everything turns on the existence of inner freedom. Man, obsessed by the forces of the external world, sees nothing in the Crucified but a human being suffering torture and humiliation, and the consequent defeat and annihilation of truth so far as this world is concerned. Divine truth seems to be powerless . . . But the religion of truth crucified is the religion of the freedom of the spirit; it possesses no logical or juridical power of compulsion and is revealed as love and liberty."

The mystery of freedom, then, and the solution of its inherent tragedy must be sought for in the Christian revelation of God-manhood, in Christ the God-man, crucified and risen.

Nonetheless the light that proceeds from Christ and illuminates all the paths of human freedom does not render Berdyaev in any way insensitive to the overwhelming power of evil, sin and suffering born from this freedom, and does not make him content and happy

in an easy-going optimism. In fact, as we have already seen, awareness of evil and sin in the world and the capacity for suffering and compassion are for him pre-eminent signs of a true Christian spirit. "Man is a creature who suffers and is compassionate, who is sensitive to pity, who in these ways proves the dignity of human nature" (*Spirit and Reality*). In the face of the evil and agonies in the world Berdyaev refuses to accept any conception of God's providence which establishes a rational or moral expediency and "final causality." "In this world there are irreconcilable good and evil, unjust suffering, the tragic destiny of great and just men. It is a world in which prophets are stoned and unjust men, the persecutors and crucifiers of the just, are triumphant. It is a world in which innocent children and innocent animals have to suffer. It is a world in which death, evil and anguish reign supreme. Is Divine Providence effective in this world?" (*ibid.*).

§

In this very question we feel Berdyaev's deep awareness of that terrible age-long action brought for their sufferings by stricken mankind against God—a challenge to the Hidden God to reveal himself. At one time Berdyaev was a convinced atheist; but, like many other people who have seriously and deeply questioned about the meaning of life and have sought the truth, he was an atheist, not because of intellectual difficulties which stood in the way of his belief in God, but for moral reasons, because spiritually he could not solve the agonizing problem of theodicy, *viz.*, of the "justification" of God in face of the tragic strickenness of the world and man. And may it not be that the overwhelming fact of boundless evil and innumerable sufferings in the world is indeed the only

serious objection to faith in God? This is surely why, among the rebels against God, there are people of a deeply sensitive conscience, imbued with the thirst for truth and justice. The historical destiny of the Russian people is a striking witness to this.

Thus no optimistic teleology is capable of facing, not to speak of solving, the problem of evil. To solve it one must first of all taste the tragedy of evil; evil must be lived through, or rather lived out from within; one must experience all the paths and possibilities of freedom. "Good," says Berdyaev, "is revealed and triumphs through the ordeal of evil." He answers the argument against God from the existence of evil in the world by affirming that the very existence of evil is a proof of the existence of God. "If the world consisted wholly and solely of goodness and righteousness there would be no 'need' for God, for the world itself would be God. God is, because evil is. And that means that God is because freedom is" (*Dostoevsky; cf., Freedom and the Spirit*).

Berdyaev as it were offers man the way to light through darkness, through the abyss and chasms of freedom. It almost seems that he, not unlike Dostoevsky and other Russians, wants to *know* evil, so that in the experience of this knowledge it may be overcome. This is a dangerous truth (and what truth is not dangerous!); it is a truth only for the really free and spiritually mature. Only a slave or a spiritual infant could understand it to mean that one must consciously take the path of evil in order to be enriched and to arrive happily at the good. Berdyaev is no evolutionist for whom evil is but a moment in the development of good—such a point of view is fundamentally untragic and optimistic (besides being morally vicious), and for this reason alone quite alien to him. "Only the unmasking of evil, only deep suffering from evil, can raise man to greater heights. It is precisely

self-satisfaction in evil which means utter ruin . . . Evil is the tragic path of man, his destiny, the trial of his freedom. But it is not a necessary moment in the evolution of good . . . Man may be enriched by the experience of evil, become more acutely conscious; but for this he must suffer, realize the horror of perdition, expose evil, cast it into the fire of Hell and expiate his guilt" (*Dostoevsky*).

Evil, then, is overcome from within, through living it out, through deep inward awareness of its meaning, through inner illumination—in other words, existentially. "And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John i. 5). This is the path of Christ's redemption. God who came down to earth and became man shared the destiny of stricken and sinful humanity, and in this sharing redeemed it. "Christ has died, and we must freely accept death as the way to life and as an interior moment of it" (*Freedom and the Spirit*). The cross of Christ is the revelation of the meaning of evil and suffering, and the only adequate answer to the question, "Is Divine Providence effective in the world?" God does not explain or justify the anguish of life, but takes it on himself, tastes its full horror, and in so doing illuminates it. Thus the problem of evil points as well to the twofold mystery with which life is bounded—to God-manhood, in whose power tragic existence becomes and is Christian existence.

"The transfiguration of the life of the world into eternal life is the supreme goal of all things. The way which leads to it involves the free acceptance of the cross, suffering, and death. Christ is crucified above the dark abyss in which being and non-being blend one with the other. The light which shines from the Crucified is a light shining in the darkness. It is this light which both illuminates the shadows of being and overcomes the darkness of non-being" (*op. cit.*).

The Modern World

IT has already been pointed out that Berdyaev cannot conceive of true Christian life which does not share in the fate of the world, and that for him all that happens even in the non-Christian and anti-Christian world is not only the concern of Christianity, but ultimately an event within it, and cannot remain external to it. History is not a meaningless void into which man is placed only to be hurled into another world, but is the realm of God's providence and man's interaction with it. And in a truly prophetic spirit Berdyaev wants to make the human soul aware of the momentous and eternal issues which history reveals and which are in themselves decisive.¹

The world to-day stands in the shadow of a crisis, a crisis which has equally deep-seated social, economic, international, cultural and spiritual implications. This crisis is also one of Berdyaev's central problems, and he summons Christians to become aware, from within Christianity itself, of the tragedy in which the modern world is plunged, and to grasp the meaning of the present historical predicament as an event intensely relevant to Christianity.

The world is in a flux; little solid is left in it; and both inwardly and outwardly it is passing through an age of revolution. Man to-day lives in *fear*: his life is as it were suspended over an abyss and he is threatened on all sides. He has lost the hopes which so recently he tried to substitute for the Christian faith. He no longer believes in

¹ Cf. his most illuminating attempt at a Christian philosophy of history in *The Meaning of History*.

progress, in humanism, in science, in salvation to be brought by democracy and democratic civilization; he knows the injustice of capitalism, and has become disillusioned about the utopias of ideal social-orders; he is eaten away by cultural and spiritual scepticism. In this atmosphere there have arisen new forms of pessimistic and nihilistic philosophy, in comparison with which the romantic pessimism of the past seems extremely comforting and harmless. Such was already Karl Marx's well-known *Verelendungstheorie*, according to which health, that is, the socialist collectivity of the future, had to be the result of the shocking state of the proletariat under capitalism; things had to get worse and worse in order that they might be better. Such is the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, to whom being itself is essentially fallen, though there is no one and nothing from whom it can have fallen away: the world is desperately depraved, but there is no God. Anxiety and throbbing fear are at the very heart of man's existence. Such too are the sinister philosophies which propagate the "necessity of desperation". The mind of Europe is under the sway of the melancholy, obscure and tragic Kierkegaard. His teaching of trembling and fear is spreading more and more, and it reveals the contemporary state of the world and man. A similar mood is shown in the school of dialectical theology and Barthianism, which are possessed by a deep consciousness of the terrible sinfulness of life and man, which are in radical reaction against the liberal humanism of the last century and proclaim a negatively eschatological Christianity. A similar reaction against liberalism, romanticism and modernism is to be found in the Roman Catholic Church in the form of a thorough-going return to St. Thomas Aquinas, a return which is not only theological but also inspires a whole cultural movement.

Berdyayev's thought expresses the same disruptions and disquietude. It seems to be in fact in the tradition of Russian thought to understand and give expression to such things (*cf.*, Herzen, Dostoevsky, Solovyev, Leontiev, Feodorov and others); and Russia's historical destiny itself revealed, before anyone in western Europe was aware of it, that the earth is crumbling away under our feet and that, in Berdyayev's words, "we can see all things naked and undeceiving." This became manifest above all in the Russian revolution of 1917, in which all the hopes of modern man in the idols of humanism, materialism, economism and all the other "isms" which constitute the faith of the average European, reached their limit and showed their true face: not only their truth, but also their demonic falsehood. "The Russian people," says Berdyayev, "in full accordance with their particular mentality, offered themselves as a burnt-offering on the altar of an experiment unknown to previous history: they have demonstrated the extremest consequences of certain ideas. They are an apocalyptic people and they could not stop short at a compromise, at some 'humanitarian state': they had to make real either brotherhood in Christ or comradeship in Antichrist. If the one does not reign, then the other will. The people of Russia have put this choice before the whole world with awe-inspiring force" (*The End of Our Time*). It will, however, be convenient to postpone a fuller account of Berdyayev's views on Russia to the end of this chapter.

It should be noted that although many idols of the past have been cast down by the forces of modern history, yet those forces have also created new idols. Man is constituted in such a way that he can only live either by faith in God or else by faith in idols and ideals: he cannot be a thoroughgoing, consequential atheist. Moreover, the creation and worship of idols pertain to all spheres

of his life: they can be found in science, in culture, in our national social and spiritual existence. The awareness of such tendencies renders Berdyaev highly critical of the nihilism, fear and feeling of doom characteristic of the above-mentioned spiritual currents. However inevitable and even necessary these reactions may be, and however justified the disquiet which inspires them, Berdyaev does not seem to believe that they are really capable of saving the situation in which stricken man finds himself. In fact, he perceives behind them the reverse side of the same chaos and dislocation of the world. And as in modern social and political movements fear and insecurity drive man to the principles of force, authority and the suppression of freedom, so in some contemporary religious aspirations he sees a disastrous tendency to authoritarianism and the debasement of man. Man seems to have grown tired of freedom, and is ready to renounce it for the sake of solid force, which he wants to shape his inner and outer destiny. He has become tired of himself and disappointed, and longs for the moment which will abandon him completely either to supra-human social collectivity or to a supra-human transcendent divine power. Both are to Berdyaev heresies against God-manhood, the truth of which he so eloquently and diversely defends.

§

There is one phenomenon in respect of which he believes man to be still full of a strange optimism: *modern man believes in the might of technology and the machine*. Here we come to a very remarkable prognosis of Berdyaev's thought, on which it is important to dwell more fully. He has devoted a special essay to this theme—one of the most brilliant of his shorter works, in which he has attained to a great depth of insight into the spiritual

destiny of modern man (cf., *Man and the Machine*; also the corresponding chapters in *The Meaning of History*). He considers the crisis of our time to be largely determined by technology, which has given us a colossal power, but which in the last resort we are unable to control.

For a long time the sphere of technology was regarded as quite neutral and indifferent from the religious point of view, remote from any spiritual issue and, so to say, innocent. Russian thought seems to have been the first to realize fully that this is not so. Nicolas Feodorov, that strange and almost enigmatic thinker, author of the amazing *Philosophy of Common Work*, already perceived it in the early nineteenth century. Berdyaev too has come to realize that technology is fundamentally a spiritual problem, a problem pertaining to the inmost destiny of man and his relation to the world and to God, and that it has created an entirely new spiritual environment. Technology has put into man's hands a terrible and unheard-of power, with which he aspires to unleash the hidden forces of nature and exploit them for his own ends. But at the same time it has proved stronger than man himself; it has subdued him, it brings him bitterness and disappointment, it threatens him with destruction, and by its power the final cataclysm of the world may come about.

Berdyaev views technology in the first place as the change in human existence from *organic life* to *organization*. In the past man lived in an organic order, linked up with the cosmos, with the earth, with nature. The great cultures of the past were encompassed by the life of nature and evolved within its rhythm. Closeness to the earth gave birth to what Berdyaev calls "telluric mysticism" (a term borrowed from the work of the German mythologist J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht*; cf., *Spirit*

and Reality): man felt himself one with the earth and the living organism of nature. This was displayed even in religious life, and has created religious myths and symbols. The life of social units, of the family, of the state, of the religious community was conceived as essentially organic and resembled a living organism.¹

But technology made its appearance, and cut man off from nature. It as it were transferred him to the plane of universal space and imbued him with the feeling not of the cosmic but of the material, spatial and "planetary" character of the earth. It showed itself as a power hostile to all organic incarnations and plunged man into a new cold, metallic atmosphere, charged with electric power, but devoid of cosmic warmth and the throb of living blood. "Man in the technical age of civilization ceases to live amongst animals and plants." The power of technology has, moreover, brought with it a weakening of the "psychic" element in human life, of human emotions, of tenderness, sensitiveness and lyricism. In short, technology has killed all that is "organic" in life, and instead has placed human existence under the banner of "organization." Berdyaev tells us with great power and eloquence how the machine, with cold and cruel ruthlessness, tears asunder the bonds of the spirit with the living and organic flesh of life. "The heart of man shrinks from the hard blows dealt to it by the machine; it loses blood and gradually wastes away." The process of technicization, mechanization and materialization seems almost inevitably to end in the death of life.

Nevertheless in the last resort Berdyaev welcomes this process. He believes that the spirit can transform and revivify it and enter a new and integral life. Technology

¹ In more recent times the Russian people in particular have been inclined to conceive life in terms of organism rather than organization; hence the doctrine and practice of *sobornost*. Cf., John Maynard's interesting study, *Russia in Flux* (London, 1941).

faces man with a reality which is more significant and of greater value for his final destiny than the conditions which defined his life in the age of organic, cosmic unity. Berdyaev does not want, nor does he like, mere romantic reaction whether it be the reaction of the nineteenth¹ or of the twentieth century. Romanticism was in fact quite powerless in its reaction against technology and could not solve the problem—or maybe solved it in much too easy a way. Berdyaev does not aspire to a mere return to former patterns of organic life, to a patriarchal structure of society and old forms of agricultural and artisan civilization; he is equally opposed to the conversion of life and nature into a mere instrument of technical exploitation. He wants man, and quite particularly Christian man, to define his attitude to the new environment in a creative and positive way. And in the very experience of technical civilization he perceives hidden possibilities for a greater intensification and purification of the spirit, and for a power which steels and tempers heart and mind. Man can and should be technical and capable of “organizing”; he can and should become maker and master of technical forces, which does not in itself and of necessity imply the mechanization and rationalization of life. In fact true creativeness renders life mysterious in its unforeseen possibilities and points to the “irreducible, irrational element of being,” whose vision has so much contributed to Berdyaev’s originality.

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Another side of the process which has given birth to the crisis of the modern world is seen in the entry of vast

¹ John Ruskin in his rejection of the machine would not even reconcile himself to travelling in a train, but used to drive demonstratively in a carriage alongside the railway.

human masses into the sphere of culture, in the "democratization" which is taking place on such a large scale to-day.

Berdyaev distinguishes two elements in cultural life: the "aristocratic" and the "democratic." The former denotes the principle of qualitative selection, of deepening and intensification, without which culture could never attain perfection;¹ the latter denotes the quantitative principle. Cultural life spreads outwards, and continuously absorbs new social strata. This inevitable and necessary process can be observed particularly in Soviet Russia, whereas Western culture suffers acutely from self-isolation, from loss of inner unity, of integral co-ordination between the upper and lower layers, and the *élite* seems to be increasingly less aware of its call to serve the common cultural whole. The idea of service has weakened since as far back as the Renaissance, and has been gradually replaced by the ideas of liberalism and individualism. Berdyaev shows how one-sided "aristocratism" must inevitably result, and in point of fact has resulted, in a general disintegration and atomization of life and man in a whole series of cultural processes in Europe—in literature, art, science and politics (cf., *The End of Our Time*). An integral conception of life is a Christian conception: it was characteristic of the middle ages. And Berdyaev arrives at the conclusion that the way to cultural integration lies in a creative re-discovery of the middle ages, or, as he calls it, the "New Middle Ages" (cf., *The End of Our Time*).

These ideas had been expressed before in Russian thought. In particular, Vladimir Solovyev was the prophet of the New Middle Ages. The idea of an integral culture

¹ Berdyaev has dealt with this subject in his book, *The Philosophy of Inequality* (1923), which was written largely under the impression of the general cultural levelling which came about in Russia in the years immediately following the Revolution.

with its underlying principle of service has re-appeared in a new and powerful, though blurred, form in Russian Communism, which Berdyaev therefore believes to be the actual forerunner and anticipation of the New Middle Ages. In his book, *The End of Our Time*, he has made an extremely profound statement, the significance of which cannot be over-estimated: "In considering Russian Communism we must not rely on the categories of modern history, humanism, democracy, or even humanistic socialism, nor may we speak of liberty or equality, understood according to the spirit of the French Revolution. In Bolshevism there is a passing of all bounds, a flood, an agonizing attainment of something most superlative; its tragedy is not enacted in the full day of modern history but in the darkness of medieval night. In communist Russia one can travel only by the stars, and to understand the revolution modern astronomy must be put aside for medieval astrology . . ."

There occurred in Europe a fatal dissociation of the "aristocratic" element in culture from the "democratic," and the cultural *élite* has proved powerless to give the masses the ideas and values which could inspire them. This Berdyaev explains as being due to a kind of cultural over-refinement and fragility, which prevents the *élite* from meeting the movements of the masses creatively and draws it into self-isolation and particularism. The masses, on the other hand, easily assimilate a vulgar materialism and external technical civilization, and in view of the particular environment of their own existence they are not open to a higher spiritual culture, and so easily pass from a religious world-outlook to atheism. (It may be added in parenthesis that this last danger is enhanced by the disastrous associations of Christian churches with the ruling classes and with the defence of an unjust social order.) In any case no ideas of cultural

and intellectual refinement can exalt, inspire or dominate the heart of the masses. What can and does inspire them are images, myths or symbols ("archetypes," to use a term belonging to modern psychology) which express the deep and all-pervading hopes and fears of mankind; in other words, *beliefs*, beliefs of a religious or anti-religious, social-revolutionary or national-revolutionary nature. Hence Berdyaev does not see any solution of the conflict between the "aristocratic" and the "democratic" elements, between quality and quantity, between "height" and "breadth," based on the idea of a neutral, secularized, symbolless and mythless culture, for such a culture is doomed to powerlessness and exhaustion. What is needed is a resuscitation and new awareness of Christian myths and symbols which in themselves are a symptom of both religious and cultural intensity. The restoration and re-integration of culture must emerge from within Christianity. The very symbol of God the Father as revealed in Christianity sums up and integrates the "aristocratic" and "democratic" principles, for it is both a call to highest "quality," to "heavenly perfection," to realization of the dignity of God's children and to common life and fellowship, to service and integration. "In Christianity," says Berdyaev, "the problem of culture is integrally bound up with the problem of society . . . The fate of culture depends on the spiritual and material condition of the working masses; it depends both on whether their hearts are inspired by the Christian truth or by atheistic materialism, and on whether their labour and their material problems are recognized as of supreme and transcendent spiritual significance or as neutral and profane" (*Put*, No. xxxv).

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With the growth of technology and the mass-democratization of culture Berdyaev associated another important problem of modern life which is particularly disturbing for the Christian conscience, namely, that of the individual and society. As a result of the spreading technicization and democratization of life man's personality comes to be more and more crushed by society. This situation is shown by Berdyaev to be pre-determined by the capitalistic social order with its individualism and materialism, its Mammon-worship and economic autonomy, its stock-exchange and "anonymity"; all this did much to produce a general levelling-down and to kill personality (Cf., *Christianity and the Class War*). Materialistic Communism (and in fact all totalitarianism), which in some sense has justly risen against capitalism, finally crushes personality, absorbs it completely into the machinery of the social collective, and rejects on principle man's unique and transcendent personal destiny.

In this new conflict man is either forced into himself, into self-isolation, and remains out of any relation to the community, or else is utterly subjected to and dissolved in the collective; and it presents to Berdyaev the conditions which as it were negatively point to the Christian truth about man, finding in this truth its own solution. Christianity alone is the supreme affirmation of man's free personality and his unique eternal value, and does not permit him to be converted into a mere tool for the ends of social life. The very fact that man is imbued with awareness of the mysterious, boundless depth of his own personal existence establishes the limit of society over him. Yet at the same time Berdyaev's personalism, or even subjectivism (in the true sense), does not preclude,

but in fact implies, a call to common life, to service, to the union of every "I" and "thou" in "we," to *communism*, no more and no less (Berdyaev says that he is quite ready to label himself a Christian communist, although for some this is a contradiction in terms). Only in Christ and in the life of his divine-human body is realized the innermost integration of personality and society: man and society are existentially correlated and thus each comes to the fulness of its life.

I shall dwell more fully later on the constructive ideas of Berdyaev's social ethics. I will merely note here that the problem of personality and society raised by the present crisis must in Berdyaev's view bring about a structure of social life which he describes as *personalistic Socialism*. This will include all the truth of Socialism and repudiate all its falsehood, its false world-view, which denies not only God but ultimately even man. But Berdyaev is far from "optimism" about the future. After all, no one who has lived consciously through the last thirty years can cherish roseate and encouraging dreams in this respect. Yet the knowledge of the evil forces opposing the emergence of a new society does not paralyse his power to confront creatively the urgent tasks of social re-integration. Moreover, with all his thorough-going faith in man and man's free creativeness, he never loses the living awareness of God's action upon the world and of the grace of Christ quickening those who fulfil his work in this world (It is, in fact, hardly fair to Berdyaev to speak of merely "not losing the awareness of Christ's grace," considering the nature of the reality involved). "Not for anything in the world would I be free from God; I wish to be free *in* God and *for* God. When the flight from God is over and the return to God begins, when the movement of aversion from God becomes a movement towards Satan, then modern times

are over and the middle ages are begun. God must again be the centre of our whole life—our thought, our feeling, our only dream, our only desire, our only hope . . .” (*The End of Our Time*). And it is this meeting and encounter with God which is for Berdyaev the supreme solution of man’s predicament to-day.

The modern world is experiencing above all the crisis of man: not only the crisis *in* man and in human life, but over and above this the crisis *of* man himself.

This crisis is to Berdyaev the betrayal of God-manhood by Christian Europe. Sinful human nature has never been able to realize the fulness of this mystery. Even within Christianity itself it seems to have been insufficiently recognized or brought to light; whence the truth about man too has remained unrealized. This made the appearance of humanism inevitable. “Humanism arose in the midst of the Christian world because Christianity had not fully realized the truth about man . . . because it was given neither expression nor sanctification . . . But humanism in modern history is to be clearly distinguished from the humanism of antiquity, since it could only arise in a Christian period of history. It is connected in some way with a Christian problem which seems so harassing and insoluble” (*Freedom and the Spirit*). Berdyaev describes humanism as a “great, providential and inevitable test of human freedom,” as a test which has a profoundly Christian significance. “It is the pathway of the freedom of man, in which his creative forces are tested and human nature gains its self-awareness” (*ibid.*). He perceives in humanism a “partial truth,” the truth of the divine-*human* nature of the Christian revelation.

Yet humanism gave rise to a process fatal in its results. There began a theoretical and practical disintegration of the Christian myth of God-manhood. To begin with

one half as it were was cast aside, namely, the reality of God.¹ But the other "half" remained, *i.e.*, the reality of man and the Christian idea of man. A striking example of such half-truths is, according to Berdyaev, the anthropocentric philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach, who repudiated God but so to say preserved the divine likeness of man. This applies to other humanists who have not yet directly encroached on the image of man.

The destruction of the myth of God-manhood, however, went further. As humanism evolved in isolation from God, it *ipso facto* threatened to destroy the other "half" as well, namely the reality of man. The betrayal of God led to the betrayal of man, for "where there is no God, there is no man . . .—that is what we have learned from experience" (*The End of Our Time*). "The turning of humanism against man constitutes the very tragedy of modern times. Humanism destroyed itself by its own dialectic . . . for the putting up of man without God and against God leads to man's own negation and destruction" (*ibid.*). The most characteristic representatives of this stage in the fate of European civilization are Marx and Nietzsche, who have both violated man. For Marx the supreme value is no longer man, but the social collective. A new myth arises—that of the messianic mission of the proletariat. "Marx," says Berdyaev, "is a direct outcome of humanism."² On the other hand there is Nietzsche, who also denies the supreme value of man by substituting for him the super-man, the man of the elected race (*"Die blonde Bestie"*): man is expected to surpass himself, yet this is in the last resort equivalent to his

¹ I am fully aware that no such arithmetical phraseology is adequate to express this complex process: neither God-manhood nor man's living relation to this mystery can be dissected in such a way. I am using these terms only to describe Berdyaev's point of view more briefly and more lucidly.

² See, however, his more qualified interpretation of Marx in the next chapter.

annihilation. The same applies to the theory and practice of National-Socialism, which has replaced the value of man by that of an impersonal, biological entity.¹ Nietzsche is the other outcome of humanism.

Modern man has entered an epoch which knows neither God nor man: atheistic Communism, racism, capitalism and many other "isms" seem to join hands in a demonic struggle against God-manhood.

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I now turn to Berdyaev's views on Russia.² He has an amazing insight into the social and religious currents which have determined his country's historical destiny; moreover, he is himself Russian to the very core of his being. His thought cannot be understood outside the context of Russian life, and from him much may be learned of the Russian mentality. All his problems express the preoccupations of the Russian mind—not the notorious and on occasion nauseating *âme slave*, but of that mind which speaks in the great literature of Russia, in the questionings of her intelligentsia, and indeed in the fate of her whole people, with its burning disquietude and searching for the utmost truth in the world, with the breadth and boundlessness of its vision, with its limitless and truly Christian faith in God and man.

"Russia," writes Berdyaev, "remained outside the great modern humanist movement; she has had no Renaissance" (in the European meaning of this word). The uniqueness of Russia's destiny lies in that "she has never been able

¹ It may, however, be pointed out that Nietzsche would probably be horror-struck by his contemporary Germanic adepts.

² Cf., *The Soul of Russia; The Fate of Russia* (essay on the Psychology of War and Nationhood); *Dostoevsky*; "The Russian Religious Idea" in *Problems of Russian Religious Consciousness*; and also *The Russian Revolution* and *The Origin of Russian Communism*.

wholly to accept humanist culture, with its rationalist concepts, formal logic and law, neutrality in religion, and general secular compromise." "But the Russians took over the last fruits of European humanism at the moment of its decay, when it was destroying both itself and the divine image in man" (*The End of Our Time*). Moreover, it would seem that no other people has gone so far on this path of humanism, or has drunk so deeply of its poison. To this the Russian Revolution is evidently the most striking witness. Russian humanism is described by Berdyaev as that of the heroes of Dostoevsky's novels, of Kirillov and Piotr Verekhovensky in *The Possessed*, and Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, which has in the last resort but little in common with the classical humanist spirit of the West and its secularized, neutral culture and civilization. This is largely due to certain distinct features of the Russian character, which Berdyaev describes as being possessed by the feeling that the world is always on the brink of some apocalyptic cataclysm; that life, which is governed by standards of civilization, of worldly goods and *bourgeois* virtues, is of doubtful value; that history is intolerably slow; and that truth and justice, or falsehood and iniquity (as the case may be), cannot be half-hearted and can suffer no delay or compromise (Cf., *The Fate of Russia* and "The Russian Religious Idea," *op cit.*).

As regards the relations of Russia with the West Berdyaev ranges himself beside Solovyev and Dostoevsky, but goes considerably further. He was much stimulated in this respect by the war of 1914-18 and later by many years spent abroad in contact with Western culture. He has entirely freed himself from the spiritual and historical provincialism which was to some extent characteristic of both the Slavophiles and Westerners in their tendency radically to oppose Russia and Europe.

“We are entering on an epoch which at many points makes one think of the age of Hellenic universalism. If there have never been such divisions and such enmities, there have on the other hand never been, at least throughout the course of modern history, similar *rapprochements* and attempts at world-unification. For the murderous strife of the war has contributed to a coming-together and fraternizing among the peoples, to the unifying of races and cultures; it drew Russia out of its state of isolation. Nationalities are ceasing to keep themselves apart from one another; and this is in accordance with their destiny; all will have to depend upon all. To-day the organization of each people affects the state of the whole world. What occurs in Russia has repercussions in every country and upon every race. There has never before been such close contact between the Eastern and the Western worlds, which used to live so markedly separate. Civilization is ceasing to be European and is becoming ‘of the world’; Europe will have to renounce her pretension to a monopoly of culture. . . . And Russia, situated midway of East and West, in a terrible catastrophic way has taken on the most considerable significance of all nations: the eyes of the whole world are on her” (*The End of Our Time*).

The above quotation shows a striking revival of certain characteristic elements of nineteenth-century Russian thought. *Gentilhomme russe citoyen du monde!* Berdyaev develops in a new way the traditional theme of Russia’s special historical path and mission, which lies at the basis of the Slavophil philosophy of history. In the coming period of history and culture, which, as we have seen, Berdyaev describes as the “new middle ages,” “a quite special place will belong to Russia” because she “looks

to the future" more than does any other country, because she is free of the fetters of standardized civilization and protected against the development of the *forms* of life at the price of its *content*, because the Russian people is the most universalist nation and the most deeply penetrated by a burning desire for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.¹

Such is Berdyaev's faith in Russia; but he is also aware that on this path to a renewal of life and spiritual rebirth the Russian people will have to go through the purifying fire of national repentance and undergo a stern self-discipline of the spirit.

¹ Cf., Dostoevsky's famous speech in praise of Pushkin, in which he spoke of the Russian people as possessing a special gift for realizing the idea of the unity of all mankind: "the task of coming generations in Russia will be in the end, perhaps, to utter the final word of the great universal harmony of the final, brotherly meeting of all peoples in Christ's gospel-word."

“Personalistic Socialism”

IN this chapter I describe some of Berdyaev's positive social ideas. It must however be born in mind that most of his writings on social questions are of an intentionally polemical character, both as to matter and manner, and his constructive affirmations are consequently to a large extent only implicit in his negations. Moreover, Berdyaev is not a sociologist in the strict sense of the term, and the social problem is for him primarily a matter of ethics rather than of economics and politics. Charles Péguy, one of the most profound of French Catholic writers, once drew a distinction between “politics” and “mysticism,” a distinction which clearly differs from the commonly accepted use of these terms. To his mind this distinction coincided with that of falsehood and truth, of mere opportunism and a genuine attitude to life. It is well known that Péguy was in considerable sympathy with the French politician Jean Jaurès so long as Jaurès' socialism seemed “mystical,” but ceased to sympathize with him when that socialism turned out to be only “politics.”

Now it can be said that Berdyaev too approaches the social problem from the point of view of “mysticism” rather than “politics”—which, however, does not at all mean that he denies the value of politics or economics, of the state or the nation, etc. His “mysticism” denotes a particular evaluation of man and his place in society and he judges the process of social life above all from the point of view of the Christian value of human personality. He is up against any autonomy and self-sufficiency of the various spheres of social existence and their conversion

of man into a mere means and tool for social development, for the power of the state or of the economic collective. And this leads him to the consideration of the most important problem of "ends" and "means" in social life.

Is it possible to attain social freedom by means of force; unity by compulsion; love through hate; truth through falsehood; in other words, to attain the "Kingdom of God" by the means of the "Kingdom of Cæsar"? This question is indeed exceedingly disquieting and can fail to disturb only the spiritual *bourgeois* who is hypnotized by the norms of secular utilitarianism.

When Vissarion Belinsky, a famous Russian social writer and publicist of the last century, was carried away by the idea of Socialism, he was filled with boundless love for humanity, and, while proclaiming the slogan (since proverbial among Russians) "Sociality, sociality or death!" was quite prepared to destroy half mankind with fire and sword in order to make the other half happy. He in fact anticipated the ethics of "totalitarianism," although he was originally moved by compassion and love for man. Berdyaev observes a similar psychological process whenever good ends are bought at the price of evil means, and annihilation is required for the sake of these ends. However, it is common knowledge that the way to Hell is paved with good intentions. "Ends" are too often mere abstractions, which may cover anything. From Berdyaev's "existential" point of view the decisive thing to know is not abstract principles and "ends" which govern the life of so many, but the quality of life itself, *i.e.*, what life actually is. And it is force, hatred, cruelty and falsehood, or (as the case may be) love, compassion and truth rather than abstract ends and principles, however exalted, which are decisive for the evaluation of life; in other words, *means* are symptomatic

of the real quality of life, of its spirit and its content. "What is it to me," exclaims Berdyaev, "that man aspires to freedom while his whole life is full of violence; that he aims at brotherhood while his life is full of hatred; that he desires the triumph of the Christian Church while his whole life is permeated with anti-Christian deeds and feelings; that he strives for the good of his country while in its name he oppresses its people?" It may be noted that Leo Tolstoy was already acutely aware of the importance of the question of "ends" and "means." But his post-conversion rationalism and insensitiveness to the tragedy of history prevented him from really facing it, though his very concern and disquietude were extremely edifying and significant. Both the Christian and the anti-Christian worlds have been led astray and have stumbled precisely in the sphere of "means." While continuing to regard as "ends" the Kingdom of God and salvation, or the good of mankind and a perfect society, they have too often calmly committed all sorts of crimes and injustices as occasion arose.

As has already been noted, Berdyaev does not deny the value of the state or politics with their "means," which are often inevitably evil; but he is concerned to show them as essentially relative values, subordinate to man, as having not a "substantial" but a "modal," functional meaning. This is in his view the main social imperative of Christianity, which, however, Christians are so much inclined to forget. He has no doubt that the living, personal human being stands above the state, economics and even society at large: these he admits only as functions of concrete personal human existence, as a content of man's personal life which he must master and integrate. The possible objection that society is after all "greater," and in any case stronger and consequently more decisive, than man, Berdyaev meets by pointing out that in our

sinful world the things of the greatest value are seldom in possession of the greatest strength. It is rather the other way round: coarse and hardened matter appears to be mightier than the Almighty God. The state always has more power than man; but this is just because it is of less and not of greater value. Evidently society forms a larger unit, into which man is placed as a much smaller unit; and in this sense human personality seems to be absorbed by society and wholly dependent on it. But from the existential point of view, as well as from the point of view of the hierarchy of spiritual values, it is not the personality which is part of society but rather society which is a part of personality, or, so to say, its (personality's) realization in a direction outside itself; and the depth and absolute, eternal value of personal existence will remain impenetrable to society.

I must repeat that Berdyaev approaches the problems of social life, not from the point of view of "politics" and of naturalistic sociology with its laws and standards (as such his position must, no doubt, appear to be meaningless), but above all from that of the supreme value of human personality, which may even sometimes involve opposition to the social order and its sociological assumptions. Such a position becomes particularly significant against the background of certain contemporary social phenomena: nationalism, state-worship, totalitarianism and economism have overthrown the hierarchy of values and have resulted in all the calamities of universal disintegration. Berdyaev longs for idols to be shattered—in the name of the living God and living man. Hence his call to what he terms a "personalistic revolution." "The world has yet to see a great and unheard of revolution: the revolution of the human personality" (*Freedom and Slavery of Man*). "Man is an end in himself and cannot be used as a means" (*ibid.*). If social harmony is reached

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by using him as an end, it is not harmony but an antheap. Revolution in the name of man and human personality is the only revolution which can be called Christian.

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But Berdyaev's faith in such revolution by no means implies what in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came to be known as individualism; it is in fact its very opposite, and even demands that it should be overthrown. It is precisely individualism which destroys personality, and leads in practice—however paradoxical this may seem—to the domination of society over human personality, and in the last resort to the slavery of man. This is particularly manifest in economic life, in capitalism. If Berdyaev is intensely disturbed, as indeed he is, by the position of the proletariat in a capitalistic order, it is because the personality of the working-man, rather than his class, suffers and is humiliated. From the sociological point of view the victim of individualistic capitalist economy is the working *class*, which is deprived of the means of production and forced to sell its labour like goods; but from the existential Christian point of view the working-class is a pure abstraction with no capacity for suffering or joy, and it is *man* in the working-class who suffers or rejoices.

For Berdyaev's social ethics nothing is more ambiguous and cynical than the so-called "freedom of the individual" in a capitalist democratic order. And to this individualism he opposes, not the negation of personality or its subjection to the social collective, but the affirmation of the personality of every living human being, who is levelled down and crushed by the unreal and fictitious individualistic system. Berdyaev accuses capitalist society of never being really concerned with the value of man's personality,

of never having defended its dignity: it has been concerned not with man, but with "economic man," with a quasi-human being conducive to economic power and expansion. It is indeed advantageous, according to capitalist ideology, that man, or rather "economic man," should be guided in economic life by individual interests and be entirely autonomous in his economic initiative. But this is valuable not because capitalism believes in the creative initiative of man and its place in the life of the community, but because such initiative is a useful means to increase production, creates channels for inordinate acquisitiveness and justifies insatiable lust. The process of production itself has hardly ever considered man as such, otherwise there would never be that discrepancy between production and demand which is so characteristic of a capitalist society. And the defence of freedom and economic individualism is ultimately nothing but the self-protection of the exploiters and holders of economic power, and seldom or never the protection of those who are exploited and deprived of this power, so that the real freedom of the greater part of mankind remains quite fictitious.

In Berdyaev's analysis the individualistic, capitalist system is equivalent to the domination of the "whole," of the anonymous impersonal economy and the autonomous power of economics over the "particular," *i.e.*, over living personal human beings. A human being however is for him emphatically not a "part" of anything, either of society or of the world at large. It is itself a whole, and hence the relation of man and society cannot be conceived in terms of "whole" and "part." If it is desirable, as indeed it is, to limit the scope of economic individualism and autonomy, Berdyaev envisages such limitation not for the sake of the state and society or the "whole," but for the sake of personal

human beings, their real freedom and right to economic justice. “Economic man must be limited in the name of man’s integral and sacred personality.”

If individualists and liberals in economic life believe that man must be given full economic freedom and autonomy of economic initiative and that he must be guided by personal interests, they are primarily concerned with the advantages of maximum production or of national prosperity and expansion; they are hardly determined by any faith in the unique and supreme value of the human personality. Berdyaev on the other hand believes in this value, and consequently maintains that society should be organized on this basis rather than on that of a powerful state and national prosperity; whereas the individual should be guided by the ideal of social service, of self-sacrifice and self-limitation. In other words, the individual must think of society, of others, whilst society must think exclusively of the individual. Such a view may even imply a wide scheme of economic socialization, which in fact Berdyaev welcomes; yet this should be brought about, not for the sake of society, but in order that man may be secured the possession of real freedom. “Freedom cannot exist only for a privileged group; it must exist for all or for nobody. It must exist for every living human being” (*op cit.*).

It may be relevant to refer here in more detail to Berdyaev’s attitude to Marxism. He has brought to light certain aspects of Marx’s teaching which are, even from the Christian point of view, strikingly superior to impersonalistic and inhuman capitalist ideology. He has shown how in Russia a revolution on a grand scale could come about under the banner of Marx just because the liberal-democratic creed which gave birth to capitalism was universally spent and powerless to inspire anyone.

Marx gave a definition of capital which exceedingly surprised and even shocked economists. He defined it as the social relations of men in the process of production: he regarded capital not as an objective material reality (*Verdinglichung*), but as a symbol of the relations between living beings. He dissolved the motionless, objectivized economic categories and recognized them as historical. Behind the lifeless material goods he perceived living people, their toil, their struggles and their vital relations with one another. Here economics ceases to be conceived as having a substance of its own: its "substance" is people, human labour, conflict. It is only capitalism which turns people into "goods," sees goods where in fact there is concrete human existence.

Berdyaev regards such an interpretation of capital and capitalism as Marx's most remarkable discovery and contribution. But at the same time he is fully aware that this discovery is reduced to an absurdity by Marx's own materialism: for it is precisely materialism which objectivizes all things and disregards acts and living relations as the primal reality of being. Hence capitalism too is thoroughly materialistic.

§

Both to capitalism and materialistic Marxism Berdyaev opposes a *personalistic socialism*, which, so far as economics is concerned, is nevertheless Marxist. He believes that Marx's attitude to the capitalist system corresponds to an existential philosophy of life rather than to materialism; for it is the existential philosophy which perceives human existence, human destiny, and vital human relationships behind the world of objects, things and goods. The very concept of labour is an existential one. Marx's materialism, on the other hand, like all

materialism, belongs to the *bourgeois* world, to a world which has enslaved man by its lifeless economic categories and material objects. “A true liberation of human existence from the fetters of the *bourgeois* world will signify above all the freedom from material *things* and from the rule of economics” (*Christianity and Class War*).

Personalism in social life is essential for Berdyaev if only because man is irrevocably endowed with the image and likeness of God, which cannot be said of the state, the nation or the social collective as such. The latter have a transcendent value only in the power of man’s relation to God, *i.e.*, of the image of God in man. “Christ,” says Berdyaev, “suffered and died on the cross for the salvation of every human being, rather than for the state or the social collective; indeed, it is they which have crucified him.” Berdyaev is far from denying the religious value of social life, or that the Kingdom of God itself is a society (or rather community), but this latter is conceived by him as essentially personalistic, *i.e.*, based on existential personal relationships, and has but little resemblance to the state. It is indeed not by chance that the whole of after-Christian history is a crying witness to a continuous conflict between Church and state. Caiaphas said: “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John xi. 50). The state, even the so-called “Christian state,” always speaks as Caiaphas spoke at that greatest moment in history. But the Christian truth is a “personalistic revolution” in the world: its relation to social life is determined by the supreme and all-pervading vision of the absolute and transcendent value of human personality. And when Christianity ceased to be a revolution in that sense it took the fatal path of opportunism, and its fall drove men away from it. “The very existence of

personality," says Berdyaev, "signifies a discontinuity in the world, as it were a break in the world process, and witnesses to the fact that this world is not self-sufficient . . . Personality is the convolution of two worlds" (*Solitude and Society*).

I should like to emphasize again that it would be a great mistake to identify Berdyaev's point of view with social individualism, as some of his interpreters have tried to do (*Cf.*, J. F. Hecker, *Religion and Communism*, New York, 1930). He rejects individualism altogether as being based on a completely false conception of the relation between man and society, a conception which creates extraneousness and estrangement between the members of the social community and leads either to the isolation of the individual within himself or to the subjection of personality to the extraneous collective, which is (as history has sufficiently shown) the reverse side of the same thing, *i.e.*, it leads in both cases to disintegration. Berdyaev's personalism, on the other hand, presupposes both man's self-existence and his out-going and relatedness to God and men. It implies awareness of man's universal and cosmic nature, to which nothing is external, whose very existence is to be in community and togetherness (*cf.*, *Solitude and Society*).

This explains Berdyaev's strictures of democracy, in which he seems to carry on the tradition of Russian nineteenth-century publicists.¹ He thinks it a great mistake to believe that liberal-democratic ideology expresses or guarantees the principle of personality and personal freedom. In fact it ignores the real nature of man and man's personality, and conceives of freedom as a product of society. "The Declaration of the Rights of Man," he writes, "cannot be said to have given much

¹ *Cf.*, *The End of Our Time, Christianity and Class War, The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, and other works.

attention to 'man'; he was rather put in the background by the 'citizen,' who was understood as a political animal and his rights as formal rights. So the declaration easily degenerated into a charter of protection for *bourgeois* interests" (*Christianity and Class War*). This is evidently based on the primacy of social values over personality. Moreover, Berdyaev regards the very concept of freedom in democracy as formal, abstract and wholly rooted in the secularized mentality which is so characteristic of West-European civilization.¹ "Democracy is individualist in principle . . . and this leads it to a dead-levelling of human beings. Democrats talk a lot about liberty, but no respect for the human spirit and personality is entailed: it is a love of liberty expressed by people who are not interested in truth . . . There was probably more real liberty of the spirit in the days when the fires of the Spanish Inquisition were blazing than in the middle-class republics of to-day" (*The End of Our Time*).² Berdyaev believes that it is just because of its lack of real content and of a positive attitude to truth that modern democracy is passing through a grave crisis. It is threatened on all sides, above all by Socialism, which, unlike democracy, is primarily concerned with the truth (whatever socialists may believe this to mean), and does not leave Pilate's question "What is truth?" to the counting of votes and the possible results of the clash of party—and economic interests. Not unlike some

¹ Nevertheless he does not deny the existence of a genuinely Christian tradition of democratic liberalism: in England in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (and even now to some extent); in the nineteenth century in France (Lamennais and Lacordaire) and in Russia (some of the Slavophiles and particularly Solovyev). But he doubts whether this tradition has been as yet of decisive importance for the destiny of Europe, though this may be so at present and in the future (cf., *Put*, No. ix).

² He recalls an anecdote attributed to Louis Blanc. A well-to-do man was walking past a cab and said to the driver, "Are you free?" (*i.e.*, disengaged). "Free," was the reply. "Long live freedom!" exclaimed the passer-by and went on his road.

of the more anarchically thinking Slavophiles, Berdyaev believes that it is time for men to challenge republic, legislation, representation and all the ideas regarding the citizen in his relation to the state.

§

Berdyaev makes a very important distinction which, no doubt, he also owes to the Russian Slavophiles and their teaching of *sobornost*, namely that of *society* and *community*. "Man," he says, "has need not only of society, to which moreover he often belongs simply by the force of circumstances; but also, and even more decisively, of community" (*Solitude and Society*). Yet community cannot be created by the way of external organization which so often defines the structure of societies. Though perhaps it may be possible and even necessary to create just social conditions by means of external planning and organization, the life of the community functions in other ways: it presupposes fellowship, *i.e.*, personal or personalistic relationships.¹ Berdyaev insists on the fact that it is quite fatal to separate personal and social acts: every personal act in human life has a social projection and is bound up with the relation of man to man. Behind every social act stands a series of personal acts and the quality of any social activity is ultimately determined by the quality of the relations between the living human beings who inspire it. It is impossible to create a perfect society from imperfect human material, as it were abstracting it from the living people who make it up. And it is likewise impossible to attain personal perfection while upholding an unjust

¹ This thought has lately been put forward very forcibly by Dr. J. H. Oldham and the Christian News-Letter; cf., *Real Life is Meeting* (C.N.-L., 1943).

social order, while committing social crimes, violating and exploiting one's neighbour. This point of view is in the last analysis assumed also by Communism, which both holds in high esteem the human material out of which communist society is to be built up, and seeks to create not only new and just social conditions, but also fellowship and common life. Its fatal mistake lies, however, in that it holds the possibility of creating a community by the same means as are used to organize society or the state. Berdyaev has but little faith in these means and he can conceive of true community only on the basis of the Christian, existential truth, which reveals the supreme and integral synthesis of personal and common life among men.

This life derives its origin not from a class, nor from the state, nor from a race, nor even from society: it springs from the living waters of Christ's body. It belongs to the truth of God-manhood, in which all things are equally personal and in common; in which man constitutes not a mere unit of the universe or a part of a machine, but a “living member of an organic hierarchy, belonging to a real and living whole” (*The End of Our Time*). Such was, if not in practice, at least in purpose the great epoch of the middle ages, and such the new middle ages will be, in which the Christian truth about man and the world will have the decisive power and significance. For these new middle ages Berdyaev longs with all the thirst for and love of things to come so characteristic of him—*amor futuri*! “Christians must will the creation of a Christian society and culture, putting before all things the search for the ‘Kingdom of God and his righteousness.’ Much depends on our freedom, on man's creative efforts . . . I have a presentiment that an outbreak of the powers of evil is at hand . . . The night is coming and we must take up spiritual weapons for the fight against evil, we

must make more sensitive our power for its discernment, we must build up a new knighthood . . . *We* are men of the middle ages, not only because that is our destiny, the doom of history, but also because we will it. *You*, you are still men of modern times, because you refuse to choose . . .” (*ibid.*)¹

¹ It is interesting to note that Berdyaev’s “personalistic socialism” is represented, though quite independently of him, by a group of French Catholics (who have come out of Péguy’s “school”), particularly associated with Emmanuel Mounier and the review *Esprit*. Their moral and social outlook, which marked a real Catholic revival in France, has developed along spiritual lines similar to those of Berdyaev. See Mounier’s *Personalist Manifesto* (Sheed & Ward).

6

Conclusion

As I write these lines historical events are taking place in Russia which will decide her fate for a long time to come. There is no doubt that the future shape of Russian culture is closely bound up with the catastrophic events of the war. Nonetheless I venture to suggest that the main motifs of her cultural development go deeper than the external events of to-day, or for that matter than those of the last stormy twenty-five years of her history. Every external historical factor is preceded and to some extent predetermined by deeper spiritual processes: and the outer factors of Russia's life, in spite of all its recent disruptions and dislocation, have deep spiritual roots in her historic destiny. To understand them we must be aware of these spiritual roots and of the elements which in one sense or another prepared the soil for the present harvest. Here the Russian religious thought of the years before the revolution is the first to arrest our attention. It may be legitimately asserted that while the revolution, as it issued in radical social economic changes, occurred in 1917, it was preceded by another revolution in the spiritual and cultural sphere—the revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was described in the first chapter as a spiritual renaissance. It struck a note of expectation of great things to come, of a renewal of life and of the liberation of man. The figure of Nicolas Berdyaev is a symbol of the great vision and courage which inspired this revolution.

§

The present book is appearing in a series under the title of "Christian Revolutionaries." What is revolution and how are we to define it?

The notion of revolution used *ad nauseam* as a slogan hardly bears scrutiny. Its true meaning, however, may be most comprehensively described as an *eruption*, as a radical change, a break-up and turning upside down. And though revolutions often mature slowly within the life from which they have emerged, they nevertheless burst into our gradual and continuous daily existence as something sudden, as something new and unheard of, and so cut asunder the course of time.

The spirit of Berdyaev's philosophy, with its ideas of man's calling to co-operate in the cosmic realization of God-manhood, with its ideas of creativeness and freedom, with its faith in the impossible, with its contempt for causal necessity, utilitarianism and conformism, is a spirit of novelty and change, of hope in the new things to come, and thus a spirit of revolution. He is a Christian and Russian heir of the ancient, mysterious Heraclitus who saw existence in perennial flux, in the process of becoming, as a continuous emergence of new forms of life.

Yet Berdyaev's call is not to mere external revolution, but above all to a revolution *within*. Our moment of history, in fact, demands that the primacy of spiritual life should be proclaimed over the long-dominant external and largely fictitious values of the "kingdom of this world," because these values have spent themselves and do not inspire anybody. In order to uncover the springs of regeneration it is imperative to turn inwards, to deepen our awareness, to attain to a more meaningful attitude to life: one which will free us from bondage, hardening and inanition of the spirit. To turn inwards does not,

however, mean to abandon the burdens and responsibilities of the world for the sake of a comfortable, sheltered inner life; it is rather a movement to a greater activity, a greater potency and intensity of the spirit.

If sin speaks of man's loss of freedom, slavery, and the bondage of the spirit, then salvation is and will be not submission to an outer order of society, not the worship of the present or of any future external forms of life, but the acquisition of freedom, meaning, depth, of true humanity, love and creativeness, in other words a new vision of the mystery of God-manhood. Berdyaev's thought is a signpost on the way to true inwardness, to a creative return of man's spirit to the divine-human sources of being.

§

It has frequently been pointed out that Berdyaev is more concerned with man than with God, that his circling round man and subjective human existence has considerably narrowed down his philosophical and theological outlook, to the exclusion of more general and universal problems on which other thinkers have pondered for centuries. Are we not doomed here to fruitless anthropomorphism, which disregards the existence as relevant values of supra-human and supra-personal realities and the perennial objective forms of being? When we read Berdyaev's passionate denunciations of every sign of "objectivization" and falsification of life when projected on to the "objective" plane, in cultural, social, and scientific spheres, in the symbolic forms of religious and historical traditions, when we are faced with the terrible panorama of the defeats of the spirit, we may perhaps be justified in asking how it is possible to believe in the spirit's future victory. Is not history thus deprived of any power and purpose of realization? And though

Berdyaev is an untiring advocate of creativeness, does this creativeness not remain for him as it were torn away from its own creations, from that in which it is embodied and objectified? In other words, does it not cease to be a true creative *act*, which must of necessity turn outward towards its object, and become a mere creative impulse, an aspiration without aim or content, so that man's creative energy is scattered to the winds and lost in space? Following Berdyaev past the graves of the mummies of objectivization (or "things," as he would say) which he has laid low, many may well ask: What about the more evident creative achievements in the "objective" sphere of culture? Do the creations of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Pushkin, Beethoven still live and preserve their spiritual "existential" power? If we admit any value in these, we cannot help, it seems, going further still in the rehabilitation of objectivized values, even in the sphere of social life and civilization: is not each of them capable (granted, of course, a creative attitude towards them) of being a positive contribution and enrichment?

I have deliberately given voice to these doubts in an interrogative form, for I do not believe that they actually present relevant objections to Berdyaev's view, in spite of the fact that his occasional waywardness and contradictions may justify them. Some of these doubts have already, I hope, been dispelled in the previous chapters. I shall confine myself here to a few observations.

Berdyaev's emphasis on the "existential" nature of life does, in fact, never imply mere preoccupation with the self-isolated human being, with the *solus ipse*. He is pre-eminently concerned with existence as *correlation*, with life as the vital relatedness of man to God (God-manhood) and of man to man (community, *sobornost*). Man's life is viewed as authentic only in his freedom from the bonds

of individualism and self-sufficiency, in his encounter with God, with the world and with other men. Though he is summoned to discover the meaning of life in personal, creative inwardness, yet such a discovery is as much a movement from within *outward* as one from without *inward*, and thus presupposes objective reality outside man. But this reality has no meaning as a separate, divided "objectivized" sphere of life. It has meaning only as an inherent part of man's own personal existence, of which he must be at all times conscious. Hence Berdyaev's strong belief in common, corporate salvation, in the integration of all humanity and the whole world into a united, transfigured cosmos. Even the processes of objectivization, as Berdyaev sees them, may be a positive activity of the spirit, in so far as they fulfil man's active task of the shaping of life, and truly embody his creative energies. As soon, however, as the spirit loses its inwardness and submits to the determinism of its own external creations they become its defeat and ruin.

§

Berdyaev's philosophy, like all true philosophy, epitomizes the historical situation of his time, with its peculiar needs and problems. I have already shown that this situation has issued in modern man's feeling of fear and insecurity, not only in the social sphere, but in the very depth of his life. Yet with all the awareness of the perils threatening human existence to-day, there is in Berdyaev a strong faith in the supreme underlying meaning of this predicament: it is a great opportunity in which man's destiny is being worked out and his soul is growing deeper, more complex and more mature. Berdyaev perceives in the agonies of stricken human existence the seeds of new life—an eternal, not only human but divine-human

answer to and atonement for all that has happened to modern man. To Berdyaev applies what Dostoevsky said of himself: "It is not as a child that I believe and confess Christ Jesus. My 'hosanna' is born of a furnace of doubt." And Berdyaev's merit lies in that he is one of the few who have found the Christian answer, and yet do not cease to question with those whose lives are still torn asunder by disbelief, doubt and sufferings; one of the few who dare to be, as thinkers, Christians and, as Christians, thinkers. He belongs to those watchmen who look out into the gathering darkness: "He calleth to me out of Seir: 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?' The watchman said: 'The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye . . .'" (Isaiah xxi. 11-12).

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