

THE BRAHMINICAL
AND VEDANTIC
IDEAS OF
BENJAMIN
DEBUYAEV

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THE
PERSONALISTIC EXISTENTIALISM
OF
BERDYAEV

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OF
BERDYAEV

BY

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FOREWORD

Though existentialism as a movement has come into prominence only in recent times, it is not a new phenomenon. The emphasis on the subject as against the object which constitutes the central core of existentialist thought is a recurring feature in the history of philosophical thinking. The importance of the subject as against the object, the need for an inquiry into the nature and ontological status of the 'I' which is the investigator, and an understanding of human existence as it is, subject to many limitations, constitute the common theme of philosophical thinking both in the East and in the West.

In the West, we may trace certain traces of existentialism in the writings of St. Augustine and Pascal. However, it is through Soren Kierkegaard that existentialism assumed a definite form and decisive importance in modern times, for his influence on philosophical theology was so pervasive throughout the Christian world that even those existentialists who are atheistic have to reckon with his thought. One of the most influential thinkers on the side of theistic existentialism is

Nicolas Berdyaev, who has been characterized as the second Socrates and as a link between the East and the West, between Christians and non-Christians. The personalistic existentialism of Berdyaev focusses our attention on the basic struggle between Christianity and secularism which has contemporary relevance and calls for a new way of life protesting against all those forces which are detrimental to the freedom of man and spiritual awakening.

Berdyaev was a prolific writer, and he expressed his views on a very wide range of themes. Dr R. Balasubramanian has singled out for discussion in this book Berdyaev's views on God and man against the background of existentialism. Every existentialist not only states his position, but also tries to vindicate it by means of arguments. The peculiar difficulty in the case of Berdyaev is that his arguments lie scattered over the entire range of his writings, and hence lack a clear formulation in the context of the problem taken up for discussion. Dr Balasubramanian presents the problems and the supporting arguments in the proper perspective of Berdyaev's personalistic existentialism.

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

P R E F A C E

Nicolas Berdyaev (1874-1948), the Russian Orthodox philosopher-theologian, was by temperament a nonconformist. Championing the freedom of the individual and the need for spiritual awakening, he revolted against totalitarianism. He was banished from Russia in 1922 as he was opposed to the Communist regime which was, in his view, detrimental to spiritual elements both in personal and social life. After spending a year at Berlin, he moved to Paris and lived there until his death. It was during this period that he wrote most of the important books which have been translated into a dozen languages. He lived a busy life, writing and lecturing.

Two contemporary movements which play a dominant role in the Western world are analytical philosophy and existentialism. Berdyaev belongs to the latter movement. He is a theistic existentialist. His personalistic existentialism is of much interest to all theists, both Christian and non-Christian. The scope of this monograph is restricted to the study of Berdyaev's conception of God and man against the existentialist background.

Though Advaita Vedanta is the main area of study and research at the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, the field of comparative philosophy is not neglected. The Centre, under the guidance of its Director, Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan, is interested in promoting the study of other systems of thought, Western as well as Eastern, for the purpose comparative philosophy. I wish to acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to Dr Mahadevan for the help and encouragement which I received from him in completing this work. I am thankful to him for the Foreword which he has given to this book.

To Dr V. A. Devasenapathi, Professor of Philosophy at the Centre, I am very much indebted for reading the manuscript and making many valuable suggestions and criticisms for its improvement.

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R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

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'All philosophy-because it is an activity of the human spirit-is, in its themes as well as its causes, intimately connected with the life of the person who is philosophizing.'

—Karl Jaspers*

I

BASIC BELIEFS

1 IMPORTANCE OF BERDYAEV

A critical study of the philosophy of Nicolas Berdyaev is necessary and worthwhile for three reasons. For one thing, the personalistic existential philosophy which he advocates is unique. Though he calls himself an existentialist, his existentialism is different from that of other thinkers. He differs as much from the theistic existentialists like Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Marcel and others as he differs from the atheistic existentialists like Nietzsche, Heidegger (?), Sartre and others. A study of the theistic existentialism of Kierkegaard or of Marcel will not enable one to anticipate the thought of Berdyaev who had something important to say on the basic issues in philosophy, religion, politics, and society. He did not sail into the moorings of existentialist thinking being influenced by any thinker of this school, much less by Kierkegaard who is generally considered to be the springboard of the existentialist movement in modern times. I was an existentialist, says Berdyaev, even before I came to know Kierkegaard's writings. 'Neither Kierkegaard, whom I did not read not until late in life and whose morbid exaltation of sin is profoundly uncongenial to me, nor Heidegger, nor even Jaspers, had any particular influence on my thought.'¹ So Berdyaev who stands on his

*P. A. Schilpp (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1957), p. 5

¹ N. Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 103

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own must be looked at, not from the point of view of other existentialists, however close their thought may be to his, but only from the perspective provided by his writings for the purpose of appreciation and criticism of his thought.

Second, his philosophy is universal in its appeal. His philosophy which can be described as a commentary on the meaning of life is intended for all, since every one, at some stage or other, is concerned with this central existential problem. What he has got to say is based on experience. Being convinced that bare speculation and abstract reasoning without any bearing on the problems of life will not be of any use, he built the structure of philosophy on the foundations of experience. It was his conviction that any philosophical theory worth the name must throw a new light on the meaning and significance of life. To him philosophy is not just an intellectual game or a theoretical exercise in reasoning which one assiduously practises for the purpose of scoring a victory; rather it is a function of life. Berdyaev observes: 'I have been nourished in my philosophical thinking above all by the experience of life, and I regarded philosophy as a function of life, or rather as a kind of symbol of spiritual experience, of a lonely pilgrimage of the spirit.'² He claims that his philosophy is 'born of spiritual experience, rather than deduced from ascertained and assured premises.'³ It is here that we find the universality of his philosophy.

A discerning student of Berdyaev will have to discriminate the essential and the basic from the superfluous and the secondary in his teachings. His frequent references to Christ and Christianity in his writings should not be narrowly interpreted as proof of his sectarianism. While he is as much deeply concerned with Christianity as he is with other movements, his basic approach to all problems, social as well as religious, is that of a mystic. It is in terms of spiritual awakening, which is the goal to be achieved, that he evaluates every movement that man ushers in, every social order that he is interested in maintaining, and every concrete achievement that he claims to his credit. Consider, for example, the way in which Berdyaev reacts against the hostile

² *Ibid.*, p. 104

³ *Ibid.*, p. 302

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attitude of the Church towards Communism. According to Berdyaev,

The fight of the Churches and of Christian movements against the advent of Socialism and Communism is the worst possible evil which could happen. It is not the fear of Communism which should dominate nor the formation of an anti-Communist front which would inevitably degenerate into a Fascist front. What is necessary is the Christianization and spiritualization of Communism at the core of which we must know how to discern the positive elements of social justice.⁴

While he does not accept the Marxian exposition of Communism in its entirety, he is convinced that there are elements of truth embedded in the philosophy of Communism which none seriously concerned with social justice can disregard, and that Communism which is 'the phenomenon of our modern world most worthy of serious attention,' is quite compatible with Christianity.⁵ The idea of Communism, says Berdyaev, has a Christian origin and in the past has often taken religious forms.⁶ It is not the place here to consider Berdyaev's evaluation of Communism. We refer to his appraisal of the Church and of Christian movements against Communism in order to show that being concerned with authentic spiritual values he always speaks about 'Christianization and spiritualization' of every movement and organization. It must be pointed out here that 'Christianization' has a deeper significance than what it appears to a casual reader. Berdyaev is not concerned with the external forms and outward institutions of Christianity, for they are no longer the principal sources determining the characteristics of Christian life in the world.⁷ What is of utmost importance is the 'inner life', 'the spiritual life' of man who must remain a free and creative being, being determined from within, not an individualist but a communal being, independent of exterior social determinism.⁸ It is this sense which is uppermost in

⁴ N. Berdyaev, *Towards a New Epoch* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), p. 46

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51

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his thought whenever he refers to Christianization or spiritualization. It is not, therefore, surprising that Berdyaev's thought and language bear a close resemblance to those of other mystics. If we approach Berdyaev as a mystic who was deeply concerned with social reorganization for the purpose of realizing spiritual values and perfecting the inner life, we could easily appreciate the universal appeal of his philosophy.

There is also another reason to show why a study of Berdyaev is desirable. Though first and foremost a mystic, Berdyaev bestowed careful thought on all social and political questions. It is for the sheer intrinsic value of his insights into, and conclusions on, the various pressing social and political problems that we have to study Berdyaev. While it does not mean that we have to treat his pronouncements on all these questions as final and authoritative, it is necessary on our part to examine them with the care and patience which they deserve, since they are the declarations of one who being a rebel refused to toe the line marked by others either by virtue of their authority or social standing and pressure, but who at the same time readily accepted the elements of truth in what others had to say. If we want to assess the value of a thinker, we have to consider not merely *what* he said, but also the *way* in which what he said works on others. We may or may not agree with Berdyaev's conclusions, but the fact remains that his views are provocative, and that his conclusions kindle our thought and imagination and make us think and rethink about those issues.

Consider a few among the many observations of Berdyaev's. Commenting on public opinion, he says that in his 'attitude towards so-called public opinion, in all its manifestations, there was something not far removed from contempt. I never took it into consideration : it simply did not exist so far as I am concerned.'⁹ The misfortune of the Russian Revolution, according to Berdyaev, did not lie in that it came too early but in that it came too late.¹⁰ In just two sentences he brings out the strength as well as the weakness of Marxism. 'If Marxism is in earnest about

⁹ *Dream and Reality*, p. 109

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223

A ROMANTIC EXISTENTIALIST

its avowed aim to liberate mankind from servitude to economics, then I am a Marxist. I cannot assent to any exteriorization of the personal conscience to its transference to the collective.'¹¹ His evaluation of revolution is as prophetic in its range as it is penetrative in its insight. According to Berdyaev, '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 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.'¹² As one who does not believe in eternal suffering of man, Berdyaev says : 'I can conceive of no more powerful and irrefutable arguments in favour of atheism than the eternal torments of hell. If hell is eternal then I am an atheist.'¹³ These passages which bear testimony to the multi-dimensional character of Berdyaev's thought clearly bring out the original insight with which he unravelled the problem he took for consideration.

2 A ROMANTIC EXISTENTIALIST

There is no better introduction to the study of the personalistic existentialism of Berdyaev than Berdyaev himself. To understand the life and problems of Berdyaev is to understand his philosophy. It is generally the case that the life of a philosopher is neither exciting nor sensational. Rousseau and Berdyaev are the two notable exceptions to this. Just as the half-mad, half-educated Rousseau who exerted a tremendous influence on the political thinking of his contemporaries and subsequent thinkers led a sensational and adventurous life, moving from place to place, so also Berdyaev led a sensational and adventurous life, revolting against the collectivizing tendencies both in philosophy and politics. In the words of Berdyaev : 'When I think about my life I am led to the conclusion that it has not been the life of a philosopher in the current sense of the word. It has been too passionate and too full of dramatic events, both individual and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 241

¹² N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (London : Geoffrey Bless, 1937), p. 263

¹³ *Dream and Reality*, p. 293

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social.¹⁴ There is similarity between Rousseau and Berdyaev in yet another respect. Just as Rousseau's thought is coloured by romanticism, Berdyaev's existentialism too bears the stamp of romanticism. In fact, Berdyaev is aware of the way in which critics reacted against the romanticism of Rousseau. Historians of philosophy do not consider that the romantic movement ushered in by Rousseau and followed by others was a step forward in the progress of human thinking. 'The origin of the alleged plague of romanticism is said to be Rousseau, and, accordingly, everybody bears the curse of Rousseauism.'¹⁵ We would be doing Berdyaev less than justice if we think that he was a romantic in the sense in which Rousseau and others were romantics. Unlike Rousseau and others, he did not fall a victim to illusions and insincerity, to spectacular emotionalism and glorification of impulses. Not only did he reject the generally accepted interpretations of romanticism, but he even went to the extent of saying that he was not a follower of Rousseau.

What, then, is the sense in which Berdyaev called himself a romantic? Berdyaev brings out the central idea of romanticism as he conceived it in one sentence. Romanticism, according to him, stands for everything that is human.¹⁶ Without leaving us to guess as to what this possibly could mean, he himself provides us with an illuminating explanation of his conception of romanticism. Romanticism, according to him, stands for the following. It first of all emphasizes the supremacy of the personal and individual over the general and universal. The primacy of the subject over the object is another important aspect of romanticism. Further, it underlines the importance of intuition as against discursive reasoning. It is not the place here to discuss the significance of each of these aspects of romanticism. They will be taken up for a critical consideration in the course of our discussion of Berdyaev's conception of philosophy. One point that has to be made clear at this stage is that Berdyaev is not a romantic in the conventional sense of the term, and that his romanticism is not an end in itself, but only a means to the attainment of liberation.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. viii

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105

A ROMANTIC EXISTENTIALIST

which consists in spiritual awakening. The following two passages bring out in unmistakable terms the standpoint of Berdyaev as a romantic existentialist.

Some have described romanticism as a revolt of nature in general, and of human nature with its passions and emotions in particular against reason, against norms and laws, against the binding principles of society and civilization. But for me the problem had a different connotation. I have never urged any revolt of "nature" and "instinct" against the laws of reason and society: rather, I have urged a revolt of the spirit and have demanded the recognition of the primacy of the spirit over nature, society and civilization alike.¹⁷

To understand the true aims of man's liberation one must transcend romanticism and classicism, naturalism and rationalism alike: and I have endeavoured to do this.¹⁸

If Berdyaev felt the need of studying the existential problems of man, - his freedom and his creativity, his relation to God and *vice versa*, - it is because of the fact that he lived in an age of crisis and catastrophic changes which took place not only in Russia where he lived, but throughout Europe. Berdyaev brings out very vividly and succinctly the crisis which confronted him in the Preface to his *Dream and Reality* which is an essay in autobiography. Berdyaev observes:

It has been my lot to live in an age catastrophic alike for my own country and the whole world. Before my eyes old worlds have collapsed and new ones have arisen. I was able to observe the extraordinary vicissitudes of the destiny of man. I have seen people transformed by their experiences; I have seen them adapt and betray themselves in the course of these experiences. Such betrayal is, perhaps, what is hardest to bear in life. In the trials which I have undergone I have come to believe in a higher power which

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107

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has guided me and probably saved me from my own undoing.¹⁹

In another passage he says :

I have lived through three wars, of which two were world wars, and two revolutions in Russia, that of 1905 and of 1917 ; I have lived through the spiritual renascence in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, through Russian communism, through the crisis of a whole civilization, through the upheavals in Central Europe, through the collapse of France and her occupation by the German armies ; I have lived in exile and my exile has not come to an end... My life as a philosopher was under the constant impact of this torrent of events. I have been in prison four times - twice under the old *regime* in Russia and twice under the new ; I was exiled to the north of Russia ; I was brought to trial and threatened with permanent deportation to Siberia ; I was banished from my mother country and shall probably end my life in exile.²⁰

3 A SPIRITUAL NONCONFORMIST

Berdyaev was interested in all socical and political problems which had a bearing on life. The only consideration which moved him in all his reviews and appraisals of the social and political problems which confronted him was spiritual awakening which he set before himself as the goal. And so any movement or course of action which was conducive to the liberation of the individual or spiritual awakening met with his approval ; if it was considered to be a hindrance, then it was disapproved. The result is that the friends and critics of Berdyaev who try to evaluate him size him up differently by giving him different labels. To some he is 'intolerant'. Some describe him as a 'modernist' and a 'free-thinker' ; some others think of him as a 'heretic'. While every one of these descriptions is true in so far as it attempts to portray Berdyaev from a particular point of view, no one of them taken by itself is completely true. 'Religious

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xi

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii

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'philosopher' is perhaps the best description that suits him. In fact, he describes himself as a religious philosopher.²¹ There are two other significant expressions employed by him to describe his standpoint. He calls himself a 'spiritual anarchist' and an 'individualist'. If he distinguished himself as a fighter, it was in the name of individualism; if he revolted against the regimentation of thought and freedom of the spirit both against the old *regime* and the dictatorship of the Marxist party, it was in the name of spiritual anarchism.

Even as a boy he found it difficult to reconcile himself with any institutional education, even that of the university. He had a deep-rooted dislike for military training. The training which he received from the Cadet Corps organization developed in him a strong reaction against the military spirit and *milieu*. He says that his dislike of soldiery issues from an innate instinct to resist and set at naught the power of the collective.²² By temperament he was a nonconformist, and there was a strong dissenting note in all that he said and did.

I have always broken with every group to which I belonged. I could never conform to any collective. I was never able to go with the stream of the world around or bow submission to any one or anything; my life has taught me that this could not have been otherwise.²³

Though he was not a professional revolutionary, he was never in the good books of the authorities of the state either at the time of the old *regime* or during the Marxist rule. As the champion of the cause of the oppressed working classes, he could not but show his sympathy for the Marxist movement; and his association with the Social-Democrats while he was still in the university led to his arrest in 1898, and he was exiled to Vologda. He had the greatest admiration for Marx, but his admiration was not that of a blind follower who would readily accept all that Marx said. In short, he was not an orthodox Marxist, but a spiritualist Marxist. While he accepted the materialist

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 325

²² *Ibid.*, p. 15

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 15

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interpretation of history, he repudiated the metaphysical implications of materialism.²⁴ We have an elaboration of this point in the following passage :

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.²⁵

As he could not agree with the policy and programme of the Marxist ideology in all its aspects, he came to be looked upon as a reactionary. Being an outspoken critic of Marxism which controlled the Russian state after the historic Revolution, he could not have expected any other treatment than that of banishment from the state. Marxism for which he had a 'soft corner' in the early stage of its development proved hostile to spiritual values. Once Berdyaev was aware of the implications of Marxism *versus* spiritual values, he did not hesitate to defend the latter against the collectivizing tendencies of the former. He himself describes his break with the Marxian ideology as follows :

I went through a stormy inward reaction also against the second, the great 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.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123

²⁵ N. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom* (London : Geoffrey Bles, 1944), p. 13

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16

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Berdyaev was deeply interested in social problems without being *involved* in them. He was not anti-social, but non-social. To quote Berdyaev:

I have never actively engaged in political activities. I have been deeply involved in many things, yet have not belonged entirely to any one of them. I have never surrendered myself to anything, except my creative calling, to which alone the core of my being owes allegiance. Far from having ever been indifferent to social questions, I have, indeed, suffered deeply from their impact on me, and my "social conscience" seemed never at rest. But in the last analysis and in a still deeper sense, I have been non-social. Social movements have never been able to claim my whole-hearted allegiance.²⁷

Being a religious philosopher, Berdyaev's interest in society and the problems which arise in it is mainly from the point of view of spiritual awakening which is the goal to be achieved. He realized the importance of society to the individual for attaining his spiritual awakening. The individual is related to society in the same way as an actor has relation with the stage on which he appears. Just as the stage provides opportunities to the actor to display his talents, so also society provides opportunities to the individual to develop and display his creative acts. The relation between the individual and society is not external, but organic. "Sociologically the individual and society are correlative; the individual cannot be conceived apart from society, and society presupposes the existence of individuals."²⁸ The life of an individual cannot be understood individualistically: it is life in society, in communion with others. Just as an actor cannot identify himself with the stage, however useful and necessary it may be, so also the individual cannot identify himself with society in spite of his intimate relation with it. Though he is in it, he is not of it. To the extent that he tries to *transcend* society while remaining in it, he is free and creative. It is perhaps in this sense of transcendence of society that Berdyaev's claim to his being non-social has to be understood.

²⁷ *Dream and Reality*, p. xii

²⁸ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 252

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All through his life Berdyaev never accepted the world as it was given to him. He was not happy about things commonplace, habitual and routine affairs. He was of the view that the every-day-world was unauthentic, untrue. He was convinced about the existence of *another world*, more authentic and more true, to which the deepest self belongs. As he puts it :

Man is a complex and perplexing being. I am aware of myself as a point of intersection of two worlds; while "this" world, the world of my actual living, is known to me as unauthentic, untrue, devoid alike of primacy and ultimacy, there is "another world", more authentic and more true, to which my deepest self belongs.²⁹

It is in terms of spiritual awakening or realization of the inner spirit in man that we have to interpret his non-acceptance of the familiar world. His dislike of the so-called life as led by almost all was due to the fact that he was deeply concerned with the trans-empirical self. His dislike was not physiological or psychological in origin.³⁰ It should not be thought that Berdyaev was averse to things beautiful and lovely, that he sadly lacked the aesthetic sense, and that the ideal he cherished was a life of simplicity and self-mortification bereft of beauty and pleasure. The truth is that he was profoundly appreciative of physical beauty, of aesthetic forms and loveliness. His love of beauty was such that he was not able to stand the sight of even the slightest disfigurement on a human face. Even though he was appreciative of beauty in all its forms, his fundamental attitude to life was not that of an aesthete. His approach to human life was predominantly ethical, and he would care for beauty in all its manifestations only to the extent that it would contribute to the enhancement of life which must be judged in terms of spiritual awakening. Beauty which is a hindrance to goodness must have no place in the life of man. Berdyaev gives expression to the delicate moral sensitiveness he had in his own characteristic way. 'I should have liked the world to be turned into a symphony of odours : I am intensely and painfully sensitive to bad "odour" in the world. And a bad moral odour pains me as much as a

²⁹ *Dream and Reality*, p. 20

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23

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bad physical odour.⁸¹ Schemings and simulations, deceits and duplicities in life and politics - all these constitute what he calls the 'bad odour' in the world. And it is against these that man has to fight a relentless battle, and it is these he must transcend in order to be free.

When we say that Berdyaev had a dislike for the so-called life, it should not be thought that he was not interested in the problems of life. As an existentialist the one problem about which he was deeply concerned was the problem of life. But he had a different interpretation of what it meant for him. He categorically rejected the view that it centred round sex and political power. He openly declared that he had nothing to do with such a life and the problems which it presented. Judged from the conventional standard, Berdyaev did not belong to 'this' world, but to 'another world'.

My love for life was a love for the meaning of life, and my love for the world was a love for a world that had denied its worldly fashion. I am not so presumptuous as to claim that I was above the temptations of "life": I was, indeed, as much their victim as any body else. But I was never tempted to provide them with moral sanctions or to justify them spiritually. The problem of the "flesh" was never a particular concern of mine... the problem which preoccupied me above every other was that of freedom.⁸²

In short, Berdyaev did not accept the conventional values which people generally cherish and pursue; he did not approve of the standardised social patterns of life, in spite of the fact that he was deeply interested in the problem at the individual as well as at the social plane. He speaks about his role as a philosopher *vis-a-vis* others as follows: 'Few philosophers have been so deeply involved in life as I was, though, as I have tried to show, I have not liked "life". Likewise, few philosophers were so much involved in society as I was, although I had a positive dislike of "society".'⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 24

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 31

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4 TWO TURNING POINTS

In the life of Berdyaev there were two turning points which gave his thought the characteristic stamp and significance it has. In fact, Berdyaev acknowledged them as of the nature of conversion. It must be emphasised here that he did not think of conversion in the religious sense as conversion to Orthodoxy or even to Christianity in general. They have to be interpreted as conversion to the search for truth. For the sake of convenience and better understanding of the position of Berdyaev we could characterize the two turning points as spiritual and social. Though we refer to two turning points, it should not be thought that they were entirely separate and that there was time lag between them. In the life of Berdyaev both of them were intimately connected with each other, and there is no suggestion in his writings that the one followed the other. His social conversion has to be understood in the background of spiritual conversion, which in its turn presupposes social conversion.

It was under the spell of spiritual conversion that he busied himself with the search for the *meaning of life*. One may not find any meaning in life as a result of the search; the search, nevertheless, is, according to Berdyaev, necessary and useful since it renders life significant and meaningful. The search for the meaning of life is more important than the success of the search. It is not the case that every one feels the urge to find out the meaning of life. The urge itself felt by persons like Berdyaev can be called an insight. To quote Berdyaev:

This insight marked a true inner revolution which changed my whole outlook... This was undoubtedly a kind of conversion - the most powerful and perhaps the only one in my life. It was the conversion to the search for truth: a search which itself implied faith in the existence of truth; a search for truth and meaning which conflicted with commonplace and meaningless actuality.³⁴

Linked with the search for the meaning of life was the social conversion which urged him to demand social justice and seek

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79

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social liberation of man. He was convinced that neither society nor the state nor the nation, but man alone should be regarded as sacred. Revaluation of values and reorganization of the social order are urgently needed for ensuring the freedom of man. Social justice demands that a few cannot be allowed to wallow in luxury, while the many suffer through poverty and pestilence. But social levelling which proves fatal to the freedom of man is no better than the evil of social inequality. It was the vision of a free individual living in a society with the ideals of justice and freedom that moved Berdyaev towards Socialism in general.

5 FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

There were three formative influences on Berdyaev : (i) the Russian Socialism and Marxism, (ii) the cultural renaissance that took place towards the close of the 19th century, and (iii) the religious philosophy of the 19th century Russia.

Berdyaev approached Socialism purely from the ethical point of view. His interest in Marxism was based on, and justified by, ethical considerations. He came under the spell of Marxism because it presented a new vision, a purpose, and a new conception of man. It presented a distinctly higher intellectual and cultural standard than most of the preceding movements. Berdyaev distinguished four stages in the history of Russian Socialism : (1) Utopian Socialism, (2) Narodnik Socialism, (3) Marxian Socialism, and (4) Bolshevik or Marxist Communism. It was the Bolshevik Communism that came to the top in the course of the Revolution. Acknowledging the tremendous impression produced on him by Marx when he first read his writings, Berdyaev appreciatively refers to Marx's 'insight into purposeful conflict as a part of the structure of things.' The Marxian theory, according to him, was 'pregnant with enormous revolutionary possibilities, in comparison with which the old socialistic theories appeared weak, ineffectual and rudderless.'⁸⁵ Though he had 'faith in the possibility of the spiritual regeneration and liberation of communist Russia from within,' the totalitarian elements of the communist rule endangered the freedom of man which was

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118

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dear to him. His vehement condemnation of the communist rule on religious, philosophical, and moral grounds, all centring round the sacredness of man and the ultimacy of his freedom, resulted in his banishment from Russia, which was based not on any political but on ideological grounds. Though he was critical of the totalitarian elements of the communist rule, he attached the greatest importance to the principle of social justice and the promise of a new society contained in the Marxian ideology.

We shall now consider the second source of influence on Berdyaev. Towards the close of the 19th century there took place a cultural renaissance in Russia which left an indelible impression on thinkers like Berdyaev. The renaissance was by and large religious in character. There was a new outlook on art and aesthetic values, not from the point of view of conventional, social, utilitarianism, but from the point of view of religion. The 'outlook' to which the writers and thinkers of the 19th century Russia were committed led not infrequently to their exile and martyrdom. The great thinkers and novelists of the Russian renaissance were influenced by Pushkin, who was 'the great Renaissance architect of the Russian literature.' So great was his influence that Berdyaev went to the extent of saying that, without Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy would have been impossible. Two thinkers of decisive influence associated with the new movement were Merezhkovsky and Rozanov. Though Berdyaev did not accept everything advocated by these thinkers, he held them in great esteem. According to Berdyaev, Mereshkovsky introduced, and was himself expressive of, a whole unknown or forgotten world of cultural values, of Greek and Roman antiquity, of the Italian Renaissance, of French literature, of Nietzsche and Ibsen. He seemed to follow a kind of Nietzschean Christianity, but his 'Nietzscheanism was a glorified religion of flesh and sex.'⁸⁶ Berdyaev's regret was that Merezhkovsky did not appreciate the true significance of freedom, in spite of the fact that he frequently used it in his writings. Freedom, says Berdyaev, is spirit and not flesh, which more often than not, spells the enslavement of man. 'Freedom is attained neither through ascetic denial nor through naturalistic glorification of the flesh, but through inwardness,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149

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whereby no part of man's nature is external to him.⁸⁷ Rozanov was a writer of the first order and of exceptional originality. His critique of historical Christianity and his exposure of contemporary Christian hypocrisy with regard to sex were greatly valued by Berdyaev. Nevertheless, Berdyaev could not agree with Rozanov whose anti-Christianity moved in the direction of the naturalistic religion of sex, procreation, marriage, and the family under the influence of sensuousness.

The impact of Western thinkers on Berdyaev and his contemporaries was tremendous. The French symbolism, the writings of Ibsen and of Nietzsche were popular among the Russians at that time. Berdyaev had his own way of understanding Nietzsche, one of the most controversial and enigmatic thinkers. Unlike others who, coming under the influence of Nietzsche, glorified vitalism and immoralism, Berdyaev, under the same influence, showed his concern for moral problems, for he read Nietzsche in the light of Ibsen, and Ibsen in the light of Nietzsche.⁸⁸ While agreeing with Nietzsche in respect of the place to be accorded to vision and inspiration as the indispensable means in our encounter with reality, he had to part company with him in respect of the conclusions arrived at therefrom. In the words of Berdyaev :

Like Nietzsche I ask about the place of creative ecstasy, vision, and prophecy in man's endeavour to comprehend reality. In surrendering to these Nietzsche arrived at the conclusion that God is dead. This conclusion may, indeed, be unavoidable in the experience of human destiny, but in Nietzsche it marked not only the death of God but also the death of man in the advent of the superman. As to me, I am concerned to show that creative ecstasy, vision, prophecy, and inspiration are a pledge of the living reality of God and man.⁸⁹

The third source of influence which played a vital role in moulding the views of Berdyaev was the 19th century Russian

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.143

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 290

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religious philosophy. The Slavophils represented this type of thinking. These thinkers were of the view that Russia had a unique mission in world history. Berdyaev was a true 'Russian'. 'The history of the Russian people, the Russian soil, the Russian air—all had their part in shaping Berdyaev and his thought.'⁴⁰ There was no traditional Orthodox atmosphere in his home; for his father was a free-thinker and a Voltairian, and his mother adopted Roman Catholic ways, in spite of her being a member of the Orthodox Church. Yet Berdyaev was drawn towards Orthodoxy as it provided greater freedom than Catholicism and Protestantism. At the same time he was not a *typical* Orthodox. He never claimed that his religious teaching was acceptable to the Orthodox Church. He was not a heretic and a sectarian, but a believing free-thinker. His religious thinking was safely based on an act of faith which was so deep-rooted that nothing could uproot it. The central concept of his religious thinking was the divinization of man, in terms of which he interpreted the essence of the Orthodox view. 'God-manhood embodies the unity and interaction of two natures, divine and human, which are one but unconfused. Man is not subsumed in God, but is made divine and his humanity endures in eternal life.'⁴¹ Such was the religious, social, and political thinking of Berdyaev, the aristocratic radical, the mystic anarchist, the personalistic existentialist.

⁴⁰ O. F. Clarke, *Introduction to Berdyaev* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950); p. 10

⁴¹ *Dream and Reality*, p. 182

'Look here, upon this picture, and on this.'

—Hamlet, III, 4

II

BERDYAEV'S CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

1 ORIGIN OF EXISTENTIALISM

It will be useful to set forth Berdyaev's treatment of the nature of philosophy not only against the background of the origin of existentialism, but also against the background of contemporary philosophy which pursues philosophical issues along the track of linguistic analysis with the belief that philosophical problems are nothing more than exercises in grammar and language. To one who is not acquainted with existentialism, the nature of philosophy and the problems it deals with as set forth by existentialists may appear queer and fantastic as the philosophical pursuit is directed towards the analysis and understanding of problems with which the contemporary philosopher has nothing to do. Many contemporary philosophers in the Anglo-American universities are not concerned with existentialism as a philosophical system; they seem to think that it is not an academic discipline worthy of serious and systematic investigation. Apart from the insurmountable difficulty in understanding the thought and language of the existentialists particularly those of Heidegger and Sartre who are fond of using involved arguments and unfamiliar terminologies, employing familiar terms in unfamiliar senses, the problems which they discuss like those of 'nothingness' and 'being' are, according to contemporary analytic philosophers, pseudo-problems arising as a result of the abuse or careless use of language or through being deceived by grammar. Consider, for example, Ayer's critical observation :

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In general, the postulation of real non-existent entities results from the superstition just now referred to, that, to every word or phrase that can be the grammatical subject of a sentence, there must somewhere be a real entity corresponding. For as there is no place in the empirical world for many of these "entities" a special non-empirical world is invoked to house them. To this error must be attributed, not only the utterances of a Heidegger, who bases his metaphysics on the assumption that "nothing" is a name which is used to denote something peculiarly mysterious, but also the prevalence of such problems as those concerning the reality of propositions and universals whose senselessness, though less obvious, is no less complete.¹

While contemporary philosophers level the charge that classical philosophers and modern system builders deal with pseudo-problems not worthy of investigation, what they do, with astonishing zeal in the name of language analysis, appears to be a profitless pursuit.

To evaluate the contribution of any thinker, it is first of all necessary to approach him with sympathy. It will be of great help to a discerning critic if he starts studying any thinker with the expectation that he may find in his thinking something valuable which has not engaged the attention of others, something which is of the nature of a complementary to what has been stated and stressed *ad nauseam* by others as if it constitutes the whole truth. It is from this point of view that we have to approach the philosophical thinking of the existentialists.

The origin of existentialism as a philosophical movement in modern times can be explained in two ways. It is at once the expression of the peculiar historical situation characteristic of Western Europe in the past four decades and a reaction against the contemporary philosophical outlook. Since it came into existence in the wake of national catastrophes, it has been most unfairly characterized as post-war despair, the philosophy of despair, irrationalism, and sensationalism. It is true that

¹ A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951), pp. 43-44

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existentialists, particularly Sartre, give expression to the political and social condition of man during the war and in the post-war period. Their portrayal of the plight of man is all too vivid and graphic, and their discussion of the feeling of dread, anxiety, and care experienced by man is striking and significant. But it is a gross misrepresentation to say on that account that existentialism is the feast of irrationalism, and that it is the philosophy of despair. Adopting the conventional view of rational *versus* irrational, a very gloomy picture of existentialism is presented as if it is concerned with the darker and irrational aspects of the human being. Being indoctrinated to receive favourably anything that is given under the label of rationalism, we naturally react rather violently against what is considered to be not rational. What is not rational is anti-rational; and what is anti-rational deserves to be heartily ridiculed and then summarily rejected: this seems to be the line of argument of those who characterize existentialism as the philosophy of irrationalism. They forget the fact that rationality is only one aspect, though an important one, in the life of an integral man. And to look at man from the fragment of his rationality alone is as much a distortion of him as to look at him only from the segment of his senses and feelings. From the context of human existence the neat dichotomy of rational-irrational is undesirable, and the study of only one side of the dichotomy to the exclusion of the other will be partial and onesided. Man is no more completely rational than he is completely irrational. What we have to study is the total man, the integral man. The need for the study of the integral man and his existence is accentuated by the national catastrophe that overtakes man, affecting human existence at every level, social and political, religious and cultural. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the existentialist movement against the violent impact of the crisis which overwhelmed Europe during the pre-war as well as post-war period. The European thinkers who went through the crisis stressed the existential problems of vital importance which confront man.

Consider the following passage in which Sartre gives a graphic description of the lot of the Frenchmen during the German occupation.

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We were never more free than during the German occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to talk. Every day we were insulted to our faces and had to take it in silence. Under one pretext or another, as workers, Jews or political prisoners, we were deported *en masse*. Everywhere, on billboards, in the newspapers, on the screen, we encountered the revolting and insipid picture of ourselves that our suppressors wanted us to accept. And because of all this we were free. Because the Nazi venom seeped into our thoughts, every accurate thought was a conquest. Because an all-powerful police tried to force us to hold our tongues, every word took on the value of a declaration of principles. Because we were hunted down, every one of our gestures had the weight of a solemn commitment...

Exile, captivity, and especially death (which we usually shrink from facing at all in happier days) became for us the habitual objects of our concern. We learned that they were neither inevitable accidents, nor even constant and inevitable dangers, but they must be considered as our lot itself, our destiny, the profound source of our reality as men. At every instant we lived up to the full sense of this commonplace little phrase : "Man is mortal!" And the choice that each of us made of his life was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death, because it could always have been expressed in these terms : "Rather death than..."²

As Berdyaev was not prepared to subscribe to the tenets of Communism and totalitarianism of the Communist leaders who controlled the revolution in Russia, he was put to much suffering and hardship and was forced to do 'socially useful' works like street-cleaning, was arrested more than once and kept in solitary confinement, and was finally banished from Russia. It was no wonder that he characterized the Communist regime as a 'consistent application to life, of Russian nihilism, atheism, and materialism' and 'the denial of all absolute spiritual elements in personal and social life.' Holding the view that *man* is the central object of inquiry, Berdyaev stresses the importance of the study

² Sartre, *The Republic of Silence*, quoted in William Barrett's *Irrational Man* (London : Heinemann, 1961), pp. 213-214.

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of all the existential problems connected with man - his spiritual existence and his personality, his freedom and his communion with others, the transcendental man as contrasted with the natural man.

Two prophetic thinkers of the nineteenth century Europe, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, gave a warning about the impending catastrophe that was to overwhelm man who was gradually losing his personal identity as well as personal responsibility in a mechanized world of mass communication and organization. According to Kierkegaard (1813-55), the Danish existential Christian, what was urgently required was 'honesty' on the part of man as a sure remedy against the spiritual sickness and moral slovenliness he was suffering from. Collectivism and abstractionism ignore the claims of the individual, repudiate the singularity of human existence, level down what is unique and particular in the name of the group and the mass, the totality and collectivity. Protesting against the levelling process, Kierkegaard said :

The individual who levels down is himself engulfed in the process and so on, and while he seems to know selfishly what he is doing, one can only say of people *en masse* that they know not what they do ;...A demon is called up over whom no individual has any power, and though the very abstraction of levelling gives the individual a momentary, selfish kind of enjoyment, he is at the same time signing the warrant for his own doom...No age, and therefore not the present age, can bring the scepticism of that process to a stop, for as soon as it tries to stop it, the law of the levelling process is again called into action.⁸

In the preface to *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche (1844-1900) declared that his work would pass a summary judgment on the nineteenth century, on the kind of civilization which we have attained.

What I am going to narrate is the history of the next two centuries. I shall describe what will of necessity come about: *the advent of nihilism*. Our entire European

⁸ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age* (Oxford, 1940), p. 30

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civilization has long been moving with a tortuous tension, a tension growing free from decade to decade, toward the final catastrophe.

It is necessary to know how the nihilism referred to by Nietzsche becomes inevitable. There is a close link between the frantic dynamism of our modern age and the will to power which is the characteristic trait of the modern man. The dynamism of the modern age has its philosophical base in the subject-object dualism of Descartes. According to Descartes, the subject or the ego is the knower, a thinking substance, confronting the world of objects which are extended things. Nature is something to be pursued and probed into, studied in order to be subjugated, cared for in order to be conquered. Man is not satisfied with the power he has as a result of conquering the forces of Nature. He wants to have more and more of it. He is frantically active and exhibits the will to power at every turn of his activity. The will to power, according to Nietzsche, begets the problem of nihilism which haunts the present century in many forms and shades. Modern man who prides himself in being dynamic is not satisfied with what he has. The ceaseless desire for power prompts him to probe into the mysteries of outer space for attaining mastery over other planets. At every stage of victory, there is a void beyond to be pursued and conquered. As he emerges victorious over the immense territory he has conquered, there is something which he knows not, and which possibly could be a threat to his safety and security. So in this dynamism of the modern man whose characteristic trait is the will to power, there is always the dread of the void beyond. And the problem of nihilism is the confrontation of the dreadful and alien void by the modern man. This is, according to Nietzsche, inescapable, since modern man, losing faith in supersensible reality, can think of nothing else but power as the supreme value.

Quite a few critics hold the view that existentialism is a reaction against the dominating influence of technology. We live in an age of technology which binds us to such an extent that we are helpless victims of it. Tillich refers to three characteristic

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features of Western industrial society as it has developed in the last hundred years. They are : (1) naturalistic mechanism, (2) analytic rationalism and (3) secularised humanism.⁴ Naturalistic mechanism has endangered individual freedom and personal decision ; analytic rationalism has transformed man into a calculating machine ; and secularised humanism has cut man off from the creative source and the ultimate mystery of human existence. The existentialists who are concerned with the freedom of the individual and the existence of the *total* man, therefore, oppose the system of thought and the manner of life developed by Western industrial society and its philosophic champions. The danger which modern man faces today has been characterized as *technological alienation*.

It will be easier for us to understand this new phenomenon of technological alienation by comparing it with two other kinds of alienation. It was Hegel who stressed for the first time the fact of *creative alienation*. Alienation is estrangement. It is disharmony or dissociation between man and man, or between man and the world, or between man and his creations in the fields of art, science, and technology. It may assume many forms. It is, as Heinemann puts it, a multidimensional phenomenon, psychological, psycho-pathological, and sociological.⁵ According to Hegel, when the human mind creates works of art, philosophy, science, etc., there arises alienation between the human mind and its creations. His creations acquire a sort of alien, independent existence, though in truth they are the embodiment of his own mind. This estrangement between the creative mind and its own creations is what is known as creative alienation. In the place of creative alienation, Marx brought in *productive alienation*. Labour, according to Marx, is the essence of creativity. Man sells labour which is his own and gets himself alienated from his own products. So there arises alienation of labour which leads to alienation of classes. There is, in short productive alienation. According to Heinemann, the solutions

⁴ P. Tillich, "Existential Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 44-70

⁵ F. H. Heinemann, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 9

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proposed by Hegel and Marx are not satisfactory to the existentialists. Alienation cannot be overcome either by the all-embracing world-mind of Hegel or by the proletarian revolution of Marx, for both of them deny the rightful place to the individual and the legitimate role he has to play in society. The alienation which modern man faces is the result of technology. The tools and machines created by him get out of his control and create problems for which he did not bargain. Instead of remaining as Marx suggested 'the measuring rod of the development of human capacity for work,' the machines have turned out to be the means of destruction. We can overcome technological alienation by redirecting our attention to human existence. The existentialists, therefore, take up in their writings the problem of human existence and its meaning as worthy of careful investigation.

2 COLLAPSE OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

Though contemporary philosophers in the British and American Universities are contemptuously indifferent to the teachings of the existentialists, the fact remains that existentialism is a formidable challenge to contemporary philosophy which is heading towards its inevitable collapse. Many sympathetic critics of the recent trends in philosophy have pointed out that even though it is worthwhile and necessary to play the language game of analysis, the game has to be played not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else. The aim of philosophy must be to probe into the nature of man and the world for the sake of understanding the nature of reality and the ordering of life in the light of one's understanding of the nature of reality. Analysis, no doubt, is necessary. But it need not and should not be restricted in a narrow way to language alone. Just as it is necessary to analyse and examine the conceptual equipment and the linguistic expressions which we use with a view to clearing up the philosophical muddles and paradoxes arising as a result of the faulty use of language, it is equally necessary to analyse our experience as well as our existence in its varied forms. It is here that we find the breakdown of contemporary philosophy, since it is seriously concerned with the clarificatory function in respect of the

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language that we use, without being concerned with the meaning of the universe, or a unified conceptual scheme of the universe.

We could see the collapse of contemporary philosophy in the major fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics if we just consider what, according to the analytic philosophy, a philosopher is expected to do. The analytic philosopher maintains, following Schlick, that 'the philosopher as such is not interested in facts of experience.' It is the business of the scientists to study the facts of experience, and the philosopher has nothing to do with them. Strawson explains the work of the philosopher as follows. The chief work of the philosopher, according to Strawson, is conceptual analysis. He has to lay bare the ways in which concepts and speech-forms operate for the sake of clearing up conceptual confusions and diagnosing philosophical disorders. Philosophy, says Strawson, begins with paradox, and paradoxes can be resolved by a careful study of concepts and speech-forms. The philosopher is, therefore, interested in understanding not only *how* our conceptual equipment works, but also *why* it works as it does. The work of analysis is being carried out in two directions. The American school dominated by Carnap and Quine adopts the method of formal logic, while the English school influenced by Austin and Ryle adopts the method of understanding the puzzling concepts by noting the ways in which the related linguistic expressions are used in discourse.⁶ Consider, for example, the inimitable patience and the meticulous care with which Austin prepares a list of the correct usages of the word 'know', which is considered to be necessary for understanding the concept of knowledge. Austin points out that in the following cases, 'I know the election is today; I read it in *The Times*', 'I know your feelings on the matter,' 'he knows his own mind,' 'he knows the town well,' etc., the word 'know' is correctly used.⁷ Though this type of astonishingly careful and detailed study of the uses of the words 'if', 'can', 'know', etc., as exhibited by such masterminds as Austin is to be appreciated, the fact

⁶ See Strawson's essay "Construction and Analysis," in A. J. Ayer and others, *The Revolution in Philosophy* (London: Macmillan & co., 1956), pp. 97-110

⁷ A. G. N. Flew (ed.), *Logic and Language*, 2nd Series (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), pp. 128, 140, and 141

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remains that it gives us neither an understanding of the nature of knowledge and the problems connected with knowledge which find a place in the discussion of epistemology, nor an insight into the nature of reality. Knowledge does not form a closed system without any relation to the things which we know. It is neither arbitrary nor accidental. Knowledge which we acquire through thinking is subject to certain well-established laws which govern our thinking, and it is the means to our understanding of the nature of reality. Any length of discussion of the uses of the word 'if', 'can', 'know', etc. will not enable one to solve the basic problems of epistemology, unless it be through the oft-resorted malignant method of dismissing them as meaningless. However careful our study of the ordinary language may be, it will be of no avail in understanding the nature of reality. Contemporary philosophy has moved out of the arena of epistemology and metaphysics through dubious ways by raising the bogey of language-analysis.

It is not only in the fields of epistemology and metaphysics, but also in ethics that we could see the breakdown of contemporary philosophy. Many contemporary philosophers hold the view that value judgments do not express insights or truths, and that they are incapable of rational justification or refutation. According to the emotivists, a moral judgment is not an assertion of which we may demand truth and coherence. Carnap argues that the sentence 'Killing is evil' is merely the expression of a certain wish, and so is not verifiable and has no theoretical sense; and the same thing is true of all other statements.⁸ Though linguistic moralists like Hare appear to have abandoned emotivism, their standpoint in the final analysis is not different from that of the emotivists. It is true that Hare admits that a moral judgment can be supported in terms of the system of principles it involves and finally in terms of the way of life to which one is committed. To quote Hare :

... a complete justification of a decision would consist of a complete account of its effects, together with a complete account of the principles which it observed, and the effects

⁸ Rudolf Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (London : Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1935), pp. 24-25

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of observing those principles...Thus, if pressed to justify a decision completely, we have to give a complete specification of the way of life of which it is a part...If the inquirer still goes on asking "But why should I live like that?" then there is no further answer to give him...We can only ask him to make up his mind which way he ought to live; for in the end everything rests upon such a decision of principle.⁹

The question that has to be answered by Hare is: how are we to justify the choice of the ultimate principle on which everything is said to rest? To him it is not a rational commitment. On the contrary, it is an expression of preference which is beyond rational justification or refutation. If so, the standpoint of Hare who is a linguistic moralist is not different from that of the emotivists, for to the emotivist as well as to Hare a moral judgment is an expression of a wish, a preference, a choice which can neither be vindicated nor refuted. The difficulty with the contemporary analysts is that they naively assume that metaethics has no ethical implications, and that it is quite possible to discuss it in a logical vacuum. Metaethics, however valuable it may be, cannot be pursued independently of ethics. As Blanshard has rightly observed, "in dealing with fundamental notions like right and good, correct analysis itself requires that one should see the implications of one's theory for men's actual valuations."¹⁰ In the name of metaethics contemporary analysts indulge in barren verbal discussions whether the meaning of the word 'good' is cognitive or non-cognitive, etc., completely ignoring the implications of such a discussion so far as practice is concerned.

It is against the breakdown of modern philosophy in the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that we have to examine existentialism as expounded by Berdyaev.

⁹ R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 69

¹⁰ Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Goodness* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 264

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3 STUDY OF INTEGRAL MAN

According to Berdyaev, it is the business of philosophy to enquire into the nature of Spirit which is ultimately real. An inquiry into the nature of man is a necessary preliminary to our inquiry into the nature of Spirit. It will be seen as a result of such an inquiry that, while Spirit is the reality, everything else other than Spirit is not really real. Philosophy which is concerned with reality cannot ignore the problems of epistemology and ethics, as they help to clear the ground for our understanding of the nature of reality. It is neither a critique of science nor a critique of language. It is not mere theory which one propounds in fulfilment of academic interests and duties ; it is also practice, and it is nothing if it is not practice. It is necessary to elaborate each one of these statements which bring out Berdyaev's conception of philosophy.

Berdyaev's existentialist philosophy may be characterized as the philosophy of Spirit in view of the fact that Spirit is admitted to be the ultimate reality in his system. The aim of philosophy is to inquire into the nature of Spirit. If we undertake such an inquiry, we shall come to know not only what Spirit is, but also the essential nature of man and the status of the world around us. It is not the case that we start with the study of Spirit as a being outside us as we would study the objects in the external world. Reality, according to Berdyaev, is not in front of the knowing subject, but behind him, in his existentiality.¹¹ In other words, to know what Spirit is we have to study man and his existence. In his essence man is a spiritual being. Though he is in the world, in his essential nature he is not of *this* world. 'Man is one of the phenomena of this world, one of the things caught in the maelstrom of all things in nature : and man passes beyond this world, as the image and likeness of absolute being transcends all things of the order of nature.'¹² Therefore what is of importance in man is his spiritual experience which makes him 'a break in the world of nature.'

¹¹ N. Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End* (New York : Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 93

¹² N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (London : Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1955), p. 60

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God who is Spirit is revealed only in spiritual experience. Man who is the microcosm is, therefore, the clue to our understanding of God who is Spirit. In the words of Berdyaev : 'Man's consciousness of himself as the centre of the world, bearing within himself the secret of the world, and rising above all the things of the world, is a prerequisite of all philosophy : without it one could not dare to philosophize.'¹⁸

To know man from the point of view of philosophy is different from studying him as an object of scientific investigation. Man, according to Berdyaev, is not just one among the many phenomena existing and functioning in the world of necessity. The special sciences like biology, psychology, etc. which examine him from their own points of view treat him as no better than the numerous objects of the external world which are caught in the wheel of necessity. They give invaluable information concerning human motives and behaviour, the methods by which men live together and contribute to the development and decline of society, and the factors responsible for the differences among human cultures. However valuable these studies may be, they are piecemeal studies of man in abstraction. They do not do justice to the real nature of man. What constitutes the core of his being escapes the attention of these specialized studies. There are two aspects in man: the natural and the transcendental. While the special sciences give a detailed account of the 'natural man', they fail to throw light on the 'transcendental man' and his spiritual experience. Philosophy alone which deals with the transcendental aspect of man holds the clue to our understanding of the nature of Spirit. It is, therefore, immaterial whether we say that philosophy is the study of Spirit or that it is the study of man. Berdyaev would agree with the view of the poet that the proper study of mankind is man. Man is to be studied as an integral, existential being. The study of the integral man is the proper theme of philosophical investigation. Philosophy, says Berdyaev, is 'primarily the doctrine of man, the doctrine of integral man elaborated by integral man.... This doctrine is the exclusive province of philosophy, and not of biology, psychology,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58

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or sociology.¹⁴ In another passage he says: 'Philosophy is concerned primarily with man's inner life, and it should therefore investigate all problems from the standpoint of human knowledge. The purpose of existence cannot be elucidated either from things or from objects; it is inherent in the knowing subject and in existence itself.'¹⁵ Philosophy is the search for the meaning of existence, and starting with the investigation into human existence, it seeks its consummation in unravelling the mystery of Spirit, human as well as divine.

Philosophy inquires not only into the nature of man, but also into the nature of the world. The philosophical treatment of the world is entirely different from the scientific treatment of it. Science studies the things of the world in a piecemeal way in the same way as it studies man in a piecemeal manner. The physical sciences have their own field of specialization. They study the physical and chemical properties of the object and the sub-atomic particles and processes by the method of abstraction and analysis, employing the well-known technique of isolation in which while one factor is varied at a time the remaining factors are kept constant. In the same way, biological sciences, geological sciences, etc., have their own area of specialization, and they employ the methods of isolation and analysis of a complex structure into its component parts. Though they study the objects of the external world, they do not give us what Whitehead called a 'self-consistent understanding of things' as a whole. They do not give us an account of their significance from the point of view of the knowing subject. That is because they do not deal with the world as a whole. What is it that we witness in our day-to-day experience of the world? Berdyaev gives us a graphic description of the world of our common experience with a touch of pathos and a tinge of realism.

The sun shines on it, albeit from without and not from within as it ought to have been. There is vigorous and growing life in it, although death brings that to an end. Flowers bloom in it, although they fade. The creative acts

¹⁴ N. Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society* (London: Geoffrey Bles), p. 29

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69

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of man break through into it. The human face is here, and at times with a wonderful expression in the eyes. The heights of holiness and genius are attained, but so are the depths of moral ugliness and crime. Love, pity and self-sacrifice emerge, and yet how much cruelty and murder as well.¹⁶

If this is what we undeniably witness, certainly we want to know what it is all for, and what significance it has for human existence. So long as we are not able to get our answer to this question, we are not satisfied, and so long as we approach the facts of the world by the analysis-isolation-method of the special sciences, we will not get the answer we want.

Berdyaev points out that the findings of the physical, chemical, and geological sciences are most illuminating. They are exact. They are of the nature of generalizations which can be verified. However illuminating their findings may be, there are many dark corners which lie beyond the scope of scientific illumination. Berdyaev's complaint is that their insight does not penetrate into the mystery of the cosmic life.¹⁷ Comparing the progress of scientific knowledge to the step-by-step advance which a person makes while climbing the stairway, he says: 'Scientific knowledge climbs a dark stairway - which it enlightens, step by step. It does not know what awaits it at the top of the stair.'¹⁸ Since science is not interested in finding the meaning of the world, its unity, and its significance for the existential subject, its account of the world is piecemeal and partial: but this is not to belittle the importance of science and the enormous part that it has played in the development of man's powers. Science has been and continues to be of immense use to man in his adaptation to the world. Science, according to Berdyaev, is 'man's reaction for self-preservation.' It is a 'highly perfected means of adaptation to the given world and to the necessity forced upon it. Science is knowledge of necessity by means of adaptation to the given world, and knowledge out of necessity.'¹⁹ Through mighty machines which are the products of scientific knowledge man has succeeded

¹⁶ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 79

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76

¹⁸ *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 14

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25

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in ushering in a new rhythm of life characteristic of machines. Berdyaev tells us :

The dizzying successes of technics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mark the greatest revolutions, in the history of mankind, more profound than all political revolutions, a radical change in the whole rhythm of human life, a breaking away from the natural, cosmic rhythm and the appearance of a new rhythm, determined by machines.²⁰

What is apparently a profit for man through his alliance with science is really a privation of his life as a consequence of science. Because of what science has secured for him, he has not been able to attain the vision of the totality of things and the valuation of the whole spectacle of life. And for this he must turn to philosophy.

Philosophical investigations must centre round the existence of man as an integral personality, and so philosophy, according to Berdyaev, is anthropocentric. It is impossible to eliminate man from the study of philosophy. The study of God which is an integral aspect in the existentialism of Berdyaev cannot be accomplished without the study of man. From the contention that man is the central theme of philosophy one should not draw the conclusion that philosophy is ego-centred. Berdyaev protests against such an interpretation of his standpoint. The personality of the individual, who is the subject of philosophical investigation, is the reflection of the divine image and likeness, and so it is the pathway to the study of God. Without fighting shy of anthropocentrism, we should endeavour to purify and exalt this anthropocentrism so as to enable the philosopher to reflect the image of the Higher Being inherent in him.²¹

Philosophy must be anthropological for two reasons. The first reason is that the knowledge of Being is derived from man. The other reason is that philosophy cannot be abstracted from life or be made purely theoretical. Philosophy is essentially practical. It is a way of life. Berdyaev emphasizes the part that philosophy

²⁰ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 244

²¹ *Solitude and Society* p. 30

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has to play in shaping the life of man towards the final destiny. Philosophy 'is essentially active, and has a useful function to fulfil in ameliorating life, as the great philosophers, the lovers of true wisdom, have always endeavoured to do.'²² The language of the philosopher must have something in common with colloquial speech, and his thought and speculation must grow out of experience, and must have a bearing on life. How could philosophy, asks Berdyaev, claim to apprehend Being, if it refused to explore human destiny or to show sympathy for its unhappy lot? Though Berdyaev stresses the active role that philosophy has to play in regenerating the condition of man, he is not prepared to accept the way in which the Marxists have expounded the practical role of philosophy. Marx was right when he pointed out that philosophy cannot and should not be merely theoretical, that it should not be satisfied with a mere knowledge of the world. But he was certainly wrong when he sought to explain it in terms of materialism. The practical role of philosophy has been distorted 'in a monstrous fashion by illogically giving it a materialist foundation.'²³

Though there is an intimate relation between philosophy and life, Berdyaev does not consider that the function of philosophy is *social*. It is not the business of philosophy to cater to the needs of society. It is true that philosophy to be worthwhile must be practical. But its bearing on life must be interpreted not in terms of material success, but in terms of moral regeneration of man in society. Though it does not guarantee to its votaries enlarged income, worldly success, and social popularity, it does help them to develop the capacity for clear thinking, disinterested inquiry, and tolerance of the views of others. Right living to which philosophy contributes is different from socially successful living. Though philosophy is not concerned with material goods, it calls for a revaluation of the whole scale of values prevalent in a society. By enlarging our vision, it enriches our non-material goods like love of truth, capacity for clear and disinterested thinking, and the spirit of accommodation of the points of view of others in a society, which are all necessary for right living.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 30

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 31

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Philosophy will cease to be philosophy, if it becomes social. If it assumes a social character, it has to accept and approve whatever society dictates to it. It is not the privilege of society to dictate to philosophy, but that of philosophy to dictate to society.²⁴

4 SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

According to Berdyaev, philosophy cannot help being personal and subjective, even when it aspires to be objective. 'Every true philosophy bears the stamp of its author's personality.'²⁵ In illustration of the subjective and personal character of philosophy, Berdyaev refers not only to the philosophy of existentialists like Pascal, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and others, but also to the philosophy of Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Fichte, and Hegel.

There is, first of all, the influence of the subjective factor in the choice of the problems. What is significant to one may not be so for another. One and the same phenomenon may be interpreted differently by different thinkers. Philosophy is not interested in cataloguing the facts; but it is interested in studying the facts by inquiring into their meaning. What concerns philosophy is not facts, but their significance. In the work of analysis and interpretation, of assessment and valuation of facts, the personal element of the thinker comes to the foreground. Since the conclusions of philosophy depend upon the interpretation of facts, the subjective factor is unavoidable, and every philosophy is in some sense a personal statement. Though every true philosophy is a picture of the universe, it is a reflection of the philosopher, and so the subjective factor finds a place. But the subjective factor has to be discounted in assessing the truth-claim of a philosophy.

The subjective factor, according to Berdyaev, is also at work in the choice of the type of philosophy. Whether one chooses dualism or monism, personalism or impersonalism, spiritualism or naturalism, the primacy of freedom over Being or

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26

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Being over freedom, etc., is a matter of personal choice or commitment. Berdyaev is personally committed to the first of the two alternatives in each variety mentioned above. 'The choice between these two types of philosophical approach is apparently not directed by any external authority; so that the choice once made attests to the personalist character of philosophy.'²⁶

Intuition is the *sine qua non* of philosophy, and every true philosopher, says Berdyaev, has an original intuition of his own.²⁷ What distinguishes one philosophy from another is not just its self-consistent character, but the depth of vision it displays. The excellence of a philosophical system is ultimately dependent upon the insight or the intuition which a philosopher is able to attain for presenting a unity of outlook and assigning to each and every element an integral place in the scheme. And so, intuition is another factor which makes philosophy personal and subjective.

Finally, the degree of spiritual experience which one attains is another contributory factor. Philosophy is not an exercise in language or a game of intellect. It is a pursuit of truth and a practice of it. It will have the stamp of authenticity only if it is based on the spiritual experience of the philosopher. We do not, however, have any *a priori* test to find out whether a person who claims to have spiritual experience is justified in his claim or not, and also the degree of spiritual experience he has attained. The proof is in the practice. How he lives the philosophy he preaches will testify to the spiritual experience he has attained. In the words of Berdyaev :

The imprint of a philosopher's personality is already manifest in the choice of problems and in a predilection for one or other of the philosophical types we have defined, as well as in the nature of the philosopher's predominant intuitions, in the amount of attention he apportions to particular problems, and in the degree of his spiritual experience.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27

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5 PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

It is Berdyaev's conviction that philosophy cannot dissociate itself from religion. Philosophy and religion are intimately connected with each other. While the distinction between the two is necessary, their separation is suicidal to both. If philosophy were to succeed in its attempt at separation from religion, it will be only to become a docile servant of science. Philosophy, according to Berdyaev, is always positively or negatively religious. A study of philosophy from the time of the Greeks down to the present time will substantiate his contention. Greek philosophy, says Berdyaev, is religious in its origin and its pathos; it reflects as a whole the religious ideas of the Greeks. Plotinus and the neo-Platonists are religious in their outlook. The same is the case with modern philosophers. Descartes and Spinoza, Leibnitz and Berkeley hold a religious view of the world in spite of the naturalistic bias that may be seen occasionally in their writings. German idealism, according to Berdyaev's analysis, is linked on to Protestantism. The importance of Kant lies in the fact that he was the leader of the great general revolt against naturalism in the modern period. If a philosophical system is not religious in the positive sense, it is bound to be religious negatively. Positivism and materialism are, according to Berdyaev, *negatively* religious. They are antagonistic to religion, but they cannot escape from the ties which bind them to life. If philosophy has anything to do with life, - and Berdyaev is thoroughly convinced about this, - then it is bound to be religious.

Philosophy is the target of attack from science on the one hand, and from theology on the other. Berdyaev characterizes the position of a philosopher as tragic, because he is the butt of ridicule and an object of contempt to both the scientists and the theologians. The philosopher is in a tragic position of justifying the validity of his claim to exercise his function. Philosophy "has never enjoyed the least semblance of popular support; nor does the philosopher ever create the impression that he is satisfying any "social demand"."²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 3

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Why is it that theology is antagonistic to philosophy? Theology is a systematic study of the problems of religion in the background of philosophy. One reason for the antagonism between theology and philosophy is the common subject matter. 'The problems posed and resolved by philosophy are invariably the same as those propounded by theology.'⁵⁰ But a common subject matter by itself need not lead to antagonism, for their approaches to the same problem may be complementary to each other. The conflict arises at a deeper level. It is not theology as such that is antagonistic to philosophy, but theology which is institutionalized, and which functions as a social phenomenon. Theology does not remain pure, but comes to be 'adulterated by the immediate reactions of the human community in which it takes place, and by the way in which men make use of it to further their own interests.'⁵¹ The official representatives of religion are responsible for the tortures and persecutions inflicted on philosophers like Bruno, Descartes, Spinoza, etc. Revelation is as much vital to philosophy as it is to religion. The difficulty arises in respect of the interpretation of revelation. Berdyaev sees danger not from the side of the individual who may endeavour at expounding the revealed truth, but from 'the organized collective' which is interested in institutionalizing the revealed truth as it seems fit by giving official sanction to it.

6 PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

Just as theology tries to replace philosophy, so also science seeks to oust philosophy by challenging its competence and restricting its scope. The attack on philosophy from the side of science is not confined to one particular period. It is a recurring feature in which the part played by some philosophers is as important as that of the scientists. What is to be deplored, according to Berdyaev, is the attitude of those philosophers who want to be scientific in philosophizing. They 'do not dare to be themselves - they are always trying to imitate men of science.' They 'believe in science more than they do in philosophy; they have doubts about themselves and their work, and they raise these

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5

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doubts to the place of a principle.³² They are under the obsession of the idea of 'scientific' philosophy. Berdyaev includes in the list of scientific philosophers not only positivists and materialists, but also metaphysicians. Descartes and Leibnitz are no less scientific philosophers than Haeckel and Husserl; Spinoza and Spencer are as much possessed with the idea of scientific philosophy as Aristotle and Aquinas. Every one of these thinkers endeavours to be scientific according to the scientific criterion of his period, though the substance of philosophy may differ from thinker to thinker.

It is necessary at this stage to spell out what Berdyaev means by 'scientific'. To Berdyaev 'science' and 'scientific' are two different terms which should not be confused with each other. Man has to adapt himself to the given world in the interest of his own survival, and science is of much use to him in this regard. There is a close correlation between scientific thinking and survival problems. Scientific thinking is a means of orientation in the given world of necessity. Science is, therefore, 'knowledge of necessity by means of adaptation to the given world, and knowledge out of necessity.'³³ Berdyaev is not against science; but he is against the application of the scientific method to the problems of philosophy. It is wrong to think that the method which holds good in science will also hold good in philosophy. By 'scientific' Berdyaev means carrying the criteria of science over into other spheres with the belief that the method of science is the best and the most suitable for everything. 'Science is a specific reaction of the human spirit to the world and, from an analysis of the nature of science and the scientific attitude towards the world, it should become clear that forcing the scientific upon man's other relations with the world can only mean a slavish dependence of the spirit.'³⁴ Philosophy, declares Berdyaev, is not at all a science and in no way should it be scientific. Scientific philosophy is a contradiction in terms. Philosophy aims at the liberation of the individual from bondage to necessity. It is a 'vision which surpasses the necessity of the

³² *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 21

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25

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world.'⁸⁵ Science, on the contrary, is alignment with the world's data, forced upon us by necessity. Since science and philosophy are concerned with different spheres, to subject philosophy to science is to subject freedom to necessity. 'Scientific philosophy is enslaved philosophy which has surrendered its pristine freedom to the power of necessity.'⁸⁶ In a prophetic vein, Berdyaev observes that recent philosophy which is too much absorbed with the problem of science has become a logic of science or a theory of scientific knowing to its own detriment.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28

'This Self cannot be known through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to ; this Self of that seeker reveals Its true nature.'

—*Katha Upanishad*, I, ii, 23

III

THE WAY TO GOD

1 THE CENTRAL PLACE OF MAN

In Berdyaev's theistic existentialism man occupies the central place in such a way that the problem of God as well as the problem of the world can be understood only against the background of our understanding of the nature of man. To consider man in isolation from God and the world is to fall a victim to the process of abstraction. Nor can we know anything significant about the world and its destiny apart from God and man. The three - God, man, and the world - are related in such a way that the one serves as a pointer to the other.

Man is the link between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between nature and God. 'Man is an appearance, a creature of nature and subject to the laws of this world. At the same time man is also a "thing-in-itself", a spiritual being, free from the powers of this world.'¹ He is endowed with consciousness or awareness which enables him to make a break-through from the natural world of necessity to the spiritual sphere of freedom. It may have for its object a limited world which is subject to necessity or the Kingdom of God characterized by beauty, peace, and harmony. It may expand or contract. It may be completely

¹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 81

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adapted to the conditions of this world in such a way that it may fail to be aware of a new dimension when it is revealed; or it may be able to grasp the new dimension and thereby understand the significance of the familiar world. It all depends upon the training it has gone through and the development it has attained. It is for this reason that it is said to be capable of expansion and contraction.² So the power of consciousness which is in man enables him to have access to the divine.

Berdyaev thinks of the God-man relation in terms of two movements - from God towards man and from man towards God. He talks about the birth of man in God and the birth of God in man. 'The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of Divine-humanity, in it God is finally born in man and man in God, and this is accomplished in the Spirit.'³ Berdyaev is of the view that man has to play a significant role with regard to the world which is created by God. Though God has created the world it is not yet finished. Its completion, says Berdyaev, is left to man. With his creative freedom man continues the work of creation in knowing the world. The work of interpretation of the significance of the world from the different points of view is the most important one. There is the natural world which man has to take account of. There is also the world of inter-personal relationships involving problems of morality and responsibility. In addition to these two, there is the sphere of religious significance which he claims to know. There is the work of interpretation on the part of man in respect of each one of these three spheres, natural, moral, and religious. Berdyaev explains man's cognitive enterprise as follows: 'The world does not enter into me passively. The world I face depends upon my attention and my thought (this intensity is determined from within, not from without).'⁴

It is meaningless to think of God as resting in a far off region. It is in the world and in the human beings that God manifests himself. The world should be made the resting place of God: thus it would serve as a pointer to the divine. When the mystics

² *Ibid.*, p. 85

³ Quoted in D. A. Lowrie, *Christian Existentialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), p. 43

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28

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point out that there is the manifestation of the divine in the world, they have in mind not the 'objectified world' but the world which has been thoroughly transformed and which appears in an entirely new light. This is what Berdyaev means when he says that the revelation of God in the world is an eschatological revelation. To Berdyaev, eschatology does not mean a passive waiting for the end of this world, but an active transformation of the world here and now.

To bring belief in God within the bounds of possibility and to make it morally possible to accept him, can only be done by recognizing the truth that God reveals himself in this world. He reveals himself in the Prophets, in his Son, in the breath of the Spirit, and in the uplifting spiritual aspirations of men.⁵

What is obvious from the foregoing account is that an exclusive treatment either of God or of man or of the world is neither possible nor desirable.

2 NATURE OF GOD

There are two related questions with regard to the problem of God. The first is about the reality of God. Both theologians and philosophers, sceptics and believers are concerned with the problem of the existence of God. Just as a theist pays attention to the problem of God's existence by examining the sources and sifting the evidences which would make us believe in the reality of God's existence, so also a sceptic sets forth his arguments by way of challenge to the accepted belief in the existence of the divine. Neither the theologians nor the philosophers can afford to be indifferent to the challenging criticisms of the sceptics. But the question of God's existence cannot be taken in isolation from the other important question about the divine nature. It is necessary to know *what* it is that we are talking about in order to say *that* it is or exists. No meaningful discussion is possible about the existence of anything whose nature we do not know. In other words, the two questions about the nature and the existence of

⁵ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 152

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God are strictly speaking inseparable, though for the sake of clarity a distinction between the two is sought to be made.

How are we to think of God? Is there anything given to us in our day-to-day experience which would help us to conceive of God in a similar way? It is usually the case that we proceed from what we know to what we do not know on the basis of similarity or resemblance. If so, is there anything similar or analogous to God on the basis of which we could think of Him by suitably enlarging our conception? It is here that Berdyaev warns us against the danger of what can be called naturalistic thinking. The nature of God cannot be expressed in terms of the categories of natural thinking. God does not resemble anything in the natural, objective world. He is *wholly other*, and so we cannot stretch our imagination to God from things known by us in the natural world. Let us examine one by one the different categories with a view to find out whether they are adequate to explain the nature of God.

The category of substance cannot be applied to God. A substance is passive and inert. It is what it is because of the significance we attach to it. But 'God is spirit and spirit is activity. Spirit is liberty. The nature of spirit is the opposite of passivity and necessity; it is for this reason that spirit cannot be a substance.'⁶ Berdyaev repeatedly emphasises the antithesis between spirit and nature. 'Spirit and the natural world are utterly unlike one another, and exteriorly they do not meet and there is no interaction between them.'⁷ It is not correct even to characterize God as 'supernatural', for the supernatural is only the natural on a higher plane and possessing a greater range.⁸ When we say that God is supernatural, we are implicitly comparing it with the natural phenomenon whatever it may be; and it is this comparison which has to be objected to. There is nothing which connects God and nature; there is no common feature on the basis of which we can institute a comparison between God and nature and then say that God is supernatural.

⁶ N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (London : Geoffrey Bles, 1935) p. 2

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3

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The category of whole and parts cannot be applied to God. We are familiar with two kinds of wholes, mechanical and organic. God is not a mechanical whole consisting of a number of parts. Any highly complicated machine which functions as one unit in spite of the fact that it consists of a number of parts could be taken as an illustration. It may perform various activities which would demand an intelligence of a very high order. It may answer in the most appropriate way the questions put to it. It may move with human beings in the most normal way without any indication whatsoever that it is a mechanical contrivance. Thus it may perform a number of activities. Nevertheless, there is a vital difference between our conception of God or Spirit as activity and the activity of a mechanical whole. The latter is active because of the momentum it receives from something outside. Some one must impart activity to it ; some one must make it active, must contrive it in such a way that once it is produced it is capable of behaving itself in the most intelligent way. But God is not such a mechanical whole who comes into being through the contrivance of some other being. God is freedom ; and the creative activity of God which is an expression of freedom is so unlike the derived activity of a mechanical whole that any comparison between the two is revolting.

Is God, then, an organic whole ? Leaving aside those organic beings which are lower in the scale of evolution we can, it may be suggested, think of God as an organic whole like a human being. But even such a comparison will not hold good. To think of God as a being analogous to man is to limit the freedom which is God. Man has not only the psycho-physical outfit, but also spirit in him. He is subject to many limitations on account of the psycho-physical frame through which he has to function. To quote Berdyaev :

The corporeal world possesses a sort of reality and we are in a very high degree dependent upon it. My body enters into the whole make-up of me, it is a constituent part of my personality, I am not a bodiless spirit. But the bodily constitution of man lies within that state of the natural

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world which is the outcome of objectification, that is, of exteriorization, alienation and enslavement.⁹

If so, the comparison between man who is embodied spirit and God who is bodiless Spirit breaks down.

Nor can we employ the category of causality to God. The phenomena of the natural world can be explained in terms of cause-effect relation. We can say by employing the causal principle that one phenomenon is the cause of another. But many difficulties arise when the relation between God and the world is sought to be explained in terms of the causal principle. Objections are raised both against the possibility and the motive of creation. The argument which treats God as the first cause is not satisfactory, since it draws an arbitrary line at God and says that, while everything else can be traced to God, there is nothing higher than God to which He can be traced. There is also the difficulty about the material out of which God must have fashioned the world. If it is said that the material out of which God made the world was pre-existent, then God is not infinite. There is also the further question in respect of the relation between God and the pre-existent material. The motive of God's creation of the world is equally puzzling. It is difficult to accept the view that God created the world for His own glorification or for the manifestation of His love to something other than Himself, or that the creation of the world is an arbitrary accident since God had no need of man and the world. Further, cause-effect relation presupposes the factor of time. It is intelligible only when it is viewed against the background of time. If we apply the principle of causality in order to explain the relation between God and the world, it is pertinent to ask (1) whether God causes the world *in* time and (2) whether God determines the nature of the world. If the work of God is in time, it follows that time is a factor which is independent of God: such a position will militate against the infinitude of God. If it be said that God determines the nature of the world, then is He responsible for the good as well as the evil in the world? If God is to be held responsible for the evil in the world, then what happens to His

⁹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 65

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goodness ? We cannot avoid asking questions of this type so long as we swear by the cause-effect relation between God and the world. God, says Berdyaev, is a mystery ; and the creative work of God is not a 'process in time which transpires in successive order'.¹⁰ And so it is futile to employ the principle of causality in the explanation of the relation between God and the world. Berdyaev's observation is relevant in this context :

God is not the cause of the world any more than he is master and king, any more than he is power and might. God determines nothing. When people speak of God as the creator of the world they are speaking of something immeasurably more mysterious than a causal relation. In relation to the world God is freedom and not necessity, not determination. But when men speak of freedom they are speaking of a very great mystery. God has been turned into a determining cause, into power and might, as he has been turned into a master and a king. But God is not anything of the kind. God is completely beyond the limits of such terms.¹¹

In several places in his writings Berdyaev condemns what he characterizes as sociomorphism in our conception of God. Very often people think of God as a master and a king controlling human beings and the world. Sometimes they think of God as a mighty power which determines everything in this world including human beings. In all these cases their thinking is guided consciously or unconsciously by the human analogy and by the social relations that obtain among human beings. God, according to Berdyaev, is none of these.

Berdyaev does not subscribe to the view that God is the Absolute. The description of the Absolute which we come across in the writings of philosophers is the result of abstract thinking. Philosophers argue that the Absolute cannot be a relational being. A being which is involved in relations with another cannot be absolute but only relative. Further, there are difficulties in explaining the relation that obtains between such a being which is said to be the absolute and another. Therefore it is argued

¹⁰ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 195

¹¹ N. Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953, p. 56)

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that the Absolute has no relation whatsoever with man and the world. The Bradleyan Absolute which is said to be supra-relational is a good illustration. Further, the Absolute is said to have no movement or change. Since the Absolute is perfection, it cannot change. If what is perfect changes, it will not be as perfect as before. Berdyaev argues that the immobilist conception of God is the result of rationalistic thinking. According to him, 'The theological and metaphysical doctrine of the absolute immobility of the divine is exoteric and rationalistic, and illustrates the limits of all logical concepts in relation to divinity.'¹²

It may be pointed out in this connection that Berdyaev is against both monism and abstract theism which seek to place God within the strict categories of reasoning. In monism God becomes the Absolute 'without any concrete inner life and without the tragedy of those relations between God and His other self.'¹³ The personality of the individual will disappear in the monistic system; and so there will be no problem of divine-human relation. Abstract theism, on the other hand, results in a rationalistic dualism which is just the opposite of rationalistic monism. God, according to it, is a self-sufficient being having no relations with man and the world. Both monism and abstract theism do violence to the dynamic relation that obtains between the creator and the created. It is no argument to say that we are not able to conceive of the relation between God and the world in a satisfactory way. Berdyaev's contention is that if we look at the problem through the point of view of reason we cannot even understand it, for it is a mystery which lies outside the scope of discursive thinking. Berdyaev, therefore, maintains that the powerlessness of monism and dualism to understand the divine-human mystery is precisely the powerlessness of rational thought.¹⁴

According to Berdyaev, God is Truth and Truth is God. Truth which is God must be grasped integrally by the whole personality. There is as much work for will and feeling as for intellect in this regard: that is to say, Truth is existential.

¹² *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 191

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 190

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 190

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Berdyae夫 explains this point in the following way. Truth, he says, 'is not given to men in a ready-made form, as though it were an article, or one of the realities in a world of things, it means that truth is attained by the way and the life.'¹⁵

It is necessary at this stage to refer to the distinction between truth as objective and truth as subjective. Berdyae夫 talks about 'integral Truth' or existential Truth as distinguished from partial truths or objective truths. Integral or existential Truth which is subjective should not be confused with objective truths. Berdyae夫 says: 'Truth, integral Truth, with a capital letter is Spirit and it is God. Partial truths, with a small letter, which are worked out by the various social sciences refer to the objectified world.'¹⁶ Commenting on the significance of scientific knowledge for man in his relation to the world Berdyae夫 remarks that scientific knowledge which is concerned with the objective world 'discovers truths, but not the Truth.' These partial truths, he further remarks, cannot contradict Truth as a whole any more than they can supply a basis for it.¹⁷ When Berdyae夫 uses the term 'truth' in plural he is obviously referring to objective truth; but when he uses it in the singular number and with a capital letter he refers to the existential or subjective truth. Berdyae夫 does not deny either the validity or usefulness of objective truth. No one disputes the point that when two individuals are called upon to calculate the area of a room they will arrive at the same figure provided they have made use of the same yard stick in their calculation. Their finding is objective. It will be the same to any one who takes pains to calculate the area of the room in the same way. In cases of this type what is true for one is equally true for the other person. It is not subjective in the sense that it varies from person to person but objective in the sense that it is necessarily binding on the individuals. Sciences which are concerned with the external world formulate their findings, or arrive at truths, which are objective. It is as a result of the *total interpretation* that the individual puts on them from the point of view of his existence, from the point of the

¹⁵ *Truth and Revelation.*, p. 22

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44

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significance they have for him when he views them from inside his being, that he becomes aware of the Truth which is subjective. Since Truth is existential and subjective, it is quite possible that it 'may be revealed to one single person and rejected by all the rest of the world.'¹⁸ In other words, it is revealed only under certain conditions when man makes himself fit for receiving it. 'The grasp of Truth depends upon degrees of awareness, upon the expansion or contraction of the mind.'¹⁹ Berdyaev says that a spiritual awakening to Truth must take place in man, otherwise Truth is not attained.²⁰

Berdyaev looks upon God as freedom which is creative. There is no freedom which is not creative, and there is no creativity without freedom. Berdyaev's treatment of the nature of freedom and creativity suggests to us that they have to be taken as constituting the nature of God. It is difficult to explain the nature of both creativity and freedom. Berdyaev observes: 'Creativity is inexplicable. Creativity is the mystery of freedom. The mystery of freedom is immeasurably deep and inexplicable.'²¹ If we can find out the source from which both creativity and freedom are derived, then we can endeavour to understand their nature in the light of their basic source. Since they constitute the nature of God who is the creator of the world, they cannot be traced to any source which is more basic. Berdyaev, therefore, emphatically declares that 'creativity derives from nothing which precedes it.'²² He holds the same view with regard to freedom.

Freedom is the ultimate; it cannot be derived from anything: it cannot be made equivalent of anything. Freedom is the baseless foundation of being: it is deeper than all being. We cannot penetrate to a rationally perceived base for freedom. Freedom is a well of immeasurable depth - its bottom is the final mystery.²³

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24

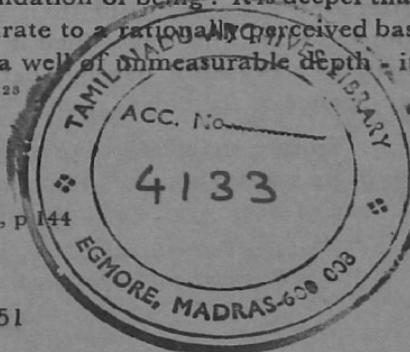
¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23

²¹ *The Meaning of the Creative Act.*, p 144

²² *Ibid.*, p. 144

²³ *Ibid.*, p.145



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If man is free and creative, it is by virtue of the spirit in him. Man is the image of God in so far as he is aware of the spirit in him. If man claims to be free and creative, it is because of the divine spirit in him to which he has access in those rare moments of his life. If there is no God, then man is wholly subject to nature and society : he is the slave of natural and social necessity.²⁴ Though we cannot completely understand what divine freedom and creativity would be like, we can have a glimpse of it when we exercise our freedom and are creative. Man is really creative when, realizing that the objective world is inadequate, he tries to overcome it by transforming it. To the extent that he is creative he rises to the measure of his dignity.

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 of the mastery is 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.²⁵

This point will be obvious if we consider the creative work of man in sculpture, painting, music, etc. It is the awareness that the objective world is inadequate and imperfect, and that he does not exist 'within a finished and stabilized system of being' which makes man creative. Man is creative because he is dissatisfied with the world. The creative impulse in him desires the end of this world and the beginning of a different world, for it always calls up the image of something different - something higher, better, and more beautiful than the 'given'. The creative act brings in something new which is not from the world but from the spirit. In a beautiful passage Berdyaev brings out the spiritual significance of the creative act :

From a shapeless stone or lump of clay the beautiful form of a statue is given to us ; out of a chaos of sound we have one of Beethoven's symphonies ; out of a chaos of words, the

²⁴ Christian Existentialism, p. 51

²⁵ *The Beginning and the End.*, pp. 172-173

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verses of Pushkin with all their power to charm. From sensations and impressions all unaware of meaning, knowledge is derived, from elemental subconscious instincts and attractions the beauty of moral form takes shape, out of an ugly world beauty is captured. In all this there is something miraculous from the point of view of the world, this given empirical world.²⁶

God who is both free and creative is a concrete personality. The only category which we can employ in common both to God and man is that of personality. It is necessary to free ourselves from the false notions which we have of personality. Personality is an axiological and not a natural category. Berdyaev urges that personality should not be confused with individuality. As an individual, man belongs to the world of nature, is subject to necessity, and behaves like one among the phenomena. By virtue of the spirit in him, he is a personality. In the words of Berdyaev, 'Personality is not nature, but freedom: it is spirit. One might say that personality is not man the phenomenon, but rather man the noumenon... Personality breaks into the natural and social order with the claim that it is an end in itself, supreme value.'²⁷ It is the spirit in man which constitutes his personality and elevates him from a biological being to a personality independent of the order of nature. If we employ the category of personality to both God and man, we have to give up the explanation of the relation between man and God in terms of means and end. Every person is an end in himself and so the relation between one personality and another cannot be thought of as that of end and means. The means-end relation holds good only in the natural world. Since both God and man are personalities, neither God nor man is a means to the other.

There are two different conceptions of God which have been put forward as alternatives in the Western tradition. They are known as the self-sufficient and outgoing conceptions of God. According to the former, God is eternal and unchangeable, complete in Himself and self-sufficient. The latter view maintains

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174

²⁷ Quoted in *Christian Existentialism*, p. 75

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that God by His very nature is out-going, and that He creates what is not. He is concerned with man. He expects man to carry on the creative work and thereby reveal his creative nature. Berdyaev explains God-man relation in terms of two movements - the movement of God towards man and the movement of man towards God. God operates Himself in the world and in men through grace.

Berdyaev is of the view that these two conceptions are not mutually exclusive so far as God is concerned. We have no idea of what divine perfection is. It is the logical, rationalistic attitude with regard to God that makes us think that the two cannot be synthesised in God. In the words of Berdyaev:

In God absolute rest is inseparably connected with absolute motion. It is only in our rational consciousness and in our world that rest excludes motion, and that motion is incompatible with rest. The absolute perfection of divinity contains within itself absolute rest and absolute motion.²⁸

The idea of God as *coincidentia oppositorum* favoured by the mystics is more profound than the conception of God either as absolute rest or absolute motion.

Consider, for example, some of the arguments advanced to show that the self-sufficiency of God cannot be reconciled with his outgoingness. Is it the case that God has to outgo because He lacks something or because of His superabundance? It cannot be the former, for God who is said to be self-sufficient cannot lack anything. If there is anything lacking in God, than He is necessarily incomplete; and incompleteness in its turn leads to imperfection. In short, we cannot think of any lack in God without doing violence to the very perfection which God is. We cannot adopt the other alternative which is equally exposed to a number of difficulties. If it be said that there is the outgoingness or overflowing of God because of His superabundance, it is legitimate to ask how this superabundance takes place with regard to God. There cannot be any addition to what God is from

²⁸ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 191

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without. If something is added to God from without, then it is meaningless to say that He is self-sufficient. Just as a being which is self-sufficient cannot lack anything, so also it cannot add on to itself anything from without. In other words, there cannot be any superabundance or overflowing in the case of God who is said to be self-sufficient. Further, the process of addition as well as that of overflowing is intelligible only if they are viewed as taking place in time. And this will militate against the eternity of God.

These and other difficulties arise, according to Berdyaev, because of the rationalistic attitude that we adopt with regard to God. We firmly hold to the view that what are related as contradictories cannot be true of the same being at the same time. We subject God to the principle which holds good in the sphere of nature completely forgetting that God is a mystery which cannot be understood in terms of the familiar categories of understanding. Motion in God does not imply any insufficiency or absence of fulness, but precisely the superabundance of his plenitude and perfection.²⁹ The divine process or activity is not similar to the process or activity we are familiar with in the natural world. It is not what takes place in time in successive order, but an ideal achievement taking place in eternity.³⁰ If it be said that 'an ideal achievement taking place in eternity' is beyond our comprehension, Berdyaev frankly admits that it is the case. And it is for this reason that he urges that the divine mystery cannot be understood by philosophical investigations, but only by mystical experience. To the former it will always remain a tormenting problem; to the latter it is an assured experience.

3 INADEQUACY OF RATIONAL PROOFS

Berdyaev is of the view that the existence of God cannot be proved in a rational way. There are three different approaches to God: (1) the rational approach, (2) the negative approach, and (3) the mystical approach. The rational approach consists in formulating arguments to prove the existence of God. The

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195

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traditional arguments which have been advanced by philosophers and theologians come under this category. There are philosophers who react to the question of the existence of God in a negative way. Some totally deny the existence of the divine. Others argue that God as portrayed by philosophers and theologians is beyond our powers of understanding and that there is no way of knowing such a being who is alleged to exist. Some others argue that no meaningful discourse is possible with regard to God, and that any discussion about God is, therefore, futile and meaningless. These three views constitute the negative approach to God. There is finally the mystical approach to God which consists in realizing God through intuitive mystical experience. It is Berdyaev's contention that the existence of God cannot be proved by means of argument in a satisfactory way. Whatever be the proof that is offered, it can be shown to be defective in some way or other. Nor is it possible to formulate a satisfactory argument to vindicate that God does not exist. The arguments urged against the existence of God are *naturalistic* in the sense that they transfer to the divine sphere the quality of the reality which belongs to the natural world.³¹ Depending upon the findings of science we cannot say anything about God either negatively or positively. Science cannot prove that there is no God any more than it can prove that there is God, for 'the question of the existence of God is the concern of a totally different sphere of thought from that of science, which is concerned with knowledge of the natural world.'³²

Berdyaev's position can be made clear by considering the traditional proofs for the existence of God. These proofs are generally said to be four in number, but basically there are only two kinds of proof, ontological and cosmological. The teleological and moral arguments can be brought under the cosmological proof. The ontological proof proceeds from the idea of God to the existence of God, while the other three proofs argue from the existence of something finite to the existence of God - either from the existence of the world to the existence of God (cosmological argument), or from the factual relation of means to ends in nature

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

³² *Truth and Revelation*, p. 96

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to the existence of God (teleological argument), or from the existence of moral fact to the existence of God (moral argument). Since cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments proceed from finite existence to God's existence, they can all be grouped together as constituting one variety as distinguished from the ontological proof. Though Berdyaev does not undertake a detailed examination of these two proofs, his general line of approach to them which serves to show why they have to be rejected is obvious. His basic objection is directed against the competence of the human understanding to grasp the divine perfection and the legitimacy of proceeding from the finite existence to the infinite. Commenting on the ontological proof he observes:

Kant's criticism of the ontological proof of the existence of God is of great importance. It is directed against false ontologism in general. Ontological proof is based upon a confusion of the logical predicate with reality ; of the idea of being with being.⁸³

We have undoubtedly the idea of God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived.' But is there really anything existing which corresponds to our idea of God? Berdyaev's contention is that 'the reality of God does not correspond to our thought of it.'⁸⁴ We can establish the necessity of God's existence from God's perfection only if we can grasp that perfection in idea. So the crucial issue is whether our thought can grasp God's perfection as it is. God, according to Berdyaev, is a profound mystery which cannot be known by our intellect; and so the idea of divine perfection which we have will not help us to establish the existence of God.

The cosmological argument fares no better. The different versions of the cosmological argument make use of the principle of causality. Whether we argue for the existence of God as the 'first mover' who without undergoing any change is the cause of change in the world, or as the first cause of the world, or as a being whose existence is necessary and not merely possible, or as one by whose intelligence all natural things are directed to their

⁸³ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 10

⁸⁴ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 10

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end, we think in terms of cause-effect relation between God as a self-existent being and this world as what is dependent upon God for its existence. The basic assumption of this argument is that God and the world are related as cause and effect, that the existence of God can be argued by employing the category of causality to God. Berdyaev argues that it is wrong to employ the category of causality which is applicable to the things of the natural world to God who is not one among the phenomena. There is no link between God who is freedom and the natural world which is subject to necessity, and so we cannot proceed from the latter to the former.³⁵ When we say that God is the creator of the world, 'we are speaking of something immeasurably more mysterious than a causal relation.' For want of a better term we use the word 'creator' with regard to God. The moment we say that God is the creator, what strikes us most prominently is the causal relation between God and the world. And so we have to guard ourselves against the naturalistic interpretation of God being the creator of the world. In the words of Berdyaev:

In relation to the world God is freedom and not necessity, not determination. But when men speak of freedom they are speaking of a very great mystery. God has been turned into a determining cause, into power and might, as he has been turned into a master and a king. But God is not like anything of the kind. God is completely beyond the limits of such terms.³⁶

4 EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Broadly speaking there are two ways in which we gain our knowledge. Logical demonstration is one way, and the other is experience. The scope of logical demonstration is very much restricted. It holds good only with regard to tautologies in the fields of logic and mathematics. Outside logic and mathematics we cannot have proof in the strict sense of the term. We do not come to know of matters of fact by proving them or by logical demonstration. Rather we know them only through experience.

³⁵ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 56

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56

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In the same way the existence of God cannot be logically demonstrated. It must be known only through experience. It is impossible to make a man accept the existence of God by taking him step by step through a process of logical proof. The position here is analogous to our knowledge of the external world and our accepting its existence. Berdyaev's observation is relevant in this context : 'The man whose life is not turned towards God cannot demand to be shown God or to have his reality demonstrated. The reality of God cannot be "inserted" or demonstrated from without.'⁸⁷ We do not infer God from evidences in our experience, but we directly experience God. We enjoy something which we describe as an experience of God. The believer claims that he has the experience of the divine disclosure in human freedom, in creativeness, and finally in grace. It is a question of interpretation of the situation in which man finds himself.

Man perceives significance in the situation which he confronts and reacts in a particular way.* There is the natural world surrounding him. He interprets it in a particular way and puts forth suitable responses. An examination of the activities of a human being will reveal to us the significance which he perceives in the natural world. He builds houses and works hard on the field. He cooks food and makes use of the objects of the world to serve his purposes and also to overcome the barriers and inconveniences which natural phenomena cause. Every one of his activities is an expression of the way in which he takes account of the natural significance of the environment.

Man has not only relation with the natural world, but also with other human beings. Just as he is aware of the natural significance and makes appropriate responses, so also he is aware of the ethical significance in the world of inter-personal and impersonal relationships which calls forth appropriate responses. There are occasions when he is aware of his obligation to another individual in a particular situation or to other individuals in

⁸⁷ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 12

* I am indebted to Professor John Hick for the pattern of argument followed here. See his *Faith and Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), Chap. 8

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general, when he conducts himself as a person and treats others as persons. They constitute the sphere of ethical significance as distinguished from natural significance. The distinction which we make between the natural and ethical spheres does not amount to isolating one from the other. On the contrary, they interpenetrate in so far as the moral presupposes the natural sphere. We discharge our duties to others and conduct ourselves with responsibility presupposing a stable natural environment in which actions will have foreseeable results. In other words, ethical significance is mediated to us in and through the natural world.

In addition to the natural and ethical spheres there is also the sphere of religious significance. It does not remain isolated from the other two, but interpenetrates them. It is mediated through them. Just as the natural and moral significance calls forth appropriate actions by the individual who is conscious of them, so also religious significance calls forth suitable responses by the individual who is aware of it. He perceives the divine presence in the world and in his relations with other persons. Religious significance presupposes both ethical and natural spheres. It is a case of apprehending the divine in human experience which includes the natural and the ethical. The person who is aware of the religious significance has his own style and manner of acting towards the natural and human environment. The inward peace which he enjoys enables him to see the outward harmony. He moves about without attachment, without selfishness, without vanity. He knows that he lives in the divine presence though he may not be able to prove it logically. Berdyaev says that in religious experience 'there is no longer any insurmountable dualism between the supernatural and the natural, the divine and the created, for in it the natural becomes supernatural and the creature is deified.'⁸⁸

We gain our knowledge of God by being aware of the significance of the world around us. It involves not only a particular interpretation of the situation in which one finds oneself, but also the adoption of certain volitional dispositions which result in a

⁸⁸ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 243

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new pattern of life in relation to man and society. In short, to know God is to be engaged in a voluntary activity of interpretation of the significance of what is given and to shape one's life in the light of the significance which one perceives. Knowledge of God is not given to us involuntarily without our asking for it and seeking it, without any effort on our part. On the contrary, it presupposes the activity of the whole man. 'Hidden in all beings, He reveals (himself) not to all, but is seen only by the seers of the subtle through their pointed and subtle intellect.'³⁹ It is true that God reveals himself to man in many ways. But unless man makes himself fit enough to apprehend the revelation, he is blind to it. It is for this reason that Berdyaev characterizes revelation as divine-human.

There can be no attainment of the knowledge of God, unless it be the fact that God is also active in the matter, unless he goes out to meet him. That is to say that the knowledge of God presupposes revelation and that it is at once divine and human. The most necessary thing to keep in mind is that revelation is divine-human, it cannot be just onesidedly divine. Revelation is not something which drops into man's lap from outside and in which he has nothing but an entirely passive part to play. If that were the case, we should be driven to think of man in the same way as we do of a stone or a piece of timber...⁴⁰

Revelation is an inward and spiritual event which shows itself in symbols in the facts of history; and so it is dependent on the condition of man. Berdyaev spells out what is required of man so that he could gain an insight of the divine. 'The active part that man plays in revelation,' says Berdyaev, 'depends upon his thoughts and the exertion of his will, as well as upon the degree of spirituality that he has attained.'⁴¹

Knowledge of God which is obtained through interpretation of the significance of the world around us is an achievement. It presupposes freedom on the part of man. It is a free acknowledgement by man as a result of the measure of freedom that he enjoys.

³⁹ *Kathopanishad*, 1, 3, 12

⁴⁰ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 46

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48

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Man exercises his freedom in every case of cognitive activity, though the quantum of freedom which he enjoys may vary depending upon the situation he deals with. It is to the minimum with regard to the material things which he perceives. At this level he is not even aware of the freedom which he enjoys. There is not much variation in the picture of the world which he and others form. Their experiences are almost identical. If there is any difference, it can be accounted for in terms of certain abnormalities which make one person different from others. But the measure of freedom which man enjoys becomes more prominent in the case of his moral and religious experience. That is why Berdyaev says: 'Revelation takes my freedom for granted, my act of choice, my faith in something which is still invisible and which uses no force upon me.'⁴²

According to Berdyaev, true knowledge which is existential and subjective is not a system of beliefs or a body of proof. It is the dawn of inward light, entry into communion, an experience of transcending.⁴³ Such a knowledge is creative in the highest sense. Berdyaev's interpretation of creative act as eschatological is of profound significance. Every creative act is eschatological in the sense that it marks the beginning of a new world in the place of the old one. Commenting on the role of creativity of man he says:

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, it takes place in existential time. Those who have experienced creative ecstasy are well aware that in it man is, as it were, in the grip of a higher power.⁴⁴

A person who has the knowledge of God which is really creative, which is a flight towards a different world will have a new experience of the world. The objectified world appears in a new light to him. The man of God has the vision of world harmony. He sees the beauty of man, of nature, and of works of art as the partial transformation of the world. It is a creative break-through towards the other world.⁴⁵

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 48

⁴³ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 182

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148

*'And God said, Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness: ... So God created man in
his own image ...'*

— Genesis, 1, 26-27

IV

MAN : THE IMAGE OF GOD

1 NATURE OF PERSONALITY

Man is a tiny creature when compared with the surrounding world into which he is thrown. He is interested from the beginning in knowing the world and its secrets, its meaning and hidden powers, because the world, which not only nourishes him but also destroys him, is a formidable challenge to him. In the very attempt to know the world he rises above it and reveals in himself a higher principle which is not part of the world, but which belongs to a different order.

Man wants to know not only the world which surrounds him, but also himself. Ever since the beginning of human speculation the study of man has engaged the attention of philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and others. Man has been and continues to be a fascinating study since he holds the key to the problem of the world and the meaning of being. It is for this reason that Berdyaev maintains that the real and the fundamental problem is the problem of man, and that philosophy must centre round man. Man, according to Berdyaev, is dual in nature : he is the meeting point of two worlds, the world of nature and the world of spirit. What makes the problem of man poignant is not merely the dual nature of man, but his knowledge of his dual nature. Man knows himself as 'the image and likeness of God and as a drop in the ocean of the necessities of nature.'¹ He is at once conscious of his greatness and power and

¹ *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 60

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of his worthlessness and weakness, of his freedom and his slavery. What is really puzzling about man is his personality. As one among the phenomena, there is no mystery about man, but it is his personality that baffles our understanding. Berdyaev remarks that man is a riddle, not as an animal or a social being, not as a part of nature and society, but as personality which constitutes his essential nature.

Personality is a key concept in the philosophy of Berdyaev. Many factors contribute to our difficulty in understanding the precise significance of the term. Berdyaev does not use the term personality in the popular sense. Nor does he use it in the psychological sense as standing for the sum total of the traits or characteristics of man. Rather he employs the term in the spiritual sense. Personality, according to him, is a spiritual category. It is a value term.

First let us understand what personality is not according to Berdyaev. Personality is not a substance or an object existing in the world of phenomena. It should not be classified along with other innumerable objects which we find in the world. In fact sciences like biology, sociology, psychology, etc., look at man as one of the objects on a par with other objects in the world and thereby miss the essential feature in him. Man is not a thing. There is no mystery in him when he is viewed as an object or a substance.² Personality should not, therefore, be confused with the physical aspect of man.

Personality is not an aggregate or a whole made up of parts. It is not the sum total of the different traits, physical, chemical, psychological, etc. It is not what comes into being or emerges as a result of the development of the different traits in man. It cannot be fashioned out of something. The realization of personality does not mean the formation of a whole out of the parts.³

It is a mistake to think that personality is a ready-made datum present in man from the time of his birth. It is not a ready-made datum because it is an ideal which is to be realized

² *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 22

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23

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by him. It is not what is given to man in spite of his seeking it, but it is what must be achieved by him. Man is the maker of his personality.

By personality Berdyaev does not mean the static or the unchanging in man. Nor does he mean by that what undergoes total change. Personality is not a congealed condition. Without remaining static, it undergoes change; it develops and thereby it becomes enriched. But it is not mere change without the unchanging: rather it is the unchanging in change. The change that takes place is for one and the same abiding subject.

Personality again should not be confused with the individual which is a category of naturalism, biology and sociology. The individual is a part of nature. He is connected not only with the material world, but also with the cosmos. Inasmuch as the individual is born of a man and a woman, he has a biological origin. He is subject to the influence of family and social heredity, and is an integral part of the social fabric. 'There is no individual without family and no family without the individual.'⁴ The individual is also a member of the community or society. Berdyaev characterizes the individual as a socialized creature. The influence of society on the individual is so subtle and pervasive that the latter cannot even realize that he lives in a social hypnosis. Personality can be realized only by overcoming the social hypnosis. Whereas the individual identifies himself with society, personality emerges by opposing society. While every one has individuality, only a few have personality. That is why we say 'of one man that he is a personality and another that he is not, although both are individuals.'⁵

Since personality is opposed to society, it may be thought that it stands for self-centredness. But it is not so, according to Berdyaev. Personality and egoism are poles asunder. Berdyaev contends that egocentric self-containment and concentration upon one's own being thwart the realization of personality. He illustrates his point by citing the case of a hysterical woman who

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35

⁵ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 71

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is crazy about herself and who has the odd way of referring everything to herself. Though she is undoubtedly a distinct individuality, she has no personality. Egoism, according to Berdyaev, stands for a double slavery of man, slavery to himself and slavery to the world. An egoist is a slave to his isolated being which alone is of importance to him. Since he cannot but think of the world all the time as that which constrains him from without, he is also a slave to the world. He is obsessed by 'the other' as a restraint on him on account of his exclusive concern for his own being. In the words of Berdyaev : 'The egocentric man is a slave, his attitude to everything which is non-I is a servile attitude. He is aware of 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.'⁶

There are two aspects in man, the natural and the spiritual. 'There is a spiritual man and there is a natural man, and yet the same individual is both spiritual and natural.'⁷ Man's dual nature is attested by man's consciousness of himself, of his freedom and slavery. While the natural aspect makes him part of nature, the spiritual aspect constitutes the divinity of man, his personality. As a natural man he is subject to necessity, but as a spiritual man he is rooted in freedom. Man is, therefore, a strange being who is at once in chains and free, of this world and also of another world. It is the spirit in him that constitutes his personality. As spirit, as personality, man is free ; but as non-spirit, as an individual, he is subject to necessity.

The problem of freedom *versus* necessity is an existential problem which arises as a result of the dual nature of man. Berdyaev is of the view that the solution to this problem is to be found only in personalistic existentialism and not in any other theory. Other theories which seek to explain the problem of man take into consideration only the natural aspect and not the spiritual aspect which constitutes the personality of man.

To look upon man as a product of evolution is to miss the real significance in him. Berdyaev points out that the presence of

⁶ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 43

⁷ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 27

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spirit in man complicates the question of man's evolution. If we look at man from the biological point of view, we have to say that he regresses rather than progresses. Berdyaev says :

Consciousness has weakened in man the power of instinct and made him biologically defenceless. His organs have not been perfected but weakened by the growth of civilization. He has to think with regret of his lost primeval strength. His organs for attack and defence have become social instead of biological; he relies upon his social environment and its weapons. But this means that his strength has ceased to be biologically hereditary.⁸

If man were a product of evolution, the latter without weakening him should have strengthened him. But it has not done so. Man has lost his primeval strength based on instinct; and he has been made to depend upon the institutions of society for his care and protection.

The objections levelled against the evolutionary theory as a whole hold good even in the case of the evolutionary conception of man. Berdyaev rejects the evolutionary theory of man as the feeblest of all anthropological theories.⁹ But this should not be interpreted to mean that Berdyaev is committed to a static conception of man. He admits that there is dynamism in man but that dynamism springs from his freedom and not from necessity.¹⁰

The sociological theory of man is equally unsatisfactory. According to this theory as advocated by Durkheim and others, man is a product of society, a social animal moulded and disciplined by society. This theory maintains that there is nothing valuable in man by himself, and that man owes everything to society. Man is what he is because of the work of socialization. The sociological theory of man is defective since it does not take into consideration the personality of man. Berdyaev characterizes all those who subscribe to the primacy of society over personality

⁸ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 63

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 62

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 68

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and maintain that personality is a product of society as reactionaries. The distinction between personality and the individual is not taken into consideration by them.

While the individual is a part of society and a plaything of the social forces, personality is a force outside society and a factor which supports the social frame-work. According to Berdyaev, it is society which is a part of personality. 'The reality of society consists in the personalities themselves: not in the simple interaction of personalities, but in the "we", which is not an abstraction, and has a concrete existence.'¹¹ Berdyaev is not favourably disposed towards the organic view of society. Society is not an organism. Nor is it a personality. It is the objectification of the 'we', and so it has no reality, no existence, outside the relation between one personality and another, between the 'I' and the 'Thou'. The 'we' in its existentiality is a community, a fellowship, but not society.¹²

Berdyaev maintains that the psychoanalytic view which portrays man as a 'sick creature' tormented by the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious is equally untenable. By emphasizing the part played by the unconscious, the deep irrational layer which lies hidden from consciousness, the psychoanalytic school has made very significant contribution to our understanding of man. Berdyaev's charge against psychoanalysis is that, while it bestows due attention on the unconscious and the conscious, it is oblivious of the super-conscious. It treats man's mental life as though there is no spirit in him. It is blind to the personality of man, the spirit in him which is the image of God.

To treat man as a rational being is to do less than justice to the nature of man. The Greeks, for example, thought of man as a rational being, as the bearer of reason. The truth is that there is not only reason in man, but there are also feelings and passions which are equally involved in the act of knowing. Berdyaev maintains that there is no such thing as pure thought.

¹¹ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 103

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 104

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Pure thought does not exist; thought is saturated with acts of volition, with emotions and passions, and these things play a part in the act of knowing which is not simply negative; they have a positive role to play.¹³

What is known as intuitive knowledge is not purely intellectual, but integral, concrete: that is to say, it is also emotional and volitional.¹⁴ Therefore to say that man is a rational being is to present a partial picture of man.

Since man is dual in nature, it will not do well to pay attention to the naturalistic aspect alone. What makes a man human and a personality is the spirit in him. And so the spiritual aspect alone which serves to distinguish man from other things is worthy of attention. Berdyaev readily admits that the theories which have been referred to earlier contain elements of truth. But in so far as they do not bring out the essential nature of man, he rejects them as superficial.¹⁵

Berdyaev criticizes the Catholic and the Protestant views of man on the same count, for they do not consider man as the image and likeness of God. According to the Catholic view, man was

created as a natural being, lacking in the supernatural gifts of the contemplation of God and communion with Him; the supernatural gifts were bestowed upon him by a special act of grace. Through the Fall man lost precisely those supernatural gifts, but as a natural being he suffered comparatively little damage.¹⁶

This, according to Berdyaev, is only another version of the naturalistic view of man; for man came into existence as a natural being and continues to be so, and whatever he acquired through the grace of God was forfeited by him on account of the Fall. The Protestant view maintains that man, as a result of the Fall, has lost his freedom and that human nature

¹³ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 16

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14

¹⁵ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 69

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61

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can never be hallowed and transfigured. Man is looked upon as a sinful and insignificant being, and there is nothing divine in him.¹⁷

The Jewish-Christian view which considers man as a being created by God in His own image and likeness is acceptable to Berdyaev. As the image and likeness of God, man is divine. he is the 'other divine'. The Fall which Berdyaev attributes to man's original freedom has not deprived man of his divinity, of the spirit in him. Man has his own part to play in attaining his salvation and in regenerating the world. 'Man has to manifest all the activity of his spirit, all the intensity of his freedom, in order to accomplish what God expects of him.'¹⁸

Man in his creative love for God does not only invoke Him on behalf of his human needs, expecting salvation from Him : he also offers Him all the superabundance of his forces and all his fathomless liberty with absolute disinterestedness. If man does not bring his creative gift to God, if he does not participate actively in building the Kingdom of God, if he shows himself to be a slave, if he buries his talents in the earth, than the creation of the world will receive a check and the fulness of the divine-human life conceived by God will not be realized.¹⁹

Only if it is admitted that man is divine in spite of the Fall, it will be possible for us to satisfactorily explain the part he has to play by way of response to God. The 'natural man' will not be equal to this task.

Man is not only divine, but is also rooted in freedom. Man, says Berdyaev, is the child of freedom. It is in terms of this freedom which is 'primeval', 'utterly undetermined' that we have to explain his action. There is the divine image in him, and he can exercise his freedom either to realize or damage it. There are two aspects in man. One is the divine image and the other is freedom.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 69

¹⁸ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 209

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13

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There are two elements in human nature, and it is their combination and interaction that constitute man. There is in him the element of primeval, utterly undetermined potential freedom springing from the abyss of non-being, and the element determined by the fact that man is the image and likeness of God, a Divine idea which his freedom may realize or destroy.²⁰

The Fall of man has to be explained only on the basis of the original freedom in him. Berdyaev explains the scope of man's original freedom as follows :

The first kind of freedom, which is in itself irrational and unfathomable, by no means alone guarantees that man will follow the right path, that he will come to God, that truth will dominate in his life and that freedom will in the long run be supreme in the world. Unlimited force makes possible the most varied and opposite actualizations.²¹

So, man's original freedom does not guarantee the right course of action to him as it can take him in any direction. The worth of man is the personality in him. Man is no better than a thing so long as he does not realize his personality ; and he can realize his personality only on the basis of his freedom.

To understand the significance of the personality of man, it is necessary to consider the relation between man and God which can be explained in three ways. According to one explanation, man and God are mutually exclusive ; they remain alien and separated. Berdyaev characterizes this view as transcendent dualism. Another explanation seeks to deny the independence of man by identifying him with God. The will of man is not different from that of God. 'It sees in man only a manifestation of the divine life, a transitory moment in the development of divinity.'²² Berdyaev refers to this view as immanent monism. Neither of these views is acceptable to Berdyaev. The relation between man and God must not be thought of in terms of

²⁰ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 70

²¹ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 131

²² *Ibid.*, p. 208

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dualistic separation or monistic identification. While man and God are independent, they are also interdependent. This is the Christian view of the relation between man and God as interpreted by Berdyaev. This standpoint Berdyaev calls as the theandric anthropomorphism. He points out that the independent-interdependent relation between man and God cannot be understood by one who views it from the standpoint of reason.

God and man are not external to each other, nor outside one another ; neither are they identified, the one nature does not disappear in the other. But it is impossible to work out adequate concepts about this, it can be expressed only in symbols.²³

The man-God relation cannot be reduced to categories of a rigid type. It is a mystery inaccessible to absolute thought.²⁴

By its very nature, personality presupposes another personality. It is not self-oriented, but other-oriented. The relation between man and God is the relation between one person and another person. Personality is an end in itself, and so the relation between one person and another should not be conceived in terms of means-end relation. 'The relation of personality to personality, even the most exalted personality of God, cannot be a relation of means and end, all personality is an end in itself. The relation of means and end exists only in the world of objectivization...' ²⁵

Berdyaev thinks in terms of a two-way relation between man and God. God is not the Absolute of metaphysics, but is a personality. 'God as a person presupposes his other, another person, and is love and sacrifice.'²⁶ The same thing is true of man as a personality. So the personalities of God and man presuppose each other. The relation between man and God has to be explained, according to Berdyaev, in terms of two movements - from God towards man and from man towards God. Berdyaev finds support for his interpretation of the man-God relation in the

²³ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 101

²⁴ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 192

²⁵ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 39

²⁶ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 74

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utterances of mystics. Eckhart describes the man-God relation by saying that God exists if man exists, and that when man disappears God will also disappear. Silesius says that without him God could not endure for a moment. 'I am as great as God, He as small as I.' Mystics have emphasized the two-way relation between man and God—the longing of God for man and the longing of man for God, for neither God nor man would be complete and sufficient without the other. This truth, says Berdyaev, can be realized only in spiritual or mystic experience. 'The human soul suffers the pangs of God's birth within it. The birth of God in the human soul is the true birth of man.'²⁷ Man will have no positive life-content, no significance, without God. If he attempts to separate himself from God, he will become a prey to the element of the natural world. It will amount to his becoming a slave of nature and necessity. God is infinite love and the embodiment of inexhaustible grace. Such a conception of God involves an object of love, some one who will be the beneficiary of divine grace. 'Infinite love cannot exist without a loving subject and a loved object. The birth of man in God is the answer to divine aspiration, the movement from man towards God.'²⁸

The tragedy of man can be overcome only if man participates in the work of God. God expects man to reveal his creative nature which is rooted in freedom. God alone is not enough to put an end to the tragedy of man. If there is nothing to be done by man on his part and if everything depends upon the work of God, there will be no problem at all, and God would have established His Kingdom on earth by His mere will. In fact, He could have prevented the Fall of man. But the problem is not so simple as that, as it involves the part to be played by man as the counterpart of God. That is why Berdyaev says that the Kingdom of God cannot be realized without man, without man's participation in creation.²⁹

It is not only with regard to God, but also with regard to other human beings that person-to-person relationship holds good. One must look upon others as persons and not as objects.

²⁷ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 197

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 197

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To meet a person is to meet a 'Thou' and not an object ; it is a case of I-Thou relation. If one treats a person, a Thou, as an object, as a means, it is an indication of the fall in the relation between I and Thou ; it is what Berdyaev would call a sign of objectification. In the person-to-person relationship what is characteristic of personality is the capacity to feel suffering and joy. Berdyaev conveys this idea by saying that 'personality exists in the relation of love and sacrifice.'⁸⁰ Nowhere in this world can we see this capacity excepting in a person.

Man can realize his personality only by transcending his subjectivity. The process of transcending may take place in two different and opposite directions. Man may find himself as part of the external world ; he may get himself involved in the social processes. This is the way of objectification. By following this path man cannot realize his personality. The other way consists in transcending himself into the trans-subjective realm of personalities. It is self-transcendence towards God and other persons. One must be careful in interpreting the meaning of self-transcendence. According to Berdyaev, self-transcendence is an inward process and not an outward one. It is not transcendence towards external things. It is something that takes place in self-awareness ; it is an event within one's very existence. 'It is the path not of objective communication but of existential communion. Personality reaches full realization of itself only on this path.'⁸¹ By self-transcendence man as a person can commune with God and other human beings.

The problem of freedom *versus* necessity is connected with the dual nature of man. As spirit, man is free, and is a personality ; but as a natural being, he is completely determined and belongs to the world of necessity. Man endeavours to transcend himself in two ways. One way leads him to the world of objects, to the realm of necessity, while the other to the noumenal world, to the realm of freedom.⁸² The transcending of the self towards the objective world is due to objectification.

⁸⁰ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 74

⁸¹ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 29

⁸² *The Beginning and the End*, p. 59

OBJECTIFICATION

2 OBJECTIFICATION

It is necessary at this stage to consider the principle of objectification - its nature, its work, and the way out of it— which plays an important part in the philosophy of Berdyaev. Objectification, according to Berdyaev, is the principle which accounts for one thing appearing as something different. Man who is an existential subject appears as a part of the external world, and the external world which is only a phenomenon appears to be real. The external world is an appearance ; it is the outcome of objectification. It is what serves as a prison to the spirit of man. Man loses his freedom on account of objectification and becomes a slave to the world - to nature, society, civilization, and history. Berdyaev says: ‘I should put it that illusions arise as an effect of objectification, of the projection into the object of that which has real existence only in the subject.’³³ We have, therefore, to examine how the principle of objectification is at work at epistemological, ontological, and axiological levels.

Berdyaev contends that the basic problem of epistemology is to determine the nature of man, the existential subject. To treat man who is a concrete being, an existential reality, as an epistemological subject which is related to an object is a case of objectification. Berdyaev’s conception of the scope of epistemology is radically different from that of others. The subject-object epistemology is the target of Berdyaev’s attack. It is generally held that knowledge involves subject-object relation. The knower is the subject and what is known is the object. ‘The subject and object are logically correlative and cannot be separated one from the other, and yet they are for ever opposed to each other.’³⁴ In such a view the knower is not treated as a concrete reality, but only as an epistemological subject ; and what is known is not treated as an existent, but as the objective correlate of the knowing subject. ‘The result is that ‘existence slips away both from the subject and the object.’

Epistemology is not intended to be a closed system. Its function is to throw light on the nature of reality. Berdyaev

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 84

³⁴ *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 13-14

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contends that the subject-object epistemology will not lead to ontology, for it is based on the assumption that 'knowledge is concerned with objects which lie outside it and must somehow be reflected and expressed in it.'⁸⁵ It is a mistake to think that knowledge and reality are separated from each other. Berdyaev maintains that knowledge is a part of life. The epistemological thought of a knowing subject is an experience of life; it is what the knowing subject lives through. In so far as the knowing subject is an existent reality, his knowledge is a part of reality. If knowledge and reality are separated, there can be, says Berdyaev, no inner connection between the two. There is also another difficulty. Having no access to reality, the epistemological subject will be left with only ideas about the real. 'There is no God but only various ideas about God which he investigates; there is no real good and evil, but only different ideas about good and evil, and so on.'⁸⁶ The separation of knowledge and reality is the work of reason. The subject-object relation comes into existence not at the primary stage, but only at the secondary stage as a result of reflection.⁸⁷

In the place of the subject-object theory of knowledge, Berdyaev advocates a spiritual conception of knowledge. Knowledge, he says, is a light which springs from being and within it.⁸⁸ It is of an intuition; it is communion with being. It is man's reaction to the divine revelation. Knowledge in the sense of communion or participation is a part of life. It is an existent; it is *something* and not *about something*. It is for this reason that Berdyaev says: 'Knowledge of truth is communion with truth and life in it; knowledge of righteousness is communion with righteousness and life in it.'⁸⁹

The principle of objectification is at work at the ontological level also. By virtue of his spiritual nature man belongs to the realm of freedom. But if he looks upon himself as one among the phenomena, it is because of objectification. 'Objectification is the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18

OBJECTIFICATION

ejection of man into the external, it is an exteriorization of him, it is the subjecting of him to the conditions of space, time, causality, and rationalization.⁴⁰ Berdyaev brings out the same idea in a different way by saying that 'the freedom of noumena passess into the necessity of phenomena'.⁴¹ Under the spell of objectification a person not only becomes an object, but treats other persons also as objects. 'Objectification is the uprising of an exteriorized "not-I" in place of the "Thou" which exists interiorly.'⁴² Again, the world of phenomena which is only an appearance appears to be real on account of objectification. 'The world of appearances acquires a grandiose empirical reality which exercises compulsion and force upon us.'⁴³ According to Berdyaev, there is no objective world in the sense of reality in itself. The only world which is authentic and real is the world which is divinely and humanly free. 'The whole cosmos enters into the true free world, whereas there is nothing of it in the world of appearances, the world of objects.'⁴⁴

At the axiological level, confusion between means and ends and the overturning of the hierarchy of values are the result of objectification. Society, civilization, and culture assume a decisive importance on their own ; they are treated as ends in themselves. Consider, for example, the way in which sociologists affirm the primacy of society over personality. Sociologists maintain that man owes everything in him to society, and that society stands on a higher level than personality. For the purpose of establishing their thesis, they make use of myths and symbols like the sovereignty of the people, the infallibility of the General Will, the myth of the state, the myth of the race, etc.⁴⁵ And there is no society without myths and symbols. If society which is secondary is treated as primary, it is a case of objectification. It is wrong to treat civilization as the final goal of human existence.

⁴⁰ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 60

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 60

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 57

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59

⁴⁵ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 112

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or as its highest value.⁴⁶ However valuable culture may be, it is not in itself 'the transfiguration of life and the appearance of the new man.'⁴⁷ If civilization and culture which are created by man enslave him, it is on account of objectification. Describing the way in which both civilization and culture function in relation to man, Berdyaev observes:

Civilization arose as a means but it was turned into an end and has become a power which controls man despotic ally. Culture with all its values is a means to the spiritual life, to the spiritual ascent of man, but it has been turned into an end in itself which crushes the creative freedom of man. This is the inevitable result of objectification.⁴⁸

To choose a lower value in preference to a higher one is because of objectification.

What is the cause of objectification? Berdyaev's answer is the subject. It is the subject which introduces objectification. 'The objectification of the world takes place through our agency and for our own sake.'⁴⁹ 'In my view the subject itself introduces objectification and gives rise to the world of phenomena, and does so not only as he who knows, but above all as he who exists.'⁵⁰ The work of objectification is carried out through reason and its categories. Reason distinguishes and divides what is given. It operates by distinguishing the epistemological subject from the object which it confronts. It introduces not only the subject-object relation, but other relations, too, like cause-effect relation, whole-part relation, means-end relation, etc. As it functions, it moves out of the concrete to the abstract. As a result of the work of reason, formation of concepts takes place. Conceptual knowledge is a medium through which objectification functions. From this point of view, all philosophical systems which are conceptual, which bring into service what Berdyaev

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130

⁴⁹ *The Beginning and the end*, p. 56

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56

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calls 'the rational apparatus of the concept,' bear the mark of objectification.

It is not enough to say that the subject is the cause of objectification. The question which now arises is: Why does the subject become the cause of objectification? The answer is: It is because of the Fall which is separation from God and the turning away from the divine image and likeness which is in one's own being. What, then, is responsible for this separation and the turning away? Berdyaev's answer to this question is in terms of the initial freedom of man. As already pointed out, there are two elements in the make up of man. They are the divine image and freedom. The latter is what Berdyaev calls the initial freedom which is the freedom of choice, which is prior to good and evil. When man exercises his initial freedom, he attains knowledge of good and evil, and begins to make distinctions and evaluations. Man is completely free to make his own choice. The initial freedom does not guarantee that man will choose the good rather than the evil. 'It may mean the choice of the path of discord and hatred, of the affirmation of one part as against another, the way of disunion in the spiritual world, that is to say, the way of evil.'⁵¹ So according to Berdyaev, the Fall is bound up with man's initial freedom, and it could not be explained apart from it.⁵² Apart from tracing the cause of objectification, through the subject and the Fall, to the initial freedom, there can be no further analysis of this problem. The initial freedom itself which is the farthest limit cannot be probed into. It is a mystery. It is not accessible to rational knowledge and conceptual definition.

3 FREEDOM—REAL AND APPARENT

Man can overcome objectification through spiritual or mystic experience. Mysticism, according to Berdyaev, is the overcoming of creatureliness. It asserts the reality of a unifying experience in which the distinctions between the divine and the human, the subject and the object, the supernatural and the natural disappear.

⁵¹ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 132

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 132

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It implies the inner kinship or union between the human spirit and the divine. It is the overcoming of transcendence, the sense of God and man being external to one another. Union with God does not mean, according to Berdyaev, the disappearance of man altogether, nor the obliterating of the distinctions between the two different natures.⁵⁸ As a result of the mystic experience there is a total transformation in one's outlook of human existence and the world. The person who has that experience gains a new insight into the nature of things including his own existence. He realizes the divine in him; he knows himself to be a person in communion with God and other persons. The external world appears in a new light to him. It is no more a prison in which he is caught, or what is devoid of meaning, or what is alien to him. To one who has attained mystic experience, the natural world becomes symbolic in character. It is full of signs of another world. Berdyaev observes that when the mind is turned towards the divine the mystic discovers everywhere an inner connection and meaning, and the indications of another world are apparent to him.

One does not get the mystic experience for the mere asking or for the mere liking of it. Nor is it something which can be acquired by laborious effort. While asceticism can be acquired, mysticism cannot. Mystic experience is something which one attains due to the grace of God. No one can say when one will acquire it. Like a flash of lightning, mystic experience is a sudden inner illumination. It is, therefore, different from the ordinary, normal human thinking which is both methodical and ratiocinative. When a person gains mystic experience, he attains a new life and becomes a spiritual man, a transcendental man. He is a personality in the true sense of the word.

Real freedom is spiritual freedom which is fully manifest in the transcendental man. The distinction between *real* freedom and *apparent* freedom is basic in the existential philosophy of Berdyaev. That alone is real freedom which does not bind the individual or lead to his slavery. This explanation may look trivial. What else, one may be tempted to ask, could freedom be? Freedom and bondage are antithetical. What binds a person

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243

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or what leads to his bondage cannot be freedom ; and so freedom is the overcoming of bondage. It is meaningless, so it may be argued, to talk about freedom as real and freedom as apparent, and explain real freedom as that which does not bind as if there is some other kind of freedom which binds.

To Berdyaev freedom which is real freedom is different from two other kinds of freedom. His approach to the problem of freedom is existential and dialectical. A rational approach to freedom cannot help to solve the problem of freedom *versus* necessity which is at the existential level. Freedom can be grasped only in the experience of life. It must be viewed dialectically, since it is dynamic and not static. ‘ Rational philosophy involves a static view of freedom, while the latter is dynamic in its very essence and can only be conceived dynamically.’⁵⁴

Reference has already been made to the initial freedom with which man is born. As distinguished from this, there is what Berdyaev calls the rational freedom. Berdyaev describes the initial freedom as irrational. In so far as it is not determined by anything, except by its own self it is freedom which is self-determination. It is the freedom with which man starts in his adventure. It is what is prior to good and evil ; it is by this freedom that man directs his life and makes his choice of good and evil. But it does not guarantee that man will follow the right path and come to God. More often than not, it leads to the choice of ‘ the path of discord and hatred,’ of the path of evil. Instead of keeping man free, this initial freedom binds him, makes him a slave and a victim of necessity. Freedom, that is to say, degenerates into its opposite as a result of the inner dialectic in it. ‘ The dialectic of initial freedom is the source of the tragedy of the world process.’⁵⁵ This freedom, therefore, is quite inadequate. When Berdyaev uses expressions such as ‘ tragic ’ and ‘ fatal destiny ’ with regard to freedom, he has in mind the inner dialectic as a result of which freedom degenerates into its opposite.

The other kind of freedom which Berdyaev calls rational freedom fares no better. It is the freedom which man wants to

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 121

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133

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attain through reason, truth, and goodness. It is freedom as *aim* as distinguished from the initial freedom which is freedom as *choice*. When a man submits himself to reason or when he allows the principles of truth and goodness to control his conduct, he attains rational freedom. The Greeks thought of freedom only in this way. 'It is the freedom to which man is making his way, the very summit of his life's activity and its final goal; it is the freedom which must one day be achieved through the triumph of the highest principles of life.'⁵⁶ Like the initial freedom, this freedom, too, degenerates into its opposite because of the inner dialectic in it and destroys itself. As a member of society, man is required to act in accordance with the moral law in society and to conform to the institutions therein. When left to himself, man falls a victim to a chaotic life as result of the exercise of the initial freedom in him. This is one extreme. At the other extreme, truth and goodness come to be organized and institutionalized for the benefit of man who is required to submit to the moral law and social institutions in order to overcome the chaotic life, and attain peace and happiness. But what actually happens is a tyrannical organization of life. Man is denied freedom of choice and is compelled to acquire a virtue imposed from without. The persecution of people in the name of God by Christians and non-Christians, and the regimentation of life in the name of truth and goodness by the Communists and the non-Communists constitute the total slavery of man. In short, instead of attaining freedom man becomes a slave in his pursuit of rational freedom.

There is dialectical relation between the initial freedom and the rational freedom. In order to escape the danger inherent in the first freedom, man resorts to the second which proves equally disastrous. When rational freedom leads to tyrannical organization, he wants to take refuge in the initial freedom, freedom as choice. Thus, he moves back and forth between the two freedoms. Berdyaev observes: 'There appears to be no end to this tragedy of freedom and it seems doomed to perish, for it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.'⁵⁷ Freedom which is a source of slavery is no freedom at all. It is freedom only apparently.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134

FREEDOM—REAL AND APPARENT

The tragedy of the two kinds of freedom can be overcome only by attaining spiritual freedom, which is real freedom. Spiritual freedom as exemplified by Christ, the God-man, fulfils the claims of the two other kinds of freedom without, however, leading to bondage. Christ is not only God, but also man in the absolute and spiritual sense of the word. The freedom of Christ is the freedom which is not determined by anything from without. It is not only 'a freedom like God's but freedom in relation to God and in its attitude towards Him.'⁵⁸ Christ, the God-man, who is the embodiment of spiritual freedom, does not compel any one to accept Him. The Truth for which He stands, the spiritual freedom which He exemplifies, is different from 'the truths of this world which seek to organize the life of man by constraint and end by depriving him of the freedom of the spirit.'⁵⁹ To make a free response to the God-man is to make a free response to the call of God. The uplifting grace which comes from Christ is the grace of God. Berdyaev emphasizes the human factor in Christ in the same way as he emphasizes the divine aspect in Him. The entire mankind participates through the human aspect in Christ in the work of salvation and deliverance of the world. To quote Berdyaev :

To receive the freedom of Christ is not only to receive the freedom of God but to receive also, by partaking of Christ's human nature, that freedom which enables man to turn to God. It is thus the power of becoming God's free sons and so making that loving response to God which He needs.⁶⁰

The spiritual freedom of Christ is at once redemptive and creative. It is redemptive in so far as it is liberation from the fear of suffering as well as of life and death. Christ, the God-man, has shown how the free acceptance of suffering and death is the way to liberation therefrom. It is also creative since it marks the beginning of a new aeon. 'The appearance of Christ marks a new era in the destiny of the world, a new moment in the creation both of the world and of man.'⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179

4 MYSTIC EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVITY

In the mystic experience of a spiritual man both the redemptive and creative aspects of freedom find concrete expression. There is no freedom so long as there is no overcoming of the fear of suffering and death, of the burden and bondage of the world of necessity. If man experiences the sense of creatureliness, it is because of objectification. Creatureliness is a name for man's slavery to nature, society, civilization, and history, and also for his fear of suffering and death. A mystic is one who has overcome the sense of creatureliness : he is, that is to say, free from the fear of suffering and death and from the dead weight of the world of necessity. Spiritual freedom is not only freedom *from* something, but also freedom *for the sake of* something.⁶² While the former stands for the redemptive aspect, the latter for the creative aspect of spiritual freedom. Being free from the fear of suffering and death, the mystic as a new man sees the world as something totally different from what it was earlier as a result of the insight he has gained. So far as he is concerned, his creative freedom marks the end of this world and the beginning of a new world.

It is necessary here to bring out the nature of a creative act, as it will help us to grasp the significance of the creative aspect of spiritual freedom. Any creative act ushers in something new which did not exist before. It is a triumph over the given. Berdyaev points out that the creative newness cannot be accounted for in terms of emanation or evolution. From what is given it is impossible to create what is completely new. If anything comes out of something that exists, it can be only a case of emanation or evolution. In emanation something comes out and is separated off from something else, and so there is no newness. In evolution nothing new is made, but the old is redistributed or is made to appear in a different form. Creativeness is not to be understood in the sense of imposing ideal forms upon the given material, for even this will not give rise to genuine newness. According to Berdyaev, creativeness consists in giving rise to something new that had never existed before and is not deduced from, or generated by, anything. In every creative act there is absolute gain, something added.⁶³

⁶² *The Destiny of Man*, p. 189

⁶³ *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 129

MYSTIC EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVITY

Three factors are involved in creative work. They are : man's freedom, the divine image in man which is the gift bestowed upon him by the creator, and the world as the field of his creative activity. Every creative act which is the human response to the divine call is an ascent towards God. It is a step in the direction of a new world. It is an act of transcendence from the given, from the old to the new. The creation of a statue from a shapeless stone, the drawing of a painting which is full of life from 'lifeless' colours, the production of a marvellous literary work from a chaos of words - these and other creative acts bring out how the artist as a creator being possessed of 'creative ecstasy' brings in something new which is higher, better, and more beautiful than the given. What the artist does is not of the nature of perfecting the given, but that of creating something new. The creative act, according to Berdyaev, is eschatological; it is an upward flight towards a different world. This holds good as much in the sphere of knowledge and morals as in the realm of art.

The mystic is an extraordinary artist ; he is a creator *par excellence*. Since he has overcome the fear of suffering and death, creativeness is at its best in his case. The mystic as a redeemed man has an important place in society. Having attained freedom and inner illumination, he sets out to end the given world and pave the way for the entry of a new aeon. Berdyaev observes : 'Human nature, redeemed and saved from evil, has a positive human content and a positive human purpose. This content and purpose can only be creativeness.'⁶⁴ One can be truly human only if there is spiritual awakening. The creation of a new world, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, is a divine-human work. This is the inner meaning of Berdyaev's observation that 'the world is created not by God only, but also by man.'⁶⁵

The creativeness of the liberated man expresses itself through struggle and contemplation. The liberated man has no more involvement in the social processes. Liberation and social involvement do not go together. Involvement in the social processes is objectifica-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111

⁶⁵ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 174

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tion ; it constitutes the slavery of man to society and other forces. And so it is the very opposite of liberation. Though the liberated man has no more social involvement, he is not without social concern. He aims at transforming the world of necessity by voluntarily undertaking to do everything for the sake of humanity. The ideal for him is universal salvation. One cannot be saved, says Berdyaev, in loneliness and isolation. 'Salvation can only be a corporate experience, a universal release from suffering.'⁶⁶ The 'struggle' of the liberated man is no ordinary struggle as we generally understand the term. It should not be understood in the sense of struggle for survival or struggle for success in society, for the liberated man does not run a race with others. To the liberated man there is no conflict or struggle with others, as there is no clash of interests in his case. The struggle of the liberated man is the struggle for the salvation of others in society.

If the struggle of the liberated man which is directed towards humanity is an expression of his creativity, his contemplation of God is also an expression of his creativity. Just as the 'struggle' on his part for the sake of humanity is an expression of love, so also his contemplation of God is an expression of love towards God. 'The contemplation of God who is love is man's creative answer to God's call.'⁶⁷

The creative activity of the mystic who is the divine-man takes place in existential time. Though the mystic undoubtedly exists in cosmic and historical time, he has conquered both of them through his mystic experience. His spiritual experience which takes place in existential time intrudes into historical and cosmic time. It is the 'break-through' of eternity into the historical process and the cosmic cycle. Berdyaev calls this 'break-through' as metahistory. The end of 'this world' can be achieved here and now. We should not wait passively for the end of this world and the beginning of a new one as if it is something which is scheduled to take place at a remote period. Berdyaev is for an active eschatology. Every creative act of man is a step towards the new Kingdom. The spiritual man is a witness to the beginning of the new world and the end of the old one.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 237

⁶⁷ *The Destiny of Man*, p. 194

*'The destination cannot be described;
You will know very little until you get there;'*

—Reilly*

V

PERSONALISTIC EXISTENTIALISM: AN EVALUATION

1 THEISTIC PLURALISM

In spite of the fact that Berdyaev has written more than two dozen books distributed over nearly five decades and covering a very wide range of themes, he is not a system builder, and there is no indication whatsoever in his writings of a well-rounded system of philosophy embodying basic doctrines and supporting arguments. He has not worked out a full-fledged, coherent, final system of philosophy like the traditional philosophers or even in the fashion of some contemporary existentialists (say, Sartre or Heidegger). In recent times speculative philosophy and system building have been the target for those who swear by logical empiricism and language analysis. Usually some specific problem which forms an integral part in a philosophical system is singled out for analysis by contemporary philosophers who express their views more often in the form of long articles in philosophical journals through objections and answers, arguments and counter-arguments. The scope as well as the nature of philosophy as understood by these philosophers is such that system building becomes out of question. And this is also true in the case of Berdyaev, though it is for an entirely different conception of philosophy which he holds.

The primary aim of philosophy is the illumination of the personality of man whose concrete individual existence does not admit of a rational analysis. The problems connected with the personality of man are existential in nature. The task of a

*T. S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*

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philosopher, who tries to bring out the nature of human existence and personality, of freedom and divine communion, is hampered by a twofold limitation.

First, since the nature of the subject matter is such that it does not admit of theorizing, a philosopher who is involved in it feels that the tools left at his disposal are quite inadequate. Personal existence is essentially self-realization in its most profound and deepest sense. It is what Kierkegaard calls existence at the religious level. It is not theoretical knowing, but practical awareness or realization of one's authentic existence. Though one may try to illumine it through language, one will not be successful in the attempt; and this is the limitation from the standpoint of the person who aims at philosophizing.

The other limitation is in respect of the person who is supposed to receive the communication and derive the benefit therefrom. No one can understand the meaning of personal existence unless one lives it, and so the benefit which one can derive from communication from others is only indirect. What it means to exist and to exercise one's freedom by decision and choice can never be understood unless and until one actually gets involved in the concrete situation, deliberates on the alternatives, makes a choice, and appropriates what is chosen as a mode of existence. It will be useful in this context to refer to the distinction between a problem and a mystery as emphasized by Marcel. A problem is something which one hits upon, something which demands a solution by being a challenge to one's thought. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself engaged, and so it is not what is 'in front of me.' The personal existence of man and his encounter with other persons are metaproblematic; they fall outside the realm of problems. What is of the nature of a mystery can be understood only through participation. Any attempt at theorizing of what is of the nature of a mystery will at the most have only an indirect value in so far as it hints at the mystery. With the twofold limitation, one at the level of communication and the other at the level of reception, it is impossible to work out a well-rounded system of philosophy. Berdyaev, therefore refrains from system building.

VALUE AND ACTION

In spite of the absence of a philosophical system one can easily identify the basic standpoint of Berdyaev as a philosopher. Berdyaev is a theistic pluralist. He admits the existence of God, a plurality of souls, and the world which is not a product of objectification. He tries to distinguish his theistic pluralism from other kinds of theistic pluralism by saying that his philosophy is the philosophy of the subject, of the spirit, of freedom, of the personality, and also that it is eschatological. His philosophy centres in the concept of personality which he applies both to God and to human beings. It is, therefore, personalistic in character. Since man provides the clue for our understanding of both God and the world, human existence constitutes the basic theme of his philosophy. Man as a personality exercising his spiritual freedom will be a 'break-through' in this world. So unlike other philosophies which are theistic and pluralistic, Berdyaev's philosophy is eschatological in character. Instead of waiting passively for the end of this world and the beginning of a new one, man has to endeavour to usher in a new era, the Kingdom of God, here and now, and so he has a tremendous responsibility by virtue of his moral autonomy to make a breakthrough and realize the goal. Berdyaev's ethical voluntarism is neither of the Kierkegaardian type nor of the Nietzschean variety. To Berdyaev the grace of God is as indispensable as the moral autonomy of the human being; there is no *either or* between divine grace and human freedom. And so his ethical voluntarism which admits the necessity of both divine grace and human freedom steers clear of the ethical voluntarism of Kierkegaard and of Nietzsche.

2 VALUE AND ACTION

Berdyaev's philosophy is value oriented. To Berdyaev personality is the supreme value. Whatever is intrinsically connected with the personality of man is equally valuable. Freedom which is the basis of personality, and creativeness through which personality expresses itself are, therefore, valuable. Since, according to Berdyaev, freedom, creativeness, and personality are values, they ought to be pursued and realized by the individual. This gives rise to two problems.

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There is first of all the problem of the relation between value and action. A philosophy which is value oriented is '*ipso facto* action oriented. The concept of value bridges the gulf between theory and practice in philosophy. The emphasis on practice is said to be one of the characteristics of Indian philosophy. Philosophy, that is to say, is not merely a view of life, but also a way of life. If Indian philosophy has been action oriented, it is because of the fact that it is value oriented. Every philosophical system is concerned with the explanation of the nature of the supreme value as conceived by it and the means by which it is to be attained. Any explanation of value in the absence of an enunciation of the means thereto will not be of any use. To know a value, to believe it, and to accept it, is to commit oneself in practice, which means an endeavour to appropriate it as a mode of life. Berdyaev, too, subscribes to the view that philosophy is not mere theory but practice because philosophy by its very nature is value oriented. A philosophy which is not value oriented is no philosophy at all: it is a pseudo-philosophy.

Like Kant and Nietzsche, Berdyaev maintains that the morally autonomous will is the central element in human personality. It is a mistake to think that man has a determinate nature by reference to which questions of conduct are in principle resolvable, a nature which is at once an object of knowledge and a source of principles of action. Berdyaev's position, which is similar to the standpoint of Kant and Nietzsche on this, may be characterized as ontological voluntarism. According to ontological voluntarism, moral principles are principles of action to which the concepts of truth and falsity do not apply. It insists that moral phenomena must be described in a vocabulary that recognizes the decisional character of moral judgment. Neither the nature of value nor the work of evaluation can be described in intellectualistic terms. In recent times quite a few moral philosophers discuss the question whether 'value' stands for a natural property or a non-natural property or for neither as if the nature of value can be described in intellectualistic terms. Morality is not a matter of knowing at all, and evaluation in the form of a moral judgment does not consist in cognizing a certain property,

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whether natural or non-natural, which is supposed to be a value. Berdyaev writes :

I repeat, the question of the supreme value of personality, of the supremacy of what is personal and individual over the common, and the controversy about values, are not open to intellectual and rational solution : a solution is to be found only through the moral will which establishes values, only through volitional choice.¹

In another passage he says : ‘ The supreme value of personality, the supreme truth of personalism cannot be demonstrated as a proposition of objective ontology, it is affirmed by the moral will which assumes that value is a choice on the part of freedom.’² Berdyaev emphasizes in these two passages (1) that values cannot be understood in intellectualistic terms, (2) that it is the moral will which establishes values through volitional choice, and (3) that moral judgments are not propositions of objective ontology, but are decisional in character. In short, as against intellectualistic ontology Berdyaev urges ontological voluntarism.

Value concepts are essentially practical. If a person believes that something is a value and makes a volitional choice of it, it necessarily commits him to a certain course of action which will exemplify the value he has chosen. If I choose wealth as a value, the course of action which I pursue and the mode of life which I lead will speak out the value I have chosen. A formal declaration of the value I profess is not called for under the circumstances. If the mode of life which a person leads does not bear out the value which he professes, it only means that he is not sincere in what he says, and that he has not really made a volitional choice of the value in question. Action is the mirror which reflects the value which has been chosen. Where action does not bear out the value in question, the person concerned is leading an inauthentic life. It is a case of *bad faith*. To know the values of any one, the guiding principle is : ‘ Dont ask for the value, but look for the action.’ So the use of a value concept necessarily

¹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 133

² *Ibid.*, p. 137

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commits its user to a judgment that some action is to be performed and through that judgment to the actual performance of that action, if he finds himself in the appropriate situation and if he is physically and psychologically in a fit condition to do so. The actions to which value concepts refer are *possible* actions which the concerned person could perform if he chooses to do so. They are actions which are not necessary or inevitable. He can also not perform them if he so decides. It then becomes a question whether he chooses to lead an authentic life or not.

A CRITIQUE OF ORDINARY MAN'S VALUES

So far we considered the problem of the relation between value and action. There is, again, the problem of existentialist values *versus* ordinary man's values. If personality, freedom, and creativeness are values which, according to Berdyaev, ought to be pursued, it follows that the ordinary man is mistaken in what he considers to be values. Money, property, security, happiness - these are the values of the ordinary man, whether a bourgeois or a proletarian, who wants to be a citizen of this world and a king of the earth. The ordinary man has no sense of the vanity and futility of the world, and of the insignificance of the so-called good things of the world. The basic value of the ordinary man is happiness which is associated with, and is dependent on, the enjoyment of money, security, property, etc. It is what may called 'worldly' happiness derived from the things of the world.

The human condition being what it is, whatever be the structure of society, 'worldly' happiness as understood by the ordinary man can, according to Berdyaev, never be achieved. The ordinary man is either a bourgeois or a proletarian. If he is not a bourgeois, then he is in the other camp, and the proletarian is no better than a bourgeois. The proletarian and the bourgeois, argues Berdyaev, are correlatives and pass over one to the other.³ When the proletarian is denied his legitimate and dignified place in society, he begins to think in terms of a new social set up which will recognize and guarantee his legitimate place. But

³ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 183

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unfortunately his hope is not fulfilled because 'when the proletarian is victorious, he becomes a bourgeois, a citizen of this transformed world and the king of the earth.'⁴ Berdyaev observes :

The bourgeois is always a slave. He is the slave of his property and of his money, he is a slave of the will to enrichment, a slave of bourgeois public opinion, a slave of social position, he is the slave of those slaves whom he exploits and of whom he lives in fear. To be bourgeois is to be unemancipated in spirit and in soul, it means the subjection of the whole of life to external determination.⁵

Since a bourgeois leads the life of a slave, it is impossible for him to achieve happiness.

Nor can a proletarian of the collectivist society achieve happiness. Marx attacked Capitalism on the ground that the capitalist transformed man into a thing (*verdinglichung*). 'He demanded that the fulness of human nature should be restored to man, who has been materially and spiritually impoverished, the workers particularly.'⁶ Though the myth of proletarian messianism has undoubtedly contributed to the unity of the labouring masses, it has not helped the proletarian to realize his dignity and personality. Accepting the formula that the exploiters must be exploited, the proletarian in his turn plays the role of an oppressor with a vengeance. So human history, remarks Berdyaev, is a terrible comedy, for the rich torment the poor and then the poor kill the rich.⁷ Dehumanization takes place as much in a proletarian as in a bourgeois society, for in both types of society economics is the dominant factor; and the dignity and personality of man will pale into insignificance in any society in which the ordering of the social structure is based on economics. According to Berdyaev, what is ironical in Marxism is that though 'it wants to liberate man from the enslaving power of economics it looks for the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184

⁶ *Towards a New Epoch*, p. 19

⁷ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 213

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liberating act within economics, to which it assigns a metaphysical significance.⁸

If man by himself cannot achieve happiness, is it not possible for him to achieve it through the proper organization of social, economic, and political institutions as maintained by the thinkers of the eighteenth century 'enlightenment,' nineteenth century 'positivism,' and the Marxist humanism of the present century? These thinkers argue that we have to modify the entire social structure by concerted effort in order to help the individual achieve happiness. It means that, since happiness cannot be attained in the absence of the state and society, the latter must be given much more importance than what has been given to them. These thinkers take advantage of the *functional* significance of the state, and deify it as if it is an end in itself. The state comes to be looked upon as a personality; it is said to have an existence of its own. In the same way society also is treated as an end in itself and as an organism, though in truth it is only an organization. So state and society are looked upon as supreme values on the ground that they are conducive to the happiness of man. In the name of creating a perfect state and a perfect society, revolutions are justified by these thinkers. The champions of revolutions argue that they want to create a new man through a proper ordering of the state and society.

Berdyaev has two valid arguments against what he characterizes as 'the lure and slavery of revolution.' First, a new society, argues Berdyaev, may be created, but there is no guarantee that 'the new man' will make his appearance, because there is all the difference between the creation of the new man and the creation of a new society. 'A new society after the revolution is as a matter of fact created, whereas the new man does not make his appearance.'⁹ Instead, a new form of slavery makes its appearance. Berdyaev writes: 'All revolutions in a certain sense have been ruined by the old Adam, who appears in a new dress at the end of the

⁸ *The Beginning and the End*, p 219

⁹ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 199

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revolution. The old Adam, a man of sin, makes both revolution and counter-revolution.¹⁰

Secondly, the new man is not an article of manufacture. He is not a product of social organization. The appearance of the new man is a spiritual birth, and so any social revolution to be effective must be followed by spiritual revolution which implies 'a change in the structure of consciousness, a change of attitude to the objectified world.' Commenting on the tragedy of revolution and its destined failure, Berdyaev says :

Revolutions are made by the average man and for the average man who by no means desires a change in the structure of consciousness, does not want a new spirit, does not wish to become a new man, has no desire for a real triumph over slavery. Terrible sacrifices are needed for the attainment of very small results. Such is the economy of the life of this world...¹¹

Berdyaev is not a pessimist. He is convinced that the dream of a perfect and complete life can be realized in this life, notwithstanding the anguish, the despair, and objectification to which man is subject. He is not against Socialism, though he is severely critical of what he calls metaphysical Socialism which is full-fledged collectivism. Drawing a distinction between the social and economic side of Socialism on the one hand and its metaphysical side on the other, Berdyaev maintains that while the social and economic side of Socialism is right and just, its metaphysical side is wrong and perverted. The social and economic side of Socialism is, according to him, nothing but the social projection of Christian personalism. 'Socialism is not necessarily collectivism, it may be personalistic and anti-collectivist.'¹² While Berdyaev repudiates metaphysical Socialism which is founded upon the supremacy of society over personality and which is, therefore, nothing but enslavement, he advocates personalist Socialism which emphasizes the supremacy of personality over society and which is, therefore,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 209

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the *sine qua non* of the freedom of man. Two problems confront man, and they are the problem of bread and the problem of freedom. 'Bread is a great symbol, and with it the theme of socialism is connected, and it is a theme of world significance.'¹³ It will not do to sacrifice freedom for the sake of bread or bread for the sake of freedom. Berdyaev declares :

Personalist Socialism which is founded on the absolute supremacy of personality, of each personality over society and over the state, the supremacy of freedom over equality, offers "bread" to all men while preserving their freedom for them, and without alienating their conscience from them.¹⁴

4 REJECTION OF ONTOLOGY

As a personalistic existentialist, Berdyaev is opposed to ontology in any form, ancient as well modern.

From ancient times philosophers have sought for the knowledge of being (*ousia, essentia*). The construction of an ontology has been philosophy's highest claim. And at the same time the possibility of achieving this has raised doubts among the philosophers. At times it has appeared as though human thought was in this respect pursuing a phantom.¹⁵

Ontology is a doctrine of Being built up [by means of concepts. It is a doctrine of essences. Pure being is an abstraction which is sought after by means of reason in a conceptual way. Berdyaev, therefore, says :

Pure being is an abstraction and it is in an abstraction that men seek to lay hold upon primary reality, primary life. Human thought is engaged in the pursuit of its own product. It is in this that the tragedy of philosophical learning lies, the tragedy, that is, of all abstract philosophy.¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 210

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210

¹⁵ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 91

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92

REJECTION OF ONTOLOGY

His rejection of ontology is mainly on the ground that it is conceptual and that, being conceptual, it ignores the existence and the existing. Reality is not 'in front' of the knowing subject, but 'behind' him, in his existentiality.

Berdyaev sets forth the difference between existential philosophy and ontology by saying that Being with which ontology is concerned is a product of thought and is not, therefore, the primary reality, whereas existence as understood by existentialism is the primary reality which is not the subject matter of knowledge. The Sartrian dictum that existence precedes essence lays stress on this basic difference between existentialism and ontology, though Sartre has strayed from this dictum by attempting to work out a phenomenological ontology in *Being and Nothingness*. The difference between ontology and existentialism comes to this :

Ontology is always a naturalist metaphysic. Being does not exist : there is only existence and the existing. Existentialist philosophy reflects before everything else the existentialism of the philosopher ; it gives expression ; it does not objectify but expresses participation in existence, which precedes the division into subject and object. Its novelty lies precisely in the fact that it must be an integral and vital knowledge which precedes objectification and the division into subject and object.¹⁷

Prmenides and Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas and Hegel, Sartre and Heidegger, to mention only a few, are, according to Berdyaev, votaries of naturalist metaphysics which is purely conceptual. Berdyaev rejects not only naturalist metaphysics, but also theological naturalism which treats God as being which is knowable by means of concepts or rational categories. God, declares Berdyaev, is not being, but mystery which can be intuited only through mystic experience.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Towards a New Epoch*, p. 97

¹⁸ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 100

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5. CRITICISM OF EPISTEMOLOGY

The objection which Berdyaev raises against ontology holds good equally even in the case of epistemology. Just as ontology is conceptual, so also epistemology which is concerned with knowledge involving subject-object relation is conceptual, and so is off the track. Philosophical knowledge, as understood by Berdyaev is concerned with the subject, the existent I, which philosophizes and not with the object which is in front of me. The subject which is the existent is the 'truth'; the object which is in front of me is *not* the 'truth'. It is necessary to bear in mind that Berdyaev does not deny that there are objects like table, pen, paper, etc., in front of, and external to, us. Nor does he deny the 'reality' of these objects. The objects which are in front of, and external to, us belong to the world of objectification, and so they are not, according to Berdyaev, really real. The objects of the space-time-cause-world do not fall within the scope of philosophical knowledge. What deserves to be known is not the space-time-cause-world of objects, but the subject, the existent. The knowledge of these objects is no real knowledge.

Berdyaev's position can easily be understood by drawing a distinction between existential truth and objective truth. The truth-claim in respect of statements such as 'I see that object,' 'It is a tree,' etc., may be admitted as a matter of fact, when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. The truth of the statements here may be characterized as objective truth. The knowledge of table, tree, etc., which one acquires may be characterized as objective knowledge, in the sense that it is knowledge of objects of the space-time-cause-world. The truth which is claimed for the statements in respect of these objects is objective truth. Berdyaev denies neither objective knowledge nor objective truth, though he is inclined to use the word 'truth' only with regard to existential truth. Berdyaev observes:

The fact that there is in front of me a writing-table and I am writing with a pen on paper is not truth. It is something received by the senses and a statement of fact... There is no truth of any sort in the object; truth is only in the subject.¹⁹

¹⁹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 42

NEED FOR REALISTIC ETHICS

If Berdyaev is not inclined to consider objective truth as 'truth', it is because of the fact that objective truth as well as objective knowledge has only secondary importance to him.²⁰ Existential truth is primary; and it can be known not by concepts, but by communion. Subject-predicate epistemology is concerned with knowledge by concepts, whereas philosophical knowledge which transcends subject-predicate relation is knowledge by communion or participation. In the words of Berdyaev: 'Knowledge of truth is not knowledge of something which is alien to oneself, of an object which stands over against one. It is rather communion with it, it is the beginning of life in the truth.'²¹

6. NEED FOR REALISTIC ETHICS

The concrete problems of ethics which are particular and unique can be solved neither by normative ethics nor by metaethics. Normative ethics is concerned with the formulation of general ethical statements or principles like 'An experience is desirable in itself if and only if it is pleasant,' 'A person's act is reprehensible only if it was not done under coercion,' etc. The problem of justification of ethical statements or principles is the work of metaethics or critical ethics. The latter not only aims at formulating the correct method for justifying normative statements, but also aims at showing that the method in question is the correct method. A normative statement cannot be justified without ascertaining the meaning of ethical terms and statements. So the problem of analyzing the meaning of ethical terms and statements is also a part of metaethics. Both normative ethics and metaethics, which are intellectualistic, proceed on the assumption that morality is a matter of knowing, and that the concrete problems of life can be resolved by formulating principles and giving reasons in support of them. Unfortunately, the truth is otherwise. No norm, declares Berdyaev, can help to solve a moral conflict.

The greatest liberty is given man in solving the moral conflicts which make life so difficult. Man is left free not only to act worse or better but also to decide for himself what is

²⁰ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 44

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38

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worse and what is better. The law does not recognize tragedy, it knows only the categories of God and evil.²²

Berdyaev is against intellectualistic ethics for two reasons. A norm or a general principle is concerned with elementary, straightforward situations. Further, a general principle like 'Don't kill,' 'Don't steal,' etc., is applicable to all men. A general principle, that is to say, does not take into consideration the factors which would make a particular situation different from others. Nor does it take cognizance of the existential problems of a man who aspires to realize a higher value much against social norms and institutions. The classic example of Abraham, the knight of faith, may be given as an illustration of this point. The complexity of life is such that it is impossible to have 'built-in exceptions' in the general principle itself to cover exhaustively all possible variations in situations and persons.

The second reason is that moral principles, as pointed out earlier, are principles of action to which the concepts of truth and falsity do not properly apply, and that they are dependent on choice. Moral judgments are decisional in nature. When an individual is forced to make a choice in a moral situation, he acts in one way or other. The individual commits himself to a certain mode of existence which means the rejection of other modes of life. Kierkegaard argues that when a man is thrown open in a concrete situation and when he realizes that his very existence is at stake in that situation, the choice that he makes is bound to be right.

Berdyaev insists on the need for realistic ethics as against symbolic ethics. The latter is conventional in nature. For example, a person may proclaim his belief in brotherhood and practise it only in words and overt gestures and not as a mode of life. He pays only lip-service to the principle of brotherhood, and his action is restricted to the showing of certain gestures as in the case of saluting a person, which is a conventionally significant action. The practice of conventional morality does not bring about a real change in life, for it is just a ritual. Symbolic ethics,

²² *The Destiny of Man*, p. 198

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says Berdyaev, is non-human, for it does not believe in actually doing good things, but doing them only symbolically.

But realistic ethics is human, for it demands a real transfiguration of life, genuine goodness and realization of righteousness. The fundamental principle of realistic ethics is not to do symbolic good works, but to be good, to radiate the quality of goodness, not to utter conventional expressions of love, but to be loving and to radiate love, not to reverence rank which merely symbolizes but to reverence man's human qualities, actual greatness.²³

7 THE PROBLEM OF ANGUISH

If we leave aside certain peculiar features of Berdyaev's personalistic existentialism which mark him off from other existentialists, both theistic and atheistic, and consider him mainly as an existentialist, we could see that there is much in common between Berdyaev and other existentialists. Like other existentialists, Berdyaev emphasizes the primacy of existence over essence. Human existence which is concrete and particular constitutes the central theme of the existentialist thought. Connected with the central theme is a series of problems dealt with by the existentialists. Like other existentialists, Berdyaev lays emphasis on the subject as against the object, on the will as against intellect, on the concrete individual as against the general and the universal, and on intuitive as against conceptual knowledge. Again, Berdyaev's interpretation of existentialism as a philosophy of freedom and of action is in substantial agreement with the views of other existentialists, though there is unmistakable difference between Berdyaev and others, or for that matter between one existentialist and another, in the interpretation of the nature of freedom.

The problem of anguish which finds a prominent place in the writings of other existentialists is also discussed by Berdyaev. The word 'anguish' is not used by the existentialists in the sense in which it is used in ordinary parlance. In existentialism anguish is the name given to an intense, subjective experience of

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 312

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disgust and dread, of awe and exhilaration. Berdyaev tells us that he was subject to the experience of anguish all through his life, although his awareness of it varied and was more or less intense at different stages of his inner development. The existential anguish may assume many forms. According to Berdyaev,

Anguish points to the world above and is associated with the experience of the insignificance, precariousness and transitoriness of this world. Anguish bears witness to the transcendent and at the same time, to the distance, the yawning gulf that exists between man and the transcendent. Anguish is also a longing for another world, for that which is beyond the boundaries of this finite world of ours. It spells solitude in face of the transcendent; it is the point of greatest conflict between my existence in the world and the transcendent. Anguish can awake my awareness of God, but it can also signify my God-forsakenness. It intervenes, as it were, between the transcendent and the abyss of non-being, of void.²⁴

Berdyaev presents the problem of anguish in its different manifestations against the theistic background. If we consider his description of anguish in the context of his personalistic existentialism, we may say that he emphasizes three forms of anguish: (1) the anguish due to the experience of the contingent character of the world of things, (2) the anguish associated with the duality of man's nature, and (3) the anguish of freedom.

To Berdyaev, spirit which is existence is the reality and everything other than spirit is contingent, meaningless, absurd. The being of the world is the result of objectification which is due to the Fall of man. The contingency of being is not to be attributed to God, but only to man - to his Fall and to his initial freedom. As a product of objectification, the being of the world is contingent and not eternal. There is, therefore, existential anguish in the form of a longing for another world, for that which is beyond the finite world of our day-to-day experience.

²⁴ *Dream and Reality*, p. 40

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Berdyaev's argument to prove the contingent nature of the world is similar to the argument advanced by the Christian existentialists like Augustine and Pascal.

The human condition is another factor which contributes to the experience of anguish. Berdyaev traces the plight of man to his dual nature. As a result of the dual nature, man has to lead a life of a self-contradictory, paradoxical being.

Man exists at a particular time and at a limited place. He is subject to the laws of nature. His being is conditioned by both historical and cosmic time. But this is not the whole truth of man. The essential nature of man is such that he cannot be contained within the finite world. He is not only of this world of necessity, but also of another world of freedom. What is significant, according to Berdyaev, is the fact that man knows that he is the meeting point of two worlds. In a passage which is reminiscent of Pascal's portrayal of the dual nature of man, Berdyaev says: 'What a strange being - divided and of double meaning, having the form of a king and that of a slave, a being at once free and in chains, powerful and weak, uniting in one being glory and worthlessness, the eternal with the corruptible.'²⁵

Is it possible for man to escape his particularity, his finitude? Berdyaev does not deny that the being of man is contingent, and that the life he leads is meaningless and absurd. But is it necessary to conclude on this account that man is, to use the language of Heidegger 'thrown into the world' and left there, or that man is 'forsaken' as Christ was forsaken on the Cross? Is it possible for him to overcome his 'natural' aspect and remain as a spiritual being, though he has a dual nature? Berdyaev maintains that man can transcend his contingent nature and should aim at such transcendence. His standpoint on this issue is, therefore, different from that of Sartre who dismisses man rather pessimistically as a useless passion. Man, according to Sartre, is utterly alone and groundless, and the only course of action which is left open to him is active engagement with other men in the enterprise of freedom.

²⁵ *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 60

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If the dual nature of man is the cause of man's predicament, the same dual nature, according to Berdyaev, provides the clue to the overcoming of his predicament. It is true that as a part of nature he is completely absorbed in natural processes and is conditioned, like any other object, spatially, temporally, etc. But since there is also the 'divine' in him and since he knows himself to be such, it is possible for him to detach himself from his involvement in the natural processes and rise to a vision of things *sub specie aeternitatis*. Berdyaev cites the creative acts of a painter, a sculptor, a composer, a musician, etc., as what justifies our belief in this regard. A creative act is a break-through from the given world to a new one. In the case of those who have not overcome the fear of life and death, suffering and sorrow, the escape from the world of necessity is only temporary. But in the case of a spiritual man or a mystic who has gained redemptive freedom, the creative freedom is, according to Berdyaev, not only fully manifest, but is also permanent. For the mystic, there is no more return to the world of necessity or bondage.

Every existentialist has his own way of presenting the anguish of freedom. Man experiences anguish when he exercises his freedom and chooses a particular course of action among the different possibilities which are open to him. The anguish of freedom is really anguish over the fact that one must choose. Even the refusal to choose is already a choice. By agreeing to abide by the choice of others, one has really made a choice. The question of choice leads to the problem of responsibility. By making a choice, one always decides for oneself, and one cannot shift the burden of responsibility on others. Sartre, for example, has adopted this line of reasoning to explain the anguish of freedom experienced by man.

Berdyaev focusses his attention, not on the problem of choice and the burden of responsibility which goes with it as Sartre does, but on the consequence of choice which makes man quite unhappy.

Real freedom, according to Berdyaev, is spiritual freedom. The other two kinds of freedom, viz., 'initial freedom' and 'rational freedom' which alone are available to one who has not

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risen to the level of spiritual experience are no freedom at all. As pointed out earlier, Berdyaev refers to the 'inner dialectic' as a result of which freedom degenerates into its opposite. As a result of the initial freedom, man falls a victim to a chaotic life. When he moves from the initial freedom to the rational freedom, he becomes a slave to moral law and social institutions. So the consequence of freedom is either a chaotic life of discord and evil, or a life of slavery in a tyrannical organization. Not being satisfied with one kind of freedom, he moves to the other only to be disillusioned by it. Each of these two kinds of freedom carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Berdyaev, therefore, speaks about the 'tragedy' or the 'fatal destiny' of freedom. The only way to overcome the tragedy of freedom is to transcend both and attain spiritual freedom.

To the question : 'How is this freedom known ?' Berdyaev's answer is intuition. Here, again, Berdyaev's standpoint is similar to that of other existentialists. Berdyaev says : 'Man feels within himself this irrational and unfathomable freedom in the very fibre of his being...'²⁶ In another passage he says : 'The existence of two kinds of freedom has been revealed to us...'²⁷ Berdyaev's argument is that freedom is an unfathomable mystery, and so it cannot be solved by a rational philosophy. Though freedom is an irrational mystery, it is not, says Berdyaev, unknowable. It cannot be understood except by those who have entered into its tragic dialectic. It can be known only through intuition when the person is under the grip of experience which compels him to exercise his freedom.

8 TECHNOLOGICAL ALIENATION

The problem of technological alienation also engages the attention of Berdyaev. The emergence of technological knowledge is, according to Berdyaev, the most revolutionary and cataclysmic event in the history of the world. From the point of the social life of man, the increase of technological knowledge means greater and greater objectification of human existence.

²⁶ *Freedom and the Spirit*, p. 126

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131

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Man is all the while more and more thrown out into the external, always becoming more and more exteriorized, more and more losing his spiritual centre and integral nature. The life of man is ceasing to be organic and is becoming organized; it is being rationalized and mechanized.²⁸

The machine which is the creation of man takes a line against him. Technology, says Berdyaev, puts into men's hands fearful means of destruction and violence. 'A group of men who have seized power with the help of technology can hold the whole world under the tyranny of their rule.'²⁹ The problem of technology raises the eschatological question about the spiritual condition of man and the establishment of the Kingdom of God by putting to an end this world of objectification.

9 THE PROBLEM OF SOLITUDE

One form of alienation which man experiences is solitude. In the writings of Berdyaev the problem of solitude figures prominently. Human existence being what it is, this problem is bound to occur in every age and in every society. But it gains a special importance in our times in view of the fact that even though we have successfully established quicker means of communication and faster modes of travel the problem still persists. Berdyaev discusses the nature of the problem and the means by which it can be solved.

To many it may appear quite odd to characterize solitude as an existential problem. They would react by saying that solitude is not a problem but a solution. Leading a fast life in a mechanized social order and living a mechanical life in accordance with a time-schedule in over-crowded cities, where the encounter with others at every turn in streets and subways, in buses and trams, in national parks and other recreational places is at once puzzling and irritating, man wants privacy at any cost; what he longs for is solitude.

One may wish to be left alone far from the madding crowd. But still the seclusion that one is supposed to enjoy becomes a problem. The dreadful feeling of loneliness may persist whether

²⁸ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 223

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224

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one is in the midst of others or whether one is alone. When a man feels that there is no communion between him and others, it matters very little even if he is forced to lead a life which involves others. The mere presence of others is no cure for the loneliness that he experiences. It is here we could see the tragedy of life. Although a person is left alone, he may still brood over his loneliness which is sickening. The seclusion that one may seek temporarily in order to escape from the stiff time-schedule of work is no remedy at all, for even in solitude one may feel lonely. When loneliness becomes a problem, the presence or absence of others is immaterial; for we are not concerned with the physical or spatial sense of loneliness or solitude. If the problem arises at the physical level, it can easily be solved by removing the barriers that separate one from others or by helping one to gain proximity to others physically. The problem does not admit of an easy solution because it takes place not at the physical level, but at the spiritual plane. The loneliness or solitude with which we are concerned here can be characterized as spiritual exile. Oppressed by solitude, man looks upon everything that surrounds him as alien. He feels himself to be 'a stranger, an alien without a spiritual home.'³⁰

Every problem has its own redeeming feature. It is no doubt true that a problem presents itself as an obstacle hindering the smooth running of life. But it has also at the same time a positive aspect. As a challenge to what we are and what we wish to do, it makes us think and review the situation that confronts us. However troublesome it may be for the time being, it is a great help to man. This is equally true with regard to solitude. Though we characterize it as a problem which has to be overcome, it marks an important stage in man's spiritual growth. Berdyaev says that only when a man is overwhelmed by a distressing sense of his isolation he becomes aware of his personality. It is not the case that every one thinks over this problem with the care and anxiety that it demands. The mass of mankind is quite untroubled by this sense of solitude. Many may experience it at some stage or other of their lives. But the number of those who

³⁰ *Solitude and Society*, p. 92

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seriously reflect on its significance is very limited. To the extent that they are conscious of it and reflect on it, it constitutes an important stage in their spiritual growth.

The individual tries to overcome solitude through many ways. Knowledge, social life, and sexual relation are some of the important ways resorted to by the individual. Berdyaev argues that it is impossible for the individual to overcome solitude by any of these means.

Let us consider first of all how far knowledge would help a man to overcome solitude. Berdyaev observes that 'man's longing for knowledge is an expression of his endeavour to overcome solitude.'⁸¹ But knowledge of things and of the external world is of no use in this regard, for it involves duality. The subject-object relation arises only at the epistemological level. Missing the essential nature of the Self or I, or what Berdyaev calls the Ego, we look upon it as a subject or a knower in confrontation with an object. The external world of plurality is a result of objectification. It is alien to me. It is an appearance. Berdyaev says that the world of appearance which is the outcome of objectification is brought about by the subject ; and so objectification indicates the trend and the condition of the subject. It is the subject who as conditioned by space, time, causality, and rationalization projects the world. While his essential nature as spirit is not subject to the limitations of time, space, etc., he looks upon himself as a limited being confronting a not-I, different from him and external to him. So by the knowledge of the external world one cannot overcome solitude, for it is based on objectification which involves duality. To overcome solitude, one must overcome objectification ; and to overcome objectification one must realize the nature of spirit. It is Berdyaev's contention that such a realization can be had only on the higher apophatic plane and not on the lower kataphatic plane. 'The ultimate unity in which all contradictions and antinomies are resolved is attainable only by means of apophatic knowledge - that absolute knowledge which brings about communion with God and the Kingdom of God.'⁸²

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 68

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The social life that a man leads will not enable him to overcome solitude. Man has to play different roles in society, and so he is an 'actor'. As a member of society, a certain type of conduct which is in conformity to the standard prevalent in society is expected of him. His success as an actor depends largely on his ability to conform to the standards and conventions set up in society. So the social life of an individual is, according to Berdyaev, a form of objectification. The Ego or I of everyday social life is not the authentic Ego. It is by stripping off the 'social disguises' put on the Ego or I that we have to realize its true nature.³³

Berdyaev distinguishes four types of relationship between the individual and society. There is first of all the relationship of total conformity and instinctive adaptation to the social environment. This is the most elementary and common type of relationship between the individual and society. Those who come under this category are men of 'strong imitative instincts,' 'men who lack all originality of thought and are content to subsist upon a "common" heritage, a tradition, which might well be conservative, liberal, or revolutionary.'³⁴ Whatever be the tradition that prevails in society, they are the perfect conformists. They behave as 'social animals.' So in this type of relationship there is no conflict between the individual and society. Since the individual is totally lost in the social environment, he is unaware of solitude. Those who come under this category may be called instinctive conformists.

The second type is one in which the individual, though maintaining harmonious relation with society, does not take an active interest in social affairs. As in the previous type, those who come under this category do not experience solitude, for they do not have any conflict with their social environment. Men of this type may be called indifferentists.

In the third type of relationship the individual who has no social interests experiences solitude. Though his relation with society is not harmonious, he is not inclined to revolt against it.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 98

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102

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So he is social to a minimum degree, and is prepared to compromise with his social environment when there is the need for it. 'They are neither born fighters nor innovators.'³⁵ We may call men of this type as compromisers.

Finally, there is the type of relationship in which the individual, while fighting against the existing social order, is interested in the regeneration of society. Men of this type are conscious of both solitude and society. Unlike the compromisers, men of this type are deeply interested in the social affairs which they want to reshape. And so they are innovators, reformers, creators, spiritual revolutionaries. Men of this type may be called prophets. Berdyaev describes the role of a prophet in society as follows :

The prophet is invariably preoccupied with the destiny of a people or of a society, with history, his own personal destiny and that of the world in general. He denounces the vices of his people and of society, he judges them, but he never loses interest in their destiny. He is not concerned with his personal salvation, his own personal experiences and states, but only with the Kingdom of God and with the perfectibility of man and that of the whole universe.³⁶

The analysis of the different types of social relationship between the individual and society is to show that solitude can be overcome only by men of the prophetic type and not by those of the compromising type. It is too bad not to experience the problem of solitude as in the case of the instinctive conformists and the indifferentists. They do not realize that they are actors in society. They do not know that they wear masks when they play the different roles. They do not know what they are. Nor do they feel the necessity to know their real nature. Unlike the instinctive conformist and the indifferentist, the compromiser is painfully aware of the problem which confronts him. But he takes the line of least resistance. He finds an easy solution to the problem by agreeing to toe the line marked by society. In his eagerness to compromise with society, the problem disappears.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103

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He does not endeavour to strip off the social disguise and reveal the authentic Ego or I as distinguished from the pseudo-ego of everyday social life. In short, knowing that the social life that he leads is a form of objectification, he allows it to continue as it is, thereby perpetuating objectification.

The attempt to overcome solitude by means of sexual relation will not be successful for the simple reason that sex is one of the chief causes of human solitude. It is sex that causes isolation, and so it cannot help to overcome what it gives rise to. Man is divided and incomplete because of sex. He is a sexual being in the sense that he is half a being. Berdyaev points out that the original Russian word for *sex* means both *sex* and *half*. So man who is incomplete because of sex aspires to be complete, and he can realize his goal not by following the course of sex, but by transcending it. The physical union of the sexes which puts an end to sexual desire for the time being cannot remove solitude permanently. Without helping to overcome it, it only intensifies it. Further, the physical union of the sexes results in the institution of the family which may partially diminish the sense of solitude. Remaining a member of the family a man may still experience solitude in the same way as he experiences solitude living in the company of others in society. As pointed out earlier, the presence or absence of others either as family members or as fellow beings is not going to solve the problem of solitude. Its solution must be found elsewhere.

Berdyaev is of the view that solitude can be overcome only through communion. In order to understand the significance of communion, it is necessary to bear in mind the distinction that Berdyaev makes between communion and communication. The latter serves to relate two individuals externally. It takes place in the objective, social sphere where one individual confronts another individual as a separate entity different from himself. It presupposes what Berdyaev calls 'a state of disintegration and dissociation';³⁷ it presupposes the difference among the individuals. Whatever be the advancement of technology which helps to improve communication between men, it can never abolish the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 184

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distance, however small, between one man and another. Communion, on the other hand, helps us to overcome solitude, because it is a case of identifying oneself with others. Berdyaev maintains that communion which is the goal of human life is essentially religious. 'Communion involves participation, reciprocal participation, interpenetration.'³⁸ It is a mutual affair between two individuals. It presupposes activity not only on my part, but also on the part of the Thou whom I confront. It is, therefore, reciprocal participation. Berdyaev refers to it sometimes as ecstatic communion, and at other times as love.

10 BERDYAEV'S CRITICISM OF SARTRE

Berdyaev is of the view that neither Sartre nor Heidegger is the representative of existential philosophy. Though he does not deny the great gifts and the many-sided talents of Sartre, the latter has, according to him, 'too much levity and the characteristics of an intellectual playboy'.³⁹ He thinks of Sartre as an acute psychologist rather than as a metaphysician. He even goes to the extent of saying that Sartre 'does not possess the metaphysical depth which belongs to Heidegger and the Germans'.⁴⁰ Though there are many points of difference between the theistic existentialism of Berdyaev and the atheistic existentialism of Sartre, Berdyaev, it must be said, has been less than fair to Sartre when he says that the latter lacks metaphysical depth. Sartre's denial of mystery, and his unqualified affirmation that the world of phenomena as given in experience is final are unacceptable to Berdyaev who thinks of God as a mystery, of the spirit in man as the truth, and of the space-time-cause-world as objectification. Sartre, it is true, does not have the same insight which Berdyaev has. But this does not justify Berdyaev's conclusion that Sartre lacks metaphysical depth.

If Berdyaev hopes to see the *same* insight, if not in others whose philosophical stance is different from that of existentialism, but at least in every other existentialist, it is a pious wish. His attitude confirms the old adage that the hand is subdued to the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188

³⁹ *Towards a New Epoch*, p. 95

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95

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dye it works in. Berdyaev is not the first thinker, nor yet the last, to fall a victim to the fallacy of wishful-thinking.

Berdyaev's criticism of the existentialism of Sartre is directed against the problem of freedom which is the central theme of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Berdyaev argues that the theory of man which Sartre advocates appears to justify the radical freedom of man; but it does not really do so. If Sartre is really concerned about the freedom of man, then he must, according to Berdyaev, revise his conception of man.

The theory of man which Sartre presents comes to this: 'Man is not capable of being defined. To start with, man is nothing at all; but he makes himself, and is responsible for himself and for all men. He exists by transcending the given situation. His mode of existence is action which expresses his freedom.' Such an account of man given by Sartre leads us to think that man is not to be identified with nature and that there is a spiritual principle in man which is the source of his liberty. But Sartre denies the existence of any such spiritual principle in man. According to Berdyaev, it is spirit which constitutes the personality of man, and if man is free it is because of the spirit in him. But the position is quite different in the case of Sartre. The Sartrian *for-itself* (*pour-soi*) is a perpetual, fleeting consciousness which is pervaded by negation and which is always what it is not. It is, to use the significant expression of Barrett, a bubble which has nothing at its centre. By reducing man to a 'nothing', by denying the existence of an identical principle in him, and by restricting reality to the phenomenon, Sartre, according to Berdyaev, has debased man. The Sartrian man is 'condemned to be free.' Being nothing more than a bubble, the *for-itself* is baseless; so it means that man's freedom is rootless. If so, does it make sense, asks Berdyaev, to speak about the role of freedom in human life? ⁴¹

11 BERDYAEV ON HEIDEGGER

Though Berdyaev is appreciative of the 'unusual philosophical gifts' and the 'great intellectual intensity and concentration'

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100

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of Heidegger, he is severely critical of the latter's views. He is sarcastic of the terminology used by Heidegger. Berdyaev remarks :

Thus, Heidegger, proceeding though he does from Kierkegaard, has, ironically enough, rationalized the Kierkegaardian theme into a rigid and almost scholastic system. He puts a genuinely existential experience into the strait-jacket of rational categories which are really quite unfit for it, and, in so doing, conjures up a whole inventory of almost unbearable and incomprehensible terminology, the only virtue of which is its undoubted originality. The terminology, however, is more original than the thought.⁴²

Again, he says :

He is one of the most serious and interesting philosophers of our time. His chasing after new phrases and a new terminology is a little irritating, although he is a great master in this respect.⁴³

Berdyaev is undoubtedly right when he refers to the terminological difficulties which one encounters in reading Heidegger. But he is certainly not justified in some of his criticisms of Heidegger.

Let us consider, for example, the question whether Heidegger is an atheist or not. Berdyaev is of the view that Heidegger is an atheist like Sartre. The latest new form of godlessness, says Berdyaev, has made its appearance in certain currents of existential philosophy, first and foremost in Heidegger and Sartre.⁴⁴ Sartre declares himself to be an atheist, and so there is no dispute on this issue in respect of Sartre. In the absence of any explicit denial of the existence of God, or even an implicit reference suggestive of the absence of God or his disbelief in God, one is not justified in concluding that Heidegger is an atheist.

⁴² *Dream and Reality*, p. 103

⁴³ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 116

⁴⁴ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 106

BERDYAEV ON HEIDEGGER

Heidegger's exclusive concern has been man (*Dasein*) and Being (*Sein*). Just as Berdyaev approaches God through man, Heidegger approaches Being through man. Just as Berdyaev is interested in working out the relation between man and God in terms of the concept of personality, so also Heidegger is interested in finding out the relation between man as a mode of Being and the structure of Being. This comparison, it must be pointed out, is not intended to suggest that Heidegger's Being is identical with Berdyaev's God. Heidegger does not talk about faith and eternity, God and religious experience. His concern is with Being, and he leaves the question about God to the theologian. It is for this reason that one cannot straightforwardly say that the Being of Heidegger is no other than the God of a theist. However, it is possible in a way to think of the Being of Heidegger as the God of a theist. The contrast between Being and a mode of Being holds good equally well between God as transcendent and the world as contingent. Just as the nature of Being is not exhausted by any mode of Being, so also the nature of God is not exhausted by any category drawn from our experience. When Berdyaev ridicules the conceptual approach to God who is a profound mystery far beyond human comprehension, he gives expression to the transcendent aspect of God which cannot be exhausted by the empirical categories. Since it is possible to show that Heidegger is not anti-theistic, Berdyaev is not justified in his conclusion that Heidegger is an atheist.

Again, Berdyaev's criticism that the ontology of Heidegger is not a theory of Being, but of non-being, of nothingness, and that in his description of *Dasein* he looks upon man and the world exclusively from below as one burdened by care, fear, death, and daily dullness, seems to miss the real significance of Heidegger's position. It is not denied that Heidegger describes human existence as what is being cast out into the world, into *das man*. This state of affairs of human existence is what Berdyaev calls objectification. According to Heidegger, two possibilities are open to man. Either he can look upon himself as one among the phenomena in the world, subordinating his self to objects, or he can project his possibilities in such a way that he may aim at transcending the given world which is nothing. In the one case he

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leads an unauthentic life; in the other, an authentic life. The condition of *das man* who is entirely preoccupied with his everyday affairs and who is lost in externalized anonymity may be aptly described as bondage or objectification. Though man is forsaken in the world, he can transcend it by realizing its nothingness. He can sink into the world of emptiness, or he can sublate it by responding to the call of Being. Berdyaev's complaint is that 'Heidegger does not explain whence the power of getting to know things is acquired.'⁴⁵ In truth, Heidegger answers this point. Though he approaches Being through man, he does not regard man as the measure. Man can certainly apprehend truth, not as his own invention, as in the case of Sartre, but as coming from Being.

Berdyaev characterizes Heidegger as 'the most extreme pessimist in the history of philosophical thought in the West.'⁴⁶ But this is not the complete truth, for his pessimism which is connected with *das man* and the nothingness of the world is only one side of the picture of human existence. If we look at the other side, we can see that there is enough of optimism in Heidegger, for he admits that man can be his true self by realizing the nothingness of the world. Every true philosopher with a mystic outlook is as much a pessimist as an optimist, though the emphasis may vary from person to person. This is as much true of Heidegger as it is of Berdyaev.

12 ETHICAL VOLUNTARISM

Berdyaev does not think of any conflict between divine grace and human freedom. The problem, according to him, is not either divine will or human freedom, but both. His conception of personality which he applies to both God and man enables him to preserve the claims of both divine will and human freedom in a harmonious way. In the exposition of his theory of voluntarism, he follows neither Kierkegaard nor Nietzsche.

Kierkegaard insists on the subordination of human will to the will of God. It is impossible for man to know the content of God's will. There is nothing which man as a subordinate being

⁴⁵ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 117

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116

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could do except to conform to the will of God, even though His commands may appear to be unjustifiable when judged by the standards of conventional morality prevalent in a society. Though Kierkegaard's voluntarism is man-centred, it does not lay stress on the moral autonomy of the human will.

If Kierkegaard's voluntarism goes to one extreme, that of Nietzsche goes to the other. Berdyaev says that 'with Nietzsche a new and subtler form of godlessness begins.'⁴⁷ The 'death of God' stands for the absence of the old norms of transcendent goodness, truth, and beauty, the disappearance of the entire supersensible reality, and the decadence of conventional morality. The madman, who is the mouth-piece of Nietzsche, tells the people assembled in the market-place, 'We have killed God, you and I ! We are all his murderers !' The visible churches, according to the madman, are the tombs and monuments of God. What is the implication of the 'death of God' so far as Nietzsche is concerned ? Berdyaev writes : 'Nietzsche cannot live without the divine and the sacred, and the God who has disappeared must be replaced by something. To him the superman was a new form of the divine, a supreme value which man must create.'⁴⁸ Herein comes the voluntarism of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche argues that the world as it should be does not exist. It must be brought into existence by the volitional effort of man. Evaluation, according to Nietzsche, is not a cognitive, but a volitional act. Nietzsche formulates a new conception of evaluation as a human activity which would involve a new style of life. So far, man has impoverished himself and admired and venerated things beautiful and sublime, forgetting that it was he who created what he admired. He must, says Nietzsche, put an end to this attitude and proudly declare, 'It is my work.'

Though Berdyaev cannot accept the line of reasoning adopted by Nietzsche, he can understand the motive behind the reasoning. What Nietzsche saw was the 'petty bourgeois Christianity.' He could not reconcile himself to any form of consolation which comes from the idea of progress, or the triumph of reason, or the

⁴⁷ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 103

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103

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possibility of human happiness. 'He repudiated the Christian God rather because He brings consolation and happiness. Christianity gives a meaning to suffering and that Nietzsche could not endure. To him it meant the denial of the tragic principle. He wanted suffering and he did not want consolation.'⁴⁹ Nietzsche is of the view that divine will and human freedom are antithetical and so he votes for the latter, as it would give meaning to human suffering and responsibility.

To Berdyaev the conflict is not between divine will and human freedom, but between belief in God and the necessity in nature. As pointed out earlier, Berdyaev thinks in terms of two movements, from God towards man and from man towards God. The divine will presupposes the absolute moral autonomy of human will. The ethical theory of Occam which maintains that, whereas God has absolute autonomy of will, the subordinate human being has only heteronomy of will, is totally unacceptable to Berdyaev. God, according to Berdyaev, has endowed man with talents and freedom. Man should not bury his talents, but should make use of them by exercising his freedom. God, says Berdyaev, expects man's participation in the work of the eighth day of world-creation. 'This is the will of God, and man must fulfil it.'⁵⁰ But God never forces man to do things according to His will; He never sets limit to man's freedom which he enjoys as the image and likeness of God. It is open to man to exercise his freedom in any way he likes: he can participate in the work of creation, be spiritually creative, and establish the Kingdom of God on earth; or he can refuse to cooperate with the divine will, lead a worldly life, and perpetuate the world of objectification which is bondage.

Berdyaev's ethical voluntarism which seeks to reconcile the divine will and human freedom bears a close resemblance to the theory of voluntarism as advocated by Ramanuja. Berdyaev refers to Ramanuja in one place.⁵¹ But from what he says about Ramanuja's position, it is obvious that he is not fully acquainted with Ramanuja's system at all. He says that 'Ramanuja came

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104

⁵⁰ *Christian Existentialism*, p. 59

⁵¹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 134

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near to theism,' though the truth is that Ramanuja has worked out a well-rounded system of theism based on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras*. The individual self (*jīva*), according to Ramanuja, is a personality (*puruṣa*) which is different from matter (*acit*) and God, the Supreme Person (*Puruṣottama*). Though different from God, it is inseparably related to God. God allows the individual self to work out its destiny with perfect freedom. The individual self is morally autonomous either to work its way up to divine communion or to wallow in the mud of bondage. It may be of interest to refer to the very suggestive example given by Ramanuja in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*⁵² to illustrate this point. Two individuals, let us say, are joint owners of a piece of property. If one of them wishes to transfer that property to a third person, he cannot do so without the permission of his partner. His getting the premission depends upon his own initiative. He can take for granted that permission will be given to him provided he asks for it. No one stands in the way of the exercise of his freedom. In the same way, God permits the individual self to exercise its freedom. Like Berdyaev, Ramanuja does not want to sacrifice the moral autonomy of the individual self at the altar of divine determinism ; nor does he deny the divine will in order to preserve the freedom of the individual self. To Ramanuja, as it is to Berdyaev, it is not a case of *either or*, but of *both and*.

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13 OBJECTIFICATION AND AVIDYA

The principle of objectification which accounts for one thing appearing as something different is a key concept in the personnalistic existentialism of Berdyaev. It is similar to *avidyā* or *māyā* which is a key concept in Advaita Vedānta. Like *avidyā* which is responsible for one thing appearing as something different, objectification accounts for our mistaking one thing for something else. If man who is a personality, an existential subject, appears as a part of the external world, if the external world which is only a phenomenon appears to be real, if the knower is treated as an epistemological subject, if the hierarchy of values is turned upside down, it is due to objectification. In short, objectification, like *avidyā*, is the cause of man's bondage.

⁵² II, 3, 41

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There is, however, one difference between Berdyaev's treatment of the principle of objectification and the conception of *avidyā* in Advaita. Since *avidyā* is beginningless (*anādi*), the question of the cause of *avidyā* does not arise. But Berdyaev traces the cause of objectification, through the subject and the Fall, to the initial freedom which is the farthest limit. Just as *avidyā* is a mystery which baffles human understanding, so also the initial freedom to which objectification is traced is a mystery which is not accessible to rational knowledge and conceptual definition. It should not be thought that the initial freedom alone is a mystery, according to Berdyaev. The Fall, including objectification, is equally a mystery. In fact, instead of speaking about initial freedom, the Fall, and objectification as separate factors, we may refer to them as constituting one complex, freedom-Fall-objectification. This much is certain in both cases. *Avidyā* which is the cause of bondage is a fact; the same thing holds good in the case of objectification. What is really important is the admission of the fact of *avidyā* and the havoc it does rather than an inquiry into the cause of it which is a profitless pursuit. The same thing may be said of objectification. Why there is objectification is a question which cannot be satisfactorily answered.

There is a striking similarity between *avidyā* and the Fall-objectification in another respect. According to Advaita, *avidyā* which is symbolic of the fall of the Self which is non-dual and non-relational into the realm of duality and relation does not affect the essential nature of the Self. It is only a fall as it were. The essential nature of the Self which is *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* remains intact. Berdyaev also maintains that the Fall with which objectification is connected has not deprived man of his divinity, of the Spirit in him.

Again, like *avidyā*, objectification can be overcome through spiritual realization. Berdyaev holds the view that spiritual realization or mystic experience can be attained here and now. His unique conception of active eschatology which stands for the realization of the Kingdom of God here and now is similar to the conception of *jīvanmukti* in Advaita. The transcendental man of Berdyaev is a *jīvanmukta*. Berdyaev says: 'Transcendental

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man stands outside the division into subject and object and, therefore, all the theories which are derived from knowledge of the object can tell us nothing about him.⁵³ In another passage he says : ' Transcendental man is the inner man whose existence lies outside the bounds of objectification. It is to this man that that which is not ejected into the external belongs, that which is not alienated, nor determined from the outside, that which marks him as belonging to the realm of freedom.'⁵⁴ To the transcendental man who is divine-human, who has realized the divinity in him, the external world is no more a prison. Kant stated the problem of philosophy in a series of three questions ' What can I know ? ' ' What ought I to do ? ' and ' What may I hope for ? ' Like Advaita Vedanta, Berdyaev gives the assurance by way answer to the question ' What may I hope for ? ' that the divine life or the Kingdom of God can be attained here and now. However, it must be borne in mind that, even though there is similarity in certain respects between Berdyaev's existentialism and Advaita Vedanta, the basic philosophical standpoint of Berdyaev is different from that of Advaita Vedanta.

14 PROBLEM OF TIME

Special mention must be made of Berdyaev's treatment of the problem of time. Existentialists generally provide a new insight into the nature of time as a result of phenomenological investigation. The problem of time has a special significance for a philosophy which claims to be existential. There is a radical difference between the traditional view of time and the existentialist conception of time. While the traditional view looks upon time as a series of dimensions coming one after another on the analogy of a flowing stream, - the present succeeding the past and the future succeeding the present -, existentialists argue that time is an existential structure of man's being in the world. There is an elaborate treatment of the nature of time in the writings of Heidegger and Sartre from the phenomenological point of view. Though Berdyaev does not say that his explanation of time is based on phenomenological analysis, it may be

⁵³ *Truth and Revelation*, p. 17

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17

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said that his approach to this problem is basically phenomenological in so far as it is based on the descriptive study of human existence.

Like Heidegger and Sartre, Berdyaev maintains that 'time is a mode of existence, and depends upon the character of existence.'⁵⁵ According to Berdyaev, 'Time is not by any means a sort of eternal and congealed form into which the existence of the world and of man is placed. Not only does change in time exist, but the change of time itself is possible. A turning back of time is possible, and also an end of time; there will be no more time.'⁵⁶ Time is a mode of existence in the sense that temporal dimensions come into being only through human existence. If so, human existence cannot be explained in terms of time, but time has to be explained in terms of human existence.

Time, according to Berdyaev, is of three kinds - cosmic time, historical time and existential time. Every man lives in these three forms of time. While cosmic time and historical time belong to the sphere of objectification, existential time which symbolizes 'the irruption of eternity into time' is the overcoming of objectification.

Cosmic time which is divided into years, months, days, hours, etc., may be symbolized by a circle. Berdyaev argues that victory over death is impossible in cosmic time. He characterizes time as a disease which inevitably leads on to death. 'Time which is torn apart into past, present and future is time which is diseased, and it does an injury to human existence. Death is connected with the disease of time'⁵⁷

Man is not only a cosmic being, but also a historical being. So he is subject to historical time which is related to movement and change in man and society. The special property of historical time, says Berdyaev, is its 'stretching out towards what is coming.' Though there is repetition in historical time, novelty may be considered to be its significant feature in so far as it looks for the disclosure of a meaning in what is coming. Historical time

⁵⁵ *Slavery and Freedom*, p. 258

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 258

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 258

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may be symbolized by a straight line. Man, declares Berdyaev, is wounded and enslaved as much by historical time as by cosmic time, for he can never achieve immortality so long as he is subject to them.

Existential time which stands for the triumph of man over objectification is 'inward time, not exteriorized in extension'.⁵⁸ It may be characterized as a 'break-through' in so far as it stands for the transcending of cosmic time and historical time which are meaningful only from the standpoint of objectification. It may be symbolized, according to Berdyaev, not by a circle, nor by a line, but by a point. A truly creative work takes place in existential time. A mystic or a transcendental man who has attained spiritual freedom and who is really creative lives in existential time. Others may see him as living in a particular period of history and in a particular century. But he is not conditioned either by cosmic time or by historical time. By way of contrast to cosmic time and historical time, he is said to live in existential time. Strictly speaking, his being has no sense of time. By conquering the disease of time he has attained immortality, even though he lives and moves for the sake of others. He is, to use Hindu terminology, a *jivanmukta*. When Berdyaev says that 'a turning back of time is possible and also an end of time,' he has in mind the transcendental man who has conquered both time and death.

Berdyaev is not for any kind of ideology, social and political, for he is not prepared to see any finality in any type of social and political order envisaged by an ideology. No ideology by itself will be of any value unless the individual relates himself to what it embodies in his personal acts. Nor is he inclined to accept any philosophical system as final. Berdyaev wants the individual to accept his responsibility and lead an authentic life. He says that the destiny of an individual is linked with the destiny of the entire mankind. 'My failure, or the failure of any creature whatever will be world failure too, it will be the failure of humanity as a whole.'⁵⁹ One cannot be saved, declares Berdyaev, in loneliness and isolation.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 260

⁵⁹ *The Beginning and the End*, p. 235

