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PERSONAL FREEDOM IN BERDYAEV

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Graduate Study, The Social
Department in Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology

by
David A. [Name]

June 1953

Approved by: [Signature]
[Signature]

CONCEPT OF PERSONAL FREEDOM IN

BRIEFARY

Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. DEFINITION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM 3

Meaning and the English Language
 Freedom, the Will
 Liberty, the Concept
 The Freedom
 The Power

III. THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL FREEDOM IN THE
 DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
 IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
 BACHELOR OF DIVINITY 20

IV. THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL FREEDOM 21

Definition
 The Will
 Liberty
 The Concept of Liberty in Systematic Theology
 The Power

V. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONAL FREEDOM 33

The Creative Act by
 Personal Freedom,
 Definition of David J. Klump
 The Goal of the
 June 1959

APPENDIX 1. Definitions 45

APPENDIX 2. Excerpts from "The Will" 47

REFERENCES 52

Approved by: Advisor

 Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BERDYAEV: THE BACKGROUND AND THE MAN	3
Russia and the Russian Mind	3
Berdyaev, the Man	5
Berdyaev, His Thinking	6
Why Berdyaev?	8
Why Freedom?	8
III. THE ORIGIN OF PERSONAL FREEDOM	10
The Personal	16
Concluding Summary	19
IV. THE LOSS OF PERSONAL FREEDOM	21
Objectivization	21
The Fall	22
Interpretations of the Fall	22
Examples of Loss of Freedom Through Objectivization	27
Summary	32
V. THE MANIFESTATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM	33
The Creative Act	33
Personal Freedom, The Basis for Creativity	34
Definition of the Creative Act	35
The Goal of the Creative Act	41
APPENDIX A. Definitions	45
APPENDIX B. Excerpts from "The Grand Inquisitor"	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This paper will attempt to describe Berdyaev's thinking on the subject of personal freedom. No attempt will be made to criticise or evaluate his thinking by either the criteria of philosophy or theology although instances in which he takes issue or attacks Orthodox Christianity will be noted. In presenting Berdyaev's concept of personal freedom an attempt will be made to remain within the framework of his thought as it is available in his English writings. This places limitations on this paper for not all of Berdyaev's works have been translated from the Russian or French. In addition I am confining my research to those editions of Berdyaev's works which I either own personally or are in Fritslaff Memorial Library.

Moreover, Berdyaev does not always present his thinking as a logical, integrated unity. As he faces the various problems of life he invariably is confronted with irresolvable paradoxes and impenetrable mysteries. Berdyaev is aware of his inconsistencies and contradictions but does not try to remove them feeling they are:

expressions of spiritual conflict, of contradictions which lie at the heart of existence itself, and are not to be disguised by the facade of logical unity. True integrality of thought which is bound up with integrality of personality is an existential unity, not a logical.¹

Furthermore, the essential nature of personal freedom as Berdyaev

¹Nicolas Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, translated by R. N. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 8.

understands it makes any comprehensive, precise definition of it impossible. But personality and freedom are the heart and core of his approach to both philosophy and theology. Freedom makes personality but at the same time personality is the only competent subject of freedom. The two cannot be separated in Berdyaev's thinking. To separate them destroys not one but both.

Berdyaev as an existentialist often gives new or greater meaning to certain words and terms. Therefore, it will assist the reader if he consults Appendix "A" for a definition of key terms. It will also help to understand Berdyaev's thinking on this subject if he consults Appendix "B" which contains excerpts of Dostolevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor" since Berdyaev himself feels that he is writing but a commentary on the thoughts which are expressed in this masterful passage.

We will first look briefly at Berdyaev as a man in order to gain some insight into the background of his thinking and the Russian mind in general. The paper proper divides into three chapters: The origin of personal freedom, the loss of personal freedom, and the manifestation of personal freedom in the creative act. In these three chapters we will get to the heart of Berdyaev's thinking as he strives to avoid determinism in all forms. The end of personal freedom is creativity and this is the beginning of the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND AND THE MAN

Martin Luther once said, he who wants to understand what is said must see why or for what reasons it is said.

Berdyayev is listed among the leading existentialist thinkers of our day and yet among us he is largely unknown. In A Handbook of Christian Theology one may read:

Behind the thought of virtually every theologian dependent upon the philosophy of existence is some form of the conviction that the human predicament to which Christianity is relevant can most adequately be expressed through this philosophy. Nicholas Berdyayev, the Russian theologian, has been more outspoken on this point than any thinker except Bultman. The idea, more simply expressed, is that if any philosophical concepts and categories are essential for theology they must be existential ones.¹

Why is Berdyayev so outspoken an existentialist? Why is his dominant emphasis on personal freedom? The background for answers to these questions is to be discovered in the Russian mind and the man Berdyayev to which we now turn so that we may follow Luther's basic rule of interpretation.

Russia and the Russian Mind

A glance at a map of Russia will show us an enormous land mass stretching across two continents. Within this great country are the seemingly boundaryless steppes. Russia faces both east and west, it is at once in Asia and Europe. On this account arise the two problems with

¹John E. Smith and Others, A Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), p. 124.

which Russia has always been faced. First: shall she shrink back within herself in isolation or shall she seek contacts with the outside world? And second: shall she turn east or west in seeking her contacts? This tension was the cause of much debate and dispute in the nineteenth century and still can be seen in the present day communism of Russia.

The first part of the twentieth century in Russia was marked by a literary revival and a fresh appreciation on the part of the intelligentsia of the national religious heritage as preserved in the Orthodox Church. This movement however had little impact upon the lower classes and the Revolution of 1917 swept all away. But Berdyaev has affinities with both these movements. A disciple of the great Russian thinkers of the last century and a one time adherent of communism.²

Probably the best introduction to the Russian mind is an introduction to the four dominant ideas of its nineteenth century thinkers. The first concept is that of sobornost, which connotes a way or idea of human life equally distant from either our individualism or collectivism. "It is a solidarity of persons in love and freedom, a community whose members at once make and share in the life which pulses through the whole."³ The Orthodox Church is usually viewed as the physical agent of sobornost.

Behind the concept of sobornost lies a passion for freedom. An anarchic element is dominant in the Russian temperament. Ironic as life often is, this very passion for freedom, or anarchy has been the cause

²E. L. Allen, A Guide to the Thought of Karl Barth (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1951), pp. 91f.

³Ibid., p. 11.

for Russia's despotic forms of government.⁴ The Russian love of freedom has found classical expression in the description of "the Grand Inquisitor" by Dostolevsky in The Brothers Karamazov.

The third dominant Russian concept is the emphasis which is placed upon Christ's incarnation. Christ is the God-man. For the Russian this is not a punctiliar act in history, but is something which is continually taking place. "God is ever becoming incarnate in the world; that indeed is the meaning of the historical process, that God becomes a man so that man may one day become God."⁵

To the Russian, the reunion of Christendom will come when at last we learn that truth is neither in God without man nor in man without God, but in the unity of the God-man; this will bring with it both healing of the nations and unity of the Church. Indeed, it will bring with it the Kingdom of God.

The fourth concept peculiar to Russian thinking is Russia's sense of her unique worth and Messianic mission. In The Idiot Dostolevsky makes one of his characters predict that a Russian Christ will one day shine forth upon the world. In short, the future of the world lies with Russia.⁶

Berdyaev, the Man

Nicolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev was born at Kiev in 1874 of a wealthy family. He was educated in a military school and subsequently

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

at the University of Kiev. At the University he accepted Marxism and took part in political agitation, and was expelled for same at age twenty-five and spent some time in Siberia. Shortly before the revolution he narrowly escaped a second exile, although he had broken with Marxism in 1909 and contributed to a symposium which reaffirmed the values of Orthodox Christianity.

Appointed to a chair of philosophy at the University which he helped to found in Moscow he soon fell into disfavor with the Bolsheviks for his independent political opinions. He was twice imprisoned and in 1922 exiled from Russia.

Berdyaev settled first in Berlin and later near Paris. At both places he founded a Russian academy of philosophy and religion. In 1939 he was invited to lecture at the Sorbonne in Paris and continued there until his death in 1948.⁷

Berdyaev, His Thinking

Berdyaev's approach to Christianity is through the God-man concept.

The basic and original phenomenon of religious life is the meeting and mutual interaction between God and man, the movement of God towards man and of man towards God.⁸

Berdyaev feels that western Christianity although formally admitting that Christ was a man has largely forgotten that fact for all practical purposes. Hence one of his great criticisms of western Christianity has been what he calls its obsession with sin and the need for salvation.

⁷Ibid., pp. 17f.

⁸Nicolas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, translated by O. F. Clarke (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), p. 243.

Berdyaev also acknowledges the dreadful power of sin, but feels that it should be dealt with positively. To him, to be human is to be endowed with freedom and summoned to creativity. The freedom and creative activity facets of Berdyaev's thinking are the subject of our study.

What is Berdyaev's goal? He answers: "we must work for nothing less than the transfiguration of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, the lifting up of man and nature to share in the very life of God."⁹

How is this done? Only through the free creative response of man to God. Without freedom man cannot accomplish this goal. Berdyaev makes an important distinction between two senses of the word freedom; between freedom as a means and freedom as an end. In the first he means freedom to direct one's own life, to choose between good and evil as one understands them; but by the second he wishes to indicate the freedom which consists in the liberation from one's lower nature for the service of what is highest and best. He states:

we mean by one and the same word either that initial and irrational liberty which is prior to good and evil and determines their choice, or else that intelligent freedom which is our final liberty in truth and goodness.¹⁰

Berdyaev means the former when he says the will is free, the second when he quotes the Gospel saying: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Theologians have considered the second type of freedom while neglecting the first contends Berdyaev. For example Luther argued that man's will is like a horse which either God or the devil rides; he has

⁹Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 133f.

no power of self determination. Luther was able to acquiesce in such a view of human nature because the only liberty which interested him was the freedom which grace confers.¹¹

But for Berdyaev dynamic freedom always seeks self expression and herein is exposed to the grave peril of objectification. Freedom in itself is spiritual but cannot remain in the purely spiritual world; it must enter the world in which we live and take form in it. In this process freedom always suffers loss. It may be compared to molten lava pouring from a volcano's mouth, but soon it begins to slow and harden into a solid motionless mass. This is the fall which attends freedom's creativity.¹²

Why Berdyaev?

Obviously we're not going to agree with all Berdyaev says. This is why it is necessary to consider him. In this time of world stress and tension it is necessary for us to know and understand those whom today we look at with great suspicion and distrust. On the average we know so little of Russian thought that we may yet rue the day when the opportunity existed and we in calloused indifference and complacent superiority neglected it. This is why I chose to consider Berdyaev.

Why Freedom?

No problem is as pertinent as the problem of freedom today. Both political freedom and theological freedom are in the balance. Books like

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Allen, op. cit., p. 28.

Philip Wylie's Generation of Vipers are numerous, and caustic in their condemnation of everything in America from the church to the popular attitude toward sex.

In the A. Powell Davies Memorial Lecture given January eighteenth of this past year in Washington D.C. Adlai Stevenson writes:

Why this lack of initiative? Why this paralysis of will? What have we done to our truth and brotherhood--the supreme truth of freedom, the Christian truth of brotherly love? Have they failed? Or have we?

You may be surprised, but Berdyceev, a Russian, feels he has the answer for Mr. Stevenson's questions. Toward this answer, this paper is devoted with the hope it may shed some small light on how others feel about a possible solution.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN OF PERSONAL FREEDOM

Traditionally freedom is thought to have its source and origin in God. Speculation as to freedom which may have existed prior to creation doesn't concern us, nor is freedom within the Divine Personality one of our considerations. But this does concern Berdyaev. He adopts for the explanation of primal freedom the Ungrund concept of Jacob Boehme.¹ For if God is the author of freedom he is also by implication the author of sin, since it was Adam's misuse of his freedom that gave birth to sin. So if God authored freedom then God is implicated, not so however, if freedom pre-existed being, even the being of God. Says Berdyaev posing the problem, "either being has primacy over freedom which results in either open or disguised determinism, or freedom has primacy over being."² With this either or always in mind Berdyaev seeks to answer the question of freedom's origin.

¹It is to Jacob Boehme that Berdyaev is chiefly indebted for his concept of the Ungrund, an indebtedness he constantly acknowledges. According to the New Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedis of Religious Knowledge Jacob Boehme born in 1575, died in 1624, was one of the greatest Protestant mystics the world has ever known. Boehme was not a crazy visionary but combined eager study of the works of Paracelsus, Weigel, and Schwenckfeld and the Bible to elevate himself above the religious strife of his time to the light and joy of the contemplation of God. With sincere longing and real hunger of soul he plunged into the depth of God's being. His thoughts show such depth and intensity that they defy adequate linguistic expression. Boehme held fast to the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, and although persecuted for his views and writings he died within the Lutheran church and received the sacrament before his death. His works in both German and English are available in Fritslaff Memorial Library.

²Nicolas Berdyaev, The Beginning and the End, translated by R. N. French (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 104.

Berdyayev's answer is going to reflect his basic beliefs about God and man. God is dynamic for Berdyayev, being constantly born out of Ungrund but God is and remains always the God of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Ungrund for both Boehme and Berdyayev is

nothingness, the groundless eye of eternity; and at the same time it is will, not grounded upon anything, bottomless indeterminate will. But this is a nothingness which is 'Ein Hunger zum Etwas'. At the same time the Ungrund is freedom, neonic, potential freedom.³

So primal freedom finds its source in nothingness, pure will, non-being, and at the same time appears to be pure will, non-being, nothingness. This is the stuff of the Ungrund and it precedes God. Notice that the Ungrund is defined only in terms of negative theology. It is neonic freedom, the nothing out of which God created the world, and out of which He is constantly being born. It is an irrational mysterious void that is beyond the reach of logic.⁴ According to Berdyayev this is the only possible way of defining the Ungrund.

The constant recurring birth of God or as Berdyayev calls it, the theogonic process in God, taking place in eternity, does not signify the birth of a previously non-existent God, but a mystery play going on in the hidden life of the Godhead.⁵

Will, that is freedom, is the beginning of everything. But the Ungrund, ungrounded will lies in the depth of the Godhead and precedes the Godhead. . . . The Divine Ungrund, before its

³Ibid., p. 106.

⁴Nicolas Berdyayev, The Destiny of Man, translated by Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), pp. 25f.

⁵Ibid., p. 29.

emergence is in the eternity of the Divine Trinity. God gives birth to himself, realizes himself out of Divine Nothingness.⁶

To deny this process is to deny the life of the Godhead according to Berdyaev. This process can only be explained in a visionary and mythological way because it is the primordial mystery of life. As such it transcends logical analysis or representation.⁷

In short, before God existed or the world was created, there was the Ungrund. It was in this aeonic Freedom that God chose to become a being and from this freedom accomplished the creation of the world. Still in this aeonic freedom God is being constantly born anew for God is not static but dynamic. God for Berdyaev has,

effective emotional states, dramatic development in His inner life. . . . It is utterly unthinkable to ascribe to God the creator self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and despotism as a characteristic of His inner life. It is more worthy of God to ascribe to Him longing for the loved one, a need for sacrificial self-surrender.⁸

To the traditionalist who looks upon God as immutable Berdyaev replies that changelessness spells lack of dynamacy. Within God there is a constant tragic conflict as sacrificial love unfolds itself. This conflict and unfolding are indicative of God's perfection rather than his imperfection.

The Christian revelation shows us God in the aspect of sacrificial love, but sacrificial love far from suggesting self-sufficiency, implies the need of passing into its other. It is impossible to deny that the Christian God is first and foremost the God of

⁶Cp. Nicolas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, translated by O. F. Clarke (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), pp. 165, 194; The Meaning of History, translated by George Reavy (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), pp. 51f.

⁷Berdyaev, The Beginning and the End, p. 105.

⁸Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 26.

sacrificial love, and sacrifice always indicates tragedy. Dramatic movement and tragedy are born of the fullness and not the poverty of life. To deny tragedy in the Divine life is possible at the cost of denying Christ, His cross and crucifixion, the sacrifice of the Son of God.⁹

To Berdyaev God is a Free Being who is making a movement outward from Himself in search of a free creative response to His love.

Although this is very strange to our ears, Berdyaev very handily and consistently applies it in his thinking on personal freedom. This is one facet of the God-man emphasis mentioned earlier as a characteristic of Russian thought. Berdyaev takes very seriously the prologue of John's Gospel where creator and redeemer are one. Ultimately, however, plausible his thinking sounds Berdyaev admits that God's seeking another in love remains the primary mystery of being. It is on this premise that all creation has meaning. Nothingness is seeking something. Berdyaev feels that if God is completely self-contained, then creation is meaningless. Only in God's movement out to another in sacrificial love gives creation its meaning.

When God created man it was out of nothingness and from this nothingness God was seeking something; something to answer His invitation to sacrificial love. God created man because He longed for another to creatively answer His call. God wanted man to create values and take an active part in creation. In short, God desires a responsible, responding free personality¹⁰ with whom a free communion in love can be established and maintained.

So God created man in His image and this constituted His call to

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Supra, p. 45.

free activity. He did this by creating out of nothing, that is, out of the Ungrund, aeonic freedom. Therefore man's source of life is a dual one, for man's being is rooted in God, but his freedom is rooted in the Ungrund.

There ensues a series of insoluble paradoxes. Man's 'nature' is created by God, but his 'freedom' is not created, not determined by any being and prior to all being. That which is called the 'creature's nothingness' is precisely that which is uncreated by God and therefore cannot be called a "nothing."¹¹

Once again we find a conflict with the traditional Christian thinking on the subject of the Creator-creature relationship. With Berdyaev, man's freedom is uncreated and totally independent of God. He feels the traditional view belittles both God and man by making the creature created in God's image a completely determined individual. Because man was created in God's image, anything which is an insult to man is simultaneously an insult to God. Man's humiliation does not consist in the fact that he is a creature but in the fact that he is a fallen creature and has perverted his createdness. The Fall marked the perverting of man's createdness and introduced evil into creation. But this evil is the result of man's uncreated freedom not man's being which was created by God. Moreover, Berdyaev feels the traditional view of createdness is self-contradictory because it is intended both to establish a gulf between the creator and the created and at the same time to make man, the created, utterly insignificant and entirely dependent upon God.¹²

In contrast Berdyaev asserts that the origin of man's freedom

¹¹Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 28.

¹²Cp. ibid., p. 30.

in the Ungrund relieves God of the responsibility for evil and avoids determinism.

Because man was created out of the Ungrund, he had within himself the freedom of choosing between an infinite variety of possibilities both good and evil. This freedom was not given him by God, but it is the part of man that is uncreated. It is the element in man which is born of aeonic freedom. God has no control over it, for it antecedes even God.¹³

Thus man in his uncreated freedom may either accept or reject God's offer of love. This takes place in "the inner dialectic of freedom which produces evil from within itself." But "the source of evil as well as the source of life is to be found in the same primal irrational freedom, infinite potentiality."¹⁴

Hence freedom for Berdyaev is basic to both life and evil. In a sense freedom is not evil in itself, in another, it is the source of evil by its very nature. It is an explanation for the genesis of free being, but at the same time, the genesis of evil. Ultimately it is a cosmological mystery to use Berdyaev's favorite descriptive term.

So in analysis we begin to note two freedoms, or at least freedom serving two functions.

'In the beginning was the Logos.' The Logos was in freedom and freedom was in the Logos. That, however, is only one of the aspects of freedom. It has another aspect, one in which freedom is entirely external to the Logos and a clash between the Logos and Freedom takes place. Thus it is that the life of the world is a drama; it is full of the sense of tragedy, the antagonism of diametrically opposed principles occurs in it. There is an existential dialectic of freedom. It passes into necessity; freedom not only liberates, it also enslaves. . . . The world lives in the stresses of passion, and the basic theme of its life is freedom.¹⁵

¹³Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, p. 160.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 105.

It is in the second function, that of choice, then that freedom becomes a meaningful part of our lives, but this second function is posited upon freedom's first function, as a source of being.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the conclusions reached would depend upon one's basic beliefs concerning God and man, Berdyaev believes his theory reveals the possibility of an entirely different theodicy and anthropodicy. For Berdyaev, the primordial mystery is the kindling of light within dark freedom, within nothingness, and the consolidation of the world out of that dark freedom.¹⁶

He states:

Everything leads us to the conclusion that being is not the ultimate depth, that there is a principle which precedes the emergence of being and that freedom is bound up with that principle. Freedom is not ontic but noetic. Being is a secondary product and it is always the case that in it freedom is already limited and disappears altogether.¹⁷

The Personal

We've now briefly considered the origin of freedom and considered God's place in the scheme of Berdyaev's thinking, but now we must consider man's position. To Berdyaev, the term "person" is a loaded term as was already indicated. The centrality of freedom and the ultimate worth of the person over all else are correlated in Berdyaev's thought. He terms his approach and evaluation of the "person," personalism.

Berdyaev feels nothing is comparable to the human personality.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 111.

The personality cannot be identified with the soul, for personality has an elemental unconscious foundation. Personality can't be identified with reason although personality is a rational being. Personality isn't a biological or psychological category either, but an ethical and spiritual category. Why? Because personality is unchanging, indestructible. Human worth consists solely in personality.

The existence of personality presupposes freedom. Personality is a subject, and not an object among other objects, and it has its roots in the inward scheme of existence, that is, in the spiritual world, the world of freedom. Personality as an existential center presupposes capacity to feel suffering and joy. As such it is unique, collective realities such as the church or state can only be said to experience suffering and joy by virtue of the suffering and joy experienced by persons within the group. It is for this reason that the personality is primary. Only personality is capable of experiencing suffering.¹⁹

Personality is the coming into being of the future, and as such it consists of creative acts. It is struggle to attain to self-realization and self-realization implies resistance. Overcoming resistance is a painful process which involves suffering. Man can either transcend the objectified and objectifying world or he can acquiesce to it. However, acquiescence spells slavery, and the loss of that which is unique about personality, its very subjective existentiality.¹⁹

¹⁸Nicolas Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, translated by R. M. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), pp. 21ff.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 26.

How does the personality, this 'free existential subjective center' relate itself to God? Berdyaev answers:

The relation between personality and God is not a causal relation, it lies outside the realm of determination, it is within the realm of freedom, God is not an object to personality. He is a subject with whom existential relations exist. Personality is the absolute existential center. Personality determines itself from within outside the whole object world, and only determination from within arising out of freedom, is personality. Everything defined from without, everything determined, everything that is based upon the power of the object world is not personal, it is the impersonal in man.²⁰

Berdyaev's understanding of the person also conflicts with the traditional Christian understanding of man. He criticizes the Christian view feeling it is inconsistent and shallow.

In Christianity there has always been a twofold attitude to man. On the one hand Christianity has, as it were, degraded man by regarding him as a sinful and fallen being who is called to humility and obedience. . . . But on the other hand Christianity extraordinarily exalts man in that it regards him as made in the image and likeness of God, recognizes a spiritual principle in him, which raises him above the natural and social world, it recognizes in him a spiritual freedom which is independent of the Kingdom of Caesar, and it believes that God Himself became a man and by this exalted man to heaven. And only on this Christian basis can a doctrine of personality be constructed and the personalist transvaluation of values be worked out. Personalist philosophy must recognize that spirit does not generalize but individualize . . . that it forms personalities. The triumph of the spiritual principle means, not the subordination of man to the universe, but the revelation of the universe in personality.²¹

Hence we see that Berdyaev takes from Christianity the germinative spiritual principle for his philosophy of personalism, but rejects the concomittant emphasis of Christianity on man's spiritual slavery and deadness. This, of course, harks back to Berdyaev's different understanding of freedom. Berdyaev firmly believes man to be a microcosm

²⁰Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

²¹Ibid.

and a microtheos and upon this and the freedom which is man's uncreated indeterminate correlate he rests his case for man's personality.

Concluding Summary

Already in this third chapter we have foreshadowed our subjects for chapters four and five, the loss and manifestation of personal freedom. This has occurred because it is impossible to completely sever Berdyaev's thinking on the subject into our categories without some distortion. I have felt that it is better to overlap than to distort.

Berdyaev is convinced that his understanding of the origin of personal freedom successfully answers and eliminates the determinism so obvious in nearly all other systems of thought. Although he may seem very far afield to us, we should not dismiss him lightly for he is by no means alone. He himself points out that one of the latest most successful attempts at an ontology is that of Heidegger. His emphasis also is on the theory of non-being, nothingness, rather than being.

Berdyaev feels that all he writes on the subject of freedom is but a commentary on Dostolevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor,"²² in The Brothers Karamazov.

This chapter is the key to understanding what is coming in the ensuing two chapters. An open mind will prove an invaluable aid toward

²²Berdyaev's high regard for Dostolevsky and the prominence of this theme, namely freedom, in his writing is stressed by Berdyaev in his book, Dostolevsky, which is Berdyaev's interpretation of the great novelist. See Appendix "B" for excerpts of "The Grand Inquisitor."

understanding and in some ways appreciating what Berdyaev has to offer. How Berdyaev can believe and say what he does in the face of the harsh cold realities of life is the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE LOSS OF PERSONAL FREEDOM

Objectivization

Chapter three may have left the impression that Berdyaev is just another idealist overlooking man's shortcomings and frailty and championing the cause of human independence. On the contrary he is very much aware that all is not as it should be. In most of his works he gives greater space to the loss of freedom and its effects than he does to the positive aspects of personal freedom.

Basic to understanding Berdyaev's thinking on the loss of personal freedom is the concept of "objectivization."¹ This term is synonymous with the terms, alienation and exteriorization, and all three are used recurrently to describe the loss of freedom. Berdyaev describes objectivization as the process whereby a subject becomes an object; it loses its existential center and becomes incapable of subject to subject communion either with God or other human persons.

Objectivization makes one incapable of self-determination and reduces life from the spiritual into the natural. It changes an act into a substance. It destroys the image of personality—the image of God in man—which is always free, unique, spirit, qualitative, unrepeatable, creative and self-determined. Ultimately objectivization spells annihilation of man, for it transfers the qualities of man to things and thus renders them lifeless. It changes the inward into the

¹Supra, Appendix A, p. 45.

outward and thus divorces it from reality.² It is "the fountainhead of slavery."³

The Fall

Where is the source for objectivization and how did it come about are questions which Berdyaev answers with "the myth of the Fall." A myth, because only in myth is an adequate approach to the problem found. A myth points to the fact that good and evil are only symbols designating a relationship. When man refused to obey God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the objectivization process was begun. God had created man in His image, that is, to be a creator and this act on the part of man indicated his refusal to make a creative answer to God's call. Instead of creating his own values, man tried to appropriate values ready made. He resisted the act of creation to which he was called and attempted to return to non-being.⁴

Interpretations

Of the Fall

Berdyaev believes that a myth is capable of bearing many interpretations, each containing an aspect or facet of the truth it means to convey. For our purposes we will cite three of his interpretations of the Fall.

²Nicolas Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, translated by R. H. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), chapter 1.

³Ibid., p. 178.

⁴Nicolas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, translated by O. F. Clarke (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), p. 25.

First, the Fall symbolized the birth of consciousness.

Paradise is in the realm of the instinctual, of the unconscious unity of nature. In this state no antithesis between subject and object exist. No conflict between the conscious and unconscious is present. No distinction between the one and the many is to be found. Life is itself everything, and everything is identified with it. Man is in God and the world is in man. Man knows God neither as idea nor concept, but as God, Himself. Life is lived in an I-Thou relationship and not in an I-it.⁵

However, in the present world dividedness, opposition between the one and the many, painful conflict between the conscious and the unconscious is everywhere obvious. The fruits of that tree in the garden have proved bitter to the taste and that bitterness has been transferred to consciousness itself. Consciousness is born in pain and suffering. The higher an individual's consciousness is, the higher is his capacity for suffering. Increase in consciousness inevitably means a corresponding increase in sorrow. Consciousness implies concentration on a limited area to the exclusion of other areas. At the same time, however, this focusing of attention brings with it separation, dividedness, distinction, which cause pain. Man desires to be whole, to be complete, but consciousness means lack of completeness. From its very nature consciousness can never embrace the whole of being, for it closes us off from the realm of the subconscious and the super-conscious.⁶

Consciousness is paradoxical in character because it both preserves man from cosmic chaos, groundless freedom, endless potentiality and yet

⁵Nicolas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, translated by Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), p. 43.

⁶Ibid., p. 38.

it separates man from the realm of the superconscious, from complete union with God.⁷

A second interpretation of the Fall is that it took place in a spiritual realm for freedom is ultimately spiritual and being and nature only derivative realities. First Satan rebelled, but man was involved in Satan's rebellion because man was a part of the spiritual hierarchy. Man became a slave to externals because of this prior rebellion of Satan and since then man's spiritual freedom has also been clouded. The nature of evil bears this out because it appeals first to man's spiritual, higher nature and the freedom which it possesses. "It is only later that evil finds expression in our subjection to lower elements and carnal passions."⁸ Moreover, in the myth of the Fall Satan is pictured as an external reality whereas he really possesses no such extrinsicism. Satan belongs to the spiritual world where everything is inward and integral. This explains why the world of Satan and the spirit man are inwardly related.

Satan is an inner reality in the spiritual world of man, and he only appears to be something external through analogy with the natural world. He is a reality of the spiritual order and cannot be conceived in a naive realist sense. He is not the autonomous source of evil in his original being, but only the manifestation of irrational freedom at the highest spiritual level.⁹

So we return to what was previously stated. "The inner dialectic of freedom produces evil from within itself. The source of evil as well as the source of life is to be found in the primal irrational freedom

⁷Ibid., p. 84.

⁸Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, p. 162.

⁹Ibid., p. 163.

and infinite potentiality."¹⁰

A third interpretation of the Fall which Berdyaev advances is that the Fall is responsible for egocentricity. In the Fall and since the Fall man's self-affirming pride attempts to replace God. This not only destroys God's ordered world hierarchy but also destroys man's personality. Man's egocentricity shuts him off from God as his source of being and inevitably leads to non-being; for outside of God there is no life but only illusion and death. Egocentricity means the inability to receive life from God.¹¹

Furthermore, egocentricity denotes slavery to self. It is the inability to issue forth out of self. The egocentric man is engaged exclusively in his own condition and is without interest in the world or in other people. Egocentricity is both slavery to self and world because it transforms the world into an object which experiences constraint from without. In this way the egocentric man becomes a slave to his highest ideals.¹²

In this third view the objectivization process works to its fullest extent. In the first and second interpretations objectivization was more a concomitant of consciousness and spiritual anarchy. But the egocentric man lives exclusively on the level of the I-it relationship and knows nothing about the I-Thou. Everything becomes an object to be used or discarded.

¹⁰Supra., p. 15.

¹¹Cp. Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, p. 132, and Freedom and the Spirit, p. 168.

¹²Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, p. 43.

His attitude towards everything which is a non-I is a servile attitude. He is aware of the non-I only, he has no knowledge of another I, he does not know a Thou, he knows nothing of the freedom of going out from the I. The egocentric man usually defines his relation to the world and to people in a way that is not personalistic.¹³

Personality as was mentioned earlier is the image of God in man. It looks for the image of God in another and tries to establish communion with him. Hence the very existence of egocentricity is a denial of the personality, for personality can only exist in the going out of self to another.

Berdyaev has other interpretations of the Fall but these three suffice to indicate the connection of the Fall with the loss of personal freedom. One crucial question remains. If in the Fall man is made conscious; becomes spiritually disjointed and loses his freedom, becomes egocentric; how then is man capable to reflect his freedom constructively?

Berdyaev answers that no matter what has happened or will happen to man, the image of God within him is never lost, and hence the potential possibility for proper utilisation of his freedom in the creative act remains.¹⁴

The spiritual nature of man may be twisted, deformed, broken, but it is not destroyed. Regardless of the depths of evil to which a man may sink during his life he still retains a capacity for enlightenment. The yearning for life with God remains in him and makes both revelation and salvation possible.

¹³ibid.

¹⁴Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, p. 86.

Evil has not finally possessed man's nature for it is a dual nature belonging to two worlds and even after the Fall man did not completely break with God, who continues to have dealings with him and to impart to him His regenerative powers. . . . God and the devil are at war within the human heart, and fallen man preserves the divine image in spite of everything, for he has passed through the experience of evil as a being of a definitely higher order.¹⁵

So in man exists the dialectical struggle between really living as a subjective existential center of creativity and acquiescing to objectivization. The same thing may be both good or evil depending upon how man relates himself toward it. To see how this actualizes itself in man's life we must examine a few of the examples of objectification or objectivization.

Examples of Loss of Freedom through Objectivization

Berdyaev treats in detail man's relationship to nature as a potential ground of objectivization. He doesn't contrast nature with culture, civilization or the supernatural. To Berdyaev nature is not just the world of matter in the finite setting of space and time. Nature is primarily the antithesis of freedom and consequently of personality and spirit. "Nature in this sense is the world of objectivization, that is to say of alienation, determinability, impersonality."¹⁶

Nature is not evil because it is lower on the hierarchy of being than the spirit. Animals, vegetation, minerals, sea, sands and stars all have an inner source of existence and consequently also have a place in the divine order. Nature is evil because in it everything

¹⁵Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁶Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, p. 94.

has become a thing. It is no longer determined from within but from without. Its deep source of life has been taken captive and ejected to the sphere of the superficial. Nature because of this objectivization is cut off from the source of freedom and being.

The natural world, this world and its massive environment, is certainly not identical with what we call the cosmos and cosmic life filled with existences. This world is the servitude, the enchainment of existences, not only of men, but of animals and plants, even of minerals and stars.¹⁷

But,

Man, in virtue of his own image, man as personality is not a part of nature, he has within him the image of God. There is nature in man, but he is not part of nature. Man is microcosm and therefore he is not part of the cosmos.¹⁸

Man becomes a slave to nature when he exteriorises it and regards himself as a part of nature, when instead of recognizing himself as a unit--a personality--complete in himself, he regards himself as a part of a greater unit. It is man as personality that is complete and nature that is partial, not vice versa. Each time this order is reversed man becomes a slave to nature.

Berzysov expresses this in another way using universals and particulars to illustrate his point. Enslavement occurs when man, a particular, regards himself as subordinate to nature--a universal. In reality, however, universals exist only in the particular. Universals actually are a part of particulars. Nature thus is a part of man and not man a part of nature. Thus life lived on the level of this natural world is evil because it is meaningless, irrelevant and accidental. This

¹⁷Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸Ibid.

is true because on the natural level there exists no underlying principle capable of uniting man with the rest of life, for nature is fragmentary and disconnected.¹⁹

Berdyaev seldom settles for just one static answer or proof to the problems he poses, but prefers to parallel partial solutions. He is in character then, when he also expresses man's slavery to nature in terms of being slavery to Satan. This is the result of men choosing to find his source for life in a lower being. This act causes distortion in the hierarchy of the universe because the spiritual principle is displaced by the material, God is replaced by Satan.

Now Satan has no independent source of life of his own and can therefore only compel man to derive his life from lower elements of nature.

This lower nature, when it occupies its proper place in the hierarchy of the universe, is not in itself evil for it belongs to the divine world. It is only when it usurps the place of something higher that it becomes untrue to itself and evil.

Animal nature certainly has its place in the scale of values and an eternal destiny; but when it takes possession of men, when man submits his spirit to the control of a lower element then it becomes an evil thing. For evil is a question of the direction pursued by the spirit, not of the constitution of nature itself.²⁰

Related to slavery to nature is what Berdyaev terms, slavery to the cosmos. Man recognizes and wrestles against the necessity and determinism of nature that is based on natural law,

But he has another attitude towards the cosmos, to that which presents itself to him as a world harmony, to the world whole, world unity, and world order. In this he is willing to see a reflected image of the divine image of the divine harmony and order, and the ideal basis of the world.²¹

¹⁹Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, p. 53.

²⁰Ibid., p. 169.

²¹Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, p. 101.

He feels that if only he unites himself with this, everything will go well. There will be meaning, order and completion in his life. He believes that he will again attain to unity for which he feels himself to have been destined. However, one will never find world harmony, the inner life of the cosmos, in objectivized nature for it has lost its inward existence. The cosmos to the view of natural man is enslaved and depersonalized by the Fall even as he is. By his futile attempts to unite himself with the cosmos man only succeeds in enslaving himself and consequently losing his personality.

Fusion with cosmic life does not emancipate personality, it brings about its dissolution and annihilation. The form of slavery is changed. This has fateful results in social life, in relation between personality and society. Society roots itself in the cosmos and interprets itself as an organism which has subjected and enslaved to the organic and in the last resort to the cosmic whole, man becomes a mere organ, and all the freedoms of man, which are bound up with his spiritual independence of society and nature are abolished.²²

In this social life, rooted in the cosmos, Berdyaev finds another manifestation of loss of freedom. The social doctrine through the ages has sought to convince man that socialization is the force that has created man. This doctrine has been so effective that man now lives in a state of "social hypnosis."

It is difficult for him to set his freedom in opposition to the despotic claims of society, because the social hypnosis, through the lips of sociologists of various schools of thought, convinces him that he has received his very freedom from society and from society alone.²³

So society has enslaved man by exteriorizing his freedom, by making his freedom, which is integral to man, dependent upon the external

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 102.

conditions of a social group. Here Berdyaev quotes Hertzzen's statement: "The subjection of personality to society, to the people, to humanity, or to an idea is an extension of the practice of human sacrifice."²⁴

It is true that man as an individual²⁵ is part of society. He enters into the organism as an organ. But as a personality, the I never enters into society as a part to the whole, as an organ into an organism. The moment man relates himself to society as an individual, as a part to a whole, the hierarchy of being is destroyed, society becomes higher in the scale of values than man, and the partial usurps the place of the whole. Man, by entering society as an organ, becomes the victim of an enslaving lie. He becomes the victim of the "social lure" and the results are as fatal as those of an individual who is enticed by the cosmos.²⁶

These three examples, nature, the cosmos and society serve to illustrate objectivization and the loss of personal freedom. Everything we encounter in life is potential ground for slavery as it is potential ground for the manifestation of our freedom through a subjective creative relationship toward it. Berdyaev speaks at length on several areas of possible slavery in Slavery and Freedom. The state, nationalism, individualism, collectivism, revolutionism, sex, beauty, etc., all are areas of possible objectivization. Nevertheless, the principle is the same and the pattern might be summarized as: Objectivization, subjection, slavery.

²⁴Ibid., p. 103.

²⁵Supra, p. 45.

²⁶Ibid., p. 106.

Summary

When freedom is lost the personality is destroyed. And yet it is in the nature of personal freedom that potential destruction of the personality lies. At the same time, it is only in the creative realization and utilization of his freedom that man becomes a personality. This is the paradoxical inner dialectic which continually goes on in man.

Objectivization and objectivity is not one half of an either-or situation. There are various degrees in objectivization. However, Berdyaev maintains that it is not the objective which is true. "The actual criterion of truth is found in the subject and not the object. The object is the creation of the subject."²⁷ Berdyaev asserts that only a reflected, secondary, symbolized truth or reality is found in objectivity. Hence man lives his life among symbols of realities, but it is the symbols, not the realities which enslave him.

And so it is with this premise, namely, that the object is created by the subject, objectivized by the subject, consequently the object enslaves the subject and creates a deterministic existence that Berdyaev rests his case for an explanation of how personal freedom is lost.²⁸

How is it possible to avoid the seemingly inevitable objectivization and consequent loss of personal freedom is the subject of our next chapter.

²⁷Ibid., p. 116.

²⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE MANIFESTATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM

The Creative Act

Having considered the origin and loss of personal freedom we now turn to the positive side of the picture; the manifestation and goal of personal freedom. Berdyaev answers the question, how do we preserve our personal freedom with the term, "creativity" or the "creative act."¹ Berdyaev shows how the creative act is the response of personal freedom to God's sacrificial love.

Berdyaev treats this subject at length in The Meaning of the Creative Act. But since he wrote this work in 1914, his thinking has matured somewhat. He writes in the preface to the German edition of 1927,

My Book, The Meaning of the Creative Act, was written fifteen years ago. Since then mighty catastrophes have broken over Russia and the world. A new epoch in history has begun. The bases of my thinking remain unaltered . . . but now the definiteness of my book appears to me as too optimistic. . . . Today I am inclined to greater pessimism. . . . But now as then, I still believe that God calls men to creative activity and to a creative answer to His love. Our creativeness should be the expression of our love toward God. . . .

But,

Man is a creator not only in the name of God but in the name of the devil as well. This complicates the problem of creativity . . . creativeness neither destroys nor diminishes the eternal truth of salvation: it merely reveals the other side of Christianity; it enlarges the Christian truth.²

This provides an excellent overview and introduction to our subject in this chapter.

¹Supra, p. 15.

²Nicolas Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, translated by Donald Lowrie (New York: Harper Brothers, 1950), p. 9.

Since Berdyaev's thinking has altered somewhat since the writing of The Meaning of the Creative Act in 1924, most of the material for this chapter will be drawn from his latest and most comprehensive work, The Beginning and the End. Here the bases for his thinking on Creativity are lucidly presented without the "errant particulars."

Personal Freedom, the Basis for Creativity

Personal freedom is the fountainhead of creativity. Without freedom, it would be impossible to be a person, and without both the freedom and the person there could be no creativity according to Berdyaev.

Creativity is inseparable from freedom. Only he who is free creates. Out of necessity can be born only evolution; creativity is born of liberty. When we speak in our imperfect human language about creativity out of nothing, we are really speaking of creativity out of freedom . . . and what is born of freedom does not derive from previously existing causes. . . .

Creativity is inexplicable: Creativity is the mystery of freedom and to deny creation out of nothing is to capitulate to determinism.³

As freedom is necessary for personality, so personality is the agent of the creative act, but the creative act in turn is what makes and saves personality.

Personality is empty unless it is filled with suprapersonal values and qualities, unless by means of creative acts it moves outwards and upwards beyond its own confines, unless it triumphs over itself and in so doing realizes itself.⁴

Without personal freedom the very possibility of a creative act is removed, and yet it is through the creative act that personal freedom realizes itself.

³Ibid., p. 244.

⁴Nicolas Berdyaev, The Beginning and the End, translated by R. M. French (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 104.

Definition of the Creative Act

When Berdyaev speaks of creativity and the creative act is he referring to something isoteric as so often we have found him to do? So lest we misunderstand him, we let him define his terms.

The creative act is not only a movement upwards, but also a movement toward an other, towards the world and towards men. The creative act cannot be stilled within the creator and find an outlet for itself.⁵

Berdyaev is very conscious of the possibility that some will identify his creativity with evolution and he goes to some length to dispell this notion. In fact, he equates evolution with objectification. It is simply a process of cause and effect whereas the creative act always has an element of the miraculous about it. The source of Berdyaev's creative nessness is not in that which is, but in non-being. Because of this, it is not a product of deterministic causes, it is causeless, a creation from nothing, non-being, freedom.⁶

To be aware of the fact that man does not exist within a finished and stabilized system of being is fundamental to the philosophy of creativeness, and it is only on that understanding that the creative act of man is possible and intelligible. Another fundamental position consists in the realization that the creative act of man is not simply a regrouping and redistribution of the matter of the world. Nor is it merely an emanation, an outflowing of the primary matter of the world. Nor again is it just a shaping of the material in the sense of imposing ideal forms upon it. In the creative act of man, a new element is introduced, something which was not there before, which is not contained in the given world, and is not part of its makeup, but which breaks through from another scheme of the world, not out of a dark freedom, but out of an illuminated freedom.⁷

⁵Nicolas Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, translated by R. M. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), pp. 127, 128.

⁶Berdyaev, The Beginning and the End, pp. 160f.

⁷Ibid., p. 171.

Berdyaev sees the very potential for the creative act and its possibility as an indication that the world as it exists is inadequate. Actually he feels the true image and form of man is a creative unity. And yet it is not without conflict that man realizes himself. Man, as microcosmos and microtheos, is above the flat dimensions of the natural world which is his environment and provides the matrix for conflict. And because man is, he is able to overcome objectivization.

Man is a being who masters and surmounts himself and overcomes the world; it is in that that his value and dignity consist. But this securing the mastery is a creative power. The mystery of creativeness is the mystery of achieving the mastery over given reality, over the determinism of the world, over the locking of its closed circle. In this sense creative activity is an act of transcending; in a deeper sense it is the victory over non-being.⁸

Once again Berdyaev tangles with Orthodox Christianity because he feels the Church denies man his privilege and prerogative as a co-operative creator with God. "The world is created not by God only, but also by man. Creation is a divine-human work."⁹

The mystic aspect of Berdyaev again appears as he describes the nature of the creative act:

The creative act is by its very nature ecstatic; it involves movement out beyond the boundaries; there is an act of transcendence in it. Creativeness is not an immanent process, nor susceptible of explanation in terms of immanence. There is always more in it than in any of the clauses by which it is sought to explain creative power; that is to say, the forcing of a way through within the realm of lettering determinism. Creative activity will not come to terms with the given state of the world, it desires another. The creative act always calls up the image of something higher, better and more beautiful than this--than the 'given'. This evoking of the image of something different, something better and more beautiful, is a mysterious power in

⁸Ibid., pp. 172, 173.

⁹Ibid., p. 174.

man and it cannot be explained by the action of the world environment.¹⁰

The imagination which Berdyaev mentions in the above paragraph is not of necessity good. It must be remembered that imagination can be creative of falsehood. It can cast a man into a fictitious world. In fact, Berdyaev notes that Jacob Boehme felt that evil was the result of man's vicious imagination. However, the creative imagination rightly used, that is, under the power and guidance of God's Spirit builds up realities. But what is a reality? Things are but secondary symbols of reality for Berdyaev. The image is an act not a thing.¹¹

The image of something different, something better, the image of beauty if brought into being out of the mysterious depth, out of freedom, not out of necessity, it arises from the noumenon, and not from the phenomenon. And the creative act is, as it were, a link between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds, a way out beyond the confines of the phenomenal world, it is ecstasy, an experience of transcendence.¹²

How does man come into the realm of creativity is the next question. Is man miraculously transplanted at conversion into the realm of the creative? Berdyaev answers:

To picture oneself as a free spirit in a consistent and thorough-going manner, and to act as a free spirit, means to be a free spirit. Creative fancy is capable of producing real and vital consequences. Creative ecstasy is a way out from the time of this world, historical time and cosmic time and takes place in existential time.^{13, 14}

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 176.

¹²Ibid., p. 177.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Supra, p. 45.

lest we too hastily mock this as an unrealistic solution as an example of Realism, we should pause and reflect on Luther's, believe that your sins are forgiven and live as though they were!

Man is not alone in the act of creation. Human creative power is not human only, there is an element of the divine in it. Thus though the creative act is an act achieved by man, it is achieved with the awareness that it is a reflection of a greater strength than his alone.

Another aspect of the nature of the creative act because of the divine activity involved in it Berdyaev calls prophetic.

Thus if one looks more deeply into creative activity we can say there is a prophetic element in it. It speaks prophetically of a different world, of another, a transformed state of the world. But that means that the creative act is eschatological. In it the impossibility of resting content with this given world is proclaimed, in it this world comes to an end, and another world begins.¹⁵

The creativity of man is the only release from objectivization. This creativity unites man with his Creator God and with the freedom from which he was created to make of him a true personality, one capable and in the act of responding in love to the outreach of his Creator.

This is true in every case of the creative condition in man, even though no creative product should result from it. The significance of the creative state for the inner life of man lies in this, that it shows he is overcoming the state of subjection and humiliation which is imposed by the burden of this world; it shows he has attained the experience of an exalting impulse. Creative power, therefore, proclaims that this world is superable, that congealed being can be overcome. It tells of the possibility of setting it free from its chains, it speaks of liberation and transformation.¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁶Ibid.

It is the supraconscious which is active in the movement upwards just described in the creative act, although the sub-conscious is also operative.

According to Berdyaev there are two sides and meanings to the creative impulse. There is the inward creative act, and there is the created product, the external disclosure of the creative act. It is the latter that is liable to objectivization which separates it from its source and separates its source from its source in God. The inner creative act is liable to the assaults of false imagination productive of a fictitious world, but the created product is vulnerable to the objectivization process in the world and herein it seems, the greater conflict comes.

And yet the creative act must issue forth into the world and stand liable to objectivization.

But in any case the creating mind cannot remain within itself, it must issue out of itself. This going out from the self is usually called the embodiment and a character in the highest objective is ascribed to it. . . . The creative act is bent upon the infinite, whereas the form of the created product is always finite. And the whole matter in question is this: does the infinite shine through the finite image?¹⁷

Or as Berdyaev summarizes, "creative power is noumenal in its origin, but it is in the phenomenal world that it reveals itself."¹⁸

We mentioned that there was a divine element in creativity and hence it could be called prophetic. But more specifically Berdyaev asserts:

¹⁷Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 185.

The very possibility of creation presupposes an infusion of the Spirit into man, and that we call inspiration. And this raises the action of creative power above the world. But the world seeks to make its own use of creative acts which count upon the end of this world.¹⁹

The world attempts to exploit creative acts for this time and its own particular ends when they are in another time and predicated upon the end of this present world and the beginning of another. This is the tension in which man lives. In this struggle man either succeeds or fails. And what is success and failure in the realm of creativity?

Berdyaev describes them:

Creative failure in this world is a sad and tragic thing. But there is success on a grand scale in the fact that the results of every creative act of man enter into the Kingdom of God.

This then is the eschatology of creative energy. The failure of the creative act consists in this, that it does not achieve its purpose of bringing this world to an end, of overcoming its objectivity. Its success, on the other hand, lies in the preparation it makes for the transformation of the world, for the Kingdom of God.²⁰

Berdyaev has presented the creative act as the impulse and product of a personally free subject responding to God's sacrificial love. Thus this is not something objective which could be given as a rule for all men to follow. What then is its relationship to objectivity?

Berdyaev also asks this question and answers it:

Creative power is in its essential nature subjective, the creating mind is a subject and it is in the subjective sphere that the creative process takes place. To speak of 'objective' creativeness is inaccurate and refers merely to the course taken by the creating subject.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 181.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 187, 188.

²¹Ibid., p. 189.

As in the realm of objectivization, there is a relativity in creativity, the other side of the coin so to speak.

Three principles may be said to operate in creative activity, and three principles are those of freedom, grace and law. And it may be that there are various degrees in the predominance of one or another of the principles.²²

and this assertion summarizes Bortyacev's thinking on the power and nature of creativity, but what of its end?

The Goal of the Creative Act

Since reality is not thing but act, and the things are simply symbols of the deeper reality; the end of creativeness is the realization of the reality of act. In this realization the eschatological Kingdom of God begins, and man's relationship to all takes on its proper significance and relevance. In other words, the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth is the perfection of the creative act which is posited on the premise that things are but symbols of the true image of God within the human personality.

The limits of human creative activity, of human art, are imposed by this objective world. They make it symbolical, although this symbolism is realist, not idealist. But the final transformation of the world will be the passing of the symbols into reality. Human creative power will create life itself, another world, and not things, in which the breach between subject and object always remains. Then no sacrifice will be offered by life and love for the sake of creative power, . . . but creative power and life will be made one and the same.²³

But this culmination can not come without grace. "Creative power must be theurgic, the cooperation of God and man; it must be divine human.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 192.

It is the answer of man to the call of God."²⁴

Berdyaev asserts that it is God's will for man that he be a co-operative creator with Him. This is God's image in man, but this presents a "religious problem."

The religious difficulty of this problem lies in the fact that the will of God concerning the creative vocation of man, the need of God for the creative activity of man, could not be revealed to man by God, it had to be brought to light by the daring of man himself. Otherwise there would be no freedom of creative power, there would be no answer made by man. Redemption comes from God, from the fact of the Crucified and Sacrificed God, whereas creative activity derives from man. To oppose creativity and redemption, however, is to succumb to the rules of objectified and fallen consciousness.²⁵

So man holds the option.

Man finds an outlet from the closed circle of subjectivity in the creative act of the spirit by two routes, that is, by the way of objectification and by the way of transcendence. By the way of objectification the creative act is adjusted to the circumstances of this world and does not reach its final state, it is cut off short. By way of transcendence the creative act breaks through to noumenal reality and sets its bearing upon the final transformation of the world.²⁶

Reminiscent of St. Paul's "Be ye transformed and not conformed. . . ."

The Kingdom of God of which Berdyaev speaks will be realized not in objectified chronological time, but personally in existential time. Berdyaev isn't denying the reality of the objective life completely, but here he is speaking of a spiritual reality, of which the objective can only present a symbol.

This reorientates thinking concerning the end of time. The time in the new eon, in eternity, is existential time and this is treated

²⁴Ibid., p. 193.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

by Berdyaev in The Meaning of History.

The end is perceived and accepted not as a fated doom, but as freedom; and it is the discovery of personality and freedom in the concrete universality of spiritual existence, in eternity. It is the transformation of the world, and man creatively and actively takes his part in it. It is the new heaven and the new earth.²⁷

Statements like this are often misunderstood and have made it necessary for Berdyaev to defend himself against the charge of utopianism. In The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar Berdyaev defines at length the differences between political power and political kingdoms and that of the spiritual world. He insists that only the Kingdom of God, the realm of Spirit, can be perfect and harmonious, not the realm of Caesar. And such a perfect realm is conceivable only eschatologically.²⁸ He also points out the stark contrast between the Spiritual realm and all worldly utopias, socialism, communism, etc., which he feels are diametrically opposite because all attempts at perfection here in the political realm have annihilated freedom.

Berdyaev no doubt felt that the charges of evolutionism and utopianism in connection with his thinking on the creative act and the realization of this act in the kingdom of God are examples of the world's objectivization and exploitation of the creative act for its own temporary purposes. We must keep in mind constantly that he is thinking in the realm of the spiritual world, and not physical temporal existence.

As I understand him, Berdyaev is saying that heaven begins with

²⁷Ibid., p. 233.

²⁸Nicolas Berdyaev, The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar, translated by Donald Lowrie (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 177.

the creative act because in it the person is connected with the Kingdom of God. This is a sporadic attachment, though, because of the attacks of false imagination and objectivization keep driving us back from our subjective creative response to God's love. However, the Kingdom of God culminates beyond chronological time, or, in other words, after this life ends, and then we enjoy the perfect creative life with God in existential time. In existential time there is no conflict between life and creativity but both are one same reality. No longer will man's response to God's outgoing sacrificial love be vulnerable to objectification. This is the Kingdom of God, the goal of personal freedom realised through the creative act by the freedom which is man's uncreated possession and the Grace of God.

Objectivization - The process by which a creative act is reduced to an objective thing by alienating it from the subject. Objectivization occurs as the fruit, within the creative subject through false imagination and is the product of personal freedom when they are alienated from their "subject orientation."

Objectivization - In general the belief that existence precedes essence. This quest from subjective existence the essence of anything is unattainable.

Individual and Person - The individual is born of the flesh and is incomplete, a part or segment of the totality of humanity. The person is born of the spirit, which is God's image and is complete in himself.

Freedom and Creativity - The inward motion and product of Grace, freedom and personality interacting to form a response to God's sacrificial love by going up and out toward another.

1 - 1000 Objectivization - The interaction of two subjects with

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS

Ungrund -- Divine Nothingness, Absolute non-being. Primal, irrational indeterminate freedom beyond the category of good or evil. It is from this that God created the world and out of which He is constantly being born anew. It is an irrational mysterious void that is beyond the reach of logic.

Determinism -- Any aspect or facet of life or nature which makes man a product of causes, which mitigates man's freedom, which objectivizes his existence.

Objectivization -- The process by which a creative act is reduced to an objective thing by alienating it from its subject. Objectivization occurs on two fronts, within the creative subject through false imagination and in the products of personal freedom when they are alienated from their "subject orientation."

Existentiality -- In general the belief that existence precedes essence. Thus apart from subjective existence the essence of anything is unknowable.

Individual and Person -- The individual is born of the flesh and is incomplete, a part or segment of the totality of humanity. The person is born of the Spirit, exists in God's image and is complete in himself.

Creative Act and Creativity -- The inward motion and product of Grace, freedom and personality interacting to form a response to God's sacrificial love by going up and out toward another.

I - Thou Relationship -- The interaction of two subjects each

regarding the other as a subject. This relationship is the reverse of the I - it relationship which treats all, persons and things alike as objects, investing them with no personality or rights of their own.

Time -- Cosmic time is mathematically calculated on the basis of the world's movement around the sun. Calendars and clocks depend on it and it is symbolized by a circle. Historical time is placed within cosmic time. It is reckoned in decades and centuries but every event in it is unrepeatable. Historical time is symbolized by a line which stretches forward into the unknown future, towards what is now. Existential time is not susceptible of mathematical calculation, its flow depends upon the intensity of experience, upon suffering and joy. It is within this time that creative uplifting impulses take place and ecstasy is experienced. It is symbolized by a point which indicates movement in depth.

These definitions although brief and sketchy will help to clarify Berdyaev's thinking as he recurrently draws upon these terms to express his message.

...the right to reveal to you one of the mysteries of
 that world from which you have been banished by old men who die, and answer
 the question for him. "No, this heart will not. This heart will not to
 what has been said of old, and repeat not like from the freedom
 which they did not want when they were on earth. Whatever they revealed
 was still unbroken in man's freedom of feeling for it will be manifest as
 a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was deeper to the bottom

...these definitions, the English language, translated by ...
 ...and ... by ...
 ...

APPENDIX B

EXCERPTS FROM "THE GRAND INQUISITOR"

The influence of Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor" on Berdyaev is immeasurable. Included are pertinent excerpts.

The Setting is the Spanish inquisition. At this time Jesus Christ reappears in Seville, the seat of the inquisition and raises a child back to life on the Cathedral steps. The people acclaim him but the cardinal passing by at the time has him imprisoned for disturbing the peace and tranquility of the church. Once in prison the cardinal who is the Grand Inquisitor comes to question Jesus Christ and to vindicate his right to arrest him. The following are excerpts of the ensuing dialogue between the cardinal and Jesus. Central in Dostoevsky's mind was freedom and so these are the portions which have been excerpted. For the total chapter see The Brothers Karamazov in the Dell paperback edition from which these sections were taken.¹

"Hast Thou the right to reveal to use one of the mysteries of that world from which Thou hast come?" my old man asks Him, and answers the question for Him. 'No, Thou hast not; that Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee fifteen

¹Iyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, translated by Constance Garnett and abridged by Edmund Fuller (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 187ff.

hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, "I will make you free"? But now Thou has seen these "free" men,' the old man adds suddenly, with a pensive smile. 'Yes, we've paid dearly for it,' he goes on, looking sternly at Him, but at last we've completed the work in Thy name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with Thy freedom but now it is ended and over for good. . . . But let me tell Thee that now, today, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet. But that has been our doing was this what Thou didst? Was this Thy freedom?'"

The Grand Inquisitor cites Christ's rejection of Satan's temptation in the wilderness as proof of Christ's unrealistic optimistic policy, and suggests the changes the Church has found it necessary to make.

"Thou wouldst go into the world, and art going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom which men in their simplicity and their natural unwillingness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread--for nothing has ever been more insupportable for man and human society than freedom. . . . But Thou wouldst not deprive man of freedom and didst reject the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth, if obedience is bought with bread? Thou didst reply that man lives not by bread alone. . . . And we alone shall feed them in Thy name, declaring falsely that it is in Thy name. Oh, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, "Make us your slaves, but free us". They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be

convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. Thou didst promise them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. . . .

"This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what Thou hast rejected for the sake of that freedom which Thou hast exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hid the great secret of this world. Choosing "bread", Thou wouldst have satisfied the everlasting craving of humanity--to find some one to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find some one to worship. . . .

But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered Thee an invincible banner; give bread, and man will worship Thee, for nothing is more certain than bread. But if someone else gains possession of his conscience--oh! then he will cast away Thy bread and follow after him who has ensnared his conscience. In that Thou wast right. For the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for. . . . But . . . instead of taking men's freedom from them, Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience but nothing is a greater cause of suffering. . . .

. . . Thou didst crave for free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him for ever. But thou didst think too highly of men therein, for they are slaves, of course, though rebellious by nature. Look round and judge; fifteen centuries

have passed, look upon them. Whom hast Thou raised up to Thyself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than Thou hast believed him! Can he, can he do what Thou didst? By showing him so much respect, Thou didst, as it were, cease to feel for him, for Thou didst ask far too much for him--Thou who loved him more than Thyself! Respecting him less, Thou wouldst have asked less of him. That would have been more like love for his burden would have been lighter.'"

All that Berdyaev writes on the subject of personal freedom may be regarded as a commentary on this great passage. Even these few excerpts serve to point up the thrust of spiritual freedom so important to both Berdyaev and Dostolevsky.

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