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Berdyaeв's Philosophy of Liberty: Existential *versus* Existentialistic

Abstract: The purpose of the study is to examine the worldviews and methodological foundations of Berdyaeв's philosophy of liberty and concrete personalism in the context of his fundamental separation between existential philosophy and existentialism. The methodology of the study is to apply methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, as well as the combination of cultural, religious and historical-philosophical approaches, which have made it possible to analyze the creative work by Berdyaeв within the non-classical type of philosophizing. The scientific novelty attests to Berdyaeв's worldview distance from the philosophy of classical existentialism and his affiliation with "non-academic" thinkers. For Berdyaeв, human liberty and creativity are the basis for renewing the neglected spirituality of mankind and transforming the foundations of traditional Christianity. The conclusions emphasize that the most characteristic feature of Berdyaeв's philosophical and religious ontological conception was the a priori of his entire categorical system of the phenomenon of liberty and its equation with the phenomenon of God. The spirit is associated by Berdyaeв not with being, but with liberty, a creative act that takes place in the depths of human existence.

Keywords: existential philosophy, existentialism, personalism, liberty, creativity, Christianity.

1. Introduction

The relevance of the study. In the 20th century, Nikolai Berdyaeв turned into "Kierkegaard for Orthodoxy" when he began to develop and apply existential dialectics as a method of reinterpreting the basic tenets of Christianity. Berdyaeв is proclaimed one of the founders of existentialism, though he himself never called himself and did not qualify as a representative of this philosophy. Berdyaeв distinguished the concept of existential philosophy and existentialism. In the context of the development of the tendency towards spiritual degradation of humanity and rethinking the significance of the phenomenon of "religiosity", the significance of

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Berdyayev's views only increases. At the same time, the relevance of his views to the present lies in their interdisciplinary nature, where the integration of religion, philosophy, culture serves as a worldview and methodological background for rethinking the foundations of traditional Christianity, which is the moral, ethical and value foundation of the modern Western world. The importance of Berdyayev's ideas for the resuscitation of the devastated spirituality of modern man cannot be properly re-thought and interpreted without a clear understanding of the features and specifics of his "non-academic" style of thinking.

The state of the scientific development of the problem. Generally, Berdyayev's creative work is defined as "personalism" or "religious existentialism". During the last decades, both Ukrainian and foreign researchers have turned to the analysis of M. Berdyayev's works, in particular, Bychko (2003), Volohin (2003), Horban (2014), Linde (2010), Liamtsev (2007), Myslyvchenko (2003), Ovsiannikov (2008), Slaatte (1997), Tytarenko (2006), Fedotov (1991) and others. Myslyvchenko, to the question, "Was Berdyayev an existentialist?" replies "it would rather be called an existentially thinking philosopher rather than just a faithful follower of the philosophy of existentialism as a fixed current with its terminology" (Myslyvchenko, 2003, 130). In his own manner Fedotov defines the philosophy by Berdyayev, "Berdyayev speaks of the Kingdom of God as the ultimate ideal, but the Kingdom is built not only by God, but also by the efforts of man. So Berdyayev's religious philosophy becomes not so much the doctrine of God as the doctrine of man: anthropology in the theological sense" (Fedotov, 1991, 397). "Berdyayev's philosophy is a phenomenon of the time when the tenet was perceived not as an object of irrational attitude – belief, but as an object of intellectual comprehension", Volohin also states, noting that Berdyayev's philosophy "is a model of the non-dogmatic perception of Christianity by an emancipated personality" (Volohin, 2003, 89). Tytarenko in the work "Specificity of Religious Philosophy by N. A. Berdyayev" as summing up Berdyayev's studies discourse in the perspective of our research states, "If to conditionally divide all the philosophers into two categories – essentialists and existentialists, one can say with certainty that in the historical-philosophical study, the first category identifies the communicative orientation of the text and its task is of peripheral character, and for the second, it is of central significance. Since Berdyayev can be unequivocally classified into the second category, the issue of clarifying the given specificity of his work is an urgent task of modern Berdyayev's studies. Despite the fact that many studies have expressed very valuable ideas that clarify the specifics of the creative work of the Russian philosopher as a whole, the conceptual understanding of this problem has not yet been reached" (Tytarenko, 2006, 50). There are extremely fruitful observations and conclusions drawn about the ideological heritage of Berdyayev by

Bychko, who notes that “the main content of anthropologism of Berdyaev is inextricably linked to the problems of creativity and liberty, which are extremely far from Orthodox dogma...” (Bychko, 2003, 202 – 203).

2. Dialectics of freedom: logical thinking vs intuitive and synthetic thinking

To some extent, the above mentioned is true. After all, the phenomenon of liberty in Berdyaev's philosophy was laid as a priori throughout his system of understanding the world. A priori was the beginning of his thinking, and to which the whole logic of the development of his thinking was directed. “I am called a philosopher of liberty,” wrote Berdyaev in “Self-Cognition”. Some Black-Hundred hierarch told me that I was a “prisoner of liberty”. And I have really loved liberty the most. I came from liberty; she is my mother. Liberty is more important to me than being. The peculiarity of my philosophical type is first of all that I have laid the foundation of philosophy, not being, but liberty. In such a radical form, no philosopher seems to have done it” (Berdyaev, 1991, 25).

At the same time, the very path to this act and its motivation for the authors' deep conviction were hidden, first of all, in the peculiarities of the process of intellectual and psychological formation of the personality of the thinker. “I have been a rebel all my life. I was also a rebel when I made my best efforts to reconcile”, recalled Berdyaev. “I have been a rebel, not only in accordance with the direction of my thoughts in a particular period of my life, but in my own self. I am extremely prone to rebellion. Injustice, violence against human dignity and liberty cause angry protest within me. In my early teens, I was even presented with a book entitled “Dear Insurrectionist”” (Berdyaev, 1991, 29).

In various periods of his life, as recalled by Berdyaev, he criticized much different kinds of ideas and thoughts. But in essence he always sympathized with all the great revolts and rebels in history – the revolt by Luther, the revolt of the mind of education against authority, the rebellion of “nature” of Rousseau, the revolt of the French Revolution, the rebellion of idealism against the power of the object, the rebellion of Marx against capitalism, the rebellion of Belinski against the world spirit and world harmony, Bakunin's anarchic rebellion, Tolstoy's rebellion against history and civilization, Nietzsche's rebellion against reason and morality, Ibsen's rebellion against society, and he also “understood” Christianity “as a rebellion against the world and its law” (Berdyaev, 1991, 29).

And this is the personal psychological and psycho-emotional, and later the intellectual setting (which, incidentally, later, and not without the influence of Berdyaev's ideas, was embossed in the well-known existentialistic “rebellion philosophy” by Albert Camus), and which formed

Berdyayev's striving for liberty and the role of the latter in his worldview, outlook and world-realizing, in the authors' opinion, significantly influenced the decision of the thinker to make liberty the cornerstone of his philosophical and religious concept. "My main belief," Berdyayev wrote, "is that God is only present in liberty and acts only through liberty... The secret of the world is hidden in liberty. God wanted liberty, and this is where the tragedy of the world happened, liberty at the beginning and freedom at the end. In essence, I have been writing the philosophy of liberty all my life, trying to perfect and supplement it" (Berdyayev, 1991, 25).

Thus, one can see the primacy and obviousness of the existential (psycho-emotional) roots in philosophical and religious thinking and the formation of Berdyayev's teaching, which during the whole period of his activity was in no way "burdened", neither "obscured", nor altered by logic and logic thinking. "The peculiarity of religious philosophy," as Serbinenko notes, "Berdyayev saw in that it does not come down to a system of concepts and is not so much "knowledge-discourse" as "knowledge-contemplation", which speaks the language of symbols and myths. From the symbols of his own philosophy, the key role belonged to liberty and creativity, with which all other ideas-symbols are ultimately connected: the spirit whose "kingdom" ontologically resists the "kingdom of nature", objectification – a world of rigid need that causes drama of the fate of a person who is able to go beyond the "realm of nature" on the routes of history and culture, transcendence – a creative breakthrough, overcoming, at least for a moment, the shackles of natural-historical being, existential time – a spiritual experience of personal and historical-social life, which has met historical, absolute sense and defines the meaning of the "kingdom" of the spirit, resists the "kingdom" of objectification" (Serbinenko, 2010, 240 – 241).

In view of the negation of the need to prioritize logical thinking in cognition and theoretical systematization of philosophical knowledge, in view of his attitude to systematic ("academic") philosophy, Berdyayev, using Nietzsche's terminology, called himself a "robber" of philosophy and determined his thinking not as logical, but as thinking intuitive, synthetic. "I have tried many times to understand and comprehend the process of my thinking and cognition, although I do not belong to people of reflection over themselves. I have always been aware of the weaknesses of my thinking. I have little ability to analyze and to discursively develop my thoughts", said Berdyayev. "My thought did not proceed as a distraction from a specific one and did not obey the laws of discourse. I have not sought to achieve the universal in its meaning, but to immerse myself in the concrete, to the maturation of the meaning and versatility in it. This means that my thought is intuitive and synthetic. In private and in particular, I have seen the universal. I have done it in my daily life. For me, in fact, there are

no separate issues in philosophical cognition. There is only one question and one area of cognition. In all the detailed, private, separate I see the whole, the whole meaning of the universe. By talking or arguing over any issue, I tend to see the solution to the fate of the universe and my own destiny” (Berdyayev, 1991, 45). Subsequently, recognizing Scientism as a false and limited philosophy, and arguing that philosophy should be guided not only by scientific knowledge but, above all, by religious experience, Berdyayev writes that the philosophy he would like to express is a dramatic philosophy of fate, existing in the time that passes into eternity, the time that is directed toward the end, which is not death but transformation. “Existential philosophy is the very expression (expressionism) of my personal destiny, but my destiny must express the fate of the world and man. This is not a transition from the individual to the general, but an intuitive revelation of the universal in the individual. Philosophy, metaphysics is not a reflection of objective realities, but a change within human existence, revealing the meaning of existence” (Berdyayev, 1991, 45).

3. “Existential” as a psycho-emotional, psychological and spiritual activity

Thus, the “robber Berdyayev” also denied the expediency of abstraction as a necessary element in his thinking, going towards “immersion” rather than analysis of the concrete, neglecting generalizations in favor of “synthesis” ... Such a characteristic of the author of his own thinking is really striking ... In addition, Berdyayev argued that he did not believe even in the phenomenological method, which, in his opinion, “can be fruitful in psychology, can only help cognizing the metaphysical and meta-historical”, and believes only in “the method of existential-anthropocentric and spiritual and religious, if, however, it can be called a method” (Berdyayev, 1993, 254). If the “existential” is understood as psycho-emotional and psychological, which attests to the existence of acts of spiritual activity (Raida, 1998, 129 – 141), it can be argued that the understanding of the processes of cognition, epistemology, and, ultimately, the processes of cognition in Berdyayev were of exclusively or dominantly existential character. They were existential typologically.

Touching on the characteristics of the process of cognition in his teaching, the thinker testified that many of his readers and interlocutors were sometimes struck by the fact that he sometimes attached great importance to minor things. And he explained it with his desire to see the whole meaning of the object or phenomenon under study. “Sometimes of great importance to my process of cognition,” wrote Berdyayev, “was a small, seemingly factual conversation, a film in which nothing philosophical was present... The whole plan of one of my books came to my mind as I

sat in the cinema. From the outside, I only got aroused by the jolts, but everything was revealed from within the infinity within me. This is reminiscent of the doctrine of remembering Plato and Leibniz's doctrine of the monad as a microcosm. Except any philosophical theory, any epistemology, I have always been aware that I know not by one intellect, not by my mind subject to my own laws, but by a set of spiritual powers, also by my will to the triumph of sense, by my intense emotion. The impartiality in cognition recommended by Spinoza has always seemed to me an artificial fabrication... Philosophy is the love of wisdom, love is an emotional and passionate state. The source of philosophical cognition is a holistic life of the spirit, some spiritual experience. Everything else is just minor help. Suffering, joy, tragic conflict is the source of cognition" (Berdyaev, 1991, 45).

Putting existential (psycho-emotional and psychological) not only in the basis of knowledge, but also turning it into the main element and condition of this process, Berdyaev, of course, in a certain sense went against the history of the development of European philosophy, which with all its strength grew the elements of scientific approach to understanding the world. Therefore, it is clear that the thinker asserts that his philosophy is not a scientific philosophy, but a profane and eschatological in its direction. Philosophy of the scientific type, in particular, and modern philosophy for him, as the thinker noted, as a result of neglect of spiritual culture and cultivation of rationalism found itself in a state of severe crisis, philosophical thought went to a deadlock, for it epigonism and decline began. Berdyaev proclaimed that "after all the trials, all the wanderings in the deserts of abstract thinking and rational experience, after heavy police service", declared Berdyaev, "philosophy must still "return to the temple, to its sacred functions, and to find lost realism there, to regain the initiation there in the mystery of life" (Berdyaev, 1997, 20).

Berdyaev was absolutely convinced that the whole new philosophy, beginning with Descartes and ending with the Neo-Kantians, "denied the need for consecration and attraction for the possession of knowledge, gnosis", and therefore the mysteries of being and the mysteries of life began to close for it. "Philosophy ceased to be sacramental, as it was in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages; it was exposed to everyday life and turned into a policeman's philosophy, not a full of divine grace" (Berdyaev, 1997, 19). An example of such philosophy, he considered, for example, the philosophy by Kant, whose philosophy, in his words, from the holy Gnosis has become a "police order of abstract thought", to protection, to the process of urban governance, where philosophy is sometimes resorted to and to permission to arrange one thought and cognition or others.

The severity of the problem facing the philosophical community, Berdyaev saw not in the fact that philosophy should not be autonomous

and free, but in the fact that it should be aware of the need for a religious basis in the entirety of the spiritual and, in particular, religious experience. Religion, in his opinion, is quite capable of managing without philosophy, since its sources are absolute and self-sufficient, but philosophy, on the contrary, cannot manage without religion, since “religion needs it as food, as a source of living water. Religion is the vital basis of philosophy, religion nourishes philosophy with real being” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 20).

Berdyaeu was absolutely convinced that only Christian metaphysics affirms the reality of being and the reality of the ways to being, that only it “grasps the great mystery of freedom, that which is not decomposed, and that it can be reduced to nothing”, that only it recognizes substance of a particular person, enshrined in eternity. “Only in the mystical Gnosis of Christianity”, he wrote in the “Philosophy of Liberty”, “all this is given and nowhere else. Only the Christian gnosis leads to transcendental realism, to concrete personalism, and to the philosophy of liberty. The latter, and above all, is the “soul of Christian philosophy”, and the fact that “it is not given to any other, abstract and rationalist philosophy” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 22).

Putting religion at the heart of any truly human philosophy, and man himself and his liberty at the heart of this philosophy, Berdyaeu made a desperate attempt to point people to the major mistake they had been making in the historical process of European civilization, the mistake that, in his opinion, had led to the fact that “glorified scientific conscientiousness, scientific modesty, scientific self-restraint of our age is often only a cover for weakness, indecision, lack of faith in belief, love, indecision of choice. Too many secular decencies and conventions cover up the inner emptiness. There is no such thing as the essence of life, and therefore it is considered worth speaking only about something; it is admitted only the obligatory science of something in the realm of the weak-willed, unloving skepticism, in the realm of relaxed disbelief” (Berdyaeu, 1997, 15).

Therefore, he counted himself “to the kind of philosophy that is now called “existential” (Berdyaeu, 1991, 47). Claiming that he always belonged to philosophers of existential type, M. Berdyaeu saw its beginnings in the distant historical past of European philosophy. The subject of existential philosophy is not new at all, he claims in his writings. There have always been philosophers who have invested themselves in their philosophy. The same, in his view, both Blessed Augustine and Pascal did, and in part Maine de Biran, and Schopenhauer, and many other thinkers. This element, in his view, was present in “all true philosophers”, even Spinoza and Hegel. But it is precisely these modern philosophers from whom existential philosophy in the 20th century originated, Heidegger and Jaspers, to Berdyaeu they appeared to be the least existentialists.

“Having received “existentiality” from “Kirchehardt” (Berdyayev spelled his name as “Kirchehardt”, the insert is ours. – *Hanna Yemelianenko*), Heidegger wanted to express existential problems in the categories of academic rationalist philosophy”, noted Berdyayev. Heidegger began to impose rationalist categories on existential experience to which they could not be applied, and created “unbearable terminology” that, in the end, proved even more original than his thinking itself. Heidegger, as noted by the Russian thinker, certainly possesses an undeniable philosophical talent, and he has a great deal of intensity and concentration of thought. Jaspers is a man struck by the experience of Nietzsche and Kirchehardt. But, according to his own distinction between the types of philosophy of prophetism and science, he belongs rather to the type of the philosophy of science. “I greatly appreciated Jaspers”, wrote Berdyayev in “Self-Cognition”, “but I did not consider him an existential philosopher in that sense in which existential philosophers Nietzsche and Kirchehardt were. I do not consider the French, who are enrolled in the type of existential philosophy, their real representatives. Existential philosophy is primarily determined by the existentiality of the subject which cognize. The philosopher of the existentialist type does not object in the process of cognition what the object does not oppose to the subject. His philosophy is the expressiveness of the subject himself, immersed in the mystery of existence. I call the existential philosophers those”, continued Berdyayev, “whose thought means the identity of personal destiny and world destiny” (Berdyayev, 1991, 135). And such an identity meant for Berdyayev to overcome objectification. As Berdyayev noted, “I was never interested in the existence of people as an object of cognition, I was interested in the fate of man, the fate of the subject in which the “universe is shaking”, the meaning of its existence, etc.” Therefore, the conclusion in the recognition of the Russian thinker there became the words in which he noted that “neither Kirhegardt, whom I read late and the manner of writing which annoys me, nor Heidegger and Jaspers had any special influence on my philosophical opinion. My spires are of the other origin” (Berdyayev, 1991, 81). Berdyayev is most skeptical of the work of one of the founders of French existentialism, “The modern-day philosopher Sartre, talented and very characteristic of the day, is essentially a slave to objectivity, a world of things, a world of phenomena, he has no reality within himself. A deep truth as well as reality depends on human creative activity. But Sartre wants to think that after what appeared, there is nothing, no secret” (Berdyayev, 1993, 355).

Such a position by M. Berdyayev may be viewed differently. In this case one can say that he never understood, and could not understand the essence of the philosophy of classical existentialism, its principles and the ideas of its main founders. There is another point of view that continues J. Maritain’s position on the division of classical existentialism into

“existentialism primary” (“existential” in Raida’s (2009) terminology) and “existentialism academic” (“existentialistic”), and, accordingly, the merits by M. Berdyayev in isolation in existentialism of two planes: the plane of cultivation of spirituality, spiritual experience, and the plane of existential analysis of being (Heidegger’s analytics of being) as an inversion of classical philosophy, adapted to the specific reproduction of the problems of existence of people in the 20th century.

4. Conclusions

Berdyayev’s interpretation of human cognition and belief as a dynamic form of the human being, as a particular orientation of the human spirit, brings together, on the one hand, his views not only with Kierkegaard’s ideas but also with Tillich’s systematic theology. However, on the other hand, from Berdyayev’s position and recognition analyzed above, it follows that the relationship between the philosophy by Berdyayev and Kierkegaard did not appear to have arisen through ideological or methodological adoption, as it was in the case of a similar relationship between the ideas of Kierkegaard and Bart. Berdyayev, as evidenced by his “theoretical confession” from “Self-Cognition”, went to existential type of thinking in his own, personal way, qualitatively different from the way of thinking by Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre and other representatives of “classical existentialism”. And the similarity of thinking, outlook and methodology by Kierkegaard and by Berdyayev arose, most likely, due to the similarity of the outlook of both thinkers, the similarity in their understanding and attitude to the relevant concepts of ontology, epistemology and logical thinking in their philosophical-religious systems.

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