



THE EXISTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF BERDYAEV'S  
IDEA OF FREEDOM

BY

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The human soul is an arena in which there takes place the interplay of freedom and necessity; the spiritual and the natural world. When the spiritual is operative within the psychical, the freedom of the spirit is revealed; when it is the natural which is active, then necessity once more asserts its sway.

Nicholai Berdyaev: Freedom and the Spirit, p. 123

... my thought as it moves within my own being is that of a man who, without being a sceptic, is putting problems to himself.... God expects from me a free and creative act.  
Ibid., p. xxiii

To three of the most valuable gifts God has given me -  
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POSITIO QUAESTIONIS

In 1928 Max Scheler wrote in Man's place in Nature,

Man is more a problem to himself at the present time than ever before in all recorded history ... we have a scientific, a philosophical, a theological anthropology in complete separation from each other. We do not have a unified idea of man. The increasing multiplicity of the special sciences valuable as they are, tend to hide man's nature more than reveal it.<sup>1</sup>

This confused, fragmented and piecemeal picture of man is the legacy left to him by the promises of the Enlightenment when men had once believed in the happiness to be attained by the progress of reason. Men in the twentieth century, contrary to the predictions of the Enlightenment, have lived through two world wars and are facing the danger of an immanent third; an atomic holocaust. They are ghostly spectres, passionless, goalless, without soul or integrity. How has such a sorry state of affairs come about and how is the integral image of man to be restored to him? These are some of the questions that plague twentieth century thinkers who sit amongst the ruins of over two thousand years of western culture.

This is how the twentieth century confronted Nicolas Alexandrovich Berdyaev. The first and second world wars in the West and the ascendancy of Communism in the East heralded for him the end of a historical epoch. As far as Berdyaev is concerned, modern man is undergoing a crisis of consciousness and is desperately in need of

direction and hope.

Existentialism<sup>2</sup> and Marxism, two modern schools of thought, were conscious reactions to the history of ideas in the East and West. The shock of the wars forced many thinkers to challenge the assumptions inherent in the understanding of man by the thinkers in these two 'worlds.' The result was, in the case of the West, an admission that the glorification of reason had obscured the irrational and passionate aspects of man's creatureliness and had presented a distorted and onesided picture of him. He saw himself as a being whose rational powers were the dependable means for the advancement of his happiness and the resolution of conflict. But events in the twentieth century showed up the hollowness of this claim and in so doing precipitated an unprecedented attack on the entire philosophical tradition of the West. The overriding influence of reason was traced back to its sources in Greece and Rome for it was here that reason first gained ascendancy in the formal logic of the Romans and in the philosophy of the Greeks and had remained differentiated and supreme throughout the history of philosophy in the West.

Despite several attempts made during the course of Western philosophy by, for example, the Stoics, St. Bernard, St. Augustine, the mystics like Thomas, Eckhard, Tauler, Suso and Böhme, Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche<sup>3</sup> to point to the limits of reason, reason held sway until

the cataclysmic world wars of 1914 and 1939. It is for this reason that Existentialism was a necessary reaction to the distorted self-understanding of Western man. The Existentialists contended that it was faith in reason which predicted the glorious progress of man from the Enlightenment onwards; reason which has given us the abstract technological world we live in and reason which makes the extinction of man through atomic war possible. Now with the shattering of the idea of the dependability of reason to advance the cause of man, the traditional view of man which was built on reason and which goes back to the culture of Greece and Rome stands in need of evaluation. This means that if man was understood in terms of reason, to question the ability of reason to solve man's crisis is to question the traditional understanding of man himself. This is what the Existentialists in effect did. By pointing to the neglected aspects of man, they altered the picture of man in the West and produced an 'adjustment crisis'.

In the case of the East the crisis may be best described in Berdyaev's words, 'How could holy Russia be turned into an arsenal of militant atheism?'<sup>4</sup> It is an irony that Russian thought which is fundamentally religious and which has prided itself on its holistic view of man should in the end spawn a social theory that would destroy and crush this very holism. The Russian holistic view of man is intimately linked with her religious culture for all the themes and controversies among the Russian

intelligentsia of the nineteenth century which were attempts to cope with the sufferings and unhappiness of man were rooted in religious questions. The phenomenon of serfdom and the absolutist monarchy of Russia gave to this quest a particular poignancy. The serfs were the subject of concern in the writings of Radischev and Chernishevsky, Herzen and Belinsky to name but a few. The quest for righteousness and justice, the problem of evil, God's responsibility for the condition of man, the pitiful state of unfreedom and the orthodox doctrine of the divinity of man were all deeply religious themes with a particular social concern.

The advent of Communism in Russia is the beginning of the ascendancy of the social over the religious. The socio-political problems of Russia, the gulf between the rulers and the ruled and the events that brought this conflict to a head all contributed to changing the religious quest of the Russians for a solution to man's problem, to the possibility of a social Utopia here on earth. This subtle change produced a split among the intelligentsia. Many among them, Berdyaev included, stubbornly maintained that the problems of Russia and man could only be resolved in an eschatological culmination of the world in the kingdom of God. Others who secularized this eschatology completely preached the message that the kingdom of righteousness on earth was both desirable and possible and that Russia would be the country to realize it first. Communism then, although it was the brainchild of a Jew

in the West, responded to urgent social and religious preoccupations of the Russians and was seen by many to be the answer to Russia's problems.

History has shown, however, that atheistic socialism was a bitter parody of the essential God-consciousness of the Russian people. Experts on Russian thought maintain that on the one hand the Russian mentality is predisposed towards Communism because the Russians have always had a holistic and integrated approach to life. On the other hand they point out that the Orthodox Church gave to the Russians an inner freedom and dignity by insisting on the divine aspect of man who has been cast ~~X~~ in God's image. These contradictions found their apparent resolution in the social promise of Communism which, however, soon proved to its supporters to be a perversion of the essential religious disposition of the Russians.

Like the West, Russia too operated with a particular view of man which made possible the rise of Communism. Now the horrors of Communist dictatorship have forced many to question and re-examine the understanding of man in the East. The crisis of man's self understanding in the West and East is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter I for Berdyaev's philosophy is a conscious attempt to cope with the dilemma of his age and many of the themes and motifs of his views can be traced to the early beginnings of philosophy in both the West and Russia.

The crisis of modern man then, is his alienation from his own self-understanding and, as a consequence, his inability to understand 'the other.' This has produced an unbridgable gulf of contending ideologies in the twentieth century which appear to be the only overt symbols of security and cohesion to the peoples of the West and East. It seems that unless an attempt is made to reaffirm the integrity of man, man will be unable to free himself from the kind of ideological collectives from which he derives his security and well being. He will be therefore under the constant threat of ideological warfare for ideology is uncritical and fosters fanaticism. It seems further, that in the absence of inner strength man will derive it from externals and the more frenzied the attachment the greater seems to be the absence of inner peace and integrity.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the conflicting ideologies of technocracy and communism have been given a frightening dimension by the service of science. Science has, if anything, given the ideological war the power to completely destroy man and has removed all traces of inner security from the minds and hearts of men. Even modern social sciences, as Schlerer has pointed out, have increased rather than alleviated these tensions. More than ever before man has become the subject of his own investigations, and although the information concerning man has far surpassed any previous age, he is nowhere nearer apprehending himself in his wholeness than before. Ironically the plethora of information has presented a fragmented and disjointed picture of man with the anthro-

pologists of the separate disciplines all claiming a unique understanding of him. Hence for the sociologist, man is first and foremost a social animal who discovers himself in relations with his fellow man and his environment. For the psychologist he is a creature of neuroses and for the biologist a specimen in the laboratory no greater than any other subject of study. Although all these disciplines have advanced important information concerning man they have not improved his overall lot in the world nor contributed to the advancement of his inner peace.

In the face of these problems - of the lack of understanding, lack of freedom, dehumanization and rootlessness - many attempts have been made to call man to an awareness of his unfree condition and dehumanized aspect but few have faced the reality of the crisis of consciousness of Western man and the need for a new source of inspiration that would provide new direction. One such person has been Nicholas Alexandrovich Berdyaev whose unique philosophy of freedom is an attempt to call man to a recognition of his humanity and provide for the men of East and West an incisive understanding of the purpose and vocation of his humanity.

As a onetime member of the Russian intelligentsia and of the early Marxist circle he is a true representative of the Russian world-view for all the themes of the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century recur in his mature



philosophy. Yet on the other hand he openly declares his sympathy with Existentialism, agreeing and supporting many of their main themes especially their reaction to absolute knowledge and their emphasis on subjective experience.

The circumstances of Berdyaev's birth and the exigencies of his life go a long way in explaining this apparent contradiction.

Berdyaev was born in Kiev in 1874 during the reign of Alexander II the Emancipator (1855-1881) at a time when Russia was afire with revolutionary activity. His life mirrors the political turmoil of Russia for in 1898 he was arrested and exiled to Volgoda for his part as a leader in the student Marxist circle. However, he soon became disenchanted with the Marxist's alternative for he saw that 'it was bound to lead to despotism and the betrayal of freedom'. When Berdyaev was exiled to the West in 1922, this time for antagonizing the Soviet authorities by publishing in the magazine Russian Freedom his disagreements with the Marxist doctrine, he realized that the bourgeois civilization of the West was no haven for those seeking freedom either.<sup>6</sup> His sympathetic disposition towards Marxism and Existentialism was his appreciation of the fact that these philosophies appeared to be man-centred. Only later he realized that Existentialism and Marxism are mutually contradictory.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of his experiences in Russia and after his exile in the West, he diagnosed the problems of his age to be specifically man's state of unfreedom. In his book Slavery and Freedom he goes to great lengths to explain the various ways in which man has become enslaved to externals and has lost his integral image. However, Berdyaev saw the modern crisis in Apocalyptic terms. For him the world wars were not merely crises in history but a judgement on history. The history of man he claimed has reached the end of an epoch and is now on the threshold of a new beginning. Berdyaev conceived the crisis of Western man in these apparently exaggerated terms because of his Christian perspective.

Retreating from Existentialism which he claimed stopped at mere individualism and Marxism which was hostile to man, Berdyaev, in search of a philosophy that would,

1. recognize the primacy of individual freedom, and
2. restore to man his essential humanity, found himself drawn to Christianity. He claimed that it was Christianity alone that presented to man in the God-incarnate what human beings can potentially be in their freedom and humanity.

Hence, he held up to enslaved man, whose humanity had become distorted, the Christian interpretation which he believed was the only enduring preserver of human values. He said of his conversion:

I became a Christian because I was seeking for a deeper and truer foundation for belief in man.<sup>8</sup>

Berdyaev's Christian view of man presents a multitude of problems to the philosopher of Russian orthodoxy. His vision of man bears an orthodox stamp, yet at the same time the subjective emphasis of his philosophy he developed from his acquaintance with the German mystics, German Idealism especially Kant and finally the Existentialists.

Berdyaev's philosophy is primarily concerned with the freedom and humanity of man. It is therefore completely anthropocentric and hence at odds with conventional Christianity. God, the world and history are seen in terms of the Absolute freedom of man. Freedom is a priori and the Christian revelation is adjusted in accordance with this a priori.

Although many have called Berdyaev a Christian philosopher and there is an element of truth in this, it must be stressed that Berdyaev sees Christianity in terms of man and, this being the case, he often indulges in permutations of the conventional interpretation of God and Christ to preserve above all else the freedom and dignity of man. He thus presents a highly controversial idea of God and may even be accused of delimiting the powers of God to increase the powers of man. One finds that Berdyaev is often forced into this position because his a priori is freedom, not revelation. In his Dream and Reality Berdyaev wrote,

Freedom is a primordial source and condition of existence, and characteristically I have put freedom rather than Being at the basis

of my philosophy. I do not think any other philosopher has done this in such a radical and thoroughgoing way.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, no philosopher or theologian had, but it is this thorough-going idea of freedom that is responsible for the fact that he was charged with heresy by the ecclesiastical authorities and very nearly expelled from Russia by them.

Berdyayev's Christian perspective raises methodological problems. He has a tendency to write in a tautological fashion for he sees man in terms of Christ and Christ in terms of man. His philosophy cannot be seen as a logical argument. Rather his method must be likened to a wheel, where his ideas radiate from man to the Christian understanding of him and from the Christian world view back to man. This makes Berdyayev difficult to evaluate except in terms of Biblical consistency for ultimately he presents his reader with the option of either accepting his views or rejecting them on faith. Of course this is problematic from a philosophical standpoint, but Berdyayev has radically redefined philosophy to make it consistent with his pursuit of truth. His contention that not only religion but philosophy too leads to truth remains to be evaluated. Here, he follows the existentialists in the shift from the quest for absolute truth to the more meaningful quest for authentic knowledge. This conflation of truth with knowledge has presented innumerable difficulties to many thinkers. This explains why research

done on Berdyaev has been straitjacketed within a theological mould. Besides a few scholars like Oliver Fielding Clarke, An Introduction to Berdyaev; Donald Lowrie, Rebellious Prophet; Samuel C. Calian, The Significance of Eschatology in the Thought of Nicholas Berdyaev; David Bonner Richardson, Berdyaev's Philosophy of History and Fuad Nucho, The Existential Paradox of Freedom and Necessity, a critical study, who have attempted a systematic rendering of Berdyaev's philosophy, his writings have been confined to anthologies of Russian thinkers or articles in religious journals. Even these researchers show confusion in their writings. But this is not a reflection on their ability but rather on the way Berdyaev develops his ideas. He does not develop his thought along a logical sequence and he knows himself to be unsystematic. Each of his ideas is dependent for its clarification on the next and produces the difficulty of where does one start to explain his thought for to start at any one point requires the assumption of another. This problem is obviated somewhat in this dissertation because not all the aspects of Berdyaev's thought are of equal importance or relevant to the central theme, that is, the existential implications of his idea of Freedom. However, the quest for the essentially humane which is the main existential import of Berdyaev's philosophy may, if one stretches a point, be traced along a linear path.

This is not to imply that a logical argument along a linear path is the best method in philosophy to lay out one's

ideas. Berdyaev himself would quarrel with such a method.<sup>10</sup> What it means is that the nature of the topic demands a logically developed argument for the existential import of Berdyaev's idea of Freedom.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show that Berdyaev's search for what constitutes the humane in terms of his idea of Freedom is an attempt to cope with the dilemma man's alienation from his own self-understanding has produced. The various steps of the argument are,

- (1) an overview of the ascendancy of Reason in the West and Atheistic socialism in the East and the abdication of freedom in both these cultures. Berdyaev's philosophy is developed in response to these traditions, hence a description is necessary to make his ideas intelligible;
- (2) The meaning of Freedom as Berdyaev conceives it and the purpose of man;
- (3) The destruction of personality in the Humanistic revolution in the West and socialist revolution in the East;
- (4) The quest for Personality in terms of
  - a) Personality and Freedom and Necessity,
  - b) Personality and Creativity,
  - c) Personality and History,
  - d) Personality and Eschatology and the reconstruction of the image of man, and
- (5) a critical appraisal of the implications of Berdyaev's thought for man and for philosophy.

Footnotes: Positio

1. Scheler, M. Cited in Berdyaev, Slavery and Freedom, p. 34.
2. 'Existentialism' is used here to refer generally to a number of writings of diverse interests, many of whose authors repudiate the term. They are joined together, however, by their preoccupation with certain common themes which are discussed at the end of this section.
3. Mounier, E. Existentialism, p. 3.
4. Berdyaev, N.A. The Russian Revolution, p. 3.
5. This theme has been developed by many commentators on ideology but it is suggested here as a theme for consideration.
6. Berdyaev, N.A. Dream and Reality, pp. 103f.
7. Ibid., p. 93.
8. Berdyaev, N.A. Dream and Reality, p. 180.
9. Ibid., p. 46.
10. Cf. Berdyaev, N.A. Freedom and the Spirit, p. xix.

It must be borne in mind that to argue logically for a point of view does not necessarily mean the development of a dogmatic constitutive model. However, it can be argued also that any attempt at explanation, no matter how simple, does presuppose a constitutive model. This dissertation attempts to outline the fundamentals of Berdyaev's 'model'.

CHAPTER I      FREEDOM IN HISTORY

In Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov the Grand Inquisitor says to his prisoner, Christ Jesus:

You want to go into the world and you are going empty handed, with some promise of freedom, which men in their simplicity and innate lawlessness cannot even comprehend, which they bear and dread - for nothing has ever been more unendurable to man and to human society than freedom.<sup>1</sup>

As harsh as this may sound, there is an eternal truth in the words of the Grand Inquisitor, whose triumphalistic contempt of the promise of Christ is followed by his claim that 'he and his followers have at least vanquished freedom and have done so in order to make men happy'.<sup>2</sup>

The message that rings out from the words of the Inquisitor is that freedom is too heavy a burden for man to bear and that he is happier, indeed content, in his unfree state. Freedom has not been wrenched from him; he willingly gave it up.

A survey of the intellectual histories of both East and West provides sufficient evidence for the claims of the Inquisitor.

The ascendancy of reason in Western philosophy produced a belief in the manifold powers of reason to both explain the world for man and to preserve his freedom in terms of reason. The ascendancy of atheistic socialism in the East perverted the Russian spirit, and, in pursuit of happiness in the social collective, destroyed the freedom of the individual.



The men of both Eastern and Western cultures appeared to willingly surrender their freedom in the hope of 'earthly' justice and happiness. The Grand Inquisitor is right in concluding that 'these men are more than ever convinced that they are absolutely free, and yet they themselves have brought their freedom to us and humbly laid it at our feet'. The man of the Enlightenment was complacent in the belief in the progress of reason to promote the happiness of man; and the man of nineteenth century Russian socialism, influenced by Hegel, also optimistically believed that an earthly justice is desirable and possible.<sup>3</sup> Only a few dissenters like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the West and Lev Shestov in the East saw through the illusion and called men to a greater awareness of the complexity and essential absurdity of the human condition. These, however, were only a few lone voices who, however, failed to penetrate the consciousness of nineteenth century man.

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that political and cultural events combined to precipitate, in Berdyaev's words, 'a judgement in history on the history of man'.<sup>4</sup> The first and second world wars; the advent of communism; the possibility of complete extinction through the atom bomb and the bewildering technological revolution shattered the complacency of Western and Eastern man. Belief in the omnipotence of reason or the possibility of happiness for all in a socialist community was completely crushed.

Twentieth century existentialism emerged from this milieu. Taking their cue from the 'protestors on behalf of man' in Western and Eastern history like St. Augustine; Pascal; Kierkegaard; Nietzsche; and Shestov, they stripped philosophy of its illusions and brought home to twentieth century man the truth of his unfree condition.

The existentialist revolt against conventional philosophy charged the history of ideas in the West with denying the primordial freedom of man by constituting systems of thought which bore little or no relevance to the destiny of man or the nature of his being. The irrational elements in human psychology, which after the world wars were plain for everybody to see, had been ignored in favour of the neat resolution of all contradictions into a rational whole. Philosophy had explained the world in terms of only one aspect of man, reason, and had, therefore, presented a distorted picture of man.

Man's contemporary dilemma is that the events in the twentieth century did not correspond at all with his hitherto understanding of himself and his world. He discovered that while philosophy may ignore the ambiguities, contradictions and passions of human personality, it is these impulses which forge the history of man and which, therefore, cannot be ignored in any future deliberations.

While the existentialist revolt against the omnipotence of reason may apply more to the West, their emphasis on the individual is important for both cultures. Russia remained

by and large outside the overriding influence of reason yet it too, through a distorted understanding of their own culture and destiny, precipitated a totalitarianism that overwhelmed individual freedom with the social whole.

Russian intellectual history of the nineteenth century was stimulated by a passionate interest in the fate and freedom of man, man and his relation to society and man and God. The themes of humanism, personalism, existentialism, individualism and the urgency with which they were discussed could have only emerged from a people whose philosophy issues from a religious passion to which its history had predisposed it. While all this is explained in greater detail in Part II, suffice it to say that in spite of these almost irrational themes Russia too degenerated to a condition of bondage in a form hitherto unknown in Europe and Asia.

Since Berdyaev was a child of this crisis and developed his philosophy of freedom in direct response to the problems in East and West and since he purports to give a new interpretation to 'being human', the discussion begins with the interpretation of man which led to the abdication of freedom in the East and West.

Although there are numerous factors which contributed to the existential crisis of modern man, the fate of man in both cultures mentioned will be traced through two distinguishing features, namely, the supremacy of reason in the West and the rise of atheistic socialism in the

### 1.1 The Ascendency of Reason and the Corresponding Abdication of Freedom in the West

The unconditional freedom of the creative human personality was unknown to the western world until the nineteenth century. Freedom was, throughout Europe's cultural history, derived either from ethics, that is, the ability to choose between right and wrong, or from politics, that is, the tension between freedom and authority in the relationship between the State and the individual. This narrow view of freedom resulted from the fact that it had to be worked out from a philosophical system which could explain the world in terms of reason. Reason was a priori for it determined the question What can I know? and from this epistemological starting point the metaphysical explanation for the world was deduced and a consistent system of ethics derived. Clearly, if freedom is derived from epistemology, then freedom is not dynamic but static for men are 'free' to act according to logically reasoned out rules of morality.

In spite of the fact that Christianity with its inherent dynamism and proclamation of the unconditional freedom of all before God was introduced early into the Western world, its moorings in the Graeco-Roman culture prevented either a dynamic concept of history or the idea of the fundamental freedom of man to emerge.

This Graeco-Roman link explains the rational orientation of all of Western culture until the shock of the two world wars.

Philosophy had its beginnings and remained under the influence of the rationally based Roman and Greek history of ideas.

In a letter ostensibly written to Count E.E. Komarovski in 1852, Ivan Vasilevich Kireevsky (1806-1856), the Slavophile thinker, claimed that the three main components underlying Western culture which makes it different from its Russian counterpart, and which gave the whole of the West its specific character were:

- 1) the special form in which Christianity reached it;
- 2) the special aspect of the civilization of the ancient world which it inherited;
- 3) and, lastly, the special elements which entered into the formation of its political organization.<sup>3</sup>

While Kireevsky may have been correct in isolating these three points as the distinguishing features of Western civilization, the first two are of greater relevance to this discussion.

The Roman influence which predated Christianity was all pervasive for, even after the fall of Rome, the rigorous logic of the Roman mind pervaded all aspects of Western culture. The rigid grammar and the form of law are only two of the manifestations of the mental orientation of the Romans. Logical form and consistent application of it, were more important than content. This explains why, in a slave-based society where the idea of every individual being born free was entirely unknown, laws determining the

rights and duties of individuals were chiselled to a refinement unsurpassed by any contemporary culture, and which forms the basis of much of modern common law. This is why the idea of individual freedom in the west has been confined largely to political debates where the relationships between individuals are determined by laws, and authority and freedom worked out accordingly.

When Christianity was introduced into the midst of this logically, formalistic world, its inner dynamism was in immediate contrast to the Roman inclination towards rational self-seeking. So while Christianity had brought a new religious content to a 'pagan' world it did not manage to break the logical cast of the Roman mind and the dynamism of Christian spirituality was smothered into the formal ordering of concepts. Kireevsky accused Western theologians<sup>5</sup> of destroying with their 'onesidedness the harmony and wholeness of their introspective speculation'.<sup>6</sup> Hence, they were 'incapable of visualizing the unity of the Church in any other form than that of a formal unity under one bishop'. Because abstract logic had been elevated above the 'common consciousness of the Universal Church', the Western church 'sowed within itself the inescapable seeds of the Reformation'.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this is that while in a spiritually based, universal consciousness there is sufficient room for organic development, in a formal, syllogistically based model, growth necessitates violence and destruction.

The long and bloody history of the spread of Christianity in the West deserved Berdyaev's criticism when he declared that one of the contributing factors to the crisis of modern man was that the church had not accomplished its mission here on earth. It was the church, he maintained, that did not offer an image of man as an integral whole with an imperative to spiritual living and creativity.

Contrary to the development of Christianity in the West, the Russians found themselves in entirely unique circumstances. There was no firmly established pre-Christian culture like the Roman or Greek, so when missionaries from Constantinople brought the message of the Eastern Orthodox Church to the people of Kiev and Novogrod in 988, it was the Orthodox Church which formed the basis of the culture of Russia. According to Nicholas Zernov in Three Russian Prophets, 'Russia is a cultural unity ... that has been shaped by one factor above all, Orthodox Christianity'.<sup>8</sup>

Zernov sums up the relative differences between Russia and the West succinctly when he declares that 'the western social and political order has been built on the idea of the Law, the Ten Commandments, the Roman ideal of justice and the notion of privilege were the three solid pillars which supported the imposing edifice of European civilization. But the Russians were brought up in the Spirit of the Sermon on the Mount'.<sup>9</sup>

This is what accounts for the conspicuous absence of epistemology in Russia, for Russian intellectuals were un-

concerned with the problems of knowledge and were more concerned with the twin ideas of personal integrity and the relation between the individual and community.<sup>10</sup>

There was a notable absence of exclusive intellectual speculation in both the philosophies and theologies of Russia; in fact Russia is not credited with a systematic philosophy until Khomiakov in the nineteenth century, and its theological tradition cannot even be compared with the tradition of the West. The attempt to capture and understand reality rationally and to systematically develop this rational understanding is alien to Russian thinking. Western theology on the contrary had already been cast into the logical mould by Tertullian and St. Augustine . It only became imaginatively speculative when after the fall of Constantinople, Greek philosophy invaded the West. It is from this point on that the tussle between the Hebraic and Hellenic cultures begin.

The history of this tussle in the West became, in the end, a description of the ascendancy of the Hellenic over the Hebraic. This is what precipitated Berdyaev's comment that it was the Russians who, outside the influence of the Hellas had remained truer to the Spirit of Christianity than the West. This sentiment is echoed by Berdyaev's friend Lev Shestov who in his book Athens and Jerusalem claims that there can be no reconciliation between a philosophy which would be scientific, and biblical revelation. Athens, he claimed, can never agree with Jerusalem, and yet for two thousand years the foremost thinkers of the Western world have firmly believed that a reconciliation



is possible and have bent their strongest and most determined efforts towards effecting it.<sup>11</sup>

The major difference between the Hebraic and Hellenistic world views were conceived, from the time of St. Paul, to be the problem of Faith and Reason, that is, the particular versus the Universal. The Greeks, the first philosophers in Western history, discovered the 'universal abstract of essences'. This discovery, claims William Barrett in his Irrational Man, 'marked nothing less than the earliest emergence and differentiation of the rational function' and established for the Greeks the ideal of detachment as the path of wisdom.<sup>12</sup> Starting from Plato, who articulated his forms as the eternal reality which must be grasped for man to live authentically, all of Western metaphysics have been based on this 'essentialism'.

According to Berdyaev, the Greek preoccupation with reason goes hand-in-hand with an aesthetic conception of the cosmos. He claims that the 'Greeks conceived the world aesthetically as a finite harmonious cosmos, ... creation was static, ... a sort of classical contemplation of a well-ordered cosmos'.<sup>13</sup>

The Greek resolution of all human capriciousness into a well ordered whole revealed a history with no crisis; everything was static and rationally explicable in terms of a universal metaphysical reality. The Jewish consciousness, on the other hand, conceives history as a linear movement aspiring to the future. The Hebraic world-view possessed

an inner dynamism with a definite eschatology.

Berdyayev claims in Meaning in History that the lack of dynamic history in the Greek metaphysic results from a lack of knowledge of freedom. He asserts that 'submission to fate is the most characteristic feature of the Hellenic spirit. It had no conscious knowledge of freedom, that freedom of the subject to create history'. It was the Christian world then, that revealed the 'irrational principle underlying human freedom and the free creative subject without which the fulfilment of the historical process is impossible'.<sup>14</sup>

To sum up, the Greek world view with its perfection of form denied the irrational<sup>15</sup> and denied with it freedom and history in favour of the 'essential' and the universal. Their culture is marked by a preoccupation of ideas rather than of man. The authenticity and freedom of the individual Greek could only be guaranteed if he lived in harmony with nature and with the cosmos.<sup>16</sup> Lack of harmony and capriciousness gave rise to conflict and unhappiness. 'Freedom' was entirely missing from their frame of reference.

In the absence of the admission of the freedom of the individual to create his own destiny, the dynamic character of history is denied, for it is in history that one witnesses the tragedy<sup>17</sup> of free action, evil and darkness.<sup>18</sup>

In Berdyayev's mind, history, eschatology and freedom are all allied concepts belonging to the Christian not to the

Greek or Roman world-views. Therefore it was Christianity which bequeathed to the Western world the idea of progress. Within Christianity history was the movement of the spirit and the self-creativity of the individual man, but it came in Western culture to mean the progress of science and reason, where progress seemed to have implied some ineluctable advancement in 'science' and reason. This became particularly striking during the Enlightenment when the idea of progress in history became completely secularized. Enlightened man believed in the progress of human reason to greater and greater heights of maturity and knowledge.

The importance of all this for philosophy is that Christianity did not interrupt the prevailing belief in the detached application of reason to lead to wisdom. The rational faculty was accepted by Christian theologians as the highest faculty in man. Reason was now elevated to unprecedented heights for revelation was accepted and made to accord with reason. Rational proofs for the existence of God were repeated and numerous during the Middle Ages. Theologians like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus betrayed in their writings the heavy influence of Aristotle. Science was by no means in conflict with faith - the secular and the sacred hung together. Ironically, it was the Greeks who had differentiated reason, but it was the theologians who unwittingly guaranteed the autonomy of reason for faith found justification in reason and not the other way around.

That reason gained autonomy in the Middle Ages needs to be

qualified, however, for while it is true that the Scholastic school went a long way in their theological enterprise to prove God through speculative philosophy, the mystics, many of whom were contemporaries of the scholastics, attempted to point to the inadequacy of reason in understanding the mystery of God. People like Johannes Tauler, Heinrich Suso, Jan van Ruysbroeck, Meister Eckhart and societies like the Friends of God and later Jacob Boehme belong to the tradition which claims that the only communion that is possible with God is mystical intuition. According to Kolakowski in his book Religion, 'in the mystical union alone, God, instead of being simply conceived of in speculative terms as an eternal infinite and living ground of Being is known, or rather felt as such in direct touch'.<sup>19</sup>

Although the influence of this tradition can be traced in German Idealism especially in Kant and Hegel, the mystical tradition remained, by and large, outside the mainstream of Western thought. For example, one may cite the extreme caution that the Roman Church displayed toward mysticism. Twenty eight of Eckhart's propositions were condemned by Pope John XXII in 1529 who also declared that the rest of his propositions were heretical. This was not because Eckhart had challenged the basic tenets of Christianity; rather he had introduced a dimension to the religion which was in discord with the existing doctrines of the church that had been worked out logically and reasonably. The Church in the West could not admit the existence of any faculty other than reason

to understand God. So the seeds for the separation of faith and reason were ironically sowed by the theologians of the Middle Ages themselves, for with the autonomy of reason guaranteed, it became no longer possible to keep reason in the service of faith and by the beginning of the sixteenth century the departure of reason from faith began.

The discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler shattered the old Ptolemaic/Aristotelian world-view. The rise of the landed bourgeoisie, evidenced by the new class of property owners in England, accelerated the secularization process and made man the centre of the Universe. Philosophically, the influence of the age became very apparent in Descartes (1637) who, while still heavily influenced by scholasticism, had shifted the emphasis from God to man. When he attempted to prove his own existence (*res cogitans*), and that of the extended world (*res extensa*), by the rigorous application of his methodological doubt, he displaced God from the centre of reality and made man the measure of all things. However, it soon became plain that Descartes had only given us formal concepts lacking in experiential content. This is not to detract from the importance of Descartes in the history of philosophy; it is only to show the status of reason in Descartes' philosophy. Descartes made man a prisoner of reason and did not realize that reason can in itself be alienating.

Even the British empiricists, although they shifted the attention from logical abstraction and innate ideas to inductive reasoning from sense impressions, knowledge, for them, was

still obtained through abstraction from experience by<sup>29.</sup>  
reason. Even the higher knowledge, for example the  
existence of God, could be demonstrated. In his Essay  
concerning Human Understanding Locke wrote that 'we have  
the knowledge of our own existence by intuition, of the  
existence of God by demonstration, and of other things by  
sensation'.<sup>20</sup> So while Locke attempts to prove that all  
knowledge comes from the senses, it is reason that has the  
constitutive task and still occupies the highest place in the  
hierarchy of human faculties. In the same book he wrote,  
'The Understanding as it is the most elevated faculty of  
the soul ..., is employed with a greater and more constant  
delight than any other'.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, then, empirical  
philosophy did not materially disturb faith in reason.

A notable exception to this tradition was David Hume the  
most extreme of all the British Empiricists for, while  
he too pointed to the senses as the data of knowledge, he  
denied that reason had any constitutive function at all.  
Reason could not prove the logical necessity or casual  
sequence of physical events. Hume allowed only that co-  
ordination and sensibility was possible through 'custom'  
and 'habit'. Man took for knowledge of facts what  
he was used to through experience. The logical powers of  
reason for Hume was confined to tautological mathematical  
propositions. Hume left man then a prisoner of his senses.  
It is for this reason that Hume had to be superceded for  
Western philosophy could not suffer the complete denial  
of the faculty of reason. Lev Shestov, to whom we have  
already referred, complained that the only way Hume could  
have left a lasting impression was if he realized the full  
implications of his conclusions, that is, he would have,

through the denial of the constitutive function of reason in knowledge, been opened up to the wonders of faith. But, Hume, every bit the sceptic, was satisfied with the answers he had given to the deficiencies of reason.

An attempt has been made so far to explain that the history of Western thought could not honestly be described as spiritual and organic. The intellectual history of Western man has been dominated by the question 'What can I know?' It is false to believe that Christianity interrupted the pursuit of this quest or even changed the direction of the history of ideas in philosophy in any meaningful way for the epistemological questions asked in antiquity persisted throughout the Middle Ages right up to the enlightenment.

When after the Middle Ages, the perception of the world changed from theocentric to anthropocentric, it should be clear that the separation of the sacred from the secular had resulted from an unhappy union in the first place. Western man who believed that religion was knowable through reason soon discovered that reason as a differentiated and elevated faculty will not remain long in the service of theology. Not that this should be the case, for religion finds its justification not in reason but in existential commitment. The nature of religion, which is hardly rational, cannot remain tied to a narrow science, and the nature of reason when once differentiated will relentlessly pursue its own course and is bound to repudiate dogmas which inhibit its possibilities.

It was not until the Enlightenment, however, that the split between reason and religion was complete. The Enlightenment cannot be regarded as an adequate description of a particular period in the history of Europe but is rather a philosophical category which designates a turning point in the history and self-understanding of Western man.

The most distinguishing feature of the Enlightenment was the emergence of the self-consciousness of reason and the awareness of its possibilities. Reason no longer tolerated 'supernatural ideas' that put themselves above it. The idea that human beings by the exercise of reason could penetrate to the depths of natural science and human nature, and create for themselves a better life was fashionable.

Kant in his essay on the Enlightenment gives probably the best description of the consciousness of Enlightened man. He wrote

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of the enlightenment is, therefore, Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding!<sup>22</sup>

When Kant asserted that 'the public use of man's reason must always be free', for 'it alone can bring about enlightenment among men',<sup>23</sup> it is clear that freedom here meant freedom from dogma; freedom from the church; freedom from superstition, and freedom to use one's reason.



The idea that reason itself may be restricting never occurred to the man of the Enlightenment. There was a genuine belief in the ability of reason to free man to trust in his own ability; to understand the ways of the world and the ways of men.

Kant, although he was a true son of the Enlightenment, is also the turning point in the ascendancy of reason in the West. His 'Copernican revolution' turned the focus from the object of knowledge to an examination of the faculties of the subject of knowledge. Kant is very important for the development of Berdyaev's mature philosophy, but for the purposes of this chapter he is important insofar as he turns reason in on itself. His transcendental philosophy undermined both the scepticism of Hume and the limitless rational possibilities of Descartes and his followers. According to Kant, understanding was a combination of reason and sense perception. 'By a transcendental act of rational organization the understanding arranges in an orderly manner, as spatio temporal phenomena, the stuff yielded by experience.'<sup>24</sup>

Obviously then, knowledge was restricted to the world as it is. Kant undermined the rational dream that all is knowable through reason and destroyed the scepticism of the Empiricists by introducing the universals in the form of rational categories. Hence, man, according to Kant, is only capable of knowing that which subsists in the spatio-temporal world. He claims, however, that while the world outside phenomena, noumena, is unknowable, man as a rational being in possession of rational categories may through the act of 'rational

striving' be shown 'the ought.' This means that man may free himself from bondage to the senses and achieve transcendental autonomy. Reason is for Kant then the liberating faculty.

Berdyaev regarded Kant as the philosopher of freedom par excellence in Western culture and he is no doubt right since Kant was the first philosopher to have actually addressed himself to the problem of freedom; but even for Kant freedom was rationally based. His idea of freedom is derived from his theory of knowledge and is therefore also epistemologically based. Fredrick van der Pitte makes this point succinctly when he writes in the introduction to Kant's Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View that recognition of autonomy forces man to postulate freedom as a fact of his own moral experience - and it is freedom which is the true nature of man, and which Kant employs as the 'keystone of the system of pure reason and even speculative reason'.<sup>25</sup> While Kant appeared to be primarily concerned with man's freedom, he saw freedom as the choice exercised in the moral realm for 'reason in its practical aspect ... points to the moral realm as the arena of freedom. The true ends of human existence are concerned with the realization of the moral law, the fundamental presupposition for which is the idea of freedom'.<sup>26</sup> For Kant, freedom was not endemic to the condition of man. True to the spirit of the Enlightenment, he conceived freedom in and through reason.

For Hegel, too, who tried to reconcile the dualisms left by Kant, freedom appeared to be the 'most important category

of reason'.<sup>27</sup> However, Hegel's idea of freedom was part of a more dynamic, historically motivated system than Kant's. In an attempt to go beyond the separation Kant had effected between things-in-themselves which are unknowable and the restriction of knowledge to phenomena, Hegel replaced Kant's epistemology with a dynamic logic. He substituted for the transcendental critique an immanentist one to surmount what he called Kant's 'fear of the truth'.<sup>28</sup> Hegel argued that for Kant truth subsisted in noumena which is inaccessible to man, but truth can be accessible if the alienation between reality and the knowing subject can be overcome. For Hegel truth subsists in freedom which obtains when the subject comprehends the independent objectivity, of all objects. As long as an object exists which the subject has not mastered by pure thought, the subject is unfree. The free subject has no object<sup>29</sup> and that is the moment of truth. According to Marcuse, Hegel claimed that reason presupposes freedom, that is, the power to act in accordance with knowledge of the truth, the power to shape reality in line with its potentialities.<sup>30</sup> Freedom in turn presupposes reason for it is knowledge that enables the subject to gain and wield power.<sup>31</sup> Without delving into the details of Hegel's phenomenology or logic one can claim safely that for Hegel the real is the rational and if knowledge is accessible through reason, then reality, that is, 'noumena' is accessible to man. This means that the distinction between phenomena and noumena falls away. Absolute knowledge is achieved by the logical outcome of the negations of history, that is,<sup>32</sup> life is self-generative and exposes itself in successively unfolding forms. The process begins with

simple contradictions and develops to more complex ones, the resolution of each leading to the 'blossoming' of consciousness. The whole process achieving all the time a greater awareness and a higher degree of freedom.<sup>33</sup> Hegel replaced Kant's dualism with a monistic whole where ultimately everything will become knowable to the rational subject. In presupposing the rationality of both subject and object, Hegel's idea of Freedom is still based on epistemology for the knowing subject is free only at the coincidence of absolute knowledge and his own rational faculty. This means that reason is still supreme and freedom is achieved again only in and through reason.

This explanation of history as the progress toward the self-understanding of Absolute Spirit provoked a series of reactions, the most important being Existentialism, Positivism and Marxism. Existentialism and Marxism, which is discussed in Part II, is more important for our purposes than Positivism since it has a direct bearing on the discussion on Berdyaev although Berdyaev's philosophy responds to the problems inherent in all three reactions to Hegel.

The Existentialist revolt which began in the nineteenth century as a rebellion on behalf of man 'against the excesses of the philosophy of ideas and the philosophy of things'<sup>34</sup> gathered momentum and burst into Western culture immediately after World War I. Existentialism was a necessary reaction to the all pervasive presence of reason which had failed to bear out the expectations placed on it. The first World

War was a parody of the belief of the Enlightened man in reason. The Existentialists-by and large refuse classification and repudiate labels, many of them have even refused to be called 'existentialist.' This is in obvious reaction to the 'classification of reality demanded by Rationalism'.<sup>35</sup> However, the existentialists are called such, not because they represent a cohesive body or form a school of thought in any meaningful sense, but rather because they share common themes, the most significant being:

- 1) the contingency of being human: in the face of the fixed, static, constituted systems of conventional metaphysics, human contingency was pushed into the background, and its problematic nature excluded from philosophical deliberations.
- 2) the Importance of Reason: Existentialists to a man agree that philosophy born from reason alone gives a one-sided, partial picture of man and renders man impotent in the face of reality.
- 3) Being-in-advance of itself: a Heideggerian concept which, nonetheless, applies to all the existentialists. This means that man is always in the making, that is, his being is always becoming. Since it is man who must confer meaning on the world and create his own values he can be seen, in terms of his future potential as a being who is ahead of himself, in a state of constant becoming.
- 4) 'estrangement' or 'alienation': describe the inauthentic condition of man when man is out of step with his 'authentic being.' This usually implies a condition of unfreedom. For each of these thinkers, alienation meant separation from the source or ground of freedom - that which makes freedom 'possible' whether it be Being, or God or transcendence.

5) temporality: time plays a very important part in the thought of existentialists. While they have often been accused of denying or not emphasising sufficiently the historical, their preoccupation with the implications of time is more than enough evidence of the fact that they took for granted man's historical facticity and his inevitable death. In recalling man to his subjective being the existentialists shifted the attention from a historical, epistemological and metaphysical construct to the temporality of existence and Ideas.

6) Dread or Angst reveals the mood of the existential thinker in the face of the awesome possibilities his freedom presents to him. It is not an emotion, like fear which is directed to an object; it is rather the existential condition of man in the awareness of his being and his freedom.<sup>36</sup>

While all the existentialist thinkers, despite their peculiar emphases and orientation, share these common themes, Berdyaev still divides them into two distinct camps and claims to follow in the spirit and mood of the one rather than the other. In his Dream and Reality he wrote

I regard my type of philosophy as 'existentialist' even though one should qualify this by pointing out that true existentialist philosophy is represented by St. Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche rather than Heidegger, Jaspers or Sartre.<sup>37</sup>

His reason for this categorization was that while the first four were suffering existential thinkers the latter X three gave to the West a philosophy of existentialism. According to Berdyaev the detached philosophizing of the last

three thinkers indicate that they reflected upon rather than lived in- existential suffering. While Berdyaev's 'classification' may seem problematic to most, it appears that he is only trying to show that the former differ in terms of the passionate nature and personal anguish that permeate their writings while the latter appear to reflect on this passion and suffering.

It is for this reason and the fact that modern existentialism begins with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche that a little more will be said about them than about the others.

The early reactions of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard reflect strikingly the condition of man in the nineteenth century. Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard realized that the 'world did not', as Hegel had presumed, confront man with objective meaning, rather meaning had to be imposed on the world'.<sup>38</sup> Writing in Homer's conquest Nietzsche declared,

Disinterested contemplation is rank absurdity. Let us from now on be on our guard against the hallowed philosophers myth of . . . painless, timeless knower. Let us be aware of the tentacles of such contradictory notions as 'pure reason', 'absolute knowledge', 'absolute intelligence'. All these concepts presuppose an eye such as no living creature can imagine, an eye required to have no direction, to abrogate its active and interpretative powers - precisely those powers that alone make of seeing, seeing something. All seeing is essentially perspective, and so is all knowing.<sup>39</sup>

In these words Nietzsche expressed the sentiments of all who are called existentialist for the disillusionment with the world and man, especially after the events of the twentieth century, caused them to abandon absolutes

and universals and begin anew on the particular and individual.

Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard approached the problem of meaning in a world without God in vastly differing ways. Nietzsche who according to Emmanuel Mounier, is the exact counterpart of John the Baptist, tried to announce the end of the evangelical era by proclaiming the death of God to the men who after having been responsible for it, dared not accept it as a fact.<sup>40</sup> Albert Camus claims that Nietzsche did not form a project to kill God but he simply found him dead in the soul of his contemporaries and then undertook to discover what the shape of human life consequently had to be.<sup>41</sup> It is for this reason that Zarathustra challenges man to the task of self-enobling since the gods are dead.

According to Nietzsche the death of God makes man sovereign for the only means left to restore dignity to man, who has killed God, is to make him worthy of the crime, that is, man must take the place of God. Man, therefore, stands before Absolute freedom, for as Dostoevsky said somewhere 'without God everything is permissible', and the responsibility is on him to confer meaning on the world. Nietzsche's Superman, then, is designed to cope with these expectations for he alone does not shrink from the awesome challenges presented by the death of God.

Although there are some obvious problems with Nietzsche's solution, the details of which are not relevant to this dis-



cussion, his frustration with nineteenth century man's failure to rouse himself and realize his potentialities in the face of the vast freedom before him, echoes throughout the existentialist rebellion. Also, he leaves a lasting impression of the anguish of individual soul in its meaning conferring role.

Søren Kierkegaard takes a completely opposite view to that of Nietzsche. Like Dostoevsky, whose spirit he shared, Kierkegaard denounced the legitimacy of the rights of reason, of common consciousness, of omnitude, 'it is the living individual and his freedom that are ultimate, and not natural laws or universal truths'.<sup>42</sup>

Kierkegaard was in open rebellion against a mediocre culture which had substituted for passion an objective philosophy, and which had paid lip-service to a 'diluted' Christianity. In his Journals he wrote,

Passion is the real thing, the real measure of man's power. And the age in which we live is wretched, because it is without passion.<sup>43</sup>

Christianity for Kierkegaard was characterized by passion; by a radical subjectivity. According to him man forged his destiny and brought himself to a confrontation with the eternal by the choices he makes, the choice to 'leap' from the aesthetic where he remains a spectator of the affairs of the spirit, to the ethical where he is by participation bound by moral laws and finally the choice to confront the Abyss, the eternal God. It is in the last that the individual begins to live authentically.

The importance of both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the history of philosophy is that they reacted to the mediocrity of their age; the all pervasive hypocrisy and bourgeois complacency and the illusion of freedom. Both men were singularly condemnatory of Hegel's absolute spirit as a gigantic hoax which did not square with the realities of day to day living.

Nietzsche's significance is that he brought to an end the Humanist tradition which began during the Renaissance with his radical idea of the Superman and took to a logical conclusion the subject-object dualism, a fundamental presupposition of much of western thought.

The subjects turn the world and other subjects into objects which must be transcended through subjugation. Superman is 'mature man' who breaks through the subject-object prison.

Kierkegaard's impact lay in the fact that he brought to a head the crisis in Christianity which began with Luther. His was an attempt to restore the immediacy of the religious experience typified in the attitude of Job or Abraham to their God in the face of a diluted bourgeois Lutheranism.

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard brought to a close the pagan and X Christian strands which moulded western philosophy and opened a new epoch in the self understanding of man. However, the influence of these men were only felt after the first world war when the cultural climate of Europe,

disposed men to an understanding of the truths contained in their writings.

Post war existentialism, although markedly different in spirit from its forebears, nonetheless exposed the rootlessness and goallessness of modern man. A brief account of the ideas of the main post war existentialists who are of importance to the understanding of Berdyaev will be mentioned here. They are Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre. Heidegger and Sartre are the progeny of the phenomenology of Husserl. It was Husserl's intention to construct a presuppositionless philosophy that would radicalize Descartes' demand that all philosophy be grounded in absolutely certain insight. Influenced by the natural sciences he believed that the ground must be sought in phenomena but an analysis of phenomena can only take place by an analysis of consciousness.

Consciousness is always consciousness of something since every act is characterized by intentionality.<sup>44</sup> Husserl, therefore, claims to have overcome the distinction between phenomena and noumena by treating phenomena itself as a window to being. Freedom for him obtains in the Lebens - Welt (which Heidegger used), in the way of existing, and its expression is through the whole of human existence.

Echoes of Husserl are strong in both Heidegger and Sartre. For Heidegger Freedom is openness to Being. Man is the window to being for man is the only conscious, reflecting creature on earth. Heidegger, therefore, does not define

man in terms of objects but rather as Dasein or 'thrownness.' The condition of freedom for Dasein is the 'standing open' to Being. Freedom then is not choice or will, but the ground and existence of truth. Hence, the history of men is seen in terms of the unveiling and concealing of Being.<sup>45</sup> When one is alienated from Being one is lost in a world of beings. Freedom is the awareness of the thrownness into a foreign world and the threat of inauthentic existence by lapsing into the world of beings and becoming closed to Being.

For Sartre too, freedom is a condition of consciousness which obtains in the dialectic of the being in-itself and the being-for itself. For Sartre freedom is a lack - it is this lack which prevents consciousness from being identical with the object of consciousness; and the relationship between Being and Nothingness<sup>46</sup>, which is the title of his book, is the condition of man.

Man, for Sartre, is condemned to be free for freedom is evidence of the structure of his consciousness. Hence, man who 'falls into existence' is the creator of his own values. As an atheist, Sartre has no recourse to any higher reality so he demands of man that he recognize both the lack of meaning in the world and his own freedom to confer meaning on the world.

The influence of Husserl on Heidegger and Sartre is obvious for they followed him in deciding that freedom ultimately

depends on the structure of the consciousness.

Jaspers differs from Heidegger and Sartre in his emphasis on the transcendent. While refusing to commit himself to any specifically theistic view he maintains that man's authentic self is revealed in what he calls 'border situations'; for example, moments of dread, guilt, awareness of death are experiences that impinge on our consciousness and are our moments of awakening. It is in his grasping of his finitude that man becomes aware of his opposite, namely Being as transcendence, for transcendence manifests itself in Existence. Jaspers, unlike Heidegger and Sartre allows for transcendence and claims that man is forced to consider it in order to apprehend his own limitations and in the ability to do this lies his freedom.

This all too brief exposition of these thinkers was intended only to point to their idea of freedom which will be evaluated during the course of the discussion in terms of Berdyaev's idea of Freedom, and also to show that in many respects he goes beyond them especially in his ideas on what constitutes the humane.

## 1.2 The Rise of Atheistic Socialism and the Abdication of Freedom in the West

If the differentiation of the rational faculty and the supremacy of reason could be held responsible for the suppression of freedom and the denial of integrity in the West, what could be responsible for the rise of atheistic socialism and the abdication of freedom, in a country which has remained by and large outside the overpowering influence of reason? In Berdyaev's words 'How is it possible for Holy Russia to be turned into an arsenal of militant atheism'?<sup>47</sup> Russia, contrary to expectations, gave rise to the most cruel, unfree and totalitarian system which crushes rather than nurtures human personality.

A brief description of the Russian consciousness and a sketch of the main intellectual currents demonstrate that atheistic socialism was both consistent with the inner dynamics of the Russian spirit and yet a perversion of the religious messianism of the Russians.

The Russian consciousness was given its peculiarly religious character by the fact that Byzantine Christianity was introduced to a people separated tribally and spread over the vast plains of Russia and not into sophisticated pagan societies like Rome and Greece where the 'national' consciousness of the people had already been shaped.

As it has already been pointed out in Part I, it was the Orthodox Church which gave the Slavonic races its homogeneous character and idea of nationhood.

In 1453, the historical circumstances surrounding the fall of Constantinople had a tremendous influence on the Russian world-view. Henceforth Christianity would be an integral part of the Russian consciousness, their attitude to the Tzar and State and their perception of the Russian mission influencing and moulding the Russian history of Ideas throughout the twentieth century.

The fall of Constantinople was not only a bitter blow for the Russians but a turning point in their history. Nicholas Zernov in his book Three Russian Prophets remarks that the effect of the fall of Constantinople was so great on the Russian mind that 'when the news spread that the Emperor and Patriarch had perished in defence of their city, there was all over the East a widespread fear that the end of the world was nigh'.<sup>48</sup>

The Russians compensated for this calamity by transferring the centre of Christianity to Moscow. They found justification for their belief in the Book of the prophet Daniel (ii 27-49, vi, 1-28 ix, 24-27). These passages describe the fate of kingdoms which after being raised to pre-eminence are cast down one after another by the same Divine power. The texts prophesy that the first and second coming of the Messiah would

take place during the ascendancy of the fourth great Empire, that of Rome. However, this did not mean that the power belonging to her was confined to a single spot. When Rome succumbed to pride, the centre was moved to Constantinople and now it was transferred to Moscow.<sup>49</sup>

The identification of Moscow as the 'holy city' effected in the Russian consciousness a conflation of religious and national interests and imbued in them a messianic fervour. Consequently, very great importance became attached to the Tzar because of 'the power and transcendent majesty of the Russian state', and gave to the Tzardom a particular character. In his The Russian Idea Berdyaev wrote, 'the Moscow Tzardom was in principle totalitarian in its outward expression. It was a theocracy in which the power of the Tzar predominated over the priesthood, and at the same time there was no unified life in this totalitarian Tzardom. It was pregnant with a variety of clashes and cleavages.'<sup>50</sup>

Evidently, the seeds of Communism were sown during the formative years of Russian culture when Moscow with the Tzar at the head was identified with Moscow as the centre of Christianity. This unhappy marriage produced no unified life as Berdyaev pointed out and the Tzardom was pregnant with cleavages. The conflation of the religious and secular produced a schism in the minds of the Russian peasantry. On the one hand



the peasants were able to accept the authority of the Tzar but on the other hand 'they fled from it and took refuge in the assertion of their liberty'<sup>51</sup> in Christian faith.

Two very important events in the development of Russian culture were linked with the schism:

- (1) the crisis in the ecclesia between the obscurantists and searchers after truth, and
- (2) the reforms of Peter the Great.

The reason for the first is that the schism precipitated an apparent crisis of the ecclesia which produced a series of events, the effects of which led directly to the controversies of the nineteenth century, and eventually to communism.

It appeared that the problem was between the obscurantist element of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who revered rites and ceremonies and those who sought divine truth.<sup>52</sup> That the obscurantists and 'seekers after truth' could be in opposite camps is rooted, according to Berdyaev, in the doubt in the minds of the Russian peasantry whether Orthodox Tzardom was in fact the 'third Rome.' The 'schismatics' apparently got wind of the change in Church and State and ceased to believe in the sanctity of the hierarchical power of Russian Tzardom, feeling that God had forsaken the Tzardom'.<sup>53</sup> Because of the belief that

Moscow was the seat of the anti-Christ they sought inspiration from an apocalyptic Utopian vision. 'From this', wrote Berdyaev, 'arises an intensified quest for the Kingdom of Righteousness as opposed to the present Tzardom of the day.'<sup>54</sup> The quest for righteousness produced two streams among the schismatics - the religious and the revolutionary. The realization of righteousness by the former had an eschatological bent, but it was the latter, the revolutionary dimension, that championed the cause of the peasants against the Tzar, and who made Russian thought free and adventurous and directed it towards an end.<sup>55</sup>

Another major effect of the schism was the fact that it paved the way for the introduction of Peter the Great's reforms which created conditions that could only be resolved in the end by a revolution.

The reforms of Peter the Great were both inevitable and forced. The fact that Russia was at the time lagging far behind the military and technical advancement of the rest of Europe necessitated reform, but the manner in which the changes were introduced gave rise to an 'identity crisis'.

Thereafter the major concern of the Russians was in which direction does Russia's destiny lie - East or West.

Nicholas Zernov sums up the effects of Peter's reform on the destiny of Russia succinctly when he writes:

Peter attacked Muscovite customs only for the sake of Western efficiency. He sought to replace the family ideal of the old Tzardom by a powerful bureaucratic and militarist state of the European type. But most of those who obeyed his orders cared for nothing but their own pleasure ... This attitude however was taken only by a minority of the Russians - the bulk of the people remained faithful to their traditional outlook, resenting and mistrusting the Western way of life.<sup>56</sup>

Clearly, the St. Petersburg empire which fell to the Bolsheviks in 1917 was built on a shaky foundation. There was an immense gulf between the rulers and the ruled - the young men whom Peter had sent abroad returned full of technical expertise, bureaucratic know how and were unable or unwilling to fit back into Russian society. The ruled on the other hand discontented with 'alien institutions borrowed from the West neither accepted nor assimilated them properly'.<sup>57</sup>

The gulf that Peter the Great's reforms created was one of the enduring themes among the intellectuals several centuries later producing in 1874 ridiculous movements in an attempt to bridge the gap like 'V Narod!' ('go to the people') 'a spontaneous unorganized crusade by possibly thousands of young zealots who left the cities to work and live in the countryside', with the peasants.<sup>58</sup>

Isiah Berlin, an acknowledged expert on the Russian intelligentsia, agreed that the great social schism between the educated and the masses in the time preceding the Bolshevik takeover 'sprang from the wound inflicted on Russian society' by Peter the Great in the sixteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Berdyaev's assessment is that 'Peter secularized the Russian Tzardom and brought it in touch with Western Absolutism of the more enlightened kind', so the Tzardom of Moscow did not 'give actual effect to the messianic idea of Moscow as the Third Rome',<sup>60</sup> and strengthened the belief of the peasants in the God forsakenness of Moscow for they now identified Peter himself with the Anti-Christ.

After Peter and during the nineteenth century the 'general questions of world outlook was either westernizing or Slavophile, that is, ought Russia to go east or west? Must she follow the path of Peter and go west or must she turn to the time before him, to Muscovite Russia?'<sup>61</sup>

The messianic vocation of Russia was no longer clear. It had become compounded by the dilemma of the direction of Russia's destiny. These two ideas, which had its beginnings early in the history of Russia, formed the underlying and unifying themes of the controversies among the intelligentsia several centuries later.

A major reason for the delayed reaction to Peter's reform is the fact that education was concentrated mainly in the monasteries, especially in Kiev and the Ukraine. Greek, Latin and scholastic theology were the main subjects taught; there was little or no place for the development of any original ideas.

However, after the introduction of Peter's reforms the centre of learning shifted gradually to St. Petersburg where Peter actively encouraged the cultivation of western ideas.

Russian intellectual history may be traced back, if one stretches the imagination, to Gregory Skovoroda (1722-1794) who is regarded by many to have made the first attempts at an original Russian philosophy. He attempted to synthesize ideas and doctrines of Platonism, Stoicism and Western Scholasticism with the mystical elements of Russian spirituality. Skovoroda deserves mention if only to point out that from the first, original Russian thought had a religious colour.

The Russian culture of the eighteenth century was largely underdeveloped and immature, except for the importance of Freemasonry and the Decembrists. Freemasonry was the only spiritual movement which was self-organized in Russia and it awakened Russian thought to the predominance of the moral over the intellectual. The

Decembrists, the first revolutionary movement against the State on behalf of the oppressed, was the direct result of Freemasonry for they were trained in the Masonic lodges. The merciless execution of all the Decembrists confirmed them as the first liberationists who opened up the nineteenth century to a series of revolutions which were to culminate eventually in the fall of St. Petersburg in 1917.

The flowering of the Russian genius only really began in the nineteenth century. In his book The Sources of Russian Communism Berdyaev remarked,

To understand the sources of Russian communism and to make clear to oneself the character of the Russian revolution one must understand that singular phenomenon which in Russia is called 'intelligentsia'. Western people could make a mistake if they identified the Russian intelligentsia with those who in the West are known as 'intellectuals'.<sup>62</sup>

The intelligentsia were a group formed out of various social classes and held together by ideas about society and life and not by a common profession or economic status.

The Russian intelligentsia was born between the years 1838 and 1848. The sudden and passionate outbreak of intellectual flurry was made possible by the Napoleonic wars (1813-1815) when Russia played a major role in the liberation of Europe. Russia's entrance into Europe produced an incursion of Romantic ideas especially those of Schelling and Hegel who stressed the creative role of

the nation's character. German Idealism generally had an influencing effect on Russian thought.

The first 'patron' of the Russian intelligentsia was Alexander Nicholayevich Radischev (1749-1802). His motivating belief in the primacy of the people over the State was a premonition of the fate of the revolutionary intelligentsia. Radischev, under the patronage of Catherine the Great, went to Leipzig to study and his experiences in the West, especially the revolutionary climate in Europe, had a permanent effect on him. In an Utopian sketch (A project for the Future) from his book A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow he depicts Russian society as approaching the pinnacle of perfection albeit with one major exception - serfdom. For Radischev serfdom was so great an evil that it successfully negates all else that may be good in Russian society. To the question why is serfdom an evil? Radischev answers:

1. It is a violation of man's natural rights to freedom and equality;
2. It contravenes man's natural right to property;
3. It is economically inefficient;
4. The constant example of parties in 'slavery' is morally harmful, breeding conceit on the one hand and servility on the other;
5. Serfdom threatens the very existence of civil society when the oppressed arise and demand en masse their due.<sup>63</sup>

Radischev's thought was aflame with the ideas that ignited the French Revolution. His clear grasp of the social implications of serfdom for Russia's future anticipates the revolution which took place almost two hundred years after he had seen its inevitability. Berdyaev asserts that the sentiments of Radischev set the tone for the social concerns of the nineteenth century and fed the Russian 'emotional bent for revolution' which was the 'outcome of the unbearableness of the actual conditions in which they lived, their wrongness and their ugliness'.<sup>64</sup>

The second forerunner of Russian intellectual history is Peter Chaadaev (1794-1856). He emphasized the unity of all aspects of life and stressed that Russia especially had been given a mission by God. This he asserted in A Mad Man's Apology thus giving expression to an issue that not only had a formative influence on the intellectual life of the nineteenth century,<sup>65</sup> but adapted itself to the atheistic socialism of the twentieth, for Russia believes, no less now than previously, that she has a mission to the world.

So first with Skovoroda, then Radischev and finally Chaadaev Russian thought approached an original and independent philosophical expression. From Radischev onwards the paths leading to the revolution are much clearer. Characterized by an essentially religious consciousness, the emergence of which has already been discussed, the controversies of the Russian thinkers had at its centre,



whether they realized it or not, the question of an unjust God and the sufferings of the masses. Atheism in Russia was an inverted religious phenomenon for it was a rebellion against God on behalf of the people. The social emphasis in Russian thought may be said to be the only unifying factor among the divergent reactions and solutions to the crisis in Russia. Marxism in Russia was one of the 'solutions' to the problems in that country and spelt for many the end of misery and the realization of righteousness on earth. However, the Marxist phenomenon showed up the irreconcilable gulf, between the idealists and materialists, among the intelligentsia. Both groups primarily concerned with the 'good of the people', offered widely different perspectives on this problem each believing that the other was a betrayal of the dignity of man. That Marxism in the form of atheistic socialism gained ascendancy over the idealists, among whom was Berdyaev, was a matter of emphasis and historical circumstances.

The history of the rise of Marxism, following a chequered pattern, begins with the dispute on the destiny and vocation of Russia by two loosely formed groups, the Slavophiles and the Westernizers.

The Slavophiles of whom Ivan Vasilyevich Kireyevsky (1806-1856) and Alexis Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804-1860) were the most prominent, strove to work out a Christian world conception on the fundamentals of Orthodoxy. They valued the peculiarities of Russian culture and insisted that

Russian political life develop in a direction different from those of Western nations. Lossky credits these thinkers with the real beginnings of independent philosophical thought. In his book The History of Russian Philosophy he claims that neither set out a systematic philosophy; they set down the plan and created a spirit of philosophical movement which was original in its achievements.<sup>66</sup> In his most important work On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy Kireevsky laid out the difference between Russia and the West. As a convert from Hegelian philosophy he pointed out more sharply than most that Hegelian philosophy was a 'typical one-sided product of Western rationalism' and must be resisted. He argued forcefully that Hegel's identity of the dialectic of abstract ideas with reality was the final and logical conclusion to Western civilization. 'New principles' would have to be sought as a way out of this impasse and for Kireevsky, Russia provided the key. Russia had escaped from the rationalism of Greece and Rome and had consequently averted the 'conflict of reason and faith in scholastic philosophy, the rejection of reason in the Protestant reformation and finally the rejection of faith of post Protestant philosophy'.<sup>67</sup>

Thus Russia, innocent of these reactions in the West, could bring 'new principles to the revitalization of this philosophy' and to 'break through the Hegelian impasse'.<sup>68</sup>

Kireevsky's main contribution to philosophy was his attempt

to make 'integral cognition' that is 'the realms of feeling, motivation, desire and intention' a new basis for epistemological enquiry. For Kireevsky faith 'defined in this way is the source and criterion of philosophizing'. He stressed that true knowledge is not the function of a single human faculty (reason) but 'involves the community of believers who are organically united to one another within the Christian life of Orthodoxy!'.<sup>69</sup>

Kireevsky anticipated Khomiakov's idea of Sobornost. The freedom of man appeared to be the motivating force of Khomiakov's thought. The 'primary reality for him is free thought' or 'integral reason'. The editors of Russian Philosophy maintain that for Khomiakov 'the integral man is a unified organism who experiences himself as free - in an experience which cannot be doubted.... An experience which leads to the level of 'definitive consciousness, which is the faculty of "faith". For man ultimately exists as a spiritual reality independent of the determinism to which both pure rationalism and pure materialism would subject him'.<sup>70</sup> Khomiakov claimed that both the 'extreme and unjustified 'pure rationalism' of Hegelianism, as well as the 'pure materialism' of the Hegelians of the left, equally involve 'a determinism' which does away with individual freedom and the independent rights of human subjectivity for they are but two sides of the same system. According to Khomiakov the 'Western Christian hierarchy is based on a legalistic understanding',<sup>71</sup> of unity and freedom; Western man has only two choices. The sacrifice of free-

dom for unity - Catholicism or the sacrifice of unity for freedom - Protestantism. Khomiakov refers to the failure of western Europe to realize the Christian ideal of wholeness of life. The Russian idea of sobornost, for him means 'the combination of unity and freedom based upon the love of God and his truth and the mutual love of all who love God'.<sup>72</sup>

While the basic tenet of Slavophile philosophy as emphasized by Kireevsky and Khomiakov is the specific character of 'slavdom' as the only authentic representative of Christian culture and its place in world history, many implications may be drawn from this thought which sheds light on the character of Russian consciousness. As it has already been claimed, Russia not only stood outside the excessive influence of reason but consciously repudiated it in favour of a more total or holistic outlook which when forced into epistemological categories was called 'integral cognition'. However while the Russians may have prided themselves on the apprehension of things in their totality, their passionate disposition and the almost complete absence of the mitigating influences of reason disposed them, in many instances, to a totalitarian rather than 'total' outlook. So what was in essence a Russian advantage could just as easily have become her greatest disadvantage. Berdyaev appreciated fully the implication of this holistic attitude of his country men when he wrote in The Sources of Russian Communism,

The Russian spirit craves for wholeness.

55.

It cannot reconcile itself to the classification of everything according to categories. It yearns for the absolute and desires to subordinate everything to the Absolute and this is the religious trait in it (It indicates the religious integration of the Russian soul.) But it easily leads to confusion - takes the relative for the Absolute, the partial for the Universal, and then falls into idolatry. It is a property of the Russian spirit, especially, to switch over the current of religious energy to non-religious objects, to the relative and partial sphere of science or social life. This explains a great deal. 73

Indeed it does! Berdyaev's comment bears out the claim that the Russian consciousness is essentially a religious one. But the disadvantage of this is that the very same religious consciousness, characterized by passion, by absolutism, and even by dogmatism could, depending on circumstances, be made to serve a secular end. In this description of the Russian spirit lies the explanation for the eventual rise of socialism, for the Russian attitude to social concerns was essentially a religious attitude. It was the transfer of religious passion from a 'transcendental object' to an earthly end. This characteristic may also be identified among the westernizers, the group to whom the Slavophiles were opposed in their assessment of the destiny of Russia.

The westernizing movement was, by and large, contemporaneous with Slavophilism (1840-1860) although its influence was more far-ranging than the latter's. In fact it branched out into Nihilism in the 1860's and Populism in the 1870's and 1880's.

The Westernizers may be traced to two circles: the Stankevich circle of 1831 whose members V.G. Belinsky, M.A. Bakunin T.N. Granovsky, V.P. Botkin, met to read German especially Hegelian philosophy, and the Alexander Herzen, N.P. Ogaryov circle which had a more political bent, concentrating mainly on French writers like Saint Simon.

The westernizers could not accept the idolization of the pre-Muscovite period; they believed that Russia's mission to the world could only be effected if she followed the initiative of Peter, for she was a European nation who had, unfortunately, been retarded by the Mongol invasion, but now the time was right for her to assume her place in Europe again.

The westernizers were profoundly affected by German philosophy and many of their ideas are merely Russian interpretations of German idealism. Under the impact of Hegelian philosophy this strain of Russian thought took a path that identified it as western and opposed it to Slavophilism whose main source of philosophical inspiration was Orthodoxy.

Hegelianism had become the major influence among Russian thinkers and it would appear that each of these men 'assimilated Hegel in his own way and then reacted against his philosophy' and it was largely 'in reaction to Hegel that their own original philosophical ideas emerged'.<sup>74</sup>

Inclined towards a revolutionary interpretation of Hegelianism from the start, the westernizers thought they saw in 'Hegel the necessary law of historical development and they interpreted the direction of this development in their own sense'.<sup>75</sup> However, the political reality of Russia did not square with their interpretation of Hegel and they quickly forsook Hegel for Feuerbach and the Hegelians of the left. Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity in which he claimed that God was the projection of the 'perfect state of man' and that the realization of man's potential can only come about through the 'substitution of man for God';<sup>76</sup> left a permanent impression on many of the westernizers. Under the influence of his thought many of the westernizers became frankly atheistic and man centred, making an important contribution to philosophical anthropology. Many commentators on Russian thought are in agreement that atheism in Russia was born from the frustration engendered from the difficulty of understanding a creator who made 'an evil and incomplete world full of suffering. They themselves desired to make a better world in which there should be no wickedness and suffering.'<sup>77</sup> The nature of Atheism in Russia then, according to Thomas Masaryk in his book The Spirit of Russia, is ethical and social, rather than metaphysical. The Russian atheist is 'quite forthrightly preoccupied with the ethical aspect of religion'.<sup>78</sup> It must be remembered also that Feuerbach had exercised a profound influence on Marx and Marx's Theses on Feuerbach<sup>79</sup> is one of his seminal works. The westernizers were, then, under the influence of Feuer-

bach and the Hegelian left, which are the same influences that acted on Marx, albeit independently, being prepared for the reception of the Marxist doctrine.

The philosophical career of Vissarion G. Belinsky (1811-1848), an influential westernizer, illustrates quite vividly the conversion from Hegelianism to revolutionary anarchism. At first he accepted the general idea that society is the higher reality and the individual must subordinate his interests to the interests of society. However, it was not long before Belinsky realized the incompatibility of Hegelian philosophy with the Russian reality and in a letter to Botkin in 1840 he wrote 'What is it to me that the Universal exists "when personality is suffering"'.<sup>80</sup> Berdyaev asserts that Belinsky's revolt against Hegel is a revolt on behalf of living human personality, and the conflict for living human personality resolved itself into a conflict for a socialist structure of society. Thus was formulated the characteristically Russian type of individualistic socialism.<sup>81</sup> In his enthusiasm to fight the cause of the oppressed, Belinsky soon denied the individual and went so far as to assert in his revolt against the state that he is quite prepared to sacrifice some people for the happiness of the majority.

This makes Belinsky more than any other revolutionary the 'intellectual ancestor of Russian communism'.<sup>82</sup> Not only in his ethical but also in his social views he approximates close to Marxism for he saw the importance of both the



industrial development and the bourgeoisie. Belinsky could be regarded as the first fully fledged socialist although it must be remembered that his socialism was 'more a matter of sympathy with the oppressed than of attachment to particular economic theories.'<sup>83</sup>

Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (1812-1870) agreed with Belinsky on a number of the main themes. His journey to the West, especially to Paris and London, convinced him of the moral superiority of Russia over the West. Russia's strongest point was, for Herzen, the absence of a bourgeois class. True to the Narodnik spirit Herzen was opposed to a political revolution that might drive Russia into the bourgeois path of development. He was anti-Hegelian in the sense that he did not believe that society moves up inevitably to the attainment of a higher and perfect state; and secondly he could not sacrifice human personality to history for he could not accept either that man could be an instrument for the attainment of inhuman ends or that present generations should be sacrificed for the generations that are to come. According to Berdyaev, Herzen grasped the fact that 'the religion of progress does not contemplate anybody or anything or any moment as a value in itself'.<sup>84</sup> Herzen's revolution was not the revolution of political socialism designed to bring Russia in line with the bourgeois west by the sacrifice of thousands. He based his socialism - like the Slavophiles - on the Russian village communes. Herzen's influence was far reaching and laid the foundation for the original Russian individualistic

socialism opposed to bourgeois socialism which was to be represented in the 70's by Mikhailovsky.<sup>85</sup>

The third most important westernizer was Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876). Bakunin was the only one among the senior westernizers who made any direct contact with Marx. He met Marx in Brussels in 1848 and joined Marx's Democratic Federation. However, Bakunin could not agree with the tactics of Marx and after a short period together Bakunin left.

Bakunin's move to practical revolutionary action is brilliantly laid out in his book The Reaction in Germany published in German in 1842, and in 1840 in the introduction to the translation of Hegel's Gynmasial Lectures. Here Bakunin laid out the connection between religion and the state asserting that with the destruction of religion comes the destruction of the state. In him is evidenced extreme materialism and anarchistic socialism for the individual is merely the 'involuntary product of his environment, with no freedom of will ... Thus since there is no law, immorality is merely a product of social and economic inequality which will vanish with the state'.<sup>86</sup> Bakunin stressed his ideas in his works God and the State (1871) and The Paris Commune, the latter contains his critique of Marxism.

Although the views of the Slavophiles and westernizers were completely unsuited to the social and political

complexities of the 1860's and were even wrong in their exclusive claims, the road to revolution began with them. Berdyaev points out that the westernizers were wrong in seeing nothing 'original and distinctive in Russian history' and in considering Russia as 'only a backwater in enlightenment and civilization'. They were wrong in seeing the West European type of civilization as the only type'.<sup>81</sup> The Slavophiles on the other hand were wrong because Peter's reforms were quite inevitable. If Russia had remained militarily, educationally and economically backward she would have been unable to 'fulfil her great mission'. Also the Slavophiles failed to appreciate the fact that it was only during and after the Petrine period that Russian culture blossomed. However, in spite of their onesidedness and often parochial perspectives of the Slavophiles and westernizers, the conflict between them brought to the fore the contradictions deep in the Russian soul which after the 1860's grew, intensified and became sufficiently acute to find its only resolution in a revolution of the people.

Strong affiliations to Orthodoxy represented by Kireevsky and Khomiakov subsisted side by side with the militant atheism of Herzen, Belinsky and Bakunin. The primacy of the personality whose cause was championed by the Slavophiles and Herzen clashed with the predominance of society over the individual and the ruthless utilitarianism of Belinsky and Bakunin. Faith in the village commune (abschina) which was the motivating ideal of Kireevsky, Khomiakov and

Herzen was again opposed to the attraction of industrial revolution and the creation of a bourgeois class which Belinsky ardently favoured. The only unifying factor amidst all these irreconcilable conflicts of the 1840's was the socialist theme.

The controversies were caused in the first place by a genuine concern for the plight of the peasants. However, socialist solutions at this stage were still of a very individualistic character and had not yet become politicised. Even the socialist theories of Herzen and Belinsky were naive in comparison with the historical circumstances of the 1860's. The changes of the 1860's and the ascendancy of the political principle in socialist doctrines are evident in the thought of the nihilist and populist thinkers.

Michael Bakunin's book The Reaction in Germany in 1842 anticipated the nihilistic movements of the 1860's. By the middle of the 1860's the social climate in Russia altered radically. After the accession of Alexander II in 1855 came a series of reforms which altered appreciably the socio-political climate of the time. The two most important pieces of legislation which had a direct effect on the 'intelligentsia' were the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the relaxation of the censorship laws of 1865 which saw an incredible burst of almost frenzied intellectual activity. However, the men of the 1870's realized that the reforms had actually given the serfs little chance of economic self-sufficiency or genuine freedom.<sup>88</sup> Neither

the 'retrospective Utopia' of the Slavophiles nor the pursuit of a western-type civilization of the westernizers were adequate to the needs of the time.

One of the most significant factors of the change in the social climate was the change in the ranks of the intelligentsia. Previously the intelligentsia comprised mainly the gentry. The westernizers, for example, were all, with the notable exception of Belinsky, members of the gentry. Now among the men of the sixties few were from this class.

The fact that ranks of the intelligentsia were being filled by members of other social classes brought about a complete change in the outlook of the revolutionaries. Now movements for reform were no longer spearheaded by a cultured few who acted on behalf of the oppressed. Now many of the members of the intelligentsia were themselves oppressed. This being the case they were not merely men of reform but men 'fanatically dedicated to the cause of freedom and justice, they were the first true members of the non-aristocratic Russian intelligentsia'.

Another reason for the intensified agitation for reform was the fact that the sources of influence had changed. The nihilists had no appreciation for the idealist inclinations of their forbears. They were nurtured on Feuerbach, the French socialists, the German materialists Büchner, Moleschott, Vogt, the positivists like Comte and Utilitarians like

J.S. Mill. Clearly, influenced by these thinkers, the men of the 60's adopted a hard materialist, positivist line.

One of the most penetrating movements during the sixties were the nihilists. Also operating from a materialist position they denied the existence of a merciful God. Central to their thought was Egoism and the glorification of science. The nihilists argued that 'only in an illconstructed society does egoism yield socially undesirable consequences. In a properly ordered society the most egoistic behaviour will also be the behaviour most productive of the public good. Fundamentally and naturally the interests of society and the interests of the individual are identical'.<sup>89</sup>

One of the most outstanding nihilist thinkers was Nicholas Gravilovich Chernyshevsky (1828-1889). Like the men of the forties he started off as an Idealist too but he soon abandoned his idealism for Feuerbachianism which he judged to be more relevant and more meaningful to the times. From Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity and his own strong belief in the viability of the Russian social commune came a rapid conversion to philosophical materialism, atheism and socialism.

Chernyshevsky made his impact in Russia through two major works The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy in 1860 which denied the spiritual in man affirming him only as a biological compound, and his novel What is to be done?

which explicitly lays down a socialist ethic. In it he describes a socialist commune based on cooperation and harmony.

When Chernyshevsky died, Dimitry Ivanovich Pisorev (1840-1868) became the chief spokesman for nihilism. It is in his hands that the centrality of the Ego gained prominence. His main contribution to the development of this idea was his book Thinking Proletariat (1865). Russia was at this stage in the process of developing a proletariat class. A phenomena the thinkers of the forties were not faced with. On behalf of the proletariat, Pisarev advocated the most destructive means of overthrowing the existing order. One of his more famous statements is,

What can be smashed should be smashed.  
What withstands the blow is fit to survive.  
What flies into pieces is rubbish. In any  
case strike out right and left, no harm  
can come of it. 90

Nihilism was not a large movement. Its impact on Russian society from the point of view of Socialism was largely positive. In the eyes of Dostoevsky the nihilists represented the realm of the Antichrist. His caricature of nihilists, notably Stavrogin in the book The Possessed, while it is a caricature, nonetheless points out the empty but hardened mood of these circles and predicts that it would be through them specifically and through their attempts at the secularization and radicalization of society that materialism and socialism would flourish'.<sup>91</sup> Dostoev-

sky's predictions were borne out by the fact that the nihilists were indeed the direct ancestors of Marxism-Leninism.

According to Berdyaev, 'Russian nihilism sinned in its fundamental inconsistency', and this is epitomized by Pisorev. While Pisarev, fought for the liberation of personality and demanded that the personality, or more correctly the Ego, be raised above the social environment, 'from whence is personality to get the strength for such a conflict since Pisarev and the nihilists were materialists and in morality utilitarians'?<sup>92</sup>

Nihilism as a movement did not outlast the sixties; it soon gave way to the Populists who held sway during the seventies. Populism, which is the last apparently cohesive movement before Marxism, is more removed intellectually from Marxism than nihilism was. One possible reason could be that they also saw Berdyaev's criticism of the nihilists and attempted to temper their materialism to cope with it.

Populism as a movement still held to a formal agrarian socialism which was based on the glorification of the Russian people, especially their moral fibre.

From the centrality of the peasant village commune the future of the socialist order was worked out.<sup>93</sup> Chief spokesman for Populism was Peter Lavrov (1823-1900). Lavrov pointed out that moral and historical phenomena



were not incompatible with positivism and socialism.

Indeed he insisted that a debt was owed to the peasants, a moral debt; Lavrov was prepared to admit that there were spiritual and historical phenomena outside of scientific phenomena but even this admission did not materially alter the scientific-materialist basis of his thought. He did manage, however, to convince many young men that the pursuit of 'lofty ideals' which were scorned by the 'thinking realists' and 'rational positivists' of the sixties are legitimate but that they owed a debt to the peasants to be able to enjoy such a luxury in the first place. According to Lavrov, this was the case because of the toil and suffering of the unprivileged peasant masses which had allowed them the leisure and the resources needed for their own cultivation .<sup>94</sup>

The same moral emphasis of the populist doctrine is stressed by another chief spokesman, Nicholas Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky (1842-1904). Mikhailovsky too insisted on the 'subjective factor in human action and history', by which man could properly study man, despite adopting a positivistic attitude towards religion and metaphysics.<sup>95</sup>

Mikhailovsky followed Lavrov in his repudiation of any deterministic theory of history insisting that historical goals may only be reached through the conscious and deliberate effort of man.

Clearly this combination of anti-metaphysical positivism

and a thoroughgoing moral idealism, is far removed from the ruthless positivism in Marxism. The importance of populism on the path to the Revolution lay in two important points:

1. Man's earthly social well-being is his most important concern - that human society is alterable by deliberate human action - with one difference this ancient Russian theme was distinguished during the Populist phase by a great and frenzied commitment to the people. So while theoretically the Populists were removed from Marxism, they did in fact help intensify the concern for the underprivileged masses.

2. The Populist-movement was the target of attack by the so-called Bakumists especially on the issue of gradual revolution. The opposition between these two groups spawned a number of radical groups 'shading off into revolutionary terrorism'. Parties like Land and Liberty (1876), Black Repartition faction, Peoples Will Party - the last was responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 - had their roots in Populism.

Populism then was part of the dialectic that led eventually to the revolution even if it was more the negative pole of that dialectic.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a remarkable cultural renaissance in Russia. The social climate of

Russia, the revolutionary fervour, the results of almost a century's controversies stimulated in the twentieth century a profound spiritual disquiet and religious searching.

There were three major sources behind the Russian Renaissance at the turn of the century. First the source of greatest significance for the Intelligentsia had its origin in Marxism. Paradoxical as this may seem, Marxism had caused a crisis of the left Intelligentsia, i.e. those who placed their faith during the second half of the nineteenth century upon Russian narodnik socialism and later Marxism. The Group that formed 'The Emancipation of Labour' which was part of the left Intelligentsia actually laid the foundations of Russian Marxism.

However, the philosophy of history introduced by Marxism, which was a spiritual and intellectual movement, flourished. The Intelligentsia was obviously split at this stage. There were those who accepted Marxism in its entirety and they formed the nucleus that would spearhead the Communist revolt. Then there were the others who accepted it only in part - they made the transition from Marxism to idealism and finally to Christianity. Berdyaev attempted to unite both Marxism and Idealism.

The second source of the Renaissance was the development of the eschatological perspective. An eschatological

bent is endemic to the Russian consciousness, a fact which has already been discussed.' But now the eschatology of the nineteenth century thinkers, for example Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, were being assessed and evaluated, the details of which are not really relevant at this stage

The Russian Marxists attempted to find fulfilment of their eschatological desire in an 'earthly paradise' while others, like Berdyaev, maintained it within a religious world-view.

The third source of Russian Renaissance was connected with the blossoming of Russian poetry. It was the age of symbolism, the chief representatives being Alexander Blok; Andrei Bely, and V. Ivanov who drew their inspiration mainly from Vladimir Solovyev. Berdyaev was also one of those strongly influenced by Solovyev.

Symbolism sees a spiritual reality behind visible reality and is the link between two worlds. The symbolists believed that there is another world which represented symbolically in this world.

The Russian Renaissance is the most ironical development in Russian history. It showed an unprecedented depth of creativity in the Russian spirit yet it predated by only a few years the advent of the most repressive totalitarianism.

The discussion on the rise of Russian Communism traced the main themes of Russian philosophy from 988 to 1917. It shows how certain historical circumstances predisposed the Russian spirit to both totalitarianism and to spiritual anarchy. This survey of the development of Russian thought was an attempt to place Berdyaev in historical perspective, to outline the main influences on his thought and also to outline the main ideas he was at pains to refute or affirm. It will become clear during the course of the discussion that almost none of Berdyaev's central themes originated in his works. Every one of them may be traced back to motifs in Russian intellectual history. In his own philosophy, however, these themes underwent a vital cross pollination, the unique fruit of which the remaining chapters will seek to examine.

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Chapter IIThe Meaning of Freedom

Berdyaev developed his philosophy of freedom in response to the almost total absence of a explicit idea of freedom in the traditional understanding of man in philosophy and theology. As a member of the Russian intelligentsia Berdyaev shared all their concerns; the passionate concern for the plight of man, and the anguished search for the meaning of pain, suffering and evil. These themes underlay the cleavages among the Russian intelligentsia. All the prominent thinkers of the nineteenth century whether Westernizer or Slavophile, Populist or Anarchist or Nihilist were motivated by the same concerns. They differed, however, in their understanding of man and consequently on the meaning of his suffering and the solution to his plight.

Man was for Berdyaev, as he was for the others, the raison d'être for the philosophical quest. However, Berdyaev, under the influence of many Russian and western thinkers realized that the clue to the understanding of man lay in the nature of freedom. Freedom is endemic to being human and can only be apprehended from the vantage point of man.

Berdyaev's philosophy is an attempt to describe the relation between freedom and man. His own struggle to understand this relation led him from Marxism to idealism, from idealism to existentialism (represented particularly by Dostoevsky) and finally to personalism.

In his book, The Divine and the Human, Berdyaev claimed that the quest for meaning by the traditional philosophers had failed in three respects:

- (i) they had not explained the existence of evil which triumphs in the world;
- (ii) they have not discerned the tragic character of the world process;
- (iii) they provided no possibility of constructing a theodicy.<sup>1</sup>

Berdyaev kept ties with Marxism and Existentialism

because he thought he saw in these disciplines answers to the above questions. However, while he was quite correct in discerning that Marxism and Existentialism had attempted to cope with these problems, they had either traded freedom for authority, or they did not go far enough or they debased the image of man.

Berdyaev realized early in his philosophical journey that the question of freedom entailed the problem of evil, and it is the interrelatedness of the two which describes both the dynamic character of human personality and the tragic nature of human history. The denial of evil is bound to lead to the denial of freedom and, 'earthly' solutions to the problem of evil will be of an authoritarian nature. Alternatively, if freedom is affirmed in the absence of a higher truth, evil is still not transcended and man becomes a victim of empty individualism.

In his attempt to penetrate to the meaning of personality and the nature of freedom, Berdyaev strove for an understanding of freedom that would preserve the autonomy and dignity of man even if this entailed suffering.

He had joined the young Marxists initially because he felt that Marxism offered 'an integrating view of man which united thought to action' and which spelt 'man's victory over irrational forces of nature and society.'<sup>2</sup> In Berdyaev's words,

The Marxist movement of the late nineties was born of a new vision: it brought with it ... a purpose and a new conception of man. It had, furthermore, a distinctly higher intellectual and cultural standard than most of the preceding movements. Marxism, at that juncture, was in fact a signal for the spiritual as well as social liberation of man. What attracted me most of all was its characteristic appreciation of the moving forces below the surface of history, its unconsciousness of the historic now, its broad historical perspectives and its universalism.<sup>3</sup>

Marxism for Berdyaev and for many of the intelligentsia was not the solution for the socio-political problems of Russia only; it represented for them the solution to the liberation of all men. As it has already been pointed out, the early Marxist movements in Russia appeared to be for the religious and atheistic left and right wing thinkers alike, the final answer to the

tragic conflict of man with his fellow man; man with nature and man with the State. Berdyaev's association with Marxism arose from the fact that he, like many others, believed that idealist values like the independent existence of truth and goodness could be combined with the social truths of Marxism. In other words, he based his socialism upon an idealist foundation.<sup>4</sup> However, it soon began to dawn on him that freedom of the individual in Marxism was an illusion, and that there was an irreconcilable contradiction between the idealist and materialist sides of Marxism.<sup>5</sup>

In Truth and Revelation Berdyaev described his disillusionment with the revolutionaries:

... I saw with grief that in the Marxist camp also there was no reverence for the dignity of personality, and the liberation of the people was too often associated with the enslavement of man and his conscience. At a very early stage I saw the results of this process. The revolutionaries had no love for freedom of the Spirit; they denied the rights of human creativeness.<sup>6</sup>

Almost in response to Lunacharsky's criticism that such a defence of disinterested truth, of the independence of the intellect and the right of personal judgement contradicted Marxism which subordinates the interpretation of truth and justice to the revolutionary class struggle,<sup>7</sup> Berdyaev together with other 'idealist Marxists' like Peter

Struve, Sergius Bulgakov and S.L. Frank broke completely from Marxism and adopted a consistent Idealist position. He declared of his beliefs vis-à-vis Marxism:

I maintained the existence of truth and goodness as idealist values which are independent of the class struggle, of social conditions and the rest; and I did not acquiesce in the final rejection of philosophy and ethics to the revolutionary class struggle. I believed in the existence of truth and justice as determining my revolutionary attitude to social reality and not as determined by it. 8

Berdyaev rejected out of hand the Marxist doctrines that truth belongs to the collective and not to the individual and that no realm of truth and freedom independent of historical materialism existed.

He was already by this stage converted to the Kantian dualism which espoused an independent realm of truth and freedom and so he considered the 'one-planeness' of historical materialism an affront to the duality of the human being. Man's consciousness was not material and deterministic but rather spiritual and free. He not only rejected Marxism in terms of the Kantian dualism but he rejected Western philosophy also for having enslaved itself to Being which denies evil, freedom and, therefore, personality. The existential freedom of man as a result of the primacy of ontology had been ignored in the West and even when it was affirmed like the existentialists did, it degenerated in some cases

into 'empty actionalism',<sup>9</sup> which inhibited the development of personality, and in other cases led to the debasement of man. Berdyaev criticised existentialists like Heidegger and Jaspers whom he claims also disregarded the real problem of man. He asserted that,

... 'they' never really consider the problem of man nor do they attempt to build up a consistent philosophical system on the basis of philosophical anthropology. They have not worked out or elaborated the rich material inherent in their systems into a definite philosophical doctrine of man. They leave the problem of human nature unsolved ...<sup>10</sup>

By this Berdyaev meant that while the post war existentialists like Heidegger, Jaspers, Camus, and Sartre had concentrated on the individual who was being threatened by mass culture and absolutist doctrines, they never really explained or accounted for the uniqueness of personality. The existentialist thinkers identified and fought on behalf of the individual, but 'explain' him or what his purpose is they could not or did not.

Berdyaev argues that 'man is not the last end of man', he cannot be set free in the name of man's freedom.<sup>11</sup> Man can be free to realize himself and to create his own being only in the name of a higher truth. If there were no independent realm of pure freedom, no higher truths, man is faced with complete nothingness. It is not sufficient to espouse a 'theoretical liberty to accept truth, ... a liberty founded not upon truth but on the right to choose no

matter what truth or lie, which means the creation of a culture and a society without an object because they do not know in the name of what they exist.<sup>12</sup> Even the religious existentialists like Kierkegaard and Bultman, although they have a defined higher truth and see a meaning in the world, their theology consistent with Protestantism in the West saw God as wholly other, and man as a completely debased sinner before God whose only vocation was to work for his salvation and his redemption.<sup>13</sup> The quest for the humane has no place in the theology, albeit existential, of either Kierkegaard or Bultmann.

For Berdyaev the quest for meaning is the quest for freedom, the search for truth and the realization of the truly human. This much neglected idea - the essential humanity of man can only be realized for him in and through freedom in response to a higher truth. In his charge that all of Western philosophy up to and including the existentialists have neglected the humanity of man, and in his reaction to Western ontology in terms of the major influences acting on him, for example, Kant, Dostoevsky, Boehme, Baader and Solovyev, Berdyaev develops his own unique idea of freedom. He begins by claiming that the Greek Philosophers did not address the problem of the contradictory human personality. They only managed to differentiate reason in man and had to face thereafter all the attendant problems, some of



which have been discussed in Ch.1. In other words, the Greeks had only a partial grasp of man; they could not see that man is immersed in the depths of Being. Therefore Being as a whole is not accessible to his understanding. In The Beginning and End Berdyaev wrote,

Greek philosophy as a whole is not yet a philosophy of the Ego, it was not the apprehension of Being from the point of view of subject; and arising out of the depths of human existence. Greek thought is directed to the object.<sup>14</sup>

Berdyaev maintains that in the search for the primordial the Greeks tried to penetrate behind the world of senses to the unchanging reality. This meant that the Greeks took for granted the ability of the human mind to rise above phenomena which confronts us, to penetrate through the world of becoming to Being.

Being became then an object of thought and thereby came to denote objectification. To this end Berdyaev writes,

What reason finds is its own product. Reality is made to depend upon the fact that it becomes the subject matter of knowledge, in other words an object. But in actual fact the reverse is true, reality is not in front of the knowing subject but behind him, in his existentiality.<sup>15</sup>

For Berdyaev, all of Western philosophy has fallen into the trap of assuming an objectivity that does not exist and have had consequently to cope with the problem of whether the acquisition of knowledge is active or

passive. Berdyaev claims that there can be no solution to this problem so long as knowledge is regarded as a mere subjective reflection of the objects, and Being as an objective state from which the subject has been eliminated. The tragedy of philosophy is that Being can only be apprehended through reason otherwise no communion with Being is possible, for the knowing subject stands in opposition to the abstract object. This means that knowledge and Being are in opposition to each other.

The implications of this rational metaphysics is that knowledge can only be passive reflection. Creative penetration into Being is rendered impossible by this static view of the world.

It was against this view of the 'world' and the apprehension of it that the existentialists rebelled. They repudiated the idea that man was an object among other objects capable of being apprehended through reason. In a telling passage from The Way to Wisdom Karl Jaspers articulated the problem thus:

The truth is that man is accessible to himself in two ways: as object of enquiry, and as existence endowed with a freedom that is conceived as object, in the other as new object which man is and of which he becomes aware when he achieves authentic awareness of himself. We cannot exhaust man's Being in knowledge of him, we can experience it only in the primal source of our thought and action. Man is fundamentally more than he can know himself.<sup>16</sup>

According to Berdyaev man has been accessible to the Greeks and Western philosophy in the first way that Jaspers has described, 'as an object of enquiry', however, man can never know himself completely; historically conditioned and contingent, absolute knowledge is denied to him. Berdyaev, therefore, follows the existentialists in their qualitative shift in the epistemological quest - the striving for absolute knowledge has now been substituted for the striving for authentic knowledge.

Berdyaev claims that in the West the beginnings of the shift of emphasis from the acquisition of objective knowledge to the fact that it is the subjective personality who is the bearer of truth and who confers meaning on existence, lies in German Idealism, especially Kant, who 'dealt a blow to the objectivism of the Greek and scholastic philosophy from which it cannot hope to recover.'<sup>17</sup>

He maintains that the 'Copernican revolution' of Kant was the final break with the influence of Greek philosophy and the doctrine of substance. Kant moved the enquiry from the object to the knowing subject. He had seen the confusion between the processes of thinking and being, for reason had accepted as objective being that which it itself had produced. Berdyaev argues that Kant saw that the object was the mere offspring of the subject ,

that is, what refers merely to appearances and phenomena must not be transferred to what is noumenal, to the things-in-themselves.

Kant's criticism was that the subject matter of thought is the creation of thought itself; it is the result of the objectifying act. However, the objectifications of the constructions of the mind begin 'to exist' independently and give rise to pseudorealities. For Berdyaev, Kant was the antidote to this since he saw that the 'existence of an idea does not imply the existence of reality.'<sup>18</sup> In the face of this inadequacy in traditional philosophy, Kant postulated the realm of noumena and the realm of phenomena connected by practical reason 'which does not objectify and therefore breaks through beyond the world of phenomena to the noumenal world which provides the norms for moral action.'<sup>19</sup>

Berdyaev is of the opinion that Kant's philosophy was the first step towards human emancipation, toward freeing man from the constraint and slavery to the objective world. The very fact of a critical awareness of the subject's participation in the objective processes implied the subject's deliverance from the tyranny of the objective world. Kant, for Berdyaev, was the first to make existential metaphysics a possibility for he 'drew the distinction between the order of nature and the order

of freedom',<sup>20</sup> which is Existenz.

If, for Berdyaev, the order of freedom is the order of existence then the order of nature is the order of objectification and, therefore, unfreedom.

Berdyaev explained this more clearly when he wrote that,

Objectification is the ejection of man into the external; it is an exteriorization, of him, it is the subjecting of him to space, time and causality.<sup>21a</sup>

However, while Berdyaev accepted the basic distinction Kant made between the world of space, time and causality and the world of noumena and freedom, he was highly critical of the Kantian metaphysics. He pointed out that while Kant's metaphysics was based on the subject, Kant saw the subject itself in an objective and non-existential way. Hence he made no real contribution to the understanding of the ambiguities of human personality. In fact Kant's metaphysics gave no account of the presence of evil, suffering and death which are the major concerns of man. Knowledge for Kant was still objective and epistemological.

Furthermore, while Kant taught a doctrine of causality through freedom he left unexplained the manner in which noumenal freedom breaks in upon the causal sequence of appearances. Although he asserts that man can, indeed must, act in terms of the Categorical

Imperative, which norm is outside the senses and pertains to the noumenal world, he appears to present two worlds different and entirely separate from each other; shut up in themselves without any possibility of communion. The implication of this is that man is merely a phenomenon unto himself and cannot participate in the noumenal world. Berdyaev writes:

Man remains as it were corked up in the world of phenomena, he is unable to break out of it; or able to break out only by way of practical postulates. Kant regarded man from man's point of view, as an appearance, man was not revealed to himself as a noumenon.<sup>21b</sup>

According to Berdyaev, this is the biggest shortcoming in Kant's philosophy. He says Kant did not come to terms with the fact that the knowing subject, the thinking, reflecting passionate human being cannot be reduced to a phenomenon - the singular uniqueness of the human personality defies categorization.

Kant's philosophy, therefore, does not really shed light on the question What is man?. Berdyaev did not regard as important Kant's idea of the freedom of the rational will of man to act morally as a contribution to the understanding of man as a person. In fact, influenced by Dostoevsky, the German mystics, Solovyev and others like him, he did not regard the will as rational at all. He maintained instead, that Kant's dualism is important because it made possible a philosophy of authentic freedom wherein

lies the clue to the mystery of man.

Berdyaev saw a much closer link between freedom and personality in the Dostoevskian rather than in the Kantian dialectic. According to Fuad Nucho in his book The Existential Paradox of Freedom and Necessity in Berdyaev's philosophy, it was in the writings of Dostoevsky that Berdyaev found an outline not only of the problems of freedom but also of its solution.<sup>22</sup>

In his book The Brothers Karamazov Dostoevsky offers man two alternatives: the principle of compulsion of the Grand Inquisitor and the principle of freedom of Christ.

In the legend of the Grand Inquisitor the Pope has taken Christ Jesus captive and while holding him prisoner explains that the success of the Church was gained at the cost of man's freedom, that 'the tranquil mind and even death is dearer to man than the free choice in the knowledge of good and evil'.<sup>23</sup>

The Grand Inquisitor glories in the fact that the church on earth had vanquished freedom in Christ's name, for according to the Inquisitor 'there are three forces and only three forces that are able to conquer and hold captive for ever the conscience of these weak rebels for their own happiness - these forces are miracle, mystery, and authority. ... You rejected all three when the devil tempted you with

them... Oh, of course, you acted proudly and magnificently, like God. But men, the weak rebellious race of men, are they gods?... Christ surely could not have loved man if instead of taking possession of men's freedom he multiplied it and burdened the spiritual kingdom of man with its sufferings for ever.<sup>24</sup> It is the church on earth, claims the Inquisitor, which has served men for it has removed from them the terrible burden of freedom of conscience. The Inquisitor asks of Christ,

... You rejected the only absolute banner, which was offered to you, to make all men worship you alone incontestably - the banner of earthly bread, which you rejected in the name of freedom and the bread from heaven. And look what you have done further - and all again in the name of freedom! I tell you man has no more agonizing anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over with all speed the gift of freedom with which the unhappy creature is born. But only he can gain possession of men's freedom who is able to set their conscience at ease. With the bread you were given an incontestable banner: give him bread and man will worship you, for there is nothing more incontestable than bread.<sup>25</sup>

The argument of the Inquisitor turns on a particular understanding of man. He sees man as a wretched creature unable to respond to the call of love and freedom of God but only too willing to deny his higher purpose and subjugate himself before earthly masters all for the sake of tranquility and material happiness. They (men) will say 'we don't mind being your slaves so long as you feed us.'<sup>26</sup> The Inquisitor unashamedly says to Christ 'I do not want your love



because I do not love you myself ... we are not with you but with him (Satan): that is our secret! It's a long time - eight centuries - since we left you and went over to him. Exactly eight centuries ago we took from him what you rejected with scorn.<sup>27</sup>

According to Dostoevsky man in the historical church has been a child of authority, of Satan, rather than a child of freedom, of Christ. Christ is the embodiment of freedom. In him is the indissoluble link between freedom and personality. His call is to the dignity of man; that man should follow him freely even if this journey entails suffering. Nucho's opinion is that the emphasis Dostoevsky laid on the independence and the dignity of the human personality led him to distinguish between two kinds of freedom: initial freedom and final freedom. That the truth shall make men free is the final freedom, but that man must freely accept the truth is initial freedom.<sup>28</sup>

These two 'freedoms' are crucial to an understanding of many of Dostoevsky's characters through whom he demonstrates that freedom may conduct a man either to self-destruction or to the heights of spiritual transfiguration;<sup>29</sup> the difference lies in whether man rejects or accepts God.

Matthew Spinka in his book Christian Thought from Erasmus to Berdyaev says of Dostoevsky's view of

freedom,

The tragic judgement of freedom Dostoevsky depicts in the judgement of his hero's freedom passes into self will, into rebellious self-affirmation of man. Freedom becomes objectless and empty. Such objectless and emptiness is the freedom of Stavrogin Versilov (in The Possessed) the freedom of Svidrigailov and Feodor Parlovich Karamazov (in The Brothers Karamazov )...is disintegrating; the freedom of Raskolnikov (in Crime and Punishment ) ... leads to crime, and the demonic freedom of Kirilov and Ivan Karamazov destroys man. Freedom as self annihilates itself, passes into its opposite, disintegrates and destroys man.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand freedom rightly used,

... leads to the way of God-manhood. In God-manhood human freedom unites with divine freedom, the human image with the Divine image. By an inward experience, an inward living of freedom is attained in the light of that truth ... But Christ is not an external law, an external rule of life. His kingdom is incompatible with the kingdom of this world and Dostoevsky angrily denounces all deviations of Christianity toward the religion of constraint and force.<sup>31</sup>

Berdyaev accepted completely from Dostoevsky that the 'justification of both God and man must be looked for in freedom of which the tragic process of the world is only a function'.<sup>32</sup> Firstly, the irrational and mysterious nature of the freedom of man which can both destroy man or uplift him spiritually. Secondly, the nature and source of evil, without which goodness and freedom make no sense. Thirdly, the existence of good through compulsion which serves only to destroy

the humanity of man and, fourthly and most importantly, the need for a higher truth which preserves the freedom of man once he has chosen the truth in freedom. This apparent tautology implies that the truth is in freedom and freedom in the truth.

Berdyayev realized from his evaluation of Kant that it is not enough, in the face of our modern problems, to declare that man is in his nature free. The question is how does man remain free and not end in ideological slavery and both natural and spiritual self-destruction X which seems an immanent possibility in the twentieth century. The answer to Berdyayev lay in Dostoevsky's Christ.

The Christ-event as it was interpreted by Dostoevsky provided for him the twin ideas of personality and freedom. Berdyayev claimed that in no other religion or philosophical system did one discern what was expected of man or what man could potentially be. It was only in the Christ-event that the calling of man in his essential and existential freedom has been revealed to him in all clarity. In his autobiography Dream and Reality he wrote,

In becoming a believer in God I did not cease to believe in man and man's dignity and creative freedom. I became a Christian because I was seeking for a deeper and truer foundation for belief in man. 33

The impact of Dostoevsky's understanding of Christianity on Berdyaev was so great that it is actually in his book Dostoevsky, which is only ostensibly an elucidation of Dostoevsky's ideas, that Berdyaev works out his own philosophy of freedom.

For Berdyaev, freedom is not a means to happiness; freedom cannot be a means to anything. It is an end in itself in which and through which the relationship of God and man is worked out. The tragic aspect of human history, which has been ignored by traditional philosophers, is the result of the dialectic that obtains between the primordial, initial freedom of man to first choose the truth and the final freedom that comes of having chosen on the one hand, and the constraints of necessity, of objectification in the realm of space, time and causality, on the other.

Berdyaev starts his argument with the assertion that 'the truth shall make men free, but they must freely accept it and not be brought to it by force. Our Lord gives man the final liberty, but man must first freely have cleaved to him.'<sup>34</sup> The paradoxical nature of freedom is that there is a truth about freedom as well as freedom in the truth.<sup>35</sup> The truth about freedom is that man is by his very nature free to choose but the freedom in the truth is the 'gift of Christianity to the redeemed man'.<sup>36</sup>

The nature of freedom was unknown to Greek and Indian societies and it was only with the advent of Christianity that the awareness came that man's freedom to choose his destiny lay in his own hands. For Dostoevsky and for Berdyaev, Christianity confirmed both the freedom of man to reject or choose truth and the freedom in Christ once he chooses. For Berdyaev there is no realization of freedom outside of Christ for objectless freedom negates the authenticity of initial freedom. This is a very significant factor in understanding his idea of freedom, for although he follows Dostoevsky in making a distinction between initial and final freedom, he says quite clearly that the one condition of freedom cannot be realized without the other. The implication is that man cannot remain free although he is by his nature free if he does not choose the only truth that guarantees his freedom, namely, the 'Christ alternative.' Freedom without goal or direction ends in aimless, rebellious, voluntary, circumscribed liberty that distorts man and destroys his image. For Berdyaev the 'liberty rich in fulfilment that confirms man as man ... is in Christ'. In Dostoevsky he writes,

If there is no bond between human freedom and divine freedom, then freedom does not exist either. If all things are allowable to man then freedom becomes its own slave, and a man who is his own slave is lost. The human image needs the support of a higher nature and human freedom reaches its definitive expression in a higher freedom in truth. The dialectic is irrefutable and draws us into the wake of God-made man, by whom alone human freedom can be joined with divine freedom and the form of man with the form of God.<sup>37</sup>

Berdyayev makes several bold claims in this statement:

- 1) If all things are allowable to man then freedom becomes its own slave, that is, godless freedom turns in on itself to destroy itself;
- 2) the human image is only realized in a thorough-going freedom;
- 3) human freedom is defined in terms of a higher freedom;
- 4) the God-man is the meeting point of human and divine freedom; and the boldest of all,
- 5) the form of man joins with the form of God in the Christ-event.

Berdyayev's substantiation for the above five claims forms the outline of his later and more developed philosophy. He starts with the contention that if man is absolutely free all things are permitted to him and that man may aspire to become himself God, as Adam did. Here he echoes the concern of both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche. Nietzsche argued that man had killed God and in so doing had put himself beyond good and evil. However, Nietzsche had also emphasized that to be worthy of the crime of killing God, man must aspire to be God himself. This is dramatically represented in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment<sup>38</sup>, typified in the figure of Raskolnikov. Taking Nietzsche's commandment to its logical conclusion, Dostoevsky makes Raskolnikov decide to exercise the most extreme licence his terrible freedom allows him - to take the life of one whom he thinks

to be a lesser mortal. Raskolnikov's justification for the murder of the old usurer was that it would benefit himself and mankind. Although the book ends with Raskolnikov's pitiful lament that he was not equal to the crime because his conscience had failed him, the torture of his conscience, which was more painful than the penal servitude he was sentenced to, starts him on the long path to the realization of the real meaning of human freedom. The capricious exercise of his freedom led Raskolnikov to crime, sundering his conscience and enslaving him to an idea. He did not recognize the absolute value of every individual nor did he realize that in the name of freedom he had destroyed freedom.

Freedom is an absolute 'category' in so far as it is constrained by no external force. The only limit to freedom is freedom itself, meaning that I choose freedom not only for myself but for all of mankind. The only thing that binds man to this realization is his recognition of the absolute value of every individual. Berdyaev's comment on this was,

All things are not allowable because, as immanent experience proves, human nature is created in the image of God and every man has an absolute value in himself and as such the spiritual nature of man forbids the arbitrary killing of the least and most harmful of men; it means the loss of one's essential humanity and the dissolution of personality, it is a crime that no idea or 'higher end' can justify. 39

Raskolnikov placed himself on the throne of God to give expression to his freedom. His action he could only justify in the absence of God for he accepted no higher purpose for his freedom, and accordingly set himself up as judge over his fellow being.

Berdyayev maintains that,

When freedom has degenerated to self will it recognizes nothing as sacred or forbidden, for if there be no God but man then everything is allowable and man can try himself out at will. At the same time he lets himself get obsessed by some fixed idea and under its tyranny soon begins to disappear.<sup>40</sup>

For Berdyayev as it is for Dostoevsky there is no other basis for values except in God. There is no reason for man to feel constrained by any values at all in the absence of any higher truth; he becomes as a consequence, a law unto himself.

There have, however, been attempts to construct systems of ethics by atheistic philosophers who do not accept that values need necessarily derive this binding nature from God. Albert Camus is a good example of an existentialist atheist who attempted to make out a case for values in the absence of a higher order or God. In his books The Rebel<sup>41</sup> and The Myth of Sisypus<sup>42</sup>, Camus argues that man has a responsibility to rebel on behalf of values otherwise he faces non-being. The protagonist in the second book mentioned feels himself bound to roll the stone up the hill continuously or be destroyed. It



is through rebellion against non-being, which is the constant threat to man, that man creates values and confers meaning on the world. Although Camus explains that if man did not rebel he would be destroyed, he still does not present a convincing enough case for why the individual should be bound by this ethic at all. In the absence of God death signifies complete nothingness, and if that is the case man is not himself called to any higher purpose. If transcendence is denied, it still remains for there to be a value system that is 'binding' by its own internal logic which recognizes the absolute freedom of man.

The case of Raskolnikov answers to the first claim that Berdyaev made that if all things are allowable to man freedom becomes its own slave because freedom becomes licence and has shown itself to be destructive. The chaos that results from the arbitrary exercise of freedom annihilates in the end the 'bearer' of that freedom, man himself.

However, the fact that man could degenerate so easily into self-affirmation raises the question of the presence of evil in the world which obviously, as it has been shown in the discussion on Raskolnikov, acts in and through freedom. Indeed Berdyaev tells us that it is freedom which opens the 'path of evil to man, evil is proof of freedom, and man must pay the price'.<sup>43</sup>

According to Berdyaev the main argument levelled against belief in God is the existence of evil in the world. It was the central idea of the Russian atheists of the nineteenth century, the main reason for the rejection of God by the nihilists and the single most important argument that Ivan Karamazov used in The Brothers Karamazov against God. Paradoxically, Berdyaev interprets the presence of evil as proof of the existence of God, and not the reason for his absence. He claims that,

... if the world consisted wholly and uniquely of goodness and righteousness there would be no need for God for the world itself would be God. God is because evil is. And that means that God is because freedom is.<sup>44</sup>

If God may be freely chosen by man then the presupposition is that man is rooted in a freedom outside of God and that he may choose between God and this opposite. Any suggestion to the effect that a world harmony is an attainable ideal ignores the metaphysical reality of evil in the world, the fact of which makes both freedom and God meaningful.

Both Dostoevsky and Berdyaev stress that evil has metaphysical origins. They vehemently repudiated humanitarian positivist theories which explain the evil of man with reference to the social environment. Humanitarian theories signify for them the 'denial of the depth of human nature and of the liberty of

the spirit and the personal responsibility that goes with it'.<sup>45</sup> Berdyaev asserted that,

If man is nothing but a passive reflection of his social surroundings, an irresponsible creature, then there is no such thing as 'man' nor is there God, freedom, evil or good.<sup>46</sup>

Humanitarian-positivist theories are in any case in conflict with certain fundamentals of Christianity. Firstly, that man is a creature of sin is a metaphysical fact. Sin is part of the spiritual nature of man. It is not a sociological category which implies that man may be restored to his former perfection given the 'perfect' environment and setting. Admittedly no sociologist would make so bold a claim but social theories by and large claim to answer such complex issues as the existence of religious phenomena (notable examples are Marx and Feuerbach), religious conversion<sup>47</sup> and the presence of evil and wickedness in the world. Social theories have shed light on the problem of evil by clarifying the social contexts that may aggravate it, but they cannot answer the question 'why evil?'. Their theoretical frameworks remain at the level of description; they are Procrustean beds for metaphysics.

Secondly, and most importantly, humanitarian-positivist theories forget that the appeal of the God-man was to the free human spirit to redeem itself from sin. If the sociologists are right that it is the environment

that is corrupting man, then the Jews were right in expecting a messiah who would be first and foremost a social reformer and political liberator.

It is because evil has metaphysical roots embedded in the mystery of freedom and not sociological roots, that God is meaningful for if there were no freedom then God alone would be responsible for evil and this would not be consistent with the nature of God as he is revealed in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The loving, forgiving and merciful God who suffers alongside man is anti-thetical to evil, not responsible for it. Man is free, then, to make a choice between God and evil. This is why Christ made an appeal in freedom to the wayward spirit of men to follow him, pointing the only way by which the freedom of the individual man could be guaranteed. According to Berdyaev, the kingdom of God is the kingdom of freedom. To respond to the call of God means to transcend evil freely for any compulsory good is not of the kingdom of God. Berdyaev draws attention to the fact that,

(Christ) used no coercion to make us believe in him as in God; he had not the might and majesty of the sovereigns of this world; the kingdom that he preached was not here. Therein lies the radical secret of Jesus Christ, the secret of freedom.<sup>48</sup>

No sociologically based theory which guarantees world harmony can effect such an ideal except through compulsion, which is the power of the Anti-Christ,

the power of Christ being freedom through freedom itself. The biggest 'price' that man will have to pay for an earthly 'paradise' is the sacrifice of his freedom. Berdyaev spells out the gloomy condition of man in such a case,

... evil and suffering could be abolished and the world forced to be good and 'happy', but man would have lost his likeness to God, which primarily resides in his freedom.<sup>49</sup>

This insistence on freedom as a priori settles for Berdyaev two major problems that have confused western thinkers for centuries and which have been the motivating reason for the vision of earthly Utopias:

1. the relation between freedom and, good and evil;
2. the relation between freedom and happiness. This confusion does not arise for Berdyaev because freedom is the primary reality. Good and evil are both rooted in freedom so any identification or confusion of freedom with goodness and perfection negates freedom and strengthens compulsion; obligatory goodness ceases to be goodness by the fact of its constraint. But free goodness, which alone is true, entails the liberty of evil.<sup>50</sup> For Berdyaev there are two types of evil.

Evil which is self explanatory and obligatory goodness which is also evil, for compulsion, power and authority are symbols of the Anti-Christ. Compulsory goodness can no longer be goodness since it denies freedom thereby denying both man and God. Berdyaev sums up the antithesis between freedom and evil thus,

Free goodness involves the freedom of evil but freedom of evil leads to destruction of freedom itself and its degeneration into an evil necessity. On the other hand, the denial of the freedom of evil in favour of an exclusive freedom of good ends equally in a negation of freedom and its degeneration into a necessity. But a good necessity is not good because goodness resides in freedom from necessity.<sup>51</sup>

For Berdyaev the ethics of good and evil are clearly of secondary importance. Man is primarily caught in the dialectic of freedom and necessity or compulsion, and only when he has freed himself from compulsion can he consider the free choice between good and evil. In other words, only if the freedom to choose is realized can man make ethical choices.

With regard to the problem of freedom and happiness, the same argument holds true. Berdyaev argues that happiness is not the last end of man. Certainly not an enforced happiness nor a superficial happiness that ignores the reality of evil or the tragic process of history. Authentic happiness, for Berdyaev, is far removed from the Utopian visions of Marx and the Russian socialists. He conceives happiness to be the satisfaction of the individual who is not only free to choose the truth but who remains free in the choice. Of course, this may entail much suffering but man can never be free from suffering because he will always be faced with the choices between good and evil. Any Utopian construction that anticipates a happy

society which ignores the reality of evil is a denial of freedom and a mockery of the human condition.

Berdyaev has thus moved from Marxism to Kantianism by his separation of freedom from the realm of necessity. Yet he has gone beyond Kant also by his rejection of the Idealist separation of the realm of freedom from the realm of nature. Berdyaev moved to Existentialism, particularly the type represented by Dostoevsky.

Having identified in Kant that man essentially has a dual nature, of freedom and necessity, Berdyaev found in Dostoevsky what was missing in Kant, namely, the connection between freedom and nature and its significance for man. The phenomenon of the God-man, the meeting point of the realms of freedom and necessity, provided for Berdyaev the existential standpoint for the understanding of man. The Christian world-view explained for him the essential sinfulness of man and his 'condemnation' to alienation and necessity; the reason for evil which must exist if man is to choose freely between evil and God; and the inevitability of suffering for the conflict in the human spirit between the desire for freedom and the weakness of the 'flesh' where flesh refers to any earthly restraint and which must produce by its contradictory nature pain and suffering. Ultimately evil and suffering are meaningful if one sees the Christian message as a message of voluntary redemption. This means that the Christian message is essentially a message of freedom - God

presupposes freedom, evil and suffering.

Berdyaev is well aware of the polemical nature of his ideas and its incompatibility with the way in which Christ has been previously interpreted. Indeed he rejects the traditional attempts primarily because they could not cope with the freedom of man. His own personalistic philosophy which goes further than even existentialism, in its insistence on freedom, grows out of his attempt to give a philosophical basis to Dostoevsky's and his own ideas on freedom and God, God-man and man.

Berdyaev seeks a philosophical basis for the thesis that the God-man is the incarnation of freedom and that man 'participates' in an absolute freedom before which God himself is powerless. This basis he finds in German mysticism.

The mystics especially Jacob Boehme claimed that an irrational principle lay at the basis of being. Boehme conceived of God as the creator who emerges from a state of undifferentiated immobility to become God.

This state of primordial and irrational freedom Boehme called Urgrund. In The Destiny of Man Berdyaev wrote,

Out of the Divine nothing, the Gottheit or Urgrund, the Holy Trinity, God the Creator is born. The creation of the world by God the Creator is a secondary act. From this point of view it may be said that freedom is not created by God: it is rooted in the nothing, in the Urgrund from all eternity. 52



While Berdyaev was profoundly affected by Boehme's idea of preexistential freedom he could not reconcile himself to Boehme's idea that freedom is in God. It is the inmost mysterious principle of divine life for Boehme. Berdyaev conceived it to be outside God preferring not to speak of the 'unspeakable and ineffable ... mystery of God's life'. According to Berdyaev,

Out of the Abyss, out of the Divine nothing, is born the Trinitarian God and He is confronted with meonic freedom. He creates out of nothing the world and man and expects from them an answer to His call - an answer from the depths of freedom. 53

For Berdyaev the Gottheit or Ungrund is not in itself creative for it is absolute, but the person becomes in the creative act the correlative in freedom of man and the world. So while the absolute is a mystery, God the creator has been revealed. Kolakowski asserts that the reason Boehme offered for the creative act of God is that God emerges from his solitude and overstepping his own boundaries in search of himself, engages in creative activity. God the creator becomes then the correlative of the creature with each finding definition and meaning in the other.<sup>54</sup> This point is emphasized by Angelus Silesius who wrote,

Ich weiss, dass ohne mich Gott nicht  
ein nu kann Leben, werd ich zu nicht,  
er muss von not den Geist aufgeben.<sup>55</sup>

According to the mystics, represented here by Boehme and Angelius Silesius, God needs man as much as man needs God. God's creative act was an act of self realization for he created man out of freedom in his own image. Man then participates of the Divine in God and is a spiritual being, because freedom obtains in spirit. God becomes the correlative of man, the father of man in so far as he created him but powerless before man's freedom. Man is as potentially free as God and, therefore, is capable of forming himself as personality. According to Berdyaev, it was to reveal to man his freedom and the fact that the shaping of his personality, which is an act of redemption lies in his own hands, that God revealed himself in history in the Christ-event. God could do no other in his impotence before man's freedom. He can only teach and direct but he cannot compel. Berdyaev asserts that the myth of the fall tells of this powerlessness of the creator to avert the evil resulting from freedom which He has not created. At first the answer to God's call from the depths of freedom was consent to creation, then it was rebellion and hostility towards God in an expression of self will to exercise freedom, and this is a return to original non-being.

All rebellion against God is a return to non-being which assumes the form of false, illusory being, and is a victory of non-being over the Divine light. And it is only then that the nothing which is not evil becomes evil. Then comes God's second act: He descends

into non-being into the abyss of freedom that has degenerated into evil; He manifests Himself not in power but in sacrifice; the Divine sacrifice, the Divine self crucifixion must conquer evil (in) meonic freedom by enlightening it from within, without forcing it, without depriving the created world of freedom. 56

Man is capable of rebelling against God because man is as free as God. God created man out of the depths of freedom where good and evil have their source. Man, therefore, is by virtue of his nature both potentially good and potentially evil. But according to Berdyaev, spiritual reality is beyond good and evil and man's creation belongs to spiritual reality not to the natural order. It is only when man rebels against God that good and evil actually come into being for man's assertion of self-will denies freedom and in so doing produces its opposite - slavery which is the realm of ethics. In the face of man's rebellion the only course left to God is to illuminate slavery, calling man to a realization of his essential freedom. Man in his freedom may choose to either redeem himself or he may choose to follow his own will.

The Christianity Berdyaev subscribes to is paradoxical. It is made paradoxical by the consistency with which Berdyaev draws the conclusions from the primary reality of freedom: God and man both have their source in freedom - God creates himself and then man. While man as created being is the product of God's creation, his

essential freedom is outside the jurisdiction of God. Man ironically as created being has the freedom to rebel or accept God. However, while man may have this apparent freedom of choice, his choice is actually the choice between freedom and slavery. Christianity has the secret of authentic freedom; the Anti-Christ is of the realm of compulsion.

This explanation of course would call into question the 'validity' of the initial freedom in the first place for man appears to be free to choose either freedom or slavery. The fall is the result of wrong choice and man collapses into bondage. In the realm of nature he does not recognize that he has a higher purpose and that he must free himself to attain it. This is the meaning of revelation. Revelation is the summons of man back to freedom, a call away from compulsion. It draws attention to the spirituality of man, the link man has with the Divine Being, reminding man that he was forged by freedom in the image of God. It is in the awakening of the spirituality of man, the rising to the call of freedom, that personality is born. However, before we go on to the discussion about personality, some of the problems associated with Berdyaev's idea of freedom should be highlighted.

Firstly, Berdyaev's philosophy is thoroughly Idealistic. Reality, for him, is spiritual reality. The fallenness of man is spiritual alienation. Man was created in

spiritual reality; in eternity. He shares the freedom and divinity of God for he was created in an act of God's self-realization. He is the creaturely correlative of God defining himself in terms of God and God in terms of him. God is an existential reality for Berdyaev. He is perfect personality, perfect humanity, perfect immortality, perfect freedom and perfect spirit. The creature he begot in his own image, argues Berdyaev, shares in all of these features of God. At this point, Berdyaev is not clear on what makes man different from God. Solovyev, for example, had differentiated between God and man by arguing that while divinity belongs to God and man, God possesses divinity in eternal reality while man can only have it granted to him.<sup>57</sup> However, the creature in an expression of his freedom did not choose his creator but the Anti-Christ (i.e. the opposite of God - the power of necessity) thereby becoming estranged and alienated from himself. This is the condition of man in the natural order. He is a creature of conflict and objectification. Every free expression of his is trapped in space, time and causality maintaining man's spirit in perpetual disjunction.

The realm of nature is explained by Berdyaev in terms of the realm of Spirit. This immediately raises the question of the 'reality' of the God-man. For Berdyaev the suffering of Christ in history is the symbolic revelation of the suffering of God in eternity. So called 'religious' events in this world are symbolic

expressions of the events in reality, that is, in the realm of spirit. In his book Freedom and the Spirit Berdyaev spends a whole chapter - "Symbol myth and dogma" - discussing the nature of myths and symbols as the only meaningful way of speaking about God, or the only way in which God may communicate with us. Symbolism is not alienation of spirit; it is the manifestation of spiritual reality in space, time and causality. It does not objectify and is not part of the natural order; it is symbolic. The spirit of man which reaches out to spiritual reality in acts of creation, on the other hand, objectifies immediately.

If God belongs to a spiritual reality and communicates with man through symbolism, that is, if symbolism is the irruption of the spiritual into the natural, how does man communicate with God? Here Berdyaev reveals his mystical bias.

Communication with God is possible through mystical intuition. Mysticism is the penetration of the spirit of man into spiritual reality. Berdyaev does not even attempt to argue out a case for mysticism. As far as he is concerned, those with heightened consciousnesses experience mystical communion and those who have had no such experience have no heightened consciousness. Mysticism cannot be discounted for it may well be that the critic is not in possession of a heightened spirituality.

The mystery of God, for Berdyaev, cannot be rationalized, yet he himself provides the most vigorously argued out explanation for such far removed ideas like the 'birth of God'. The only issue that lies outside Berdyaev's logic or into which his logic cannot penetrate, is the stuff from which God was born and the manner in which He came into existence. Man has knowledge of this issue only through mystical intuition.

It may be said in Berdyaev's defence that if one starts with freedom and not Being, with man and not God, speculation is inevitable to give coherence to, and sense to one's, claims. It must be borne in mind, however, that Berdyaev's idea of a becoming God is wholly outside the Biblical purview. His limitation of the powers of God would be considered heretical by most. However, Berdyaev to absolve God from the responsibility of evil is forced to make him impotent before man's freedom. Berdyaev's insistence on the divinity of man is blasphemous to most. These objections will be considered in greater depth later on. Suffice it to say now that X Berdyaev's insistence on the primordial reality of freedom forces him to postulate a completely revolutionary interpretation of the Christian message in terms of which he attempts to offer an explanation of personality. Hence, while his view of man only appears to open man to the sin of hubris, nothing is further from Berdyaev's aim. On the contrary, his is a call to even greater and more meaningful commitment in faith and freedom.

At the heart of Berdyaev's thought, says Fuad Nucho, 'lies a persistent attempt to understand what it means to be a person. Berdyaev's philosophy of Freedom begins and ends with man'.<sup>58</sup>

Berdyaev tirelessly points out in his discussion on freedom that the most significant existential feature is personality. In fact, according to Berdyaev,

personality is not only related to freedom but cannot exist without it. To realize personality is to achieve inner freedom; to liberate man from all external determination. 59

From Berdyaev's perspective freedom is only significant if it can be actualized in his being for the reality of human freedom and the responsibility incurred therefrom is the central theme of existentialism. This means that every human being is both an end in himself and is solely responsible for his own destiny. In Slavery and Freedom Berdyaev wrote,

As a result of a long spiritual and intellectual journey I have arrived at a particularly keen awareness of the fact that every human personality of the least significance of men, bearing as it does within itself the image of the highest existence cannot be a means to an end whatever. It has in itself an existential centre and has a right not only to life, a right derived by contemporary civilization, but also a right to possess the universal content of life. 60

While Berdyaev may say that man has a right to possess the universal content of life, he repeats frequently



that man is not born a complete personality with a universal content; he is only potentially so because he was fashioned after the divine image. Man must so to speak give birth to his own personality. In Berdyaev's words,

Man is by no means a completely finished product. Rather he moulds and creates himself in and through his experience of life, through spiritual conflict and through those various trials which his destiny imposes upon him - man is only what God is planning - a projected design.<sup>61</sup>

He enforces this point succinctly in a passage from his Truth and Revelation,

The fundamental problem of Existential philosophy is that of personality. I am an Ego before I become a personality. ... The Ego's purpose is to realize its personality and this involves it in an incessant struggle. 62

The Ego or individual was the fundamental category of the existentialists. Berdyaev goes beyond the Ego (and existentialism) when he speaks of personality. For a clearer understanding of personality one ought to look at the comparison Berdyaev makes between 'personality' and 'the individual' in his book The Beginning and the End. According to him the individual is a naturalistic and sociological category belonging to the natural world. Personality, on the other hand, is a spiritual and ethical category not born of natural parents but created spiritually, giving effect to the Divine idea of man. Personality is not man as phenomenon but man as noumenon.

He goes on to declare that while the individual is part of a race or society, the personality is not part of a whole; it is spiritual and therefore has a claim to be its own end and supreme value, with a claim to a whole not a part. For Berdyaev human personality as an integral form is not part of the world order. Man is ultimately a spiritual personality.<sup>63</sup> As Nucho states it,

... by nature man is an individual; by spirit he is a personality .... We may say of man that he lacks personality but we cannot deny him individuality. 64

Within the Christian context personality is the image and likeness of God in man and this is why it rises above the natural life.<sup>65</sup> Personality is the true path leading to God; it is the fruit of the struggle of the spirit against its own alienation. The ultimate aspiration of man is to attain to perfect personality not to happiness, nor even the perfect society; nor the amelioration of suffering. The capacity to bear pain is an indissoluble part of the task to create personality. A life without inner conflict is a life devoid of spiritual growth. Because personality is creative activity and because it presupposes the continuous conflict of spirit with nature, personality is constantly in a process of change and becoming. However, with change there is also the element of immutability. The paradoxical nature of personality is that, on the one hand, it is 'potentially universal', and, on the other

hand it is a distinct and particular being unique in every respect. Personality is the response to the summons of the God-man; a summons for spirit to repudiate the realm of Caesar since Caesar has an irresistible tendency to demand not only,

what is properly his own, but also what is God's. He wants the whole of man to be subject to himself. And in this lies the greatest tragedy of history, that of freedom and necessity of the human fate and historic destiny. 66

.....

This chapter has attempted to highlight the significance and the centrality of the idea of freedom to Berdyaev's whole philosophy. His concern for the freedom of man led him to consider most seriously the two main contemporary philosophical quests for freedom viz. Marxism and existentialism. It would have been obvious in the above discussion that Berdyaev imbibes the critical concerns and many insights from both these philosophical approaches yet goes beyond them. His disenchantment with Marxism is in some respects based on the same reasons why he could not accept atheistic existentialism, viz their gratuitous jettisoning of God and evil. Marxism does not take the presence of evil seriously enough and Existentialism without God falls prey to a vacuous actionalism in the face of evil which it perceives as the irrationality of existence.

Yet it is his grappling with the irrationality of human existence, that is, with the fate and destiny of man qua man not Grossmensch or slave, that leads Berdyaev to faith in God. Contrary to the traditional arguments that questioned faith because of the presence of evil, it was his serious grappling with the problem of theodicy that led him to believe in God.

However, contrary to this belief being a theological concern only, Berdyaev builds his whole philosophy around this issue of the primordial freedom of man and God. This is a novelty in philosophical tradition.

For Berdyaev, the freedom that Marxism and Existentialism sought was not derived from one or other theory about freedom but is a priori, a metaphysical quantum, behind any idea of God and man. Here also is the theological novelty. Both God and man have their source in freedom and since man is made in the image of God he realizes his true freedom in reconciliation with God. However, because he is free such a turning to God is entirely his decision because before man's freedom, even God is impotent. Quite logically, anything less does violence to man's freedom.

One of Berdyaev's most important contributions to philosophical and theological discussions on freedom, a point that both Marxism and Existentialism had failed to fully grasp, is the important distinction he made between necessity and freedom; a point that has been

repeatedly made in this chapter. Only in absolute freedom can Berdyaev's high view of man be fully understood. Alienated man enslaved in the realm of necessity (the realm outside of God and freedom) is essentially natural man who turns his back on full realization of his spiritual potential.

These concerns about freedom and God are ultimately related to Berdyaev's central concern for man. While Marxism reduces man to a fundamental relation within a collectivism where man is swallowed up by social being, Existentialism attempts to restore man's autonomy by highlighting the significance of the individual. Berdyaev believes both have not gone far enough. The Existentialists had quite correctly refocussed on the individual in his thrownness; the fact of his being there. Yet, for Berdyaev, that is still part of the realm of necessity because it is his natural dimension. What was needed now was his development to full personality, i.e. his development from the natural to the spiritual; from necessity to freedom. Thus man's whole existence is placed in the tension between freedom and personhood, a quest which gives philosophical underpinning to a living and vital ethics; not an object-less ethics that leads to greater alienation from reality where human striving is directed to some deceptive Utopia; nor an ethics, as G.A. Rauche warns about, 'that becomes frustrating operationalism or empty actionalism, a problem that both Marxism and Existen-

tialism face'.<sup>67</sup>

Of course, Berdyaev's presuppositions cannot be proved and he can be accused of gratuitous speculation also. His philosophical 'model' may therefore also be criticised. However, he is aware that these presuppositions cannot be empirically shown, but that is precisely why he refuses to attempt to do so. Such an attempt would end up as an exercise in the realm of necessity. Hence his great appreciation for mysticism.

However, here is an attempt by a philosopher to bring a new dimension to bear on philosophical discussion. His all-encompassing concern for personality and the freedom of man is a refreshingly different and important contribution to the way out of the impasse that modern man encounters in this age of dogmatism, intolerance and the destruction that threatens him in the face of raging totalitarian and absolutist powers. It is this concern for man that forces Berdyaev to investigate the meaning of personality, which shall be analysed in the next two chapters of this dissertation.

## Footnotes

1. Berdyaev, N. The Divine and the Human, p. vi.
2. Berdyaev, N. The Russian Revolution, p. 53f;  
The End of our Time, pp. 134f; cf.  
also, Vallon, M.A. An Apostle of Freedom, p. 58.
3. Berdyaev, N. Slavery and Freedom, p. 13;  
Truth and Revelation, p. 35.
- ✓ 4. Berdyaev, N. Slavery and Freedom, p. 13.
5. Berdyaev, N. Dream and Reality, p. 50f.
6. Berdyaev, N. Truth and Revelation, p. 35.
7. Berdyaev, N. The Russian Revolution, pp. 30f; 40-49.
8. Berdyaev, N. Slavery and Freedom, p. 13.
9. Rauche, G.A. Abdication of Philosophy ..., p. 150 and  
several other places in his new book  
Theory and Practice.
10. Berdyaev, N.A. Solitude and Society, p. 30.
11. Berdyaev, N.A. The Destiny of Man, pp. 103f.
12. Berdyaev, N.A. Solitude and Society, p. 36.
13. Berdyaev bases this assessment on the views that Kierkegaard expresses in Fear and Trembling, for example, and Barth's Römerbrief.
14. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 5.
15. Ibid, p. 15.
16. Jaspers, K. The Way to Wisdom in Readings in Philosophy  
(ed) Kelly and Tallon, p. 155.
17. Berdyaev, N.A. Solitude and Society, p. 27.
18. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 60.

19. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 60.
20. Ibid, p. 9.
- 21a. Berdyaev, N.A. Beginning and End p. 60.
- 21b. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 14.
22. Nucho, F. Berdyaev's Philosophy, p. 50.
23. Dostoevsky, F. The Brothers Karamazov, p. 298.
24. Ibid., p. 299.
25. Ibid., p. 298.
26. Ibid., p. 297.
27. Ibid., p. 302.
28. Nucho, F. Berdyaev's Philosophy ..., p. 50.
29. Ibid., p. 40.
30. Spinka, M. Christian Thought from Erasmus to Berdyaev, p. 224.
31. Ibid., p. 225.
32. Berdyaev, N.A. Dostoevsky, p. 71.
33. Berdyaev, N.A. Dream and Reality, p. 180.
34. Berdyaev, N.A. Truth and Revelation, p. 22.
35. Ibid., p. 24.
36. Ibid., pp. 28; 48.
37. Berdyaev, N.A. Dostoevsky p. 90.
38. Dostoevsky, F. Crime and Punishment, a theme throughout the novel.
39. Berdyaev, N.A. Dostoevsky, p. 67.
40. Ibid., p. 97.
41. Camus, A. The Rebel, an idea that is developed throughout the book.
42. Camus, A. The Myth of Sisyphus, a general theme.



43. Berdyaev, N.A. Dostoevsky, p. 91.
44. Ibid., p. 87.
45. Ibid., p. 90.
46. Loc. cit.
47. Pillay, G.J. Religion at the Limits?, introduction, pp. i-ix.
48. Berdyaev, N.A. Dostoevsky, p. 79.
49. Ibid., p. 81.
50. Loc. cit.
51. Loc. cit.
52. Berdyaev, N.A. The Destiny of Man, p. 25.
53. Ibid., p. 25.
54. Kolakowski, L. Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, p. 36.
55. Calian, S.C. The Significance of Eschatology in the thought of Nicholas Berdyaev, p. 14.
56. Berdyaev, N.A. The Destiny of Man, p. 26.
57. Nucho, F. Op. cit., p. 34.
58. Ibid., p. 34.
59. Berdyaev, N.A. Solitude and Society, p. 149.
60. Berdyaev, N.A. Slavery and Freedom, p. 10.
61. Ibid., p. 11.
62. Berdyaev, N.A. Truth and Revelation, p. 19.
63. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 136.
64. Nucho, F. Op. cit., p. 72.
65. Berdyaev, N.A. Dream and Reality, p. 155.
66. Nucho, F. Op. cit., p. 91.
67. Rauche, G.A. Abdication of Philosophy . . ., pp. 135f.

### Chapter III

#### The Meaning of Personality and the Abdication of the Humane

The argument so far is that philosophical theories have failed to give a meaningful account of the problematic nature of man because of their inability to come to terms with the terrible freedom of man. It was essayed to show that the evolution of Berdyaev's thought from a Marxist to an Idealist-existentialist and eventually personalist position was in response to the failure of conventional philosophy to cope with the tragic aspect of human history; an attempt to defend freedom as the primary reality in terms of which man has his being.

The first part of the argument (Chapters I and II) dealt primarily with the problem of freedom. The abdication of freedom in both the East and West and the distortion of the image of man was the main theme of Chapter I. Chapter II discussed the realization in Berdyaev's philosophy that freedom is the real ground of all being and that the true nature of man i.e. his humane-ness, can only be realized in and through freedom.

The quest for the essentially humane is the existential implication of Berdyaev's philosophy. The second part of the argument discusses, in the light of Berdyaev's idea of Freedom, the actualization of the humane. According to Berdyaev humanity cannot be attained outside freedom and

outside God. The search for humanity in the absence of any higher guiding principle leads, on the one hand, to rank individualism, and on the other, to oppressive collectivism. The tragic irony is that in the name of the humane, man-centredness calls into being its opposite - the antihumane, the evidence of which is man's growing dehumanization within totalitarian ideologies.

Proof for the above argument Berdyaev finds in the cultural Renaissance and Humanism of the West and the rise of Socialism in the East. For him personality had been betrayed in its own name. The twentieth century has reaped the unhappy fruit of the glorification of man in the West for it gave rise to the atomic individualism of modern western man. The anguished search for the amelioration of the pitiful condition of man in the East by thinkers who relied entirely on their own strength, believing in their own power, resulted in oppressive collectivism.

Berdyaev's decision to examine cultural epochs to prove the point about individual man rests on the fact that human personality results from the creative activity of man and is therefore always in a state of becoming. Not until death does the personality cease to develop. Since, however, man is rooted in history and history is made from both the contradictory and harmonious creativity of individual personalities, culture reflects the development of the values and spirituality of man. Berdyaev's assessment of the means of certain cultural

phases, namely Humanism and Communism, serves to reveal the extent of freedom or unfreedom achieved by man and the maturity or immaturity of personality.

Indeed Berdyaev's analysis of Humanism and Communism is an attempt to show that authentic humanity, that is, personality, may only be sought in and through God, i.e. in and through freedom.

### 3.1 The Meaning and Impact of Humanism

In his book The End of Our Time, Berdyaev claimed that modern man is witnessing the end of the Renaissance, for modern history, now coming to an end with the exhaustion of both creative and spiritual sources, was conceived at the time of the Renaissance.

The middle ages ended with the Christian mystical Renaissance of the fourteenth century which served as a bridge to the Humanist phase. Robert Ergang, writing in From the Renaissance to Waterloo, defines the Renaissance as 'the entire process of transition in western Europe from the medieval to the modern world.'<sup>1</sup> Because Renaissance, or rebirth, suggests a 'cataclysmic conception of historical development', it means that the intensification of the secular spirit in literature, philosophy and art of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which heralded the shift from the theocentric to the secular, revealed a sudden disclosure of the hidden talents of man.

Erganz claims that 'the idea of man's essential sinfulness and guilt gave way to a new appreciation of the dignity of human nature; Christian humility was now replaced by a consciousness of human power.'<sup>2</sup> The spirit of the Renaissance is typified in the words of Hamlet who declared,

What a piece of work man is! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and movement, how express and admirable; in action, how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals. <sup>3</sup>

This description of man epitomizes the new found wonder in the talents of man in the art and literature of the Renaissance. Berdyaev openly acknowledges the artistic achievements of the Renaissance, arguing that it surpassed even Greek art in its striving for unfulfilled spiritual perfection rather than perfection of form. However, he claimed that it was the negative moment in the Renaissance itself which grew over the centuries to usher in the modern crisis. Pitrim Sorokin in his summary of Berdyaev's interpretation of the Renaissance and Humanism wrote,

It was, therefore, the period of man's liberation from all "superhuman" controls, and deconcentration of his concentrated inner forces, the period in which he spent the creative funds accumulated in the medieval period, and abandoned the religious central value of the Middle Ages; the period of secularization and external freedom. These tasks were accomplished in the course of some six centuries. Humanist culture spent most of its funds accumulated in the previous periods and exhausted its creative power. <sup>4</sup>

According to Berdyaev the freeplay of the creative powers of man was only apparent freedom for 'the more proudly Humanist man relied upon himself, and the more he moved away from the Christian, Divine, medieval foundations of personality, the less creative, less powerful, and less self-controlling he grew to maturity.'<sup>5</sup>

Berdyaev claimed that the Renaissance was based on a humanism because it encouraged the creativity of man as a natural not a spiritual being. But natural man has no constant and enduring source of inspiration beyond and above him and the 'freeplay of his human forces could not possibly go on forever'. This is the crisis of the nineteenth century; the drying up of the Graeco-Roman fount of western culture. Berdyaev describes it thus,

There was within the Renaissance all that was needed for its own annihilation. It freed the creative forces of man and gave his powers the highest expression in art, and in that it operated within the realm of truth. But it also separated man from the spiritual fountains of life; it denied the spiritual man, who cannot but be a creator, and affirmed in his place the natural man alone, the slave of necessity. The triumph of the natural man over the spiritual man in modern history had to lead to sterility; to the destruction of Humanism by its own self, the end of the Renaissance. 6

It is interesting to note here that Berdyaev's philosophy implicitly denies the shift from theocentric to anthropocentric worlds. He would regard the move in the Middle Ages to be from the theocentric to the secular. His philosophy implies that a preoccupation with the interests

and mundane affairs of man does not mean an abiding interest in man, the subject, himself. Anthropocentrism is only authentic when man remains in the image of the Divine, that is, the God-man. Hence, the separation that was effected between man and his spiritual sources in later Humanism, was the beginning of the destruction of the image of man itself.

According to Berdyaev, the beginnings of Humanism was still close to Christianity but the Renaissance had drawn its inspiration from pagan sources also, and the contradiction between the pagan and Christian sources was bound to set up a tension which would destroy, in the end, the real humanity of man. Berdyaev himself wrote that,

It is an unfolding of ideas and events wherein we see Humanism destroying itself by its own dialectic, for the putting up of man without God and against God, the denial of the divine image and likeness in himself, lead to his own negation and destruction; the affirming of paganism against Christianity means the denial and demolition of his sacred past. 7

Berdyaev claimed that the Reformation also had its roots in the Renaissance. While he admitted the eternal truths and authentic religious elements in Luther's revolt, Berdyaev maintains that it was the spirit of rebellion in the Reformation which led to the evolution of modern history towards the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The reason for this is that the Reformation asserted individual faith at the expense of the organic

whole which Catholicism had managed to maintain. Consequently, claimed Berdyaev, the Reformation together with the cultural impact of the Renaissance and Humanism, evolved towards modern day Rationalism, Positivism, Socialism and Anarchism. The Enlightenment was for Berdyaev not really the coming of age of man, as it is understood by most, but a 'pale reflection of the Renaissance, a lingering form of humanistic self-affirmation'.<sup>8</sup>

Berdyaev asserted in his book The End of Our Time that Humanism obtained its humaneness from Christ, for man could not have evolved a humanistic philosophy from the culture of antiquity only. However, as Humanism developed and human creativity was released in abundance, man became separated from God and his destruction began there, for man is made in the image and likeness of God.

For Berdyaev, the tragedy of modern times is Humanism's turning against man for when man in his self-conceit became content with the image and likeness of nature, to be the natural man only, the spiritual centre of human personality was lost. When this happens, says Berdyaev, that is, when Humanism denies the spirituality of man, that man is handed over from the eternal to the temporal. This means that the individual will is trapped within the temporal and is aimless, directed towards nothing and leads man to the 'wilderness of the human soul'.<sup>9</sup> The upshot of all of this is that humanism emphasized human individuality at the expense of personality. For Berdyaev, the individual



is still an objective category that has meaning only against its opposite, that is, for example the Hegelian Absolute. But the individual only becomes an authentic subject or human personality, when it is filled with content, that is, spiritual content, which provides a source of creativity, for it is only in creativity, that is, in the creation of values that personality is born.

According to Berdyaev when man is cut off from his spiritual fountainhead he denies authentic creativity and becomes instead excessively individualistic or excessively socialistic. These two manifestations of the 'abstract decomposition of personality and society' are represented by both Nietzsche and Marx. Nietzsche exemplifies the destruction of Humanism through individualism and Marx shows up its decomposition in a collectivist form.

Neither in the individualism of Nietzsche nor in the collectivism of Marx, does man, sufficient unto himself, triumph. Both Marx and Nietzsche served only to unmask the illusions of Humanism for the Renaissance is consummated in them in different ways.<sup>10</sup> Berdyaev almost bewailing the 'drying up' of the Graeco-Roman 'headwater of all European culture' wrote,

The nineteenth century saw the decomposition of Humanism by itself, the end of the Renaissance, the collapse of the fallacious 'reign of man', the final demonstration that he could no longer be a creator after he had set himself up against God. 11

Individualism epitomizes the atomization of man who ends up proud, self-conceited, lonely and shut up within himself, thereby, creating a condition that would destroy man's essential nature. Socialism, on the other hand, is the result of the natural aggregation of human beings who seek to forge a common social centre when this centre has ceased to be religious.

The latter decomposition of the spirit of the Renaissance is nowhere seen so clearly as the nineteenth century crisis of Russian man.

### 3.2 The Russian Revolution

Berdyaev maintains that there is no cultural period in the history of Russia which can truly be called Renaissance. But Humanism infiltrated and influenced the Russian intelligentsia albeit in a negative way for it entered Russia 'at the moment of its decay' when it was destroying both itself and the Divine image of man. Consequently, the 'Russian soul of the nineteenth century was a suffering soul brought to the point of self torture'.<sup>12</sup>

According to Berdyaev the Russian problem started with the reforms of Peter the Great which, as was explained in Chapter I, resulted in the schism between the 'upper classes' and the peasants. Peter's attacks on the orthodox church and hallowed Russian customs, virtually destroyed the faith of the Russians in the Orthodox

Christian empire. The immediate and direct result of this was that, while religious fervour was dimmed, the Russian messianic idea remarried but in profound divorce from its actual surroundings. Thus a 'schismatic and eschatological disposition is the fundamental psychological fact of the Russian nineteenth century; it will express itself both in a religious way and in an anti-religious (an inverted religious) way.'<sup>13</sup>

Berdyayev never tired of stressing the fact that the Russian religious impetus had in the nineteenth century been channelled to a secular end. He wrote in The Russian Revolution,

We have here a transposition of religious motives and religious psychology into a non-religious or anti-religious sphere, into the region of social problems, so that the spiritual energy of religion flows into social channels, which thereby takes on a religious character, and becomes a breeding ground for a peculiar form of social idolatry. <sup>14</sup>

That Russian socialism was a religious not a political phenomenon, Berdyayev learnt from Dostoevsky. Russian socialism during the nineteenth century was nihilistic and atheistic in character and the so called love for humanity was only love for the idea of the humane for it was this type of socialism that ushered in the communism of the twentieth century which mercilessly crushed the idea of individuality and personality.

Leaders of Russian nihilism like Belinsky, Chenishevsky

X

and Dobroliubov repudiated Orthodox Christianity on the grounds of the scandal and injustice of the world. Hence Russian nihilism was a sort of religious polemic. Dobroliubov's nihilism, for example, had noble and spiritual motives. According to Berdyaev,

Early nihilism was characterized by the quest of truth at all costs, a protest against every conventional lie and hypocrisy; it was especially a denudation, a throwing away of all veils and garments, a belief that, once that was done, the truth of life would be revealed. The naïve materialism that the Russian nihilists professed like a religious faith was determined chiefly by moral, one may even say ascetic, considerations. They held that any sort of idealistic or spiritual metaphysics was an unlawful luxury, a mental debauch, a forgetfulness of the sufferings of the common people. It was their duty to live in poverty and be satisfied with bare necessities. 15

However, despite the noble beginnings of nihilism: asceticism without grace, that is, asceticism not in the name of God, but in the name of the future welfare of mankind, in the name of a perfect society',<sup>16</sup> was bound also, like humanism, to destroy itself. Nihilism which became an atheistic socialism enslaved the human person to social utility and the interests of society, 'it denies the right of personality to lead its own spiritual and creative life; it rejects religion, philosophy, art, morality as qualitative contents of personal life, and throws down all values that exalt personality. And it is obliged to do so, because it considers human personality to be a mere product of social surroundings, and denies its spiritual nature'.<sup>17</sup>

That socialism could have developed such a force in Russia

is, according to Berdyaev, the result of the failure of Christianity in Russia. Berdyaev asserted that the greater mass of decadent Christians of the nineteenth century gave little proof of capacity for self-sacrifice that the nihilists and socialists displayed. So the denunciation of the untruth, falsehood and hypocrisy of so-called Christian society, inspired and nourished anti-religious psychology. The unworthiness and sinfulness of Christians became a victorious argument against Christianity itself.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, there was nothing to stay the tide of Marxism in Russia which not only perverted the Russian spirit but substituted a completely new atheism for the atheism of the nihilists.

The atheism of Marxism is conceived chiefly with strength; the power of organized society. Berdyaev argued that the Marxists saw religion itself as inimical to the pursuit of human happiness. He wrote,

Religious faith must be plucked from the heart of man and the idea of God destroyed, in order that human society may become powerful, human life be definitely organized and rationalised, and that the final victory over the elemental powers of nature and the elemental irrational forces in human society may become possible. The Marxian type of atheism is not moved at all by pity; on the contrary it is pitiless. In order to procure power and riches for the social collectivity, it proclaims ruthless cruelty towards men. There is no humanitarian element left in it. It comes from Feuerbach, but it goes one further than him and rejects his religion of humanity. It was not in the name of man that Marx raised the standard of revolt, but in the name of the mightiness of a new deity, the social collectivity. 19

The paradox of Russian atheism is that it was born as something oppressed, which rebelled against the injustice and evil of the world; it rejected God because the world is evil, unjust and full of the sufferings of innocent people. Yet when it triumphed it became a persecutor, created a new injustice, producing evil and causing an immeasurable amount of suffering.<sup>20</sup>

Ironically, the philosophy that claimed to be a preserver of personality ended up destroying it. It should be clear from what was stated in part I of Chapter II that personality can only develop in freedom and in the image of the God-man. If the spiritual fount of man is cut off, not only will authentic creativity be arrested, but also man will destroy his true image and live by a distorted idea of humanity. Berdyaev claims that when,

faith in a true living God fails, and the very idea of God is pushed out of man's consciousness, the images of false gods arise in his soul and religious worship is paid to them. Man has a tendency to idolatry that cannot be uprooted; he has a capacity for turning absolutely anything, every kind of value into an idol. 21

Communism, says Berdyaev, has a special significance for Christians. It is a reminder and a denouncement of an unfulfilled duty, of the fact that the Christian ideal has not been achieved. Christianity recognizes the inherent value of human personality and is incapable of organizing a society in which personality is humiliated and denied.

This gives rise, says Berdyaev, to fanaticism for it turns

relative values into absolute ones and the freedom of the personality is destroyed both socially and ontologically. Personality, then, is only achieved in opposition to false gods and idolatry, in the ability to discern the relative from the absolute and the capacity to remain ever above alienation.

Footnotes:

1. Ergang, R. Europe From the Renaissance, p. 40.
2. *ibid.*, p. 42.
3. *loc. cit.*
4. Sorokin, P. Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis, p. 140.
5. Berdyaev, N. The Meaning of History, p. 45.
6. Berdyaev, N. The End of Our Time, p. 23.
7. *ibid.*, p. 29.
8. *ibid.*, p. 30.
9. *ibid.*, p. 34.
10. *ibid.*, p. 40.
11. *ibid.*, p. 52.
12. Berdyaev, N. The Russian Revolution, p. 9.
13. *ibid.*, p. 7.
14. *ibid.*, p. 14.
15. *ibid.*, p. 21.
16. *ibid.*, p. 20.
17. *ibid.*, p. 21.
18. *ibid.*, p. 25.
19. *ibid.*, p. 31.
20. *ibid.*, p. 37.
21. *ibid.*, p. 39.



## Chapter IV

The Meaning of Personality: The Quest for the Humane

According to Berdyaev the failure of Humanism and socialism to show up the greatness of man resided in the fact that both movements ignored the spiritual calling of man. Humanism ended in rank individualism and Socialism in the primacy of the collective. Man triumphed in neither of the movements of which he was ostensibly the centre. That freedom ended in unfreedom and humanism in the antihuman was the result of the refusal to acknowledge a transcendent realm of freedom and truth which exists in dynamic tension with man. It has already been pointed out that for Berdyaev freedom for man is only authentic when it is directed - Undirected freedom destroys itself and produces its opposite. The same may be said of 'personality'. Personality may only be achieved if the individual responds to the higher calling of God in freedom. For Berdyaev, the quest for the humane is a religious quest. Paradoxically, man's search for God leads in fact back to man, for it directs him to his freedom and creativity. A glorification of the Ego, a man-centredness that has no higher purpose, is bound to lead in the end to either individualism or collectivism as it was proved for Berdyaev in Humanism and Socialism. The only way out of the impasse is to acknowledge that man is a spiritual being and that the full realization of man as a spiritual being can only be achieved if he is directed away from nature, from the Ego

and from social collectives. Again, according to Berdyaev, this direction away from phenomena must necessarily lead the way of the God-man. The God-incarnate is the one example given to man, says Berdyaev, to show him that the realization of perfect humanity is a condition of freedom and the spirit, and not of nature and compulsion. To summarize, Berdyaev argues that the realm of freedom is the kingdom of God and the realm of compulsion is of the Anti-Christ. Man in his abuse of freedom, which according to Berdyaev is original sin, placed himself within the power of the Anti-Christ. The tragic aspect of the destiny of man is the attempt by man to overcome the power of compulsion and assert his freedom. Personality is born from this struggle - it is born from the revolutionary nature of spirit which in its subjectivity and dynamism stands in polar opposition to the realm of nature. Personality is the spirit's victory over matter since it acts against matter's depersonalizing determination. Man, however, only understands himself in terms of freedom, spirit and personality when he tries to make sense of the God-man. Christ is the meeting point of both God and man. He is the hermeneutical standpoint from whom, according to Berdyaev, the world derives meaning and through whom man understands himself and his destiny. The God-man is God and yet perfect man. He represents the actualization of humanity. Hence, any attempt by man to search for his own essence, that is, to try to define and realize the humane must point to the Christ-event. Any other path, therefore, is necessarily wrong for, according to Berdyaev,

there is no other example of perfect humanity. In his attempt to reach the humane in order to liberate himself from authority, his personality is born.

It may appear, however, that in his attempts to show that the flowering of personality is the quest for the essentially humane, he takes the idea of man being created in the image of God, sharing both the potential freedom and divinity of Christ, to an ambitious conclusion. He seems to be claiming that the nature and characteristics of God, as he manifested himself in the world, are attainable by man. This means that man in vanquishing evil is capable of becoming as merciful, loving and as free as the God-incarnate. While he does not actually say it, Berdyaev's entire discussion on personality points to the fact that the personality of Jesus Christ is potentially attainable by man. Berdyaev repeatedly says that he has no other paradigm by which to talk of man except the perfect personality of Christ. From this, one concludes that personality results from the extent to which spirit can overcome objectification or the forces of compulsion of the Anti-Christ to approximate to the image or aspect of Christ. The confusion that arises from this notion is whether Berdyaev believes that the perfect personality of Christ can actually be achieved or whether it is merely a teleological principle that drives man towards a goal. This is important to determine for it would explain Berdyaev's 'definition' of man, that is, whether he has a realistic apprehension of the potentialities of man's personality or whether he (Berdyaev) is in fact not

very different from thinkers like Nietzsche and Marx. The former urged man to transcend himself in the name of the 'Übermensch' and the latter claimed that man could lead a life free of crime and evil which are social phenomena, if he lived in a perfect society. Berdyaev himself would agree that Marx and Nietzsche were completely unrealistic. However, it remains to be seen whether he himself does not fall into the same trap in expecting from man a God-like aspect.

An attempt has been made in Chapters III and IV to show from the point of view of what constitutes personality by Berdyaev's standards, the breakdown of humanism and the eventual triumph of the antihuman. The discussion is now taken a step further. The attainment of the humane itself is discussed from the point of view of freedom and the God-man (cf Chapter II). It will be essayed to show that personality can only be understood in terms of antitheses to 'constructs' in the realm of phenomena, and to demonstrate that Berdyaev ultimately did maintain the duality between God and man.

#### 4.1 Personality and Slavery

Berdyaev's inability to define personality and his negative approach to the discussion on personality lies in the fact that personality is immersed in freedom which finds substantiation in the Christian revelation. For Berdyaev both man and God participate of the same freedom - freedom which

is the uncreated abyss or, to borrow Boehme's idea, the Urgrund. This is why the idea of God cannot be rationalized. Man's rational faculties cannot penetrate to the depths of freedom which is irrational. The only meaningful talk about God is negative talk. By this Berdyaev means that while we may decide what God is not, what God is, is entirely beyond the Euclidean mind of man. If God cannot be spoken of meaningfully except negatively because he is immersed in freedom, then man whose spiritual essence has the same beginnings defies definition also. A picture of personality as the projected plan of God emerges from Berdyaev's philosophy as a whole but no definition is attempted, not only because personality is immersed in freedom but also because personality is constantly in a state of becoming and there is no way of fixing a definition.

These are the reasons then for the fact that the discussion on personality is entirely negative. The 'reconstruction' of the image of man along the lines Berdyaev suggests must be gleaned then in terms of its opposites, that is, the means by which man may be enslaved.

In his book Slavery and Freedom Berdyaev writes,

Personality realizes its existence and its destiny in the contradictions and combinations of the finite and the infinite, of the relative and the absolute, of the one and the many, of freedom and necessity, of the inward and the outward, of the subjective and the objective, by a tragic lack of correspondence and a conflict. But unity and universality

are attained not in infinite objectivity  
but in infinite subjectivity, in  
subjectivity which transcends itself.<sup>1</sup>

It has been pointed out already in terms of Berdyaev's theology that the fallen world is the world of objectification while the spiritual is the world of infinite subjectivity. With the abuse of freedom by man in eternity came division, discord, exteriorization and slavery to space, time and causality. Hence, man by his very nature participates in both worlds. Also, as it has already been mentioned, the victory man achieves in freedom over exteriorization is what constitutes personality. Personality is basically a spiritual category in constant conflict with the inclination of man to give in to the less burdensome weight of the realm of Caesar. Personality is subjectivity and can only be understood in terms of its polar opposite, objectivity. It is the end result of the suffering that comes about from the tragic history of man which is a dialectical movement between the two poles of freedom on the one side, and space, time and causality on the other.

History for Berdyaev, then, involves the issue of dynamic spirit which at the moment of expression is bound, defined and arrested in space and time. But spirit, unable to be contained in the realm of objects, transcends it in creative expression bringing about yet again objectification.

While this explanation may be reminiscent of Hegel it must be pointed out that Berdyaev differs from Hegel on a number of points. For Hegel, spirit is immanent and 'objective'; for Berdyaev spirit is transcendent and subjective.

Hegel's is a monistic philosophy; Berdyaev's a dualistic one. For Hegel spirit is Absolute and culminates in the end in its own self-identity. For Berdyaev, spirit is not Absolute and the march of history is not toward the self-realization of spirit. Spirit for him is particular; it is man who is the spiritual being and the march of history is the result of the free creative activity of man who strives in history (or ought to) to attain liberation from objectification. The meaning of history is not the self-realization of spirit but the creation of personality; the spiritual victory over objectification by the particular individual.

The similarities between Hegel and Berdyaev are confined to two points,

- i) Both held that history is a dialectical movement - For Hegel the synthesis is another moment in the self-realization of spirit; for Berdyaev the synthesis is another moment in the realization of personality.
- ii) Both see the world in terms of Spirit. For Hegel spirit is objective, Absolute and identical with necessity. For Berdyaev it is subjective, particular and identical with freedom.

This brief comparison of the ideas of Hegel and Berdyaev

was an attempt to point to the fact that personality cannot be defined except in terms of necessity or of objectification. If it is at all possible to understand the events in this world as the result of division, discord and unfreedom of fallen spirit then it may be possible to understand the nature of spiritual freedom and personality.

Since Berdyaev develops his idea of personality from a detailed examination of almost every possible form of enslavement, personality will be examined in this chapter in terms of only some of the major and most significant forms of slavery, viz the forms of unfreedom that obtain in Being, society, civilization, "Individualization" and the State.

#### 4.1.1 Being and Slavery

For Berdyaev the most dangerous form of slavery which, he claims, has bedevilled all of western philosophy, is slavery to Being. According to him, the issue to be decided is whether Being is primary or secondary, that is, to what extent is Being a construction of thought, an objectivization of the subject. For Berdyaev, Being is primarily a concept, an abstract concept produced by the objectivized thought of the subject and therefore enslaves man.<sup>2</sup>

Berdyaev asserts that Being is objectivized as the 'common' and universal which ipso facto excludes the personal and



the singular. But existential truth lies in the fact that the real thing exists singularly; the common is not real.<sup>3</sup>

For Berdyaev Being means 'alienation and objectivization, a change of freedom into necessity, the individual into the common, the personal into the impersonal. It is the triumph of reason which has lost its link with human existence'.<sup>4</sup> Being then, by virtue of it being a function of reason and reason alone, is a form of determinism - man is subjected to the authority of one of his "parts". Slavery to Being consequently becomes the primary slavery of man.

Ontology, for Berdyaev, cannot be a philosophy of freedom, because it must in terms of its rational hierarchical structure, arrive at an order of being with God at the summit which explains and accounts for all 'beings'.

This hierarchy excludes personality for it abolished the reality of good and evil. If primary reality is a rational construction, then there is no place for evil at all. Evil ceases to be autonomous. Everything is explicable in terms of reason. One of the problems facing Berdyaev is that western philosophers and theologians have been unable to construct an acceptable theodicy. The reason for this is that the world is conceived in terms of Being and non-Being. Being has as its summit, God. All substantial 'things', like all creativeness, falls within

the ambit of Being. The problem here is that even Satan lies in Being and in terms of the hierarchy is subordinated to God. God then is directly responsible for Evil.

Berdyaev claims that this problem has dogged western thinkers and the impossibility to reconcile the position of God as the highest order of Being with the presence of evil has led to such theories as, for example, the double predestination of Calvin.

The God who emerges from such an ontology is the most terrifying apparition for Berdyaev. In all his books Berdyaev wages a battle against the traditional idea of God as master who expects of men servility and absolute obedience. He insists that God is liberator not master; God is spirit not Being.

God cannot be traced as first cause in the hierarchy of Being. God is essentially a mystery to man's Euclidean mind and must therefore, says Berdyaev, be cleansed of 'servile sociomorphism'.<sup>5</sup> Evil like good has its roots in freedom which in Berdyaev's scheme of things lies outside God in a mysterious irrational abyss. Any attempt to systematize evil is to deny the freedom of man and hence to blur the existential centre which discovers its personality in terms of the decisions man takes amidst good and evil. Berdyaev argues that,

God is always in freedom, never in necessity, always in personality, never in the world ... God acts, not upon the world order as justifying the suffering of personality but in the conflict, in the struggle of personality, in the

conflict of freedom against that world order. God created concrete beings, personalities, creative existential centres, not the world order which is a mark of the fall of these creatures and of their ejection into the sphere of the objectivized external. 6

World harmony claims Berdyaev is a 'false and an enslaving idea. It ignores the irrational and senseless'. The problem of theodicy cannot be explained away in a harmonious system. It is solved 'on the existential plane where God reveals Himself as freedom, love and sacrifice, where He suffers for man and strives together with man against the falsity and wrong of the world, against the intolerable suffering of the world.<sup>7</sup> There is no need to justify the suffering and evil on earth; one cannot. Evil is as much a mystery as freedom and lies outside the comprehending powers of man. To pretend to understand it in terms of reason is to enslave man to a limited rationality which obscures his own infinity and denies him as personality, the bearer of both good and evil. It is to God we turn, not for an understanding of evil but for the struggle on behalf of freedom, on behalf of righteousness, on behalf of the enlightening and betterment of existence. We know that we can turn to God to struggle against evil on behalf of freedom for, according to Berdyaev,

While ... in personality there is an instance of the universal in a potential form, in the personality of Christ the universal was actualized. Here there is no abstraction from the existence of personality, no objectivization. 8

Here Berdyaev declares that in man there is an instance of the universal but in Christ the universal is actualized. Does this mean that to turn to God, to struggle against evil on behalf of freedom, leads to the eventual actualization of the universal in man. If this is true the claim Berdyaev makes is that it is within the power of man to become God. But this would contradict his own theology for, according to Berdyaev, man is in the condition of sin, fallen and imperfect. Christ is the perfect man, an irruption of the spiritual into temporal nature. How is it possible then for the universal to be actualized in man within the realm of nature? Nature is in itself antithetical to any realization of the perfect state of man.

#### 4.1.2 Personality, Nature and Freedom

Nature is the primary example of objectivization. 'The slavery of man to nature', says Berdyaev, 'is slavery to the objective world. Enslaved nature, as object, is nature which determines from without, it is nature which depersonalizes and oppresses inward existence'.<sup>9</sup>

According to Berdyaev, matter 'denotes dependence, and a state of determination from without. For this reason nature is always object'.<sup>10</sup>

This means that if nature is the antithesis of freedom, it is the antithesis of personality and spirit.

However, man is an inalienable part of nature and he does commune with cosmic life, but this communion has been outside objectivization. Hence the desire, at certain times in history, to fuse with nature in the hope that man's primal innocence and freedom may be retained. One notable theoretician in this regard is Rousseau, who in the attempt to escape the iniquities and sheer pressure of modern civilization, advocated a return to nature as the solution to man's problem of freedom. In this regard, Berdyaev wrote,

... in wrestling with the necessity of nature man created civilization, the atmosphere of which is stifling, the standards of which do not give freedom of movement. In the very longing for communion with the inner life of the cosmos there lies much truth and right, but this truth and right are related to the cosmos in the existential sense, not to the objectified cosmos, which is nature again with its determination. 11

The cosmos held a unique fascination for man, because fusion with it meant 'fusion with a world soul'. However, this fusion for Berdyaev is a completely false understanding of the world and cosmos. He claims that one cannot look for the soul of the world, the inner life of the cosmos, in objectified nature 'because it is not the real world but the world in a fallen state, an enslaved world, alienated and depersonalized'.<sup>12</sup>

Fusion with the cosmos had meant for man an ecstatic emergence from the boundaries of personal existence into the cosmic element, it is the hope of entering into communion

with this primary element. All orgiastic cults have been founded upon this.<sup>13</sup>

Berdyaev goes on to conclude that,

... personality is inevitably subjected and enslaved to the organic and the last resort the cosmic whole; man becomes a mere organ, and all the freedoms of man which are bound up with his spiritual independence of society and nature are abolished. 14

Hence, the slavery of man to nature must not be opposed to an absolute, hidden communion with nature for this denies the existential uniqueness of the personality: 'Personality in its spiritual quality is not dependent upon society and nature.'<sup>15</sup>

Berdyaev has shown that nature is in its essence hostile to the spiritual. The only way the instance of the universal can be achieved is through 'fusion with the cosmos'. The 'get back to nature' idea is attractive to man trapped by the pressures of society. In his fusion with nature, man hopes to lose his distinctiveness which is burdensome and painful and participate in the 'world whole'. While this may well be achieved for example through 'orgiastic cults', fusion with nature is the denial of personality. It is the refusal to recognize that personality is a spiritual category; singular, unrepeatable and independent of both nature and society. So while nature appears conducive to the actualization of the universal, it is an actualization that denies the real universality of spirit and denies persona-

lity. Hence, the actualization of the spiritual universal in the Christ-event seems beyond the realization of man who is an inalienable part of nature. If nature presses in on the inwardness of man, setting up constantly 'obstacles' that must be transcended, then everything points to an actualization of the universal as in Christ. Hence, man anticipates an eschatological culmination of the world. The perfection of the God-man cannot be achieved by man here on this earth. Further proof of this is Berdyaev's assertion that even society which is made up of a number of individuals is in fact inimical to personality.

#### 4.1.3 Society and Personality

Of all forms of slavery, the least obvious to man is slavery to society. According to Berdyaev, man's enslavement to society presupposes a different relation than that which exists between man and nature and man and being. The nature of 'society' is the abstract collection of a number of independent "I"s,

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. The reality of society is not a special 'I', it is 'we'. The communion of the I with the others takes place in the 'we'. This 'we' is a qualitative content of the 'I' it is its social transcension. 16

The 'I' holds communion not only with the 'you', communion as personality with personality; it also holds communion

with the 'we', that is, with society. Berdyaev asserts that since the 'we' is a number of 'I's, it is not a collective 'substance'; it has existential significance although it may have no existential centre for the existential centre subsists only in the individual 'I'. Existential social reality, therefore, is the relations that obtain between the 'I', the 'you' and the 'we'. But the condition of man disallows pure existentiality and the 'we' becomes objectivized and society is created. The objectivization of society is inimical to the development of personality for it lays claims to a greater reality assuming a primacy over man and personality. Berdyaev wrote,

society is the objectification of the 'we' which possesses no reality at all and no existence outside the relation to it of the 'I' and outside the relation between the 'I' and the 'you'. The 'we' in its existentiality is a community, a communion, a fellowship, but not society. 17

Authentic communion is possible for Berdyaev only among the community of believers. The orthodox idea of sobornost which was first formulated by the Khomiakov, the Slavophile thinker, is the basis for his claim. Sobornost, for Berdyaev, is neither unity without freedom nor freedom without unity. It is the free communion among people who are united in a higher truth. Sobornost cannot be objectivized like society because it is a spiritual not a secular 'category'.

The obvious criticism raised against this idea is again



what chances does man really have of establishing such a community. The history of the world has almost shown its impossibility. Furthermore, the community is exclusive for only Christians may be part of it and it also involves Berdyaev in a contradiction of terms too; on the one hand, all people are challenged to consider the alternative he offers yet, on the other hand, he asserts that such a communion is possible only among the already initiated. Civilized man is unable to capture the innocence which makes communion through 'primal intuition' possible at all.

#### 4.1.4 Civilization and Personality

Civilization is completely different from culture. While culture is the inner development of individuals in a society, civilization is the external ordering of society and the refinement of social relations. Culture by its nature is antithetical to primitiveness if primitiveness is defined in terms of the naive inner bond of man with nature which has not been transfigured by the expression of the creative development of spirit. Culture is spiritual but civilization is not.

The relations between primitiveness and civilization are complicated. Primitiveness continues to exist within civilization, but without its naivete and its freshness. The properties of technical civilization are such that the barbarian can avail himself of it exactly in the same way

as the man of the highest culture. This is connected with the problem of the active irruption of the vast masses of the people into history and culture which has always been aristocratic in principle.<sup>18</sup>

The categories 'people' and 'masses' are different. People may be defined qualitatively, for example, in terms of labour, religious beliefs and art. The masses, on the other hand, are vast numbers of people in whom personality is not expressed, and who are consequently predisposed to slavery. This indicates a crisis in civilization. The masses appropriate to themselves the technical side of civilization and are able to equip themselves with it, but it is with difficulty that they assimilate spiritual culture. The masses had indeed in the past their own spiritual culture, based upon religious belief. The masses in the present transitional period, on the other hand, are devoid of all spiritual culture including religion.

Civilization, therefore, is characterized by the mass and indicates a higher degree of objectivization than socialization, whereas culture is more closely linked with personality and spirit.

Culture is closely linked with personality because culture and cultural values are brought into being by the creative act of man and the natural genius of man is revealed in them. However, the product of creativeness in Culture, is a downward pull.<sup>19</sup> The creative act is in the realm of

subjectivity, whereas the product of creation is the realm of objectivity.

#### 4.1.5 Slavery of man to himself

Berdyayev calls this form of slavery egocentricity, which is the dissolution of personality. Egocentricity is intensified by seeing individuality as part of a whole and not an integral whole itself. Berdyayev argues that one of the illusions of men is their conviction that individualism is the resistance of the individual man to the surrounding world which is always bent on curbing his freedom. In actual fact, individualism is 'objectivization' and is connected with the 'exteriorization' of human existence. This fact is to a large extent not immediately evident. Since the individual is part of a society, part of the race, part of the world, individualism is the isolation of the part from the whole, or the revolt of the part against the whole. But to be part of any kind of whole, even if it means being in revolt against that whole, is to be exteriorized already. Only in a world of objectivization, that is to say a world of alienation, impersonality and determinism, does that relation of part to whole exist which is disclosed in individualism.<sup>20</sup>

Personalism means something entirely different. Personality contains the universe within it, but this inclusion of the universe takes place not in the sphere of the object-world but in the sphere of the subject-world, that is to say of

existentiality. Personality is aware of itself rooted in the realm of freedom, that is, in the realm of the spirit, and from that source it draws the strength for its conflict and activity. This is the meaning of being a person and of being free.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1.6 The Slavery of the State

Berdyayev proceeds to argue that Christ's command 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's', has been commonly interpreted in a sense which reconciles the kingdom of Caesar and the kingdom of God; it is given a meaning which abolishes the conflict between the two. But the life of Christ was precisely this conflict carried through to the utmost limit of intensity. The 'kingdom of Caesar' has in fact never agreed to recognize the kingdom of God as an autonomous region and has always demanded service from the 'kingdom of God'; has always been bent on making a mere 'tool' of it. The kingdom of Caesar has tolerated Christianity only when Christianity had been adapted and adjusted to it and has rendered it service. When there has been such subservience the sovereignty of Caesar has conferred every kind of privilege upon it.<sup>22</sup>

The State has a particularist character and is often unconscious of its boundaries since elements and functions of the state are to be found in every expression of human life. The will to power which always endangers personality

is built on the foundation of the State. Imperialism, totalitarianism and fascism have all subjugated personality to their ends.

The state itself is not personality; not a being. It is not an organism nor an entity. It has no existence of its own since its existence is always to be found in people; existential centres are in people. Nevertheless, the state has become a projection, an exteriorization; an objectivization of a condition of the people themselves. Ironically, men not only need the state and cannot do without the service it renders, but they are reduced by it; they are taken captive by the state as they connect their dreams of sovereignty with it. And there lies the chief evil and source of human slavery.<sup>23</sup>

The human being feels oppressed by the weight of the state and does not grow beyond it. The state is seen as some sort of exterior force with which human beings have relations. It is not viewed as a functional aspect of society devoid of independent character. On the contrary, the state is the seat of power and power destroys the integrity of personality.

Closely allied to the state are ideas of war, nationalism and economics, that is, property and money, all of which have an enslaving ability. All three associates of the state oppress personality and demand absolute allegiance. The human individual in his nationalistic or patriotic

passion, or in his pursuit of money and property, enslaves his person to a part, to a function, and hence to an 'exteriorization' of spirit.

Only creative activity liberates man from the external world because it is the irruption of spirit into nature and because it preserves the uniqueness of personality. Authentic creativity sees the difference between the act and impulse of creation and the products of it. And since the creative activity is spurred on by dissatisfaction with this world, man can never become enslaved completely to the products of his creation.

For Berdyaev the most important proof for the instance that man is spirit, is his creativity. Man is a creative being like God is a creative Being. Man as the correlative of God shares in God's creativity. However, man in his fallen state is subject to the limits of space and time. Unlike God who creates from freedom and spirit, man creates from necessity and matter. Unlike the creative act which as act belongs to the spiritual realm, the product of the human creative act becomes constrained by the world.

So far we have seen that personality is the result of the attempt by spirit to transcend the constraints of the 'earthly' world. However, the question still to be asked is, what does self-transcendence mean? How is it to be

achieved?

#### 4.2 Personality and Creativity

The point has already been made that God in his essential humanity neither expects servile submission from man, nor obedience, nor fear of condemnation. If obedience to the will of God is not the primary characteristic of the relationship between man and God, what is? In his seminal work The Meaning of the Creative Act Berdyaev wrote,

Like its creator, man's life could not be created by God only for the purpose that, having sinned he should atone for his sin and should put into the work of his redemption all his powers, throughout the whole extent of the world process. Such a conception of human nature would not correspond to the idea of the creator and would demean the God-like dignity of man. The absolute Christian truth turns on the one hand towards redemption from sin and evil and on the other hand towards the positive creative calling of man: it reveals a Christology of man. The New Testament truth of the Gospel is only a part of Christological truth, oriented towards redemption and salvation; in it we cannot seek the direct justification of man's creative purposes. The Gospels reveal only one aspect of Christ, the Absolute man redeeming and saving human nature. 24

Later on Berdyaev elucidates further,

And God awaits from man an anthropological revelation of creativity; in the name of man's god-like freedom God has hidden from the ways of creativeness and the justification of creativeness. 25

While Berdyaev acknowledges that there is no scriptural

evidence for his claim that man's primary vocation is to be 'co-creator with God', he bases his assertion on the fact that 'the divine idea of man, that creative freedom, the free power to reveal himself in creative action, is placed within man as a seal and sign of his likeness to God, as a mark of the Creator's image'.<sup>26</sup>

The most significant thing about man's creativity is that it is a free response to the divine call of man. Berdyaev argues that if the revelation of creativeness was a command by God, man's free creative deed, where he reveals the image and likeness of God in him, would be impossible. If what God expects of man is an anthropological revelation of the creative potential of the 'divine' creature, then that creativeness is revealed by man's own free initiative. To deny that essential freedom is to deny the divine in man.

Berdyaev claims further that a passive concept of human nature is contradicted by the divine incarnation. He writes,

... a passive concept of human nature makes man a being unworthy of the incarnation. Christ would not have been God-man if human nature is merely passive, unfree and reveals nothing from within itself. For truly the God-man is a revelation not only of divine but of human greatness, and predicates faith not only in God but in man as well. 27

Berdyaev does not deny that the meaning of the incarnation lies in redemption and salvation but he argues that man's salvation can be effected not only through obedience and asceticism, but through creativity. In this regard



he wrote,

Salvation from sin, from perdition, is not the final purpose of religious life: salvation is always from something, and life is always for something ... man's chief end is not to be saved but to mount up creatively. For this creative upsurge, <sup>28</sup> salvation from sin and evil is necessary.

He claims that man justifies himself before the creator not only by redemption but by creativeness as well.

Here lies Berdyaev's main criticism of traditional theology which has concentrated, to the exclusion of all else, on the fact that the purpose of man is to be saved. That man has fallen and needs to be saved. Berdyaev himself emphasizes that man's vocation and purpose is sought in his creation. In support of this view, Berdyaev writes,

The religious acceptance of the truth that the religious meaning of life and being is not wholly a matter of redemption from sin (is) that life and being have positive creative purposes. That higher creative, positive being though unobtainable at the time when redemption was begun, when God was still transcendent to man, is attainable in another period of religious life, after <sup>29</sup> the redemption, when God in man is immanent.

If salvation is to be sought in creativity and if the 'creative revelation in the spirit will have no holy scripture, but will be accomplished in man and in humanity, that is, an unveiling of the Christology of man', <sup>30</sup> then creativity is essentially a transcendent act; it is the encounter between the personality of man as creature-creator and the personality of God as supreme-creator.

For Berdyaev, 'creative power is the expression of the whole life of a man. Man creates his personality and in the act of doing so expresses his personality'.<sup>31</sup> When Berdyaev says that 'man is not called to creativeness as an activity which operates in the world and is exerted upon the world, but he is himself creative power and without that creative power his human countenance is lacking', he binds together the essential humanity of man with essential creativity. Berdyaev does not allow for an idea of humanity outside creativity because for Berdyaev there can be no personality outside of freedom.

In the discussion of Personality, and Freedom and Necessity an attempt was made to show that personality is forged in liberation from objectification which is by its very nature enslaving. The way of this liberation, claims Berdyaev, is through creativity. He maintains that 'creative activity does not consist merely in the bestowal of a more perfect form upon this world; it is also liberation from the burden and bondage of this world'.<sup>32</sup>

Berdyaev argues that there are two ways in which creativity can express itself. The way of objectification or the way of transcendence. In the way of objectification creativity conforms to the circumstances of this world and does not reach its final state, 'it is cut off short'. This means that it is confined to phenomena. However, by way of the transcendental the creative act 'breaks through to noumenal reality and sets its bearings upon the final transformation

of the world'.<sup>33</sup>

These are, argues Berdyaev, the two extremes of creative power. But man being a creature of both nature and spirit is a peculiar combination of both. Partaking of both the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, man's creativity has both an objective moment and a spiritual moment. Without the objective moment man would be unable to endure the conditions of his existence in this world or improve those conditions. Without the spiritual moment, where creative power itself (not its products) moves out beyond the limits of objectification and is directed towards a new life, the kingdom of God could not be prepared.

For Berdyaev, in the kingdom of God belong only personalities. Personality born through creative liberation. To this end Berdyaev writes,

The significance of the creative state for the inner life of man lies in this, that it shows he is overcoming the state of subjection and humiliation which is imposed by the burden of this world. It shows that he has attained the experience of an exalting impulse. Creative power, therefore, proclaims that this world is superable, that congealed being can be overcome. It tells of the possibility of setting it free from its claims, it speaks of liberation and transformation. 34

Obviously the birth of personality through creative and spiritual struggle has the effect of transforming the environment of man. Personality is not caught up in the closed circle of subjectivity. It has its being in the natural

world and comes into being in strife with that world. And it is this creative strife which is revolutionary and transforming. Berdyaev maintains that creativeness cannot emanate from nothing. The world supplies the material, but the source of the creative activity is the freedom of the other world. Creative action is not initiated within space and time. Its product only is seen within space and time. He writes,

This means that what is most important, most mysterious and most creatively new, comes not from the world but from spirit.<sup>35</sup>

It is spirit that bears freedom and the creative philosophy of freedom which is existential interprets creative revelation as the liberation from the determinism of nature and society. For Berdyaev, if the creative impulse comes from the world of freedom, Spirit or noumena it may be said 'that the transcendent comes to birth in the creative effort which is a union with eternal creativity'.<sup>36</sup>

The human individual or Ego which gives birth to this transcendent transforms itself into an existent, no longer potential, creative being; for that which is 'personal is original, connected with the primary fountainhead, authentic. Personality must perform its self-existent, original, creative acts and this alone makes it personality and constitutes its unique values'.<sup>37</sup>

In a significant passage from Slavery and Freedom Berdyaev elucidates this claim thus,

The growth of personality, the realization of personality certainly does not mean the formation of a whole out of its parts. It means rather the creative acts of personality, as a whole thing, which is not brought of anything and not put together from anything. The form of personality is integral, it is present as a whole in all the acts of personality; personality has a unique, an unrepeatable form. 38

The meaning of creativity becomes clearer if one considers what Berdyaev means by philosophy as a creative activity: Philosophy for Berdyaev is essentially liberation. Philosophy is creativeness and not adaptation or obedience. The liberation of philosophy as a creative act is its liberation from all dependence upon science, i.e. resistance to every sort of adaptation to necessity. In philosophy the self liberation of the creative act of the human spirit in its reaction to the world takes place in the conscious resistance to necessity and to the given world; not in adaptation to it. Philosophy is an art rather than a science. Philosophy is an art because it is creation. Philosophy is the art of knowing in freedom by creating ideas which restrict the given world and necessity, and penetrates into the ultimate essence of the world.

Since, according to Berdyaev, the perception of the world as value or meaning is not a scientific perception but a creative act and not an adaptation to necessity, the philosophy of values breaks with the scientific. Philosophy is essentially not the knowledge of this world but the penetration into meaning - into the noumenal world.

An attempt has been made so far to show that personality realizes itself in conflict. That man has to continuously transcend the products of his own creation. The act of transcending is man's own creativity. But the paradoxical nature of creativity is that its end product enslaves man. For man's creativity to be pure spirituality must necessarily end, for there is no immanent solution. It is a contradiction in terms for there to be any solution to the problem of freedom and spirit in the world. The constraints of space and time are the antitheses of phenomena.

Berdyaev evidently does not see man as gaining the status of God in a kind of moksha or nirvana. He is very clear about the relation of man to God and that man is the bearer of God's image. But man is man. Man is man not only by virtue of spirit but by virtue of nature. Nature and spirit in dialectical tension is the basis of the nature of man. If this were not so, man would either be God or an object. It is for this reason that for man to regain his pure spirituality, he has to be free of the conditioning of the world. And since this cannot be so, the world itself still has to end. Hence Berdyaev's insistence on the eschatological significance of freedom.

According to Berdyaev, the 'kingdom of God' is prepared for by both God and man. Christ revealed himself to man and to a society that appeared to be receptive. The messianic consciousness of the Jews prepared them for the reception of the Messiah, although this lapsed into an

expectancy of a political and national Messiah. Man has to prepare the way for the coming of God for God and man are co-partners in the preparation of the consummation of the world, of history and of spirit.

An examination of history and eschatology concludes the discussion on the meaning of personality. It describes the relation between personality and history, and the eschatological dimension of man, history and end.

#### 4.3 Personality and History

That man is both a spiritual and a creative being who realizes his personality, is proved by the historical manifestation of God in the Christ-event. For Berdyaev the incarnation of God symbolized among other things, that man is a spiritual being like God is or God would not have had a point of contact with man. Furthermore, Christ was the perfect personality for in him freedom was actualized. However, the Christ-event took place in human history. All of man's creative efforts belong to the panorama of history. Hence, for Berdyaev, the destiny of the human personality is the destiny of history.<sup>39</sup>

The questions Berdyaev asks are, 'From what perspective does one view history? Must man be seen in terms of the cosmos, or the cosmos in terms of man? Is human history a subordinate part of the cosmic process or is the cosmic process

a subordinate part of human history?'<sup>40</sup> Berdyaev does not see the world as cosmocentric as the Greeks saw it; for him it is anthropocentric. If the actions of men are caught up in space and time, the passage of which determines history, then history is anthropocentric. Human creativity and human freedom has meaning only if history has meaning. In his book Beginning and End Berdyaev writes,

History in time is the pathway of man towards eternity, within it the enrichment of human experience is accumulated. But it is absolutely impossible to conceive either of the creation of the world within time or the end of the world within time. 41

Just as for Berdyaev the personality derives its meaning from the spiritual world, so does history find its purpose outside time. Meaning is not immanent in history. If it were so, as Hegel had assumed, man is doomed to necessity. It is only because history refers to the noumenal world that its meaning lies in its testimony to the freedom of man.

Berdyaev claims that 'a meaning which is not commensurate with the destiny of personality, with my personal fate, and has no significant bearing upon it, has in fact no meaning. Unless the universal meaning is at the same time a personal meaning also, it has no meaning at all'.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly then, the meaning of history must be consistent with the meaning of personality and must therefore lie outside time. Berdyaev did not tire of repeating that



'the history of the world and the history of mankind possesses meaning solely upon the condition that they will come to an end'.<sup>43</sup> It is because of this that the philosophy of history has always been prophetic. It contained a prophetic element that passed beyond the bounds of scientific knowledge; beyond necessity and causality to existentiality.

Berdyayev's understanding of time is divided into three aspects: cosmic time, historical time and existential time. Cosmic time, which is calculated mathematically, can be symbolized by a circle; that is, it refers to the cyclic nature of seasons, movement around the sun, etc. Historical time which lies in cosmic time and is also calculated mathematically in decades, centuries and millenia, is symbolized by a straight line; a linear progression. Existential time is not susceptible to calculation like the above two are. It depends on the intensity of experience, suffering and joy and can be symbolized by a point.

The prophetic element in the history of philosophy usually comes from a heightened spirituality which can communicate with existential reality and which usually gives expression to it. It anticipates the breakthrough of the existential into the historical, i.e. the breakthrough of the spiritual into the natural. This is why the Christ-event is of central importance to Berdyayev. Christianity for him is historical, 'it is the entrance of God into history and

it confers a transcendent meaning upon history.

Christianity accepts a meaning for history'.<sup>44</sup>

History is a reflection of the battle between freedom and necessity, between spirit and nature, for historical time and existential time are at odds with each other. From the previous subsection one concludes that while the products of creativity remain within space and time, the creative impulse belongs in the noumenal world. The passage of history is the record of the objectivization of creativity and its meaning lies in the fact that it nonetheless communes with the spiritual world. If this were not so, history would not be movement for the incessant creativity of man, which implies change and transformation, comes about from man's freedom to create; a freedom which he has as a spiritual being. For history to be, it has to presuppose human freedom, yet the weight of history denies the freedom of the unique person. Berdyaev describes this conflict graphically in a passage from The Beginning and the End:

There is a clash between human personality and history and it is a clash which cannot be subdued within the confines of history. Man puts his creative strength into history and does so with enthusiasm. But history on the other hand takes no account of man. It uses him as material for the creation of an inhuman structure and it has its own inhuman and antihuman code of morals. 45

However, although 'history treats me roughly and shows not the slightest concern for my well being ... history is also my history. I have indeed had a share in its

happening'.<sup>46</sup> I cannot be understood apart from history, nor can history be understood apart from me. If, according to Berdyaev, 'man holds the cosmos within him, there is all the more reason for saying that he includes history within him.'<sup>47</sup>

By nature and destiny man is a historical being. His natural dimension transforms his creative impulse into objectivization and sets up a contradiction between man and history. On the one hand, man's spiritual freedom repudiates objectivization as alienation. On the other, his natural being forces him to accept history as part of him. However, Berdyaev is quick to qualify what acceptance means when he writes, 'I accept it (history) not as an obedient slave but as a free man'.<sup>48</sup>

In his examination of history Berdyaev concludes that history is a failure because the unresolved tension between freedom and necessity culminated in the triumph of necessity. The spectacle of history always evokes sadness in Berdyaev. In Truth and Revelation he wrote with an obviously heavy heart,

History is always disillusionment for human personality and it always wounds it very deeply. To a notable degree history is the history of crime, and all the deeds of the idealists about a better state of society have ended in criminal deeds. 49

History is a failure because in it the creative act of man becomes objectified. For Berdyaev, history remains an

evil force in relation to human personality, but this force is within man. He wrote,

History may be brought into man and may be recognized as his own particular destiny. The recognition of the failure of history by no means indicates that it is devoid of any meaning and that man must repudiate it, or that he can escape from it. He must live out his destiny in history and in so doing to bring transcendent meaning and light to it. 50

The story of history is the story of personality. The spiritual principle of personality realizes and actualizes itself in history. History is the relation, therefore, of spirit and nature. A tension which cannot be resolved in the world of phenomena. If it has meaning in terms of the noumenal world then it must end in a noumenal moment. For freedom and spirit to triumph, nature must be forsaken.

#### 4.4 Personality and Eschatology

If personality is the actualization of spirit and freedom in creative activity in history, the conflict of personality with nature can never be resolved in history and therefore must aspire to some resolution or end outside history. In a tribute to Dostoevsky's view of personality, Berdyaev makes this point clearly when he says,

The existence of personality with its infinite aspirations, with its unique and unrepeatable destiny is a paradox in the objectified world of nature. It is placed face to face with a world environment which is alien to it, and it has tried to accept the world as a world harmony. The conflict of human personality with the world harmony, the

challenge of world harmony is a fundamental theme in personalist philosophy. No one has stated it with such power and trenchancy as Dostoevsky. The world and world harmony must be brought to an end for the very reason that the theme of personality is insoluble within the confines of the world and history and because the world harmony in an aeon of the world is a mockery of the tragic fate of man. 51

Berdyaev also points out that the question of 'world harmony' and personality involves history in an ends-means problem. Personalities are not viewed individually and singly but each generation becomes the 'manure' for the benefit of the next. The utilitarian ethics which prevails denies the uniqueness of the individual person, and personality, by the very nature of uniqueness, must necessarily clash with history. For Berdyaev, the 'tragic conflict between personality and world "harmony", between person and the world process' remains fundamental. He writes,

It is par excellence a theme of existential philosophy, for no solution of it is to be found within the bounds of history and it requires an end to history. 52

The idea of 'being' which has dominated western philosophy and theology has been, in Berdyaev's words, a compromise between two worlds and has hidden the eschatological mystery from view. Any monistic idea denies the reality of evil for all is resolved in a kind of 'world harmony'. The independent existence of evil and good, and consequently freedom, has no place in a monistic philosophy. Any attempt

to make sense of the reality of evil and the idea of world harmony must anticipate an end to the world; that is, it must anticipate the 'coming of the kingdom'. It is only in the kingdom of God that the dualism between spirit and nature can be overcome for dualism does not indicate 'a transcendent breach between two worlds, it points to a conflict and is a summons to creative action'.<sup>53</sup>

It has been pointed out in the section on personality and history that history is a failure because necessity achieved the upper hand despite man's free impulse to create. However, the problem of history is more primary than the success of necessity. It obtains in the very fact of alienation and exteriorization itself. The creative act is connected with dissatisfaction with the world and the desire to transform it. Therefore, even in its realization it has an eschatological moment. But the failure of the creative act is that it can never fully achieve its purpose. It never overcomes objectivity. Its success can only be limited to the preparation of this world for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God can never be realized on earth because it is only spirit where matter has no part.

Clearly then, eschatology is the overcoming of objectivity and in so far as it is a battle with necessity it is a divine-human enterprise. Man not only awaits the end, he prepares for it. For Berdyaev,

The end is not merely the destruction of the world, and judgement; it is also the illumination and transformation of the world,

the continuation, as it were, of creation; the entry upon a new aeon. The creative act of man is needed for the coming of the kingdom of God. God is in need of and awaits it. 54

Ironically, eschatology seems to point out the uselessness of creative activity, yet it is because man's efforts are a response to the call of God that it cannot be abandoned to the exigencies of this world and must therefore culminate in an end that confers meaning on all. According to Berdyaev,

The human tragedy from which there is no escape, the dialectic of freedom and necessity, finds its solution within the orbit of divine mystery, within the Deity; which lies deeper than the drama between creator and creature, deeper than the representations of heaven and hell. 55

An eschatological interpretation of the world is the only meaningful answer to the frustration of incessant creativity, for it points to a consummation. Samuel Calian in his book on the Eschatological Dimension of Berdyaev's Philosophy also points out that,

What is underlying Berdyaev's thinking is the fact that the creative impulse wishes in its original outburst to see an end to this world, it is the beginning of a different world. In short, creative activity is eschatological. 56

Since creativity itself becomes objectified, the moment it finds expression, freedom is immediately limited, and this very limitation points towards the end; to the end

of time and space when freedom which finds creative expression and lies outside objectivization is fully manifested.

Eschatology also resolves the problem of time. The idea of time is part of our destiny because it is in history and in time that we experience our destiny.

The ultimate and important reason for an eschatological interpretation of the cosmos is the self-realization of personality in the Christ-event. According to Calian,

The eschatological dimension is the image and likeness of God in man and this is why it rises about the natural life. Personality is not a part of something, a function of the genus or of society ... it is a whole comparable to the whole of the world ... Personality is spiritual and presupposes the existence of a spiritual world. The value of personality is the highest hierarchical value in the world, and of the spiritual order. 57

In short, Berdyaev's personalism is based on meonic freedom, which the first Adam had before the tragedy of man's fall. He extols the fact of man's redemption in Christ who restores to man the possibility of realizing personality in dynamic creative freedom; working towards the eschatological good of God-manhood. His personalism is pointed toward the end. Man is created not for this world of objectification but for God's world. 'It is for this reason that God has given to man His revelation in Christ. It is in the God-man, in the son of God and Son of man, that the new man takes his beginnings, the man of a new and external humanity.' 58

Through Christ, man becomes a participant in the nature of



the Holy Trinity, for the second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity (Christ) is the Absolute man.

Thus Berdyaev places his concept of personality in the context of Trinity, which is a spirit-centred mystery of life itself; while historically Berdyaev's view of man was anthropocentric and idealistic, he favoured a pneuma-centric spirituality, and a pneuma-centric personality which is eschatologically orientated. Hence Berdyaev considered man an eschatologically directed personality.

It would be obvious by now that it was Berdyaev's deep concern about man's freedom that underlay his whole philosophy of freedom and the Spirit. His was not a logically constructed system like Hegel's in which God or Absolute Spirit completes 'the system'. That kind of theoretical superstructure alienates individual man. Neither did Berdyaev stop at the stage of merely highlighting the individual as the existentialists had done. For him, individualism demeans man and human freedom comes to its full manifestation in personality. The theme of state, labour, alienation and such like which run through Marx are filled with a new content by Berdyaev's personalism. In Marx's thought the individual became enslaved by social being. In Berdyaev, freedom and personality fills society, state, history and time with new significance because freedom is not empty actionalism but human creativity is filled with eschatological significance. His preoccupation with the struggle of existence leads him to perceive a new and

refreshing dimension to the Christ-event which provides a new terminus a quo for philosophical discourse and for dialogue with theology, a task which may heal the present fragmentation in the human quest for freedom and authenticity.

Having attempted to highlight some of the main tenets of Berdyaev's thought, which in his writings, it has been pointed out, are not systematically presented, it behoves us now, briefly, to attempt a critical analysis of his thought. This will be the task of Chapter 5.

PERSONALITY AND NECESSITY

1. Berdyaev, N.A. Slavery and Freedom, p. 59.
2. Ibid., p. 73.
3. Ibid., p. 74.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Ibid., p. 82.
6. Ibid., p. 88.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
8. Ibid., p. 91.
9. Ibid., p. 96.
10. Loc. cit.
11. Ibid., p. 98.
12. Loc. cit.
13. Ibid., p. 100.
14. Ibid., p. 101.
15. Ibid., p. 102.
16. Ibid., p. 103.
17. Ibid., p. 104.
18. Ibid., p. 120.
19. Ibid., p. 126.
20. Ibid., p. 135.
21. Ibid., p. 137.
22. Ibid., p. 140.
23. Ibid., p. 145.

PERSONALITY AND CREATIVITY

24. Berdyaev, N.A.     The Meaning of the Creative Act, p. 96.
25. Ibid., p. 98.
26. Ibid., p. 99.
27. Loc. cit.
28. Ibid., p. 104.
29. Loc. cit.
30. Ibid., p. 107.
31. Ibid., p. 172.
32. Ibid., p. 173.
33. Ibid., p. 193.
34. Ibid., p. 179.
35. Ibid., p. 173.
36. Berdyaev, N.A.     Truth and Revelation, p. 74.
37. Ibid., p. 24.
38. Berdyaev, N.A.     Slavery and Freedom, p. 23.

PERSONALITY AND HISTORY

39. Richardson, D.B. Berdyaev's Philosophy of History, p. 10.
40. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 197.
41. Ibid., p. 207.
42. Ibid., p. 229.
43. Loc. cit.
44. Berdyaev, N.A. Truth and Revelation, p. 53.
45. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 208.
46. Berdyaev, N.A. Truth and Revelation, p. 81.
47. Loc. cit.
48. Ibid., p. 92.
49. Ibid., p. 79.
50. Ibid., p. 137.

PERSONALITY AND ESCHATOLOGY

51. Berdyaev, N.A. The Beginning and the End, p. 137.
52. Ibid., p. 148.
53. Loc. cit.
54. Ibid., p. 251.
55. Berdyaev, N.A. The Destiny of Man, p. 55.
56. Calian, S. The Eschatological Dimension of  
Berdyaev's Philosophy, p. 66.
57. Ibid., p. 81.
58. Berdyaev, N.A. The Divine and the Human, p. 127.

## Chapter V    .Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation, as was stated in the positio quaestionis, has been to evaluate Berdyaev's contribution to the understanding of man and his response to the problem of freedom vis-à-vis the de-humanization of man in the twentieth century. His is a thoroughly anthropocentric philosophy that aims at restoring man to himself; to what, Berdyaev believes, man can and ought to be.

Berdyaev's diagnosis of the modern dilemma leads him to the view that the historical development of man has floundered in two respects: it has not led to the realization of greater freedom by man, nor has it promoted the flowering of man's full humanity. Freedom and humanity are the fundamentals in Berdyaev's thought, for humanity can only actualize itself in freedom and man can only be free if he is truly humane. In this dissertation 'humane' has been used to describe that which is intrinsically, qualitatively and fully human. For Berdyaev this dialectic between freedom and being fully human is ultimately at the root of the quest for personality.

### 5.1    Beyond Existentialism

In many respects, Berdyaev may be regarded as a 'post existentialist' for his philosophy of personality goes beyond the centrality of the individual which is fundamental to existentialist thought. He makes an attempt to 'rehouse' man in the world after the existentialists had abandoned

him to the fact of his solitary freedom and to his 'thrownness'.

To handle the problem of man's humanity, Berdyaev is driven back to first order questions. He is not content to merely accept the 'facticity' of man. He seeks to know 'why man is' in the first place; to work out what man can potentially be, what his task is and what direction he should take.

The terminus a quo of existentialism, without exception, is the fact of man's 'thrownness' in the world. That he is already here in the world, and that he 'ek-sists' in the face of Being (Heidegger), Nothingness (Sartre) or in his border-situation (Jaspers). Whether theistic existentialists like Augustine, Pascal, Marcel and Kierkegaard, or atheistic ones like Heidegger, Camus and Sartre, they cope with man's relationship with his fellow man, man's relationships with God or with non-being, as the case may be, and man's responsibility to himself, from the fact that he exists in the world already. Here lies Berdyaev's problem! He claims that the existentialists, despite their reaction to absolute metaphysics, the tyranny of ontology, and the degradation of culture and man's general unfreedom, did not go far enough. Berdyaev would still place the existentialists, especially the atheistic ones, within the objectivized world; that is, they speak from within the realm of necessity. For him there is no meaning immanent in the phenomenal world. Meaning must be sought in the realm of freedom. He, therefore, goes beyond the 'facticity' of man to attempt an explanation for what it means to be man in the first place. It is from

this standpoint that he understands the meaning of freedom and the ultimate calling of man; not from 'below', i.e. from the point of view of his 'facticity'.

Of course, one must keep in mind that the existentialists responded to a different conflict-situation which presented its own unique problem. In the face of depersonalized bourgeois Christianity, utilitarian ethics, the reign of the Hegelian Absolute and later the outbreak of the first and second world wars, the existentialists in reaction insisted on the freedom, dignity and individual responsibility of man. They defended the individual's subjective experience against the onslaught of impersonal and objective knowledge.

Berdyayev's historical experience was slightly different. Although he was the contemporary of many post-war existentialist philosophers and theologians, his experiences posed to him different questions. Berdyayev was confronted with a number of doctrines all operating with conflicting views of man interwoven with the social, religious, political themes of the Russian intelligentsia in the first two decades of this century (cf. Chapter I); the influence of Orthodoxy which maintains the doctrine that man is created in God's image, is essentially spiritual, and contains a divine spark in him; and the ascendancy of Marxist socialism, which saw man primarily as the outcome of materialist forces. Hence it was not sufficient for him just to call attention to the freedom and dignity of the individual person. His



aim was to challenge the fundamental assumptions in these understandings of man so that man may be redirected on the path of freedom and humanity. Berdyaev then supersedes the existentialists by asking the first order question 'why is man "thrown" in the first place?' This question is even more fundamental than the fact of his existence. However, the pretentiousness of his quest exposes him to a great many more problems than the more modest reactions of some of the existentialists.

While the existentialists began with the freedom of the individual, Berdyaev begins with freedom as the primal reality.

Further, it must be remembered that his account of freedom as primordial and unfathomable reality was an attempt to cope with the besetting problems of theology and philosophy and to account for the relative responsibility of man and his tragic fate in history. He was quick to grasp that while it was true that man did not have an adequate grasp of his own potentialities and was far from any self-understanding, this was in itself not the reason for his crisis but went much deeper.

## 5.2 The Christian Answer

In his attempt to preserve the dignity and freedom of man whom he claimed was essentially a creative being, Berdyaev turned to the Christian answer. Here he saw the most

enduring preserver of the dignity of man and the only adequate basis for the claim that man is not merely an individual but also personality.

According to Berdyaev the God-incarnate is only meaningful if freedom is the primal reality. It is also the only meaning that can be given to the Christ-event if the dignity and freedom of man is to be maintained. Christ is the criterion against which man's humanity is assessed and against which he is found wanting. However, to begin with freedom, and not with God, is a fundamental departure from western theology and involves Berdyaev in numerous controversies.

His argument starts with the observation that when Christ came to earth he preached a message in freedom. The methods of the realm of Caesar, of might and power, were unknown to him. As a humble servant he called man to follow the truth <sup>X</sup> voluntarily. His message was, for Berdyaev, essentially a summons to spirituality and freedom. If Christ was himself perfect personality and his message was preached in freedom, then the kingdom of God is the kingdom of freedom of nature, the kingdom of compulsion and necessity. It is on this basis that Berdyaev argues for the birth of God from the depths of the Urgrund. His most daring postulate is the idea of Boehme that man is the result of the creative self-realization of God. God creates himself out of the depths of the Urgrund and creates man to discover his own potential (cf. Chapter 2 and 3). This picture of God would

be, however, from a western and strictly Biblical point of view, highly problematic.

The idea of the 'Becoming God' has no Biblical justification. Since, as it has already been pointed out, Berdyaev's primary reality is freedom then he comes to the Bible with this pre-supposition. He does not try to make sense of the world in terms of biblical postulates only. Freedom and the Christ-event are held in dynamic tension explaining each other. For Berdyaev, in order for man to be created, God must suffer a 'lack' (Chapter 2). His philosophy implies that God needs man as much as man needs God, for if God was completely self-sufficient there would be no purpose for man. So God created man as an act of his own self-realization, in eternity, out of nothingness or freedom. So while God may have absolute power over the Being of man, He is powerless before man's freedom; the very stuff from which he created him. Man in his freedom may choose then either to walk with God or to explore the limits of freedom in a rebellious assertion of self-will (hubris). This was essentially the sin of Adam. To choose apart from God is to choose spiritual alienation for while man may continue to create in freedom, the product of his creative act is trapped in space and time bringing about a sundering of the spiritual consciousness of men for spirit becomes caught in a tension with necessity.

One implication of this interpretation of God is that firstly, the powers of God are limited. Berdyaev may be

accused of limiting the power of God to increase the powers of man. However, if Berdyaev sees the realm of God as the realm of freedom, then power and authority have no place in it.

The implication of this view for the interpretation of man is that man, by virtue of being a spiritual being cast in the image of God, is potentially free. He, however, is in constant danger of being enslaved by the 'forces of nature'. This is the condition of his fallenness.

The fall of man is, then, man's alienation from himself and this is a spiritual alienation. The whole of the realm of nature, of space, time and causality, is the fallen world of man. The problem this raises is that there is no God in such a world. God is 'wholly other'. Also, if as Berdyaev suggests, the Christ-event is the symbolical representation of God suffering in eternity, then God suffers alongside man and not in the world with man. Man's redemption then is only symbolically accomplished by Christ. His 'real' redemption lies entirely in his own hands. The Christ-event was only a summons, a beckoning to follow freedom and the truth. The ultimate choice is up to man. Since the world represents alienation God can have no part of it. The only communication he has is through symbolism.

For Berdyaev, symbolism and mythology are the only overt means of man-God communion. The Bible itself is for him symbolical and does not tell us everything about God. It

merely reveals God's purpose for man. However, the fact remains that while God has it in his power to illuminate the dark world of man, and point man in the right direction, he can have no power over man. Man is spiritually free even if he is bound by nature. It lies within his own power to attain both freedom and humanity to the extent that his fallenness would allow. In other words, God cannot really save man from further sin.

It would be a valid question to ask of Berdyaev, 'Where then is the place for prayer?'. It is true that prayer is a means of communicating with God, but if God has no real part in the world except a symbolical one, then he cannot really answer prayers or effect changes in the lives of people who so beseech him. All he can, and wills, is to show man the path to salvation. The rest is up to man to accomplish.

This symbolical explanation of the Incarnation will indeed occasion several problems for traditional theologians, the most important being the doctrine of the divine identification with human history in the Christ-event. How would Berdyaev interpret, for example, John's view that 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory full of grace and truth'? Berdyaev's idealism becomes especially apparent when he considers the mode of communication with the realm of freedom (cf. Chapter 3). For him, this communication is mystical intuition, creative penetration into the depth of man's own being which brings him

into touch with the mystery of God since both God and man share the same beginning. Here also, emerges Berdyaev's Russian heritage! In the west philosophy has been primarily the search for knowledge and theology, the search for ultimate truth (cf. Chapter 1). In the intellectual tradition of Russia this separation was not made. Knowledge and truth were not separate concerns. Philosophy was also the search for truth. It is for this reason that Russia almost entirely lacks an epistemology. All its quests for meaning have either positively or negatively a religious basis. Hence, Berdyaev brings to bear on his philosophy a deeply religious a priori. For him, authentic knowledge is based ultimately on mystical intuition which is both knowledge of God and realization of truth.

### 5.3 The dynamic tension between the 'Ideal' and the 'existential'

It would appear then, that Berdyaev is idealistic to the core yet, as it has been pointed out, he is fundamentally existentialist also. How can this antithesis be understood? For Berdyaev freedom and the spirit are transcendent realities belonging to the realm outside that of nature with no possible means of communicating with nature except symbolically. Man is seen as a creature belonging to both the realms of freedom and the order of nature. So long as man is extended in the objective world, constrained by space, time and causality, and is a natural being, so long as he remains free and creative, he participates in the spiritual.

However, Berdyaev's philosophy is existential because the quest for the humane is an existential quest. God is an existential reality; he exists in one's inner depths and the incarnation is the irruption of the existential into the linear progression of time. All aspects of spiritual reality, for example, all acts of creativity belong in existential time. Paradoxically, for Berdyaev the order of spirit is the order of eternity and anything in the natural world participating in eternity is existential. For Berdyaev man's being belongs to historical and cosmic time but his spiritual essence, his existential striving belongs to existential time. The awakening of the spirit, the creation of values, have no place in the natural world; it makes sense only if it participates in eternity.

This is what gives rise to the paradox of idealism and existentialism. Berdyaev's idea of two worlds and the fact that this world is not ultimate reality is thoroughly idealistic. His only basis for this idealism is the God-man, the irruption of the spiritual into the phenomenal. However, in so far as Berdyaev sees man as co-responsible for the world and that man is God's 'projected plan' not a completely created entity, man is in a position to forge his own being and to be the creator of his own values. In so far as he endures a 'terrible freedom' before which even God is powerless, and in so far as man's image and destiny lie in his own hands, Berdyaev could not be more existentialist.

A brief comparison with some of the main existentialist

themes described in Chapter One elucidates this point. As it was observed already, Berdyaev also analyses the concept of 'Dread', one of the enduring themes of the existentialists. He follows Kierkegaard in distinguishing between dread and fear. Fear is directed to an object. Dread is objectless; it is the condition of the human spirit on awakening to an awareness of its vast freedom. Dread is endemic to the development of personality and is the precondition for the transcending act of spirit, i.e. for spirit to transcend the world of objects and be fulfilled in freedom. Dread is not a psychological condition but is, for Berdyaev, as it is with other existentialists, an existential condition. It describes the consciousness of man at his moment of confrontation with 'reality'.

For many existentialists 'dread' is a condition of consciousness. For Berdyaev it is a crisis of the spirit. Spirit for Berdyaev is a category like reason or consciousness. There is as much evidence for spirit as an aspect of the human make up as there is for reason. Even in the face of irrationality man is credited with having a rational faculty for there is enough evidence in the history of man to support the claim that he is capable of rational thought. Likewise, the history of man is characterized by spiritual yearning. This can only be the case if man has a spiritual 'faculty'. While 'fear' is a category dealing with his psychology, 'dread' deals with his spirituality.

The second major theme of Berdyaev's philosophy is the idea



of Being in advance of itself. Although this is a Heideggerian coinage it is a theme common to all the existentialists and is also fundamental to Berdyaev's idea of personality.<sup>1</sup> Personality is spirit in advance of itself. It is both personality and yet it is not yet personality for personality is dynamic; it is constantly in the making. The conflict of spirituality and the external world is the motor for the creation of values and it is the creation of values that constitutes personality. For Berdyaev a creature who experiences no inner conflict is a creature whose spirit has not awakened to its calling; a creature with no personality. As long as man is alive in the world his spirit will be at odds with the world because there is no immanent solution to the problem of man. Hence, there is no completed state of personality and no set of final values. Man is always in the making, and hence, he is always ahead of himself - a being in-advance of itself.

However, with regard to this point there is one important difference between Berdyaev and the existentialists. For Heidegger and Sartre, for example, no direction is given to the creativity of man. The idea of Being-in-advance of itself is an attempt to explain man from empirical data, that is, they explain what man is 'doing' and why

he must do it. The atheistic Existentialists make the jump from the 'is' to the 'ought' without sufficiently substantiating why the 'ought' is an imperative. It is of no avail to tell man, like Sartre did, that he is condemned to be free when he is so easily enslaved or to say

like Camus that man must rebel on behalf of values without giving convincing enough reasons why he should. Berdyaev not only explains man from what he observes, the 'is', he shows why man's creation of values is imperative and why it can be no other way. Here, then, is one of the most impelling philosophical arguments for faith that has emerged in our century!

A third main theme that Berdyaev shares with existentialism is the theme of temporality. Temporality is antithetical to individuality. It relativizes human existence. One moment is not any more important than the next. Existentiality is opposed to temporality. Berdyaev gives fullest expression to this theme (cf. Chapter 2 ). The moments of victory of the spirit belong to existential time for the moment of victory of spirit over nature belongs to eternity. Hence personality does not have meaning in time; it has meaning in eternity. It is in fact antithetical to time for it is immortal.

These are some of the main themes Berdyaev shares with the existentialists and which qualifies his philosophy as thoroughly existential. So although he appears to have an idealistic interpretation of the world, his philosophy only culminates in idealism but at grass roots attempts to explain the reality of man's existentiality. It is for this reason that the pivot of Berdyaev's philosophy is neither God nor man, but the God-man.

Berdyaev's philosophy then is thoroughly idealistic and yet thoroughly existentialist. The argument against the problematic nature of God which he advances, he counters with the fact that his idea of God is actually consistent with the personality of God as he is revealed in the Bible. Proof of this is that he absolved God of any responsibility for evil.

Conventional western theologians have often tied themselves up in knots trying to undo the paradox of a loving and suffering God with a God who allows the flourishing of evil on earth. In his Divine and Human Berdyaev argues,

If Satan is entirely subordinate to God and is the instrument of Divine providence, if God makes use of him for his own good ends, evil does not really exist. This is an entirely optimistic theory. 2

If this is the case, the loving and suffering nature of God as revealed in the New Testament is incompatible with the view of God where He appears to be the One who allows for the wantonness of evil. God and not man in this case would be responsible for evil. In his attempt to make the idea of God consistent with his revelation in Christ, Berdyaev postulated the idea that evil is rooted in uncreated freedom, the stuff from which God created man. This makes man both potentially good and potentially evil and places evil outside the ambit of God. This explanation squares with the idea of the personality of God, with the God revealed in Christ, but it denies the omnipotence of God in the face of such evil.

Western theology has been unable to accept a God that is not omnipotent and the difficulty in theology arises from trying to reconcile the idea of omnipotence with the idea of the all loving, all merciful God. Berdyaev, on the other hand, is prepared to sacrifice one of the attributes of God (omnipotence) to emphasize the reality of God as suffering and loving.

While Berdyaev does stray beyond the confines of the Bible and there is in the end very little Biblical justification for his views, Berdyaev's statements about God's personality begins with scripture. His speculation is only an attempt to present an understanding of man and the world which would be consistent with the image of God in revelation. So while his views may be considered heretical and, narrowly interpreted, may imply the limitation of the powers of God and the exaltation of man, at no point does he make statements about the personality of God which are contradictory to the Bible. It is the western theologians who are far more guilty with regard to the distorting of the notion of God since they insist on maintaining the omnipotence of God side by side with his mercy and in the attempt to interpret strictly, in keeping with the 'Word of God', they postulate a very problematic picture of God and man, which contradicts the image of God in the New Testament.

Berdyaev blames the narrow literal understanding of the Bible for the distortion of the image of God and from his point of view it is the western theologians who are guilty

of blasphemy and heresy. He, on the other hand, manages to accomplish an incredible exaltation of God and man. Man is free even before God and God loves and suffers alongside man who must bear his freedom with dignity. So Berdyaev manages to assert man's freedom and the loving personality of God who cannot be held responsible for the pain and suffering of the world.

Berdyaev's understanding of evil and freedom has important implications for the understanding of man. If God is not responsible for evil and man is free to choose either to walk with God or fall away from him, God is impotent in the face of man's freedom. This may be interpreted in two ways, only one of which has been emphasized in the West. The fact that man fell away from God into a situation of sin and alienation demonstrates the evil in man, the will to power of man and the need for man to humble himself and redeem himself before God. The fact that man is free to choose, such a choice exalts man infinitely. It speaks of the nobility of man as a free creature and exalts him. Berdyaev writes that,

If man is a fallen creature and if he fell in virtue of freedom inherent in him from the first, it shows that he is a lofty being. Awareness of original sin both humbles and exalts man. Man<sup>3</sup> fell from a height and he can rise to it again.

For Berdyaev God did not create man to humiliate him. He created him in an act of His own self-realization. Man then is cast in God's image and is co-creator with God; that is his calling first and foremost. That man abused his freedom and chose against God means that he must redeem himself and

creativity becomes a redemptive act.

Clearly Berdyaev's interpretation of Christianity differs completely from that of the West. His audacious idea that man as a free being must be a spiritual being for only spirit is free, and that he has a divine spark in him because he is God's image, cannot be substantiated by the biblical revelation.

Berdyaev's philosophy is also an incisive counter to Marxism. It answers the 'hidden agenda', the inner themes, in Marxism. While his views on God, philosophy and man, as we have already seen, may be problematic to the western mind, they are consistent with the picture of man and God - with a few minor changes - that the Orthodox Church of Russia presents.

Berdyaev argued that Marxism can neither be combated by capitalism, which is an even greater evil, nor by counter revolutionary forces. Hence he fell out with the Mensheviks because he believed that they did not see the truth of Marxism, nor did they understand that revolution was not a political or socio-economic crisis. In actual fact, the Revolution was the result of the failure of Christianity in the world; the reaction of suffering people against a distorted image of God. The only answer to Marxism is a religious revival for only a religious awakening can extirpate the anti-Christ from the souls of men.

Berdyaev maintained that Communism essentially propogated a dogmatic and intolerant religion of its own: a messianic concept of the proletariat<sup>4</sup> and, like every extreme revolutionary ideology, an unconscious survival of dualistic Manichean tendencies and 'a sharp distinction between the kingdom of a good god and that of an evil god, a dualism Marxism hopes, will be overcome with the victory of the proletariat.'<sup>5</sup> Berdyaev argued that Marx's proletarian Communism was a secularised form of the ancient Jewish chiliasm, a 'chosen class takes the place of the chosen people'.<sup>6</sup> Berdyaev cites the experience of K. Leontyev who lost faith in a positive religious vocation of the Russian people and began to believe that Russia was destined to bring forth anti-Christ. Russian remained messianic, but in an evil sense. Such is the type of messianism, Berdyaev argues, that emerges in Boshevism and in Communism.<sup>7</sup>

However, as Berdyaev goes on to show, Marxism which 'prefers the most naive materialism, is an extreme idealism' because 'the proletariat' is not an empirical reality but an idea. He writes,

X It is impossible to understand Communism if one sees in it only a social system. But one can comprehend the passionate tone of anti-religious propaganda and persecution in Soviet Russia, if one sees Communism as a religion that is striving to take the place of Christianity. Only a religion is characterised by the claim to possess absolute truth; no political or economic movement can claim that .... Only a religion has a catechism which is obligatory for everyone ... Recognising itself as the one true religion, it cannot suffer other false religions alongside of it. Besides it is a religion that aims at making its way into life by force and coercion,

taking no account of the freedom of the human spirit. 8

The anti-Christ emerges in Marxism as 'a divinised collectivity'.<sup>9</sup> Hence Marxism constitutes a great danger to human freedom because man is reduced to 'a function of society and even, more precisely, of a class. Man does not exist; only his class exists!'.<sup>10</sup> Marx's doctrine is changed from Feuerbach's anthropocentrism to 'socio-centrism' or 'proletariocentrism'. Marx's man has 'lost the image and the likeness of God; he is the image of and likeness of society',<sup>11</sup> a product of his social surroundings, of the economics of his epoch, of his class.

It has been repeatedly stated that Berdyaev's philosophy is not free from problems of its own. It remains a highly rationalistic constitutive model which is based on certain inexplicable and undemonstrable a priori; the Ungrund, the primordial freedom that pre-exists God and man, the absolute freedom of God and Man, and man's possession of the spark of the divine. When ultimately Berdyaev is pressed (like Barth had done) to show the basis for these presuppositions, he has recourse to affirming intuitive mysticism, a realm that he cannot be drawn out from since it is a priori not logical. This type of argument may well open him to the charge of escapism.

Yet, on the other hand, he is not wary of indulging in speculative philosophy in order to find a purpose or justi-



fication for human existence. However, this very attempt at explanation, as it has been discussed already, is problematic. Furthermore, it undermines the very basis of Berdyaev's mysticism. The problem of how to make an intuitive grasp of an idea or mystical understanding accessible rationally still remains!

Furthermore, how can one judge when one has had a mystical experience; that is, what criterion can be used to distinguish true mystical truth from hallucination? Of course, such an objection undermines mystical postulates especially since freedom is primordial, there can be no norm that is independent of it and prior to it. Yet if there can be no norm that guides one with regard to mystical experience then any experience can be claimed by anyone to be mystical.

The problems Berdyaev runs into with regard to subjective experience is no different from the ones the existentialists encountered. To counter this they introduced the category of 'authenticity', claiming that authenticity was the ultimate means by which one can judge 'good faith'. But even this is not helpful since it is even more subjective than mere good faith.

Another problem that Berdyaev does not seem to address is the universal validity of his truth-perspective. In a multi-religious world, how does Berdyaev expect to convince the rest of the world about his philosophy if it is ultimately based on the fact of revelation? However significant and

plausible his arguments may be from the idea of the God-man, the difficulty he faces is how to convince all the world's religious populations that Christ Jesus is indeed the God-man and that God does identify with man in history. For example, that the docetic avatar of Hinduism is inadequate to grasp history. Berdyaev cannot very well ignore this problem for his philosophy of history, creativity and eschatology is the prophetic anticipation of the destiny of all men. However, it is interesting to note, as Donald Lowrie reports, that at a meeting in the Sorbonne it was a Hindu scholar who called Berdyaev 'his master among western thinkers'.<sup>12</sup> Berdyaev may yet have universal appeal!

However, since he so emphatically declares that the kingdom of God must be prepared for by man, who in his creativity seeks redemption, Berdyaev means the creativity of all of man. But if half the world does not accept Berdyaev's a priori, the God-man, they will be excluded from the preparation of the kingdom of God. What becomes of the eschatological consummation of history that Berdyaev insists must happen? This problem is especially acute since, unlike in traditional western theology, for Berdyaev this kingdom will be brought about by man, not God.

To briefly summarize, the problems in Berdyaev's philosophy include,

- (i) His attempt to go beyond the 'facticity' of man to account for him which leads to a speculative a priori;

- (ii) The idea of powerlessness of God in the face of man's freedom;
- (iii) The essential divinity of man which has no real Biblical evidence;
- (iv) His view that ultimate knowledge is only possible through mystical intuition. While he achieves here the important task of bringing to bear the mystical on thought, this option by its very nature remains controversial.
- (v) His truth-perspective which takes as its fundamental assumption the identification of God with man to be made accessible to people of other religious faiths who may not accept this idea;
- (vi) Given the internal logic of Berdyaev's philosophy and the 'tautological' method of writing, his philosophy is a contribution only to believers; for none of his ideas are universally valid from the epistemological and rational point of view.

This last point raises a major methodological problem in Berdyaev's thought. Every one of his ideas is valid only within the 'system'. The reader is left with the problem of either accepting or rejecting Berdyaev's message as a whole, for it is not possible to accept or reject parts of it. He may argue in his defense that this is the nature of truth; it cannot be bonum partem. On the positive side, Berdyaev's cautiousness not to 'rush in where angels fear to tread' and either like the neo-Positivists reduce everything that cannot be explained to untruth and even non-sense, or reduce human behaviour to empty actionalism as many of

the existentialists have done, or to a type of operationalism as the Marxists had done. All these alternatives he quite convincingly has shown, undermine the freedom of man.

Furthermore, Berdyaev provides for both philosophy and theology a starting point for renewed dialogue, and a new possibility for the healing of man's fractured world-view since the Enlightenment. Faith and reason; theology and philosophy; metaphysics and epistemology; morality and economics; politics and society, and even theory and practice have been set in incurable antithetical tension. Man, as it were, has blown himself apart and the task facing philosophy (and theology) is to reconstitute meaning and truth, and to heal the terrible schism in man's mind, nay, his soul (his being - ψευκμ ). Berdyaev's philosophy is such an attempt! It affirms freedom as a non-negotiable a priori, man's spiritual nature as the terminus a quo, the humane as the terminus ad quem and human creativity as man's modus vivendi.<sup>12</sup> His thought is saved from lapsing into empty actionalism since the object of man's striving, the model par excellence, is the historical Christ-event, wherein man's possibilities had been wonderfully manifested.

Ultimately, one is forced to accept Berdyaev's philosophical presuppositions on the basis of faith for there is no other way to understand the Christ-event. The emptiness of the nineteenth century historical quest for the historical Jesus and the spiritless alternative of ethical monotheism of the History of Religions School show that any other way to under-

stand the Christ-event is an exercise in futility. Having accepted his presuppositions, Berdyaev argues consistently and is not unmindful of the criticism levelled above. In fact, he refused to attempt to prove, or attempt to demonstrate, either the existence of God or the Ungrund; that would be proceeding in the way of Graeco-Roman logicality, which he severely criticised (cf. Chapter 1). It would lead to levelling off the mystery of both God and human existence, and invariably, would lapse into quantification; the obsession of the 'realm of Caesar'.

A severe criticism that can be made against Berdyaev is that he makes faith and man's justification entirely a human work. There is here no room, for example, for Luther's view of faith as coming Wann es in das Treffen get, or for justification by faith, not works. Is Berdyaev's optimism perhaps not blinding him to the reality of 'sin' and the debilitating power of 'sin' over man, which even non-Christian philosophers have perceived as the 'irrationality' of existence, its accompanying fear and dread and its unpredictability? Having read Berdyaev's works carefully, one can almost hear how he would counter the charge! He would affirm that man must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, i.e. through redemptive suffering and creativity since he is a creature of space and time and that it was imperative for him to do so since in the realm of the Spirit his redemption has been already wrought, the sign of which is the fact of the Christ-event. Manifest on earth what is already true in 'heaven', he would say! Faith as

potentiality of the Spirit must be manifest in human effort. He would explain justification by faith, by his idealism. For him if redemption was not man's own responsibility then man's freedom was greatly endangered.

However, it could be asked whether there is in fact any difference between Berdyaev's postulate 'freedom' and, for example, Sartre's postulate 'Nothingness'. Are they really all that different? Both are primordial and both cannot be demonstrated. However, Berdyaev would answer that his 'freedom' is an attempt to understand God and man, and to undergird human freedom and morality. To present to man not only the challenge of freedom but to show the existential (not existentialist) possibility for man to be truly humane; to give man an incentive to strive to be fully human. In so far as Berdyaev sets this struggle for the humane in ongoing creativity and in so far as this creativity is the correlative of God's creativity, man is set coram Deo and this dynamism at least prevents the dogmatism and intolerance of some of the existentialists and Marxists, and we may add, the religionists.

What then is of lasting value in Berdyaev's thought? It is clear that in spite of the points of controversy in his thought, the two ideas of Freedom and Necessity and the quest for the humanity of man, that is, the development of personality cannot be separated from the rest of his thought. The lasting legacy left in his philosophy include:

(i) The affirmation of the category of the spiritual in describing man. There is as much evidence for calling man a

spiritual being as there is for calling him a rational, irrational, psychological or emotional being;

(ii) Given the category of the spiritual, man is essentially free. He is not condemned to be free in the Sartrean sense. He is both free to choose good or evil and free to remain in the truth. However, he may just as easily enslave himself and deny his humanity. While, as Sartre may say, he does this of his own choosing, Freedom for Berdyaev is not the empty freedom of actionism but the meaningful freedom that preserves man in his essential humanity; his personality.

(iii) Although he does not provide a satisfying answer to why man was created in the first place, he nonetheless asks the question. In this regard, Berdyaev asks the most fundamental question of all, even more fundamental than the existentialists'. While the philosopher accepts that there could never be a conclusive answer to this question, to ask it would be to help clarify the purpose of man, which is an ongoing quest.

(iv) Man's fate is entirely in his own hands. While God may suffer on behalf of man, for that is all he can do, it is in the end up to man himself to strive for the realization of humanity in terms of his higher purpose.

Berdyaev's answer to what the higher calling of man is and the end his freedom must be exercised may not satisfy all.

Nevertheless, the question must be asked again and again, for whatever else be the purpose of philosophy, the quest for humanity as the existential implication of Freedom remains its enduring responsibility. This responsibility

Berdyaev clearly grasps and, as M.M. Davy states it,

Berdyaev speaks to all who are turned towards the Light, hoping to respond to their tragic destiny and through their creative freedom to play their part in the transfiguration of the cosmos. 15

To summarize, the lasting value of Berdyaev's philosophy firstly lies in his clear grasp of the nature of freedom vis-à-vis necessity, a problem that has remained unresolved in Kant, Hegel, the Existentialists and the Marxists.

Secondly, his understanding of personality vis-à-vis individuality. M.A. Vallon called Berdyaev the 'Apostle of Freedom'.<sup>16</sup> He may well be called also the evangelist of personality! It is from the perspective of personality that he repudiates technological, communistic, capitalistic and all other forms of besetting ideological slavery. In our age of looming conflict between totalitarian power and the increasing dehumanization of man by absolutist powers (functionalism, scientism, technologism, ideological oppression and such like), Berdyaev provides thought provoking possibilities for a way out of the crisis that modern man finds himself in.

In conclusion, it may be added that, while Berdyaev's philosophy is a response to the exigencies of the twentieth century as he experienced it, every human perspective is a valid one. The implication is that, while no philosopher can be credited with the entire truth, every attempt at truth sheds a particular perspective on man, a perspective



that has to be encountered if there is a genuine desire to understand man in the first place. Increased understanding will necessarily lead to a diminution of conflict, and, while this conflict may not be entirely resolved by man qua man, the humane will gain ascendancy over dehumanization and human degradation.

Footnotes: Chapter IV

1. Cf. Tsambasis, A.N., "Berdyayev's Personalistic Philosophy", The Personalist, pp. 46: July 1965, pp. 327-341.
2. Berdyayev, N.A. The Divine and the Human, p. 40.
3. Ibid., p. 40.
4. Berdyayev, N.A. The Russian Revolution, p. 72.
5. Ibid., p. 73.
6. Ibid., p. 74.
7. Ibid., p. 76.
8. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
9. Ibid., p. 95.
10. Ibid., p. 83.
11. Ibid., p. 82.
12. Lowrie, D.A. Rebellious Prophet, p. 287.
13. Cf. The following articles for a definition of Berdyayev's understanding of creativity, a point that has been elucidated fully in Chapter 4; Dye, J.W. "Berdyayev on Creativity", The Personalist 46, October 1965, pp. 459-467; Anderson, R.V. 'The concept of creativity in the thought of Rilke and Berdyayev', The Personalist 46: April 1962, pp. 226-232.
14. Cf. Cayard, W.W. 'Berdyayev's defense of "uncreated freedom"', Journal of the West Virginia Philosophical Society, Spring 1974, pp. 18-20; This point has been elucidated in Chapter 3.

15. Davy, M.M.            Nicholas Berdyaev Man of the Eight Day,  
p. 133.
16. Vallon, M.A. called his study of Berdyaev, "The  
Apostle of freedom: The life and Teachings of Nicholas  
Berdyaev."

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