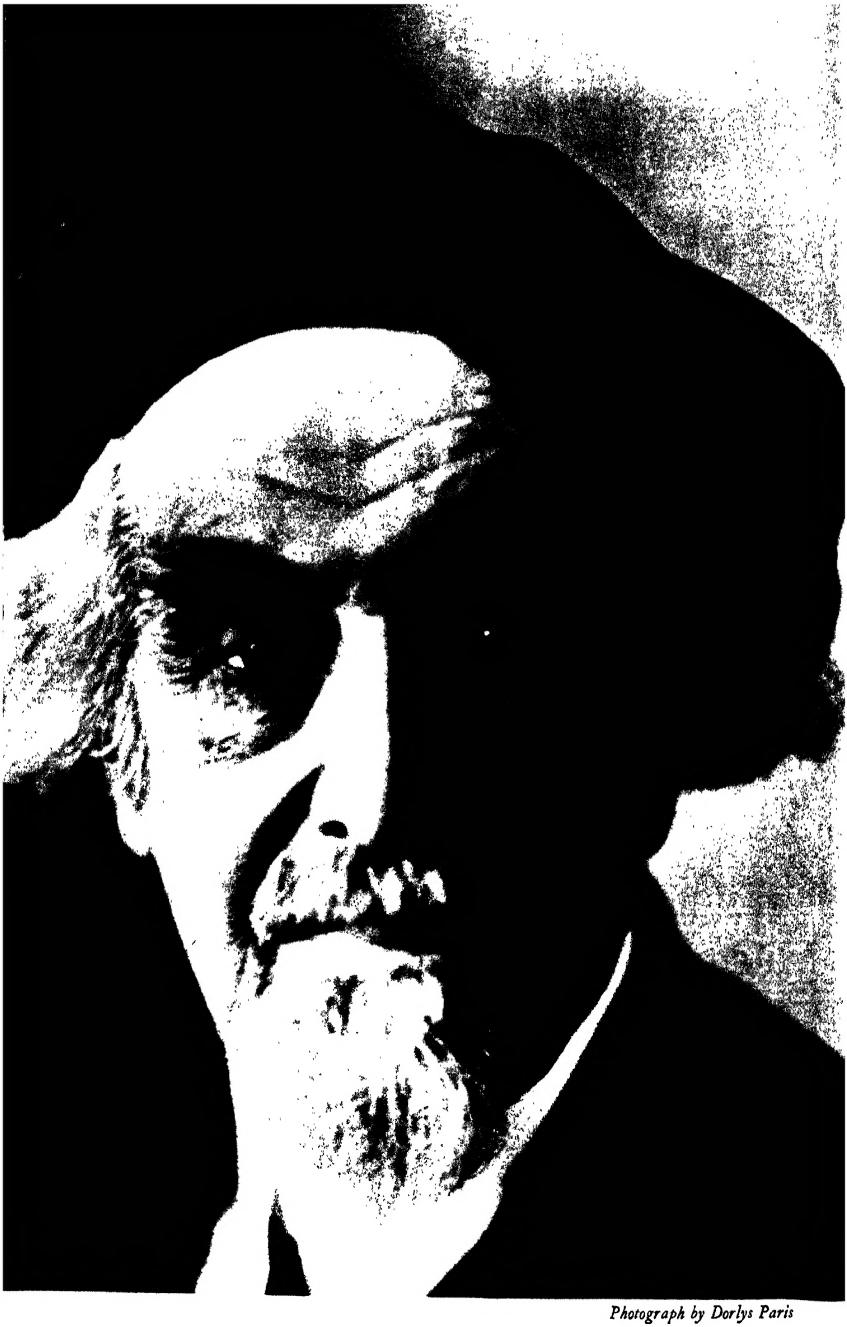
INTRODUCTION TO BERDYAEV



Photograph by Dorlys Paris

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INTRODUCTION TO BERDYAEV

LONDON
GEOFFREY BLES
MCML

Printed in Great Britain by
Robert MacLehose and Company Ltd
The University Press Glasgow
for Geoffrey Bles Ltd
52 Doughty Street London W.C. 1

First Published 1950

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THE BACKGROUND

I

RUSSIA'S DESTINY

Nicolas Berdyaev is *par excellence* the Christian philosopher. His philosophy is through and through religious, prophetic, Christian. In this sense, therefore, his appeal is universal. He belongs to all. Nevertheless, he is at the same time quintessentially Russian, and herein lies the major difficulty for anyone who would expound his thinking, even in outline. For the western world is to this hour largely ignorant of Russia, that is, of Russia as a living unity, as a concrete whole, as a great people with an historic culture and an historic Church, both alive today in new ways under a new regime which is the fulfiller as well as the destroyer of tsarist Russia.

There is, of course, any amount of the detailed sort of knowledge about Russia possessed by specialists in particular aspects of all that goes to make up 'Russia'. There are, for example, those who have made a profound study of such matters as the economics of Soviet Russia, or the latest developments of Marxist theory and practice. Others can tell you all you need to know of particular epochs of Russian history, the culture of Kiev in the twelfth century, the emancipation of the serfs, or some other period of special interest. There are the language specialists. There are the people who have had first-hand contact with modern Russia through diplomatic, military or trade channels. There are again the theologians who have made a study of Russian Orthodoxy. There are those proponents of the reunion of Christendom

who see in Orthodoxy a light which is neither of Rome nor of Geneva. There are the lovers of Russian music and opera and the *balletomanes*. Yet again, there are those of all types and of all classes who read the great Russian literature of the nineteenth century, who know their Tolstoy, their Dostoyevsky, their Turgeniev, Pushkin and the poets, who also may be catholic enough in their taste to follow on to know Maxim Gorki, Sholokhov and the modern Soviet authors.

But the trouble about all these groups (except the last) is that they are essentially specialist groups, and only too frequently specialists with an axe to grind—it may be economic, political or religious. Russia, in any case, is not seen as a whole, is not loved as a concrete, living unity and for her own sake. Too often interest in Russia is like the interest of certain sectarians in the Bible. It is a source of proof-texts for some political, ecclesiastical or economic controversy in which the specialist is immersed. Alternatively there are those who gaze over the field of Russian history or culture as over some dead museum piece. The Russian Church, for example, for such people is not the existing Church of Russia with its living tradition and its adaptation to a Communist environment, but a sort of Tutankhamen's Tomb—a glittering collection of relics of a dead past. These are to be catalogued, described, commented upon and finally are to be sighed over as a vanished glory. At the other extreme you have those for whom Russia might as well not have existed before November 1917, a second Aphrodite emerging miraculously from the foam of revolution.

But overtopping all the obstacles created by specialization and by often profound, yet woefully constricted, knowledge is that created by the lack of contact between the ordinary people of Russia and of the western world. This, of course, is no recently created difficulty. It has always existed. It has indeed often been said that the big western emigration of Russians after the first World War has helped towards overcoming this isolation, but I am convinced that it has done very little in practice—except in a few striking cases. In

most cases the reverse is true. The *émigrés* have increased and intensified the misunderstanding between East and West. After all, those who leave their native land because they detest the regime, or have suffered at its hands, cannot, except in rare cases, take unprejudiced views. Those exiles who on the other hand made a reassessment of the regime from which they fled, if they are young enough, return whence they came. Those who do not change naturally tend to see the past in an ever more and more rosy light and so help to keep alive many old illusions about 'Holy Russia'.

But without some general knowledge of Russia and broad human sympathy with the Russians as living people, as well as with their history, their culture, their religion and their politics; without some ability to rise above and beyond the points of view which dissect the concrete reality of Russia into a tsarist and soviet period, much of the meaning of Berdyaev will be lost. He was always a Russian of the Russians in spite of the fact that all his major works were written in exile. Berdyaev is rooted and grounded in Russia absolutely and concretely. To understand him one must go beneath the surface of present-day controversies.

Truly to appreciate Berdyaev one must know something of Russian history and Russian religion, and know these things as something still alive, not just as hallowed antiquities rescued from a blitzed site upon which a stream-line skyscraper is now in course of construction.

Naturally it would be impossible by way of introduction to this outline of Berdyaev's thought to provide a complete survey of Russian history, religion, literature, art and politics. Nevertheless three short chapters as a prelude, coupled with short bibliographies, may be of some value. The serious comprehensive study of Berdyaev, as opposed to a vivid appreciation of his individual works, has yet to be undertaken. When it is, those who embark upon it will need a broader knowledge of things Russian than either the professional western theologian, the philosopher or the student of Marxism possesses.

'Man is tied to his destiny,' wrote Berdyaev in his Introduction to *Freedom and the Spirit*. 'It is in what I experience of life, in the trials I suffer and in my search for reality that my spirit is formed and moulded.'

But 'destiny' and 'experience' are never purely individual, least of all for a Russian. Berdyaev's destiny and experience were part of Russia's. The history of the Russian people, the Russian soil, the Russian air all had their part in shaping Berdyaev and his thought. In Rupert Brooke's sonnet, *The Soldier*, was expressed the idea that the English soldier who dies in a foreign field brings to another land the whole inheritance of England. If we were to put 'The Thinker' for 'The Soldier' and 'Russia' for 'England', much (though not all) of that sonnet would express perfectly the Russian-ness of Berdyaev.

The soil of a nation and, to speak generally, the physical environment of a people through history are recognized as major factors determining life and ways of thought. In this respect it would be hard to find two nations whose surroundings have differed more than those of the Russians and the English. The English are an island people who for nearly a thousand years have experienced no serious invasion. Yet the sea which has been a wall of defence to England has also been an outlet on every side. The sea which kept others at a distance was the Englishman's highway. By sea the Englishman has been able to visit almost any part of the world without let or hindrance, without having to cross the territory of hostile or interested third-parties.

But if the sea largely made England it has been land which has chiefly made Russia. When Russia's known history begins she is virtually landlocked. Her rivers met the sea at points where others ruled, and the seas themselves resembled basins with foreigners controlling their solitary exits. Centuries later even Peter the Great's famous 'window into Europe' at St. Petersburg was little more than a dormer on to a Scandinavian canal. The role of the land in Russian history has been the exact reverse of the role of the sea in

English history. For the land has kept the Russians isolated from the rest of Europe, while at the same time, in the absence of natural frontiers, it has made her the prey of invaders alike from the west and the east. Geography has been Russia's foe but England's friend. Russia has always been easy to invade, England never.

Over Russia, therefore, has always brooded the sense both of the possibility of catastrophes and of splendid potentialities baulked of their realization, the memories of great promise unfulfilled, especially because of foreign intervention or foreign suspicion. At one time a great deal was written about the alleged tragic mystery of the *âme slave*, but the mystery dissolves as you begin to look at Russian history and Russian geography. Moreover (and this was frequently forgotten) the sense of the tragic among the Russians is always matched by tremendous exuberance and by immense powers of recovery. In vast areas of Russia spring breaks upon the iron grip of winter with catastrophic violence, and long and fierce labour succeeds to an icy period when little can be done outside. There is a dialectical pattern in the Russian climate imposing itself on life and labour, and there was a dialectical pattern in the Russian character before Hegel or Marx was born.

Russian history even begins with an alternation of hope and despair. It was in the midst of the Anglo-Saxon period of English history that Christian missionaries penetrated into what is now southern Russia from the Balkans and from Greece. In 988 Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev, formally adopts Christianity. A tremendous impetus is given to trade and culture. Architecture, especially in the form of church-building, iconography and the writing of chronicles (second to none as sources for the historian and infused with a lofty Christian conception of the meaning of history), the beginnings of epic poetry—everything is there except indeed political wisdom, for the Russian princely houses were excessively quarrelsome.

Yet the Kiev period of Russian history, bursting with

promise and with many achievements, comes to a catastrophic end. Overwhelmed by pagan Tartar invasions from the east, and attacked at the same time by Teutons and Swedes from the west, whose Latin Christianity knew no respect for that of Greek origin, the Russian principalities spent two centuries under the heathen yoke. Culture and Christianity did indeed survive in a few fortress-like monasteries, such as that of the Holy Trinity presided over by St. Sergius of Radonezh, an organizer of resistance to the invader. But the main result is clear. The clock is put back for centuries. The very cradle of Russian Christian civilization, Kiev, first desolated by the Tartars, remains in foreign hands till the seventeenth century. When the Grand Princes of Moscow begin to organize a new centre for the Russian people, military strength is matched by no great cultural revival. Of the Moscow period—the fifteenth and the two succeeding centuries—Berdyaev has some hard things to say. The promise of the Kiev dawn was not fulfilled, even when Moslems, pagans and Latins were driven back. The Russian frontiers were extended but the Russian soul was not enlarged. In the well-known words of Kliuchevsky, 'the state grew strong, but the people were weak.'

It is in the closing decades of this Moscow period that the great schism in the soul of Russia begins. This period had opened with the growth of the political and military might of Moscow to which the Church, which had been the spiritual core of the nation under the Tartar yoke, gave a symbolical sanctification. When Constantinople, the Second Rome, fell to the Turks, Moscow came to be regarded by Russians as the Third Rome, the final citadel and centre of a Christian Empire. State and Church stood together and seem to have reached a pinnacle of glory. The Grand Prince is already by the sixteenth century Tsar (Cæsar), while the Metropolitan is Patriarch of a self-governing Orthodox Church.

But it was a hollow success and the people began instinctively to feel this. Their physical sufferings were terrible.

Holy Russia had not triumphed. The messianic destiny of the Russian people, that is, the creation of a world-wide brotherly and Christian order of society, had not been achieved. This was not the midday promised by the Kiev dawn but rather 'confusion of face'. The ecclesiastical schism of the middle of the seventeenth century, while it took shape as obscurantist, conservative opposition to the reforming zeal of the Patriarch Nikon, concealed the beginning of a much deeper schism in the soul of Russia. The messianic destiny of the Russian people had been betrayed by the State and by the Church, which already, long before Peter the Great, had become the lacquey of Cæsar.

At the same time the frontier-less ocean of land which is Eurasia into which the Tsars were fated continually to push their way in search of frontiers, created both the need for increasing autocracy and the slow-growing revolt against it. At times the revolt was ecclesiastical, as in the formation of the strange sects, mystical, apocalyptic, anarchical, but at others politico-economic, as in the risings of a Stenka Razin or much later of a Pugachov. The brutally oppressed peasantry revolted when and as they could.

It was Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 that produced for a time a new integration of national life. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* shows us the real hero of this period—the Russian people. Russia threw back the invader, saved Europe in saving herself, brought herself right into the main stream of European history, made possible a remoulding of the nation which had found a new unity and purpose in a great patriotic war.

It was not, however, to be. Europe was afraid of Russia, while in Russia the experience of that terrible invasion from the west revived the bitter memory of the days when fellow-Christians had turned upon her as she was overrun by the pagans from the east. Liberalism in the Court was succeeded by reaction. Aristocratic revolution in the shape of the Decembrists failed and was followed by a further tightening of the autocratic screw by that prince of re-

actionaries, Nicolas I. Government had westernized itself under Peter the Great. In the nineteenth century it was revolt which began to learn from the west as, apart from a few individuals such as Radishchev, it had never done previously. Now revolution was to become by stages atheistic, nihilistic and finally, later than in most lands, Marxist.

Still, through it all, there went on the search for frontiers that could be defended, the struggle for access to oceans affording real outlets. This process in turn created fresh antagonisms with powers like Britain, who, imperialist herself, has never been able to understand why others too want places in the sun.

In the past 140 years Russia has suffered more than five invasions from the west, the last of which exceeded in scale and horror even that of Napoleon. And between 1905 and 1917 Russia had three revolutions of which the greatest was the last, followed by civil war and foreign intervention.

A people whose history, already abounding in tragedy, has experienced mostly within living memory such an acceleration of tempo and such a crescendo of sound and fury, such horror and such heroism, such fulfilment and such disappointment, can hardly be expected to look at the future like those twin favourites (so far) of modern history—Britain and America. Berdyaev to the end of his life felt himself one with the destiny of his people. Their sufferings were his sufferings, their achievements in social justice the achievements of his people. Soviet Russia, though she had expelled him, was always Russia for him—Russia without adjectives, the essential, concrete people and their land. The Soviet regime was for him always a 'yes' as well as a 'no' in relation to Russia's past. The Soviet regime was part of Russia's destiny. It was not only a break with the past but also its fulfilment.

It is therefore not surprising that the first book Berdyaev wrote when he came to the west in 1922 was *The Meaning of History*, much of which had actually been delivered in lecture-form at Moscow. Russians who think at all cannot

help being conscious of history. There has been a British century and there is an American century. A Russian century is yet to come, though Russian achievement in so many different fields has been so startling and Russian potentiality and vitality so evident.

Anglo-Saxons have sometimes asked rather petulantly and complacently why Russia could not have developed on 'constitutional' lines in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The answer lies partly in Russian history and geography and partly in economics. The age-long search for frontiers and for seas, the need for strong government to hold the state together and to protect it in a pre-mechanical age when communications were so difficult in such a vast area, put a premium first on autocracy and then on a hideous amalgam of autocracy and bureaucracy. With the Church virtually a state-department since the days of Peter the Great, there could be no effective spiritual protest against this development through the medium of organized Christianity. The Church itself had to be re-born in the fires of revolution. The protest came first by way of peasant revolts, then by nineteenth-century Russian literature, by thinkers who increasingly emancipate themselves from Christ for Christ's sake, by social revolutionaries, by Marx, and lastly by way of unsuccessful war and by the final upsurge of the cruelly exploited masses led by the highly concentrated urban proletariat. The small band of Russian 'liberals' at the end of the last century and of the first quarter of the twentieth were not, however, all deceivers who wished to mask exploitation behind a democratic façade. There were also able and sincere men who genuinely sought for a gradual and peaceful solution of social problems. But ideas are not enough. The forces actually operating in Russian history and the schisms both economic and spiritual were beyond the power of liberal manipulation and liberal healing processes. Nor must it be forgotten that even in Britain itself liberalism had only been made possible by past violence, by civil wars, revolutions and imperialist wars, as also by huge

and ruthless economic upheavals, by a process of industrialization, the horrible details of which fill Marx's famous chapter, *The Working Day*. It was the liberal William Ewart Gladstone himself who said, 'if no instructions had been addressed in political crises to the people of this country except to remember to hate violence, to love order and to exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been obtained.' If this be true of England, how much more true has it been of Russia where everything is on a much vaster scale.

There was in fact no smooth way out for Russia, there was no possibility of a compromise solution or of gradualness. There could be no graceful sliding from a combination of autocracy and bureaucracy coated with a Holy Orthodox veneer into a Russian version of the British constitution. Above all, the economic contradictions created by the extremely uneven development of capitalism in a quasi-feudal state meant that precedents derived from England had no real significance.

But when the crack came finally in 1917 few could see in Lenin the man of destiny. He was not even the only leader who claimed to direct revolution on Marxist principles.[1] The Bolsheviks had many rivals. Still Lenin won not only because he had a doctrine, but because he was not afraid of power and accurately assessed the forces operating in the history of his time. Lenin was prepared to be a dialectician, not simply in theory but in practice. To turn Russia inside out and upside down was the condition of future progress. There had to be negation before there could be the negation of the negation and a final synthesis.

The greatness of Berdyaev is that he sees both the inevitability of this—the Soviet stage—and at the same time in the name of God and of human freedom insists that it should be transcended. That is why there was no place for

[1] See Alexei Tolstoy's *The Road to Calvary* for a picture of the welter of conflicting revolutionary, interventionist and separatist currents after 1917, and also the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*.

him in Russia in 1922, nor opportunity to return during his lifetime. As a realist he knew that revolutions, like wars, must restrict certain freedoms for a time. But he never lost faith in Russia, never believed in counter-revolution, always gave full value to the positive achievements of Communism, yet always saw in it judgment upon the failures of the old regime and a Church which became its tool.

The spiritual and material potentialities of Russia have yet to be realized in history. Orthodoxy when allied to tsarism and capitalism failed to transfigure Russia. Justice was not 'throned in might', rather it was might which became justice. Brotherhood, 'fraternity', which J. B. Priestley sees to be 'the secret dream' of Russia, as 'liberty' is of England and 'equality' of America, was never realized in the old Russia. Through Marx a fresh start was made to work out Russian destiny both spiritually and materially. It was the hope of Berdyaev that when the social problem had been equitably resolved, the religious vocation of the Russian people would come to the fore. New forms of Christian activity will emerge when Christianity, purged of its dross, will manifest the prophetic spirit, turning itself no longer towards the past but to the future.

II

RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

In his introduction to *Freedom and the Spirit* Berdyaev wrote: 'My book is not a theological work, nor is it written according to any theological method.'

Nevertheless, the doctrines and practice of the Russian Orthodox Church are in the background not only of *Freedom and the Spirit* but of all that he wrote. Berdyaev was a son of Orthodoxy though an extremely critical one. As an *émigré* he made a point of belonging to congregations which were linked to the Moscow Patriarchate. This was typical of Berdyaev's 'concreteness'. He belonged not to a vague something called 'Orthodoxy', still less to those 'splinter' churches which consider themselves in the wilderness of emigration as the only true bearers of Russian Orthodoxy. Berdyaev knew but one Russian Orthodox Church and that Church had its head in Moscow. However free Berdyaev was in his handling of certain religious-philosophical questions, his self-confessed purpose was 'not to introduce heresy of any kind nor to promote fresh schisms'. 'I am moving,' he wrote, 'in the sphere of Christian problematics which demands creative efforts of thought and where the most divergent opinions are naturally allowable.' He remained in full communion with the Church, and the Church is therefore part of the concrete experience from which his thought arises, however pungent were his criticisms of ecclesiastical bigotry and pedantry.

The Russian Church is the largest member of the second largest family of Christian churches in the world, viz. the Eastern Orthodox. These churches, which acknowledge the primacy of the Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, are united both in faith and in church order. They are normally in full communion with one another. Yet each is indepen-

dently organized, for the most part on a national basis. In some respects the Orthodox churches resemble from the point of view of organization the independent churches of the Anglican Communion. But there is this very important difference. Whereas outside England Anglicans are everywhere in a minority, the Orthodox churches are in nearly every case the churches of a majority of the population. They are very intimately linked with the culture, history and, till recently, often with the government of those countries to which they belong. In a word Orthodoxy is a religion of the soil and of the people. Orthodoxy is national. Yet it possesses also a oneness of faith and order which unites it across frontiers. In this sense it is truly international and never cosmopolitan. Thus while each national Orthodox church celebrates its services in its own language (in either an ancient or modern form) there is such complete unity of doctrine and discipline that a Greek and a Russian bishop, for example, can celebrate the Liturgy together, using their own languages but having a common ceremonial and order or service.

Orthodoxy claims to be the pure unbroken tradition of Christianity. It was the Orthodox who first resisted the claims of the Papacy. In their eyes Romanists are innovators, the first schismatics on a grand scale. On the other hand, 'Protestantism,' says Berdyaev, 'was the revolt of man's subjectivity against an externally imposed authority.' Among the Orthodox in so far as Protestantism means the rejection of papal claims there is a certain bond of sympathy between the Orthodox and Protestants. But anti-sacramental tendencies, the repudiation of apostolic succession, the negative attitude towards the saints and the Mother of God are features of Protestantism repugnant to Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy represents a development of Christianity untouched by the controversy between Romanism and Protestantism. Recognizing only the decision of those General Councils held before the division between East and West, the faith of the Orthodox Church is defined broadly and in

positive terms. It is entirely free from references to the controversies between Romanism and Protestantism which colour so much western post-Reformation teaching.

It has been fashionable in some circles to decry Orthodoxy as 'static' because it has not produced the rich crop of new definitions which both Roman and Protestant authorities have elaborated in recent centuries. But this is a superficial approach. Actually the absence of over-refined definitions has meant a freer atmosphere. True, not much use has been made of this except by a few Russian laymen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but there it is. It will be of immense value in the future not only for the Orthodox churches themselves but in their dealings with non-Orthodox churches.

As Fr. S. Bulgakov put it, 'The Orthodox Church has only a small number of dogmatic definitions. Strictly speaking, this minimum consists of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, . . . and the definitions of the seven Œcumenical Councils. This does not mean that these documents exhaust *all* the doctrine of the Church; but the rest has not been so formulated as to become obligatory dogma for all. . . . It contents itself with the indispensable minimum. . . . This is not to say that new dogmatic formulæ are impossible in Orthodoxy, formulæ which might be fixed by new Œcumenical Councils. But, strictly speaking, the minimum already existing constitutes a sufficient immovable base for the development of doctrine, without the disclosure of new dogmatic forms. This development manifests itself in the life of the Church, forming new lines of theological teaching (*theologoumena*). The predominance of *theologoumena* over dogmas is the special advantage of the Orthodox Church, which is a stranger to the legalistic spirit, even in the matter of doctrine.'[1]

As regards the philosophy of religion an attempt was made in the seventeenth century under Polish influence (then predominating in south-western Russia) to provide

[1] *The Orthodox Church*, by S. Bulgakov, chapter VI.

Orthodoxy with an Aristotelian foundation like that of western scholasticism. But the attempt failed, just as Platonist influence on some of the Fathers of the undivided Church at a much earlier period had never led to the importation of an official philosophy into Orthodoxy. This is of capital importance for the Russian Church at the present day living in the Soviet State which has a philosophy of its own.

It is worth noting here that it is precisely an Armenian cleric, Tiran Nersoyan, who has undertaken a reconciliation between dialectical materialism and Orthodoxy as professed by one of the 'separated' Eastern Churches.[1] Berdyaev himself did not believe that such a reconciliation is at all possible, nevertheless the fact remains that it is being attempted.

While we must beware of idealizing the freedom enjoyed in the Orthodox Church and of exaggerating the number of independent, creative thinkers like Khomyakov, Solovyov or Berdyaev himself, the fact remains that the apparently 'static' quality of an Orthodoxy based on the definitions of the Undivided Church has positive advantages. There is ideally if not always in practice more elbow-room in Orthodoxy than in Rome and also more room to breathe. But there is also less scope for irresponsible adaptations to current fashions of thoughts and modern moods than in some English and American Protestant circles. It is no accident that a religious thinker of Berdyaev's quality appeared on the soil of Orthodoxy, and that he was the prophet of freedom while remaining a full member of the Russian Church.

Orthodoxy has succeeded in escaping both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and the over-definition and the provocative form of doctrinal statement which are their fruits. In doing this it has secured in practice a larger measure of freedom of thought while not weakening its grasp on the essentials of the tradition of undivided Christendom.

Yet Orthodoxy is not simply loyalty to a not too rigidly

[1] *A Christian Approach to Communism*, by T. Nersoyan (F. Muller, London).

defined past. Tradition according to the Orthodox conception is essentially alive. 'Tradition,' as Fr. S. Bulgakov has said, 'is the living memory of the Church containing the true doctrine that manifests itself in its history. It is not an archæological museum, not a scientific catalogue, it is not furthermore a dead depository. No! tradition is a living power inherent in a living organism. In the stream of its life it bears along the past in all its forms so that all the past is contained in the present and *is* present. The unity and continuity of tradition follow from the fact that the Church is always identical with itself.'

Holy Scripture and dogmatic definitions are part of the Church's tradition but by no means the whole. There is the living tradition of worship, and there are also many undefined traditions in the life of the Church of varying degrees of value. But the point is that all this has to come alive in the hearts and minds (and in the action) of each generation within the Church. Fr. Bulgakov speaks of tradition as an 'inexhaustible torrent of the life of the Church, to be understood only by a life of creative effort'. 'Tradition is not authority; it is the creative life of the spirit.'[1] Development, even in the sphere of dogma, is by no means excluded.

It may be asked, however, if tradition be an alive and growing thing is there any criterion in Orthodoxy by which we can discern the difference between healthy and unhealthy growth? Rome has its infallible Pope, what have the Orthodox?

The answer is that though the teaching office belongs to the hierarchy, infallibility rests with the Church as a whole. The famous Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs published in 1849 puts the matter clearly enough. 'With us the guardian of piety is the very body of the Church, that is, the people themselves who will always preserve their faith unchanged.' The Eastern Church refuses to assign to one element in the Church the infallibility which resides in the whole body of

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 331. See also *The Orthodox Church*, by S. Bulgakov, chapter II, *The Church as Tradition*.

Christ. It is the mind and heart of the whole people of God which keeps the faith and which by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in it discerns what is a leading of the Spirit into all truth and what is a descent into the abyss of error.

No Orthodox church has given more consideration to this question of the mind of the Church than the Russian. It was Khomyakov, a layman, who spoke of the soul of Orthodoxy as *sobornost'*. This word, untranslatable into any western European language, is derived from the verb *sobirat'* which means 'to reunite' or 'assemble'. In the Slavonic Nicene Creed the Church is called not *catholic* but *sobornaya*. *Sobornost'* is the abstract noun derived from the same root. The concrete noun is *sobor*, which means both 'council' and 'church'. So one may say that *sobornost'* means 'togetherness'. It suggests the common mind of those gathered together. It is opposed on the one hand to the autocratic conception of church authority to be found in Romanism and to the individualism which certain types of Protestantism exhibit. *Sobornost'* suggests freedom and unity in love, a combination of liberty and order which results from the indwelling of Christ by the Holy Spirit in those who are baptized.

Orthodox worship can often be the symbolic expression of *sobornost'*, for it combines form with freedom. The service goes its way according to the book, but how freely the clergy and their assistants move in comparison with the stiffer ways of Rome or England! Meanwhile the congregation, free from the constraints imposed by pews or chairs, play their part also with a certain liberty, bowing and crossing themselves at such petitions in the litanies as move them specially, going forward to put a candle by an ikon, intense or relaxed by turns. In no other churches, whether Anglican, Protestant or Roman Catholic, can you find that unique atmosphere of order combined with freedom that you get in Orthodoxy. Here is a community with a living tradition, bound together yet not regimented. In Orthodoxy the rigidities of the West which has never forgotten Roman

Law and the Roman soldier are left behind. Orthodoxy is not a half-way house between Geneva and Rome. It is a third dimension.

Nevertheless the soul of Orthodoxy has often been caged by historic necessity. We have already spoken of the slavery of the Russian Church to Russian bureaucratic absolutism, especially during the last two centuries of tsarism. Khomyakov's theological writings, for example, were suppressed by the censor and had to be published abroad in French, only appearing in Russia after some considerable time. Nevertheless, through outward oppression, the real *sobornost'* of the Church existed. The history of the Church under thirty years of Soviet rule proves that in spite of the stranglehold of tsarism her soul had not been killed. It was in fact capable of living through a period of acute suffering in the first period of the new regime until the present happier relationships were developed between itself and the Soviet State.

Another characteristic of Orthodoxy, marking it off alike from Romanism and Protestantism and important for the understanding of Berdyaev, is the conception of salvation as *theosis*, the making divine of man and the transfiguration of the cosmos.

In the West even before the Reformation a tendency to separate the Cross from the Resurrection is already noticeable. Similarly salvation is conceived too exclusively in terms of individuals being saved from sin. The Atonement was also being interpreted too much in legal language.

It would, of course, be easy to exaggerate the differences between East and West in this matter. It would be as false to say that in the East there is no sense of the divine Justice, as to assert that the West had completely lost the idea that 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature' or has forgotten the prayer 'finish then Thy new creation'. Nevertheless, a marked difference of emphasis is to be found which cannot be ignored. The West may accept on paper the teaching of such Fathers of the undivided Church as S. Athanasius about God becoming man in order that man

might become God, but in practice the Western Church fights shy of such phrases as 'the divinization of man'.

In the East there is a greater wholeness both in the conception of salvation and in the means by which it is achieved. The birth of the God-Man Christ of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Death upon the Cross, His Resurrection and Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit with the continuation of the incarnation in the life of the Church and in her sacraments, all these are seen as one organic process by which not only man but all the world is penetrated by the Divine and refashioned. The dome of the typical Orthodox 'temple' or church building is a fitting symbol of the all-embracing divine activity of redeeming and sanctifying love as it bends down to earth. Salvation is far more than the washing away of sin. It is a new level of life not simply for an individual but for the community, and ultimately for the *whole* creation which 'groaneth and travaileth in pain together . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God'.

From this it follows, firstly, that because salvation is the divinization of man and the transfiguration of the cosmos, man (made in the divine image) must himself be a creator. Secondly, it follows that salvation cannot be separated from eschatology. Orthodoxy looks towards the glorified end of history.

All this can indeed be misunderstood and has been misunderstood. For example, instead of a real transfiguration of the life of the community, you have a purely ritual sanctification of the *status quo*. The time-process is characterized throughout by a dialectical quality. Within everything there is a union of opposites, and there is the ever-present tendency of plus to turn into minus, and minus into plus. Thus the 'givenness' of salvation within the Church, the penetration of the life of the cosmos by the Divine, can become a static instead of a creative doctrine; the Orthodox Tsardom of Muscovy can be regarded as the Kingdom of Heaven on earth!

But such confused identifications of a particular empirical

and temporal embodiment with the spiritually real living movement must not obscure the deeper truth. Historically-conditioned disfigurements must not be allowed to blind us to the true image. Because in history the Orthodox Church has too often become the ecclesiastical department of the State, we cannot therefore assert that it must always be so. For example, in Russia at this moment the Church is neither established nor persecuted. This gives the Church's role in transfiguring the world an entirely new setting with new possibilities. As Berdyaev says, 'The Russian Revolution awakened and unfettered the enormous power of the Russian people. In this lies its principal meaning. The Soviet constitution of the year 1936 has established the best legislation on property in the world; personal property is recognized, but in a form which does not allow of exploitation.'[1] 'The Church leaders in Russia recognize the value of changes such as this and also of the brotherly attitude of the Soviet regime towards the non-Russian peoples of the U.S.S.R. which differs radically from the russifying policy of the tsars. A new environment has been created by such changes and by the disestablishment of the Church which gives the possibilities of an entirely fresh understanding of the meaning of 'the transfiguration of life'.

But while the transfiguration of all things is the task of the Church, and while the political and economic structure at a given time in a particular state may either hinder or promote the carrying out of this task, the Church can never be identified completely with systems, movements or programmes of purely human origin. As we have already said, the Church looks towards the final end. 'Orthodoxy,' Berdyaev wrote, 'has preserved the eschatological view of the Kingdom of God better than Catholicism; the Church is not yet the Kingdom of God so far as Orthodoxy is concerned, for the Kingdom will only be set up at the end of time and is connected with the Second Coming of Christ. That is why we find at the very heart of Orthodoxy these

[1] *The Russian Idea*, p. 250.

three things: faith in the Resurrection, the Festival of Easter and a real expectation of the transfiguration of the world.'[1]

Doctrinally we have seen already that the Orthodox Church is based on the first seven Councils of Undivided Christendom and it is unnecessary here to outline that broad structure which is the common heritage of Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Anglicanism. Neither is it necessary to speak of the system of church order which is the historic ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, descending from apostolic times. Orthodoxy observes seven sacraments, but draws a less rigid line between them and *sacramentalia*. 'The seven sacraments are only the most important manifestation of the sacramental power inherent in the Church,' says Fr. Bulgakov. The cult of the ikons (to be found in every Orthodox home and forming a conspicuous feature of all Orthodox places of worship) is closely connected with this broad sacramentalism. The blessed ikon is a place of meeting between the Christian who venerates it, and the holy person represented by the ikon. The ikon is a 'channel of divine grace' (St. John Damascene). A Protestant writer like Dr. Visser't Hooft, who has nevertheless a sympathetic approach to Orthodoxy, recognizes that ikons have a 'central place in Orthodoxy piety' and their cult is part of the 'realism' of the Orthodox sacramental view of life.[2] This cult is also connected with the whole question of the manifestation of the Divine in the human. The corollary of the truth that 'man is made in the image of God' has been too much lost sight of in the West. To put this corollary in Berdyaev's words 'the eternal face of man abides in the very heart of the Divine Trinity Itself. The Second Hypostasis of divinity is divine humanity'. The work of Christ in repairing the defaced image of God in man through the incarnation and all that followed from it is illustrated in the actual lives

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 354.

[2] See some interesting passages in *Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy*, by Visser't Hooft. (S.C.M.)

of the Saints. So also in the ikons of the saints there is a visible revelation of the divine-human redemptive activity of Christ. The ikon is precisely the image of the restored divine-human image.[1]

Thus there is nothing accidental about the extraordinary prominence of the ikons in every Orthodox church and house. It is the outward expression of a whole philosophy of life and a whole theology, and here the simple peasant as he kisses the ikon or lights his candle before it is at one with the religious philosophers of Orthodoxy, Khomyakov, Solovyov or Berdyaev himself.

And the ikons fixed to the walls of the Orthodox temples, illumined by the flickering light of many candles and lamps which seems to make them alive, are indeed the 'lively stones' (I Peter II, 5) of which the spiritual house is 'built up' and are the outward setting for 'the spiritual sacrifices' there offered which are 'acceptable to God by Jesus Christ'. The Orthodox Church is *par excellence* the worshipping Church. It is not a Church where there has been much preaching.[2] Its prophets speak outside the temple rather than within, and are more often laymen than clergy. As in ancient Israel the roles of prophet and priest have only on rare occasions been combined.[3] But it is worship that has so far been at the heart of Orthodoxy. It is said that when the Russian envoys of the Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev went to Constantinople to see what Orthodoxy was like with a view to its official adoption by the Kiev principality, that the Greek Emperor's first direction was 'Let them see the glory of our God', and the envoys were forthwith conducted to a

[1] Cf.

And every virtue we possess
And every conquest won
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone.

What we put in poetry, the Orthodox put in paint.

[2] First-hand reports from Russia during the past few years show that preaching is now much more frequent.

[3] St. John Chrysostom is of course the classic example of the achievement of this dual role.

solemn celebration of the Liturgy in the great church of St. Sophia. When it was over the envoys declared that they did not know whether they were in heaven or on earth.

That has often been the effect of Orthodox worship on westerners who have attended its rites and particularly the offering of the Eucharist. There is contact here with another world, yet the two worlds are not separated. There is here manifested a divine-human activity which eternally breaks into time; death is overcome by the Resurrection of Christ; we do not need to be told as we gaze upon the ikons and they upon us, that 'since by man came death by man came also the Resurrection of the dead', and that 'in Christ shall all be made alive' (I Cor. xv: 2 and 22). We have 'access by one Spirit unto the Father'. We are 'therefore no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'.

This is Orthodoxy, and into Orthodoxy Berdyaev was baptized. To free speculation he may have given himself, or, as he would have preferred to put it, to seek freely creative answers to the problems of person and community in the modern world. But Nicolas Berdyaev had his church foundation in spite of his profound dissatisfaction with many empirical manifestations of church life. Any first-year student of theology can find apparently heretical sentences in the writings of Berdyaev by isolating them from their general context or by ignoring his method of approach. 'I put my problems in the form of affirmations,' he writes in the introduction to *Freedom and the Spirit*, 'but my thought as it moves within my own being is that of a man who, without being a sceptic, is putting problems to himself. Here no Elder (*starets*), however advanced in the spiritual life, could be of any help to me. God expects from me a free creative

act. . . . There is no need to see . . . anything directed against the holiness of the Church. I may be much mistaken, but my purpose is not to introduce heresy of any kind nor to promote fresh schism. I am moving in the sphere of Christian problematics which demands creative efforts of thought and where the most divergent opinions are naturally allowable. . . .' Yet wherever his mind may have ranged, be it over metaphysics, the philosophy of history, the politics and economics of our day, or the problems of mysticism and of the spiritual life, Nicolas Berdyaev was always a member of the Holy Orthodox Church, praying and worshipping with his fellow Orthodox, nourished by the common sacraments of the Church, accepting the essential dogmatic definitions of Orthodoxy. It is this concrete Orthodoxy which remained in tension with the activities of a mind which turned back from no quest and which feared no accusations as long as it could fulfil its creative task, stimulating not only the Orthodox but Christians of all confessions to a frank and creative approach to the problems of our time.

III

CURRENTS IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

In the two preceding chapters we have been considering basic elements which went to the moulding of Nicolas Berdyaev. There is the history and destiny of the Russian people, themselves deeply influenced by Russia's position on the map of the world. There is Russian Orthodoxy, a type of Christianity which while containing major features of belief, church order and sacramental life in common with the West has special characteristics of its own.

In this chapter we shall review some of the literary and philosophical currents which were dominant in Russia at the time when Berdyaev was born, which in their subsequent development strongly affected him and in which later he played a part.

Such a review is not easy for a number of reasons. In the first place the history of Russian literature is quite unlike that of most other nations. After a glorious beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when it was in the vanguard of contemporary Christian literature there is almost nothing more to say about it till the late eighteenth century. Yet in the nineteenth century Russian literature burst forth with such fertility and strength and so copiously that it is hard to find a metaphor suitable to describe what then happened. To speak of it as 'blossoming', or even of its 'development and expansion' would be rather like calling the Great Fire of London an 'incident'. Within a space of eighty years Russia produced a literature on such a scale and of such tremendous vigour and pathos, above all, so full of a sense of purpose and of mission as to be without parallel after such an apparently unpromising start. But though we can never lose our sense of wonder here, the mystery of it is partly resolved when we come to see how literature in nineteenth-century

Russia was a means of expression for many forces which in other lands found outlets in political and economic life.

A second difficulty confronting the attempt to give a general survey of literary and philosophical currents in Russia during this period is that of grasping the significance of those works which few in the West have had the opportunity of reading. Many are still untranslated, though thanks to Mrs. Constance Garnett and others the Russian novel is well represented in English dress. In the sphere of philosophy the influence of Hegel and then of Marx was very great, and it is quite impossible to understand the second half of this period without them. This is not to say that the Russian thinkers were not original. The developments in Marxism made by the Russians are alone sufficient to rebut such a suggestion. Nevertheless, it is Hegel and Marx who force to the surface elements in the Russian consciousness which had previously been little disclosed.

The beginnings of Russian literature are inseparably connected with those of Christianity. It was from St. Cyril and St. Methodius, the apostles of the Slavs, that the Russian language first acquired an alphabet and in the Kiev period it is the Church which fosters learning and culture of every kind. The ikonography and architecture of the Kiev period have already been mentioned as outstanding. The historical chronicles written by the monks of this time will bear comparison with the finest of such work elsewhere. Sir Bernard Pares, the best English authority on Russian history, wrote of them, 'the task of recording events faithfully was . . . regarded as a holy work and the chroniclers took great pains to secure accuracy. These annals were a school of history in which man was taught to use the past for guidance in the present and to see always before him the great choice between good and evil. They have exercised a deeply moral influence on all succeeding Russian historians.'[1] This comment is highly significant. The Russian mind seeks integration,'wholeness', totality. The monkish chroniclers already

[1] *A History of Russia*, by (Sir) Bernard Pares, 1926 edition, p. 31.

saw history not as a mere catalogue of facts but as the struggle for certain moral factors of universal significance. The Russian desires to see the particular in terms of the whole, to see the relatedness of things. Schismatic tendencies in Russia are precisely the revolt against failures in practice to achieve wholeness and integration.

The Tartar invasion meant the submergence of the culture of Kiev and the Moscow period which covers the time between the turning-back of the Tartars and the reforms of Peter the Great was not a period of literary creativity. It is perhaps a sign of the times that the one literary masterpiece of the seventeenth century was the autobiography of Arch-priest Avvakum who was one of the leaders of the 'conservative' schism of the Old Believers, and who suffered torture and execution for his opinions. In the suffocating atmosphere of Cæsaro-Papism and Papo-Cæsarism which increasingly characterized the Muscovite period creative thought and literature were impossible.

The reform, or rather 'the revolution', of Peter the Great gave a new orientation to what had been the Moscow Church-State. The powers-that-be now looked westwards. A critic of the British Raj in its last days in India once described it as 'a Rolls-Royce administration in a bullock-cart country'. In Russia too, as a result of Peter the Great's work there was soon a deep gulf between a westernized government in step with western 'enlightenment' and the mass of the people, unlettered, living by the old Orthodox Faith, dreaming of the Kingdom of God on earth and regarding Peter as anti-Christ. Not, of course, that Peter did not do a great deal for the spread of culture to wider circles. He even founded the first Russian newspaper and simplified the Cyrillic script. Yet Peter's reform produced no immediate result in the sphere of literature. As Maurice Baring has said, 'How could it? To blame him for this would be like blaming a gardener for not producing new roses at a time when he was relaying the garden.' But Peter had opened the way to western influence.

'Modern Russian literature,' says Prince D. S. Mirsky, 'owes next to nothing to old Russian literature. From the point of view of literary culture it is entirely an offshoot of western civilization. It has many roots in Russian life, but no roots in any native literary tradition.' He compares what happened in Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with what happened in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth. Just as mediæval and modern English literature is a development of continental traditions and does not stem from the poetry of Beowulf, so it is with Russia. But as Prince Mirsky goes on to insist, the originality of both English and Russian literature springs from the creative genius of individuals and from forces in the nation developed *in other spheres than the literary.*

The culture of Russia in the eighteenth century was at first borrowed from the West. We have for example Empress Catherine the Great, who could dabble with the ideas of Voltaire or the French Encyclopædists while at the same time bringing nearer the possibility of revolution by policies which brought fresh miseries upon the serfs. A German by birth she was typical of many 'enlightened' aristocrats of the period in Russia and, for that matter, elsewhere too. By far the greatest name in the literature of this time was Lomonosov, a man of quite extraordinary versatility, but a peasant not a noble by birth, whose education had been the fruit of the bitterest struggle. With him and with Derzhavin we have the beginnings of Russian poetry.

The real soul of Russia had, however, still to speak. A cloud no bigger than a man's hand may be seen in Radishchev. His *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* was a portent. In it he describes the terrible and inhuman sufferings of the serfs and attacks the censorship. But the book was published in the year 1790 and with the French Revolution in full flood the authorities soon repented of having allowed it to appear. Sentence of death was passed on Radishchev (afterwards commuted to exile in Siberia) and his book was almost unobtainable in Russia itself till the Revolution of

1905. Exile and martyrdom were to be frequently the destiny of Russian writers and thinkers all through the nineteenth century.

The dawn of this new period is a strange one. Revolutionary France becomes the France of Napoleon. Russia is invaded, but the bravery of her people and the rigour of her winter are too much for the Emperor of the French; Russia is drawn more and more into European affairs. The Tsar Alexander I, who reigned from 1801 to 1825, was an extraordinary figure. He was educated by the Jacobin Laharpe in ideas of freedom. He was influenced by freemasonry with its notions of universal brotherhood and mysticism. (Freemasonry, generally speaking, in Russia had provided for some time for the more privileged classes of society an approach to a more mystical understanding of life than official Orthodoxy.) Alexander's liberalism also appeared in the patronage which he gave to the British and Foreign Bible Society. Even his support for the Holy Alliance (before Metternich had corrupted it) was in origin an attempt to form a 'Christian front'. But Alexander went the way of all liberal Tsars. Unlike Anatole France's Almighty in *Ile des Pengouins* they did not grow milder as they grew older but increasingly illiberal.[1] The rising of the Decembrists on the accession of Nicholas I was itself the fruit of Alexander's growing tyranny. Like all unsuccessful rebellions that of 1825 was followed by yet more violent reaction. The reign of Nicholas I was thirty years of Prussian police-rule.

In the midst of this extraordinary period there arose the greatest figure in Russian literature, Pushkin. His poetry and his prose have left an indelible mark on the Russian language. Yet, as Berdyaev points out, in the deepest sense the whole of subsequent Russian writing has taken a different path from his. 'Without Pushkin Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy would have been impossible, but in Pushkin there was something which belonged to the Renaissance, and in this respect the whole of the great Russian literature of the

[1] Cf. the fate of many liberal capitalist democracies in our own day.

nineteenth century was different from him, for it was certainly not Renaissance in spirit. . . . The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century created not from the joy of creative abundance, but from a thirst for the salvation of the people, of humanity and the whole world, from unhappiness and suffering, from the injustice and slavery of man. . . . The fundamental Russian theme will be not the creation of a perfect culture but the creation of a better life.'[1] Berdyaev has noticed the interesting fact that while Pushkin was a contemporary of the ascetic St. Seraphim of Sarov the two never met and were never aware of each other's existence. This is a symbol of the deep cleavages at this time within the Russian soul which more than that of other peoples craves for integrality, for 'wholeness'.

Pushkin has been called the architect of the Russian language. He is the acknowledged master to whom writers of every school look back. Both in prose and poetry he set a standard for all subsequent literature. Calling himself a romanticist, he is in fact a golden classic. He cannot be guilty of a superfluous word, yet his classicism is always alive. It glows, it breathes: not seldom it burns.

He belonged to the same aristocratic circles which produced the Decembrist rising against Nicholas I. Fortunately for literature he was already exiled from St. Petersburg because of his outspoken criticisms of the reactionary regime of Alexander I. Had he been in the capital he would doubtless have joined in the rising and shared the fate of those who took part in it. The message of encouragement which he wrote to those who had escaped the death penalty and had been sent to Siberia shows this clearly.

The Pushkin who was recalled years later to Court by Nicholas I had learnt something alike from his own experience and the far harsher experiences of those who had been his friends. Berdyaev speaks of a 'great difference between the first and second half of his literary activity'. On the other hand, as Professor Janko Lavrin puts it, 'the Tsar's inten-

[1] *The Russian Idea*, p. 25.

tion thus to turn the greatest Russian poet into the glorifier of a reactionary regime had no success'. Had Pushkin not been killed at an early age in a duel, banishment, if nothing worse, must again have been his fate. He wrote his own epitaph in the year before his death, and in it he foresees that the nation will remember 'how in a cruel age I sang in praise of freedom'. He had a passionate love of freedom combined with a love for the greatness of Russia which, owing to the unhappy condition of the country, were, as Berdyaev observes, but rarely found together. Pushkin's comments on hearing Gogol read the manuscript of *Dead Souls* are very revealing. 'God!' he cried out, 'what a sad country Russia is!' Later, in speaking of it, he said, 'Gogol invents nothing; it is the simple truth, the terrible truth.' Pushkin, in the true Renaissance manner, with all his classicism, with all his connections with the Court, with all his zest for the gay life of the St. Petersburg aristocracy and deep love for the capital's architectural glories, is the fierce lover of freedom, the man who once wrote of a tsar:

Thou autocrat of evil deed,
On thee and thine my execration!

In Pushkin's work there were many foreign influences, among which we may note successively Byron, Shakespeare, the now forgotten Barry Cornwall and Sir Walter Scott. But Pushkin is very typically Russian in that he never succumbed to these influences. The Germans are fond of talking about the feminine quality of the Russian soul, meaning its receptivity, but if they think that means the Russians are simply born copiers one can only say that it reveals as little knowledge of Russia as it does of women. Russia certainly knows how to receive from others, but her response is always her own. This needs to be continually in the background of any study of Russian literature, philosophy or politics, particularly during the nineteenth century and later.

Pushkin then is the great Renaissance architect of Russian literature. His scope is as broad and noble as Peter's

plans for St. Petersburg. He is the romanticist in classic dress. 'There is not a literary *genre* in which he did not excel.' But withal he is the great realist. He is the fountainhead of all later realist novel-writing in Russia. Accepted by all classes in Russian society of the old days, he is a best-seller in the Soviet Union, read by the masses (in editions running into tens of millions), whose forbears could not even spell their own names.

When Pushkin was killed the renaissance was finished. After him the streams divide up, running in all directions. 'There were two sides to Pushkin,' Berdyaev once said. There were many more sides to those who followed him.

To give here a complete outline of the development of Russian literature from Pushkin to the present day would be out of the question. We are concerned here mainly with the development of ideas rather than with the appreciation of literary forms. But in considering the background of a contemporary Russian thinker like Berdyaev it is impossible to draw rigid lines. Religion, politics, economics, philosophy, the novel, the study of history all flow into one another, enriching one another, overlapping, refusing to be neatly departmentalized. In Russia right up to 1917 the fields in which there was anything at all like responsible government were very restricted; industrialization was confined to certain areas; the Church was muzzled; 87 per cent of the population could neither read nor write. In such circumstances talents and energies go into writing which elsewhere would overflow into a wide variety of activities. This is why the nineteenth-century Russian novel handles the greatest problems of real life, or again why what would have been 'pure' philosophy in Germany or England becomes in Russia the philosophy of history. It is partly because Marx combined the roles of philosopher, interpreter of history, economist and pioneer of revolution that he has had such a profound influence on Russia. It is also because he brought to them all a moral indignation such as flames through his chapter in *Capital* on *The Working Day*.

Three lines will be pursued in what follows of this introduction. We shall speak first of the 'thinkers' as we may call them, the philosophers of history and literary critics, whether religious or not. We shall then have something to say of the novelists. Finally, we shall trace the direct influence of Marx and in doing this we shall naturally become more and more involved not only with ideas but events. Only a few leading figures and tendencies can be mentioned here. The rich detail can best be studied in the pages of Berdyaev himself in *The Russian Idea*, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, and also in his *Dostoyevsky* and *Leontiev*.[1]

The period immediately after Pushkin's death is dominated by the great and famous controversy between the Westernizers and the Slavophils. For the Westernizers the great hero of Russian history is Peter the Great with his western-facing reforms. It is to western ideas, forms of government, education and technical progress that Russia must look for salvation. The men of this school of thought not only idealized Peter, they also idealized contemporary western Europe and some of them became sadly disillusioned with the reality. Their later reactions are strongly reminiscent of the disillusionment of admirers of Soviet Socialism of André Gide's type.

To the Slavophils, on the other hand, Peter the Great was the villain of the piece. They looked back to the pre-Petrine, Moscow period of Russian history as to a golden age. Russia's salvation was to be achieved by eschewing western innovations and by the developing of her own peculiar

[1] *The Origin of Russian Communism* is of great value *historically*, that is, precisely in so far as it does deal with *origins*. But in the presentation of the record since 1917 there are many points with which the present writer finds himself in complete disagreement. In any case it is essential to grasp that this book was written before the inauguration of the Stalin Constitution of 1936 and before any of the significant developments in Russia of the past twelve years. It would be a profound error, for example, to use it as an authority for the existing relations between the Orthodox Church and the Soviet State. *Towards a New Epoch* gives Berdyaev's later attitude to the Soviet regime as it had developed in the years before his death.

genius. Naturally Orthodoxy figured prominently in such conceptions.

While one can hardly speak of 'founders' in connection with either Westernizers or Slavophils, since both tendencies existed long before either term was coined, we can at least point to those who were prominent at the time when such tendencies began to crystallize. Belinsky, for example, the real father of Russian literary criticism, was one of the early leaders of the Westernizers, and since his life overlaps that of Pushkin he is a natural link between the short and glorious renaissance period and later developments.

Belinsky is also the prototype of the 'intelligentsia', that peculiarly Russian phenomenon. The 'intelligentsia' was drawn from all classes of society, with a function of its own in the concluding century of tsarism to which there is no exact parallel elsewhere. The culture of Russia escaped from purely aristocratic circles; it achieved as it were a classless society in the midst of a class-ridden empire. The 'intelligentsia' was not a class in the Marxist sense of the word in that it had no common economic foundation. Yet it had a real coherence while the widest varieties of opinion prevailed in its midst. The 'intelligentsia', unlike many circles of 'intellectuals' in the West, was neither a coterie of academic hair-splitters nor yet of precious æsthetes. However interminable were the nightly combats round the samovar, however subtle was the argument or abstruse the problem, what really 'made' the 'intelligentsia' was its profound concern with the problem of the good life for all humanity. As Professor Brückner has said: 'To the intelligent Russian, without a free press, without the liberty of assembly, without the right to free expression of opinion, literature became the last refuge of freedom of thought, the only means of propagating ideas. He expected of his country's literature not merely æsthetic recreation, he placed it at the service of his aspirations.' Hence the 'didactic' quality of Russian literary criticism which has been lamented by more than one foreigner unable to put his foot into the Russian boot and feel

where in fact it pinches. And this 'didactic quality persists today in the pages of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, in the standards appealed to in the condemnation of a Zoshchenko and Akhmatova in 1946, or in the criticisms of western literature at the recently held congress of intellectuals in Wroclaw.

Belinsky, then, is of the type of the intelligentsia. Unlike Pushkin, he was of humble origin and lived in poverty and ill-health. His career was one long battle. He had repeated troubles with the censorship. He was one of the first Russians to come strongly under the influence of Hegel. Of Belinsky Berdyaev wrote, 'to him with his passionate and sensitive values, to understand and to suffer were one and the same thing. He lived exclusively by ideas and searched for truth with stubbornness, agitation and haste. He was aflame and quickly burned himself out.' Belinsky went through a number of violent changes in his world-outlook. Following in the footsteps of Hegel, he broke with his radical friends and went through a conservative reaction, for it is characteristic of Hegelian dialectic that both the conservative and the revolutionary can trace their pedigree to him. Belinsky, having absorbed the doctrine that the rational is the real, proceeded to draw the reactionary conclusion that the real (that is the actual) is rational! Might is right! Submit to history and to society!

This stage did not last long. Belinsky was soon back again in the opposite camp with the cry, 'the fate of the subject, of the individual, of the person is more important than the fate of the whole world and the well-being of the Chinese Emperor (that is to say, the Hegelian *Algemeinheit*).' Or again, 'I do not want happiness, even at a gift, unless I have peace of mind about every one of my brothers by blood.' This is the phase which is the clue to so much Russian atheism. The sufferings of the world of which all history is a record are laid at the door of the Creator. When a man like Belinsky sees the Orthodox Church in particular buttressing the iniquities of tsardom he cries out 'What has the Church to do with

Christ?'[1] We are reminded here of English Samuel Butler's famous dictum about forsaking Christ for Christ's sake. The suffering imposed by society upon the individual led to a revolt not only against the Church which sanctified the existing order, but against the God Whom the Church worshipped and Who built a world in which men could be so wretched.

The final stage of Belinsky's dialectical development is equally important for the understanding of those currents of thought active when Belinsky was born and which, in combination with Marxism, played a dominant role in the October Revolution and subsequent Soviet history. In his third phase Belinsky, though still caring passionately for the individual, realizes that without social reorganization the lot of the individual cannot be made happier. Individualism leads him to socialism. 'Social organization or death', is his new cry. 'People are so stupid that it is necessary to bring them to happiness *by force*.' Even violence and bloodshed are by no means excluded from Belinsky's proposed methods, as Berdyaev himself pointed out.

We have dwelt at some length on Belinsky because in him is epitomized at a very early date so many of the tendencies through which Russia was to pass, but more typical of the Westernizers was Alexander Herzen. Unlike Belinsky, he belonged to the gentry. He was influenced by the French Socialists, and after being twice banished to the provinces for his radical views eventually went abroad in 1847 and never returned. He started a newspaper called *The Bell*, which had great influence. It was published in London, then the refuge of progressives and revolutionaries from many parts of Europe, as it has since become the asylum of quite an opposite kind of *émigré*.

Like Belinsky, Herzen underwent some profound changes

[1] '... Voltaire who stamped out the fires of fanaticism and ignorance in Europe by ridicule is ... more the son of Christ, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, than all your priests. ...' Belinsky's *Letter to Gogol* (*Selected Works*, p. 506).

but of a less violent order than those of Belinsky's dialectical path. Having been the champion of the West in Russia, in exile he found the concrete reality of the West a disconcerting experience. The man who wrote: 'What is the starting-point of modern Russian history if it be not a total negation of nationalism and tradition?' (i.e. the very antithesis of Slavophilism) was soon disillusioned by the bourgeois West. In the class-struggles of Western Europe he saw nothing but a conflict between avarice and envy. He began to think that the very backwardness of Russia economically and politically would prove its salvation. The primitive village commune which still survived in large parts of Russia became for him a more hopeful basis from which to develop a personalistic form of socialism than anything the West had to show. Thus the Westernizer begins to find common ground with Slavophil.

The greatest name among the Slavophils of the earlier period is undoubtedly Khomyakov. Like Herzen he belonged to the gentry and was an officer in the Horse Guards. He was a very many-sided person, but of massive integrity. He was a poet, a theologian, and a writer on the philosophy of history. As a Slavophil he believed in Russia's unique destiny, but he was not at all blind to Russia's sins present or past. The fact that some of his work had to be published abroad alone sufficed to show him that the freedom he loved was still far to seek in Russia. Of the past he said once: 'the eye does not come to rest upon a single bright moment in the life of the people nor upon a single period of consolation.' No one could have been more critical. Moreover, Khomyakov could appreciate much that was best in the West, and he had a great love for England which he visited.

Nevertheless he had no faith in the future of the West. He was a sharp critic of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestantism he regarded as simply the logical development of Papalism, that is, the victory of rationalism and individualism over the true community spirit of Christianity. As the Popes had first broken the unity of Christendom by their

self-assertiveness, so Protestantism demanded for every individual Christian what the Papacy had already secured for itself.

Over against this Khomyakov asserted that Eastern Orthodoxy had in *sobornost'* the authentic spirit of community in which there was a true freedom for the individual. 'The unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a multitude of people in their separated individualities, but the oneness of Divine grace indwelling in reasonable creatures when they freely submit themselves thereto.' The Orthodox Church alone knows true freedom and true community.

In the economic sphere the Russian rural community, governed by its assembly, the Mir, was the germ of a new and more Christian order of society. He approves very warmly of the idea, so common in Russia, that only decisions unanimously reached are binding upon the conscience. He has high praise for the *artels*, which were small groups of craftsmen running a business together and sharing their work, their equipment and their profits among themselves.

Khomyakov, however, was no narrow nationalist. He felt that Russia's gifts were to be shared with the whole world. Europe was to learn from Russia the secret of a truly Christian, communal way of life. The amazing thing is that, as we have seen, no one could have been more aware of the gulf between the ideal and the reality than Khomyakov. It is an extraordinary example of the polarity of the Russian that a man could be so conscious of this gulf and yet retain his integrity.

Side by side with the literary critics, the philosophers of history, whether atheists like Herzen or lay theologians like Khomyakov, whether of the Westernizing or of the Slavophil schools, there were the great nineteenth-century novelists. Of these one of the earliest and greatest was Gogol. In Gogol Pushkin's realism comes of age and it remains *the* characteristic of all Russian novel-writing till the end of the century, and though some may have deserted it, it still re-

mains. 'Beginning with Gogol,' writes Berdyaev, 'Russian literature becomes didactic. It seeks truth and righteousness and teaches the bringing of truth into actual life. Russian literature was not born of a happy creative profession,[1] but of suffering and the painful fate of mankind, out of the search for salvation for all men. . . . It was realist in the sense of revealing the truth and the depth of life.'[2]

The two greatest names, in this amazing period of literature which was so full of great names, are of course Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, and of these two it is the former who had much the deeper influence on Berdyaev. In almost every book he wrote Berdyaev referred to Dostoyevsky and particularly to *The Brothers Karamazov. The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, which occurs in this novel, seemed most of all to haunt Berdyaev. One can remember no other great writer who so persistently turns back again and again to one parable.

Dostoyevsky belonged not to one of the big land-owning families but to the professional classes, to the intelligentsia. His father was a poor doctor. Destined for a career as an engineer in the Army, Dostoyevsky early abandoned it and took to writing. His first novel *Poor Folk* had a brilliant reception, but not those which followed it. Though not himself a revolutionary, he joined a group of young men who were studying the French socialists under the leadership of Petrashevsky. The police arrested them, and it is some indication of the conditions of life then that Dostoyevsky could be condemned to death for 'taking part in conversations against the censorship, for reading a letter from Belinsky to Gogol, and for knowing of the intention to set up a printing press'. After months of imprisonment the condemned men

[1] Prince Mirsky, however, in speaking of Gogol says: 'his satire was merely the outcome of an exuberant creative temperament.' Maurice Baring's judgment is nearer that of Berdyaev. He suspects that it was out of intensity of soul that Gogol finally renounced his art and went on pilgrimage. It was from this intensity that his power to create was derived.

[2] *The Origin of Russian Communism*, chapter IV.

were led out to be shot, but just before the execution took place it was announced that they were pardoned and the sentence was commuted to one of hard labour in Siberia. One of the men released went mad on the spot and Dostoyevsky himself developed epilepsy. When he was again free and continued writing, his life was a perpetual struggle. He had to write at top speed, and it is said that he never corrected what he wrote.

Such in outline was the life of a writer who was not only one of the two greatest novelists Russia has produced but also among the world's greatest.

The qualities which above all Berdyaev found in Dostoyevsky are dynamism and prophecy. Dostoyevsky seems to write like one possessed. It is like the eruption of a volcano.

The central problem with which Dostoyevsky deals in this dynamic and prophetic vein is the problem of man himself, of freedom and the suffering it brings, of man's attempt to escape the burden of freedom, of the attempt to secure happiness by the surrender of freedom. Dostoyevsky foresees the collapse of western civilization and the attempts to re-order life more happily by means of regimentation. He also foresees socialist dictatorships which will achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number but at the expense of liberty. From the emphasis laid on this element in Dostoyevsky by contemporary western writers on religious-sociological questions (including Berdyaev himself), it might be supposed in view of the alleged lack of freedom in Soviet Russia that Dostoyevsky would be under a cloud today in his own country. Such is not the case. He has never been more widely read in Russia than he is at this moment. His realism and his profound humanity make him as deeply valued now as ever he was in the past. Russia still wrestles with the fundamental question of man himself.

The amazing thing about Dostoyevsky is that though he is so immersed in the tragic consequence of man's abuse of freedom, though his pages are full of characters tortured

within and without, he never leaves one with a feeling of hopelessness and despair. In *Crime and Punishment*, for example, though we move through the stifling underworld of St. Petersburg, we feel that there is light in the darkest places. Many have written tritely enough of the divine spark in man. In Dostoyevsky it is really there. You see it and you feel it just when schizophrenia, a nightmare of a social order, morbidity of every sort, seem to have blotted out every ray of light or hope. He was, of course, profoundly Christian.

The other pre-eminently great Russian novelist of this period—though later than Dostoyevsky—is Leo Tolstoy. He had his greatest influence on Berdyaev personally in his earlier days rather than in his middle and later life, but his place in the developing world of ideas in which Berdyaev grew up is, of course, very great.[1] As one who wanted radically to transform society there can be no doubt that Tolstoy would claim Berdyaev's attention, however far apart they were in other respects.

Tolstoy's background was entirely different from that of Dostoyevsky. He was a count and belonged to a great, wealthy, aristocratic landowning family. The struggle for sheer physical existence, the terrible sufferings of imprisonment and exile through which Dostoyevsky passed were not part of Tolstoy's experience. He might be called the supreme incarnation of that nineteenth-century Russian type, 'the repentant nobleman'. Like many others Tolstoy was overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of the life of highly cultured irresponsibility to which the bureaucratic imperialism of the later period of tsardom condemned so many. Here were people whose culture was on the highest European level, people of exquisite sensitivity; but what could they do in the face of all the evils of the time? Tolstoy answered the question by going to work his own land and by writing. Though brought up in the Orthodox Church, he had lost his faith as a young man. In 'going to the people' he returned to faith, but for him it could not be Orthodoxy,

[1] See Introduction to *Slavery and Freedom*.

allied as it then was with the State. 'Tolstoyism' with its rationalism and pacifism is a simple but bleak creed which did not find a wide circle of actual adherents in Russia itself but had tremendous influence outside its ranks in Russia and in many other parts of the world. Mr. Gandhi, for example, admitted that Tolstoy was one of the major formative influences in his life. In Russia itself, however, though as we have said the number of Tolstoyans was small, his moralism had a marked effect not only among the intelligentsia but among the masses. 'Doubts about the justification of holding private property, especially of the private ownership of land, doubts about the right to judge and punish, the exposure of the evil and wrong of all forms of state and authority, repentance for his privileged position, the consciousness of guilt before the working people, a revulsion from war and violence and dreams of the brotherhood of man—all these elements were very much part of the make-up of the central body of the Russian intelligentsia. They penetrated even into the highest stratum of Russian society and seized upon even part of the Russian subordinate officials in the State services. This was platonic Tolstoyism. The Tolstoyan ethic was considered unrealizable, but yet the most lofty one could imagine.'[1]

Tolstoy was ever a seeker after perfection and truth. At the very end of his life he left home to find his way to a monastery, but died before reaching it, at a small railway station. There is, as has been pointed out, a certain symbolic character in the circumstances of Tolstoy's death. During his long life he searched in different directions, but always went straight ahead like a railway line. Dostoyevsky wrote of Tolstoy as early as 1877: 'In spite of his colossal artistic talent, Tolstoy is one of those Russian minds which only see that which is right before their eyes, and in this manner press towards that point. They have not the power of turning their necks to the right or to the left to see what lies on one side; to do this, they would have to turn with their whole

[1] *The Russian Idea*, p. 181.

bodies. If they do turn, they will quite probably maintain the exact opposite of what they have been hitherto professing; for they are rigidly honest.'

Contemporary both with Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky is the enigmatic philosopher-poet-mystic Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900). Until quite recently practically none of the writings of this extraordinary thinker was available in English, but now his *Lectures on Godmanhood*,[1] *The Meaning of Love*,[2] and *Russia and the Universal Church*[3] are all translated. Berdyaev regarded Solovyov as the greatest of Russian nineteenth-century philosophers. Though he created a complete system of philosophy, the man himself and his life are full of the most amazing contradictions and riddles. He was from first to last a seeker, a seeker after the all-embracing unity of things not only in thought but in life. He was never afraid of striking his tent or smashing the idols he had worshipped. (He literally destroyed his ikons during a period of revolt from religion as a young man.) He had a passionate sincerity. He could be extravagantly generous to the poor, ascetic in secret, yet a lavish entertainer when so moved. His whole life is full of paradox. A man who was never married and suffered bitterly in his love for women has yet given to the world a book on the meaning of love which has no equal. Berdyaev regarded it as the most remarkable of all Solovyov's works and 'the one and only original word which has been spoken on the subject of love as Eros in the history of Christian thought.'[4] That love had a meaning in the fulfilment of personality apart from the family, that procreation was not the sole justification of marriage from the Christian standpoint was the heart of Solovyov's teaching on this subject.

His philosophical *method* is not attractive. It is closely argued and Berdyaev regarded it as out of date. Yet the

[1] Translated by Peter Zouboff (Dobson).
[2] Translated by Jane Marshall (Bles).
[3] Translated by Herbert Rees (Bles).
[4] *The Russian Idea*, p. 176.

importance of such a work as the *Lectures on Godmanhood* is considerable. There you have man's activity justified and the clear repudiation of the view that all is from the Godward side. 'The idea of Godmanhood means the overcoming of the self-sufficiency of man in humanism and at the same time the affirmation of the activity of man, of his highest dignity, of the divine in man.'[1]

Solovyov's work for the reunion of the Churches—particularly for the reunion of Rome and Moscow—was part of his craving for unity and universality. He was looking for the One Church which was far greater than Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Catholicism. It seemed at one time as if in his disappointment with empirical Orthodoxy and in his disillusionment with the theocratic pretensions of tsarism that he would join the Roman Catholic Church, but he died an Orthodox. However bitter his attacks on the Slavophils' uncritical adulation of the old Church and State set-up of Muscovy, Solovyov was not finally prepared to become a Latin.

Berdyaev has pointed out how in spite of Solovyov's fundamental intuition with regard to all-embracing unity there were always big contradictions within his thought. The theocratic and the prophetic aspects of his thinking were in sharp conflict, so too were his final deliverances on the subject of eschatology. His *Story about Antichrist*, written at the end of his life, is a rejection of the idea which had once meant so much to him that theocracy could be realized in history. A church civilization, a Church-State, actually achieved in time, would mean the end of any quest for the Kingdom of God. But by the end of his life Solovyov had passed over to a completely pessimistic view of history. It is Antichrist who triumphs before the end, and according to Solovyov he is a humanitarian Antichrist. For Berdyaev Antichrist is essentially the dehumanizer.

No one can fail to be deeply stirred by the immense vigour of Solovyov as the seeker, the whole-heartedness with

[1] *The Russian Idea*, p. 173.

which he pursued different lines of thought and the equal whole-heartedness with which he abandoned a path which he had found unfruitful. There is an immense range of subjects which he illuminates by his insight, ethical, religious, social, historical, ecclesiastical and mystical. He was worn out at the age of forty-seven by the intensity of his life. The tragedy is that a man of such gifts could regenerate neither Church nor State in Russia. Indeed, speaking generally, the more one reflects upon the amazing list of writers and thinkers produced by Russia in the nineteenth century, the more clear it becomes that neither insight, sincerity nor passion were lacking, but that without a movement among the masses and without radical economic and political changes Russia could not save herself. The new turn in Russian history which came in our own day drew its first inspiration from an outside source, and only then could the dreams of the old and the visions of the young become flesh.

Thus we have finally in this chapter to consider the impact of Hegel and Marx on that nineteenth-century Russia into which Nicolas Berdyaev was born.[1]

The importance of Hegel in the development of Russian thought was considerable, while Marx first among the thinkers and then among the workers of revolution has been the greatest influence from abroad since Christianity came to Russia. But what was the position prior to the nineteenth century? The Orthodox Church had no official philosophy corresponding to Aristotelianism in which western scholasticism is embedded. It is true that there was as we have seen some influence of scholasticism on the Russian Church in the seventeenth century, largely as a result of Polish domination in the south-west. In the eighteenth century too there were opened a number of theological seminaries of the western type which sprang up as part of Peter the Great's policy. But these seminaries were not the home of any creative thinking or of any genuine philosophical training.

[1] The subject of the important renaissance in literature and arts which took place in Russia at the turn of the century is dealt with in the next chapter.

The influence of Voltaire, Diderot and the Encyclopædists was considerable at the Court in the middle of the eighteenth century, but gave rise to no philosophical movement among the Russians themselves. When we compare Britain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with Russia of the same epoch the contrast in this respect is amazing. Britain, not usually regarded as one of the chief centres of philosophical activity, produced in those centuries a number of philosophers whose names are famous all over the world. Russia's potentiality for metaphysical thought was then undeveloped, but as in the case of her literary capacities, once brought into action, they were surprising.

Hegelianism came to Russia, then, as to virgin soil. There may be many theories about the causes of the astonishing effect Hegel had upon Russia. One thing is very certain. The highly polarized Russian character, which a peculiar historical destiny had developed, was simply made for Hegelian dialectic. As Berdyaev wrote: 'The immense importance of Hegel's philosophy has lasted even into the period of Russian Communism. The Soviet publishes a complete edition of Hegel's collected works and this in spite of the fact that to him philosophy was a doctrine about God. . . . The Russians put all their capacity for giving a passionate welcome to influence in the sphere of ideas into their acceptance of the ascendancy which his philosophy had over them. . . .' Berdyaev has quoted also the exuberant dictum of Stankevitch: 'I have no desire to live in the world unless I find happiness in Hegel,' and he added that Bakunin 'takes Hegel as a religion'. But of course Hegel can be applied in two opposite directions. We have already noticed, for example, that the first effect of Hegel on Belinsky was to turn him into a conservative. Only the rational is real, therefore the real is rational, and by 'the real' was meant Nicholas I's semi-Prussian 'bureau-autocracy'. The deifying of the *status quo* was after all one of the conclusions derived from Hegel's doctrines in Germany itself.

But when Marx developed Hegel in the opposite direction by 'standing Hegel on his feet instead of on his head', the effect on Russia was even more electrifying. Among the very first of Marx's disciples was a Russian *émigré* in Paris. Russian translations of Marx were also among the first. Yet in the sphere of concrete politics it was a long time before there was a Marxist party in Russia. All sorts of indigenous trends brilliantly described and analysed in the earlier chapters of Berdyaev's *Origin of Russian Communism* had to work themselves out before Marxism as practical politics could appear. It was only when the purely Russian phenomenon of *narodnik* socialism had been found finally impracticable as a line of advance that Marxism in Russia crystallized into a party working for revolution. Yet for three decades before this happened Marx had been like leaven working in the lump.

The longing of the Russian for 'wholeness' found in many cases its satisfaction in Marx. Here is a philosophy which sees life as a changing whole and sees it in order to change it further. The wholeness and the dynamism of Marx alike appealed to profound elements in Russia. The religious hope of the transfiguration of the world which official Orthodoxy had begun to betray as early as the sixteenth century, and which had been one of the driving forces behind the religious schisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this now found in Marx another mode of realization. What the Church had failed to do, a revolution based on scientific principles might now effect.

Berdyaev, who was himself at one time a Marxist, though of an 'heretical' kind, shows very clearly how often Marx has been misunderstood by Russians. He also shows how Lenin developed Marxism. The more closely one studies the growth of Russian Communism in relation to Russian history, Russian religion, thought and literature, the more clear it becomes that it is by no accident that it was Lenin, Stalin and the Russian people who first succeeded in establishing a State run on Marxist principles. Marx had something

essential to give to Russia, but it is equally true that Russia is giving something essential to Marxism. For Marxism is no rigid dogma, as its opponents are fond of declaring. It is a way of thinking and acting in relation to the actual forces which are forever changing the structure of society and the economic relationships upon which it rests. The Russians with their sense of a mission to the world unfulfilled, of having been so often 'doomed' by history, the Russians who had so little of the bourgeois sense of property, but so much of the fraternal sense of community (sanctified by the theological notion of *sobornost'*), have proved themselves more ready 'to read Marx, learn and inwardly digest' Communism than those western proletariats which have shared if only in part in 'the super-profits of the imperial exploitation of backward peoples'.

Though there are still many times more Christians than members of the Communist party in Russia, Marxism has become the official creed of Russia. Marxism as we have seen is the fulfiller as well as the destroyer of Russia's past. The future alone will reveal whether a new synthesis can be achieved. Certainly the Church in Russia has greater freedom than before, while the great nineteenth-century writers, whether Christian or not, are widely read and studied in the interests of the new Soviet humanism. It was Berdyaev's belief that Christianity would enter into the future as a transfiguring force from within a communist regime, which politically and economically the Church could and ought to accept as more Christian than capitalism. If this happens there will be a drawing together and reinterpretation of many tendencies in Russian literature and thought which may now appear to have been pursuing conflicting ends. The Marxist believes that out of contradiction a deeper synthesis is reached which includes the partial truths formerly in conflict. The Christian looks to the summing-up of *all things* in Christ.

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IV

BERDYAEV'S LIFE AND TIMES

Nikolai Alexandrovitch Berdyaev was born in Kiev in 1874. Kiev was the first centre of Christian Russia. From the great hills which rise three hundred feet above the right bank of the River Dnieper, St. Vladimir threw down the image of Perun on the occasion of the mass baptism of his people. Kiev became the home of a great Christian culture, but her predominance was comparatively shortlived. Tartars, Lithuanians and finally Poles ruled over her from the middle of the thirteenth century till 1686, when Kiev was again incorporated into Russia. The nineteenth century witnessed the beginnings of industry and the turn of the century saw the rise of Ukrainian nationalism. The Revolutions of 1905 and of 1917, the German invasions of 1918 and 1941, the civil war, the wars of intervention, the Polish invasion of 1920 all brought much suffering to the city and great destruction. It was in a place of past and future martyrdom that Berdyaev was born, in a place where Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox faith had faced centuries of struggle against West and East alike, against the rival influences of Papalists, Moslems and pagans. But still the great Cathedral of St. Sophia with its nineteen domes and gold-capped bell-tower, as well as many other churches and the great Cave monastery, visited annually by its quarter of a million pilgrims, witnessed to the tenacity of Orthodoxy.

The father of Nikolai Berdyaev, Alexander Mikhailovitch Berdyaev, was a man of great culture. He read widely, particularly in the field of history. He had a fine library, so that from earliest days the young Berdyaev lived among books. His father, however, was not a religious man. During the latter half of his life he became increasingly 'liberal' in his general outlook. As a young man he was a cavalry officer.

Later, however, he retired and held the position of a 'Marshal of the Gentry', an office created by Catherine the Great as part of her plan to draw more of the local gentry into public affairs.

Nikolai Alexandrovitch's mother was Alina Sergeevna, who was the daughter of the Comtesse Choiseul, and so half French. Her father was Prince Kudashev. In those days the Russian gentry and nobility often spoke a good deal of French among themselves, but Alina Sergeevna talked and wrote hardly anything else. Though she had become Orthodox, her Roman Catholic sympathies remained. Both the grandfather and great-grandfather of Nikolai Alexandrovitch had held the office of Governor-General in southern Russia, while his grandmother had been a secret nun. Another of his ancestors actually entered a convent after the death of her husband. Thus the traditions both of the army and of the cloister had gone into the making of the Berdyaev family. Nikolai Alexandrovitch had only one brother, a man of great gifts and some fifteen years his senior. There were no sisters. The home, though cultured, was devoid of any religious atmosphere. From early days the young Berdyaev began to follow his own bent. As he himself says: 'I have never seen any difficulty in sacrificing the social traditions, prejudices and interests of the gentlefolk society from which I sprang. It was from freedom that I made my start upon my journey.'[1]

However, his education began at a Military School, and in due course he reached the sixth class. But the whole atmosphere of the place was alien to him, and, having taken his examination, he entered the University of Kiev. Here while supposed to be studying natural science he actually devoted most of his energies to philosophy.

This was also the time when a passion for social justice began to develop in him. The universities of Russia, even in tsarist times, had far more poor students than the ancient universities of England. The class struggle was not merely

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 11.

a subject for study. It was there in the life of the university. 'Academic' could therefore never be a synonym for 'isolated from reality' as it has too often meant in England.

Russian universities had an ardent political life. Not only social-democratic but also revolutionary tendencies were strong. It was the heyday of reaction under Alexander III and 'the principal fields of repression were education and the press.'[1] There had been troubles with the universities already in 1882 at Kazan and St. Petersburg and again in 1887 at Moscow, Odessa, Kharkov and Kazan. Even troops had been used against the students.

In such circumstances the young Nikolai Alexandrovitch, who had already shown his independence of family traditions, did not stand aloof. Political activity occupied him more and more. He became the fearless champion of the oppressed working-classes. The authorities' reply was to expel him from the University. He was arrested and exiled to Vologda in the far north for illegal activity in conducting Marxist revolutionary propaganda, chiefly among the intelligentsia but partly among the working-classes. He spent two and a half years in exile, but was not harshly treated. His father came to visit him, and his family, while detesting his views, bore the scandal with remarkable patience.

But while he suffered no physical hardships this was a time of acute mental struggle with his fellow exiles. Berdyaev was never an 'orthodox' Marxist. He attempted to combine an 'idealist' philosophy with the economic programme of Marxism.

Now Marxism is a complex theory and in Russia its seeds fell upon a soil very different from that of western bourgeois capitalism where it had originated. Moreover, Marxism had its increasing vogue in Russia just as Berdyaev was growing to manhood, precisely because many were thoroughly disillusioned with the various 'home-grown' brands of socialism. There were circles in Russia which turned avidly to-

[1] See *History of Russia*, by Sir Bernard Pares.

wards Marxian socialism because it was scientific, not 'folk-socialism'. As Ryazonov says in his preface to *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, it was the publication of Plekhanov's *Socialism and the Political Struggle* in 1883 which 'embodied a decisive break with the time-honoured prejudices of the narodniks.[1] To the baffled revolutionary movement it disclosed a new road, along which success, sure though slow, could be attained.' To quote Plekhanov himself: 'Just as Darwin enriched biology with the theory of the origin of species, a theory at once amazingly simple and rigidly scientific, so the founders of scientific realism showed that in the development of the forces of production, and in the struggle of these forces against antiquated social conditions of production there was implicit the great principle of the transformation of social species.' . . . But 'though scientific socialism derives from Kant and Hegel (among others) it is the deadly enemy of idealism. Scientific socialism hunts idealism out of its last refuge, sociology, where the positivists had given it so cordial a welcome. Scientific socialism is based upon the materialist conception of history, this meaning that it explains the spiritual history of mankind as the outcome of the development of social relations, partly influenced by the natural environment.'[2]

It was thus the seemingly deterministic elements in Marxism (though *mechanical* determinism is as much a heresy for Marxists as it is for Christians) which appealed most to the Russians of the 'eighties and 'nineties. And it was just these elements which were most repellent to Berdyaev. The controversies of those days were long and bitter and Berdyaev himself has brilliantly analysed and described them in Chapter V of his *Origins of Russian Communism*. Particularly strenuous were his arguments with his

[1] 'Narodnik' from the word 'narod', people. The 'narodniks' had a tremendous belief in 'the people', and that in them lay the secret of a new order of society.

[2] See Editor's Preface, pp. X and XI, to Plekhanov's *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*. (English edition, Lawrence & Wishart.)

fellow exile, Lunacharsky, the future Commissar of Education under the Soviet regime. Already Berdyaev was a lonely figure, in fierce revolt against the reactionary regime of the tsars, full of eager sympathy with the oppressed masses, certain of their eventual triumph, yet, while seeing much truth in Marxism, quite unable to accept the philosophy of dialectical materialism. These days of exile were for Berdyaev a time of great mental suffering as he came to realize his isolation more and more fully. 'I have never been an orthodox Marxist,' he wrote in his introduction to *Slavery and Freedom.* 'I tried to combine my idealism in philosophy with Marxism in social questions. I based my socialism upon an idealist foundation, although I acknowledged the truth of many propositions in the materialist interpretation of history. The low type of culture among the greater part of the revolutionary Marxists was a torment to me. I felt this particularly acutely in the years of my exile in the north.'

Among the exiles with whom he had the most friendly intercourse were A. M. Remizov, a highly talented and original writer, Savinkov, a member of the 'social-revolutionary' party and its militant terroristic organization, Shchyogolev, the historian of literature, and A. Bogdanov, the Marxist philosopher. Although there was police supervision these men could meet and discuss questions among themselves, so that these years were by no means lost to Berdyaev so far as the development of his thought was concerned.

Already before his exile Berdyaev had published his first article, namely, *F. A. Lange and the Critical Philosophy in relation to Socialism.* It was printed, not in Russian, but in German in a Marxist journal of those days called *Neue Zeit.* The well-known Marxist, Kautsky, regarded it as highly significant and in a letter to Berdyaev about it said that, in his opinion, the future development of Marxism lay with the Russians. He was right, but the developing was done not by Berdyaev but by Lenin and Stalin.

Nikolai Alexandrovitch's first book appeared in the year 1900 and was called *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy*. It has not yet been done into English. It was published at a critical period when a very remarkable change was coming over the educated classes of Russia.

Writing of this time in Chapter X of *The Russian Idea* Berdyaev said: 'At the beginning of the century there was in Russia a real cultural renaissance. Only those who themselves lived through that time know what a creative inspiration was experienced among us and how the breath of the spirit took possession of Russian souls. Russia lived through a flowering of poetry and philosophy. Intense religious enquiry formed part of its experience, a mystical and occult frame of mind.' But he noted sadly that 'there was not the necessary strength and concentration of will for a religious renaissance'. He spoke too of the tragic 'cleavage of spirit' which 'continued to be characteristic of Russia'.

Berdyaev traced the renaissance of the early nineteen hundreds to three main sources. Firstly, there was the influence of Marxism, in which a process of differentiation had begun to take place. Among the more cultured Marxists there was a demand that philosophy, art, the life of the spirit should be free from domination by dialectical materialism. The general Marxian outlook on history was retained but without an attempt to explain everything in terms of economics. The 'orthodox' Marxists were very suspicious of this tendency and what they predicted as to its development actually took place. The 'autonomists' soon passed from idealism in philosophy to religion. There sprang up a whole new interest in the things of the spirit, a veritable thirst for the spiritual, which had long been tabooed among the 'left' intelligentsia.

The second source of the renaissance was literary, and the outstanding names here are Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. Both aroused fresh interest in religion, the latter specializing in the whole problem of religion and sex. While neither of them was morally profound they stimulated thought in

circles where religion had been either dead or conventional. But interest in religion is one thing, spiritual rebirth another. Russia then witnessed in a much narrower circle, possessing far greater erudition and passion, what England was to see in the 'twenties and 'thirties, endless talk 'about' religion but no genuine revival.

The third source was also literary but deserves mentioning by itself, and that was the new poetry. It is the period of symbolism associated with Alexander Blok, Andrei Byelii and Vyacheslav Ivanov. The symbolists are those who see spiritual reality behind visible reality. These poets are but little known in England and need for their appreciation a good knowledge not only of the Russian language but also of their particular background, and especially of the writings of Vladimir Solovyov. What is chiefly interesting to the foreigner about the Russian symbolists is their uncanny prescience of what was in store for their country. Neither their decadence nor their occultism is finally significant, but rather their painful awareness of the abyss yawning before them and their quasi-apocalyptic intuitions.

Of Diaghilev, of the *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art) movement connected with the paper of that name, and of the painters and musicians Berdyaev does not write. But they represent the aspects of the renaissance best known in western Europe, and are further evidence of the mighty stirring of the spirit in the Russia of those days.

In *The Russian Idea* Berdyaev has described the brilliant religious-philosophical gatherings organized in Petersburg in 1903 and attended by representatives of different tendencies within the renaissance. Over these there presided Bishop Sergius, the future Patriarch of Russia under the Soviets.

Early in 1904 war broke out with Japan. Though bitterly opposed to the monarchy and the whole reactionary regime, Berdyaev as a patriot felt deeply the humiliation of Russian defeats. Here he differed completely from those of the intelligentsia who welcomed disaster in war as a

prelude to revolution. Berdyaev also wanted revolutionary change, but not by such a path.

It was in this year—not a happy one for a man who followed no party-line—that Berdyaev married. Lydia Yudifovna, his wife, came of the wealthy family of Trushev. Her father was a lawyer of exceptional gifts but devoid of religion and a disciple of Voltaire. The daughter, however, was from childhood deeply religious. In spite of (or was it because of?) receiving her education at one of those boarding-schools for girls from the best families, she had strong revolutionary sympathies. For her share in revolutionary movements she was twice arrested and imprisoned. It was only later after her marriage to Nikolai Alexandrovitch that she became a Roman Catholic. She had a strongly marked contemplative and mystical nature and was also a poetess. It was characteristic of her that she always refused to have her poems printed during her own life-time, but it is hoped that they will soon be given to the world.

From war Russia passed to revolution, and it was in the stormy year of 1905 that the Berdyaevs moved from Moscow to Petersburg. It was also the year of 'Bloody Sunday', when Father Gapon marched demonstrators to the Winter Palace, where they were pitilessly mowed down by the troops. Strikes, assassinations, pogroms, mutinies—such were the prelude to the calling of the first Duma. It was an ill-fated attempt to plant western 'liberal' constitutionalism on a soil unprepared for it either by history or tradition. The strongest forces alike of reaction and revolution were united in their dislike of parliamentarianism. To say this is not to belittle the gifts of many of the Russian 'liberals', but, as Berdyaev says, it was precisely constitutionalism which was utopian in Russia. It was Bolshevism—the all-out Marxist welding of theory and practice—which became 'practical politics'.

In Petersburg, together with Sergius Bulgakov, another fellow-traveller from Marxism to idealism who was eventually ordained and became the head of the Russian Theo-

logical Institute in Paris, Berdyaev edited a paper called *Problems of Life*. This paper tried to combine a variety of tendencies. 'Those were the days of the first small revolution,' writes Berdyaev.[1] 'Politically the paper belonged to the left, the radical school of thought, but it was the first in the history of Russian periodicals to combine that sort of social and political ideas with religious enquiry, with a metaphysical outlook and a new tendency in literature. It was an attempt to unite those who had been Marxists and, becoming idealists, were moving towards Christianity, with Merezhkovsky and the symbolists, in part with the representatives of the academic philosophy of the idealist and spiritual school and with journalists of the radical tendency. The synthesis was not organic enough and could not be durable. . . . I call to mind a clear picture of the breach and schism in Russian life. The cultured *élite*, poets, novelists, philosophers, savants, artists, actors, used to meet on Wednesdays for several years at Vyacheslav Ivanov's "Tower"; that was what they called his flat at the corner of the very top storey of a high house opposite the *Tavrichesky Dvorets*. . . . The flower of the Russian Renaissance was present. At the very same time down below in the *Tavrichesky Dvorets* and round about, revolution was raging. The actors in the Revolution were entirely uninterested in the subjects discussed in Ivanov's circle.' Yet the folk in the 'Tower' were not conservatives. Many were prepared to sympathize with the Revolution, but they were out of touch with those who made it. The blame must rest upon both sides. There was firstly complacency and lack of will-power on the part of the leaders of the Renaissance. Secondly, among the revolutionaries there was a lack of culture and a clinging to stale forms of materialism and utilitarianism. Meanwhile the Church had utterly failed to carry out the task of transfiguring life. As a body it was prepared to support the capitalist order and could not see, as Berdyaev did, that Communism 'answered more truly to Christianity than

[1] *The Russian Idea*, p. 246.

capitalism'. The creative ideas of the nineteenth century had left the Church quite untouched. When the big revolution came in 1917 the Church was powerless at first to assume anything but a reactionary role.

A study of those times in Petersburg ten or twelve years before the 1917 Revolution when a few men like Berdyaev and Bulgakov were trying in vain to build bridges between culture, religion and socialism, throws a good deal of light on subsequent events. The schisms in Russian life were too deep to be bridged, and the forces which make history were not directed and controlled by the *élite*.

In 1907 Berdyaev founded in Petersburg the Religious-Philosophical Society but soon afterwards went to Paris and having spent the winter there moved to Moscow. Here he took an active part in another Religious-Philosophical Society founded in memory of Vladimir Solovyov. He had returned to the Church and was much immersed in certain Church circles which brought him no little disillusionment. He was, in fact, carrying on a struggle on two fronts—firstly against the reactionary currents in Orthodoxy indifferent to the social problem, and secondly, against the materialism of the left intelligentsia. He was a member of various groups of 'God-seekers' and mystics among whom the thirst for truth and the longing for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth were strong. The contacts made at this time had a profound influence upon him. The mystical element in his thought, particularly noticeable in *Freedom and the Spirit* and his concern with 'gnosis', go back largely to this period.

At this time there appeared a symposium called *Landmarks* under the editorship of M. Gershenson, to which Berdyaev also contributed. It was symbolical of a crisis in the consciousness of the intelligentsia, a section of which now began to consider spiritual questions. The work had a very hostile reception in left circles and was bitterly criticized. As Berdyaev said: 'In accordance with the ancient tradition of the Russian intelligentsia the struggle for the

spirit was taken as reactionary, almost like a betrayal of the struggle for freedom.'

But by 1914 Berdyaev was again in trouble with the 'right'. He had published a pretty sharp attack on the Holy Synod, the governing body of the Russian Church which had replaced the Patriarch since the days of Peter the Great, and had been dominated in recent years by that arch-reactionary, the lay procurator Pobyedonostsev. The article bore the sufficiently truculent title of *The Quenchers of the Spirit.* Berdyaev was put on trial and was threatened with exile for life in Siberia. Only the outbreak of war with Germany saved him, and, of course, the whole case was dropped when the Provisional Government came into office in February 1917. During the short period between this and the October Revolution Berdyaev was a member of the Council of the Republic.

In 1920, in spite of the fact that he was not a Marxist, Berdyaev was elected to a professorship in Moscow University. The official ideology of the Russian State was now of course that of Karl Marx. The Church, to use English phraseology, had been 'disestablished and disendowed'. Education was secularized. 'Holy Russia', the old Church-State and State-Church system, had been swept away by the October Revolution. In its place was Soviet power and Marxist theory. But a bitter struggle was still being waged between the old and the new: violence, terror, bloodshed, civil war and foreign intervention still ravaged the country. But Berdyaev never shifted his ground. He remained a critic of Marxism. He founded a 'Free Academy of Spiritual Culture', which, though not officially recognized, had a great success, and which reaffirmed and upheld spiritual values. Though it was not possible to advertise the lectures which he gave in the press, the hall was always packed to overflowing. His life was full of activity, lecturing, debating, and also conducting a seminar. It is true that in 1919 he had been arrested by the Cheka in connection with the case of the so-called 'Tactical Centre', but having taken

no part in its work he was quickly released and his work went on with unabated vigour. Every week in his flat there were meetings of people holding all kinds of views, and there were discussions on a wide variety of philosophical, religious and literary questions. Politics alone were eschewed. Berdyaev considered it his duty during these dark and difficult times to uphold spiritual values and culture, and to that end he never spared himself. The gatherings over which he presided and to which he lectured were unique in the Moscow of that period.

He was, however, arrested again in 1921 and imprisoned for a short time by the G.P.U. No formal charge was brought against him, but on his release he was sent out of Russia, together with a group of writers and students, by order of the Soviet authorities. The grounds on which he was thus exiled were purely of an ideological nature and not political.

Writing of his attitude towards the Bolshevist Revolution, Berdyaev says, 'I went through a stormy inward reaction also against the second, the great Russian revolution. I considered the revolution inevitable and just; but its spiritual aspect was uncongenial to me from the very beginning. . . . My refusal to accept the Bolshevik revolution was not so much on social grounds as on spiritual. I expressed this too passionately and often unfairly. I saw all the while the same triumph of the *Grand Inquisitor*. At the same time I did not believe in the possibility of any sort of restoration and I certainly did not want it. I was banished from Soviet Russia simply and solely because of my reaction in defence of freedom of the spirit.'[1]

After leaving Russia Berdyaev went first of all to Berlin, where he took part in the work of the Y.M.C.A., and in the foundation of a Religious-Philosophical Academy. In 1924 he moved to Paris and the Academy moved with him.

In Paris Nikolai Alexandrovitch continued to take part

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 16. The introduction to this book is a valuable summary of Berdyaev's spiritual pilgrimage.

in the work of the Y.M.C.A. and in the Student Christian Movement, which is closely linked with it, particularly in America. But while his connection with the Y.M.C.A. has remained and their press has published so large a number of his works, he was not long at home with the Russian *émigré* Student Christian Movement. The 'right' tendencies within it met with his strong disapproval and he preferred to work with another group who had left the Russian *émigré* S.C.M. for the same reasons, F. T. Pianov, G. Fedotov and the late Mother Maria, who eventually met her death in a Nazi concentration camp to which she had been sent for the 'crime' of sheltering Jews. Berdyaev became one of the editors of the Y.M.C.A. press in Paris, which besides publishing his own works has made a splendid contribution to the religious thought of the world by printing so many valuable Russian religious books. In 1926, through the help of Dr. John R. Mott, there was founded in Paris the Russian religious-philosophical journal *Put'* (The Way), of which Berdyaev was the editor from its inception until it was closed down in 1939. Throughout this period Berdyaev also lectured in the Baltic states, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Holland, and took part in innumerable conferences organized by the World Student Christian Federation, including those of the Fellowship of SS. Alban and Sergius in England, which grew out of the work done by the British and Russian S.C.M. Besides all this international conference work Berdyaev organized frequent gatherings of a private nature in Paris, attended by Roman Catholics, Protestants of various denominations, as well as the Orthodox. These gatherings were highly successful, though they could not be thrown open to a wider public, and out of them developed a remarkable degree of mutual understanding. It was unfortunate that after a time the Roman Catholics had to withdraw from them.

In the West, however, in spite of enjoying more freedom for his activities and for the development of his thought, Berdyaev had a life by no means devoid of struggle. For the

reactionary politics of the average Russian *émigré* he never had the slightest sympathy. He never wavered from that opposition to the old tsarist regime which was the cause of his first exile. The tendency among the *émigrés* to use Russian Orthodoxy for rallying political reaction sickened him. In 1926 he wrote a sharp article attacking the Karlovtsi Synod of *émigré* Russian bishops, which has always represented the extreme right wing of reaction. The article, *The Cry of the Russian Church*, was directed against the majority of Russians in exile, who by identifying religion with the old tsarist regime were doing infinite harm to the Church in Russia itself, then undergoing severe trials. There is plenty of evidence to show that Berdyaev was correct in his view. The Patriarch Tikhon and later the locum-tenens of the Patriarch Sergius found the counter-revolutionary activities of the *émigrés*, and particularly those associated with the Karlovtsi Synod, a continual obstacle to their attempts to find a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Government. Much needless suffering was caused to the Church in Russia by the propaganda of these exiles in Europe and America. Berdyaev could see this, and he protested vehemently against it, at a time when most people in the West were dreaming of the overthrow of Soviet power as the one hope for religion in Russia.

On the other hand, when Father Sergius Bulgakov of the Theological Institute in Paris was condemned for heresy by the Moscow Patriarchate for his sophiological speculations, Berdyaev warmly defended him against those who condemned what they had not been able to study. Equally when the Theological Institute itself wanted to expel G. P. Fedotov from his professorship for the 'crime' of contributing an article to the 'left' democratic organ, *New Russia*, Berdyaev was again ready to take up arms in defence of freedom of conscience. Wherever he found obscurantism in theology or reaction in politics, whether in the Church or elsewhere, Berdyaev attacked it with energy. It is against the background of these perpetual conflicts with the dominant ele-

ments in the Russian emigration that we must see his more recent defence of Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, who had been so sharply censured by Zhdanov in the Soviet Press. Wherever he felt that the freedom of personality was in danger Berdyaev rushed to its protection, and this had nothing whatever to do with his general acceptance of the Communist Revolution (on the economic and political but not the spiritual level) and his undying hostility to reaction. Berdyaev criticized friend or foe impartially. This is frequently ignored by those who simply want to make political capital out of Berdyaev. He belonged, it is true, to the 'left', he belonged also to the Church, but before all things he was the apostle of freedom and of man's creativity. As he has written of himself: 'There was no direction in which I could bring the whole of me completely to bear and I felt rather lonely. The *motif* of loneliness has always been basic with me. But owing to the activity and combativeness of my character, I took part from time to time in a good deal that was going on; and this was torture to me, for it led to disillusion.'[1]

Of his experiences in the West he has said: 'In Western Europe I again passed through a psychological reaction and that a two-fold one—reaction against the Russian *émigrés* and reaction against the bourgeois capitalist society of Europe. Among the Russian *émigrés* I saw the same revulsion from freedom, the same denial of it as in Communist Russia. This was explicable, but very much less justifiable than in the Communist Revolution.'[2] He points out that revolutions have never loved freedom and indeed cannot, for their role is to bring to the surface new classes which have to establish themselves before they can be concerned with finer points. On the other hand, the lack of love for freedom among those who claim to be the guardians of spiritual culture has far less justification. 'In Western Europe,' he said, 'I saw clearly to what an extent the anti-communist front is controlled by bourgeois capitalist in-

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 16. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

terests. The circle of my thought on social philosophy was completely closed. I returned to the verity of the socialism which I had professed in my youth, but now on the ground of ideas acquired in the course of my life. I call this personalist socialism. . . .'[1]

It was in Paris that Berdyaev wrote all his greatest works, and it is a remarkable fact that only one of the books for which he is best known was published before he was fifty. On the other hand, he was already lecturing before he was thirty and had written his first article in *Neue Zeit* while still in his twenties. A man who has done much speaking and writing of articles, who has exchanged ideas frequently with the best intellects of his day, who has been in the thick of so many controversies and passed through such a variety of experiences can of course get down to the writing of large books late in life with greater expectation of success than most who embark late on such ventures. The extraordinary vigour, freshness and vitality of Berdyaev's writing are the result of a long apprenticeship as a speaker and writer of short articles. But the vigour emerges through a style which would sink the creations of a less gifted and original thinker. His method when about to write was to brood restlessly for a long time before putting pen to paper. When at last he got down to the actual writing he had a clear picture of what he was going to say and wrote straight on, hardly making any corrections. But while this method can give the impression of a great reservoir pouring forth of its abundance, it also leads to considerable repetition. On top of this his confessed habit of putting the questions that tormented him in the form of provocative affirmations resulted in a style which has set his translators no easy problem.

The great period of Berdyaev's literary activity was brought to an end by the outbreak of war in 1939. The books he wrote after that date are mostly shorter. Some are concerned with more philosophical questions, but *Towards a New Epoch* deals with post-war problems—largely with

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 17.

Russia and the West. His autobiography was finished just before his death.

The second world war did not take Berdyaev by surprise. The former disciple of Karl Marx, no less than the Christian prophet and apocalyptist, lived in no fool's paradise and saw clearly what was coming. His attitude towards war in general may be described as negative but not pacifist. He accepted war as at times necessary and unavoidable. 'Do not kill,' he says, 'is an absolute norm, the same for all men; but sometimes a man has to take upon himself the sin of killing so that there should be less killing in the world and that the highest values might be preserved.'[1] While aggressive war was abhorrent to him he justified resistance to the aggressor. Above all the victims of aggression must be defended. But war, like revolution, can become largely an irrational process since it releases blind elemental forces. When war or revolution have broken out they must be lived through by the Christian. Berdyaev himself always believed in sharing the destiny of his people. Just as he felt deeply the defeat of Russia in 1904, so he felt the collapse of France in 1940.

He was quite fearless. Yet when the Germans entered France and his wife insisted on leaving Paris for the south-west he went with her. Soon, however, he was back again. He had written strongly against totalitarianism and anti-semitism before the war, and thus might easily have fallen a victim to the Nazis. Twice the Gestapo visited him, but he was not arrested, though a rumour to that effect got about. He confined his activities to small meetings of his closest friends in his own home. He made no public speeches nor did he print anything at this time. In the earlier part of the occupation some Germans who knew about him through his writings came to see him. One of these visitors he particularly liked to remember. He was a Roman Catholic and a convinced anti-Nazi who detested having to take part in the

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 155 (199). All references to *The Destiny of Man* are to the latest standard edition. The figures in brackets refer to the first and earlier editions.

war into which Hitler had plunged his country. On another occasion he met a German soldier who came from Königsberg. Berdyaev, always glad to acknowledge his debt to Kant, spoke to the man of the great philosopher who had been a native of his city. 'Kant,' replied the soldier, 'I never met him. As a matter of fact, I have never even heard of him!'

The end of the war meant for Berdyaev the resumption of his literary work and the restoration of contact with many old friends in other countries. But his happiness was soon to be overshadowed by the death of his wife. The loss of the companion who for over forty years had shared his wanderings and struggles was a severe blow to him. In 1946 he visited England and received an Hon. D.D. from the University of Cambridge.

Those of us who saw him then for the last time were amazed at his enduring vitality in spite of all that he had suffered. It was eight years since I had been royally entertained by him in his home at Clamart and I had frankly expected to see a very marked change. He had been very busy during his visit to England, yet he did not appear tired. He gave us double the time he had promised in a day full of engagements. His conversation was as good as ever, witty, now whimsical, now impassioned. His answers always showed how deeply he had thought over that whole field of religious philosophy and politics which was his very own. If he could see no road ahead on a certain problem he would say so at once. He was transparently sincere. He had all the graces of a man of good family, he detested pomp, hated convention and particularly bourgeois conventions. Yet there was nothing of the harsh intellectual about him, no suspicion of snobbery. The kindness and gentleness of the man struck you first. Yet though the pointed beard, the long hair on either side of his face, the slender figure and the style of dress seemed to indicate a certain artistic type, the flashing eyes beneath the high, broad forehead showed the keenness and fire of the mind. There was gentleness indeed but no

weakness. There was a delicacy but never a refusal to face what was hard, or to flinch from conflict. The breadth and depth of his thought were revealed in that massive head.

The end came very suddenly about nine months after his last visit to England. He had had a spell of ill-health but was much better. He was busy with his writing once more. Late in the afternoon of March 24th, 1948, he went up to his study on the first floor of his home to go on with his work. Shortly afterwards his sister-in-law heard him call. When she reached him he was already dead. He died at work among that tangled array of papers and books amid which his thought was hammered out.

Even among those who knew Berdyaev intimately there have been some strangely contradictory opinions about him. He was essentially a person in whom there were always fresh depths to be discovered. Some who knew him found him quiet and balanced, others restless and tragically divided. Some again got the impression of an almost cold aloofness and dryness, while others noted passion, pity and extreme sensitiveness.

The fact is he was a many-sided person and that his abnormal sensitiveness was sometimes hidden behind an impenetrable manner. He was shy and easily embarrassed. Yet at other times he could be moved to great outbursts of wrath, especially by any attempt to trample upon freedom. There was in him a curious mixture of pride and humility. He was no 'respecter of persons' in the sense that no one was less awed by rank or dignity, place, power or office. He hated magnificence and show, took no interest in reading laudatory press comments on himself and his work, and to the end seemed genuinely surprised at his world-wide reputation. While no one could have been a more jealous guardian of his own soul in anything of importance, he was incredibly accommodating in the small things of everyday life. To meet him at Victoria Station at the beginning of a series of engagements in England was like meeting a child about to be taken round by relations. He

had none of the fussiness of the great man whose every whim must be studied and who radiates self-importance or masks it behind an exaggerated condescension. It was not by an elaborate stepping down from a pedestal but by a kind of simple banality that he would try to put at ease some humble person whom a display of originality might have embarrassed. His sensitiveness made him a most courteous host, and all who enjoyed his hospitality will remember his quiet charm.

One amazing contrast in Berdyaev's character which many noted was the combination of great physical, moral and mental courage with a child-like fear of much that goes to make up everyday life. For example, he would protect himself from what appeared to him to be the chaos of everyday life today by an almost pedantic ordering of the programme of his day. He would write in the morning, read in the evening, and retire to rest with seven books of various types and the Gospels. Yet where business was concerned he was hopelessly at sea. His papers were always in confusion. Business generally was something alarming to be dispatched as quickly as possible. Somehow it seemed generally as if life for him were a very fragile thing, set in the midst of a crude, merciless world.

Yet no one was ever less in love with comfort. He detested and despised the vulgarity, extravagance, lack of style and culture of bourgeois western civilization. At the time of the Russian Revolution he bore cheerfully all the deprivations inseparable from such an upheaval. Food shortages, fuel shortages, all the dislocations of normal existence, as well as the real physical sufferings which come when nations are broken—all these Berdyaev accepted with ascetic detachment. Ordinary life might often be a nightmare, but not an air-raid, a bombardment, an invasion or a revolution. Once in the early days of the Revolution he found himself with a big crowd in Moscow faced by troops ready to fire. Completely disregarding his own safety he broke through the crowd, ignored the officer in command,

who might have shot him on the spot, and pleaded fiercely with the soldiers not to fire upon the unarmed crowd. His appeal was entirely successful. It was precisely in moments of crisis, catastrophe and danger that the whole strength and force of his character always came out. It was ordinary everyday life that constrained and appalled him.

Berdyaev was one of those sensitive people who was ever seeking for more intimate contacts with others than were actually given to him. 'Cordiality without intimacy' had no attractions for him. He wanted deep friendships, where deep thoughts could be exchanged naturally, easily and sympathetically. Though there were such friendships in his life he needed more. There was at times a shyness about him which conveyed a feeling that he had stepped from another planet, that he was 'outside' life or rather outside the present. Someone who was very close to him for many years remarked that even his bodily movements gave the impression that he was trying to reach out into the future rather than enjoy what was immediately given. In this respect his love of animals provided one remarkable exception. With them he was relaxed and at peace. His favourite cat has wandered into more than one passage in his works![1]

It was the paradoxical elements in his own character which made Berdyaev peculiarly fitted to speak to a generation acutely aware of the tensions and contradictions of a disrupting world-order. He seemed to experience within himself, in the depths of his own personality, the conflicts of which the history of our times is composed. As a voracious reader in his own language and those of other great European peoples, a man of wide culture and aware of so much, he was able to formulate with tremendous effect the questions facing us. In an age of over-specialization one who can find his way equally well about Marx and the Fathers of the Church, who is both a philosopher and a student of history, who can analyse and assess realistically the forces which are making the future while above all retaining for himself the

[1] E.g. *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 75.

limitless freedom in which he found Christ, has unique value. If he asked more questions than he answered we need not complain. His sincerity is patent, and he forces those who study him to be sincere in their turn and to refuse easy or conventional answers. More important than all, he pointed men to Christ, not simply to a Christian world view but to Christ Himself, to concrete encounters between man and God.

The modern cry for leaders is often not a cry for leaders at all, but simply for some cocksure tyrant who has already arrived and camped for the night. Berdyaev never could stand the type of person who has all the answers. It was seekers whom he welcomed most of all to his home in Paris. It is in this sense that Berdyaev is a leader of thought. He led men to think, because his own thought never stopped but marched on to the moment when he died writing. His leadership sprang from a character moulded by Christ by suffering and by the ceaseless struggle for fresh discoveries of truth, for fresh creative effort in an apocalyptic moment of world history.

Part II

THE WRITINGS

V

MAN, FREEDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Berdyaev's thinking begins with an intuition about man. In the centre of his thought is man, man as known from within, man as personality, as spirit, man as concrete, unrepeatable, not as an abstract conception, not as an idea but as a centre of life with its existence given immediately and requiring neither proof nor justification.

He calls his philosophy 'personalism' and less frequently 'existentialism'. But it is poles asunder from the fashionable existentialism of Sartre. Berdyaev's is a Christian personalism, for him the Christian revelation is not a theory of the universe or a set of views or ideas. Still less is Christianity an afterthought, something clamped on to a world-view constituted without reference to God as concretely revealed in Christ.

Revelation is primarily a concrete meeting with Christ. 'Freedom has brought me to Christ,' he says. The 'I' which is given is the 'I' which has met Christ, the 'I' which knows itself to be made in the image of God yet utterly free in relation to God.

It is the greatest possible misunderstanding of Berdyaev's philosophy to suppose that this personalism has anything in common with subjective idealism, solipsism, or any such like trend. 'It is wrong to say that the world is created by the subject, for the world is created by God; but God creates living creative subjects rather than objects or

things.'[1] Of course, Berdyaev admitted himself that he used terms carelessly, particularly in his earlier writings. In this he is not alone among philosophers. Kant, for example, was a great offender. So too when Berdyaev writes that in his most Marxian days he was always an 'idealist' in philosophy the remark lends itself to every sort of misinterpretation. The 'idealism' which he opposes to 'materialism' is certainly no abstract metaphysic, no hypostatization of ideas. It is certainly not 'idealism' as opposed to 'realism' in the sense in which these terms are bandied about in the classical battles of academic philosophers. The 'idealism' which he opposed to 'materialism' is really a philosophy of the concrete spirit. It is this that he sets up against that crude sort of materialism which the true dialectic materialist also rejects.[2] Berdyaev is neither an idealist nor a realist in the accustomed jargon of philosophy. 'There is a third position,' he writes, 'which I personally consider to be the only valid one.'[3] It is the philosophy of personalism, of the spirit which is concrete, existential, in which the subjective and objective are transcended.

Just as we need to be on our guard against supposing that Berdyaev is an 'idealist' in the ordinary sense of the word, so we must also beware of confounding him with the ordinary run of 'subjectivists'. The world is real enough, and God is even more real for Berdyaev. Nothing is easier than to take a few sentences from Berdyaev and then plant him firmly into some prefabricated philosophic niche. To lump him in with the decadent æsthetic personalisms of modern western Europe (as some Soviet critics have done) is as profound a misunderstanding of Berdyaev as an attempt in western Europe to build him politically into some anti-Communistic front. If Berdyaev will not bake Soviet

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 8.

[2] 'Materialist dialectics is something as different from older materialism as it is from the idealistic dialectics of Hegel.' Professor J. D. Bernal. *Modern Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1948.

[3] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 7.

philosophical bread still less will he bake that of bourgeois capitalist politics.

No one can hope to understand Berdyaev who will not at the outset renounce the temptation to put him into a pre-existing pigeon-hole. His personalistic philosophy is his own and one must read most of his books—early and late—before one can be sure of catching his meaning. As regards the fundamentals of personalism *Slavery and Freedom* is the most important, but *Solitude and Society*, *Spirit and Reality*, as well as the opening chapter of *Freedom and the Spirit* and Part I of *The Destiny of Man* are essential if we are to grasp his primary intuition about man. And without some grasp of his personalistic philosophy much of his more concrete conclusions (and pregnant questionings) will not be seen in their true perspective.

Nor ought we to forget that Berdyaev's personalism has not been lightly achieved. The introduction to *Slavery and Freedom* makes this abundantly clear. It is undoubtedly the most valuable, clearest, simplest and most vivid introduction to Berdyaev's thought, the stages it has passed through, the men who have influenced him, and his disillusionments, especially in regard to the West.[1]

Here he shows that his personalism is truly concrete. It has come out of his life and out of his reading. It is the philosophy of a personal experience. This is all the more impressive because this is no case of an opposition between 'theory' and 'life'. Reading always was very much part of his concrete experience. Indeed, one of the most amazing things about him was just this width of his reading. He did not wear blinkers. Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Feuerbach, Marx, Comte, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, not to mention the Fathers of the Church of many periods, the mystics, among whom Jakob Boehme holds an exceptional place, the modern theosophists and anthroposophists, the whole galaxy of Russian religious,

[1] His *Autobiography*, soon to be published, is even more clear and frank.

moral and political philosophers, and a wide range of Hindu thought—all these he knows. He moves easily among men, sees their strength and their weakness and is afraid of none of them. While gratefully acknowledging what he has received from them all, he is never afraid to criticize even the most revered philosophers. He has no idols on pedestals. If he has said some rude things about Marx he has been equally rude to Aquinas. His debt to German nineteenth-century philosophy is freely admitted, and the ultimate deficiencies of this philosophy unmasked with equal frankness.

All this is relevant to any discussion of Berdyaev's 'Personalism'. It is essentially concrete. It cannot be discussed as an idea in a logical vacuum. It cannot be discussed in abstraction. It is the man Berdyaev's philosophy, a man who lived, read, thought, suffered just such and such things. His philosophy is a concrete spiritual activity. All that he has read, all that he has lived through, and all that the world about him has lived through (especially Russia) is part of it. Above all the student of his philosophy must himself be 'in the spirit'. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned—an activist theory of knowledge (though the word 'theory' is a misnomer in such a context) demands an active thinker. 'Historians of philosophy', as Berdyaev contemptuously calls the pedlars of other people's ideas, are of no use here. That is why in all Berdyaev's writing we are never left for long in the air; always we are brought back to actual people and actual experiences (even to that favourite cat of his) and to the point where thought will involve revolutionary change. That was a bit of Marx that he never forgot—'think to change'.

Berdyaev's personalism then starts with man, the person. It is anthropocentric, active, concrete, spiritual and not natural. For, 'mere abstraction,' he writes, 'makes the philosopher's position false and untenable. . . . Just as the philosopher's language must have something in common with colloquial speech, so philosophy must grow out of experience. . . . Abstract reasoning is the fault of those metaphy-

sicians of the past who have ignorantly sacrificed their interest in life, mankind and the world and have taken refuge in an ideal citadel of concepts. . . . Actually, the only true basis of metaphysics is to be found in the knowledge of life, of concrete reality of man and the human destiny.'[1]

The same thought is expressed in a somewhat earlier work of Berdyaev in the opening chapter of *The Destiny of Man*. 'The chief characteristic which distinguishes philosophic from scientific knowledge is that philosophy knows being in and through man and finds in man the solution of the problem of meaning, while science knows being as it were apart from man and outside him. . . . Philosophy can only be about one's own ideas, about the spirit, about man in and for himself; in other words, it must be an intellectual expression of the philosopher's own destiny. . . . To free philosophy from all anthropological ideas would be to destroy it.'

Similarly *Freedom and the Spirit* attacks 'abstraction' in the very opening words of its first chapter. 'We have lost all confidence,' says Berdyaev, 'in the possibility and fruitfulness of an abstract metaphysic.' *Slavery and Freedom*, written thirteen years later, again returns in lively manner to the same charge. 'What is the most primary thing about the particular single horse?' (Nikolai Alexandrovitch loved animals!) 'The idea of the horse, the common in it, or the individually-unrepeatable in it? This is an age-long problem. It is precisely the individually-unrepeatable in the single horse which is the most rich and full and the chief thing. . . . In the same way everything which concretely exists is richer and more primary than abstract being. . . . The abstract quality of being, the predicate of being, is only an inward integral part of the concretely existing unique. . . . Abstract being is the product of constructing thought. It has no inward existence at all.'

This distinction between 'being' and 'existing' is important for Berdyaev. In his earlier work, it is true, he uses the word 'being' more loosely, but in all his later writings there

[1] *Solitude and Society*, p. 31.

is a clear differentiation. The following might be given as an example of a 'bridge' passage from the earlier and wider use of the word 'being' to the later one wherein 'being' is sharply defined and contrasted with 'existing'. 'The subject himself is being—*if we have to use this term* (present author's italics)—and the only authentic being is that of the subject. The subject is more than merely thought; he is voluntarist and existential.'[1] But in *Slavery and Freedom* Berdyaev's terms are now clearly defined. 'In the words "I am existing", the chief emphasis is upon "I" and not upon "existing". The ego, personality, is more primary than "being", which is the result of categorical thinking. *Personality is more primary than being*. This is the basis of personalism. Being is a product of abstract thought. And yet here is my favourite cat existing. Being has no existence. Cat (person) is the kernel of the phrase "the cat exists".'[2]

In this passage Berdyaev has now completely crossed the bridge. Pausing beside him here in 1939 we can now look back to the other shore, let us say to the following quotation from *The Destiny of Man*, written in 1931. In this, 'being' in the third sentence practically means 'existence' in the later Berdyaev. 'Man has lost the power of knowing *real being*, has lost access to reality and been reduced to studying knowledge. And so in his pursuit of knowledge he is faced throughout with knowledge and not with being. *But one cannot arrive at being—one can only start with it*' (present author's italics). He then goes on to explain that by using the term 'being' he is not referring to any particular system of ontology, such as that of St. Thomas Aquinas. 'All I mean is that we must turn to reality itself, to actual life, and overcome the duality which undermines the value of cognitive activity.'[3]

A consideration of this passage which stands right at the beginning of *The Destiny of Man* opens up for us the question

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 8. Berdyaev is here in process of discarding the use of the word 'being' for 'existing'.

[2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 75. [3] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 1 (3).

of Berdyaev's theory of knowledge. It was characteristic of him that while praising the work of Kant in this field he always indicated how much had been left for Kant's successors to tackle. The 'epistemological accusation' with which *The Destiny of Man* begins is a refusal to be satisfied with Kant, still less with pre-Kantian 'realism', nor does it reveal any particular tendency to find Hegel or later post-Kantians acceptable. All are tried in the balance and found wanting.

Berdyaev then expounds his own view. 'Man is the key to the mystery of knowledge, of existence. He is the enigmatic being which, though a part of nature, cannot be explained in terms of nature and through which alone it is possible to penetrate into the heart of being.'[1] ('Being' 1931 vintage, of course, not 1939!). And then (more concretely and therefore more fully expressing his personalist philosophy) he drops into the first person singular and says without parable, myth or abstraction, 'I, a man, want to know reality, and the knowledge which may be attained in non-human realms is nothing to me. I, the knower, abide in reality from the very first and am an inalienable part of it. I know reality in and through myself, as man. Only an existent can know existence.'[2]

Knowledge, then, is an interior dynamic activity. 'Knowledge is an event within being, an event revealing the mystery of being. But this is a non-objectified, non-exteriorized being. Spirit is the reality revealed in and through the existential subject.'[3] Berdyaev will have nothing to do with the theory that knowledge is completely determined by the object as the only genuine reality, nor with the opposite theory of the idealists that the world is constructed by the subject. Knowledge is not the passive acceptance of objects rattling like so many hailstones on the corrugated iron roof of the mind. Knowledge is a spiritual activity of man's whole self. Deep answers deep. Deep penetrates deep. Berdyaev

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 11 (16). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 11 (16).
[3] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 9. 'Being' as in *The Destiny of Man*.

speaks of it frankly as 'humanization'. There are for him 'degrees of humanization' where Maritain has 'degrees of knowledge'. The highest degree lies in religious knowledge. 'For man is the image and likeness of God; and consequently God contains in Himself the image and likeness of man, the pure essence of humanity. Next to it is the degree of philosophical knowledge, which also involves humanization, that is, the apprehension by man of the mystery of Being inherent in him, the apprehension of the meaning of existence in so far as it is commensurable with human existence and destiny. Humanization is at its lowest degree in scientific knowledge and particularly in the physico-mathematical sciences.'[1] 'Philosophy must . . . be anthropological since its knowledge of Being is derived from man.'[2]

Berdyaev furthermore is altogether with Marx when he demanded that to know should be also to change.[3] The idea of the philosopher as the detached spectator who sees more and more of reality the more closely he shuts himself up in his ivory tower is as alien to Berdyaev as to Marx. 'As a philosopher I have not only wished to gain knowledge of the world; in my case the desire to know the world has always been accompanied by the desire to alter it.'[4]

Knowledge is dynamic and creative because it is the function of spirit and spirit is free. 'Knowledge is spiritual life, the activity of the spirit.'[5] 'In the knowledge of spirit subject and object are not opposed to one another. Spirit as the knowing subject is at the same time the known object. Spiritual life is not an object of knowledge, it is the knowledge itself of spiritual life. Life is only open to life. Knowledge of life is life itself.'[6]

But this activist and spiritual way of considering knowledge presupposes a fathomless abyss of freedom. 'The

[1] *Solitude and Society*, p. 18. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[3] Cf. 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to change it.' Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, No. XI in Appendix to Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach*.

[4] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 7.

[5] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 4. [6] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 9.

basis of knowledge is irrational because it is derived from a pre-ontic freedom. The irrational foundation of rational knowledge has been most clearly grasped by the German metaphysicians of the school of Boehme. . . . To admit the free agency of the existential subject in the intellectual sphere is to uphold a philosophy affirming the primacy of freedom over Being.'[1] Elsewhere he writes, 'Spirit emanates not only from the Deity but also from the primal pre-existential freedom from the *Ungrund*. . . . Spirit is . . freedom in God and from God.'[2] Or again, 'The existence of personality presupposes freedom. The mystery of freedom is the mystery of personality.'[3]

Berdyaev cannot discuss the question of freedom, whether it be the freedom of knowledge or of anything else, without bringing us back to the 'picture' of the *Ungrund*, the fathomless abyss which is 'prior to Being'. His adoption of this 'picture' has been severely criticized. Dr. Evgueny Lampert, for example, calls it 'the most disastrous conclusion in his whole philosophy; and one which seems, in fact, in no way warranted by his own fundamental presuppositions.'[4] But surely the 'picture' of the *Ungrund* is the very reverse of a conclusion. How can it be unwarranted by Berdyaev's 'fundamental presuppositions' when it is quite obviously itself one of those very same 'fundamental presuppositions'?

The *Ungrund* is not a concept, it cannot be rationalized or objectified. It is not something parallel to God. There is no question of a metaphysical dualism. I have called the *Ungrund* a 'picture' advisedly. It is not part of a philosophical structure, nor is it a religious dogma. It is, so to speak, 'meta-theological'. It is a basic intuition. Alongside of existence is the fathomless abyss of non-being, of utter and complete freedom, limited neither by reason nor any-

[1] *Solitude and Society*, p. 76.
[2] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 33.
[3] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 27.
[4] *Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages*, by E. Lampert, p. 53, footnote.

thing else. This abyss is not part of God's creation, because it is prior to creation—it is the free nothing out of which God creates. Man's creativity also 'postulates' this abyss of freedom and non-being, in addition to 'the raw material' provided by God for man's secondary creations. Infinite existence demands an infinite 'environment' of free non-being. *Anything* could be. 'With God all things are possible.'

Language disintegrates at this point, but those who will read and re-read Berdyaev on this subject will come to see his meaning. Part I of *The Destiny of Man* is particularly rewarding in this respect, for here we see clearly how necessary is his teaching about the *Ungrund* to the whole formulation of his ethics and to the problem of theodicy. This teaching is not, as we have said, a dogma but a pre-condition of dogma. The *Ungrund* is the medium in which God and man exercise an infinite freedom. 'Freedom is rooted in nothing, in baselessness, in non-being if we use ontological terminology. Freedom is without foundation; it is not determined by being nor born of it. . . . There exist therefore only freedom and personality.'[1]

The present writer is convinced that the day will come when not only the theologians but also the dialectical materialists will have to acknowledge the truth set forth here by Berdyaev. Dialectical materialists in following out their own methodology and by their concrete experience will be forced to recognize the fundamental abyss of irrational freedom and of non-being which can be covered up neither by pure monism nor by pure dualism, nor yet by simply referring *all* change to the operation of the dialectic (essential though dialectic is to the understanding of reality).

But to resume the main thread of this chapter—knowledge is an activity of the *free* spirit. Knowledge like all

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 76. Boehme's *Ungrund* is 'in God': Berdyaev's is not. There is a vast difference here, but Berdyaev acknowledges his debt to Boehme and defends him thus: 'The line followed by Boehme was not sufficiently orthodox and his doctrine was confused, but he was at least more of a Christian than Aristotle!' (*Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 334.)

activity is *grounded* in freedom—an abyss of freedom. But it may be asked what then actually *is* the Person who acts and who knows, the Subject, the 'I' which is the core of personalist philosophy?

'Man,' says Berdyaev, 'is a spiritual being.'[1] 'Spirit is, as it were, a Divine breath.'[2] Or again, 'Spirit is subject, subjectivity. It is freedom and creative act.' Spirit is not 'being' in the ontological sense of the word. Berdyaev thinks there is still validity in the time-honoured distinction between 'spirit', 'soul' and 'body', provided one does not turn the concrete man into three water-tight compartments, or imagine that 'spirit', 'soul', and 'body' are three rungs on the same ladder. 'It is from within, from the depths, that spirit absorbs into itself body, matter, and likewise soul, but spirit belongs to another order of reality and to a different scheme of things.'[3] Spirit is, as Pico della Mirandola asserts, of a heavenly or extra-natural origin. 'Through spirit man becomes a Divine image and likeness.'[4] The spirit is from God and also, as we have said, from freedom, the primal freedom or *Ungrund*. And spirit *is* what it comes from. It is the breath of God and also it is free. This is thoroughly Biblical. We are the offspring of God, as S. Paul (quoting Aratus in Acts XVII, 28, with approval) asserts. We are also free, as the myth of Adam and Eve in Genesis II and every scrap of Bible teaching on hell and judgment also underlines. For what does hell imply but the limitless freedom of the subject, himself God's breath, to breathe a 'No' in reply to God?

For the more complete understanding of what Berdyaev means by 'spirit' the second chapter of *Spirit and Reality* called *The Attributes of Spirit* and the chapter on *Personality* in *Slavery and Freedom* are of special importance. But earlier works, particularly *Freedom and the Spirit*, have already

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 6. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 8. Sections II and III of his first chapter have many valuable observations on the difference between 'spirit' (*pneuma*) and 'soul' (*psyche*). [4] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 33.

given us the essentials. Throughout the emphasis is on the divine origin of spirit and its uncreated freedom. These, however, are not set in sharp contrast with 'matter', which can be illumined from within by spirit. 'The Cartesian dualism of spirit and body is entirely wrong.'[1] 'Personality is the entire image of man in which the spiritual principle has the mastery over all the powers of man's soul and body.'[2] Spirit is to be contrasted not with the other elements which make up the concrete 'I', the living subject, but with 'nature', with what is determined and objectified, and with 'being' in the later sense in which Berdyaev employs that term. 'A primary act,' he says, 'is not being; being is *congealed act*. . . . Personality is more primary than being. This is the basis of personalism. Being is a product of abstract thought.'[3]

Closely connected with all this is the distinction between spirit and nature, which is the theme of the opening chapter of *Freedom and the Spirit*. Nature is defined as a world of objects. Berdyaev denies that St. Thomas Aquinas has faced the real difficulty, for the 'supernatural' of Aquinas, as its very name suggests, is simply the top step of the 'natural' staircase. God Himself in such a system is subordinated to 'the categories of nature, not those of spirit, and the reality of God is thus made to resemble that of material substances. But God is spirit and spirit is activity. Spirit is liberty.'[4] 'The antithesis between spirit and nature must be considered primary.'[5] This, as Berdyaev goes on to say, does not involve 'a dualistic metaphysic of being, but it introduces a distinction in the comprehension of reality itself. It is above all things the antithesis between life and thing, between liberty and necessity, between creative movement and passive submission to exterior impulses.'

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 40.

[2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 31. See also the remarkable sentences on the same page about the human face and on pages 54 and 55 about the resurrection of the body. Cf. *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 8.

[3] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 75. [4] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 2. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

To sum up this chapter—for it will be easier if we sum up here—leaving one or two points to be developed later. The core of Berdyaev's philosphy is concrete personalism. It is the philosophy of the existential subject, of the 'I', of the spirit breathed into man by God, Who is Himself Spirit. This spirit is free, for freedom is prior to being, and the spirit can never lose that uncreated abyss of fathomless and irrational freedom. Though spirit be the breath of God, it is always free. '*That is, indeed, the fundamental paradox of spirit: it is a Divine emanation and at the same time it can reply to the Deity in terms not dictated by It.*'[1] Yet such a philosophy is in no way to be confused with egocentricity. 'Personalism does not mean, as individualism does, an egocentric isolation.'[2] 'Personality presupposes a going out from self to another and to others, it lacks air and is suffocated when left shut up in itself.'[3] 'The personal needs another. . . . Communion belongs to the realm of freedom and means liberation from slavery.'[4]

So at the heart of Berdyaev's philosophy there are personalities, limitless freedom and God (Himself Three Persons). It is a philosophy of the concretely existing, of the rational existent and the irrational potential, of the divinely-human and humanly-Divine. But in all things it is supremely *Berdyaev's* philosophy, the philosophy of one Russian Christian whom freedom brought to Christ and who lived, suffered and thought at a turning-point in the history not only of Russia but of the world. It is the philosophy of an actual life 'hid with Christ in God'.

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 33.
[2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 36.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[4] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 43.

VI

GOD, MAN AND GOD-HUMANITY

Both philosophy and theology should start neither with God nor with man. . . . but rather with the God-Man.'[1] The core of Berdyaev's philosophy is the person as constituted negatively by the abyss of freedom and positively by the God-Man Christ. It is the most concretely Christian of all philosophies. 'Freedom has brought me to Christ.'[2] There it is in the simplest language. The 'I'; 'infinite freedom'; 'Christ'. When S. Paul said: 'To me to live is Christ,' he was stating that for him, existing as a person, life was constituted by the God-Man Christ. This is the true starting-point of Christian philosophy, not abstractions, not 'first principles', not a theory of knowledge, not the world of objects, but 'I', 'Christ' and 'Freedom', in which triad Christ is central. For the writers of the New Testament the whole of history, the whole meaning of life turns on Christ, and, as for the content of personality, 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature'. Berdyaev's philosophy like S. Paul's theology is truly and concretely Christo-centric. This is where Berdyaev gets clean away from both 'idealists' and 'realists' who have claimed to be Christian philosophers, but have in fact made of Christ a conclusion rather than the Foundation.

It may be objected here that Berdyaev so often calls his thinking 'anthropo-centric'. He has spoken of thinking itself as a process of 'humanization'. If this be so, how can we claim for him the title of the most Christo-centric of philosophers?

The answer will lie in exploring the meaning of God-humanity, a term dear to Russian Christian thinkers and especially to Berdyaev. The existence of the God-Man, Christ, the fact that God could become Man, shows that the

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 189. [2] *Ibid.*, p. x.

distinction between divine nature and human nature is not like that between oil and water. If man is made in the image of God, and if in Christ God the Son became Man, then there is not only a 'divine spark' in man but also humanity in God. God and Man are distinct but not wholly alien. This is why systems of philosophy evolved by Christians from first principles may indeed bring us to a point at which God's self-manifestation in Christ can be accepted and reason and revelation happily married. But is this the best that Christian philosophers can do? In the very interesting second chapter of *The Divine and the Human* Berdyaev shows the fatal dialectic of so many attempts to build up a doctrine of man, an anthropology (in the philosophical, not of course the biological sense). The twin errors of monism and dualism are apparent everywhere. In particular attempts made to exalt God at the expense of man, notably in certain currents of Reformed and neo-Reformed theology, are always sliding down into a form of monism, in which God is all and man nothing except when Grace has made him divine.

Neither dualism nor monism is satisfactory, and Berdyaev is particularly opposed to monism in every shape and form.

But if we start with the God-Man we have unity in duality, and duality in unity. This again forces us back a further step (as it did the Fathers of the Church) into the mystery of the Holy Trinity, though we must constantly remember as Berdyaev says that the truth about God-humanity is not 'a dogmatic formula but an empirical truth'.[1] 'Christianity is the religion of the divine Trinity and God-Humanity.'[2] It presupposes faith in man as well as in God, for humanity is a part of God-Humanity. An 'inhuman' God could not be the God of Christianity. Christianity is essentially anthropological and anthropocentric and exalts man to an unprecedented height of sublimity. The Second Face

[1] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 46.

[2] Cf. *The Destiny of Man*, p. 57 (74). 'Personalistic metaphysics and ethics are based upon the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity.'

of Divinity is manifested as the human face, and by this very fact man finds himself at the centre of being; . . .'[1] And again, 'The eternal face of man abides in the very heart of the Divine Trinity Itself. The Second Hypostasis of Divinity is Divine-Humanity.' Again, in *Slavery and Freedom*, the whole discussion about human personality continually reverts to the existence of the Divine-Human Person of Christ. 'From the point of view of the world history of thought, as concerned with the problem of personality, an immense importance attaches to the doctrine of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity. It might be said that the awareness of God as personality, preceded the awareness of man as personality.'[2] 'Man is personality because God is personality and *vice versa*.'[3]

The conception of God as *actus purus* is Aristotelian rather than biblical. The concrete God to Whom men pray is not the Absolute. 'God is not an abstract idea, nor abstract existence, elaborated by the categories of abstract thought. God is a Being, a Personality.'[4] It would have been more accurate to say that there is Personality in God. Indeed, this is what Berdyaev really means. In *The Divine and the Human*, for example, he says: 'There is the One and there is his Other and there is an egress, an issue, a solution in the Third. . . . There are two natures, the divine and the human, which are not to be identified. But both these natures are in the divine Trinity. The divine Other is eternal.'[5]

God-Humanity then is the Second Person of the Trinity, the First Person's Other Self. In eternity, in the eternal existence of God there is drama and movement. It is a drama of love between the One and the Other finding its resolution in the Third. 'Personality presupposes the existence of its other.'[6] You cannot have a person without other persons. The whole idea of a person by itself is meaningless. God

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 206.
[2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 33.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[5] *The Divine and the Human*, p. 43.
[6] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 50, also *The Destiny of Man*, p. 57 (74).

could not be love if He were a bare unit. 'A self-contained personality becomes disintegrated.'[1] And the other corresponding to the One is the Divine-Human Original in Whose Image man is made.

This conception of God-Humanity, of the Eternal Face of Man in God, is bound up not only with the truth that God is love but also that God suffers. Admittedly, 'the conventional theology of the textbooks denies the suffering of God.'[2] But how can there be love without suffering or personality without suffering? 'If the capacity of love is ascribed to God, then the capacity for suffering must also be ascribed to Him. In actual fact, atheism has been directed against God as abstract existence, as an abstract idea, as an abstract being, and that fact has given it its measure of truth. No theodicy is possible in regard to such a God. God is to be apprehended only through the Son, Who is a God of love, of sacrifice and of suffering. And that is what personality is.'[3]

'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' We know God personally in and through a Christ Who both loves and suffers. We cannot be reminded of this too often. It is the existential truth revealed in Christ the God-Man. It is part of the mystery of freedom and of creativeness, both of which are essential features of Christian personalism. Everything here is fitly framed together and the Corner-Stone is Christ. Without God we cannot understand Man, without Man we cannot understand God. It is, therefore, to the God-Man that we go. There is love. There is suffering. There is the depth of freedom without which there can be no love and from which also suffering springs. And from the same depth of non-being is the possibility of creating that which is new. All Berdyaev's discussion of the concrete problems of ethics and sociology, of man's creative function, of the meaning of history is inseparably connected with God-Humanity, Man in God, God in Man and the mystery of the Trinity.

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 57 (74). [2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 51.
[3] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 51.

'Man, made by God in His own image and likeness, is also a creator and is called to creative work.'[1] The Fall 'is conquered not only by repentance and redemption from sin, but by the activity of all the creative powers of man.'[2] 'To conceive of Christianity exclusively as the religion of personal salvation is to restrict the area of the Church's consciousness, and to obscure the true life of God-Humanity and the divine-human creative process of the world.'[3] Again and again comes this call to create, and in the closing chapter of *Freedom and the Spirit* this problem of creativity is closely linked with the conception of the Church as a divine-human process.[4]

Creativity, which requires as a pre-condition the fathomless depth of freedom and of non-being, is expected of man because he is made in the image of the Creator. Creativity is thus intimately bound up with Berdyaev's view of man, of God and their inter-relation. Every man is a microcosm within which creativity is a function if man is to be true to himself and to the divine image.

This fundamental Christian truth has been deeply obscured and often distorted in the course of history. For example, the Church has in practice so emphasized renunciation, personal purification, asceticism, the winning of personal salvation, the supreme virtue of humility and self-abnegation that too frequently creativity, whether in thought, in literature or in the plastic arts, has been regarded as irrelevant to the main purpose of human life. In

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 127 (163).

[2] *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 268.

[3] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 342.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 328 ff. This chapter must be read as a whole. It contains also some sharp criticism of the Church considered empirically, as an institution very much 'of this world', and sharper criticisms are to be found elsewhere in Berdyaev's writings. This was Berdyaev's strength, the clearness with which he expressed the spiritual divine-human reality of the Church, his equally clear recognition that the inner reality must actualize itself; his criticism of many of those actualizations and his personal life within the Church as a rebel and critic.

some places and at some periods it has been branded as definitely sinful.

This distortion has in its turn bred a false humanism, which shut out God and made man the measure of all things. It has led to false æstheticism, and to various forms of decadence which have taken as their watchword 'art for art's sake'.

But all true creativity is a divine-human process, a divine call and a human answer—not in slavish obedience to a dictate or 'a blue-print from heaven', but as a divine-human response out of unlimited freedom to a divine-human summons. 'God expects from me a free creative act.'[1]

'Every achievement of beauty in the world is in the deepest sense a process of Christianization. Beauty is the goal of all life; it is the deification of the world.'[2] That is the heart of the matter. But in the actual life of the Church today we see something quite different. 'The life of God-humanity is singularly complex and many aspects of the divine-human process are not assimilated by the Church and are not considered as forming part of it. . . . The greater part of our life is in this way put outside the pale, and we are condemned to a divided existence in which we have to move backwards and forwards between the rhythm of the Church and that of the world. The whole of our creative life belongs to the world instead of the Church.'[3] Berdyaev asks indignantly whether in actual practice artistic creativity, fresh moral valuations, new discoveries, romantic love, or the creation of justice and brotherhood are recognized as 'Church activities'. They ought to be. In the deepest sense they *are* 'functions of the Church', yet in the objectified life of the Church as a social organism they are accorded but grudging acknowledgment. It has been in practice forgotten that man is called not only or merely to salvation—'He has also a mission to create. The creative process of life is not indispensable for the salvation of the soul; the creative free-

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. xviii. [2] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 332.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 341.

dom of man is necessary not for salvation, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God; and for the transfiguration of the world.'[1]

A critical stage in the history of the world and of Christianity with regard to this question has now been reached. 'The old forms of culture do not correspond to the present epoch of catastrophe. Eternal being cannot be discovered among our vanishing customs. Christ came for the whole of the universe and for all men at every period. Christianity exists not merely for simple souls, but also for the more complex ones.'[2] Twentieth-century man faces problems in culture and in the whole structure of society which cannot be ignored by Christians withdrawing into a cultural, spiritual and moral desert, living without creative thought and action by patterns derived from previous eras of Church history.

Yet this call to create does not involve what is known vulgarly in England as 'a lead from the Church', or, in other words, an official project backed by the majority vote of some committee of bishops or a Church Assembly or Congress! 'The hierarchy and the sacerdotal principle in the Church will never be able to solve the religious problem of creation which is the manifestation of the human principle and human nature.'[3] It is *my* problem, *yours*, not our obedience to the directives of objectified authority, whether in Church or State. '*Only man himself can find its solution; no authority of any kind whatever and no hierarchy which is not human can give an answer to this question. The solution of the religious problem of creation will be a human solution.*[4] The problem consists precisely in this, that its solution *must* be human, coming from man to God, and not from God to man.'[5]

'Mankind in the Christian era has been torn by the fol-

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 341.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 237.
[3] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 237.
[4] Present author's italics.
[5] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 237 ff. See also *Spirit and Reality*, pp. 169, 170, and also pp. 94–96 for the dangers of false asceticism, obedience and meekness in relation to creativity.

lowing contradictions; Christianity without human creation, and human creation without Christianity; God without man, and man without God. The love of God has often been transformed into a hatred of man. When Christianity has reached its full development this antithesis will be resolved and there will be a positive revelation of God-Humanity, the union of the two movements, the uniting of Christianity and creation.'[1]

This teaching of Berdyaev's which builds human creativity on the divine image of man, and ultimately on Divine Humanity in the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is fundamental for the comprehension of his handling of ethical and social problems, as well as of artistic and cultural questions. We see in this not only the ground on which he based certain conclusions, but the why and wherefore of his *method* of approach. It is the point at which we can grasp most clearly how he combined adherence to the dogmas of Orthodoxy with such a bold spirit of enquiry, a flow of fresh insights, and severe castigation of all naïve, crude and falsely objectivized modes of apprehending the basic teaching of the Church.

God calls upon man to create because each man *is* a potential creator. Like God man confronts the limitless void of non-being. There is no rigid plan. But there is the possibility of a divine-human creative activity because of 'the God-likeness of man and the Man-likeness of God'. And the possibility is in itself a call to action.

It was Berdyaev who recognized before many religious leaders that the individualistic humanism of the Western European renaissance had run its course and was already passing by a dialectical process into its opposite, a deifying of the 'collective', involving the end of personality or the enslaving of man to applied science and to naturalistic categories.

But unlike many who are now aware of these dangers, Berdyaev based his remedy on the fundamental truth of God

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 238.

in Man and Man in God, on limitless freedom, and on the summons to create. Because he has these fundamentals clear, his criticism of present tendencies in culture, politics and sociology is never purely negative and is never a recall to those imperfect presentations of Christianity (whether Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox), against which humanism was a necessary revolt, and which are still in our own day too exclusively concerned with personal salvation, forgetting man's creative task in the realization of the Kingdom of God. A one-sided humanism must be answered not by a type of theism where God is all and man nothing (another form of monism), but by *theandrism*, which sees the divine in man and the human in God, which sees in the interior life of the Trinity a real drama between the One and the Other, and in the Other a Divine-Human Face in the Image of Which man is created. In the light of this truth and of the co-existence of the limitless ocean of freedom for man and for God (over which God has no control), we see afresh not only the question of justifying God's ways (the problem of evil), but also the understanding of the total historical situation as well as of our personal situation, and the initiation of a creative response to it.

'God is revealed in Christianity by His Son the God-Man, that is to say, that revelation itself presupposes the human activity and freedom which are manifested in Christ. The Christian Church has its origin not only in the divine, but also in the divine-human; it cannot exist without humanity and human nature; and this humanity is not only an object of the activity of divine power, it is also itself an active, free, creative subject which responds to the divine call.'[1]

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 340.

VII

THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Because Berdyaev's personalism is rooted in Christ the God-Man it is deeply concerned with history. For the God-Man appeared in history, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate and on the third day rose from the dead. The Christian cannot be indifferent to history either past, present or future. The Christian's faith is rooted and grounded in history. The fate of the world is his fate, and 'God so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son.' History is God's concern.

The meaning of history is a constantly reappearing theme in Berdyaev's writings, but there is also a full-length treatment of it in the book bearing that title. But to understand that book properly—as is the case with all the works of such a concrete personalist dialectician—we must recall the date of its publication, namely 1923.

Actually the substance of the book was given in lecture-form to the 'Free Academy of Spiritual Culture' in Moscow in 1919 and 1920. Russia was then still in the throes of civil war. The Soviet regime was fighting for its life against White Guards and foreign interventionists. It was then that Berdyaev was expelled from Russia for his non-Marxist philosophical views, not, be it noted, for any opposition to the economic or political programme of the Soviets. *The Meaning of History* was published not long after his arrival in Berlin. The remarkable thing is that in such circumstances the book is without rancour and its criticisms of Marxism, whether we accept them or not, are without bitterness. Even more remarkable is the fact that, though the western capitalist world was ready to shelter him, it had to do so on Berdyaev's terms. He abated nothing of his fundamental criti-

cisms of capitalism and its atheistic and de-humanizing fruits. His famous remark that the crime of killing God must be laid to the charge of capitalism rather than to revolutionary socialism occurs in fact in *The Meaning of History*.

But this book is not his last word on the subject of history; rather it is the first, even if the most comprehensive. The chapter in *Freedom and the Spirit* on *Spiritual Development and the Eschatological Problem* is, in spite of its title, largely concerned with the meaning of history, and the much more sharply dialectical approach to the 'failures' of history gives it a much more dynamic quality. Again, *Towards a New Epoch* (practically the last work actually published before his death) gives a meaning to the history of Europe and of Russia, in particular after the second world war, which it is essential to grasp if we are to have any understanding of Berdyaev. He always denounced what was static and uncreative. In a rapidly changing world he made different assessments as things about him changed. *Towards a New Epoch* is not so much a philosophy of history as a philosophy of history *actually at work* at a critical phase. It needs, therefore, to be read in conjunction with earlier works, as well as with the two short concentrated philosophical works, *The Divine and the Human*, and his book on Eschatology, which belong to the period of the second world war.

We must begin, however, with a survey of *The Meaning of History* itself.

'The philosophy of history is one of the ways to the knowledge of spiritual reality. It is a science of the spirit bringing us into communion with the mysteries of the spiritual life. It deals with concrete spiritual reality, so much richər and more complex than that revealed for example in individual human psychology. . . . The philosophy of history examines man in relation to the world forces which act upon him, that is, in his greatest fulness and concreteness.'[1]

But, here is the paradox, the meaning of history lies outside history! History looked at from a purely immanent

[1] *The Meaning of History*, pp. 14, 15.

standpoint is meaningless. It can only be understood 'in depth'. History as embodied in the rags and tatters of divided time is a series of failures, yet not 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. Berdyaev was no other-worldly pessimist awaiting passively for the crack of doom.

The clue to history is to be found in pre-history or celestial history. Once again we are brought back to the fundamentals of Christian Faith. All movement, all drama, all tragedy and all creation starts in the eternal mystery of the Holy Trinity.

For God is not an immobile and inert Absolute. Such a view is in a blatant contradiction with the fundamental Christian mysteries of the Divine Trinity, of Christ as the centre of divine life and of Golgotha. . . . If Christ, the Son of God, suffers a tragic destiny, and if historical destiny and movement are also manifest in Him, then this constitutes a recognition of the tragedy experienced by the divine life.'[1]

The conception of God as inert Perfection Berdyaev stigmatizes as 'formalist' and 'rationalistic'. He speaks with contempt of 'a still-born deism . . . which . . . can . . . apprehend neither the origins nor the destiny of the world process. So far from a movement in God being a mark of imperfection the reverse is true. It is the immobile, static God of rationalizing theology who is imperfect. We shall only get to the heart of things by jettisoning logical abstractions and basing ourselves on the concrete mythology of Scripture.

'Myth is a reality immeasurably greater than concept. It is high time that we stopped identifying myth with invention, with the illusions of primitive mentality, and with anything, in fact, which is essentially opposed to reality. For that is the sense which we give to the words "myth" and "mythology" in ordinary conversation. But behind the myth are concealed the greatest realities, the original phenomena of the spiritual life. . . . Myth is always concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do; . . . Myth

[1] *The Meaning of History*, pp. 47, 48.

is the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolized in the natural world, which has engraved itself on the language, memory and creative energy of the people.'[1]

So far from fighting shy of anthropomorphic images we must embrace them. The Bible always speaks of God concretely, personally. God is love. Why hesitate, therefore, to say that God yearns for His Other Self? 'If there is such a thing as a human longing for God and a response to it, then there also must be a divine longing for man and the genesis of God in man; a longing for the loved and the freely-loving and in response to it the genesis of man in God.' The drama of the creation of man, who fell through freedom and of his redemption through freedom by the Son of God made man, is the eternal meaning of history. If, on the other hand, history were just the unfolding of God's revelation, an entirely God-to-Man business, there would be no tragedy in it. But just as God in eternity looks for a free response from His Other Self, so God expects an answer from man in history. Tragedy arises from the mystery of freedom (the *Ungrund*) from which evil as well as good arises, but without the existence of which love has no meaning. God does not force. Love is sought in freedom, but, because freedom is inexhaustible and irrational, love is accompanied by tragedy.

There is no expeditious road
To pack and label men for God
And save them by the barrel-load.[2]

And because there is not, 'it behoved Christ to suffer.' Thus it came about that the Son of God was crucified and the Crucifixion has an eternal significance. It is the clue to the meaning of history. For the crucifixion of Christ is the final condemnation of history *if the meaning of history be purely immanent.* But seen in the light of eternity the Cross not only

[1] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 70.
[2] Epilogue to *A Judgment in Heaven*: Francis Thompson.

finds its own interpretation but at once interprets, gives meaning, to all else. God will not force a pattern of pre-arranged harmony on the world. He will not destroy freedom. One might say He *cannot* destroy it without destroying both Himself and man. Man, therefore, has a tragic history which can only be understood in the light of the Cross, where the eternal drama broke out into time with unique power.

'Thus history is made up of the complex interaction of the three principles of necessity, freedom and transfiguring Grace. Their inter-relation determines the whole complexity of man's historical destiny and they can claim to be the motivating, metaphysical forces in history. . . . The solution of the fundamental problem of the metaphysics of history can come only from a myth which situates world destiny as a stage of the divine destiny in man and thus predetermines its main spiritual forces.'[1]

This, of course, raises the whole question of the relation between time and eternity. For a great many systems of philosophy, some professedly Christian, some pre-Christian, such as Platonism, there is a great gulf fixed between the time-process and a static eternity. Such philosophies have only made it easier for various forms of so-called scientific materialism to regard this world as everything. The amputation of the eternal from the temporal has been accepted by positivists and 'scientific' materialists, and what was amputated first died and so finally came to be regarded as non-existent. Thus the old jibe that the Greeks sought for that which never dies but only succeeded in discovering that which never lives became true in a different sense. The philosophies which tried to safeguard the eternal paved the way for its denial.

Berdyaev, however, will have none of this conception of time and eternity as two water-tight compartments. There is, he says, a true and a false time. True time is 'an interior

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 61. 'Predetermines' is of course not to be taken as 'mechanically predestinates'.

stage or epoch of eternity itself. . . . History is neither merely the scene of the world process nor the loss of all association with the roots of being; it forms a necessary part of eternity and of the drama that is fulfilled in it. History is the result of a deep interaction between eternity and time; it is the incessant eruption of eternity into time.'[1]

False time, on the other hand, is not integrated in the eternal, but divorced from the eternal and in itself disintegrated. As St. Augustine has pointed out, false time is not only divided against itself, but the fragments are actively at war with one another. The future is in revolt against the past, the past fights against being devoured by the future, the present is being continually annihilated. 'Thus, the thread of time is severed into three parts and no real time exists. . . . The future devours the past in order to be transformed into a similar past, which in its turn is devoured by a succeeding past.' There can be no meaning of history in terms of this false time, which is continually disappearing. 'I came like water and like wind I go.' (Indeed, can the 'I' be even said to exist without memory, which is supra-temporal?)

False, disintegrated time, ever destroying and being destroyed, this spectre, this unsubstantial wraith which was the future and after the lightning flash of the present has already become the past, this evil time can only be overcome by a philosophy which sees time as containing moments of eternity and whose bulwarks are memory. 'Historical memory is the greatest manifestation of the eternal spirit in our temporal reality. It upholds the historical connection of the times.'[2] Without memory and without eternity we can have only an insane futurism which makes of each generation a mere fertilizer of the future, dung for the roots of roses which we shall never see, which may, for that matter, never blossom.

We cannot, therefore, understand time without eternity, and to do this we must have memory which is itself a

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 67. [2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 73.

victory of the spirit over objectified and disintegrated time.

But this is not all. Another fundamental postulate for apprehending history is the acceptance of the principle of the freedom of evil. If we are to understand history we cannot do so purely on the basis of nineteenth-century evolutionary theories. Man is not simply the end product of a world process destined to carry him progressively to higher and higher levels. Man is not simply a child of the world, he is the child of God, created in freedom, not in our disintegrated time, but before time.

The ancient myth of Adam and Eve embodies man's prehistory. Man is created by God in eternity and out of freedom. 'There would be no movement in the world if only the freedom of God and of good were to predetermine human destiny. The world and historical processes are based upon the freedom of good and evil, that of renouncing as well as of communing with the source of higher divine life.'[1] What science gives us in its evolutionary theories is not untrue but secondary and incomplete. Outside its vision is the course of man's tragic history in that moment of eternity when man, free to respond to God's love, preferred to take his own path. The real meaning of man and of his destiny is not given to us in the observation that biologically he is a refined monkey, but that he is a free spirit created in God's image, sufficiently God-like to respond to God's love or to refuse it. It is original man's original refusal of God that has produced our dismembered time and is the source of tragedy. It indicates with irresistible clearness that force is not an attribute of God, that God will not submit man either to necessity or compulsion. 'All that is unfree is undesirable to God. . . . Providence is neither necessity nor compulsion; it is the autonomous union of God's will and human freedom.'[2] Man's present submission to the necessities and compellings of the natural world, as we now know it and as science studies it, is not of God's contriving. It is the fruit of man's Fall. The effects of this could only be overcome from

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 77. [2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 79.

within, by the coming of Christ into the fallen world, by the illuminating of man's basic freedom from within, in a process of redemption in which God used no compulsion towards man.

But before we can grasp the turning-point of all history, the coming of Christ, something needs to be said about the destiny of the Jewish people from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. The Incarnation cannot be conceived on the analogy of parachuting a force behind the enemy's lines. The Incarnation was a divine-human event with humanity and history behind it as well as divine intervention.

The Jews are pre-eminently the people with a sense of history. While both Greece and India have made great cultural contributions to the world, yet in the sphere of the understanding of history neither has anything to offer which can compare with the Jewish contribution. The Jews and the ancient Israelite nation of which they formed a part were the original givers of meaning to history.

This meaning revolved about the idea of a coming Messiah. The Jews were preoccupied with the problem of suffering and injustice in the world, and they looked forward to 'the Day of the Lord', when justice should be done and a King should reign in righteousness. God, for them, was not the Absolute of philosophy but a living Lord. Nor did they think of God as a deified natural or social process. Evolutionary or immanent conceptions were utterly strange to them.

God was for the Jews the Transcendent One. No one might look on Him and live. (Moses who saw Him face to face was a unique exception.) Yet God was active in history and His interventions would reach a climax when the Messiah came. God's Vice-gerent would rule over a transfigured earth in which men should learn war no more, and even the lion would eat straw like the ox. But it is at first Israel as a nation, not the individual, who will share in this glorious consummation of history. Neither the individual nor humanity as a whole had a part in the apotheosis of his-

tory. It was only later that the Jews began to realize that their mission was as wide as humanity and as particular as the individual. They were to be a light to the Gentiles and there was to be a resurrection from the dead. The individual as well as the collective had 'a future before him'. As the Jewish nation passed from one tragedy to another the problem of personal immortality and the desire for resurrection became stronger. It was at a time of intense longing for both national and personal resurrection and for the coming of God's Anointed One that Christ actually came.

Yet what should have proved the climax of Jewish history was its undoing. When the Messiah came He was crucified by those whose historic role it had been to give birth to Him. A Christ Who came as the Suffering Servant of the later Isaiah was 'to the Jews a stumbling-block'. The perfect kingdom for which they looked could not in fact be realized within the framework of history and 'fallen', disintegrated time, least of all by the methods of violence and statecraft. There were contradictions too in the later phases of Jewish Messianism, between purely nationalistic conceptions and the broader universalism already to be found in the writings of the greater prophets. So Christ 'came to His own and His own received Him not'. Yet so-called 'Aryans' have no cause to be complacent about this rejection, still less does it justify the iniquities of anti-Semitism. The repudiation of the suffering Christ, Whose victory is finally secured only by the end of history, has been equally prevalent in the non-Jewish world.

The Coming of Christ was 'unique and non-recurring—the essential quality of everything historical. And it focuses the whole of world history.'[1] Yet, Christianity is not only the heir of Judah, it is also the heir of Greece. In the spheres of dogma, mysticism, and in the beauty of Christian worship Greece has also made a very rich contribution to Christianity. 'The Protestant attempts to purge Christianity of its pagan elements have only contributed to weaken Chris-

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 108.

tian æsthetics and metaphysics, that is, those elements pre-eminently associated with the Hellenic spirit.'[1]

The new thing which the coming of Christ brought was something which neither in Judah nor Greece (nor for that matter in India or China) had yet been decisively manifested, namely freedom. 'Christian freedom postulates *the fulfilment of history through the agency of a free subject and spirit.* And such a fulfilment constitutes the essential nature of both Christianity and history, because the structure of the latter is impossible without the postulate of a freely-acting subject determining the historical destinies of mankind.'[2] It was not only in Jerusalem that men and women 'were waiting for redemption'.[3] The pagan mystery-religions expressed a thirst for liberation which neither the abstractions of Greek philosophy nor absorption in the concrete tasks of Roman imperialism could satisfy. Christ brought freedom to Jew and Gentile, bond and (formally) free. He delivered men 'from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God'. Christ delivered men too from bondage to 'the elements of the world', from that slavery to objectified nature which was the result of the Fall. Man was no longer just a fragment of nature, a chip of the cosmos, a stage in a process. While 'the first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven'. Moreover, Christianity by freeing man from nature made possible the growth of science and technics. It destroyed the old demon-haunted nature of the pagan world. Although this liberation paved the way for later mechanistic conceptions of nature (themselves antagonistic to Christianity), it was a dialectical moment in the attainment of freedom from nature.

'However paradoxical it may seem I am convinced that

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 110. It is interesting in this connection to note that in India today more Christian missionaries are emphasizing the positive contributions of Hindu thought and devotion to the understanding of Christ.

[2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 110 (present writer's italics).

[3] St. Luke, II, 38.

Christianity alone made possible both positive science and technique. . . . When immersed in nature and communing with its inner life man could neither apprehend it scientifically nor master it technically. This fact throws light on the whole of man's further destiny. Christianity had freed him from subjection to nature and had set him up spiritually in the centre of the created world. . . . It made modern history with all its contradictions possible, because it exalted man above nature.'[1]

In chapters VI to IX of *The Meaning of History*, Berdyaev outlines the main development of history *since* the coming of Christ. The theme throughout is the new man liberated by Christ, but apart altogether from the main theme there are innumerable judgments and appreciations of particular epochs of history and the movements within them which are of profound originality. Even when these are unacceptable they certainly provoke thought by their directness, sincerity and lack of conventionality. But we are concerned here not with the detail but with the main theme.

As we have already seen, the spirit of man was liberated by Christ at a moment when there was a profound longing for liberation and redemption, and when both Judaism as well as Greek philosophy and religion were being asked questions about man's destiny to which they could give no adequate reply. Yet it was not only in this sense that Christ appeared 'in the fulness of time'. The close union between the East and the West which Roman imperialism forged was highly propitious for the spread of a new world-religion. The over-ripeness of Graeco-Roman civilization was equally advantageous. The fragility of all the achievements of culture and civilization is not only an important lesson which the decline and fall of the Roman Empire taught to later generations, it was very important also that the Christian Church should be given this lesson before she had become too old and set in her ways. As it is the entanglement of the Church with the Empire under Constantine has been

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 117.

disastrous enough. But had the Empire not been divided between East and West and nearer to its immersion in the Dark Ages, the results of this first *mésalliance* between Church and State would have proved even more disastrous.

Nevertheless, it is essential to observe that, though culture and civilization are fragile in their earthly expression, they contain within them a moment of the eternal. It was this eternal moment which lives on in the life of the Christian Church, the heir of the Graeco-Roman world. But there is, of course, no direct line of progress and development. The process of history is not a smooth ascending slope. It is dialectical. Cultures have their periods of flowering and decay, yet what is eternal in them can enter into new forms or reappear when once a period unpropitious for their manifestation has been lived through.

Berdyaev has shown how the main stream of world history shifted from the East to the West, but he believed that the stage is now set for a reversal of this process. In the immediate future the East will count for more and more. In the West in the Middle Ages man's image is chiefly defined in terms of the monk and of the knight. It was during this period that those spiritual forces were developed which burst forth in the Renaissance. The Middle Ages were not as is commonly supposed a time when the human spirit was quenched. Rather it was the time when the creative forces in man were being concentrated, disciplined no doubt by the cloister or the orders of chivalry, but husbanded nevertheless.

But the containing walls were too close and too brittle. The Renaissance meant the bursting of the dam. Man's creative forces swept out far and wide, and only in our own day have we realized all that this has meant. Man has lost his centre, his creative powers are progressively exhausted, and all inter-connection between his many-sided activities is being lost. 'Science, art, political and economic life, society and culture now become autonomous. This process of differentiation is synonymous with the secularization of

human culture. Even religion is secularized. Art and science, the state and society enter the modern world along a secular path. The bonds holding together the various spheres of social and cultural life now become relaxed, and these spheres become independent. That is the essential character of modern history.'[1]

Berdyaev gives us a masterly analysis of the fatal dialectic of Renaissance humanism. In the name of man's creative self-affirmation man is freed from mediæval swaddling-clothes, but at the same time he is enslaved to himself and to himself as a part of nature. Man's true image, human personality, had been revealed in Christ the God-Man. It was Christianity which had freed man and exalted man. But in the Renaissance man began to affirm himself in himself, yet without being able completely to forget his Christian pedigree. He was severed from spiritual authority yet haunted by it. There was a fundamental contradiction in the Renaissance from its very inception. '*Man's self-affirmation leads to his perdition; the free play of human forces unconnected with any higher aim brings about the exhaustion of man's creative powers.*'[2]

Such a free trial of human forces is, however, absolutely essential. It could not possibly have taken place within the limits of the theocratic institutions and world view of the Middle Ages. Though the Renaissance as it has worked itself out in modern history has brought no solution to the problems which it raised, man had to make such a creative venture if he was ever to attain to the Kingdom of God. Nor, of course, has the attempt been without many tremendous positive achievements.

Berdyaev considered the Reformation as a further stage in the development of Renaissance humanism. It too has a double character. In the first place the Reformation liberated the human spirit from its uncritical dependence upon the Roman Catholic Church; in the second place, by debasing man so completely before God it laid the foundations of

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 130. [2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 14.

those monistic tendencies in German thought which have proved so congenial to reaction.

Further stages in the development of humanism are to be seen both in the era of eighteenth-century enlightenment and in the French Revolution. The fatal dialectic of both these movements is sufficiently obvious. The exaltation of human reason, leading to the isolation of man first from God and then from the cosmos, paves the way for sceptical patterns of thought, which finally cause reason itself to be held in low esteem. The French Revolution, which began as a tremendous affirmation of the rights of man, soon devoured its own children and finally established Napoleon. But we notice that Berdyaev will have nothing to do with the cheap criticism which would write off these tremendous events as so many empty failures. Both the 'enlightenment' and the French Revolution were essential stages through which the humanist spirit has had to pass. Man must try everything. In every epoch man affirms his basic freedom and endeavours some new creative task. The fact that man never fully achieves what he sets out to do, the fact that he exhausts certain possibilities without creating what is imperishable or perfect does not mean that all human striving is pointless. The Cross illuminates all human tragedy and points forward to the End, where what now seem broken threads are gathered into a large pattern. Our own times Berdyaev interpreted as the end of the Renaissance and the crisis of humanism. The return to nature at the beginning of the Renaissance was at first a purely artistic and scientific contemplation undertaken by the human spirit in the exuberance of its creative powers, which were being more and more detached from their true spiritual centre. But from the contemplation of nature man turned more and more to dominating it and exploiting it for his own ends. With the introduction of the machine this process was enormously accelerated. The advent of the machine constitutes one of the greatest revolutions in human history. The French Revolution is not to be compared with it. Here, of course,

Berdyaev is on common ground with the Marxists who look to fundamental changes in the technique of production as the prime movers in revolutionary change. The difference is that, while Berdyaev regards machine-production as the result of a certain orientation of the human spirit, the Marxist thinks first of the change to machine-production and then to the changes in the sociological and ideological superstructure which follow. Both, however, agree that the Industrial Revolution was certainly a more far-reaching one than most which have occupied the attention of historians. The machine has, in fact, upset the whole rhythm of the relations between man and nature. While enriching man's life, the machine also enslaves him. 'It disintegrates and divides man so that he ceases to be the natural being he had been from time immemorial. It contributes most of all to bring the Renaissance to an end.'[1]

Thus humanism passes into anti-humanism. Modern mechanized civilization turns man into a mere cog in a machine. In the realm of thought Nietzsche, with his doctrine of the super-man, and Marx at the opposite pole, with his exaltation of the collective at the expense of the individual, are both seen as examples of the tragic dialectic by which concern for man ends in depreciation of man. Dissatisfied with man as he is, both Nietzsche and Marx look in opposite directions for a 'higher' humanity which can be achieved only by the denial of the man that is.

'A knowledge of what these two great men contributed to the development of the last decades of European and Russian life should throw a great deal of light on the essential process of humanist evolution. Marx finally repudiated the heritage of the Renaissance. . . . But the Renaissance had finally spent itself and provoked the crisis of humanism. Its joyous and exuberant play of forces disappears without hope of return. In the succeeding period the image of both man and nature is deeply shaken as a result of the changes brought about by the advent of the machine. The changed

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 153.

background in Marx is directly related to this event, which had particularly struck his imagination. It had, indeed, impressed Marx so much that he made it the foundation of his philosophy and revealed its infinite significance for human destiny.'[1]

Considering socialism as a spiritual manifestation and not simply as an economic phenomenon, Berdyaev regarded it as the result of the disintegration of human society and the failure of humanism. A collective society, which is the antithesis of the extreme individualism to which the Renaissance spirit has brought us, is destined to arise upon the ruins of an atomized society whose creative powers have been exhausted.

Anarchism and certain modern tendencies in art are also witnesses to the fact that we have reached the end of the Renaissance. 'When pieces of paper, newspaper advertisements or objects extracted from a dustbin are inserted into pictures, then it is finally patent that the process of disintegration and de-humanization has reached its climax.'[2] Poets like Andrei Bielii, movements such as modern theosophy and Steiner's anthroposophy, are also aspects of the anti-Renaissance tendencies of the day.

'We are entering the night of a new Middle Ages, in which a new blending of races and cultural types is destined to occur. The importance of the philosophy of history lies in the clue it provides of the destiny awaiting the peoples of Europe and Russia, and also of the explanation it gives of the decline of humanist Europe and the nocturnal epoch of history lying ahead of us.'[3]

Modern history therefore has been a tragic failure. The nineteenth-century idea of progress which was a kind of

[1] *The Meaning of History*, pp. 159, 160.

[2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 173. Since Berdyaev wrote this in the early twenties, the tendencies in art and literature which he criticises have gone much further.

[3] *The Meaning of History*, p. 177. See also *The End of Our Time*, the Russian title of which is *The New Middle Ages*.

secularized version of the Messianic hope can no longer sustain us. It has been tried and found wanting. In any case, the very idea that a future Utopia on earth can provide in itself a justification for the suffering of the millions who have passed away before its realization is morally revolting. The deification of a future, which after all may never be realized, is one of the most illegitimate species of idolatry.

We are driven then to the point that the meaning of history can only be found beyond time. History has its ultimate significance when history is no more. It must be rescued from 'the exterminating torrent of time'. The meaning of history is in eternity. There can be no solution in terms of 'fallen' time with its fleeting present, vanished past and wholly uncertain future. How can there be 'meaning' in terms of such insubstantial flux?

'History is in truth the path to another world. It is in this sense that its content is religious. But the perfect state is impossible within history itself; it can only be realized outside its framework. This is the fundamental conclusion of the metaphysics of history and the secret of the historical process itself.'[1] Yet this is no justification for apathy or indifference. 'Our function at every period, at every moment of our historical destiny is to determine our relation to the problem of life and history in the terms and according to the criteria of eternity.'[2] 'To create beauty in this world we must situate the real centre of mankind in another world.'[3] Immense activity and creativity are expected by God from man in history and through man's historical achievements, whether they be churches, revolutions, social orders or cultures. Even when these are failures in terms of our disintegrated time they have their significance in so far as they reveal moments of the free inner relationship between God and man. The fatal dialectic which dogs human achievement in the time process indicates not that everything is futile, but that the real meaning of what we do, think and

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 197. [2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 196.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

create here is only revealed beyond time, in the eternal. The exhaustion of man's creative powers and the disillusionment of the modern world are the results of man's detachment from God. Life in time will be given back to us and its creative forces refreshed in so far as man rediscovers the eternal—freely, of course, out of the abyss of primordial freedom which is always his and always God's.

The final significance of history is in the Second Coming of the God-Man Christ. In two of his latest books, namely, *The Divine and the Human* and the work on Eschatological Metaphysics now being translated, written during the recent war, Berdyaev devoted himself again to the theme with which *The Meaning of History*, written twenty years earlier, concludes. There is no meaning to history and no meaning to Christianity apart from eschatology, the doctrine of the end of the world. To identify the Church in the historical process with the Kingdom of Heaven is as gross an error as to identify it with some particular historical social order. All theocracies have been false and all through history there have been false Messiahs. Yet without Messianism and without a prophetic element history can have no meaning. Those who have not accepted Christ as the Messiah (He Who has come once and Who will come again) have perforce evolved their own Messianic prophetism. Thus Hegel, for example, believed that the Kingdom of God would be manifested in the Prussian State, Marx's Messiah was the proletariat and Nietzsche's the Super-Man. Russia, of old, had its theory of Moscow as the Third Rome, and in the nineteenth century there were many Russians (particularly the Slavophils) who thought of the Russians as the new Chosen People, the God-bearers.

But the true Messiah will be manifested only in the epoch of the Holy Spirit, outside our disintegrated time. Till then the highest achievements of history are but relative and subject to the disintegrating force of dialectic. The Church has fatally exhausted its creative powers by abandoning its Messianic and prophetic consciousness and fixing Christian sym-

bols to institutions, organizations, states, social and economic orders, which are far indeed from the Kingdom of Heaven. It has become orientated towards the past or the *status quo*. The result has been that Christianity has failed to play a role in the great events of history. It neither transforms nor transfigures. The creative processes of the modern world appear to take place outside Christianity, because that which is not directed towards the End has no creative power. (Marxism may contain only a partial Messianic truth, but at least it *has* a Messianism and so releases creative power.)

Christianity must, therefore, recover its eschatological perspective. It must face the End, not as something in the future of our divided and fallen time, but as 'at hand' in existential time. It will thus again develop man's creative powers. While all objectification of man's creativity is tainted with failure, yet whether it be in the sphere of art, morality, or the search for social truth, there is always in man's creation some penetration into the eternal. At the End nothing and no one will be lost. When Christ comes again God will be all in all. All things will be summed up in Christ. Into man's perfection will enter all his previous creativity. Thus the Second Coming of Christ, which takes place outside history, is the fulfilment of all man's creative response to God in history. The End of the World is a divine-human event.[1]

We have said in a previous chapter that the core of Berdyaev's philosophy is summed up in the three words, 'I', 'Freedom' and 'Christ'. For such a fundamentally Christocentric philosophy history *could* only end in a Second Coming. If you are a Christian there can be no End but Christ. Eschatology, therefore, figures more and more in Berdyaev's latest works, and it is a true eschatology, which

[1] The chapter on Messianism and History in *The Divine and the Human* merits the closest study in this connection. It clarifies and sharpens the themes of *The Meaning of History* and emphasises man's creative part in bringing about the End.

lights up the darkness of our times.[1] The middle and later works of Berdyaev are more full of hope and the emphasis on God's demand for human creativity grows stronger. The peculiarity of Christian Messianism is precisely that there are two comings of Christ. But the Church has been too ready to accept what has been called 'the finished work' of Christ while forgetting to *work out* its salvation, to embark on creative tasks for the transfiguration of all life. It has looked backwards and not forwards. The spirit of prophecy has been quenched and church activity reduced to the priestly administration of divine grace. In *Towards a New Epoch*, one of his last published works, Berdyaev focused his vision of history upon the contemporary scene, not as a politician but as a prophet. Here he saw three things: firstly, the end of capitalism and liberalism, alike 'gangrenous'; secondly, Communism as a great force reshaping the world, a mixture, like all other historical processes, of good and evil; and, thirdly, the Russian people as playing a decisive role in world affairs, not only as Communists, but also because of all that Russia is and has been as a great *Christian* country. He saw the role of Christians in this situation, not as defenders of the old order, which is doomed anyhow, but as regenerators of that which is to come. The Church must stand for man's real creative freedom, but not confound this with the formal freedom of outworn types of democracy. 'The part to be played by Christianity will certainly be enormous on condition that the old fictitious forms are left behind and that its prophetic aspect is revealed as the source of a different attitude towards the social problem. . . . This new Christian outlook has been prepared in Russia.'[2]

Berdyaev once wrote that his desire to know the world has always been accompanied by the desire to alter it. True knowledge is dynamic and creative. To know the meaning

[1] He stresses in the chapter on Messianism and History in *The Divine and the Human* that the light of religion comes not only from the past but from the future.

[2] The closing words of *Towards a New Epoch*.

of history is to know that its beginning and its end are beyond the past, present and future. To know the meaning of history is to enter into the mystery of the God-Man by Whom are all things and for Whom are all things, to see Creation as a moment of the drama of the Two Persons issuing in the Third, to see the End in Christ—in Heaven come down to an earth transfigured by the Holy Spirit in which the dead are raised up and our personal eschatology becomes social and cosmic eschatology. The meaning of history is to be found only in Christ, and to know Him and to find Him is to work out 'the common salvation'. Therefore, 'in every moment of life we must finish the old and start the new.'

VIII

WHAT IS 'THE GOOD LIFE'?

Ethics, as usually treated, are one of the dullest subjects on earth—that is, ethics of the textbooks and handbooks on moral theology. Nothing could be less calculated to inspire the pursuit of either goodness, truth or beauty. Casuistry, which began as an attempt to think clearly about morals, has no doubt earned for itself in the popular mind an uglier reputation than it deserves. Yet it has ugliness. 'Morality' is another grey word. And it is grey not only in the minds of those who are in a state of revolt against 'conventions'. It is interesting to note, for example, that Berdyaev's great work on ethics, *The Destiny of Man*, has for its 'text' the words of Gogol: 'It is sad not to see any good in goodness.' These words strike a note which reverberates all through Berdyaev's ethical teaching, but especially through the work in which he deals systematically and fully with the whole subject. *The Destiny of Man* is far easier to read than most of his longer books, is full of provocation, fire and wit, yet surprisingly enough it is the best planned and tidiest of all his writings. *Slavery and Freedom*, written some years later and haunted by the spectres of the Munich period, covers in part the same ground. It is a less dynamic work, but if read after *The Destiny of Man* provides an interesting restatement of the same moral problems, more exclusively in terms of man's bondage and man's liberty. While containing much that is of value (its introduction is of first-rate importance in understanding Berdyaev's own development),[1] *Slavery and Freedom* is rather a statement of the moral dilemmas confronting man today than a series of creative imperatives like *The Destiny of Man*.

[1] Though Berdyaev's *Autobiography* soon to be published will of course be of even greater value in this respect.

Berdyaev's ethics come straight out of the heart of his personalist philosophy; Man, Freedom and God. All is of a piece. Man created in God's Image outside time, beyond our present distinction between good and evil, falls through his misuse of irrational uncreated freedom. 'The question of the distinction between good and evil and of its origin cannot be solved apart from the prior question as to the relation between God and man, between the Divine and human freedom, or between grace and freedom.'[1] But the problem of evil is not merely the problem of man's sinful abuse of his freedom. Ethics have also the task of justifying God. If God *gave* man freedom (as is usually said), then He gave a fatal gift which He must have known would be abused. God cannot be acquitted of 'the martyrdom of man'. This sort of theology, as Berdyaev often points out, is one of the moral roots of atheism. When 'positive' or 'cataphatic' theologians of this type are taxed with creating God in the image of Hardy's 'President of the Immortals' (that is, a Being Who deliberately made man knowing that he would fall), their habit is to run for that deep subterranean shelter labelled 'mystery'. You should have thought about mystery before, says Berdyaev, you have already over-rationalized the whole business of God, man, freedom and evil; it is too late to take cover when the sirens of atheism begin their wailing.

'When we pass to "negative" (apophatic) theology we begin to breathe more freely as though coming out of a prison-house.[2] The fact is, man is not only the child of God but the child of freedom, of the fathomless abyss, the *Ungrund*, τὸ μὴ ὄν. 'Meonic freedom consented to God's act of creation; non-being freely accepted being. But through it man fell away from the work of God, evil and pain came into the world, and being was mixed with non-being. This is the real tragedy both of the world and of God. God longs for His "other", His friend. He wants him to answer the call to enter the fullness of divine life and participate in God's creative work of conquering non-being. God does not answer

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 23 (31). [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 24 (33).

His own call; the answer is from freedom which is independent of Him'.[1] God is not a tsar, an autocrat. The monotheism of Christianity is not unitarian or Islamic. It is precisely the conception of God as a Trinity of Persons, a God of movement and of love that delivers us from a slavish relationship to the Divine Autocrat and 'justifies the freedom and dignity of man'. Within God there is movement, not *static* perfection. 'People are afraid to ascribe movement to God, because movement indicates the lack of something, or the need for something which is not there. But it may equally be said that immobility is an imperfection, for it implies a lack of the dynamic quality of life. . . . It is impossible to deny that the Christian God is, first and foremost, the God of sacrificial love and sacrifice always indicates tragedy. Dramatic movement and tragedy are born of the fullness and not of the poverty of life. To deny tragedy in the Divine life is only possible at the cost of denying Christ, His cross and crucifixion, the sacrifice of the Son of God.'[2]

'Three principles are active in the world: Providence, i.e. the super-cosmic God; freedom, i.e. the human spirit; and fate or destiny, i.e. nature, the solidified, hardened outcome of the dark meonic freedom. The interaction between these three principles constitutes the complexity of the cosmic and the human life.'[3] But the greatest tragedy of all lies deeper than the distinction between good and evil. It is prior to such a distinction, that is, prior to the Fall of man into our disintegrated time of past, present and future. This tragedy of the conflict of values raises the profoundest of all ethical problems. It takes us into eternity.

Thus ethics are concerned not only with the problems

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 25 (34). We have already seen how this primordial drama between God and His 'other' is in Berdyaev's view the clue to the meaning of history.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 28 (38). Once again it is to be noticed how radically Christian is Berdyaev's thought. The concreteness of Christ is basic. We move from what God hath wrought, not from the abstractions of idealism.

[3] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 31 (42).

arising from the fall of man. Man being in the Image of the Creator, though fallen, is called to create. He is not here simply to keep the rules, still less merely to avoid side-turnings marked 'No Entry'. 'Man is called upon to create the good and not only to fulfil it.'[1] 'The new ethics rooted in Christianity must go beyond the conception of ideal norms.'[2] Man is to be a creator of goodness, truth and beauty: salvation means not merely being rescued from evil but devoting oneself creatively to the transfiguration of the world. In the Orthodox Church salvation is *theosis*, divinization, and that is a divine-human process demanding man's creative use of his original and uncreated freedom.

The main body of *The Destiny of Man* is devoted to the exposition of 'morality on this side of good and evil'. All that is most powerful and dynamic in Berdyaev's thought is packed into this massive Part II.

He divides Christian ethics into three sections, the ethics of law, the ethics of redemption and the ethics of creativeness. He then proceeds to examine a number of highly controversial and very concrete moral problems in the light of this three-fold division. If anyone were to ask the question where, in a short time, can one get to the heart of Berdyaev's teaching, we should reply Part II of *The Destiny of Man*. It is the most moving thing he has written. There is hardly a sham or a convention or a hypocrisy in modern civilization or in the Church, as well as in the Marxian revolt against both, which is not remorselessly exposed. Yet everything is on an utterly different plane from cheap cynicism or from the passion for 'de-bunking'. The last response it could evoke is 'what's the use of anything?' or a yearning 'to escape from it all'. No ivory tower can ever be comfortable lodging again for one who has seriously studied this tremendous call to action. The conflict of values is faced, but not for the deliberate liquidation of one for the sake of another, or for the production of some smooth monism. The truth in every lie is stated with transparent sincerity, as well

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 44 (57). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 44 (58).

as the lie in every truth. Yet man is never degraded nor made to feel helpless and hopeless. There is nothing here in common with Sartre's nauseating pessimism. What we have here is a trumpet call to creativeness, the evocation of faith, hope and intense love for God, the call to make, to dare, to answer God and by so doing to recreate mankind and the world. We shall not find here, it is true, a programme for revolutionizing Church or State (still less, of course, a program for conserving the *status quo* or for counter-revolution). Berdyaev was the prophet-philosopher, not the programme builder. It was his role to call upon men to use the aboriginal freedom from which God summoned man, and for the exercise of which previous permits are required neither from heaven nor hell.

We begin, however, first with the Ethics of Law. These are based upon the dualism between good and evil, which is the result of the fall of man. The beauty of the first Paradise, the time of man's innocency, has been disordered. Man in his fallen state can only know good as a co-relative of evil, and the tragedy is that good cannot overcome evil. Knowledge of the good does not mean power to do good. 'The good that I would I do not,' says S. Paul. The good is a law, but not moral power. Nor can man attain righteousness in so far as he does keep the law. 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. . . . Man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' S. Paul was quite clear that Christ brings us to a freedom which is above the keeping of laws and rules, the observance of a code.

Yet it would be a vulgar error to suppose that law is therefore no concern of the Christian. S. Paul calls it a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Christ Himself says that He comes to fulfil the law, that is to fill it out. Not one jot or tittle of the law is to be aspersed. Christ teaches not the jettisoning of the law but the transcending of it.

Essentially laws and codes are social in origin. When morality appears among primitive fallen men it is herd-morality. The morality of law is in origin clannish and

protected by taboos. It has a strange power of persistence even after it ceases to be necessary to the maintenance of herd-life. Not only does out-of-date law persist, but the emotions connected with dead laws survive to fetter man in the unconscious levels of his being.

Nevertheless, law cannot be set aside. In the fallen state of mankind lawlessness would mean licence and anarchy. So while law (made for the evil and not for the good) is often oppressive and can quench the spirit, it is also necessary. While it oppresses personality it also protects it. As Berdyaev aptly remarks: 'A person's fate cannot be made to rest solely upon other people's spiritual condition.' Marx looks forward to the time when the State 'will wither away'. But that time has not come. Meanwhile law, buttressed by social taboos and by fear of the strong arm, remains essential to the growth of human personality and genuine community. The law fosters and the law also thwarts the spirit of man. There is no escape from that antinomy in our world. 'The characteristic feature of the ethics of law is that it is concerned with the abstract norm of the good but does not care about man, the unique individual human personality and its intimate inner life.'[1]

'The terrible thing about moralism is that it strives to make man into an automaton of virtue. The intolerable dullness of virtue that gives rise to immorality, often of an extremely thoughtless kind, is a specific consequence of the ethics of law which knows no higher power.'[2] There are two main forms of rebellion against dull legalism. There is the revolt of the aristocrats of the spirit in the name of creative freedom, and there is the revolt of the masses against tyrannical customs, traditions, against a set-up which is really a hang-over from a dead past and is redolent of shams, hypocrisies and the dead, unreal conventions through which life once flowed, but which are now stagnant and corroded.

However it is not only when the ethics of the law become embodied in actual laws, institutions, customs, public

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 94, 95 (122). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 95 (123).

opinion, etc., that they choke life. The same tragic dialectic pursues the moral philosopher and the religious reformer. Take Kant, for example. 'The moral law, which man must freely discover for himself, automatically gives directions to all, and is the same for all men and in all cases of life. Kant's moral maxim that every man must be regarded not only as a man but also an end in himself is undermined by the legalistic character of his ethics, because every man proves to be a means and an intrument for the realization of an abstract, impersonal, universally binding law.'[1] Tolstoy is no better. There is no external authority in Tolstoy's scheme, but the inner slavery to law more than compensates for this. 'The realization of the Kingdom of God is for him on a par with abstention from tobacco and alcohol. Christ's teaching consists for him of a number of moral precepts which man can easily carry out, once he recognizes their rationality.'[2] Similarly, Luther's revolt against Roman Catholic legalism ended in new forms of legalism.

'Pharisaism', therefore, the disease of the ethics of law is a perennial problem. Berdyaev rebuts the still too common error that the Pharisees of the Gospel times were on a low moral and religious level. On the contrary, they represented a very high development. What was wrong with them is precisely what is wrong with many Christians, not excluding the would-be Christian philosopher and theologian. Those who fulfil the ethics of law need no Saviour. The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before all such law-abiding citizens and churchmen, because the publicans and harlots know their need. They *have* to find something which transcends the law: they break through to the other dimension, to the ethics of redemption.

And yet all the time the law must remain. We may perfect it here and there. We may change it. We may bring it up to date, but law will never become 'grace'. Law must remain, Christ came both to fulfil and to attack those who try to fulfil it. The law must be kept and in the same breath

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 97 (125). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 97 (125).

it must be transcended. This antinomy between law and grace must be faced in every concrete moral decision and in every concrete moral judgment.

We now come to deal more particularly with the Ethics of Redemption. Here again Berdyaev's teaching comes right out of the heart of his personalistic philosophy. His detestation of abstractions once more makes itself apparent. Christian ethics are founded not on some bloodless idea of the good, but upon what is concrete and alive. It is not the law, but actual men who can inherit eternal life. Christian ethics begin, therefore, with man redeemed by God. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but should have eternal life.' In Christianity it is not God Who needs to be reconciled with man, but man with God. God pleads, as S. Paul says, 'be reconciled!' And man's supremest need is to be reconciled with God, for in the face of the pain and evil of the world man wants to curse his Maker. 'Atheism as the cry of the indignant human heart can only be conquered by a suffering God Who shares the fate of the world.'[1]

Everywhere in the Gospel man takes precedence of law. 'The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.' Man is more than any abstraction. Christianity is an ethic of love and love is no abstraction. Love is 'I love you and you love me.' Love is a living concrete relation between two living concrete persons. It is love for our neighbour, 'the one who is near', not for a concept labelled 'Humanity'. Personality has 'an unconditional value'. It is unique and every moral problem demands a personal solution. Personality is unique and it is also immersed in unfathomable freedom. Once again, as Francis Thompson sang:

There is no expeditious road
To pack and label men for God
And save them by the barrel-load.

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 103 (134).

What can come out of a man's freedom when it meets God's grace? God Himself does not know, for that is precisely the mystery of the dark uncreated abyss, of the non-being into which even divine Eyes cannot probe. Who shall say? As Berdyaev points out, it is one of the Apostles, Judas, who betrays Christ. It is one of a band of thieves who steps with Him into Paradise. So it is that 'the first shall be last and the last first.' It is all entirely personal. It is impossible to make rules here.

'The Gospel makes a complete change in our moral valuations, but we are not conscious of its full significance because we have grown used to it and adapted it too well to our everyday needs. "I am come to send fire on the earth." In this fire are burnt up all the old habitual moral valuations and new ones are formed. The first shall be last and the last first. This means a revolution more radical than any other. Christianity was born in this revolution, it has sprung from it.'[1]

Christ calls us to the Kingdom of God, the morality of which lies beyond all our normal rules about good and evil. Much has been heard in recent years of Christ's 'transvaluation of values'! But how seriously is this phrase interpreted? 'Tareyev is right,' says Berdyaev, 'when he insists that the Gospel is absolute in character and incommensurable with the relative naturally historical life. "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil." The ordinary moral life is based upon resisting evil. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." If this call of the Gospel be understood as a law, it is impracticable; it is senseless from the point of view of the ethics of law, it presupposes a different and a gracious order of being. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Herein lies the essence of the Gospel and of Christianity. But the whole life of the world is based upon seeking first "all these things" which are

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 109 (141).

to be "added", and not the Kingdom of God.'[1] And so we go on! Christ said, what comes from us defiles us; we say, what is done to us defiles us. Christ said that the chief should be the servant, but he is in fact the lord everywhere in Christendom, even in the Church, where such a title as 'Servant of the servants of God' is given to the most powerful of prelates. In British Protestantism the words 'the Sabbath was made for man' have been interpreted to mean precisely that 'man was made for the Sabbath'. The very grace of Christ became a law, the freedom of the absolute has become the slavery of the relative.

'The teaching of the Gospel is absolute and uncompromising, but,' says Berdyaev, and very characteristically, 'there is nothing harsh about it. Uncompromising moralism is false because it is uncompromising towards other people and insists on their carrying out the law. It is pitiless and condemns everyone. There is nothing like it in the gracious absolutism of the Gospel. It merely reveals to us the Kingdom of God and opens the way to it, but it gives no rules and norms. One must be uncompromising with oneself and not with others. To be strict to oneself and kind to others—this is the truly Christian attitude.'[2] All have sinned and therefore no one can judge. Christianity longs for universal salvation. Christ died for all. It is not for us to lock up others into hell. Neither is it for us to develop in ourselves a transcendental egoism. He that would save his soul should lose it. We must rise above self by centring ourselves upon God, and it is this, incidentally, which imparts true humility, not self-absorption in self-abasement.

Closely connected with the ethics of redemption, in which Christ reconciles us to God and reveals to us and in us the absolute nature of love, is the question of suffering. Suffering is both the consequence of sin and evil and the means of redemption.

'The problem of the meaning of suffering is essential to ethics. It is the main theme of Christianity. Suffering is the

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 110 (141, 142). [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 111 (144).

inmost essence of being, the fundamental law of life. . . . But our attitude to life is not determined by the fact that life is pain and suffering. . . . I may . . . at the same time accept life, accept its suffering and understand the meaning of it. This is what Christianity does, and it alone.'[1]

Berdyaev takes his stand with all other Christian thinkers in maintaining that suffering accepted in the light of the mystery of the Cross is made lighter, acquires meaning and may become the means of regeneration. On the other hand, suffering against which a man rebels and which he will not accept is simply suffering increased. He shows here, as in nearly every book he writes, that suffering is intimately connected with freedom and that suffering could only be finally banished from the fallen world at the expense of freedom.

But he vigorously combats the immoral idea that, because the suffering which comes to us can be enlightened from within, therefore we should be indifferent to others' suffering, or worse still, desire that they should suffer. The fact that suffering can be a means of spiritual growth does not absolve us from the task of alleviating suffering or removing all preventable suffering which arises from unjust social, economic or political conditions. Nevertheless, while so engaged we must help our neighbours to bear in an enlightened way the sufferings which cannot be avoided.

In his final section of the ethics of redemption, Berdyaev again reverts to their absolute quality. 'It is impossible,' he declares, 'to understand the Gospel as a norm or law.'[2] The Gospel is the goodness of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the relation between persons which it discloses is beyond our distinctions between good and evil. The attempt to turn the 'absolutes' of the Gospel into laws only leads to sophistry, to forced interpretations, to a blunting of their cutting edge, and, above all, to a total loss of grace. 'It is only too obvious that the Gospel cannot serve as a basis for the state, the family, the economic life and civilization and that it is impossible to justify by the Gospel the use

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 118 (152). [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 122 (157).

of force inevitable in the historical development of society.'[1] 'There never has been and there can be no Christian state, Christian economics, Christian family, Christian learning, Christian social life. . . . Yet the Gospel revelation of the Kingdom of God brought about a change secretly, inwardly and imperceptibly . . . and altered the very structure of the human soul. . . . The gracious power of the Gospel revelation liberates men from the torments of fear, of pride, of love of power and the insatiable lust of life. The solution of many vital and fundamental questions, however, is not made obvious in the Gospel but is, as it were, veiled. It is left to man himself in his freedom to find a creative solution of the problems that continually confront him. The Gospel is concerned not so much with teaching us how to solve them as with healing and regenerating the texture of the human soul.'[2]

Just therefore as a consideration of the ethics of law leads us to the ethics of redemption, so this in its turn leads us to the ethics of creativeness. Man is redeemed from the law in order to create—that in one sentence is the ethics of Berdyaev.

He easily disposes of the old contention that the Gospel is not concerned with the creativeness but only with plucking brands from the burning.[3] The 'agricultural' parables, no less than the parables of the talents and of the pounds, as well as S. Paul's teaching about 'gifts', alike point to the fact that God has no desire to have unprofitable servants who keep themselves to themselves and bury their talents in the ground. We are made in God's Image and God is a Creator.

All creation presupposes freedom, the void, the nothingness—the *Ungrund*, which again we remind ourselves is not an optional and debatable conclusion, a dubious appendage to Berdyaev's thinking but absolutely basic, as basic as God and Man, though it be 'non-being'! God, of course, creates

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 123 (158). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 125 (161).

[3] Nevertheless in his *Autobiography*, Berdyaev refuses to base God's demand for creativity on scriptural proof! It is rather 'implied' with a subtlety that leaves man free.

from nothing. Man can only create from nothing with the aid of something, that is, with raw materials supplied by God. But above all man's creativeness is not a right but a duty. (The 'goats' were put on the left hand not for transgressing the law but for failure to use the raw material provided for creative acts of mercy, pity and love.)[1]

There are two stages in human creativity. There is the flame upwards to God which is unexpressed in space-time. The second movement is the expression of man's creativity towards man. It is indeed, as Berdyaev calls it, 'a cooling down'. 'There is always a tragic discrepancy between the burning heat of the creative fire in which the artistic image is conceived, and the cold of its formal realization. Every book, picture, statue, good work, social institution is an instance of this cooling down of the original flame.'[2] This gulf between the first flash of creativity and the long drawn-out process of embodying it found expression in Browning's words when he wrote:

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work', must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price.

. . . . . .

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount;
Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be
All, men ignored in me,
This I was worth to God. . . .[3]

[1] *St. Matthew*, xxv, 31 ff. It is significant that this follows immediately the parable of the talents.

[2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 129 (166). [3] *Rabbi ben Ezra*, Robert Browning.

Where, however, Berdyaev would have quarrelled mightily with Browning is over his use of the metaphor of the clay and the Potter in what follows the lines just quoted. Man's creativity is precisely *not* something which God is making out of man. On the contrary, it is man who here does the shaping. Man's creativity shapes (in the second stage of creation—'the cooling down') the material provided by God, shapes it in freedom to designs which are fresh, even to God Himself, because man has called them out of the dark void of that non-being where God Himself is sightless.

It would be a great mistake, however, to suggest that human creativity is confined to the conception and production of works of art. In the moral sphere also man is called to create. 'The moral problems of life cannot be solved by an automatic application of universally binding rules. It is impossible to say that in the same circumstances one ought always and everywhere to act in the same way. It is impossible if only because circumstances never are quite the same. Indeed, the very opposite rule might be formulated. One ought always to act individually and solve every moral problem for oneself, showing creativeness in one's moral activity and not for a single moment become a moral automaton. A man ought to make moral inventions with regard to the problems that life sets him.'[1]

Many of the most liberating and inspiring things Berdyaev has to say to our world come from his passionate demand for creativity in the moral sphere. Ethics are lifted by him right above the level on which they are usually discussed, the level to which we are normally accustomed, which make some works on moral theology read like lawyers' arguments about the Highway Code. There is no static, frozen, eternal moral law. Law is not the source of ethics: it is rather a by-product, necessary for our sinful world, but which man's creative spirit must ceaselessly

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 132 (170). See *Freedom and the Spirit* for the role of norms.

transcend.[1] The very battle against evil is seen in a new light in the ethics of creativeness. The evil is to be transfigured creatively, not simply crushed out.

Not only do creative ethics transcend those of the law. They transcend those of redemption too. They are concerned with infinite horizons of moral beauty which the spirit of man is to create. Boundless possibilities open out. Man with God looks out upon the infinite, he reaches out into the eternal. Ethics at last become alive, on fire. Man passes beyond the combat between good and evil to the creating of new values. He passes, as the great mystics have always known, beyond either the desire for heaven or the fear of hell; for 'he that feareth is not made perfect in love'. The ethics of creativity are the ethics of exuberance, not of controls or austerity. In them asceticism has its place of course, but is not the sour asceticism which castigates the powers of body, mind and spirit, which a jejune moralism does not know how to employ. The asceticism of creativity is that of those who 'scorn delights' only because they are eager 'to live laborious days'—days full of the labour of love, of the *laborare* which is *orare*, but which needs concentration for its full manifestation, a concentration involving choice of priorities. But it is asceticism and discipline which come from within, from the fire of the spirit, which burns to fulfil its loftiest creative intuitions.

But the personalism involved in this is very different from individualism. True creativity is orientated towards other men, towards even the cosmos which it seeks to transfigure. 'The prophet is social, as well as solitary,' says Berdyaev in the closing pages of *Freedom and the Spirit*. With all genuine creativity it is the same. The person is rooted in the community, he rises out of it in creation but only to return in order to give out. 'All creativeness is love and all love is

[1] *To wisest moralists 'tis but given*
To work rough border-law of heaven.

From Francis Thompson's *Epilogue to Judgment in Heaven*. Compare also St. Luke, XVII, 10.

creative. If you want to receive, give, if you want to obtain satisfaction, do not seek it, never think of it and forget the very word; if you want to acquire strength, manifest it, give it to others.'[1] ' "Spiritual" persons must not remain proudly upon the mountain tops in separation from the "carnal" world, but they must devote their energies to its spiritualization and to raising it to the highest levels.'[2] Ambition, lust, the will to power, these are not creative manifestations. They are the warping and distortion of that in personality which could be creative. They lead to satiety, dullness and disillusionment. But the personality in true creativity, like the Burning Bush, burns yet is not consumed. It radiates light and heat, it blazes out, but its self-giving is the profoundest self-enhancement. This is the paradox of the creative thought and action of the personality, its originality, its loneliness, its refusal to be dominated by the herd, yet withal its outpouring in love to men.

Berdyaev has many striking things to say of the part of imagination in moral life. 'By the side of the self-contained moral world of laws and rules to which nothing can be added, man builds up in imagination a higher, free and beautiful world lying beyond ordinary good and evil. And this is what gives beauty to life. As a matter of fact, life can never be determined solely by law; men always imagine for themselves a different and better life, freer and more beautiful, and they realize those images.'[3] Yet, as he warns us further on, 'The absolute good incompatible with the existence of evil is possible only in the Kingdom of God, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and God will be all in all.'[4] The imagination of the perfect kingdom must not tempt us to enforce it. Enforced perfection is the kingdom of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, Anti-Christ of Anti-Christ. It is the old business of happiness and 'balance' achieved at the expense of freedom; Aldous Huxley's *Brave*

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 141 (181).
[2] *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. xvi. See also *The Destiny of Man*, p. 152 (195).
[3] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 143 (183). [4] *Ibid.*, p. 148 (190).

New World in fact. Our attitude to evil must be like that of the Creator, both tolerant and offensive. 'There is no escaping from this paradox, for it is rooted in freedom and in the very fact of distinction between good and evil. Ethics is bound to be paradoxical because it has its source in the Fall. The good must be realized, but it has a bad origin.'[1] Creative ethics penetrate to eternity, beyond good and evil, beyond time. For this reason it is a profound mistake to think of creativity as if it was another name for the bad infinity of the cult of the future. If it be remembered that creativity includes contemplation as well as activity, an ascent to God as well as a descent into the world, we shall keep before us the paradox without which creativity degenerates into a mere insatiable lust for novelty. Jacob fleeing from his home to make a new life is confronted with the vision of a two-way traffic ladder. It is the ascent and descent which give to us the moments when the stones of earth become Bethel, the house of God and the gate of heaven.

Finally, Berdyaev notes three characteristics of the moral life of modern man. Men strive for *freedom* as never before. (A facet of this is seen in family life where the conviction of the modern parent is strong that the child shall *freely* embrace the good.) Secondly, there has been a vast awakening also of *compassion* and of pity—increased sensitivity. Thirdly, man longs to *create* and to find religious justification for his creativity. (Religion as merely keeping rules, keeping out of harm's way, or observing herd conventions is moribund.) Yet as world events have proved since Berdyaev wrote his *Destiny of Man*, 'other instincts are at work in him (that is, in man), instincts of slavery and cruelty, and he shows a lack of creativeness which leads him to thwart it and deny its very existence. And yet the striving for freedom, compassion and creativeness is both new and eternal. Therefore the new ethics is bound to be an ethics of *freedom, compassion and creativeness.*'[2]

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 149 (190, 191).
[2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 153 (196).

Thus Berdyaev sets the stage and creates the atmosphere in which he handles many concrete problems. To attempt to summarize all that he has to say on such a wide range of subjects would clearly be out of the question. We shall take three only—all highly controversial—namely, War, the State, and Sex. In a further chapter we shall deal with his approach to Capitalism, Fascism and Communism. All Berdyaev's judgments on concrete questions spring directly out of his fundamental philosophy and that in its turn arises from the concrete fact that freedom brought him to Christ. To isolate his conclusions on present-day controversies from his fundamental presuppositions, or rather from him as a person and from his God is completely to misunderstand him. He has no programme, no abstract conceptions to offer. He has lived, seen, suffered and prayed. He comes to tell us what he sees. Its value is not that it provides a set of cut-and-dried conclusions, but in its power to awaken in us both imagination and creation.

IX

PROBLEMS OF THE TIMES

In this chapter and the following one we shall consider Berdyaev's handling of certain practical problems which are specially urgent at the present day. We shall do this for two reasons. Firstly, there is the intrinsic value of his insights, conclusions and also his sharp questionings. What he has to say on the problems facing the modern world is always fresh and invigorating. There is never anything second-hand or conventional in his judgments, which often cut right across the normal cleavages of opinion. Yet at the same time Berdyaev avoided the extravagances of mere individualism. There was in him an extraordinarily deep spiritual vision which seemed at first sight to cut him off completely from the 'herd'. Yet combined with this was acute awareness of his membership in particular communities—e.g. the Russian nation and the Russian Church. Just when we might think he has become essentially the man apart, the philosopher and mystic who sees so deeply below the surface that he can no longer be a guide to the ordinary man who has to take sides, he comes right back again, denounces aloofness, admits the relativity of all moral action and takes his side, however critical he may be of it. This is a trait noticeable in certain Russians, the power to see the absolute but when necessary to live the relative, to be both 'extreme' and 'accommodating', to put one's head in the clouds while keeping one's feet on earth. It is quite wrong to see any 'mystery' in this trait. It is not French 'clarity', and it is not Anglo-Saxon 'compromise', that is all.

Secondly, to watch Berdyaev handling a concrete problem is to understand more deeply his philosophy. An activist, personalist philosophy cannot simply be 'described'. The student must watch it at work—that is half its meaning. Or

rather, not 'watch "it" at work', but watch *him*, the philosopher; watch the creative activity of the free spirit grappling with the changing world by which the thinker is called both to thought and action.

Berdyaev felt that the most tragic moral conflict is not between good and evil, but between one good and another. Fallen man is so often forced to choose one good at the expense of another. Social justice, for example, in the modern world can only be realized at the expense of some freedoms, whereas freedom pursued beyond a certain point always means injustice, the freedom of the strong to devour the weak. Nor is any nice balance of forces possible in a constantly shifting situation. The attempt to base ethics on rigid maxims derived from static supernatural sanctions is equally fruitless. What is needed are original and creative solutions deriving from original freedom and from the spirit.

Man's way, moreover, is not made easier by the sanctified falsehoods which are embedded in objectified social life and institutions. The conventional judgments and evaluations which are associated with all human groupings are a highly complicating factor. Man's social life is permeated with conventions, half-truths, downright lies. The family, the Church, the nation, political parties, 'movements' of all sorts are bedevilled with corporate illusions about themselves and about rival groups. The Catholic view of this, the Communist view of that, the British standpoint, the French, the Russian, etc., all these involve man's moral evaluations, the predominance of the herd over the person. To disentangle truth from convention, whether the convention be revolutionary or reactionary, and yet not to renounce the tasks of history which belong to our generation, requires not only integrity but both a redemptive and creative spiritual approach. Yet the Gospel advice to cast out the beam from our own eye before removing the mote in our brother's is the very last piece of advice any group can be expected to take. Herd hypocrisy is an old story. Yet characteristically, Berdyaev will have no truck with self-righteous individu-

alism. The herd-life is not to be renounced. Its false valuations are not to be opposed by a self-conscious moral superiority, still less by the prevalent decadent cynicism which concludes all under sin, and washes its hands in the waters of eclecticism, or of intellectual snobbery or pessimism. We must go on living in and with the herd and oppose its false valuations by a lofty and creative spirit.

The best answer to the superior person's doubt as to whether such a course of action is possible is Berdyaev's own life. For example, once he had returned to the Orthodox Church he stuck to it, though, of course, he criticized it continually. Or again, Russia was always *his* country, whether Soviet or not. He would have stayed on in Russia had he been permitted to do so. Yet in exile he always denounced counter-revolution. The *émigrés* spoke bitterly of his 'Soviet orientation', while the Soviet press at times attacked him as 'decadent' and 'bourgeois'. No wonder he wrote sometimes of his 'loneliness'.

The Christian then must be in the world yet not of it. We must share the life of actual communities while relentlessly exposing their shams, and above all taking a creative part in their transformation. Berdyaev could be absolutely merciless in his exposures, but one never feels in them a hint of rancour. Nor does one experience a sense of despair, even when he can give no answer to some particular problem. Man is never belittled or degraded. The challenge to further thought and action is always what remains with us as we read him. The unquenchable fire of the spirit, the power of God, the depths of freedom; it is these which abide. Possibilities are endless, even if at a particular moment on a particular front we appear to be at a dead end.

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights from the black west went,
Oh, morning at the brown brink eastward springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast, and with, ah, bright wings.[1]

[1] *God's Grandeur*, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

For the modern man so many of the concrete problems of ethics are embedded in the triple constellation of the State, Revolution and War. There can be no such thing as an ideal State. States can be better or worse. They can never be ideal. It was part of Marx's spiritual realism to point to the time when the State must wither away, but while Marxists believe that this can happen through an immanent historical process, Berdyaev said 'No'. Relative improvements can be achieved, and indeed must be struggled for in the name of humanity, but perfection belongs only to the Kingdom of God achieved finally by Christ's Second Coming. The State only withers away when the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The greatest error, therefore, of all time in the history of Christianity has been the unreserved consecration of the State by the Church. The criminal in this was Constantine. 'That epoch is now over', said Berdyaev, but like the assertion in the *Magnificat*, 'He hath put down the mighty from their seat', this statement of Berdyaev's is presumably to be regarded as a prophecy rather than an embodied fact! Of course the old form of tsarist Byzantinism—the old 'Holy Russia'—has gone, but the blessing of the State by the Church can take dangerous forms without such extreme identifications of the realm of Cæsar with the realm of God. An Englishman, for example, might well ask himself on what issue of foreign policy in the last hundred years the Church of England has manifested any independence of the British Foreign Office. Cæsaro-papism masked behind the forms of parliamentary democracy and the civil service stifles to our own day the voice of prophecy—though no doubt with a silk handkerchief and chloroform—a less crude but no less effective means than those employed by the tsars.

The modern democratic State can be the source of tyranny, as it certainly is of multiform illusions. For example, the half-secret operations of big trusts and cartels, the ownership and control of practically the entire press by big money, the exploitation of coloured peoples, and all the

lying propaganda and suppression of truth used in elections are among the most obvious sources of oppression and of sham. All States rely to a greater or lesser degree on coercion, and that means law and not grace, force and not love. It was the perception of this fact that led to that characteristically Russian suspicion of power, and also the tendency towards anarchism. A fatal dialectic is to be observed in this unwillingness on moral grounds of many Russians in the past to exercise coercive authority without which no State, whatever its ideological label, can exist. Moral scruples about the exercise of power pave the way for increasing despotism on the part of those who have no such scruples.

Yet the individual who is often oppressed by the State cannot get on without it. Berdyaev would look over the fence at anarchy, would see the truth in it, but decide firmly that with all its evils sinful man must live inside the State in spite of the painful conflicts which this involves.

'Sociologically the individual and society are correlative; the individual cannot be conceived apart from society, and society presupposes the existence of individuals. . . . Society has an ontological kernel, which the State has not; the Kingdom of God is a society, an ontologically real communion between persons. . . . There is something incommensurable between the State which cannot penetrate into the infinity of the spirit and the infinite spiritual life going on in the depths of personality. But that life cannot be understood individualistically: it is also life in society, in communion with others, i.e. it is metaphysically social and rooted in the Kingdom of God.'[1]

This whole problem of the State and the person reaches a great intensity in time of war, especially in modern 'total war'.[2] Violence and deceit are the instruments of war. When

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 198 (253).

[2] 'War is an extreme form of the domination of society over the person. . . . Men can wage war only under conditions in which personal consciousness is enfeebled and group consciousness . . . is strengthened.' *The Divine and the Human*, p. 101. The whole chapter on War in this book is important.

the individual acts for the State, whether as soldier or spy, he is called upon to use precisely those methods which in private life would be condemned and punished by the State. 'Thou shalt not kill' is enforced by the State against the individual in peace time. In war time the State orders the soldier to kill. Moreover, the soldier in a modern conscript army is neither a volunteer nor an old-fashioned professional mercenary. This fact raises the most painful moral conflicts.

Berdyaev, however, does not cut the knot by advocating pacifism. 'The exposure of the great evil and sin of war ought not to lead to abstract pacifism in all circumstances.'[1] All living within society, even in peace time, involves a man in compromise. 'Absolutely uncompromising moral actions and valuations are mistaken if only because they ignore the existence of the world in which men live and recognize nothing but the moral law and norm. To condemn war from the point of view of absolute morality is easy enough, but this does not solve the painful problem.'[2] Here we get to the heart of the question. Berdyaev does not content himself with pointing out that historically war is sometimes the lesser of two evils. Nor does he stop at the case for defensive wars, to resist aggression or to preserve patterns of life, culture and so forth, which represent some degree of spiritual manifestation. He says all this but takes the argument further. He goes again to the first principles of his philosophy to man's fallen nature, to the fact that since the Fall good cannot be manifested in its pure state. Evil is always present with the good. 'The pure and absolute good can only be manifested in a world which will be beyond good and evil. But then the kingdom of the good will be the Kingdom of God which is above good. Hence uncompromising moral absolutism is out of place both in the sinful world and in the Kingdom of God.'

In one of his latest works (*The Divine and the Human*), Berdyaev returned again to this subject and showed how war runs right through our fallen life, and therefore cannot be

[1] *The Divine and the Human*, p. 101. [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 199 (253).

repudiated absolutely at the stage when it becomes a shooting war between States. Empirically wars do contain good elements, produce some good things in people and in society and have protected culture.[1] We cannot escape from this complexity. Absoluteness is false to the situation in this and in every other sphere of life.[2] The inescapable paradoxicality of life after the Fall is basic to all Berdyaev's evaluations of particular problems.

There were two elements in Berdyaev's attitude to war which were very sharply distinguished. The first is the struggle against war and the attempt to construct some form of world society or organization which would make war impossible. This is our duty. The fact that war on some level is a necessary part of our fallen life does not in the least imply that war between States, war between armies, navies, air forces cannot be overcome. The combative forces in human nature cannot be eliminated, but they could take other forms of expression and ought to do so. Berdyaev approved Fyodorov's idea that the armies of the world should be used to combat the elemental forces of nature. The Christian must do all in his power to banish war from the world, denouncing it as evil and dispersing the false atmosphere of glory associated with it. The nation or State organized for war, the drive of capitalism to war must be exposed.

But in the second place Berdyaev made a very clear distinction between the struggle against war in general and the things which make for war and the problem of what a Christian must do when war actually breaks out. 'The individual,'

[1] 'If aggressive and enslaving war is an absolute evil, defensive war or a war for liberation may be not only justified but even holy.' *The Divine and the Human*, p. 101.

[2] In an article written for *Sobornost'* in March 1936, Berdyaev pointed out that Tolstoy 'was the only person who had a consistent abstract attitude to war' because he repudiated all resistance and the State as well. Berdyaev could not follow Tolstoy here, but there must be an active struggle of the Christian against war, which must be unmasked and its false glamour destroyed.

he said, 'must not throw off its burden or give up his share of the common responsibility.'[1] 'The horror and evil of war cannot be conquered by the anæmic gospel of pacifism, which is generally connected with abstract cosmopolitanism. Pacifism is the opposite of militarism, but there is no final truth in either. Pacifism is optimistic and ignores the tragic nature of history. There is a certain amount of truth in it—the will, namely, that wars should cease. But pacifism does not recognize the spiritual conditions needed to end wars; it remains on the surface, in the domain of unreal politics and legal formulæ, unconscious of the irrational forces at work in the world. Pacifism is a form of rationalism. The preaching of peace and of the brotherhood of nations is a Christian work, and Christian ethics must take it over from rationalistic pacifism.'[2]

Here and also in *The Divine and the Human*, Berdyaev speaks of the inner dialectic of war connected with technical improvements. There is a real possibility of war destroying itself in the atomic age. He has some important reflections on the decay of chivalry and on the fact that such things as the honour of the family, the class or the regiment *as generally understood*, has no basis in Gospel ethics.[3] It is what comes *from* us, not what is done *to* us which is dishonouring in the Gospel sense.

We pass on to the subject of revolution.

Berdyaev, having lived through two revolutions, or perhaps more accurately three, had naturally not a little to say on the subject of revolution in general.

The State, as we have already said, has a dual nature. It has a providential function, but one which is easily corrupted by the will to power. The State rests on a double foundation of faith and force. 'When faith is gone, force proves to be powerless.'[4]

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 201 (255). [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 202 (256).

[3] It should be remembered that Berdyaev's own family was a 'good' one, with a military tradition. He knew from within what he criticised. He was no envious 'outsider'.

[4] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 207 (263).

But why does faith in a State go? One reason which Berdyaev does not here dwell upon is an economic one. Changes in the mode of production, technical advances, etc., inevitably bring into being new classes of society. These new classes are bound to find a contradiction between their needs and demands, as well as their growing power on the one hand, and the forms of the State which had their origin in productive relationships of a different sort on the other hand. An emerging class finds itself hampered and thwarted by the machinery and the hierarchy of a State fashioned to serve the interests of those whose power is waning. The new and more vigorous elements see in the existing forms of the State both a sham and a shackle. They lose faith in the powers that be which appear no longer as ordained of God, but as a reactionary 'hang-over'. The critic, the social reformer and finally the revolutionary puncture the inflated prestige of the old order. Faith is lost, the force of repression proves futile, the new revolutionary class takes power.

But there is another approach to the subject of revolution, and it is this which Berdyaev discusses in *The Destiny of Man*, and in *The Divine and the Human*. If the State has a moral aspect so has revolution. Indeed, without the possibility of revolutions the State would be intolerable. 'Patience is a virtue, but it may turn into a vice and connive at evil. . . . Good is compelled sometimes to try to attain what is the least evil. . . . Revolution is always accompanied by horrors but it may be a less evil than endless patience with slavery.'[1] Admitting this the best theologians, whether Catholic or Protestant, recognize the right of rebellion under certain conditions. Indeed, unless one is prepared to deify the State it is impossible to do otherwise. Yet Berdyaev takes us deeper than either economics or politics in considering this subject. 'Revolutions are the destiny, the inevitable doom of nations, and it is impossible to take a superficial view of them, explaining them by external political and economic

[1] *The Divine and the Human*, pp. 101, 102.

causes, as both the revolutionaries and the counter-revolutionaries generally do. A revolution is a spiritual phenomenon, though it may and usually does deny the reality of the spirit.'[1]

'But it would be a mistake to think that the evil (in revolutions) is caused by revolutions; to suppose this would be as superficial as to imagine that revolutions are manifestations of justice and righteousness and establish a perfect social order. The cause of evil is the failure to realize the good. The existence of evil is the fault of the good. This is one of the paradoxes of ethics. The Good has formulated its lofty principles but failed to realize them in life. Thus Christianity has proclaimed the highest principles of life—love, brotherhood, spiritual freedom. But the Christians have succeeded in turning them into mere rhetoric and an edifying convention. . . . If the Good does not bring about its own realization and establish justice and righteousness, evil takes this task upon itself. Such are the dialectics of good and evil. A revolution takes place. A revolution always means that there had been no creative spiritual forces working to improve and regenerate life.'[2]

Berdyaev treats revolution when it has broken out in some respects analogously to war. Once revolution has come it must be accepted and lived through. The evil which comes out in such upheavals is not created by revolution. It has been created by the rottenness of the old regime. The revolution releases it. He is absolutely emphatic on the point that the disease of revolution cannot be cured by counter-revolutionaries and reactionaries. He has never moved from this position.

The main problem for Berdyaev when he wrote *The Destiny of Man* was that once revolution has been successful we get a form of society which in practice means regimentation, the suppression of the freedom of the human spirit. Marxists, of course, hold that after a period of 'the dictatorship of proletariat' and the establishment of a socialist basis of

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 207 (263). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 208 (264).

society, the conditions for greater personal freedom are secured. Berdyaev regarded this as unwarrantable optimism and a failure to understand the true quality of the human spirit. How could necessity be the mother of freedom? Yet in later works,[1] in considering the particular case of Soviet Russia, he was always ready to do justice to developments which gave indication of greater freedom. Such, for example, are the humanist tendency in Soviet education with its tremendous emphasis on the value of nineteenth-century literature, both Russian and foreign, as also the Christian humanist tradition of the Russian Church, which plays a more important part in Soviet life as a result of better relations between Church and State. While, therefore, Berdyaev held that the problem of personal freedom (particularly in the realm of creativity) was far from solution in Soviet Russia, he gave full value to everything which was indicative of growth in liberty. He was also painfully aware of how post-war Anglo-American policy towards the U.S.S.R. hindered and thwarted the development of freedom by re-enforcing suspicion and the need for internal cohesion.

We have spoken of the concrete problems of the State and personal freedom, of war and of revolution which are the destiny of States and put such tragic and complex choices before the Christian. One other major concrete moral problem remains to be considered in this chapter, which also affects deeply the person and the community. It is the problem of sex, of love, marriage and the family.

The subject is one of profound difficulty and complexity. 'The most intimate aspect of personality, which simply cannot be judged from outside and of which the person is shy of speaking to anyone at all, is the most organized and regulated socially. This is due to the fact that sexual life results in the birth of children, the continuation of the human race. Something intimately personal and absolutely non-social has social consequences. . . . The result is that no other

[1] E.g. in *Towards a New Epoch.*

sphere of life is so vitiated by hypocrisy and cowardice.'[1]

For the 'herd-man' sex is something purely physiological with either social or anti-social results, according to whether it finds expression in the family or in the 'loose living' which is one of the marks of a society in decay.

But love is intimate and personal, even a third person is an intruder, let alone society. It is a subject about which one might have expected the theologians of the religion of love to have had a good deal to say. In practice 'all that has been said about marriage and the family in patristic literature and by Christian theologians generally is on an extraordinarily low level. The treatise of St. Methodius of Pathara, *The feast of the ten virgins*, is pitiful in its banality. It is partly a description of physiological processes and partly a praise of virginity. . . . The treatise of St. Augustine is so bourgeois and conventional in spirit that it scarcely bears reading.'[2] Of this and other works on sex and marriage Berdyaev remarked that they 'strongly remind one of treatises on cattle-breeding. Personal love, personal destiny are completely ignored by those writers.'[3]

The whole subject of the Sacrament of Marriage is pitifully obscure. Even the *matter* of the sacrament is ill-defined. The formality and objectivity of the way in which the Church goes about the celebration of this sacrament are simply amazing. Any couple who are formally free can be joined together and 'marriage constantly turns out to be a trap in which people are caught either by being forced into it, or through mercenary motives, or through thoughtlessness and passing infatuation. To prohibit divorce, as the Roman Catholic Church in particular insists on doing, is one of the most cruel things that can be done to human beings, forcing them to live in an atmosphere of falsity, hypocrisy and tyranny and to profane their most intimate feelings. Marriage as a sacrament, a mystical marriage, is by its very meaning eternal and indissoluble. This is an

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 232 (294). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 233 (295).
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 233 (295).

absolute truth. But most marriages have no mystical meaning and have nothing to do with eternity. The Christian consciousness must recognize this.'[1]

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, of course, divorce has always been allowed in certain specified cases, including desertion, which leaves the door open for putting an end to marital unhappiness at least by flight. The Orthodox Church remarries the petitioner and in certain cases even the so-called 'guilty' party can be remarried after penance. To Berdyaev this was far better than giving a formal, indestructible sanctity to what has in fact become an oppressive sham. The appeal of the western theologians to the words of Christ on the subject of the indissolubility of marriage he regarded as 'particularly unconvincing'. Christians have never given a legalistic interpretation to Christ's absolute directives on the subject of wealth and property. Christ said 'lend hoping for nothing' and the Church has for centuries supported capitalism, the very essence of which is 'lend hoping for something'. With regard to killing in capital punishment or in war, the taking of oaths, or judging our fellowmen, the Church excommunicates no soul for not obeying literally Christ's 'absolute' commands. Yet of what Christ said about marriage Christians (at least in the West) have made an absolutely binding legal decree.

'Marriage is eternal and indissoluble, but only if its essence is eternal and not social, if it brings about the realization of the androgynous image of man and is a union of those who are truly "intended" for each other. In other words, the indissolubility of marriage is an ontological and not a social truth. . . . In that case, however, the fundamental characteristic of true marriage and true love is freedom. All social compulsion and tyranny deprive wedlock of the mystical inner meaning which is found in love alone. But love is not a social fact that can be fixed and determined from outside, it eludes the observation both of the State and of the Church as a social organization.'[2]

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 234 (296). [2] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 235 (297, 298).

True love which binds two persons together comes out of the eternal. True love is a breaking-forth of eternity. But the way in which the sanctity of marriage is discussed in the Church press or in Church organizations and conferences is hideously formal. The contract is made, the holy estate is entered upon, the service said, the books are signed, and of course like all contracts in civilized society it must be kept. The parties must be held to it under pains and penalties, and so the 'sanctity' of marriage is maintained!

All this is sheer legalism and nominalism. We should be glad that it is being challenged. The freer atmosphere of today cannot touch the real sanctity of marriage. On the contrary, it is in freedom alone that the true sanctity of eternal love is revealed. To talk about the procreation of children, as if that were the primary purpose of marriage, is to be false, spiritually and psychologically.

The night my father got me
His mind was not on me,
He did not plague his fancy
To muse if I should be
The son you see.[1]

'The meaning and purpose of the union between man and woman is to be found not in the continuation of the species or its social import but in personality, in its striving for the completeness and fulness of life and in its longing for eternity.[2] . . . No one longs for physical sexual union because he wants to beget children. It is an invention of the conscious mind. There is more truth in Schopenhauer's contention that the genius of the race laughs at the individual who is the victim of erotic illusions, and turns him into its own instrument.'[3]

[1] *Last Poems*, A. E. Housman.

[2] See Solovyov's *The Meaning of Love*, which Berdyaev deems 'the best book that has ever been written on the subject'. (English translation, published by Geoffrey Bles.)

[3] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 240 (304).

Sex in woman is far deeper, far more important, and more full of genius than it is in man. In woman sex is deeply associated with motherhood, and motherhood is not simply a question of child-bearing. Motherhood is the protective and sustaining principle of life which enters into all true love. It is a remarkable thing that the only really profound teaching in Christianity about sex is that connected with the cult of virginity, which in its turn is linked with the Virgin Mother of Christ. Virginity is wholeness and lack of slavery to the dividedness of sex life in our fallen world. The Virginity of our Blessed Lady is fruitful Virginity, she is Virgin and Mother. But here traditional Christianity has stopped short. It has nothing to tell us of how true love between man and woman can deliver human personality from its dividedness, how true love completes and integrates personality. 'Love must conquer the old matter of sex and reveal the new, in which the union of man and woman will mean not the loss but the realization of virginity, i.e. wholeness. It is only from this fiery point that the transfiguration of the world can begin.'[1]

We end here our outline of Berdyaev's thought on three concrete ethical problems. Whether we agree or not with his conclusions we cannot deny his power to stimulate thought on these subjects. He was an outspoken critic of the convention, hypocrisy, legalism and failure of creativeness which disfigure all churches, making them impotent in face of a crumbling world order, to which in an evil moment they tied themselves. But Eastern Orthodoxy to which Berdyaev belonged, in spite of a long record of subservience to the State, is in many ways freer than Romanism and less imprisoned by rationalism or a too individualistic pietism than are the Protestants. It may be argued that Berdyaev is not typical of Orthodoxy, yet it is also quite impossible to imagine him inside any other church. When we reflect on the fact that the

[1] *The Destiny of Man*, p. 242 (306). See also on this whole subject of sex and marriage *Slavery and Freedom*, Part III, 3 (A), *The Erotic Lure and Slavery*.

Orthodox are not tied to any particular system of philosophy and on the varied relationships between the Church and the new forms of State in eastern European countries, a wide range of possibilities seems to be opening before us. Was Berdyaev a portent? Perhaps the East will yet show us fresh creative thinking in the sphere of ethics, as well as examples of new types of Christian character in a situation which will continue for a considerable period to provide surprises both to the Western world and to Western assumptions.

X

ON POLITICAL THEORIES AND FORMS

'I am primarily a philosopher and a moralist. Even when I write an article which seems to deal with politics, I write it not from a political point of view but from that of the philosophy of history. It is quite incorrect to evaluate my philosophy from the point of view of advantage or of harm to Communism. I am a fanatical defender of the ideas of freedom and personality as religious, philosophical and moral principles and I will defend them to the end of my days. I want up to the day of my death to be able to speak the truth even if it be regarded as harmful. I am not a man of any one camp. I am outside camps. I want to be free as a thinker. I want as far as my strength will allow me to be a representative of the spirit and not of "interests". Such a type of person is sometimes badly needed.'[1]

It is absolutely essential to grasp first the basis of Berdyaev's thought and his method of approach if we are to understand his judgments on the forces making history today. Berdyaev was the religious philosopher and the prophet. It was from the depths of the spirit that he looked out upon the contemporary scene. It is from this angle of approach that he concludes 'all under sin', yet at the same time reaffirms man in God and assesses the strength and weakness, the truth and falsehood of such things as capitalism, communism, nationalism or fascism.

Failure to appreciate the line of Berdyaev's approach has led to many false estimates of his significance.

There are firstly the Marxist critics of Berdyaev, who, because he put his finger on the errors of Marxist Communism, are prepared to class him with the typical bourgeois

[1] Extract from a letter of Berdyaev dated May 7th, 1947, to the present writer's wife, Xenia Mikhailovna Fielding Clarke.

pessimists, the leaders of decadent tendencies in modern writing, the 'escapists', and those generally who retire to some absolute and perfectionist platform from which they can survey the naughty world about them, washing their hands of any responsibility for creative action.

Such critics fail to see that while Berdyaev was quite certain that his own personal role was that of a religious philosopher with a duty to declare the truth, whether it was 'useful' or 'embarrassing', he never suggested that this was the role of *all* intelligent Christians. His call was never an indiscriminate 'come out of her my people'. What he was saying was this—get down below the surface, get below the self-righteousness of all the contending forces, see their strength and weakness in the light of Christ, and then find in Christ the creative energy to play your own particular part according to your gifts and opportunities in the task of world-transfiguration. It is quite false to assert that because Berdyaev saw his own vocation as that of communicating inspiration and insight that, therefore, he wanted all Christians to retire to a spiritual deep shelter. On the contrary, his call was to Christian action in the world, action springing from the depths but at the surface.

It is untrue to place Berdyaev among political reactionaries because he criticizes so severely certain aspects of Marxism and certain activities of Communists. This is to ignore completely that his criticisms of capitalism on spiritual grounds are even more severe, and that empirically he regarded capitalism as a system doomed to destruction.

It is for this last reason also that a completely opposite type of people who claim to hail Berdyaev as a great thinker and religious force have missed his significance. To belittle or ignore the political *consequences* of Berdyaev's prophetic outlook is as grave an error as to label him a reactionary. Over and over again his writings of all periods, produced against the background of the constantly shifting situations of the history of the last thirty years, Berdyaev faced Christians with the challenge that the only 'answer' to Marxian

Communism is something better, in a situation where capitalism is on its death-bed and liberal democracy 'gangrenous'. One sometimes has the feeling that neither Berdyaev's enemies nor many of those who claimed him as a beacon-light were willing to face truthfully his judgments on contemporary history. It is as false to call him a reactionary and a pessimist as it is to say that, because his approach was not political, we ourselves can escape the heat and burden of the political and social struggles of our day.

Berdyaev took us to the heart of the thing, but he never expected us to sit around warming our hands at his fireside. He took us to the source of new creative energy, to the God-Man Christ; he took us to the point where we could see below the surface aspect of the movement of our time that we might act creatively.

He himself was an exile, but not by choice. If there had been room in the new Russia for his philosophy he would have stayed. But while there is freedom for theology in Soviet Russia, there is as yet no opportunity for expounding a *philosophy* other than dialectical materialism. So Berdyaev did not return. The position of an exile, particularly in a country enjoying as much intellectual freedom as France, certainly gave opportunities for the development of Berdyaev's thought, which enabled him to give to the world judgments and valuations of the contemporary scene which had remarkable independence. The fact, too, that he was a layman and not a priest gave him in practice a freedom which those who occupy officially the pulpits of churches can rarely enjoy. What Berdyaev had to offer to the world was conditioned by a unique independence of circumstances that enabled a fearless and absolutely truthful mind to move without hindrance towards its goals. If he had become entangled with 'movements' he could not have given us what he has. Nevertheless, it would be a betrayal of all that he has given if we were to escape his judgments by writing him off as a reactionary (because he was not a Marxist), or

as non-political or irrelevant to the political (because his message was primarily spiritual and prophetic).

(1 *Judgment on Capitalism*

The original sin of capitalism is its atheism. 'Modern capitalist civilization is essentially atheistic and hostile to the idea of God. The crime of killing God must be laid at its door. . . . It is "the spiritual phenomenon of the annihilation of spirituality".'[1] The god that capitalism worships is an idol. 'The useful and practically effective god of capitalism cannot be the true God. He can easily be unmasked.'[2] The capitalist order of society has two roots. *Spiritually* it is the child of the Renaissance, which freed man from the theocratic claims of a church-directed civilization, which liberated man's creative faculties, which set the individual free from many established ideas of God and affirmed his individuality as against the church-state and state-church hierarchy of the feudal world. *Economically* capitalism is production for profit rather than for use and involves usury, the breeding of money by money and for money, against which the best thought of Christianity fought a losing battle. Spiritually and economically, in spite of all the pieties of Calvinist traders, capitalism must begin by deifying the individual (*not* the person), and end by worshipping the Golden Calf. God ceases to be *the* motive, even human need is a secondary consideration—profit becomes the be-all and end-all. Berdyaev was quite clear that this was a godless and atheistical system. 'The divorce of economy from life, the exaltation of economics as the high principle of life, the technical interpretation of life and the fundamental capitalist principle of profit transform man's economic life into a fiction. The capitalist system is sowing the seed of its own destruction by sapping *the spiritual foundation* of man's economic life.'[3]

[1] *The Meaning of History*, p. 218. [2] *The Meaning of History*, p. 219.
[3] *Ibid.* (present writer's italics).

The churches, by buttressing this godless system and anointing it with holy oil, have simply been spreaders of atheism. The *roots* of atheism in Russia, for example, have nothing to do with Karl Marx. Its *roots* are moral and pre-Marxian.[1] It is the revolt of the spirit against what is anti-spiritual in the Church and in the order of society. The same phenomenon may be observed in the West, where the long reign of soulless capitalism and the terror of the wars produced by it have made millions feel that there is no God, only brute force, mechanism, greed and selfishness. The decay of Christianity in the last few centuries is in no way a mystery. It is a perfect running commentary on the words of Christ: 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' The West has increasingly opted for Mammon and dwindling church statistics register its effects upon the service of God.

Closely connected with the essentially atheistic nature of capitalism is its dehumanization of man. 'Capitalism is above all anti-personal, the power of anonymity over human life. Capitalism uses man as goods for sale.'[2] 'Production does not exist for man, but man for production. This is why it is possible to destroy or dump into the sea huge quantities of grain for purely economic interests at a moment when millions are starving. . . . Man is crushed by a vast, shapeless, faceless and nameless power, money.'[3]

What Berdyaev learned as a Christian coincided with what he learned as a young man from Marx. As *The Communist Manifesto* put it a hundred years ago, the bourgeoisie 'has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value.'[4]

The judgment upon capitalism is that it destroys both

[1] See especially V. G. Belinsky's *Selected Philosophical Works.*

[2] *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (S.C.M.), p. 15.

[3] *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, p. 80. Published in English 1935; but destruction of food in a starving world still happens!

[4] *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Lawrence & Wishart), p. 12.

God and man, reduces both to something meaningless, makes Mammon the measure of all things, subordinates man to the machine, to technics. Berdyaev had no hope for capitalism. For him it was spiritually and economically false and played out. He was more concerned about the future, how to cleanse socialism and communism from the spiritual diseases of atheism and anti-humanism which capitalism has inevitably bequeathed to them.

(2) *Judgment on Fascism and Nazism*

Berdyaev's approach to Fascism and Nazism is not that of the Marxists. In other words, he does not speak of them simply as smoke-screens for the more aggressive phase of monopoly-capitalist dictatorship. One must suppose that a former disciple of Marx could not be unaware of the economic roots of Fascism, but that is not the aspect of which Berdyaev spoke. In any case, the spiritual and economic evaluations of Fascism and Nazism are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they complement one another.

Berdyaev sooner than most other Christian thinkers saw the illusions of liberalism upon which Fascism and Nazism both thrived. In 1935 he was already writing of 'false, decomposing liberty'. He saw clearly the fatal dialectic of liberty under capitalism by which free competition must end in monopoly, the survival of the strongest wolf. He also realized long before most observers the futility of formal political freedom when unaccompanied by economic freedom—that is, freedom to work, to eat, to have a home.

It was against the background of false 'ideal' freedoms and their essential hypocrisy and of the dehumanization of man by capitalism that Berdyaev saw the significance of Fascism and Nazism. They were answers to a spiritual as well as an economic need. They gave to dehumanized man a spurious *collective* worth. He pointed out that Fascism, as a mysticism of the State, however horrible, is less disgusting than Nazism, which is a racial mysticism. Again 'from the

Christian or the purely human viewpoint, the race theory is much worse than the class theory. It carries dehumanization much deeper than the idea of class. According to the Marxist theory a man of the moribund bourgeois class still has hopes of salvation by changing his class consciousness; he always has the possibility of adopting the Marxist theory and becoming a communist or even a people's commissar. According to the race theory there is no hope of salvation whatever; if you were born a Jew or a Negro, no change of consciousness or belief can save you, you are doomed. . . . This is absolute determinism, fatalism.'[1] In another passage in this same book Berdyaev called German racialism 'collective religious insanity'. He saw Nazism as a force destroying all that was finest in the spiritual and cultural inheritance of Germany. It was especially their spiritual falseness and the immense impetus which Nazism and Fascism gave to the dehumanizing process in western Europe that moved Berdyaev to condemn them utterly. Auschwitz, Maidanek, and the barbarities of the invading Nazis in Soviet Russia underlined in rivers of blood the judgment that Berdyaev had passed long before. 'It is a reversion from the category of culture and history to that of zoology.'[2] It is also the deliberate *paganizing* of what was once Christian. Modern industrial civilization, having uprooted men from the land and broken so many of the old ties of blood and kinship by forcing human beings into the moulds created by mass-production blue-prints, has given rise to new hunger and thirst after such elemental things as blood and soil. Nazism gave a spurious and vulgarized satisfaction to this hunger for primitive nature-gods, and dressed up the process in pseudo-scientific racial categories.

In Spain Fascism has taken yet another form, different alike from the German and Italian varieties. In an article published in *Christendom* in June 1939 Berdyaev remorselessly exposed the alliance between *official* Roman Catholicism and Franco (while bearing tribute to those Roman Catholics

[1] *The Fate of Man and the Modern World*, pp. 101–2. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

in Spain and France who refused to support him). The article is of importance for three reasons. Firstly, it is one of the most 'political' pronouncements Berdyaev ever made. Secondly, it expresses with the greatest clearness a very important idea for Christians found elsewhere in Berdyaev's writings, namely, the swindle of anti-communistic fronts and his disgust at all alliances between the Church and bourgeois capitalism. He finds the idea of a 'holy war' against Communism revolting. 'To be an ideological opponent of Communism in no way implies membership of the anti-communist front. . . . A stupendous blackmail is at present taking place in international politics on the basis of combatting the communist menace.' Thirdly, the article is important from quite another angle because it reveals so clearly Berdyaev's rigid integrity and truthfulness. For example, while he denounced 'the terrible past' of Spanish Catholicism and what he called 'the repulsive and loathsome' conduct of all but a few of the Spanish bishops in their support of Franco, he declaimed equally against 'religious persecution, the shooting of priests and the burning of churches' by certain sections of those who opposed Franco. He is fair, as we have said, to the Roman Catholics who did not follow the lead of most of their bishops, and he severely castigates sections of his own Church (the Orthodox) for their support of anti-semitism and of Hitler. Berdyaev hated self-righteousness and lofty moral superiority, and it was his constant habit when he had denounced something with which he was not personally associated to administer a stinging rebuke to some error on his own side. This is a very rare virtue in these days when self-criticism is feared even by truthful people lest it serve the enemy's cause.

But, of course, the main importance of this *Christendom* article is its exposure of any form of Fascism which seeks to clothe itself with Church approval. Hitler and Mussolini made *concordats* with the Church, but what happened in Spain was of a different nature. In view of the situation after the second World War it is imperative to realize quite

clearly Berdyaev's extreme repugnance to any attempt to give Fascism a coat of ecclesiastical whitewash. For Berdyaev this was a real blasphemy, a betrayal of the Church from within, a spiritual obliquity which no wickedness of Communists could ever excuse.

To sum up. The judgment of Berdyaev on all forms of Fascism is a spiritual judgment. Whether Fascism is the deifying of the State or of a race, or again the sanctifying of dictatorship by decking it out in ecclesiastical embroidery, it is *spiritually* to be totally rejected. Fascism is but a prolongation of the practical atheism of capitalist society and its dehumanization of the masses. It is only rendered doubly repulsive by the pseudo-legends, myths or ecclesiastical patronage by which its essential hideousness is masked.

(3) *Judgment on Communism*

We propose, in this section, to deal with Communism in general, reserving Berdyaev's judgment on Soviet Russia to the last section. As the Czech Professor Hromadka reminded the World Council of Churches recently, a distinction has 'to be made between the concepts (categories) of Communism, the Soviet regime and the Russian people. . . . No matter how closely associated they may be, they are not identical.'[1] The fact that in so many of his books Berdyaev had Russian Communism chiefly in view must not blind us to his general observations on the subject.

Berdyaev, as we know, was in his student days a Marxist of an 'unorthodox' kind. His Marxism, however, sufficiently resembled the official article to secure his banishment by the tsarist government. Moreover, towards the end of his life he could still say, 'I value Karl Marx very highly.' After returning from that first exile in the north he became firstly an idealist in philosophy and finally returned to the

[1] *The Church and the International Disorder*, p. 130. The whole of Prof. Hromadka's contribution merits the closest study on the part of all who wish to come to grips with the relation between Communism and Christianity.

Church: though perhaps 'freedom has brought me to Christ' is a better phrase for what then happened.

Why positively did Berdyaev value Marx? A list of evaluations in *The Russian Revolution* gives a concise answer, and though this book appeared even in English as long ago as 1931, the list held good for Berdyaev to the end.[1]

But firstly we note two negative truths which dialectically have a positive significance. There is communist 'criticism of the falsehood of *bourgeois* capitalist civilization, of its contradictions and diseases. Then there is the truth of its denouncement of a degenerate, decadent, pseudo-Christianity, adapted to the interests of the bourgeois epoch of history.'

Berdyaev then passes on to the positive things in Communism. He puts first a planned economy, the conscious ordering of life for the benefit of all, rather than the abandonment of the satisfaction of man's needs to a free play of interests. Secondly, Communism is right when it asserts that society should be a society of people who work, and that culture should be widely shared (however much that may involve a lowering of cultural standards in the first instance). Thirdly, Communism is right to demand the ending of the exploitation of man by man and the termination of the class-struggle by such a reordering of society that 'classes' (in the Marxian sense) are eliminated. To insist that philosophy should embrace the whole of life and integrate politics, economics and culture is in principle sound. Communism is right, too, in demanding a world organization which would eliminate 'the capitalist drive to war'. (This last idea is expressed much more clearly in Berdyaev's later writings)[2]. 'The strength of Communism,' he concluded, 'lies in its having a complete design for reconstructing the world's life, in which theory and practice, thought and will are one. . . .

[1] p. 77. What is out of date in this little book are of course the references to the militant anti-God campaign in Russia and the deductions Berdyaev made from it.

[2] E.g. 'The capitalist order inevitably gives rise to war.' *The Divine and the Human*, p. 102.

For Communism subjects the life of individual man to a great, world-wide, super-individual end. It goes back again to the concept of life as a service—an idea completely lost in the de-Christianized, *bourgeois* liberal epoch.'[1]

But what is to be said on the other side? Here the judgment again is spiritual. Economically and politically Berdyaev had no quarrel with Communism. In one of his last works, *Towards a New Epoch*, he said that one must have lost all sense of right and wrong if one regards capitalism as more Christian than Communism. It was after all on ideological and not politico-economic grounds that he was compelled originally to leave Russia.[2]

What is false in Communism, says Berdyaev, is its spirit, and this has even disfigured its truth. 'Its untruth is its rejection of God.' From this comes its denial of the person. 'The social collectivity which receives divine honours steps into the place of both God and man. The centre of consciousness is shifted. There is no more personal conscience, personal reason, no more personal freedom. There is only collective conscience, reason, freedom.'[3]

It is to be noticed that in his earlier works Berdyaev, in discussing communist philosophy, emphasized its determinism, and of course the early Russian Marxists stressed precisely this aspect. As we have already seen, the failure of 'narodnik' socialism in Russia in the 'eighties drove those who wanted revolutionary changes to emphasize everything in Marxism which spoke of the inexorable working out of economic forces towards a classless society.

But, in point of fact, rigid determinism is a Marxist heresy, and in his later works Berdyaev gave more prominence to the dynamic and voluntarist elements in Marxism. After all Engels himself had rebutted the charge that Marxism is a doctrine of the complete determination of man by economics. He said such a view made nonsense of what he and Marx had been trying to set forth.

[1] *The Russian Revolution*, p. 79 (Sheed & Ward).
[2] See Introduction to *Slavery and Freedom*. [3] *The Russian Revolution*, p. 83.

One cannot, therefore, regard Marxian atheism as a necessary deduction from a supposed doctrine of rigid determinism. The Marxists are atheists on principle, but the real philosophical foundation of their atheism becomes more obscure the more one studies it.

On the practical plane the relations of Marxian atheism to Christianity have varied strangely. From Lenin's writings one would have gathered that frontal attacks on religion were misguided, except within the communist party, and that even there tact was essential! Lenin also dealt with the problem of how to handle Christians inside the communist party and even priests! Yet the League of the Militant Godless and its magazines attacked religion in the most blatant way. Since the League was wound up the relations between Church and State in Russia have been uniformly friendly. In other countries under communist control the relations between the churches and the governments have varied, but Christianity is openly practised in all. The Lambeth Conference of 1948 bore witness to the presence of Christians inside the communist parties of different countries, in spite of ideological incompatibilities between Christianity and Marxism. The theorists on both side are sure that the two cannot be reconciled, yet every day they are in practical life being reconciled.

But Berdyaev himself held that the Marxian philosophy of dialectical materialism can never be harmonized with Christianity, that it sets out to explain the world without God and is therefore essentially godless. He always insisted that, though Communism as an economic order was superior to capitalism, its spiritual falsity would always be its undoing. The attempt of Communism to impose a world-view and to dictate canons in the artistic and literary spheres was bound to quench the creative spirit. Berdyaev knew, for example, that there was no room for him in Soviet Russia, not, of course, because he was a Christian (for there are tens of millions of practising Christians in the U.S.S.R.), but because he desired to work out and to propagate his own

philosophy. It was this lack of scope for creative freedom which he attacked. The external regimentation of everyday affairs, inevitable in an age of revolutionary change as it is in war, he was always prepared to accept. It was not bourgeois freedoms that he prized, but the freedom to express a world-view which was not that of dialectical materialism. It was this lack of freedom which excluded God and a true conception of man as a 'person' that he felt to be the cardinal error of Communism and the source of its mistakes and cruelties on a practical level.

Yet other Christians have taken a more favourable view of dialectical materialism. Berdyaev himself admitted in his later writings that the Marxists attribute to matter many of the qualities of spirit. Lenin himself said, 'mind is that through which matter thinks.' Archbishop William Temple asserted that if materialism really became dialectical it must lead us (by its own law of progress through contradiction) to theism. In *Nature, Man and God*, the Archbishop points out that when Marxists say that *in time* the material is prior to the spiritual every realist Christian philosopher would agree with them. ('First that which is natural then that which is spiritual.')

In places Berdyaev also admitted that Marxism contained contradictory elements within itself. The class-struggle, for instance, is not just economic warfare—'class' has an 'axiological' as well as an economic significance for Marx. The final triumph of the proletariat can be expressed in terms of value and moral worth. Furthermore, if the Marxist view of history be true, if history is leading us towards a society from which injustice and exploitation are banished, where 'people can lead full physical and *spiritual* lives',[1] is there not a spiritual element in Marx, is there not even 'a divinity which shapes our ends'? Indeed, Tiran Nersoyan's *A Christian Approach to Communism* follows this line of thought out to the end and produces a complete recon-

[1] See *The Aims of the Communist Party*, p. 6, an official pamphlet of the British Communist Party. (Present writer's italics.)

ciliation philosophically between dialectical materialism and Christian realism.

We conclude therefore that the last word has yet to be said on the subject of Marxian atheism. That Marxists are atheists, that from atheism wrong evaluations of man follow, and that from this wrong conduct towards man can result is true. But a counter-statement can be made about Christians. Christians are theists and from correct belief in God should follow correct behaviour towards man. But what of the bloody wars of religion, the history of the Inquisition and of the numerous cruel and inhuman persecutions for which Christians have been responsible? The Church is on very equivocal and dangerous ground when it asserts that the evils committed by Communists are the fruit of *atheism*. The retort lies too easily at hand. Moreover, Berdyaev himself, though his philosophy was that of Christian existentialism, never forgot the value of the dialectical approach which he had learned from Hegel and Marx. One of his last works, *The Divine and the Human*, is indeed an essay in existential dialectics, as its Russian title shows. Now if we approach atheism dialectically it reveals itself as a negative movement in the development of theism. 'We must recognize as forerunners of the era of the spirit not only those who deliberately regard themselves as Christians, we must include also those who do not call themselves Christians and even those who are anti-Christian in their thought. The fact is that even the fight against God may be a way of serving God. . . . Moreover, there is an important element in messianic consciousness in socialism too, for all that it is associated nowadays with atheism.'[1] While therefore the reconciliation of Christianity with dialectical materialism (such as that outlined by Tiran Nersoyan) was not in Berdyaev's view possible, he could approach Marxian atheism dialectically and in so far as this line is pursued it makes certain practical relations between Christians and Communists possible.

[1] *The Divine and the Human*, p. 189. See also Belinsky's *Letter to Gogol*, a typical quotation from which is in the footnote to p. 46 of this present book.

In *Towards a New Epoch* (a later work even than *The Divine and the Human*) Berdyaev condemned Christians for 'hurling anathemas' at the Communists. Once again he denounced anti-Communism and Christian entanglements therewith. It is the role of the Christian to bring a *regenerative* contribution to Communism. The 'darkness' in Communism is not something to which Christians must adapt themselves, neither must they be morally superior about it. They must illuminate it. The future in any case, and rightly so, belonged to the working class, thought Berdyaev, and some form of collectivism would replace capitalism. Yet as a believer in the spirit and man's basic freedom he denied that the future was *rigidly* determined.[1] Christianity should give to the world a creative solution, which, while it included the social and economic truths of Communism, would avoid its spiritual errors and so go beyond Communism. He believed not in anti-Communism with its corrupt alliance between decaying capitalism and a stale, backward-looking, static Christianity, but in the forces of the spirit, a new outpouring of prophecy within the Church, which would lead not to some further instalment of purely nominal Christian 'civilization', but a real transfiguration of the world and the coming of a new Christ-centred humanity.

(4) *Judgment on Russia*

Berdyaev held that Communism in Russia must be seen not merely asthe application of Marxist principles, but also as the working out of specifically Russian tendencies. The Russian messianic idea, the Russian dream of fraternity, the sense of a Russian vocation to the whole world, the desire for an all-embracing view of life and an all-embracing faith—all these have gone into the making of Russian Communism. Russians, moreover, have never had Roman ideas of property and this has made the practice of common-ownership easier in Russia than it is in

[1] For that matter Stalin himself has said that it is men who make history.

the more possessive and individualist West. Russian Communism for Berdyaev always had a certain spiritual significance as the transposition into a Marxist key of certain basic Russian themes.

He kept in close touch with what was going on in Russia, and therefore his statements of fact about the U.S.S.R. must always be checked against the date at which he was writing. Observations made before or after the Stalin Constitution of 1936 must obviously differ. The winding-up of the Godless League, already mentioned, was another landmark.

However spiritually opposed he was to certain aspects of Communism, Berdyaev gave full weight to every development in the Soviet Union which he believed was for the better. He praised the property relations established by the Constitution of 1936 as the best in existence because they allowed to individuals the private property needed for a fully personal life without permitting property to become the basis for exploiting the labour power of others. He welcomed all that was done to encourage love of country and the appreciation of Russian culture—the sort of changes that are reflected in the teaching of history in Soviet schools. He was especially impressed by what he refers to as Soviet neo-humanism. The efforts being made to educate modern Russia through the medium of the great humanist literature of the nineteenth century was to his mind a most hopeful sign. The cult of Pushkin in Soviet Russia is remarkable. The great literature of other countries is also studied; Dickens and Shakespeare are nowhere held in higher honour than in the U.S.S.R.

Above all, the increasing freedom and facilities of all kinds accorded to the Russian Church have made possible a great revival in religion.[1]

[1] See chapter I of *The Truth about Religion in Russia* (Hutchinson) where the leaders of the Russian Church emphasize the spiritual advantage of the ending of the old connection with the tsarist State and of the achievement of more 'apostolic' conditions for church life.

Reference to these changes as well as to spheres where further changes are essential are dealt with in some of the articles which go to make up *Towards a New Epoch*. His two sharpest criticisms were directed against the attempts to give directives to artists, writers and the subordination of personal morality to the tactics and strategy of political struggle. Once again we see that it is from the spiritual standpoint that the judgment is made and that he never omitted to judge the West by equally exacting criteria.

There can be no doubt that the 'cold war' between Russia and the Anglo-Saxon powers weighed very heavily indeed upon Berdyaev in his last years. He loved his country, believed in her mission and felt that in the making of the new epoch of history lying beyond the death of capitalism Russia had a unique contribution to make, more especially because she is less encumbered by past history than the West. But to make this contribution adequately she required greater internal freedom for creative thought. The attitude of the West towards Russia after the second world war moved him both to sorrow and indignation. Russia's immense sacrifices in defeating Hitlerism seemed to have been forgotten, while anti-communist propaganda had the most disastrous repercussions spiritually within Russia, for it closed the ranks on the ideological front in the U.S.S.R.

But to the end Berdyaev had faith and hope. In spite of everything he believed that man's basic freedom remains and the unquenchable resources of the spirit are always open to him. The future is not predestined. Somehow the divine idea for Russia will be realized by a divine-human activity, and in Russia a new prophetic, religious consciousness is being prepared. It is spiritual suicide to look back. The Church must look forward and go forward. She must cease to be content with blessing the *status quo*, but turn her gaze to the future fortified by her insight into the present. The Soviet period of Russian history is not something to be

gone back upon, even were it possible to do so. Rather its achievements must be recognized, its faults corrected, and all that is positive carried forward into that new era of the spirit, which is to come both for Russia and for the world.

XI

VENTURE IN ASSESSMENT

The acid test to be applied to the work of any personalist[1] philosopher is how far it succeeds in awakening the person who reads it. An imaginative work of art has been defined as one which arouses the imagination of the beholder. The very essence of creativity is that it should stir creation. Now Berdyaev was a personalist philosopher and his theme creativity as a divine-human process arising from the unfathomed depths of freedom.

Berdyaev's philosophy is essentially *his* philosophy, *his* thinking, and a Russian Orthodox thinking at that. His philosophy is not a system based on concepts, abstractions or formal logic. It has its contradictions, its obscurities, its discontinuities. But more fundamental still is its inner consistency, the consistency of the character, of a real person, not of a scheme of thought imprisoned by rigid categories, by some immanent evolutionary process or by hard objectified facts isolated from the knowing subject. There are and there will be many disputes as to Berdyaev's meaning on a variety of points, and the liveliness of these disputes and the sharpness of our disagreements is a testimony to his vitality. But no divergencies of opinion on particular points can obscure for us the main direction of the stream of Berdyaev's thought. It is the philosophy of the free spirit. It is the thinking of a man who in freedom found Christ and whom Christ in turn released. From Kant, Hegel and Marx he had

[1] Berdyaev was once asked the question, 'What is existentialism?' To which he replied, 'L'existentialisme, c'est moi.' Berdyaev can be called a *Christian* existentialist. I prefer to use the word 'personalist', because at the present time for English people existentialism means the philosophy of J. P. Sartre, decadent pessimism, which Berdyaev strongly attacked. (See, e.g., *Towards a New Epoch*, p. 95 ff.)

learned much, but the characteristic development of his thought starts from the time when he stood fast in the freedom with which Christ had set him free.

'Freedom has brought me to Christ and I know of no other path leading to Him.'[1] However much tormented by problems Berdyaev remained to the end of his life, however much his thought developed, Christian experience had released the man and the thinker. The knowing subject, the 'I', had found Christ in freedom. This is the distinguishing mark of Berdyaev's personalism. It starts with a divine-human encounter. It is as concrete as primitive Christianity. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' 'That which we have seen and handled.' 'To me to live is Christ'—these are the six monosyllables of basic Christianity.

What gives Berdyaev's thought its inner consistency is that it is rooted in this experience of Christ. It is this which prevents his personalism from ever degenerating into a false subjectivism. There was always the 'I' and the 'Thou'—and the 'Thou' was primarily Christ in Whom and for Whom are (literally and concretely) all things, in Whom all is summed up, in Whom objectification, atomization, pluralism, dualism, monism are all transcended. True personalism is the reverse of being shut up with one's own subjectivity. Personalism implies the 'I', the 'Thou' and the 'We'. *Christian* personalism implies Christ 'in Whom all things consist'.[2]

Of Berdyaev it may be said that he is the most literally Christian of all Christian thinkers, for Christianity did not start as a philosophy but as 'the Way'.[3] It begins in a meeting with Christ, the God-Man, and everything—theology, prayer, sacraments, the Church, the life and witness of Christians in the world spring out of this meeting. If this meeting has not taken place Christianity may be for a man

[1] Preface to *Freedom and the Spirit*. [2] S. Paul, Colossians, I, 17.
[3] The journal Berdyaev edited in Paris was called *Put*, that is, *The Way*.

an idea, a system, a moral code, an institution, spiritual cement for some social order, 'the opium of the people'—anything you like except New Testament Christianity.

It is not surprising that it was a long time before Christianity acquired for itself a philosophy. It had a theology, yes, but no philosophy for many generations. Then when Christianity at last acquired a complete philosophical system for itself it started not with Christ but with Aristotle! Berdyaev complained that in Thomism the supernatural is simply the top rung of the natural ladder.[1] Even God himself can become an object. Christ is there, but He is grafted on to Aristotle. A philosophy which is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ also brings Christ into a philosophically prefabricated world. It can never be the philosophy of the free spirit which out of freedom finds Christ and is found by Christ.

Again in another age, under another sky and within another form of Christianity, Bishop Berkeley presented Christians with a philosophy—a form of idealism, the exact opposite of the realism of St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet here also we do not start with Christ. Paradoxically it is Kant, much further from the Divine than St. Thomas, as Berdyaev observed, further, too, than Bishop Berkeley—who began that revolution in philosophy to which Berdyaev always looked back, not indeed as to a foundation (for no foundation can any man lay but Christ), but as to an emancipation of thought. The freeing of the person, the subject, the knower, which is historically the work of Christ, seemed first to be effective *philosophically* in one far removed from orthodox theology. Berdyaev, after freedom had brought him personally to Christ, looked back to Kant as one who prepared the way unconsciously for Christian personalism.

It was because Berdyaev started with Christian experience—'I', 'Christ' and 'Freedom'—that he could incorporate into his thinking the insights of such a wide variety of philosophers. Nothing can show a greater misunderstand-

[1] See *Freedom and the Spirit*, chapter 1, especially p. 2 *et seq.*

ing of Berdyaev than to call him an eclectic. It is true that the width of his reading was prodigious. The ancient Greek philosophers, Fathers of the Church, mystics, theologians, the nineteenth-century thinkers, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche, Khomakov, Solovyov, novelists, poets, critics of many lands and many schools dart across his pages in bewildering fashion. How can one rub shoulders with so many writers, Christian and pagan, ancient and modern and preserve one's integrity? The answer is simple. If freedom has brought you to Christ, you know that all things are summed up in Him. You can see the truth in a Nietzsche, a Marx, a Tolstoy or a Hindu philosopher for that matter, and yet lose neither Christ nor your freedom to think creatively. Where Berdyaev does seem to have carried over from his earliest years a certain mode of thinking from a non-Christian philosopher, it is interesting to observe that the pattern is here a fundamentally Christian one. Berdyaev learned dialectics first from Hegel and had then watched Marx setting Hegel on his feet, converting the dialectic of idealism into the dialectic of materialism. Yet dialectic is essentially Christian. Nothing can be more dialectical than many of the Gospel sayings—'the first shall be last and the last first'—'he that loseth his life shall find it'—'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.' Florensky, in one of his works, draws up a whole list of 'pairs of opposites' in the Gospels. The very symbol of Christianity, the Cross, is a dialectical pattern, the cancellation of life by death, the destruction of death by death and the coming of new life (life at a higher level) through death.

One of Berdyaev's last books, *The Divine and the Human*, has for its full title in Russian *The Existential Dialectics of the Divine and the Human*. In his study of history or the contemporary scene, as well as in his treatment of religious philosophical themes, Berdyaev was quick to observe the working of dialectic. Yet he was never imprisoned by it.

For him the dialectic quality of life and of experience, of the relations between God and man, necessity and freedom and so forth was never something inexorable. Dialectic for him never became determinism. (Neither for that matter is it for the real Marxist, however much individual Marxists may from time to time deviate into mechanistic conceptions.)

But to be conscious of dialectic at work in real life and to make use of this consciousness, especially in estimating the future significance of the forces moulding history, thought, culture, the life of the Churches, etc., is not to be enslaved to it. One of the most arresting things in Berdyaev's thought is precisely this combination of a dialectical approach with the conviction that both God and man are free. There is a logical contradiction here as there is, we are told, between certain theories in physics, both of which have a relative degree of validity. Berdyaev would have said that there is a dialectical pattern in existence, there is the clash of opposites, the negation of negation, the reaching of a higher synthesis. We can observe this. Yet we can also observe that man is free, that he is both rational and irrational, that real life can never be reduced to any stream-lined monism. 'I', 'Christ' and 'Freedom', the triad, which is the core of Berdyaev's philosophy, give us plurality and unity, movement, life, time and eternity, personality and community, a real world and yet a world whose final meaning is beyond itself.

'Man is the dominating idea of my life—man's image, his creative freedom and his creative predestination. . . . But to treat of man is also to treat of God. And that, for me, is the essential point. . . . the rediscovery of man will also be the rediscovery of God. That is the essential theme of Christianity. The philosophy of human existence is a Christian, a theandric philosophy. Truth is its supreme criterion. But truth is not an objective state, nor can it be apprehended like an object. Truth implies above all man's spiritual activity. Its apprehension depends on the degree of community between men, on their communion in the spirit.'[1]

[1] *Solitude and Society*, pp. 202, 203.

These closing words of *Solitude and Society* throw light upon the inner citadel of Berdyaev's thought. We are reminded of the saying of the western mystic, 'Christ is the root of every man.' 'Freedom has brought me to Christ,' said Berdyaev, that is, to the God-Man in Whom the meaning of man and the meaning of God are both revealed.

Berdyaev takes this Christian revelation of the God-Man more radically, more seriously, more literally than any other Christian thinker has yet dared to do. God's image in man can only mean man's image in God. There is eternal humanity in God and therefore everything in man and in human history has an eternal significance. Berdyaev is not in the least afraid of the charge of being anthropocentric, for you cannot be anthropocentric without being theocentric. Modern theologians, scared by the degeneration of Renaissance humanism into capitalist individualism or degenerate forms of atheistic existentialism, have sought to stop the rot with neo-Thomism and neo-Calvinism. Berdyaev takes us back to Christ, to the God-Man, to the freedom which brought him to Christ, the Light of the world, the Light which lighteneth *every* man coming into the world because man is in God's Image. There is a massive simplicity, a transparent reality behind all the complexities of Berdyaev's thought. The centre of things is the God-Man, and here we find the meaning of man's life, of man's history, the source of a dynamic and creative approach to the world about us.

But we come to Christ in freedom. The conviction that man and God are alike boundlessly free is an essential of Berdyaev's thought. Here again he is daring. Even some of his most devoted disciples shrink back at this point. From the German mystic, Jakob Boehme, Berdyaev drew the idea of the *Ungrund* but restated it in his own way. The *Ungrund* is the fathomless void of freedom prior to good and evil, prior to creation. Berdyaev will have nothing to do with the idea of God as static perfection—'Thyself unmoved all motion's source.' The God of Christianity is a Trinity of Persons. God is love and without infinite freedom there

cannot be infinite love, infinite movement, infinite possibilities. To admit this is also to admit tragedy in God. Yet if the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world there must be, as Berdyaev unhesitatingly calls it, 'drama' in the life of the Godhead. The Cross has an eternal as well as a temporal significance. This every theologian will admit. But very few have had the courage even to begin to think out what this means. Berdyaev, like so many Russians, forced to think of the meaning of suffering more poignantly than thinkers of nations whose history has been happier, saw that the link between suffering and freedom must be there in the very heart of the Godhead, in Its interior life. 'Freedom has brought me to Christ' (the God-Man). But freedom may also take me away from Christ. Freedom gives to man the possibility of fighting against God. The Cross is there in Eternity. But if freedom be only God's *creature*, if freedom be *given* to man by God, then the drama between God and man is not real life but play-acting, man is only dressed-up in freedom, he is not basically free. But it is otherwise. God dares and suffers in creating man because man is called out of freedom, out of the boundless nothingness of infinite possibilities the only victory over which is love, itself born of freedom. Human suffering goes to the Cross of Christ to find its meaning and because Christ is God-Man that meaning is ultimately in eternity.

It is certain that what Berdyaev had to say about the reality of freedom, of God's freedom, of man's freedom and of man's freedom in relation to God, and the connection between this and suffering is bound in the future to attract more and more attention. The conventional theological conception of a self-contained God Who needs nothing and yet creates man, bestowing upon him the fatal gift of freedom, which is the cause of sin and suffering, will increasingly cease to satisfy any but those minds which will obediently stop exactly where ecclesiastical authority tells them to. Conventional, over-rationalized theology fails to acquit God and is the dialectical parent of atheism. The emancipation

of the human spirit begun by Christ, furthered by the Renaissance, is a process from which there can be no turning back. The mind will no longer be warned off certain areas. It is conscious of freedom and however hemmed in man's life may be by mechanized civilization, to his thought no bounds can be set and into the infinite void beyond good and evil men will find their way. Here Berdyaev will become a prophet in precisely the sphere where even his clerical admirers now most distrust him.

But the void of freedom is not only postulated by the existence of suffering and by evil, it is also postulated by creativity. Theology has been willing enough to agree that God created out of nothing. But human creativity also demands a void as well as the raw materials provided by God. That man is called to create as well as to save his soul is one of the basic themes of Berdyaev's thought. God does not ask simply for man's obedience. He calls on man to create. Man is made in God's image. God is a creator, therefore man is a creator too. '*Greater* works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father.' Those were Christ's words, but how narrowly have they been construed! 'When ye have done all that is commanded of you, say "we are unprofitable servants".' Why? Because Christianity is not only keeping the law. It is creativity and creativity means nothing unless man has freedom and from the void of non-being can make new things with God's materials.

Berdyaev's doctrine of creativity runs through all his works. It colours, for example, his view of history, for he sees history as man trying out every aspect of his potentialities, as part of his response to God. Even historical failures have their ultimate value as partial attempts at creative solutions which in eternity find a justification. A culture which flourishes, decays and disappears is not finally lost. It has its eternal significance for it is a part of man's answer to God.

Berdyaev's teaching about creativity is an essential part of his challenge to Christians as they face the future of the

world today. In an age when throughout decaying western civilization there is a widespread sense of frustration and helplessness, when man feels his slavery to money, to the machine, to war, to the State, Berdyaev's thought restores to man his dignity, his hope, his belief in his destiny and purpose, his basic freedom of spirit which no regime can destroy, as well as his creativity as his response to God. If we believe in God, freedom and man, we know that man cannot be finally enslaved. Slavery also has its dialectic. It generates its own destruction. Moreover, it is God, man and freedom which are primary and original. Freedom cannot be created and therefore it cannot be destroyed. The martyr is more free than his persecutors and the truth for which he suffers rises again from the dead, while 'the souls of the righteous' (the concrete personalities) 'are in the hands of God'.

However dark Berdyaev thought the immediate prospect might be he was never hopeless. He was always a rebel. He hated passivity. He insisted on a creative and overcoming response to evils which truth forbade him to minimize.

It is against the background of his demand for creativity that we must here notice Berdyaev's role as a critic. At first sight Berdyaev appears to demolish most things. What escapes uncriticized for example in *Towards a New Epoch*? Capitalist civilization is on its death-bed, its ideas are 'gangrenous'. Communism, though more Christian as an economic order, is disfigured at present by a lack of freedom for creativity and a morality too rigidly conditioned by the exigencies of the class struggle. Sartre's existentialism is decadent pessimism. The Church has its eyes glued to the past instead of to the future. Non-Marxian Socialism is savourless salt, the quintessence of parochial dullness—and so on! All this in *one* book, and, if all are read, it is safe to say that there is no institution, no thinker, no philosophy, no country, no Church which does not at some point receive castigation.

Nevertheless, nothing could be more superficial than to

regard Berdyaev as simply the universal critic, a dealer in mere pessimism. Certain critics of the 'Left' have been extremely unsubtle here. The last thing any candid and fair-minded reader of Berdyaev feels is depression or a sense of hopelessness. It is always with the urge to think or to do that one rises from reading him. Fallacies in all existing positions are exposed—that is true, but we are never left with the feeling that therefore all are equally hopeless or that there is nothing to be done. All human work and thought are referred to Christian judgment, not that we may despair but rather than we may create afresh. 'This will not do'; 'this is only half-true'; 'that is superficial'; yes, but man is of such stuff and of so high a calling that he *must* make a fresh spiritual venture, and he will.

It is true of course that one must not go to Berdyaev for a programme. This applies to every aspect of his thought. He has not produced a new theology or a new sociology. He speaks of 'personalistic socialism', for example, as his aim, but it is with principles not details that he is concerned. *It is not programmes but perspectives which he gives us.* In this he is true to his own philosophy. It is 'I', 'Freedom' and Christ'—what each person who hears his message does is that person's own creative response. He initiated no movement or organization, but everywhere there will be men and women in the church and out of it, theists and atheists, thinkers, politicians, sociologists, historians who will be inspired to grapple with new problems, who will find new creative tasks because of what Berdyaev has revealed to them. Men, as they read him, think again, think more freshly, criticize themselves and the movements or institutions which they serve and then go forward to fresh personal creation.

Berdyaev is always the prophetic thinker. Long ago he realized that the epoch of the Renaissance was over, that the old sort of individualism and capitalism was dead, that a working-class world with a collectivized economy was bound to come. But his concern was only secondarily with these

things. He contended for the spirit and for creativity, and while he believed in the Church and accepted her teaching, it was as a philosopher not as a theologian that he had his part to play. Nor was he concerned to pursue a political line. While he detested reaction, he could not be a Marxist. He wanted men to get to the spiritual sources of life. From the fiery depths of the spirit the new world-order can be transfigured from within.

While Berdyaev recognized the role of fate, he also recognized that of chance and of the irrational. The course of history is not determined absolutely. Above all, whatever fetters institutions, systems, states, fashions of thought, as well as economic necessity, may for a time put upon men as individuals or on groups, freedom, God and human personality exist. In one way or another men will continue to make creative answers to God's call. There are no dead-ends. As a dialectician he held that there is always the negation of the negation. Atheism, which is the negation of false ideas of God and of His Providence, is itself a dialectical moment in the achievement of a higher theism.

Nor is his eschatology pessimistic. To look forward to the Second Coming of Christ as the only final solution of history, to see the meaning of history beyond history and outside time is neither to abandon hope nor resign oneself to inactivity, still less to retreat into individualistic mysticism. That Christian eschatology has meant these things in the past and means them still to some is true. But it is not true of Berdyaev. Eschatology is not a way of escape nor a consolation prize. Eschatology is a source of power and of illumination. Because all things—including the creativity which could not be 'packed into a narrow act'—are summed up in Christ, all things become charged with an eternal meaning. It is not that this life is an unsubstantial shadow of another world of eternal ideas. It is that we live in a real world with real people in which real thought and real activity are demanded of us, but where full meaning and full achievement are still beyond us. The tension between the urge to create

and the imperfections and 'cooling-down' of creativity as it objectifies itself in our world cannot be resolved except on the basis of eschatology.

Berdyaev demanded a new age of the spirit. He spoke often of a new spirituality. What he meant by this was not just a revival of church-going, nor the refurbishing of old techniques of the spiritual life. It was not the intensive cultivation of the soul or a new concern for soul-saving. He that would save his soul must lose it. Christianity in all its shapes and forms had in Berdyaev's opinion become too much concerned with salvation in the narrower sense of personal redemption,[1] too little concerned with *theosis*, divinization of the cosmos as well as man, which is what Eastern Orthodoxy means by salvation when it is true to itself. Christianity has become too introspective, and movements for reconstructing the world without God are an inevitable dialectical[2] moment in getting forward to a more integral, more communal, less egoistic Christianity.

The Churches need a fresh outpouring of the Spirit and only when this has come will they find the dynamic unity essential for their task. (A divided Christendom has little with which to challenge a world already sick and frightened by division. But mere 'political', external reunion between Churches, 'understandings' achieved at so-called 'top-level', may well increase spiritual shallowness, since by nature they are orientated towards what is external and objectified.) The Churches need unity but it must come from the depths of the spiritual life, not from its surface.

With this must go a revival of prophetism. 'In historical Christianity the prophetic element inherent in it has become enfeebled and this is why it ceases to play an active and lead-

[1] See *Spirit and Reality*, p. 166. 'The idea of personal salvation is a transcendental egoism.... Individual isolated salvation is an impossibility.' The whole chapter on *The New Spirituality* is most important.

[2] E.g. p. 170 of *Spirit and Reality*, 'Feuerbach's atheism was a dialectical moment in the purification and the development of the Christian consciousness.'

ing role in history. We look no longer to anything but the past and to past illumination. But it is the future which needs lighting up. Prophetism always presupposes this light and there precisely is the function of Christian eschatology.'[1]

'In the new era of Christianity a double process must take place. On the one hand, there will be a development of the inner spiritual life.'[2] Christians must get below the surface even of Church life and particularly those elements in it which are bound up with the existing social order. 'The exclusively external forms of the cultus and ecclesiastical institutions will no longer be the principal sources determining the characteristics of Christian life in the world. . . . The adapting of Christianity to the social structure and to the forces which dominated it has disfigured Christianity in the course of history and naturally provoked resentment.'[3]

'Yet there is also another aspect. Christianity must become *more* social, that is to say, it must more and more reveal the truth it holds regarding human society. Christianity must from its own inner depths give its blessing to the social reorganization of society instead of opposing it under the pretext of preserving its ties with old forms of society which are unjust and in no sense Christian. . . . We must try to effect an internal transformation of Communism. Such a thing is possible and is actually beginning to happen.'[4]

The prophetic and creative spirit of a re-born Christianity must face the future, cease to buttress the past and while keeping free from specific political manifestations seek to transform from within the new social and economic structure. 'A new attitude of mind and new forms of Christian activity are going into the make-up of the period which lies before us.'[5] It was Berdyaev's belief that in Russia such a new outlook was already being prepared.[6]

'The new spirituality will be first and foremost an ex-

[1] *Towards a New Epoch*, p. 36. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 37. See *Spirit and Reality*, p. 178 for the kingdom of money.
[4] *Towards a New Epoch*, pp. 37, 38. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 117. [6] *Ibid.*

perience of creative energy and inspiration.'[1] It will be a transcending of egoism and of the camouflaged egoism of soul-culture. It will mean first-hand contact of our spirit with the Holy Spirit. It will mean an out-going, transfiguring activity directed towards humanity and to the spiritualizing of the new forms of human society. It will be creative and prophetic, for 'the end of the world is man's responsibility as well as God's.'[2]

Berdyaev's role was that of the religious philosopher. He saw what was happening to the world, he saw the Church (which has the answer) too much inclined to cling to what is passing away, muzzled by Mammon, by Cæsar, by ossified conventions, her very spirituality infected with the essentially capitalist sin of the individual profit-motive. He saw with equal clarity the radical spiritual defects of Communism in relation to God, freedom and personality. But he did believe that both the Church and Communism could be inwardly transformed by Christians who would themselves penetrate to the depths of the spiritual life, and who would go out into the world of today with active and creative love towards others.

He did not believe the future was fated. He believed that men made in God's image must themselves be creators out of the freedom which neither God nor man can destroy, though for a time we may suffer enslavement to a variety of men, things or ideas. We are not to break with our nation or our church, though seeing clearly and exposing their faults. We are not to seek for salvation in self-righteous cliques, nor by withdrawal from the tasks with which history now confronts us.

As Christians we believe in man, we know that in the God-Man, Christ, man's divine image can be renewed, that we are called to be fellow-workers with God, that the end of history is a divine-human event in which we are summoned to share. We are not to be deluded by the shams of established society, nor by the shams in those who would renew

[1] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 193. [2] *Spirit and Reality*, p. 107.

the face of the earth without God. The forces of history are not controlled by Christians at this epoch, but with each change in the forms of society the vocation of Christians is to transfigure from within men's historical and necessarily limited achievements. Having their eyes open to their own sins and shortcomings, Christians will not be self-righteous in their criticism of others. But we shall in all circumstances know that we are called to look forward and to go forward, to rediscover for ourselves at first hand the sources of new spiritual power and vision, and above all to see the creation of new truth, new goodness and new beauty as the supreme task of those whom illimitable freedom has brought to Christ.

APPENDIX

PRINCIPAL WORKS BY NICOLAS BERDYAEV

DATES given are those of the original publication in Russian or French. The symbols E., F., G. signify respectively the existence of English, French or German translation and, where the titles differ from the Russian, these are given.

1900 'F. A. Lange and the Critical Philosophy.'

1901 'Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy.'

1907 'Sub Specie Aeternitatis.' 'The New Religious Consciousness and Society.'

1910 'The Spiritual Crisis of the Intelligentsia.'

1911 'Philosophy of Freedom.'

1912 'A. S. Khomiakov.'

1915 'The Soul of Russia.'

1916 'The Meaning of Creativeness.' (G. Der Sinn des Schaffens). 'The Fate of Russia.'

1923 'The Meaning of History.' (E.)
'Philosophy of Inequality.'
'The World-Outlook of Dostoievsky.' (E. 'Dostoievsky').

1924 'The Russian Religious Idea' in 'Problems of Russian Religious Consciousness' 1924. (F. 'L'idée religieuse russe' in Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée No. 8).
'The New Middle Ages.' (E. 'The End of Our Time' which includes four other essays).

1926 'Leontiev.' (E.)
'Philosophy of the Free Spirit.' (E. 'Freedom and the Spirit.')

1931 'The Destiny of Man.' (E.)
'On Suicide.'
'Russian Religious Psychology and Communist Atheism.' (E. 'The Russian Revolution.')

1931 'Christianity and Class War.' (E.)

1932 'Christianity and Human Action.'

1933 'Man and the Machine.' (E., including other essays, in 'The Bourgeois Mind.')

1934 ' "I" and the World of Objects.' (E. 'Solitude and Society.') 'The Fate of Man in the Modern World.' (E.)

1937 'Spirit and Reality.' (E.)
'The Origin of Russian Communism.' Only in French and English.

1940 'Slavery and Freedom.' (Of Man.) (E.)

1946 'The Russian Idea.' (E.)

1947 'The Existential Dialectics of the Divine and Human.' French (E. 'The Divine and the Human.')
'Creation and Objectivisation.' (E.)

1949 'Towards a New Epoch.' (E.,F.)

1950 'Truth and Revelation.' (E.)

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