THE RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUAL IN THE THOUGHT OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV, LEV SHESTOV, SEMYON FRANK AND NIKOLAI BERDYAEV

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Summary

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the ideas of four Russian thinkers - Vladimir Solovyov, Lev Shestov, Semyon Frank and Nikolai Berdyaev - in light of how their views contribute to an understanding of the religious individual.

I begin with an introductory chapter which looks at the roots of the religious individual in Russian thought, focussing on the two areas which most influenced the above thinkers: Slavophilism and the Russian literature of the nineteenth century.

I then proceed to look at each thinker in his turn, examining in particular what each one has to say about religious individualism. I also attempt in each chapter to compare and contrast the ideas of the other thinkers represented in the thesis, so that each one is not looked at in isolation, but as part of a larger 'discussion'.

In the final two chapters I summarize the thought that has been explored in the dissertation, and give an account of what modern Soviet criticism has to say about the four Russian philosophers.

I hope in this dissertation to be able to show all four of these thinkers - although in different ways and to different degrees - as sensitive to the religious individual.

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Chapter One

I

Introduction

At the end of 1922, five years after the October Revolution had taken place, Nikolai Berdyaev, Semyon Frank and Lev Shestov were living outside their homeland of Russia. Shestov had left soon after the Revolution out of concern for the safety of his family and himself; Berdyaev and Frank had been exiled in October, 1922 in a general deportation of 100 or so intellectuals from the country. These three men were never to return to Russia, although each of them had played a major role in the intellectual life of the country. They belonged to a renaissance of Russian religious and philosophical thought which took place at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, a renaissance defined by Berdyaev as "a time of great intellectual and spiritual excitement, of rebellious searching, of the awakening of creative forces."[1] Its representatives were essentially responsible for the rediscovery of the religious leaders of the nineteenth century: of Aleksey Khomyakov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy, Nikolai Fyodorov, Vladimir Solovyov. But this renaissance did more than hark back to the ideas of earlier religious thinkers; it produced its own, highly original philosophers. Many of these philosophers had initially been attracted to the revolutionary movement in Russia, but the farther they advanced in their appreciation of their spiritual forebears, the more critical they became towards the revolutionaries. It is the philosophies of three members of this Russian renaissance - Shestov, Frank and Berdyaev - plus Vladimir Solovyov, which the present thesis intends to explore. More specifically, its aim is to examine the importance of the religious individual in the thought of these four.

For the social revolutionaries in turn-of-the-century Russia, religion was identified with a corrupt State, and the individual was considered much less important than the collective; the social contract was vital, the divine contract was not. The religious renaissance, however, which countered this perspective, did not attempt to defend the Russian Orthodox Church, its traditions and customs, or the State which supported the Church, but tried rather to find a form of religious expression that also gave credence to individual expression, and looking back to the rich nineteenth century it found plenty to draw upon.

All four of these men lived at a time when social problems often seemed to outweigh individual ones. Many thinkers were concerned above all with questions of national identity, political development, the education of the Russian people, etc. But the appearance in nineteenth-century Russian literature, for instance, of Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's spiritually hungry protagonists, presented to Russia for the first time the image of individuals whose lives cried out for meaning. Both of these novelists, who exerted a huge influence on the renaissance, were continually doing battle with explicitly religious issues, and the questions they raised were taken up with great enthusiasm by all four of our thinkers. In terms of Russian Orthodoxy theology, the nineteenth century saw the first efforts to sanctify the individual, by treating him not as a submissive member of a hierarchical Church, but as a free person whose duty it was to unite spiritually with other free persons. There are many shades of individualism which appear during this fruitful period, from Dostoevsky's wretched, isolated characters to the peaceful, spiritually-united members of the Church envisaged by the Slavophiles. Each of the four thinkers to be studied here favoured a particular shade of this individualism, although as we shall see the shades are often quite different one from the other.

Having settled on this theme, one might then ask why these four thinkers in particular have been chosen. Their ideas do not form a single school of thought; they do at times complement and agree with each other, but it is often common to find disagreement rather than agreement in their ideas. While one thinker seems distinctively Russian, another seems convincingly "Western" or European. While one is more concerned with religion in terms of the Church, another gives priority to the single person, regardless of the movement he belongs to. We can compare these thinkers' ideas, especially since they themselves (especially the later three) often commented on each others' views, but we would have little success in creating a school out of them. So what is the bond which unites these four? Basically, it is these thinkers who - in turn-of-the-century Russia - give the most weight to the idea of the religious individual. It would be a mistake to begin our discussion by labelling them all religious individualists, but we can affirm that these four especially provide the most substantial material for such an examination.

II

The Four Thinkers

Vladimir Solovyov properly belongs to the nineteenth century, as he died in 1900, but his importance to the twentieth century is summed up by Andrey Walicki:

> It was only after his death that Solovyov's ideas became really influential. It is no exaggeration to say that an entire generation of Russian idealist philosophers and religious thinkers was schooled in his philosophy. Thanks to his many eminent disciples (largely working outside Russia after the Revolution) he gained

the posthumous reputation of being Russia's greatest philosopher.[2]

Solovyov was the first systematic philosopher in Russia, and he is the main link between the development of traditional nineteenth-century and modern twentieth-century religious philosophy. Although some of his main ideas were based around practical goals - the most important one being his efforts to unite Russian Orthodoxy and Catholicism after a separation of eight hundred years - it was his spiritual ideas which took hold of many religious thinkers of the present century. Not just Berdyaev and Frank, but other Russian thinkers have claimed their indebtedness to him, for instance Sergey Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, N. Losski, Sergey Trubetskoy.[3] (Indeed, during the revival of religious thought at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was even a society called 'To the Memory of Vladimir Solovyov', to which many of these figures - Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Trubetskoy - belonged.)[4] Solovyov places his individual firmly within the confines of his religious system; as we shall see, a great debate takes place amongst the four thinkers to be studied here as to whether the individual belongs inside or outside a religio-philosophical system, i.e. whether the system or the individual has primacy.

Lev Shestov, thought by many to be the most radical non-political thinker of his time in Russia, is the sole figure of the four who broke with all traditions of religious thought in his country. His genius lay not in the fact that he created any system or philosophy of his own, but in just the opposite: that he was able to persist in rejecting every system and yet still be a creator in his own right. He was scornful, at times seemingly contemptuous, of the philosophies of most Russians (Tolstoy and Solovyov came squarely under his axe), and in this respect it is impossible to include him in any school of Russian thought. Berdyaev says as much about

him: "His independence from the thought which surrounded him at the time is striking."[5] This is not to suggest that Shestov was anti-Russian in his outlook, or disdainful of all his contemporaries; Dostoevsky was his primary Russian hero, and he admired the work of Chekhov, Pushkin and Gogol. But it is just because of his refusal to submit to the trends of his time, or to the movements of any other age, that he stands out as such a distinctive voice of the individual in Russian thought. Of the four, he came latest to an explicitly religious standpoint; his early work even appears at times to be anti-religious. Moreover, he never calls himself a Christian. But one has to include him in the religious category because his search for meaning in life so persistently points in a religious direction. "He searched for God," Berdyaev says, "he searched for the emancipation of man from the authority of necessity."[6]

Solovyov's most influential follower was Semyon Frank. While disciples of Solovyov such as Pavel Florensky and Sergey Bulgakov inclined towards distinctively Russian Orthodox interpretations of the nineteenth-century philosopher, Frank put Solovyov's thought into a more universal perspective. Frank was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, but he was also considered a first-rank logical philosopher (he was a Professor of philosophy at various Russian universities), and so he developed Solovyov's thought not from a purely Russian point of view, but rather from one which approached faith with an accent on analysis and logic. (The legitimacy of the union between faith and knowledge poses one of the fundamental questions of this essay; for Solovyov and Frank it was a happy and a viable union, while Shestov expended great energy in trying to expose the union as one which inevitably destroys faith.) Curiously, though, while many of Solovyov's and Frank's ideas coincide, Frank claimed that it was partly accidental that their thought was so similar.[7] His greatest inspirations came not from Solovyov - or at least not only from

Solovyov - but from ancient and medieval philosophy. Nevertheless, like Solovyov he was a confirmed idealist, an essential feature of both their philosophies.

Frank's significance as a thinker is not limited to his being one of the main exponents of Russian idealism; in the highly political atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Russia he was a leading voice of opposition to the revolutionary movements. Along with Berdyaev, Bulgakov and others, he contributed articles to anti-revolutionary journals; he was not a political activist like many of his contemporaries, but nonetheless he made his religious voice heard in the political debate.

Nikolai Berdyaev is the most significant voice in this thesis. Whether or not he is the most profound thinker remains an open question for the moment, but his great importance for our purposes can be expressed in two ways. The first is that he was intimately acquainted with the works of his contemporaries, and thus has much to say on the state of Russian philosophy from its earliest days, as well as on the other thinkers being examined in this paper. Of all Russian philosophers, Berdyaev is the best known on a worldwide scale; although many of his works do not touch upon Russian thought at all, he nonetheless was greatly influenced by Solovyov, and he was far more interested in (and obliging towards) his fellow Russian religious thinkers than was Shestov. Thus he is an invaluable source of comment on Russian thought. The second and more significant way that he is important to us is in his own body of original thought. Berdyaev could justly be described as a philosopher of the individual, religious personality; he is concerned above all with the personality in all its manifestations. How the spirit lives (and dies), where it breathes freely, and where is suffocates, these are his primary concerns. As this paper itself is based around the individual, it will become apparent that Berdyaev's thought deals mainly, in one form or another, with this very

problem. Like Shestov and Frank, Berdyaev's inspirations are not limited solely to Russian thinkers; nevertheless he acknowledged a debt to Russians such as Solovyov and Dostoevsky, although, unlike Solovyov he was not a system-builder and, being generally suspicious of religious movements as a whole, he does not fit into a neat pattern of Russian thought. But it is undeniable that he was at the very centre of spiritual and intellectual life in Russia at the turn of the century, and he is in large part responsible for his age being called 'The Silver Age' of Russian letters.

Each of these thinkers developed in his own distinctive fashion, but it is important to keep in mind at least two facts which connects them all. The first is that each one in his youth had called himself either a socialist or an outright Marxist. When Solovyov was an adolescent Marxism had not yet become universally known, but for a short time he was filled with socialist ardour. As for Berdyaev and Frank, they were both expelled from their universities for revolutionary activities, and even Shestov, the least political of all four, was a Marxist for a time. In late nineteenth-century Russia, anyone, as Frank says, who was a bona fide member of the intelligentsia belonged to such a school of thought.[8] Socialism represented the opposition to tsarism, and few young Russian intellectuals who were concerned with social issues supported the crumbling autocracy. Other thinkers who were later to become strongly anti-Communistic, such as Father Sergey Bulgakov, a Russian Orthodox priest, and Peter Struve, a friend of Frank's, amongst many others, had been Marxists originally. Each of these thinkers, however, had become disenchanted with the movement well before the Revolution. This disenchantment did not turn them towards the political right and in the direction of tsarism, as might be expected, but rather towards a spiritual orientation which avoided both extremes. Berdyaev and Frank, two former

Marxists who represented Russian thought at its most developed, came to be the fiercest critics of the movement which in their youth they had espoused.

The second similarity which they share is their identification with religious spirit. There is such variety in the thought of all four that it may at times appear that little unites them, but this is not so. We will have ample time to explore the significance each gives to the individual, and to decide whose interpretation is more convincing, but from the beginning we can recognize that all these thinkers were motivated by religious impulses.

III

Sobornost'

Before embarking on a study of each of these four thinkers, it will serve the purpose of the thesis to examine briefly the roots of the Russian religious view of the individual. There are two primary sources to turn to: Russian literature and Russian Orthodox theology, which began to develop in the mid-nineteenth century, and which placed the individual firmly in the midst of community. The first important Russian religious term is *sobornost'*; it was coined by Aleksey Khomyakov, and means, essentially, togetherness amongst believers. *Sobornost'* is a type of fellowship, or unity amongst believers, that avoids both self-willed individualism and restraint by coercion. Khomyakov, along with Ivan Kireyevsky and later Solovyov to a lesser extent, were leading Slavophiles working to preserve the traditions and beliefs of ancient Russia, and it was felt that through the Russian Orthodox Church and its inherent *sobornost'*, these traditions and beliefs could be preserved.

Berdyaev describes *sobornost'* as:

> ...an internal spiritual community which stands beyond the external ecclesiastical structure, a mysterious community which consists of the living and the dead, which is blessed by the Holy Spirit, united by Christian love, completely free, and which knows no kind of compulsion or external authority.[9]

Sobornost' was neither an organized community of believers, nor an acknowledged aspect of the official Church. In fact, Khomyakov's concept was actually frowned upon by the Russian Orthodox Church leaders, because it was thought likely to undermine Church authority and to lead to the neglect of external forms of religious ritual.[10] *Sobornost'* was above all an ideal vision of the Church, in which the symbolic rituals would play a lesser role than the spiritual life of the community. In practical terms the idea never became established, but it is clear that Solovyov, Frank and Berdyaev all drew inspiration not from the external structure of the Russian Orthodox Church, but rather from an ideal, spiritualized Church, that Church envisaged in the concept of *sobornost'*.

As Berdyaev further points out, the spiritual movement was directed towards Christian freedom, but if the individual drew himself away from his spiritual community that was a rejection of freedom. In the West the Reformation and the Renaissance created a chasm between authority and the individual, but while *sobornost'* was opposed to enforced authority, it did not thereby sanction individualism, if by this term was meant isolation from community. Berdyaev says of Orthodoxy that its concept of Christian freedom "is in no way a struggle for the right of the individual who is protected and distinguished from other individuals...."[11] Thus through *sobornost'*, the individual is given freedom from external constraints, but his freedom must be used to unite him with the community. Throughout Russian religious thought there exists a tension

between the duty of the individual to himself and to his spiritual community.

Russian Orthodoxy, thought many of the Slavophiles, was in an ideal position to unite the spiritual forces of the world. Catholicism, in Kireyevsky's words, was alienated "further and further away from the truth, and produced all the destructive features of Western culture with all the consequences for itself and for us."[12] Catholicism had used worldly means to achieve its spiritual ends, claimed the Slavophiles, and Protestantism was equally unacceptable as it seemed capable only of expressing a negative idea in its opposition to Rome.[13] Slavophilism was opposed to the individual in the sense that he was simply a unit in society, isolated by his private property and legal conventions. Khomyakov saw this as being a primarily European, i.e. non-Russian, problem, where there was either "unity without freedom", or "freedom without unity".[14]

Khomyakov's formulation of *sobornost'* indicates a spiritual equality, a decisive departure from the hierarchical structure of the Church. It is perhaps easy to confuse this type of equality with that demanded by the social reformers of the day, by Westernizers such as Herzen and Bakunin. The notion of *sobornost',* had it not been a specifically religious idea, might well have been used as a tool for social reform. The future inspiration of the social reformers, the "Communist Manifesto", deals almost exclusively with this same idea of the isolated individual, although in economic rather than spiritual terms. The bourgeoisie, claims the Manifesto, "has resolved personal worth into exchange value..."[15] The counterpart to Slavophilism, Westernism, embraced this idea, and on the point of some kind of unity and equality both sides seem to be in agreement. But while the social reformers in Russia, influenced eventually to a great degree by Marx and Engels, saw the economic restructuring of society as the answer to the woes of the world, the

Slavophiles, leaning on idealized Orthodoxy for support, saw *spiritual* unity as the only valid form of "togetherness".

Russia during most of the nineteenth century was concerned with the question of national identity and direction. How could the nation express itself as a collective, what was its mission, in what way could the people of the land be released from the bondage of autocracy to reveal its true character? The Slavophiles saw religion as a means of reform, but it is important to remember that most of the other movements for social change were anti-religious in character. (Of course it was eventually the anti-religious forces which gained the upper hand in the country.) "Togetherness" was crucial to the revolutionaries' creed, but in the writings of Chernyshevsky, Belinsky, Herzen and others this idea had little or no religious meaning. Belinsky, for instance, was so convinced by the need for radical social change, that he declared that, to achieve the happiness of the greater part of mankind, he was willing to let a thousand heads roll.[16] Chernyshevsky, who had suffered greatly at the hands of the Russian autocracy (he was sentenced to seven years of hard labour for his attempts to help the peasants)[17], was acutely aware of the need for change in Russia, but nevertheless his outlook, as expressed in his most famous book, *What Is To Be Done?*, was an inspiration to the growing number of Russian nihilists. As already mentioned, religion and State were inseparable to the socialists, who identified Christianity not with freedom but with slavery, a notion that Solovyov, Berdyaev and Frank would work hard to dispel.

From the seeds sown by the early socialists/materialists grew even more radical thought. Nechaev, for instance, was a socialist who believed that the revolutionary should be willing to sacrifice all of his personal interests, his feelings, his property, even his name, for the sake of the revolution.[18] And Bakunin, at one time an ally of Marx, was passionately

anti-religious, claiming that Christ should have been thrown into prison as a vagrant loafer.[19]

The point of mentioning these various social beliefs is to stress that while there were different strands of Russian thought which were concerned with unity and equality, certain ones based their argument on religious grounds; a sharp distinction has to be made between the religious and the anti-religious forces in Russia during the nineteenth century. And yet, paradoxically, the socialists were so committed to their materialistic philosophy that their revolutionary creed had at times a kind of religious significance to it. Reinhold Niebuhr, perhaps the most influential theologian of the twentieth century, says that the nature of such passionate belief in Marxism is closer to religious overbelief than to scientific truth.[20] This question will be explored later by Berdyaev, but it is worth suggesting that the anti-religious revolutionaries were not simply scientific theorists, but were themselves possessed of religious-like devotion to their cause.

In the concept of *sobornost'* there existed a role for the individual, a role which placed more emphasis on the individual than did the purely utilitarian theories of the transformation of society. The Slavophiles made a distinction between "internal" and "external" truth. The internal truth is the voice of conscience in the individual, and it expresses itself through the values enshrined in religion, tradition and custom. The external truth, on the other hand, is represented by the law and the State, which to the Slavophiles were of secondary importance.[21] Thus the individual found his meaning not economically but spiritually, although it is clear that the individual at this early stage of Russian religious thought is far less important than the *union* of individuals.

A brief explanation of Slavophilism, itself important in this discussion as many of the religious ideas of the nineteenth century were born out of

it, should be offered here. The Slavophiles were a group of conservative thinkers, but their conservatism was not connected with the rulers in Russia at the time (especially not with the martinet Nicholas I). The Slavophile position held that the reforms of Peter the Great had been harmful, since they had drawn Russia closer towards what they saw as a corrupted Europe, and away from the ideal Russian peasant community which supposedly existed before the Emperor Peter's changes. It was claimed by the Slavophiles that pre-Petrine Russian Orthodoxy had been free of pagan rationalism and the secular ambitions of Catholicism.[22] With this supposedly pure form of Christianity, combined with the binding power of *sobornost'*, the Slavophiles believed that religion on Russian soil would provide Christianity's greatest source of spirituality. This movement was not motivated only by religious impulses; in general it wanted to convince the enlightened sections of society (i.e. those on whom European culture had had the most influence) to return to the people, that is, to return to the principles embodied in the village commune, of which Orthodoxy was a vital ingredient.[23]

The Slavophiles developed their ideas in part through, ironically, an outside influence: German philosophy. Its first influence was felt in the Society of Wisdom-Lovers, founded in 1823 and including amongst its members future Slavophiles such as Kireyevsky. The Society was formed as a reaction against the rationalism of eighteenth-century French philosophy; its dependence upon German idealism for a romantic form of expression was summed up by one of its founders, V. F. Odoevsky: "Land of ancient Teutons! Land of noble ideas. It is to you I turn my worshipful gaze."[24] The Society happened to look to Germany at a moment when Schelling's star was in the ascendant, and thus he became a symbol to the Wisdom-Lovers of all that was most profound in philosophy.

Kireyevsky willingly admitted that the Slavophiles were attempting to create a new philosophy which combined the idealistic outlook of current German thought with the old ideals of peasant Russia. He says, "I believe that German philosophy...could serve us as the most convenient point of departure on our way from borrowed systems to an independent philosophy corresponding to the basic principles of ancient Russian culture..."[25] What Kireyevsky and his fellow Slavophiles found in Schelling and German philosophy as a whole was the acknowledgement of an ideal world, along with a disinclination to focus solely on reason and speculative philosophy, as he claimed that Roman Catholic apologists had done. (Of course the typical Russian peasant would not have had the foggiest idea what German idealism was all about; this movement found itself in the odd position of introducing foreign elements so as to retain its purely nationalistic character.)

In Berdyaev's essay entitled "On the Character of Russian Religious Thought of the Nineteenth Century", he maintains that actual Russian Orthodox philosophy had been non-existent until the nineteenth century. While Catholic thinkers had abounded for centuries, and Protestant beliefs were firmly established, Orthodoxy had no scholarly tradition, had had no renaissance of thought. Russian culture flowered from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and with this flowering religious thought for the first time found its expression. Berdyaev points out what has just been mentioned, that the ideals of Slavophilism,and the power of *sobornost'*, while enriching the Church itself, was not indeed integrally related to Russian Orthodox tradition. In fact he declares that there is an analogy between Orthodox thought and Greek thought during the early Christian times, when an attempt was made to rationalize Christianity. (This attempt to rationalize faith, incidentally, evokes the passionate resistance of Shestov.) As the Greek philosophers used the most

enlightened philosophy of their time, Platonism and neo-Platonism, for the defence and unveiling of Christian truth given in revelation, so the Russian religious thinkers did the same, using the most enlightened philosophy of their time, Schelling and German idealism.[26] Berdyaev is convinced that without the influence of German philosophy, Russian religious thought would simply have been something other than what it was.[27]

However, Berdyaev is not insisting that because of the mixture of sources such Russian thought is insufficiently Christian or Orthodox. Khomyakov's teaching of *sobornost'*, however alien to the Church itself, was nonetheless a stage in the development of Christianity in Russia; it also happened to represent Christian freedom far more than did the patriarchal Church of earlier centuries, which was, claims Berdyaev, firmly connected with the Russian state and the founding of an Orthodox kingdom.[28] If the teaching of Kireyevsky, Khomyakov and others showed the influence of German idealism, it nonetheless claimed to represent Russian Orthodoxy, and was far more enlightened than previous Orthodox thought. Further, for our discussion, these early thinkers are far more significant than all the tradition and the history of Russian Orthodoxy, because it was they who first voiced the idea of freedom in a spiritual context on Russian soil. Berdyaev justifies the Slavophile adoption of German idealism by saying: "There came a time when Christian freedom had to be revealed more than it had been revealed in former times."[29]

A study of Schelling and German philosophy here is not necessary; it suffices to point out that Schelling aided the young Russian thinkers in their efforts to find a romantic Russian interpretation of the past and an interpretation of the spiritual foundations of society. After Schelling, the Russians began to take their theories of art, nature and religion from Hegel; it is important to remember that Slavophilism was, from the first,

painted in colours that were not exclusively Russian. It is a paradox that Slavophilism should take much of its spiritual inspiration from the German idealists, while the socialist revolutionaries of Russia were also informed by Hegel and Schelling, mainly through the interpretation of Marx and Engels. The same influences created two very different outlooks.

One final point on this subject is that while Solovyov emerges in large part from German-inspired Slavophilism, Shestov bases his whole philosophy on opposition to the methods and conclusions of thinkers like Hegel and Schelling, the systematic philosophers. Although Shestov and Solovyov both argued from a religious perspective, we can already see a confrontation looming between them.

IV

Russian Literature

It was from Slavophilism that Solovyov, and after him Frank and others, acquired some of the basic principles of their philosophies. While Solovyov is the first systematic philosopher in Russia, without the influence of Kireyevsky and other Slavophiles his early work would have been dramatically different. However Solovyov was the first Russian who attempted to do what the early Christian Greek philosophers and the German idealists had done: to provide a systematic explanation for the divine foundations of the world. We can discuss Solovyov's concept of the individual primarily because his early ideas of Russian Orthodoxy came not from the Orthodoxy of old *Rus'* (Russia), but from the developing tradition of Orthodox *philosophy*.

The ideas which influenced Solovyov, and which he in turn developed to influence others, form a tradition in Russian religious thought. It is to

this tradition of thought that we will often return in our discussion. But as already mentioned, not all four of our thinkers fit neatly into the tradition; in the case of Shestov, for instance, it can hardly be considered. Berdyaev and Frank borrowed ideas from the tradition, but they too cannot be said merely to be expounders of it; their thought has its own originality. However, there is one primary source which all of these thinkers share, and that is the Russian literature of the nineteenth century. While it is perhaps typical for philosophical thought to allude, in its premisses, conclusions, etc., mainly to previous philosophical ideas, the nineteenth-century Russian literature was so rich that it influenced all aspects of thought. In fact, the appearance of Pushkin and the dawn of a new Russian culture made the very existence of the Slavophiles possible. Pushkin, an aristocrat deeply affected by European culture, may have had little in common with the Slavophiles, but it was he who first awakened the Russian imagination. Berdyaev, Shestov and Frank may have been concerned above all with religious and philosophical ideas, but it was often to the novelists more than to the philosophers that they turned for their inspiration. Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Gogol, Chekhov, all of these writers were fundamental to the development of Russian culture, and therefore to Russian philosophy and theology. Dostoevsky especially played an important, sometimes vital role in the thought of all four of our thinkers; each of them was influenced by his writings. Tolstoy, too, the other great Russian novelist, occupied the thought of all four, although we shall see that all were more critical of him than of Dostoevsky.

In terms of the role of the individual, Russian literature has more to say than the developing Russian philosophy, and thinkers like Berdyaev and Shestov don't fail to notice this. For these two, Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* and *The Brothers Karamazov* are not merely entertaining works of fiction; they are creations which have shaped these thinkers'

perspectives. If one were to categorize (loosely) the relationship of the individual to Russian philosophy and Russian literature of the nineteenth century, one might consider the individual in community to be of primary interest in the philosophy and the isolated individual to be of greater importance to the literature. Both of these trends are vital to our discussion of the four thinkers.

We have now introduced the two primary influences of Russian philosophical and religious thought: the Slavophile movement and Russian literature. These are not the only influences; we shall see that all four thinkers draw on foreign, ancient, medieval, modern sources, but these two Russian streams will lead us to the main body of water. It is also worth mentioning that the political climate in late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century Russia made a strong impression on Solovyov, Berdyaev and Frank. The revolutionary atmosphere in Russia, and the significance of the changes in the country are addressed by Solovyov before the turn of the century, Berdyaev and Frank after. Each of them is in part a social thinker, with views which are often similar, however different other aspects of their thought may be. This thesis will examine some of the political ideas of these thinkers, as they strongly contribute to their overall conception of the individual. For the most part they represent the line of thought which goes back to the Slavophiles, and which is fiercely opposed to the creeds which were at the root of the October Revolution.

A note must be added about the use of certain terms. The most important is "individual"; both Frank and Berdyaev prefer the word *lichnost',* which means "personality", and not individual. (For both of them *lichnost'* is a positive term, which has little to do with a potentially destructive notion such as *kul't lichnosti*, the cult of personality.) Where *lichnost'* is used I will translate it literally, but I consider this term to

be integrally related to "the individual". Both words suggest the notion of the single person, although all four thinkers have their own ideas about what "the single person" means. Also, the word "truth" makes a frequent appearance in the writings of these thinkers; there are two words for "truth" in Russian: *istina* and *pravda*. Unless stated otherwise, I intend *istina*-truth. *Pravda* is a term generally used in common speech, and also means "justice", while *istina* means philosophical, or enlightened truth, the "higher" truth.

All four of these thinkers were at the centre of or greatly influenced a religious and cultural renaissance, although until very recently their impact on Soviet culture has been nil, since both their ideas and they themselves were prohibited from living in post-revolution Russia. This paper has little to do with the actual suppression by the Soviet Union of religious thought But the contrast between the Soviet refusal to allow individual expression and each thinker's belief in the individual is a stark one. Each of these four offered a definition of the individual which sought freedom for him based on religious principles, and each thinker's writings were banned from the Soviet Union after the deportation of 1922. Only today, almost seventy years after this ban came into effect, have these writings again begun to be welcomed in Russia. After we have looked at each thinker in his turn, we will examine the awakening response to them in the Soviet press, and try to guage the extent to which they have been rehabilitated in their homeland.

Notes

1. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), p. 684.
2. A. Walicki, History of Russian Thought (Stanford: Stanford U. Press 1979), trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka, p. 392.
3. Ibid., p. 393.
4. N. Berdyaev, Samopoznaniye (Moscow: Moskva Dem, 1990), p. 148.
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Chapter Two

Vladimir Solovyov

I

By the time Vladimir Solovyov died in 1900, he had become a *strannik*, a wanderer, who relied on the goodwill of his friends to provide food and shelter for him. He was poor, his ideas were not popular in Russia, he had no close family, no career. It would hardly have been surprising if he had been forgotten after his death, or at best remembered as only one of many strugglers for Truth on the unique landscape of nineteenth-century Russian thought. And yet within a few years of his death he was recognized as a great, if not the greatest, influence on Russian religious thought of the twentieth century. The spiritual renaissance in Russia at the turn of the century claimed him as an inspiration, he was admired by almost every well-known religious thinker in his country, and his writings gained a deep appreciation which they had never had during his lifetime.

And yet Solovyov was far from being a "modernist"; if anything many of his views even during this religious renaissance would have seemed outmoded, the beliefs of an age which had vanished. Many of his idealistic notions might have seemed anachronistic and unrealizable to the twentieth-century thinkers who faced the reality of revolution, and who could no longer maintain the optimistic philosophies which he had held till almost the end of his life. But in his thought was to be found an unconquerable belief in the divine spirit in man, and also in man's unconditional significance in this world. It was this especially which made such a great impression on his religious heirs.

Solovyov's primary theme is that of all-unity (*vseedinstvo*). Every aspect of his thought manifests his attempts to unify: he aimed to

unite philosophy and religion, church and church, man and woman, human being and God. No being, no unit could be an entity unto itself, surviving alone. For each person the significance of all-unity was that it required relationship in the divine sphere. According to Solovyov, the worst fate man could encounter was to be cut off: from God or his fellow-man or society. Isolation was the road to evil and suffering; the individual became an individual not through his own efforts or through his self-sufficiency, but through the divine, where humankind was truly united. There is a definite danger, however, for the individual in any system of all-unity, because it threatens to engulf him. All-unity can become so all-important that the individual loses his distinct features. This was always Shestov's claim, and we shall see if it can be applied to Solovyov.

Vladimir Solovyov was born in 1853 and brought up in Moscow. He was related to an earlier religious philosopher, Skovoroda, on his mother's side, and his father was Professor Sergey Mikhailovich, an eminent historian. When Vladimir was nine years old he experienced a mystical vision in church; the apparition was a feminine being he was later to call Sophia. This vision was to occur twice more in his life: once in the reading-room of the British Museum, and once in the deserts of Egypt, whither he had been sent by the reading-room Sophia. Later he fit the *idea* of Sophia into his religio-philosophical system, giving this feminine presence the quality of world-soul. At 21, after he had defended his thesis at St. Petersburg University, entitled "The Crisis of Western Philosophy", the Russian historian Bestuzhev-Ryumin remarked, "Russia may be congratulated upon a new genius".[1]

From 1875-1881 he lectured in Moscow and St. Petersburg, during that time delivering his *Lectures on Godmanhood*. However, in 1881, soon after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, Solovyov at the end of

a public talk proposed that the new tsar, Alexander III, should as a Christian monarch show clemency to his father's assassins. This created a bad impression and in November, 1881, Solovyov handed in his resignation. For the rest of his life the philosopher earned a meagre living by writing. In the 1880's he made efforts to reunite the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches; when Pope Leo XIII learned of this, he said, "*Bella idea, ma fuor d'un miracolo, e cosa impossible*" ("A beautiful idea, but short of a miracle, impossible to carry out"[2]). There has been controversy as to whether Solovyov actually converted to Catholicism, but it is unlikely that he gave himself fully over to "Rome". The end of his life was spent moving from one friend's home to another, and he died on the estate of Prince Sergey Trubetskoy in July, 1900, at the age of 47.

II

Sophia

One of the most difficult aspects of Solovyov's thought, which repeatedly arises and in different guises, is that of the Divine Sophia. From the age of nine Solovyov was aware of the existence of a mystical feminine being. In his early years he was interested in spiritualism and occultism, and in fact had gone abroad to study mystical doctrines when he had his visions.[3] He did associate this figure with a feminine image, but the figure herself became incorporated into his philosophy as a world-soul, thus perhaps losing her personal element. She appeared in the structure of his thought in his *Lectures on Godmanhood*, when he connected her with Christ. "Sophia is God's body, the matter of Divinity permeated with the beginning of divine unity. Christ, who realized that unity in himself, or is the bearer of it as the internal divine organism - universal and at the same time individual - is both Logos and Sophia."[4]

She is in Christ as the ideal or perfect *humanity*, as opposed to God himself, the all-divine. So from the boy's original vision in church of a mystical woman, Sophia has now become that part of Christ which is related to the human rather than to the divine. He then says that the idea existed even before Christianity; in the Old Testament the Proverbs of Solomon develop the idea of Sophia - under the Hebrew name of Hohma.[5] Eventually, Solovyov settles into a fairly consistent definition of this mystical figure: she is the world-soul. In Christ, she is his human element, and in the world of mankind she is the spirit which moves humanity, yet she is both distinct from *and* able to turn away from God.

> ...the soul [in this sense meaning world-soul or Sophia]...can assert herself outside of God...With the segregation of the world-soul, however...the particular elements of the universal organism lose their common tie in her, and, left to themselves, are doomed to the particularized, egoistic existence, the root of which is evil, and the fruit, suffering.[6]

Thus Sophia seems to be transformed - or developed. She is in Christ and she is in man. She is a mystical presence, but she is connected with the human rather than the divine. She can be possessed of what Solovyov calls divine beginnings, but she is also able to be separated from God and result in evil. Is this contradiction or complexity? The fact that Solovyov calls both his visions and his conception of the world-soul "Sophia" tends to blur the meaning of the feminine presence, but he does eventually associate her with the world of man, the "other" through which God is fulfilled. In *The Meaning of Love* he says that God wants mankind to realize and be united with "the image of complete

femininity ": "Such a realization and incarnation is also the aspiration of the eternal Femininity itself, which is not merely an inert image in the Divine mind, but a living spiritual essence possessed of the fulness of power and activity."[7] She is like the collective will of man. This notion raises a dilemma: if Sophia is the world-soul *and* has freedom to turn towards or away from God, then individual man loses his own freedom, and is subjected to the dynamics of Sophia. Basically, Solovyov wants to insist that freedom is organically connected with the world-soul; man is not free when he is isolated. He is insistent that man should not be deprived of his personality as a member of the world-soul, but that he should be part of a great whole - a constant theme with this philosopher - which completes him, rather than reduces him to insignificance. As we can recall from the Introduction, this is largely the definition of Khomyakov's *sobornost'*: man's personality is expressed from within spiritual unity. Sophia is, perhaps, essentially an extension of *sobornost'*.

Let us make one final point about Sophia. In his younger days Solovyov was a strong supporter of the Slavophiles, and such a concept as Sophia had a distinctly Russian flavour, however much he may have tried later on to attach it to broad European thought. Of all those who were influenced by Solovyov, the thinkers who specifically incorporate Sophiological concepts into their work are representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, Sergey Bulgakov and Pavel Florensky being the most renowned expounders of this idea. Bulgakov, an Orthodox priest who settled in Paris after being expelled by the Communists from the Soviet Union in the deportation of 1922, writes in *The Unfading Light* that Sophia is "the world of ideas, i.e. the ideal basis of the world".[8] Bulgakov accepted the femininity of the world, and he asserted that the universe, which is *actually* chaotic, is *potentially* Sophiological.[9] From

Solovyov, Bulgakov takes both the notion of Sophia as the ideal rather than material aspect of this world, and of her existence between man and God. Florensky too, who preceded Bulgakov, calls Sophia "the ideal personality of the world". She is like the substance of the Divine Trinity...; even the Church becomes "the bearer of Sophia".[10] It is significant to find this mystical notion fully developed only with the exponents of Orthodoxy; thinkers like Berdyaev and Frank, who do not preach Orthodox theology but who were under the influence of Solovyov, steer clear of Sophia, at least in explicit terms.

In terms of the individual, the concept of Sophia represents the weakest point in Solovyov's thought. This mystical notion is too abstract to apply to the single person. Solovyov developed it especially in his early days, before he had fully matured as a thinker, and in his later work a much greater accent is placed on explicitly moral questions.

III

History

Another vital component of Solovyov's thought is his understanding of history. Indeed the philosophical historian Zenkovsky says that, "Historiocentrism rather than cosmocentrism, or even anthropocentrism, defines Solovyov's approach to all problems".[11] Solovyov, quite simply, believed that the kingdom of God would be realized on earth; history was moving in such a direction that mankind as a whole would eventually turn fully towards God. Because Solovyov was always returning to all-unity, he tried to fit many diverse beliefs into a single pattern, and this pattern was history. Like the Marxist doctrine, Solovyov asserted that one inadequate social order would finally give way to another, better order. But he counted on man

growing disillusioned with his own self-assertion, his own exclusive will. (Again the notion of being "cut off") In the *Lectures on Godmanhood* he says that the way towards salvation, towards the realization of true equality, true freedom and brotherhood, is that of self-denial.[12] He affirms that the negative development of Western civilization is necessary, because it will lead man to see the futility of self-assertion, and turn towards self-denial. (As feudalism and capitalism are necessary stages which lead to communism, according to Marx. This kind of claim was made by various socialists during Solovyov's day, who thought that Russia had to live through bad capitalism so as to reach good communism.).

> When the Western part of humanity will be convinced by facts, by historical reality, that the self-assertion of the will...is the source of evil and suffering: then...Western humanity will be ready to accept the religious principle, the positive revelation of true religion.[13]

As with his notion of a world-soul asserting her own will, so here does Solovyov tend to obscure man's individual role in history: true equality and brotherhood will alight on earth when mankind *as a body* is disillusioned with self-assertion.

This tendency of Solovyov's - to put whatever aspect of life he is exploring into a historical setting - is repeated in his analysis of Christianity. In an article he wrote in 1891, *On Counterfeits*, he says "...the central idea of the Gospel...is the idea of the kingdom of God".[14] He insists that this idea has to come from within each man - "the kingdom of God is within you"[15] - but it also has to embrace the whole of mankind, it has to spread from the inner to the outer. Solovyov is

unreservedly Messianic - the kingdom of God will be restored on earth, this is the message of the Gospels, and man must serve such a cause. His belief that the kingdom of God will be restored on earth leads him to the idea of Christian politics; if man is to establish God's kingdom on earth, all aspects of society must be turned to God. (There must be all-unity, wholeness.) Thus the secular arms of society have to become religious. "The task of Christian politics is to perfect [social and political] forms and transmute them into realities fit for the kingdom of God."[16] As will be seen later, Solovyov emphatically does not believe in a theocracy whereby man assumes the voice of God; he takes literally this divine kingdom on earth where Christian principles rule, and not the iron hand of man-sanctioned theocratic tyranny. But he did believe that politics could join ranks in the Christian march of history: in his *Philosophy of History* he expresses admiration for Constantine the Great, the Roman emperor who established Christianity as a state religion.[17] The state would not wither away, as Marxism had it, but would blossom in its new Christian form: "The Christian Church, the Christian State and the Christian Society as the three inseparable modifications of the kingdom of God (in its earthly form) have one and the same essence - God's truth and righteousness (*pravda*)."[18]

This theme of the spiritual transformation of all humankind was later to be adopted by Frank and Berdyaev, most notably in the anti-revolutionary compendia *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny*. Both of these thinkers shared Solovyov's optimism - indeed were inspired by it - in thinking that all humankind could become Christianized.

As Christianity is the end of his historical process, it is natural to enquire into his views on Christ's role in history. Solovyov is not one to dwell on the person of Jesus Christ; he is in fact central to Solovyov's system, but it is the system itself that is more prominent than the

figure of Jesus. Nevertheless he does appear in the middle of the historical process. In the *Philosophy of History*, Solovyov suggests that the Romans paved the way for Christ and Christianity. The Roman Empire at one time embraced almost the whole of humanity, both through their power (which was abused), and through their formulations of reason and justice.[19] (And we can see how attractive the idea of an all-humanity-embracing force would be to Solovyov.) But their great achievements were *external*, and could not cure the illness of human egoism. Thus to give substance to form, "...the first thing that was needed was a divinely-human fact."[20]

As Solovyov accepts the self-assertion of modern Western civilization because it leads to disillusionment and then to self-denial, so he accepts the Roman Empire as a great era *externally* (despite its corruption), which leads to The Great Era *internally*. And the divinely-human fact is of course Christ. We can employ Roman (or Greek or Jewish) principles in building society, but Christ himself has altered history by giving substance to reason, justice, etc., and he now becomes history's focal point. Thus, Christ is not only a source of inspiration for each of us, but he is also an historical turning point for all of us.

Based on his attitude to Western civilization, Christianity and Christ himself, we get a clear indication of Solovyov's "historiocentrism": he had a Messianic view of the end of history. It is not irrelevant that Solovyov was an admirer of the Prophets of Israel, who also foretold of a kingdom of God on earth, when wrongs would be righted.[21] But in the final year of his life, Solovyov wrote a tale, called *A Short Story of Anti-Christ*, in which he seems to refute all that he had previously asserted about history moving naturally towards the divine. In it, a young man who is good, intelligent and spiritual, begins to turn away from God and Christ, and towards himself (self-assertion). He writes a

book on peace and well-being which is so rapturously received that soon he acquires power, and before long becomes Emperor of the World, with a magician named Apollonius advising him. He always seems just and good, and tries to lure the representatives of Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism over to his side. Many succumb, but the most devout see him as the anti-Christ. Elder John (the Orthodox) and the Pope, his opponents, are then struck by lightning through the magic of Apollonius. But when he goes to Israel and declares himself the Deity of the Universe, the Jews rise against him, and in a terrible war manage to kill him. Christ then descends from heaven and all the righteous reign with him for a thousand years.[22] This is fairly Apocalyptic stuff, filled with hellfire and brimstone; but although we find familiar themes (the evil of self-assertion and the union of all faiths, led by Christ), there is a change in Solovyov's historical process. No longer does mankind move steadily in the direction of the kingdom of God, driven by historical necessity; now it can only be won through force, through fighting against evil. The result is the same, though: Christ does appear in order to redeem the righteous. We are left with this final testament of Solovyov either to believe that he had revised his views on history, or that his poetic nature had overcome his philosophical one.

Until almost the very end of his days Solovyov seemed to believe that authority could become spiritualized; authority had the power to unite, and if it were only to accept the task of spiritualization, history's goal would be realized. It took Solovyov a long time to see that authority was in no way becoming, or would become, spiritualized.

IV

Godmanhood

From his understanding of the world-soul and of history, we can already see that Solovyov thought in universal, rather than in individualistic terms. Solovyov's universalistic perspective was religious, but his awareness of the individual's role in religious life has yet to be clearly defined. But before we condemn him to being indifferent to the individual, let us explore two more areas. The first of these has been mentioned briefly, and this is his idea concerning Godmanhood.

Godmanhood, as the term implies, involves God and man. It is the relationship between the two, in which both are active participants; God needs man to fulfill his mission on earth, man needs God to give his life divine significance. The relationship is a personal one, in the sense that God is not 'out there' or 'up there', but is in man himself.

Throughout his *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Solovyov presents several opposites which indicate a dual world: conditional/unconditional, material/ideal, human/divine.[23] Separated from God, man is reduced to material existence which leads inevitably to death. Therefore some link is necessary to unite the two: "Religion is the reunion of man and the world with the unconditional and integral principle"[24]. In this respect Christianity becomes essential; we have seen how integral it was to his historical process, but here Solovyov goes even deeper to explain why it should be so important. For him Christianity acknowledges four principles: 1) asceticism 2)idealism 3) monotheism and 4) the doctrine of the triune God.[25] Christ is the primary Godman, but because the human personality has unconditional, divine value,[26] each human being can and must participate in Godmanhood. (Berdyaev's philosophy was to focus around this very concept, that of the personality having eternal significance.) In embracing Christ's appearance on earth, Solovyov is less concerned with his moral teachings (which are found in

the Old Testament as well as in aspects of Hinduism) than he is with the fact of Christ himself, who united the divine and human: "The only new doctrine specifically different from all other religions is the teaching of Christ about himself, the reference to himself as to the living, incarnate truth."[27] A commandment such as "Love thy neighbour as thyself" is for Solovyov relatively meaningless as coming from Christ; it could be found in the Ten Commandments, in Greek notions of reason, Buddhist notions of compassion (all of which have their own value, nonetheless). But the divine-human reality of Jesus Christ bears witness to a world beyond our own, and with the divine-human established, it is death to man to ignore this reality.

Solovyov sets out to prove that the divine world is not a puzzle for mankind; rather it is our natural world of fact which constitutes the real puzzle. Indeed, Frank says, "The first thing that strikes one in all Solovyov's writings...is the keenness and clearness with which he sees the invisible - the spiritual world."[28] For Solovyov the invisible was real, perhaps more real than the visible. This notion is entwined around his vision of Godmanhood; God the invisible and man (in the visible world) must take part in a union which gives unconditional significance to both. Solovyov has built up to the proposal that God, in order to exist, must have an "other" in order to manifest himself.[29] This "other", as has been mentioned, is the world of man. But what God wants from man is not that which binds him to the mundane, but rather that which releases him to the ideal: God wants man's humanity. It is when man is united with God, the all-unity, that he becomes unconditional and eternal. When he ceases to participate in this unity, then he breaks away, reverts to his isolated self.

It is here that we begin to see the role that the individual might have in Solovyov's thought, and here too that Berdyaev and Frank are

especially admiring of Solovyov. Man as a being who has an active relationship with God: this is central to the thought of all three.

As we have mentioned, Solovyov maintained through most of his life a very optimistic understanding of humankind. Human beings are, according to him, not intrinsically fallen creatures, but by the very nature of their divine-human quality they are creatures possessing dignity. (Shestov, incidentally, believed exactly the opposite, that man was indeed fallen.) Man according to Solovyov is not merely another member of the animal kingdom, and this is because he contains three ennobling virtues: "The fundamental feelings of shame, pity and reverence exhaust the sphere of man's possible moral relations to that which is below him, that which is on a level with him, and that which is above him."[30] Solovyov sees the good in man; this is a fundamental aspect of his thought, because by means of this good - by means of shame, pity and reverence - Solovyov posits a divine world.

For Solovyov it is nothing less than obvious that man should want to be good; on one hand this recognizes man's potential for spirituality. But on the other hand, it reveals Solovyov's weakness as a psychologist. As Shestov especially, but also Berdyaev point out frequently, man does not always want to submit to the demands of morality. Sometimes to protect his individuality he wants to destroy morality, but Solovyov with his vision of divinely-inspired man as a bearer of shame, pity and piety exposes both his strengths and his weaknesses as a thinker.

Opposed to Godmanhood is nature: "...the actual being of the natural world is something that ought not to be, or something abnormal, in so far as it is contraposed to the being of the divine world".[31] Solovyov sees that nature in all its manifestations, be it a blade of grass or an animal, endeavours to exist by itself. Man is part of nature, but crucially, he is also the uniting link between the divine and natural

world.[32] This places all of the burden on man - in his own, natural world he is nothing, but in reaching out to participate in a Godman world he is filled with meaning. The appearance of Christ on earth has made it absolutely necessary for man to reach for this divine world, to recognize his dual nature. In so doing he gives ultimate meaning to himself and to God; he becomes an individual.

Essentially, it is through the formulation of Godmanhood that the individual finds his greatest role in Solovyov's thought. It is here especially that Solovyov attempts to portray man not as a meaningless unit in the historical or cosmic sweep, but as a creature having a relationship with God, and thereby given significance as an individual. Godmanhood declares that man is not a passive agent, but has divine meaning. This idea of the personal relationship between man and God - was, as we shall see, of enormous importance to Berdyaev.

V

All-Unity

The fourth and final concept of Solovyov's to be discussed here is all-unity; each of his other ideas is reflected by this light. As Sergey Bulgakov says, man of the present day thirsts after this basic principle of Solovyov's: the positive unity of all.[33] This idea was not confined simply to one branch of thought; Solovyov meant the all-unity of philosophy and religion, church and state, man and God. His analysis of human relations takes its starting point from here, as do his philosophical enquiries, although it is not certain that he succeeded in both directions.

One of his basic tenets is that reason and faith can travel hand in hand to the kingdom of God. He says that reason gives the ideal *form*, while the *content* of reason or of rational knowledge is reality.[34] His *Lectures*

on Godmanhood is an elaborate attempt to "prove" the divine nature of man. He analyzes the invisible world from an almost scientific standpoint, stating that being is composed of three parts: the atom, the living force and the idea.[35] From such notions he goes on to "reveal" the nature of God, the role of man, the meaning of Christianity. Solovyov does not rely solely on reason; on the contrary he claims that abstract thought alone is only the shadow of ideas.[36] But his approach to most religious problems is a logic-orientated one. To Bulgakov this is legitimate: "Solovyov's theory recognizes the validity of empirical, living or 'concrete' knowledge; such knowledge indissolubly combines all the three sources of cognition: faith, reason and experience."[37] Man's consciousness must make use of all the faculties given to it, so as to move towards the divine, say Solovyov and Bulgakov. But this belief comes under sharp attack by Shestov. In his essay "Speculation and the Apocalypse", he belittles Solovyov for asserting that faith itself has to be answerable at the court of Reason. To Solovyov, the exaltation of reason by the Greeks fits in well with the faith of the Jewish prophets, but Shestov thinks differently: "We face a dilemma: we follow either the path of prophetic inspiration or the path of intellectual...searching."[38] This is a central view of Shestov's; here it is used as an attack on Solovyov's all-unity in relation to "religious philosophy". Shestov puts him in line with Spinoza, and the German idealists Kant, Hegel and Schelling who, because they could not "explain" God, subjected him to their conception of reason. According to Shestov, Solovyov tried with all his strength to take freedom away from man, to make him obliged to see his purpose in the submission to rules.[39] (His attack on Solovyov, it should be said, had nothing to do with political or social considerations.) While Bulgakov sees this all-unity as valid, for Shestov, "Every philosophy which strives for all-unity is above all

concerned with removing man's freedom."[40] Solovyov does seem to be over-confident in ascribing too much authority to a "faceless" Reason. He is certainly not a "captive of freedom", as Berdyaev was labelled. When we look at Shestov's thought, however, we will see how critical he was of *any* system of knowledge, and so it is to be expected that he would accuse Solovyov of stripping man of his freedom. Berdyaev and Frank, on the other hand, felt that Solovyov was doing a great service to freedom in his notion of Godmanhood.

This question of the importance of freedom is one with which all four of our thinkers grapple. For Berdyaev and Shestov it is a term they link specifically with man's individuality (even though each defines it differently). For Solovyov freedom lies *within* all-unity. Man freely participates in divine life; he can never be compelled to do so. The weakness of this argument, according to Shestov, is that man's freedom must *release* him from his obligation and duty to moral absolutes, and not bind him to all-unity or to any other absolute.

The great irony of Shestov's polemic against Solovyov is that, while at one time Solovyov considered Shestov to be a destroyer of moral values (he criticized Shestov's book, *Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche*), it is Shestov who chastises Solovyov for not obeying purely biblical teachings. Shestov says, "It is not possible, in the manner of...Solovyov...to remove the soul of Holy Scripture only so as to 'reconcile' Greek reason with biblical Revelation. Every such attempt will inevitably lead to one result: the autocracy of Reason."[41] It is Solovyov, claims Shestov, who has sullied the purity of revelation by introducing reason into his thought.

We have looked at Solovyov's attempts to unify God and man, and then reason and faith. This effort to find all-unity also extended into the religious and social community. He believed firmly that the kingdom of

God was to be realized through the organ of the Church, and if all-unity was to take shape this meant that discrete religious movements had to be united: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, even Judaism. (He was little interested, it seems, in Eastern religions such as Islam and Buddhism.) His greatest efforts were spent in trying to reconcile Orthodoxy to Catholicism; he claimed that it was ancient cultural and political antagonism between East and West (and not religious principles) that caused the official break in 1054.[42] Solovyov saw Catholicism as being too concerned with papal authority, insisting on the Church being the Supreme Arbiter, while Orthodoxy concentrated more on faith and religious contemplation, and was thus weak in combating the force of an alien faith.[43] But no single Church is to be preferred over the other; rather: "The real strength of theocracy lies entirely in its religious, superhuman character."[44] These two main churches must be the basis for all-unity, because they uphold both tradition and community. Protestantism proclaimed man's religious freedom but did not acknowledge a universal truth independent of each man; the Protestant isolated himself.[45] And Judaism, while declaring for the first time the personal nature of God, nevertheless had a national God, one who excluded other nations and called the Jews the Chosen People.[46] Solovyov thinks that the best elements among the Jews will enter the Christian theocracy and the worst will remain outside. He does remain ever-consistent in his vision of a unified Church: all faiths are to join in to form one all-unifying Christian faith, leaning neither towards Orthodoxy nor towards Catholicism. (The fact that Judaism will have to convert to Christianity is not an obstacle for him.[47]) He remains more consistent in this view than does Bulgakov, who, while praising Solovyov for preaching "the positive unity of all",

nonetheless gives stronger support to the Russian Church. ("Orthodoxy is the Church of Christ on earth", he boldly declares.[48])

Closely connected with this vision of all-unity within the Church is Solovyov's picture of society and the state, which cannot cut itself off from the Church. He sees as paradoxical the idea that mankind could be striving towards all-unity and the kingdom of God, while the state lagged behind, secular and indifferent to Christianity. "The Christian State, inseparable from the Church, is concerned with members of the body of Christ...it must quench national hatred, rectify social injustice, correct individual vice."[49] Solovyov is well aware of the abuse of power (he reveals this in an attack on the corruption of Christianity during medieval times). But with his mostly-optimistic view of divinely-inspired humankind, he does not dwell for too long on man's will-to-power, his capability of evil, his 'fallenness' (Frank, too, will encounter similar problems in his system). In trying to unite reason and faith, he invites the sharp objection of Shestov, who insists that, at the court of reason, faith is seen as foolishness, and at the court of faith, reason is unnecessary. In trying to bring together all of the different religious strands in the world, Solovyov declares that the Jews must abandon their faith and adopt a new one, and the Protestants must rejoin an order they had long ago departed from. One final example of the way in which Solovyov attaches all-unity to all things occurs in *The Meaning of Love*, a series of papers published between 1892-1894. In it Solovyov gives an acute analysis of human relations, but insists that:

> Our personal concern (our relations with other individuals), so far as it is authentic, is the concern of the whole world - the realization and individualization of the all-one idea and the spiritualization of matter.[50]

Solovyov sees the divine value of human relationships, but why does he feel it necessary to make each one a concern of the whole world?

So far Solovyov's philosophical thought has tended toward the systematic; he has concerned himself with the minutiae of this world and the wholeness of the other, from the atom to God the all-embracing. But if he were to be represented only as a propounder of the historical meaning of Christianity, one who insisted that man was guided by a world-soul, then he would seem to be almost indifferent to the human personality. However, we have already seen, with his notion of Godmanhood - so important to Berdyaev and Frank - that the historical process does not run roughshod over man, but that man too has a role to play: that of uniting with the divine.

VI

Nature

The young Vladimir Solovyov had a precocious mind; he was brought up with the traditions of the Orthodox Church, but at the age of fourteen he rejected religion and became an ardent atheist, materialist and socialist. His boyhood friend, the philosopher Lopatin, says that he never met anyone who believed so firmly in the quick and final salvation of mankind through social revolution as did Solovyov in his boyhood.[51] In other words, while hoping to create a union amongst men, he rejected God and an ideal world, both of which he was to defend zealously later. This was during the 1860's in Russia, a period of social turmoil, and Solovyov was simply accepting the nihilistic creeds that were prevalent at the time. (The 14 year old Vladimir is like a younger version of Bazarov, the social revolutionary depicted by Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons*.) But having studied at the Moscow Theological Academy, and then

having travelled to Britain and Egypt where he had encounters with his Sophia, he emerged from adolescence a life-long opponent of materialism and positivism.[52]

Solovyov's lifelong task was to prove that humankind had to be united in a spiritual world; we can understand this better if we look at his attitude to nature. In his Godmanhood lectures, he says that the law of nature is the struggle for existence.[53] By itself, this is Darwinian: only the strongest creatures will survive, the weaker ones will by necessity be sacrificed. As mentioned earlier, Solovyov defines nature in terms of *entities*, a blade of grass, a worm, an animal, all of which are supposedly concerned with their own preservation, growth, possibly even domination. But he takes this idea of separation in nature even farther, by saying that evil is the state of tension of a will which asserts itself exclusively, denying every other.[54] This is a significant leap, because it not only defines the state of nature, but passes moral judgment over it. There is a struggle for existence, he says, but those who are involved in the struggle are involved in evil, for they are trying to assert themselves apart from all others. At an elemental level, such as with a blade of grass, it would be ludicrous to suggest that there is an evil process at work, but Solovyov wants to make the point that man is a part of nature, and it is in *man* that separation becomes evil.

One of the primary tenets of the Russian religious renaissance was that man did not have it in himself alone to perfect himself or society. *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny* are filled with essays which attack the prevalent notion that man has all the tools at his disposal to save the world. This reminds one of Solovyov's view of nature, which includes the human being: man *cannot* create an ideal world by himself, because without the divine element his natural self-assertion will get the better of him.

Thus the forces of nature are directly opposed to divine forces, merely because they aim to separate, while divinity aims to unite. But as Solovyov often asserts, man is placed squarely at the crossroads of these processes. And because man is a qualitative and not just a quantitative being, turning toward nature means not simply self-assertion, but also evil. In the *Lectures on Godmanhood* he says:

> The subjection to this external and blind force (nature) is the fundamental source of suffering for man; but the realization that nature is evil, deceit and suffering, is at the same time the realization of his personal superiority, of the superiority of human personality over nature.[55]

Solovyov more than once links suffering with evil; it is a curious connection, since suffering is intimately bound up with Jesus Christ, who is at the center of Solovyov's philosophy. As we shall see, Berdyaev believes that suffering is a vital aspect of freedom; Shestov chooses suffering over intellectual abstraction. But Solovyov rejects it, and suggests that it is the result of self-assertion. Nevertheless, this passage indicates the accent that he places on personality; it is manifest away from external and blind forces. Man's self-assertion is egoistic, through allowing the mundane aspect in him to conquer the divine, but in overcoming the dark force of his nature he can manifest the wholeness of his personality.

This understanding of nature explains primarily what religious individualism is not. Solovyov's philosophical and quasi-scientific notion of disharmony in nature was only the starting point for a rejection of disharmony in all forms of life. The fact that every organism isolates itself means that there has to be a principle which

unites all organisms. It was this *idee fixe* which led Bulgakov to praise his "positive unity of all"; Solovyov dives down into the depths of nature to prove the principle of self-assertion, just as he will reach for the firmament to prove the principle of all-unity. The 14-year-old boy who succumbed to nihilism, and thought that unity had meaning only in a social context was much different from the young man who saw chaos in material nature, which led him to search for unity elsewhere.

VII

The Divine World

Solovyov rejected materialism and the self-subsistence of the natural world on the grounds that there was division here, and not unity. We have already looked into the notion of Godmanhood, and can see that this was an integral concept in his thought, because it gave man an "other" (just as the world of man was an "other" to God); it provided him with his most serious relationship: to God, in the divine world. Since man is located on a material plane, he relies on an ideal world, in order to have access to relationship This ideal sphere Solovyov unhesitatingly posits:

> The doctrine of ideas, when it is correctly developed, indicates for us the objective essence of the divine beginning,...which is independent of the natural world of phenomena, although connected with it.[56]

In taking his lead from the German idealists and from the Platonic conception of Ideas, Solovyov offers a world where man is not abandoned to his own devices, able only to protect, preserve and assert his ego. (Solovyov in fact acknowledges Greek idealism as the first positive phase of religious revelation.)[57] The potential problem in both

a material and an ideal world, though, is that each threatens to be without substance; to achieve harmony and a divine relationship even in an ideal world there must be an "other", some content to complement and complete man. The idea, without a corresponding subject or bearer to realize it, he says, would be something completely passive and impotent.[58] For Solovyov this ideal content is God, in whom all is united. He rejects the notion that God is too incomprehesible to have a relationship with, a notion, by the way, also rejected by the other three thinkers in this thesis. In seeking for man's role in the ideal kingdom, we can find an answer in Solovyov's definition of God's role:

> God is the whole; this means that as every real being has a definite substance or content, in reference to which he says "I am"...in the same way the divine being asserts its "I am", not in relation to any separate particular content, but in relation to all.[59]

Solovyov gives to God the content which each man needs for divine relationship, and he makes him a being with substance rather than one who is simply unapproachable, although at the same time he returns to his refrain of all-unity.

Solovyov does give the ideal world its content, which is God. God is unconditional, eternal, divine; therefore through relating with him man also becomes all of these, and he escapes from the natural world which leads to death and decay. A significant question now arises: what sort of relationship is it which exists in the divine kingdom? In essence, according to Solovyov, it is the same as the relationship between man and Christ. Jesus taught that the way to salvation was not through upholding the old law (that which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai),

a material and an ideal world, though, is that each threatens to be without substance; to achieve harmony and a divine relationship even in an ideal world there must be an "other", some content to complement and complete man. The idea, without a corresponding subject or bearer to realize it, he says, would be something completely passive and impotent.[58] For Solovyov this ideal content is God, in whom all is united. He rejects the notion that God is too incomprehesible to have a relationship with, a notion, by the way, also rejected by the other three thinkers in this thesis. In seeking for man's role in the ideal kingdom, we can find an answer in Solovyov's definition of God's role:

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but in surrendering to him as the new law, which was both eternal and internal. For Solovyov the Old Testament Commandments were only transitional, marking the passage to a non-external relationship. He quotes from the Book of Isaiah to show that ceremony, which the law established, cannot by itself express God's will: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with".[60] Solovyov clearly does not abide by empty ritual (and yet he was a supporter of the traditional Church). He thinks that love is God's will,[61] and love is implicit in relationship.

> The will of God must be the law and norm for the human will not as ratified despotism, but as the conscious good. Upon this relationship is to be established a new covenant between God and mankind, a new divine-human order [Godmanhood], which is to replace the other, preliminary and transitory, religion which was grounded in the eternal law.[62]

That means nothing other than Christianity. Solovyov uses the word "Godmanhood" (*Bogochelovechestvo*) instead. So it is this which opposes the natural world of man: there is an ideal kingdom in which man finds relationship through God (and God through man), and this kingdom is reached by way of the renunciation of the external plane of existence, which at its worst is evil, at its best only carries out the old law. Without substance, the ideal has no meaning; it is the relation itself between the ideal substance and man which completes both.

It is through the ideal world that Solovyov's religious individual is asserted. We have seen how determined he is to establish all-unity, and at times it may seem that each individual is rendered insignificant,

having value only as a miniscule part of an all-embracing whole. His world-soul and all-unifying God would seem to sacrifice the One for the All. But while Solovyov opposes all those who assert *above all* the rights of man, he nonetheless takes great pains to invest each person with ultimate unconditional significance. This is accomplished, says Solovyov, by a willingness to enter the ideal world and to become bound up in relation ideally, rather than to succumb to the natural world, and truly lose individuality. In *The Meaning of Love* he says:

> ...every person, as such, possesses absolute significance and worth. There is nothing absolutely irreplaceable and too high at which he cannot value himself...The disclaiming on behalf of himself of this unconditional significance is equivalent to a denial of human worth...[63]

The unconditional is the divine world: the divine world has substance, which requires an "other". Thus man as an individual asserts himself not necessarily apart from his fellow man (for that leads to egoism and evil), but in connection with the divine. Godmanhood requires each person as much as it requires God. Solovyov is willing to grant ultimate individuality only on this higher plane, where man is beholden to unify, rather than to separate.

We find proof of Solovyov's spiritual individuality in his book *The Justification of the Good*, in which he says, "Human personality, and therefore every individual human being, is capable of realizing infinite fulness of being, or in other words is a particular form with infinite content."[64] These words could be taken directly from Berdyaev, so accurately do they portray his thought. Solovyov's universalism, as we begin to see, does not abandon man, but focusses on the personality as

the divine element in man. Solovyov's thesis in this book, written during the last decade of his life, is that man is a moral creature and is united with other men through his morality. We had trouble seeing how Sophia, and the historical process, related directly to the individual, but Solovyov's belief in man's moral value points to the personality's relationship with the divine.

Even when we look at his economic beliefs we can see that close attention is paid to the rights of the individual. Solovyov's attitude to man in economic society largely prefigures Berdyaev's and Frank's. He was dissatisfied with the meaning which both capitalism and socialism gave to man. Capitalism is inimical to moral life because "free play of economic factors and laws is only possible in a community that is dead and decomposing."[65] Socialism is no better because in it "man is exclusively a producer and consumer, and human society is merely an economic union."[66] Solovyov tries to find the middle ground in economic relations in which humankind is not merely a tool for the system itself. Inspired by the divine, man ceases to consider the material element as important.

VIII

The Church

Solovyov devoted a great deal of thought to the nature and destiny of the church. If there was any hope of history attaining the kingdom of God, then great responsibility was placed on the church for directing mankind. Throughout his mature life Solovyov sought to find the one faith, or combination of faiths, which would be able to lead man. He progressed from Russian Orthodoxy to Catholicism to a combination of the two, with aspects of Judaism, Protestantism and the Greek pagan "religion" mixed in. But his views changed not by whim, but because he

seemed to observe a basic principle: that of finding the faith which allows all of mankind to take part in the divine world, and to become united with an unconditional God. His disillusionment arose out of the inability of any particular faith to provide the wholeness of unity, which was to him the *sine qua non* of life.

Solovyov was first of all a Slavophile, who strongly supported the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1877, the year of the Russo-Turkish war, he gave a public lecture called "Three Forces", in which he declared Orthodoxy to be the religion most accessible to God.[67] In the lecture, he described three distinct cultures which governed man: the Moslem East, Western civilization (in which he curiously did not include Catholicism at this point), and Slavdom.[68] The Moslem East was a despotic unity which precluded progress or individual independence, and Western civilization had its last word in a multitude of separate entities unconnected by any kind of inner bond.[69] Only the third, Slavdom, was capable of achieving a synthesis of singularity and multiplicity, humanizing God and reconciling East and West. (Berdyaev, incidentally, also believed that Slavdom could play a leading spiritual role amongst the nations, especially during the first world war. Berdyaev and Solovyov often seemed to have a love-hate relationship with their fellow-Russians, seeing them as capable of leading the way to salvation, while being stifled by great inertia. Shestov and Frank, as Jews, were spared this concern.) Solovyov went so far as to say that, initially, integral life among mankind could be attained only by the Russian nation. According to the critic Mochulsky, Solovyov had in fact taken his ideas *in toto* from one of the original Slavophiles, Kireyevsky, removing only the notion of Russian Messianism.[70] It isn't difficult to see that Solovyov was influenced by the Russian Orthodox concept of *sobornost',* rather than by the official side of the Church His beliefs,

however, began to outgrow the often-narrow Slavophile perspective, and as Shestov, perhaps Solovyov's most severe critic, says:

> Solovyov didn't follow the Slavophiles in the way that students usually follow teachers. He accepted them in so far as he found in them that higher truth, in the search for which he saw the sense and purpose of his life. But he turned decisively away from them when his conscience demanded it.[71]

The seeds of all-unity were planted early in Solovyov, and they sprouted first into Orthodoxy, where he saw a unifying force. Within a few years, though, he had changed his mind about the Russian Church, and saw it as an integral part of the *universal* Church, but no longer in the ecumenical vanguard. The reason for this was that Orthodoxy was not sufficiently well-organized to be a driving force; in other words, it lacked the human-spiritual authority that Catholicism offered.

> The East, Orthodox in theology and unorthodox in life, understood Christ's divinely-human nature, but could not understand the divine-human significance of the Church...The Church was for it simply something holy, given from above in a final form, preserved through tradition and accepted through piety.[72]

Originally Orthodoxy had reigned supreme with him because it provided a universal truth, but when he saw that it did not in fact have the authority to unify all mankind he turned toward Catholicism, which had certainly asserted its authority as the link between God and man. His was not a wholesale betrayal of the Russian Church, but rather the first

step along a long road of attempts to unify; in this case it was the Eastern and Western Christian Churches.

In 1883 he broke with the Slavophiles, ceasing to publish in *Rus'*, the Slavophile journal, and instead started contributing to *Vestnik Evropy,* the liberal and Western-influenced journal.[73] In a letter to Ivan Aksakov, the editor of *Rus',* he claimed that Aksakov saw only papism in the Catholic Church, whereas Solovyov saw the great and holy Rome, the eternal city, a fundamental and inseparable part of the universal Church. (Shestov continues his above-quoted passage with these words: "They called him a deserter, a traitor. Both his friends and his enemies were angry at him".[74])

In a sense Solovyov had not betrayed the Slavophiles, because he had never really belonged to them. Unity was his all-consuming passion, and under the early influence of Kireyevsky and Aleksey Khomyakov he had thought that Slavdom provided this - he later saw that it did not. On the other hand, Solovyov was also aware of the corruption which the Roman Catholic hierarchy had allowed. He insisted that a) the Church cannot be united by compulsion, b) the Church cannot be dominated by compulsion and c) man cannot be saved by compulsion.[75] He saw clearly that the medieval popes had asserted their authority badly; he did not condemn them for affirming spiritual power over secular (which he thought was necessary), but for employing secular means to do this.[76] The task Solovyov set himself was to bring together the spiritually contemplative Orthodoxy and the authoritative Roman Catholicism; if he could accomplish this, then the kingdom of heaven was realizable. He "solved" his problem by finding the links between the two Churches: in both there was recognition of the divine-human element through apostolic succession; there was recognition of Christ at the head of the Church; and there was participation in the divinely-

human life through the sacraments.[77] He thought that the two Churches were not radically different bodies, but part of the one true body of Christ - their differences were essentially minor.

It is fairly clear that Solovyov had in mind a union of these two bodies and not a dominance of the one over the other, but it was still felt by some that Solovyov had indeed converted to Catholicism. Both a Uniate (Graeco-Catholic) and an Orthodox priest said that Solovyov had received communion from them towards the end of his life. (The Orthodox priest affirmed that he had communicated with him on his death bed.)[78] The question as to whether Solovyov inclined more towards the East (Orthodoxy) or the West (Catholicism) is one which has been raised more than once, but as Berdyaev points out, Solovyov was above all a "universalist", whose arguments *pro* and *con* either Church were not indicative of a leaning in either direction, but of a desire to see unity triumph. Berdyaev says, "Solovyov is not a Slavophile and not a Westernizer, he is not Orthodox and not Catholic, because during his whole life he belonged to the universal Church."[79] What Solovyov worked for in practical terms was a Church which played an active role in history and society, but whose activity was inspired by God and not by man. Solovyov managed to escape from the Slavophile view, which was very suspicious of Catholicism as being, *inter alia*, opposed to Orthodoxy, and yet he still believed that in Russia the Church had divine rather than human authority. According to Berdyaev, Solovyov devoted too much attention to the actual arguments and formal treaties between the ecclesiastical leaders, thinking that once the official reunion had taken place spiritual union - Solovyov's real aim - would follow. Nevertheless Berdyaev recognizes this spiritual goal of Solovyov's practical efforts, and says, "With such love Solovyov was much more

able to unite the Churches, to decide the problem of East and West, rather than by his efforts at formal agreements and treaties."[80]

The most significant point that Berdyaev makes is that whatever Solovyov was said to be, Catholic, Orthodox, Uniate, etc., his beliefs did not centre around one institution, but around universalism. His eventual rejection of Moscow as the third Rome, and his criticism of man-centered authoritarianism in the Catholic Church indicate that he was searching for a universal ideal which neither Church fully provided.

So this was his second stage; the desire to fuse the two main Churches. How, though, did he view Protestantism and Judaism, both of which are central to historical Christianity? Protestantism was for Solovyov a breaking-away from the Church. Recalling his philosophy of nature, the essence of which he saw as organisms tending toward isolation and self-preservation, one can see that he viewed the Protestant movement similarly. He did laud their proclamation of the religious freedom of the individual, but declared that "man must through a moral act of self-renunciation overcome his actual limitations and voluntarily surrender to the universal truth that is independent of him."[81] And where is universal truth to be found? Where else but in a united Church, which Protestantism has rejected. Solovyov did accept that Protestants were right in rebelling against external compulsion, but he felt that they had refused to recognize the inwardly binding moral authority of the universal Church.[82] He also criticizes the Protestants for being threatened by pure rationalism.[83] Solovyov consistently maintains that reason is a necessary aspect in drawing closer to God, but he says that it is only the ideal form, and not the content itself; he worries that Protestantism will devote itself to the form and lose all content. He does not consider, however, one of Shestov's heroes and the most important Protestant of all, Martin

Luther, who declared that the just shall be saved by faith alone. By Protestantism, Solovyov really seems to mean German, academic, pedantic theology.

As for the Jews, his attitude towards them was characterized by strong, warm feelings. He embraced their conception of God as a living God, and thought that he himself had recognized this and made the Jews his Chosen People.[84] He sees in them a profound faith in God coupled with great intensity of human energy, and he even believes that the materialistic instincts which they are said to possess is in fact of a religious nature: "...the religious materialism of the Jews made them pay the greatest attention to material nature - not in order to serve it, but in order to serve God on high in it and through it."[85] The God of the Jews is Solovyov's picture of the divine "other": He is personal, "living", unconditional, ever-present amongst them. But their downfall comes firstly in cutting themselves off from the divine, so that all of their bad qualities are manifest, and then in denying universal Christianity by remaining isolated as a nation and adhering to the external law rather than the internal Christian commandment:

> But as soon as the purely human and natural peculiarities of the Jewish character gain preponderance over the religious element, that unique and great national character manifests itself in the distorted form which accounts for the general dislike of the Jews.[86]

That is the one problem; the other he explains as such: "The more fully the Christian world expresses the Christian idea of spiritual and universal theocracy...the more probably and speedily will the conversion of the Jews take place."[87] His approach to the Jewish people is typical

Solovyovian analysis: he affirms their personal God, declares that the "general dislike" of them is due to their being isolated (not only from other peoples but also from the divine world), and insists that their only recourse is a speedy conversion to universal Christianity. Solovyov, like Berdyaev and the converted Frank after him, make a clear distinction between the Old and the New Testament, seeing the Old as a manifestation of law, and the New as a manifestation of spirit, but this amounts to little more than a dismissal of Jewish faith.

We have seen now the development of Solovyov's ecumenical thought: while consistently maintaining that Jews and Protestants had to move under the umbrella of a universal Church, he shifted the centre from Orthodoxy to a fusion of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, never losing sight of his dream of unification. But in 1891 he read a paper at the Moscow Psychological Society which attacked what appeared to be the whole basis of traditional Christianity. In the paper, called "The Collapse of the Medieval-World Conception", he accused Christianity of the Middle Ages of being essentially pagan, of never really accepting the truth of Christ. He traces this back to early Christian days when under Constantine the Great and Constantinus pagan masses adopted Christianity wholesale, not out of conviction, but rather from slavish (not slavic!) imitation or self interest.[88] Thus, life remained much the same for the pagans, who adopted a few Christian ceremonies but preserved their secular kingdom. In medieval times true Christianity had still not arrived, and the blood that was shed in Christ's name was essentially to protect pagan life.[89] As for the monastic communities which formed during the Middle Ages, Solovyov recognized that they fulfilled the demands of Christian humility and self-denial, but were marred by their withdrawal from the world. "They did not and could not save the Christian Society, the Christian world, because in spite of all

their righteousness and holiness they mistakenly believed that individual souls alone could and ought to be saved."[90]

Solovyov challenged the legitimacy of the Church, at least up to that point in history, and then he paid respect to his former adversaries, the individualists of the Enlightenment, who had undermined the false medieval-world conception, thus acting for the benefit of true Christianity.[91] This brings us to a paper that Solovyov read on the French positivist Auguste Comte, in 1898, called *The Idea of Humanity*, when he likened Sophia to Comte's *Le Grand Etre* . This concept was not religious in nature, but like Sophia it embraced humanity as a whole, motivating and uplifting it. The two notions were opposed on religious grounds, but as forces which moved humanity Solovyov saw much similarity between the two. These essays of Solovyov's, on the medieval-world conception and on Comte, were written in the last decade of the philosopher's life; they were not indications that he was becoming anti-religious, or even that his notion of all-unity had diminished. But his need to turn to the Enlightenment for inspiration reveals the disillusionment he felt towards the various religious forces which he had once embraced. From the end of his adolescence to his death he affirmed both the internal significance of Christianity and the need to unify the faith amongst all peoples. In each system he found contradiction inherent until, while still clinging to his belief, he turned towards anti-religious thinkers and then toward force itself (*A Short Story of Anti-Christ*) as a means of conquering evil. All of this was a long way from his claim in the *Lectures on Godmanhood* that history was leading towards the kingdom of Heaven on earth. It is important to identify the reason why these patches and odd new patterns were attached to the garment of his philosophy. Solovyov's views were altered because in each system he saw a breakdown of unity, a unity

which had to be accessible to all mankind. Each new movement that he espoused revealed inconsistencies eventually, and he was ever in search of the perfect system of unity, which he never would find.

VIII

Human Relationship

We have seen the way in which Solovyov envisaged the relationship between the natural and the divine worlds, between God and mankind, and between church and state. There is a final type of relationship to be discussed, which is that between human being and human being. In assigning mankind's ultimate meaning to the divine and the unconditional, Solovyov was not content to leave this notion in its theoretical form, but tried to apply it to practical life; it was natural to him that he should be concerned with questions of justice - he sacrificed his academic career by publicly urging Alexander III to have mercy on his father's assassins - as well as the way in which human beings can most ideally live together in society.

Solovyov approaches the question of justice and punishment by first rejecting the Old Testament declaration of "an eye for an eye"; he claims that taking a murderer's life is misusing the algebraic formula of two minuses equalling a plus, because "the corpse of the victim may be added to the corpse of the hanged murderer and then there will be two lifeless bodies - that is, two negative qualities, two minuses".[92] Solovyov gives a significance to the murderer's life which the state itself might be willing to deny. Man may be able to condemn the criminal as incapable of rehabilitation, but according to Solovyov man's judgment is limited. "In its blind madness human pride puts its relative knowledge and conditional justice in the place of God's all-seeing righteousness."[93] Human pride is egoism, which Soloyvov attaches to

the natural, isolated world. He bases his opposition to capital punishment not merely on the notion of treating criminals humanely, but on the principle that man usurps God's right by taking life in such a way. "A criminal, like every immoral man in general, receives his real punishment from the judgment of God in accordance with moral laws."[94] He sees capital punishment as being spiritually harmful to a society which wants to develop morally. This is a significant thought, because his ideas of a theocracy, in which the state submits itself to the church, and his attraction to the authority of the Catholic Church, suggest his acceptance of the use of any means possible to bring man under the yoke of the church. But his repudiation of brutal forms of punishment, even for brutal criminals, places the emphasis for ultimate justice not in man's hands, but in God's. He even accepts that in order to reach moral heights, man must have a certain amount of freedom to be immoral.[95] This, however, is a long way from Raskolnikov's belief in *Crime and Punishment* that he has the right to transcend the law established for ordinary humans, for Solovyov believes that legal justice is necessary to prevent a kind of hell on earth.[96] Retribution and even intimidation are to be ruled out in punishment; rather, society must take away the criminal's liberty but must also help him actively so that he can morally reform himself.[97] Thus the criminal who has cut himself off from society by his crime is not to be cut off by society; rather the two, transgressor and victim, must enter into a relationship.

When we think of crime and retribution in terms of nineteenth-century Russian thought, the name of Dostoevsky springs automatically to mind, he who was himself branded a criminal in his youth and who later wrote about crime in all his major novels. It is worthwhile mentioning Dostoevsky in connection with Solovyov because the philosopher had a close relationship with the novelist. They became

acquainted late in the novelist's life; Dostoevsky attended Solovyov's *Lectures on Godmanhood* in 1878, and the two of them made a pilgrimage together to the monastery Optina Pustyn' after the death of Dostoevsky's son, Aleksey.[98] Upon the novelist's death, Solovyov said in a speech to the Women's University that "Dostoevsky preached the spiritual rebirth of man and society in the power of infinite and all-embracing love to realize the kingdom of universal truth on earth."[99] This is an intriguing statement by Solovyov in that it is so completely different from Berdyaev's and Shestov's own perceptions of Dostoevsky, which we shall examine in due course. Solovyov and Dostoevsky both believed in the greatness of Russia and both were spiritually orientated, but Solovyov sees in his friend a universalism which, although it supports his own philosophy, is certainly not a consistent aspect of Dostoevsky's thought. Solovyov, however, was not influenced by Dostoevsky as strongly as were Shestov and Berdyaev, but he saw in him a spiritual ally. At Dostoevsky's funeral, Solovyov said, "Above all he loved the living human soul in everything, everywhere, and he believed that we are all God's servants."[100]

Solovyov wished to protect the life and dignity of every person, no matter how corrupt his character might be, because he saw divine significance in him, which society had no jurisdiction over. In this way too he defines the nature of relations between man and woman in *The Meaning of Love.* In terms of human relations this is his most important work; Berdyaev said of it, "I valued and still value Solovyov's essay...it is, perhaps, better than anything ever written on love."[101] Solovyov's problem at the beginning is to determine how sex-love (the love between a man and a woman - not exclusively physical) can have meaning in the overall structure of the world. As he sees it, love is not an instrument in the genealogy of Christ; in other words, there is no

place for it in the Bible.[102] We are back again to the fundamental Solovyovian task of trying to fit all life into the means of attaining the kingdom of God. He attempts to show initially how sex-love is not worthwhile simply as a means of reproduction, because there is no connection between reproduction and the salvation of the world.[103] He also explains that love and reproduction don't always coincide.[104] In a sense he seems to approach his task reluctantly: since great love won't produce babies, and anyway producing babies won't save the world, he is entering an area where it will be difficult to connect the process of history with sex-love.

Nevertheless, once he gets the idea of history behind him, his analysis of love proves to be profound. He returns to the principle of isolation being inherent in wickedness; in human relations isolation is egoism. "The truth, as a living force, taking possession of the inward essence of the man, and effectively rescuing him from false self-assertion, is Love."[105] It is love which provides the substance of the bond between God and man, and now love assumes the same responsibility between person and person. For Solovyov, genuine love is based on faith (even when the emotion of love passes away the faith remains) and it is that which will save us from death.[106] This fits into his pattern of thought; love exists in the divine world, it is eternal and unconditional, while those who pursue only physical love are like fetishists, loving something that will die, which has no connection with the divine "other". He insists that individuality must make way for the divine union, but not so as to negate the individual. The personalities of the man and woman unite in love, claims Solovyov, to create one true personality.

Zenkovsky says about this conception of love that it is magical, "connected in the closest fashion with Solovyov's mystical

metaphysics..."[107] But Solovyov rejects the idealization of love, of imagining it as that which it is not; if his notion is indeed magical and mystical, nevertheless, he says, "...it is only possible to love what is living and concrete."[108] This is Solovyov's shining example of relationship: he derides the exaltation of egoism and physical love, and affirms that true love is realized only through faith and eternity. Unfortunately, he does not leave us with that, but returns to the historical process, insisting that the man and woman cannot themselves remain isolated in their relationship, but must share their transformation, so that it will spread and thus transform the world. "Our personal concern," he says, "is the concern of the whole world".[109] Thus is the remark justified that Solovyov was above all historiocentric, even when concerned with the most personal matters. But if Solovyov clung to this belief it did not interfere with his approach to love, which aimed to sanctify both individuals involved in the relationship.

IX

Conclusion

Vladimir Solovyov lived before the Russian State was overthrown, but during a time when revolutionary activity was fermenting, and also when strong nationalist sentiment sought to defend Russia, Orthodoxy, and tradition. At 14 he was on the side of the revolutionaries, at 24 he defended Orthodoxy with zeal. By 34 he had abandoned both and looked for unity between East and West, and by 44 he had realized the impossibility of real unification between Churches which had denied Christ for centuries. His young adulthood saw him castigating the Enlightenment (for its belief in man over God) and prophesying the kingdom of heaven on earth, achieved through the historical process.

The last years of his life found him praising the Enlightenment for a humanity which the Churches had not shown, and suggesting that God's kingdom might have to be reached by force, and not history. He was portrayed diversely: some saw him as a Russian Cardinal Newman (the nineteenth-century Anglican who converted to Catholicism), some thought that Dostoevsky had based Alyosha, the saintly character from *The Brothers Karamazov*, on him, and Dostoevsky's wife, Anna Grigorevna, even saw in him characteristics of Ivan Karamazov; she likened Ivan's theocratic anti-utopia to Solovyov's philosophical theories.[110] Did his views alter so dramatically that he can only be seen as a curiosity in the history of religious philosophical thought, or is there truly some centre in his writings, and a centre which includes a sense of the religious individual?

If we admit that Solovyov's universalist system was not a practical success - because it was too idealistic - we can still claim that all-unity found room for the individual. Solovyov was a moral teacher through and through, and because of this he did not have the kind of psychological depth which later thinkers like Shestov and Berdyaev possessed; he did not comprehend sufficiently that man is not merely striving for good. But nevertheless, his moral understanding was mindful of the individual and it tried to secure for him a spiritual world which could not be threatened by authority or secularism. His moral teaching was an attempt to restore dignity to each human being by insisting that he was a part of a spiritual whole.

Solovyov's all-unity is composed of individuals who *become* individuals only through the divine, religious sphere. At no point does he allow this principle to be compromised: he hopes for a theocracy through the union of the churches, but rejects one which would use force to rule; he posits an ideal world, but insists that there is a

subject at the centre of it, God, who is to provide the divine relationship. Indeed, man finds all his meaning, be it through God or other humans, in this ideal world where there is always an "other". Solovyov's world-soul at time appears to threaten man's individuality, but because man is the mediator between God and the world, he is given responsibility for seeking after the divine relationship. Solovyov sees folly in separation, nature, Protestantism and Judaism (when they are disconnected from the source of truth, all-unity), secularization, self-assertion. He sees truth in love, a unified Church, the divine, self-denial. This truth is represented by Christianity, with Christ as the Godman at the centre. Christ's appearance heralded the final stage of history: realization of the kingdom of God on earth.

Solovyov's emphasis on the grand sweep of history, the world-soul and the all-embracing all-unity cloud the more important principle in his writing: that man is a creature dependent on relationship, on other subjects which complete his personality, and not on finite, ego-boosting, objects. His efforts to unify everything at times result in untenable propositions; but his belief in the realization of each human being's individuality through divine relationship locates his most profound idea. This was one of the main ideas that Russian religious thinkers were to turn to a few years after Solovyov's death in 1900. Solovyov, in going beyond the often-narrow limits of traditional Orthodoxy, in embracing a universalism that was not materialistic but rooted in the divine, struck a chord in the hearts and minds of the renaissance thinkers. Berdyaev and Frank, as we shall see, owed a great debt to Solovyov, since it was he who first developed a philosophical system in Russia which included an ideal, divine world, capable of uniting all humankind, and it was he who most strongly espoused the notion of a relationship between God and man involving man as an

individual. The idea of the religious individual was in its early days in Russian philosophical thought, but Solovyov had taken the first steps in that direction, allowing others to develop the idea much more clearly and strongly.

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Chapter Three

Lev Shestov

I

Tolstoy and Nietzsche

Vladimir Solovyov's philosophical system - rooted as it is in religious soil - at times seems to lose sight of the individual in the philosopher's quest for all-unity, but we cannot claim that the religious element in his thought ever weakens. Now, however, we come to a thinker whose orientation is just the opposite: the individual is of such primary importance that the religious element in his thought struggles for a long time to emerge. Lev Shestov (1866-1938) could not really have been called a religious thinker early in his writing career, but by the end of his life his idea of the religious individual was so pronounced as to be rivalled only by Berdyaev.

Let us begin with a diary entry of Shestov's, noted in 1920:

> This is the twenty fifth year since "the time fell out of joint" - the anniversary, more accurately, will be in early autumn, at the beginning of September. I write this down, so as not to forget the most important events of my life. No one knows anything about them except you - they are easily forgotten. [1]

This mysterious passage is a revealing introduction to Shestov's ideas, which are always so intimately linked with his life. Shestov devoted all his work to the task of uniting life with thought; his most strident attacks are delivered against abstract thinkers: moralists and philosophers - including Solovyov - who choose knowledge over the

individual, artists who find comfort in culture instead of seeking after a personal, lonely voice. If the diary entry is a sincere one, it is evident that his writings would have been dramatically affected by the catastrophic events which occurred in 1895, before his authorship began. It is fitting that we should not know the content of this vital biographical detail, since Shestov's struggle was an internal one and does not easily lend itself to a description of the external events of his life. Nevertheless, he was to say frequently that life was to be lived as tragedy, and this unexplained, seemingly tragic episode, points towards the wellspring of his beliefs.

Shestov, born in Kiev as Lev Shwartzmann (Shestov was his pseudonym), was neither a political nor a sociological thinker; unlike Solovyov, Berdyaev and Frank he had few ideas to contribute to the betterment of society (even though for a short time in his youth he had been a Marxist, and he did write a short work attacking the Bolsheviks). This may seem at first glance odd - not only did he live through great unrest in his homeland, but he and his family had to flee their country because of the revolution. (He ended up in Paris, where he spent most of the last two decades of his life.) How could he be mostly silent on political matters amidst the cataclysmic changes in Russia? Intellectual life in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was explosively political; his close friend Berdyaev, also from Kiev, willingly entered political discussion in his attempts to warn against the nihilism which was widespread in the intelligentsia at the time But from a mature age Shestov's tyrants lived in the realm of ideas, and his conception of tyranny was that which destroyed the individual's *internal* life, making it finite or limited. Shestov's individual did not live in the mundane world; the union of the churches, for example, would have been a matter of indifference to him. This thinker sought only that which freed each

man from the fetters of abstraction and gave him back his own existence. We cannot look to Shestov, as we can to Solovyov, for answers to division within the State or the Church. His writings dwell outside the social sphere, and find their home in a world which is purely personal.

This outlook of Shestov's, which gives primacy to the individual spirit, can be characterized mainly by two terms. The first is "struggle", and the second, which did not become fully realized until fairly late in his life, is "faith." Shestov rejected dogma and the common assumptions of morality, and he looked towards thinkers who, he believed, embodied struggle or faith or both. His first heroes were Nietzsche and Dostoevsky; as he developed he turned to Pascal, Luther, and Kierkegaard (whom he discovered in the last decade of his life), and biblical figures such as Abraham and Job. If these figures have one feature in common, it is that they rejected the conventional approaches to morality, reason and/or God, and established themselves as isolated creatures, sacrificing their ordinary lives in recognition of enormous personal struggle. Shestov's concept of the individual is not anything like Solovyov's. His individual is not made complete by another subject in the spiritual kingdom. Rather, he stands alone, usually, although not always, facing God, and his significance as a human being exists not in regard to his beliefs, but rather to his personal involvement with life. As Shestov was to suggest many times, the mere adherence to belief was dangerous, because it could allow for an easing of the struggle. This viewpoint alone makes him a radical thinker, and it compelled him to embark on relentless attacks against many different philosophers and theologians, be they contemporary, medieval or ancient.

The fundamental aspects of Shestov's thought changed little throughout his mature years. Once he had found his own ground (or lost it, one might say; one of his early books is entitled *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness*)

fought for the same ideas for the rest of his life, the primary change occurring in his religious development. The bulk of his work, we shall see, takes the form of criticism, and it is the differences in the stages of his criticism which are most apparent. In his first period he is concerned mainly with the artist, through the works of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Chekhov, among others, and occupying a first rank in this period is also Nietzsche. (His first book was actually on Shakespeare, but Nietzsche became a much more important figure to him.) In the second period he turns decisively towards philosophy, against which he wages constant war. His final period is a religious one. In these stages there is much overlapping; his attitudes towards philosophy and religion develop at more or less the same time, and he was interested in literature until the end of his life. But in this examination of him these three aspects will be separated, so that we can look at each one more closely. While the focal points for his criticism frequently change and develop, his main objective never alters: to protect the internal freedom of the individual.

Shestov's first truly radical book was entitled *Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche*. Indeed, while he was trying to get the essay published, none other than Vladimir Solovyov remarked "Conscience does not allow me to assist in the printing of such a work in *Vestnik Evropy*. Tell the author from me that I do not advise him to publish this essay."[2] If Solovyov was forbidden by conscience from approving of the essay, he must have thought it immoral in some way, and in a sense, it was just that. Shestov delivers a sharp attack against morality, at least that morality which was preached by Leo Tolstoy.

One of the events in Tolstoy's writings which most outrages Shestov is the death of the eponymous heroine of *Anna Karenin*. He feels that the novel is constructed so that those characters who follow the proper rules will succeed (i.e. Levin), and not only succeed but attain salvation, while

those who destroy the same rules will themselves be destroyed. This is highly apparent with Anna, thinks Shestov; she who is the most gifted is also the greatest sinner, and Tolstoy has doomed her to an ignominious death. "In all Russian literature, and perhaps foreign as well, not one artist has so pitilessly and calmly led his hero to such a terrible fate...It is not enough to say, 'pitilessly and calmly' - with joy and exultation."[3] This is the first sign we get of Shestov's impassioned defence of the individual. He accuses Tolstoy of portioning out this fate to Anna directly on account of her adultery with Vronsky.

But, Shestov continues, it is not only sinners who are required to pay a heavy cost. In *War and Peace* we encounter Sonya, who had once hoped to marry Nicholas Rostov but who by the end of the novel has lost him and must languish without a real destiny. Shestov quotes a conversation between Natasha and Mary, the two ultimately successful and satisfied women of the novel, in which Natasha suggests that Sonya has failed because she is a "barren flower."[4] Shestov thinks it is clear that this is also the opinion of the author, and he is highly critical of Tolstoy's attempts to make everything come out just right. The sinners won't survive, but neither will the meek, while those who want to live active, healthy lives (like Levin in *Anna Karenin* and Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace*) will get their wives, children and large estates in the end. It is the notion of conformity to a set of moral standards which Shestov finds so objectionable, and he sees this in the personality of many of Tolstoy's fictional characters.

Also, Shestov has in mind Tolstoy's late work *What is Art*, in which the Russian count claims that basic human morality should dictate our approach both to art and to life. Shestov sums up the two principles of the essay thus: The artist must a) write what all can understand and b) write about that which will awaken good feelings in people.[5] Tolstoy

was critical of great artists such as Shakespeare and Pushkin, because he felt that they were irrelevant to the vast majority of mankind. "The task of Christian art is to establish brotherly union among men."[6] By this late stage of his life Tolstoy was a passionate moralist, contemptuous of high society and committed, like Solovyov, to preaching a morality which could apply to all humankind. It is here that Shestov most sharply contrasts Tolstoy with Nietzsche; he accuses the Russian count of sacrificing his personality for the sake of good, and claims that for Tolstoy, God himself is nothing more than "good." Responding to Tolstoy's claim in *What is Art* that our life is nothing other than a striving for good, or as Tolstoy would have it, for God, Shestov declares: "Good - that is, God! Which is to say, outside of good there is no aim for man."[7] Where Tolstoy sees good, Shestov sees a wall, and one which keeps the isolated person out. Nowhere, he says, are God and good equated in the Bible, and he declares that Tolstoy for all of his preaching of morality never says a word about faith.[8] It is perhaps easy to see why Solovyov would have objected to such an essay; anyone looking for a brotherhood of man through a moral structure might well see a rejection of good (in Tolstoy's terms) as immoral.

Part of Shestov's polemic centres around the personal lives of Tolstoy and Nietzsche. The former, it is pointed out, had a dissolute past to look back on. As a young man he had gambled, drunk, and had made a habit of conquering peasant women, yet in his later life he demanded strict adherence to moral practices. (He went so far as to declare that married couples should abstain from sexual relations.) Nietzsche, on the other hand, had been an upright Christian youth. He who seemed to glorify evil and who mocked morality had actually been very religious in his younger days, and unlike Tolstoy had participated in no drunkenness, no duels, no debauchery.[9] (Since the relationship between life and ideas is so vital to

Shestov, he does not balk at introducing personal elements into his argument.) In this context it is curious that he pays little respect to Tolstoy for the enormous personal struggle he himself underwent. Tolstoy's conclusions were clearly misguided to Shestov, but his life was nevertheless much marked by internal struggle. (One example of this occurred after Shestov's book was written, when Tolstoy, in his life's final act, decided to abandon home and family and left his estate. Before he had gone far, though, he fell ill and died, at Astapova train station.)

According to Shestov, Nietzsche had lived a good life as a youth - he gladly submitted to a Tolstoyan conception of the world - but in his need, it was good itself which abandoned him.

> He was not yet thirty when he underwent that terrible metamorphosis which is called disease....Almost immediately he who had been a sleeping youth awakened a broken old man, with the terrible awareness that life had left him and would never return.[10]

To Shestov it was Nietzsche's illness that had made him realize the hopelessness of appealing to a general good; Nietzsche was no Pierre Bezukhov, whose health and sanity would allow him to fall back on accepted notions of morality. Shestov's admiration for Nietzsche consists not in the German thinker's hostile attitude towards Christianity, but rather in his hostile attitude towards the teaching of it. Indeed, he admired Nietzsche for rejecting all teaching, and looking instead at his own life to guide him. "Whoever might consider rejecting Nietzsche, would first have to reject life, from which he extracted his philosophy."[11] Nietzsche, in going beyond good and evil, in scorning the workaday morality of his contemporaries, demanded that the individual's

own passionate struggle for individuality reign supreme over any complacent or submissive attempts to find greater truths (like good, or morality). Shestov embraces the notion that man is not simply an agent through which good achieves its end (like a Solovyovian Sophia), but is himself the ultimate reality. Man forges his own meaning, and does not have it ready-made or pre-packaged for him. The fact that Nietzsche is anti-religious and seems to condone evil is irrelevant to Shestov. The very last words of *Tolstoy and Nietzsche* are: "We must search for God." Nietzsche did not turn Shestov away from God, rather he turned him toward the search.

Shestov is, in fact, dismissive of certain aspects of Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche himself, the great struggler, is repelled when he tries to establish doctrine of any kind, which Shestov thinks he does in positing his Superman. "We see how alien to Nietzsche is his ideal of the Superman, which for him plays the role of the Tolstoyan 'good'; he commands people to oppress and destroy, just like Count Tolstoy with his 'good.'"[12] Shestov is not interested in the Superman or in Nietzsche's declaration of eternal recurrence; these are merely attempts to establish knowledge. It is Nietzsche's fierce anti-moralism - which would have repelled Solovyov, who thought that morality gave man his sense of dignity - it was this total opposition to the stone wall of morality that so attracted Shestov to the radical German thinker.

II

The Underground

Although Shestov closes his book on Tolstoy and Nietzsche with a call to search for God, it is Nietzsche the god-destroyer whom he praises, and not Tolstoy the believer. But he was sincere about these final words of this essay; he was just beginning to look for thinkers who embodied both the struggle and the faith. His other main hero of this period is

Dostoevsky, he whose novels are full of religious passion; Shestov's next book was devoted to Dostoevsky and Nietzsche and is subtitled, significantly, *The Philosophy of Tragedy*.

Nietzsche himself says of the Russian novelist: "Dostoevsky is the only psychologist from whom I was able to learn anything."[13] Like Nietzsche, Dostoevsky had had many ideals in his younger life, but while for the former the breaking point was his illness, for the latter it was his years spent doing penal servitude in Siberia. The first half of Dostoevsky's work, from *Poor Folk* to *The House of the Dead*, reveals a talented if somewhat awkward writer who improved considerably over the years. But, says Shestov, the appearance of *Notes from the Underground* marks a new development; the writer is whistling a far different tune and seems even to renounce his past:

> Up to this point he had considered himself marked by fate to do a great work. But now he suddenly felt that he was not a bit better than anyone else, that he cared as little for all ideals as the most common mortal. Let ideas triumph a thousand times over: let the peasants be freed, let just and merciful courts be set up, let military conscription be abolished - his heart would be no lighter, no happier because of it."[14]

Dostoevsky's Underground man is truly a repulsive character. He avoids paying his servant so he can squander money on an extravagant dinner, he insinuates himself into the company of old acquaintances who despise him, he is wretchedly unhappy and unkind. But Shestov exults over this paltry figure, because he sees in him one who has renounced all his ideals and looked squarely at his paltriness. This man is indeed contemptible, but for Shestov what matters most is that he has

acknowledged his own reality, which is far more meaningful than any lofty ideals about Russia or humanity.

Shestov's book established him as an Underground man himself. He welcomes Dostoevsky's replacement of grand moral ideals with self-loathing, he embraces Nietzsche's replacement of everyday Christianity with a loathing of common morality. And here he again strikes out at Tolstoy, who he claims did indeed have the seeds of the Underground man in him, but refused to let them grow. He suggests that Levin in *Anna Karenin* is an unhappy man, capable of despair, and yet one who must have firm ground ('groundfulness') under his feet. He marries Kitty, for instance, so as to prove that he is no worse than anyone else.[15] Shestov sums up the differences between the two Russian writers thus: "Dostoevsky's Underground man, upon noting the falsehood of his life, becomes horrified and immediately severs himself from his entire past. But Count Tolstoy's heroes never cease to believe in 'the lofty and the beautiful.'"[16] At this point in Shestov's life, his primary influences express their individuality in negative terms. Tolstoy he cannot accept, because his outlook on life, even when it involves a struggle, arrives at the same conclusions as Dostoevsky and Nietzsche *before* their conversions. These conclusions are full of hope and ideals, which in no way fit in with a philosophy of tragedy.

It is worth noting that Shestov always embraced the idea of the Underground man even during his most religious periods. He goes so far as to say that *Notes from the Underground* could serve as an excellent commentary on the works of the great saints, because the saints themselves "all regarded themselves as the most horrible sinners...the most vile, the weakest, the stupidest of creation. St. Bernard, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, all the saints were filled with horror at their nothingness and sinfulness until they had drawn their last

breaths."[17] Dostoevsky's creation never lost its force for Shestov; even later in his life he was able to invest this seemingly nihilistic creature with religious significance.

Shestov's acuteness as a thinker is in part related to his ability to recognize the most crucial moments of a writer's life and thought. Thus he is inspired by Nietzsche's going "beyond good and evil", but he is quick to realize when a philosophical assertion is being made, as he thinks is the case with the Superman. In the same way he eagerly goes out to meet the Underground Man, but he has little use for other aspects of Dostoevsky's thought, such as his tendency towards preaching and prophecy. Where a single soul is at the centre of *Notes from the Underground*, that is not true of many of Dostoevsky's other writings, such as *The Journal of an Author*, which began to appear in 1873 and was full of predictions of the future of Russia, none of which came true. Shestov says "Dostoevsky desired at all costs to prophesy, he prophesied constantly and was constantly mistaken. We have not taken Constantinople, we have not united the Slavs, and even the Tatars still live in Crimea."[18] Shestov's theme concerns the isolated man, and he clearly does not want to engage himself in any other aspect of the writer's thought.

Both Nietzsche and Tolstoy greatly admired Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Shestov wonders how this can be so. In analyzing the novel, though, Shestov claims that Nietzsche would have responded to the first half of the book, in which Raskolnikov asserts that he is above the laws and rules of ordinary people, and to prove this he kills an old woman. Tolstoy though, says Shestov, would have had little use for this claim to be a Superman, but would have embraced the latter part of the novel, in which Raskolnikov becomes aware of his mistake, and begins the long road to regeneration through his punishment, which is both physical and

spiritual (and which in this sense bears a similarity to Tolstoy's last novel, *Ressurection*).[19]

Nietzsche above all hated compassion. He felt that by accepting pity man entered into a conspiracy against life, he grew weak and was able to forget his misfortunes. To Shestov, Nietzsche's whole life amounted to a struggle, and it was natural to him, to Nietzsche, to hate the cowardly, those who confuse the few who have not yet lost courage.[20] Shestov's acceptance of this is tantamount to his recognizing life as permeated by tragedy; those who ignore the tragedy (i.e. Tolstoy) ignore life itself, but those who are aware of it and who struggle with it (i.e. Dostoevsky and Nietzsche), come face to face with real life. Shestov's radicalism here is manifested in starkly negative terms. Perhaps this is related mainly to the event noted in his diary entry, perhaps it is on account of his strong attachment to Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, who replaced morality with beliefs that were negatively rather than positively expressed. (Shestov's study of Nietzsche concentrates mainly on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* - any passage from it, taken at random, will express this negative power. "Genuine - that is what I call him who goes into god-forsaken deserts and has broken his venerating heart."[21] And consider the opening lines of *Notes from the Underground,* in which the protagonist/antagonist rails against himself, calling himself an angry and a sick man.)

At this stage in Shestov's thought we have a clear defence of the individual, but as yet little religious expression accompanies this defence. Indeed, although Shestov has told us that we must search for God, we cannot yet call him religious.

Benjamin Fondane, who was a friend and disciple of Shestov's in Paris, wrote, on reading his book on Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, "...in order to penetrate his thought, in order to reach it, one must...have endured some personal disaster...What man, for love or truth, would dare to wish on

himself such a disaster?"[22] This remark reminds one of Shestov's unknown catastrophe, but it also suggests the importance of tragedy in his writings. Shestov's work may not be inaccessible to anyone who has not endured personal calamity, but perhaps the only way in which one could understand it is through a keen awareness of tragedy in the world.

Out of Shestov's own life, and his discovery of these two writers, he was able to declare his philosophy of tragedy, which he held to be, in principle, hostile to the philosophy of the commonplace. At the end of his essay he says that Dostoevsky's novels and Nietzsche's books speak only of the ugliest people and their problems; indeed, they themselves were extremely ugly people, and had none of the commonplace hopes.[23] Shestov is drawn to them because of their perception in locating and isolating the individual amidst the herd, but while he tells us at the end of his essay on Tolstoy and Nietzsche that we must search for God, the only way he offers us to do this is through "ugliness."

Berdyaev responds to this problem in an essay on Shestov entitled "Tragedy and the Commonplace". He agrees with Shestov's view of tragedy, that it begins when the individual is torn away from the world. But he doesn't accept Shestov's attack on "good", because he doesn't think that good is limited to the commonplace. Berdyaev suggests that Shestov was glorifying the Underground man but yearning for religion. "Shestov is also a humanist, he defends the Underground man out of his humanity, he wants to write a declaration of his rights, perhaps he even secretly sighs for the religion of Christ, perhaps the Christian rays can be manifested in him."[24] Berdyaev was perceptive on this point, because Shestov would before long move steadily in the direction of a religious viewpoint. Also, as Berdyaev realized, Shestov was not adhering to some kind of evil, godless doctrine, but was mainly trying to defend the rights of the individual. Berdyaev claims that the commonplace itself is that which is

beyond good and evil, what with its morally indistinguishable norms, and he says that "man must individually create good."[25]

Solovyov and Frank would certainly have agreed with Berdyaev, that the individual's responsibility is to create good; only Shestov of the four derides this judgement, seeing no relationship between the individual and good. And yet, it is Shestov's defence of the individual which is the fiercest and most uncompromising. We can add that the other three thinkers were also social and political philosophers, and the good had significance for them in community; Shestov, who was not such a philosopher, could with an easier conscience enjoin the individual to abandon morality, without fear that he was advocating anarchy or the rule of the strongest, etc.

III

Hopelessness

While Dostoevsky and Nietzsche were the great influences of this early period, they were not the only writers to whom Shestov declares an allegiance. As he had not yet discovered his religious voice, the philosophy of tragedy was still expressed in negative terms. His faith had not yet been developed, but the opposite side of faith, hopelessness, had. And in Anton Chekhov he found, as he himself said, the poet of hopelessness.[26] When Shestov calls him this, he means it not as criticism but rather as the highest kind of praise. When he says, "Art, science, love, inspiration, ideals...Chekhov has only to touch them and they instantly wither and die,"[27] he is showing his greatest possible respect for the Russian writer. How could he use such condemnatory language as a form of admiration?

The primary tale of Chekhov's that Shestov refers to in an essay on him, entitled, "Anton Chekhov: Creation from the Void", is "A Tedious Story".

It is the narrative of an elderly, highly respected scientist who looks at his life only to see how meaningless it is. He does not rave like the Underground man, or renounce morality; rather he quietly recognizes that his family means little to him, his renown as a scientist will soon be forgotten, and before long he will be dead. His only fruitful relationship is with his foster-daughter Katy, but even when she turns to him for advice, support, help, he cannot give her any. All he can murmur is that he is beaten, he can utter nothing but that he will be dead soon. Shestov says, "When he has stripped his hero of the last shred, when nothing is left for him but to beat his head against the wall, Chekhov begins to feel something like satisfaction..."[28] As with Nietzsche, who awakens an old man after his illness and has to go on living in spite of the enormous struggle that lies before him, Chekhov's characters have no way out of their situation. There are no ideals to appeal to, because ideals do not really soothe, there is no immediate death which could bring oblivion. The only action for these characters to take is to beat their heads against the wall while life goes on.

Shestov is not morbid; in fact he is not even pessimistic. In an essay on Berdyaev, called 'In Praise of Folly', in which he responds to Berdyaev's essay on him, he declares, "When I heard for the first time that I had been labelled a sceptic and a pessimist, I simply rubbed my eyes in surprise."[29] In affirming Chekhov's hopelessness, he does not preach gloom and doom, but glorifies the rejection of false answers to the problems of life. When life's misfortune is recognized, says Shestov, and no refuge is sought from it through idealism, this is where the struggle begins. Shestov says that no one can teach Chekhov anything; this is like Nietzsche in his later years, who rejected everything that philosophy had to teach him. Chekhov and Nietzsche have little in common as thinkers, but Shestov locates a characteristic which they both share: an unshakeable anti-idealism.

For the reason that Shestov embraces Chekhov, that is, for his willingness to beat his head against the wall rather than to accept false solutions, he condemns another great Russian writer, Turgenev. Shestov sees him as the most cultured of the Russian artists, the one who most zealously took to European ideas. But while Turgenev viewed European culture as the highest form of enlightenment, Shestov saw it as one which had almost always caved in to idealism, leaving no room for insoluble problems. Turgenev to him became a finished product in Europe - refined, educated, completed. He mocks the novelist: "Try, he taught us, to be reconciled with life, and don't search for mysteries, for in any case you will find nothing."[30] Once again Shestov returns to the division between life and thought. Turgenev, he felt, had simply been too weak to fight for life. Compared with him even Tolstoy, who fared badly against Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, is given some due respect. According to Shestov, Tolstoy was unwilling to concede his life to literature; even though his heroes and heroines emerge from his novels ordinary and happy, still, he fought against contemporary thinking. Turgenev, he suggests, did no such thing.[31]

Shestov's greatest task was still ahead of him: the battle against all the bases upon which philosophy had been founded. One can see that his earlier writings are starting to scratch at the philosophical surface. When he examines Russian literature, it is not in terms of its beauty, style or artistic form; if it had been aesthetics which had interested him, Turgenev would likely have been at the top and Dostoevsky at the bottom. Berdyaev says of Shestov, "Not 'literature', not 'philosophy', not 'ideas' interest him, rather the truth about the sufferings of all these writers, their real spirit, the living experience."[32] The questions he asks in his study of Russian writers, and of Nietzsche, are, Must we accept a moral order already prepared for us? Are there problems which remain

insoluble? Does knowledge have precedence over life, or is it the other way around? These are questions which philosophy and theology have above all asked, and it was towards these disciplines that Shestov was advancing.

Nevertheless, such questions are not limited to certain disciplines, and Shestov found that they were asked by great creative artists. He located the thought in these artists which most forcefully expressed their struggle: the thorough rejection of the commonplace in Nietzsche, the despair of Dostoevsky's Underground man, and to a lesser degree the hopelessness of Chekhov. It was when all of these conditions were lived through, thought Shestov, that man started to get down to the business of his own life.

IV

The Groundless

Shestov was not trained in philosophy. He had studied law at Moscow University, his employment came from his family's estate (his parents were prosperous merchants), and his first books had been concerned with artists more than with philosophers. But the assumptions, methods and conclusions of philosophy came to be very real enemies for Shestov; the whole concept of philosophy was his most natural opponent. In summarizing Shestov's thought, Sidney Monas says, "Frightened by the Dark King, who came to all individuals, men entrenched themselves, walled themselves into a world of common agreement where they could seemingly ignore the presence of death. They agreed to limit their own possibilities. What was alive in experience, however, was individual...."[33] Where Shestov considered Tolstoy to be walling himself in by morality, he was to discover a field of thought whose whole effort, so he believed, resulted in a wall which not only limited, but devastated possibility.

His final book was entitled *Athens and Jerusalem*; he made exhaustive efforts to distinguish between Athens, philosophy, on the one hand, and Jerusalem, faith, on the other. (At one point he even laments the fact that the two names are joined by the conjunction *and*, rather than *or*.)[34] Let us look at how Shestov viewed philosophy as a whole, with all its diversity and its two and a half millennia of practice.

As a condemner of philosophical claims of knowledge, Shestov is merciless. He doesn't flinch in his sharp criticism even from those philosophers who followed their own, lonely path to what they saw as truth. Foremost among these "lonely" thinkers are Socrates, Spinoza and Shestov's contemporary and friend, Husserl. And he has even less respect for those philosophers who, as he thought, sought truth along safe paths where there lurked no danger; into this category he puts, among others, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel.

He came to know history's philosophical arguments intimately; one could say that he knew his enemy well, even though he had become convinced that philosophy would be his enemy well before he had acquired a thorough understanding of the subject. After his book on Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, and still powerfully under the influence of these two men, he wrote *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness*, in which occur the first skirmishes in his great battle against philosophy. The book is distinctly Nietzschean both in structure and content. It is filled with short passages which are not quite as aphoristic as are Nietzsche's, but which jab at logic and reason, the heart of philosophy. Shestov is still in the Underground here, but his attacks are basically the same as those he will make when he has acquired his religious point of view.

The passages in this book refer less to philosophers and artists than to the ideas they embody. (Although in indicting philosophy he is not afraid to name names.) The meaning of this work is contained in its title: it is

the sanctification of the groundless, the deification of all that has abandoned certainty and knowledge. In claiming that we know nothing of the ultimate realities of existence, he declares:

> Therefore on principle man should respect order in the external world and complete chaos in the inner. And for those who find it difficult to bear such a duality, some internal order might also be provided. Only, they should not pride themselves on it, but always remember that it is a sign of their weakness, pettiness, dullness."[35]

Internal order, thinks Shestov, quiets a man's soul, it lulls him to sleep, and he will have nothing to do with this. The above passage gives an indication of his attitude to the social and political world around him: he welcomes order and peace in the external world, but of such a world he is almost dismissive, compared with the all-importance of his internal sphere. Internally, he would rather see all elements at war with each other than a well-regulated, ordered system.

One of his images is that of a caterpillar, who, when transformed into a chrysalis, lives in a warm, quiet world. The other caterpillars think it is an act of insurgency that he would escape this warmth by growing wings and flying out into space.[36] This is a natural image for Shestov - knowledge is for him a warm chrysalis, discouraging flight. Such an idea as this indicates a thinker who is not addressing his reproaches directly to specific philosophers but is more intent on calling the whole idea of philosophy into question. (His development, though, is different from his teacher, the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche was a brilliant scholar and devotee of philosophy as a young man, but after passionately devoting himself to it he just as passionately rejected it. Shestov, on

the other hand, was never an ardent follower of any philosopher or philosophical system.) One full passage should indicate Shestov's debt to Nietzsche:

> Philosophers dearly love to call their utterances "truths", since in that guise they become binding upon us all. But each philosopher invents his own truths. Which means that he asks his pupils to deceive themselves in the way he shows, but that he reserves for himself the option of deceiving himself in his own way. Why? Why not allow everyone to deceive himself just as he likes?[37]

This whole book argues for the groundless, especially concerning philosophy; the heroes are still those of old, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Chekhov ("Every creation," Shestov tells us, "is created out of the Void.")[38] Most of his attacks on reason and logic in the future will be able to offer religious struggle as the alternative, but this work, on the borders of his transition, still expresses the groundless in negative terms, chaos, the Void, uncertainty. However, although the expression continues to be negative, as always with him it is not pessimistic, but seeks to protect the individual.

V

Athens

So as Shestov discovered the great philosophers, he did so with "firm groundlessness". There was no chance that he would accept the order which was imposed by any one philosopher, and yet he immersed himself in a study of all the major ones. The thinker whom he carried on the longest, most intense struggle with was Spinoza. Him he saw as the

most remarkable of logicians, and also as the most fatally misguided. What seems to have attracted Shestov most of all, though, was that the Amsterdam Jew, although mistaken in Shestov's eyes, was nonetheless a courageous and isolated struggler for his conception of the truth.

Spinoza was excommunicated from his synagogue for heretical opinions, and he refused a chair of philosophy at Heidelberg the better to preserve his full freedom. (Nietzsche, incidentally, had himself given up a chair, at Basel University.) These details are enormously important to Shestov, because they link life to thought. "Spinoza spoke not what he wished, but what God commanded him to say. It is all one now whether or not he agreed with what he proclaimed to mankind: he could not help but proclaim it."[39]

In the same way that Shestov admires Chekhov's refusal to accept ideals in the face of despair, he lauds Spinoza's personal involvement with his philosophy; his ideas were not for him an idle pastime, but were linked to a divine commandment. Nevertheless, he thoroughly disagrees with Spinoza's beliefs. Spinoza's conclusions are largely formulated through a mathematical approach, and by this method he establishes "facts" about the universe, such as that God is determined by necessity. Shestov attacks these basic principles, claiming that they are representative of philosophy as a whole. His first disagreement with him concerns the notion of using mathematics when treating of God. Spinoza says his philosophy is the true one in the same way that one can know that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles.[40] Predictably, this is a horrifying notion to Shestov; nothing could be more impersonal than turning God into an equation. (Consider the statement made by Dostoevsky's Underground man: "...twice two is four is not life, gentlemen, but the beginning of death.")[41] According to Spinoza, God is the creator of the universe, but also one who is bound by the laws

of the universe. Shestov says:

> I ask again, if we judge of God, of the soul, of human passions even of man, or even to advise him, to love God and not a plane, a stone or a lump of wood? And why do we address the demand to love to a man and not to a line or an ape?[42]

He accuses the philosopher of slaying God by using mathematical proofs to locate God's characteristics. By such proofs Spinoza reaches the second conclusion which Shestov so repeatedly rails against: God's will and intellect are so different from man's will and intellect that it is only the common terms which they share, nothing else. It is, says Spinoza, like the term *canis*, which signifies the Dog constellation (in which Sirius shines) and the animal that barks.[43] In other words, declares Shestov, God and man have nothing in common; God is indifferent to man, but man must love God.[44] By so removing God from man's personal life, he concludes, Spinoza is in effect saying that God does not exist. As much as Shestov's thought differs from Solovyov's, there is a measure of agreement between them on this point: man cannot regard God as external to him, We know that Solovyov's Godmanhood was founded on the principle that God and man enter into a relationship, and while we cannot attribute to Shestov so frank a profession of belief, not yet anyway, it is clear from his criticism of Spinoza that he has slight regard for the doctrine that removes God from man.

For the Amsterdam Jew truth came before anything else. (Spinoza says of his own philosophy, "I esteem it not the best, but the true.")[45] The truth revealed to him made the God of the Bible only a moral guide, but the real God was immobilized by necessity, incapable of being addressed.

The problem with giving one's entire allegiance to truth, thinks Shestov, is that each philosopher believes that he has a monopoly on it. Each thinker is convinced that his truth is the true one, and should be able to persuade all men without exception. But, Shestov asks, would philosophers agree to limit their pretensions, so that their truths would be true only for those who are persuaded by them, but would cease to be truths to those who are not?[46] Shestov defines philosophy as the middle truth, as opposed to the ultimate truth which no man can claim for his own. The ultimate truths are unintelligible, but not inaccessible.[47]

The mere thought that ultimate truth is unintelligible is hardly conceivable to philosophy, thinks Shestov, and this is where Spinoza's third principle which Shestov reacts against comes in. More often than any other of the philosopher's words, Shestov quotes these: *Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere* (Laugh not, weep not, be not angry, but understand).[48] Man, in searching for an explanation to the world, places truth first. To do this he must not only force both man and God to submit to this truth, but he, as philosopher, has to abstract his intellect from himself, in order to arrive at his truth. The laughter, tears, fury of the philosopher are only hindrances to understanding, and it is understanding which leads to knowledge, the final end of philosophy. In this connection Shestov was especially harsh on Hegel, who claimed that the philosopher is required to abstract himself, and to such an extent that it is a matter of indifference to him whether he *is* or *is not*. This, Shestov thinks, takes the whole notion to an extreme, but at any rate the notion itself, of understanding above all else, is seriously flawed.

Lev Tolstoy was the first intellectual giant whom Shestov opposed, and Spinoza was his major philosophical adversary. These two men loomed large in Shestov's life; Tolstoy was the greatest literary figure in the

Russia that Shestov grew up in, and Spinoza was, according to Shestov, the father of modern philosophy.[49] It is noteworthy that Tolstoy and Spinoza were similar in significant ways: both acknowledged a God which to Shestov seemed impersonal, and both underwent great personal struggle to conceive what they saw as the truth. (Tolstoy in fact was excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church, as Spinoza had been from the synagogue.) But one can see that in embarking on an exploration of philosophy, Shestov's orientation had changed very little. Tolstoy taught that God equals the good, Spinoza that God equals substance,[50] and Shestov taught that both formulae lead only to depersonalizing God, making it impossible for the individual to address him.

Neither morality nor reason allowed Shestov to laugh, weep or be angry, and it was in the figure of Socrates that he found morality and philosophy awarded the highest possible value. Socrates was another who had been committed mind and soul to philosophy; not only did he abandon the life of an ordinary Athenian to discuss virtue and immortality in the Acropolis, but even at the moment of his death, before he drank the hemlock, he was engaged in philosophy and teaching. Where for Shestov the *ideas* of Spinoza were representative of philosophy's dead-end, it was the *personality* of Socrates that is most typical of what philosophy worships.

In a passage from *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness*, Shestov remarks sarcastically upon all of Socrates' efforts:

> When Xanthippe poured slops over Socrates as he returned from his philosophical occupations, tradition says that he observed: 'After a storm it always rains.' Would it not be more worthy...to say: After one's philosophical exercise, one feels as if one had had slops emptied over one's head.[51]

Socrates' life was dedicated to searching for truth in the world and to finding immutable principles by which we can guide our lives; Shestov's was dedicated to exposing truth and immutable principles as being illusory.

Socrates' went to his death fearlessly, because he believed that the "good" was autonomous, and could not be harmed even by one's own death. But, says Shestov, man is only deceiving himself by calmly accepting death, in the 'knowledge' that good will triumph. "And so our task - perhaps an impossible one, for Socrates has become second nature to us - should consist in eliminating from our souls all that is 'lawful' and 'ideal'".[52] Shestov does not see Socrates' manner of death as victorious, because in believing to the end that reason reigns, Socrates has only deceived himself; he has 'understood' instead of wept. This is one of many examples in which Shestov gives knowledge the power of tyranny, and in such a way the death of Socrates, one of the great events in the history of the individual, is diminished in importance. According to Shestov's manner of thinking, Socrates was in fact weak, because he accepted knowledge; he supported deception rather than fought against it.

In an essay entitled "The Theory of Knowledge", Shestov turns to Socrates' treatment of the truths which live in poets, great and profound truths but at the same time inexplicable. The poets had a great many ideas, but they could never explain where they had got them. Socrates himself claims that he has frequently been guided by a force which is not reason, but a mysterious demon, a kind of secret voice. Shestov claims that these unrevealed truths seemed to Socrates a great misery, a real misfortune. "I do not know how it happened...but Socrates for some reason decided that an unproven and unexplained truth had less value than a proven and explained one."[53] Socrates, he thinks, made a fatal mistake when he began to find answers to mysterious questions. In Athens at that

time, the gods themselves vouchsafed truths to men, but suddenly, with the appearance of Socrates, man wanted to acquire truths by himself, independently. The example of Socrates, he says, has been a bad example to all subsequent generations of thinking men.[54] Shestov is fiercely opposed to the task the Greek philosopher set himself, of "clearing up" the mysteries of life. It is noteworthy that one of Shestov's favourite sayings, from Pascal, is "Let us not be reproached for our lack of clarity, since we make profession of it."[55] Socrates recognized a demon which did not offer explanations in terms of reason, but that didn't stop him from seeking after reason-based truths in spite of that. This is perhaps the kernel of Shestov's whole argument: philosophy has demanded answers of a demon which has no answers to give.

His deep disbelief in knowledge manifests itself continually. Two examples should give some indication of this; the first concerns his attitude to the legend of the Fall, to original sin. He insists that we should accept the story with its every detail, Eve being tempted by the serpent, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Fall itself. He realizes fully that the legend cannot be defended by common sense, and that if we use rational means to arrive at the truth, then the story should simply be erased from the Holy Scriptures. "All our 'spiritual' being cries out: let the origin of sin be anything but the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil"[56] In the Fall man asserts himself, and Shestov claims that this is the very origin of sin.

Philosophy, he thinks, is delighted by the Fall. Socrates believes philosophy to be the highest good, Spinoza wants to do nothing but understand, each philosopher considers his system a vital contribution to mankind. But in all these attempts at knowledge Shestov sees nothing but the consequences of original sin. The man who explains is the one who does not have the strength to act on his own, who has submitted to a

power outside himself.[57] This power is the serpent, who seduces man in order to acquire knowledge. Shestov is not a literalist, the legend of the Fall has symbolic, not historical, value for him, but he does accept all components of it, seeing knowledge at the centre of man's first sin. Indeed, to Shestov, the Fall itself is far worse than any individual sin or sinner could be, for example, far worse than any political tyrant. Once, he said, 'For many years, day and night, I have been struggling with the serpent. What is Hitler in comparison with the serpent?"[58]

Another instance of Shestov's repudiation of knowledge occurs in his treatment of the thinker Philo, who lived at the beginning of the Christian era. Philo was a Jew from Alexandria; Shestov claims that he was not a particularly profound thinker, but that certain thinkers were fated to play an important role in history merely because of the time in which they lived, and Philo was one of these. It was he who brought together Athens and Jerusalem, who found a way to unite biblical and Hellenic thought. He did this through concentrating on the first words of the Gospel of John: In the beginning was the Word. Thus the doctrine of the Logos arose, and men were able, after that, to embrace both reason and the Bible.[59] Clearly, Shestov sees the entire introduction of reason and logic into the biblical viewpoint as a harmful one. He is extremely suspicious of rationalism, partly because he sees it as taking all life under its umbrella, with neither God nor man being able to escape from under it, and partly because he sees it as stripping the individual of a personal life. Zenkovsky says, "Shestov is unable to accept the *autonomy* of reason, for this autonomy rapidly becomes a *tyranny*."[60] A tyrant's most unmistakable feature is his ability to destroy freedom, and Shestov in all his writings yearns for the autonomy of the spirit instead of the tyranny of the foreign invader: reason. Both the story of the Fall and the confluence of biblical and Hellenic streams are for Shestov disastrous

episodes in man's personal history. It is apparent, from these two examples, with what dismay he reacts to the victory of knowledge and reason.

One of his greatest adversaries, and also one that he had huge respect for, was his friend Edmund Husserl. Shestov was very aware of the philosopher's enormous personal involvement in his efforts to arrive at the truth. (In his essay "In Memory of A Great Philosopher: Edmund Husserl", he even mentions that when the two would meet, Husserl would hardly notice food in front of him and would not be interested in small talk, he would want only to discuss philosophy.) Husserl attacked the relativism of modern philosophy, and declared that there is truth in the world which exists independent of man's judgments, and that the truth is absolutely true. One scientific example of this is that the law of gravity could not be destroyed even if all gravitating bodies were to disappear. A philosophical example comes from Plato, who asks if something is holy because it is loved by the gods, or is it loved by the gods because it is holy? Both Plato's and Husserl's answer is the same: what is holy is immutable, even the gods must submit to it.[61]

One of the reasons Shestov so appreciated Husserl as a thinker is because Husserl believed that most philosophy was continually relativizing and giving in to some weakness or other, while Husserl refused to do this. Socrates had spoken of a mysterious source which moved men, and then tried to solve the mystery himself. Philo had weakened both Athens and Jerusalem by trying to combine the two. Even Kant, who had supposedly written a critique of *pure* reason, could not resist introducing postulates concerning God and the immortality of the soul.[62] Everywhere along the philosophical road the travellers took detours and shortcuts to arrive at their destination, but Shestov found in Husserl a rare traveller who firmly kept his direction. The whole

problem, though, was that the road led to no destination. What men claimed was one, says Shestov, was only a cul-de-sac.

Shestov says, "In absolutizing truth, Husserl was forced to relativize being, or more accurately, human life."[63] To the Russian thinker there is no middle ground, no compromise to be made; either one accepts the dictates of truth (or reason or logic - they were all one to Shestov) and follows it everywhere, or one relativizes knowledge and absolutizes life.

Husserl rejects this attack, accusing Shestov of turning him into a stone figure, putting him on a pedestal and then smashing the figure with a hammer into smithereens. The Marxist critic V. A. Kuvakin is sympathetic to Husserl's complaint, claiming that all Shestov's efforts to defend the individual are less legitimate than they seem. He says, "With all the seriousness which only he was capable of, Shestov, apparently fighting for the person, in reality draws his whole personality towards philosophy, towards intellectual activity."[64] Is this a fair comment? Whatever Shestov's personality may have been like, it has been pointed out more than once that his primary world was an internal one, and his tyrants were the lords of reason. Shestov may have been as immersed in philosophy as Husserl, but that does not make his condemnation of Husserl's thought any less valid. His attitude to *every* attempt by logic or reason to find the meaning of life is a highly critical one. To him, systems create tyrants and stone figures.

In his essay "Penultimate Words", Shestov has a section which is entitled "What is Philosophy?" In posing the question, he does not ask which of the available systems is best, or more true; rather he wonders why it is that men are driven to philosophy, and what it is that they get out of it. In the 2500 years that it has been practiced, many diverse answers have been provided, which for the most part have been tedious to most and interesting to a few. But even for those who are interested,

will it have meaning to them? Shestov answers this with a question of his own: "For what can be more terrible to a man than to be compelled, in the hard moments of his life, to acknowledge any doctrine of philosophy as binding upon him?[65] Shestov is not insistent that all systems of thought be rejected, he is even glad to admit that they are all true. But he does not want philosophy to claim to have found ultimate meaning. What is philosophy? Shestov says that to the philosopher it is art for art's sake. The philosopher is like an artist whose works may be dearer to him than life itself. For the ordinary man, however, it is a refuge, where he can run for help and support when he has no other weapons.[66] Neither path forces man to confront his own being in its innermost depths.

After Shestov faced philosophy head-on, he never turned away. Zenkovsky says of him:

> It is strange that after his solemn burial of rationalism in one book, Shestov returns in his next book to a critique of rationalism - as though it had come to life in the meantime. This is explained by the fact that, having destroyed one "stratum" of rationalistic propositions in himself, he found in *himself* a new, deeper stratum of the same rationalism.[67]

Again and again Shestov returns to his attack on reason; his thought develops, but the same philosophers and even their same words are met frequently (*Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intellegere* is the battle-cry of the enemy which is forever sounding in Shestov's ears). One could hardly think of a philosopher, religious or otherwise, whom Shestov does not attack at some point; including the ones we have already discussed, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Hegel, Schelling, Solovyov, and

his close friend Berdyaev are all accused of being knowledge-seekers. It is apparent how deeply rooted was his objection to the assertions of reason; it follows to see how he countered it.

VI

The Fall

We have seen that Shestov did not begin as a directly religious thinker, but by the time he had reached his most developed stage as a thinker, all of his works were in some way connected with the Bible. Until the end of his life he continued his attack on philosophy, always renewing, as Zenkovsky pointed out, his battle against reason. But his criticism began to take root in the stories and the figures of the Bible. It was here that he found what he had been looking for when he had declared, in his early book on Tolstoy and Nietzsche, that we must search for God. This period in his development seems like an enormous change from the days when he had glorified the Underground man but, as we shall see, his interpretation of the Bible took him deeper into religious individualism, yet did not change the direction of his thought.

It is impossible to talk about Shestov's later religious life without drawing in Soren Kierkegaard. We cannot say that Shestov became religious after his discovery of Kierkegaard, because he had long been an admirer of Luther, Pascal, Augustine, and even of obscure religious writers such as Tertullian and William of Ockham. But it is in Kierkegaard that Shestov was to find his greatest ally. He discovered the Danish thinker in the last decade of his life; he claims that Husserl *insisted* that he read him. (This is a matter of surprise to Shestov; in his essay on Husserl, he cannot believe that his friend, the philosopher, would insist that he read Kierkegaard, who attacked philosophy at every turn.) Shestov produced an entire book on Kierkegaard as well as various

essays, and although Zenkovsky claims that Shestov discovered the Danish thinker too late in his life to call him a real influence,[68] this is not entirely true. Kierkegaard, whose own life had consisted of religious struggle, gave even greater force to Shestov's biblical orientation.

Shestov identified with Kierkegaard's insistence that the individual was greater than any system which could be constructed. We can summarize this thought with a passage from Kierkegaard's journals, which gets right to the heart of Shestov's thought:

> In relation to their systems most systematizers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack close by; they do not live in their own enormous systematic buildings. But spiritually that is a decisive objection. Spiritually speaking a man's thought must be the building in which he he lives - otherwise everything is topsy-turvy.[69]

We might find these very words in Shestov's *Apotheosis of Groundlessness*, so accurately do they reflect his own thought. This is just what Shestov had been saying for decades, whether or not it was expressed in religious terms.

Shestov does, however, have one serious disagreement with Kierkegaard; not surprisingly, he seeks out the other's conception of knowledge, and he finds fault with it. It was pointed out earlier how seriously Shestov regarded the Fall; man had acquired knowledge and this was death to him. He accuses Kierkegaard of ignoring the serpent, of trying to explain the Fall without seeing its full meaning.[70] And how did Shestov regard man *before* the Fall, i.e. what is the opposite side of man who has acquired knowledge? As usual, Shestov refuses to offer his own vision, and he certainly doesn't provide some Miltonic view of the Garden

of Eden, but he insists that pre-fallen man is infinitely better off. "Indeed, the Bible says that in the state of innocence man did not know the difference between good and evil. But this was not a weakness, a defect; on the contrary, it was a power, a tremendous advantage."[71]

Kierkegaard himself could not conceive of man in a state of innocence. Here he sees nothingness. But Shestov thinks that man's acquisition of knowledge is so disastrous that he prefers by far a pre-fallen, uncomplex being who is pure innocence, to one who has succumbed to knowledge. This raises a question which Shestov never answers: if struggle itself plays an essential role in life (as Shestov is repeatedly claiming), then what meaning does life have with no struggle at all?

Here is one of the few places where Shestov seems to establish a belief, instead of whittling away at the beliefs of others. For him the Fall is the perfect explanation of man's flawed nature. The outsider, in the figure of the serpent, has tempted man away from his state of innocence, and man has fallen, not through murder or adultery or covetousness, but merely through the desire to acquire knowledge. To our ears this may sound strange; Adam and Eve only ate fruit from the wrong tree, while after them the real evil started, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel. But Shestov sees in the Fall that man's acquisition of knowledge leads to his loss of independence in personal terms. Berdyaev sums up Shestov's attitude to the Fall neatly:

> The life in heaven was nourished by the Tree of Life. But from the abyss of non-existence came a serpent, and the voice of the serpent bewitched man. He tempted man with the fruit of good and evil. Knowledge took possession of the world, paradise ended, and terror and suffering began. The abyss of non-existence, through

> the temptation of knowledge, turns into necessity (the eternal truths of knowledge), necessity turns into reason and morality.[72]

Having seen how Shestov contrasts morality with individuality, one can see how the Fall, in these terms, would be anathema to him.

Berdyaev himself sums up Shestov's views on the Fall with a critical eye. He does not agree that renouncing knowledge is the *sine qua non* of the individual's life and, like Zenkovsky, Berdyaev claims that Shestov struggled so long against knowledge, because he found such strong rationalistic tendencies within himself.[73] For Berdyaev, though, this struggle is a misguided one. He says, "But life is everything. Why is knowledge not life? Knowledge is also a part of life, it is an event in existence."[74] This "reasonable" statement helps, on one hand, to reveal Shestov as the truly radical thinker that he was; attempts to make sense of the universe are, says Berdyaev, legitimate, and if Shestov rejects that, it *seems* to make a narrow thinker out of him, an accusation he was to encounter more than once in his life. On the other hand, Shestov's interpretation is also the biblical one, which we may or may not view as extreme: man's Fall happened not as a result of immorality, vice, or any of the other terms in our vocabulary of right and wrong. It happened because of man's self-assertion, because he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

VII

The Biblical God

Shestov insists on the reality of the Fall in each man's life; he asserts another belief which remains consistent with his thought, yet seems to flirt with knowledge itself. He spent his whole life trying to break away

from the necessity which man had fashioned for himself, the world and God. Faith he believed to be the individual's only positive path, but Shestov meant by faith much more than just plain personal belief. So abhorrent did he find the laws of necessity that he wanted the past itself, through faith, to be freed from these laws. So much freedom does he accord to God that he claims God could make what had happened not to have happened, according to his will. One of his inspirations for this belief was the medieval believer Peter Damian, who repudiated the notion *"quod factum est infectum esse nequit"* (What has once existed cannot become non-existent), and who believed that God had the freedom to change everything, even the past.[75] The closest we get to an assertion of belief by Shestov is in the following words: "God can overcome the law of contradiction; God...can, by his power...make what has once existed into what has never existed, just as he can can cause that which has had a beginning to have no end."[76] Is it limiting God to describe him in any way, even as unlimited? If so, than Shestov himself tastes the forbidden fruit. But a description such as this is intended less to give God attributes than to deny others the possibility of forcing limitations upon him.

Faith could alter the past. This is Shestov's way of saying that to the individual, all things are possible. He often uses the Bible as his authority to make such a claim, but Berdyaev declares that in acknowledging the Bible as the source of his inspiration Shestov merely chooses those elements in it which most suit Shestov, but rejects the rest.[77] This is true, as Shestov had no use for the laws of Moses, the history of the Jews, etc. (Solovyov, Frank and Berdyaev, incidentally, all make a clear distinction between the Old and the New Testaments, as that between law and spirit, a distinction Shestov never makes.) The biblical figures he focusses on are the greatest sufferers and the greatest strugglers and are, as Shestov often points out, the antitheses

of logic and reason.

One of the great biblical heroes for Shestov is Abraham, he who, in obedience to God's command, was prepared to slay his son Isaac, and had even raised the knife over him before the angel intervened. This was an act of faith, and for Shestov the greatest possible act, since it involved Abraham's sacrifice of his son. Shestov was awakened to the significance of this story by Kierkegaard, whose book *Fear and Trembling* was dedicated to the subject. Shestov's and Kierkegaard's claim is that in ethical (or rational) terms such an act is madness, and worse, is a horrible crime, the murder of one's son. Socrates would have argued with all his powers to prevent such an act. For the ordinary consciousness, to oppose Abraham to Socrates is the greatest offence and the height of folly.[78] But Shestov, in going beyond the good as he did with Tolstoy, and the absolute truth as he did with Husserl, approaches the apotheosis of groundlessness: the utter abandonment of ethical principles for a faith which promises nothing but rewards the greatest. The story of Abraham and Isaac is one which Shestov naturally accepted; from his earliest days as a thinker he had argued for an abandonment of the moral, and here he found this abandonment accorded religious status.

The difference between Solovyov and Shestov is encapsulated by the Abraham-Isaac story; for Shestov, Abraham is a shining example of genuine faith, while for Solovyov, the moralist, Abraham simply went too far. Solovyov says of Abraham that "he was simply lacking in the conception of what may and what may not be a good or an object of God's will - a clear proof that even saints stand in need of moral philosophy."[79] Certainly Abraham has committed an act which offends against the laws of morality; for Shestov this means that he has succeeded, for Solovyov, that he has failed.

The second biblical figure which Shestov, again with Kierkegaard,

upheld was Job. While it was Abraham's act which Shestov finds highly meaningful, it is Job's whole situation and his response to it, which inspire Shestov. One of his favourite passages comes in Job's reaction to his comforters, who try to console him after he has had everything taken away from him: "O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now would it be heavier than the sand of the sea..."[80] Job's Comforters, Shestov points out, were in the land of ethics; they urged him to accept God's will and not to curse his day. But Job is not consoled by them, and his grief rages even deeper. This is a classic Shestovian arrangement: a man is weighed down by the burden of life, and ethics (or reason, logic, morality, philosophy, etc.) tries to lighten his burden by persuading him that he can be comforted. "For Job, the ethical's 'you must' is an empty phrase, and the 'metaphysical consolations' that his friends tossed at him by the handful are simply nonsense."[81] For Shestov the story of Job involves the same problems as any struggle against philosophy: necessity must be vanquished at any cost, even at the cost of grief.

He values Job for the same reason that he valued Chekhov's scientist in "A Tedious Story", who had no answers to offer his foster daughter, but could only beat his head against a wall. Real life, claims Shestov, takes place when one's grief is heavier than the sand of the sea; the difference between Chekhov's scientist and Job is that God does finally respond to Job, and this is of great significance to Shestov.

VIII

The Absurd

Before returning to his belief that what has happened could be made not to have happened by God, one more example shall be offered of Shestov's

religious development, and this involves Kierkegaard's personal life. Shestov was deeply struck by Kierkegaard's decision not to marry the young woman he loved, because he believed that his struggle for faith would not allow him to be a good husband. It was not so much the sacrifice of a fiancee that so impressed Shestov as Kierkegaard's belief that he could actually attain her through faith. She could not be his fiancee in the ordinariness of everyday life, but by throwing himself "headlong into the embrace of the Absurd",[82] he could claim her as his own. Shestov raises this sacrifice by Kierkegaard to biblical levels. Spinoza, Socrates, Job's Comforters insist that Kierkegaard cannot have his fiancee, that Abraham should not raise the knife over his son, and that Job should accept words of consolation rather than cursing God. Necessity, Shestov says, "does not even suspect the existence in the world of the indignation, the anger, the horror, of Job, Abraham and Kierkegaard, and does not in any way take them into account."[83]

For Shestov, Kierkegaard's greatest term is "the Absurd"; it is here that Shestov's faith is most powerfully realized. Kierkegaard counters Hegel with Job, and reason - Shestov's great enemy - with the Absurd.[84] By throwing oneself into the Absurd, one renders oneself unassailable by reason; indeed according to reason it is absurd to raise a knife over one's own son, but reason has no means at its disposal to refute this. Even before Shestov discovered Kierkegaard he was fond of quoting the words of the early Christian Tertullian: *"non pudet quia pudendum est, prorsus credibile est quia incertum, certum est quia impossible*" ("I am not ashamed because it is shameful; it is absolutely credible because it is absurd; it is certain because it is impossible").[85] The Absurd is the highest form of faith, involving a thorough rejection of the credible for a leap into the incredible.

Kierkegaard's greatest adversary is Hegel; Shestov's is Spinoza, but the

philosophers were up to the same things, says Shestov. (He even thinks that Hegel is derived from Spinoza.)[86] The only answer to reason is the Absurd, which is intimately connected with faith. Shestov eulogises Kierkegaard thus: "Rarely has anyone had the ability and the desire to celebrate so ebulliently, so passionately, so ecstatically, the Absurd, which paves the way for faith."[87] Elsewhere he says: "Faith means that God can give Abraham a new son...and return Regina Olsen to Kierkegaard."[88]

Is Shestov, then, asserting a kind of knowledge when he claims that the past could be made not to have existed if God so wills it? In his book *Two Russian Thinkers: Berdyaev and Shestov,* James Wernham approaches Shestov's claim, and tries to see how it could be possible to wipe away the past. He uses the example of the annulment of a marriage, suggesting that although the marriage ceremony took place, the marriage was declared not to exist. In the same way one can expiate a sin, which makes the sin not to have been. But, says Wernham, there may not be sin and there may not be marriage, but the act took place and so did the ceremony; therefore we can say that the nature of something had been changed, but we cannot say that what had been was made not to have been.[89]

Thus, Wernham points out the contradiction in Shestov's claim, but he adds that Shestov knows that he is contradicting himself, and that one cannot refute his position because Shestov knows it is absurd, and yet still maintains it.[90] In essence this critic reveals the contradiction in Shestov's argument, but declares that nothing can be done about it. Wernham's argument, however, seems to overlook Shestov's belief: not that *man* can erase what once was, but that *God* can. Logic only tosses out a red herring by trying to resolve a contradiction which Shestov says can be in God's power, not man's.

But by asserting the omnipotence of God, Shestov is not himself using or abusing knowledge. Rather he says that God *can* alter the past, but he doesn't insist that he *does* alter it. Shestov wants to free God from the iron hand of necessity, and he wants knowledge to leave God alone, but his appeal to the Absurd is not within, but without, the boundaries of knowledge. In the same way Shestov's acceptance of the Fall is not really a form of knowledge but a rejection of it. He admonishes Kierkegaard for not recognizing the full meaning of the Fall, but this is not because he, Shestov, has access to knowledge himself about it, but because he sees all of man's folly as bound up with knowledge. Earlier it was asked if Shestov was himself participating in knowledge with his defence of the Fall, but his "assertions" are really all attempts to dethrone knowledge. His very embrace of the Absurd indicates his refusal to acknowledge the authority of reason.

It may not seem relevant, in exploring Shestov's concept of the religious individual, to determine whether or not he declared any concrete beliefs in his writings, but his whole rejection of knowledge is central to his attitude to life. When Shestov quotes the beginning of Psalm 130, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord", which he often does, he is insisting that to cry from the depths man must renounce all that he claims to know. Shestov's individual does not explain, he suffers. The two, he says, are mutually incompatible.

IX

Jerusalem

Although he was born a Jew, Shestov's attitude towards Christianity figures into his notion of the individual. Although he was greatly influenced by Kierkegaard, Luther, Pascal, Tertullian, all of them Christians, he never labels himself one. Sergey Bulgakov says that

Shestov seemed to consider Jesus the most perfect of men, rather than God incarnate,[91] and Berdyaev thought that Shestov was mainly concerned with proving the omnipotence of God, believing that Christianity was mainly an opium of the people which contained reason and morality.[92] Certainly Shestov didn't accept Christianity as wholeheartedly as Bulgakov and Berdyaev. (Incidentally, Shestov is critical of Bulgakov's and Berdyaev's own interpretations of Christianity; he is critical of Bulgakov for preaching the word of Christ in the same tone as he preached that of Marx, and critical of Berdyaev for seeming to shift so suddenly from Marxism to Christianity.)[93]

It is not surprising that Shestov rejects Christianity as a doctrine. He embraces the Christian whose fierce independence from everyday Christianity resembles that of Nietzsche's, the god-destroyer. This is why he is drawn to Kierkegaard, and he is much influenced by one particular passage of his:

> My severity is not of my own making. If I knew a milder word, I would gladly comfort and encourage man. And yet! It may be that the sufferer needs something else: suffering that is crueler still.My friend, it is Christianity, the doctrine which is offered to us under the name of gentle consolation.[94]

Severe, cruel, sufferer; these are the words of Nietzsche, yet here they are applied to Christianity. For Kierkegaard Jesus is crucial to his life, and it is the severity, he feels, which pulls him to Jesus Christ. But for Shestov the severity itself is sufficient; when he does mention Christ, it is usually to show how reason or necessity has transformed him into a powerless being.[95] In one curious way, Shestov's Christ is similar to

Solovyov's; he is vital to their thought, but strangely absent from their works.

One would expect Shestov to be more enthusiastic about Jesus' task on earth - he who comes not to destroy but to fulfill the law - because Shestov is willing to grant that the law (philosophy) has its place, but only on a lower level than the spirit. Jesus should be the primary hero of Shestov's, he who overthrows the traders' tables in the temple, who places man before the Sabbath, but Shestov is strangely reticent about the man Jesus; he has no more interest for Shestov, and less even, than do Abraham, Job, Kierkegaard, Luther, Nietzsche, who all went beyond the ethical. Christ fits into this category, but he doesn't stand out from the rest. Rather, his role is, like the others, to make life more severe, not more comforting. Shestov is not really a Christian, but then, unlike Solovyov, he never claims to be.

Shestov's "severity" lies at the heart of his beliefs. But if his thought were to be transferred from the purely personal to the social or political spheres, his "severity" could be subject to the kind of gross misinterpretation that Nietzsche was given by the Nazis. Shestov was not bloodthirsty or violently revolutionary in his political outlook; in fact he was just the opposite. But it is regrettable that this fierce individualist was silent in his writings on the individual in *society*, since his existence was so threatened in the Russia that Shestov lived in. Indeed, Shestov at times even seems to scorn social conscience; he is always taking jabs at Socrates, for instance, and he calls it "vaudeville" when Turgenev, in his essay entitled "The Execution of Tropmann", declares his repugnance to capital punishment.[96] Shestov often behaves as if society is meaningless, not worth mentioning, and yet he himself was forced to abandon his own society in Russia when revolution threatened.

This type of inwardness on the part of Shestov was not always seen as healthy, even by religious writers who defended internal, spiritual life. Semyon Frank, for instance, says that "any seclusion and internal concentration on oneself, and indifference to one's society, leads to sterilization and a weakening of one's spiritual life."[97] Shestov undoubtedly cut himself off from any real debate concerning his society; he may have had a profound belief in the individual, but unlike Frank and Berdyaev he does little to defend him as a member of society.

Shestov never ceases to insist on the groundless. Taken to its extreme, the term may mean internal anarchy, which he, especially in his early days, approves of, but it can also mean a lack of any direction. If a man's personal life is truly chaotic, then there must be no place to search for God, or to reject him, there must be no hope for any kind of orientation. One would be hard pressed to find anything that Shestov affirms. But he has a definite orientation, which is fully developed only later in his thought: "We must search for God." Whether this be in the Underground or in the Absurd, in hopelessness or in faith, Shestov never alters his basic direction. It would seem that if he were truly groundless, or direction-less, there would be no hope of getting him to agree with anything. But we are able apprehend the direction he moves in.

One of his most frequent statements is, "The beginning of philosophy is not wonder, as the Greeks taught, but despair."[98] Shestov has no hero, from Job to Kierkegaard, who does not despair. Indeed, it is in despair that these figures find the deepest meaning of their lives. Shestov takes from the Bible, as he takes from various thinkers, the images and expressions of suffering, struggle, severity, despair. But the Bible does not consist only of such types of expression, and Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche do not express only such states. In the thinkers that Shestov most admired one can also find profound expression of joy, grace,

spiritual peace. But Shestov wants to have nothing to do with these aspects of man, and in this respect he could be accused of partially misunderstanding his heroes. (It was felt by one critic that he had extravagantly misunderstood Kierkegaard's understanding of the ethical, a category which Kierkegaard was not nearly so contemptuous of as was Shestov.)[99] Shestov condemns constantly the pretensions of "Athens", not because it *wonders*, but because it *explains* the wonder. In his essay on Solovyov, Shestov repeatedly says that revelation and not knowledge is man's guide.[100] He affirms Abraham's faith, and Peter Damian's omnipotent God, but even in the light of revelation, faith and an omnipotent God, he sticks to his despair. Shestov railed against what he thought were false hopes: idealism, morality, necessity, reason, logic. What he eventually replaced them with was faith, a faith which had room only for revelation and despair. Berdyaev says: "For Shestov, faith is the end of human tragedy, the end of struggle, the end to sufferings, the beginning of unlimited possibility and a heavenly life,"[101] but Shestov never really abandons the struggle; faith for him seems to demand severity and suffering, not an end to them. What has to be said about such despair is that it was the most profound expression of man's soul that Shestov found, and for this reason he never forsook it.

This is one form of orientation; another is the unrelenting antagonism with which he responds to knowledge. He dedicated most of his intellectual life to the battle against this. Knowledge, according to him, is the greatest calamity that has befallen the earth. No other problem so burdens him; he is not interested at all in any of the Seven Sins; the social problems which surrounded him are given no attention in his writings. Constantly he returns to the problem of knowledge: in his essay on the Russian philosopher Fyodorov he says: "Fyodorov was completely penetrated by a belief in the all-conquering power of

knowledge and reason."[102]; in his essay on Martin Buber he says that he cannot find the answer to a certain question in his writings: ..."the question of the role of knowledge..."[103]. Such examples could be cited from almost every essay Shestov ever wrote. He is concerned exclusively with man's pretension to knowledge (and morality), and the ways it can be resisted. Both Zenkovsky and Berdyaev believe this to be because Shestov continued to discover knowledge within himself. This may be true, because he returns to the problem in a way that no other thinker has done. His position is unassailable since one cannot reason with the Absurd, but one can question whether this dilemma deserves exclusive attention. Philosophy, or knowledge, does not have to involve abstraction and the removing of oneself, and a rejection of knowledge may not mean an acceptance of inward struggle.

We can see how rotten Shestov considered the apple of knowledge to be. So misguided did he think any attempt to understand the world was that he showed little mercy toward any philosopher or moralist. Socrates was willing to die rather than give in to his Athenian accusers (Kierkegaard, incidentally, considered Socrates to be the greatest man to appear on earth before the arrival of Christ); Spinoza rejected his religion, even rejected a life as a professor, in order to seek the truth in his own, lonely way; Tolstoy turned from the Church and even from his own family, in order to respond to his conscience, but Shestov does not spare them. From one side it is curious that he is so critical of these men, since each rejected easy ways out of his own personal situation, and sought truth where it was most difficult. He himself is well aware of this (witness his respect for Husserl). But on the other side, for Shestov the only question which really mattered was whether or not they searched for knowledge in the world. This is not to say he was contemptuous of these thinkers, because he did respect the high calibre of their intelligence (his

passionate struggle against them testifies to that), but be it the "comfortable" philosophers such as Hegel or Kant, or the courageous ones like Socrates, they all tended with Shestov to be condemned as knowledge-seekers. If we accept this sharp division between knowledge and faith, than Shestov's attacks make sense. But if there is not such a clear distinction between the two (as Berdyaev thought), then Shestov will seem unduly harsh on the likes of Tolstoy and others. Berdyaev, for example, is similar to Shestov in that they both placed the individual at the centre of their thought, but because Berdyaev, according to Shestov, was a knowledge-seeker, Shestov refuses to acknowledge the similarities between the two.

It is worthwhile, in trying to understand Shestov, to mention another thinker whose ideas were very close to Shestov's but who expressed himself positively, rather than critically. Miguel de Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher, was born and died at almost exactly the same times as Shestov (the Spaniard lived from 1864-1936, Shestov from 1866-1938). In his book *The Tragic Sense of Life*, Unamuno repeats the same arguments as Shestov: that rational philosophy, in the ideas of Spinoza, Kant and others, only distanced man from God. He even calls Spinoza an atheist,[104] which is largely what Shestov himself said. He quotes Tertullian, Pascal and Kierkegaard in praise of the Absurd, and in his most Shestovian sentence, he says: "What I wish to establish is that uncertainty, doubt, perpetual wrestling with the mystery of our final destiny, mental despair, and the lack of any solid and stable dogmatic foundation, may be the basis of an ethic."[105] Neither thinker refers to the other in his writings; it is not likely that they met, although Unamuno did admire Shestov.[106] But the similarity in much of their thought is striking, the main difference being that while Shestov's efforts go mainly toward hacking away at the monolith of knowledge, Unamuno tries to

erect a structure in which a man of faith can live. Unamuno ends his book with the words, "And may God deny you peace, but give you glory!" This is a sentiment that Shestov fights for in many of his writings.

Inward struggle meant everything to Shestov. He preached groundlessness, and he was orientated away from knowledge and toward despair, that is, towards the individual. Shestov may have been tempted by rationalism, but he never gave way to it. Nietzsche's godlessness, Dostoevsky's Underground, Abraham's faith, Kierkegaard's Absurd - each of these examples involves a supreme struggle and supreme isolation, and Shestov responded to each with fervour. His development was unusual, because it didn't change his thought, but deepened it; he went from hopelessness to faith without ever abandoning the solitary person. He never tries to console man, rather, he embraces those thinkers who reject any panacea and accept internal struggle and isolation. His individual could be described in the way that Zenkovsky describes Shestov: "He sacrificed everything, turning his back on what were to him the most fundamental and precious gifts of culture, in order to 'find God'".[107]

Shestov in this present thesis represents religious individualism at its fiercest and most isolated, and this is clearly at odds with Solovyov, who was no advocate of isolation. We might put it in a simple form by saying that Solovyov argued for religious principles throughout his mature life - however these principles altered - and Shestov argued for the individual throughout his life - however much he shifted his focus. But Solovyov's Godmanhood in particular does indicate a role for the individual, and Shestov's individual does eventually become a knight of faith. We shall see in our discussion of Frank and Berdyaev how both of these positions are advanced.

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Chapter Four

Semyon Frank

I

Lev Shestov and Semyon Frank were near contemporaries. They were both Jewish, religious, both members of the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of this century, and both were one-time Marxists who had left the movement in disillusionment. They were raised on the same ideas, and yet each developed in his own way; while Shestov seeks out his own radical interpretation of the individual, Frank, we shall see, is a student of the religious movement that traced its roots back to the Slavophiles. His beliefs centre upon idealism and traditional Christianity, and he was much less interested in Nietzscheanism, 'cruel Christianity', or any other type of individualism which informed Shestov's thought. Nonetheless, the individual does have a part to play in his religious system.

Of all Russians, the thinker whom Frank bears the closest resemblance to is Vladimir Solovyov. Although Frank claims that this is partly accidental, he nevertheless declares his affinity with the older philosopher. Solovyov was, as described earlier, primarily interested in all-unity, and Frank is no different in this respect. But while Solovyov's concept of this issued in part from Godmanhood, but also from notions like Sophia and ecclesiastically-related forces (Russian Orthodoxy, Catholicism, the combination of the two), Frank's was rooted in an idealism which went back to Plato and in a universal Christian belief which did not involve specific church movements (even though he was a Russian Orthodox). On the whole, Frank is less of a prophet and more of an analyst than is

Solovyov, even though both of them held out great hopes for the spiritual future of mankind.

If we admit from the first that there are strong similarities between the beliefs of these two thinkers, then we can also suspect that Frank, in formulating his concept of the individual, will encounter obstacles similar to Solovyov. Zenkovsky calls Frank's philosophy "the most significant and profound system in the history of Russian philosophy"[1], which may in one sense give us cause for some concern, as systems of thought often tend towards diminishing the responsibility of the individual. Whether or not the barriers are insurmountable remains to be seen, but we can from the start locate the sphere in which Frank assigned the most meaning to man, and this sphere is in the ideal. Frank, it must be said, replaces the term "ideal" with many terms of his own, such as "reality", the "light in darkness", "living knowledge" and even "Christianity". But regardless of the language employed, his system focusses on the ideal, and he insists that this and no other place is where the individual's significance lies.

In addition to examining Frank's philosophical and religious views, it is important to look at his social and political ideas. Frank had the distinction of becoming an exile twice, first when he was thrown out of Communist Russia, and later when he was thrown out of Nazi Germany. As early as 1909 he foresaw the crisis that Bolshevism would create, and throughout his life he argued for political solutions which insisted on granting to each citizen of any oppressed country the freedom of personality. Because Frank, unlike Shestov, is not merely concerned with the isolated individual, but with persons in the community, his views on society and political trends fit into his whole philosophical outlook.

Semyon Ludvigovich Frank was born in Moscow in 1877. He was raised in at least some of the traditions of Judaism: his grandfather taught him Hebrew and took him to the synagogue, where he received the first of his religious impressions.[2] But his Jewish roots never took hold; as a young man he drifted into socialist circles, and for a time this replaced any religious activity. He said later of his socialist youth: "The influence on me of these ideas was not great,"[3] but he was sufficiently involved with the movement to be expelled from his university for two years because of his supposedly subversive activities.

Yet however interested he may have been in social problems, the atmosphere in socialist-Marxist circles began to stifle him, and he started to search for other means of expression. The opportunity arose upon reading Nietzsche. "From that moment I felt the reality of the spirit, the reality of depth in my own soul - and without any special decision my internal fate was defined."[4] It is curious that a study of Nietzsche would lead to the formation of a philosophical system, but in him Frank seemed to discover an internal life, one which he would eventually develop in his own way. (Although the German thinker was an initial guide for Frank into the world of spirit, he would later be highly critical of Nietzsche's form of individualism.)

As his religious and philosophical beliefs developed, he formed a friendship with Peter Struve, a fellow socialist who helped him to turn away from what he saw as destructive, nihilistic aspects of the revolutionary movement in Russia. In 1912 Frank became a Christian and joined the Russian Orthodox Church, and in 1915 his first work appeared, a master's thesis entitled "The Object of Knowledge". Over the next few years he held chairs of philosophy at the universities in

Saratov and Moscow and published his doctoral thesis, "The Soul of Man". But in 1922 he was forced to leave Russia in the general deportation of dissident intellectuals. He lived in Berlin for 15 years, but with the arrival of the Nazis he lost any hope of earning a living, and eventually emigrated to France. During the war he was separated from his children, who were in England, and he was in perpetual danger, but nevertheless noted in his journal, "In the most terrible war, in the chaos and inhumanity which now rule in the world, he will be victorious who in the last analysis will be the first to forgive. This means - God will be victorious."[5] After the war Frank moved to London with his family, and there he died in 1950.

Although he lived through enormous upheaval and destruction in Europe, and although he was highly interested in social questions, after his early days Frank was not a political activist, unlike his friend Struve. In this way he is something like Shestov, who as we have seen evinced precious little interest in politics, even though Frank did respond to political crisis when it arose. Ejected from Russia and Germany, he had not been a revolutionary; in fact the various personal impressions of him depict a calm, inwardly-orientated man. But it is apparent that the reason he would have been so unacceptable a citizen in a Communist or a Nazi state is that his teachings declare the primacy of a religious spirit, which cannot be made subservient to any external authority. In his writings the idea of spirit remains consistent throughout (even though the terms used to describe spirit change), and it is this idea, the primacy of the world of spirit, which will lead us to a definition of his religious individualism.

Let us explore his rationalism first, by looking at the different

ways that he defines knowledge.

II

Idealism

Since Shestov argued so passionately against knowledge, it behoves us to examine the emphasis that Frank accorded to it (if only for Shestov's sake!). What, first of all, does Frank mean by knowledge? Georgy Florovsky claims that indeed Frank regarded abstract and traditional theology with distrust;[6] he makes no serious effort to "know" God in terms of God's characteristics, or in terms of features which could describe him. Simply put, Frank distinguishes three kinds of knowledge in the world: empirical, rational and intuitive.[7] In the empirical world we know all that is forced upon us from without.[8] This "without" includes the world at large, but also includes the mind when it is invaded by mood, impression, etc. He says, "That which is not sensuously given as a part of the spatial part of the world, that which we can neither see nor hear nor touch, and which we call 'mental', is given no less directly and objectively than events of the material world."[9] This means that even part of man's mental life belongs to the world "out there". Thus, an individual is not simply a discrete, isolated unit in the world, but at least on one important plane he is part of the world, with thought and impression happening to him, rather than he actively creating them. The second type of knowledge is that which is concerned with conceptual knowledge. More accurately, it concerns the Platonic notion of Ideas. As Frank says, "The sphere of 'thought' or 'spirit' to which the 'world of ideas' or super-temporal being belongs is not a psychological process with all that is inevitably 'subjective' in it: it is the universal element of thought

or ideality as such, free from all subjectivity...."[10] (Is this Solovyov's Sophia, garbed in less mystical clothing?) The third type of knowledge is the one which our discussion of Frank revolves around, and it is what he calls 'living knowledge'. It is, he says, a kind of knowledge which merges with our very life.[11]

Living knowledge takes place in the ideal world. "Ideal being is a kind of reality different from concretely existing things localized in space and time, and has the form of super-spatial and super-temporal unity...."[12] For Frank, the only way to escape from the possible delusions and varied interpretations of subjectivity, and acknowledge this ideal world, is through knowledge. Even belief in God must be knowledge of God, so as to avoid taking belief on trust, or hearsay, or authority. "Faith in its primary essence is not blind confidence, but immediate certainty, direct and immediate insight into the truth of that which is believed."[13] In order for Frank to claim that there is an ideal world, he feels the need to insist that we come to be acquainted with it through 'living' knowledge. Such a defence is perhaps a reaction against the nihilists who claim that faith in God is nothing more than "pie in the sky", and against the authoritarians of the Church who themselves can, he believes, violate a true Christian world.

Why, if Frank claims to be a Christian, does he insist on the importance of knowledge when, according to Christ, this is not required of man? One response to this question is that Frank, in his belief that living knowledge is accessible to all men, does not put the same emphasis on subjectivity that Shestov places on it. Rather, he requires something which he claims transcends the subject's own moods, that is, he requires a living knowledge of a transcendent world.

So Frank, as we can see, bases his "higher world" not on groundlessness, as does Shestov, but on certainty, or knowledge. But what does he mean by a higher world? It is important to understand that Frank's comprehensive system evolved from Platonism; his Christian-based all-unity has less to do with Christ than it does with Platonism. We can get a glimpse of the Platonic notion of Idea in Socrates' words in the *Phaedo* :

> Nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful."[14]

Thus an invisible sphere of the world is posited. It was this type of sphere that Frank called the "real" one, in contradistinction to the purely empirical world. But Frank was less in tune with Plato's thought than he was with another Idealist, Plotinus. (He often says that Plotinus and Nicholas of Cusa were his greatest teachers.) Plotinus in part taught that there is a non-material aspect of the world, and claimed that it was united by the One. Everything derived from the One: the intellect and the soul included. In fact the One transcends all things yet is present in them as well.

> For since the nature of the One is generative of all things it is not any one of them. It is not therefore some thing or qualified or quantitative or intellect or soul: it is not in movement or at rest, not in place not in time, but 'itself by itself of single form...' "[15]

Frank took his own conceptions of Platonism from this idea of a presence which was both transcendent and immanent, but at the same time all-uniting. He claims that reality is unlimited, infinite; it is impossible to describe it because that would then limit it. "Reality as having everything within itself can be defined only as 'this and the other.' "[16] Since we cannot define it, it would seem that we cannot know it, either. But Frank gets around this obstacle by alluding to Nicholas of Cusa's formula of *docta ignorantia* - wise ignorance.[17] Reality is super-logical, but can be intellectually attained through concepts which suggest what it is, while remaining in its essence known only through ignorance. Such ignorance calls to mind the Absurd, which Shestov valued so highly in Kierkegaard, but by its very claim to be grounded in knowledge it diverges from the Absurd, and remains a kind of certainty albeit through ignorance.

In *Reality and Man*, Frank refers to Plotinus' metaphor of man being a leaf on a tree - he is united to other men organically, through the branches and the tree trunk.[18] The tree itself, Frank suggests, is greater than all of the leaves but includes them within it. In affirming Plotinus' image, he is going much farther than simply saying that each of us has a sense of humanity. He first of all wants to divorce the body from the soul; while the body exists in time and space, the "inner life" can fly to the past or the future, visit distant places, etc. There are no grounds, he claims, for localizing the inner life, and he is critical of thinkers like Heidegger who try to keep the soul within the boundaries of the body, and of Liebnitz, whose monadology splits up reality into a multiplicity of independent units, having no relation one to the other.[19] Once he establishes the infinitude of the soul, he makes the leap of uniting one soul to all souls (or to the One Soul). "The essential meaning of this

transcendence is that I cannot have 'my own being' except as a part of being in general, which transcends mine."[20] Here Frank's all-unity reveals itself in its starkest terms; one might interpret it by saying that we don't really exist as individuals, but are swallowed up by the behemoth which Frank calls reality. We remember that Shestov inveighed against trying to unite Athens and Jerusalem, and here Frank seems to be doing just that. His ideal world is also a Christian one.

III

All-Unity

All-unity is the starting point of Frank's system. He says, "Nothing exists or is conceivable in the world that could exist in itself. Being is an all-unity, in which everything particular exists and is conceivable only in its relation to something else."[21] Even the concept of God, claims Frank, is not an exception to this rule, since as the Creator of this world he in inconceivable apart from his creation. We can imagine how strongly Shestov would have reacted against such a claim. However this all-unity is not something which can be apprehended rationally; as Frank says, it must be bound together by a metalogical form.[22] This form leads us into the realm of the unfathomable, of living knowledge, of reality.

Of course Frank intends this reality to be emancipatory and not oppressive. It helps to keep in mind Solovyov's idea that evil consists in a breaking up of the whole into separate units; man isolated in the empirical world of fact has no meaning, while if he is united by the tree of real life he acquires his true significance. Although Frank does not provide a thorough explanation for evil, his own system is as condemnatory of this type of isolation as is

Solovyov's. (Indeed Zenkovsky claims that Frank's philosophy is a Sophiological one, even if Frank does not use the term.)[23]

Frank's analysis of what he sees as the flaws of individualism goes back to the classical and early-Christian epochs. He is critical, for example, of Pelagianism, the Christian sect which declared that man's will is his own and that by himself he can attain salvation. Consistent Pelagianism, Frank declared, was fatal, because by basing existence on one's own will, man is led to a destruction of his spiritual being.[24] In the same way he is critical of Feuerbach, and a disciple of Feuerbach's, Stirner, who taught that man's true essence is to be found only in the inmost depths of his personal spirit, detached and isolated from the world.[25] But he was most critical of Nietzsche, who had once opened up for Frank the world of the spirit. Frank doesn't deny, even later, the power of Nietzsche's thought, but claims that in glorifying man over God, man is actually destroyed. He says, "Nietzsche's dream of the man-god leads to the sinking of the spiritual human personality in the animal man."[26] Frank's system can only work if there is a general spirit; Nietzsche's denial of this, and of a transcendent God, is incompatible with a reality which unites rather than separates.

In acknowledging Frank's emphasis on all-unity, it is possible to see why religious individualism was of secondary interest to him. While he admired Kierkegaard, and Pascal before him, he was deeply critical of the modern existentialism practiced by Sartre among others, which believed in what he called "sorrowful unbelief".[27] Like Solovyov, Frank's thought was imbued with the notion of all-unity; those who attempted to isolate (Feuerbach, Stirner, Sartre, Nietzsche) were denying the spirit which united all human beings.

In his article on Frank's doctoral dissertation, "The Theory of

Knowledge", Berdyaev raises the problem of the static nature of Frank's Idealism. Berdyaev is writing from a Christian standpoint, and he claims that Christianity is dynamic (as it moves from unity to plurality and movement), while Platonism, (the world of eternal ideas and the forms of being), is a motionless world. Frank himself was a Christian, but he aligns himself more with "reality" (his version of Platonism) than with Berdyaev's personalistic Christianity. Berdyaev says, "Absolute, divine being is revealed to Frank not as a creative essence...not as a drama of dynamic pluralism in unity, but above all as all-unity, which goes beyond any plurality and beyond any movement."[28] Berdyaev claims that with Frank man merges with the absolute, and he accuses him of giving no sense of dynamism to man, to his knowledge or to his creative activity.[29] This merging of man with the absolute, which Frank seems to argue for, raises the question of whether man as an individual can have any meaning, or is just a drop in the vast sea of "reality".

However Frank is far from being stranded with concepts which bear no relation to man as an individual. Since Berdyaev accuses Frank of robbing man of the possibility of being dynamic, it is necessary to examine how this seemingly faceless "reality" is concerned with the individual's personal life. The primary point that can be made about Frank's definition of reality is that not only is it accessible to man, but man is the agent through which it manifests itself. This may seem self-evident, but the whole purpose of Frank's system is not merely to explain the world, but to assign man meaning in it. As has been said, Frank distinguishes between the natural world, which is all that animals have, and the real world, but both take place in man. "Conscious and deliberate cognition...presupposes a subject-object relation which already is

'above' nature."[30] Thus reality in its most basic state is simply one aspect of man's dual nature; with this definition there is almost a quantitative rather than a qualitative distinction between the "natural" and the "real" worlds. But once this world of reality has been established, then Frank can inject it with meaning. It is through reality that man encounters beauty, his own personality and that of others, and, ultimately, God.

IV

Living Knowledge

Earlier we saw how Frank distinguished between three types of knowledge, the third of which he called "living knowledge", that which each man encounters personally. It is through this living knowledge that Frank approaches the relationship between man and reality. He says, "That which we experience as *life* reveals itself to us - to our thought, which is inseparably present in the life."[31] Frank insists that what we know we know through our life-experience, but he is equally insistent that this knowledge, if it is true living knowledge, is not only a part of our subjective being, but belongs to the universal, i.e. belongs to reality.

One example of living knowledge which bears witness to the world of reality is in the categorical imperative, formulated by Kant. Indeed Frank calls Kant's discovery "an immortal achievement".[32] This imperative is the *ought* which is commanded to the subject, and unconditionally, without reference to relative values. Frank says, "The command issues not from some external authority or power, for, in virtue of my freedom, I could refuse to fulfill such a command; no...I know from my inner experience that I ought to do

something...."[33] In this sense reality appears as an authority, but is not external to the subject; in Frank's terms this means that reality is asserting itself. But because a command issues from reality it would be a mistake, he claims, to define it in authoritative terms. The moral command is not given from an impersonal, autocratic god; rather, it issues from reality, and acts on man. Reality is not above, but inside, man.

In the same way as Frank sees the categorical imperative being expressed through reality, he sees beauty, or the aesthetic experience, revealing itself. This conception is close to Plato's notion of the Idea in beauty. Beauty exists against the background of the objective world; behind daubs of paint or a mountain formation stand out facts of a different order, which attract us in our inmost heart. Frank says: "The beautiful is that which by means of sensuous experience gives us a direct perception of reality."[34] Again, it is wrong to claim that aesthetic experience is merely a transferral of our own subjective feeling to the object. Beauty affects us as subjects, but takes root in the being-in-general of reality. "In aesthetic experience there is clearly revealed to us a certain reality which lies as it were behind the sense data, and is, as we say, 'expressed' by them."[35] Thus both with beauty and the categorical imperative there is reality expressing itself in man, but with no external authority or internal subjective delusion influencing it. (It is worth mentioning that one of Frank's main attacks on the intelligentsia in Russia was based on his assertion that it had no appreciation of the aesthetic - or the cultural in general - but was grounded firmly in the utilitarian.)

Another aspect of the way in which living knowledge manifests itself is through communion. According to Frank, human beings often

view other human beings as objects: passersby on the street, enemies on the battlefield, etc. The people we encounter in this way are part of the empirical world of fact for us, wholly included in the world of objects.[36] But one person can also recognize another, not in the objective sense, but rather through a spiritual meeting. Such meeting is not preceded by thought or judgement: "It takes place directly and without any mediation, in and through mutual contact."[37]

Such meeting is accessible only through *docta ignorantia*;[38] it does not lend itself to rational explanation, but is no less real to man for that. Frank uses the image of two pairs of eyes meeting; one reality sends a message to another and the other answers, although the answer is essentially hidden. But because the meeting does, and can only, take place between human beings, the encounter is not like two billiard balls colliding, i.e. two objects in the empirical world coming into contact, but is a meeting in the spiritual world, between two members of that world.[39]

This communion also takes place between God and man. Frank's "proofs" of God's existence never involve purely rational constructs, but are always predicated on man's personal knowledge of him. Man comes to know God through standing in relation to him - through living knowledge. "We learn of the existence of God because in the depths of our heart we 'hear his voice' and have the unutterable experience which we call communion with God."[40] In this sense of knowledge Frank is not so far from Shestov as might originally have seemed. Shestov mocked the rational, cold, even mathematical ways in which philosophers 'found' God, and he appealed to the power of revelation. Frank is intent on using knowledge not as proof of God's existence, but as a means to draw him towards communion, beauty,

his own conscience. Living knowledge is personal, leading us to the individual when it seemed that all-unity might be incapable of doing so, just as Solovyov's notions of Godmanhood and of divine relationship pointed the individual in a more personal direction than his world spirit (Sophia) might have allowed for.

V

Evil

Frank's system insists that man can perceive the meaning of life only through living knowledge. God and a spiritual world are not delusions or fantasies, precisely because they are knowable and reveal themselves to man in his depths. Each man has spiritual depth in him, according to Frank, but what of the darker side of this depth, of the forces which do not only open up a world of spiritual harmony but lead to evil? We pointed out earlier in our chapter on Solovyov that the Russian philosopher seemed to lack the psychological insight into man's darker side, which Dostoevsky's Underground man revealed, and it would seem that Frank too, in positing his ideal world, places too little emphasis on man as a creature who does not strive only for the good, but may even will destruction. He certainly does not deny the presence of evil in the world, nor does he claim, as does Solovyov, that the world's historical movement is heading towards a realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. In his book *Light in the Darkness* he says, "The forces of evil and destruction triumph over the forces of good...the blind game of irrational forces - either in personal or historical life - places a barrier before all the hopes of the human heart."[41]

A survivor of two world wars, Frank saw evil in its starkest terms. However, this does not keep him from saying: "To explain

evil would be to give a 'reason' for it and thus to justify it",[42] and elsewhere that "sin itself has no definite place within reality."[43] Reality is all-encompassing, as Frank spends so much time explaining, but it is also positive, and he is unable to find a place for evil in his system. This comes under attack from various quarters. Berdyaev, for instance, suggests that all-unity has to include even evil, and he accuses Frank of excluding it from his system and tending towards an optimistic evaluation of reality where duty and value coincide.[44] We can see that in Frank's system the categorical imperative tells man what he *ought* to do, but there is no demonic force leading man towards what he *ought not* to do.

S. A. Levitsky, in his essay on the ethics of Frank, also claims that there is no place for evil in Frank's all-unity. According to Levitsky, Frank did not claim that God was indifferent to good and evil, but that evil remained irrational, and he said of Frank that evil was, for him, "a dark mystery."[45] It is significant that Frank not only does not give characteristic features to evil, but he also avoids giving characteristic features to God. Florovsky said that Frank distrusted abstract theology and so would never give God any limiting description. (Witness his adherence to *docta ignorantia* ; even the title of one of his books, about God and reality, is *The Unfathomable*.) In much the same way he refuses to be drawn into an explanation of evil. The difference, though, between God and evil in this sense, is that while God is within reality, evil is not.

Zenkovsky's reaction to Frank's attitude to evil is much the same as Berdyaev's and Levitsky's. He realizes that a system of all-unity simply cannot find a place for evil within it without falling into contradictions. Frank says, "Evil is generated in an unutterable abyss which lies, as it were, on the threshold between God and 'not-

God'."[46] But the abyss is not a part of Frank's system and so is not a real explanation; as Zenkovsky says, one can give an explanation of evil without justifying it,[47] but this Frank refuses to do.

It is clear that Frank knew deeply the presence of evil in the world, but was unable either to fit it into his system or to explain it in any way. This appears to be a serious defect; no individual can have a whole personality without coming to terms with good *and* evil. However, Frank does respond in some way to the problem of evil, in his discussion on sin and freedom in *Reality and Man.* Essentially, Frank does not see freedom originating in free will, i.e. in freedom of choice. The traditional attitude toward free will is that man can choose for himself either good or evil. But, says Frank, "Deliberate willing of evil testifies to the absence of freedom as self-determination...."[48] So, if a man chooses the path of evil, one cannot say of him that he has acted in freedom. This is because, according to Frank, sin is a wrong state of the soul. Sin is being cut off from reality, the source of all man's meaning, and being thrown to the forces of the empirical world:

> Groundless self-will is not freedom, but slavery...when the depth that unites the soul with the primary source of reality is locked out, chaotic forces of reality burst the dam of personality, invade it, and man becomes the plaything of his lusts and passions - the slave of demonic forces."[49]

Original sin, says Frank, is self-assertion. Shestov, too, believed this, but he meant by self-assertion mainly the search for knowledge in the world, while Frank meant by self-assertion basically what Solovyov had meant, that is, cutting oneself off

through one's will.

Freedom takes place in reality. For man to "choose" sin is not freedom, but for him to be aware of himself in his inmost depths (i.e. to embrace reality) is freedom. Reality, claims Frank, is emancipatory, since it is the world of the spirit, and thus man is free *only* when he chooses reality. In a certain sense, Frank admits that freedom is not free.[50] This definition of both evil and freedom justifies the criticism of Berdyaev, Zenkovsky and Levitsky. Frank is willing to include freedom within his system of reality; he recognizes that man at his most spiritual is also at his most free. But sin is still kept out of the system; it takes place in chaos, the abyss, in isolation from reality, but he still does not tell us how sin arose, as Shestov did so frequently. He suggests that it lies in self-assertion (like the Solovyovian equating of evil and isolation), but he essentially passes up any real opportunity to understand it. "If sin...followed with necessity from the structure of reality...it would be 'normal' and ontologically justified, and therefore would no longer be sin."[51]

VI

Personality

Before examining more closely Frank's religious and particularly Christian views, one final aspect of the system of reality remains to be looked at, and that is the emphasis he places on personality. It is sometimes easy to lose sight of the role of man amidst the distinctions between different types of knowledge and the difficult concept of all-unity, which seems both to embrace all life and yet to exclude sin and evil. But Frank continually makes the point that intellectual apprehension alone does not capture the essence of life.

Rather, the system itself is meaningless without man's "living" participation in it. Plotinus' metaphor which has already been cited, of man being a leaf on the tree of reality, finds meaning not in the leaf's external movement, which sways only with the wind, but in internal dynamism as the sap nourishes all the leaves.[52] Yet Frank's point is that man's personality, while united with other personalities, is nevertheless formed not through enforced communion, or through utilitarianism, but through life itself. He says: "The more individually and spiritually deep a person is (e.g. a man of genius), the more 'universally human' he is, the more he expresses that which is the common property and the common essence of all."[53] Thus man, in experiencing the depths of his being, belongs to the sphere of reality (even if he is isolated physically), much more so than persons who are gathered together but who view each other superficially, or as objects.

It was suggested in the chapter on Solovyov that his system was founded upon relationships; between human beings, between man and God. This is essentially true of Frank's system also. Man's personality is realised not in the chaos of the empirical world, but in connection with other types of life in the world of reality. Berdyaev's claim that Frank's system is static rather than dynamic does have some justification, because Frank's emphasis is on establishing the all-unity of reality; however, from his attitudes towards aesthetics, communion and freedom, it is clear that he saw man's personality flowering in these spheres rather than being hindered by them.

One of Frank's criticisms of Greek philosophers is that the idea of man as a *personality* remained foreign to them. It was only on Christian soil, he claims, that the idea of personality was grasped

with all its depth and significance. Having established the fundamental principles of Frank's system, let us now look at how Christianity fits into it, and see whether the two can co-exist.

VII

Christianity

In 1912, Frank became a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and he remained in the Church for the rest of his life. Thus his whole philosophy was worked out when he was a Christian; while this may seem irrelevant, it helps us to understand the dual nature of his thought. Frank was born a Jew, and after an unreligious period he converted to Orthodoxy; that is to say, he was a Christian by choice, rather than simply growing up in the Church. His writings indicate a deep belief both in God and in Jesus Christ, and yet he was not deterred by this from his philosophically-analytical investigations; he was quite happy to unite Jerusalem and Athens. As was suggested above, though, Frank saw Christianity not in purely rationalistic terms but as the manifestation of personality in the world. It follows to see how he arrived at this belief, and to decide if he is successful in combining philosophy and religion in such a way that man's own individuality is not swallowed up (as Shestov would have argued).

As a 14-year old boy, Semyon Frank was asked by his grandfather on his death bed to continue studying Hebrew and the Jewish religion. About this request Frank later wrote: "In a literal sense I did not fulfill it. However, I think that in a general sense, having turned towards Christianity and having lost my link with Judaism, I still remained loyal to those religious foundations which he had laid for me."[54] As an adult Frank may have felt that he carried forward

the general spirit of his grandfather's faith, but in any real sense he rejected the beliefs of his forefathers. The main problem for Frank with Judaism consisted in the relationship between man and God. In its most primitive form Judaism regards God as having unlimited, overwhelming power. Although in Genesis we read that God made man in his own image and likeness, Frank claims that this "likeness" was seen in the Old Testament as being only partially true.[55] There was no immanent connection between God and man, he says, and the difference between the Creator and the life he created was just as great as the difference between a potter and a pot. The functions of the Old Testament, according to Frank, were to provide objective moral principles of goodness and justice, and to act as a master who loves his slaves or as the father of his people.[56] Frank does allow that by the time of the Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, this concept is modified, and religious consciousness becomes more enlightened. But his basic attitude to the early Jews is that they were a people who had a transcendent and all-powerful God, but were unable to have a personal, inner relationship with him. (Shestov, we can imagine, would have pointed to Job and Abraham as contradictions of this claim. The central figure in Frank's Old Testament, however, would have been Moses, he who received the laws. Frank in fact did consider the Book of Job to be a work of genius,[57] but he saw the Old Testament in its general direction as remaining separated from the immanence of God in man.)

Frank thinks the early Jews were right when, in exalting God, they saw themselves as impotent creatures, aware of the instability of their own existence; but he is critical of any faith which puts up barriers between man and God, and he sees this attitude carrying over into Christianity. While he is critical of Christian sects which

asserts the ultimate rights of man (Pelagianism), he is no less critical of the opposite tendency, namely the debasing of man himself for the glory of God. He sees this trend in St. Augustine who, he says, in combatting the waywardness of Pelagianism went too far and made man seem worthless. Frank considers St. Augustine highly significant in the development of Christianity, but sees this tendency to separate man and God as an unhealthy one. In *The Confessions* we read of St. Augustine's humility: "Truly, Lord, you are eternal, and you are not angry with us forever, for you take pity on us who are dust and ashes. You looked me over and were pleased to shape what was misshapen in me."[58] Humility is one thing, Frank thinks, but rendering man so insignificant does not draw man close to God. Yet while Augustine might have gone too far in his humility, at least according to Frank, he felt that other schools of Christian thought manifested the idea of God's transcendence in ways not sufficiently humble. Calvinism, for instance, tended to sever the intimate bond between man and God, and Jesuitism demanded slavish obedience to God. The result of glorifying God at the expense of man is that, as Frank says, "every religious tendency to affirm God's absolute transcendence over and heterogeneity to man conceals a danger to human personality - the danger of inhumanity."[59] Thus we can see that, if taken too far, the idea of God's transcendence expressed in the Old Testament and in traditional Christian theology may do harm to man's own personality. In addition it is contrary to Frank's "living knowledge", which is central to his system of reality; if one is to *know* God, then God cannot be so far away that God is unreachable. There is no essential difference between this attitude to God and Solovyov's: it is the relationship between man and God that matters, the *internal* closeness between the two.

Frank, unconvinced by a transcendent God, also rejected the gods of the ancient Greeks, with whom it was impossible to have an inner relationship. As he points out, in Greek legends and poetry gods and men are often very similar, and heroes are sometimes thought of as demi-gods; in short, he says, gods and men were conceived somewhat like a higher and lower race of the same genus.[60] This solves the problem of God's too powerful transcendence, but it creates another problem: the relationship between the gods and men. While a great sense of humanism developed during this time, nevertheless there was not an *inner* bond between the two races; sometimes certain gods disappeared to make way for other ones, sometimes distrust and estrangement towards the gods were mingled with reverence and respect. "People prayed, so to speak, on the off-chance - believing that, on the whole, gods were more likely to harm than to help. Religion implied the belief that the tragedies, sorrows and wrongs of human life also came from the gods."[61]

Whether or not it is true that Judaism, various Christian sects and Greek mythology gave little scope for developing an inner bond with God or gods cannot be decided here. Certainly the rule did not always hold. What can be established, though, is that Frank did not think that either of these cultures satisfied man's yearning for that essential inner bond with God.

It was in Christianity, then, as expressed in its most personal form, that he found a religion which could establish a direct, immediate relationship between man and God. If we recall Frank's theory of knowledge, in which the most meaningful form is "living" knowledge, we can see how this corresponds with Frank's belief that Christianity is a "living" religion. In his book written during World War II, *God With Us* , he writes:

> Faith in the existence of a personal God - God as a loving Father - acquires a living significance and vital importance only in so far as it makes the 'Kingdom of God' real to us or to put it another way, only as the source of the divine power of love, illumining and transfiguring our earthly existence.[62]

In this passage can be seen Frank's idea of reality; of another world beyond our own, but one which touches us directly.

Frank saw reality not as oppressive, but as emancipatory; through this sphere man is freed, and thus he comes into his personality, which he discovers through aesthetics, communion, faith. Keeping in mind the relationship between reality and personality, one can affirm that the *religion* of personality for him was Christianity. It is through this religion, he says, that man finds himself; it goes beyond the laws and reaches into man's very being. It is so personal, he says, that it rejoices more over the repentance of one sinner than it does over ninety nine righteous men.[63] Thus man's highest achievement is not through external approval, or through being judged worthy by other men, but is related solely to his own, personal relationship with God, made possible by Christianity. (It should always be remembered with Frank that the personal implies the universal, and vice versa. Religious individualism never becomes so narrow for him that it cannot be applied to the world of spirit, in which all men can take part. Frank and Solovyov continually go back and forth between the universal and the individual, not juxtaposing the two notions as contradictory, but showing how each fulfills the other.)

In large part, thinks Frank, Christianity is the only possible

religion because of Christ's own example through his life and teachings. The example of Mohammed falls short of Christ's, because he was known to have married a rich widow and dealt in political and business affairs; Moses commanded the Jews to kill heathens and foreigners; but it was Christ, he says, whose example approached nearest to God with his self-sacrificing love.[64] Is this only another way for Frank to say that Christ approached, more than any other prophet, Frank's own conception of reality? In his essay entitled "The Religious Metaphysics of S. L. Frank", Florovsky claims that Frank in his writings about Christ hardly ever says a word about the Cross.[65] This is not an accidental omission; Christianity is above all for Frank "the Good News"; it is not the "cruel Christianity" which we see Shestov embracing, but rather the source of all man's peace, hope, etc., i.e. the source of reality.

If Christianity is to bring peace and bliss, it must first be something stable and firm, not the apotheosis of groundlessness. Indeed, God is stability.[66] (Frank's claim for the existence of God in man's life rests on the need that man has to find shelter and perfect contentment amidst the calamities of the world. This, he says, is the only real way that God can have meaning in our lives, for a God viewed as omnipotent or as Creator and Ruler concerns God only in the empirical world.)[67] God is the bearer of Truth, and Truth is not tragedy or suffering, but love. God is "a father who loves his children and cares for their welfare, who joyfully and lovingly welcomes all alike, who makes the sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."[68] Reading these words we can see why Florovsky is critical of Frank for never mentioning the Cross. Frank was not, however, simply a good-natured optimist who was convinced that God shined his love

everywhere in the world; rather, he assigned to God these qualities only in the sphere of the non-empirical, in Christianity, or reality. In *Light in the Darkness* he says, "The spirit of hatred, cynicism, contempt for human life are much more widely dispersed than any other doctrine."[69] These two statements of his are not contradictory, because Frank never says that God's love is dominant in the empirical world, but it is apparent that he interprets the closeness of God as that which brings stability, *groundfulness* (in contradistinction to Shestov's groundlessness) and joy.

The fact that Frank calls God a loving father who shelters us seems to turn man into a pitiful and weak character who can do little more than flee to God's side in times of chaos. But Frank does say that man must himself undergo sacrifice in order to meet God. Man does not create a world that is all sweetness and light; he is a being who sins (or who is guilty), but who is capable of judging himself and redeems his sin through self-sacrifice. However, Frank sees this "way of the Cross" as essentially a means to an end; man suffers to expiate his sin, and he may indeed endure great pain in doing so, but "the hopeless torments of remorse become, as it were, dissolved in the balm of the forgiving and reconciling divine love; they gradually change into serene gentle sadness and heartfelt blessed joy."[70] Frank concentrates on the meekness of Christ and thus the need for man to be meek; he defines meekness as a loving attitude to others and an absence of self-assertion.[71] It is noteworthy that in his own life he was often described as meek and inwardly calm. It is impossible for him, as a faithful Christian, to avoid the importance of suffering and self-sacrifice, but unlike Shestov, the sense of suffering is not the final meaning, but that which paves the way for blessed joy. Hardship must be endured, but

the reward for hardship is "the treasure in heaven": goodness, Truth, peace.

For Frank "light" in the darkness is obviously desirable, but this exposes him to the same accusation as Solovyov was exposed to, namely that of being of strong believer but a bad psychologist. Is light in the darkness what every sane person desires? Not according to Shestov: "In our youth, when we had just entered life...light brought us such happiness and joy...Now we search for the words and sounds to sing the praises of our recent enemy. Night, dark, dense, impenetrable, night which is filled with terrors, does it not seem to you at times to be infinitely excellent?"[72] Shestov was not a nihilist or a cynic, he too searched for God, but he recognized better than Frank that man is capable of tormenting himself in such a way that he rejects even goodness, Truth and peace.

It is not necessary to offer biblical exegesis or to select random quotes from the Gospels to suggest that Jesus' teachings did not lead only towards blessed peace and joy. If we can question Frank's interpretation of the Gospels, can we also suggest that in his interpretation Frank had more in mind than just the Gospels? That is, did he view Jesus' teachings from the standpoint of his own philosophical constructs?

Before answering this question, one more point needs to be made about Frank's notion of Christianity. In his discussion of religion in *God With Us* he often includes within Christianity those persons who can not be literally called Christians, but whose life-example nonetheless allows them to be called such. One of the greatest attractions of Christianity for Frank is that it has the potential to be a universal religion, embracing all mankind. In other words it has the potential to be all-unifying. Clearly not all of mankind has

accepted Christianity, and yet there are many outside the faith whose spirit, sacrifice, goodness, etc. would enable them to be included in an "ideal" world. On these people Frank is willing to confer the title "Christian": "All those who seek truth and yearn for it seek Christ and yearn for him, for Christ is the Truth (*pravda*); indeed, they already have Christ in their hearts though they know it not."[73] Thus the very definition of Christianity is widened to include all those who participate in a spiritual world, i.e. in reality. Frank makes the same mistake as Solovyov, who asserted that Jews and other non-Christians would be set right once they acknowledged the truth of the Gospels.[74] Frank allows for man to be living in truth without being a Christian by name, but he does not allow for man to be living in truth without being a Christian in spirit. He says, "All moral achievements of the human spirit are the result, conscious or unconscious, of the Christian faith...."[75] Either Frank is insisting that all men of moral achievement are Christians, even against their will, or by Christianity Frank means something which is closer to Platonism than to the person of Jesus himself.

VIII

Philosophy and Christianity

Georgy Florovsky says, "Essentially Frank issues not from the Gospels, but from Platonist teaching, and he apprehends the Gospels within the categories of Platonism; that is, he apprehends them, so to speak, 'selectively', paying no attention to whatever is not included within the peripheries of Platonism."[76] It should be emphasized that Frank's conception of reality does not mean that man has to flee from this world into the world of spirit, as Plato himself believed. Nevertheless, Florovsky's assertion helps to

clarify the essence of Frank's thought: if there is a tug-of-war between reality and Christianity in Frank, reality will be victorious (even if Christianity protests that they are both on the same side). Frank understood the uniquely personal element in Christianity, and this element was in accord with the personal element in his own "living knowledge", but based on the priority he gives to the "blessed joy" of Christianity over all other aspects of it, and to his insistence that anyone who is morally good can be called a Christian, he seems to incline more towards his own philosophical insights than towards biblical Christianity.

Frank identified Christianity as the religion of personality. However, by suggesting that he is closer to Platonism than Christianity one need not necessarily conclude that his philosophy is, as Berdyaev claimed, static rather than dynamic. In trying to discover what the role of the individual is in his philosophy we may be able to find a dynamism which is not always present in the concepts of Plato, Plotinus and other idealists.

In the chapter on Shestov it was suggested that his tyrants lived in his *internal* world, and were associated primarily with knowledge. If we apply the same criteria for tyranny to a thinker like Frank, then he is bound to be guilty of setting up all-powerful rulers who immobilize the individual (such as morality). But while Shestov makes very little distinction between types of knowledge, Frank insists that one type, "living knowledge", affects man directly and personally. Shestov would likely have agreed with Frank's statement that "The living fullness of the religious is...always richer, more concrete and more varied than its expression in a dogma, i.e. in a judgment abstracted from our experience."[77] Frank was also concerned with freeing man from the chains of abstract

thought, but he did so *through* knowledge rather than apart from it.

Through "living knowledge" man comes into contact with reality. This is the focal point of Frank's religious individualism In associating it with the One of Plotinus' system, or the general beliefs of Platonism, Frank's system may seem constricting to the spirit. But he labours to show that man is actually freed in this sphere, he is freed to create, to love, to worship God, to be his most individual self while also participating most fully in all-unity. In fact it is only because of this all-unity that man has a spiritual life: "Moral strength is drawn not from inevitably unreliable illusions...but from the truly inexhaustable eternal source of world-transcending Truth."[78] Thus man is both bound by Truth and freed by it. Such a claim does not satisfy Shestov's definition of freedom; he would say that Frank loses the individual as he tries to force him to obey truth and morality. But it certainly satisfies Solovyov's criteria; man is freed not by self-assertion but by moral union on a higher, ideal plane. Man *does* have his own, unique personality, which is revealed through 'reality'.

However, it cannot be denied that on purely individualistic terms, Frank's system fails to take into account a couple of factors. The first is the problem of evil, which he recognizes as an overwhelming presence in the world, but which he is unable to explain, doing little more than excluding it from his system. Frank's real interest is in a spiritual world which is immanent in and transcendent over man, and which determines his "real" nature, but he gives scant attention to the source of evil which so rules man. The second problem concerns his attitude to Christianity. He declares its great power to heal the spirit and lead man to a state of blessedness, but it takes little notice of its "cruel" aspect, its element of suffering which is not

simply the means to the end. He tends to make this mistake because, as Florovsky points out, his Christianity is rooted more in Plato than in Jesus. But this does not detract from the primary quality he gleaned from Christianity, namely that it is a religion of personality. (Or in other words, the religion of "living knowledge"; and as personality is intimately connected by Frank with reality, we can see how the philosophical and religious terms become almost interchangeable.)

To clarify Frank's concept of the individual, it is worthwhile to look at his social and political views; he lived in Russia during great change, and his analysis of the political situation at the start of the twentieth century proved to be a prophetic one. But in summing up his systematic thought, one can say that the individual became real for Frank only in the realm of the religious spirit. By making each personal spirit a part of all-unity, he sometimes seems to be limiting man. But it is important to remember that, in describing the sphere of the spirit, he does not define it; that is to say, reality in its essence always remains "The Unfathomable". We can only know it through *docta ignorantia*. By approaching the unfathomable, man is released from the chaos of the world-as-fact, and given stability in the world of reality.

IX

Socialism

Frank's political writings do not constitute a part of his systematic thought. Unlike Solovyov, whose kingdom of Heaven could not be achieved, it sometimes seems, without the union of the Churches and the submission of political powers to the regeneration of mankind, Frank's philosophy does not require any historical

developments or ecclesiastical treaties. And yet it is worthwhile to examine his political views in light of his religious individualism, because Frank (among others) believed that both religion and the individual were greatly threatened by the advance of the revolutionary movement, and he set himself the task, through various essays, of trying to expose the movement as one inimical to the world of religious spirit.

In discussing Frank's attitude towards the Russian intelligentsia of his time it is useful to mention Frank's friend, Peter Struve. Both of these men were involved with the Marxist-socialist movement in the 1890's, but it was largely as a result of Struve that Frank parted with the movement and began to develop his highly critical views of Russian revolutionary philosophy. Peter Struve was a 28-year old Marxist when he met the 21-year old Frank, also a Marxist, in Moscow. They soon formed a fast friendship, and Frank thought of the older Struve as his mentor. Essentially, Struve was disillusioned with the intelligentsia, which he saw as being capable only of criticizing authority, awakening the mood of opposition, and secretly preparing for revolution, while putting nothing positive in its place.[79] But according to Frank, Struve introduced a completely different type of thought, one which was responsible and creative, and he says: "While still a radical and even a socialist, he was not an insurgent, but saw himself as an activist for the State, as if only temporarily and accidentally finding himself in opposition."[80] In terms of their philosophical outlooks, Frank claimed that they had little in common, but as we can see from Frank's political writings, Struve's influence on his social and political views was great.

In 1909 a group of writers, including Berdyaev, Struve and Frank, published a series of essays which they entitled *Vekhi* (Signposts).

The collection aroused great interest as well as animosity in the intelligentsia, for it was an attack on their whole philosophy. Frank's essay was called "The Ethics of Nihilism", and it was his first major statement against the revolutionary movement. Like almost all intellectuals of his time, Frank did not support the fast-fading tsarist regime, but he was strongly opposed to the revolutionary philosophy which wanted to overthrow the regime. Frank characterizes this philosophy as mainly one of nihilism, and he questions how it is that a movement which wants to overturn the existing order can flourish while having no real values. He first of all accuses the socialists of lacking any cultural or religious interests other than those which will promote their cause:

> Culture, as it is usually understood with us,
> is wholly stamped with the mark of utilitarianism.
> When they speak of culture here, they usually have
> in mind railways, plumbing and carriageways...[81]

If we keep in mind his later writings on the value of aesthetics and on the whole system of reality, it becomes apparent how flawed he would have found the nihilists' position. Basically they were denying any sort of spiritual world, at best turning cultural values into utilitarian ones, while Frank's whole philosophical argument rested on the primacy of this spiritual world. He writes, "If there are no generally-binding values and everything is relative and conditional, everything is defined by human needs, by the human thirst for happiness and pleasure, then in the name of what must I reject my own subjective demands?"[82] We can glean the spirit of all-unity in this statement, even though it does not necessarily rest

on his philosophical premise. As he explains, the revolutionaries claimed to be interested above all in "the people", but what that translated into was a suspicion of anyone who loves truth or beauty for itself, since that must indicate an indifference to the good of the people.

Frank termed the seemingly positive philosophy of the nihilists "moralism". This meant for Frank a system of values that, in occupying the first rank in their thought and possessing unlimited power over their consciousness, was deprived of belief in any absolute value.[83] This moralism devoted itself to the good of the people, yet paradoxically such love for mankind gave rise to destructive tendencies. Likewise, the intelligentsia approved of the idea of distributed wealth, but hated wealth itself; it loved the people as a mass but nevertheless hatred played a vital role in its attitudes.[84] In other words, moralism did not offer any constructive or creative solution, but rather was the pretense of the nihilist to some positive outlook.

Of course, Shestov too was disdainful of moralism, but we must remember that for him this disdain was central to his philosophical outlook, while Frank's system of all-unity was most mindful of the moral element; it was nihilistic moralism that Frank derided. But Frank and Shestov would have been in agreement that the revolutionary philosophy was deprived of any religious spirit, a spirit which was vital to both thinkers.

Many of Frank's arguments against nihilism might well have been offered by supporters of the old regime, but his attack on the intelligentsia was also an attack on its hypocrisy toward love. He admired the intellectual who, inspired by his ideals, went "to the people", to help the peasant directly. (This movement was called

Populism; the intellectuals went to village communes hoping to help educate the peasants. Unfortunately, they were often met with hostility and distrust by the peasants, and the movement failed.) As Frank says, such an idealist may have been naive or mistaken theoretically and even morally, but he nevertheless had a true "love for his neighbour."[85] But the nihilist "loved from afar", he preached the "religion of the absolute realization of the people's happiness,"[86] without involving himself in any of the dirty work of real love. In a paradoxical sense, the nihilist was an idealist, but one whose ideals were empty of content. Frank, himself an idealist, recognized this, and hoped to replace nihilistic tendencies with "a creative, religious humanism."[87] We've seen that Frank's religious ideas call for an intimate relationship between man and God, and to love from afar, as he accused the nihilists of doing, was to remove love.

When the Russian revolution did take place, the nihilistic character of the intelligentsia was in the ascendant, and Frank, who lived through the early years of the new Soviet Union, was able to analyze the dynamics of the revolution from up close. He was in no doubt that the overthrow of the government was in itself an expression of nihilism, and that it was deprived of any kind of spiritual substance.[88] The reason for this is examined by Frank in an essay he wrote in 1924 called "The Religious-Historical Sense of the Russian Revolution", in which he surveys the revolutionary and emancipatory movements of Europe over the last four centuries. Russia, as Frank explains, was more or less excluded from the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe. These developments were worked out over many years in the West, and although both movements transformed the political situation in Europe, the process did not have a genuinely destructive character; in the end,

says Frank, Europe was saved from anarchy by her conservatism and by her belief in sacred principles.[89] But Russia had had neither a Renaissaince nor a Reformation; the great spiritual energy of the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned only with the depths of the spirit, but did not enter into the world. Therefore, he says, in Russia, "the gap between the religious spirit and the vital empirical sphere of law and morals, which in the West was so firmly cultivated by a theocratic upbringing, remained undeveloped and unfortified."[90] The revolutionary movement in Russia started too late, he thinks, in the sense that it did not participate in the richness of the Renaissance or Reformation, but was faced with the latest trend in European thought - namely socialism (which Frank calls "both the completion and the overthrow of liberal democracy").[91]

It is not too difficult to imagine what conclusions Frank draws from the Russian revolution: the nihilist, completely divorced from any spiritual movement, and thus unable to express himself religiously, aesthetically, etc., (as was the case in post-medieval Europe), did not, once he took over in Russia, replace old spiritual values with new ones, but instead replaced the old values with destructive tendencies. "The fundamental mistake of recent times consists in the fact that freedom was identified with rebellion."[92] Again, we can see how this is connected with Frank's philosophy: without a spiritual basis the world becomes chaotic, and in the case of the Russian revolution precisely this has happened, he thinks. The empirical and the spiritual worlds remained isolated one from the other, and thus nihilism plunged Russia into chaos.

Although Frank was an idealist, his political outlook, perhaps largely based on the Russian experience, was critical of idealism.

We have discussed how Frank saw reality as being accessible through the depths of man's personality; the ideal world according to him was found internally, not externally. Thus, he thought, any attempt to "force" the ideal in the external world could only result in a negation of the original utopian hopes. This was true not only of Russia's revolution, but of France's as well, as Robespierre's Terror had proved. No criminal, he said, has created as much evil in the world, has spilled as much human blood, as those people who wanted to be the saviours of the world.[93] From Russian socialism he points to the example of Belinsky, the nineteenth century critic, who in his passion for creating a society based on equality had said, "If, for the affirmation of socialism, a thousand heads are needed - I demand a thousand heads."[94] Solovyov and Frank are in agreement that if the world is to be redeemed, it cannot be through a policy of violence, however great the need may be to put an end to injustice. It is worth noting that Frank himself was not politically active after his early years; in his efforts to find an ideal world he looked inward, and thus his political attitudes are determined by what external factors will make the "real" world most accessible. He is certain that political idealism is not the answer, saying, "One can most accurately define the heresy of utopianism as a distortion of the Christian idea of the salvation of the world, through a plan to realize this salvation by the strong arm of the law."[95] He was much more realistic than Solovyov, who believed in the power of the spiritual world to transform even political life. Frank too hoped that the world could be spiritualized, but knew well the force of political power which was at complete odds with the spiritual regeneration of the world.

So having attacked the nihilism of the Russian intelligentsia and

the utopianism of idealists everywhere, what political solution does Frank believe to be most akin to his world of reality? First of all, he believed that the answer to this lies "beyond the right and the left"; that is, in decrying socialism he is not therefore an ardent supporter of capitalism and market forces. Rather, as he points out, both right and left have forfeited their claim to be on the side of emancipation. Before the Russian revolution the right was considered to be the reactionary party, the oppressors of the people, of free thought and free speech, while the left was the liberating force - the left stood for good. But once the left acquired power in Russia, the same terms once applied to the right were now attached to the left, while the right took on the burden of emancipation. In a word, the terms became meaningless: "Both of these concepts are void of internal unity, and cannot be defined on the basis of any one idea which is central for both of them."[96]

Frank's system of reality relies on a level of spirituality which involves all men, since it is based on all-unity rather than on isolation, and thus the structure itself of community becomes vital. Because of this, Frank is not dismissive of politics even if its relation to reality is an indirect one, but he rejects the supposedly humane way of the left, namely socialism, claiming that it has abused power as badly as the right has. Having thrown out the terms "left" and "right", he declares that the real political division lies between, on the one side - "unlimited state despotism, the rule of the lower classes over the cultured classes; and on the other side - the right of traditionalism and religious beliefs, the principal of law and freedom of the personality, the defense of the interests of culture and education..."[97]

Such a statement, however, could be used as little more than the

so-called "right's" claim to rule, and Frank is well aware of this. By an unfortunate fate Frank, a socialist in his early days, became a victim of the socialists, but because of this he did not adopt a belief in tsarism; rather, his solution to political misrule (found in his essay "The Problem of Christian Socialism") avoids either pure conservatism or liberalism, and instead is drawn mainly from his philosophical and religious beliefs.

X

Christian Socialism

Political solutions, thinks Frank, are to be found in Christianity, but he is the first to admit that traditional Christianity's response to the poor and needy has often been neglectful at best. In fact historically, he claims, it has been up to non-believers to care for the needy.[98] But the Christian is in the best position to show love for his neighbour, since this is one of Christ's commandments, and thus he must consider himself a Christian socialist, but only insofar as such socialism cares for those in need. The Christian will, Frank says, "strive toward the virtue of true, active love - he will to the best of his ability attempt to realize the commandment of Christ's - to share the last thing he has with a brother in need."[99] Of course, this would be a naive view if Frank thought that a lot of love would turn everyone into Christian socialists; he recognizes that law must be established to defend those who need protection. But he rejects the socialism which is cut off from any spiritual base, and declares that real Christian socialism can flourish only in "bourgeois" countries such as France and England, where there is freedom of religion.

> The socialist structure which deprives the person free reign over his property and which realizes social justice through compulsion, similarly deprives the Christian of the opportunity freely to express the precept of Christian love.[100]

Thus, paradoxically, socialism is in the worst position to promote social responsibility, since its methods involve compulsion rather than love. The Christian, Frank believes, is in a unique position to create a socialism based on love, because he has access to a "Heavenly kingdom", rather than the purely earthly kingdom of the materialists.

As suggested earlier, Frank's conception of Christianity is essentially little more than a restatement of his conception of reality. Therefore he is not trying to prove, for instance, that only the Church can guide political life, or that a community must be a Christian one to realize justice within it. If we equate Christianity with other terms of Frank's - "reality", "light in the darkness", etc., and if all these terms are meant in part to represent a sphere in which brotherly love is most evident, then Frank is basically arguing for the political conditions which make such a sphere most accessible. "Bourgeois" democracy, then, is best not because it gives free reign to market forces, but because through it man has the freedom to help his brother. Ultimately, he is arguing for a political system which allows man "to believe in the all-conquering strength of sacrificial brotherly love for people, and the preaching of this love."[101]

Having equated Christianity with other spheres of the ideal world in Frank's thought, and having suggested that his idea of a Christian

society has more to do with common humanity than with Church hierarchy, we can nonetheless say that Frank was a firm supporter of the Church as an institution. This support in part stems from his belief that man needs to be guided spiritually, and that dogma (the Greek root of which, he points, out means "teaching") and even symbols such as icons and incense can further one's ability to worship.[102] But along with the particular customs of the Church, used not as tired ritual but as symbols having spiritual significance, Frank values the community which the Church offers. "Knowledge is essentially communal [*soborno*] and can be possessed by mankind only as a collective whole, and every individual participates in this collective knowledge."[103] For Frank the Church provides the opportunity to manifest reality, and thus he supports not just Christian humaneness, but active Christian worship.

Frank addresses the role of the individual in society in his essay, "Personal Life and the Socialist Structure". Any plan for society aims to make the person within the society happy, Frank believes, but for this to be possible man must be free. A society which is mainly concerned with external "togetherness", by means in part of technical achievements, and is willing to sacrifice the happiness and lives of today's generation so that tomorrow's can have happiness, is denying the internal life which each person must have. He says that "any true belief - not only religious belief in the specific sense of the word, but moral belief, as a source of communal activity - is possible only on the basis of a free, personal, spiritual life..."[104] From this we can see that Frank wants the individual to be a truly free creature in society. There are similarities between Frank's own social beliefs and the utilitarianism of Mill or the Social Contract of Rousseau, both of

which were based on moral but not religious grounds. But most important to remember is that Frank values the individual spirit in society more than he does the "group spirit" if it threatens to coerce the individual.

Frank does not indicate that the forces of love will eventually conquer all, but he does claim that there are social conditions which make spiritual life most accessible to man. When we looked at Frank's philosophical system it sometimes seemed as if it were constricting rather than freeing man (especially in light of Shestov). But if we apply his system to the political world, then we get a clearer picture of the emancipating role of reality (or Christianity). Freedom of personality and solicitude towards one's fellow man are essential ingredients in Frank's system; as with Solovyov, Frank's spiritual world was not an abstract one, definable only in technical language, but was concerned with man's role in the transformation of this world. Frank brought Solovyov's all-unity into the twentieth century; this all-unity still struggled with the problem of static monism, and the problem of evil, but it also continued to develop the idea of the individual on a religious plane, finding for him ever-new significance in his personal and communal life.

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Chapter Five

Nikolai Berdyaev

I

In our discussion of the religious individual up to this point we can identify two distinct directions: the first, developed by Solovyov and Frank, tries to find a meaningful role for the individual in a system which has spiritual all-unity at its root; the second direction, Shestov's, regards the individual as primary, as more important than any system, any unity, any world-spirituality. At times it may seem that there is little that would reconcile these views, but in the figure of Nikolai Berdyaev, we find a thinker in whom the two paths seem to cross: fierce individuality and spiritual all-unity.

Let us begin our study of Berdyaev with a quote of his which indicates this dual nature. "Personality is *the* moral principle, and our relation to all other values is determined by reference to it. Hence, the idea of personality lies at the basis of ethics."[1] This statement of Nikolai Berdyaev's is central to his thought; its idea runs through almost all his writings, be they on faith, politics or society. Berdyaev refers to his own philosophy variously, as existentialistic, or personalistic, or as founded on the notion of freedom, but throughout his development as a thinker he never abandons the claim that the personality (*lichnost'*) is at the centre of his thought. In our discussion of Berdyaev we shall see if this focus on personality is closer to the religious individualism of Solovyov and Frank, or of Shestov.

Based on our examination of the previous three thinkers, it should be clear that while Shestov derided any attempt at system-building in order to protect the individual, Solovyov and Frank placed the individual *within* their particular systems. A personalist philosophy such as Berdyaev's

would seem to be at odds with systematic philosophy, and yet Berdyaev often seems more disposed to the ideas of the system-builder Solovyov than to those of the system-destroyer Shestov. Notions of the Godman and of spiritual togetherness (*sobornost'*) are close to Berdyaev as they were to Solovyov and Frank, and yet according to Shestov, the individual disappears in any attempt to formulate "truths", such as that of a Godman. It should be mentioned straightaway that, unlike Shestov, Berdyaev accepted the legitimacy of knowledge as a means to find truth. In exalting the personality he did not reject all attempts to *understand* man and the world, which attempts were anathema to Shestov. (Indeed Berdyaev declares that the definition of knowledge provides the main difference between himself and Shestov.[2]) Berdyaev is a self-proclaimed champion of the personality, one might say a revolutionary fighting for the personality, but it cannot be said that he rejects knowledge within philosophy outright, as does Shestov.

The idea of the revolutionary is one which Berdyaev had an intimate relationship with throughout his life. As a young aristocrat in Kiev (he was born in 1874), he participated in student revolutionary movements; like Frank he was arrested for such activities and then exiled for two years to Vologda, where he began his writing career. But although he passed through a Marxist phase, as did Frank and Shestov, he claimed that he was not a revolutionary in the political sense, but one whose conception of revolution stemmed from the personality, and not from society.[3] He claimed that he was not entirely certain why he became a Marxist; he did, however, want to be more than an abstract thinker - feeling the demand to realize his ideas in his life - and he valued the Marxist criticism of capitalism.[4] But he was never a loyal adherent to the cause; his break with the movement was not nearly so radical as Solovyov's adolescent conversion from socialism to Christianity.

Berdyaev joined in a movement which was striving for change, but said that he desired change that was different from that of the movement's. He declared that he had a revolutionary spirit, and yet he was fiercely opposed to the forces which were trying to overthrow the monarchy. He did not welcome the Bolsheviks when they took power, and he was eventually exiled from his country by them. This young member of the aristocracy followed the "traditional" path of many young Russian intellectuals at the end of the century: socialistic activity, arrest and exile.

Although he came from a wealthy background, he did not hesitate to join the anti-aristocratic movement. When he grew disillusioned with that movement he attacked it, partly in the form of essays written in *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny*, both anti-revolutionary compendia, and such disillusionment led to his exile from the USSR. And yet before his exile he was also sharply critical of the Russian Orthodox Church, and declared that he had no sympathy with the anti-Communist movement, claiming that it lived in the past and was deprived of any significance.[5] In the philosophy of his youth he had abandoned the socialism of the materialists, being attracted to German idealism, but before long he advanced from this to find a more personalistic, explicitly religious outlook. From these facts alone one can imagine that Berdyaev was a revolutionary in the most personal sense, because he never remained content for long with one social group or one school of thought, but tended above all towards an individualistic perspective.

II

Christianity

Unlike with Solovyov and Frank, we cannot begin by trying to understand any philosophical system that Berdyaev might have constructed; he

simply did not have one. However, the prime mover of his personalist philosophy we can identify as Christianity. Of the four thinkers examined in this paper, it is Berdyaev who most often refers to Christ, not as a part of a world-design, but as the primary source of spirit in the world. This is not to insist that Berdyaev was a better or more pure Christian than the others, but as a critic of organized religion, and as a philosopher who did not attach Christianity to any system, his attitude to Jesus as an individual is central to his thought. To begin to understand Berdyaev's philosophy it is essential to understand his relationship with Christianity.

His path to religion was not, he claims, a dramatic one. There was no sudden conversion or transition from complete darkness to complete light.[6] He had arrived at his Christian beliefs through the route of idealism; his first book, *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy*, was not so much a defence of religion as an interpretation of the individual. "I wanted a new world, but based not on a necessary social process, rather on freedom and the creative act of man."[7] By the time this book had emerged the Marxists had begun to think of Berdyaev as a traitor, and he became one of the main exponents of the movement from Marxism to idealism. As he himself says, he was one of a new type of thinker in Russia (along with Semyon Frank, Sergey Bulgakov and others), which recognized the rights of the spirit and rejected the anarchism and nihilism of the revolutionary thought in Russia at the time.[8]

Berdyaev's initial attraction to Christianity originated with the help of Dostoevsky. In his reading of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov*, such an impression was made on his young mind that, he says, "when I turned to Jesus Christ for the first time I saw him under the appearance that he bears in the Legend."[9] This story is told by

the atheistic Ivan Karamazov; in it the Grand Inquisitor, an old cardinal from the medieval Church, berates Christ for being so perfect that he is out of the reach of the ordinary man. Christ has come down to earth to offer man freedom, and asks that in return man be willing to accept the burden of the Cross and follow him. But, says the Grand Inquisitor, ordinary man wants nothing less than the horrifying prospect of freedom, and he is glad to hand it over to an earthly authority such as the Church, which will guide man, forgive him, and ask in return obedience to it, to the Church, rather than to Christ. He tells Jesus:

> Instead of taking away man's freedom thou didst increase it. Didst thou forget that man prefers peace and even death to freedom of choice of good or evil?...And thou, instead of giving clear-cut rules that would have set man's conscience at rest once for all, thou didst put forward things that are unfamiliar, puzzling and uncertain.[10]

The Legend portrays a Christ who offers freedom and suffering to man, both of which are repulsive to the common man, the herd man, but to Berdyaev this vision of Jesus was immensely appealing. The Christ of the Legend did not promise happiness or worldly satisfaction, but only freedom. Berdyaev says of Dostoevsky, "No one before him so strongly identified the image of Christ with a freedom of spirit that only a few can attain."[11] Often Berdyaev maintains that he is an aristocrat, not by birth (which he was in fact) but in the spiritual sense. His aristocratism is accessible to all, but only a few are capable of accepting the burden of it, just as only a few are capable of following the Christ of Dostoevsky's Legend.

It is typical of Berdyaev's thought that Christ's appeal should mainly

stem from the notion of freedom, a notion we shall often return to in his thought. Solovyov's Christ stands at the crossroads of history, Frank's Christ brings peace, love, it rewards the meek; Berdyaev thinks that Christ brings freedom.

"In Praise of Folly", an essay by Shestov, attacks Berdyaev's views of this early period. Shestov criticizes his friend's efforts to find a definite set of beliefs, saying that over several years he had changed his views many times, and that he had become a Christian "even before he had learned how to express clearly all the words of the creed."[12] There may be some truth in this; it is notable that Berdyaev, the spiritual revolutionary, became a Christian at roughly the same time as did Frank, Bulgakov, and other members of the movement from Marxism through idealism to Christianity. Also, his Christianity at first is taken more directly from Dostoevsky's interpretation of the Gospels than from the Gospels themselves.

Shestov's essay takes the form of a review of Berdyaev's collection of essay's entitled *Sub Specie Aeternitatis*, and in these essays Berdyaev reveals his development as a thinker. The first essay is in support of idealism; in the book he praises "Great Reason", truth (*pravda*), and eventually, Christianity. Shestov sees in the early Berdyaev the triumph of Good and of Reason, and claims that his allegiance to Dostoevsky is bewildering: "It in no way follows, from the fact that because Dostoevsky under torment rejected sweetness, Berdyaev...has a right to drink vinegar mixed with gall."[13] Shestov is harsh on Berdyaev's adoption of new ideas and new creeds, and wishes that his friend indulged more in "folly" than in "Great Reason".

However, once Berdyaev arrived at Christianity he never abandoned his faith, or even the original inspiration for it. At the end of his life he writes, "The Christ in the 'Legend of the Grand Inquisitor' entered into my

heart, I accepted the Christ of the Legend. For me Christ was always connected with the freedom of the spirit."[14] If Berdyaev came to Christianity gradually, through his belief in idealism and individual freedom, once he accepted this religion all his future writings, directly or indirectly, bear witness to his faith.

The Church in the Legend is directly opposed to Christ, and often Berdyaev's expositions on Christianity betray an antipathy towards organized religion. For him Christianity is not the idea of good for all men, or humanity in general, but rather it represents the victory of the personality. God came down to earth to share the destiny of man and to redeem him.

> Christianity is founded not upon the abstract and impotent idea of the good...but upon a living Being, a Personality, and on man's personal relation to God and to his neighbours. Christianity has placed man above the idea of the good and thereby made the greatest revolution in history - a revolution which the Christians had not the strength to accept in its fullness.[15]

The emphasis on personality, and on revolution, is characteristic of Berdyaev. Each man has a relationship with God that does not heed attempts to organize this relationship, or to subsume it under an abstract idea of the good. The Christians who did not have the strength to realize Christ's message (i.e. many followers of the Church) failed because they were not revolutionaries of the spirit, and spiritual revolution can occur only in each particular person, not in a group *en masse.*

This idea of spiritual revolution is important to Berdyaev mainly because he sees man as a creature who is living in a fallen world, and

who is called to overthrow it. Our world is a product of the Fall, in which man chose freedom but lost paradise. It is only in the fallen world that man has acquired knowledge. "Knowledge was born out of the dark recesses of the irrational. Man preferred death and the bitterness of discrimination to the blissful and innocent life of ignorance."[16] This world is one which leads only to death. Consciousness has been introduced which leads to suffering and to good and evil, neither of which could have existed in paradise where no such moral distinction need be made. Our world has given us freedom but has inevitably made sinners out of each of us. To combat this fallen state man has introduced laws and norms, systems of ethics by which he can survive.

In any talk here about the Fall, we are recalled to Shestov; his attitude towards it is quite different from Berdyaev's, since Shestov sees the desire for knowledge as the cause of original sin. However, both agree that man - after the Fall - relies on norm, law, regulation, that these do not abet spirit but dull it.

For Berdyaev the only way in which man can live meaningfully in the world is through the spirit, which opposes the world and thus calls man to revolution. He says, "The whole of our moral life consists in acquiring spiritual power and conquering the weakness and darkness of the natural life. Christianity bids us to overcome the world and not to submit to it."[17] To him Christianity is revolutionary because it turns the world's values upside down; in this faith it is the publicans and harlots who enter the kingdom of God before the Pharisees, before the self-proclaimed righteous. In the Gospels the last are first and the first last; conventional definitions of wicked and righteous are rendered insignificant.

And yet, paradoxically, because Christian morality is for the strong in spirit, Berdyaev believes that it is an aristocratic religion, one which

requires strength and power, and not compliance to norm and duty. It is ennobling, not enslaving, and therefore is a spiritual aristocracy.[18] Thus, the revolution against the fallen world can be enacted only by the few who belong to the spiritual world, i.e. by those who have the strength. He defines this type of aristocracy as "...a question of man's personal dignity, of a *real* rather than a symbolic dignity, inseparable from the personality's qualities and gifts."[19] Berdyaev is critical of the Church because he sees it as an institution which too often embraces symbolic rather than real dignity. Thus it is neither revolutionary nor aristocratic in the real sense, while the personality can be both, and at the same time. This individualistic interpretation of Christianity differs greatly from Frank's and Solovyov's perspectives, since both of them felt that the Church was destined to play a leading role in man's redemption. As we shall see, though, Berdyaev, is far from scornful of communal spirit.

However, the strength and power which Christian aristocracy possesses is not demonic or Nietzschean in character; rather it summons the Christian to a sense of guilt and humility. (Berdyaev suggests that Nietzsche's rebellion against Christianity was an attack not on the spirit of the religion but on the categorical imperatives, or norms, imposed on it by Kant and others.)[20] According to Berdyaev, Christian strength is not supposed to conquer the world, but to be capable of resisting it. Connected with guilt and humility is suffering, which he believes to be the fundamental law of life. Because Christianity does not try to deny the reality of suffering - indeed the meaning of the Cross validates it - this religion becomes man's necessary guide in life.

> Suffering tracks our steps, even the happiest of us. There is only one way open to man, the way of light and regeneration - to accept suffering as the cross which every one must bear

> following the Crucified...Suffering is closely connected with freedom. To seek a life in which there will be no more suffering is to seek a life in which there will be no more freedom.[21]

In Frank's thought we saw a tendency to equate Christianity with "a light in the darkness", a joyful release from the chaos of the world, but Berdyaev's message is basically the opposite, that accepting Christianity is perhaps the heaviest burden of all, since it demands real suffering, and yet is a necessary burden which brings a light of its own.

Freedom, suffering, the spirit are all associated by Berdyaev with Christianity. In addition to this, though, is another aspect of the religion which calls to mind Solovyov. This is his identification of Christianity with the religion of the Godman. Berdyaev is a Christian not just because of his belief in God, but also because of his belief in man, and he sees in Christ one who has united the two. For Berdyaev, God is not an omnipotent ruler with the means to crush and destroy, nor is he a static Being who has created the world and then watched passively as man has wreaked havoc on it. It is essential to Berdyaev that the destinies of man and God be linked. "Man is the mediator between God and himself...The only way to God is through man. Man carries with him the divine principle, the word of God."[22] For Berdyaev the whole notion of man's personality, so vital a notion to him, is connected with God. (He often makes the distinction between individualism, which may be limited to the natural order, one of a species standing alone for no necessarily moral reason, and personalism - really *religious* individualism, - which is intimately connected with the divine. "Personality is completely different from the individual, which is a biological and sociological category..."[23]) For a man to have a personality means for him to have the divine spark in him. "Human personality as God's idea and God's image is

the centre of moral consciousness, a supreme value. It is a value not because it is the bearer of a universally binding moral law, as with Kant, but just because it is God's image and idea, the bearer of the divine principle in life."[24] Berdyaev sees Christ as the supreme manifestation of human personality and the divine, and thus the notion of a Godman is very important to him.

From this it is apparent that his respect for Solovyov is primarily connected to Solovyov's conception of Godmanhood. Berdyaev saw in the older philosopher's thought an insistence that man participate in the divine; Christ himself, according to both thinkers, is at the centre of this idea (although, as Shestov argued, Solovyov's system was more vital to him than was Christ in the formulation of the idea of Godmanhood), but each man is called to take part in spiritual life. Berdyaev says of Solovyov: "He sees the essence of Christianity in the free union of two natures in Godmanhood, divine and human. Man is the connecting link between the divine and the natural world."[25] Clearly this is a belief close to Berdyaev; man is not only a natural creature, but in his freedom he can also have access to a divine world. Solovyov was admired both by Frank and Berdyaev, because of this emphasis he placed on the internal nature of the God-man relationship.

As is evident, Berdyaev was a strongly believing Christian (although the Russian Orthodox Church was harshly critical of him.) For Berdyaev the interaction between man and God occurred through Christianity, but so too did man's freedom, personality and suffering, all of which he saw in the figure of Christ. From his repudiation of Marxism and his journey through idealism he became, and remained, a Christian, but one who was strongly out of favour with the official Church in Russia. (He declared his aversion to official Christianity by writing an essay called "The Extinguishers of the Spirit", directed against a Church synod. For this he

was put on trial, and claims that, had the trial not been interrupted by the Revolution, he would have ended up in Siberia.)[26] Unlike Frank, he was not attracted to Orthodoxy, but rather to a personal form of Christianity. This religious belief, and the personal nature of it, is essential for a study of any other aspect of Berdyaev's Personalism.

III

Anthropology

While the source of Berdyaev's inspiration seems primarily to be Dostoevsky-inspired Christianity, nonetheless his reflections on the Godman place far greater emphasis on man than on God. That is to say, he was little interested in defining God's attributes apart from man, and he was fairly dismissive of scholastic theology which forced man, so he claimed, to be a static part of a divine design. He considered himself to an extent to be a philosophical anthropologist, whose duty it was to approach the problem of man. God, for Berdyaev, could not be God without man (and vice versa), and it is the definition of the human being which most interested this philosopher.

Essentially, Berdyaev was dissatisfied with the definitions of man which psychology, biology and sociology offered. Each, he felt, provided only one piece of the puzzle and man could not be fitted into just one of these categories. This is not to say that he saw no worth in each of these pieces of the jigsaw. For instance, he believed that psychology, in revealing a subconscious aspect to man, has had enormous value in the study of the human creature. He claims that thinkers like Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche have discovered that man is a creature who torments himself, and who can be false not only to others but to himself as well, while Freud was able to see an infinitude of sinful cravings in man.[27] Thus, to Berdyaev, the modern-day exposure of the psyche as a

darker aspect of man is more valid than a Christian-inspired philosophy such as Thomas Aquinas', in which man is basically a healthy creature seeking bliss. In this respect we can see that while Berdyaev was attracted to idealism, he was not lured by this into accepting man as an essentially good creature who always desires the best for himself and the world.

Berdyaev was much more receptive to the insights of the philosophers and poets than he was to the professional psychologists who claimed to understand man's depths. He greatly valued, for instance, the examination of the psyche in Dostoevsky (who begins his *Notes from Underground* with the words "I am a sick man"), because the novelist attempted to show that bliss was not the chief desire of all mankind. In the same spirit Berdyaev chooses as an epigraph for his own book, *The Destiny of Man*, a quotation from Gogol's notebooks: "It is sad not to see any good in goodness." Although Shestov accuses the young Berdyaev of naively accepting the temptations of all-conquering good, the mature Berdyaev is harshly critical of hedonistic and optimistic philosophies which are blind to man's psychological disorders and which believe in the inevitable triumph of good. He does not insist that man is inevitably ruled by these subconscious, dark forces, but neither does he allow the validity of the "commonplace" conception of man as essentially good. "The greatest moral problem is to make the 'good' fiery, creative, capable of active spiritual struggle and to prevent it from becoming dull, flat and commonplace. The most sinister manifestation of smugness is complacent virtue; complacent vice is morally less terrible."[28] We remember how hostile Shestov was to 'the good', believing that it destroyed active spiritual struggle, but while he wishes to banish 'the good', Berdyaev wishes to transform it, equating good itself with spiritual struggle.

Realizing that man does indeed have this dark side is vital to an understanding of human nature, but the problem with seeing man *only* as a psychological creature, and trying to cure him through exclusively psycho-analytic means, is that it limits him infinitely, and misses the ultimate truths. Berdyaev says, "Psycho-analysis treats man's mental life as though the soul did not exist. It...is a psychology without a soul. The image of God in man is completely darkened and concealed, it is invisible through the darkness of the unconscious and the falsehoods of consciousness."[29]

So we can see that Berdyaev is hostile to psychology (and to sociology and biology) if it claims the sole rights of a definition of man, and yet he is deeply appreciative of its services in uncovering the torments and sicknesses in the psyche. Man is a disturbed creature *but* he can also overcome this through spiritual means. However, his deeper, darker aspects may never be acknowledged by him, and he may live in complete ignorance of his depths and heights as a human being. This gives rise to another definition of Berdyaev's man, which is as a creature sunk in the commonplace. If one thinks of Berdyaev as a spiritual aristocrat, who believes in the fallenness of this world and the nobleness of the kingdom of God, one can conclude that while he allows for a spiritual world for all, he sees the vast bulk of mankind firmly established in *this* world, each one in the collective bearing witness to the herd man. To him this herd man arises in the social accumulations of falsity - in the church, the family, the nation, etc. - which all claim to represent the truth. He says, "So-called 'public opinion' is based upon conventional falsity and uses lies as a means to impose itself on people. Every social fashion is a conventional lie."[30] Each group creates its own rules, beliefs and fashions to preserve and organize itself, but Berdyaev conceives that as nothing more than building on false foundations. This can be related to

Ivan Karamazov's legend; Christ here is a figure which represents freedom and suffering, but he is rejected by almost all people, who prefer to have their rules and beliefs decided for them by "authorities". The Grand Inquisitor says of this mass of humankind, "We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen."[31] The herd man desires nothing more than to put his fate into the hands of so-called "spiritual" leaders on earth, and fears nothing so much as the freedom which the Legend's Christ represents.

For the herd man all potential life is transformed into a mechanical, meaningless process, claims Berdyaev. Love, for example, simply does not exist for the creature who belongs to the mass. In physical terms, sex is either rooted in immorality, or it takes place for the sake of procreation and the continuance of the race. In social terms, sex produces a family which is in accord with the organization of society. For Berdyaev, love is the only way to introduce the personal element into the family or the marriage. This is very difficult for the herd man, since he is concerned more with the organization of the family and society than with spiritual questions. "But the meaning of love, its idea and principle, is victory over the fallen life of sex, in which personality and the spirit have been made subservient to the genus...Love is the reinstatement of the personal element in sex, not natural but spiritual."[32] This idea, incidentally, is close to Solovyov, in his "The Meaning of Love". Again, as usual, Berdyaev returns to the personal element in life as a means of finding the spirit. Official Christianity has failed to appreciate the personal aspect of love. The Church is mainly concerned with families - procreation and the indissoluble marriage - but he says that the legitimacy of love between human beings is an area which is little

touched upon by specifically Christian writers.[33] To him such theologians merely reflect mass morality.

Another manifestation of the herd man is to be found in his attitude towards labour. The view of labour as a curse and a struggle for daily bread is what, more than anything, represses the personality. Berdyaev was deeply critical of what he saw as the exploitation of the working classes - the basis for Marx's thought - but he still believed that labour could be carried out freely and redemptively. Respect for work, he declares, is of Christian origin; after all, Jesus himself was a carpenter.[34]

Clearly, Berdyaev has a negative view of the man who is a part of the mass. He did not believe, as did Solovyov, that humanity was progressing toward the kingdom of God on earth. How could that be, if the herd man is in the ascendant? Man does not have to be an isolated creature to be spiritual - on the contrary, communion with other men is essential to his spiritual life - but, he says, when the Ego is confronted with the mass, it impersonates a character imposed upon it by the mass, and adopts its instincts and passions, however unconsciously it may do this.[35] Thus no institution is free from the clutches of the herd, which can turn virtue, good, God into fashionable, popular and meaningless terms.

IV

Creativeness

So the herd controls the mass of humanity, and even those who may be relatively free from it are still plagued by the torments of their psychological constitutions; it would seem that, according to Berdyaev, no one is exempt from being a degraded creature. And in a sense this is true, because he affirms that man *is* fallen, and is definitely not, as hedonistic philosophy would have it, a healthy, happy being who attains to

bliss. In this he is closer to Shestov than to Solovyov and Frank. And yet, Berdyaev is not a pessimist or a cynic, and if he believes man to be fallen this does not mean that man must therefore be living in permanent isolation from God. We have already seen that Christianity forms the core of Berdyaev's beliefs, but it is insufficient for him that men simply accept the creed of Christianity, or the teachings and commands of the Church. He sees a great truth in the participation of God *and* man in creation, and while God is *the* Creator, man no less than God is called to create, to fulfill his end of the divine human interaction. This is man's greatest attribute, to be creative, and Berdyaev insists that such activity is possible everywhere. Creative activity can take place anywhere and at any time; in a man's love for a woman, in a mother's love for her child; in the pursuit of righteousness.[36] Berdyaev's main contention is that every single creative activity stems solely from the individual, and is his greatest means of expression. "Creation is the greatest mystery of life, the mystery of the appearance of something new that had never existed before and is not deduced from, or generated by, anything."[37] This interpretation is far from one which equates creativity solely with artistic or aesthetic principles; indeed to Berdyaev a book or a statue or a picture is a necessary cooling down from the original fire of inspiration. The creative act does not have to be beautiful or universal, as one thinks of a work of art, but it must originate in the personality, which is eternal. Man is made in the image of God, and God is a Creator, therefore man himself is called to creative work.

Berdyaev sees man as capable of conceiving knowledge creatively, which puts him at immediate odds with Shestov. Man is a creator who regards intellection from a subjective standpoint rather than from an objective one; that is, he seeks knowledge from the depths of his personality. According to this belief, "knowledge is both active and

creative...It can illuminate the objective world wherein *meaning* is revealed, the meaning of human existence and of the universe as part of the Divine Being."[38] This is an almost exact definition of Frank's "living knowledge"; man uses the force of his being to arrive at knowledge-filled meaning in the world. Man is often hindered from approaching knowledge creatively, Berdyaev believes, because of the processes of objectification, in which the subject submits to the world, and hence loses his power as a subject.[39] Thus, knowledge is valid only when it is "living", i.e. a creative function of the individual. But to be able to know creatively, the subject must be free; creative activity in any realm requires independence. "Knowledge would remain unintelligible unless the existential subject were endowed with a certain amount of freedom."[40]

If we look at Berdyaev's conception of knowledge we can see the same themes appearing here as are present in the other areas of his thought. Objectification represents the herd; knowledge conceived objectively, outside of the personality, is wholly conformable to the conventions and rules of herd thought. Man can escape from this objectification only through creative activity, which takes place in freedom. Freedom is the essential quality of the Grand Inquisitor's Christ and it is essential in the process of intellection. Freedom provides man with an opportunity to flee from his degraded world, and it cannot come about without creative activity on the part of man himself.

It is not surprising, then, to see Berdyaev make the connection between Christianity and creativeness. His mainly hostile attitude towards the Church arises because he sees in the institution primarily a fear of creativeness, and a tendency to a legalistic interpretation of the Gospels which distorts the original message. But his version of Christianity is one in which the ethics of creativeness are redeemed, and man is placed

above the Sabbath. Unfortunately, according to Berdyaev, this principle is not often put into practice; Christ was creative but the Church is not, St. Francis had the creative flame of the spirit, as did Luther, but Franciscans and Lutherans have lost the creative instinct.[41] While moral acts, for instance, are not usually associated with creativeness, Berdyaev sees a necessary connection between the two. "One ought always to act individually and to solve every moral problem for oneself, showing creativeness in one's moral activity, and not for a single moment become a moral automaton."[42] Again, we see this difference between Berdyaev's and Shestov's attitudes to morality; to Shestov one must dispense with morality, to Berdyaev, it is true morality which must be created.

It is fairly clear that Berdyaev sees an indissoluble bond between the divine spirit and creative activity. Everywhere we see this connection: God is a creator and so is man, creative intellection brings one into contact with the Divine Being, moral man is a creator, and therefore is truly Christian. A thinker such as Nietzsche, who himself declared the creation of a new order of thought which would overthrow slavish, normative Christianity, is condemned by Berdyaev for misunderstanding Christianity, by identifying it with legalism, when it is just the opposite, it is a source of the creative spirit.[43]

We can begin to see how Berdyaev seems to stand between Shestov on the one side and Solovyov and Frank on the other. Man must strive for the moral element, but he must do so only as an individual, as a creator.

V

Personality

Berdyaev believes that man himself is at the centre of all meaning in the universe. The primary aspect of his thought, which always places

man back at the centre, is what he calls his Personalist philosophy. So much of an individualist is Berdyaev that he wants to extend beyond the term "individual" to "personality"; he endorses Kierkegaard's view that from the religious standpoint the individual has priority over the species, but in wanting to emphasize the absolute uniqueness of the individual he prefers to describe him as a personality.

"The personality is spirit,"[44] he says; it is through this medium that creativeness, freedom and the divine breathe. (It is worth noting that Kierkegaard begins his book *The Sickness Unto Death* with the words "The human being is spirit." Clearly the same idea is at work with both thinkers.) Personalism is Berdyaev's primary reason for refuting systematic thought, or monistic thought. Platonism, Thomism, Frank's and Solovyov's all-unity, all are incompatible with the personality because the system is at the centre and not the person. "The idea of universal order and harmony has no moral or spiritual value, because there is no implicit relationship with the personality's inner life."[45] It would be better, thinks Berdyaev, for one to reject all attempts at finding some harmony in this fallen world, and to accuse oneself of being a degraded being, as does Dostoevsky's Underground Man, because then at least attention is focussed on the personality. In this respect Berdyaev and Shestov share similar views, although Shestov exalts the Underground Man's tragedy, while Berdyaev believes that the personality is much more than a breaking down of old values, it is a value unto itself.

He best describes the personality by saying that it is "never a part but always a whole, never a datum of the external natural world but always a datum of the inner world of existence. It is not an object, and has no place in the abstract objective world. It is not of this world: when confronted with the personality, I am in the presence of a Thou."[46] It would seem that Berdyaev borrowed this concept of the *Thou* from Martin

Buber, (with whom he became acquainted in France) who writes in *I and Thou*, published fifteen years earlier than *Solitude and Society*, from which Berdyaev's quote was taken: "When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing...But when *Thou* is spoken there is no thing. *Thou* has no bounds."[47] The two above quotes are very similar; both indicate a wholeness, an undividedness of the personality. For Berdyaev, however, this wholeness excludes the external world (or the objectified world, the world of the herd-man). To be whole, according to him, the personality must reject this world and become united with the divine forces. As suggested earlier, man is a creator because he is made in God's image, and God is *the* Creator. The same is true of the personality; it is the image and likeness of God, and because of this it rises above the natural world. For Berdyaev the existence of personality is so vital that he associates it with the existence of God. Our biological existence can be explained through evolution, but "the existence of personality presupposes the existence of God...If there is no God as the source of superpersonal values, personality as a value does not exist either; there is merely the individual entity subordinate to the natural life of the genus."[48]

As with creativeness, personality is intimately connected with the divine. Berdyaev is seen by many as primarily a philosopher of freedom, and indeed he insists that freedom must be present if there is to be any real life, but he refuses to condone the notion that personality (as well as creativeness) is free-floating, independent of every influence and completely self-reliant. The personality, he believes, is most truly itself when it most fully participates in the kingdom of God. Only when the personality is *freely subordinated* to God does it have the possibility of thriving. Berdyaev firmly rejects the idea that man's personality can survive in emancipation not only from the fallen world but from God as

well. It is not surprising, therefore, that Berdyaev should declare true Christianity to be the religion of personality. He believed that Jesus, by freeing himself from legalism, Pharisaism, in a word, from the law, did not thereby become a kind of rebel without a cause, but was freed in the sense that he rejected this world so as to accept the kingdom of God. In being "bound up" in the divine, Christ realized personality in the world, and more so than any other man, according to Berdyaev. He thinks that Christianity is best equipped to declare the truth of Personalism. He even believes that Christianity gave rise to personality; pre-Christian man's moral consciousness was formed by the tribe, or clan, and the idea of blood vengeance and moral concepts, for instance, are related to the group and not to the individual. In antiquity: "Personality as a moral subject was not yet born. Only Christianity finally freed man from the power of cosmic forces and of the blood-tie."[49] It is clearly debatable whether this is true or not; if personality is inextricably connected with Christianity, and is the source of all meaning in the world, then non-Christians are presumably to be cast into outer darkness, or at least obliged to convert, as Solovyov and Frank would have liked to see. At any rate, Berdyaev is not a fundamentalist Christian; what he sees in Christianity are the principles of personality, i.e. spirituality, freedom and unique individuality, and he contrasts these principles with those he sees in the fallen world: egocentricity, objectification, renunciation of freedom.

The contemporary Soviet critic A.L. Andreyev accuses Berdyaev of making an abstraction of the personality itself. "With Berdyaev, the personality is not a definite person, but a certain metaphysical construction. Therefore it is characterized quite abstractly, outside of any sort of conditions, outside of time and place. The ordinary affairs of man, his daily needs, his joys and sufferings, essentially have little

interest for Berdyaev."[50] It is certainly true that Berdyaev accepts the validity of general terms such as "spirit", and "the divine", but the personality, as Berdyaev would have it, is just the opposite of abstract, even though it is metaphysical, or beyond the merely physical.

So as a philosophical anthropologist, Berdyaev is neither a pessimist nor an optimist. In the herd-man he sees a complete submission to the values of this degraded world, and in man's psychological make-up he acknowledges deep and disturbing currents which force man to turn against himself and reject any inclination towards ultimate happiness. But he also sees individual man as a potentially creative being, who has a unique personality and is called upon by God to realize it. Berdyaev's outlook, in recognizing that man is largely formed by biological, sociological and psychological factors, also insists that the single personality is greater than the species; he recognizes a spiritual, creative, individualistic side of man in which all his meaning on earth is to be found.

VI

Subjectivism and Objectivism

Having examined Berdyaev's attitudes toward Christianity and man, we can form some idea of the direction in which this thinker travelled to arrive at his Christian Personalism. As an anti-systematic philosopher, one might say an irrationalist, it may seem as if he rejected philosophical knowledge for the sake of the individual human being, as does Shestov. He himself denies having a consistently logical approach to ideas, saying in his book *The Meaning of the Creative Act* that "my thoughts and the normal course of philosophical argument seemed to dissolve into vision."[51] If this were always true, then Berdyaev would be

either a failed philosopher or an anti-philosopher like Shestov. But neither is the case, because throughout his work he does indeed explore traditional philosophical arguments, not from the outside as Shestov does, battering away at the foundations of philosophy, but from the inside. Like Frank, Berdyaev believed that knowledge could be 'living'.

Berdyaev was a very prolific writer who in the course of half a century produced many books. To review all of his philosophical positions might itself occupy several books, but here it is useful to focus on three of the most important areas of his thought: namely, his attitude to subjectivism and objectivism, to freedom, and to time. In each of these areas Berdyaev establishes a standpoint which never loses sight of his Personalism.

The argument between subjectivism and objectivism is as old as philosophy itself. Which is closer to the truth, the subject himself with his own mental and emotional and spiritual life, or the objective agents from which man acquires these various forms of life? For our purposes it is enough to state what may already be obvious, that Berdyaev himself was a subjectivist. Even before his Christian views had fully developed we can see, by the very title of his first book, *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy*, that he was committed to the subject over the object. Berdyaev believes that every philosopher, even the ones most seemingly loyal to objectivism (such as Plato, Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel) formed their beliefs based on reflection of their own destiny, i.e. they reflected subjectively. "The faculty of apprehension is essentially that of the Ego, of man as a concrete being, as a personality, and not that of the universal spirit or of the universal reason, of the impersonal subject or of the general consciousness."[52] The various arguments surrounding the question of the subject and the object go back and forth endlessly (Frank, as one example, sees man in a much more objectified

light than does Berdyaev), and Berdyaev as a philosopher might even be at some disadvantage, since he himself admits that his thought is not logically-based. His arguments for the subjective are not founded upon logical reasoning but upon an appeal to the human heart, to faith, and to the experience of human existence as the chief criteria for subjectivism.[53] This is basically a restatement of Pascal's maxim, "*Le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connait pas*". Berdyaev says, "Since there is no way of apprehending *Meaning* without a criterion of value, its apprehension is primarily based on the knowledge of the heart. Philosophical apprehension involves man's entire being, that is, the union of faith and knowledge."[54]

This definition places meaning in man and not in the world, that is, subjectively and not objectively, but Berdyaev also insists on the legitimacy of spirit which is not outside man, as objectivism might demand, but which still encompasses all men. He says that, "the spirit lies beyond a rationalized opposition between subject and object. Truth does not mean staying within some closed ideas, in an inescapable circle of consciousness: truth is an unlocking, a revealing. Truth is not objective but rather trans-subjective."[55] We can say that Berdyaev is a subjectivist, but with the proviso that truth is not limited to the single person, but is spread across all persons, at least potentially. One is strongly reminded here of Frank's and Solovyov's all-unity. Both of these thinkers saw spirit spreading across mankind, an immanent spirit which lived in each person (Solovyov's Sophia and Frank's 'reality' would both fit this description). Berdyaev as a trans-subjectivist wants to have the primacy of the personality *and* a universal spirit, an outlook which would certainly distance him from Shestov's stark, uncompromising individualism.

His attitude to objectivism can be expressed by his use of the term

"objectification", which to Berdyaev is a process that inheres in *this* world, rather than in the divine one. He says:

> Objective processes *abstract* and disrupt existence. They substitute society for community, general principles for communion, and the empire of Caesar for the kingdom of God. There is no participation in objective processes...the result of objectification in knowledge as elsewhere is not only to isolate man but also to confine his activities to an essentially alien world.[56]

There is a paradox here, because, as Berdyaev claims, knowledge which seeks to be general, or objective, is in fact isolated and alienated. We have already looked at his views on the herd man and the natural world as opposed to the divine world, and it is clear that objectification, in the seeking of knowledge or in the living of life, belongs to the degraded world. Berdyaev, in surveying the development of thought throughout history, declares that the philosopher has had very little time to escape the clutches of objectivism. Platonist, Aristotelian and medieval Scholastic thought were all based on objectivism, and by the time philosophy began to emancipate itself at the end of the medieval era, science (the most objectified form of knowledge) was around the corner. This is not to say that science is entirely bad, since it can provide a universal means of communication between men, but it does so "without at the same time establishing any true communion between them."[57]

Thus Berdyaev does not reject knowledge but says that it must be united with faith to be valid, which is no different from what Frank says about "living knowledge". If one wishes to reject the truth of the human heart, then Berdyaev's argument will seem to crumble, because it is not

rooted in logic or reason. On the other hand, if it is an irrational argument, it is not a nonsensical one; Berdyaev is calling for a "humanization" of knowledge, which does not give primacy to objectified reason. He is clearly on the side of the subject over the object, the individual over the collective, but he never calls himself a Subjectivist or an Individualist, but mainly a Personalist, which is an extension of the first two categories.

VII

Freedom

In all Berdyaev's writings the subjectivist (or trans-subjectivist) standpoint can be at least tacitly understood. He accepts the general assumptions of subjectivism and interprets them in his own, personalistic, way. More difficult to come to terms with in his philosophy, though, is his notion of freedom. We have seen how the image of Christ as the greatest representative of freedom in the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" had such an influence on Berdyaev. Throughout his writings he insists that freedom is the condition which is absolutely necessary in order to realize personality, creativeness and a divine-human union. He has been called "a captive of freedom", and says of his thought that "at the foundations of my philosophy I placed not being, but freedom...In freedom is concealed the secret of the world...Freedom is at the beginning and at the end."[58] It will not hurt us to ask what may seem like an unnecessary question: What does Berdyaev mean by freedom?

It may be surprising to learn that he did not believe freedom issues from God. Although one expects Berdyaev to connect value in man's life with the divine, he makes the statement: "Initial freedom is rooted in 'nothing'..."[59] Berdyaev is reluctant to give God the responsibility for

freedom which allows man to be evil, so as a result man must be not merely a child of God, but also a child of freedom - or of nothing, of non-being. This means that God is not really omnipotent, because he has power only over being, and not over non-being from which freedom springs. Indeed, to trace Berdyaev's complicated cosmogony, God himself was created in this non-being, and he in turn created the world and man. He expected man to respond to him from the depths of freedom, which man did, but then man rebelled against God (in the Fall). "All rebellion against God is a return to non-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."[60] So evil has arisen because in freedom man chose to turn away from God, towards nothing. This requires that God (in the form of Christ) descend into non-being to conquer evil freedom by enlightening it from within. According to Berdyaev, freedom is not about categorical imperatives, but is intimately linked with creativeness. However, this theme of the relationship between creativeness and freedom is a familiar one in his thought - freedom could never be imposed from without - and therefore it seems somewhat alien to his methods and style of philosophical analysis that freedom should find itself now more a product of non-being than of God, and further, find itself rooted in the kind of abstract theological conjecture which he claims that many theologians are guilty of.

On the other hand this theory, so Berdyaev declares, is in fact based on a refutation of positive theology, which attempts to explain why God created a world in which evil and suffering thrive. By releasing God from the burden of the world's evil, man can turn to negative theology, which does not try to rationalize mystery but exalts it. Such concepts as Jacob Boehme's *Ungrund*, the primeval abyss from which creation sprung, gave rise to Berdyaev's own perception of freedom.[61] In his book on Berdyaev,

An Apostle of Freedom, M. A. Vallon offers a definition of Boehme's theory:

> Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) held that back of the whole universe, both spiritual and physical, there is the primal 'groundlessness' - the *Ungrund* or the Absolute. Active in it is only an inchoate and subjective will which Boehme called the 'Unmanifested Abysmal Will'. Boehme's *Ungrund* goes deeper than God. It is the Godhead preceding God. It is the undetermined, the unconditional basis of God and the world alike. More precisely, the *Ungrund* is nothingness longing to become something.[62]

Frederick Coplestone, in his *Philosophy in Russia*, tries to come to some understanding of this notion of freedom; he thinks there is no inconsistency in the idea that freedom has its origin in God and that it also has its origin in the *Ungrund*, although, he admits, the statements appear to conflict.[63] There is irony in the fact that Berdyaev's fundamental belief in man's freedom over external compulsion and the laws and norms of this world should be beclouded by mystical philosophical notions, which somehow seem to be unrelated to man as the personalistic being which Berdyaev claims has priority over all other principles in the world.

Shestov once again wrote on Berdyaev's thought in an essay published in 1938, entitled, "Nicholas Berdyaev: Gnosis and Existential Philosophy", in which the question of Berdyaev's definition of freedom arises. This essay is more important than Shestov's first one on Berdyaev since it was written when both thinkers were fully developed; the fundamental difference of their thought is clearly manifested here.

The task that Shestov sets himself in his essay is to prove that

Berdyaev's philosophy derives not from human existence but from philosophical knowledge. Shestov quotes Berdyaev's definition of freedom:

> Freedom gives birth to evil as well as to good. Therefore evil does not deny the existence of meaning, but affirms it. Freedom is not created, because it is not nature, freedom precedes the world, it is rooted in primordial being. God is omnipotent over being, but not over nothing, not over freedom. And as a result, evil exists.[64]

According to Shestov, this may be true and it may be false, but it is definitely knowledge, and knowledge leads away from God.

Shestov thinks that the result of Berdyaev's theory is that God is deprived of his right to be all-powerful. If freedom has the final say, then even the Creator must submit: for God all things are *not* possible. In his later thought Shestov is largely preoccupied with the question of God's utter freedom; so free must he be that he could make the past not to have happened. Clearly Berdyaev's theory offends against this - traditional philosophy has given him the assurance that for God all things are *not* possible - and in the end Shestov condemns his friend to being no more than a philosopher of culture, rather than a true adherent to the Bible[65], a damning blow from Shestov. He ends his essay with these words: "Freedom comes to man not from knowledge but from faith, which presupposes an end to all our sufferings."[66] It is not so easy as Shestov makes out to cut Berdyaev off from his own philosophy, and to insist that he is only a pure gnostic, a knowledge-seeker, but Shestov does make it clear that Berdyaev's theory of the origin of freedom does not escape the clutches of knowledge.

One of the crucial questions of this dissertation is, Whose definition of the individual is more convincing, Shestov's or Berdyaev's? Since they are both passionately concerned with the individual, one would hope to find common ground between the two, but Shestov will have none of this, as he berates his friend for taking refuge in knowledge. In fact the two are closer than Shestov is willing to admit; while Berdyaev uses the tools of philosophy to arrive at his definition of the individual, nevertheless both thinkers see existence as having primacy over knowledge (Although Berdyaev's philosophical forays occasionally yield such booty as the *Ungrund*, which do not help his Personalist argument.) To decide whose ideas are more valuable concerning the individual, Shestov's or Berdyaev's, one has to decide which approach is better, the one which repudiates all the aims of philosophy, or the one which works within philosophy.

But Berdyaev is a philosopher of man rather than of the cosmos, and his vision of the beginnings of freedom is less important than how that freedom relates to man. Certainly he is more occupied with the redemptive freedom which Christ (in the "Legend") has given to man. Berdyaev in his autobiography says of freedom, "A huge mass of people do not love freedom at all, and do not search for it. The revolutionary masses do not love freedom. I have acquired much along my spiritual path, in the experience of my life, but for me freedom is primary, it is not acquired, it is the *a priori* of my life."[67] Because Berdyaev's philosophy is so centred around the personality, from which stem creativeness and communion with the divine, freedom becomes vitally necessary, because otherwise it cannot live. A personality restricted by the norms of society, the morality of the herd, etc., is not really a personality, because it is not free.

Freedom is such a nebulous term that it must be emphasized that in

Berdyaev's case he links it - usually - with religious experience. This of course is not a self-evident association; the Russian revolutionary thinker Mikhail Bakunin, to take one example, was also a "captive of freedom", but he disdained any religious approach to life. He says in a speech on education that "we are sincere, unhypocritical partisans of *individual freedom*."[68] And yet, "Divine morality is based on two immoral principles: respect for authority and contempt for humanity."[69] It is easy to see that Bakunin here would have been reacting against authoritiarian, hierarchical, official religions, which to Berdyaev also were often based on immoral principles, but while Bakunin rejects divine morality because it denies freedom, Berdyaev insists that freedom is intimately connected with the divine. The problem arises, according to Berdyaev, when human morality assumes for itself the mantle of divine morality.

The masses do not love freedom because, thinks Berdyaev, it does not bring satisfaction, delight and ease, but rather is a burden which will make life harder, more tragic and full of responsibility.[70] This is an idea which runs through much of his thought: freedom is essential for religious life and yet it brings with it spiritual struggle which is absent in the herd man. (If freedom and spiritual struggle are so important to Berdyaev, why is Shestov so critical of his friend? It is Shestov's uncompromising stance which creates such a great division between the two.) Again there is the idea that spirituality (freedom, creativeness, personality, Christianity) emancipates one from the fallen world but binds one to the spiritual world. Conscience, which seems to chain man to responsibility, is in fact the call of freedom.

VIII

Time

One of the greatest dilemmas for Berdyaev is encountered in the problem of time. "Time is the nightmare and the torment of our life in this world,"[71] he says. The fact that man is born, lives and dies within time means that unless there is some escape from its chains life is meaningless, because death is final. On the other hand, he thinks, death itself can give meaning to life, because if life continued forever there would be no meaning to it. Meaning, he claims, lies beyond this world, beyond time,[72] and it is death which transfers us finally to another world. Berdyaev does not believe that our lives are meaningless until we die; but meaning has to be captured in opposition to time; the fulfillment of meaning in the world is the negation of time. In a word, he establishes the eternal in contradistinction to the temporal.

Berdyaev subscribes to the belief that man finds his greatest meaning in the world by living in the present rather than the past or the future. He says, "Wherein lies the root of time's evil? It lies in the fact that man finds it impossible to experience the present as a complete and joyful whole, as a part of eternity, or to shake off, even while enjoying the present instant, the dread of the past and of the future, and of their nostalgia."[73] The present, if it is a "complete and joyful whole", is not part of time, but of eternity. One of man's greatest problems, Berdyaev insists, is that he is continually putting himself into the grip of time, proving incapable of living in the present. But this is not to say that the present has value if it is divorced from the spiritual. There are two different types of "instant", he claims. The first is part of the objective world, just one of a succession of instants which are measured mathematically. In our technological world, the instant loses its richness and becomes merely a stepping stone to the next instant. There is no wholeness in the human Ego, only a succession of instants in time. Yet this is the opposite of the instant when it is not disintegrated, which

is "the instant of the eternal present, indivisible and integrally part of eternity."[74] This sense of wholeness recalls Berdyaev's description of the personality, which is indivisible, not a thing among things. The present has validity only if it is spiritual, or eternal, which opposes the temporal. The paradox for the herd man where time is concerned is that with all his power to forget time and death, by trying to live in the "fallen present" (i.e. through intoxication, obsession, evil, base fear) he lives in death.

Fundamentally related to this problem of time are Berdyaev's attitudes towards Heaven and Hell. The whole notion of good and evil in this or any other world suggests punishment or reward for one's actions, but Berdyaev is very sceptical about a Hell which exists simply to punish the wicked. The Old Testament, for instance, is filled with pleas for God to ensure the triumph of justice and the retribution of the wicked, but Berdyaev considers this to be a kind of fairy-tale, borrowed from our worldly existence.[75] Nor does he have a Dante-like map of Hell, with descriptions of who gets what, and how. Hell, he claims, is exclusively linked to the subjective, and to time. "Hell is not eternity at all, but endless duration in time...In Hell are those who remain in time and do not pass into eternity, those who remain in the subjective closed-in sphere and do not enter the objective realm of the kingdom of God."[76] Berdyaev's perspective as a thinker requires eternal values - creativeness, personality - and to be forbidden access to these values is to be doomed to isolation from God, or to be in Hell. Man who rejects God, not just by name but by God's spirit, man who takes his fate into his own hands and cannot pass into the transcendental, is abandoned in the abyss of the temporal. It is impossible to understand this argument rationally, because if, say, to be evil is to be rooted in time, then death presumably releases the evil man from time. But the victims of evil may suffer far

more than the perpetrator of the evil. Does this "time-perdition" persist after death, so that the evil-doer lives in time "eternally"? Berdyaev is not sympathetic to the notion of paying eternally for one's sins; rather, his philosophy acknowledges the mystery of the beyond. But it is apparent that his notion of Hell is rooted in man's fallen world, in the world of time.

Heaven, then, is just the opposite of Hell. It is not a reward for having lived an upright life, for having obeyed the Ten Commandments and gone to church every Sunday, etc. And we cannot think of it in our own descriptive terms, imagining a Garden of Eden. Man has fallen away forever from a state of pre-sin innocence. But we can attain to paradise here on earth, by means of an escape from time to the eternal. He says that "Paradise is not in the future, is not in time, but is in eternity. Eternity is attained in the actual moment, it comes in the present - not in the present which is a part of the broken-up time, but in the present which is an escape from time."[77] In this way the onus for paradise and perdition is placed on man himself. God plays his divine role through grace, but man cannot toil, pay hard cash, or adhere to the laws of his society to attain paradise; it takes place in his life, by his initiation and with the grace of God. Heaven and Hell exist only in life, there is no Heaven and Hell beyond life; but Berdyaev's intention is not to deny an afterlife, rather it is to declare the essential importance that man himself has in creating paradise and perdition. "The kingdom of God comes not only at the end of time but at every moment. A moment may lead us from time into eternity...There are two ways to eternity - through the depth of the moment and through the end of time and the world."[78] Partly because of Berdyaev's suspicion of the lack of good in goodness, and of the dullness and static essence of most human conceptions of paradise, he cannot imagine what Heaven would actually look like. But

also, in seeing the problem of time as being so fundamental to man's understanding of life and death, he places the possibility of paradise inside our own lives, but outside of time.

Berdyaev claims that he is not a dualist, that is, he does not make the distinction between two spheres of being, the material and the spiritual.[79] Because he is not a systematic philosopher, and an understanding of his thought does not rely on an explanation of the world in abstract, "non-personal" terms, one can hardly find the sort of cohesive world-explanation which inheres in the thought of such a philosopher as his contemporary Semyon Frank. On the other hand it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Berdyaev's thought tends towards distinguishing between the fallen and the spiritual world. This fallen world which we inhabit and the kingdom of God, the subjective and objectification, time and eternity, the personality and the herd man, all of these opposites indicate a strong sense of duality. It is fairly clear that Berdyaev makes a distinction between the worldly and the spiritual, which is very much what Solovyov and Frank do, they whom Berdyaev accuses of being too systematic. Solovyov's and Frank's sense of the religious individual only manifested itself on the spiritual, divine, eternal plane, and it seemed that with Berdyaev we were concentrating more on the individual than on the world-system, but it does appear that he too makes the same distinctions as Solovyov and Frank, although not so systematically.

By the same token, Berdyaev's Personalism is as man-centred as Shestov's Groundlessness. Berdyaev works within knowledge and philosophy to form his beliefs, but he insists that only the individual human being can manifest God's will on earth, through his unique personality. In Berdyaev's philosophy it is impossible for man to escape his responsibility; it falls on him alone to use freedom creatively, and to

realize true Christian principles. That is, not just to realize them through the Church, (i.e. through the spiritual leaders who offer peace and happiness in exchange for freedom, like the Grand Inquisitor), or through the herd. Man must realize these principles through his own life. This philosophy presents several paradoxes: man must be free to live meaningfully, but the freedom must also bind him to spirit; man can hope to find release from his earthly sufferings only in the spiritual world, but the spirit itself demands suffering; the spirit is revolutionary, since it overthrows the world, but those who perform this revolution become aristocrats of the spirit. These paradoxes, however, are not contradictions; rather they express, according to Berdyaev, man's position between the earthly and divine worlds. Man can respond to this position only through his personality.

XI

Society

While Berdyaev was primarily a philosophical anthropologist, trying above all to understand the essential nature of man, he was also a social philosopher, who wrote extensively on the social and political conditions which influence the personality. He recognized the individual as having primacy over the species, but at the same time believed that each person's participation in divine life did not occur only with God, but with other persons as well. Like Frank, Berdyaev paid close attention to his own society as it underwent radical change, and he worked hard to awaken the Russian spirit to what he saw as its destiny.

Berdyaev was very sceptical about the ability of the State or the Church to play a positive role in the development of the individual. The State, he declares, belongs to the objective world; it does not take the personality into account, even when it is upholding its rights, "for it

regards the personality as an abstract unity rather than as a living entity."[80] The State's role is essentially to introduce order, law and authority, which can help the personality to survive but do not affect it directly. We have seen that he holds a similar attitude in respect to the Church; it can have value as a means of uniting people in a religious community, but he believes that its tendency is to become objectified, to adapt the norms of the particular society and thereby to lose its value. In general it could be said that all institutions, the Church and the State being the most notable ones, are aspects of objectified society, which, *qua* institutions, elude the divine world.

> The personality and society are not identical...The function of society is to establish a more or less permanent and stable mode of communication between men; it is a material phenomenon manifesting itself in the degraded world; its rule is the law of the greatest number.[81]

But this is not to suggest that man is forced into isolation to find meaning in his life. Berdyaev believes that the personality is manifested not through communication but through communion. Communion in Berdyaev's sense of the term is like Khomyakov's *sobornost':* it is an internal bond between personalities, rather than simply an external meeting of like-minded believers. Khomyakov intended *sobornost'* to be the basis of the Church, while Berdyaev thinks that communion can take place in varying social environments. Communion does away with the objective world, and focusses on the divine: "The communion of the *I* and the *Thou* gives rise to the *We*; the communion of two personalities is consummated in a third."[82] Thus, amongst other men, man is bound to assert his unique personality. This means that all the efforts of the

State to create a utopia, and all the efforts of the Church to bring the kingdom of God down to earth, are doomed to fail because they remain outside the mystery of the personality, and will never be able permanently to incorporate personality into their structure. An essential feature of communion for Berdyaev is the freedom which it embodies. While the State often uses force and compulsion when necessary to achieve its end, and society as a whole uses its social pressures to keep its members tethered to norm and tradition, communion is entirely free. Berdyaev says, "When the individual is organically attached to the Church, then the Church cannot be for him an external authority. Christian freedom is realized for him in communal life."[83] Part of Berdyaev's debt to nineteenth-century Russian religious thought is this notion of freedom within spiritual togetherness, which recognizes no external pressures. Certainly Solovyov embraced such a notion, but its origin goes back to Khomyakov, who first envisaged spiritual unity within the authoritarian Orthodox Church. Berdyaev did not support many aspects of official Orthodoxy, because in fact the official Church rejected *sobornost'*, claiming that it undermined authority. Further, communion was not ecclesiastically-related for Berdyaev; unlike Frank, he saw little value in the rituals and traditions of the Church.

The danger for a thinker like Berdyaev in the notion of *sobornost'* is that it can seem to strip the participants in this spiritual togetherness of their individuality. Instead of the objectified herd one could imagine a kind of spiritual herd, which tramples the individual. But Berdyaev has sufficient faith in the personality to claim that the group, no matter how spiritually orientated, will not have priority over the individual's creativeness and divine calling. The personality, he says, which is only partly accessible to other personalities, can make communion difficult because of its distinctness, but nonetheless by entering this spiritual

world the personality finds not adversaries and hostility, but unity and fraternity.[84] Communion which hinders the personality is not communion, but communication, or some form of objectification.

The belief in communion over communication puts Berdyaev directly into the mainstream of traditional Russian religious thought, and we often find him trying to awaken the Russian spirit to its communal potential. He tells us that "in the depths of the Russian people is a living spirit...The development of Russia to its role in the world presupposes its spiritual rebirth."[85]

X

Socialism

Berdyaev's social philosophy is governed by spirituality, union in the divine world and freedom. All of these principles are also present in the anthropological and Christian aspects of his thought. But while communion between men does not at all require the intrusion of the State or other social institutions, nevertheless Berdyaev believes that society must be ordered in such a way as to give communal life the greatest opportunity to flourish. In political terms, he believed that the best way to do this was neither through capitalism nor communism. As has already been mentioned in this essay, the Russian religious thinkers at the turn of the century did not generally turn towards capitalism after rejecting communism; their criticisms were based on spiritual factors, not economic ones; and Berdyaev is no different. "In reality I am a supporter of a classless society, which is to say that in this respect I am closest to communism. But in spite of this, I am also a supporter of...spiritual aristocratism."[86] His harshness towards what he sees as the de-personalization of man in capitalist society is hardly less sharp than Marx's. Capitalism, Berdyaev says, "is an absolutely cold world in which

one cannot even see the face of the master and enslaver; it is slavery to abstract phantasms of the capitalist world. All spiritual bonds between men are finally severed, society is completely atomized, and the 'free' individual is utterly forsaken and left to himself, helpless in a terrible and alien world."[87] One could hardly imagine such strong language from the communist ideologues who expelled Berdyaev from the Soviet Union. In fact, the similarity with Marx is not a coincidence; although Berdyaev claimed that his revolutionary tendencies were based not on Marxism and socialism, but on spirituality, he nonetheless says that he fully accepted the Marxist criticism of capitalism.[88] Berdyaev disassociates himself from Marx because of what he sees as the latter's materialism and his disregard for the individual personality in society, but the two thinkers share a hatred for what they see as the exploitation inherent in capitalism.

On the other hand, socialism, Berdyaev claims, as it is theorized about and practiced, is a rejection of the spiritual world which has priority over the earthly world. At some points socialism and Christianity are capable of agreement, because both deny the value of personal property and both struggle for an acknowledgement of all men as equal. Berdyaev thinks, however, that the motives for Christianity and socialism are completely at odds. Socialism as practiced through materialistic communism is plunged into the kingdom of this world, and denies spiritual reality.[89] Because its values are limited to this world, it is no better than capitalism; both systems avoid spiritual solutions. For one who believes in the reality of the spiritual world, as do Berdyaev, Solovyov and Frank, any political philosophy which sees the aims of society as being purely earthly ones has to be unsatisfactory, whatever its noble ideal.

Berdyaev believed in a socialism which would allow for the personality

to express itself. But he developed as a thinker during a period in which, so he claims, the socialist-communist movements denied the personality. He gives a detailed analysis of the failure of materialistic socialism to solve any of the problems of freedom, equality or individuality. He felt that in Russian society, socialism in its various guises, while remaining rooted in materialism, nevertheless had a kind of fervent approach to the transformation of society that could only be considered religious in nature. For the Russian revolutionary, socialism was not merely the means to a better society, or a correcting of social injustices; it was an ultimate value in itself, demanding complete faith and allowing of no other gods. Communism "itself wants to be a religion; advancing towards a replacement of Christianity; it pretends to respond to the religious needs of the human soul and to give sense to life."[90] According to Berdyaev, communism sees Christianity not from the internal subjective standpoint, but objectively, i.e. it identifies Christianity with the Church. Orthodoxy has not only been inextricably linked to the autocratic monarchy, but it also draws its members away from the revolutionary movement, and thus can play no part in a communistic system. In fact, Berdyaev says that a socialist Christian is more harmful to a revolutionary movement than a bourgeois Christian,[91] because the bourgeois Christian can be used as an opponent along the way to realizing socialism, while the socialist has divided loyalties which can only hinder the cause.

Berdyaev points out that communism demands atheism, because it maintains a total-outlook. He thinks that Lenin is a prime example of the revolutionary who was willing to sacrifice every old value for the sake of the new society. "Lenin is an absolutist, he believes in absolute truth...Totalitarian Marxism, dialectical Marxism, is an absolute truth. This absolute truth is a weapon of the revolution and the organization of

the dictatorship."[92] Such absolutism on the part of Lenin, Berdyaev claims, led him to distort Marx's teachings by giving primacy to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would ensure that the new communist values were established.

A.L. Andreyev, in his essay on Berdyaev, denies that Lenin was an absolutist, claiming that no one who was acquainted with Lenin saw in him a narrow-minded fanatic; on the contrary, his love of art and his selflessness were well known. Andreyev accuses Berdyaev of not being able to prove his notion of Russian messianism in communist thought, but only declaring it as true, and supporting his beliefs with arbitrary analogies but not a thorough analysis.[93] But if for no other reason, Berdyaev's impartiality seems to be made legitimate by the fact that he was highly critical both of capitalism and of the old Church and State, the main enemies of the Russian revolutionary. It is primarily worth mentioning this defence of Lenin because the book in which this essay appears (*The Origin and Meaning of Russian Communism*) was published in 1990; glasnost has cleared the way for the reemergence of Berdyaev in Russia, but it is notable that as late as 1990 there was still an "official" response attached to this attack on Russian communism.

Berdyaev's perspective on the revolutionary movement is basically the same as Frank's. Frank, it will be remembered, saw Russian socialism as being nihilistic, overturning the old values while not replacing them with positive new ones. Berdyaev sees a movement which insists on absolute values, but values which are rooted in materialism, and thus have no higher meaning. Like Frank he thinks that Russian communism has missed out on the natural development of European thought, and instead combined traditional Russian Messianism with the latest socialist Messianism, which in part creates the paradoxically religious nature of the Russian revolutionary movement.

Berdyaev, it might seem, would have welcomed any revolution in Russia as a necessary development in the country's history, as it got rid of the old, ossified order. But as has been been pointed out, he considered himself to be a revolutionary of the spirit, which he thought was very different from a revolutionary of this world. He sees revolution in the national sense as being closer to genocide than to regeneration. "A revolution cannot be regarded as a new and better life, it is an illness, a catastrophe, a passage through death. A revolution always brings with it an avenger who performs the greatest cruelties and acts of violence."[94]

Ironically, while it is through religion that man finds the greatest expression of his personality, according to Berdyaev, it is also the religious frame of mind which turns its energies into a fanatical desire to bring about revolutionary change, culminating in elements in society such as religion being stamped out. (As Berdyaev points out, early socialists such as Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were the sons of priests.[95] For that matter Stalin himself trained in a seminary in his youth.) The symbols of scientific socialism had replaced the symbols of Christianity; however, the fervor and the absolutist nature of religion remained, but they turned against religion itself. Berdyaev supports a type of socialism which is not anti-religious, since he sees in the idea of equality a fundamental Christian precept, and he feels that the methods of the religiously fanatic anti-religionists are badly misguided.

Berdyaev in his mature writings shows a clear awareness of the corruptibility of the good, and he sees in old systems which have failed (the Russian autocracy being a prime example) an abuse of good. They have formulated their lofty principles but failed to realize them.[96] But he claims that it is a mistake to suggest that revolution will rid itself of decayed good and in its place put fresh, pure values. In an essay written for *Iz glubiny*, which followed the original anti-revolutionary

compendium *Vekhi*, Berdyaev counters the claim that revolution is in any way healthy by a reference to Gogol. In the novel *Dead Souls* there are many highly unappealing characters: Chichikov, Sobakevich, Nozdryev are all motivated by pettiness, greed, hypocrisy. The Russian revolutionary thinks that such characters as these have been formed by old Russia and will disappear through revolution. But, says Berdyaev:

> In the revolution the very same old, eternally Gogolevian Russia was revealed, an inhuman, beastlike Russia of mugs and snouts...Futile were the hopes that the Russian Revolution would reveal a human form, that the human personality would ascend to its full height after the autocracy fell...There is no longer autocracy, but Russian darkness and Russian malice have remained.[97]

Berdyaev is not blind to the tragic necessity of social and political change, even that which may be violent, but he rejects the notion that such violent change will bring true renewal.

In the case of the October Revolution, he believes that the totalitarian government which resulted from it was more important to the revolutionaries than any adherence to the Marxist theories of society. For better or worse, capitalism was not a part of the economic development of Russia, even though Marxist belief holds this as a necessary step on the road to communism. But Bolshevism was far more interested in seizing and keeping power than waiting for capitalism to have its day, and Berdyaev sees these totalitarian instincts as being the most evil aspect of Russian communism. "In other countries communism is able to be less despotic."[98] The fervent orthodoxy of the Russian revolutionary makes totalitarianism seem inevitable. When we see that

Berdyaev's philosophy is centered around the notion of freedom, it is obvious that this idea obtains in the political world as well. If capitalism creates slavery through attaching economic value to man, then socialism creates its own slavery by forcing man to renounce his freedom in the name of the "ideal". A society which is not pluralistic, no matter what its social ideals, Berdyaev believes, will always become victimized by tyranny and the oppression of the personality.

How then can he reconcile his beliefs in a socialistic state (i.e., one which upholds the equality of all men) with his clear condemnation of socialism as it is practiced? In effect, his ideas in this respect differ little from Frank's. They are based upon a Christian understanding of society. Man is not just a part of the social and economic process as capitalism and socialism have it, but he must be seen as having a higher significance.

> Namely Christianity teaches that the human soul is more valuable than all the kingdoms of the world, Christianity is eternally attentive to each individual man and to his individual fate. Man, always individual and un-repeatable, is for Christianity a more primary and basic reality than society.[99]

Thus Berdyaev voices the view expressed from the time of the Slavophiles; indeed in this respect he is almost indistinguishable from Khomyakov, Solovyov and Frank. What Berdyaev adds to this view is the emphasis on personality. Because it has precedence over the species, the personality itself is more important than the State. It is the State which must cater to the individual, and not the other way around.

Berdyaev died in Paris in 1947, never having returned to his homeland.

It caused him much grief, he says, that his books which were popular all over the world were banned in the Soviet Union. In his autobiography written at the end of his life, he says, "I think much about the tragedy of Russian culture, of the Russian rupture, which the West has never known in such a form. There is something which is tormenting in the Russian fate. And it is necessary to endure it to the end."[100]

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4. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
5. Ibid., p. 287.
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11. N. Berdyaev, Dostoevsky, p. 204.
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14. N. Berdyaev, Samopoznaniye, p. 205.
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16. Ibid., p. 36.
17. Ibid., p. 117.
18. Ibid., p. 115.
19. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society trans. George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), p. 193.
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22. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 54.
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25. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), pp. 205-206.
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28. Ibid., pp. 179-180.
29. Ibid., p. 73.
30. Ibid., p. 163.
31. F. Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 266.
32. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, pp. 232-240.

33. Ibid., pp. 233-241.
34. Ibid., pp. 214-215.
35. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, p. 191.
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37. Ibid., p. 127.
38. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, p. 72.
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40. Ibid., p. 75.
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42. Ibid., p. 132.
43. Ibid., p. 150.
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45. Ibid., p. 177.
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47. M. Buber, I and Thou , trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1958), p. 4.
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49. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 61.
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73. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, p. 135.
74. Ibid., pp. 144-145.
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84. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, p. 193.
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86. N. Berdyaev, Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma, p. 145.
87. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 225.
88 N. Berdyaev, Samopoznaniye, pp. 132-133.
89. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 225.
90. N. Berdyaev, Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma, p. 129.
91. Ibid., p. 136.
92. Ibid., p. 100.
93. Ibid., pp. 195-196.
94. N. Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 209.
95. N. Berdyaev, Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma, p. 152.
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99. Ibid., p. 145.
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Chapter Six

A Summary

I

Philosophical Thought

Let us now try to bring our four thinkers together, so as to determine what features of their thought are similar, what dissimilar, and what conclusions can be drawn about the idea of the religious individual in each one. There can be little doubt at this point that each of them was religious, and that each of them addressed in some way the individual, but we have also seen variety and disagreement in their differing attitudes to the religious individual. This divergence of views is a natural one, of course; although all of them were influenced by Slavophilism and/or the spiritual leaders of nineteenth-century Russia, their own individuality denied them the comfort of belonging too securely to any movement. And yet, each of the thinkers that we have studied raised in some way the battle-cry for the individual, and each one did so on religious grounds (or, as Shestov might have preferred to say, on religious groundlessness).

There are two areas in which the individual can be looked at in our discussion of these four thinkers. The first is on a purely philosophical basis; i.e., we can ask where the single human being fits into their systematic or non-systematic thought. The second is from a social and political standpoint, i.e., how do each of these thinkers treat of the individual as a member of society?

Philosophically, Solovyov cannot be said to have made the individual the be-all and end-all of his system. As Berdyaev says of him, "The most extraordinary, fundamental thing about Solovyov - that which appeared

throughout his life - is his feeling of ecumenicalism, his universalism. In his thought there is no individualism, no particularism."[1] Berdyaev however does not say this critically - he is not accusing him of being indifferent to the individual - but claims that his system was one which sought to unite rather than to isolate. Solovyov is the single one of the four who lived (but for a few months) only in the nineteenth century; his thought was influenced by the movements of the 1840s and Slavophile concepts like *sobornost'*. He moved away from Russian Orthodoxy not towards a more exclusive concentration on the individual, but in the opposite direction, towards even greater all-unity, which he hoped would occur with the reuniting of East and West, Orthodoxy and Catholicism. His notion of Sophia, his acceptance of the positivist Auguste Comte's *Le Grand Etre*, his all-unity (*vseedinstvo*), all these different theories, embraced at different times throughout Solovyov's life, indicate a never-ending attempt to encompass rather than to isolate. Solovyov is not a pure individualist; the most critical response to this comes from Shestov, who says that "any philosophy which strives for all-unity is preoccupied, above all, with removing man's freedom...Solovyov, as we know, sought for this with all his strength, in order to remove man's freedom from him."[2] Shestov has not decided finally the question as to whether or not Solovyov stripped man of his freedom, but the basic point he makes is a valid one, namely that the individualist, the Underground man or the modern man searching for meaning in isolation, will not find a personal philosophy in Solovyov's thought. All-unity is the *conditio sine qua non* of his beliefs. If we recognize this basic outlook of Solovyov's, then we can see if, at the depths of this philosophy, there is any message addressed to the individual.

Solovyov believed firmly in the spirit. In his development as a thinker he criticized Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, even

Christianity as a whole, but he never denied that a divine spirit is present in man. Indeed his whole acceptance of all-unity is founded upon the notion of Godmanhood, the idea that man is called to realize God's spirit within him (and the idea that was close to Berdyaev and Frank). And contrary to Shestov's claim that Solovyov denied man freedom, it is *through* freedom, so Solovyov claims, that God and man must meet. Berdyaev describes his philosophy thus: "He sees the essence of Christianity in the free uniting in Godmanhood of two natures, divine and human. In Solovyov's creativeness there are several periods...But through them all the question about the active expression of the human being stood for him at the centre."[3] Solovyov always looked towards the universal, but he did not regard man as merely a passive agent, acted upon by a world-spirit which brought about the kingdom of God without man's participation (although sometimes man does seem to be a passive agent in concepts like Sophia, but as Solovyov developed as a thinker he gave an ever-greater role to man in the world-spirit). Rather, Solovyov believed, each person must freely find divine expression in himself. Each individual is possessed of God's spirit, and it is his responsibility to respond actively to it.

Towards the end of his life Solovyov disassociated himself from his earlier belief that the kingdom of God was realizable here on earth. His optimistic philosophy eventually seemed to him incorrect; sooner than mankind advancing towards the divine kingdom, an anti-Christ would appear which would have to be destroyed - this is Solovyov's claim in his *A Short Tale of the Anti-Christ*. His views on history certainly altered but, as Berdyaev points out, Solovyov never abandoned his spiritual outlook. The importance of Godmanhood for the individual is perhaps seen more clearly when Solovyov's philosophy is contrasted not with Shestov's anti-systematic thought but rather with the materialistic philosophies in

Russia which also stemmed, like Slavophile thought, from German idealism. While freedom was a fundamental concept of *sobornost'* - and Berdyaev more than any other Russian philosopher relates freedom to the individual - Russian socialist philosophy of the 1860's and onwards tended to be characterized more by remarks like Belinsky's - that if blood need be shed to attain socialism, then so be it - than by a genuine awareness of the free spirit living in man and in mankind. All-unity from one angle may seem like a show of indifference to the individual human spirit - and in Shestovian terms it is just that - but from another angle, that of the contrast between Godmanhood and a rejection of any spiritual values, Solovyov's system does offer the freedom of the spirit. Frank says that such a philosophy as Solovyov has, whatever we may think of its worth as a system, "shows the spiritual path which alone can lead humanity out of its present impasse."[4]

Frank himself is in basically the same situation as Solovyov regarding his philosophical outlook on the individual. He was an admirer rather than a disciple of Solovyov's, but the nature of their systems is almost identical. Both thinkers are concerned with all-unity and tend to view anything or anyone cut off from all-unity as being isolated (rather than individualistic). As a philosophy this may seem too limiting, since it is more interested in the community than in the individual, (although the spirit itself which unites is a loving one). Can a monist philosophy such as Frank's have anything to say to the individual? Berdyaev thinks that one of the great obstacles of monist thought consists in the absence of man's freedom. He says: "From the point of view of all-unity, the problem of the relationship between God and the free human being is unresolved. Freedom is a scandal for this philosophy. Frank, of course, does not deny freedom, but he is unable to find a place for it..."[5] Frank was certainly an advocate of a *sobornost'*-type of Orthodoxy, rather than a hierarchical, "external"

type (although he was much more ecclesiastically-minded than was Berdyaev), and like Solovyov, spirituality for him would have been unthinkable without man's own free participation. But Berdyaev's point still holds, that systematically, or purely philosophically, Frank constructs a set of beliefs which are not focussed on the individual. Man is certainly not just a cog in the universal machine - this would negate the power of the spirit which lives in each person - but nevertheless man must be integrally a part of all-unity, lest he be cut off from the source of life.

A general problem with systems such as Solovyov's and Frank's is that they tend to have a limited understanding of human nature. Thus while Frank, who was not a naive thinker, understands that there is evil in the world, he nevertheless does not place it in his system in a sufficiently convincing way, and this seems to restrict his understanding of human potential. Berdyaev believes that such a system as Frank's cannot fully understand problems such as evil, freedom, the personality,[6] because man is not at the centre. Frank himself acknowledges that *docta ignorantia*, or "the unfathomable" is a necessary element of "living knowledge", and his own system does not try to explain everything. One can accept or reject Frank's concepts of reality or all-unity, but in any case it is apparent that such systematic thought penetrates less to a complete understanding of the individual, (with all his complexes, his potential for evil), than does a more person-centred philosophy.

But as with Solovyov, so too with Frank, the individual does have scope to breathe within this all-unity; indeed, that is where he finds his greatest meaning. Frank is critical of thinkers such as Nietzsche, who have rejected all of the values of Christianity and the positive role which the divine plays in the world, but he does not reject Christian individualists such as Pascal, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky (even if they

are not the cornerstones of his thought, as is the case with Shestov). Rather, the individual meets with all-unity, or reality, on the level of 'reality'. This is to say that man is not simply invaded by the divine spirit; man does not wait passively for the kingdom of God, but through "living knowledge", that knowledge which comes into closest contact with the divine, each man's life is given significance. Beauty, music, literature, religious faith, all these are values to be apprehended by the individual, and their meaning is attained through this form of knowledge. Frank is generally scornful of the "far-off" love which he sees in revolutionaries who love the common folk *en masse* but who have little sense of love for their neighbour. Like Solovyov's system, Frank's is directed towards all-unity but it works through each human spirit. And like Solovyov, Frank's all-unity is not similar to the totalitarian materialism which Berdyaev claims is inherent in Russian socialist philosophy. If it is true, as Shestov would have us believe, that systematic thought imposes the tyranny of knowledge, nevertheless the substance itself of this thought in Frank's case lays great emphasis on each human being as a free agent of the spiritual world.

The real battle for the individual in Russian philosophical thought takes place in the struggle between Berdyaev and Shestov. Both of these thinkers were anti-systematic in their approach, and yet their methods and their outlooks greatly differ. Of the two, Berdyaev was the real philosopher, working within knowledge to defend and exalt the individual personality. His concept of knowledge is similar to Frank's: it is not something which is understood from without, grasped externally or objectively, but which penetrates to our depths, and which we go out to meet in active participation. Knowledge, Berdyaev thinks, is revelation. It is intimately connected with the individual. He says that "effective knowledge involves familiarity, or in other terms, a subjective approach,

an identification of oneself with the subjective existence."[7] As we know, Shestov entirely disagreed with this definition, and saw Berdyaev's own attempt at formulating knowledge as being typical of philosophy's general aims, which were opposed to the individual. If every philosopher envisages a different theory to explain the world, then how, according to Shestov, can we say of one or another theory that it is a revelation? He says, "Berdyaev refers to experience, Berdyaev refers to intuition, but we already know that experience does not guarantee truth, and moreover, if the experiences of various people bear witness to various things, then how do we find out which experience reveals the truth?"[8] Berdyaev has no system; the centre of his philosophy is man, man as a personality, but for Shestov this is not sufficient. The very notion that any kind of knowledge can be good (on a philosophical, not a worldly level) is rejected by him, and thus the question can be posed: whose outlook gives more meaning to the individual, Berdyaev's, which allows for the possibility of creative knowledge, or Shestov's, which does not?

In Berdyaev's defence, the substance of his own philosophy is rooted in the individual, unlike Frank's, whose "living knowledge" embraces all-unity. Man is not a building-block to Berdyaev but the whole building. In the deepest sense, he believes, it is not a collection of human beings who are free, who create, who participate actively in the divine, but only single human beings, possibly, although not necessarily together. Man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath for man; this idea is fundamental to Berdyaev's thought as he refuses to accept that any movement, any tradition, any utopian ideal is valid if it hinders the free expression of the individual. Christianity represents not a historical movement so much as the revelation of personality in the world, an example for the free, spiritually aristocratic personality. As one interpretation of Berdyaev's thought has it: "Personality is a religious

category. That is to say, the human being is a person only as related to God. Indeed, there cannot be a genuine society of persons unless this religious dimension is recognized, unless it is understood that the human being is more than a member of society."[9]

Berdyaev is critical of any philosophy which does not establish the human being as the focus of all meaning in this world. More than any philosopher before him in Russia (and certainly more than anyone after him in the Soviet Union), Berdyaev found philosophical expression for man as an even greater being than an individual: man as a personality (*lichnost'*). How then can there be any doubt that the individual in Russian thought is given a more profound definition than that given to him by Berdyaev?

Indeed, there could not be any doubt, were it not for Shestov. It is Shestov who raises the question of whether the individual is actually being harmed by the very attempt to define him. Solovyov is an easier target than Berdyaev on this count, but even Berdyaev is called to answer for his apotheosis of the personality when he tries to formulate a reason for and the origin of freedom. Both of these thinkers passionately strove for freedom, but Shestov declares that Berdyaev's explanation of it only limits man and God, and does not emancipate either one. Because Berdyaev claims that God himself cannot overcome freedom, Shestov basically accuses Berdyaev of abandoning it. "And why," Shestov asks, "if God is unable to overcome freedom that is not created by him, is the God-man (who is of the same essence as God) able to overcome the freedom which is also not created by him?"[10]

The primary difference between these two thinkers, which both recognized, is that Berdyaev worked within knowledge, while Shestov worked against it. But it would be a mistake to lump Berdyaev together with every thinker who is operating, according to Shestov, on the wrong

side of knowledge. In fact, Berdyaev is much closer to Shestov than he is to Solovyov and Frank, despite his affinity for some of the spiritual ideas of the latter two and his assertion, repeated at various times, that the fundamental difference between him and Shestov is the value each of them placed on knowledge. If Berdyaev has one lapse as a philosopher of the personality, then this is it: his attempt to explain the origins of freedom (i.e. through *Ungrund*) seems to have little to do with man himself, a being who cannot be explained by abstract theories. If Shestov is right, that Berdyaev's use of experience as a means to knowledge and Berdyaev's explanation of freedom, are not legitimate ways fully to apprehend man as an individual, then it would seem that the whole foundation of Berdyaev's thought may be weaker, paradoxically, than the foundation-less thought of Shestov.

But we can hardly say that Berdyaev's thought is drained of all its meaning because of this. If Berdyaev chooses knowledge over existence, as Shestov thinks he does,[11] then it can still be said that through his own form of knowledge he worked out the most profound definition of the individual known to Russian thought. He insisted on the reality of the divine world, on the fact that Christianity brought man and God into a close relationship, on suffering and creativeness and freedom, on the reality of the tormented psyche, not so as to add stones to his philosophical edifice but to declare the unsurpassable worth of the single personality.

Shestov is the one Russian thinker of the four who made no effort to define the individual, at least not in theological or philosophical terms. The very attempt to give final, decisive attributes to man, or to God, was to Shestov the greatest sin. So great a sin was it that man lost paradise in doing so. An individual's experience does not give him the right to seek after knowledge; in experience lies delusion. Berdyaev sums up his

friend's thought thus: "For Lev Shestov human tragedy, the terrors and sufferings of human life, the endurance of hopelessness were the sources of philosophy."[12] For a philosopher to disregard this and to try to reason a way out of the tragedy - even for one such as Socrates, who offered his very life rather than turn away from his philosophy - was to prove just how far man had fallen away from God. Man's truest expression of individuality lay not in the accuracy of his understanding of the individual - and accuracy, as Shestov often points out, cannot be proven by any human means - but in his courage in rejecting philosophical palliatives and instead living through the tragedy.

All of Shestov's attentions were directed to this battle for meaning in philosophy; he either attacked those thinkers who relied on knowledge, or he glorified those who rejected it. He was not a social or political philosopher; his thought was dominated by this struggle alone. But could it be said that he was so determined to wage war against knowledge that he lost the individual in the process, as Berdyaev sometimes loses the individual in his definition of freedom? It is not surprising, given Shestov's attitude towards the Fall, that he should wage war against the greatest defenders of knowledge, Socrates, Spinoza, Hegel, etc., but he is also prepared to turn against his very heroes, those who themselves spurned the pretensions of knowledge, when they fail to be, according to Shestov, sufficiently conscious of the spirit of their own thought. He criticizes Nietzsche for formulating his theory of eternal recurrence, Dostoevsky for his tendency towards prophecy, and Kierkegaard for refusing to admit that the knowledge which man gained through the Fall is the greatest of all evils. His attacks on specific philosophers so often have a striking similarity, as if his criticism of Philo or Socrates would be roughly the same as his criticism of Kant or Schelling. In his essay on Solovyov, "Speculation and the Apocalypse", he writes that "in the first

chapters of the Bible it is told of how 'theoretic necessity' led our forefather to the greatest woe. The Fall, which brought death, and after it all the terrors of our mortal existence to the earth, began when Adam surrendered himself to his theoretical demand, and despite the warning of the Creator, tore away and tasted the fruits from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."[13] It is insignificant that such a passage comes in Shestov's essay on Solovyov in particular; it could have been written in any of his essays and books, and is the theme which runs throughout his work. It often seems as if Shestov if less interested in the content of the philosophers' thought than in the opportunity he sees to expose them as knowledge-seekers.

But if we can question this emphasis of Shestov's, and wonder why it would lead him to reject even a philosophy which is centred around the individual, such as Berdyaev's, then we can still claim that his motives spring from the impassioned desire to protect the individual. There is irony in the fact that while his thought is the least original of the four Russian philosophers, in the sense that he was mainly responding to the thought of other thinkers - while each of the other three formulated many different concepts, Godmanhood, "living knowledge", Personalism, etc. - nevertheless it is Shestov whose individual emerges as the most significant creation. It is Shestov who struggles most to protect the "rights" of the individual. Not his rights in a legal or political sense, but in the sense that the individual has a right to be bound by no laws, such as the law of Good, or the law of Morality. The individual's rights are that he makes or breaks his own laws and is not conditioned by the laws, norms or traditions of others. Knowledge is a kind of law, imposing as it does limitation, and thus for such thought as Shestov's, knowledge is a genuine tyrant, which wants in any way it can to hinder the individual. If knowledge and existence can be happily married, if one can be a knowing

creature and an existential creature at the same time, then Shestov's whole orientation is a mistaken one, and it is for this reason that he wants to ensure that there is no blurring between knowledge and the individual. He says, "Before the face of the Creator there are no laws, no 'you must', no compulsion; all the chains fall from man and crimes cease to exist. Before the face of the Creator our original freedom, created by God, comes to life in man, a freedom which is limited by nothing, which is unbounded possibility - like the freedom of the Creator himself."[14]

The aspect of Shestov's thought which most concerns this essay is the religious emphasis that he places on the individual. One cannot say that he is insistent that meaning is to be found only in the divine; even in his later writings he defends such a one as Nietzsche (whom Berdyaev and Frank are both critical of for his denial of the divine, and whom Solovyov would never in his wildest dreams have accepted). But where Zarathustra and the Underground Man were once his gods, it is the biblical God whom he later acknowledges, and his heroes become, amongst others, Abraham and Job. Faith in the Absurd (Kierkegaard), revelation rather than knowledge, God for whom all things are possible, the outlook of the Holy Scriptures rather than the whole history of philosophy (Jerusalem rather than Athens) - Shestov defends all of these, claiming that they lead to the deepest possible expression of the single human being. Since it is the individual who is at the root of all his thought, his journey from the godless Nietzsche to the faithful Abraham is shorter than Solovyov's or Frank's or Berdyaev's journeys from socialism to Christianity. In the end, his individual stands, in the deepest sense, in relation to God. Philosophically, it is Shestov's person who, amongst our four Russian thinkers, can most assuredly call himself an individual. He stands without any support, with nothing to soothe or to placate him, and faces the stark tragedy of human life, which may reveal God himself.

II

Political Thought

Based on the nature of this essay, we can say that the *philosophical* definition of the individual concerns us more than other types of definition, and, therefore, here it is Shestov, with Berdyaev not far behind, who is most concerned with the individual *per se.* But given the time and the place in which all four thinkers lived, and their own social consciousness, we have also given consideration to the role that the individual played in their social and political writings. The span of the lives of these four writers covers the entire transformation of Russian society: Solovyov was born several years before the emancipation of the serfs, and the other three lived until the Soviet state and the Stalinist system had been well established. (One might say that they *lived* until this time because they were far removed from Russia during her most violent changes.)

While Shestov is the most significant of the four in his approach towards the individual in philosophical terms, politically speaking he has little to say. The social revolutionary and the defender of tsarism and Orthodoxy could find little in his thought to support their ideology; his writings in the main were simply not concerned with social issues. The meaning of this for his philosophy is that his defence of the individual spirit is given even more weight, since Shestov proved to be such a personal thinker. If we cannot find any real political substance in his thought, however, we can still see based on his life that his attitude to the Russian revolutionary movement was no different from the attitudes of the other three. (He did, though, as we have mentioned, write a small, little-known book attacking Bolshevism.) He was at one time a Marxist, but left that movement forever while still in his youth; when he realized

that the Bolshevik Revolution was going to succeed in his homeland he left the country with his family. Thus Russia lost its most profound interpreter of religious individuality.

Solovyov, however, much more than Shestov, tries to find a solution for the individual in society. In Russian society he himself was one of the most unique men of his time. He was not content to uphold the idea of Russian Messianism - a primary Slavophile tenet - and thus he was subjected to Slavophile criticism when he showed his support for a more universal religious system (while still defending Russian spiritual concepts such as *sobornost'*). He resigned his university post as a result of his unpopular view that capital punishment was unjust even for the assassins of a tsar; and he incurred strong disapproval for his claim that non-religious humanism had more justice in it than medieval Christianity. No movement, no society, no Church could keep Solovyov permanently under its wing; even Shestov admits this, saying that, "His first books...witness to the fact that Solovyov, although he was just over twenty years old, was his own man in all regions of philosophical knowledge."[15] And Berdyaev remarks of him, "One can say about Solovyov with equal justification that he was a mystic and a rationalist, an Orthodox and a Catholic, a man of the Church and a free-thinking gnostic, a conservative and a liberal. Contradictory movements considered him to be one of them. But he was in life and remained after his death solitary and misunderstood."[16]

Clearly it is not just in the realm of philosophy that Solovyov remains his own man. In trying to find theoretical and practical ways in which all mankind could be united in the kingdom of God, he was bound by no school. His main concern was to find the means by which man could live a spiritual life in community. One might expect to see Solovyov supporting a strong, forceful ecclesiastical authority, one that would go to any

lengths to ensure unity. But in fact the opposite is true. Solovyov was indeed attracted to the unifying powers of Catholicism, but he gradually grew more and more dismayed by the lack of spiritual unity within the Church. Solovyov made the mistake - which he later corrected - of thinking that there was a necessary connection between ecclesiastical and spiritual movements, but he moved away from the Church when it did not pay sufficient homage to internal faith. Berdyaev felt that Solovyov's interpretation of Christianity was one that involved man freely and actively in the union with God, and this meant that no external compulsion could bring about this union; indeed, in the 1890's we see Solovyov turning against historical Christianity for its failure to provide a humane (i.e. a spiritual) answer to the discord in the world.

It is interesting to compare Solovyov's thought with that of the socialist thought contemporary with him, for both types have in mind the transformation of the world. Most of the main Russian socialists of Solovyov's time (Tkachev, Bakunin, Nechaev) viewed revolution as a religion and a philosophy;[17] it is fair to say that the intolerance to divergent views of the post-Revolutionary period in Russia was inherited from the radical revolutionary thought of the nineteenth century. The Russian socialists of Solovyov's time did not want social reform, they wanted revolutionary change. Solovyov does not simply wish for everyone to become Christian by name, he insists upon a humane attitude to life which is not ultimately contingent on race and creed. Solovyov never ceased to believe that Christianity, and no other faith or ideology, was capable of transforming the world, but the end definitely did not justify the means.

In the chapter on Solovyov it was suggested that his philosophy tries to establish the idea that man is dependent upon relationship to complete his personality, and that he cannot survive simply as an isolated being. If in

Solovyov's systematic thought this point does not at all times seem to do justice to the individual, in his social and political thought the various relationships of the individual become all-important for the aims of society, because they are the means through which society becomes spiritualized. Solovyov is concerned mainly with the aggregate of persons in a society, but concerned that each person in the aggregate has the opportunity to express himself freely, and that no compulsion forces him into a false relationship with his fellow-man or with God. Humankind is organically joined together by humanity; humanity makes each man neither abstract nor isolated.

It is when we come to Berdyaev and Frank that we find the individual in society given the most sympathetic treatment. Solovyov's humane Christianity is related to these later thinkers' social ideas, but Berdyaev and Frank found themselves responding to the very breakdown of the old society, which required more direct statements to the revolutionary forces than Solovyov had ever made. Both Berdyaev and Frank claim that their thought in general is connected more with spiritual questions than with political ones, but both made significant contributions to the anti-communist movement; each of them wrote essays in the compilations *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny*, and each produced a book highly critical of Russian communism. (Berdyaev's was entitled *The Origins and the Meaning of Russian Communism*, and Frank's, *Beyond Right and Left*.) The political views of these two thinkers are very similar even though their understanding of philosophy differed.

For Frank, as for Berdyaev, the belief in a spiritual element within man informed more than anything else his political orientation. He hoped for a spiritual regeneration in society which the forces of revolution blithely ignored. Unlike Solovyov he did not optimistically believe that the world was advancing ever-closer towards the kingdom of God. But he decisively

rejected the idea that man could solve all his problems by himself, that "mangodhood" could have precedence over Godmanhood. The Age of Reason and the French Revolution, the socialist revolutionaries in Russia, all told man that he could be master over himself and his society without the mediation of God. But this according to Frank is wrong; man requires the light of God in which to flourish. Left to himself he will die in darkness. Any Orthodox supporter trying to defend a crumbling empire might hold the same beliefs, but Frank was far from trying to preserve the old order; in his essay in *Iz glubiny,* entitled *De Profundis* (both of these titles mean "out of the depths"; a term from Psalm 130) he says that "Russian conservatism, which was officially guided by and dreamed abstractly of being guided by definite religious belief and a national-political ideology, was weakened, and weakened itself, by its factual disbelief in the living force of spiritual creativity..."[18] Frank was himself a Christian, and a Russian Orthodox, but like Solovyov it was not simply the superficial fact that he called himself a Christian that concerned him so much as the spiritual "reality" which lay beneath the labels. Frank called for a society which bore no relation to the ossified and corrupted Russian Orthodox Church under tsarist rule, but one which was nevertheless founded on religious principles:

In addition, Frank considered the October Revolution to be an unmitigated disaster. Given that he was highly critical of the old regime and that he had declared himself to be a socialist (albeit a Christian one), it is a damning comment on the socialist revolutionaries in Russia who also derided the old system.. As we have seen, Frank came to realize eventually that one could not associate the left with those who sought justice and the right with those who clung onto the *status quo.* Frank's own religious orientation is conservative, since he defends the value of traditional Christianity in an ecclesiastical environment (while still

being highly critical of the Church in Russia), yet he is politically liberal, since he sees social equality as being of paramount importance. But these terms in the light of the Revolution - right and left, conservative and liberal - are sapped of much of their previous meaning. Frank's political beliefs are inspired by his philosophical beliefs, which are based on an all-unifying spirituality in the world. What most concerned him about Russia was not who was winning the political battle - the tsarists or the Communists - but that this most fundamental aspect of his philosophy, spirituality, was apparently missing everywhere. At the time of the Revolution he writes, with uncharacteristic vehemence, that revolutionary socialism in Russia was poisonous and had led to "a fatal illness, a gangrenous decay of the brain and the heart of the Russian state...The destructiveness of socialism in the final analysis is conditioned by its materialism - by its negation of the natural, authentically-founded, unifying forces of society..."[19] The primary difference between Frank and the Russian revolutionaries is that he recognized a higher, positive value in the world, while they, so he claims, did not.

Brought into the political sphere, Frank's and Berdyaev's views, often different in their respective philosophies, are strikingly similar. Frank is mindful of the creative and religious possibilities of the individual and insists that he needs the freedom to express them. He sees more importance in spiritual unity in society than does Berdyaev, for whom spirit related directly to the individual, but the requirement for society is, in both cases, that there be some kind of spiritual foundation.

As a philosopher, Frank's reputation has not spread nearly so far as Berdyaev's has; his writings for the most part lack the dramatic quality which is evident in Berdyaev's books. However as a social thinker - although it wasn't his main concern - he has gained a reputation as a passionate defender of freedom. Recently the chess player Garry

Kasparov, an aspiring politician, quoted Frank's hope, expressed in the aftermath of the October Revolution, for a spiritual renewal in Russia: "In these days of our national misfortune, rooted in nihilism, we may console ourselves that the sheer depth of the abyss into which the Russian people has fallen does not only testify to its blindness, but also to the grandeur of its misguided spiritual strength."[20] Frank saw the individual in Russia stripped of all his rights by a system which denied higher values, but he also remained hopeful that the spirit would someday manifest itself again in his homeland.

The struggle between Berdyaev and Shestov for the truest defence of the individual in philosophical thought becomes irrelevant when the argument turns into a political one. We need not question Berdyaev's definition of "uncreated freedom" to accept fully his concept of the individual in society. As with Frank, the most essential point to consider is his acknowledgement of the spirit as the fundamental aspect of man's life; this means that man requires social and political freedom to express his spirituality.

Berdyaev is in a paradoxical position similar to Frank concerning his conservative/liberal make-up. Although he was not very sympathetic to ecclesiastical movements, nonetheless he was a member of the aristocracy, as well as a Christian socialist. As with Frank, the fact that Berdyaev rejected the *status quo* of tsarism, and looked for social justice and equality makes his repudiation of the Russian revolutionary movements all the more legitimate. Of course, his argument for socialism was not simply based on economic factors: "The significance of Communism as a goal of human life is essentially religious. Communism involves participation, reciprocal participation, interpenetration."[21] Communion has spiritual meaning, but communism as Berdyaev saw it practiced in Russia does not, and in fact in trying to make the state

absolute, the personality - the agent through which the spirit passes - is doomed to disappear or be destroyed.

Based on Berdyaev's philosophical beliefs, we can see that his defense of the individual in *society* follows naturally. If in a monist philosophical system creativeness and personality are diminished, then in a monist political system the same is likely to happen. "A pluralistic social system corresponds more to the freedom of the human spirit than a monistic system. A monistic social system always leads to tyranny and the oppression of the human personality. The monism of the Marxist system is its main defect."[22] Berdyaev is in a sense better equipped than Frank or Solovyov to offer constructive, practical political advice, because his whole notion of freedom insists upon a democratic solution to social life (a democratic, rather than an anarchistic, solution), whereas the latter two have to base their hopes partly on the advance of spirituality in the world, an advance which was certainly not evident in their own times. This is hardly to nullify the value of Frank's and Solovyov's contributions to social thought, because they both keenly understood the danger of rejecting higher values in society (whether they be called humanistic or spiritual). But even in Berdyaev's political orientation the human personality is central; political life must adapt itself not to the few but to each individual. However, we have also seen that Berdyaev's individual is made all the more whole by his participation in a genuinely spiritual collective, in *sobornost';* society does not need to adapt itself merely so that the individual can exist in his splendid tower of isolation, but so that he can respond to spirituality, both personal and communal.

Berdyaev's own life continually expressed the struggle for the freedom of the individual in society. As a youth we find him exiled for two years because of his socialist activities, but his insights into social justice

could not be limited by the Russian socialism of the day. In his articles in *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny* he attempted to expose the spiritual vacuum of the revolutionary movement before it was too late; it was, of course, too late. Like Frank and Solovyov, Berdyaev had become a firm believer in the realm of the spirit, and thus his arguments against Russian nihilism had their spiritual foundation. (It is interesting to note that while Shestov criticizes Berdyaev, in his early essay on him, for being so eager to embrace notions like idealism and Christianity, it is Berdyaev, and *not* Shestov, who was most vocally opposed to a movement which *both* thinkers considered to be misguided.) When the Revolution actually arrived, Berdyaev was as determined to struggle for social justice in his actions as in his writings. His friend Evgeny Rapp describes this determination in one telling instance:

> News had reached us from St. Petersburg that the Revolution had begun. Along the streets of Moscow crowds were gathering, and from mouth to mouth the most impossible rumours were passed...N.A. [Berdyaev], my sister and I decided to join the revolutionary crowd, which had advanced to the riding-school. When we approached, the riding-school was already surrounded by a huge crowd. Troops ready to fire stood on the square near the riding-school. The threatening crowd advanced closer and closer, pressing itself upon the square in a tight ring. A terrible moment had arrived. We expected a salvo to burst forth. At that moment I turned to N.A. to tell him something, but he had disappeared. Later we learned that he had made his way through the crowd to the troops, and had delivered a speech asking the soldiers not to shoot at the crowd, not to spill blood...The troops did not shoot.

> To this day it is a wonder to me that at this very place he was not shot by the commanding officer.[23]

Given the bloody circumstances of the post-Revolutionary period, Berdyaev was very fortunate to survive. His criticism of Bolshevism did not become less sharp, and before his exile he was even hauled in front of Dzerzhinsky, the chief of Cheka, the secret police, for a personal interrogation. ("Keep in mind," Berdyaev told him, "that I consider it my duty as a writer and a thinker to tell you exactly what I think."[24]) Abroad his attacks on the new political order continued, although he was willing to acknowledge the Soviet Union as a legitimate state; he did not see a return to the old system as a healthy idea.

Today in his homeland Berdyaev's reputation as a struggler for the rights of the individual is, like Frank's, growing. Journals and newspapers such as *Moskva, Sobesednik,* and *Novy mir* have recently printed essays by or about him, his books are being published in the Soviet Union, and his name has become a symbol for freedom of conscience and of religious expression. (Even when his ideas are not always clearly understood. At a lecture at the Lenin Museum in Kiev, in May, 1990 entitled "Nikolai Berdyaev and Self-Education", the lecturer spoke for three hours and mentioned the name of Berdyaev twice, both times in passing.) Of all the pre-Revolutionary thinkers in Russia it is Berdyaev more than any other whose ideas are today, in the climate of freedom, being remembered, discussed and valued.

We have seen how these four thinkers differed from each other; let us now look at what they all hold in common. At first sight it may seem impossible for Shestov to have any common ground with Solovyov or Frank, but there are several similar elements which inhere in the thought of them all. The first, and most important similarity is that they all

affirmed the validity of the religious spirit. That Solovyov, Frank and Berdyaev do so is self-evident; they wage continual war against materialism and insist on the priority of the spirit. What Frank says about Solovyov's vision of the spiritual world could hold true for all three: "It has for him the kind of obviousness with which ordinary people perceive the sensuously given world of objects."[25] Shestov poses a more difficult problem. He does not defend the spirit as an obvious aspect of man; indeed, his defence of Nietzsche, and of Chekhov's sense of hopelessness, might indicate that he rejects any type of higher sphere, be it called divine or spiritual. Most of his attacks on philosophy are based on the *assumption* (made by philosophy) that spirit does exist.

But it is important to realize that Shestov does defend religious spirit. Living as he did in turn-of-the-century Russia, it would have been easy for him to have attached himself to a materialist bandwagon. But nothing could have been farther from his intentions. Shestov attacks the ideas of Solovyov, Berdyaev, Tolstoy and other Russians of his epoch, yet it is not his wish to attack the spirit *per se*, but only the interpretations given of it. After all, Nietzsche himself was not a materialist; he threw out the morality of Christianity, but defended a spirit of his own (although not a religious one). All four of the Russian thinkers we have examined went through a phase akin to materialism, by supporting the socialism and Marxism of the day. But all four rejected this type of thought - Shestov no less than the other three - for the sake of the spirit.

Connected with spirit is the relationship between man and God, and the defence of internal reality is close to them all. Solovyov's Godmanhood expresses this internal, divine relationship, and Berdyaev and Frank enthusiastically follow him. Both of them are always arguing for the closeness of God in man's spiritual life. And we have seen how Shestov's attack on Spinoza and Tolstoy, among others, centred around the way that

God was removed from man by morality or a mathematical equation. Shestov does not want to define God (none of them do, really), but he does insist that God can be revealed to man. For all four thinkers, God is to be found only in the internal life of man.

The notion that they all affirmed a belief in the spirit can be supported by another point at which they all meet, and this is in their youthful advocacy of revolutionary thought and their subsequent rejection of such thought. Not one of the four declared himself afterwards to be a tsarist, or a capitalist, but rather their recognition of the spirit made it impossible for them to continue their involvement with revolutionary socialism. Given the different directions these thinkers advanced in, and given their analysis of the nihilism of the social materialist, it is not easy to resist the conclusion that their understanding of the revolutionary movement was far more profound than was that of the revolutionaries themselves.

Another point of similarity is their preference between the two greatest Russian writers of their day, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. With each of them Dostoevsky looms the larger figure. For Shestov and Berdyaev he is fundamental to their thought; the Underground man for Shestov and the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" for Berdyaev are themes central to their respective bodies of work. Solovyov was a personal friend of Dostoevsky's, and Frank saw Dostoevsky's value amongst other things in the novelist's recognition of the impotence of the Russian revolutionary (who could not act but could only reject and snigger).[26] As for Tolstoy, Shestov saw him as the grand moralist, worshipping 'the good' but disregarding the individual in the process. Solovyov's story *A Short Tale about the Anti-Christ* was in part a polemic against Tolstoy, and both Berdyaev and Frank saw Tolstoy as being another negative element in the revolutionary movement, reject as he did the value of the state. As

Berdyaev says: "Tolstoy was an extreme anarchist, the enemy of any type of government, based on his moral-idealistic foundations...Tolstoy was an exponent of the anti-governmental, anarchic instincts of the Russian people."[27] This is not to negate, in a few short sentences, Tolstoy's significance as a writer; all four thinkers recognized this significance. But it is worthwhile to note that, for different reasons, Dostoevsky's religious fire was more inspiring to all of them.

A final word about Berdyaev's and Shestov's relationship with Dostoevsky is in order. Both of these thinkers base the essence of their philosophy on a specific concept of the Russian novelist's, and both return again and again to these concepts. Neither Berdyaev nor Shestov ever tired of Dostoevsky. But the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" covers a couple of dozen pages in an 800-page novel; *Notes from Underground* is a very short novel, dwarfed in size by half a dozen of Dostoevsky's other works. Basically, Dostoevsky developed each of these ideas once, and returned to them occasionally, but never with the same force. However, Berdyaev and Shestov liked to think that the particular idea that they have latched on to represents the real Dostoevsky. It is important to remember that each of these thinkers, in their defence of the individual, are looking at two essentially different Dostoevskys.

III

Conclusion

The four thinkers that have been discussed in this essay hardly exhaust the list of Russian religious writers at the turn of the century. Philosophers such as Pavel Florensky and Sergey Bulgakov, two spiritual heirs of Solovyov, are just a couple of the many thinkers who contributed to religious thought in Russia as socialistic materialism became an increasingly influential force in the intellectual life of the country. It is

on the one hand, unfortunately, a matter of irrelevance how large the cultural renaissance was at the turn of the century, because it was based on spiritual principles which could hardly resist the socialism of the time, which had no qualms about transforming the society through non-spiritual means. On the other hand, fortunately, what this renaissance did not accomplish in political terms, it did accomplish in its original thought which had not only Russian but worldwide influence. Out of all the thinkers in the cultural revival, it is three, Shestov, Berdyaev and Frank who most powerfully defended and glorified the spirit, be it in individual or universal terms. Solovyov was an influence upon, rather than an actual participator in, the cultural life at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the mark he made upon Frank and Berdyaev, at least, was a strong one.

The movement recognized the rights of the spirit which were independent of social utilitarianism; this means that social questions need not interfere in any way with spiritual questions. Throughout much of this thesis we have looked at the thought of these philosophers often without regard to its social significance, but only with the idea that the thought has value unto itself. Such is the case with Lev Shestov. Although he was anti-Bolshevik, his thought is not fundamentally social, and we have examined it purely from the standpoint of its value in philosophical terms.

Also in terms of Solovyov, Frank and Berdyaev, the focal point of our examination of them as thinkers has not been their political beliefs, but their philosophical ones, which have then led to their understanding of society. As a consequence of their philosophical thought they arrived at social beliefs (not the other way around), and we have attempted to develop these social beliefs out of their philosophy. We can see that there was a great and significant debate occurring at the turn of the century over the meaning of the spirit and how it relates to the single person. Lev

Shestov and Nicholas Berdyaev are more passionate defenders of the individual in philosophical thought than are Vladimir Solovyov and Semyon Frank; the individual, despite the differences between Shestov and Berdyaev, is central to their work. But Solovyov and Frank too found a spiritual plane for each human being. When we look at all four in contradistinction to the political trends of their time, we can see that each of these thinkers recognized values for the individual which were simply denied him by theories such as dialectical materialism and revolutionary socialism. The transition from philosophy to politics finds all four men in agreement, that the effort to transform a society into one in which the political and economic aims are sought for without a recognition of religious values, can only end in disaster.

Notes

1. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii, (Paris: YMCA Press, 1989), p. 217.
2. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, (Paris: YMCA Press, 1964), p. 89.
3. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii, p. 206.
4. A Solovyov Anthology, ed. by S. Frank, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 3.
5. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii, p. 653.
6. Ibid., p. 651.
7. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, trans. George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), p. 51.
8. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, p. 268.
9. F. Coplestone, Philosophy in Russia, (London: Search Press Ltd., p. 381.
10. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, p. 271.
11. Ibid., p. 295.
12. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii, p. 407.
13. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, p. 49.
14. Ibid., p. 294.
15. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, p. 26.
16. N. Berdyaev, Tipy religioznoi mysli v Rossii, p. 205.
17. N. Berdyaev, Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma (Moscow: Nauka, 1990).
18. Iz glubiny (Moscow: Prospekt, 1988), p. 289.
19. Ibid., p. 285.
20. *The Times*, "Saturday Review", Sept. 1., 1990, p. 4.
21. N. Berdyaev, Solitude and Society, p. 188.
22. N. Berdyaev, Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma, p. 152.
23. N. Berdyaev, Samopoznanie (Paris: YMCA Press, 1983), p. 262.
24. Ibid., p. 279.
25. A Solovyov Anthology, p. 9.
26. Iz glubiny, p. 288
27. Ibid., p. 76.

Chapter Seven

Modern Soviet Criticism

Note: The demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant of course the end of Soviet restrictions on the printed word. It is far from certain that the menace of censorship has been quashed forever in Russia, but Soviet censorship is now a thing of the past.

This dissertation has been compiled and written almost entirely while the USSR was in existence, and the present chapter offers a sampling of Soviet commentary on our four thinkers. It would have been possible to add post-Soviet commentary to this and other chapters, but it seems to me that the Soviet criticism is valuable by itself, since it gives us insight into the increasing freedom of the press in the USSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

For Shestov, Berdyaev and Frank, Soviet repression was all too real, and it is surely fitting here to round out the dissertation by examining how they were slowly brought back to life in their homeland *while* the party that exiled them was itself facing banishment from power.

We have seen that to a large degree the four thinkers we have studied were not widely accepted in Russia during their lifetimes. While each of them no doubt had sympathizers, their beliefs were generally either ignored or attacked. But seven decades on from the revolution, glasnost has revived (or introduced) free speech into the Soviet Union, and these

four thinkers are no longer treated with the open, inevitable hostility that they once faced in the Soviet press. And no longer do copies of their books need to be smuggled into the Soviet Union, because these books are now published in Russia. The process of bringing back the names of these Russian religious thinkers has not been a rapid one, but it is certainly taking place and journals are now, or so it seems, free to respond to these writers in whatever way they choose: critically, admiringly, respectfully. We can be fairly satisfied that Solovyov, Shestov, Frank and Berdyaev are receiving just, if not always uncritical, treatment at the hands of Soviet scholars. (Although as we have seen in the instance of Andreyev, responding to Berdyaev's *The Origins and Significance of Russian Communism*, the reflex to criticize anyone who appears to be anti-Soviet has not yet been completely overcome.) Because of this it is worthwhile to survey various of the articles on our four thinkers written by Soviet critics during the period of glasnost, to see to what extent these philosophers have been rehabilitated.

Let us start in general terms and look at an article written in *Literaturnaya gazeta* in May, 1991, on the Vekhovtsi: the contributors to *Vekhi* and also to *Iz glubiny*, the compendium which was put together in the wake of the October Revolution. This article gives us a good indication of the change of attitude to religious writings in the Soviet press; it is appreciative of the Vekhovtsi without admiring them blindly.

First of all, the author, Svetlana Semyonova, believes that Frank, Berdyaev, Struve, etc., were very prescient in predicting the woes that the Soviet Union would meet:

> The analytical panorama - presented in these articles by S.N. Bulgakov, A.S. Izgoev, P.B. Struve and S.L. Frank - strikes the reader of today by how quickly, in about

> half-a-year, everything was discovered, literally everything, which was later unravelled in the following decades, up to this very day: all the failures, the consequences and tendencies, all the hypocrisy and demagogy.[1]

This is a significant statement, because it seems to present the failures, hypocrisy, etc, as an almost objective historical fact (it comes from *Literaturnaya gazeta*, remember, and not from *samizdat'*. The 'nightmare' of the October Revolution is presented here as incontrovertible, and the Vekhovtsi are regarded as something akin to prophets). But they are not hero-worshipped by Semyonova, indeed in a constructive way she is critical of them, because for all of their insights she claims that they do not really come to terms with the practical problems - social, economic - of their society, but try to 'spiritualize' Russia, an undertaking which one can hardly imagine being realized. As Semyonova points out, Western societies which have put secular principles at the heart of their constitutions - even making sure to separate church and state - have succeeded far better than Russia.[2] "In searching after the 'absolute good', what is lost is the vital 'world of relativity in which we live'; high-minded religious pathos stands in the way of the practical structuring of our earthly life."[3] What Semyonova says is true: we cannot picture a world in which Berdyaev's and Frank's visions of an ideal society are realized, because their emphasis on spirit does not sufficiently address the sorts of practical problems that the Bolsheviks were addressing. Nevertheless they foresaw how the spiritual emptiness of this revolutionary movement would lead to destructive ends.

This article is like others now being written in the Soviet Union; the vision which these religious thinkers had is contrasted with the beliefs and practices of the Russian revolutionaries. It is not always the most

natural of contrasts, because not one of our four thinkers is *essentially* a political writer; what most concerns all of them are matters of philosophy and theology, and their political attitudes stem from their spiritual orientation. Yet at times they are written about in such a way as to draw more attention to their exile from the Soviet Union or to their political beliefs. N. Motroshilova, for example, begins her article on Shestov in *Voprosy filosofii* with a lament for the talent that was lost in Russia when such a fine thinker as he was cut off from his homeland, and although she is generally unappreciative of his thought, she ends her essay thus: "Shestov's books are practically unknown to a wide reading audience [in Russia]. I hope that they become accessible to those who are striving to know the culture of the homeland..."[4] Shestov himself would no doubt have felt damned by such faint praise. He did not yearn - as did Berdyaev - to return to his homeland. This is not the major thesis of Motroshilova's essay on Shestov, but it is typical of the attitude of many who now write on the banished intellectuals of pre-Revolutionary Russia.

We find a more direct attack on Soviet repression in E. Rashkovsky's essay on Solovyov, also in *Voprosy filosofii.* The author quotes a standard, old-Soviet description of Solovyov, which calls him a "religiously-orientated, reactionary philosopher-idealist, a bourgeois-gentrified social writer, a theologian and poet-mystic"[5], and after analyzing each term, Rashkovsky confesses: "We all, either willingly or unwillingly, but unanimously, signed our names to provincialism and inertia..."[6] What we see here, as we see in the other articles already mentioned, is a taking-for-grantedness that for long decades Soviet society followed all the wrong paths and moved in all the wrong directions, and now, with more breathing space, old, long-forgotten or long-forbidden voices such as these religious ones, can now be heard again.

One of the greatest signs of glasnost in these writings is the freedom that is felt to criticize constructively and not according to the Party line. Thus, Renata Gal'tseva, writing in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, takes issue with Berdyaev's view that Russian communism is especially prone to despotism. She points out that while Berdyaev was *always* a fierce critic of capitalism, he accepted certain principles of communism, and that his attacks on the October Revolution and on the development of Russian socialism focus more on the defects of the Russian character than on the defects of socialism. Berdyaev saw "the Russian idea" as being a "form of striving for an all-embracing salvation."[7] We have talked about this before; he believed that the Russian character tended to relate to ideas from the perspective of absolutism. In other words, the *Russian* revolutionaries possessed a Messianic, religiously-fanatical belief in the aims of socialism. The reason Russia was in such a state was because "certain immemorial, primordial qualities, the 'metaphysical formation' of the Russian nation...appear as the main sources of the unprecedented social order."[8] This is an interesting point because it suggests that although Berdyaev was considered an intellectual enemy of the Soviet Union, and he wrote articles and books attacking the Russian revolutionaries, he was not in fact hostile to the idea itself of socialism, but to the practitioners of the idea, the Russians. Gal'tseva writes that "unfortunately, Berdyaev for all his insight seized hold of the 'Russian idea' as the guilty party in the historical tragedy of Russia, and as a result led many people astray."[9]

We can hardly say, however, that Berdyaev had some kind of ingrained prejudice against the Russian character, because along with his criticism of the religiously-fanatical nature of Russian socialism, he also saw great potential for the Russian spirit in the world community. In his book, *The Destiny of Russia*, he writes, "From days of old there was a

premonition that Russia was foreordained to do something great - that Russia is a unique country, similar to no other country in the world."[10] To a Russian, Berdyaev may seem to place more accent on "Russian" than on "communism" in the failure of Russian communism, but it should be fairly clear that he did not think that Russia's position was hopeless in the world. In any case Berdyaev's views on society lend themselves to varying interpretations; the term *berdyaevshchina* was coined in Soviet philosophy to refer to anti-Soviet thought, while in the *emigre* press the same term indicated a pro-Soviet stance![11]

The theme of "the Russian idea" in Berdyaev's thought arises in another article, in *Russkaya literatura*, published in 1990, this time, however, focussing more on how it relates to Russian literature than to Russian society. Its author, V.A. Kotel'nikov, says that Berdyaev defined "the Russian idea" as "an aggregate of the spiritual motives of national life and a supra-national calling."[12] Gal'tseva criticized the way in which Berdyaev attacked the Russian character, as he claimed that it abused its spiritual motives and its calling, but Kotel'nikov declares that Berdyaev was also partly possessed of this character. He was attracted to Stavrogin in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, precisely because of this "fiery thirst for a new revelation" in Stavrogin, which is not religiously-based at all. To Kotel'nikov, Berdyaev's thought has a dual nature, which wavers between a sober religio-philosophical outlook and the temptation of a Stavrogin: measureless willfulness.[13]

Kotel'nikov further claims that the explicitly religious figures of Alyosha and Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov* were of little interest to Berdyaev, since he saw asceticism and monasticism as being harmful to the personality. The author admits - and how could he not? - that Berdyaev was powerfully influenced by "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor", but he returns to his belief in the dual nature of Berdyaev's

thought by saying: "In the entire 'philosophy of freedom' of Berdyaev lies the 'reflection' of the Legend - or the shadow of the Grand Inquisitor."[14]

Let us now look at several of the articles which deal with the philosophy, as opposed to the political ideas, of these religious thinkers. E. Rashkovsky, in his 1988 article in *Voprosy filosofii*, "V. Solovyov on the Fate and Significance of Philosophy", focusses especially on the element of individual freedom in Solovyov's thought. Recognizing that all-unity is Solovyov's main idea, Rashkovsky tries to highlight the accent on human freedom which is contained in this concept: "It is affirmed throughout all the philosopher's creative activity that no spiritual and humanistic values can act in the world as such if the human spirit does not accept them freely."[15] As we have discussed in the chapter on Solovyov, it is a great paradox in his thought that the spirit must be wholly free and yet part of all-unity. It is certainly possible to give an uncritical assessment of Solovyov's thought by putting more of an accent on all-unity than on freedom (as another contemporary scholar, N. Utkina, does in her essay "The Theme of All-Unity in the Philosophy of V. Solovyov"), but Rashkovsky feels that freedom is the most important aspect of Solovyov's thought, and that this freedom is even integrally related to all-unity.

We can remember how critical Shestov was of Solovyov's system, and even Berdyaev criticizes it for being monist rather than dualist, but Rashkovsky has no problem with the idea that, as he describes Solovyov's system, "out of the notion of all-unity flows the principle of human freedom."[16] It must be said that the author of this article is mainly presenting an overview of Solovyov's beliefs, and not analyzing their philosophical worth, but it is fairly clear that he is sympathetic to Solovyov's basic ideas, and wishes to atone for the hostile attitude to the philosopher which once reigned. He writes: 'And I myself...feel responsible for what happened.'[17]

N. Utkina gives a much more thorough and detailed analysis of Solovyov's thought, also in *Voprosy filosofii*, in her 1989 article, "The Theme of All-unity in the Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov". While she is generally of the same mind as Rashkovsky, thinking that Solovyov's all-unity leads to spiritual freedom, nevertheless she recognizes that his desire to unite *externally* as well as *internally* exposes him to the accusation of being against freedom, and she tries to defend him. "The adherence by Solovyov to the principle of autocracy and monarchism may evoke surprise in any reader of his brilliant social works, which were written above all in a spirit of liberalism..."[18] Utkina is well aware that Solovyov progressed through many stages of development, but claims that all-unity remained the most fundamental and enduring aspect of his systematic thought, and moreover that his all-unity was imbued with moral principles. She describes him as trying initially to go beyond the "abstract rationalism" of Hegel by introducing a more explicitly moral factor into his system (with the peculiarly Russian concept of Sophia), while not forgetting about the individual: "Eternity belongs not to the idea of man, it is the fate of 'each separate person,'"[19] she says in describing his thought. She too does not see the individual disappearing in all-unity, rather she appreciates Solovyov's insistence on the active role that each person must play in the spiritualization of the world. "Progress is unrealizable if the participants in it become objects, moving by someone else's will. True progress is connected with the activity of subjects which possess their own wills, their own personal substance."[20]

The articles of Utkina and Rashkovsky are both primarily summaries of his ideas, although Utkina had more of a focus with her accent on Solovyov's all-unity. Neither one reacts very strongly to Solovyov's thought, although the attitudes of both critics might be summarized by Utkina's friendly if not entirely convincing final line: 'And we can hope

that present-day civilization will recognize the necessity of the union of a freely-moral mankind.'[21]

Both Utkina and Rashkovsky agree that Solovyov was a moralist, whose all-unity was supported by a "justification of the good". This is also the conclusion of S. Averintsev, writing in *Novy mir*, in 1989. It is true that he finds Solovyov much less of an inspirational figure than do the former two, preferring to point out the strange nature of the philosopher's character - he was reported to be the prototypes for both peace-loving Alyosha and rebellious Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*, he had the look of a biblical prophet and a Christian martyr, he seemed to be, as Blok called him, a 'knight-monk'.[22] But Averintsev recognizes the philosopher's basic idea:

> For V. Solovyov, a fragile man liable to fits of melancholy, the idea of truth [*pravda*] genuinely cheered him. This is always expressed in his style: whenever the philosopher returns to his cherished task of 'the justification of the good', to his explanation of moral perspectives, his eloquence blazes, the flow of his speech becomes light and winged, as if it were dancing.[23]

Averintsov in this short essay does not attempt to explore Solovyov's ideas in depth, but even a general statement like this one sees morality as the main pillar of Solovyov's all-unity construction, and sees nothing 'reactionary' in this morality.

Each of these three critics - Rashkovsky, Utkina and Averintsev - acknowledge the Russian philosopher as a moral teacher, whether they put the emphasis on human freedom, all-unity or the complexities of his character. The notion that Solovyov was a "bourgeois, gentrified social writer" is nowhere to be found in these critiques; rather, there is a sense

in each of the essays that Solovyov is being welcomed back into Russian intellectual life, that while he is not always easily understood or uncritically appreciated, it is at least possible to discuss his ideas objectively.

The modern Soviet critic who wants to take seriously the work of Lev Shestov must resist the temptation to view him in any way but as a thinker concerned exclusively with philosophical and religious ideas. Solovyov, Berdyaev and Frank provide plenteous material for a discussion of the fate of Russia or the dangers of materialist socialism, but one could bring Shestov into the political arena no farther than does N. Motroshilova in regretting the loss to Russia of a fine thinker (cited above). Fortunately, despite the unpolitical nature of his writings, and despite the fact that, as one critic says, "The philosophy of Lev Shestov is not for each and every person"[24], he has nevertheless not been overlooked in the revival of Russian religious thought.

Motroshilova, as has been mentioned, does not place herself in the ranks of Shestov admirers. Her essay, "The Parabola of the Living Fate of Lev Shestov", published in *Voprosy filosofii*, in 1989, is, however, in no way a bullying one - of the sort that might have been written a decade ago - but gives credit to Shestov for initiating a genuine dialogue with philosophers from Socrates through Kant to Hegel, Schelling, etc., and for initiating this dialogue in such a way as to seem to bring to life thinkers who have been dead for over two millennia. This is reminiscent of Berdyaev's comment on Shestov, that philosophy was for him not an academic speciality, but a matter of life and death.[25] She also grants that his main virtue as a thinker is his defense of freedom and individuality. But this critic sees in Shestov what other philosophers and critics have seen in him, namely, a narrowmindedness based on his blanket refusal to admit that philosophy, the pursuit of knowledge, can have any value at all. For

instance, she claims that although Edmund Husserl, a friend of Shestov's, had done a great service to philosophy by rejecting relativism, psychologism, scientism, etc., Shestov saw in him only a rationalist, and refused or was unable to look any deeper into his thought. Although this is not an original idea (indeed Husserl himself complained to Shestov about the same thing, as did Berdyaev) it is a valid point; an admirer of Husserl would likely have little sympathy for Shestov's wholesale rejection of philosophy. This critic accuses Shestov of not taking the trouble to understand Husserl, and she declares: "Shestov desperately needed...a strong opponent; he wanted very much to find a contemporary incarnation of rationalism."[26]

Husserl is not her only example. Motroshilova herself appears to be sympathetic to the type of systematic thought which German idealist philosophy produced, and she thinks that what Shestov has done is to create an improbably rigid definition of this philosophy, and then attack it for its rigidity. "Shestov sees in classical German philosophy primarily one side - an apology to the all-general, a glorification of necessity to the detriment of the individual, to the detriment of freedom."[27]

Shestov is open to such criticism. The radical and even combative nature of his thought finds passionate but not widespread approval. Motroshilova clearly has much more sympathy with systematic thought than does Shestov, and his own devotion to *Sola fides* - faith alone - finds in her a sharp critic. Even so, she graciously welcomes him back to Russian soil as an important voice in the long-lost tradition of Russian religious thought.

Least known today of these four thinkers is Frank, about whom fairly little has been published in the Soviet Union in recent years. Frank is known today mainly as one of the intellectuals exiled in 1922, who was a defender of political freedom. In *Teatral'naya zhizn'*, in 1989, Boris

Lyubimov wrote a short biographical sketch of Frank, citing favorable remarks by Berdyaev, Zenkovsky and others. While the article itself casts Frank in a very positive light, the author himself is unwilling to commit himself to any more substantial assertions about Frank than that he made a deep impression on others and that a love for philosophy never abandoned him.[28]

In a 1990 article in *Novy mir*, A. Kazakov introduces Frank's essay, "Beyond the Right and the Left", by summarizing briefly his life and work. Kazakov claims that Frank saw through the weakness of both political sides, to the extent that he was able to follow that most un-Shestovian principle, "Weep not, laugh not, despise not - but understand."[29] We have already covered some of the reasons why Frank (and Berdyaev) were suspicious of both conservative and liberal in Russian political life - they saw an absence of true religious inspiration on both sides. Kazakov elaborates somewhat on this, but offers no comment either pro or con such an outlook.

In contrast to Frank, Berdyaev has become widely known again in his homeland. The essays by Andreyev, Renata Gal'tseva and Kotel'nikov have already been cited. Berdyaev is the most controversial figure of the four because his thought lends itself to seemingly contradictory interpretations - we have seen how *berdyaevshchina* has has been viewed as a pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet term. Generally, though, he is now acknowledged as an inspiration because of his analysis of freedom and culture within Russia. In the afterwards to Berdyaev's book, *The Destiny of Russia*, published in the USSR in 1990, K. Kovalyov says of him: "There was much, very much, that he foreordained and divined."[30] V. Todres says in his short essay in *Sobesednik* that "Berdyaev thoroughly rejected any kind of dictatorship."[31] He is credited with understanding, perhaps better

than any Russian thinker, the significance of freedom and the disasters that follow when it is removed, at least in the political sense.

Even in matters of love and sex Berdyaev commands respect. In a review of Berdyaev's book, *Eros and Personality. A Philosophy of Sex and Love*, Jacob Khotov, in *Novy mir,* says that a reader of his book "discovers the possibility of love as the free and creative essence of man."[32]

Berdyaev, however, like the other three, is subject to criticism in Russia today, but this criticism is markedly different from that of earlier generations, in that it is usually constructive. What we can say about most of the articles we have looked at so far is that they mainly present summaries of our thinkers' ideas. There are exceptions: Gal'tseva's and Kotel'nikov's essay on Berdyaev, Motroshilova's essay on Shestov, the discussion of the Vekhovtsi, there is not much attempt to grapple with the ideas themselves. Mostly we are now seeing overviews of their thought, and a sense of gladness that they have returned to Russian culture. These are all positive changes, even if they are still scratching the surface. What can be unequivocally stated is that there is no longer a ban on the open and objective discussion of religious thought in the Soviet Union.

Let us finally look at the current attitude in the Soviet press to one of the events which sparked off the decline and fall of Russian religious discussion in the USSR: the exile of intellectuals five years after the revolution. In 1922 it was widely felt that the Bolshevik leaders in the Soviet Union were loosening their grip on Soviet society. The economic programme NEP had allowed for greater freedoms in the marketplace, and intellectual life in the country was still flourishing, as new philosophical societies were being created and lectures, courses and seminars on philosophical and religious topics were being offered at the universities. But suddenly these freedoms were curtailed, and with little warning the

crackdown began. As it is explained in *Ogonyok*, in June, 1990, the communist apparatchiks:

> ...saw unmistakeably in the rebirth of a free market a deadly threat to their positions and their party privileges...but the new class did not dare to attack NEP openly, because the fruits of the free market were too obvious. Instead they led an attack into the sole area were the Bolsheviks believed themselves to be indisputably right - into ideology. The first victim of this secret attack on NEP was the intelligentsia."[33]

Berdyaev and Frank were not in active opposition to the Bolsheviks. Although they had attacked the revolutionary character in *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny*, they did not belong to any political parties and were not sympathizers with the old regime. The only threat that they and other members of the intelligentsia posed was in their *potential* to support the Bolshevik opposition in the future. They were by themselves politically insignificant. However, as Trotsky put it, "they are a potential weapon in the hands of our possible enemies."[34] No crime had been committed by these members of the intelligentsia - indeed, no crimes were hinted at by the Bolsheviks - but solely because they were not like-minded thinkers with the Communist leaders, it was felt that they could be a threat to the new order.

So in the autumn of 1922 Berdyaev, Frank and other intellectuals with their families took a train to Petrograd, a ferry across to Finland, and from there made their way to Berlin. From that time on in the Soviet Union, says V. Kostikov in *Ogonyok*, "the concepts 'mind', 'honour', and 'conscience' acquire a completely different, perverted sense..."[35] However, the refugees were undoubtedly more fortunate than they would

have ever believed at first. Abroad most of them were welcomed, offered jobs, etc., because of their great stature in the world of European thought. In their homeland by the end of the decade the Stalin Terror was beginning, from which they would have had no hope of escape.

The arrest and exile of those intellectual leaders in Russia were explored in a series of two articles, on 9 May and 6 June, 1990, in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, by Sergey Khoruzhy. The author admits that the whole event was shrouded in mystery; there are no extant documents which point to a decision or to a decision-maker. However, there could have been only three people capable of making such a decision: Trotsky, Zinoviev and Lenin. Khoruzhy believes that Trotsky played virtually no role, and Zinoviev a minor one. "The entire responsibility and command, all the general and operational principles of the exile belong to Lenin."[36] The author's proof of this is scanty, and there seems to be no certainty that Lenin did indeed order the exile. What is most remarkable is that the accusation should be made at all in an official Soviet newspaper; the inviolable Lenin is made the scapegoat for the infamous operation.

The exile began to take shape when, on the night of 16 August, 1922, arrests took place in cities throughout Russia. Those arrested were interrogated, then indicted with "contrarevolutionary activity during a period of great difficulty in the country,"[37] which was Article 57 of the Soviet criminal code. Then the accused were informed of their impending exile, and told that if they tried to return to the country they would be shot.[38] They were allowed to take with them one sheet, one suit, two shirts, but no books and none of their writings.[39]

If all this sounds severe, it should be remembered first of all that they were for the most part welcomed in their new lands (and they even departed Russia in a certain style; Frank's students from Moscow delivered a farewell address, declaring that his teaching was an

inspiration)[40], whereas had they remained in Russia they would certainly have met their end in far crueller circumstances. Also, some of the accused actually welcomed the exile. Prince S.E. Trubetskoy said that "I feared only that something might hinder our departure."[41]

So it has to be admitted that, despite the initial blow to many of them when they discovered they were to be deported, they were more fortunate than they would initially have realized. It was the Soviet Union which suffered the greatest loss. As Sergey Khoruzhy says, "With the deportation philosophy was finished in Russia; and that which since then has been called philosophy here, in fact is only one of the services of the totalitarian machine."[42]

"Lately the theme of Russia has tormented me," wrote Berdyaev at the end of his life.[43] Each of these four men was tormented by Russia: Solovyov tried many times without success to ignite the spiritual fire in the Orthodox Church, and by the end of his life his society had more or less rejected all his ideas. Shestov had had to flee his home to save himself and his family, and Frank and Berdyaev were forced into exile. These latter three men, who had contributed significantly to intellectual thought in Russia, spent the remainder of their days outside their own country. In their work, ideas of the religious individual continued to be explored and developed, but now in foreign places, in Berlin and Paris and London. For the rest of their lives, Russia no longer had ears for them.

Notes

1. S. Semyonova, "Diagnozy i prorochestva", 'Literaturnaya Gazeta', 1 May, 1991, p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. N. Motroshilova, "Parabola zhiznennoi sud'by L'va Shestova", 'Voprosy filosofii', No. 1, 1989, p. 143.
5. E. Rashkovsky, 'Vl. Solovyov o sud'bakh i smysle filosofii", 'Voprosy filosofii', No. 8, 1988, p. 113.
6. Ibid., p. 115.
7. R. Gal'tseva, "Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdyaev", 'Literaturnaya gazeta', No. 31, 2 August, 1989.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. N. Berdyaev, Sud'ba rossii (Moscow: Sovetski pisatel', 1990) p. 8.
11. R. Gal'tseva, 'Literaturnaya gazeta', No. 4, 1990, p. 112.
12. V. Kotel'nikov, "Russkaya ideya kak filosofskaya i istoriko literaturnaya tema", 'Russkaya literatura', No. 4, 1990, p. 112.
13. Ibid., p. 113.
14. Ibid., p. 118.
15. E. Rashkovsky, "Vl. Solovyov o sud'bakh i smysle filosofii", 'Voprosy filosofii', p. 117.
16. Ibid., p. 116.
17. Ibid., p. 115.
18. N. Utkina, "Tema vseedinstva v filosofii Vl. Solovyova", 'Voprosy filosofii', No. 6, 1989, p. 73.
19. Ibid., p. 64.
20. Ibid., p. 66.
21. Ibid., p. 75.
22. S. Averintsev, 'Stat'i i pis'ma: k kharekterisikye russkogo uma", 'Novy mir', No. 1, 1989, p. 197.
23. Ibid., p. 196.
24. L. Shestov, Umozreniye i otkroveniye, (Paris: YMCA Press, 1964) Intro.
25. N. Motroshilova, "Parabola zhiznennoi sud'by L'va Shestova", 'Voprosy filosofii', p. 142.
26. Ibid., p. 137.
27. R. Gal'tseva, "Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdyaev", 'Literaturnaya gazeta'.
28. B. Lyubimov, "Svet vo t'mye", 'Teatral'naya zhizn', April, 1989.
29. A. Kazakov, Introduction to "Po tu storonu pravogo i levogo", 'Novy mir', No. 4, 1990.
30. N. Berdyaev, Sud'ba rossii, p. 139.
31. V. Todres, "Tsarstvo sovesti", 'Sobesednik', No. 37, Sept. 1989, p. 6.

32. J. Khotov, 'Novy mir', No. 3, 1990, p. 270.
33. V. Kostikov, "Izgnaniye iz raya", 'Ogonyok', No. 14, June, 1990.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. S. Khoruzhy, "Filosofsky parakhod", 'Literaturnaya gazeta', 6 June, 1990.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. N. Berdyaev, Samopoznaniye (Paris: YMCA Press, 1983), p. 387.

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Where I have used the English translation of a Russian text, I have put the original title in brackets.

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