Homo Theurgos:

Freedom According to John Zizioulas and Nikolai Berdyaev



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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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And now the question arises: In the creative ecstasy of the genius is there not perhaps another kind of sainthood before God, another type of religious action, equal in value to the canonical sainthood? I deeply believe that before God the genius of Pushkin ... is equal to the sainthood of Seraphim…

N. Berdyaev

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ABSTRACT

For both John Zizioulas (b. 1931), the prominent Greek theologian, and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948), the renowned Russian religious philosopher, freedom is the question of ontology, i.e., freedom is about absolute otherness. Since *to be* is *to act*, and because *to act* means *to create*, we *are* only as long as we are capable of creating a radically unique reality. The essential trait of the divine image in the human person is the capacity for untrammeled self-determination or the power to create radical newness even from God's perspective. In all its varied forms, however, theistic theology claims that God added nothing to Himself by the creation of the world. The doctrine of the divine image thus appears to be incompatible with the theistic concept of divine omnipotence. Inquiry into human freedom is therefore inevitably intertwined with the question of how God *is* God. Zizioulas's concept of divine omnipotence does not envisage a space of freedom that God provides for the human person. Berdyaev on the other hand locates the origin of our being in the *Ungrund*. In his view, this Bottomless freedom is Godhead from which both freedom of the divine Persons and that of the human person originate. Because the person in spite of being created is *not causally determined* by the Creator, she can create her radically unique reality and realize her ontological freedom. If God is to be called the living God, movement would need to be one of his attributes. The nature of movement and the essence of life are seen as creation of newness. If God is to be called the living God, his creature also needs to be alive and capable of creating ontological excess in being. We explore and enlarge this circle of ideas, while introducing a new term *homo theurgos* in order to designate the paradigm shift according to which humans were created not for God's own glory but to enrich divine life.

ABBREVIATIONS

Nikolai Berdyaev

BE	Beginning and the End
DH	The Divine and the Human
DR	Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography
DO	Dostoievsky
ED	Eksizstencialnaya dialektika bozhestennogo i chelovecheskogo
FS	Freedom and the Spirit
FSD	Filosofiya svobodnago duha
MCA	The Meaning of the Creative Act
MD	Mirosozercaniye Dostoievskago
OEM	Opyt eshatikigicheskoi metafiziki; Tvorchestvo i objektivaciya
RSCH	O rabstvye i svobodye chelovyeka
SF	Slavery and Freedom
SP	Samopoznanie
STv	Smysl tvorchestva: Opyt opravdaniia cheloveka
SS	Solitude and Society
YMO	Ya i mir obyektov

John Zizioulas

BC	Being as Communion
CO	Communion and Otherness

Other abbreviations

Amb	Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua
CL	Hans urs Von Balthasar, Cosmic Liturgy
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca
EO	Nikolaos Loudovikos, A Eucharistic Ontology
GBB	Eberhard Jüngel, God's Being is in Becoming
GMW	Eberhard Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World
GN	Rowan Williams, Grace and Necessity
LFI	Douglas Hedley, The Living Forms of Imagination
LG	Sergius Bulgakov, The Lamb of God
ML	Meyer Howard Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp
MM	Lars Thunberg, Microcosm and Mediator
NS	Meyer Howard Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism
PG	Jacques Paul Migne (ed.), Patrologia Graeca
SMP	Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy
Svet	Sergius Bulgakov, Svet nevechernii: Sozertsania i umozrenia
ST	Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology
TWP	Rowan Williams, Theological World of Philokalia

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Introduction

Given the immense role the problem of freedom has played in the history of theology, it is surprising, Paul Tillich lamented, how little ontological investigation into the meaning of freedom is carried out by modern theologians.[1] We should note from the very outset that the emphasis in Tillich's remark is on the adjective 'ontological', that is, what theology needs is an *ontological* elucidation of the nature of freedom. Tillich wants to make it clear that freedom is not freedom of will but that it pertains to the human being as a complete self and a rational person.[2] Thus, freedom is conceived here as the capacity of a particular 'complete self' to be radically 'other' and unique.

Our enquiry into the question of freedom is thus transferred to the level of ontology and we need to focus on the question of how the freedom of a particular person can be not only freedom *from* the other but also freedom *for* the other. How can we construe a positive, non-destructive freedom when one is faced with the 'necessities', by which we imply the Creator and His world? Etienne Gilson postulated that 'to be is to act, and to act is to be'.[3] Since every action amounts to a creation, *to be* means *to create*. And since a person *is,* as long as it is unique, what one creates also inevitably appears as unique, unrepeatable, and as a previously non-existing 'world'. Because *to be* means *to act*, and *to*

[1] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Digswell Place: James Nisbet & Co. Ltd, 1968), 202.
[2] Ibid. 202-203.
[3] Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A.H.C. Downes (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 94. Charles Hartshorne entertains a similar idea: 'To be is to act; to be individual is to act individually, that is, as not fully determined by another individual or set of individuals.' *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York, 1984), 21.

act means *to create*, it follows that ontological freedom is not about freedom of choice, but necessarily implies the capacity to create radical excess in being.

Tillich avers that the human is able to transcend the essential necessity of being – its 'destiny' according to his terminology – without destroying it. Tillich tends to see necessities or destiny not as a strange external power determining us but as the indefinitely broad basis out of which our decision arises.[4] The person stands, he asserts, in a dialectical opposition to destiny, not only without destroying it and without being destroyed, but experiencing it as an infinitely deep source of its self-transcendence. In spite of being created, the finite is not destined to limitedness. Infinitude, avers Tillich, is finitude transcending itself without any *a priori* limit.[5]

Tillich regards the world and God – united in 'destiny' – as an unlimitedly deep source of our self-actualization, challenging the traditional or 'classical'[6] theistic concept of divine omnipotence and omniscience. If the person's self-affirmation is not to be taken in an abstract way, but as a concrete manifestation of our freedom – as a new reality – obviously it becomes necessary to ask how it is possible to create something that does not already exist in the world or in the mind of an omnipotent and omniscient God. To paraphrase Nietzsche, if there is [a traditionally construed omnipotent][7] God, how can any being create something 'new', that is, something unique?[8] How can there be anything 'new' for an omniscient Being? How can I have something that belongs to me, and to me alone,

[4] Ibid. 204.
[5] Ibid. 212.
[6] Hartshorne distinguishes between 'classical theism' with its 'six common mistakes about God', one of which is the traditional concept of omnipotence, and a revised form of theism which some call 'process theology' but he prefers the term 'neoclassical theism'. Ibid. ix.
[7] According to Hartshorne, the question of what is the highest conceivable form of divine power was scarcely put seriously because the answer seemed to be so obvious: it must be the power to *determine* every detail of what happens in the world. Ibid. 11.
[8] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

something that is *uniquely* mine – for how can I be 'other' if I don't have something 'other' than anyone else – if the omniscient God is the creator and thus determines the very foundation of my being? If God is, however, regarded as the unlimited source of our capacity for self-determination, does this not compromise His omnipotence? The problem we are facing may be stated thus: can we speak about a human ontological freedom alongside a classical All-powerful God?

Clearly, theological enquiry into the problem of human freedom needs to start from the question of God. The problem of how the human person *is* a free person, of necessity is intertwined with the question of how God *is* God.[9] Is it possible to think of the relationship between the creation of the world and of how God *is* God without annulling God's independence from the creature? Can we *a priori* dismiss the question as to whether God can be free if that which He creates is not free?[10] Is it possible to ask this question without imperiling God's transcendence?

As soon as we accept, however, that there is a *movement* in God towards the creation of the other we have to ask the question of the *ontological* meaning of the movement as well as of the *ontological* meaning of otherness. The majority of Christian thinkers would probably subscribe to the theistic doctrine of God in its different forms and, following the logic of God's omnipotence, they would argue that the reason for creation lies in the 'goodness' of God. Etienne Gilson, indeed, claimed that '*all* Christian

[9] Our concept of God essentially shapes our notion of the human person. I would therefore agree with George Pattison that the question 'what it is for God *to be* as God' is still worth thinking about. As Pattison suggested, 'reflecting on the kind of Being that we think of as proper to God… would seem to have a certain priority over the question as to the existence of God.' *God and Being: An Inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 2-3.

[10] For Hartshorne the idea of a supremely free God who nevertheless decides to have creatures not in the least free is rather bizarre. Ibid. 23.

philosophers have said … [that] it is because God is good that we exist.'[11] The problem, however, is that this answer completely bypasses the ontological meaning of becoming. It refuses to discuss God's being and neglects the fundamental question of 'what does it mean to speak of God?'[12]

What do we achieve by arguing that we exist because God is good? Is it not the case that God is 'good' because of the ontological gift of freedom he bestows upon the world?[13] The essential expression of God's goodness is his desire to create something that is 'other' than him, an autonomous existential centre capable of continuous generation of the surplus in being. God's goodness lies precisely in His willingness to die for us and to become 'nothing' by opening up the space of ontological freedom for the creature. Before the God who does not create the other, the God of metaphysics [theism], writes Heidegger, 'man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before…'[14]

In its most elementary form the question of 'what does it mean to speak of God' and the ontological meaning of becoming is the problem of being. Why being and not simply nothing? To look into the question of nothingness and being means to explain why Nothing does not remain what it is but 'decides' to become Being as well so as to explain the purpose of becoming. When we say 'Nothing' we do not imply an absolute non-being but rather a primal and still undiversified source of all becoming. In his interpretation of the creation, for example, as the primal source of being, Jacob Böhme poses a unity that in its

[11] SMP, 93. Italics added.
[12] Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 1.
[13] It seems that we are more ignorant about God's goodness than about his power. If we want to avoid worshiping power more than goodness, it is important that we should have more than a vague idea as to what God's 'goodness' is really about. 'What does "God is good" mean if the kind of purpose it implies is hopelessly opaque to us?' Hartshorne, 24.
[14] Pattison, 6. Heidegger believed that this is also the God of the theology that explicitly affirmed metaphysics as its element. Ibid.

absolute lack of distinctions, is Nothing, *ein ewig Nichts*, the *Ungrund*. But this *Ungrund* possesses an inner nisus, striving for self-realization, which establishes itself as a dialectical force to the primal Nothing, and sets the otherwise static unity in motion. In this way the Nothing is transformed into Something, and the source of all existing things.[15]

The nature of God has to be regarded as theogonic and 'generative' because 'the notion of a solitary or inactive deity is incompatible with what God shows of God in the world and its history'.[16] Thus the ontological purpose of being is becoming. But becoming cannot take place in a vacuum. Becoming is impossible unless multiple, mutually undetermined infinite personalities establish relationship. It is true that we exist because God is 'good', and by God's 'goodness' we imply that God loves us. The very nature of love should preclude sameness because that which engenders the lure and drive of love is radical and inexhaustible otherness. That God is good means that he loves us, but he would not be able to love us unless we were his 'eternal other'. The purpose of being is becoming conceived as a personal movement and the exchange of novelties between innumerable infinities. If we assume that becoming is the purpose of being it follows that the movement of life cannot arrive merely to halt in God's 'other'. The 'other' must be ontologically free; otherwise by creating a radically determined creature God would go against his own nature.

This is why God cannot be simply God the Father but God the Trinity. If there is an ontological movement or *becoming* in God this means that God *is* God, that God is the *living* God,[17] so long as the infinite becoming continues.[18] *To be* involves constant

[15] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 161.
[16] Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity* (London: Continuum, 2005), 159.
[17] Jüngel stresses the importance of something that should be a truism but in fact it is not, i.e., that theology is about thinking of God as 'the living one'. 'Unless it has the courage to *think* God's livingness, theology will end up as a mausoleum of God's livingness.' GBB, page xxvi.

movement of unhindered self-determination and self-transcendence. As Tillich writes, 'Being-itself manifests itself to finite being in the infinite drive of the finite beyond itself.'[19] Being, explains Tillich, tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It tends to unite identity and difference, rest and movement. That is why it is impossible to speak of being without speaking of becoming. 'Becoming is just as genuine in the structure of being as is that which remains unchanged in the process of becoming.'[20]

If God is called the living God because of continuous becoming, can we avoid assuming a dialectical negativity in God himself? Tillich belonged to the group of thinkers who were aware of the significance of the question of non-being and its dialectical relation to being. Tillich continues,

> If God is called the living God, if he is the ground of the creative processes of life, if history has significance for him, if there is no negative principle in addition to him which could account for evil and sin, how can one avoid positing a dialectical negativity in God himself? Such questions have forced theologians to relate non-being dialectically to being-itself and consequently to God. Boehme's *Ungrund*, Schelling's 'first potency', Hegel's 'antithesis', the 'contingent' and the 'given' in God in recent theism, Berdyaev's 'meonic freedom' – all are examples of the problem of dialectical non-being exerting influence on the Christian doctrine of God.[21]

Movement, however, is possible only if the hypostases of the Trinity possess full ontological integrity. What then is the purpose of otherness in the Trinity? 'The doctrine of

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[18] We should add that the terms 'movement' and 'becoming' must be understood in a new way. As Jüngel argues, the becoming in which God's being is does not mean either an augmentation or a diminution of God's being. Ibid. page xxv. This is an inevitable conclusion of any theology that does not see a bottomless Nothing as the fount of the personal form of being. How can we speak of God's being as becoming if in the divine being nothing new is generated? And if something new is brought forth, is this not an augmentation of God's being? We thus suggest that the solution of the problem should be sought in a picture of God as a dialectic union of Godhead and the personal, trinitarian form of God. This, at least, is how Berdyaev's conception of God could be interpreted. Jüngel's position seems to lead to a similar conclusion. He writes, 'is it theologically true that everything that is in becoming must therefore also have become? Is it finally settled that transience must follow becoming as sunshine follows rain? Theologically, what we call 'becoming' should be understood in its fundamental ontology as a trinitarian category. According to this, God does not leave his present behind him as a past in order to proceed towards a future which is strange to him; rather, in his trinitarian livingness he is 'undividedly the beginning, succession and end, all at once in His own essence'. Ibid. page xxvi.

[19] ST, 212.

[20] ST, 200.

[21] ST, 210.

the Trinity is not a conceptual tour de force to resolve a set of abstract puzzles,' avers Rowan Williams. 'It is a statement that the God encountered in the history of Israel and in the life of Christ must of necessity be involved in the generating of otherness because of the radical, self-dispossessing character of the love this God displays.'[22]

Is it then unthinkable to make a parallel between the 'why' of the intra-Trinitarian movement and the 'why' of the movement towards creation; between the uncreated other and the created other? If my freedom as radical ontological otherness is taken seriously does this not mean that for God I am a dialectical and dialogical partner, and that my otherness keeps the ontological movement, the movement of life uninterrupted? If God is to be conceived as the living and free God does it not follow that He is so as long as the creature is the living and free creature? Would it not be incompatible with the divine generative nature to cause 'short-circuits' in being by bringing forth a creature in which becoming reaches a dead-end?

The problem, however, is that if we accept that God lives as long as His creature is alive we also need to admit that if the creature dies God is diminished. Indeed, how could God who is Love possibly survive the death of His creature? In other words, if God is Love how could he possibly decide to bring into existence a dead creature? The absurdity of such an assumption becomes obvious if we closely examine our question. What would the expressions 'to create' or 'to bring into existence' mean if what is brought forth were dead? This means that the only meaningful form of human freedom is ontological freedom. And since ontological freedom – the possibility of personal self-determination, as well as the possibility of the living God – rests upon the assumption of a dialectical notion of non-

[22] GN, 158.

being, the question of the nature of non-being appears to be one of the most significant theological issues and as such is crucial for our investigation.

The idea of the death of God to many seems heretical due to the literal interpretation of the concept of death. Even if we accept the Hegelian contention that on the cross it was not only Christ's human nature that died but also the divine,[23] we still need to clarify what we imply by 'death'. 'Death' should not be identified with *ouk on* or the absolute non-being but with *mē on* or the non-being that stands in the dialectical opposition to God. Apart from Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the death of God has yet another perspective, the one mentioned in the writings of certain mystics. Angelus Silesius, for example, argued that 'if I die God dies with me'. We should note that Silesius talks not so much about God's vulnerability as much as he does about human dignity, to use Pico della Mirandola's expression. And the dignity of the creature is certainly the dignity of the Creator. God's act of creation is successful to the degree that the movement towards the creature is a true becoming. Silesius therefore argues that because the person cannot die, i.e., the person's death cannot be taken to mean the nothingness of *ouk on*, she is an ineradicable part of being and becoming. A person's death, and by the same token God's death, is only a process within *mē on*. Since humankind was dead, Christ died on the cross. But essentially Christ's death was nothing else but the multiplication of life. Christ's death was the path towards the regeneration of human nature so much so that it became capable concurrently of participating in the life of the divine and yet preserving its integrity. Resurrected human nature became capable of *perichoresis*, which means that it is not only God who

[23] For more about Hegel's concept of the death of the divine see in, Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, transl. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 77. *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977), 77. Jüngel makes a good point in criticizing Hegel for talking about the 'death of the divine *nature*', because nature always appears as hypostasized. It would be therefore more appropriate to say that Christ 'dies' also as God.

'penetrates' and enriches our nature but now also the human person who has the power to reciprocate and to enrich God.

From this point of view we could probably better understand the words of Nikolai Berdyaev that God does not need those who are not free, that those who are afraid to use their gift of freedom betray the purpose for which they were created and thus do not belong to God's cosmos. Ontological freedom is the most precious and the most desired gift. And yet it is also the most fearful. Ontological freedom commands relentless creation of novelties, because to be is to act. Freedom demands immense effort and places upon our shoulders an almost unbearable burden of responsibility for the continued creation of the world, without which the world would be a dead place. Now we see yet another aspect of Silesius's contention: indeed, if I 'die' because I lack the courage to act as a unique person; if I do not fulfill the purpose of my existence – to be God's 'irreplaceable other' – certainly what is my unique contribution is never going to become a part of God's life.

The critical assessment of classical theism should stress that God needs to be conceived as union of being and becoming, i.e., the union of his unfathomable nature and his triadic personal form of becoming, a part of which is the human person. In the words of Alfred North Whitehead, God's conceptual nature remains unchanged but his derivative nature is consequent upon the creative advance of the world.[24] 'It is true', writes Whitehead, 'to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.'[25] He continues, 'neither God, nor the World, reaches static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty. Either of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other.' We need to stress however that

[24] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* Corrected Edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 345.
[25] Ibid. 348

there is an essential difference between the divine and the creaturely capacity to create. Only God is capable of creating something 'other' than him, i.e., a new person, something that is impossible for the creature. The person creates new reality that always bears her mark but it can never create a new person as her 'other'.[26]

In modern Orthodox scholarship the question of ontological nature of freedom holds a prominent place in the works of John Zizioulas (1931–),[27] an influential Orthodox Christian theologian, and the above-mentioned Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948), a prominent Russian religious philosopher. Like Tillich, Zizioulas and Berdyaev aver that freedom must not be restricted to the psychological and moral level, i.e., to the 'freedom of will' or the freedom of choice. Zizioulas believes that the question of freedom is related to the fundamental problem of *being.* He asserts, 'being other and being free in an ontological sense, that is, in the sense of being free to be yourself, and not someone or something else, are two aspects of one and the same reality.'[28] In short, freedom means to be other in an

[26] Ibid. 349. Kierkegaard holds a similar opinion when he writes, 'yet for God, the infinitely strongest one, there is no obstacle. He himself has placed it – yes, he himself has lovingly, in incomprehensible love, placed it. He placed it and places it every time a human being comes to existence, whom he in his love makes into something in relation to himself. Oh, what wonderful omnipotence and love! A human being cannot bear to have his "creations" be something in relation to himself; they are supposed to be nothing, and therefore he calls them, and with disdain, "creations". But God, who creates from nothing, omnipotently takes from nothing and says, "Become"; he lovingly adds, "Become something even in relation to me." What wonderful love; even his omnipotence is in the power of love.' *Kierkegaard's Writings,* XVII; *Christian Discourses,* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 127. Berdyaev also stresses that it is only God who can create another person. In Berdyaev's view this is the essential difference between the two creative powers: 'Created beings do not create personality – personality is created only by God.' Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie, ed. Boris Jakim (San Raphael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), 142. *Smysl tvorchestva: Opyt opravdaniia cheloveka* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1991), 176. Nevertheless, he also believes that human creativity has ontological, soteriological, and eschatological potential.

[27] John Zizioulas is the Eastern Orthodox metropolitan and the Chairman of the Academy of Athens.

[28] John Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 13. Zizioulas is acutely aware of the importance of the question of freedom. The problem of the Other, he writes, has been central to philosophy in our time, culminating in the thought of philosophers such Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. It is, in fact, a subject as old as Greek Philosophy itself, as is evident particularly in the Platonic dialogues. Zizioulas avers that this is why 'there can be hardly any philosophy worthy of the name that does not involve, directly or indirectly, a discussion of this subject.' Ibid.

absolute ontological sense.[29] Zizioulas and Berdyaev, however, suggest diametrically opposite paths towards the resolution of the problem of freedom. Zizioulas would like us to believe that the solution has already been provided by the Greek Fathers and in particular by Maximus the Confessor. Berdyaev, on the other hand, claims that in the work of the Church Fathers, due to a monophysite tendency, one cannot find fully-developed anthropology and that going back to the Fathers would be a grave mistake.

It was not until Athanasius of Alexandria and Nicaea stepped in, claims Zizioulas, that the position of Christianity regarding the question of freedom was clarified. Between God and the world there is total ontological otherness; God's being is uncreated whilst that of the world is created. However, that does not make the world's being less real. The world's otherness vis-à-vis God does not lead to ontological diminution and a totally *other* being can exist side by side with God's being because, as Zizioulas explains, being does not necessarily come out of being itself. Rather, it stems from freedom.[30] Zizioulas argues that substance or nature is a non-relational category[31] whilst Berdyaev contends that freedom does not stem from nature but from the unfathomable void that is prior to being.[32]

It appears that one of the characteristics of God's being lies in His power to create a free creature. A creature is free because it comes from the freedom of God's being. God's freedom, in Zizioulas's view, among other things, is due to the fact that He creates out of nothing. What then is the 'nothing' from which God creates? One of the shortcomings of Zizioulas's theology is that he leaves this question unexplained. Is it *mē on*, a relative non-being, or rather *ouk on*, the absolute non-being? The Platonic school, as Tillich explains,

[29] CO, 11.
[30] CO, pp. 17-18.
[31] 'Substance or nature per se allows for no possibility of communion'. CO, 25.
[32] FS, 124. FSD, 153.

identified *mē on* with that which does not yet have being but it has a potential to become being if it is united with ideas. The 'nothingness' of non-being was however regarded as having the power of resisting a complete union with the ideas and thus it represented the dualistic element or the second principle in addition to God. This is why *me-ontic* matter was rejected by Christianity, which now claimed that the *nihil* out of which God creates is *ouk on*, the undialectical negation of being.[33]

The rejection of the dialectical non-being meant however that God is construed as the first cause or the Being-for-itself, and that He creates not out of 'nothing' (which is absolute non-being and therefore cannot be a potential source of beings), but out of Himself. The foundation of the concept of creation out of nothing thus simply collapses. God's other is inconceivable unless there exists a 'space' out of which, as if out of unlimited freedom, God creates. Without the space of freedom only emanation – generation of ontologically invalid copies – is possible and the theistic God still dominates the entire space of being. As Tillich argued, the ontological attempt to avoid the mystery of non-being tries to deprive non-being of its dialectical character. If being is placed in absolute contrast with non-being (*ouk on*), non-being is excluded from being in every respect. As a matter of fact, everything is excluded except Being-itself. The world in its otherness is therefore impossible unless we postulate a dialectical participation of non-being in being.[34]

For both Zizioulas and Berdyaev the creature is free as long as it is able to transcend every form of givenness, including the created world and the Creator, since they are not our

[33] ST, 209. For Berdyaev, 'there is nothing more sad and barren than that which the Greeks expressed by the phrase *ouk on*, which is real nothingness.' N. Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, trans. R. M. French (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), 97.
[34] ST, 208.

'will'.[35] Berdyaev contends that the human being 'must be free in respect of God, the world, and his own nature.'[36] If the world and God are not our *thelema* – our will – how can the human person, 'in its terrifying ontological ultimacy',[37] accept them? Since to be is to act, freedom of the person remains an illusion as long as it is not actualized. This drive towards self-realization, notes Zizioulas, is probably most obvious in genuine art, which is not simply creation on the basis of the already existing, but a tendency towards creation out of nothing.[38]

Similarly to Berdyaev, who describes freedom as the capacity to create 'out of nothing',[39] Zizioulas arrives at the conclusion that human freedom implies a form of *creatio ex nihilo*. The world, nonetheless, stands before the person in its unrelenting reality. The only option for the person's self-actualization seems to be a negative form of creativity, that is, not the creation of a radically new world, but the destruction of the given one, the ignoring, abolishing, and shattering of the natural forms of beings.[40] In its frightening ontological ultimacy, concludes Zizioulas, personhood leads to God – or to non-existence.[41] God and the world remain 'other': a threat to the person and the person's 'hell'.[42]

Zizioulas and Berdyaev agree that the failure of Christian doctrine to overcome the impasse of freedom is the main reason for the development of humanistic anthropology and its dangerous over-elevation of the human that might lead to his final destruction.

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[35] CO, 235.
[36] FS, 127. FSD, 157.
[37] CO, 235.
[38] J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 42.
[39] As we shall see, Berdyaev does not understand this 'nothing' as our capacity to create without a medium: 'Out of nothing' for him means to create out of unlimited freedom.
[40] BC, 42, n38.
[41] CO, 235.
[42] BC, 43.

Christianity, explains Zizioulas, has tried to reconcile the human and God in terms of obedience, but obedience can result only in a unilateral relationship between the creature and the Creator, without being able to incorporate the human desire to transcend the given. This is why, writes Zizioulas, 'man has felt like a slave and rejected the yoke of God. Atheism sprang out of the very heart of the Church and the notion of freedom became prominent again. There is more than 'obedience', or rather something quite different from it that is needed…'[43]

What exactly is 'more than obedience' according to Zizioulas? In affirming our freedom how can we transcend the world and God whilst preserving our liberty from being negative and destructive? Zizioulas finally arrives at the conclusion that positive transcendence of the compelling reality is impossible. Human freedom as an ultimate self-determination is unfeasible and thus it has to surrender itself to God: 'human freedom can prove itself ultimately only through the annihilation of what exists'.[44] We have to choose between self-determining freedom that leads to non-existence and a theistic God who is conceived as the ultimate form of necessity. Zizioulas therefore sees only two kinds of freedom: first, human and destructive liberty; second, divine freedom to which we have to yield our self-determination.

Even the third form of freedom, which we receive in the 'new birth' through baptism, is only a disguised type of the second freedom. I shall claim that Zizioulas does not arrive at a concept of the third freedom that would be a combination of the first and the second type of liberty. His idea of liberty does not reflect the mystery of Godmanhood, i.e.,

[43] Ibid. 237.
[44] CO, 235.

the unity of divine and human freedom in Christ.[45] In trying to escape 'evil freedom' it seems that Zizioulas falls captive to 'benevolent necessity'.[46] According to Berdyaev, genuine freedom is to be found in the God-Man in whom neither God nor the human constrain each other's self-affirmation. The originality of Berdyaev's view, about which I shall speak at length later, is that he understands God as a dialectical union of being and non-being. In this union non-being never becomes the second principle in addition to God but remains the 'void of original freedom' from which both God and the human proceed. Berdyaev argues that only on the basis of freedom that is prior to every form of personal being is genuine communion and otherness between God and the human possible.[47] He writes,

> Only the coming of the new Adam, the spiritual man, can end this tragedy of freedom and can overcome the conflict between freedom and necessity. The Son of God descends into the void of original freedom. Only the New Adam can take from freedom its deadly effects without compromising freedom itself… In Christ there is revealed to us a third kind of liberty that is a reconciliation of the two other kinds. The grace of Christ is the inner illumination of freedom without any outward restraint or coercion.[48]

Both thinkers are aware that the solution to the 'tragedy of freedom' lies in the hypostatic/personal union of the two natures in Christ. However, their understanding of hypostatic union is radically different. I shall try to demonstrate that the key to unlocking of the meaning of hypostatic union should be sought in Maximus's concept of *eos-mehri* ('so long as').[49] That concept is however absent from Zizioulas's theology. '*Eos-mehri'* pertains to the concrete realization of personal freedom in the form of *mutual* interpenetration of the

[45] As Karl Barth wrote, 'at no level or time can we have to do with God without having also to do with this man [Christ]. We cannot conceive ourselves without first conceiving this man with God as the witness of the gracious purpose with which God willed and created ourselves and the world and in which we may exist in it and with it.' K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* IV vol. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-75), IV/2, 33.
[46] These expressions, in a slightly different form, belong to Berdyaev: 'The grace of Christ triumphs over the evil freedom and the beneficence of necessity'. FS, 135. FSD, 165.
[47] FS, 124. FSD, 153.
[48] FS, 135. FSD, 165.
[49] *Ambigua* 10; PG 91, 1113 BC.

two natures in Christ. As I shall aver in the second chapter, Maximus has failed to develop sufficiently this notion and this is probably because '*eos-mehri'* is predicated on the more basic idea of relational non-being.

These are some of the reasons why I find it necessary to challenge Zizioulas on his contention that the theology of Maximus the Confessor, as the crown of patristic thought, is 'the best and most satisfying way of working out an ontology of communion and otherness.'[50] Zizioulas leaves no doubt that 'the only correct theology is that of the Greek Fathers', and consequently only that theology can give the answer to the problem of freedom.[51] Thus it is hardly surprising that Zizioulas should believe that the Patristic concept of the person is still valid for modern man: 'With a rare creativity worthy of the Greek spirit they [the Fathers] gave history the concept of the person with an absoluteness which still moves modern man…'[52]

Berdyaev, on the contrary, warns *against* the restoration of the Christianity of the Fathers.

> In this lies a grave danger for our epoch, the danger of the restoration of the Christianity of the Fathers, which has no true anthropology. Such a restoration might play into the hand of the spirit of Antichrist. When religious consciousness leaves an empty place, it is filled by the spirit of Antichrist. Religious demeaning and oppression of man lead to a false over-estimation of himself that finally destroys him.[53]

In his somewhat prophetic style the Russian thinker declares that the faith of Christianity depends on the development of a new anthropology and a new concept of freedom, that is, on the advancing of a new renaissance. He states, 'either a new epoch [i.e.,

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[50] Ibid. 26. That Zizioulas relies strongly on the Church Fathers is also mentioned in the introductory note to the collection of essays devoted to the critical appraisal of his theology, *The Theology of John Zizioulas*, ed. Douglas Knight (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 'Zizioulas has argued that the Church Fathers represent a profound account of freedom and community that represents a radical challenge to modern accounts of the person.'
[51] BC, 43.
[52] Ibid. 35.
[53] MCA, 93. STv, 124.

an epoch different from that of the Fathers] is in store for us and a Christian renaissance will take place, or Christianity is doomed to perish…'[54]

In this thesis, Chapter One scrutinizes Zizioulas's search for the balance between communion and what he calls the 'absolute ontological otherness.' Zizioulas argues that the prevailing Western experience of communion is coloured by the fear of the other, and especially of God, who is the ultimate other. The archetypal perception of the other is depicted in the Biblical narrative on Adam, who, Zizioulas avers, fearing that union with God will impede his freedom, chooses to affirm his self at the expense of communion. We focus in particular on the question whether Adam's fear of God, as conceived in patristic thought, was solely – as Zizioulas would like us to believe – a result of Adam's individualism. Is it possible, as Berdyaev argued, to trace vestiges of 'monophysite tendency' in the patristic notion of freedom and therefore to a lack of sufficiently developed anthropology?

Chapter Two looks more closely into the question of freedom as conceived by Maximus the Confessor, one of the leading figures among the Eastern Church Fathers and the thinker whose work Zizioulas uses as a foundation for his own theology. Berdyaev argued that the Christianity of the patristic period has not managed to present itself in fullness as a religion of freedom. This is mainly because the Church Fathers were focused on producing a negative concept of freedom, or freedom *from* passions, and therefore largely overlooked the positive aspect of freedom, or freedom *for*, i.e., freedom as the capacity to create radical novelty in being. Even in the patristic doctrine of *theosis* or deification, which aims at describing the positive facet of the human liberty, the emphasis is again on the suppression of human nature. The chapter analyses Maximus's elucidation

[54] FS, 46. FSD, 68.

of the Chalcedonian doctrine of the union of the divine and the human nature in Christ. In order to establish the possibility of a positive expression of the human nature, the concepts of *tantum-quantum*, *perichoresis*, and *eos-mehri* are closely examined.

With Chapter Three we start the second section of the thesis by turning our attention to Nikolai Berdyaev. We seek to clarify why Berdyaev breaks away from the long-standing tradition of classical ontology. Special attention is given to the concept of the *Ungrund*, which Berdyaev borrows from Jacob Böhme, and which seems to be not only the most important pillar of Berdyaev's philosophy, but also the most contested of all of his ideas. Within the context of Berdyaev's vision of the Trinity we clarify the meaning of some of his key terms, such as spirit, life, freedom, action, movement, and infinity. In addition, a section of the chapter is devoted to Berdyaev's view of the human person and her eight essential characteristics, as well as to one of his quintessential ideas – the concept of Godmanhood.

Chapter Four is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with the relationship between Berdyaev's concepts of negative and positive freedom, proceeding with an interpretation of Berdyaev's critique of historical Christianity and in particular what he calls 'Christianity's sin against the Holy Spirit'. Section two focuses on a set of concepts introducing Berdyaev's understanding of positive freedom as theurgy. These are asceticism and creativity, saint and genius, 'the world', and imagination. The question is asked: Apart from asceticism, are there other religious experiences and paths towards saintliness, such as a path of creative ecstasy?

The chapter contains a section on imagination with a brief overview of the concept of intellect from Plato and Aristotle to Berdyaev. Special emphasis is given to the

subsection on Kant, due to the importance of his Copernican turn and his theory of transcendental apperception. With equal attentiveness we look into Coleridge and his elaborate concept of imagination.

Chapter Five reflects on Berdyaev's assertion that the world has not yet seen a religious epoch of creativeness, that is, an epoch in which creativity and art would not be only 'worldly' actions, but 'spiritual' and 'religious'. We expound on Berdyaev's concept of genius and geniality by which the 'passive' notion of saintliness should be supplemented. Consequently, the chapter argues for an amended concept of sacraments according to which the human being is also a creator of eschatological realities. Thus, a 'theandric' concept of sacraments is inaugurated. Suggesting that this is something that Berdyaev's theology lacks, the final section of the chapter offers a phenomenological outline of a theurgic, i.e., ontological, soteriological, and eschatological apology of art.

1. Zizioulas's Concept of Freedom as Absolute Ontological Otherness

The aim of this chapter is to examine John Zizioulas's concept of ontological freedom or freedom as an 'absolute ontological otherness'. As Zizioulas himself remarked, while in his book *Being as Communion* the stress was on the importance of relationality and communion for *unity*, *Communion & Otherness* focuses especially on the aspect of *otherness*.[55] The latter work must be read, writes Zizioulas, as an attempt to complement and balance the previous one. Thus, one of the main goals of Zizioulas's theology is to find the right balance between communion and otherness.[56]

The Greek theologian argues that in Western culture the other is in many ways regarded as an enemy and this is the source of individualism, which is present in the very foundation of this culture. The 'fear of the other' poisons the very roots of our existence. It resulted from the rejection of the Other *par excellence*, God, by the first man, Adam. Adam, explains Zizioulas, chooses to affirm his *self* through the rejection and not acceptance of the Other, and as an inevitable consequence the Other becomes an enemy and

[55] CO, xiii.
[56] Nikolai Berdyaev sets the same goal for himself. The Russian philosopher writes about the two kinds of freedom, the first leading to division and disunion, while the second strives to subdue division and disunion through creating a necessitarian freedom. 'How, in a word, can freedom be separated from the evil it brings in its train except by the destruction of freedom itself?' FS, pp. 134-135. FSD, 165.

necessity. Unless we find reconciliation with God, contends the Greek theologian, there could be no reconciliation with any 'other'.[57]

We should obviously concentrate our attention on the question - What is the reconciliation between God and the human that Zizioulas is offering? Has Zizioulas managed to find the ideal balance between communion and otherness? Has he succeeded in demonstrating that the fear of the other, and especially of the Other *par excellence*, God, the way it is conceived of in patristic thought—which is the basis of Zizioulas's theology—is unfounded, and that is simply a result of Adam's individualism? Moreover, what is Zizioulas's response to Berdyaev's verdict that Christianity, due to a lack of genuine anthropology, has not yet revealed itself in fullness as a religion of freedom?[58] In the following I shall discuss the question of otherness.

Zizioulas discusses the theme of otherness first (1) in the context of bridging the gulf between God and the world. Here the concept of *hypostatic union* appears to be the solution to the problem of how the world can be 'abysmally other ontologically, and yet remain unseparated?'[59] The question of otherness is, secondly, (2) elucidated in the framework of the being of God. Zizioulas argues that the major contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to theology was the introduction of the Father as a personal causal principle in God. In this chapter I shall give only the contours of the first two points. More detailed elucidation follows in the second chapter. The third (3) aspect of otherness is related to the question of otherness as constitutive of the human being. However, I shall start my scrutiny by looking first at the being of God, since the concept of the person was

[57] CO, pp. 1-2.
[58] MCA, pp. 158-159. STv, 191.
[59] CO, 20.

born historically as an attempt of the Church to give a theological expression of its faith in the Triune God. As Zizioulas writes,

> What does it mean to say that God is Father, Son, and Spirit without ceasing to be *one* God? (…) What is significant is that this history includes a philosophical landmark, a revolution in Greek philosophy. This revolution is expressed historically through an identification: *the identification of the 'hypostasis' with the 'person'*. How was this unforeseen revolution accomplished? What kind of consequences did it have for the concept of the person?[60]

1.1 Otherness and the Being of God

The question of the person's capacity to preserve simultaneously communion and otherness is especially complicated because the otherness and the person are constitutive first and foremost of God's being. Zizioulas emphasises strongly the fact that the otherness of the world is possible only because otherness is ontologically ultimate in the case of God's being. First we shall look briefly at the 'revolutionary' identification of the 'hypostasis' with the 'person',[61] and then at the attaching of the notion of ontological causality in God to the person of the Father.

1.1.1 The Hypostasis and the Person

The reason for the inability of ancient Greek philosophy to create an ontology of human individuality is deeply rooted in its basic principle that being constitutes a unity in spite of the multiplicity of beings. Particular beings trace back the source of their being to their relationship with the 'one' being; every differentiation or individuation is regarded as

[60] BC, 36. Zizioulas argues that the bond that unites the notion of the person with patristic theology is 'indestructible': 'The person both as a concept and as living reality is purely the product of patristic thought.' Ibid, 27. More about Zizioulas's view on this ontological 'revolution' see in Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 73-89 (especially page 83).
[61] For the more detailed outline of this question see Zizioulas's BC, pp. 27-49.

a deterioration of the being.[62] The 'ontological monism' characteristic of Greek thought leads to the concept of the *cosmos*, i.e., of the harmonious unity of all existent things. God is not regarded as transcendental but ontologically related to the *cosmos*.[63]

The place of the human being in this world from which chance and the unforeseen are excluded is the theme of ancient Greek tragedy. It is exactly in the context of tragedy that the term 'person' (*prosopon*) appears in ancient Greek. However, the question is, why was this meaning so quickly identified with the theatrical mask (*prosopeion*); what is the connection between the actor's mask and the human person?[64]

As Zizioulas explains, the central theme of Greek tragedy is the conflict between the human being, who aspires to liberate himself from all necessities, and the constraints of the unified world. Greek tragedy testifies that humans cannot escape fate, nor could they continue with their *hubris* without being punished by gods. As an example of the human capitulation to the world Zizioulas quotes a sentence from Plato's *Law's* – 'For it [the whole] is not brought into being for thy sake, but thou art for its sake'. Human freedom is circumscribed, but limited freedom is in itself a *contradictio in adjecto* if we remember that to be free means precisely to be above all necessities. Thus, the human being is not a real 'person' but a 'mask'.[65]

Nevertheless, there is a positive aspect of the term 'prosopeion', since the theatrical mask also brings forth a certain experience of freedom and of 'hypostasis'. As Tillich explains, the mask could be regarded as something positive because it makes the actor a

[62] BC, 29.
[63] BC, pp. 29-31.
[64] BC, 31.
[65] BC, 32.

definite, individualized character.[66] As a result of the mask, both the actor and the spectator acquire a certain taste of freedom, a specific 'hypostasis' or identity.[67]

The mask is therefore related to the person, but this relation remains tragic. To have a person in the ancient Greek context means to have something that is accidental to one's being or one's true hypostasis. The ultimate ontological category is still 'hypostasis' with the meaning of 'substance' or 'nature'.[68]

What was necessary for the radical change in our understanding of the world and the being of the human so that they both would be characterised by freedom? Zizioulas singles out two basic presuppositions: (a) a fundamental shift in cosmology that would see both the world and the human being as free from ontological necessity; (b) identification of the person with the ontological and eschatological identity of the human being. It was the Cappadocians in their wrestling with the problem of Trinitarian theology who provided both prerequisites.[69]

The full scope of the philosophical 'revolution' is perceived only when we know that the term 'hypostasis' was never connected to the term 'person' in Greek philosophy. For the Greeks, 'person' would have any other connotation but that of the essence of the human being, whereas 'hypostasis' was eventually identified with the concept of 'substance'. The Cappadocians therefore needed, first, to avoid Sabellianism and to give an ontological content to each person of the Trinity; second, the ontological status of the persons had to be in full harmony with biblical monotheism. Zizioulas does not go into the detailed analysis of the historical background of the 'revolution' but instead gives a brief

[66] ST, 194.
[67] BC, 32.
[68] BC, 33.
[69] BC, 35.

account of its deeper significance that involves a twofold thesis: (a) the person is not something added to a particular being with an already established ontological hypostasis; the person is itself the hypostasis of the being, that is, there is no being unless the substance is hypostasised. (b) Thus, being ceases to be a fundamental ontological category and the source of other entities; it is replaced now by the person who becomes the constitutive element of beings.[70]

This radical break in Greek ontology was prepared by what Zizioulas names as the two basic 'leavenings' in patristic theology. The first concerned the deconstruction of the absolute cosmological necessity by the introduction of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, which means that the world was no longer considered as co-eternal with God and thus limiting divine freedom; God's free decision is now the source of the world and the world is a product of freedom.[71]

The second 'leavening' represented even further reappraisal of the monistic ontology. It was not enough to argue that the being of the world is traced back to freedom, but the being of God was a result of a free person, the Father. Since the source of divine being is the Father's person, the unity of God was no longer in the one substance of God, but in the free person of the Father.[72]

Both of the reappraisals were crucial for the question of otherness and freedom. If otherness is to be ontologically primary; if we are to talk about freedom as the radical ontological otherness, then the one in God has to be a person and not substance. This is because substance is by definition a monistic category, i.e., substance cannot be conceived of as maintaining simultaneously communion and otherness. Zizioulas explains that,

[70] BC, 39.
[71] BC, 39.
[72] BC, pp. 40-41.

> Substance is a *monistic* category by definition (there can only be *one* substance and no other in God), while a person, such as the Father, is inconceivable without relationship to other persons. By making the person of the Father the expression of the one ontological *arche* in God, we make otherness ontologically constitutive in divine being.[73]

Here we witness Zizioulas's failure to give a satisfying description of what person is and how it achieves simultaneously communion and otherness. For our further discussion it is important to note that Zizioulas insists only on the relationality of the Father's person, thus emphasizing communion and unity. Nevertheless, the problem of how otherness of the divine person is sustained remains unclear.[74]

We have seen that by placing the Father as the ontological principle of causation in God the Cappadocians inaugurated *freedom* in God. God the Father does not beget the Son due to some necessity but as a free person.[75] Without the Father's personal freedom, we need to stress, there would be no freedom or otherness in God and as a consequence we could not speak of ontological otherness and freedom of the human being. We shall now proceed by looking into the two closely related themes:

(1) the otherness of God and the world, and

(2) the otherness as constitutive of the human being.

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[73] CO, 35.

[74] Zizioulas is aware that by positing the ultimate ontological otherness in the case of God one enters a dangerous theological area. 'One could perhaps', writes Zizioulas, 'easily accept the notion of otherness with regard to the doctrine of creation and the being of the world, but what about the being of God himself? Can otherness be ontologically ultimate in the case of God's being? Would it not threaten the unity of God? This is precisely what the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is about.' CO, 32. In the next chapter we shall see that Zizioulas's explanation of the unity of God by means of the Father's monarchia, from the personalist point of view advocated by Zizioulas himself, is incongruent.

[75] 'Had it not been for their idea of the Father as cause, divine being would have to be a logically necessary and self-explicable being in which neither otherness nor freedom would have any primary role to play.' CO, 36.

1.2 Otherness, God and the World

Zizioulas stresses that the otherness of the world is possible because being does not necessarily come out of being itself; rather, it stems from freedom, which, in Zizoulas's case, means that it comes from person. The coming to being of the world from freedom or person involves a radically different view of the creation from the classical Greek. Christianity inaugurates the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. The new doctrine implies that the creation was not an act of necessity. This point has two important implications; first, the being of the world is real and not only a *phenomenon*; second, the world possesses an ontological otherness vis-à-vis God. This, furthermore, means that the world can participate in the life of God and yet it does not lose its freedom and otherness. However, how is the gulf of otherness bridged? How is it possible to conceive of the world's otherness and its communion with God at the same time?[76] This question brings us to the concept of the hypostatic or personal union.

1.2.1 Hypostatic Union

Zizioulas's answer to this question is that an ontological relationship between God and the world does not have to be substantialist, i.e., based on nature or substance. For those who hold substantialist ontology, identifying being with substance, it is difficult to

[76] 'Otherness is necessary for freedom to exist: if there is no absolute, ontological otherness between God and the world, there is no ontological freedom allowing each of these two "beings" to be themselves and thus to be at all. But if this were all we could say about otherness, separateness and distance would be a sine qua non condition of otherness. Christian doctrine, however, does not seem to imply or accept such a condition. The very fact of the Incarnation precludes a philosophy of otherness that would regard separateness as a condition of otherness. But how can otherness retain its absolute ontological character if separateness is not its constitutive element?' CO, 19.

speak of God's relationship with the world as 'ontological' because it results in ontological monism. As a result of the failure to produce an ontology that would encompass communion and otherness, Western theology has tried to fill the gap between God and creation in terms of ethics or psychology. However, argues Zizioulas, there is a possibility of working out an ontological way of relating God to the world without falling into the monism of Greek thought. This is because ontology does not have to be substantialistic in order to be true ontology.[77]

Out of the several ideas of how to solve the problem of communion and otherness in the works of the Eastern Church Fathers, Zizioulas favours the one offered by Maximus the Confessor. Maximus proposes reconciling participation in the divine life and freedom of creation through *Logos* as a personal principle. Key to Maximus's ontology is his idea of the *logoi* of beings according to which every being has its own *logos* or particular identity. Without its particular *logos* the being would cease to exist. However, Maximus distinguishes between *diaphora* (difference) and *diairesis* (division), which means that difference does not necessarily lead to division. How can communion and otherness coincide in ontology according to Maximus?

Zizioulas writes that in Maximus's view, and in contrast to Origen or Evagrius, the *Logos* is not conceived as an impersonal *nous* but as the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. This means that the gap between God and creation is bridged in a personal or hypostatic manner, that is, in the *hypostatic union* of the divine and the human nature that took place in Christ's Incarnation. Zizioulas reminds us that in Chalcedonian terminology the unity between the divine and the human nature takes place in a Person and it is due to this personal union that the natures are united 'without confusion'. The idea of 'hypostatic

[77] CO, 20.

union' requires, furthermore, an ontology that is based not on the nature of beings (on *what* the beings are), but on the 'way of beings' (on *how* they are). For this purpose, Maximus makes the distinction between *logos* and *tropos*. In other words, in every being there is a permanent aspect and an adjustable one. In the framework of the Incarnation, thus, the *logos physeos* or the *logos* of nature remains fixed whereas the *tropos hyparxeos* or the mode of being is adjusted so as to allow for the unity and freedom. Zizioulas explains that this amounts to a 'tropic identity' or to an ontology of *tropos,* of *how* the things are.

> We are dealing here with two kinds of identity. The first one implies natural otherness, and in itself and by itself, that is, as substance or nature *per se*, allows for no possibility of communion. The second one concerns not nature *per se*, its *logos*, but the way it relates, its *tropos*, and it is this that makes communion possible… It is because of and through their *tropos* that the divine and the creaturely natures can unite, since it is the *tropos* that is capable of adjustment. Substance is relational not in itself but in and through and because of the 'mode of being' it possesses.[78]

When Zizioulas writes that Maximian ontology is an ontology of *tropos* he speaks about the ontology in which *person* is the primary category of being. God and the world, explains our author, are united while preserving their otherness only in the *person* of the divine *Logos*; 'it is a *person* that makes this possible, because it is only a person that can express communion and otherness simultaneously…'[79] This point is of the crucial importance for Zizioulas's theology and therefore requires special attention.

Thus, the question on which we are focusing is, *which particular quality of person makes possible simultaneous expression of communion and otherness*? Zizioulas's response—that person is capable of adjusting its mode of being so as to preserve unity and particularity—is rather vague. We are not told what this 'adjustment' involves and how it is

[78] CO, 25.
[79] CO, 29.

performed. I argue therefore that Zizioulas is offering only a dogmatic explanation,[80] that is, an explanation according to which in Christ's Incarnation the two natures are not confused. He fails, however, to produce a theological elucidation as to which characteristic of person enables it to preserve otherness while remaining in communion.[81] But this question is crucial for Zizioulas's entire theological edifice because of his ontological understanding of freedom. What does Zizioulas imply when he writes that freedom is a matter of ontology?

1.2.2 Freedom as the Radical Ontological Otherness

Zizioulas explains that freedom should not be restricted to the psychological and moral sense that is traditionally attributed to it; freedom is a matter of ontology. In other words, freedom is not 'freedom of will' and freedom of making moral decisions or choices. Freedom, insists Zizioulas, should be related to the fundamental question of being. It is of a paramount importance to understand that for Zizioulas to be *other* and to be *free* are two aspects of one and the same reality. If I am not unique in my otherness my freedom is simply an illusion. Zizioulas writes, 'Being other and being free in an ontological sense,

[80] I borrow this significant distinction between the 'dogmatic' and the 'theological' explanation from Sergius Bulgakov. Tackling the question of Christology, Bulgakov writes, for example, that in the Chalcedonian dogma of the duality of the two natures in Christ 'we have only dogmatic, not a theological, synthesis; until the present day, a theological synthesis is still being sought by theological thought… The desired theological synthesis in the doctrine of Christ remains something for the future—and in particular of our epoch—to achieve.' S. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 443.

[81] I shall suggest a possible solution of this problem in chapter Two. We shall see that Zizioulas later, when he explains otherness as being constitutive for the human being, gives more elaborate and yet not altogether satisfying response.

that is, in the sense of *being free to be yourself*, and not someone or something else, are two aspects of one and the same reality.'[82] He adds,

> The crucial question has to be not simply whether otherness is acceptable or desirable in our society — the ethical principles of societies are usually transient — but whether it is a *sine qua non* condition for one's very being and for the being of all that exists. This is what an ontology of otherness is about. And this is what an existentially relevant theology cannot but be concerned with.[83]

We see, therefore, that Zizioulas raises the subject of otherness in its absolute ontological significance.[84] For him, the question of otherness is related to the concept of the person.[85] This particular facet of his thought has been criticized recently by a number of authors, most of them patristic scholars. He has been accused of projecting a modern concept of the person into the thought of the Church Fathers. Some authors have defended Zizioulas from the claims that he is an 'existentialist in disguise'[86] whilst others have gone so far as to accuse him of heresy.[87] It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss this issue at length, although it is going to be inevitable to mention some of its aspects.[88] From the very outset I should like to stress that in my scrutiny of Zizioulas's work I do not agree with those of his critics who accuse him of being anachronistic in his 'personalism', or of reducing the importance of nature—i.e., understanding nature only as fallenness— for the sake of personhood. As I will show in chapter two, I believe that Zizioulas does not diminish the significance of nature but that he simply argues that nature and person are two

[82] CO, 13.
[83] CO, 14.
[84] CO, 11.
[85] Zizioulas avers that person and nature, while having acquired different meanings in the course of history, have become central and decisive in the philosophy of our time. 'Person and Nature in the Theology of St. Maximus the Confessor', (paper from the International Symposium on St Maximus the Confessor, Belgrade, 18-21 Septembre 2012), 1.
[86] Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise?' A Response to Lucian Turcescu', Modern Theology 20 (2004), pp. 601-607.
[87] Basilio Petra, 'Personalist Thought in Greece in the Twentieth Century: A First Tentative Sythesis', transl. Norman Russel, Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 50:1-4 (2005), 34.
[88] See especially chapter Two.

different and yet complementing concepts. Even Zizioulas's idea about the 'ecstatic' character of personhood, i.e., that personhood represents an '*ecstasis*' from nature, does not imply the devaluation of nature.[89] It simply means that otherness, particularity, or personhood, is the primary ontological category. I believe that this crucial point of Zizioulas's theology has been largely misunderstood.

In my critique of the Greek thinker, on the contrary, I shall argue not that Zizioulas is being too personalistic, but rather that he is not being *consistently* personalistic. In my opinion, he is not prepared to follow all the conclusions that inexorably stem from his fundamental personalistic premises, i.e., that freedom is equal to an 'absolute ontological otherness'. There has been no study so far on Zizioulas that would regard his thought from this specific angle. If we argue that to be free means 'being free to be yourself' we obviously need an adequate concept of the *self* or *identity*.[90] We need to answer the question. '*Who* is free to be him or herself?'. In other words, we need an adequate concept of the self or identity. This is precisely what Zizioulas is trying to avoid because a strong concept of the self (we could also use the terms identity or person) in the context of Trinitarian theology would raise the question of tritheism. Zizioulas avoids facing a few other problems that come from his description of freedom. As we have seen, he seems to believe, that the anthropology of the Fathers is sufficiently developed and that it provides an ideal answer to the question of human freedom. However, the patristic doctrine of creation, as well as the doctrines of divine omnipotence and omniscience, cannot be

[89] The problem with Zizioulas's understanding of substance is more complex. It seems that he is unable to define divine freedom in any other way but by arguing that God's nature is necessity and thus identifying God's ontological freedom with the transcendence and abolishment of the substance. BC, 44.

[90] Tillich argues that 'selfhood' is the mode of existence of everything that is. 'Selfhood or self-centredness must be attributed in some measure to all living beings and, in terms of analogy, to all individual Gestalten even in the inorganic realm. One can speak of self-centredness in atoms as well as in animals…' ST, 188. Nonetheless, Tillich adds that only the human being is fully developed self since he 'possesses' himself in the form of self-consciousness and thus has an 'ego-self'. ST, 188.

reconciled with Zizioulas's concept of ontological freedom. To be 'absolutely other in an ontological sense' means also to have *radically unique expression* of one's otherness. As long as it exists as a corporeal reality, the human being cannot be solely a being of potentiality because it manifests itself simply by being present; by *being here*. We cannot help manifesting ourselves even when we think we are not doing anything in particular, when we are simply sitting and being silent. Even when we refrain from talking our entire being emanates and speaks.

One's otherness is one's unique identity or *logos* in the state of potentiality. But as manifested—and it needs to be manifested since the self has to be relational[91]—it is perceived as a radical newness, *even* for God. To make such a claim would however mean either to question God's omnipotence and omniscience in their traditional form or to conceive of them in a different way. Zizioulas, nonetheless, unlike Berdyaev, does neither of these.[92] Thus, the patristic doctrine of creation according to which—in the terms of Maximus the Confessor—the individual is a co-creator, in order to be in full harmony with freedom as ontological otherness, would need to postulate that the human is capable of creating newness even from God's perspective. We shall see in the chapter devoted to Maximus that this kind of possibility is not envisioned.

Let us now return to Zizioulas's understanding of the ontological significance of otherness. Zizioulas emphasises that otherness is not secondary to unity but is rather *primary* and *constitutive* of the very idea of being. He contends that 'if otherness

[91] 'When I say, not that I am, but that I exist… I glimpse more or less obscurely the fact that my being is not only present to my own awareness but that it is a manifest being. It might be better, indeed, instead of saying, "I exist", to say, "I am manifest". The Latin prefix *ex*—meaning *out, outwards, out from*—in "exist" has the greatest importance.' Gabriel Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, (Chicago, Illinois, Gateway Edition, 1960), pp. 111-112.

[92] Berdyaev, of course, is not the only modern thinker who tried to re-interpret the traditional teaching on God's perfection, omnipotence, and omniscience. See already cited Jüngel's GMW.

disappears, beings [and, needless to say, their freedom] simply cease to be. In Christian theology there is no room for ontological totalitarianism. All communion must involve otherness as a primary and constitutive ingredient.'[93] That is, there is no communion where a radical otherness is absent. Consequently, Zizioulas stresses that to be free does not simply mean to have a 'freedom of will'; rather, freedom is about *'being other in an absolute ontological sense'*.[94]

1.3 Prerequisites for the Concept of Freedom

At this point I would like to note (a) a strong, though perhaps not obvious, similarity between Zizioulas's and Berdyaev's views on freedom. Unlike Zizioulas, however, Berdyaev does not hesitate to draw all the inevitable conclusions from the assumption of the person's ontological uniqueness. If we accept that freedom needs to be not only potential but also actualised,[95] then from Zizioulas's claim about freedom as an absolute ontological otherness it follows that freedom, to use Berdyaev's expression, is the power to create radical newness.[96] One's absolute ontological otherness in the case of one's self-affirmation involves furthermore, (i) a concept of the creation 'out of nothing'—a different

[93] Ibid. 11.
[94] Ibid. 11. Zizioulas stresses the paramount significance of the problem of the Other for contemporary philosophy (especially in the philosophical schools of phenomenology and existentialism, culminating in the works of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas). However, the question of otherness is as old as Greek philosophy itself, particularly in Plato's Parmenides, in Aristotle and even in the Pre-Socratics. Moreover, Zizioulas rightly emphasizes that 'there can hardly be any philosophy worthy of the name that does not involve, directly or indirectly, a discussion of this subject.' Ibid. 13.
[95] '[…] Do we not feel in ourselves the truth of the metaphysical principle *operatio sequitur esse*? For to be is to act, and to act is to be.' E. Gilson, SMP, 94. In spite of accepting this postulate, Gilson maintains that *homo faber* can never become *homo creator*. Ibid. 90.
[96] Berdyaev's writes that 'freedom is the power to create out of nothing, the power of the spirit to create out of itself and not out of the world'. MCA, 146. STv, 179.

name for Berdyaev's idea of uncreated freedom[97]—on the basis of which (ii) the creation of radical newness becomes possible; finally, (iii) these two concepts are an indispensible presupposition for the self-actualisation of the person and they constitute what I call the *ontological formative principle of the person.* In Zizioulas's view, however, neither a creation 'out of nothing/freedom' nor the creation of radical newness is possible for humans.

As a result, (b) Zizioulas is unable to produce a solid basis for the concept of the self and this is why, we shall see, he decides to dismiss it altogether. We shall first focus on the two prerequisites for the concept of freedom as an absolute ontological otherness: *(i)* the creation 'out of nothing' and the creation of radical newness; then, *(ii)* the concept of the ontological constitutive principle of the person.

1.3.1 Creation 'Out of Nothing'

One's otherness, I argue, cannot be merely a matter of potentiality; to be existent means to be actualized.[98] If freedom means to be radically other in an *ontological* sense, it follows that manifestation of my otherness, i.e., what I do or create, has to appear to everyone else also as fundamentally unique, i.e., radically new and unprecedented. Creation of the radical *novum* therefore involves a kind of creation 'out of nothing'—or in Berdyaev's words creation out of 'freedom'[99]—but in Zizioulas's thought there is no room for a similar concept in the context of human creativity.

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[97] We shall see that Berdyaev is not so naïve as to assert that the creation out of nothing implies creation without a medium, but that the medium in which we create allows for infinite creativity since it originates in the so called uncreated freedom.

[98] As we shall see in the final chapter, Sergei Bulgakov also fails to reconcile potential and actual freedom.

[99] What Berdyaev implies by the 'creation out of nothing/freedom', I believe, is a kind of a creation out of *mē on* or, in Tillich's terminology, out of 'dynamics'. Dynamics, writes Tillich, cannot be thought of as

In Zizioulas's terminology 'out of nothing' indicates God's capacity to create in unhindered freedom, without being limited, as the Platonic demiurge was, by the existing ideas of Goodness and Beauty, as well as space, and matter. The same idea of creating out of nothing is expressed if we say that God creates without a *medium*. There is no doubt that on this point there is a radical difference between God and the human; in our creativity we always start from the already existing world, which is our *medium* of expression. However, what if we assumed that the world as our medium is in no way a restraining factor for our creativity, that it allows of infinite and untrammelled generation of new identities?[100] In that case, human creation would be also in a sense a creation 'out of nothing', albeit we create using a medium.[101] To have a medium does not necessarily imply a lack of freedom in creation. This is because God also creates using a medium, but the medium that he has created. The medium of the created world has never existed before and in that sense God's creation was absolutely free. But this is only one aspect of freedom in creation regarding *creatio ex nihilo*. The other aspect is related to the world that, as God's medium, is *inherently* a framework that allows of infinite creative potencies; otherwise, it would not have allowed for God's radical freedom in creativity. In short, God's freedom consists not

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something existent or non-existent; rather, dynamics is the *mē on* or the potentiality of being, which is non-being in contrast to things that have a form, and the power of being in contrast to pure non-being (*ouk-on*). ST, 198.

[100] 'Man can transcend any given situation. He can transcend himself without limits in all directions just because of this basis [dynamics or *mē on*]. His creativity breaks through the biological realm to which he belongs and establishes new realms never attainable on a non-human level… His self-transcendence in this direction is indefinite…' Tillich, ST, 201.

[101] Gilson writes, 'let us consider the poet. Confronted as he is with his sheet of white paper, he sees it as the place of infinite poetic possibilities, any one of which can materialize precisely because none of them is already there. The same remark applies to the canvas, wood panel, or wall selected by the painter as the support of his future painting (…) The initial nothingness of figures corresponds to the nothingness of sounds that is the silence created by conductors at the beginning of a musical performance. Like music, painting can be said to be, in a certain sense, created from nothing. E. Gilson, *Painting and Reality,* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1957), 114. Gilson's statement is clearly in opposition to his claim that the human being can never be *homo creator*. For another perspective on creation out of nothing see: George Pattison, *Crucifixions and Resurrections of the Image,* (London, SCM Press, 2009).

only in that the world is created as an absolute newness; His act of creativity was not limited because the medium of this world, of the matter, colours, sounds, etc., in no way restricted his creative inspiration. Thus, when Berdyaev claims that the human can create 'out of nothing' what he has in mind is that the world does not determine our creative act. He writes,

> My critics charged me with a refusal to admit the need of any given 'material' for the creative act of man. This charge was, of course, completely unfounded. I have never denied that man cannot create without a medium, that he cannot dispense with the world of external reality and that he cannot perform anything in a vacuum. And yet the basic characteristic of a creative act consists in not being wholly determined by its medium, and that it comprises something new, something which cannot be derived from the external world in which it is embodied, or indeed from some fixed repository of ideal forms which press upon the creator's imagination. This, then, is the point where Freedom comes in—untraceable, undetermined and unpredictable movement from within outwards. Creation is, in this sense, out of nothing.[102]

To hypothesize that the world is not a limiting 'other' means moreover to postulate a God who in no way limits the freedom of human creativity. If positive self-affirmation is the constitutive and formative principle of otherness, and therefore of freedom and person, it follows that they are unachievable if any form of givenness determines creativity. The radical uniqueness of the person implies the fundamental uniqueness of its manifestation. This means that we need to postulate a form of creation 'out of nothing' in the case of human creativity.[103] The human can create 'out of nothing' only if we assume, as seen, that neither the world nor its Creator are a restraining factor for human self-affirmation. In order to exist as a unique entity, in its self-constitution and self-determination person cannot be limited. God however ceases to be a determining factor only if we assume, together with

[102] N. Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, (London, Geoffrey Bles, 1950), pp. 212-213. *Samopoznanie*, (Moskva, Hranitel, 2007), 269.
[103] Creativity, explains Berdyaev, is not similar to evolution. Evolution is always a development of the already given, out of necessity, whereas creativity is inseparable from freedom. Thus, when he speaks about creation 'out of nothing' Berdyaev emphasises that in our imperfect human language this expression means creativity out of freedom. MCA, 144. STv, 177.

Berdyaev, that the human originates from freedom as the mysterious source of life and the primordial experience; from freedom that is the abyss deeper than being itself and from which being develops. 'One feels', writes Berdyaev, 'this groundless and irrational freedom in oneself, at the primary bottom of one's being'.[104]

1.3.2 The Ontological Constitutive Principle of Personhood

If 'freedom is to be other in an absolute sense',[105] i.e., to be like no one else, as Zizioulas claims, can I be absolutely other unless I am also absolutely unique?[106] My absolute otherness is inevitably related to my absolute uniqueness—I am absolutely other in comparison to all other persons precisely because, and only if, I am absolutely unique. If I am, however, absolutely unique, how is my uniqueness manifested? It ought to be manifested through my mode of existence. All humans have a common human nature, but they are distinguished among themselves, in the words of Maximus, through their modes of existence.

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[104] FS, 126. FSD, 154. Berdyaev explains that he was compelled to reject ontology, or the science of Being, thus breaking with a long-standing tradition that goes back to Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and continues in many trends in modern philosophy. 'My rejection of ontology, then, issues in the recognition of the primacy of Freedom over Being, for, with regard to Being, man is not free at all… The primacy of Being over freedom, on the other hand, must needs lead to determinism and the denial of freedom: if freedom is, it cannot be determined by anything except itself.' DR, 99. SP, 124.

[105] CO, 39. It is interesting that Zizioulas uses the adjective 'absolute' with regard to the human person because only that which has the power of depending on itself without a causal nexus can be thought of as absolute. See Tillich, ST, 218. And yet, human person ought to be 'absolutely' unique and limited only by itself if it is to be considered as a genuine personhood. This again leads us to the conclusion that personhood is conceivable only on the basis of a freedom that precedes Being.

[106] Zizioulas explains that difference is not identical with uniqueness. Whereas difference is a natural category, uniqueness belongs to the level of personhood. 'If we understand otherness as uniqueness, we must clearly distinguish it from the notion of difference. Difference does not involve uniqueness; it is not absolute or radical ontological otherness, since it does not require us to regard any 'other' as absolutely Other in relation to other Others… It is only when otherness is understood as uniqueness that we can speak of absolute metaphysical exteriority…' CO, 69.

If my uniqueness is manifest through my mode of existence, because I am unique this manifestation ought to also be unique in a radical sense. That which is absolutely unique is inevitably manifest as total newness. If I am free, this is because of my absolute otherness; my absolute otherness is predicated on my being absolutely unique. My uniqueness, on the other hand, is manifest in my mode of existence, but from the point of view of other persons it is perceived as an absolute newness. It follows that I am free because I am able to create absolute newness.

However, my otherness, uniqueness, freedom, and capacity to create things formerly non-existent are given to me only as a potentiality. This means that in order to actualize my otherness and uniqueness, which are my freedom and without which I am not a particular person, I ought to struggle to create things absolutely novel, being faithful to the distinctiveness of my person. In other words, when I create, it has to be *kath' hypostasin*, i.e., according to one's hypostasis or, rather, according to one's most personal logos. Maximus is quite clear about this point when he writes that

> Each of the intellectual and rational beings, whether angels or human beings, through the very logos according to which each was created (logos that is in God and is with God) is and is called 'a portion of God'… Surely then if someone moves according to this logos, he will come to be in God, in whom the logos of his being pre-exists as his beginning and cause.[107]

It follows that the power to create a radical newness according to the unrepeatable logic of one's hypostasis is precisely the ontological constitutive principle of personhood. Freedom as absolute ontological otherness therefore presupposes three principles: a) a form of creation out of nothing (or out of unlimited freedom), which furthermore makes possible b) the creation of radical newness, without which c) the ontological self-constitution of the

[107] *Amb* 7, PG 91 1080BC; cited according to *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, Paul M. Blowers and R. B. Wilken, (Crestwood, New York 2003) pp. 55-56.

person is inconceivable. This in other words means that the person is possible only as long as in its self-affirmation it is able to constitute its radical otherness/uniqueness by creating a total *novum*. This is achievable only if we assume that we create out of *uncreated* freedom, i.e., freedom that is in a way not limited by God's omniscience. It is rather interesting that Zizioulas himself arrives at this conclusion when he writes that,

> Only theology can treat of the genuine, the authentic person, because the authentic person, as absolute ontological freedom, must be *'uncreated'*, that is, unbounded by any 'necessity', including its own existence. If such a person does not exist in reality, the concept of the person is a presumptuous daydream. If God does not exist, the person does not exist.[108]

If the person is free only when in its self-affirmation in the world is unbounded by any necessity, it follows that we need to assume that the person creates out of 'uncreated' freedom. This seems the only logical conclusion of Zizioulas's fundamental assumption about freedom as an absolute ontological otherness. Zizioulas nonetheless does not make this deduction and one could only assume that this is because it would lead him inexorably to question the patristic doctrine of God's omnipotence and omniscience, as well as to a fundamental reappraisal of the doctrine of creation of the human being – the reasons for which God created the human being. The consequence for the concept of the self is rather obvious: the self (or the person) is possible only if it is 'uncreated', i.e., if the person can create out of unhindered or uncreated freedom. In its positive self-affirmation the person therefore cannot be limited by God's omniscience, either if we understand omniscience as

[108] BC, 43. Italics added. Compare with Berdyaev's claim, 'if freedom is, it cannot be determined by anything except itself'. DR, 99. SP, 124. In other words, 'freedom is not free to be unfree. Freedom must be free.' Jason M. Wirth, *Translator's Introduction* in F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. Jason M Wirth, (Albany, State University of New York, 2000), xxiii. Berdyaev would of course agree with Zizioulas that the uncreated Christ's person is the precondition of free human person ('Only the coming of the new Adam… can end this tragedy of freedom', FS, 135). However, although Christ is the source of our freedom he cannot be a constitutive principle of each person's uniqueness: 'Man receives a certain kind of freedom from God, but he does not possess that which leads him to God. The free response that man has to make to the divine call becomes impossible, God responds to Himself. The tragedy in which two beings participate is transformed into a tragedy that involves action on the part of one being alone'. FS, 136.

pre-determination or determination.[109] The person's freedom cannot be 'in' God, cannot be controlled by God. In Berdyaev's metaphorical language, freedom has to be 'uncreated' and 'external' to God.[110] Since such a possibility in Zizioulas's view does not exist, this renders the concept of the person impossible. Since he chooses not to question the fundamental doctrines of divine omnipotence and omniscience the only option left is to question the concept of the self. Once the 'death of the self' is established as inevitable, the concept of the person is characterised solely by its relationality and to such an extent that its ontological particularity becomes indistinct. We shall first examine Zizioulas's notion of the self.

1.3.3 The Self

Zizioulas uses the term 'self' exclusively with a negative connotation of a non-relational and self-insular *individuum*.[111] This self 'must die'.

> The first thing one must acknowledge with appreciation is the proclamation of the death of the Self by leading thinkers of postmodernism. Certainly, a theology inspired by the Greek Fathers, such as this essay wishes to expound, would welcome the questioning of self-identity, unity of consciousness and subjectivity, in spite of the fact that a great deal of modern Orthodox theology and 'spirituality' still operates with similar categories, borrowed from western modernity. The Self must die—this is a Biblical demand…— and any attempt to question the idea of Self at the philosophical level should be applauded. [112]

[109] For the difference between pre-determination and determination the way it is described by S. Bulgakov see chapter Five.

[110] The concept of freedom that is, metaphorically speaking, 'outside' of God, as absolutely crucial for Berdyaev's thought, will be discussed at length in the second part of the thesis. Here it will suffice to mention only that the idea of freedom 'outside' of God is based on Jacob Böhme's concept of the ('groundless'). Böhme's conception of freedom was the only one satisfactory for Berdyaev. However, in Berdyaev's interpretation the *Ungrund* comes to mean primordial freedom or that 'that precedes all ontological determination'. He writes, 'According to Böhme this freedom is in God; it is the inmost mysterious principle of divine life; whereas I conceived it to be outside of God…' DR, 99. SP, 124.

[111] Zizioulas explains that the distinction between the individual and the personal has been made more than once in philosophy, as in the works of Thomas Aquinas, Jacques Maritain, and N. Berdyaev. BC, 164, n85. See also CO, 9.

[112] CO, pp. 51-52. For a different opinion of the 'death of the Self' see John Webster, 'The Human Person', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 222.

Zizioulas believes that patristic questioning of self-identity is congenial with the 'death of the self' declared by the leading thinkers of postmodernism. The idea has taken on a variety of expressions, for example the 'death of man,' the 'death of the author,' the 'deconstruction of the subject' etc.[113] As it is well known, Michel Foucault proclaims the death of the human in his early writings, asserting that 'man is an invention of recent date' and it will soon 'be erased like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.'[114] The demise of the human is in Foucault's view a sequel to Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God. In Zizioulas's case as well there seems to be a clear link between deconstruction of the monotheistic God whose oneness is ontologically prior to his otherness and Zizioulas's attempt to decompose the similar anthropological oneness of the self. As John Webster argues, there is an obvious 'coinherence of subjectivity and ontotheology – a tie between the self as an enduring moral and cognitive foundation and appeal to the metaphysics of substance to explicate the nature of God…'[115]

Zizioulas's concept of the 'dying of the self' is however a reaction to an oversimplified image of modern self that is always characterised by 'the circle of

[113] See more about this in Calvin O. Schrag, *The Self after Postmodernity*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997), 2. Richard Sorabji discerns two traditions of denying of the self: the first is analytic philosophy and the second Nietzsche. David Hume has influenced both of the traditions directly or indirectly chiefly by his notorious claim from his Treatise of Human Nature that when he looked inside himself he could see only many perspectives but no self linking them together. R. Sorabji, *Self; Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17-18.

[114] M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Anthology of the Human Sciences* (New York, Random House, 1970), 387. Regarding his claim of the discontinuity of interest in the self, according to Richard Sorabji, Foucault was selecting particular texts rather than looking at philosophical schools as a whole and their development. Sorabji, 53. As Charles Taylor however observed, towards the end of his life Foucault seemed to have espoused the ideal of the aesthetic construction of the self as a work of art. C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self; The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), 489. In one of his interviews Foucault argues that 'we have hardly any remnant of the idea in our society, that the principal work of art which one has to take care of, the main area to which one must apply aesthetic values, is oneself, one's life, one's existence.' *The Foucault Reader; An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London, Penguin books, 1991), 362.

[115] Webster, 222.

appropriation and possession.'[116] This is surprising since Zizioulas himself perceives a causal link between the rebellion of modernity and the inadequate Christian concept of freedom. Like Berdyaev, he identifies the problem of freedom as the main cause for the development of humanistic anthropology. The world is not our *thelema* or will, thus the only way to 'preserve' our freedom is to accept God's will as our own. Christianity has tried to reconcile the human and God's will in terms of *obedience* of man to God. Nevertheless, obedience as a mode of reconciliation can only create a unilateral relationship between man and God and cannot properly incorporate man's desire for freedom. Zizioulas explains that 'man has felt like a slave and rejected the yoke of God. Atheism sprang out of the very heart of the Church and the notion of freedom became prominent again. There is more than 'obedience', or rather something quite different from it that is needed…'[117]

He argues, furthermore, that the concept of modern self is built on the writings of Tertullian, Antiochenes, Augustine, and Scholastics. Common to all of them, and 'the real issue' of their thinking, was an attempt 'to understand man by looking introspectively at him either as an autonomous ethical agent (Tertullian, Antiochenes) or as the *Ego* of a

[116] Mark C. Taylor, *Erring; A Postmodern A/theology*, (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1984), 143. Cited in Webster, 228. Zizioulas's position is very similar to deconstructive postmodernism. The problem is that deconstructive postmodernism is shaped as a reaction to a one-sided construe of modernity. As Webster observes, 'if modernity is understood (as by Heidegger and his heirs) as a unified intellectual, cultural, and spiritual history defined by the Cartesian project of subjectivity and representation, then deconstructive anthropology can indeed be seen as innovative. On the other hand, if modernity is seen as a much more conflictual set of processes, then deconstructive anthropology may be understood [or should be construed as] not simply as a repudiation of modernity but… as its continuation or intensification…' Webster, 220.

[117] CO, 237. Zizioulas's words seem to echo Jüngel's contention that theism or the traditional interpretation of God's absoluteness and omnipotence provoked the rise of atheism. Jüngel believes that modern humans have their own awareness of freedom, which is, however, fundamentally questioned by the concept of God who is absolutely superior to man. 'Modern man', avers Jüngel, 'especially is allergic to a God who can only be thought of absolutistically. This distinguishes him from his medieval fathers.' GMW, 40. Unlike Jüngel, however, Zizioulas never questions the patristic view of God's absoluteness.

psychological complex (Augustine) or as a substance possessing certain potencies (Scholastics).[118]

The problem with the Western and the Antiochene approaches, as we read in the quoted paragraph, is in their attempt to analyse the human *as an autonomous ethical agent.* More precisely, by using the Boethian and the Augustinian approaches, Western philosophy came to conceptualise the human as made of two basic components: *rational individuality* on the basis of Boethius' definition of person, and *psychological experience and consciousness* derived mainly from Augustine's *Confessions.* The problem with such an understanding of the human as an *autonomous self,* determined by one's ability to be conscious of oneself and of others, is that the human became an *individuum,* i.e., a being which is isolated from the rest of creation.[119]

> By becoming an *individuum* definable by its own substance and especially its intellectual capacities, man has managed to isolate himself from creation, to which he naturally belongs, and having developed an indifference to the sensitivity and life of creation has reached the point of polluting and destroying it to an alarming degree.[120]

Here we have a very synoptic description of what happens when the human becomes an *individuum* or subjectum *par excellence* in the created world. However, it is difficult to accept Zizioulas's contention that the human, conceived as an autonomous subject, of necessity becomes an *individuum* insensitive to the life of creation. To deny the importance of the self because of the danger that it might not be *ecstatic* and relational is tantamount to denying freedom to the human being. Of course, freedom could be tantalising and dangerous. Zizioulas never mentions explicitly that he does not appreciate the concept of the self because he would like to circumscribe human freedom. But if one,

[118] CO, 210.
[119] CO, pp. 210-211.
[120] CO, 211, n9.

being unable to reconcile the positive and self-affirmative aspect of freedom with the notion of God's omnipotence decides not to reinterpret the latter but to advocate the 'death' of the former, that could certainly be regarded as a form of the *fear of freedom*. The question one needs to ask here is this: can we construe a *positive* theological anthropology that 'nevertheless does not fall under the category of "ontotheology-to-be-deconstructed."'?[121] We could agree with the postmodernists in their attacks on the classical substantialist theory of the self, but we could also argue that an abandoning of this theory does not necessarily entail a jettisoning of every sense of self.[122] Is it not possible that in the aftermath of the deconstruction of the substantialist theory of God and the self a new self emerges?[123]

By stressing only the negative aspect of the autonomous self we largely overlook the contribution of modern philosophical aesthetics as a strand of thought that opposes positivism and rationalisation. It can hardly be denied that scientific and technological methods attempt to obliterate the idiosyncrasy of the subject in the name of the phantom of 'objectivity'. The spirit of modern science and technology, the spirit of 'objectification', cannot be *a priori* related to the 'autonomous subject', because it undermines anything that is 'subjective'[124] or, rather, to use the more appropriate term, personal. There is nothing wrong with being an autonomous self, a self with its own boundaries, as long as one uses one's selfhood in a proper way; that is, as long as one knows how to live 'from within

[121] Webster, 223.
[122] Schrag, 9.
[123] Schrag, 9.
[124] A. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 11-12.

outwards.'[125] Is it possible to propagate the idea of the 'death of the self' and self-identity without embracing an idea of impersonal and 'unreal'[126] being?

John Macmurray's idea of 'unreal' and 'real' people could serve as an important corrective for the concept of the self advocated by Zizioulas and by deconstructive postmodernity. For Macmurray to be 'unreal' is not only about being a self-centered 'individual' but *also* about not being faithful to one's identity. Thus, people are unreal for two reasons. First, when they are 'out of touch with the world outside them'[127], and second, when there is a clash between their feelings and their thoughts. Macmurray writes,

> If we do what we think is right without feeling that it is right, our reality is destroyed. That is why people who continually do their duty in defiance of their desire are such unreal people. Such pandering to thought in defiance of feeling is humanly unreal. We often say of such persons—and rightly—that they are not human. Their humanity is not real humanity.[128]

Harmony of thoughts and feelings presupposes a selfhood, an 'I', which discerns, if thought is at variance with feeling, what is significant and good. Left to itself, thought does not decide for itself and it can only accept the opinions of others. It must rely on tradition, that is, on *somebody else's* feeling and it falls back on external authority. 'If I do this,' writes Macmurray, 'if I think that something is good or true or beautiful or important because somebody else thinks so or feels so, then *I* do not really think it.'[129]

What Macmurray argues here is that the self or the I is *constitutive* of itself by living 'from within outwards'. The world enters into us through senses and through the same gateways [the self in the form of its] thought and feeling goes out to grasp the world. The self must be *interested* in things it experiences, it has to enjoy them and feel them because,

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[125] John Macmurray, *Freedom in the Modern World*, (London, Faber & Faber, 1968), 166.
[126] Ibid. 155.
[127] Ibid. 159.
[128] Ibid. 163.
[129] Ibid. 163.

'it is a mistake to think that [non engaging with the world] is the way to be unbiased or unprejudiced. To be indifferent to the things you see and think about is to be desperately biased and prejudiced in favor of unreality.'[130] Zizioulas's declaration of the death of the self has a strong resemblance to what Macmurray describes here as the failure and fear of the subject to be involved. So according to Macmurray, which kind of the self is it that 'must die'? Firstly, the self that is not in rapport with the outer world; secondly, the self that fails to live according to its identity and thus becomes 'unreal', that is, is constituted by other people, orthodoxy and tradition. Zizioulas's demise of the self entails only the first part of Macmurray's dialectical pair.

Zizioulas's exclusively negative attitude towards the self becomes clearer when we locate its ultimate origin. The real birthplace of the self is in Adam's rejection of God; the rise of the self provokes the Fall or, in other words, *the Fall gave rise to the self*.

> The rejection of God by Adam signified the rejection of otherness as constitutive of being. By claiming to be God, Adam rejected the Other as constitutive of his being and declared himself to be the ultimate explanation of his existence. This gave rise to the *Self* as having ontological priority over the Other.[131]

Zizioulas here repeats that otherness is constitutive of being. However, he makes an almost unnoticeable and yet radical change in his definition of otherness. While he claimed previously that otherness is constitutive of being because there is no being without *particular* beings, now it is the other that now becomes *constitutive* of our otherness. Obviously we encounter here a fundamental contradiction in Zizioulas's thought. His contention that freedom is equal to radical ontological otherness—that to be a person means to be oneself—means that the self or the 'I' is constitutive of otherness, on the condition that this freedom is not freedom *from* but freedom of love *for* the other. To be in a loving

[130] Ibid. 165.
[131] CO, 43.

relation with the other however does not mean that the other constitutes my personal and unique identity. These two claims are simply irreconcilable and they create one of the major problems of Zizioulas's thought.

Berdyaev, having more sensitivity for the temporal development of the relation between God and his creature, interprets Adam's fall in a radically different way. In Berdyaev's view, the Fall was a necessary event, but also an event that was meant to be surpassed. Adam had a choice only between absolute obedience and absolute willfulness. His freedom at that stage could have been only negative, freedom as arbitrary free will, freedom *from*. The positive and creative purpose of freedom could not yet be conceived at this stage of creation. Adam's freedom was formal rather than material; material freedom was to be attained in another epoch of creation. It was born of the union of the human nature of Jesus with the divine nature of Christ.

> Human nature, become son of God, rises to the consciousness of material freedom full of creative purpose. Freedom is penetrated by universal love. Freedom is henceforth inseparable from its universal content. Freedom *from* is in sin: freedom *for* is creativeness. Adam's freedom in the seven-day creation is different from his freedom in the creation of the eight day. The freedom of the new Adam, joined with the Absolute Man, is creative freedom, freedom which continues the work of God's creativity… There are two freedoms: divine and diabolic. The freedom of the first Adam could not be diabolic freedom, because divine freedom in its positive content could not be revealed in the seven-day creation. Adam's freedom was the first stamp of man's likeness to the Creator. And even in paralysing sin there was still a sign of man's power.[132] The fall of the first man, Adam, had positive meaning and justification, as a moment in the revelation of creativity, preparing for the appearance of the Absolute Man.[133]

[132] It is interesting that, although in a different context, Zizioulas accepts the idea that our destructive application of freedom—the attempt of modern art to create ex nihilo by shattering all the existing forms of being— is intrinsically linked with the concept of the person. BC, pp. 42-43, n38.
[133] MCA, 148. STv, 181.

1.3.4 The Person

Otherness, we have seen, is not secondary to unity, but primary and moreover constitutive. This means that otherness is not secondary to relationship (*schesis*) but rather constitutive of it. Nevertheless, Zizioulas argues that 'person is an identity that emerges through relationship (*schesis*)…; it is an '*I*' that can exist only as long as it relates to a 'thou' that affirms its existence and its otherness'.[134] Furthermore, we can understand the person 'only as *schesis*: as that *schesis* (relation) which is *constitutive of a particular being* and in which or by virtue of which natures are such a particular being—or beings—and thus are at all'.[135] In the case of God, we remember, the unity is not predicated on the common nature but is the result of the Father's person. However, it seems that in his anthropology Zizioulas uses a substantialistic approach in the sense that it is not the person that creates relation/unity, but relation, very much like substance, acts as an impersonal constitutive principle.

1.4 Otherness and the Human Being

In Zizioulas's view otherness is constitutive of the human being in three ways. I shall outline the first two points and give my critical appraisal, and then I shall expound on the third point. First, the *identity* of the human being, according to Zizioulas, emerges only in relation to other beings and God. Secondly, the human being is constituted by freely choosing to be ontologically other. In other words, one's particularity is constituted through

[134] CO, 9.
[135] CO, 239.

freedom that is described as the drive to ontological otherness; freedom as seen by the Fathers, argues Zizioulas, is related to the acceptance or rejection of everything *given*. One's own nature, other human beings, the world, and God, are all forms of givenness.

1.4.1 Human Otherness (I): The Identity

If we bear in mind Zizioulas's description of freedom as 'absolute ontological otherness' than we cannot help noticing an incongruity in the description of otherness as constitutive of the human being. The incongruity stems from the one we have observed regarding otherness and the being of God. The first part of the description clearly places the other as constitutive of one's identity, much in the same way as the Father's person is inconceivable without relationship to other persons.[136] In trying to create distance between his theology and the modern concept of self, Zizioulas appears to confuse relationality of personhood with identity. In other words, Zizioulas sacrifices the notion of identity to the concept of relationality. It would be proper to say that one's *person* emerges only in relation to other beings, simply because personhood is not given; it needs not only to be attained but also constantly sustained. To this, in my view, we would need to add that *identity* is a *potential* personhood, i.e., identity needs to be actualised in a loving relationship with other beings. If there is no identity prior to relationship there is simply no one to create relationship.[137] It is not correct to claim that one's identity is abolished if

[136] CO, 35.
[137] Zizioulas is aware that in order to develop the concept of otherness he needs a notion of identity. He writes, ' For him [Maximus], *diaphora* is an ontological characteristic because each being has its logos which

relationship is not established. Rather, one's identity can never be destroyed, but it could remain non-affirmed and self-insular.[138]

Furthermore, without a concept of identity it is impossible to depict freedom as 'absolute ontological otherness' because in that case it would not be at all clear about whose 'otherness' we are talking about. This question will be discussed at length in the next chapter. However, I should like to stress already here that Zizioulas's negative attitude towards the concepts of self and identity comes from his understanding of God's being. If we agree to define the freedom of the human being as 'absolute ontological otherness' then we simply need to accept the implications that such a definition involves. The most important of these consequences is that one's otherness cannot be conceived of as being merely potential and non-actualisable due to being limited by some form of external givenness, even if this 'givenness' is God.

1.4.2 Human Otherness (II): Freedom as Ontological Otherness

Zizioulas is right in claiming that the patristic concept of freedom as *autoexousion* involves acceptance or rejection of everything given, including God; 'freedom', he writes, 'means the drive to ontological otherness, to the *idion*, the particular, in all respects: with

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gives it particular identity. without which it would cease to be itself and thus to be at all. Without *diaphora* there is no being, for there is no being apart from beings.' CO, 22.

[138] The terminological confusion to which I am referring here is obvious from the following sentence: 'The person is an identity that emerges through relationship (*schesis*, in the terminology of the Greek Fathers); it is an "I" that can exist only as long as it relates to a "thou" which affirm its existence and its otherness.' CO, 9. Thus, in the first part of the sentence Zizioulas claims that person implies an identity, only to contradict himself in the continuation by saying that this identity or the 'I' exists as long as it relates.

regard to God, to the animals, and to other human beings'.[139] The problem is, however, that God as perceived by Zizioulas, as we shall see, never ceases to be a God of theism who is inescapable givenness for the human being. This is because, I argue, he accepts unreservedly the patristic interpretation of the doctrines of God's omnipotence and omniscience, as well as the doctrine of creation according to which—to quote Berdyaev—God created the human without having a real 'need' for him. In spite of criticizing the traditional solution of the problem of the relationship between God and the human by means of obedience,[140] what Zizioulas himself offers in the final analysis is only a different and a better disguised form of obedience. Zizioulas, I emphasise, does not envisage the possibility that freedom as rejection of all givenness does not necessarily imply rejection of God. In Zizioulas's case, rejection of givenness always has to result in the rejection of God.[141] In other words, if we define freedom as absolute ontological otherness we need to conclude that self-affirmation, the positive or the creative aspect of our ontological otherness also has to be 'absolute'. To be 'absolute' in this context means that our creative self-affirmation cannot be a matter of freedom of choice, but it has to be the capacity to create identities that would be radically new even from God's perspective. I shall explain this in more detail by analysing the concepts of begetting and of creation out of nothing, which, in my view, have a common characteristic.

[139] CO, 39.
[140] 'There is more than "obedience", or rather something quite different from it, that is needed to bring man to a state of existence in which freedom is not a choice among many possibilities…' CO, 237.
[141] This is clear from Zizioulas's identification of the rejection of givenness with the Fall. CO, 39.

1.5 Otherness as Creation of a New World

1.5.1 Begetting and Creation Out of Nothing

It is possible, as we shall see in Berdyaev's work, to conceive of the communion with God that does not involve God as a form of givenness.[142] One purpose of the idea of creation out of nothing, on this understanding, is that the mechanical chain of causation between God and the world is broken so that the creation acquires ontological otherness. The Father, as Zizioulas argues, is the *personal* ontological cause; but 'personal' here has to mean that the Father's causation is not mechanical, i.e., that it is a 'free' causation. The Father is a 'free' causational principle because he, as a free person, chooses to break the chain of causation.

I argue that there is an essential similarity between the Father's *begetting* of the Son[143] and the *creation out of nothing* of the human being. Expressions 'to beget' and 'to create out of nothing' imply not only that God was not pre-conditioned in his creative act, and not only the uncreated character of the Son and the created nature of the human person, but also that the Father refuses to be the mechanical cause of the Son and the creature. Begetting and creation out of nothing imply that an excess in being was brought about and that at the end of this process we have *more* than in the beginning. Three divine persons are more than just one of them, just like God and the human being are more than God alone. Begetting and creation happen on different ontological levels, but in spite of this not only

[142] Jüngel quotes D. Bonhoeffer's remarkable sentence, which is very close to Berdyaev's understanding of God's omnipotence: 'God allows himself to be pushed out of the world onto the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matthew 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.' D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. E. Bethge, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1972) 360. Cited in E. Jüngel, GMW, 60.

[143] This also of course includes the procession of the Spirit.

the creativity of the divine persons but also that of the created person generates a surplus in being. We have *more* after begetting and creation out of nothing only if the divine persons and human persons are themselves capable of continuing to create *more* than there was before. According to this view of begetting and creation the Father *needs* two other divine persons, but he also '*needs*' the human person. The Father needs all of them because they are autonomous sources of new realities, which is an increase in being. Thus, God created the human being because he wishes to be enriched by his continuous creativity.[144]

This furthermore means that the Father cannot beget or create out of *himself* because by doing so he would make otherness impossible. Hence, the expression to create *out of nothing* obviously has to imply that by begetting or creating the Father does not causally determine. Now, the important question is, *from where* does the Father beget and create if he does not create out of himself? It appears that we need to postulate an unlimited, groundless freedom that is, metaphorically speaking, prior to the Father and out of which, *as if* out of nothing, he begets and creates. Groundless freedom has to be the origin of the Trinity and of the human person because only that which is beyond any form of omnipotent and omniscient control can be the source of a being with radically unique identity and unrepeatable manifestation of that identity.[145]

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[144] See more about this in Jean-Louis Segundo, *Berdiaeff; Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la personne,* (Paris, Aubier, 1963), 128.

[145] Swiss author Pascal Mercier writes, 'In His omnipresence, the Lord observes us day and night, every hour, every minute, every second… He never lets us alone, never spares us a moment completely to ourselves. What is man without secrets? Without thoughts and wishes only he, he alone, knows? (…) Did the Lord our God not consider that He was stealing our soul with his unbridled curiosity and revolting voyeurism, a soul that should be immortal?' P. Mercier, *Night Train to Lisbon*, trans. Barbara Harshav (London, Atlantic Books, 2007), 170. Berdyaev pushes this argument even further by asserting that God's love for us does not justify exhaustive control over our persons; the mystery of the person should remain mystery even for love. 'Love may break silence between lovers: but do they not speak across an impassable gulf, which no intimacy can redeem? The person of every other human being must needs remain an impenetrable and untrodden mystery, which even love is unable to fathom.' DR, pp. 278-279. SP, 361.

1.5.2 Human Otherness (III): Otherness as Creative Expression of Freedom

Zizioulas is aware that ontological otherness is not attained unless it is actualised in an ecstatic movement, a movement of the person out of itself, which means that *freedom* and *person* remain an illusion if they are not realised in their encounter with the other. However, according to Zizioulas's concept of self-affirmation the human remains a tragic being. Thus, we arrive at the third possibility of expressing otherness. It is a *positive* expression of one's particularity—in Berdyaev's terminology this freedom is described as freedom *for*[146]—and it involves *creativity*. This specific aspect of Zizioulas's theology is of particular importance for our investigation, for it strongly resembles some of the most significant of Berdyaev's ideas. Zizioulas argues,

> Freedom as otherness, however, is not only a negative thing; its ontological character involves a positive aspect expressed as a drive towards love and creativity. Freedom to be other involves the tendency to create a world other than the given one, that is, to bring about otherness in the radically ontological sense of the emergence of new identities bearing the seal of the lover's or the creator's personhood. This is expressed in art, when it is not a mere copy of reality, and it is a distinctive characteristic of the human beings in creation.[147]

Zizioulas's words about freedom as the tendency to create otherness in the radical ontological sense and as the emergence of new identities evoke strongly Berdyaev's description of freedom as the power to create out of nothing. One could even claim that Zizioulas here vindicates Berdyaev's daring view on freedom. However, this is only partially true because the Greek thinker never accepts the inevitable repercussions of his contention that freedom involves creation of ontologically new identities. The problem is

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[146] Zizioulas also uses the distinction between freedom from and freedom for (ibid. 26), but in his case the latter can hardly be taken as a freedom for one's ontological uniqueness. This is because the positive affirmation of one's otherness is impeded by the existence of the world, and God as its creator, which does not allow for the creation of a radical newness. Zizioulas mentions freedom for but it is always freedom for the other's will and other's identity to which one needs, in obedience, to surrender as a form of necessity.

[147] BC, 40. See also J. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, ed. Luke Ben Tallon, (New York, T&T Clark, 2011), pp. 135-136.

that Zizioulas, in contrast to Berdyaev, excludes the possibility of human creation out of groundless freedom. He writes, 'Creativity, therefore, and *eros* are the positive exercise of human freedom, as they "image" God's will and capacity freely to bring about beings other than himself which bear his personal seal, albeit, in the case of human being, not out of nothing but out of a given world.'[148]

At first glance, Zizioulas is, of course, right in claiming that human creation out of nothing is impossible; we always need a medium for our creativity. The problem is, however, in how one interprets and defines terms 'out of nothing' and 'out of a given world'. This is where our authors have two radically different positions and as a consequence two fundamentally dissimilar concepts of freedom.

To hypothesize that the world is not a limiting 'other' means to postulate a God who in no way limits freedom of human creativity. If positive self-affirmation is the *constitutive* and *formative* principle of freedom and person, it follows that they are unachievable if any form of givenness determines creativity. The radical uniqueness of the person implies the fundamental uniqueness of its manifestation. This means that we need to postulate a form of creation 'out of nothing' in the case of human creativity.[149] The human can create 'out of

[148] CO, 40.

[149] For Berdyaev, we should stress, the term 'out of nothing' signifies creation out of 'an untraceable, undetermined and unpredictable' freedom. Berdyaev writes, 'to admit that freedom is rooted in non-being or nothingness, is to admit the irrational mystery of freedom. No rational concepts can possibly express this mystery, for concepts deal with and are dependent on the already existing. It is only accessible to spiritual experience and, as such, it can only be spoken of in symbols and mythological images.' DR, 213. SP, 270. The 'nothing' of which Berdyaev speaks is the *Ungrund*, 'groundlessness' or the indeterminate nature of freedom. DR, 99. SP, 124 The term Paul Tillich is using with a similar meaning to the *Ungrund* is 'dynamics', which is the *mē on* or the potentiality of being. 'This highly dialectical concept', writes Tillich, 'is not an invention of the philosophers. It underlies most mythologies and is indicated in the chaos, the *tohu-va-bohu*, the night, the emptiness, which precedes creation. It appears in metaphysical speculations as *Urgrund* (Böhme), will (Schopenhauer), will to power (Nietzsche), the unconscious (Hartmann, Freud), *élan vital* (Bergson), strife (Scheler, Jung). None of these concepts is to be taken conceptually. Each of them points symbolically to that which cannot be named. If it could be named properly, it would be a formed being beside other beings instead of an ontological element in polar contrast with the element of pure form.' ST, 198. Whilst Berdyaev avers that the *Ungrund* or the *mē on* is Godhead or the ungrounded divine nature/freedom

nothing' only if we assume, as seen, that neither the world nor its Creator are a restraining factor for human self-affirmation. In order to exist as a unique entity, in its self-constitution person simply cannot be limited. This seemingly paradoxical deduction is however an inevitable conclusion and as such it is recognised by Zizioulas. He writes, as if echoing some of Berdyaev's ideas, that the person implies,

> The transcendence of the 'necessity' of existence, the possibility of affirming its existence not as a recognition of a given fact, or a 'reality', but as the product of its free consent and self-affirmation. This and nothing less than this is what man seeks in being a person. This is especially apparent in art. Art as genuine creation, and not as a representational rendering of reality, is nothing other than an attempt by man to affirm his presence in a manner free from 'necessity' of existence. Genuine art is not simply creation on the basis of something which already exists, but a tendency towards a creation *ex nihilo*… What is apparent in all this is the tendency of the person to liberate itself in its self-affirmation from the 'necessity' of existence, that is, to become God.[150]

Our upsurge towards unrestrained freedom is, nevertheless, in tragic conflict with our createdness, adds Zizioulas. As human beings, as creatures, we cannot escape the 'necessity' of our existence, argues our author. In that case, is there a way out of this tragic impasse? Zizioulas believes that we cannot find it in philosophy. Philosophy deals solely with intramundane realities and can only confirm the reality of the person; but since the intrinsic characteristic of the person is the overcoming of givenness, the person cannot be fully human or intramundane. Therefore, Zizioulas argues that, 'only theology can treat of the genuine, the authentic person, because the authentic person, as absolute ontological

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from which issue theogony and anthropogony, Tillich explains that Christianity has rejected the concept of *me-ontic* matter, arguing that God creates out of *ouk-on* or out of the absolute non-being, which is not in a dialectic relation to being. ST, 209. Without a dialectical potency in God it is difficult to see how God can be both being and becoming.

[150] BC, 42, n38. I believe that Zizioulas's understanding of art is less profound than Berdyaev's. For Zizioulas, art is a tendency towards overcoming of necessity in the form of its attempt to create out of nothing. However, this ex nihilo, in Zizioulas's case, always remains on a subjective and psychological level; art is never perceived as a flight towards freedom through creating a new being in its full ontological reality.

freedom, must be 'uncreated', that is, unbounded by any 'necessity', including its own existence.'[151]

We see that in following the inevitable logic of his description of freedom as an absolute ontological otherness Zizioulas arrives at the conclusion that person—and consequently *freedom*—ought to be 'uncreated'.[152] The notion of the *Ungrund* or uncreated, groundless freedom, a freedom that is 'external' to God, is one of the most important ideas of Berdyaev's philosophy. Thus, this is the closest point of contact between our two authors, but also the point from which they irrevocably take diametrically different paths. From now on Zizioulas will try to do away with the tragedy of our createdness, due to which we cannot escape the necessity of our existence,[153] by finding a refuge in the patristic doctrines; he will present his either/or and argue that the human fundamental self-affirmation in this given world is possible only either as the *acceptance* or *rejection* and destruction of the world. Contradicting his fundamental claim about freedom as a rejection of everything given, Zizioulas refuses to acknowledge that there is only one word to describe the acceptance of givenness, even if this acceptance were heroic and courageous: that word is 'tragedy'. It is a similar acceptance of givenness as freedom, a similar contention that freedom is an obviously *tragic* situation, which provoked Berdyaev's verdict about Christianity failing to reveal itself as a religion of freedom.

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[151] BC, 43.

[152] In their effort to describe the dignity of the human being some Church Fathers go as far as to describe the deified person as 'unended and unbegan' (Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua 10, PG 91: 1144c.), whilst Gregory Palamas goes even further as to say that the human being becomes 'uncreated, unoriginate, and indescribable'. *The Triads* 3.1.31, The Classics of Western Spirituality, transl. N. Gendle, (New York, Paulist Press, 1983). On the condition that these adjectives are not taken to be simply metaphors, one could maybe argue that to be 'unoriginate' means not to be determined by created freedom, that is, that the human person originates from the *Ungrund* or uncreated freedom.

[153] BC, 43.

It is then only natural that a theology according to which human creative self-affirmation leads only to two equally gloomy situations—the acceptance of the given world or its destruction—would not concentrate on developing a doctrine of the positive or creative aspect of the human nature. As already mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to challenge Zizioulas's favourable appraisal of patristic theology with a radically different opinion. Berdyaev warned in his *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1916) about 'the danger of the restoration of the Christianity of the Fathers, which has no true [positive] anthropology'.[154] Berdyaev critiques patristic thought on the grounds that early Christian anthropology was not successful in revealing 'the creative mystery of human nature', i.e., the self-affirmative and self-formative aspect of our freedom. According to Berdyaev, the Fathers developed fully only the negative side of anthropology, i.e. only the teaching about the healing of passions, which he terms 'redemptive' anthropology. Zizioulas's initial definition of positive anthropology is that it is 'fulfilment of man's full communion with God', what the Greek Fathers have called *theosis*.[155] However, 'communion with God' does not necessarily imply positive and creative aspects of the human being. There are many different kinds of communion. As Berdyaev has observed, 'religion of redemption' did not answer the question of the meaning and the purpose of redeemed human nature. He writes, 'the usual Christian answer, that man's chief end is life in God, cannot satisfy us – it is too general and too formal.'[156]

Patristic concepts of absolute and vertiginous truth about man, avers Berdyaev, do not correspond to the Christological truth about redemption. One of Berdyaev's most

[154] MCA, 93. STv, 124.
[155] CO, 237.
[156] MCA, 111. STv, 144.

important claims is that the mystery of redemption has 'veiled-over' the creative mystery of man and that, as a result, an unbridgeable gap between God and man still exists.[157]

> Even in the dogmas of the ecumenical councils, which reveal only the Christological mystery, the mystery of redemption, there is no final anthropological revelation. And neither in the Christianity of the early Fathers, nor in that of the ecumenical councils could there be a truly Christian religious anthropology (...) Religious consciousness had to be oriented wholly towards Christ rather than towards man.[158]

Berdyaev is right in claiming that the Church dogmas are concentrated on Christ rather than the human. When Zizioulas concludes that person and freedom must be 'uncreated', he argues that, from the point of view of theological anthropology, that is not a problem since Christ is an uncreated person. However, this answer totally overlooks the human aspect of the problem. Indeed, without a God who is the union of the uncreated Persons the very concept of uncreatedness is unimaginable. This does not imply nonetheless that each human person does not need to attain its self-constitution. If I am a radically unique person *no one else* can perform the task of my self-affirmation for me; not even God. To repeat, Zizioulas identifies Adam's drive towards the affirmation of his self, i.e., of his ontological otherness and freedom, as the essence of the Fall. How can we, however, conceive of 'absolute ontological otherness' without a notion of the self or identity? If the self disappears, the otherness clearly disappears as well. Thus, when Zizioulas talks only about God sustaining and even *constituting* the being of creation this is symptomatic of his proclivity towards monophysitism and his failure to develop a positive and creative anthropology.[159] Berdyaev stresses that self[160] exists as an ideal that has to be attained, that self is self-creative.

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[157] MCA 82. STv, 112.
[158] MCA, 82. STv, 112.
[159] '[…] for a God who is so personal as to be capable of self-modification to the point of lending his very "mode of being" to constitute and sustain the being of creation. By pervading the world through the person of the divine Logos, God not only unites it to himself while maintaining his otherness, but at the same time

> […] the very existence of the ego itself is a creative effort, a synthesizing creative act… Man creates his personality and in the act of doing so expresses his personality. In the self-creation of the ego, of the personality, the human spirit accomplishes a creative act of synthesis. A creative effort is needed in order to avoid any disintegration of the ego, any division of the personality, to prevent its breaking up into parts. Man is not only called to creativeness, as an activity that operates in the world and is exerted upon the world, but he is himself creative power and without that creative power his human countenance is lacking.[161]

The neglect of human integrity provoked a compensatory reaction from modern philosophers, leading to the stringent emphasis on the self and its activity that characterizes our era.

> This problem reached final acuteness in the life of Nietzsche. He burned with creative desire. Religiously, he knew only the law and the redemption in neither of which is the creative revelation of man. And so he hated God because he was possessed by the unfortunate idea that man's creativeness is impossible if God exists.[162]

1.6 Conclusion

Zizioulas's theology repeats the mistakes of patristic anthropology—in which the mystery of redemption has veiled over the creative mystery of human nature—failing to alleviate Christianity's 'helplessness in the face of the modern tragedy of man'.[163] It is true that Zizioulas is in dialogue with postmodern thought, especially regarding the concept of person. Paradoxically, however, what he regards as the most important trait of postmodern personalism is the notion of the death of the Self. In its positive self-manifestation the self, according to Zizioulas, can only be destructive. Positive human freedom is doomed to

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brings about and sustains a world existing as simultaneously communion and otherness in all its parts…' CO, 32.

[160] Berdyaev's terms 'ego' and 'personality' have the same connotation as 'self'.

[161] N. Berdyaev, BE, 72.

[162] MCA, 106. STv, 138.

[163] MCA, 92. STv, 124.

negativity due to the theistic understanding of God's omnipotence. Zizioulas's God does not envisage a space of freedom for the human person, not even in a form of a *tzim-tzum*, i.e., in a form of freedom that does not have the potential of Berdyaev's *Ungrund* because it is 'interior' to God and thus controlled by him. This inevitably leads to a radical depreciation of history, culture, and every form of human creativity. Theistic theologies similar to Zizioulas's are unable to pave the road to a 'Christian Renaissance'—i.e., a religion of Godmanhood—and to justify the human being. On the contrary, they are only enhancing the continuing process of secularisation, the meaning of which is that the most valuable forms of human creativity are being developed outside of—and sometimes in opposition to—the Church.

We therefore need to ask what the purpose and the future of the Church would be if it were no longer a context in which the human spirit thrives? If the Church does not acknowledge positive human freedom, and if it fails to understand that the human being was created in order to bring forth excess in being, maybe the spirit of Godmanhood will try to express itself outside of the institutionalized Church, in different forms of secular life and creativity, which would then become equally or even more churchly than the Church itself.[164]

In the next chapter I shall look into the question of communion and otherness in Maximus the Confessor, whose work is the main inspiration for John Zizioulas. I shall particularly concentrate on Maximus's interpretation of the notions of *perichoresis* (mutual

[164] As Yves Congar observed, 'no longer is the church the framework for the whole of social life; no longer does the church carry the world within itself like a pregnant mother. From now on the world stands before the church as an adult reality, ready to call the church to account. It no longer suffices for the church to verify its fidelity to its own tradition. The church now must face up to questions and criticism with respect to its relationship to the world…' Y. Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert (Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press 2011), 58.

interpenetration) and *eos-mehri* (so long as), which are the backbone of Maximian positive human freedom. Is Maximus also guilty of the 'tendencies towards monophysitism'? Is it possible to talk about mutual interpenetration of the divine and the human nature unless we deconstruct the concept of the theistic God?

2. Freedom According to Maximus the Confessor

As I have stated before, Berdyaev claims that Christianity has not yet revealed itself in fullness as an experience of freedom. This is due to an incomplete Christian concept of freedom itself; or, in other words, Christianity which is represented in the teachings of the patristic period has mostly striven to produce a negative notion of freedom, that is, freedom *from* passions, whereas freedom *for*, which would demand the activation of human creative capacities, has been largely overlooked.

Berdyaev rightly equates freedom from passions with negative anthropology, the basic concern of which is to describe the suppression of human nature. If there were traces of positive anthropology in the works of the Fathers, then this was only old pagan anthropology, anthropology of the fallen Adam. Even in the patristic teaching on *theosis*, which aims at describing the glorified and deified character of human nature, it is not clear what would be the specific difference of created nature in comparison with divine nature.

> The teachers of the Church had a doctrine of the *theosis* of man, but in this *theosis* there is no man at all. The very problem of man is not even put. But man is godlike not only because he is capable of suppressing his own nature and thus freeing a place for divinity. There is godlikeness in human nature itself, in the very human voice of that nature. Silencing the world and the passions liberates man. God desires that not only God should exist, but man as well.[165]

It is obvious that Berdyaev here tackles one of the most important issues of patristic theology, i.e. the question of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ. As

[165] MCA, 84. STv, 114.

is well known, the council of Chalcedon dealt extensively with this problem, and the autonomy of human nature was preserved in the definition that explained that both natures exist in Christ in an unconfused way. The theme of two natures existing in Christ certainly represented one of the most important problems in the history of Christian theology.

There is no consent among the Orthodox thinkers whether the problem was resolved in a satisfactory manner.[166] It is hardly surprising, then, that many centuries later, Berdyaev deemed it necessary to raise this issue again. Moreover, the Russian philosopher claimed boldly that 'in the Christianity of the early Fathers there was a monophysite tendency.'[167]

There is no doubt that one could deduce proofs against Berdyaev's argument from the patristic works. However, the very fact that we have to look for something that is not at all obvious and explicit proves that the question of the human being was treated by the Fathers not for its own sake but only in the context of the Christological debate.[168] For example, one of Berdyaev's most significant arguments about human freedom is that the human person is able to create out of untrammelled freedom, although not without a medium as God does. If this claim plays such an important role, as I believe it does, and in particular with regard to the formative ontological principle of personhood,[169] and if this is not obvious but could only be deduced from the texts of the Fathers, then is it not possible

[166] Most of the Orthodox theologians, including Zizioulas, believe that the question of the two natures in Christ was resolved once and for all. Here I give just one example: '… Christ who is the perfect communion of God and man unto all ages…' Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology; Maximus the Confessor's Eucharistic Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity,* (Brookline, Massachusetts, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 177. Sergei Bulgakov believed that the Chalcedonian doctrine was a work in progress. He argues that in the Chalcedonian dogma 'we have only a dogmatic, not theological synthesis', adding that 'until the present day a theological synthesis is being sought', in spite of the labours of Maximus the Confessor. S. Bulgakov, LG, pp. 443-444. Bulgakov stresses that in the Chalcedonian dogma the fundamental question of the union of the two natures in the one hypostasis of Logos was described only from the negative side (with the four negatives: inconfusably, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably), but not from the positive side. Ibid. 444.

[167] MCA*,* 80.

[168] Berdyaev is well aware that there were a few exceptions among the Fathers, amongst whom he mentions Gregory of Nyssa, Symeon the New Theologian, and Macarius of Egypt. MCA, 82. STv, 113.

[169] Some authors, such as Torstein Tollefsen, use instead the term *principle of individuation*.

to speak about a 'monophysite tendency'[170] in the Christianity of the Patristic period? However, since the Fathers claim that nature never exists in a 'naked' form, i.e., that nature can exist only in an enhypostasized form, as a person, we need to shift our argument from the level of nature to the level of person. Now, Berdyaev's argument does not concentrate on the Fathers's 'one-nature tendency' but rather on their failure to work out a sufficient concept of the human person. Thus, instead of talking about the tendency towards monophysitism we should argue that the patristic theology betrays a proclivity towards impersonalism.

2.1 Maximus's Defence of the Person of Christ

Maximus is known as a 'Confessor' precisely because of his defence of the Orthodox teaching on the Person of Christ.[171] Maximus's Christology was shaped as a critical response to the theology that suggested one will (Monothelitism) and one activity (Monoenergism) in Christ, as a way of making a bridge to the Monophysites.[172] This is why one could be even more precise and claim that Maximus became a "Confessor" precisely because, by defending the doctrine of the Person of Christ, he safeguarded the integrity of human nature in Christ's Person; human nature is able to participate in divine life, yet it stays distinctive. Whilst being one of the Trinity, Christ is also a human and, as such, he is the best divine 'defence' of the human person against any possible claim that God has not endowed humankind with genuine autonomy and otherness. Using different terminology, we could assert that the question of the singleness of created nature is

[170] Loudovikos himself writes about the 'monophysitic tendency' in modern Orthodox theology, which seems to be a direct consequence of the misreading of Maximus. See EO, 225.
[171] Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor,* (London, New York, Routledge, 1996), 48.
[172] Ibid. 48.

essentially a question of freedom. In other words, the very purpose of being distinctive is to be free, and as much as one is free, he exists.[173]

Maximus's duel with the Monothelites, with its apogee in his disputation with Pyrrhus at Carthage in 645, forced him to apply all the results of the Chalcedonian formula, in particular the 'unconfused' character of the two natures of Christ. This is how the dissolution of human nature in Divine substance was prevented.[174] Even from Maximus's early writings it is clear that 'synthesis' and not 'confusion' is the first structural principle of all creation.[175] This is why the question of Christ's human nature is not only an anthropological issue, but also cosmological and ontological, because it touches upon the meaning and destiny of God's entire creation.[176]

The Christology of the sixth and seventh century, as we have seen, depends strongly on the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. In order to understand Maximus's theological terminology, we need to go to the Chalcedonian definition concerning Christ's Person. Here I shall quote the most important part of the formula:

> So, following the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin Mother of God, as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten,

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[173] Zizioulas is right when he claims that 'otherness is not secondary to unity; it is primary and constitutive of the very idea of being. Respect for otherness is a matter not of ethics but of ontology: if otherness disappears, beings simply cease to be. In Christian theology there is simply no room for ontological totalitarianism. All communion must involve otherness as a primary and constitutive ingredient. It is this that makes freedom part of the notion of being. Freedom is not simply 'freedom of will'; it is the freedom to be other in an absolute ontological sense.' CO, 11. However, as we have seen, what Zizioulas' theology lacks is precisely an ontological formative principle of this absolute ontological otherness.

[174] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy; The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, (San Francisko, Ignatius Press, 2003), 207.

[175] Ibid. 207.

[176] 'Everyone recognizes that his ontology and cosmology are extensions of his Christology, in that the synthesis of Christ's concrete person is not only God's final thought for the world but also his original plan.' Ibid. 207.

> acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.[177]

Maximus endorses the Chalcedonian adverbs *asynchytos*, *atreptos*—versus Eutychians—and *adiairetos* and *achoristos*—versus Nestorians—('which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation') for the purpose of developing his notion of 'synthesis' and thus protecting the distinctiveness of the created. So the first two adverbs aim at explaining that the two natures in Christ were neither confused nor changed in their *logos*; however, this does not mean that there was division or separation between them. Confusion, change, division and separation are all negative qualities in Maximus's theology and they are seen as a result of the Fall. More precisely, the Fall did not change the *logos* or the principle of created natures, but only their mode of interaction.[178] It is obvious that here Maximus talks about a special form of synthesis between two natures. What are the main characteristics of this synthesis?

2.1.1 Christ as a New Synthesis

Maximus asserts that, 'of all divine mysteries, the mystery of Christ is the most significant, for it teaches us how to situate every present or future perfection of every being, in every kind of intellectual investigation.'[179] Why does Maximus insist boldly that of all the mysteries Christ's mystery is the most significant? Moreover, why does the Confessor think that the mystery of Christ teaches us how to understand and explain 'every present and future perfection of every being?' The answer, and I would like to emphasise this point,

[177] Here I use Louth's translation, Ibid. 49.
[178] Louth, 50.
[179] *Amb,* PG 91, 1332C.

is that Christ is a synthesis precisely because he is a hypostatic or personal synthesis of the two natures. So at the very beginning of our scrutiny of Maximus's defence of Christ's Person we encounter something which is possibly the most difficult question about the Confessor's theology: what is Maximus's concept of person? Regarding this question, it seems inevitable to note that the Chalcedonian definition of the mutual indwelling of the two natures in Christ, although mentioning the term person, does not give any further explanation as to how to understand this concept. If Christ is the most significant of all divine mysteries,[180] it is because he is a Person, a Person that hypostatically unites the two natures.[181] Maximus himself seems to be more than simply rhetorically puzzled when he writes about Christ's synthetic Person which 'exceeds our reason.'

> For the superessential Word, who took on himself, in that ineffable conception, our nature and everything that belongs to it, possessed nothing human, nothing that we might consider 'natural' in him, that was not at the same time divine, negated by the supernatural manner of his existence. The investigation of these things exceeds our reason and our capacity for proof; it is only grasped by the faith of those who reverence the mystery of Christ with upright hearts.[182]

Hans Urs von Balthasar also stresses the hypostatic union when he writes that, since the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, the mystery was designated in negative terms: it was to be found somewhere between Nestorius and Eutyches, between a theory of two persons and a theory of one nature. The Fathers were concerned to avoid both division and fusion, and they were aware that Nestorius's and Eutyches's mistake was in that they were looking for the synthesis on the level of nature itself.

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[180] Following Maximus, von Balthasar calls it 'the world's central mystery.' CL, 212.

[181] Thus Maximus' favourite term 'theandric' in his work is consistently related to the personal relationship established in Christ. As Thunberg observed, 'theandric' designates the entirely unique and new relationship that is established in Jesus Christ as being both fully human and fully divine… One might also say that the full implications of the term 'theandric' could only become apparent after the definitions of the Council of Chalcedon, where what is *theandric* in Christ is also defined as *personal."* L. Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos; The Vision of St Maximus the Confessor,* (Crestwood New York, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 71.

[182] *Amb,* PG 91, 1053CD.

> A solution to the problem was impossible as long as one was unable to recognize any other dimension of being than that of 'nature' or 'essence'—the dimension considered by ancient Greek philosophy. For the result of this one-dimensionality was the conclusion that all 'essence' (*ousia*, *physis*) possessed reality in itself, or was at least the key element, the structure, the law of some really existing thing.[183]

This suggests that the Chalcedonian definition is not only incomplete, but that without a proper concept of person it is unable to sustain its main claim about the character of the union of the two natures or to articulate that claim in an intellectually persuasive manner. I argue that the theology of person thus appears to be an indispensable foundation for every ontological, cosmological, Trinitarian or Christological, investigation. If God is a Triune God, a God who is three Persons, then every theological investigation ought to start by investigating what is meant by person; that is, to start by trying to solve the 'world's most significant and central mystery.'

In the light of these comments, I should like to amend Berdyaev's claim about patristic theology and to argue that, indeed, there is an obvious monophysite tendency in the teachings of Fathers, but only because there is a tendency towards impersonalism. Person has an ontological primacy over nature and this is rather clear from Maximus's writings.[184]

> The fact that no nature is without hypostasis does not make it into a hypostasis but rather into something hypostatized (enypostaton), so that it should not be conceived simply as a property that can only be distinguished [from the hypostasis] in thought, but rather is recognized as a form (eidos) in actual fact (pragmatikos). Even so, the fact that a hypostasis is not without its essence does not make the hypostasis into an essence, but shows it to be essential (enousion); it should not be thought of as a mere quality [of nature], but must be seen as truly existing together with that in which the qualities are grounded [that is, with a nature].[185]

[183] CL, 210.
[184] However, we need to make more detailed exploration of personhood than just to argue about its primacy over nature.
[185] Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica;* PG 91, 205AB.

This means that it is not quite correct to speak about a 'one-nature' (monophysite) tendency. We should rather talk about the incapacity of patristic thought to give an account of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. Without a concept of person that explains the way in which the two natures are united without undergoing confusion and change of their *logos* the Chalcedonian formula seems to be insufficiently substantiated.

As we read in von Balthasar, the specific contribution and the novelty that Christianity claims to have brought about consisted precisely of the idea that God is the union of three Persons.[186] But this does not imply that the work on the notion of person has been finished, not even in Maximus's writings.[187] Von Balthasar for example writes that 'the relationship of these two pairs – essence and existence; being and person – still remained objectively unexplained [in Maximus work], [and that] Maximus's own Christology still stands in this [Neo-Chalcedonian] twilight.' [188]

Thus, we may conclude that what is Christianity's greatest achievement could also appear – should we claim that the work on the concept of person is completed – as its weakest point. What causes this ambiguity? The root of the problem appears to be the failure of Christian theology to pinpoint the central characteristic that makes it different from other monotheistic religions, that is, to single out the vital ontological constitutive principle of the divine and of the human person. I would like to emphasise that with regard

[186] Von Balthasar writes that, 'the discovery of the new dimension, one that begins in the non-identity of abstract and concrete being, of essence and existence, as the fundamental objective state of every created reality, is the product of the Christian consciousness…' CL, 210

[187] Louth, for instance, is well aware of the central place that the issue of person occupies in patristic theology. He writes that the initial point of the great Ecumenical Councils is the belief that in Christ one encounters God as person. However, he is also aware that the question is far from being resolved and, *if* there is a light at the end of the tunnel, it is to be found in the Maximus's theology: 'The critical issue is: what is person? And the heresies that litter this theological path – Docetism, Apollinarianism, Eutychianism, Monoenergism, Monothelitism – can be seen as the result of premature attempts to resolve this issue. (It should be said, in fairness, that many scholars would see this theological path as leading nowhere, or narrowing down to vanishing-point: but if this path does lead somewhere, then it is Maximus to whom we must attend if we want to understand where.)' Louth, 59.

[188] CL, 211.

to the created world God is a Person exactly because of his capacity to create *ex nihilo*. Of course, this fact is widely acknowledged in the context of cosmology;[189] however, one ought to stress that the importance that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* plays for the theology of person is not properly understood and is principally overlooked.[190]

Establishing the major difference of his metaphysics from that of Greek philosophy, Maximus writes in *Ambiguum* 7[191] that, 'God by his gracious will created all things visible and invisible out of nothing.'[192] The creation of the world out of nothing allowed for a potential[193] distinctiveness and autonomy of the created with respect to the Creator.[194] This

[189] Von Balthasar draws a line between what he calls East and West using precisely God's freedom in creation of the world as a main criterion. 'In contrast to such [Eastern] thinking stand the powerful forces of the Bible, Greece, and Rome. In the Old and New Testament, God and the creature stand in an irreducible relationship of confrontation: not emanation and decline, but only the good, free, creative will of God is responsible for the creature's being… So the overarching unity of God and the world in Christ is no attack on the integrity of creation but an act lifting creation beyond itself to fulfilment, an act in which even the Asian longing for divinization is brought to rest.' CL, pp. 45-46.

[190] Von Balthasar relates God's creative unlimited capacity with freedom and, consequently, with person. Although he does this very briefly, his remark deserves to be cited: 'It was in this same relationship [the relation between God the Creator and the radical contingency of the world], too, that the full conception of personal being, in its metaphysical implications, was discovered: as the ultimate seat of God's sovereign freedom, on which all the "that" and the "what" of the creature depends, and consequently—since the creature is an image of God—as the ultimate centre in the creature's being, beyond all 'nature' and 'essence', of the power freely to be, which is at the same time the centre of radical dependency on God.' CL, 210.

[191] 'Maximus' metaphysical doctrine of being is not a doctrine of causation; such that we find, for instance, in Proclus Diadochus. Indeed, it would be very difficult to justify such a reading of Maximus. If the Neoplatonist Proclus saw contingent reality as a series of unions and distinctions, a chain of causation and participation in which the many unfurl from the One as the *arche,* Maximus in contrast sees it as a created order of being, created out of non-being. And this creation *qua* creation participates in God its creator. This is why God for Maximus is not an *arche* in the ancient sense. God is the principle and source of creation as the creator only. Creation is not God's emanation, of God unfolding into the beings. It is God's pre-eternal and benevolent will (*logoi*) realized in them through an act of creation. In brief, creation is not God, but it is God's, manifesting his will and freedom to create.' M. Törönen, *The high Word plays in every kind of form mixing, as he wills, with his world here and there; Remarks on the Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor*, 2. Paper given at the Patristic Conference in Oxford, July 2011.

[192] *Amb, 7,* PG 91, 1077C. This is why one could claim that without a capacity for creation out of nothing uncreated Person is inconceivable. And genuine human person is possible only on the basis of an Uncreated, divine Person.

[193] Here I emphasize the adjective 'potential' because, as I shall explain it later on, God's capacity to create out of nothing requires a reciprocal human response.

[194] Zizioulas observes astutely that 'God's being ultimately depends on a willing *person*—the Father—and on the other hand it indicates, as indeed Gregory explicitly states, that even the Father's own being is a result of the "willing one"—the Father himself. Thus, by making a person—the Father—the ultimate point of ontological reference, the Cappadocian Fathers made it possible to introduce freedom into the notion of being, perhaps for the first time in the history of philosophy. CO, 108. However, what one does not find in Zizioulas,

means, I think, that only a God who is Person was capable of creating an entity of a totally different ontological order, endowing it with an absolute otherness; and yet, this entity possesses a capacity of participation in the divine mode of existence.[195]

The Platonic deity was not conceived as hypostasis but rather as a being or ousia, with a limited freedom. This limitation of freedom made it impossible for the deity to create an entity of a different ontological level which would not lose its singleness in participation with the divine.[196] The only way out of the Platonic *cul-de-sac* was to explain that God is a free Person and, since man was created in his image and likeness, human nature possesses self-determination and free will. Maximus highlights this reciprocity, which is a result of the *imago Dei* in the human being.

> And again, if man was made after the image of the blessed godhead which is beyond being, and since the divine nature is self-determined, then he is by nature endowed with free will. For it has been stated already that the Fathers defined 'will' as self-determination (autoexousion).[197]

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although he mentions often *creatio ex nihilo*, is the emphasis on the fact that a radical freedom as the capacity to create out of unbounded freedom is a precondition of a genuine personhood.

[195] 'Even greater than a God who defines himself only by his absolute otherness from the world, this God proves his very otherness in the fact that he can give positive Being to what is not himself, that he can assure it its autonomy, and for that very reason—beyond the gaping chasm that remains between them—assure it a genuine likeness to himself.' Von Balthasar, CL, 83. What Von Balthasar here implies by God's 'otherness' is in fact God's absolute freedom thanks to which he is able to create a being which is not him, but which participates fully in his life. On this subject see also: Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

[196] 'In order to give the particular an ontological ultimacy or priority it is necessary to *presuppose* that being is *caused* and cannot be posited as an axiomatic and self-explicable principle. This causation must be absolute and primary in ontology, not secondary. Ancient Greek philosophy knew of causation, but it always posited it *within* the framework of being. Everything is caused by something else but the world as a whole is not caused *radically*, that is, in the absolute ontological sense, by anything else. Plato's creator is an artist and an organizer of pre-existing being, and Aristotle's *nous* is the First Mover causing the world to move always *from within* and on the basis of an eternal matter. The world is eternal; it is not ontologically caused. And so the particular is never the ontologically primary cause of being. This leads to necessity in ontology. Being is not a gift but a datum to be reckoned with by the particular beings.' Zizioulas, CO, 104.

[197] Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho,* PG 91, 304CD. The translation according to: Joseph P. Farell, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of our Father among the Saints Maximus the Confessor,* (South Canaan, Pa, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press 1990), pp. 24-25.

But do the notions of self-determination and free will as conceived by Maximus, together with other concepts such as *communicatio idiomatum, perichoresis, tantum-quantum* formula of reciprocity and the so called *eos-mehri* ('so long as'), contain sufficient potential for building a radical otherness of the human being? If 'freedom is not only about free will;' if 'it is about to be other in an absolute ontological sense', as Zizioulas writes, is Maximus's concept of self-determination capable of providing this sort of freedom and, consequently, a satisfactory notion of person? I shall spell out this point clearly: if divine freedom consists of the capacity to create an absolute novelty is there reciprocity between divine and human freedom in Maximus's understanding? Or, is there reciprocity between the divine and the human person, since person is inconceivable without freedom, i.e., in Zizioulas's words, it is an illusion if it is 'uncreated'? What is it that makes it possible for a particular human person to be an other in an absolute ontological sense? We shall now look at the several concepts used by Maximus on the basis of which he builds the reciprocity between God and the created.

2.1.2 Communicatio idiomatum, perichoresis, tantum-quantum, and eos-mehri

In order to answer the question of whether there is a reciprocity between divine and human freedom, it is important to see how Maximus understands one of the basic patristic concepts – *communicatio idiomatum* – and even more so the concept of *perichoresis* since it is mainly with the help of the concept of *perichoresis*, as well as some other notions, that Maximus develops his idea of reciprocity. This will help us to scrutinise the real character of Maximus's understanding of reciprocity, as well as his concept of hypostasis.

It was already argued that Maximus made some pioneering contributions to the question of *communicatio idiomatum*.[198] The concept of the 'exchanging of properties' was used even before Chalcedon, as early as in Irenaeus and Origen. However, Maximus's personal contribution had more to do with the development of the idea of the mutual permeation of the two natures, that is, the idea of *perichoresis*. Maximus uses the idea of *perichoresis* in such a way that it significantly modifies the idea of *communicatio idiomatum*.[199] In what follows, besides my own analysis, I shall also use what has already been written on this issue, in particular the works of Lars Thunberg and Nikolaos Loudovikos, the two authors who seem to have made the most significant scrutiny of the active role of human nature in Christ's person.

Maximus seems to be the first to use the term *perichoresis*, writes Thunberg. What he implies with this term is of a paramount importance: if he thinks that *perichoresis* is chiefly the penetration of the divine into human nature, then this could be the proof of the monothelistic traits of Maximus's early writings.[200] Of course, in that case, I should add, it is impossible to talk about an absolute otherness and, as a result, about human freedom. Thunberg makes several points. First, there is a stress on the penetration of the divine nature into the human and, in that sense, the Incarnation could be already comprehended as *perichoresis*. However, it would be difficult to prove that Maximus sees the Incarnation as occupying the central place for his concept of interpenetration; *perichoresis* as a reciprocal interpenetration of the two natures is frequently used only with regard to the concept of deification. Thunberg gives an example of penetration of the divine nature into the human

[198] L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator; The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, (Chicago and La sale, Illinois, Open Court, 1995), 22.
[199] Ibid. 23.
[200] Ibid. 24.

with reference to deification, which proves that the 'ineffable penetration' of the particular believer is related to the faith he possesses. Thus, the unconfused character of human nature is allegedly preserved by the element of reciprocity.[201]

Maximus's original contribution, argues Thunberg, is observable only in the second facet of the concept of *perichoresis*, that is, when Maximus writes about the capacity of human nature to penetrate into the divine. One of the best examples is found in *Ambigua* 5 where Maximus explains that human nature is capable of completely penetrating the divine nature due to an unconfused union with the divine nature in Christ.[202]

Thunberg observes that, within the context of Maximus's work, the term *perichoresis* tends to have a connotation of reciprocity between the divine nature and human nature, and this is the third aspect of the concept. More precisely, in most cases of Maximus mentioning *perichoresis*, he speaks of a double penetration.[203] As is well known, the Fathers used the term *perichoresis* having in mind the analogy that was offered by the Stoic concept of 'mixture' (*krasis*). The term *krasis* comes from Stoic physics and implies a capacity of bodies to penetrate into each other without being damaged.

However, the active character of *perichoresis*, continues Thunberg, is probably mostly pronounced when compared to the other term that depicts a more static relation of the two natures. As in the case of the *perichoresis*, Maximus borrows the term 'adhesion' from Gregory Nazianzen who writes about the two natures penetrating into each other 'in

[201] Ibid. 26.
[202] It is interesting that in Louth's translation this passage conveys a different, or rather opposite meaning: 'The human energy united without change to the divine power, since the [human] nature, united without confusion to [the divine] nature, is completely interpenetrated…' Louth, 175.
[203] '*Perichoresis* often comes—at least in Maximus's work—in a phrase *eis allila perichoresis* (penetration into each other), and sometimes in another similar phrase but without the prefix *di allilon horisis* (penetration through each other) which is also important.' Törönen, 122.

virtue of their mutual adhesion' (*to logo tis simfyias*).[204] The term 'adhesion' is a prerequisite for a synergetic *perichoresis* as we can see from Maximus' sentence from Opuscula 7:

> Then, as he showed that the natural energies of Christ the God, who is composed of both, are perfectly preserved, that of his Godhead through the almighty command, and that of his humanity through the touch, he proves them to be thoroughly united by their mutual coming together and interpenetration…[205]

According to Thunberg, the first term points to the relationship of the two natures induced by the Incarnation, whereas the second concept depicts their mutual interpenetration. As Thunberg argues, Maximus stresses the reciprocity by claiming that one and the same activity proceeds from Christ in a joined and united manner, as if 'from two subjects united into one'. However, Maximus wants to make it clear that he does not speak about the 'one subject' and this is why he explains that this activity is 'according to the unitary interpenetration in them.'[206] I find Maximus's mentioning of the 'two subjects' in relation to Christ, who could only be one subject, rather peculiar, but I shall return later to this important point.

In order to explain the character of the unity of the two natures in Christ, continues Thunberg, Maximus uses the well-known metaphor of fire and iron. Iron blazes in fire, becomes almost as fire, but it does not change its nature, remaining iron. In other words, in one hypostasis we have both iron and fire; iron acts according to its own nature, as well as according to the nature of fire, but in a way that is characteristic to iron alone. Thunberg writes that here we are dealing with an adoption of human nature into the realm of the divine, and adds, 'But human nature itself tends towards this adoption, and, therefore, (as in

[204] *Ep.* 101, PG 37, 181C. See Thunberg, MM, 29.
[205] Louth, ibid. 189. As we see, Louth translates the term *simfyias* not as 'mutual adhesion' but as 'mutual coming together.'
[206] PG 91, 85 D-88A, in Thunberg, MM, 30.

the case of iron and fire) develops within this union always what is inherent in itself and proper to itself. The glowing sword burns and cuts at the same time.'[207]

Thunberg's explanation sounds very optimistic with regard to the ability of human nature to preserve its distinctiveness and otherness. Nonetheless, although the simile of iron and fire is quite compelling, it is only a figure of speech—just as much as Berdyaev's 'uncreated freedom'—and one ought to ask, how exactly we are supposed to understand it? What does it mean that 'the glowing sword burns and cuts at the same time' if we apply this figure in the context of human nature? What is the 'cutting' of human nature, that is, what is the property of human nature that is retained? Moreover, on the basis of which of its properties does human nature manage to stay distinct? It is obvious that Maximus sees the *activity* of human nature as decisive for the preservation of its otherness. However, is this activity really sufficiently 'active' or, in other words, creative, to maintain the otherness of human nature?

This question is also applicable in the case of what Thunberg distinguishes as the fourth aspect of *perichoresis*. Thunberg contends that it is precisely this aspect that demonstrates in the most obvious manner Maximus's faithfulness to Chalcedon and to preserving the otherness of human nature. Thunberg here has in mind the famous *tantum-quantum* formula or the formula of reciprocity. He quotes *Ambigua* 10 where Maximus writes that God and man are each other's exemplars, and they stand in a relationship that is characterised by a certain polarity of which the best example is the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Here is the quote from Maximus that Thunberg uses:

> … And that God makes himself man for the sake of love for man, so far as man, enabled by God, has deified himself, [and also] 'that man is rapt up by God in mind to the unknowable, so far as man has manifested through virtues the God who is by nature invisible.'[208]

[207] Ibid. pp. 30-31.

It is interesting that Thunberg deems that the *tantum-quantum* formula does not present a further and successful elaboration of Chalcedonian Christology with regard to the preservation of the individuality of each of the natures.[209] However, he finds another of Maximus's expressions which is in a close relation with the former, namely *eos-mehri*, and claims that this 'so long as' explains that the unity between divine and human is safeguarded precisely through the preservation of the distinctions between them. The union of the two polarities, two natures, writes Thunberg, exists only so long as their natural difference is preserved; their unity is not jeopardised by the lack of confusion or change.

> On the contrary, precisely the fact that each nature preserves its own character and develops its activity in accordance with it guarantees their inseparable and indivisible union. The Christological insights of Chalcedon could not have been more strongly expressed in a single formula than by this *eos-mehri*.[210]

However, Thunberg fails to name which property of human nature makes it distinct from the divine. It cannot be the created character of our nature unless this implies that to be created means to originate from a zone of non-limiting freedom. If the human nature were simply created, i.e., utterly determined by its cause, it would simply represent the passive mirroring of the divine.[211] This would mean that in creating God is repeating himself, being unable to create a new and free being. Why would God wish to create, let alone to preserve for eternity, something 'other' than himself, if this other is not genuinely an absolute other, but only a pale copy of his image? To understand better this point we should recall the quotation from Maximus used by Thunberg, '… And that God makes

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[208] *Ambigua* 10; PG 91, 1113 BC, in Thunberg, MM, 32.
[209] Ibid. 33.
[210] Ibid. 33.
[211] We cannot find a solution for this problem on the level of nature, but only on the level of person, as I shall explain later in this chapter.

himself man for the sake of love for man, so far as man, enabled by God, has deified himself.'[212]

As we have seen, this quote is probably one of the best examples for Maximus's concept *eos-mehri*. Nevertheless, what Thunberg here seems to miss is the character of divine *kenosis* or Christ's penetration into human nature. To become human, God in the first place needed to create the human person as a being of an absolutely other ontological level. In order to make this possible God had to create *ex nihilo* because otherwise the act of creation would have taken place by way of emanation, in which case the otherness of the created would be lost. One of the conclusions is that the human could deify himself only by an analogous act, that is, in an act of creation out of unrestrained freedom. However, Thunberg's analysis of Maximus's concepts of reciprocity does not demonstrate that the Confessor allows for such a power of human nature.

Only when he starts to scrutinise the next set of notions does Thunberg come very close to an understanding of the capacities of human nature that I have suggested. Here I have in mind Maximus's interpretation of Dionysius's much-debated expression 'new theandric energy'[213] and especially the related text from *Ambigua 5*. As is well known, Maximus does not follow Cyril's falsification of Dionysius's 'new theandric energy' into 'one theandric energy.' Maximus argues that Dionysius's expression should be understood as divine and human energy working in cooperation. This is why Dionysius does not speak of *one* energy, but of a new energy, explains Thunberg.[214]

Things become much more interesting when Thunberg starts quoting from *Ambigua 5*. First, we read that due to the hypostatic union Christ is 'man above man'; second, that

[212] *Ambigua* 10; PG 91, 1113 BC.
[213] PG3, 1072 C.
[214] MM, 34.

the natures, while preserving their principles, transcend their own limits due to the 'supernatural modes'; third, that the divine acts of Christ are effected 'in human mode' since they are made in flesh, whereas Christ's sufferings take place 'in divine mode'; fourth, due to the hypostatic union, there is no more a 'mere man' or a 'naked God'; fifth, divine energy is humanised; and, finally, theandric activity implies that the divine and the human energy work together in a mode both divine and human.[215]

Obviously Maximus does not mention explicitly the capacity of the human nature to manifest itself from an unbounded freedom. However, some of the mentioned expressions could be interpreted in that direction. First, how are we to understand Maximus's claim that, due to the hypostatic union, Christ is 'man above man'? I believe that Maximus here talks about deification in which the human person, whilst remaining created, acquires all divine qualities and becomes god by grace, that is, 'man above man'.

One of the main divine characteristics would be unhindered self-determination. Thus, in the deified state the human being ought to have a similar characteristic. My interpretation seems to be confirmed by the second point according to which the natures, because of the 'supernatural modes' of their existence, transcend their own boundaries.[216] If human nature transcends its own limits, or if, as the fifth point contends, divine energy is humanised, this could signify that our nature originates from 'uncreated freedom', i.e., freedom that, in Berdyaev's words, is determined only by itself.

[215] MM, 35.
[216] This does not imply of course that the human nature does not remain created.

Another quote of Thunberg's[217] appears to be in support of my argument: 'What is unlimited (the divine) is co-limited with that which is limited (the human), while that which is limited (the human) is developed according to the measurements of infinity.'[218]

Human nature is 'limited' because it is created. That something is created means that it has had a beginning, and therefore it cannot be unlimited or infinite. Nevertheless, by participating in the divine life, that which is limited or finite is broadened according to the measurements of infinity. Hence, at this stage we may conclude that Maximus envisages the possibility that human nature, by participating in the divine, is capable of infinite freedom of creation. However, since we cannot find this idea explicitly outlined in Maximus we may conclude that for him the capacity of human nature for infinite creation was not essentially important.

I would like now to turn to Nikolaos Loudovikos, another scholar whose reading of Maximus emphasises strongly the freedom and the activity of human nature in Christ.

2.2 Maximus's Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity

Loudovikos does not seem to have any critical distance or reservation towards Maximus's thought.[219] He endorses fully the Confessor's 'eucharistic ontology' and does not find in it anything problematic.[220] It is interesting that, like Berdyaev, Loudovikos also

[217] Ep 21; PG91, 1056 D-1057 A.
[218] MM, 35.
[219] N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology; Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, (Brookline, Massachusetts, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010).
[220] Loudovikos's work would have been interesting for at least couple of other reasons, especially because of his critique of Zizioulas's 'personalist' reading of Maximus and his critical dismissal of Berdyaev. Regarding Berdyaev, Loudovikos's attention centres mostly on the book *Ya I mir obiektov; Opit filosofii odinochestva I obschenia* (English translation: *Solitude and Society*).

distinguishes between 'freedom from' and 'freedom for';[221] he writes about a need for connecting analogy with dialogue in human relationships with God, underlining the human active and free response to God's call;[222] he observes that what Orthodox theology has to offer is its concept of dialogical reciprocity as an ontology of personal and eucharistic synergy between man and God;[223] but perhaps the most important of his claims, which brings him even closer to Berdyaev (although Loudovikos does not indicate whether he was inspired by the Russian thinker), is that in Orthodox theology[224] there is a kind of 'monophysitic' tendency.[225] Almost in the same way as Berdyaev, and echoing Zizioulas,[226] Loudovikos puts the question, 'Perhaps modern secularization, atheism and its related nihilism were born exactly from the melancholy of the passivity of a relationship with God without synergy and without dialogue?'[227]

Similarly to that of Zizioulas, although using different terminology, Loudovikos's elucidation vindicates Berdyaev's position regarding 'uncreated freedom'. As we remember, Zizioulas arrived at the conclusion that in order to exist the person needs to be 'uncreated', or, in other words, free from every external necessity, including God. Loudovikos, on the other hand, concludes that the essence of beings ought to be 'an abyssal and bottomless God-like freedom'.[228]

> For Maximus, to create means for God to establish a real and full otherness outside Himself. By otherness, we do not mean a fixed and immoveable being *in se* … but exactly another radically different intentionality indeed. God creates the unthinkable and impossible: an intention incredibly and *absolutely independent of His own*. That means that he does not create a senseless cosmos, but an *absolutely God-like image of his own*

[221] EO, 216.
[222] EO, 224.
[223] EO, 240.
[224] The difference is that Loudovikos writes exclusively about modern Orthodox theology.
[225] EO, 225.
[226] CO, 235.
[227] EO, 240.
[228] EO, 212.

> *freedom, as an equal partner for an eternal, adventurous discussion.* God the Logos creates His Dia-logos, i.e. the human world, full of intentions-logoi culminating and assumed in many ways in human logos. This anthropological cosmology, according to which createdness is a whole universe of ontological tendencies assumed in the human priestly intentions, is thus expressed as a *constant dialogue of two equal freedoms*… That means Khora is created by God as *an incredibly free other intentionality*, i.e. the essence of beings is *an abyssal and bottomless God-like freedom*.[229]

This is one of the most important paragraphs in Loudovikos's book. Here we find the full account of what Loudovikos believes is Maximus's teaching on being as a dialogical reciprocity. God creates radically other intentionality, which is 'incredibly and absolutely independent of His own'. The created world is full of *logoi*, which are conceived as potentially autonomous entities. However, since non-rational creation does not possess freedom, it is not fully personal and needs human mediation to be personalized. The non-rational creation, possessing its freedom and otherness solely in a potential way, utterly depends on human freedom. 'Bottomless freedom' might as well be seen as a possible translation of Berdyaev's term the *Ungrund* or the Ungrounded freedom. Loudovikos emphasises even further his position in the following passage,

> Thus the logoi are a proposal for real Otherness outside the Sameness; it is the will of God as Logos to put Himself in an eschatological dialogue with *a really God-like partner*. Not to fulfil His eternally fulfilled (in intra-Trinitarian communion) essence, but eternally overcome His own transcendentality in a double transcendence which makes Him possibly *nothing* in the Other's freedom: this is what we call divine love… The mode of existence proposed by God can only be described as a possible, as we saw, *exchange of gifts* in a context of dialogical reciprocity.[230]

How are we to interpret Loudovikos's assertion that God creates an absolutely free Otherness, 'a really God-like partner', 'a totally free, created agent' with 'absolutely free, other intentionality', by making himself 'possibly *nothing* in Other's freedom'? Is Loudovikos willing to follow Berdyaev's daring assertion about the freedom that is, metaphorically speaking, 'external' to God, which means not controlled by God? We have

[229] EO, 212. Italics added.
[230] EO, 212.

to ask this question because if God is indeed in control of freedom—if freedom is 'within' God—that freedom for God cannot be bottomless. In that case it would be difficult to use the expression 'exchange of gifts', except as a nice and consoling metaphor. What can the human being 'exchange' with God if everything belongs to God? Without a bottomless freedom God cannot create 'the unthinkable and impossible', i.e., 'an equal partner for an eternal, adventurous discussion' because he is still the theistic, omnipotent and omniscient God. There could be nothing 'adventurous' for God in his dialogue with us for the simple fact that he is an omniscient God. God creates the unthinkable and impossible only if there is more after the creation than before, if he creates excess in being. However, excess in being cannot be a result of our freedom of choice.

All the doubts about whether Loudovikos would accept Berdyaev's idea of 'uncreated freedom' are dispelled by the following paragraph.

> The uncreated logos of created beings causes a created gift of otherness, which is so absolute that it is totally ontologically different from its origin—that is, it is exactly created. This created gift of otherness needs, as its logical core, a totally free, created agent, whose absolutely free, other intentionality accepts the offering and thus makes this gift of otherness exist in reality…[231]

What Loudovikos really implies here is that we can choose between existences which Maximus calls *para physin* (against nature) and *kata physin* (according to nature).[232] In other words, we can choose whether we shall live in communion with God or not. It is important to observe that in this case freedom is conceived as freedom of choice. If we read carefully the quoted paragraph, we see that 'a totally free created agent', with 'absolutely free, other intentionality' is in possession of this 'God-like' freedom because he can accept or refuse God's offering. It is difficult to understand in what way then the human person

[231] EO 214.
[232] EO, 213.

could be 'a really God-like partner' since the only gift in this 'exchange of gifts' it has to offer is the submission to the divine will.

In spite of these incongruities Loudovikos believes that in Maximus's teaching one can find a '"scandal" of also having a God-like created freedom, i.e., the scandal of this strange "equality" between divine and human freedom.' [233] Loudovikos criticizes mainstream Orthodox theology for claiming that God's freedom is unlimited whereas human freedom is absolutely limited. This understanding, explains Loudovikos, stems from the belief that human nature is presented to us as a *given* fact, whilst this is not the case with God's nature. These theologians, continues Loudovikos, identify nature with necessity and this is why freedom can only be an 'escape' from such a nature. Freedom expressed as the rejection of the given nature for Loudovikos is, surprisingly, a 'monophysite sort of freedom' or a 'negative freedom'.[234] But if it is given, as the adjective itself suggests, our nature is surely necessity from which the human person cannot escape. Both Zizioulas and Loudovikos were aware of this impasse and they expressed it in different terminology. Zizioulas, we have seen, argued that the person could not exist if it is created, but he believes that the uncreated Christ's person vouchsafes the integrity of human freedom.[235] Loudovikos, on the other hand, approaches the problem on the level of nature but his position remains highly ambiguous. While his claims that God becomes 'nothing' for us by endowing us with 'bottomless freedom' are doctrinally correct, Loudovikos fails to develop them theologically. It is rather difficult to reconcile bottomless freedom—which obviously implies freedom beyond any form of givenness— and the givenness of human nature.

[233] EO, 216.
[234] EO, 216.
[235] Without a groundless freedom or Godhead, from which God the Trinity emerges, it is difficult to speak about Christ as 'uncreated' person. What 'uncreated' principally means in this context is that the person is not limited by its source.

Neither Zizioulas nor Loudovikos ever take into consideration the possibility that our nature is, of course, created and given to us; however, our nature is also uncaused because it originates from groundless and unconditioned primordial freedom.

In the cited paragraph we see that God has created a 'totally and absolutely free agent'. But, as I have said, the total and absolute freedom of this agent consists only of a mere capacity to accept or reject God's gift of createdness, or, in other words, to conform our *gnome* (human will in a fallen state) to God's will. Freedom in this case is obviously solely a freedom of choice. Although Loudovikos uses grandiloquent terms regarding the freedom of human nature, the only activity of human otherness he envisages consists of accepting or rejecting God's gift. In that case, human nature is precisely what Loudovikos argues it must not be—'a splendid reflection of God's glory',[236] a result of analogy and not dialogue.

The question of human freedom has to be discussed as the problem of personal otherness. Personal otherness, however, is but a reverie if we believe that what the hypostasis is supposed to enhypostasise—our nature—is givenness. Loudovikos not only does not seem to grasp the importance of personal freedom;[237] he also fails to give a theological account of his doctrinal intuition that God has to become 'nothing' for our sake so as to give us the 'bottomless freedom'.

What about Maximus himself? Why did the Confessor conduct his explorations in Christology on the level of the freedom of human nature and not on the level of the human person? I believe the answer is quite simple. It is not because Maximus thought that nature is the authentic form of being. It is important to stress that Maximus produces his work in a

[236] EO, 216.
[237] 'So there is no need for a 'personal' overcoming or outlet or ek-stasis out of a nature ontologically passive, but a synergetical ek-stasis or outlet of this personal nature itself.' EO, 220.

very specific context—in the context of Chalcedonian formula, or, rather, in the framework of the 'Cyrilline Chalcedonianism'[238]—where there is only one person mentioned, and that is, of course, the person of Christ. Therefore, Maximus was bound to defend not the freedom of human person—because the only person involved in the Incarnation was the divine person of Christ—but the freedom of human nature. Consequently, his Christology does not possess a sufficiently developed theology of the human person. As is known well, however, Maximus writes about unity of the two natures in Christ as a hypostatic union, i.e., as a personal union. Maximus also develops a concept of the divine person, which may be used as an indirect model for his notion of the human hypostasis. We shall now turn to Maximus's understanding of concepts of nature and person.

2.3 Nature and Personhood According to Maximus

There is no consensus among Orthodox scholars about the concepts of person and nature in the teachings of the Fathers. On the contrary, this issue became a serious controversy in several recent publications, including Loudovikos's *Eucharistic Ontology*.[239] As a result, we have presently two antagonized factions. The first group (Lossky, Yannaras, and Zizioulas) finds in the Fathers a highly developed concept of personhood, which in several points resembles a modern personalist position. It is with a certain reserve,

[238] Louth, 55.

[239] See Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Personhood and its exponents in twentieth-century Orthodox theology', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 241. Zizioulas's approach to the Fathers was under scrutiny in the article by Lucian Turcescu, *"Persons" versus "Individual", and other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa*, in: *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Sarah Coakley, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 97-109. Aristotle Papanikolaou answered this criticism in '*Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise? Response to Lucian Turcescu'*, Modern Theology 20:4, October 2004, pp. 601-607.

however, that I put Lossky together with the other two. There is no doubt that Lossky's theology of person influenced both Yannaras and Zizioulas;[240] yet, the Russian theologian expressed clearly his doubts as to whether one can find an elaborate doctrine of the human person in the Fathers.

> For my part, I must admit that until now I have not found what one might call an elaborated doctrine of the human person in patristic theology, alongside its very precise teaching on divine persons or hypostases. However, there is a Christian anthropology among the Fathers of the first eight centuries, as well as later on in Byzantium and in the West; and it is unnecessary to say that these doctrines of man are clearly personalist. It could not have been otherwise for a theological doctrine based upon the revelation of a living and personal God who created man 'according to his own image and likeness.[241]

Lossky's position is clear—the Fathers have not produced a developed teaching on the human person, but this notion can be extracted from their anthropology. The patristic anthropology can only be personalist because it is developed from a doctrine of a personal God. In other words, Lossky detects a lack in the theology of the Fathers—a lack of an elaborate notion of human person, although it is not quite clear how it is possible to have a 'very precise teaching on divine persons' and not to be able, using analogy to a certain extent, to work out a notion of human hypostasis. I shall argue therefore that a theory of human person was not formulated because the Fathers have not yet completed their work in elaborating a theology of divine person. As we know, the question of hypostasis was ultimately raised because of the controversies regarding Trinitarian theology.

The logical consequence of a deficient theory of human hypostasis is the absence of a genuine concept of freedom of a particular human person. The second group of theologians is not completely homogenous. In differing ways they all seem to doubt[242]

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[240] Papanikolaou, ibid. 233.
[241] Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, (Crestwood, New York 10707,St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 112.
[242] One of the differences is that Törönen's work is based entirely on Maximus, although, of course, he also mentions the Cappadocians, whereas Zachhuber and Turcescu concentrate on Gregory of Nyssa. However,

whether the Cappadocian Fathers had an elaborate concept of divine persons, if person is to be understood as an absolute uniqueness with ultimate ontological identity. However, Melchisedec Törönen, for instance, is very much in line with Loudovikos's position, since he does not regard this absence as a failing of patristic theology. Although Törönen does not mention Zizioulas by name, it is clear that he uses the metonym 'modern personalist'[243] to denote Lossky, Zizioulas, and Yannaras. Holding his position on the 'freedom of nature', Törönen can hardly share sympathies for contemporary personalism, although he never claims this openly.

Johannes Zachhuber is even more reserved in taking a position *vis-à-vis* modern personalist trends and his focus is primarily to demonstrate that Gregory of Nyssa was not an individualist.[244]

I shall start with Lucian Turcescu since he is Zizioulas's sharpest critic. Turcescu argues that in the time of the Cappadocians the notion of individual/person 'was only emerging.[245] This is why Zizioulas's contention that the Fathers make a distinction between person and individual, in the modern personalist and existentialist sense, is rather unsubstantiated. Primarily basing his argument, as I have stated previously, on the work of Gregory of Nyssa, Turcescu tries to demonstrate that the Cappadocians did use the terms 'person' and 'individual' interchangeably, i.e., that the Cappadocians regarded 'person' as

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Gregory of Nyssa, together with his brother Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and the Alexandrian Christological tradition, are theologians who exercised a highly significant dogmatic influence on Maximus and the analysis of his theory of person is therefore relevant. See Louth, pp. 26-28.

[243] Melchisedec Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), 54.

[244] J. Zachhuber, *Gregory of Nyssa On Individuals,* https://www.academia.edu/163523/Gregory_of_Nyssa_on_Individuals, 12.

[245] *"Person " versus "Individual", and Other Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa*, in: *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Sarah Coakley, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 103.

individual in Zizioulas's terminology. Therefore, in spite of Zizioulas's claims, there is no such a thing as a relational ontology of person in the theology of the Fathers.

We have to elucidate carefully what Turcescu claims here. Zizioulas explains that the 'individual' is, first, a complex of qualities that cannot guarantee uniqueness, and, second, that the 'individual' can be enumerated, whilst the uniqueness of person defies such an enumeration.[246] In both cases Zizioulas describes the individual in sharp contrast with the person—an individual differs from a person because it does not possess uniqueness. This means that Turcescu's assertion about the non-existence of a relational ontology in the writings of the Cappadocians basically means that the Fathers did not distinguish between person and individual. This is because the character of a relationship is dependent essentially on the character of related entities.[247] If the work of the Fathers does not contain a notion of person—understood as unique particularity in an absolute sense—then relationship makes little sense indeed. Genuine relationship exists only if each of the entities involved possesses an absolute otherness and particularity, and, as a consequence, has something to communicate to the other. That is, without a notion of an absolute otherness of the other a relationship without confusion is inconceivable.[248] The question is—can we talk about a genuine relationship if the related entities melt into each other—would this not be simply an end of a relationship? As I shall demonstrate shortly, without a

[246] Papanikolaou, 601.

[247] 'The thrust of Turcescu's argument', writes Papanikolaou, 'can be paraphrased as follows: by looking primarily at the work of Gregory of Nyssa, it can be shown that the Cappadocian Fathers do in fact identify person with individual as Zizioulas defines the latter and, therefore, there is no such a thing as a relational ontology of person in the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers.' Papanikolaou, 602.

[248] Törönen is aware of this: 'Particularity and its integrity is for both [Greek patristic theology and the existentialist type of personalism] of immense importance. Unity which annihilates the particularity of those united cannot be true unity.' Törönen, 59. Nevertheless, we shall see shortly how Törönen understands 'particularity'.

concept of person with full ontological identity the foundations of both the Trinitarian theology and Christology are rickety.

That in Turcescu's view the Cappadocians have indeed regarded the term 'person' as an equivalent to the concept of the individual is even clearer from the following quotation.

> The Cappadocian Fathers were not aware of the dangers of individualism and perhaps this is why they did not make many efforts to distinguish between person and individual. They were more concerned with distinguishing between person or individual, on the one hand, and nature or substance, on the other hand, in connection with the Christian God. At that time, the three divine persons were not properly understood as three different entities while each was one and the same God.[249]

If at the time of the Cappadocians 'the three divine persons were not properly understood as three different entities', it follows that the Cappadocian concept of person was similar to Zizioulas's notion of individual, or, in different words, that the Cappadocians understood person as something not possessing uniqueness and full ontological identity. However, in the case when the person is understood simply as a mask or modality without a distinct identity, it is hardly possible to distinguish between person and individual, on the one hand, and nature or substance on the other. However, according to the Cappadocians, it is precisely this difference—the distinction between the *logos* of nature and the *tropos hyparxeos*—that makes the doctrine of the Trinity possible. Following the Fathers, Maximus explains that person is a unique *tropos* or mode according

[249] *"Person" versus "Individual"*, pp. 106-107. I have to say I find it rather difficult to believe that the Fathers 'were not aware of the dangers of individualism', since this would imply that they lived in some sort of Eschaton. This claim also entails that the Fathers did not have strong sense of identity of their unique persons, because the question of individualism cannot be raised in a context that lacks a notion of identity. However, if the Fathers had not had a sense of identity of their own persons, they would not have been able to start with the issue of hypostasis regarding Trinitarian theology. The question of three hypostases and one (unity of) God is, essentially, a question of person and individual. It seems to me that sometimes we think of the first centuries of Christianity as some sort of a Golden Age in which all the questions of distinction, separation and unity were not present. That is why it would be closer to the truth to allege that the Cappadocians started working on the concept of person but this work is far from being completed.

to which substance or nature is appropriated. If person lacks this uniqueness it follows that it cannot create its unique *tropos*.

Finally, in support of his contention Turcescu explains that the Fathers—in this particular case Gregory of Nyssa—employ the term hypostasis even when referring to a horse.[250] This is possibly the strongest argument one can use in order to dismiss a Zizioulian or, rather, personalist interpretation of the Fathers. If a non-rational animal, a horse, is a person in the same way as a human being, this means that the Greek patristic thought did not conceive of person as an absolute particularity.

Törönen uses the same argument, but only as an introduction for a much longer scrutiny of the notion of person in Maximus. Summarized, Törönen's assertion is that according to the Fathers, 'what the universal is in relation to the particular, this the essence is in relation to the hypostasis'.[251] In other words, things that share the same essence belong to one nature, whereas 'hypostasis' denotes things which share the same nature or are composed of the same nature but differ in number.[252] Maximus endorses these two claims when he writes, 'hypostasis is that which exists distinctly and by-itself, since they say that "hypostasis" is an essence together with particular properties and it differs from other members of the same genus in number.'[253] From these citations Törönen draws the conclusion that 'a hypostasis is an instance of a nature ["not something opposed to essence"], distinguished in number from other individual instances of the same nature by its particular properties.'[254] Törönen rightly observes that an understanding of hypostasis as

[250] Ibid. 103.
[251] Törönen here quotes Basil, *Ep.* 214 (Deferrari 3), who is quoted by Maximus, *Ep.* 15 (PG91), 545A; Törönen, 53.
[252] This is a synoptic account of the quote from Leontius of Byzantium, *Nest. et Eut.* (PG 86), 1280A, quoted in Törönen, 53.
[253] *Ep.* 15, PG 91, 557D; cited in Törönen, 53.
[254] Ibid. 54.

particular immediately raises the question: can simply any particular being be a person? Does this mean that there is no difference between rational and non-rational creatures? Törönen opts for an understanding of the term 'hypostasis' as a 'merely grammatical tool in the toolkit of a Byzantine logician'—'if we are to understand the theological discussions in the Greek-speaking world of the first millennium, we must come to terms with this merely logical notion of the "person"'. [255] In other words, in the final instance he endorses a rather astounding position that there is no difference between rational and non-rational creatures.[256]

> What the sources themselves seem quite strongly to suggest is, in fact, that there is no such distinction [between rational and non-rational creatures]. The modern personalist would find the following statement of Gregory of Nyssa rather disappointing, even off-putting.
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> 'One thing is distinguished from another either by essence or by hypostasis, or both by essence and hypostasis. On the one hand, man is distinguished from a horse by essence, and Peter is distinguished from Paul by hypostasis. On the other hand, such-and-such a hypostasis of man is distinguished from such-and-such a hypostasis of horse both by essence and hypostasis'.[257]

Törönen seems to neglect Zizioulas's answer to this critique, which I find rather reasonable. Zizioulas does not try to hide that Maximus uses the term hypostasis to everything that exists, not only to human beings. Zizioulas observes,

> Since the Fathers, argument goes, use the term hypostasis… to describe non-humans as well, such a personalism cannot be found in them. This criticism, based mainly on a literalistic treatment of the patristic sources, entirely misses the theological point, emphasised particularly by St Maximus, that all created beings exist as different hypostases

[255] Ibid. 55.
[256] One cannot but be flabbergasted as to how one can come to this conclusion, which totally overlooks the concept of image and likeness, simply because one is *a priori* against every theological theory that does not originate from the 'first millennium'. I think here we have a very good example of what happens if in one's interpretation of the Fathers one does not have, alongside indispensible humility, enough courage to take responsibility to follow the 'spirit' of the Fathers (to recall Florovsky), rather than the dead letters from several quotes, which are taken out of a wider context of Trinitarian theology and Christology. This could be also a good illustration for Berdyaev's words that freedom, in this case freedom to interpret, is not a privilege, but duty.
[257] Ibid. 54. Quote from Gregory of Nyssa, *Comm. not.* (GNO 3, part 1), 29.

> only by virtue of their relation to, and dependence upon the free hypostasis of human being, and ultimately of Christ.[258]

Törönen then proceeds to explain that contemporary theology understands person as founded on five notions. The first four, rationality, freedom, relatedness, and self-consciousness, nevertheless, are connected, not with the personal, but with the universal, stresses Törönen. It is only in the fifth concept—particularity—that personalism and patristic theology converge. However, if we try to find whether Törönen has to say something more about the description of particular or of hypostasis, we see that he only reiterates what he has already explained. In other words, Törönen claims that 'particular' in Greek patristic thought is solely a logical term. He cites Maximus in saying that the otherness of particularity is a matter of difference, and the difference is embedded in the *logoi* of creatures. Maximus writes, '[It is] by means of these *logoi*… that the different beings differ [from one another]. For the different beings would not differ from one another, had the *logoi* by means of which they have come into being have had no difference.'[259]

The particular possesses otherness because of the difference, and the difference is something rooted in the particular in the form of the *logoi* of creation. Are we, then, to conclude that the logos of each particular represents its hypostasis, or rather the very identity (*ταυτότης*) of the hypostasis, which means that each one of us possesses a totally unique characteristic upon which we build our relationships with others? Törönen does not say that. It seems to me that in trying to avoid the term 'hypostasis' he embraces the

[258] CO, 24, n36. Also: 'The *logoi* of creation on which the 'logos of nature' depends can only truly exist in the hypostasis of the Logos. From the Christian point of view, there is no other way for creation to exist authentically except 'in Christ', which from the patristic standpoint means to exist in the *hypostasis* of the Logos. There is no escape from personhood in Christian cosmology.' Ibid. 66. See also page 32.
[259] Ibid. 59; quote from Maximus: *Amb.* 22 (PG 91), 1256D.

concept of *logos*, but he does not explain in what way these two terms are distinct. The Fathers must have had some reason for using both terms, and it is apparent that they are not using them as synonyms. Why would it not be possible to regard logos as an element of hypostasis, as the root of its identity? Törönen's reasoning is rather odd, because only two pages further he quotes a passage in which Maximus writes about the 'logos of the essential community' and the 'logos of personal otherness. This paragraph deserves our attention.

> [Although some beings share the same essence and are consubstantial by virtue of the logos of the essential community], on the other hand, they are of different hypostases (*ἑτερουπόστατα*) by virtue of the logos of personal otherness, which distinguishes one from another. The hypostases do not coincide in their characteristic distinguishing marks, but each one by virtue of the sum of its characteristic properties bears most particular logos of its own hypostasis, and in accordance with this logos it admits of no community with those that are connatural and consubstantial with it.[260]

It seems that Maximus claims here precisely that each hypostasis bears its 'most particular logos'. It follows that the 'most particular logos' is an element of hypostasis, moreover, its root of identity. Torstein Tollefsen develops the same idea and quotes Maximus in claiming that, 'Nature has the logos of being that is common, while hypostasis in addition has the logos of being that belongs to itself. The nature, then, has only the logos of the species, while the hypostasis is such that it in addition shows a someone.'[261]

If the hypostatic logos is an integral element of the hypostasis, and it makes the hypostasis absolutely unique, it becomes difficult to claim that there is no difference between human and non-rational hypostases. Indeed, the Fathers use the term hypostasis, as we have seen, even when they refer to the lower forms of life – such as plants, and even when referring to minerals. Nonetheless, it would be a gross misinterpretation of the Fathers to conclude that the hypostasis of a horse is not absolutely unique—acquiring its

[260] *Ep.* 15 (PG 91), 552BC. Cited in Törönen, 61.
[261] *Th. pol*. 26, PG 91, 276a-b. Cited in Tollefsen, 128.

uniqueness through free human hypostasis—and to conclude that the Fathers likewise understood the human hypostasis as an abstract and impersonal 'logical notion'.[262] Quite the opposite is the case. Everything created exists in a hypostatic form, as Törönen himself outlines, in a remarkable way, because union and distinction are the very logic of the Trinity and, consequently, of the universe. Nonetheless, it is only due to the human hypostasis, more precisely—due to the specific form of undetermined freedom—by which the human hypostasis alone out of all creation is endowed, that createdness can be saved in a hypostatic form. It is this freedom that generally makes the human being different from all other creatures—this freedom is the logos of its nature. The freedom ought to be manifested in each human being according to the 'most particular logos of one's own hypostasis', i.e., freedom consists not only of living *kata physin*, but, as I have argued, also of *kath' hypostasin*.

This is why I suggest that a distinction should be made between hypostasis and hypostatic logos or identity (*ταυτότης*). Tollefsen argues in a similar way,

> The Logos Himself is also the centre of each particular because each being is created by, and has its being from, the logos of its being qua particular… One of the most important lessons to be learned from this is that the particular being of each man has its logos from God, which logos is the centre of the person's very being.[263]

Hypostasis, therefore, should be taken as a broader term that entails a special gift of freedom as well as engagement into relationship. Identity, on the other hand, is a mysterious 'name', a centre of an absolute uniqueness of each particular human being.[264] It

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[262] Gregory of Nyssa emphasises that it is precisely the image and the likeness to God that makes the human being, in a mysterious way, different from all other beings. *Psalm Inscriptions* 1.3 (Gregorii Nysseni Opera [GNO] 5:32, 18-19), and *The Beatitudes* 6 (GNO 7, 2:143); cited in, Robert Louis Wilken, *Biblical Humanism*, in, *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2006), 17.
[263] Ibid. 135.
[264] 'Because human beings are made in the image of God, the human self is a mystery… But, "who has understood his own mind?", asks Gregory [of Nyssa]. Let those who reflect on the nature of God ask themselves whether they "know the nature of their own mind". Basil wrote, "We are more likely to

is due to this 'name', or hypostatic logos/identity, that one is in the first place able to act and to will, and, consequently, to create, relationship. 'Name' can only precede relationship and be fulfilled in a relationship of love, but it is wrong to say that it is altogether created by relationship.[265]

As I have already argued, the concept of hypostasis cannot be underplayed without the most detrimental implications for the doctrine of the Trinity and for Christology. The Cappadocians sailed into an uncharted sea in order to develop the notion of hypostasis precisely because of the Trinitarian controversy. They could have used some other term, 'logos' for instance, but they opted for 'hypostasis'. The concept also proved to be crucial in the framework of Christology, because the unconfused union of the two natures in Christ is explained as a hypostatic union. However, the case that the patristic concept of hypostasis provides an opportunity for the formulation of different and highly incompatible interpretations proves that the Fathers were at the initial stages of developing their personalist theology. In order to see what kind of dilemmas they were facing we shall embark upon a brief survey of the concept of divine persons in Gregory of Nyssa.

2.4 Gregory of Nyssa on the Divine Persons

It was Origen who introduced the term hypostasis into Trinitarian theology, with the purpose of emphasising the distinct existence of the Son from the Father. Origen's polemic

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understand the heavens than ourselves". We do not know ourselves, said Augustine, for "there is something of the human person that is unknown even to the spirit of the man which is in him."' R. L. Wilken, 18.

[265] In his insistence on relationship, Zizioulas seems to misunderstand this point and to regard relationship as some sort of automaton. This is obvious from the next paragraph: 'When you are treated as nature, as a thing, you die as a particular identity. And if your soul is immortal, what is the use? You will exist, but without a personal identity; you will be eternally dying in the hell of anonymity.' CO, 167. The mistake of this concept of identity becomes obvious if we ask a simple question, *Who* will be dying eternally, if I do not have my identity?

is directed against monarchians who were stressing God's unity at the expense of his Trinitarian nature. In claiming that the Son and the Father are two distinct hypostases, Origen argued that the difference between the two persons is as absolute as their unity. The unity, on the other hand, is due to the Son's derivation from the Father, i.e., the Son's divinity stems from his relation to the Father.[266]

Around the year 360, Basil of Caesarea changes this derivative and subordinationist model of the Trinity by making a distinction between the predicates that are said of all its members and those that are characteristic of hypostases or individual existences. Ten years later, Basil adds the distinction between ousia and hypostasis as between *koinon* and *idion* (universal and particular). In this framework, ousia accounts for unity, whereas hypostasis denotes difference.[267]

In order to understand better this issue, we need to know more about the philosophical background of the theory of individual. For this purpose I find useful a distinction between a 'strong' and a 'weak theory' of individuals, outlined by Zachhuber in his paper *Gregory of Nyssa on Individuals*. Zachhuber scrutinizes Dexippus's commentary on Aristotle's Categories, reaching the conclusion that individuals are distinct in two ways: firstly, a singular needs to be special or unique in order to be a particular—this accounts for a 'strong theory' of individual. Secondly, a 'weak theory' is the one in which individuals appear as a mass of items that are indistinct, so the only thing one could say about them is that they are numerically different.[268]

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[266] 'The Son is God, though His deity is derivative and He is thus a "secondary God"' (*δεύτερος θεός*)." J.N.D. Kelly, *The Early Christian Doctrines*, (Harper One, revised edition, 1978), 128.
[267] Zachhuber, *Gregory*, 3.
[268] Ibid. 5.

Having made the distinction between the two theories of individual, Zachhuber moves to the Cappadocians, namely to the so-called 38th epistle of Basil, which was according to a general consensus written by his brother Gregory. Although Gregory endeavours to explain the meaning of both the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*, his emphasis is on the latter. He needs to elucidate why the term hypostasis, which used to be the principle of unity of the Trinity, now denotes its individual members. One should also notice that the difference between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is made on the basis of the Aristotelian distinction between the primary and secondary substance—Gregory identifies hypostasis with primary substance, which now becomes a synonym for 'person'.[269] In short, 'person' for Gregory is that 'which makes distinctive' or 'otherness'; it is described as 'the concurrence of the characteristic features around each', i.e., 'the distinguishing sign of the existence of each',[270] or 'the concept which by the characteristic features that appear restrict the common and uncircumsribed in a particular thing.'[271]

Moreover, Gregory elaborates his concept of hypostasis by making observations about common and proper nouns, namely, 'man' and singulars such as Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, concluding that the use of proper nouns denotes, 'One thing's description that has, insofar as it is specific, no community with (the description of) other beings of the same kind' (Ep. 38, 2, 13-5).[272]

Expressing Gregory's idea in the terms which I have used throughout this thesis, we may conclude that hypostasis according to Gregory is about uniqueness. Because of its specificity, hypostasis has 'no community with other beings of the same kind.'

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[269] Christo Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, (Brookline, Massachusetts, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 16.
[270] Gregory of Nyssa, *Περὶ διαφορᾶς οὐσιας καὶ ὑποσταστάσεος*, 5, PG 32, 336 C. Cited in Yannaras, ibid. 16.
[271] Ibid. PG 32, 328 B. Cited in Yannaras, ibid.
[272] See Zachhuber, *Gregory,* 6.

Zachhuber cites another sentence in which Gregory almost appears to be giving a definition of hypostasis, writing that, 'This, now, is what we say: that which is said specifically (τὸ ἰδίως λεγόμενον), is indicated by the term "hypostasis."' (Ep. 38, 3, 1-2).[273]

Zachhuber himself makes a parallel between proper name and individual logos, arguing that Gregory uses them as exchangeable predicate terms. This is important because of my previous analysis and the prominent place I give to the idea of 'name' in addition to personal logos. Here is another quote from Gregory (by Zachhuber), which seems to underpin my hypothesis.[274]

> This now is hypostasis, not the indefinite concept of ousia, which does not find stability (*στάσις*) due to the universality of what it signifies, but that which restricts and circumscribes what is (otherwise) universal and uncircumsribed in one particular thing by means of properties that are seen in it (Ep. 38, 3,7-11).[275]

Gregory seems to allege that hypostasis is that which conducts the action of restricting and circumscribing, 'in one particular thing', properties of nature, which are otherwise unhypostasised. It appears that, if there is an action, as in the case of an action of instantiation of what is universal, a subject or agens of that action is necessarily implied.

Nevertheless, Gregory does not hold to his position of the 'strong theory' of individual, and this is due, as Zachhuber contends, to the charges for tritheism.[276] In his writing *Ad Graecos* Gregory responds to those charges, but he does so by mitigating his initial theory of individual. Although he follows the Porphyrian scheme of division, treating the lowest species precisely in the same manner as the higher genera, Gregory denies that

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[273] Ibid. 6.
[274] I need to mention that my scrutiny of Gregory's 'strong theory' of individual is slightly different from Zachhuber's. Namely, Zachhuber claims that Gregory does not describe hypostasis in relation to an individual quality; hypostasis is, rather, 'particular thing *insofar* as it is an individual.' (Ibid. 8) My suggestion is, however, that we should think of hypostasis as a centre of willing and action, as an agent, which actualises its singleness, i.e., as '*that* which restricts and circumscribes.' In other words, if my reading of Gregory is correct, here we speak about a stronger theory of individual than is the case in Zachhuber's essay.
[275] Ibid. 8.
[276] Ibid. 10.

human individuals differ in their essential predicates. Various species of one genus are distinct because in each of them the genus is modified, but this does not apply for the singulars of one species.[277] Zachhuber writes that, 'Gregory seems willing to accept that the multiplicity of species within one genus implies a multiplicity of sorts in the latter…, but the same, he seems to urge, does not apply to the members of one species. Why not? His answer is that they only differ in "accidents"' (GNO III/ I, 31, 20).[278]

The division of lower species (individuals) differs from those between genus and species, and this is precisely why Gregory argues that this model can be applied to the Trinity. Thus, the Trinity is not a genus with three species, because the distinction between the species is too radical to allow a unity; it is rather a genus with three lowest species (*infima species*), the distinction between which is solely accidental. It seems that because of the charges for tritheism Gregory embraces the 'weak theory' of individual. In other words, the only way for Gregory to defend himself from the charges of tritheism was to give up his initial position from the *Epistle* 38, that is, to deny his crucial notion of hypostasis.[279]

A concept of hypostasis as a radical uniqueness, it appears, cannot be developed as long as we are unable to explain how unity is possible between individuals endowed with full ontological identity. Does identity preclude unity? Does identity exclude person? If the differences between divine hypostases are only accidental, as Gregory seems to contend, the patristic doctrine of the Trinity, built through an extremely painful process over the ages, becomes ambiguous. We would find ourselves again at the very beginning of the speculation on the Trinity, forced to re-think, for instance, the distinction between the

[277] Ibid. 10.
[278] Ibid. 11.
[279] 'It would then possibly follow that the Cappadocian approach cannot reply to the charge of tritheism without giving up on some of its central concepts.' Ibid. 11.

hypostasis of the Son from that of the Father. The same is valid for Christology, in particular with reference to Christ's Incarnation. If hypostasis is nothing more than accidence, then what do we imply when we reiterate with Chalcedon and Maximus that the unity of the two natures in Christ is a hypostatic union? Is it possible to have unity of the two natures that is without confusion and without separation if this unity is not hypostatic?

It seems that there are two possible ways out of this impasse. We can follow the logic of the initial strong theory of individual as expressed in *Epistle* 38. In that case, however, we would need to explain in what way unity is possible in spite of the absolute singleness of the divine hypostases. This comment implies that the answers we find in the works of the two arguably most influential contemporary Orthodox theologians, Lossky and Zizioulas, are not satisfactory. The logic of the strong theory of individual has its implications and it is hard to see how they could be avoided. If we refuse to accept them, it ceases to be the strong theory of individual. This is because the theory presupposes full ontological identity that could only exist on the basis of absolute uniqueness. Either an identity is unique—in which case we talk about the strong theory of individuality—or it is not.

What does our definition of freedom as absolute ontological otherness mean for the concept of the Trinity? If we claim that each of the persons in the Trinity possesses full ontological identity,[280] this would mean that each is radically unique and as such has an absolutely unique mode of existence. For Maximus, it needs to be stressed, *diaphora* or difference is a major ontological characteristic and it does not imply *diairesis* or

[280] Zizioulas is fully aware of the dangers of Sabellianism or crypto-Sabellianism: 'Sabellianism represented an interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity which involved the view that the Father, the Son and the Spirit were not full persons in an ontological sense, but roles assumed by the one God.' CO, pp. 156-157.

separation.[281] Each being draws its particular identity from its logos, and this ontology is valid also in the context of Trinitarian theology.[282] The manifestation of the unique mode of existence of one of the divine persons appears necessarily as a total newness to the other two. So when Turcescu writes about Gregory's vision of the Trinity, saying that, 'Since the Son is eternally contemplated in the Father, and the Spirit is the Son's Spirit, the Spirit too is eternally contemplated in the Father. All three persons rejoice eternally in the presence of each other and know each other perfectly',[283] this appears to be in support of my argument. By saying that the all three persons know each other perfectly Gregory is defending the consubstantiality of the Son and the Spirit with the Father. He is not trying to say that there is nothing in the Son's personal mode of existence that the Father does not have himself. What would be, otherwise, a hypostatic distinction between the persons? If the divine persons were not distinct, if the expression 'know each other perfectly' signified that one of the persons does not see in the other something that is unique and different, why would they eternally rejoice in the presence of each other?

If we follow this logic, it becomes impossible to claim that 'communion is the solution Gregory [of Nyssa] proposes to the question, "what causes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to be persons and not a mere collection of properties?"'[284] Obviously this position resembles strongly Zizioulas's highlighting of relationship as a formative principle of person. But does this mean that if the divine hypostases are a mere collection of

[281] It is noteworthy that Zizioulas acknowledges Maximus's application of the concept of *logos* even to the divine persons. In that context Maximus refers to it as 'personal difference' (*διαφορὰ προσωπικὴ*). 'Maximus is keen to distinguish between *diaphora* (difference) and *diairesis* (division). For him, *diaphora* is an ontological characteristic because each being has its *logos* which gives it its particular identity, without which it would cease to be itself and thus to be at all. Without *diaphora* there is no being, for there is no being apart from beings. This is an ontology applied also to Trinitarian theology.' Ibid. pp. 22-23, 23 n29.
[282] Ibid. pp. 22-23.
[283] Ibid. 117
[284] Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 117.

properties prior to their relating to one another, relationship is a sort of an agens, built by itself? When Zizioulas argues that divine persons are not individuals, what he really wants to say is that they are not self-centred and self-referential.[285] He also seems to imply—and this might also be the most serious drawback of his theology—that to be an individual means not to have full and uncompromised identity. Does one become person by losing one's identity, or, on the contrary, by being able to share it with others?

Zizioulas does speak of some sort of identity of divine persons, although by using a different term—unique properties. These properties are the unbegottenness or the fatherhood of the Father, the begottenness or the sonship of the Son, and the *ekporeusis* (spiration) of the Spirit. These properties are incommunicable; they are personal or hypostatic properties, whereas the substance is communicated between the persons.[286] Is it possible, however, to define the person as that possessing 'absolutely unique properties'? Can the set of properties, regardless of how unique it is, be a person? In other words, the expression 'unique set of properties' has an impersonal connotation. There ought to be a more fundamental personal identity of person,[287] the very centre of hypostasis from which stems an awareness or self-consciousness[288] of singleness and distinctness, of the

[285] CO, 160.
[286] Ibid. 160.
[287] It is interesting that both Zizioulas and Yannaras mention the term *name*, without ever exploring all the possibilities this concept offers. In Zizioulas we read: 'Outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness and becomes a being like other beings, a "thing" without absolute "identity" and "name", without a face.' BC, 49. Yannaras writes, 'whatever detailed descriptions we give, as long as we insist on the quantitative nuances of individual traits and properties …, what we determine will, in any case, be the same for many individuals, because it is impossible with objective formulations of our everyday language to mark off the uniqueness and dissimilarity of a person. Therefore we must separately evaluate the importance of the function of the *name*, which alone can signify this uniqueness, which alone can express and reveal a person beyond all concepts and determinations.' Ch. Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 30. The concept of 'name' is mentioned in Sophrony Sakharov: 'At the last trump every man will receive a new *name* for ever, known only to God and to him that receiveth it' [cf. Rev. 2:17], *We shall see Him as He is*, (Essex: The Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2004), 84.
[288] I use the term awareness or self-consciousness in the context of the Trinity with considerable reserve because of its anthropomorphic connotation. However, whatever term we decide to use in this framework, it

immutable continuity of identity, the centre from which love as willing and agency proceeds in a unique and hypostatic way. This centre of identity, in order to be person and to have 'full ontological identity', ought to be a 'living' and 'free' being. The terms 'living' and 'free' are not used here simply as metaphors.

What does it mean that the identity/person has to be a 'living' and 'free' being? What does 'full ontological identity' imply? It is not enough to repeat with the Fathers that personhood is a unique set or conjecture of properties; or to say with Zizioulas that person is formed by communion or love, because this would imply that communion and love, no matter how important they are, and not the person, are ultimate ontological categories. There is an obvious, although subtle, contradiction in Zizioulas's theology and it stems from his fear that giving the full ontological identity to the divine persons undermines the unity of God. This is why Zizioulas is trying to emphasise the importance of communion and unity over identity and person, as if communion was possible without the identities that create it in the first place. His approach is in a way reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa's retreating from his position of the strong theory of individual when he was facing charges for tritheism. It is interesting that Zizioulas is well aware of this problem, which could be noticed in his insistence that '"communion" does not exist by itself", but it is the Father who causes it.

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seems impossible to deny that there is a centre of identity in each divine person, which makes self-identification and communication possible in first place. Regarding human personhood, I do not see how we can deny the relevance of self-awareness for communion and relationship. Can we create relationship without being aware? Even in the extreme cases, such as when one person is in a coma, for instance, this person's unconscious state affects its relations with other people, but not necessarily the relationship *par excellence*, i.e. the relationship with God. Nevertheless, in trying to reject the entire Western concept of individual, Zizioulas, together with the concept of identity, also dismisses the notion of self-consciousness. 'Most of us today, when we say "person" mean *individual*. This goes back to St Augustine and especially to Boethius in the fifth century CE, who defined the person as an individual nature endowed with rationality and consciousness.' CO, 168. Regarding the importance of self-consciousness, C.G. Jung for example wrote, 'this capacity to isolate part of one's mind, indeed, is a valuable characteristic. It enables us to concentrate upon one thing at a time, excluding everything else that may claim our attention.' Jung, 8.

> Just like 'substance', 'communion' does not exist by itself: it is the Father who is the 'cause' of it. This thesis of the Cappadocians that introduced the concept of 'cause' into the being of God assumed an incalculable importance. For it meant that the ultimate ontological category, which makes something really be, is neither an impersonal and incommunicable 'substance', nor a structure of communion existing by itself or imposed by necessity, but rather the person.[289]

Zizioulas furthermore explains that for the constitution of God's being communion is not enough; a free person is also needed.

> The fact that God exists because of the Father shows that His existence, His being is the consequence of a *free person*; which means, in the last analysis, that *not only communion but also freedom, the free person, constitutes true being*. True being comes only from the free person, from the person who loves freely—that is, who freely affirms his being, his identity, by means of an event of communion with other persons.[290]

Clearly the term 'free person' becomes vital for the elucidation of communion and otherness within the Trinity. Although Zizioulas conceives of the Father as a free person, he identifies freedom with love. In that case, however, love and not the person becomes the ultimate ontological category. Doubtless, love should be regarded as a prerequisite of freedom, but God's being is not exhausted only in love. Furthermore, Zizioulas speaks of love as if it existed independently of the person, or, more precisely, as if love were more primordial than the person. Just like human nature, however, love exists only in a personalised way, as the Father's or the Son's love, etc. Using Zizioulas's own words, we could say that 'love does not exist by itself, it is the Father who causes it.' Zizioulas defines freedom as the power to be absolutely other and in doing so he clearly gives the person ultimate ontological primacy. But only several pages later Zizioulas introduces another 'ultimate' category, this time speaking about the 'supreme ontological predicate'.

> Love is not an emanation or 'property' of the substance of God – this detail is significant in the light of what I have said so far – but it is constitutive of His substance, i.e., it is that

[289] BC, 18. Even the title of Zizioulas's book reflects that, in the final instance, he gives ontological priority to communion, and not person.
[290] Ibid. 18.

> which makes God what He is, the one God. Thus love ceases to be a qualifying – i.e., secondary – property, of being and becomes the supreme ontological predicate.[291]

Zizioulas does not apply to the Trinity his definition of freedom as the absolute ontological otherness, or, rather, he would like us to accept that the Father's fatherhood or unbegottenness is what full ontological identity is about. Can the fatherhood of the Father be a full ontological identity? We have seen that God exists not simply because of the communion, but because the Father is a free person: there is no communion unless free persons create it. Evidently, full ontological identity is essentially related to freedom. Without freedom, Zizioulas rightly argues, God does not exist, i.e., without freedom being cannot emerge from non-being. But, how do we define freedom?

The full ontological identity of the person is therefore inseparable from freedom. Zizioulas's concept of freedom nonetheless does not provide a basis for the full identity. We understand this when Zizioulas claims that the names of the divine persons only describe their relationships. In other words, it seems that Zizioulas believes that the identity of the divine persons is exhausted in their relationship. What follows is that communion and relationship are the ultimate ontological category. The Son bears this name because he is son in his relationship to the Father, but in what way is he 'son' in his relationship with the Spirit? In short, Zizioulas argues in a rather monistic way that identity precludes unity. Unity, relationship, catholicity, or *sobornost* in Zizioulas's theology in the final analysis are possible only if personal identity is sacrificed. Zizioulas thus proves to be unable to implement *diaphora* or difference in his concept of communion and otherness, in spite of arguing that *diaphora* is the constitutional principle of the being, the principle without which being simply does not exist. His fear of difference is unwarranted since *diaphora*, as

[291] Ibid. 46.

he himself emphasises, does not lead to *diaeresis* or separation. On the contrary, *diaphora* is both the reason and the principle of unity, and Trinitarian theology not only should accept it as such, but should cherish it as one of its most important assets.

To possess *diaphora* therefore means to be a free and living being. *Diaphora,* freedom, and life, however, are but an illusion unless the Son, the Spirit, and the human being—i.e., the results of the Father's begetting and creation out of nothing—are capable of breaking the circle of the already existing. The Father is a free person with full ontological identity[292] *only* if he can beget and create a *free* person. True being therefore comes only from the free person, the Father. The Father is free because by not causally determining He inaugurates a person capable of creating excess in being. By begetting and creating therefore the Father gives freedom, which is defined as the power to bring forth surplus into the existing. But this kind of freedom is possible only on the basis of the creation 'out of nothing', which is merely the other name for creation out of undetermined freedom. The free person, the person who can only constitute the true being, is conceivable solely if the Father begets and creates out of a freedom not determined by him. For the Father the freedom he begets and creates from appears as unknown, inexhaustible, and ungrounded. Thus, to be a 'free' and 'living' person, a person with a 'full ontological identity', entails nothing less than the power to infinitely enrich the being.

Perhaps Maximus's words that the deified human person becomes without end and without beginning,[293] or the even more daring claim by Gregory Palamas, that the deified

[292] A 'full ontological identity' therefore cannot be simply a 'conjecture' or *syndrome* of properties, as Zizioulas claims. Von Balthazar's words seem to confirm my point. 'For much as it seems, at first, that it would be enough to define it as an "individual form" (*ἄτομον εἶδος*), by means of the essence and all its particularizing characteristics… still in reality it contains, even beyond this, that *active*, *functional process of "ownership"* that is necessary if a concrete individual is to result.' CL, pp. 223-224.
[293] *Amb,* 10, PG 91: 1144c.

persons 'become thereby uncreated, unoriginate, and indescribable, although in their own nature they derive from nothingness',[294] should be interpreted along these lines. What else could 'to be unoriginate' mean but that we are not determined by our 'origin'? In other words, the expression 'to be unoriginate' could mean that our origin is 'uncreated' and ungrounded freedom.

2.5 Does Unity Preclude Full Identity? A Question of Trinitarian Theology

From the assumption about the full ontological identity of the person arises an inevitable question as to how we can reconcile radical otherness of the divine persons with the extreme union of God. How can *diaphora* be the principle not of separation but of unity?[295] Maximus asks,

> How does extreme union possess both identity and otherness, that is to say, identity of essences and otherness of persons or vice versa? … For instance, in the Holy Trinity, there is identity of essence and otherness of persons; for we confess one essence and three hypostases.[296]

If each divine hypostasis possesses full ontological identity then it may be perfectly legitimate to assume that it is precisely their personal integrity that generates oneness in God. Since God is a union of persons it seems natural that a genuine oneness should come as a result of personal uniqueness and *diaphora*. As Zizioulas asserts, only the free person constitutes true being. Therefore, the unity of God can only result from the relationship of the free persons. It is exactly the distinction between the persons, and the appeal of the flow

[294] *The Triads* 3.1.31, The Classics of Western Spirituality, trans. N. Gendle (New York: Paulist Press, 1983). Quotes from Maximus and Palamas from Tollefsen, pp. 212-214.
[295] This question, of course, is not related exclusively to the Trinity but necessarily includes the problem of the unity of the humankind and of the humankind and God.
[296] *Opuscula* 13. 2 (PG 91), 145B.

of infinite newness in an other person's being—other person's life—that creates the bonds of unity.

It seems that trinitarian theology needs to go back to its beginnings and to ask the most elementary question as to why is God – the Trinity? We could rephrase the question and ask, why does the Father beget the Son and bring about the procession of the Spirit? Zizioulas argues that in order to exist, person needs relationship, implying that God has to be more than one person. 'Person', argues Zizioulas, 'cannot exist in isolation. God is not alone; he is communion.'[297] A genuine communion cannot be a relationship of mere echoing. On the contrary, we have seen that communion makes little sense unless there is something to be communicated. There is no communion if the communicating persons are not free; and, we call the persons free because they remain eternally distinct, thus having potency to eternally enrich each other. Relationship and communion are eternal mutual enrichment. The person is inconceivable outside of relationship because it is only through communion that it is involved in the process of constant becoming. Infinite becoming or the creation of limitless excess in being is how we have defined freedom and life. God is a free and living God because of the interpersonal exchange of life and mutual enrichment of the divine hypostases. The exchange of life would have been impossible without the full ontological identity of the persons. Thus, God is the free and living God only due to the persons's radically distinct identity. As Rowan Williams writes, 'the life of the Trinity is an

[297] CO, 166. Zizioulas's argument that 'God is communion' is contested by several authors. André de Halleux, for instance, argues that what the Cappadocians denoted as the 'intradivine *koinônia* was the common nature, and not dialogical relations between the persons.' 'Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Péres cappadociens?', in *Patrologie et oecumenisme receuil d'études* (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1990), 265. Cited in Törönen, 67. De Halleaux's understanding of the Trinity, however, fails to address my main question, why is God – God the Trinity? I do not argue against Zizioulas's dialogical interpersonal relations. The point of my critique is that Zizioulas fails to explain why person needs to live in communion.

unending openness to the inexhaustible other.'[298] Jüngel understands the dynamic nature of the Trinity in a similar way. He writes that 'the doctrine of the Trinity expresses the truth that God is alive. "God lives" means that God is life.'[299]

Zizioulas nonetheless contends that God is free because of the *monarchia* of the Father, that is, because the Father as a free person and out of love decides to generate two other divine hypostases.[300] Zizioulas here follows Maximus' idea of the Father as the *aition* or cause of divine being.

> One God, [is] Father, the begetter of one Son and the source of one Spirit; Monad without confusion and Triad without division; Mind without beginning, the only begetter by essence of the only Logos without beginning, and the source of the only everlasting Life, that is, of the Holy Spirit.[301]

This leaves us with an impression that the Son and the Spirit are subordinate and that only the Father is a truly free person.[302] Clearly, there is a certain difference between the persons and since the Father is the cause their relationship is asymmetrical-

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[298] R. Williams, 'The Theological World of Philokalia', in *The Philokalia: Exploring the Classical Texts of Eastern Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119. A. Papanikolaou stresses that there is more in Zizioulas' insistence on the monarchy of the Father than simply unity of God. At stake is also freedom of God, which is a *sine qua non* of human freedom. 'Since human uniqueness and particularity are constituted in a freedom from the "given" … in order for such a freedom to be realized in a communion with the divine, God's being must itself be free from necessity, even the necessity of God's essence. Otherwise, God cannot give what God does not have. Put another way, *God's existence is freely constituted so as to be free to give God's life of freedom as love to what is not God*.' A. Papanikolaou, 'The Trinity in Contemporary Orthodox Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 252.

[299] Jüngel, 'Relationship', 179.

[300] BC, 18. See also Elizabeth T. Groppe, 'Creation *ex nihilo* and *ex amore*: Ontological Freedom in the Theologies of John Zizioulas and Catherine Mowry LaCugna', Modern Theology 21:3 July 2005, 469.

[301] *Cap. Xv* 4 (PG90), 1180A. Quoted in, Törönen, 67.

[302] The question of the subordination of the Son and the Spirit was also raised by Lossky. 'Does not this monarchy of the Father savour of subordination? Does not this conception confer upon the Father, the one unique source, a certain pre-eminence as *the* divine person?' Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2005), 63. Lossky goes on to quote Gregory Nazianzen who argues that he is 'afraid to call the Father the greater', and is also reluctant to call the Father Origin, 'lest I should make him the Origin of inferiors, and thus insult him by precedencies of honour. For the lowering of those who are from him is no glory to the Source.' *In sanct. Bapt, Oratio* XL, 43', (PG 1125A). Cited in Lossky, 63. See also Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,1998), 78.

reciprocal.[303] If we follow our definition of freedom we would notice that the Father cannot be free by himself but only because he is able to beget other inexhaustible divine identity. The Father begets the Son outside of time, so there was not a moment when the Father was without the Son, i.e., without the Other's limitless person.[304]

In Zizioulas's view the Father does not really need the Son or the Spirit—let alone the human person—because they don't have anything unique to communicate to him. *Stricto sensu* in this case we cannot speak of *unity* in God simply because unity implies *diaphora* as its dialectical polarity. Zizioulas's God is therefore *one* not because of the personal union but because he is *alone*. The Father as described by Zizioulas has all the characteristics of a theistic God who as immutable and impassible—i.e., as perfect—possesses in himself the fullness of being and therefore does not have any needs.

2.5.1 Re-thinking the Concept of the Divine Absoluteness

The bedeviling question remains, however: If God is three persons how do we avoid tritheism? How can we claim that God is still *one* and, in that case, what would the nature of his unity consist of? Perhaps we should first reconsider what we mean exactly by saying that God is *one*? What is our understanding of the oneness of God? Although it might sound superfluous, we need to remember that arguing about God's oneness we do not imply, as Sabellius did, that God is *one person*. Maximus writes, 'we anathematize Sabellius not for proclaiming the natural unity in the Holy Trinity, but for not declaring the

[303] Volf, 78.
[304] Volf remarks that 'the Father never exists alone, but rather only in communion with the Son and Spirit; the other two persons are the presupposition of his identity, indeed, of his very existence.' Ibid., 78. Moreover, writes Jüngel, the eternal Logos is *Logos incarnandus* and not *Logos asarkos*. Ibid, 182. This means that the Logos from eternity has been the human being. As we shall see later, this idea plays an important role in Berdyaev's Trinitarian theology.

hypostatic difference.'[305] The question of oneness therefore cannot bypass the simple fact that God is the Trinity. If we however take a closer look at the problem we cannot fail to notice that the main reason for the rejection of tritheism lays in our understanding of the divine absoluteness. Put simply, absoluteness by definition implies that there could be only one absolute being. To claim that all three persons are absolute would simply mean that neither one of them is absolute. But how much is the concept of absoluteness influenced by the theistic understanding of God?

According to the traditional view God is absolute because he is not dependent on anything outside of himself. The Absolute is omnipotent and perfect, and, possessing the fullness of being, is self-sufficient. This concept of absoluteness is obviously shaped by the theistic understanding of omnipotence. Zizioulas's description of the Father, we have seen, to whom the Son and the Spirit are subordinated, bears strong resemblance to the theistic God. Theism however cannot explain the Son and the Spirit otherwise but as modalities, that is, as the Father's different manifestations. What remains unclear is what the Father's motive would be for generating different modalities, given that they are incapable of independent acts. Had the Son and the Spirit been simply modalities their begetting and procession would not have been the acts that bring forth something not already existing. The Father's mode of being—his absoluteness—would have been identified in this case not with what is unlimited and radically new but with self-repetition and finitude.

Critique of the theistic concept of absoluteness needs to stress therefore that God is absolute because he is free and living God. God's absoluteness—consisting of his freedom and life—are in His power to generate never-ending surplus in being. The non-theistic idea of the Absolute clearly involves a more complex, *theogonic* and *anthropogonic* vision of

[305] *Opuscula* 13. 1 (PG 91), 145A.

God. The non-theistic, living God is God the Trinity—whose second Person is God-Man—emerging from the Godhead as the primordial abyss of freedom. God's absoluteness is no longer defined as a forever-achieved perfection that precludes movement. God is absolute only insofar as he possesses an infinite power for the movement towards what has never existed before. God is absolute because of the mutual enrichment within the Trinity, which emerges from the Godhead as the cradle of unconditioned freedom.

What we infer by saying that God is *one,* then, is not that God is *one person* acting in different modalities but that three divine persons, whilst preserving their radical alterity, are *as one* because of the harmony of their wills. But just as in the case of the human being, this does not imply that the freedom of the divine persons is to be identified with the freedom of will or freedom of choice. Freedom, as we have seen, is about personal ontological uniqueness. It would be a gross oversimplification to claim that the unity of God stems only from the persons' common objective or from the concurrence of their wills, especially because theistic theology relates the harmony of wills solely to the history of creation and salvation. The paradox of theism is that the human, seen as a redundant being whose only goal of existence is redemption, thus enslaves the traditionally conceived omnipotent God, since the only purpose of God's life appears to be human salvation. The unity of God resting on the concurrence of wills clearly belongs to the monophysite epoch of redemption. Should the oneness of God, therefore, be interpreted from a theandric perspective, on the basis of the assumption that God created humans so that they could bring new beings into existence? The unity of God in this case would be a result of the intra-trinitarian and theandric *eros*, which is triggered by the eternal alterity of the divine and human persons. The question of the unity of God cannot be essentially different from

the question of the unity of all human beings and of humankind with God. There is a clear analogy between divine and human alterity and unity, because all human beings are called to be *as one*,[306] not by conflating their identities, but through loving the neighbour as oneself. Maximus makes this analogy boldly, writing that, 'Both the division and the union [in God] are extraordinary. But what is there extraordinary, if as one man with another, so likewise the Son and the Father, is both united and separate and nothing more?'[307] Thus, the lack of the coercion of wills is not the uniting power in God. Lack of the coercion of wills comes as a result of the yearning inspired by the incollapsable *personal identity*. It would be inconceivable to talk even theoretically about the conflict of wills if the divine identities were not radically unique.

Gregory Palamas writes that, 'The Spirit of the supreme Logos is a kind of ineffable yet intense longing or *eros* experienced by the Begetter for the Logos born ineffably from Him, a longing experienced also by the beloved Logos and Son of the Father, for his Begetter.'[308] Williams observes that Palamas implies in the divine life an awareness of the incompleteness analogous to that experienced by the self in finite experience. Williams underlines that Palamas does not speak about 'incompleteness' within God. It is rather

> An eternal desire to exist in the other that is at the same time never consummated by any collapse into an undifferentiated identity… The Father is eternally confronted with the sheer otherness of the Son whom he generates. Likewise the response of the Son to the Father is not a simple abjection and self-cancelling: it is again a desire to give life 'into' the other that is never exhausted. The otherness of the persons of the Trinity to each other is irreducible, and for that very reason their relation may be imagined as *eros*, as 'yearning' rather than consummation, since no amount of self-abnegating love can abolish the eternal difference – which would in fact be to abolish the love itself.[309]

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[306] 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us… That they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.' John, 17:21-23.
[307] *Capita de Caritate,* II. 29 (PG 90), 993AB.
[308] Ibid. 18.
[309] Williams, TWP, 117.

The divine persons are 'eternally', that is, infinitely different. They are enchanted by each other's inexhaustible otherness and this yearning causes the unity of God, because it is personal and fully reciprocal.[310] In the *Epistle* 2 Maximus writes that even spatial distance (*διάστημα*) between men, as well as between man and God, is abolished in spiritual communication.[311] Personal *eros* results from *diaphora*/difference and that is why, whilst abolishing *diairesis/*separation and *diastima*/distance, it never abolishes the uniqueness of the other, which is its origin. Therefore, identity of the divine persons, which has to be inexhaustive, not only does not hinder oneness of God, but it is its indispensable precondition.

2.6 Identity and Hypostatic Union

We have seen why the concept of the full ontological identity is vitally important for our understanding of the Trinity. What role, however, does identity play in the context of Christology and especially regarding the issue of hypostatic union?

The main problem the hypostatic union raises is already present in its name – i.e., 'personal union'. If nature never exists 'in the nude'; if we know nature only in the form of a particular person, how can the union of the divine and the human nature in Christ be a hypostatic one if only one person is involved?

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[310] M. Volf also asserts that the unity of God cannot be simply due to the Father's being the cause of divine being: 'What remains obscure, however, is why the monarchy of the Father should be necessary for preserving the unity of God, who is, after all, love, or why the only alternative for securing the unity of God is by way of recourse to the "ultimacy of substance in ontology."' Volf, 79.

[311] PG 91, 393A. See Thunberg, MM, 58. The overcoming of distance and separation on an anthropological and cosmological level, however, entails a truthful contemplation of the *logoi* of creatures. Human being is a microcosm and mediator, performing a role of Christ, simultaneously holding the whole universe together and re-creating it by virtue of his or her gnostic functions. Ibid. 143. The genuine union and preservation of otherness is inevitably related to the purification from false notions of a fallen contemplation. Ibid. 338.

In this chapter I have already highlighted the importance that the term *perichoresis* has for the preservation of the integrity of human nature. Thunberg believes that the term 'mutual adhesion' points to the relation between the two natures established in the Incarnation, whereas *perichoresis* denotes their mutual interpenetration. How can human nature penetrate into divine if, as I have said, nature exists always as a specific person? If human nature does not penetrate into the divine does this imply that its integrity is not safeguarded?

Obviously, the answer should be sought on the level of person rather than on that of nature. This is precisely the point of Maximus's 'Chalcedonian logic', which makes a distinction between the natural and the personal level. As Louth has explained, if activity and will are regarded as processes, they belong to the level of nature, but if we observe results, activity and will express the personal level, the particular mode (*tropos*) in which nature behaves towards other natures.[312]

It follows that the term *perichoresis* needs to be elucidated on a personal rather than on a natural level. However, Christ is only one person. Zizioulas is addressing the problem of hypostatic union precisely by distinguishing between the levels of nature from the person.

> The person, or hypostasis, is not generated by nature or derived from it… In other words, we cannot begin with the natures of Christ as though they were something ultimate or self-existent, and if that is the case, we avoid the question which has constantly bothered theologians, namely whether 'two natures' does not, in fact, mean 'two persons'. We also avoid the dilemma 'divine or human person' as well as the curious composition 'divine and human person'…[313]

[312] Louth, 57.
[313] CO, 239. According to Apollinarius, God-Man is a unitary but *complex* being. In Bulgakov's view, Apollinarius's own doctrine is perfectly orthodox, but misunderstood by his critics. Bulgakov, LG, 7.

Zizioulas goes on to explain that these dilemmas are avoided because we cannot speak about person in the same way we do about nature, that is, as an object; Zizioulas emphasises that we can understand person only as *schesis* or relation. *Schesis*, according to Zizioulas, is constitutive of a particular being and it is only through *schesis* that beings exist at all.[314]

Since the relation constitutive of Christ's person is the Son's relationship with the Father, we may call Christ's person the 'divine person', explains Zizioulas. He immediately adds that this does not mean that we have opted for divine versus human person, because the human becomes a true person only through the filial *schesis* that constitutes Christ's being. Feeling that he needs to address potential fears that in such a Christology there is no place for a full human person, Zizioulas tries to explain—in my view rather unconvincingly—that this is not the case because, 'There is no such a thing as "human personhood" purely and simply except in the sense of "man loving himself" in a sort of self-existence or loving creatures in a sort of idolatrous existence.'[315]

It seems that Zizioulas, just as in the case of his trinitarian theology, here conflates two cognate yet different terms: individual and person. As I have already argued, I understand identity as the most personal logos or name of each human being according to which one creates one's relationship and becomes person. There could be no person without an identity. Consequently, I do not see how we can avoid the aforementioned dilemmas 'divine or human person', or 'divine and human person' simply because there

[314] Ibid. 239.
[315] Ibid. 240.

has to be a human person with the particular *human* identity, Peter or Paul, etc. It is difficult to see how Christ's identity can make up for any other human person's identity.[316]

Zizioulas himself often repeats that there is no nature in the nude. If Christ acts solely as divine person, does this imply then that human nature does not preserve its integrity? This has to be our conclusion because human nature in its un-enhypostasized form not only is incapable of penetrating divine nature, but, according to Zizioulas, it simply does not exist.[317]

Zizioulas's concept of hypostatic union therefore remains largely vague. It is not enough to claim that 'it is only a person that can express communion and otherness simultaneously, thanks to its being a mode of being, that is, an identity which, unlike substance or energy, is capable of "modifying" its being without losing its ontological uniqueness and otherness.'[318] We need to explain what the 'modifying' activity of person is about. What is it that Christ, who according to Zizioulas is a divine person only, 'modifies' so as to safeguard the integrity of human nature? If human nature is left without an agens, that is, without a human person, how can it be modified? Zizioulas distinguishes two different types of identities: The first, or natural identity, does not allow of communion.

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[316] Zizioulas seems to be implementing here the medieval idea of the collective personality according to which Christ is both one and many. See Johannes Zachhuber, 'Who Loves? Who is Loved?; The Problem of the Collective Personality', https://www.academia.edu/12362109/Who_loves_Who_is_loved_The_problem_of_the_collective_person202. Zachhuber acknowledges that Christian love should be always directed towards an irreducible *other,* i.e., towards a unique identity. 'To this corresponds the observation that the perception of the other as our 'neighbour', which precedes the act of neighbourly love, relies not least on the willingness to see the other as *other* and thus essentially as mysterious and never fully known or reducible to clichés and categories. The other can only encounter us as other if we do not reduce her to that which is familiar and already understood. The demand to see Christ in the other is not, therefore, yet another version of the substitution of the 'neighbour' by something else (in this case Jesus Christ) but the insight that a conscious renunciation of our knowledge and our judgments, which inevitably turn the other into a part of ourselves, is a precondition for the true encounter with, and thus also for the love of, the neighbour.' Ibid. 206.

[317] 'Just as it is only this or that particular man that makes it possible for "human nature" to be particular beings and thus *to be at all* … (there is no nature "in the nude").' Ibid. 239.

[318] Ibid. 29.

The second, the so-called 'tropic identity', is not about nature and its logos, but about its tropos. Thus, it is tropos, or mode of existence, being capable of adjustment, that makes unconfused union possible.[319] But the main point of Zizioulas's argument, that person is capable of adjustment, remains unsubstantiated and without sufficient explanation, just as in the case of the 'modifying' capacity of person. If person is 'solely and exclusively' schesis, does it not follow that my person is not distinct, irreplaceable and unique? If it is not unique, what makes it capable of 'modifying' or 'adjusting' its tropos so as to be a unique mode of existence and as such not confused with some other person? One cannot find this momentous question in Zizioulas's work.[320]

Put briefly, I am looking here for an ontological formative principle of person or principle of individuation, which I have already defined[321] and without which it is impossible to explain hypostatic union or how communion and otherness can exist simultaneously. For this purpose I suggest we recall Maximus's idea about the mutual interpenetration of the two natures, that is, about the 'one and same activity proceeding from Christ in a joined and united manner (*συμφυῶς καὶ ἡνωμενως*), i.e., as from two subjects united into one'.[322] However, Maximus expresses this idea with clear reservation, adding that the activity happens 'according to the unitary interpenetration in them.'[323] What I find interesting in this passage is that Maximus, though with reservation, speaks about new theandric energy as if coming from two sources, clearly in opposition to Cyril's claim

[319] Ibid. 25.
[320] Maximus is probably addressing this issue in the following paragraph, without suggesting a solution: 'For there is a "certain new" thing, characteristic of the new mystery, the logos of which is the ineffable mode of the coming together. For who knows how God assumes flesh and yet remains truly both in his natural existence, and each through the other, yet changing neither? Faith alone can grasp these things, honouring in silence the Word…' *Amb* 5 (PG 91 1057A).
[321] See chapter One, section *On the ontological formative principle of person*.
[322] *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, 7 (PG 91, 85D-88A). Cited in Thunberg, MM, 30.
[323] Ibid. 30.

about one theandric energy. If I understand correctly, Maximus speaks about 'two subjects' and thus his description of hypostatic union appears to be more in a spirit of personalist theology than Zizioulas's. In spite of this, Maximus' personalism is not at all evident and, as we shall see shortly, in order to be elucidated requires significant hermeneutical effort.

Needless to say, I am not arguing that Christ possesses two persons, divine and human. But in order to clarify Maximus's position on the human person we need to elucidate what it is that he implies with the expression 'a certain new theandric energy'? In other words, does Maximus's concept of a new theandric energy provide a strong enough basis for building up a constitutive ontological principle of human hypostasis?

When Maximus argues that the deified human being becomes unended and uninitiated – or, according Gregory Palamas, even unoriginate – he surely talks about deification of the human *person* and not just of the human nature. Would it not be possible then to assume that, just like the human nature, the human person also becomes divine 'by grace', i.e., by virtue of participation, changing its tropos whereas its logos remains immutable?

Thus we may conclude that the human person due to its participation in divine life becomes capable of performing the same acts as Christ.[324] We can interpret Maximus's words from Ambigua 5, 'And he [Christ] does human things in a way transcending the human…'[325] to mean that the human person in union with Christ can break the *status quo* of the existing and bring forth radical newness in being, and this is exactly the indispensable ontological principle by which each human person constitutes its singleness and distinctness. The only way to explain the hypostatic union of the two natures in which

[324] 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.' John, 14:12.
[325] *Amb* 5, (PG 91 1053B)

the integrity of human nature is safeguarded is to conjecture the distinctness of a particular and enhypostasized human nature. Can we make such an assumption without claiming that there are two persons, divine and human, in Christ?

Maximus writes that Christ confirms each of the natures of which he was hypostasis 'not acting through either of the natures separately from the other, but rather confirming each through the other.'[326] Apparently human nature needs to be 'confirmed' in order to stay distinct. How this is achieved, when there is only one person involved is a mystery, says Maximus: 'The knowledge of these things exists beyond the intellect as indemonstrable, its only conviction being the faith of those who sincerely worship the mystery of Christ.'[327]

In spite of being 'mysterious', the hypostatic union deserves not only faith but also further theological elucidation. It is difficult to see how the human nature can preserve its otherness in the hypostatic union unless it is active and distinct in the form of a specific person. But this is possible only if Christ confirms the human nature through his personal mode of existence, that is, if the human nature in Christ's person penetrates divine nature. *Perichoresis* or mutual interpenetration is feasible solely on the level of person and this is why the union of the two natures is hypostatic union. Should we, perhaps, interpret Maximus's idea about *perichoresis* that is proceeding 'from two subjects united into one' as an indication that the Confessor talks about double personal activity of one Christ's person?

[326] Ibid. (PG 91 1056A).
[327] Ibid. (PG 91 1053D). When tackling the problem of the hypostatic union, Cyril uses a similar strategy declaring that 'the Word was united with the flesh unfathomably and ineffably and as only He knows how'. When he is pressed by his opponents to be less apophatic in his elucidation, Cyril simply repeats the Chalcedonian definition comprised of four negative expressions. Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 25.

Can Christ, however, be involved in a double personal activity and still be one person? Here Douglas Farrow offers a useful insight claiming that, although in the Incarnation a divine and a human person are one and the same person, 'yet this one person is related to the Father as son in two distinct ways, as God to God and as man to God.'[328] Farrow adds that

> Two natures does not mean two persons, but it does mean two ontologically distinct ways of being personal. For if natures cannot be abstracted from persons—we may agree that there is no nature 'in the nude'—neither can person be abstracted from natures—there is no person 'in the nude' either. Therefore we cannot speak, as Zizioulas asks us to, of a person who 'makes divine and human natures to be that particular being called Christ'. We can only speak of a divine person who becomes and is a human person…[329]

Maximus's words about Christ, who 'in a way beyond human truly became human',[330] seem to confirm Farrow's opinion. We need to recall that the ontological formational principle of person is person's capacity to produce formerly non-existing realities. A person is a 'living' being because it is endowed with the power for ever-new creation. A human person is possible only if, acting as human, Christ is able to produce an inimitable mode of existence. And indeed, according to Maximus, Christ 'humanly performed wonders, for he did them through the flesh, since he was not naked God.'[331] To 'perform wonders' means not to be bound by any necessity. Adam Cooper understands 'a certain new theandric energy' in the same way when he writes that, 'Christ shows how human action in its free and fulfilled state properly introduces into history an utterly

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[328] 'Person and Nature: the Necessity-Freedom Dialectic in John Zizioulas', in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and the Church,* ed. Douglas H Knight (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 115.
[329] Ibid. 115, n25. 'He [Christ] does, however, enter into a new and different relation to the Father in which he is constituted as a man. In this new and different relation it is perfectly appropriate to speak of him as a human person, though for fear of adoptionism the tradition has been hesitant to do so.' Ibid., 115, n24. According to Adam Cooper, Maximus puts significant emphasis that some of Christ's actions are not enacted by him *either* as God *or* as man, but rather simultaneously as God and as man. 'Freedom and Heteronomy', 8.
[330] *Amb* 5, PG 91 1056A.
[331] Ibid. 1056B.

singular and unexpected quality that transcends all "normal" and predictable schemes of natural causation.'[332]

I suggest therefore that the expression 'a certain new theandric energy' should be taken to mean that, by living his totally unique mode of existence as the human, Christ safeguarded the integrity of human nature. In other words, the distinctness of human nature is preserved only through the uniqueness of one's identity and inimitability of one's mode of existence. There could be no freedom of human nature apart from the freedom of a singular human person. Or, in Zizioulas's words, freedom is about person's radical ontological otherness.

Freedom, nonetheless, is not only about creating one's unique mode of existence vis-à-vis nature; it is also about living our relationships with other people and with God according to the most personal logos of one's hypostasis. If in my relationship I merely reflect and mirror another's person, whether it is divine or human, does this not abolish my freedom as freedom to be absolutely other? Radical alterity of a person rests on its unique identity/logos, and this identity, as I have argued before, is infinite and inexhaustible. How can a person be unique unless in its identity it possesses certain traits not shared with anyone else—not even God—on the basis of which it creates radical newness? Should not freedom entail that the person, although created by God, is also God's radically 'other'?

Several contemporary authors have criticized Maximus for Monothelitism and Monoenergism.[333] In order to defend Maximus from these charges it is not enough to point out the passage in *Ambigua* 5 where he mentions Christ's double energy.[334] The question is

[332] Cooper, 11. Cooper here refers to *Amb* 5, PG 91 1052A. Cooper's paper is inspired by the work of the Italian theologian Livio Melina.
[333] See Jean-Claude Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme*, (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2009), pp. 554-558.
[334] *Amb* 5, PG 91 1056D.

how human will is used in a particular human person. The confusion comes from the conflation of two different levels, natural and personal. Human will ought to be in harmony with the *logos* of human nature, which means to be in concord with the general divine will about humankind. This is how most of Maximus's scholars understand his concept of freedom.[335] For instance, Törönen remarks

> In the patristic understanding, we are not free because we are persons; we are free because we are rational and *autoexousioi* by nature/essence. Freedom resides in our rationality rather than in an indeterminate principle of personhood. Human beings (let alone God) are not in want of an extra principle of liberty that is not already part of the essential being. Human nature is after all an extremely fine and complex fabric that already as such is a supreme mystery.[336]

As we have seen, the aforementioned authors think on the level of human nature. On this level, however, one cannot find a principle of personal differentiation. The core of this principle is to be found solely on the personal level and it consists of radical uniqueness of each identity. My unique 'name' entails that in the most personal *logos* I have an inexhaustible and infinite source of creativity, and that each thing created according to this *logos* appears as total newness to every other person, human or divine.

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[335] Polycarp Sherwood, for instance, observes that, according to Maximus, 'the perfect imitation of God [which I take should result in human freedom], that is in His fixity in the good, is to be attained only through a surpassing of *γνώμη*, a complete handing-over of our self-determination to God; and this is not its destruction but its perfect fulfilment according to the capacity of its nature." P. Sherwood, *St Maximus the Confessor; The Ascetic Life; The Four Centuries on Charity*, translated and annotated by Polycarp Sherwood, O.S.B, S.T.D. (Westminster, Maryland, The Newman Press, 1955), 59. Von Balthasar finds in Maximus a distinction between freedom of nature and freedom of person, but it is clear that he underplays the latter: 'The concept of a "*freedom* of nature"… is bound up, then, strictly and consistently, with the conception of the hypostasis. To act and to achieve reality is the work of nature; it is only [sic!] in the manner, the "how" of realization that the hypostatic comes into its own.' CL, 227. Although von Balthasar is aware that 'this unity of natural freedom and personal freedom raises the creature, in a certain sense, above the opposition of necessity and freedom and allows it to be, in some degree, somewhat like God', in *Cosmic Liturgy* we cannot find a concept of freedom that would be reminiscent of freedom as the power to create excess in being, and there is no trace of an idea of God limiting his omniscience. Von Balthasar's final remark about personal freedom proves that he did not see it as crucially important. In fact, personal freedom is dissolved in natural freedom: 'Free self-determination toward every good thing by following the law implied in one's status as God's image, in obedience to the flow of one's own natural movement toward God's image: there, in Maximus' view, is where the personal freedom of the creature must come to its lived reality.' Ibid. 229.

[336] Törönen, 112. I would certainly agree with Törönen that human nature is 'very complex fabric'. Nonetheless, no matter how subtle it could be, I simply cannot see how we can possibly replace something supremely particular, such as person, with something *par excellence* universal, such as essence.

Livio Melina is one of the very few contemporary thinkers who makes a direct relation between freedom and human capacity to create newness. Melina contends that, 'Freedom is the power to introduce novelty into the cyclical time of history, breaking the preestablished schemes of physical laws and natural instincts.'[337]

Berdyaev explains that it was a part of God's plan to create the human being as an autonomous existential centre. This bold idea, absent from either Maximus or Zizioulas, is one of the central tenets of Berdyaev's philosophy.

> It is imperative to bear in mind that human creativity is not a claim or a right on the part of man, but God's claim on and call to man. God awaits man's creative act, which is the response to the creative act of God. What is true of man's freedom is true also of his creativity: for freedom too is God's summons to man and man's duty towards God. God does not reveal to man that which it is for man to reveal to God.[338]

The idea that God does not reveal to us that which we have to reveal to God forces us to pose a question similar to that already asked in the context of trinitarian theology – why the Father wanted to have the Son and the Spirit, that is, to be a relational being? Similarly, we need to go back to the most elementary theological level and to ask ourselves, was not relationality again the main motive for God's creation of the human being?

Therefore I suggest that we should establish a parallel between the Father's motives in creating the human being and in having the Son and the Spirit.[339] If the Father is the 'cause' of the two other hypostases because of their radical alterity and infinite identity, which makes possible a boundless hypostatic exchange, and if the inexhaustible personal otherness of the Son and the Spirit is something unforeseen by the Father, would it not be

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[337] L. Melina, *The Epiphany of Love: Toward a Theological Understanding of Christian Action*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 4. Melina's definition of freedom strongly resembles Berdyaev's claim that 'freedom is the power to create out of nothing'. However, Berdyaev is not among the authors cited in Melina's book.

[338] DR, 208. SP, 263.

[339] This parallel, of course, does not overlook that the Son and the Spirit have their personal roles in their immanent and economic relations.

possible or even necessary to contend that God creates humans precisely for the same reasons? The Father was never without the Son and from eternity the Son is *Logos incarnandus* and not *Logos asarkos*.[340]

The idea that the human being has always been a part of the life of the Trinity is the essential tenet of the theandric theology, one that could not be found either in Maximus or Zizioulas.[341] On the other hand, *bogochelovechestvo* or God-manhoodness, is one of the most important ideas entertained by Berdyaev. Before I proceed with Berdyaev's concept of freedom, I shall make a concluding remark about notions of person and freedom in Maximus.

2.7 Conclusion

Probably the main reason for the vagueness and insufficiency of Maximus's concept of human freedom is that the Confessor, as I have said earlier, does not tackle the problem of human freedom on a personal level. Maximus's main concern is Christology. We also have to bear in mind that Maximus works in the framework of the Cyrillian Chalcedonianism. There is only one person mentioned in the Chalcedonian definition, and that is the divine person of Christ. This is why Maximus is not directly defending the

[340] This is also Jüngel's position regarding the immanent/economic trinity. Using Berdyaev's terminology, we could say that Jüngel believes that, since Christ is God-Man, anthropogony has always been a part of theogony. Jüngel writes, 'God *aims* in himself at what is other… God aims in his eternal begetting toward creation. In the eternal Son of God, who himself was not created, but comes eternally from God the Father, in this Son of God coming *eternally* from God, God aims at the man who *temporally* comes from God… In this creative being of the God the Son as the aim of God the Father, God is aiming at man. In that God the Father loves the Son, in the event of this divine self-love, God is aiming selflessly at his creation.' E. Jüngel, GMW, 384. GGW, 384.

[341] Bulgakov writes that 'Apollinarius is the *sole* representative of Greek and Latin Christology (except for Origen) who poses the question of the relation between the eternal Logos and man, or (which is the same thing) the question of the eternal Divine-Humanity as the foundation of the Incarnation.' LG, 16.

human person. However, it is not impossible to understand Maximus's Christology as an indirect justification of the human person. In order to comprehend his concept of human hypostasis we need to remember the concept of the personal logos and personal freedom that cannot be abstracted from freedom of nature. However, these notions could hardly respond to a highly demanding call for a freedom conceived as freedom to create absolute newness. We would need a considerable hermeneutical struggle in order to extract this sort of freedom from Maximus's vision of person, although this, as I have demonstrated, is not altogether an impossible mission.

3. Freedom According to Nikolai Berdyaev

In the previous chapter I have examined theological views on freedom in Maximus the Confessor, as well as some of his interpreters, in the light of Berdyaev's contention that the theology of the Church Fathers has a tendency towards monophysitism. Since the Fathers, as it has been shown, claim that nature exists solely in an enhypostasized form, i.e., as a particular hypostasis, I have found it necessary to amend Berdyaev's claim so as to posit that the anthropology of the Fathers betrays a tendency towards impersonalism.

In the previous chapter I asked the question, if my person only reflects some other person, whether divine or human, does that not obliterate my freedom understood as freedom to be absolutely other or, in other words, to be absolutely unique? I believe that this question is at the very centre of Berdyaev's philosophy, which does not mean that he expressed it in exactly these terms. One of Berdyaev's main concerns, if not the most important, was how to conceive of a relationship between God and the human as well as between the human and the world that would be neither monistic nor irreconcilably dualistic.[342]

Berdyaev's interest in the question of the human being and human freedom was the principal reason why he decided to borrow the concept of the *Ungrund* from 17th century

[342] As has been noted, Berdyaev was in the first place a Christian anthropologist, whereas, for instance: one of his lifelong friends, Sergei Bulgakov, mainly took interest in the question of sophiology, that is, concerning cosmological issues. Matthew Spinka, *Nicolas Berdyaev: The Captive of Freedom* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 116.

German mystic Jacob Böhme, and subsequently to develop out of it the notion of 'uncreated freedom'. Thus as one of its principal aims this chapter shall seek to critically approach the concept of the *Ungrund* as probably the most important of all Berdyaev's ideas, upon which the entire edifice of his philosophy rests, and yet at the same time one of the most controversial aspects of Berdyaev's thought. Since freedom in Berdyaev's view always implies ontological freedom of a particular person, special attention is devoted to Berdyaev's notion of personality with its eight main characteristics.

Some commentators contend that Berdyaev's main motif for introducing the *Ungrund* comes from his preoccupation with theodicy.[343] It is certainly beyond question that theodicy was among the themes Berdyaev regarded as rather important.[344] Berdyaev was aware that if we accept that God has endowed the human with freedom, this would mean that He is responsible for our misuse of freedom; and this conclusion inevitably becomes a source of atheism.[345] This is why, for example, Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov does not altogether reject God, but is not prepared to accept his world order.

However, Berdyaev held that there is an even more serious reason for embracing atheism for humankind. That was an impression, that the human, despite the lofty Christian teaching about *imago Dei*, was created solely as a divine puppet. One could hardly think of a more justified reason for rejection of God than that; that the human was created for a relatively short earthly life, only in order to disappear as a distinct and particular

[343] For example, Spinka writes that 'theodicy is a characteristically Russian problem and dominates even Russian anarchism and Communism; it certainly was a lifelong concern of Berdyaev's.' Spinka, 117. The problem of the existence of evil was one of the central issues for Böhme as well. See for example John Joseph Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity: A Study in Jacob Böhme's Life and Thought*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), pp. 60, 196.

[344] 'Throughout my religious development I have been much exercised by the problem of theodicy. This was the evidence of the heritage of Dostoyevsky. I have said on many occasions that the only serious argument in favour of atheism is the difficulty of reconciling an almighty and benevolent deity with the evil and suffering in the world and in human existence.' DR, 178. SP, 219.

[345] Spinka, 116.

personality in the divine being. Faced with tremendous sufferings, some people may as well wish to cease existing as particular conscious beings. There is no doubt that the arguments concerning the agony of innocent children developed by Ivan Karamazov are probably the strongest conceivable attack against God and his world. Yet from what we read about the little girl from Ivan's narrative, although she experiences ineffable torments, her existence as a particular and unique person is not denied.[346]

As Spinka has rightly observed, '[Berdyaev] suggests that perhaps the only way to write a convincing theodicy is by way of an anthropodicy.'[347] That the justification of the human or 'anthropodicy' is the most important issue in Berdyaev's writings is rather apparent from his persistence that even the traditional doctrine of creation ought to be abandoned. The Russian philosopher stated that, 'The old doctrine according to which God created man and the world, having in no respect any need of them and creating them only for His own glory, ought to be abandoned as a servile doctrine which deprives the life of man and the world of all meaning.'[348]

Theodicy was one of Berdyaev's most serious preoccupations, but he became Christian because he was looking for a faith able to give a much deeper foundation for belief in the human, thus providing the best theodicy, making peace between the creature and God.

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[346] 'For Dostoyevsky there was both God and man: the God who does not devour man and the man who is not dissolved in God but remains himself throughout all eternity… Dostoyevsky goes to the very depths of the divine together with man. Man belongs to the depths of eternity… He [Dostoyevsky] was in radical opposition to the monophysite spirit: he recognized not one single nature, human or divine, but two natures, human and divine.' *Dostoievsky*, (San Rafael, CA, Semantron Press, 2009), pp. 65-66. *Mirosozercaniye Dostoevskogo* (Moskva, AST Moskva: Hranitel, 2006), 51.

[347] Ibid. 145.

[348] N. Berdyaev, *The Divine and the Human*, (San Rafael, CA, Semantron Press, 2008), 7. *Ekzistencialnaya dialektika bozhestennogo i chelovecheskogo*, (Moskva, Astrel, 2010), 360. Berdyaev's words remarkably betray his awareness of the need for a new anthropology, which at the beginning of the 20th century was named 'philosophical anthropology'. Max Scheler, for instance, asserted that the 'problems of philosophical anthropology have become the centre of all philosophical problems…' M. Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, (Darmstadt, Otto Reichel Verlag, 1930), 11.

> When I became conscious of myself as a Christian, I came to confess a religion of God-manhood: that is to say, in becoming a believer in God I did not cease to believe in man and in man's dignity and creative freedom. I became a Christian because I was seeking for a deeper and truer foundation for belief in man.'[349]

In other words, the main goal of Berdyaev's philosophy was not simply to defend God, but to do so in the only possible way – by defending the dignity of the human. But this is not everything. Berdyaev believed that the most important drawback of historical or conventional Christianity was that it embraced a monistic ontology.

> […] All monophysitism that diminishes or denies the value of human nature is a denial also of the mystery of Christ, of the divine-human mystery of unity in duality. All the weaknesses and failures of Christianity in history spring from the difficulty experienced even by Christians themselves in grasping the divine-human mystery of a nature which is both single and dual. In addition to this, the tendency towards a practical monophysitism is another cause of such failure. Even in the Christian era of universal life the human mind is still equally subject to monistic influences, and thought naturally tends in that direction.[350]

For Berdyaev the only way to overcome this monistic tendency is to be found in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, in the unconfused union of divine and human nature, that is, in the Person of God-Man. There are two absolutely central doctrines without which, according to Berdyaev, Christianity is impossible: the doctrines of the Divine Trinity and Godmanhood.[351] In other words, the concept of the *Ungrund* cannot be grasped unless analysed in the context of Berdyaev's understanding of Godmanhood; the doctrine of Godmanhood is on the other hand essentially intertwined with the doctrine of the Divine Trinity. Furthermore, this means—and this is my crucial argument—that there is a strong parallel between the question, why is God God the Trinity and not simply God the One, and the question, why has God created the human? To repeat my previous conclusion, human freedom depends on divine freedom; however, not every way of interpreting the doctrine of

[349] DR, 180. SP, 222.
[350] FS, 207. FSD, 245.
[351] FS, 206. FSD, 245.

the divine Trinity allows for a satisfying notion of divine freedom. Unless each of the persons of the Trinity has full ontological identity, freedom as a capacity for infinite newness is inconceivable. I shall endeavour to demonstrate that this concept of freedom is possible only if it is based on an idea similar to that of the *Ungrund*.

Some of the reasons for which Berdyaev decides to use the notion of the *Ungrund* and uncreated freedom might have been already obvious from my scrutiny of both the theology of the Confessor and his commentators. However, a full explanation is still needed and this is the scope of the section that follows.

3.1 The Meaning of the Concept of Ungrund

Firstly, I shall explain how Böhme and Berdyaev conceived of the *Ungrund*, and what the main differences were that Berdyaev introduced into Böhme's theory. Secondly, I shall expound on how different commentators apprehended Berdyaev's vision of bottomless freedom, and consequently what their reasons were either to reject it or to accept it.

Berdyaev borrowed the concept of the *Ungrund* from Jacob Böhme (1571-1624), whom he regarded as the 'greatest of all mystics'.[352] According to Berdyaev, Böhme was 'the first in the history of human thought [who] has made freedom the first foundation of

[352] DR, 179. SP, 220. Hegel considered Böhme as the father of German philosophy, while Schelling believed that Böhme was a 'miracle' in human history. The shoemaker from Görlitz had a strong impact on Romantics such as Coleridge, Tieck, and Novalis. By his view of the 'original craving', which was an anticipation of modern existentialist views, Böhme left his mark on modern philosophy, on authors like Heidegger and Jaspers. Stoudt, 20. Both Böhme's and Berdyaev's views are kindred to the recent theological movement of 'open theism'. The term 'open theism' was introduced in 1980's with theologian Richard Price in his book *The Openness of God*: *The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will*, (Minneapolis, Bethany House, 1985), which offered a detailed articulation of open theism. However, the open theism theologians of the Evangelical and post-Evangelical background draw their inspiration mostly from Bible and do not refer neither to Böhme nor to Berdyaev.

being [:] freedom is to him deeper and more primary than all being, deeper and more primary than God himself.'[353] Böhme's teaching, asserts Berdyaev, goes beyond the confines of Greek thought and starts a new epoch in the history of human thought.[354] Böhme's importance for Christian philosophy, claims Berdyaev, is in his struggle to break the sway of the classical concept of God, and to reveal the truth about the 'first mystery of life' that was still concealed in Greek and Latin philosophy.[355]

Christian thought in general, argues Berdyaev, is so profoundly influenced by Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism, that every confrontation with this manner of reasoning seems to be an attack on the truths of Christian revelation.[356] Greek philosophy, as is well known, was not satisfied with what it regarded as the anthropomorphic depiction of the gods in Greek religion. Whilst Greek religion spoke of destiny, philosophy preferred the concept of necessity. The essential difference is that behind the notion of destiny there are gods and their will, whereas behind necessity there is only law.[357] In other words, religion thought of ultimate reality in personalistic terms, even if this was done in a manner that is not totally in agreement with Christian understanding of divine personality. Philosophy, on the other hand, postulated an impersonal principle above the personal gods. Even the gods were subjected to a higher power, which in this case was the ultimate metaphysical principle. In Plato's philosophy, for example, the impersonal principle of Good is elevated above the personal principle, God or Demiurge.[358] The Good, for Plato, is

[353] N. Berdyaev, 'Ungrund and Freedom' in Jacob Boehme, *Six Theosophic Points and Other Writings*, (Michigan, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1958), page xxiii.
[354] BE, 18. OEM, 26.
[355] *Six Theosophic Points*, page xxxvi.
[356] Ibid. page xxxvii.
[357] É. Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959), 19. Cited in John Sanders, *Historical Considerations*, in *The Openness of God*, (Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1994), 61.
[358] Gilson, for example, observes that, '[…] After describing the order of appearance, then the order of true reality, which is the same as that of intelligibility, he [Plato] says that even this "really real" is not supreme.

not mind or soul; it is an impersonal Idea or Form. The Demiurge, however, has both intelligence and soul. Although God or the Demiurge is dependent on the Good, he is nevertheless 'in every way perfect'. By divine perfection Plato implies that God is self-sufficient, immutable, timeless, and impassible.[359] As we shall see, Boehme and Berdyaev challenge these divine properties, although believing that by doing so they do not diminish God's omniscience.

Boehme maintained that behind both the spiritual and the physical universe there is an elemental groundlessness or bottomlessness,[360] the *Ungrund* or the Absolute. According to the German mystic, the *Ungrund* dwells deeper than God, it is the Godhead 'prior' to God. It represents potential basis for both God and the creation alike. In Böhme's words, the *Ungrund* is 'the uncausable and uncaused … an eternal nothingness, and the cause of an eternal beginning, a craving for something.'[361]

Böhme did not belong to the Neoplatonic tradition of mysticism but developed an original teaching, which differed from Neo-Platonism, as well as from Western scholasticism, in that he did not see the Godhead primarily as Being (esse) but as will. This primal, pure, naked, aimless, and content-less will is the central characteristic of the *Ungrund*.[362] This 'Abysmal Will', according to Böhme, stimulated by desire, manifested

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Above and beyond *οὐσία* there still remains an *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*, that is to say, a principle which lies beyond being. Such is the Good, of which Plato says that it passes being in power as well as in dignity. É. Gilson, *Being and some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 20.

[359] Sanders, pp. 62-63.

[360] These are some of the possible translations of the German word Ungrund.

[361] Cited by Berdyaev in *Spirit and Reality*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), 130. Cited also in, Michel Alexander Vallon, *An Apostle of Freedom* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), 150. Böhme draws his teaching on the Ungrund from John I, 1-3, interpreting John's 'in the beginning' in the following way: 'For "in the beginning' means the eternal beginning in the will of the Unground for a ground…' Cited in Stoudt, 198.

[362] Spinka, 118. Precisely because of his concept of will, there has recently been an increasing interest in Boehme's thought. His emphasis on the concepts such as lack, need, striving, and conflict as central for both divine and the human life, opened the path for modern voluntaristic philosophies. Thus, Stoudt saw Böhme as

itself in a threefold process. Firstly, in the theogonic process, the indeterminate will (the Father) actualises itself in the Eternal Mind (the Son), and finally out of both the Spirit is engendered.[363] The theogonic process, unlike Aristotle's 'Unmoved Mover',[364] produces a dynamic God, i.e., God the Trinity. The second process is metaphysical, which out of the groundless potentiality generated the variegated world of eternal ideas. Finally comes the cosmogonic process in which the world of nature came into being.[365]

Berdyaev arrived at the notion of the *Ungrund* through his rejection of the aforementioned classical ontology, i.e., of a 'long-standing and venerable tradition, which goes back to Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and continues in many other trends of modern philosophy.'[366] Berdyaev held that when we conceive of Being in the manner of this tradition, human freedom is impossible. Henceforth his breaking with ontology resulted in the recognition of the pre-eminence of Freedom over Being.

Although Berdyaev regarded Böhme's teaching concerning the *Ungrund* as susceptible to his own point of view, he makes one significant alteration to it, among some others of minor importance. In Böhme's view, God creates freedom and, as a consequence, freedom is rooted in him. However, Berdyaev maintains that freedom is both uncreated and

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'the first significant voluntarist' in Western thought. Stoudt, 302. Cited in, Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God(s)*: *Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 74-75.

[363] The councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, by affirming the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, have made two important modifications of the classical concept of God. First, as Robert Jenson observes, to be God now means to be related. This claim is in stark contradiction with the main principle of Hellenic philosophy according to which God is a monadic and self-sufficient substance, and as such does not relate. Second, if the Father begets the Son, then to be God implies not only to give being, but also, in the person of the Son and the Spirit, to receive 'being'. R. Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 85. Cited in Sanders, 77. In other words, the begetting of the Son is a form of the theogonic process and brings about a concept of a dynamic God.

[364] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in Richard McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1071-1075. Cited in Sanders, 65. Aristotle does not seem to be interested in the 'problem of God', but rather in the 'problem of change'. His main concern was to explain the origin of change and motion in the universe. Thus, by a logical induction he arrives at a God that is more of a metaphysical principle than God in Biblical sense. Sanders, 65.

[365] Vallon, 150. Spinka, 119.

[366] DR, 99. SP, 123.

lies 'outside' of God. His decision to see the *Ungrund* outside of God Berdyaev explains as follows, 'According to Böhme this freedom is in God; it is the inmost mysterious principle of divine life; whereas I conceived it to be outside God, preferring, as I do, not to speak of the unspeakable and ineffable apophatic mystery of God's life.[367]

When thinking about Berdyaev's central concepts of the *Ungrund*, we have to bear in mind that the Russian philosopher deliberately uses metaphorical language. This is because these notions, argues Berdyaev, cannot be grasped conceptually, since they transcend the limits of discursive reason. We have to understand Berdyaev's mythological language correctly; otherwise the real meaning of his philosophy remains unattainable. Berdyaev is trying to avoid rationalistic language that would distort primordial reality that is, in his view, above all concepts. However, whilst his apophatic vocabulary helps him to avoid reification, it demands cautious interpretation. Although one might rightly conclude that Berdyaev develops ontological dualism because he places uncreated freedom outside of God, this is not the case. As he has pointed out,

> To avoid misunderstanding I was always anxious to emphasise that the idea of 'groundless freedom' does not imply a kind of ontological dualism, which affirms the existence of two spheres of being, viz. God and freedom. Such affirmations are precisely evidence of rationalization, no less conspicuous than the affirmations of monism, which reduces everything to a single sphere of being, be it divine or human.[368]

3.1.1 Critiques of the Concept of the *Ungrund*

It was precisely the doctrine of the *Ungrund* that provoked more criticism that any other of Berdyaev's views. Spinka, for instance, observes, 'this highly speculative theory

[367] DR, 99. SP, 124.
[368] DR, 179. Cited in Vallon, 151.

raises more serious problems that it allays or solves.'[369] Evgeny Lampert even thinks that it is 'probably the most disastrous conclusion of his [Berdyaev's] whole philosophy; and one that seems in fact in no way warranted by his fundamental presuppositions.' [370] Commenting on Lampert's view, Spinka wrote that he is 'reluctantly constrained to agree, in the main, with this judgment.' He also adds, 'Granting the authentic character of Boehme's genius, and the vivifying influence he has exerted on many religious thinkers and philosophers, his insights nevertheless have sometimes been contrary to basic Christian concepts.'[371]

It seems that the concept of the *Ungrund* wouldn't have produced so many dubia had Berdyaev decided to locate bottomless freedom 'inside' God. James M. McLachlan, for instance, thinks that it is not possible to place the primeval Abyss outside of God even in a symbolical way. He believes that the only conceivable explanation for locating the Abyss outside of God is, firstly, a concession to traditional theology, or, secondly, to clear God of possible responsibility for evil.[372]

Commenting on McLachlan, Lubardić observes that to see the *Ungrund* outside of God, regardless of how we understand this 'dislocation', cannot be a concession to traditional theology; on the contrary, it is in opposition to it.[373] Lubardić is right because it would be difficult to find a concept similar to uncreated freedom, regardless of its possible interpretation in traditional theology, and this includes even the works of the mystical authors. Nonetheless, does this automatically mean that Berdyaev was wrong? He was

[369] Spinka, 121.
[370] Evgeny Lampert, 'Nicolas Berdyaev', in *Modern Christian Revolutionaries*, ed. Donald Attwater, (The Devin-Adair Company, 1947), 346, n4.
[371] Spinka, 121.
[372] James Morse McLachlan, *The Desire to be God; Freedom and the Other in Sartre and Berdyaev* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 137, n62.
[373] Bogdan Lubardić, *Nikolay A. Berdjaev izmedju Ungrund-a i Oca* (in Serbian), (Beograd, Brimo, 2003), 58.

aware that he is the only one who holds such a doctrine.[374] And yet he remained faithful to it to the end of his life.

Michel Vallon is one of the thinkers who believe that to see the *Ungrund* outside of God does not produce ontological dualism.[375] Vallon uses Berdyaev's own explanation, emphasizing that the Russian philosopher did not conceive of the absolute reality either in terms of monism or of dualism, but as if there were at the root of existence a basic antithesis, the one between God and uncreated freedom. However, this antithesis is transcended in the ultimate mystery of the Godhead.[376]

However, Vallon's interpretation of this major difficulty in Berdyaev's thought met stern criticism in a critical study written by Fuad Nucho.[377] Nucho does not believe that the antithesis between God and uncreated freedom was merely an assumption. He writes, 'to believe that, it is to attribute to him the sin of rationalization and conceptualization, against which he fought. The antithesis between God and uncreated freedom, whatever its meaning, was a concrete reality that Berdyaev experienced in his own life.'[378]

Thus we have here two schools of understanding of the *Ungrund*. Vallon and Clark belong to the first one. Their most important contentions can be summed up in three points:

1) The *Ungrund* represents reality, although in a meta-ontological sense.

[374] N. Berdyaev, *Samopoznaniye*, (Paris, Y.M.C.A. Press, 1949), 239. Cited in Spinka, 121.
[375] Among these authors belongs Oliver Clark. See his *Introduction to Berdyaev* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950).
[376] Vallon, 301.
[377] Fuad Nucho, *Berdyaev's Philosophy: The Existential Paradox of Freedom and Necessity* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1967).
[378] Nucho, 172.

2) The *Ungrund* is a reality that allows for the unity between uncreated freedom and God; the antithesis between the two is transcended since the *Ungrund* is the origin of both uncreated freedom and God.

3) Uncreated freedom does not stand in opposition to God, thus the *Ungrund* does not result in an ontological dualism.[379]

Nucho shares some of the mentioned assertions. He likewise believes that the *Ungrund* 'provides freedom for freedom';[380] he too holds that there is no ontological dualism in Berdyaev's thought. If there is a dualism, it is only symbolical. However, whereas Vallon and Clark assert that the *Ungrund* possesses a certain ontological reality, even if we understand it as a meta-ontological, Nucho sees bottomless freedom solely as an existential experience of the primacy of freedom.[381]

There is also a third group of scholars who assert that, although we might apprehend the *Ungrund* as a symbolical, meta-ontological or meta-logical reality, it cannot be denied that Berdyaev conceives of it as preceding God and God's world. In other words, these authors, among whom we might mention McLachlan and Lubardić, hold that despite his mythological and apophatic language, Berdyaev has created an ontological dualism, because he places the *Ungrund* outside of God.[382]

We have arrived at the most crucial question about Berdyaev's philosophy. I argue that Berdyaev's entire philosophical edifice is deliberately built on the assumption of the *Ungrund* that is 'outside' of God, i.e., on the presupposition of uncreated freedom over which God has no power. In that case, does Berdyaev not abolish God's omnipotence? I do

[379] Lubardić, 70.
[380] Ibid. 70.
[381] Ibid. 71.
[382] McLachlan, 123 n62; Lubardić, 71.

not believe that he was that naïve. I assert that he was trying to ensure 'freedom for [human] freedom' and to reconcile it with God's absolute supremacy. However, to demonstrate this we shall have to examine the way in which Berdyaev understands that the *Ungrund* is 'outside' of God. Perhaps the Russian philosopher believed that God's powerlessness over the *Ungrund* and uncreated freedom stems precisely from God's uncompromised power; that God's self-limitation and kenosis represent his true power. Berdyaev's comprehension of God's pre-eminence had nothing to do with the way power is understood on a natural level. As he explains,

> The social categories of dominance and power have been transferred to God and that was evil sociomorphism. But in truth God is not a master, nor is he a wielder of power. A wrong cosmomorhpism transferred categories of power to God, but God is certainly not power in the natural sense of the word.[383]

However I also deem, and I ground this conviction in Berdyaev's own words,[384] that his unsystematic way of philosophizing prevented him from making a crucial connection between the three of his most important tenets, of which I shall say more shortly. McLachlan comes very close to unwrapping this most intricate mystery of Berdyaev's philosophy, the locating of the *Ungrund* and uncreated freedom outside God, when he writes,

> Freedom cannot be derived from Being because the concept of being includes the possession of objective and determinate character. Freedom, if it is to be taken seriously, is the absence of external determination. Any derivation of freedom from something more ultimate gives it determinateness and destroys its reality. So freedom must be metaphysically ultimate. If freedom is to be taken metaphysically ultimate it cannot be a mode of Being.[385]

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[383] DH, 4. ED, 357.
[384] 'My thought moves largely around one centre, I have always been badly understood … It is of course I myself who am to blame for this as I have done but little to make my general outlook understood. I have announced it, but I have not developed it systematically.' BE, page v. OEM, 9.
[385] McLachlan, 122.

Traditional Christian theology likes to believe that the Christian God is above every concept of Being. But Berdyaev claimed boldly that there was a monophysite tendency in the theology of the patristic period. He argues, 'patristic anthropology failed to discover the whole truth about man; it did not deduce from Christological dogma all those conclusions about human nature which are capable of being drawn from it.'[386]

In other words, Berdyaev believed that traditional Christian theology, in some of its most subtle anthropological aspects, still suffers from a monistic way of thinking about God. And if freedom is to be worthy of its name it cannot be a mode of such a God. Berdyaev furthermore assumed that a rebellion against such a God in the name of the human is also an uprising of the true God Himself; a rising for the sake of a higher idea of God.[387]

Since Berdyaev develops his position having in mind Eastern patristic teaching, I would now like to analyze the critique of his concept of the *Ungrund* addressed to him from this specific angle.

3.1.2 Critique of the Concept of the *Ungrund* from a Patristic Position

Bogdan Lubardić, already mentioned in this chapter, is one of the rare theologians who scrutinize Berdyaev's work from the patristic point of view. The most crucial of Lubardić's arguments is that Berdyaev's introduction of the notion of the *Ungrund* was altogether redundant: patristic theology already provides means for the development of a thought that Berdyaev had in mind when he instituted the concept of groundless

[386] FS, 214. FSD, 253.
[387] DH, 2. ED, 355.

freedom.[388] Thus Lubardić claims that the most vital concept of Berdyaev's philosophy is superfluous. It is interesting how Lubardić phrases his evaluation of Berdyaev's philosophy. He writes that the Russian thinker 'did not manage to accept biblical and patristic teaching on the origins of freedom.'[389] Spinka uses almost the same phrase: 'Unable to accept the traditional Biblical view of the origin of freedom, Berdyaev developed a highly complex view of his own.'[390]

Spinka's expression does not necessarily imply that Berdyaev was unable to accept Biblical teaching because he was not capable of understanding it, although this connotation seems to be obvious from Lubardić's sentence. The reason why Berdyaev 'did not manage' to accept the traditional teaching was due to his 'erroneous apprehension of the patristic interpretation of Church doctrines.'[391] Hence we have to find, first, what were the reasons, according to Lubardić, for which Berdyaev initiated the 'new and quasi-Christian teaching' of the *Ungrund*; [392] second, what was it about patristic teaching that Berdyaev misunderstood.

The first assumption Lubardić makes is that the role of the *Ungrund* is to 'protect the mystery of divine existence.'[393] But what does he mean by the 'mystery of divine existence'? The mystery Lubardić talks about is meant to protect our apprehension of God from any form of what Berdyaev terms 'objectification'. However, Lubardić stresses, a 'mechanism' for such a protection already exists in patristic teaching. It is enough to recall

[388] Lubardić, 103.
[389] Ibid.12.
[390] Spinka, 118.
[391] Lubardić, 113.
[392] Ibid.103.
[393] Ibid. 104.

the divine 'Nothing' of Dionysius the Areopagite.[394] Thus we need to see if Dionysius's 'Nothing' of Godhead provides all the divine qualities Berdyaev deems as necessary for a true idea of God.[395]

Lubardić argues that the divine 'Nothing' or the Godhead, is neither non-being nor being. It is above every form of existent or non-existent being, and this is so because the Godhead is transcendent to every form of existent or non-existent. The term 'Nothing' is not to be taken literally and aims at expressing the absolute unknowability of the Godhead.

Secondly, together with 'Nothing' Dionysius also uses numerous other names that suggest a personal character of the Godhead. The 'Nothing' in Dionysius's view does not at all imply nothingness or emptiness. Quite the contrary, it is a superabundant fullness realized through the unity of the three divine Persons who enhypostasise their uncreated Nature.

To sum up, Dionysius's 'Nothing' is, first, absolutely transcendent to every form of being or non-being. Second, it is always enhypostasized and it cannot be conceived without the divine Persons. Third, we should not understand it as a contentless vacuum or nothingness; it is superabundant fullness. What do we learn about the divine Nothing from the aforementioned description of its qualities? What do we imply when we say that the Godhead is absolutely transcendent, or that it is personal and should be conceived of as superabundance rather than emptiness? The cited divine characteristics could be recapitulated in one, supreme divine feature, and that is that God's freedom is absolutely

[394] Ibid. 104. Berdyaev believed that in the Dionysian corpus one could find vestiges of Neoplatonic mysticism. MCA, 305: STv, 340. Berdyaev's opinion on Plotinus's mysticism was, however, rather negative. 'Plotinus is the clearest and the most gifted exponent of the mysticism of "the One". Plurality and individuality do not possess for him metaphysical reality. Man is lost in God.' Ibid. 339.

[395] Due to the limitations of this project I am not addressing here the concept of 'Nothingness' in Dionysius himself, but rather the way Lubardić interpreted it.

undetermined. This absolutely unrestricted divine freedom, claims Berdyaev, is the most essential difference between the Greek and scholastic understanding of being and the Christian God. Thus Lubardić rightly observes that Berdyaev introduces the *Ungrund* in order to deconstruct ontologism.

Since Dionysius's Nothing provides all the necessary features for overcoming ontologism, it seems that Berdyaev should have simply accepted the patristic position on freedom. Nonetheless, Berdyaev was also concerned that God's freedom ought not in any way restrict human freedom. Lubardić is well aware that along with the deconstruction of ontologism, the question of human freedom was one of Berdyaev's principal reasons for developing the concept of the groundless potentiality and freedom. This is obvious from his highlighting one of Berdyaev's central principles – the principle of Godmanhood. The Russian thinker held that one should theologize neither from God nor man, but from God-Man. Therefore Lubardić asks two significant questions: 1) What is the relation of the *Ungrund* to the concept of Godmanhood? 2) In what way does the notion of the *Ungrund* make a contribution to our better understanding of God as God-Man?[396]

In answering question 1) Lubardić explains that a lack of undetermined freedom would render both the creation and the redemption of the human and the world meaningless. In both cases it is only God who acts by imposing his will on his creation. Lubardić's solution of question 2) takes us, in my opinion, closer to Berdyaev's most fundamental reason for inaugurating the *Ungrund*. Lubardić explicates that thanks to groundless freedom, Berdyaev manages to correct the alienation of God present in the theology of divine authority in which the relation between God and the creature takes the form of the one between master and slave. In Berdyaev's vision, God humbles himself

[396] Ibid. 41.

before the *Ungrund* and the creature. This specific form of kenosis, holds Berdyaev, is in harmony with the testimony of the New Testament. The divine 'powerlessness' is the supreme expression of God's power. Moreover, by accepting to limit himself before the *Ungrund*, God makes possible the interiorisation and appropriation of uncreated freedom.[397]

Another important aspect that calls for clarification is the relation between the *Ungrund* and Berdyaev's vision of creativity in the context of his teaching on God-manhood. In order to properly comprehend Berdyaev's concept of creativity it is necessary to elucidate his technical term 'meonic freedom'. Berdyaev coins this concept using two Greek terms, *μὴ* (no) and *ὄν* (being). We should understand meonic freedom not as an absolute nothing but as freedom from being's determinateness. Absolute nothing in Greek tradition, as we have said, was designated by the term *οὐκ ὄν*. Berdyaev explains that the *μὴ ὄν* contains in itself bottomless potentiality and that we could see it as a being that is not yet realized. God's creation of the world *ex nihilo* means that God has created the world out of freedom. Since the human has been created in divine image, concludes Berdyaev, he is also creator and is allotted the duty to engage in creative work.[398]

By introducing meonic freedom Berdyaev makes a correction to the Greek and scholastic concept of God.[399] Since we are looking for the consequences of the *Ungrund*'s impact on Berdyaev's teaching on Godmanhood, we could also add that meonic freedom radically reinterprets the traditional Greek and scholastic vision of the human. The *Ungrund* allows for three divine features that have been deemed incompatible with the classical and scholastic notion of God. These features are 1) God's dynamic character, that

[397] Ibid. pp. 44-45.
[398] Nucho, 100.
[399] Lubardić, 50.

is, God is not static but an ever developing supra-being; 2) God is conceived of as an inexhaustible life; 3) God is a Creator that brings about newness. Berdyaev contended that the idea of superabundant potentialities of the *Ungrund* is the principal contribution of apophatic theology. It is on the basis of the groundless freedom that God's creativity is possible as an unrestricted generation of new forms of life. The same principle ought to be applicable to human creativeness since Christ is not only God, but also the perfect human being.[400]

If meonic freedom were not prior to being, this would render impossible the creation of an absolute novum. We understand that the teaching on meonic freedom provides the basis for two theories: 1) the theory of anti-ontologism; and 2) the theory of creativity. We also observe that the two theories are interdependent; meonic freedom makes the creation of newness possible on both the divine and the human level. What is particularly interesting about the creature's creativeness is that he is the 'created creator with an uncreated element'.[401] This is what accounts for Berdyaev's 'Christology of man'. However, what especially distinguishes Berdyaev from other authors, observes Lubardić, is his emphasis on an 'anthropological revelation'. God does not want to know or to predestine the outcomes of our actions.[402]

Lubardić fairly comprehends Berdyaev's reasons for the inauguration of meonic freedom and he is fully aware that without the concept of the *Ungrund* that is outside of God, Berdyaev's idea of God and the human, and consequently of Godmanhood is implausible. For Berdyaev, a God who does not deliberately hide from himself the results of our free actions is a God that is created according to an image of what is inhuman in the

[400] Ibid. 52.
[401] Ibid. 53.
[402] Ibid. 54

creature. Lubardić understands this very well. This is precisely why his claim that in the Fathers we already have a 'mechanism' that would prevent us from turning God into being is even more surprising. It is clear from his elucidation of Dionysius' divine Nothing that the Areopagite does not develop a notion similar to meonic freedom. The divine Nothing is a bottomless abyss of potentialities just like the *Ungrund* but these two concepts are still radically different since Nothing is not 'outside'[403] of God. And, as we remember, without meonic freedom Berdyaev's concept of Godmanhood is impossible.

There must then be something else that Berdyaev misunderstood in patristic teaching, which made him introduce an altogether obsolete doctrine of the *Ungrund*. At this point we have arrived at my second question: 2) what was it, according to Lubardić, that Berdyaev did not understand in traditional theology?

Lubardić argues that Berdyaev misinterpreted the traditional teaching on *creatio ex nihilo*. He uses Berdyaev's own explanation as to how it is possible that the *Ungrund* does not create ontological dualism. Berdyaev claims that the *Ungrund* is not a rational concept but rather a symbol or a myth. Only if we interpret it in a rationalistic vein does it imply dualism. The bottomless freedom is a mystery that cannot be comprehended by our abstract faculties. Lubardić borrows Berdyaev's argument and asserts that, *mutatis mutandis*, one could make a similar claim about the traditional doctrine of creation out of nothing. That is, if we claim that this doctrine is a mystery not susceptible to conceptualization the doctrine does not lead to monism.[404] Lubardić argues that in developing the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* the Fathers implied a teaching similar to Berdyaev's, i.e., that God is indeed the creator of freedom but deliberately refuses to have absolute power over it.

[403] As long as we postulate that due to the bottomless freedom God is not the all-determining cause the question of whether the *Ungrund* is 'outside' or 'inside' God is rather irrelevant.
[404] Lubardić, 115.

Apart from being an astounding logical somersault, this renders a rather generous favour to the Fathers. Lubardić's postulation certainly could have been a rather strong argument against Berdyaev; it would have proved that the Russian thinker had indeed misjudged patristic theology. But in order to successfully make this point Lubardić should have been able to give at least one example of where the Fathers talk about God circumscribing His own omnipotence so as not to limit human freedom. Unfortunately, he does not provide such a quotation from patristic literature and his contention that Berdyaev failed to grasp the meaning of the traditional teaching remains unsupported.[405] It needs to be stressed, however, that even if we were to find the vestiges of an idea similar to Berdyaev's in the Fathers or even if we were able to derive this idea from their teaching, they do not offer a detailed and systematic exposition of human freedom as the power to create radical newness. It seems that, for some theologians at least, it takes a good deal of bravado to accept this simple and palpable fact.

Lubardić's critique of the *Ungrund* regarding Berdyaev's vision of human creativity appears perhaps even more unsubstantiated. Berdyaev directly links freedom with creativity, as in one of his most important claims that 'freedom is the power to create out of nothing…'[406] Lubardić recognizes that the doctrine of bottomless freedom was instated in order to provide ground for human creativity and the creation of radical newness. He adds, however, that patristic teaching on creation out of nothing, as well as the doctrine of *imago Dei*, already postulates such a possibility. Again, except for making a parallel between God

[405] In our correspondence from November 6 2012, Lubardić acknowledged that in order to provide more grounded critique of Berdyaev he needs to substantiate his claims with passages from Patristic texts in which the Fathers talk about human capacity to create radical newness. Lubardić is preparing a new and revised edition of his book on Berdyaev that, I was told, contains a number of quotations from the Church Fathers.
[406] MCA, pp. 144-46. STv, 179. It is interesting that none of the authors I quote in this work mention this definition of freedom although it seems to be fundamental for Berdyaev's entire philosophy.

and the human as *imago Dei* (a parallel that does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the person can create total novum), Lubardić does not support his claims with illustrations from patristic literature.

Lubardić's 'defence' of patristic theology against Berdyaev's critique paradoxically renders the patristic position even more vulnerable. Without a serious investigation of patristic texts an apology of the patristic teaching appears only arbitrary. My scrutiny of the theology of Maximus the Confessor in chapter Two is only one small step towards establishing a serious and two-way critical dialogue between Berdyaev and the Fathers. But first of all, as an inevitable precondition for such a dialogue, Christian theologians, Orthodox and patristic scholars in particular, would have to first recognize and acknowledge the innovative character of Berdyaev's thought. Unfortunately, this has not been the case so far.[407]

The mythological language Berdyaev uses certainly represents one of the principle reasons why his vision is so ambiguous and difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, he used the language of myth because he believed that there is no other way of expressing divine mysteries. At some point of his philosophical mythologem he should have explained in less equivocal terms that God, indeed, has no power over the meonic freedom and He will never abolish its integrity, but this is because the *Ungrund* is God in the form of the divine nature or Godhead. The *Ungrund* is the abysmal non-deterministic cradle of personal being, both uncreated and created, and as such it is not set against God. On the contrary, as a non-

[407] This is why Lubardić's book on Berdyaev is even more praiseworthy. At the end of his work Lubardić endeavors to make a balanced position on Berdyaev's philosophy from a point of view obviously strongly influenced by Florovsky's concept of the Neo-patristic synthesis. He writes that in the final analysis Florovsky's critique of Berdyaev, although made in a *Sturm und Drang* style, is appropriate. However, he immediately justifies those who decide, despite Florovsky's uncompromising position, not to totally reject Berdyaev. Lubardić also does not hesitate to call Berdyaev the 'ingenious Prophet from Clamart'. Lubardić, 122

determining source of life, Godhead enables the Trinity to be the Living God or the constant and limitless exchange of gifts between the hypostases.

Finally, I need to say couple of words about Berdyaev's terminology as a serious cause of misunderstanding. In 1935 he strongly reacted against the decree of Metropolitan Sergei that condemned Sergei Bulgakov's teaching on Sophia.[408] In his inspired and acerbic manner, Berdyaev writes:

> […] I am solidly with Fr. Sergey Bulgakov in his new problematics and in his struggle for the freedom of religious thought. It sometimes seems to me, that if he had not employed the Greek word Sophia, but had used only the Russian word 'Premudrost', then everything would have remained tranquil. This is an indicator of the insignificance and wretchedness of human accusations.[409]

Similarly, we may speculate that had Berdyaev not employed the German term *Ungrund*, with its rich mystical and heterodox connotations, but used some Russian word, perhaps everything would have remained tranquil. Moreover, his thought not only would not have been evaluated as unorthodox, but also might have been regarded as a significant contribution to Christian theology.

Since Lubardić did not deny his initial argument that Berdyaev's rather complex philosophical construction was altogether redundant he could not give a satisfying evaluation of Berdyaev's philosophy. In order to defend the patristic position he had to question Berdyaev's crucial concept of Godmanhood. The notion of Godmanhood as well as Berdyaev's concept of human personality could be illuminated only if we first understand the model according to which it was conceived, and that is the model of the Trinity. None of Berdyaev's commentators mentioned here deemed it necessary to investigate his vision of the Trinity. According to Berdyaev, God cannot be above an

[408] See more about it in: 'The Spirit of the Grand Inquisitor', Journal Put', October-December 1935, No. 49, 80.
[409] Ibid. 80.

objectified notion of being unless he is [the] Trinity. On the other hand, the Trinity as conceived by Berdyaev is unfeasible unless it rests upon a bottomless and infinite freedom. In the following section I shall seek to clarify Berdyaev's view of the Trinity.

3.2 Berdyaev's Vision of the Trinity

We have seen that Berdyaev introduces the notion of the *Ungrund* in order to deconstruct ontologism and to explain the possibility of God's freedom upon which he will build the edifice of human freedom. The crucial question that I am pursuing concerns Berdyaev's comprehension of divine freedom.

But before I try to answer the question about divine freedom it is of crucial importance to establish the real meaning of Berdyaev's terminology. Berdyaev's novel use of terminology was perhaps the principal source of misinterpretation of his philosophy. This is, for instance, obvious from the way Nikolaos Loudovikos reads Berdyaev.[410] I shall now seek to shed some light on Berdyaev's key concepts which sometimes appear in the form of antithesis, such as: 1) spirit and nature; 2) noumenal and phenomenal; 3) subject and object, and sometimes as single concepts such as: 4) objectification.

3.2.1 The Meaning of Berdyaev's Terminology

1) The fundamental antithesis upon which Berdyaev develops his philosophy is the one between spirit and nature. The distinction between spirit and nature has nothing to do

[410] Loudovikos, for instance, takes for granted that Berdyaev's 'nature' denotes divine and human nature, as well as the created world. Loudovikos, for instance, writes: 'Berdyaev identifies nature with the fallen world and slavery, with "objectified world", whereas personality is identified with Kantian "world of noumena" that is "spirit, freedom and creative power." *H Kleisth pneymathkothta kai to nohma toy eaytoy*, (Athens, Ellhnika grammata, 1999), 309.

with the antithesis between spirit and matter.[411] In that respect Berdyaev is above every form of idealism or materialism. Spirit and nature are Berdyaev's terms for Kant's world of noumena and phenomena. The term nature has two meanings; first, it denotes the objectified phenomenal world; second, it points to the world that is potentially noumenal and free. Material reality, asserts Berdyaev, is not denied but rather illuminated by spirit.[412] Everything that exists in its essence is potentially noumenal, spiritual, free, and infinite and as such escapes the definition of lifeless, abstract and delimiting concepts. Spirit, life, freedom, and infinity are interdependent; spirit, life, and freedom are implausible without infinity: 'Freedom presupposes the infinite.'[413] Berdyaev's crucial argument is that being in order to be both free and living ought to be infinite.

2) As is already clear, the world of noumena is for Berdyaev the world of spirit, life, and infinity. The phenomenal world comes to existence in the process of the conceptualization of the hypostatic reality of the noumenal world.

3) Another significant distinction is that between subject and object. In the noumenal world, explains Berdyaev, there are no objects, and everything exists in a subjective manner. Again Berdyaev does not use these terms with their commonly accepted meaning. His subject is in fact what I have so far named person or hypostasis. Subjective means personal. The noumenal world consists of subjects; however we need to understand that when Berdyaev says 'subject' he claims that everything that exists is hypostasis with the sense that this term had, for instance, in Gregory of Nyssa or Maximus the Confessor.

[411] As Vallon observed, 'Berdyaev postulates that the distinction traditionally made between spirit and matter … is not ultimate. Moreover, the identification of "spirit" with "soul" is Biblically unwarranted. Berdyaev posits as more accurate the antithesis between spirit and nature. To the latter he ascribes both soul and body. As to the former, he asserts that it belongs to altogether different reality.' Vallon, 175.
[412] Ibid. 176.
[413] DO, 74. MD, 58.

Subject or person always presupposes freedom and infinity. Objects on the other hand belong to the world of phenomena. The phenomenal world is a product of objectification.

4) Objectification occurs when one approaches reality with one's pure reason in the Kantian sense and takes its abstractions as the ultimate truth of reality. Objectification is the turning of subjects or hypostases, i.e., of the ultimate reality that is personal, into objects. Pure reason, as we know from Kant, does not provide true knowledge – *Vernunft*. Pure reason can only give us scientific knowledge – *Verstand*. Scientific knowledge is useful for practical reasons, it offers means for the usage of things but it cannot penetrate to the truth of their essence. Berdyaev explains that the entire organization of our reason and the entire apparatus of logical concepts is conceived for the natural world, so as to facilitate man's orientation in this world.[414]

Nature and object in Berdyaev's terminology denote the products of pure reason and of objectification. Nonetheless, Berdyaev explains that Kant's philosophy does not represent the end of metaphysics. We are not to conclude from Kant's philosophy that one cannot cognize the world of noumena. Spirit is that human cognitive power that is compatible with noumenal reality.

Berdyaev breaks with the tradition of an abstract metaphysics that was based upon the objectification of the phenomena of either human psychic life or of the material world, or of the world of ideas. Out of these three forms of objectification, metaphysical spiritualism, materialism, and idealism came into existence. Berdyaev asserts that all three forms of objectification, despite their differences, belong to naturalistic metaphysics.[415]

[414] FS, 64. FSD, 86.
[415] FS, 1. FSD, 19.

The main characteristic of naturalistic metaphysics, whether material or spiritual, is that it understands life as nature. The principal category of this metaphysical nature is that of substance. Being is substance, material or spiritual. Even God is substance. Nature and substance are static and without capacity for never-ending growth. This is why Berdyaev appraises 19th century German idealism as a preponderating event in liberation from naturalistic metaphysics. The metaphysics of German idealism is more dynamic than pre-Kantian naturalistic philosophy because its roots are in emancipation from every form of static substance.[416] 'German idealism', argues Berdyaev … 'has grasped this truth: that being is action and not substance, movement and not immobility, life and not thing.'[417]

We have identified the main divine attributes as: a) spirit; b) life; c) freedom; d) action; e) movement; and f) infinity. For Berdyaev, God is spirit, and the spirit is activity and liberty, activity in liberty. Aristotle's concept of God as *actus purus* deprives God of his inner active life. God is bereft of power; he is no longer a source of movement and life.[418] On the basis of the divine attributes we are now prepared to look for Berdyaev's concept of divine freedom. He writes:

> Liberty … is associated with what is infinite, with the very depths of being and of life. These infinite depths were still undiscovered by the mind of Greece and that is why it could not conceive of the idea of freedom. But it is within the sphere of Christianity and in the spiritual world that it reveals that this infinitude is disclosed. Freedom is bound up with the infinite potentialities of the spirit.[419]

Berdyaev puts an immense stress on his concept of infinity. There is no freedom without infinity. Freedom is genuine for Berdyaev only if it is without any external

[416] FS. 2. FSD, 20.
[417] FS. 2. FSD, 20.
[418] FS. pp. 2-3. FSD, pp. 20-21.
[419] FS, 128. The English translation renders incorrectly the last sentence. So instead of 'freedom is bound up with the potential energies of the spirit' I have put 'the infinite potentialities of the spirit'. ['Svoboda '*svyazana s beskonechnimi potenciyami dyha*.' FSD, 158. I find that Berdyaev's emphasis that liberty is associated with what is infinite is essential for his argument and should not be easily omitted.

constraints. On the other hand, spirit, life, action, and movement are conceivable only on the basis of freedom. It follows that divine being is feasible solely on the precondition that it is infinite. What is Berdyaev's conception of infinity?

5) Infinity is plausible only as personality. For Berdyaev, there are no 'objective' or impersonal realities. Although he does not use patristic technical terms, on the question of nature and hypostasis he holds the same position as, for example, Gregory of Nyssa or Maximus the Confessor. Instead of the terms 'nature' and 'hypostasis', Berdyaev uses the notions of 'being' and 'existent' (individual or subject). It is not true, he asserts, to say that being is: only that which exists is, only the existent is. Nature or being are that which is universal and they can exist solely in personal or hypostatic form: 'Being is the common, the universal. But the common has no existence and the universal is only within that which exists, in the subject of existence, not in the object. The world is multiple, everything in it is individual and single.'[420]

When Berdyaev claims that there is no liberty without infinity he implies that genuine freedom and infinity are to be found solely in personality. We can talk about divine as well as human freedom only if infinite divine and infinite human personality exists. What is then Berdyaev's concept of personality and what is for Berdyaev personal infinity?

3.2.2 Berdyaev's Concept of Personality

In this sub-section I shall mention only some of the most fundamental traits of personality according to Berdyaev. I shall give a more detailed description of this concept

[420] BE, 95. OEM, 90. Also, 'the existential sphere is also the personal sphere. There is nothing in general, nothing abstract in it. Just as God is manifest in the subject rather than in the object, so the personality is revealed in the existential subject.' *Solitude and Society*, (San Rafael, CA, Semantron Press, 2009), 47. *Ya i mir obyektov*, (Kniga po trebovaniyu, 2011), 38.

in the section that deals with the question of human freedom. As his initial step towards a description of God as infinite personality Berdyaev borrows Nicholas of Cusa's words that God is a *coincidentia oppositorum*. The qualities that are irreconcilable from a rationalistic point of view find themselves in God in perfect harmony. But perfection usually implies immobility. If something is perfect it follows that it does not need to struggle to attain more perfection. Such a striving would be suggestive of imperfection. The argument of the theological and metaphysical doctrine of the absolute immobility of God seems to be reasonable. Yet Berdyaev rejects this as sheer rationalism. Precisely because of the divine perfection, in God the absolute rest is inseparably interweaved with absolute motion. God's perfection does not entail immobility. God is spirit and life. If something is a living being or personality,[421] this according to Berdyaev means that it possesses capacity for an infinite origination of newness.

As we have seen, Berdyaev argues that liberty is associated with what is infinite. Since infinity exists only in a personal form, i.e., as a concrete personality, we may conclude that liberty is always related to an infinite person. An infinite person is infinite and free because it is capable of limitless generation of total newness. Berdyaev describes freedom as the capacity to create out of nothing, that is, to create things that were formerly non-existent. Personality and freedom, life and spirit are inconceivable if the appearance of totally new realities is impossible.

Berdyaev believes that infinite personality cannot exist if we understand it as a windowless monad as was the case with Leibnitz. For Leibnitz monad is simple substance, 'it is closed, shut up, it has neither window nor doors', explains Berdyaev. Personality, on the other hand is in constant encounter with infinity. Berdyaev adds, 'for personality,

[421] I argue that Berdyaev uses these two terms as synonyms.

however, infinity opens out, it enters into infinity, and admits infinity into itself; in its self-revelation it is directed towards an infinite content.'[422]

Since personality is not a closed monad we can conclude that in Berdyaev's vision personality cannot exist in isolation.[423] It has to be 'directed towards an infinite content'. An infinite content for a personality could only be other infinite personality. Once we break with an image of God as a lifeless substance and see him as a limitless spirit and life, movement and action, it follows that the genuine God ought to be personality. And since personality needs an infinite content, that is, needs another infinite personality, we have to conclude that genuine divine freedom is plausible only if God is more than one person.[424] This is why Berdyaev addresses a very severe critique to any form of monotheism that does not envisage God as the Trinity. Berdyaev even sees such monotheism as a form of idolatry. He argues, 'a naturalist attitude towards God, conceived of as a metaphysical transcendent Being, an immobile Substance, represents the latest form of idolatry in the history of human spirit. Monotheism can indeed be a form of idolatry.'[425]

From his categorical rejection of non-Trinitarian monotheism it is obvious that Berdyaev did not think that the oneness of God is incompatible with the three divine Hypostases. He firmly believed that in the revelations of spiritual life the Three form

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[422] N. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R. M. French (San Rafael, CA, Semantron Press, 2009), 22. *O rabstvye i svobodye chelovyeka*, (Paris, YMCA-Press), 20.

[423] In the previous chapter I have cited Zizioulas's similar understanding of personality as relational being. 'The person cannot exist in isolation. God is not alone; he is communion.' CO, 166. However, I have argued that Zizioulas's concept of the identity of divine persons does not entail infinity. Without infinite divine personalities it is not possible to conceive of divine freedom in a manner similar to Berdyaev's.

[424] Jürgen Moltmann has grasped this point of Berdyaev's thought. Moltmann writes: 'Anyone who denies movement in the divine nature also denies the divine Trinity. And to deny this is really to deny the whole Christian faith. For according to Berdyaev, the secret of Christianity is the perception of God's triune nature, the perception of the movement in the divine nature which that implies, and the perception of the history of God's passion which springs from this. Christian faith is the experience of the boundless freedom of which this is the source.' J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 45.

[425] FS, 23. FSD, 43.

perfect unity without losing their particularity. In the life of the spirit there is no room for antithesis between unity and multiplicity.

> Unity is not opposed to multiplicity as to some exterior reality, for it penetrates the latter and creates its life while at the same time leaving it as multiplicity. 'I am in my Father, ye are in me, and I in you' … It is on this victory over the outsideness extrinsicity[426] [*vnepolozhnost*] of the one and the many that spiritual life is based.'[427]

The Trinitarian nature of God, claims Berdyaev, is only unacceptable for rational thought.[428] Moreover, rational thought has a natural inclination towards monism: 'Reason, without illumination of faith, tends naturally towards monism or dualism, and the mythological character of the Christian Trinity is an offence to the reason, which is too ready to see in it a form of polytheism.'[429]

Like Gregory Palamas,[430] Berdyaev talks about the inner life of the Trinity being principally characterized by love and longing between the divine persons.[431] The internal relationships between the hypostases of the Trinity are dynamic and are revealed as concrete life.[432] Monotheistic God could only love Himself. But the flow of limitless life is

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[426] We could also translate this term as 'exteriority' or 'outsideness'.
[427] FS, 17. FSD, 37.
[428] 'Berdyaev asserts that the Trinitarian doctrine cannot be derived from the law of identity, "the main law of reason". The law of identity expresses the fallen and limited order of nature as opposed to the order of freedom. The doctrine of the Trinity, on the other hand, implies belief in the realm of infinite existence. Such existence is unconstrained by law of identity. The Trinitarian doctrine "is sanctioned not by the law of logic, but by the law of logos", and can be grasped only by intuitive rather than by discursive thinking.' Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*, (Quincy, Franciscan Press, 1998), 107.
[429] FS, 73. FSD, 96
[430] See chapter Two.
[431] Sergius Bulgakov gives credit to Berdyaev for emphasizing the humanity of God in biblical representation. 'To reduce all this [God's emotions] to anthropomorphism is to close one's eyes to Divine reality and to replace the fiery words of Holy Scripture with the scholasticism of seminarians.' LG, 133.
[432] FS, 192; FSD, 229. Berdyaev was well aware, in his own words, that 'when we approach this mystery we find ourselves on a razor edge and it is very easy to fall from it in either direction; a fall which the Church calls heresy.' Ibid. 192. However, he believed that all forms of heresies are indications of a rationalistic approach to the divine mysteries, of a thinking that does not allow of antinomy in thinking about God. It is reason without illumination that produces heresies, concurrently condemning supra-rational thinking as heretical. 'Heretical doctrines are always rationalizations of spiritual experience because they regard as the whole truth what is only partially true. The mystics of Christianity do not make this mistake. They put forward the most daring ideas which alarm the minds of average people and appear sometimes even more extravagant and more contrary to our accustomed faith than the teaching of heretics.' Ibid. 193.

possible only between divine persons that are equal in dignity. The Father begets the Son out of God's longing for intra-divine eros, and 'it is the Son, born from all eternity, equal in dignity to the Father, Who responds to the divine aspiration of the loving subject and the loved object.'[433]

Apparently Berdyaev grounds his vision of the unity in God not on the unity of the divine nature or on the monarchy of the Father. The oneness in God is a result of a personal intra-Trinitarian *eros* and longing in which none of the Hypostases is in subordination.

> The antithesis between the one and the many has its origin in space, time, and matter, which are simply the result of the Fall and of the separation from God. Spiritual life is lived outside time, space, and matter… In spiritual life and experience there is given to me the interior unity of my destiny as well as that of the world, and of God Himself.'[434]

To recapitulate: I have started this section by asking about Berdyaev's concept of divine freedom. I have cited Berdyaev's analysis of the main divine characteristics as: 1) spirit, 2) life, 3) freedom, 4) action, 5) movement, and 6) infinity, concluding that divine freedom is bound up with the infinite potential of the spirit. I have also established a central place for Berdyaev's concept of infinity in his understanding of freedom. Furthermore, I have argued that in Berdyaev's consistently personalistic view infinity exists not as an abstract category, but as a concrete personality. For Berdyaev, personality is a dynamic living being that implies capacity for the infinite generation of newness. Freedom is bound up with the infinite potential of the spirit, meaning that freedom is identified with infinite personality. Personality, on the other hand, is infinite insofar it produces total newness. From this point of view we have better comprehension of Berdyaev's description of freedom as the power to create out of nothing. It is now necessary to give a short evaluation

[433] FS, 198. FSD, 235.
[434] FS, 18. FSD, pp. 37-38. Although in this paragraph Berdyaev talks on an anthropological level, it is possible by way of analogy to apply his view in the framework of the inner life of God.

of Berdyaev's vision of God as the Trinity. I argue that Berdyaev does not follow all the logical consequences of his initial claims, in particular the one related to his concepts of infinity and freedom.

3.2.3 Evaluation of Berdyaev's Concept of the Trinity

In Chapter Two I have posed a seemingly redundant question: why is God, God the Trinity? We have seen that Berdyaev's answer to this question is that God is not immobile substance, but is, rather, personality. Personality on the other hand is characterized by the infinite generation of absolute newness. As such, personality cannot be a windowless monad; it cannot live in isolation, but is directed towards an infinite content. If we want to overcome the concept of God as a lifeless substance, the only way to achieve this is to see God as personality. And since personality needs another infinite content, i.e., another personality, God needs to be more than one person. Nevertheless, since in his analysis of divine freedom Berdyaev emphasises the crucial importance of the concept of infinity, one would expect him to be consistent and to use this fundamental notion in order to explain God's trinitarian character as well as intra-trinitarian life. Probably due to the unsystematic character of his philosophy Berdyaev fails to do so. This is apparent in the paragraphs where he talks about the 'inner life of the Trinity'; the 'inner esoteric movement within God'; the 'internal relationships between the Hypostases of the Trinity' that are 'dynamic and not static and are revealed as concrete life'.[435] For instance, Berdyaev writes that 'God

[435] FS, 192. FSD, pp. 227-229.

longs for His other self, for the free response to His love',[436] without making it clear that love is implausible unless each of the divine Hypostasis is conceived as infinite.

Berdyaev is also inconsistent probably because he does not treat the question of the ontological identity of divine Hypostases. He does not try to elucidate what the full ontological identity of each divine Person would imply: is it, for instance, enough to claim that the Father's identity is solely in His fatherhood? If each divine Hypostasis is not ontologically distinct, it is difficult to see what could be the source of the intra-trinitarian eros. Both love and eros presuppose, as I have claimed in chapter Two, that the loved person, the person longed for, is hypostatically unique and distinct. One person is loved and yearned after precisely because it possesses identity that is different from mine. Berdyaev also fails to stress another important point about identity of the divine Hypostases: that it is not only unique, but also infinite.

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that the reasons for Berdyaev's inauguration of the *Ungrund* are explicable only from the context of the Trinity and Godmanhood. The inexhaustible circulation of life between the three Hypostases, in order to be untrammelled, ought to be based on the notion of bottomless and unrestricted freedom. Since Berdyaev only mentions, for instance, that the Father yearns for the Son, but he does not give any further elucidation, the introduction of the *Ungrund* in the framework of the Trinity remains partly unjustified.

What Berdyaev failed to explicate clearly in the trinitarian context, he managed in the context of anthropology. And although he tries to build his concept of human freedom on the basis of divine freedom, we shall see in the following section that Berdyaev's vision of the Trinity and divine freedom becomes clear only from the point of view of human

[436] FS, 191. FSD, 228.

liberty. But what is it that gives authenticity to Berdyaev's concept of human freedom? In order to answer this question we need to explain Berdyaev's concept of human personality.

3.3 Berdyaev's Notion of Human Personality

Berdyaev's entire vision of human personality and human freedom, as well as his vision of God, rests upon the human capacity for generation of the total novum. This is why most of Berdyaev's critics who were not comfortable with his concept of the 'external' *Ungrund*, and yet not being able to replace it with a satisfying doctrine, had to reject Berdyaev's teaching on the human person.[437] At this point we need to establish the main tenets of Berdyaev's vision of human personality.

3.3.1 The Main Principles of Berdyaev's Concept of Personality

First, 1) the creation of the human can be understood only if we grasp the inner life of the Divine Being.

> Traditional affirmative theology has been closely confined within rational concepts and that is why it has been unable to grasp that inner life of the Divine Being, solely in which the creation of the world and man (that is to say, the attitude of God towards His other self) can be understood.'[438]

We could interpret these words in the sense that there is a strong parallel between the reasons why God is the Trinity – why the Father begets the Son and spires the Spirit - and the creation of the human. Although the human person is created, God needs her almost

[437] See Lubardić, pp. 78-83. Lubardić argues that Berdyaev's anthropology betrays 'neo-humanistic tendencies'. Ibid. 78. Also George Seaver, *Nicolas Berdyaev: An Introduction to His Thought* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 15; Vallon, 197.
[438] FS, 190. FSD, 227.

in the same way as the Father needs the other two Hypostases.[439] The problem is that at this point Berdyaev's thought is imprecise. It is not the inner life of the Trinity that enlightens our understanding of the creation but, as we shall see, the creation of the person explains the relations between the divine Hypostases. Berdyaev never elucidates explicitly why the Father is in need of the Son. To say, as Berdyaev does, that the Father longs for the Son because of His love for His Son is a tautology. As I have argued in chapter Two and drawing from Rowan Williams, the source of the intra-trinitarian *eros* lies in the irreducible character of the personal otherness of the Trinity. To abolish the 'eternal difference' between the persons would be, as Williams observes, to abolish the love itself.[440]

This first principle of human personality leads to the second: 2) Since God is in need of his creature, the traditional concept of the creation has to be rejected.[441] Berdyaev claims, 'rationalistic and exoteric religious thought is obliged to maintain the cruel idea that God created the world capriciously, without necessity, and entirely unmoved from within.'[442]

If the creation was not necessary for God, the world and the person, the entire creation, is without significance and is going to perish, contends Berdyaev.[443] In order to

[439] Berdyaev is aware that due to the limitations of human language it is difficult to express the exact character of God's 'need' for man. He writes, 'in the depths of spiritual experience there is revealed not only man's need of God but also God's need of man. But clearly the word 'need' here is an inexact expression, as indeed are all human terms when applied to God.' FS, 210. FSD, 249.
[440] R. Williams, TWP, 117.
[441] If we again take Maximus the Confessor as an example of the Patristic teaching, we find that, despite his teaching on the human as microcosm and mediator, he does not understand the creation of the person as 'necessary' for God, or as a part of the interior life of the Divine. Maximus emphasizes that God is immovable and that movement pertains only to creatures. The goal of the creation is that creatures find rest in God's immobility. Although this rest is conceived as 'perpetual striving' (*ἐπέκτασις*), it is clear that only creatures strive towards God whereas God Himself is utterly immovable vis-à-vis His creation. See Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22:73-81; *Amb*. 7, PG 91:1069A-1077B.
[442] FS, 190. FSD, 227.
[443] It is clear that for Berdyaev we cannot ground human freedom solely on the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, that is, on the doctrine according to which the creation of the world was not an act of necessity. If God creates

secure a genuine basis for human liberty, argues Berdyaev, we need to see the mystery of the creation 'as the interior life of the Divine'. What Berdyaev tries to say here is that we can grasp what human freedom is only if we understand that we are intrinsically connected with the life of the Trinity.[444] That is, it seems that Berdyaev argues that it is impossible to avoid monophysitism if God creates the human without 'necessity' for him. 'This mystery,' contends Berdyaev, 'is the need which God feels for His other self, of one who loves and is beloved, which is realizable within the Trinity in Unity, which exists both above, and below, in heaven, and on earth.'[445]

Berdyaev claims that the theological doctrine in which God created the human for His own glory is not only degrading to us, but degrading to God as well. Berdyaev notices a striking fact that any doctrine that debases the creature also debases God.[446]He is aware that it is against the generally accepted Christian view on God to claim that God is in need, or that He experiences longing or desire.[447] According to the traditional view, if God longs for

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freely, His creation, according to Patristic teaching, also possesses freedom and is even 'equal of honour' (*ὁμὸτιμος*). *A Greek Patristic Lexicon*, (Oxford at Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 209-210.

[444] This is one of Berdyaev's most fundamental principles, without which his concept of Godmanhood remains incomprehensible, and I shall return to it later.

[445] FS, 191. FSD, 227.

[446] SF, 39. RSCH, 35.

[447] For a different view of patristic position about divine passibility and impassibility see: Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In his book Gavrilyuk argues that the 'picture of an essentially impassibilist account of God in patristic theology… is incorrect.' According to patristic teaching, observes Gavrilyuk, God deliberately accepted all the consequences of his incarnation, including suffering and death. Ibid. 20. However, he also points out that 'in the contemporary theological climate impassibility is so universally presented in an unfavourable light that it is quite often ignored that the notion of unrestricted divine passibility is also fraught with many difficulties.' He emphasizes that not all human emotions may be ascribed to God. Ibid. pp. 5-6. As an illustration for a passibility that is not necessarily incompatible with God I shall quote a passage from Origen: 'He [the Saviour] came down to earth in pity for the race of men. By our affections He was affected, before He was affected by the sufferings of the cross and condescended to take our flesh upon him. Had he not been affected, He would not have entered into association with the life of men. First He is affected; then He comes down and is seen. What is that affectation whereby on our account He is affected? *It is the affectation of love*. The Father Himself, too, the God of the Universe long suffering, and of great compassion, full of pity, is not He in a manner liable to affection? Are you unaware that, when He orders the affairs of men, He is subject to the affections of humanity? The Lord thy God bear with thy ways, as if a man should bear with his own son. God then bears with our ways, just as the Son of God bears with our affectations. *The Father is not impassible,*

something or someone, this implies two things: first, that God's being is mutable and mobile. Second, that God is imperfect. Moreover, this position, which was mainly influenced by Parmenides and the philosophic school of Elis,[448] claims that the Absolute, as a perfect being is immobile and self-sufficient.[449] Berdyaev believes that this understanding is a product of objectification, an invention of our rational consciousness that thinks on a natural level. Only in the natural world does rest exclude motion, and this is so because natural reasoning is confined to the laws of Aristotelian logic. Nevertheless, clarifies Berdyaev, God is *coincidentia oppositorum*, and in God absolute rest is inseparable with absolute motion.

Berdyaev also argues that we should break with our concept of perfection as an abstract, immobile, and static substance.[450] God is not substance, God is life, contends Berdyaev. God's longing for His other, and His creation of the other, is not a manifestation of divine insufficiency, but precisely a sign of the superabundance of His plenitude and perfection.[451]

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without affectations. If we pray to Him, He feels pity and sympathy. He experiences an affection of love. He concerns himself with things in which, by majesty of His nature, He can have no concern, and for our sakes He bears the affections of men.' *Selection from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen*, transl. R. B. Tollinton (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, New York and Toronto, The Macmillan Co., 1929), VII, pp. 15-16.

[448] FS, 192. FSD, 229.

[449] Zizioulas sees God's self-sufficiency as a form of 'closed ontology'. On this point Zizioulas quotes E. L. Mascall who refers to the classical Greek thought, Platonic and Aristotelian alike, as holders of a doctrine of 'closed' natures. Mascall observes that: '[For all Greeks] everything had a nicely rounded off nature which contained implicitly everything that the being could ever become… What Greek thought could not have tolerated… would have been the idea that a being could become more perfect in its kind by acquiring some characteristic which was not implicit in its nature before.' E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 246. Cited in Zizioulas, BC, 70, n11. According to a popular reading of Parmenides besides being complete and unchangeable, the One is also eternal and timeless. See John Sanders, 'Historical Considerations', in *The Openness of God*, 62.

[450] While Greek religion spoke of the ultimate reality as personal, philosophy endeavored to purify the concept of deity from anthropomorphism. For this purpose, philosophy used the methods of natural theology, deducing the concept of deity from the notion of perfection, since nothing less then perfection is appropriate for God (the method of *theoprepes*). Sanders, 61.

[451] FS, 191. FSD, 228.

At this point, however, I need to ask, what is the actual attribute of God's perfection? If we understand what divine perfection really is this will explain that divine longing does not necessarily entail God's imperfection. The question is related to the point previously made, i.e., that God's need for, and creation of, the human does not involve insufficiency. Divine yearning for his other, it appears, is not a deficiency precisely due to the character of the divine act of creation. God's genuine power and perfection are hidden in the features of His creative act. God's creative act, on the other hand, justifies God's longing for His other, because this action brings into being a very special kind of creature, i.e., human personality. Due to the very character of human personality, God's longing for his created other is not a sign of insufficiency, but quite contrary, it is a testimony of His perfection and His freedom. In other words, God's perfection and freedom are in His power to create human personality.

The question about divine perfection is important for us because it sheds light on Berdyaev's concept of the human person. I shall seek to elucidate what divine perfection is by analyzing God's works. The reason for this is quite simple. Probably the best way to evaluate any personality is by looking into that personality's works.[452] God's perfection should become apparent if we examine his best work. What is God's best creative achievement? Berdyaev answer is, '[…] the idea of man is the greatest divine idea.'[453]

We can establish the third principle of human personality according to Berdyaev: 3) human personality is God's most valuable piece of work. We could even assume that God

[452] According to Berdyaev, personality presupposes immutable but ever developing identity. Although a personality is supposed to constantly develop and create itself, each of personality's manifestations bears a unique and personal seal. 'The form of personality is integral, it is present as a whole in all the acts of personality, personality has a unique and unrepeatable form.' SF, 23. RSCH, 22.

[453] DR, 209. SP, 263. Berdyaev expresses the same idea in *Freedom and the Spirit*, but in accordance with his poetic and non-systematic way of writing, he does this in a less powerful and clear way. That is, instead of saying that the idea of man is the greatest divine idea, Berdyaev uses the adjective 'primordial' [osnovnaya]: 'The primordial divine idea is the idea of man.' FSD, 234.

would have created even more accomplished beings had this been, so to say, 'necessary', and moreover not only 'necessary', but also 'possible'.[454] I shall explain shortly how this daring idea can be justified.

According to Berdyaev the human is the best of God's realizations. Berdyaev also adds that, 'the primordial idea in man is the idea of God, which is the theme of humanity, just as man is the theme of God.'[455]

From these two statements it follows that out of the entire creation only the human is created in the divine image and likeness. This being so, we have to accept Berdyaev's contention that the human is the greatest divine idea since it would be simply impossible to conceive of anything 'greater' than the being created in God's image. Was it 'possible' for God to create something more perfect than His own image?

Furthermore, the dignity of the human, the significance of *imago Dei*, and consequently the perfection and power of God, is in the human capacity to create the idea of God. This contention needs elucidation. Berdyaev certainly did not mean to say that one creates God in an anthropomorphic way. Berdyaev claims, I argue, that one is capable of

[454] The standard Patristic view on this issue, with some dissenting voices, is that human nature, due to its dual, bodily and spiritual nature, occupies lower level than angelic nature. For Greek authors who contend man's superiority to the angels, see, among others: Macarius, *Homilies*, XV. 22, 43; Anastasius of Sinai, *Questiones*, 78, PG 89, 708A-B; Gregory Palamas, *Natural, Theological, Moral and Practical Chapters* 63, PG 150, 1165C-D, cited in Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 19. However, in Chapters, 27, PG, CL. 1140A, Palamas argues about superiority of angels. See, Kallistos Ware, 'The Human Person and the Greek Fathers', in *Persons and Personality*, ed. Arthur Peacocke and Grant Gillett, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987), 216. However, it is precisely because of its mixed character that human nature is able to play a role of microcosm, that is, to unite spiritual and bodily level, thus helping the material world to be spiritualized. Hence we could claim that human nature, as Ware observed, 'if not at the summit of the created order, is certainly at the centre.' Ware adds, 'An angel does not reflect and hold together in his person the entire creation, and so cannot serve as a microcosm. This is a role fulfilled only by a human. Our human nature, precisely because it is mixed, is more complete than the angelic, and by virtue of its greater complexity, it also possesses richer potentialities.' Ware, ibid. 200. However, probably the only criterion upon which one can assert or deny the superiority of angels would be the capacity of angels to create radical newness. If the human is the only creature endowed with such a capacity, this, despite of his double nature, places him above the angels.

[455] FS, 197. FSD, 234.

producing an 'idea' about God that does not diminish divine superabundant perfection, that is, that does not abolish divine transcendence. To 'create an idea' about God means moreover that one has the capacity to cognize God, i.e., that for us God is both transcendent and immanent. This is possible only on the condition that human cognitive faculties are illuminated and that they, in a paradoxical manner, transcend themselves. Berdyaev writes:

> Cognizance of God involves a passage through the revolution of consciousness, through spiritual enlightenment that changes the very nature of human reason. Enlightened and illuminated reason is a reason of a different kind, belonging neither to this world nor to this age. God is immanent in the reason when it is enlightened, illuminated, and spiritually integrated.'[456]

If we are capable of cognizing God, it follows that Berdyaev does not see *imago Dei* simply as a metaphorical term. The human being is created but endowed with capacity to transcend its createdness. Hence the human is potentially God by grace, that is, designed both as microcosm and microtheos. If God creates His other who is God by grace, we cannot say that God's longing for His other is a sign of imperfection.

In summary: in seeking to define human freedom, we have looked into divine freedom, i.e., into its archetype without which human liberty is inconceivable. Freedom, holds Berdyaev, is related to infinity and infinite potentialities of spirit.[457] Infinity exists only in personal form, thus freedom is connected to infinite personality. Personality, on the other hand, is infinite insofar it is able to create infinitely radical newness. Thus Berdyaev defines freedom as the power to create radical ever-newness. In God's case radical newness *par excellence* is human personality. What are the essential traits of human personality on

[456] FS, 73. FSD, 97.
[457] 'The category of infinity is, for Berdyaev, a symbol of the mystery of existence that refuses to be locked into any closed and finite form, however perfect. The Böhmean symbol of the *Ungrund*, which is the eternal freedom itself, is a symbol of that infinity that transcends all finite forms…' Georg Nikolaus, *C.G. Jung and Nikolai Berdyaev; Individuation and the Person*, (London, Routledge, 2011), 115.

the basis of which we see ourselves as microcosm and microtheos? Berdyaev writes, 'created beings do not create personality – personality is created only by God.'[458]

In the cited paragraph we observe the fifth fundamental characteristic of human personality: 4) only God creates personality. In other words, personality is such a mysterious and powerful mode of being that only God can create it. Why is personality such a unique and powerful being? Although human personality cannot create another personality, it has the capacity, argues Berdyaev, to generate hitherto non-existent values, a hitherto non-existent upsurge into truth, goodness and beauty. Human personality can create the super-worldly pleroma or fullness and completeness of being.[459] Thus only God can create a being that is an existential centre with inexhaustible and limitless capacity to engender newness. Personality is a living creature that at the bottom of its identity possesses a boundless source of ever-new life.

Moreover, I claim that, according to Berdyaev, 5) personality implies identity, and this is the sixth feature of human persona. Although Berdyaev does not use the term 'identity' itself it is apparent that his concept of personality implies it. He writes, for instance, about the 'unchanging' in personality, about the 'unity' of persona, 'personality is the unchanging in change, unity in manifold.'[460] Berdyaev understands that personality cannot be conceived solely as that unchanging or exclusively as that changing. However, it is exactly the combination of the two that accounts for the dynamic character of personality.

> It strikes us unpleasantly, alike if there is the unchanging in man and not change, and if there is change and not the unchanging; if there is unity and not the manifold, or the

[458] MCA, 142. STv, 176.
[459] MCA, 143. STv, 176.
[460] SF, 22. RSCH, 21.

> manifold and not unity. Both in the one case and in the other the essential qualitativeness of personality is disclosed.[461]

In contrast to Zizioulas, who claims that personality is *schesis*, that personality is moreover created by *schesis*,[462] Berdyaev claims that there must be an identity before relationship; otherwise there would be no one to create relation.[463]

> Personality must construct itself, enrich itself, fill itself with universal content… But for this, it must already exist. There must originally exist that subject which is called upon to construct itself. Personality is at the beginning of the road and it is only at the end of the road… Personality has a unique, an unrepeatable form, *Gestalt*.[464]

By creating human personality God creates an identity that is totally different from the identities of the divine Hypostases. I argue that the true character of the divine creation out of nothing is observed in the first place in God's power to engender radically new identity. God's supreme creation out of nothing is the creation of human personality and identity. The miracle of God's creative act is that He creates living beings with the following features:

a) Although created and dependent on God, at the same time they are also able to act as autonomous beings, that is, as free beings. Berdyaev explains, 'personality determines itself from within … and only determination from within and arising out of freedom, is personality.'[465] Although human personality is created, it possesses capacity for autonomous self-determination.

b) In spite of their created nature, each personality has a totally unique identity, an identity whose uniqueness can never be eradicated. Berdyaev stresses that 'personality is

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[461] SF, 22.
[462] See CO, pp. 60-61.
[463] Not only Zizioulas, but also the theology of open theism fails to address the issue of identity, both in divine and human context. For example, in *The Openness of God*, already cited in this chapter, the concept of identity is totally absent.
[464] SF, 23.
[465] SF, 26. RSCH, 24.

indestructible'.[466] Yet, this does not imply that personality is coeternal with God as if God was not its Creator. Personality can be coeternal with God and still be God's creation because God conceived it out of time. Realized personality always transcends time.

c) Identity is infinite; it could serve as a source of limitless growth and development. 'For personality, however, infinity opens out, it enters into infinity, and admits infinity into itself,' writes Berdyaev.[467]

If we apply to God the difference between negative and positive freedom, we shall observe that God is not free merely because He is not determined by any external limitation – which would only be negative freedom – such as pre-existing matter, space or ideas. God is free because He can create the miracle of human personality and identity – and that is positive freedom – which, although created, is also autonomous and endowed with power to enrich God's life.[468]

Human identity, in spite of its createdness, is endowed with autonomy, indestructible uniqueness, and infinity. I argue therefore that according to Berdyaev God's freedom is in His capacity to create a microtheos. From God's idea about the human we could draw an asymmetrical analogy between divine and human freedom. If divine freedom is in God's power to create human personality as His 'greatest idea', it follows that human freedom ought to be asymmetrically similar to the divine. Asymmetry in this case is due to our createdness. Due to our createdness, first a) one cannot create radically new things

[466] SF, 23. RSCH, 22. This is in stark contrast with Zizioulas who in my opinion confuses the terms 'identity' and 'person'. Zizioulas concludes that identity can cease to exist: 'When you are treated as nature, as a thing, you die as a particular identity. And if your soul is immortal, what is the use? You will exist, but without a personal identity…' CO, 166. Even if one is treated as a thing it does not follow that one loses one's identity, for how can one lose something that was created and given to him as one's eternal identity? When one is treated as a thing or treats others in the same manner one's identity is used in a wrong way and is not fulfilled as personality.

[467] SF, 22.

[468] As I have explained in the Introduction, by God here I mean God in his personal form.

without a medium; second b) one cannot create other personality. Nevertheless, what one is able to create is still so fundamentally new that one's creation enriches divine life. This is what Berdyaev implies when he says that the person is microtheos.

Although in patristic texts we find a description of the person as microtheos I believe that Berdyaev goes further than the Fathers. This is related to his understanding of the person as the 'absolute existential centre', not only in her relation to the world but also in her relation to God.[469] That which is by the inner logic of its being capable of being the absolute existential centre cannot serve as a means for some higher purpose. Although, according to Berdyaev, the existence of human personality is preconditioned by the existence of the divine Personality, it would be incorrect to claim that God is the person's end and the person merely a means to that end. Berdyaev, 'man as personality cannot be a means to God as Personality.'[470]

Rather than being totally consummated in her relation with God, human personality stands vis-à-vis God as an inexhaustible and ever-new existential centre. In the background of this idea, as its indispensable precondition, lies Berdyaev's concept of Godmanhood.

3.3.2 The Mystery of Godmanhoood

If God is not a lifeless substance but a living God this entails infinite and un-recurring process and flux in divine life. The idea of God as an ever-new and limitless life also involves what, drawing on Böhme, Berdyaev sees as a theogonic process. The theogonic process, on the other hand, presupposes the existence of the *Ungrund*. As we have seen, Berdyaev insists that, although the *Ungrund* is 'outside' of God, this does not

[469] SF, 26. RSCH, 24.
[470] SF, 39. RSCH, 35.

imply ontological dualism in God.[471] The distinction between God and the *Ungrund*, or Eckhart's distinction between the *Gott* and *Gottheit*, to which Berdyaev also refers,[472] is made only for the sake of the indispensable minimum of conceptual thinking about divine life. In reality, God and Godhead exist in irreducible oneness. Godhead is a bottomless abyss out of which takes place the process of the 'divine birth'.[473]

Berdyaev talks about humanity of God and, subsequently, about its counterpart, divinity of the human. The most crucial point in Berdyaev's argument is that the process of the divine 'birth' does not involve only the intra-trinitarian relation between the divine Hypostases. Except for the 'birth' of the divine Hypostases, the process in God also includes the birth of God in the human and the birth of the human in God – anthropogony is a part of theogony.[474] This idea bears tremendous consequences for our understanding of human personality. What Berdyaev wants to say here is that as much as God the Father needs the Son and the Spirit, He also needs the human. In order to be the interplay of boundless life, in the theogonic process Godhead becomes the three divine Hypostases. The Hypostases are limitless ontological identities in need of each other so as to actualize their

[471] Schelling uses somewhat different expressions that could help us understand better that the distinction between the *Ungrund* and God does not necessarily lead to dualism. Using the terminology of the natural philosophy of his time, Schelling speaks about nature and God. Nature is being insofar as it is merely the ground of existence whereas God is 'being' in so far as it exists. God and nature are, in Schelling's view, inseparable yet still distinct. Nonetheless, the German philosopher underlines that although nature dwells beyond God, it is to be thought 'neither as precedence according to time nor as priority of being.' Schelling adds that, although nature is the ground of God's existence, we can think of it as begotten by God. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, (New York, SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 27-28.
[472] FS, 194. FSD, 231.
[473] Ibid. 194.
[474] This idea is already present in Böhme's work. 'The hidden dialectic of God', i.e., the theogonic process, 'issued forth into the manifest dialectic of nature', which resulted with the creation of the sensible world. E. A. Beach, 74. Böhme's emphasis on the close relationship between theogony and cosmogony, between God's self-consciousness and God's self-revelation, played both a central and controversial role in modern religious thought.

infinitude.[475] A Hypostasis, apart from her ontologically infinite identity, in order to realize itself needs, in Berdyaev's words, an 'infinite content'. And that infinite content is only provided by another Hypostasis. This is why personality cannot live in a vacuum, in isolation. This is the pivotal claim of Berdyaev's relational ontology, and it finds its predecessor in Böhme's postulation that God would not have knowledge of himself (*Erkenntnis seiner selber*) if he did not reveal himself to himself.[476]

Berdyaev adds that the theogonic process is not complete if the created person is not also born in God. Berdyaev seems to suggest that we still think of God as substance as long as we assert that the intra-trinitarian exchange of life does not include the human. This assertion marks the fundamental difference between Berdyaev and patristic anthropology.[477] What Berdyaev essentially claims here is that for the fullness of divine life it is necessary that the interchange of infinitude over-bridge the gap between the divine Hypostases, the uncreated, and the human, the created. The unity of the uncreated and created, of the two ontologically absolutely different yet cognate levels, represents the fullness of the miracle of God's boundless life and freedom. The mystery of the divine life is both the mystery of God the Trinity and Godmanhood. That is why for the Russian philosopher Christianity is not simply the religion of the Trinity but of both the divine

[475] See more about this in chapter Two. Jürgen Habermas, for example, credited Böhme for having made the first attempt to think about the historicity of the Absolute. Jürgen Habermas, *Das Absolute und die Geschichte: Von der Zwiespältigkeit in Schellings Denken*, (Ph.D. diss., Bonn, 1954), 2. Cited in E. A. Beach, 75.

[476] E. A. Beach, 73.

[477] Criticizing Jewish monotheism, for example, Maximus the Confessor stresses that it is not satisfying because God 'possesses word and spirit as qualities, without itself being Intellect, Word and Spirit.' (*Expositio orationis dominicae*, CCSG 23, 52-3.) Are we to conclude, then, that for Maximus monotheism is acceptable only if the Hypostases have full ontological identity that allows the inner life of God? Although Maximus adds that Christians believe that God is Triad because of the 'essentially subsistent' Intellect, Word and Spirit (Ibid. 443 ff., CCSG 23, 53), it would be farfetched to draw the conclusion that Maximus here speaks of exactly the same relational ontology as it was developed in the previous chapter of this thesis. In Maximus's case we could probably speak of a relational ontology in embryonic form, just as his concept of personality, which preconditions such ontology is not sufficiently developed. It seems to be natural, then, that Maximus does not envision the human as a part in the inner life of the Trinity.

Trinity and Godhumanity.[478] God the Trinity and God-Man are inseparable to such an extent that God without the human would not be God the Trinity. 'God without man, an 'inhuman' God, would be Satan, not God the Trinity.'[479]

This claim seems to be against God's omnipotence. Yet, in this case we should probably compare God's 'need' for the creature with divine powerlessness before the *Ungrund*. Although the *Ungrund* is outside of God this does not compromise divine omnipotence. This is because God deliberately makes a *kenosis* before the uncreated freedom and the creature.[480] Just as the fullness of God's life is achieved in bridging the gap that separates Him from the created, God's love is fully demonstrated only when shown to someone who is of the different ontological level, i.e., to the creature.

Let us return to the question of the divine humanity. For the 'definite birth of God in man and man in God' [*okonchatelnoe porozhdenie Boga v cheloveke i cheloveka v Boge*],[481] for the coming together of the two natures to happen, Christ has to be God-Man. The fullness of the divine freedom is attained in Christ's Godmanhood, in the unconfused union of the uncreated and created. This is why the Son needs to be God-Man from eternity; that is, the human has to exist from eternity so as to be able, through the Son, to respond to the Father's call of love: 'Through the birth of the Son in eternity the whole spiritual race and the whole universe comprised in man, in fact the whole cosmos, responds to the appeal of divine love.'[482]

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[478] FS, 206. FSD, 245.
[479] FS, 189. FSD, 225.
[480] 'True divine "omnipotence" is entirely paradoxical; it resides entirely in the sacrificial power of infinite divine love which is utterly powerless. It is thus a very different kind of "omnipotence", which is diametrically opposed to the idea of absolute power.' Nicolaus, 123.
[481] Ibid. 189.
[482] FS, 198. FSD, 236.

The *pleroma* of the divine perfection, freedom, and love is incomplete without God-Man. If at some point of his personal form of life God was not also God-Man, if the creation of the person and the Son's incarnation took place in time, that would suggest that God was not perfect and that the movement towards creation was a sign of His imperfection. This brings us to the crucial question about Berdyaev's concepts of time and eternity and the way they are related to human personality.

3.3.3 Time, Eternity and Human Personality in Berdyaev's Philosophy

In this section we shall elucidate Berdyaev's concept of time, eternity, and human personality. We shall first look at the relationship between time and eternity. Berdyaev explains that the creation of the world could not have taken place in the fallen time, rather, 'creation took place in eternity as an interior act of the divine mystery.'[483]

In the context of metaphysics that comprehends movement as imperfection, the creation that brings forth a changeable being can only take place in time. As we have seen, according to Berdyaev God the Trinity is an infinite flow of life and in this sense God is both movement and perfect stillness. If God is personal, living God and not lifeless substance, He has to be God the Trinity. Thus, the word 'movement' inadequately describes the inner life of the Trinity. The concept of the trinitarian movement, clarifies Berdyaev, is not to be confused with movements on the natural level.

> The perception of God as a Trinity is the perception of the inner esoteric movement within God, which has quite clearly no analogy with that which transpires in our natural world. The internal relationships between the Hypostases of the Trinity are dynamic and not static and are revealed as concrete life.[484]

[483] Ibid. 198.
[484] FS, 192. FSD, 229.

The intra-trinitarian movement not only is not suggestive of an insufficiency in God, on the contrary, it is a token of divine supra-perfection. God's supra-perfection consists in His capacity, first, to beget the Son and to make the procession of the Spirit. Second, it also consists of the creation of human personality that, although created, even for God is a subject and an absolute existential centre.

We have already argued that personality cannot be means for some other purpose. Every personality is 'absolute', i.e., it is a purpose for itself. The main goal of a personality is to actualize its uniqueness, which would be lost if personality were to serve some other purpose. However, from the 'absoluteness' of personality it does not follow that personality is self-sufficient. Personality reaches out of itself towards an infinite content', towards another personality. For personality God is not an end that in the final analysis abolishes its radically unique identity. God and the person find the endless and never-consummated fulfillment of their longings in each other and neither of them could serve as 'end'.

By 'eternity' therefore Berdyaev does not imply reality absolutely unapproachable for us. That would be a dualistic way of thinking. Eternity also does not swallow time, which is the case in pantheistic monism. Both dualistic and pantheistic concepts of time and eternity fail to comprehend the mystery of Godmanhood.

> The initial phenomenon of religion, that is to say, this religious drama of separation and of meeting, this mystery of transfiguration and of union, can be explained neither by monism nor by monophysitism nor yet by dualism. For the former everything is included in an abstract initial unity, for the latter everything is hopelessly divided against itself and incapable of achieving unity… The powerlessness of monism and dualism to conceive the divine-human mystery is precisely the powerlessness of rational thought.[485]

In order to understand Berdyaev's concepts of eternity and time we need to recall the Judeo-Christian concept of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. In the context of the

[485] FS, 190. FSD, 226.

creation, the 'out of nothing' among other things also signifies that God the creation was not necessary. Creation was a positive act in the sense that the creature is able to participate in divine life without losing the logos of its nature. From a Biblical and Christian point of view, the creation of the world is not descent or degradation, but rather ascension. For Greek metaphysics, as well as for its modern descendants represented in Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Hegel, creation is regarded as a 'fall'. The world is a 'deduction' or 'alienation' that will be eventually abolished in the eternal unity. Judeo-Christian concept of the creation as an ascent marks the radical departure from the Greek metaphysics that is essentially monistic and its implications are of immense importance.[486]

What is true of the human participation in divine life must be true of time as well. If we are potentially endowed with all divine qualities, then time has to be micro-eternity. The creature is the mode of God existing as created. Time is the mode of eternity existing as created. If the human becomes 'God by grace' by virtue of participation in divine life, in the same vein time becomes 'eternity by grace'. This is so because time does not exist as an objective and a phenomenon separate from the creature. Berdyaev writes that, 'existential time, which is known to everyone by experience, is evidence of the fact that time is in man, and not man in time, and that time depends upon changes in man.'[487]

If Godmanhood is the primordial religious phenomenon, and if as a consequence in theologising we should start neither from God nor from the creature, but from God-Man, the same principle should be applicable in the case of time and eternity. In order to reach the truth about the relation between time and eternity we need to start thinking from

[486] Claude Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque*, (Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1962), pp. 13-14.
[487] BE, 206. OEM,179.

theandric time-eternity or what Berdyaev designates as meta-history.[488] Without such a concept of time, the hypostatic union of divine and human nature, as well as the idea of Godmanhood is simply unsustainable.[489] If Christ was walking amongst us as the human without ceasing to be God, then He must have been living in theandric time-eternity or meta-history. If Christ has ascended into the Father's bosom both as God and as the perfect Human, then time in the form of theandric time-eternity has its place in the Trinity.

Since we are created in the divine image and as such are able to participate in the divine life, the creation of human personality must have taken place in meta-history or theandric time-eternity, which are synonyms for the traditional term eternity.[490] We have arrived at the sixth characteristic of human personality: 6) the human was created in theandric meta-history or 'eternity'.

3.3.4 Human Personality as an Absolute Existential Centre

Berdyaev makes yet another assertion that is seemingly in contradiction with divine supremacy. He claims that the person is 'an absolute existential centre.' He states, 'God exists if man exists. When man disappears, God will also disappear… Angelus Silesius

[488] BE, 211. OEM, 183. Berdyaev distinguishes three forms of time: cosmic, historical, and existential. Cosmic time is calculated by mathematics on the basis of movement around the sun; this time is circular. Historical time is divided by mathematics into decades, centuries, and millennia. Since no event in historical time is repeatable, this time is linear. Existential time depends upon our experience and cannot be calculated. It is symbolised by the point and the movement in depth. Existential time is akin to eternity. Ibid. pp. 206-207. OEM, 179.

[489] 'Human historical destiny within time is not closed, but open to the transcendent, which may at any point enter into time. Nowhere is this eruption more dramatic that in the incarnation of the God-Man.' Nicolaus, 118.

[490] 'But it is absolutely impossible to conceive either of the creation of the world within time or of the end of the world within time. In objectified time there is no beginning, nor is there any end, there is only an endless middle. The beginning and the end are in existential time.' BE, 207. OEM, 180.

says, "I know that without me God could not endure for a moment. Were I brought to naught He would yield up the Ghost for lack (of me)."'[491]

Renowned contemporary Russian mystic Sophrony Sakharov observes that his death involves the death of everything that his consciousness encompasses, including the Creator Himself. Drawing from his experience Sakharov writes, 'the fact that with his [person's] death the whole world, even God, dies is possible only if he himself, of himself, is in a certain sense the centre of all creation.'[492]

We could add that if with our death even God dies, human personality is not only the centre of all creation but stands as such also in her relation to God. We have arrived at the seventh feature of human personality: 7) human personality is the 'absolute existential centre' of all creation and also in its relation to God. Is this contention in contrast with God's supreme power? Again, no. Whenever Berdyaev talks about the person as a radical existential centre, he always does so in relation to God and not to Godhead. What Berdyaev argues is that, if we die, God also dies, but this does not involve Godhead. God became God only for the sake of the creation.[493] Yet,

> In the primal void of the divine Nothingness [of Godhead], God and creation, God and man disappear, and even the very antithesis between them vanishes. 'Non-existent being is beyond God and beyond differentiation.' The distinction between the Creator and creation is not the deepest that exists, for it is eliminated altogether in the divine Nothingness that is no longer God.'[494]

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[491] FS, 194. FSD, 231. As I have already argued in the Introduction, one of the meanings of the death of God is the multiplication of life. Intro, 8. God's death in fact implies the descending of the Son of God into the original void of freedom. FS, 135. FSD, 165. By descending into meonic freedom, the New Adam empowers and resurrects human nature without acting as the nature's determining cause.

[492] *We Shall See Him as He Is*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds, (Essex, Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1988), pp. 12-13.

[493] FS, 194. FSD, 291.

[493] Nikolaus, 125.

[494] FS, 194. Using Whitehead's terminology, this would mean that in the divine Nothingness the antithesis between God's conceptual nature and derivative nature disappears.

As a summary of the seventh characteristic of human personality, we recall that the 'birth' of God, since it takes place in eternity, is a synchronic process resulting from the divine Nothingness and primeval will. The theogonic process also involves cosmogonic and anthropogonic processes; the latter is in fact at the very heart of the theogonic process. Although created, in terms of inexhaustiveness of her identity, the person becomes an equal dialogical partner with God—a microtheos. As such, the person stands before God as another existential centre over whose freedom God has no power. The creature experiences herself as an existential centre with whose death everything, including God, dies.[495]

These seven features of human personality are not everything Berdyaev has to say about the question of human freedom. These seven characteristics are the seven layers of personality intertwined in mutual interaction. They make possible the full realization of human freedom. Nonetheless, one actualizes the completeness of one's freedom only when he 'activates' the final trait of his personality. Berdyaev writes that due to the created identity's infinity, the person is capable of limitless growth. The limitless growth is thus the eight 8) feature of human personality. 'Man is a being who surmounts and transcends himself. The realization of personality in man is this continuous transcending of self.'[496]

The eighth attribute is closely linked to Berdyaev's definition of freedom as the power to create radical newness. If we agree with this understanding of freedom, it follows that the human active and mutually enriching interaction with God is the crown of our freedom. This is why for Berdyaev the highest form of freedom is the 'freedom of the

[495] Every man is potentially *ομφαλός* or umbilical of the world. Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty; Ecocritical Approaches to early Medieval Landscape*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.
[496] SF, 29. RSCH, 26.

eighth day of creation'. 'God expects from man the highest freedom, the freedom of the eighth day of creation…'[497]

3.4 Conclusion

For Berdyaev the only genuine theodicy is contingent upon anthropodicy. The true 'defence' of the human is the defence of human freedom. And one is free only if one is able to enrich the divine life. Thus Berdyaev defines freedom as the power to create radical newness.

Searching for the foundation of human freedom Berdyaev borrows the concept of the *Ungrund* from the German mystic Jacob Böhme. However, unlike Böhme, Berdyaev places the *Ungrund* 'outside' of God. The *Ungrund* is positioned 'outside' of God but this is because it is regarded as God's nature. Since this kind of freedom is not controlled by God Berdyaev calls it uncreated or meonic freedom. The existence of the uncreated freedom is the first precondition of a genuine human freedom and personality.

On the basis of meonic freedom Berdyaev builds his theory of human personality. In spite of Berdyaev's unsystematic presentation of the topic the eight essential characteristics of human personality can be derived. Each of the eight features provides a certain quality crucial for the fulfillment of human freedom. The main features are: 1) There is a parallel between the origination of the Son and the Spirit and the creation of human personality. Theogony implies anthropogony. 2) God is in 'need' of man. The conventional concept of the creation has to be rejected. 3) Human personality is God's most valuable creation, more valuable even than angels. 4) Although the person can create

[497] MCA, 158. STv, 191.

radical novum, only God can create personality. 5) Personality is not simply relationship but implies identity. Identity is infinite. Without an identity there would be no one to create relationship. 6) Personality was not created in what is conventionally called time but in meta-history or theandric time-eternity. 7) Personality is the supreme existential centre not only vis-à-vis creation but also in relationship to God. 8) Personality is continuous transcending of oneself according to the uniqueness of one's identity; personality ought to be unique and not to comply to the rules. God wants human beings to participate in the continuous creation of the world. Each personality is capable of bringing forth radical uniqueness and thus to enrich the divine life. This is the task that God expects from each human being.

Now we have to examine the eighth characteristic of human personality. In the following chapter I shall seek to elucidate what precisely the 'freedom of the eighth day of creation' means for Berdyaev.

4. Positive Freedom According to Nikolai Berdyaev: A New Epoch of Christianity

This chapter is divided into two major parts. In the first part I expound on the relation between Berdyaev's concepts of negative and positive freedom. Then I proceed with presenting Berdyaev's critique of historical Christianity and in particular what he calls 'Christianity's sin against the Holy Spirit'.

The second part deals with a set of concepts that serve to introduce Berdyaev's understanding of positive freedom as theurgy or freedom 'of the eighth day of creation.' These are asceticism, 'the world', and imagination. Finally, in the last section I mention Berdyaev's concepts of saintliness and genius/geniality, though I postpone a full explication of these notions for the next chapter.

The section on imagination gives a brief overview of the concept of intellect from Plato and Aristotle to Berdyaev. However, special attention is given to the subsection devoted to Kant, due to the importance of his Copernican turn and his theory of the transcendental apperception. With equal attentiveness I shall expound on Coleridge, as a successor of Kantian tradition, and his elaborate concept of imagination.

I argue that positive freedom is only one aspect in Berdyaev's multi-layered conception of liberty and that it always implies freedom from self-centeredness. A largely correct discussion of the complex relation between the negative form of freedom (or

freedom *from*) and freedom *for* is found in Paul A. Scaringi's doctoral thesis *'Freedom and the "Creative Act" in the writings of Nikolai Berdyaev: An Evaluation in Light of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Freedom'*.[498] Here, for reasons of space, I shall only highlight the main points of Scaringi's analysis of negative freedom in Berdyaev.

4.1 Positive and Negative Freedom According to Berdyaev

4.1.1 Relational Freedom with Autonomous Characteristics

Scaringi observes that at the base of Berdyaev's understanding of freedom is freedom from external determination, i.e., freedom is self-determination. Scaringi adds that although self-determination is a necessary part of freedom if a human being is to exist as a distinct entity, it is not freedom's sole characteristic. Berdyaev is aware, contends Scaringi, that if freedom is narrowly defined as self-determination or an autonomous freedom it follows that individualism is the apex of existence. Berdyaev advocates a *relational* freedom with *autonomous* characteristics: autonomous freedom or freedom *from* is only a point on a spectrum of freedom and in order to achieve its fullness it has to develop into a positive freedom or freedom *for*. The freedom *for* is what Scaringi names 'theandric' freedom, which is a liberty based on communion with God and others. In short, Berdyaev's conception of freedom is described by two seemingly paradoxical theses: 1) freedom is self-determination 2) freedom is dependent upon relationship with God and others.[499]

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[498] *Freedom and the "Creative Act" in the writings of Nikolai Berdyaev: An Evaluation in Light of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Freedom,* (University of St Andrews, Scotland, September, 2007), http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/10023/443/1/THESIS.pdf.

[499] Scaringi, pp. 62-64. As I shall explain later in this chapter, I believe that at this juncture Scaringi misreads Berdyaev. Although he is aware of the importance that meonic freedom plays in Berdyaev's thought (op. cit. 65), Scaringi fails to mention meonic freedom in his description of theandric freedom.

Furthermore, Scaringi explains that Berdyaev's notion of theandric freedom presupposes four elements:

1. A reconfigured view of *grace* in which there is no 'traditional antithesis between freedom and grace' because, according to Berdyaev, 'if he [human] is without freedom the reception of grace is impossible'.[500]

2. The *autonomy of the individual*, which, if it is to be achieved, requires

3. *Love*, as well as

4. *Sobornost*, i.e., a community of people who are bound in love to one another and to God.[501]

In his appraisal of Berdyaev's conception of freedom, Scaringi seems to be more concerned to defend the Russian thinker from accusations that his view of the human is 'titanic'[502] than to understand the implications of Berdyaev's claim about the monophysite tendency in the anthropology of the Early Church.[503] I shall argue that Berdyaev has developed a concept of positive freedom that, although bearing certain similarities, for instance, to the theology of liberty of Jürgen Moltmann, offers a fundamentally original view of human liberty. Berdyaev's main concern was not an anthropology that would be safe from charges of titanism. Such an anthropology already existed in the teaching of the Church Fathers. Berdyaev's vital goal was to defend the human being, as it is clearly expressed in the subtitle of his *The Meaning of the Creative Act*: *An Essay in the Justification of Man*. Thus, Scaringi's suggested reading of Berdyaev 'in light of'

[500] N. Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, (New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), 70.
[501] Scaringi, 89.
[502] Scaringi himself believes that, while the charge of 'titanism' may be too harsh, Berdyaev's anthropology provides enough material for such a critique. Ibid. 223.
[503] Scaringi is aware of Berdyaev's critique of the patristic anthropology. Ibid. 74.

Moltmann's theology of freedom with the purpose of making the Russian philosopher's thought more acceptable was a questionable endeavor from the very beginning. Berdyaev intentionally places himself not only outside of existing ecclesiastical anthropology, but is seeking to sketch a Christianity of the new epoch, the epoch of the Holy Spirit. Although one could argue that Berdyaev was wrong to believe that Christianity is going through different historical periods, an accurate critique of Berdyaev's position would need to question its very source, which is his vision of the *Ungrund*, together with his understanding of the interrelation between the theogonic and the anthropogonic processes. Scaringi grasps the vital importance of the *Ungrund* for Berdyaev's justification of the human[504] but fails to understand that for Berdyaev the Abysmal freedom makes sense only as long as it is 'outside' of God.[505] The *Ungrund* that is not controlled by God, as I have already claimed, is an idea without which Berdyaev's philosophical edifice is hardly meaningful. Berdyaev knew that he was the only thinker to hold such a bold idea, and yet nowhere in his work can we find the smallest sign that he doubted its validity. If we replace the vision of the *Ungrund* 'external' to God with Moltmann's idea of a God who bestows freedom upon his creation by creating space of liberty in him—a version of Lurian *tzim-tzum*—we strip Berdyaev's theology of freedom and creativity, as well as his anthropology, from its most vital principle.

However, Berdyaev's vision of freedom as theurgy is not entirely flawless. Thus, in chapter Five I shall outline my critique of Berdyaev's concept of the human as creative

[504] Scaringi, 226.
[505] Scaringi endorses Moltmann's view that freedom originates in God alone. Scaringi, 227. However, it becomes obvious that he misunderstands Berdyaev when he claims that 'by re-configuring Berdyaev's vision of freedom with Moltmann's theology of freedom (…) Berdyaev's overall objective was maintained (…) This re-configured view, then, posits that freedom depends on human subjectivity and relationship with God and others…' Scaringi, 227. Clearly, Scaringi suggests that Berdyaev's conception of freedom is feasible without human's direct relationship with meonic freedom.

being or *homo theurgos*, and shall suggest possible amendments for insufficiently developed aspects of this theory.

The full depth of Berdyaev's notion of human freedom can be grasped only if considered together with his other axial concepts of the *Ungrund*, God the Trinity, and Godmanhood. As I have maintained in chapter Three, these three notions disclose their full meaning only when they are taken together. The *Ungrund,* the Ungrounded freedom or Godhead, is the crucial basis for the Trinity, being an inexhaustible well of potentialities out of which a theogonic process, the process of the 'birth' of God, takes place. Furthermore, Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is God-Man, perfect God and perfect human being, from eternity. In Berdyaev's view, the theogonic and the anthropogonic process are the same creative movement in God. It is this idea of the human being as a part of the inner movement in God that makes Berdyaev's understanding of creativity, art, and culture as sacramental activities—his notion of the sacrament—possible in the first place.

The concept of Godmanhood also holds a prominent place in Berdyaev's theory of freedom. One should start to theologize, asserts Berdyaev, neither from God nor from the human, but from God-Man. The theogonic process in God is incomplete without the anthropogonic one. God is born from Godhead not only having in mind an exclusively divine framework, but also envisaging the human as a part of the life of the Trinity. Although created, the human is a part of the divine creative movement in which he plays an important role. Building on his vision of the *Ungrund* Berdyaev revisions the traditional Christian doctrine of the creation according to which God created the human being without having any real 'need' for him.

The scope of this chapter is to explicate Berdyaev's introductory notions of human freedom as the eighth day of creation. But before we start clarifying the theandric freedom in Berdyaev's work we need to learn more about his critique of historical Christianity, as well as about the different epochs that, in Berdyaev's view, Christianity is going through. This is important because every era has a characteristic understanding of human being and human freedom, which affects our understanding of asceticism and saintliness.

4.2 Christianity and the Sin Against the Spirit

Since God is regarded as creatively moving, it is plausible to claim that the world, which is a many-sided revelation of Divinity, is going through different epochs of divine revelation. Berdyaev discerns three major eras in the history of Christianity in each one of which a different Person of the Trinity has a more prominent role: 1) the epoch of the revelation of the law (the Father); 2) the revelation of the redemption (the Son); 3) and the revelation of creativity (the Spirit).[506] These three religious periods should correspond to the three forms of freedom. Since the epochs are co-existent so are the forms of freedom. Berdyaev stresses that true creativity and consequently genuine freedom is possible only on the basis of the redemption. 'Christ', he writes, 'has become immanent to the human nature and this deification of the human nature is what makes man Creator, akin to God-the-Creator.'[507] Humanity advances from a less perfect to a more perfect religious revelation

[506] MCA, 320. STv, 355. Berdyaev stresses that the three epochs are co-existent: 'To-day we have not fully lived out the law, and redemption from sin has not yet been completed, although the world is entering the new religious epoch.' Ibid.
[507] MCA, 101. STv, 133.

and it is reasonable to assert that, although vitally dependent on, the new form of freedom is superior to the previous one.

The three epochs of divine revelation in the world are the three eras of the revelation about the human.

> In the first epoch man's sin is brought to light and natural divine force is revealed; in the second epoch man is made a son of God and redemption from sin appears; in the third epoch the divinity of man's creative nature is finally revealed and divine power becomes human power. The revelation about man is the final divine revelation about the Trinity.[508]

Christianity has not sufficiently acknowledged that the world is going through different phases of revelation, asserts Berdyaev. Christian theology, he claims, develops its doctrines only with regard to law and redemption. Thus, Christian teaching on freedom is necessarily one-sided. Since historical Christianity seems to believe that the full truth about the human was revealed in the epochs of the law and the redemption, in which there is no revelation of the divinity of human creative nature, Christian teaching inevitably betrays a tendency towards monophysitism.

> The creative vocation of man was not revealed of necessity neither in the Old nor in the New Testament. Creativity is an act of man's god-like freedom, a revelation of the Creator's image in man. Creativity is neither in the Father nor in the Son, but in the Spirit, and that is why it surpasses the limits of the Old and the New Testament.[509]

As the root problem of historical Christianity Berdyaev identifies its refusal to recognize enough creative movement in God and thus fails to comprehend that the Church and the world are not finished. The bearer of the divine creative dynamic in God is the Holy Spirit. Whenever Christians regard human history as fixed and complete, whenever they stand against creative development and generation of new things, they sin against the Holy Spirit. Berdyaev contends,

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[508] MCA, 321. STv, 355.
[509] MCA, 98.STv, 130.

> Christianity in history has fallen into the most terrible sin, sin against the Holy Spirit. Christianity has blasphemed against the Spirit whenever it has recognized the Church as finished, Christianity as complete, creativeness as something forbidden and sinful. For life in the Spirit can be only eternally creative, and every stop or stay in the creative dynamic of the Church is thus a sin against the Spirit.[510]

Christians, adds Berdyaev, have misunderstood the concept of tradition. Instead of regarding it as an eternal creativity in the Spirit, they have transformed it into something static and external to them.[511] In other words, Berdyaev claims that Christians have identified tradition with the past and that teachings of the past have become, to use Florovsky's expression, the 'eternal criterion of the truth'. Berdyaev therefore argues that tradition in its petrified form has become one of the major signs of Christianity's sin against the Spirit. It follows that one ought to approach creatively even the dogmas of the Church because they mainly offer dogmatic or external account of the most elementary truths of faith, but not the full theological explanation. Consequently, the future can bring a new and a deeper grasp of the initial intuition of the dogmatic teachings.

Due to the erroneous understanding of tradition, contends Berdyaev, or because of the proclivity towards an almost idolatrous veneration of the past, the life of the Church has been fossilized: 'The life of the Church has ossified, has cooled, almost to the point of death, and it can be reborn only in man's religious creativeness, only in the new world-epoch. Christianity has grown old and wrinkled. Christianity is a two thousand years old man.'[512]

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[510] MCA, 331. STv, 366.
[511] Ibid. Scaringi writes, 'Berdyaev maintains that tradition becomes problematic when it either becomes objectified, so that it is an authority external to the person, or when people believe that the past, where the tradition originated, must somehow be re-created. In this latter deviation tradition becomes nostalgia; Berdyaev considers nostalgia to be a sentimental form of tradition that can lead the person away from creativity.' Op. cit. 101.
[512] MCA, 331. STv, 366.

Although modern Christians are poor in spiritual gifts and have 'scarcely learned how properly to make the sign of the cross', they live in a religious epoch other than that of the greatest saints.

> Alone, this old and eternal Christian saintliness is unable to lead man over into a world-creative epoch… Each of us receives a 2,000-year-old Christianity and this lays upon each of us a burden of world responsibility. The responsibility for the world growth of Christianity, and not merely our personal growth, is laid upon us.[513]

The old Christian consciousness, Berdyaev boldly argues, which fearfully closed its eyes to human's religious development in the direction of a new and brave form of freedom, is doomed to disappear. Many contemporary Christians feel nostalgic about the previous religious epoch and this envy paralyzes their spiritual life. Berdyaev asserts that, 'this constant spiritual depression paralyses creativeness and gives birth only to religious cowardice. This eternal discouragement with one's own feebleness is not worthy of being called saintliness. This does not increase saintliness by one iota.'[514]

4.1.1 Failure of the Church of Peter

The old church of law and redemption Berdyaev calls the church of Peter. This church, being unable to understand the new, anthropological content in modern person—human yearning for a new form of freedom—cannot anymore provide satisfying forms of spiritual life. The Christian understanding of monasticism, for example, as a spiritual life *per se*, suffers from one-sidedness and it has to be revised in accordance to the new epoch. The traditional ideal of saintliness has to be complemented by a new concept that Berdyaev introduces, i.e., the concept of genius. Berdyaev claims that, 'on the way of creative genius

[513] MCA, 169. STv, 203.
[514] MCA, 170. STv, 204.

it is possible that a special new type of monasticism [i.e., a new type of saintliness] should arise. This way demands no less renunciation of "the world" and its goods than the way of monasticism as now recognized. The life of genius is a monastic life in "the world."'[515]

Berdyaev is quick to add that what is eternal cannot grow old. His critique is directed against historical Christianity, or the aspect of Christianity that is distorted by human incapacity to grasp God as continually bringing about, and expecting from the human person, eternal newness.

> It is only the temporal in Christianity that has grown old, it is only a certain epoch of Christianity that has been outlived. The infant stage of the first education of man, the epoch of guardianship and religious fear, has grown old and wrinkled, has lost its vivacity. The abnormality in Christianity is just this wrinkled old-age of the infant.[516]

As we have seen, Berdyaev calls the Christianity that has served its purpose the Church of Peter. This church, church of the religious guidance of children for whom one is always fearful, has completed its mission in conserving the Christian shrine for the masses of people for the times of humankind's maturity. Berdyaev believes that the moment of human maturity has now arrived, but, and this is important to stress, not because humans have become more perfect.

> Man has now matured into readiness for the new religious Church, not because he has become sinless and perfect, not because he has fulfilled all the commandments of the church of Peter, but because man's consciousness at the height of culture has attained mature and final acuteness… The adult is not better than the child but he is mature. Man has finally moved out of his childhood, has become mature in both his vices and his virtues… And for modern man there can be no return to childish or infantile religiosity, he cannot return to religious tutelage.[517]

[515] MCA, 178. STv, 213.
[516] MCA, 332. STv, 366.
[517] MCA, pp. 332-333. STv, 367.

The church of Peter, and the forms of saintliness, *starchestvo*,[518] and monasticism that belong to it, is unable to understand and satisfy the modern person and cannot cope with his religious tragedy, claims Berdyaev. The church of Peter refuses to acknowledge a 'new content' in the being of modern humans and this is why it is powerless to help with the sins of maturity.[519] I believe that Berdyaev comprehends this new content in modern person, the consciousness attained at the 'height of culture', as rebellion against a monophysite penchant found both in the theology of the early Church Fathers and in their modern followers, and their failure to produce a new vision of freedom. The 'new content' is twofold. Its first aspect 1) is related to the human yearning for a genuine freedom that would overcome the boundaries of the epoch of law and redemption. The genuine human freedom consists of two elements: a) first, of the human capacity to change the givenness of the world. It is important to note that changing of the world does not imply only altering of 'the world' of objectification, or that it does not solely consist of the contemplation of the noumenal cosmos and the principles (*logoi*) of the creation that would be simply returned to God. God expects the human to change the world by creating new principles of the creation. b) The second element of the new form of freedom is human capacity to enrich the divine life by creating new *logoi* of the creation. The second aspect 2) of the 'new content' is related to the form in which the new freedom will be expressed. This form, in Berdyaev's view, appears to be a religious creativity or a religious culture, or, in other words, creativity and culture taken as a radical change of the world and the creation of the new being.

[518] *Starchestvo* is a Russian term for eldership.
[519] MCA, 333. STv, 367.

For Berdyaev, creativity and culture are phenomena that stem from the human desire to respond to the divine call for continuing creation of the world. Creativity and culture are expressions of the human desire for a genuine freedom as the continuation of the creation. By continuing God's creation humans vanquish the givenness of the world and enrich the divine life and bring to being something formerly non-existent and unforeseen by God. Therefore, creativity and culture spring from the view that freedom is illusory unless we are able to overcome the determinism that the world imposes on us and to generate something that God did not envision. This conception of creativity and culture implies a doctrine of the creation radically different from the traditional one according to which God created the human without having any 'need' for him. In their essence—from which, as we shall see, they have become alienated in most cases—creativity and culture are nothing less than a human answer to God's vision about human who is a part of the creative movement in the Trinity. Thus, Berdyaev understands religious culture as a form of *sacramental* [520] creativity. This is clear from the question he asks about the *religious* meaning of creativity – 'was there in the world a creativity in the religious sense of the word?'[521]

We have seen, therefore, that what is missing from the Christianity of redemption, what is absent from the redemptional conceptions of saintliness, *starchestvo*, and monasticism—and what represents Church's 'sin against the Holy Spirit'— is precisely the new form of freedom that God demands from his creature. 'In the Gospel', contends Berdyaev, 'there is not a single word about creativity… The New Testament aspect of

[520] In the next chapter I shall explain how I understand Berdyaev's conception of sacrament.
[521] MCA, 101. STv, 133.

Christ as a God who sacrifices himself for the sins of the world still does not reveal the creative mystery of man.'[522]

Human creativity is not revealed, explains Berdyaev, because this is according to God's providence. The mystery of creativity does not come from above, it comes from 'below', it is not theological, but anthropological revelation.[523] And the mystery of human creativity was not revealed because, had God revealed it, the revelation would have limited human freedom. For this reason, continues Berdyaev, in an act of his omnipotent will, God wanted to circumscribe his foreknowledge about what the human creative freedom was going to reveal. He writes, 'in his wisdom, God has hidden from man his will according to which man is called to be free and bold creator, whilst from himself God has hidden that what man was going to create in his free boldness.'[524]

4.1.1 Responsibility of *Startsi*

In his categorical critique of historical Christianity Berdyaev touches upon some of the most sensitive issues in his own Orthodox Church. One of these issues is related to the question of how much spiritually outstanding monks, spiritual 'elders' or *startsi*, are responsible for the decay of Christianity. To most of the devout Russian Christians, who have a special reverence for *startsi*, Berdyaev's words must have sounded like blasphemy.

[522] MCA, 96. STv, 128.
[523] MCA, 98. STv, 129.
[524] MCA, 100. STv, 132.

'And for the decadence of Christian life today it is not the worst who are responsible, but the best among them. *Maybe the startsi are the most responsible*.'[525]

Berdyaev is not, as we have seen, against saintliness, and consequently against *startsi*, because in saintliness he saw 'an eternal and undying truth'. However, he thought that that truth is incomplete because it belonged to the previous epoch, i.e., to the Church of Peter, which has served its mission. In Berdyaev's view, what characterizes saintliness is mainly its almost exclusive stress upon repentance and a battle against the old human nature, and a lack of concern what is the role of the redeemed human nature.[526] In short, saintliness is concerned mainly with freedom *from* or with the negative side of freedom. But for the overcoming of 'the world'—and 'the world' is a notion that stands for every kind of determinism—freedom *from* is not sufficient.

The asceticism of the Fathers was once a new act in the world and a heroic challenge to the fallen nature. Today, however, this revolutionary spirit of asceticism has changed into petrification.

> St Isaac the Syrian was palpitatingly alive in his time and will remain so for ever. His work was revolutionary: it carried on a super-human straggle against the old nature… Today St Isaac the Syrian, great and eternal, may become a source of death for us… Now the world is moving towards new forms of ascetic discipline. The old experience of humility and obedience has turned into something evil. And it is necessary to enter the way of religious disobedience to the world and the evil of the world when the spirit of death is sensed in the fruits of obedience. Man is to face the world not with humble obedience but rather with creative activity.[527]

[525] MCA, 170. STv, 204. It is interesting that the sentence I have italicized is omitted from the English translation. Was it simply a mistake or the translator deemed that Berdyaev's casting the blame on *startsi* would be too harsh for most Orthodox readers?

[526] Berdyaev is fully aware of the importance of repentance for spiritual life. He writes, 'the struggle with the darkness of sin begins with repentance. The spiritual life is unthinkable without the great mystery of repentance. Sin must be not only recognized but it must be consumed in the fire of repentance.' MCA, 165. STv, 199.

[527] MCA, 167. STv, 201.

It is important to note that Berdyaev starts his critique of traditional asceticism by focusing on the concepts of humility and obedience. Humility and obedience, he claims, have turned now into something evil. Humility and obedience cover only one, redemptional aspect of Christ, but the full mystery of the Lord, and consequently the full mystery of human beings, is not only in Christ who took the form of the servant, but also in Christ the King.[528] In other words, humility and obedience are concerned only with the question of how human nature is redeemed, overlooking an equally important problem of what is supposed to be the activity and the goal of the redeemed human nature.

Humility and obedience are necessary for redemption and salvation. The problem is, however, that the redemptional concept of salvation betrays all the drawbacks of the second epoch of Christianity and especially its proclivity towards monophysitism. Our goal is not simply salvation but constant creative upsurge [*tvorcheskoe voshozhdenie*], [529] argues Berdyaev, saying that God created us not to be simply satisfied with being redeemed but also expecting from us to use our redeemed nature in a positive way. Humility and obedience are indispensible for redemption, but not to be daring to use the redeemed nature does not mean that one is humble. If we take these two virtues on their own we are distorting their meaning because they make sense only when they are combined with the virtues that belong to the positive use of our redeemed nature, and these are qualities of courage and daring. Hence, 'if great obedience is needed for redemption, for creativeness there is needed great courage.'[530] To be an ascetic or even saint, Berdyaev is saying, has become equal to neglecting human nature and the purpose for which God created it. This concept of saintliness thus betrays a dangerous disposition towards monophysitism.

[528] MCA, 106. STv, 139.
[529] MCA, 105. STv, 138.
[530] MCA, 107. STv, 140.

This is obvious, continues Berdyaev, from the teachings of modern followers of St Isaac, such as Russian 19th century saint Theophan the Recluse. For Theophan, the centre of asceticism has moved even further away from its old ideal and it has become a struggle to preserve external rules, a simple observation of which should grant one salvation. Asceticism is no longer resistance to the old nature, 'but first and foremost *obedience* to the results of sin and the justification of what is', preservation of all the forms of life that belong to 'the world'. In *startsi* spirituality that is similar to St Theophan Recluse, not only that creativity does not find its place but is definitely condemned as sinful.[531] This is why *startsi*, the members of the Church with greatest spiritual authority, who nevertheless still live in the past, are, according to Berdyaev, the most responsible for the crisis of Christianity.

> The old Christian individualistic consciousness does not wish to recognize the profound crisis of the anthropological element as it goes on throughout the whole modern history. Not even the best among today's *startsi* can give a reply to Nietzsche's torment: he answers him only with a condemnation of his sins. By the same token the *starets* has no answer for the heroes of Dostoevsky. The new man is born in torment, he passes through abysses that the saints of old never knew.[532]

[531] MCA, 167. STv, 201. Theophan's work *Nachertanie hristianskogo nravoucheniya*, according to Berdyaev, is a product of the patristic spirit in the 19th century. Bishop Theophan, argues Berdyaev, negates Christianity as a religion of freedom and is fully in a position of fear and terror before the dangers that threaten the non-mature Christians. Thus, he denies human freedom saying that, 'in man, nor outside of him, there is nothing free', and everything is arranged according to the laws of God's will. Berdyaev believes that Theophan is monophysite in that he denies man, God-Man, and Godmanhood. STv, 424.

[532] MCA, 170. STv, 204. A good example of how not even the best of today's *staretz* is not able to fully grasp the torments of a modern person is the relationship of Nikolai Gogol with his spiritual counselor Fr. Matthew Konstantinovsky. According to one of Gogol's biographers, when the writer tried to explain that art and holiness were not irreconcilable, the priest cried, 'Deny Pushkin! He was a sinner and pagan.' The only thing that mattered in Fr. Matthew's view was redemption, and he could not understand how one who has turned to God could waste their time on scribbling. A friend of Gogol tried to warn the writer against the influence of the priest, and wrote to him, 'as a man, he assuredly deserves respect; as a preacher, he is most remarkable; but as a theologian, he is weak, being totally uneducated. I do not believe he would be capable of solving your problems if they have to do with fine points of theology. Fr. Matthew can discourse upon the importance of fasting and the need for repentance, which are all well-worn topics, but he will scrupulously avoid any discussion of matters of pure religious philosophy.' Henry Troyat, *Divided Soul: The Life of Gogol*, trans. Nancy Amphoux (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 421-422.

In the character of Elder Zosima, however, Dostoyevsky has presented some traits of his vision of the new Christianity, writes Berdyaev.[533] Zosima is not a traditional *starets* and he does not fully resemble Elder Ambrose of Optyna Monastery who served as a model for his character. The Elders of Optyna did not recognize Zosima's character as being akin to their spirit. Elder Zosima, argues Berdyaev, has passed the same tragic path as other of Dostoyevsky's heroes and that is why he understood the complexities of the Karamazovs and, unlike the traditional *startsi*, he was able to provide answers for the torments of the new human person. Yet, Berdyaev believes that Zosima's character does not betray all the traits of the 'new soul', the 'new saintliness', or the 'new man'. In order to achieve this, Zosima would have to have virtues of a 'genius'. It is the soil of the Karamazovs that will give the fruit of the new person.[534]

It is not clear, however, which traits in Zosima's character belong to the new Christianity and what Zosima lacks in order to be fully a representative of the new saintliness. Furthermore, Berdyaev's important claim about the Karamazov brothers as the soil for the 'new man' remains insufficiently explained. Berdyaev argues that Zosima had the same life trajectory as the Karamazov's but still finds something wanting from his character. I want to argue that not even the Karamazovs, although being closer to the ideal of the new soul, embody all the qualities of the new epoch as projected by Berdyaev. Berdyaev maintains that Elder Zosima is not a personification of the traditional creativity, i.e., that in the Elder's character we can find features of the new creativity, but he does not illustrate his argument. This is the case, I contend, because we cannot find passages in which Zosima would talk about a new form of creativity as a creation of a new being. What

[533] DO, 205. MD, 173.
[534] DO, 207. MD, 174.

is lacking both from Elder Zosima and the Karamazov brothers is understanding that freedom means being able to overcome the determination of the given world by creating a radically new world. Zosima comprehends that evil in humans is almost inevitable because it comes as a result of radical freedom given by God. Thus, he is able to say that one should not be afraid of human sinfulness but should nevertheless love the human being. Moreover, he is ecstatic in his love for every detail of the creation. However, a new form of creativity, a new form of *starchestvo* and monasticism, in which there would be a religious purpose to creativity and culture, a *sacramental* understanding of creativity, is not mentioned either in Elder's preaching or in Ivan's speculations about theodicy.[535] In the next chapter I shall argue that Berdyaev's vision of the new saintliness implies a synthesis—a centauric symbiosis—of saintliness and geniality. For Berdyaev, a future saint is a symbiosis of St Seraphim of Sarov and Pushkin.[536]

4.2.3 Asceticism and Creativity

Berdyaev insists on the new type of creativity because he believes that, 'by the ascetic way alone, solely by repentance, "the world" cannot be overcome… ' "The world", contends Berdyaev, must be conquered both ascetically *and* creatively.'[537] This claim—fundamental for our understanding of Berdyaev's concept of freedom—in which the Russian philosopher presents the dialectical pair asceticism/creativity, needs further elucidation. The quoted sentence gives the impression that Berdyaev sees a radical gulf

[535] Therefore, Berdyaev appears to be rather benevolent in his appraisal of Dostoyevsky's concept of freedom. Dostoyevsky's vision of freedom, I argue, is inferior in comparison to Berdyaev's and stands on the boundary between the old church of Peter and the new epoch.
[536] MCA, 170. STv, 204.
[537] MCA, 166. STv, 200.

between asceticism and creativity. However, I contend that for Berdyaev there was only one ultimate source of creativity, and that is the human imagination. In the section on imagination later in this chapter I shall argue that Berdyaev, like Maximus the Confessor for example, believed that the mind with its faculty of imagination is a ruling power in the human, and that the proper functioning of our being occurs only if body and soul follow the guidance of the mind. An operative, manual praise, or thanksgiving to God, i.e., a 'Eucharist', presupposes speech.[538] Thus, in Berdyaev's vocabulary the term 'asceticism' with its traditional meaning implies an activity that, while not being totally devoid of the activity of mind, focuses its noetic power solely on redemption and liberations from passions without using it for creativity. This form of asceticism belongs to the epoch of redemption. 'Creativity', on the other hand, also implies that in the human there is no dichotomy between body, soul, and mind. 'Creativity' belongs to the new epoch, the epoch in which the human believes that real freedom necessarily involves our capacity for radical self-determination. The source of self-determination is our capacity of imagination, with the special meaning that Berdyaev gives to this concept.[539] Hence, 'creativity' for Berdyaev is first and foremost related to the power of imagination, which is the power to create a new world and to enrich divine life.

Furthermore, Berdyaev identifies the pair asceticism/creativity with the corresponding pair saint/genius, about which I am going to say more in the last section of this chapter. I contend that we need to make a parallel between Berdyaev's terms asceticism/creativity and saint/genius with the set of notions priest/poet.[540]

[538] See also Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Ark of Speech*, trans. Andrew Brown, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2004), 144. *L'arche de la parole*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 195.
[539] See more about it in the section on imagination in this chapter.
[540] See more about it in chapter Five.

4.2.3 Christianity and the Sin Against the Holy Spirit: Summary

In Berdyaev's view, the main characteristics of Christianity's 'sin against the Holy Spirit', as well as of the failure of the Church of Peter, are as follows: 1) Christianity has blasphemed against the Spirit whenever it has recognized the Church as finished, Christianity as complete, and creativeness as something forbidden and sinful; 2) The Church of Peter has failed to recognize that 'man's consciousness at the height of culture has attained mature and final acuteness'. This means that the modern person is no longer satisfied with the old form of culture, which has attained its peak. Modern person is now looking for a new form of freedom and this freedom ought to be realized in a religious and sacramental culture. That a culture is religious and sacramental means that it affects and changes the very being of the world and enriches the divine life. Modern humans feel that their freedom is insufficient unless they are able to change the givenness of the world and to contribute to the divine life. This is, according to Berdyaev, the main characteristic of the contemporary human person.

The new epoch of Christianity, as we have seen, requires a new type of Christian life, a new form of asceticism, saintliness, *starchestvo*, and monasticism. What Berdyaev in essence advocates is *a novel type of asceticism* that would be in accordance with the new conception of freedom. The Russian thinker argues that the old Christian ideal of saintliness—and, since saintliness should be the highest form of freedom, the old ideal of liberty— fails to reveal God's idea about the human in its totality and thus ought to be

complemented by the cult of *genius*.[541] Berdyaev's concept of genius, we shall see, springs from his idea that freedom implies radical capacity for self-determination in relation to the world and God. The asceticism of saintliness, which I have already mentioned in the last section, ought to be improved by the asceticism of genius. Hence, in the following section I shall clarify Berdyaev's understanding of the concepts of asceticism, together with his notions of 'the world' and imagination. The next chapter will be devoted to elucidation of the concepts of saintliness and genius.

4.3 Asceticism, 'the World', and Imagination

4.3.1 Asceticism

Asceticism, according to Berdyaev, is the thirst for overcoming 'the world' as a lower order of being. Asceticism ought to be an achievement of freedom, and this type of freedom is defined as the vanquishing of the givenness of the world. Berdyaev argues that the new asceticism has to be ontological or immanent to the being of the world, it has to have a capacity to change the world. He explains, 'without this ascetic moment, that is the conquest of lower nature for the sake of another world, religious and mystical life is unthinkable.'[542]

Berdyaev makes it clear that no single mystic ever saw either the purpose or the essence of spiritual life in asceticism. Asceticism is solely a technique and formal method of religious practice.[543] Consequently, no form of ascetic struggle should be regarded as necessarily valid for different religious epochs. Perhaps the new epoch of the Spirit requires

[541] MCA, 176. STv, 210.
[542] MCA, 160. STv, 193.
[543] MCA, 161. STv, 194.

a different form of asceticism as a new way of achieving freedom, suggests Berdyaev, adding, 'but we are faced with the question: is there some other religious way, some other religious experience, experience of creative ecstasy?'[544]

The ecstasy of ascetics and mystics, in Berdyaev's view, is an ecstasy of returning to God, but it is not—and this is the critical point—the creation of the new world. The old asceticism is concerned with the fall and redemption of human nature, but it does not ask the question concerning the vocation of redeemed human nature. According to redemptive asceticism, argues Berdyaev, once redeemed, our nature has to vanish and leave space for the divine nature. The old redemptional asceticism obviously still has not reached a point of asking a question what is the purpose of the deified human nature.

In order to have a full grasp of the notion of asceticism, we need to clarify Berdyaev's concept of 'the world'.

4.3.2 'The World'

I argue that the Russian thinker identifies 'the world' not only with passions but also with what he calls objectification.[545] Nonetheless, it needs to be emphasised that 'the world' has yet another connotation although this is never explicitly mentioned by Berdyaev. It is not only 'the world' of objectification that we are called to vanquish. Even the divine cosmos, in Berdyaev's opinion, sets a limit to our freedom and therefore 'to create a new world' implies to generate things that are neither contained in the creation nor envisaged by God.

[544] MCA, 161. STv, 194.
[545] I imply, of course, that Berdyaev sometimes uses the noun 'world' with its most common meaning, denoting the created world.

Objectification, as we have seen in the previous chapter,[546] occurs when the human approaches reality with his pure reason in the Kantian sense and takes its abstractions and concepts as enabling the representation of the ultimate truth of reality. In other words, 'the world' for Berdyaev means two interrelated things: 1) the objectified reality that comes to existence as a result of human conceptualization or objectification—of turning what is in its essence 'subject', spirit, and infinity into an 'object', i.e., something finite—of the noumenal, spiritual, and infinite reality;[547] 2) 'the world' is another name for passions; however, at this point Berdyaev's thought is vague and needs elucidation. It seems that he believes that all passions stem from the fundamental ignorance[548] about the real character of noumenal reality, or ignorance about God. The Russian thinker contrasts 'the world', i.e., the world of phenomena, and 'the divine cosmos', the noumenal world. The fundamental question of metaphysics, contends Berdyaev, is: What is primary reality?[549] Berdyaev writes that, '"the world" is not true being, it is a fallen being and must not be confused with the divine cosmos. "The world" is only a shadow of the light. The world-cosmos is divine in all its multiplicity: 'this world' has fallen away from Divine life.'[550]

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[546] See page 39.

[547] As we shall see later in this chapter, when we come to discuss Coleridge's notion of imagination, the Romantic poet and philosopher believed that fancy, in contrast to imagination, which is passive human capacity, is what gives rise to 'fixities and definities', and turns nature into an object and 'deadness'. Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (San Rafael, CA: The Barfield Press, 1971), 88. Also, 'Romantic thinkers regard philosophical reflection, the very act of taking thought… as in itself, in Schelling's words, "a spiritual sickness of mankind … and evil," because once begun, it continues inexorably to divide everything which nature had united.' Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 181.

[548] This is clearly in accordance with patristic tradition. For example, Evagrius uses the twin pair of terms: 'virtue and knowledge' and 'malice and ignorance'. As it was shown, the first member in each pair causes the second, i.e., virtue brings about knowledge, and malice yields ignorance. Julia Konstantinovsky, *Making of the Gnostic* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 84. We might add that, as a consequence, the intellect's vision of the light of knowledge is preconditioned by soul's passionlessness, but the human would not strive for passionlessness if he or she lives in oblivion of God, which is the prime form of ignorance.

[549] BE, 176. OEM, 156. As we shall see, Berdyaev maintains that the religion of redemption identifies religiousness with morality and moral perfection, ignoring two other important characteristics of our being, namely, beauty and knowledge.

[550] BE, 163. OEM, 145.

The fallen world is, moreover, the realm of necessity, whilst the divine cosmos is the domain of freedom.[551] It follows that 'the world' for Berdyaev is the result of the supreme ignorance: ignorance of the divine.

Here we need to introduce a new term that facilitates an understanding of Berdyaev's epistemology. This term is imagination. Imagination, I argue, is the power that enables us to see the true world-cosmos and thus to avoid the supreme form of ignorance. Thanks to imagination we are able to cognize the ultimate reality of things and avoid turning the world into an object. Imagination is, moreover, a power to create a completely new world, a radical excess in being.

Scaringi rightly claims that there are similarities between Berdyaev and Kant in their concepts of imagination because both authors regard it as an active power. Scaringi quotes several contemporary authors who describe Kant's imagination as 'the act of putting different things together', or making 'metaphorical connections among various preconceptual and conceptual structures.'[552]

In fact I shall argue that, since imagination plays a pivotal role in Berdyaev's understanding of freedom, it requires much more attention than Scaringi gives it. In other words, unless the human mind is able not only to reflect the genuine divine reality, but to *add* something new to that reality, what then would be the root of the ontological formative principle of human otherness[553] or the basis of human freedom? If the mind with its capacity of imagination is indeed what distinguishes humans from other creatures and if it

[551] MCA, 225. STv, 261.
[552] Scaringi, 23, note 24. Scaringi quotes the following authors: Mark Johnson, Mary Warnock, Trevor Hart, and Richard Bauckham.
[553] See more about the ontological formative principle in Chapter two.

is the divine image in the person, is it not logical to conclude that the very source of our freedom ought to be traced within the capacity of imagination?

If we give a prominent place to the mind and imagination in our understanding of the human, it does not necessarily follow that we regard the intellect as an altogether independent capacity able to act without any interaction with the rest of human powers. The mind and imagination, in Berdyaev's view, in spite of being discernible as specific human capacities, are nevertheless integral parts of human personality; they are never in a 'pure' state and they never act in an impersonal way.[554]

In the following section I shall argue that the human mind in Berdyaev's view has two essential characteristics. First, it possesses the capacity to produce newness - even from God's perspective.[555] Second, that mind has an ontological power by which it communicates with the created world and God.[556]The new type of asceticism, which I am going to call noetic, contemplative, or the asceticism of geniality and artistic creativity, provides the possibility for the transformation of the world and for freedom as liberty from givenness. These two characteristics will be the criterion according to which we shall evaluate all other concepts of imagination.

These characteristics of the intellect are not fully explicated in Berdyaev's work. Berdyaev's theory of the mind and imagination is not as elaborate as, for instance,

[554] Thus, Berdyaev criticizes German metaphysics precisely because he finds in it a concept of 'pure thought'. 'The most thorough-going idealist was Hermann Cohen to whom thinking and its product are all that there is. The mistake of thorough-going idealism has lain in this, that to it the ego was not the individual entity, not personality. It was the error of impersonalism and that is what is basically wrong with German metaphysics… Kant was not an impersonalist. On the contrary his metaphysics are personalist. But his mistake lay in the very admission of the existence of pure reason and pure thought. Pure thought does not exist; thought is saturated with acts of volition, with emotions and passions and these things play a part in the act of knowing which is not simply negative; they have a positive role to play. BE, 16. OEM, 24.

[555] I should emphasize that I do not see imagination in Berdyaev's philosophy as a capacity that would be impersonal and common for every man, or that mind exists as an isolated element in human personality. Berdyaev always stresses that mind is an integral part of personality and bears personal characteristics unique for each human.

[556] About the ontological status of imagination in Coleridge see Barfield, 71.

Coleridge's. On the other hand, in the writings of the latter we cannot find a theological or anthropological elucidation as to how it is possible for human intellect to create radical newness.[557] Moreover, and this is the crucial point, it is clear that Coleridge affirms that the human being contributes to the life of nature,[558] but he does not discuss the possibility of the human activity enriching the divine life. Is Coleridge saying, in a similar way to Maximus,[559] that the human solely returns to God the divine principles planted in the creation, or perhaps that the human possesses the capacity to re-create the principles and to bring forth something radically new.[560] If we claim, furthermore, that the human being re-creates, we need to explain whether this is feasible due to a power that the human bears in his own nature, regardless of God, or because this power is endowed upon him by God. I shall argue that Berdyaev's idea of the 'external' *Ungrund* in the Christian context is the essential precondition for a concept of the mind and imagination as radically free.

4.3.3 Imagination

Some authors trace the problem of passivity or activity of human mind back to Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. M. H. Abrams, in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, maintains that

[557] In his book on Coleridge Barfield has dedicated a chapter to the question of the relationship of God and the human. He claims that God and the human stand with each other in the relation of polarity, but he does not address the issue of the human nature to 'penetrate' and enrich the divine. Barfield, 147.

[558] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp; Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1958), pp. 64-65.

[559] Maximus writes that God does not need our gifts, and this is in harmony with the traditional view about God's omnipotence. This view, as we have seen, is in the very centre of Berdyaev's critique of the traditional doctrine of the creation. Von Balthasar quotes Maximus: 'By giving to the Lord the intellectual meanings of things, we offer him gifts:… not as if he needed them… and draws a conclusion, "So we only give back to God his own gifts, in a constant interchange of giving and receiving"'. CL, 306.

[560] It seems that Schelling, who amongst the German Idealists exercised probably the strongest influence on Coleridge, held a position that the artist does not simply subordinate himself to nature, because this would be a production of masks but not works of art. The artist not only interprets the structure of the world but freely extends its boundaries. Furthermore, Schelling seems to identify human imagination with the Divine Mind, abolishing the distinction between divine and human creation. Kearney, 180. The last point, as we shall see, is vital for Berdyaev's understanding of imagination.

Plato was the main representative of the philosophical archetype of human intellect as the reflector, i.e., intellect as a passive faculty or mirror. Explaining the nature of sense perception, memory, and thought, Plato evoked the reflection of images in a mirror, or stamping of impressions on a wax plate. Aristotle was close to this position, arguing for a comparison between intellect and wax.[561]

Plotinus, however, was the chief begetter of the archetype of the projector. He explicitly rejected the notion of sensation as 'imprints' made on a passive mind. For Plotinus, the mind is an act or power that 'gives radiance out of its own store' to the world of objects. [562] Drawing from his theory of emanation, Plotinus drew an analogy between the One and the Good and 'overflowing fountain' or a 'radiating sun'. Moreover, as it was observed by E. K. Emilsson, Plotinian intellect could be described as an 'ideal knower', 'something that knows and understands what there may be to know and understand in as full a sense as one could possibly postulate.' Emilsson also makes a significant difference between Plato and Aristotle's concept of knowledge, on the one side, and Plotinus's, on the other. Plotinus, like no one before or after him regarded intellect's knowledge both as self-constitution and constitution of the object. The self-constitutional aspect of knowing Emilsson calls an 'existentialistic element' in Plotinus's thought. Nonetheless, we are warned that in spite of intellect's defining and building itself, seemingly without any outer restraints, the impression of absolute freedom is misleading. The One, explains Emilsson, determines the intellect, and, although it is called an image of the One and bears resemblance to it, it does not faithfully represent its original.[563]

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[561] Abrams, ML, pp. 57-59.
[562] Abrams, ML, 59. We shall see how this image of the mind is congenial to Berdyaev's understanding of intellect.
[563] Eyjolfur Kjalar Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 4-5.

What Abrams fails to see is that a theory of intellect as essentially active, in particular in the sense that Coleridge gives to the term 'active', is unthinkable in the context of creation as emanation.[564] In other words, Plotinus's understanding of the intellect's activity is not sufficient from Berdyaev's point of view. Any form of emanationist theory of necessity ends up in a monistic ontology since everything that the One yields is at a less perfect ontological level. It follows that the human mind is passive and, as a result, can only a) mirror divine reality; moreover, b) this mirroring is imperfect.

We see again how crucial for Berdyaev's entire theological structure the question of human intellect and imagination is. There could be no freely active intellect without genuine human freedom. God and the human are more than God alone.

> This is the mystery of Christianity, the mystery of Christ, which is unknown to Hindu mystics, to Plotinus or to any of the abstract-monistic mystics. God and man are greater than God alone. The substantial multinomial being revealed in One, is greater than a One undifferentiated.[565]

4.3.4 Kant on Imagination

Amongst the modern philosophers, Kant is probably the one who, together with Nietzsche, has exercised the greatest influence on Berdyaev and his theory of freedom. Berdyaev maintained that Kant's thought 'is the central event in the history of European philosophy.'[566] Kant's Copernican turn, argues Berdyaev, should be regarded as a manifestation of Christian spirit in modern philosophy. The usually adopted view that

[564] Abrams argues that it is precisely Plotinus's theory of creation as emanation that renders possible the understanding of the mind as active power. ML, 58. For the sake of precision, we should note that, according to Emilsson, in Plotinus we cannot find a theory of emanation, but only metaphors that point to such a theory. Emilsson, 8.
[565] MCA, 130. STv, 163.
[566] BE, 11. OEM, 19.

mediaeval philosophy is Christian whereas the modern time's is non-Christian or even anti-Christian is wrong. In fact, explains Berdyaev, mediaeval scholastic philosophy was fundamentally Greek; it was philosophy of the object, i.e., a cosmocentric philosophy. On the other hand, modern philosophy is philosophy of subject, an anthropocentric philosophy in which the centre of gravity is transferred to the human.[567]

Kant's theory of imagination marks a radical break with the understanding of intellect as a passive and formless reflector. In Kant's view, not only is our intellect not formless but also possesses *a priori* cognitive capacities, 'a transcendental apperception', without which sensuous perceptions would appear chaotic. That is why regarding the problem of subjectivity in general and imagination in particular probably the most crucial event in modern philosophy was Kant's Copernican turn. Some Kantian scholars maintain that only with Kant's critical writings did a full-scale doctrine of subjectivity become central to philosophy.[568] It is important to understand Kant's concept of transcendental apperception or imagination in its historical context. He borrowed the term from Leibnitz, who distinguishes bare perceptions from perceptions of perceptions, i.e., apperceptions. Kant saw three levels in mental life: 1) the level of passive representation, which involves sensations and feelings; 2) at the second level there is an element of activity, but still nothing amounts to genuine cognition; 3) genuine cognition arises only on the third level, which Kant names 'consciousness' in the sense of apperception.[569]

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[567] BE, 11. OEM, 19.
[568] Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Historical Turn* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 51. By the early twentieth century, however, philosophers who were influenced by Russell, Moore, or Heidegger, criticized Kant for giving too much stress to subjectivity. Kant's own position was ambiguous: the German philosopher is famous for grounding philosophy in the 'I', and at the same time he is rather critical of the ways that philosophy tends to focus on the 'I'. Ibid. 51.
[569] Ameriks, 54.

Kant explains the meaning of these terms only in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[570] where he distinguishes between 'inner sense' and 'apperception'. Apperception alone is the genuinely cognitive term, denoting the power of objectively judging the data provided in inner sense. Apperception is sharply contrasted to the mere 'sense data', whether inner our outer.[571]

So what does Kant imply when he talks about a 'transcendental imagination'? As is well known, Kant means that imagination is the hidden condition of all knowledge, and in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he speaks of it as an 'art concealed in the depths of the human soul'. [572] Consequently, for Kant, the term 'transcendental' is concerned with the preconditions of experience or with a knowledge that is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects as long as this knowledge is possible *a priori*.[573]

Imagination, argues Kant, is not to be conceived solely as a mimetic model of representation, but rather as the transcendental model of formation. [574] Therefore, imagination for Kant is not merely a secondary mediation between sensation and intellect

[570] The first edition appeared in 1781 whereas the second in 1787.
[571] Ameriks, 54.
[572] Kearney, 167. In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant wanted (but did not actually do so) to omit the description of the imagination as 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no knowledge', and to replace it with a contention that synthetic power belongs to understanding. Bowie, 20. Since every human possesses transcendental imagination, and since in every human it is personal and thus unique, that implies that in every different person it makes a radically unique combination of the sensuous data; and if we define art as a product of 'esenoplay' in which manifold elements are united in one in a totally new form, it follows that every one of us in our everyday experience acts as an artist. This point will be important for Berdyaev's claim that every person is potentially endowed with geniality, whereas the term genius refers to a gift specific for a particular art.
[573] Kearney, 168. Kearney observes that Descartes and Hume had already established the primacy of subjectivity over substance and in that way paved the path to modern idealism. But it was only Kant that was prepared to take the final step and to disclose the transcendental imagination as a radically transcendental basis for human subjectivity. Ibid. 168.
[574] Douglas Hedley argues against the commonly accepted view that imagination remains mimetic until the Romantic period and then becomes creative and productive through Kant and the Romantics. He believes that Plato's theory of the Forms and his use of myths is the employment of imagination, and that Plato's legacy is expressed in Romanticism. D. Hedley, *Living Forms of Imagination*, (London, T&T Clark Int. 2008), 6.

but the common root of both these forms of knowledge. In other words, Kant agrees that our sensory experience provides the 'content' of cognition—we may say that sensory impressions are the indispensable 'other' in an act of cognition—but without our faculty of understanding they are formless. Thus, sensuous impressions are the 'content' of knowledge whereas our faculty of understanding gives the 'form' in which we receive it. These two forms of knowledge are, furthermore, joined in a synthesis, or what Kant calls 'an active faculty for the synthesis of the manifold', which is *imagination* or *Einbildungskraft*.[575] Imagination unites in a particular way the sensory experiences—Kant names these forms 'schemata'— which are then subsumed under the pure concepts of understanding.[576]

The crucial step that Kant made towards establishing the autonomy of the imagination was to distinguish between its 'reproductive' and 'productive' functions. The reproductive function of imagination forms sequences of perceptions, but behind it there is a more fundamental capacity of productive imagination that provides creative rules according to which certain classifications of perceptions are favoured to others. This selection happens *independently* of the empirical order of sensory perceptions and it represents the *autonomous* capacity of the productive imagination.[577]

How is the autonomous faculty of the productive imagination related to our freedom? According to Kant, human freedom becomes obvious in particular in our experience of the beauty of an object as well as in our moral judgements.[578] It must be

[575] Kearney, 169.
[576] Bowie, 20.
[577] Kearney, 170.
[578] In his famous conclusion to the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant juxtaposes the invisible human self or personality with the impersonal nature. The latter's 'view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates, as it were, my importance as an animal creature… The former, 'on the contrary, infinitely elevates my worth as an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality and even

noted that an aesthetic object differs fundamentally from an object of our quotidian experience. The former is not to be compared to the latter because, as we have seen, the faculty of imagination is not mimetic but productive. I argue that this means two things. First, the aesthetic object possesses an *inner finality of form*,[579] which can be estimated only by a cognitive faculty—Kant calls it the 'free play of imagination'—able to act outside of given rules, that is, to identify the inner logic of a piece of art. Second, the artist does not emulate the rules of nature but creates the inner semantic of his art.[580] Thus, in both cases the same cognitive pattern is repeated: firstly, using the faculty of imagination an artist creates new rules that have not existed before; secondly, imagination helps a beholder to recognize these inner rules in spite of encountering them for the first time. Both artist and beholder, in their free play of imagination, create something totally new, although in a different way. What is required in the artistic act of creation and the beholder's identification with it is an act of imagination that is performed in a radical freedom. The artist's imagination, out of potentially limitless possibilities, dares to choose a combination of words, sounds, or colours that have never been combined before, and creates a radically

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of the whole sensible world…' I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 2004), 170. As Paul Guyer noted, 'Unlike mechanists and empiricists from Hobbes to David Hume, Kant did not try to reduce human freedom to merely one more mechanism among those of a predictable nature, but, unlike rationalists from Descartes to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Christian Wolff, Kant was not willing to ground human freedom on an alleged rational insight into some objectively perfect world only confusedly grasped by senses. Instead, Kant ultimately came to see that the validity of both the laws of the starry skies above as well as the moral law within had to be sought in the legislative power of human intellect itself.' P. Guyer, 'The Starry Heavens and the Moral Law' in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

[579] Kearney, 172.

[580] Kearney writes that, 'when Kant speaks of imagination's power to create a second nature out of the material supplied to it by nature, he does not see this second nature as a mere imitation of the first. It is a totally new creation, which transforms the given appearances of things. In aesthetic judgment, writes Kant, "imagination freely produces its own law. It invents a concept…"' Ibid. 173. Guyer writes in a similar vein that, in Kant's view, 'a beautiful object must appear to satisfy our cognitive craving for unity if it is to please us, but that it equally well must appear to satisfy this objective without subsumption under any determinate concept if it is to please us… Kant stresses the freedom of the imagination in the experience of beauty: "The result of the prior analyses amount to this concept of taste: that it is the faculty for estimation of an object in relation to the free lawfulness of the imagination"'. P. Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 105.

new being;[581] the beholder's imagination, in a similarly bold act, dares to recognize this totally new being as beautiful, although it does not comply to any of the previously existing 'rules'. In both cases we could say that imagination creates radical newness out of unlimited freedom of choices. In that sense, as Berdyaev observed, this is the creation 'out of nothing' of meonic freedom.

Kant explains that the ultimate source of the unity of transcendental apperception is not the productive imagination on its own but only together with a 'transcendental ego'.[582] Thus, consciousness of my own self, or in Kant's words, 'synthetic unity of self-consciousness', through a synthesis of different moments of such consciousness,[583] is the precondition of the unity of all of my apperceptions. This, I argue, is the crucial point in Kant's 'Copernican turn'. The German philosopher maintains here that there is no 'objective' reality, or 'objective' truth, independently of a particular subject, or, in the terminology used in this work, independently of a particular personality/identity. Every subject, by virtue of his autonomous power of imagination, acts as a particular and independent, i.e., free being. However, this freedom is not arbitrary. What Kant endeavoured to achieve is to reinstate 'the validity of objective knowledge by establishing the validity of the subjective imagination'.[584] We may say that in this way every person becomes a potential centre of the universe or, in Berdyaev's words, an 'absolute existential

[581] In Romanticism, the verbal language is usually seen as overly conceptualized and capable of representing only pre-existing objects. Hence, Romantics search for an alternative, conceptless language, and believe to find it in music, the least representational of all arts. Herder and Hamann, for example, develop a concept of language that is not representational, but rather 'disclosive' or 'constitutive'. 'The divorce of music from representational', writes Bowie, 'is the vital step in the genesis of the notion of aesthetic autonomy.' Bowie, 35. We may add that aesthetic autonomy is in fact freedom from mimesis of nature, and thus freedom to create radically new things.
[582] Kearney, 170.
[583] Bowie, 21.
[584] Kearney, 169. Since in an experience of beauty the disposition of mind is 'disinterested', argues Kant, and thus unbiased, beauty accustoms us for objective judgment in respect of good. Therefore, although subjective, experience of beauty has universal validity. Guyer, *Kant*, 35.

centre'. From this, however, it does not follow that the universe is shattered into unrelated pieces, but that unity is possible only, to use Coleridge's favourite term, as 'unity in multeity'.[585] Thus, the doors were wide open for Coleridge and his theory of imagination.

4.3.5 Coleridge on Imagination

Coleridge is an author of particular interest for our investigation due to his effort to introduce the theory of imagination to Christian framework, that is, to the framework in which Berdyaev himself operated. Another parallel with Berdyaev is Coleridge's stress on the trinitarian and dynamic character of God, an idea that he probably drew from Jacob Böhme whom he read during his student days.[586] Douglas Hedley sees another important source of Coleridge's trinitarian thinking in the German Idealists of the early nineteenth century—whose thought, as we have noted, was highly appreciated by Berdyaev—who, drawing upon Neoplatonic and Platonic tradition, revived the doctrine of the Trinity.[587]

In this subsection I shall not try to elucidate all the details of Coleridge's rather elaborate theory of imagination. Instead, I shall highlight the most important similarities between Kant and Coleridge in trying to establish what Coleridge's original contribution to the understanding of imagination was. I shall stress in particular those details that enable us

[585] Barfield, 79.
[586] Barfield calls 'absurd' a persistent tradition according to which Coleridge's Trinitarianism was a lapse into religious orthodoxy only towards the end of his life. According to this author, 'Coleridge had been a trinitarian, though not always a Christian one, from the time when he "conjured over *Aurora* at school."' Barfield, 249. In a way similar to Berdyaev (see previous chapter and the section *Berdyaev's vision of the Trinity*), Coleridge criticizes rationalistic approach to the Trinity, observing that it inevitably leads to a conclusion that God is either one God or more than one and that one 'cannot have it both ways.' The Trinity for Coleridge, moreover, is dynamic—another parallel with Böhme and Berdyaev—it is 'Unity with Progression', or, in other words, there is a theogonic process in God in which God the Father projects his own 'alterity'. Ibid. pp. 146-147.
[587] Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

to understand better Berdyaev's concept of freedom and imagination and to evaluate their possible shortcomings.

In chapter ten of the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge acknowledges his debt to German Idealism by making an overt relation between the German term *Einbildungskraft* and his own coinage 'esemplastic'. The term *Ein-bildungskraft*, in Coleridge's view, excellently expresses the essence of the 'prime and loftiest faculty, the power of coadunation, the faculty that forms the many into the one, *In-Eins-Bildung*'.[588] Coleridge explains that this 'in-one-uniting' power or 'esenoplay' is distinguished from fantasy or mirrorment, proving that like the German Idealists he is resolute to separate productive imagination from mimetic representation. He names the mirroring function 'fancy' whilst the generative one is 'imagination'.[589]

Furthermore, Coleridge distinguishes between the two kinds of productive imagination, primary and secondary. The primary imagination, argues the author of the *Biographia*, is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception and a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'.[590] On the other hand, Coleridge considers the secondary imagination, 'As an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in the degree and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate.'[591]

[588] See Marry Warnock, *Imagination*, 92 ; Kearney, 182.
[589] Hedley suggested a useful tripartite division in which 'imagination' denotes creative power, 'fancy' the mechanical association of mental images, and 'fantasy' the capacity for delusion and escapism. Thus, fancy is not necessarily seen in a pejorative light. LFI, 52.
[590] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (second ed., New York: G. P. Putnam, 1848), XIII, 378.
[591] *Biographia*, XIII, 378.

Fancy, in Coleridge's view, is the aggregating power, since it combines and aggregates given units of already conscious experience. Secondary imagination, on the other hand, modifies the units themselves and, in doing so, proves to be identical with the primary imagination, i.e., the seminal principle, on which all our conscious experience is based. Thus, the secondary imagination is similar to the primary imagination in a way that fancy, being passive, is not.[592]

Coleridge appears to be identifying the primary imagination with Kant's transcendental apperception, which is, according to the German philosopher, 'the root unknown to us' that forms our apprehension of the world (Schelling defined it as an 'unconscious poetry').[593] The secondary imagination is reserved for artistic imagination or, in Kant's terminology, aesthetic judgement (Schelling's 'conscious poetry').[594]

We have seen that at the peak of patristic theology, in the writings of Maximus the Confessor, the ideal for the human mind to achieve is to become 'naked' and similar to a mirror. Akin to a mirror, the mind is able to reflect 'the intellectual meaning of the things', which it offers to God although God is not in 'need' of them. Hence, from God's perspective the human and his mind appear to be superfluous, not being able to offer Him anything new.[595] This is why we need to examine whether in Coleridge's view the intellect is seen as a power capable of: 1) interpreting and *changing*, i.e., bringing something *new* to the already given intellectual meaning (*logoi*) of things; 2) in spite of changing them and

[592] Barfield, 86.
[593] Schelling's 'unconscious poetry' is similar to Berdyaev's capacity of geniality, inherent to every human being. See more about geniality in chapter Five.
[594] Kearney, 182.
[595] Von Balthasar, CL, 306. Von Balthasar does not seem to have any objections to this concept of the intellect, which is clear from the sentence, 'So we only give back to God his own gifts, in a constant interchange of giving and receiving.' Ibid. 306. Thus, von Balthasar fails to note that a genuine 'interchange of giving and receiving' would imply that we offer something that is our own and not simply something that we have received.

bringing forth new meanings being faithful to their identity; 3) whether this interpretation of the *logoi* has an ontological impact on creation.[596]

1) M. A. Abrams makes an important observation, which partly answers our first question, when he writes that the Copernican revolution in epistemology—'if we do not restrict this to Kant's specific doctrine that the mind imposes the forms of time, space, and the categories of the "sensuous manifold"'—was about 'the general concept that the perceiving mind *discovers what it has itself partly made*.'[597] This is why one of the favourite images employed by the romantic writers for the activity of the perceiving mind is that of a lamp projecting light.[598] The limit between what is already in the object and what is bestowed is sometimes vague, oscillating between Schelling's coalescence between the subject and the object and Fichte's absoluteness of the Ego. In most cases, however, Coleridge and Wordsworth see reciprocation between the nature and the observer.

2) In his lecture *'On Art'*, Coleridge used Schelling's metaphysics of a parallelism between the world and the mind, according to which the essences within nature have a duplicate subsistence as ideas in the intellect. It follows that art is not an arbitrary product, but a joint result of nature and the person. In Schelling's view, nature is an unconscious poetry—'the objective world is only the original still unconscious poetry of the spirit'—whereas philosophy and art have a task to form a conscious poetry.[599] The role of art is to

[596] It is significant that, according to Von Balthasar, Maximus's 'idealism' or his understanding of contemplation of the intellectual meaning of things is precisely an activity with an ontological impact. Thus, Von Balthasar writes that Maximus sees the 'transformation and elevation of the corporeal into the intellectual [that occurs through contemplation] [as] precisely its glorification and immortalization.' CL, 305. As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, Berdyaev understands the intellect and its ontological power in a similar way to Maximus. In chapter Five I shall argue that art originates precisely from the human impulse to contemplate and interpret the *logoi* of things—'to make nature thought and thought nature'— with a hope that this will have an ontological impact on them.
[597] ML, 58. Italics added.
[598] Ibid. 60.
[599] Kearney, 179.

reconcile the world and the mind by making, in Coleridge's words, 'nature thought, and thought nature.'[600]

3) Both Coleridge and Wordsworth believed that in the act of perceiving the mind already creates. This argument was a part of their attempt to revitalize the mechanised universe that had appeared from the philosophy of Descartes and Hobbes, and at the same time to re-establish the union between the world and the human. The human was to be regarded as integral with the world, as Abrams noted, 'by the strongest of all bonds, through participating in its very creation and so sharing with it attributes of his own being.'[601] Thus, in Coleridge's view, the perceiving mind transforms matter-of-fact into matter-of-poetry, or into the highest form of poetry.[602]

By embracing Schelling's psycho-natural parallelism, Coleridge moved away from Kant and his dualism of the world and the mind. Coleridge's imagination, just like Kant's, in its creativity is free from senses and sensuous world. However, here we encounter two fundamental differences: firstly, it seems that in Coleridge's case one draws one's inspiration for 'the free play of imagination' from the essences *within nature*. This is how I read the first part of the sentence, 'to make nature thought'. Secondly, without distorting the essences one creates new meanings and by doing so transforms the essence of nature, that is, 'makes thought nature'. The second point in particular, as we shall see in the following section, is of a vital importance for Berdyaev's concepts of theurgy and freedom. About the relation between nature and human thought Berdyaev writes, 'in theurgy the

[600] Ibid. pp. 52-53. Hedley writes that, 'in human beings, pre-eminently the artist of genius, unconscious nature becomes aware of itself as Spirit, in articulate self-awareness. In artistic expression, Spirit manifests nature as slumbering spirit: the intelligible fabric of the natural world becomes transparent. Hence Genius is able to make the external internal and the internal external, "to make nature thought and thought nature.'" LFI, 53.
[601] ML, 65.
[602] ML, 68.

creation of beauty in art is joined with the creation of beauty in nature. Art must become a new, transfigured nature'.[603]

4.3.6 Berdyaev on Imagination

Berdyaev's concept of imagination is strongly influenced by Kant's theory of transcendental apperception and Romantic theory of imagination. Regarding the latter it should be mentioned, nevertheless, that Berdyaev does not specifically mention Coleridge and he is using the terms classicism and romanticism 'not as aesthetic, literary categories but in a much wider sense as universal metaphysical categories that cover all phases of creativity, perception, and moral life.'[604] At the beginning of this section I shall expound on Berdyaev's critique of Kant's and the romantic theory of imagination, creativity, and freedom.

There are two main points of critique that Berdyaev addresses to Kant. The first one has to do with Kant's understanding of the nature of the world. The world, argues Berdyaev, is not a finished or determined system. This point is important, he adds, because, 'To be aware of the fact that man does not exist within a finished and stabilized system of being is fundamental to the philosophy of creativeness, and it is only on that understanding that the creative act of man is possible and intelligible.'[605]

Second, contrary to what Kant wrote, there is no dualism between the mind and the world, because if there were, the human being would not be free. A genuine freedom is not solely in the imagination's not being determined by the world of phenomena, but rather in

[603] MCA, 249. STv, 285.
[604] MCA, 120. STv, 153.
[605] BE, 171. OEM, 152.

its ontological capacity to change the world by creating a new world. We are free in the measure we are capable of changing the world and creating a new world, or, in Berdyaev's words, the old world is conquered only when the new world is created.

> But the acts of the creative subject meet with the opposition of the objective world, and the strength of freedom measures itself against the power of this resistance... The creative act of man is not simply a regrouping and re-distribution of the matter of the world… In the creative act of man, a new element is introduced, something that was not there before, which is not contained in the given world… which breaks through from another scheme of the world, not out of eternally given ideal forms, but out of freedom.[606]

The critique of romanticism, on the other hand, is given together with a critical appraisal of classicism. For Berdyaev, classicism is similar to Kant's critical gnoseology[607] in that it implies a chasm between subject and object, mind and the world. Due to this gulf classicism begets a 'tragedy of creativity'.[608] Creativity in classicism is immanent only to humans but not to the world and thus it creates a culture and not a new being. Romanticism, on the contrary, being permeated by a Dionysian spirit, strives towards the elimination of the contrast between subject and object. Romanticism feels the malaise from which classicism suffers and thus it is healthier, argues Berdyaev.[609] The impulse of romantic creativity is a desire for overcoming the tragedy of creativity, it is a longing not for creation of what Berdyaev calls 'differentiated culture' but for the creation of a new being. Berdyaev believes that,

> There is a healthy spirit of life in romanticism while in classicism there is an unhealthy spirit of the renunciation of life. In romanticism there is an urge to surpass being; in classicism, abnegation of all being. Classicism involves an immanent self-centredness; romanticism involves transcendent impulse. This romantic creative urge reveals *the transcendent nature of creativity*, which passes all bounds. The romantic creative urge is deeply related to the Christian feeling of life, to the Christian idea of another world.[610]

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[606] BE, pp. 170-171. OEM, 152.
[607] 'Critical gnoseology is only one of the forms of classicism.' MCA, 120. STv, 153.
[608] MCA, 119. STv, 152.
[609] MCA, 120. STv, 153.
[610] MCA, 119. STv, 152.

However, in spite of his positive appraisal of romanticism, Berdyaev believed that it does not represent the new creative epoch but only foretells it.[611]

I have established two characteristics of Berdyaev's theory of imagination that serve as general criteria for other views on imagination. To repeat, these are: 1) the imagination possesses the capacity to produce newness even from God's perspective;[612] 2) the imagination has an ontological power by which it communicates with the created world and God. There are two different sorts of imagination: 1) the creative or productive imagination, and 2) vicious or lying imagination.

1) *The creative imagination*. In general, imagination for Berdyaev is one of the fundamental powers with which the human is endowed. He explains that 'the creative imagination' and the rise of images of something better are of fundamental significance in human life—because, we need to remember, there could be no new world without the 'images of something better'—and that the relation between the real and what can be imagined is more complex than is commonly thought. 'Productive imagination', writes Berdyaev, 'is a metaphysical force which wages war against the objective and determinate world…'[613] Imagination is also a power able to produce something higher, better, and more

[611] MCA, 120. STv, 153.
[612] This is obvious from Berdyaev's general position that the fullness of human freedom implies the human capacity to enrich divine life. In his evaluation of critical gnoseology Berdyaev is yet again clear about this point, writing that in that framework 'man does not dare to surpass the creation of God-the-Creator.' MCA, 117. STv, 150. I should emphasize that I do not see mind or imagination in Berdyaev's philosophy as a capacity that would be impersonal or present in the same form in every person, or that mind exists as an isolated element in human personality. Berdyaev always stresses that mind is an integral part of personality and bears personal characteristics unique for each human.
[613] BE, pp. 174-175. OEM, 155.

beautiful than… the given.[614] Thus, for Berdyaev, imagination is a transcendental power capable of changing the world.

2) *Vicious imagination*. Berdyaev quotes Böhme's argument that evil, and the Fall as a consequence, is a result of vicious imagination.[615] Originally, the Fall was a loss of freedom and enslavement to the external objective world that was in itself a product of the vicious imagination.[616] In other words, enslavement to the objectified world, which is only another name for passions, was due to the vicious imagination or the faulty perception of the essence of things. This is similar to Maximus's claim that purification from passions is dependent on the purification from false notions effected by contemplation.[617]

From what Berdyaev claims it follows that for the true liberation from passions—as well as for full freedom—the human mind has to be enlightened to see the truth and the beauty of the divine cosmos. The enlightenment of mind takes place, according to Berdyaev, 'in the creative-artistic attitude towards this world [in which] we catch a glimpse of another world.'[618]

The first anthropological consequences that results from Berdyaev's position is that the human is seen as governed in the first place by his rational or gnostic faculty. The mind is regarded as 'the ruling faculty' in the human. Without the liberation of the rational faculty, of what in patristic texts is called mind or *nous*, there could be no liberation of passions. At this juncture, Berdyaev thinks along the same line as Maximus the Confessor. According to Maximus, without knowledge of God asceticism is idolatry, while without

[614] Scaringi, 112.
[615] BE, 175. OEM, 155.
[616] BE, 214. Scaringi, 112.
[617] Thunberg, 338.
[618] MCA, 225. STv, 261.

asceticism knowledge is solely a fantasy.[619] As Lars Thunberg observed, *vita practica* or traditional, physical asceticism 'includes a good use of rational faculty'.[620] This is why when talking about practical asceticism Maximus uses the term 'practical *philosophy*'. Thunberg explains,

> On several occasions Maximus shows, in fact, that he regards the virtuous life of a Christian as a manifestation, not only of his victory over passions and of the peace that reigns in the passible part of his soul, but also of his *reasonable* nature as such. The activities of the 'practical' soul are related to the function of the reasonable element (*λὸγος*), while the 'contemplative' activity functions through the mind (*voῦς*).[621]

Expressed in traditional terms, we may say that Berdyaev argues that the two forms of ascetic life, *vita practica* and *vita contemplativa* are of necessity fundamentally interwoven and cannot be separated from each other. Thus, Berdyaev advocates a two-fold asceticism, the most important feature of which would be not only the contemplation of God-implanted principles of creation, but their *interpretation*, which in Berdyaev's case always involves the creation of a radical novum. Berdyaev maintains that the only way to fully overcome 'the world' is by the creation of 'the new world'. The human is not free unless able to change the givenness of the created world, no matter how much this world could be, or is, beautiful. 'The world', Berdyaev wants to say, is not only another name for human passions comprehended in the traditional way. If 'the world' had been solely a term designating passions, it would have been possible to 'conquer' it by the negative form of freedom or freedom *from* passions. However, Berdyaev contends that the full victory over 'the world' is accomplished only when 'the new world' is created. In other words, for the victory over the lower form of being freedom *for* is required. Positive freedom in Berdyaev's thought is freedom of unhindered self-determination or, as he defines it

[619] PG 90, 689P – 692A.
[620] MM, 339.
[621] Ibid.

elsewhere, positive freedom is 'the power to create out of nothing'. Thus, 'the world' that ought to be conquered is not only the world of objectification, as Berdyaev sometimes seems to argue. Even the divinely created cosmos, the noumenal, in spite of its beauty, if it cannot be changed, represents the world of determination. One of the main characteristics of saintliness,[622] in Berdyaev's view, is in its unawareness that the healed human nature should not remain passive, should not withdraw so as to leave space for divine nature. Deified human nature, Berdyaev believes, has a special vocation from God and it needs to be active. Consequently, the old conception of saintliness does not envisage that genuine human freedom implies two fundamental and closely related capacities and vocations: first, the human theurgic capacity and vocation to change the world; second, a capacity and vocation for the enrichment of the divine life. At this point we need to say more about Berdyaev's understanding of saintliness and why he thinks it represents an outlasted form of freedom.

4.4 Saintliness and Geniality/Genius

4.4.1 Saintliness

In saintliness Berdyaev sees an eternal value, and yet saintliness for him is an outlived form of Christian freedom. In spite of having reverence for saints and saintliness, as well as for the New Testament,[623] Berdyaev thinks that this ideal of human perfection is incomplete.

[622] It needs to be stressed, though, that this in an interpretation, and maybe also an additional clarification, of Berdyaev's thought that is sometimes vague and unsystematic.
[623] There could be no doubt about Berdyaev's great reverence for the Gospel. He writes, for example, that 'the truth of the New Testament, the truth of the Gospel, is absolute and the only salvific truth.' MCA, 94. STv, 125.

> Christianity, as a New Testament revelation of redemption, is becoming decrepit. The Christian blood is cooling off and all sorts of restoratory measures are being used to warm it up again. You cannot produce youth artificially. And Christian saintliness was related to Christian youth. In Christian saintliness there is an eternal and undying truth, but a truth which is incomplete, in which not everything has been revealed.[624]

It is important to emphasise that the word 'saint', the way Berdyaev employs it, signifies an ideal of perfection and freedom that was characteristic for the epochs of the law and redemption. Consequently, according to Berdyaev, a saint is someone whose ultimate ideal is liberation from passions or conquering of the evil in human nature. Nonetheless, a saint hardly ever asks, what is the vocation of the redeemed human nature? Or, if he asks, he gives a rather vague answer that the goal of the redeemed human nature is 'a life in God'. 'Life in God', dwelling of the human nature in God, is, however, regarded as extinguishing of that nature. Berdyaev writes, 'it is as though the man who is redeemed from his sins desired that his human nature should cease to exist – that only the divine nature alone should exist.'[625] Since the vocation of human nature is solely negative – it has to vanish so as to liberate a place for divine nature – Berdyaev is right in claiming that in the religion of redemption, in the religion of the Church Fathers, there is a fatal bent towards monophysitism.[626] Therefore, the old notion of saintliness betrays the similar inclination towards monophysitism.

Christ is not only God, but God-Man, Berdyaev reminds us. Christ redeems and re-establishes *human* nature and what is akin to the divine in it. Thus, human nature that is aware of its autonomy and freedom ought to exist in eternity as a creative nature. Human nature does not justify itself before God by extinguishing itself, but by its creative

[624] MC, 169. STv, 203.
[625] MCA, 111. STv, 144.
[626] MCA, 111. STv, 144.

expression.[627] Creativity, in Berdyaev's vocabulary, is no longer related to the notion of the saint. Creativity is a characteristic property of genius.[628]

4.4.2 Genius

As we have seen, Berdyaev claims that asceticism of saintliness remains unfulfilled unless it fully vanquishes the world. He believes that one is truly free only if one is able to change the given. This changing of the given is a way by which the human being communicates radical novum to God and establishes genuine interchange and dialogue. It follows that asceticism, in order to lead to genuine freedom, ought to be creative or, in other words, that the concept of saintliness needs to be complemented by the notion of genius. Asceticism is a transcendental activity, maintains Berdyaev, since there is no chasm between us and the world; the mind is in a life-giving interaction with the world. Berdyaev uses the noun 'world', we have argued, with a twofold meaning: 1) it denotes the world created by God; 2) it is a synonym for the objectified reality that is a product of the wrong use of human intellect. Both evil and good human creativity originate from the intellect. Therefore, in creating the new and transfigured world, the human ought to start from the intellect and the rest of the human powers follow its path. We see that Berdyaev uses the word 'saint' also to denote someone who in his asceticism uses primarily external methods of *vita activa*. The practical ascetic, according to Berdyaev, in the first place would be someone who is not aware that our physical actions are, so to say, only a 'body' of an act. It is the thoughts by which they are accompanied that give them their 'soul' or real meaning.

[627] MCA, 111. STv, 145.
[628] Berdyaev sometimes uses the term 'genius' as a synonym with the term 'geniality' and sometimes he uses them as congenial and yet as having different meaning. I shall say more about it in the next chapter.

On the other hand, *vita contemplativa* requires that the ascetic's principal stress be on the activity of his mind.[629] In Berdyaev's view, the mind is not mimetic but transcendentally creative, it possesses power to change the being of the world. The ascetic needs, by being faithful to what we might call the principle (*logos*) or the bottomless potentiality of the identity of things, to bring forth totally new traits, as if creating out of nothing. In doing so, the ascetic creates not a differentiated culture or an aesthetic value but a new being.

4.5 Conclusion

Berdyaev's critique of the traditional concepts of saintliness and freedom rests upon his claim that Christianity progresses through different epochs. The commonly accepted notion of saintliness, as well as of the freedom related to it, was shaped during the periods of the law and the redemption. This is why it cannot satisfy the demands of the new era of the Spirit. The new person desires a freedom that is in harmony with the new epoch. The new freedom is a task and an obligation. In order to reach the state of freedom, one needs to 'create' one's freedom, that is, we are proving to be free beings only if we are able to create radically new being.

However, according to Berdyaev, one of the central traits of the new person is her experience of the 'crisis of culture' or the 'tragedy of creativity'. This means that culture and art have proved to be incapable of changing the world and of creating a new being. The question of a genuine religious creativity proves to be fundamental for modern human's quest for freedom. To this question we shall dedicate our next and final chapter.

[629] This does not mean that the contemplative ascetic engages solely his mind without paying attention to his heart. It means only that mind is an 'eye of the soul', i.e., the leading principle that directs the energy of heart in the right directions.

5. Freedom as the Creation of a Beautiful Being: Human Being as Homo Theurgos

As seen in the previous chapter, Berdyaev maintains that the traditional concept of saintliness does not correspond to the highest form of freedom. This is because the notion of saintliness was shaped in the epochs of the law and the redemption. As a result, it suffers from the same shortcomings as these two periods do, in which only the conception of negative freedom was developed. It seemed, we remember, that the 'role' of healed and deified human nature was only to withdraw and to leave space for divine nature. Berdyaev therefore concludes that in the theology of the Church Fathers there was a tendency towards monophysitism and that Christianity has failed to reveal itself in its fullness as a religion of freedom.

Here we need to remember Berdyaev's conviction that freedom lies in the human power to overcome every form of givenness and to create a radically new being. According to this understanding, freedom is genuine only if it is not subject to any sort of 'control' and this is why it needs to be 'uncreated'. If we claim that freedom is created, then God, the creator of freedom, would be regarded as a form of 'givenness'.

Berdyaev's idea of uncreated freedom, as we have seen, is of vital importance for his theory of human freedom and his ontological justification of creativity and art. In Berdyaev's philosophy freedom is inconceivable without the power to create complete

newness on an ontological level; the creation of the fundamental novum, as I have explained,[630] is the ontological formative principle of the person. Consequently, salvation is inconceivable if human otherness is not preserved. It follows that it is not only divine grace that is needed for our salvation, but that in synergy with God one needs to actualise the potential uniqueness and otherness of one's person. In short, salvation depends on freedom that is realised in synergy with God, and freedom is the human power to create essential newness.

Therefore, in this chapter I shall argue that only on the basis of the idea of uncreated freedom it is possible to justify the human, that is, to give an ontological defence of human freedom, creativity, and art, seeing them as sacramental activities.[631] I shall also argue that because Christianity in general seems to have committed to the idea of created freedom, it has so far failed to produce a genuine justification of human creativity and art. When I say 'a genuine justification' I imply that so far creativity and art have been 'defended' only as symbolical activities.

In Berdyaev's view this want of an adequate doctrine of freedom has made impossible the emergence of an epoch of creativity in the religious sense of the word. This is what Berdyaev maintains when he writes,

> Has the world ever seen creativeness in the religious sense of that word?[632] The very question may appear strange. Who can doubt that there was a great effort of creativeness in Greece or in the period of the Renaissance? Throughout all history man has accomplished creative acts and in creative values the flowering of culture has appeared. And yet we must say *that the world has not yet seen a religious epoch of creativeness*… Whatever has been

[630] See chapter one, section *On the ontological formative principle of personhood*.
[631] I am using here the term 'sacramental' to denote the freedom in creativity that in its nature is ontological rather than modal. This furthermore implies that the works of human creativity are potentially of an eternal value, that they are going to pass the test of the 'end of time' and will inherit the 'fullness of time'.
[632] I believe that what Berdyaev really asks here is, 'Has the world ever seen *a justification* of creativeness in the religious sense of that word?' This interpretation is also valid for the sentence, 'And yet we must say that the world *has not yet seen a religious epoch of creativeness*.'

> called creativeness, no matter how great or valuable it was, was only a hint at true creativeness, only a sign, a preparatory stage.[633]

Berdyaev goes on to explain that, except for the 'separate flashes of lightning' of great genius, from the religious point of view the flowering of 'science and art' may be revealed as forms of obedience to the heavy burden of natural necessity.[634] It is important to comprehend that when Berdyaev employs the term 'religious', as in the case of 'religious creativeness', he has in mind an ontological form of creativity, creativity that produces not only signs but new being, new world. Hence, the world still has not seen a doctrinal justification of human power to create in a 'religious'— i.e., ontological—way, and this is one of the reasons why there has not been in history a religious epoch of creativeness.

> The creative experience, the creative ecstasy, is either denied completely by religious consciousness as 'worldly' and of the passions, or else is merely admitted and permitted. Up to the present, religious consciousness has seen in creativeness not 'spiritual', but rather 'worldly' action. At best, religious consciousness justified creativeness. But this very religious justification of creativeness presupposes that creativeness lies outside the way of religion. The very idea would have seemed forward and godless that creative experience does not need religious permission of justification but is itself a religious way, a religious experience of equal value with the way of asceticism. The old religious consciousness could only put the question of the justification of creative experience. The new religious consciousness puts the question of creative experience as in itself religious, as in itself justifying, rather than needing justification.[635]

Berdyaev's view on human freedom and ontological creativity will be better appreciated if we contrast it with a variant of the teaching on determination. This type of idea, while rejecting the doctrine of predestination, argues that, firstly, God is not a first cause but a living Person; secondly, that God in His kenosis creates space of freedom for the world and thus this freedom is created; and, thirdly, that the created space is, metaphorically speaking, 'in' God. As an example of such a doctrine I shall take the theory of the noted Russian theologian Sergius Bulgakov. This theory is particularly interesting for

[633] MCA, 101. STv, 133.
[634] MCA, 102. STv, 134.
[635] MCA, pp. 161-162. STv, 194.

us because it represents a further development of the patristic doctrine of creation, a doctrine that was criticised by Berdyaev.[636]

5.1 The Doctrine of Determination and Creation's Modal Freedom

Bulgakov's fundamental claim is that God cannot be the 'cause' of freedom or the 'first cause'. As he observed,

> If one understands the relation between God and the world on the basis of causality, as between a 'first' cause and the 'second' causes, in whatever variant, this leads to an aporia without a way out. This aporia is expressed in the inevitable absorption of the second causes by the first cause, that is, in the de facto abolition of the second causes.[637]

Instead of the concept of God as the first cause, Bulgakov suggests that God should be regarded as a living Person and Creator. However, I argue that a simple replacement of the principle of causation by the concept of creation – i.e., if we replace the concept of 'impersonal mechanism of causality' by 'the living and personal God'[638] – does not give an automatic solution of the problem. It would be a serious misreading of Berdyaev not to notice that he reacts against the idea of the 'first mover' as much as he reacts against the traditional doctrine of creation; he voices his critique of predestination as much as of determination. This is because God can be conceived of as 'a living and personal God' and can still be the Creator who creates the human as an essentially passive and redundant

[636] Moreover, Bulgakov explicitly mentions Berdyaev's *The Meaning of the Creative Act* and, while admitting that it is an 'interesting and gifted work', still dismisses Berdyaev's concept of the creative act as an attempt of the 'immanent deification of the human'. Berdyaev's notion of creativity, argues Bulgakov, fuses together the creative elation and folly of self-deification. *Svet nevechernii; Sozertsania i umozrenia*, (Moscow, 1917-1971, Gregg International Publishers Ltd), 182, n1. As we shall see later in this chapter, Bulgakov also devotes a subsection of his chapter *The Human* to the question of theurgy and art.

[637] Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, transl. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans and Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002) 220.

[638] Bulgakov writes, 'The entire doctrine of the first and second causes, the doctrine of God as the *cause* of the world, which acts upon the world but also interacts with it in some way, is only a monstrous misunderstanding, a theological temptation, which replaces the revelation of the living and personal God with the doctrine of an impersonal mechanism of causality. Here, the idea of creation, of the Creator and creation, is replaced by the concept of a well-adjusted mechanism of causes.' Ibid. 220.

being. From the predication that God is Person it does not follow inevitably that God creates the human as a being that is not only enriched but also a being that is a source of enrichment. Thus, we need to focus our attention on the question of what form of human freedom is needed if we hope to avoid the concept of God as the first cause.

In order to shed more light on this issue we should compare Berdyaev's position with Bulgakov's doctrine of the sophianicity of the created world. Bulgakov introduces the concept of the Uncreated Sophia and its created counterpart in order to resolve the problem of the relation between God and the world.[639] I shall therefore now seek to elucidate whether his introduction of the concept of Sophia truly results in a doctrine of genuine human freedom.

That the world is created Sophia means that the creation, contrary to the deistic position, possesses being in itself, but this being, in opposition to pantheism, is not fused with God.[640] So how does Bulgakov conceive of this 'communion and otherness' between God and the world? What is the essence of his panentheism?[641] We need to remember that if otherness is lost communion is compromised since the being of the world disappears in God (pantheistic view);[642] on the other hand, if communion is absent, the otherness becomes creation's tragedy since it can never participate in the Uncreated life (deistic position).

Criticising and eventually rejecting the teaching on predestination, Bulgakov develops the concept of 'determination'. The fundamental idea of the doctrine of

[639] Bulgakov firmly believed that the question of the freedom of creation 'can be resolved only in sophiological terms'. Ibid. 228.
[640] Bride, 226.
[641] Bride, 228.
[642] 'For in order to *state* the identity, an element of non-identity must be presupposed.' P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 15.

predestination, for Bulgakov, is that, from eternity, God pre-established all events in time. This idea institutes a causal relation between eternity and time, 'such that eternity precedes time in some way.'[643] Bulgakov explains that eternity does not precede time but is its foundation. This nuanced distinction should be of vital importance for the doctrine of determination. However, it is rather difficult to see the essential difference between the idea that eternity 'precedes' time (the verb 'precede' might have been used only as a temporal metaphor), and the idea that eternity is its foundation. This becomes obvious if we compare the consequences of the doctrine of predetermination and the doctrine of determination.

According to the former theory, from all eternity God pre-determines every human action; according to the latter, God determines all the *possibilities* of human actions. Bulgakov maintains,

> All creaturely creative activity is accomplished on prescribed themes, as it were, as variations of sophianicity. These themes are practically inexhaustible and infinite, and pour into eternal life. But they are sophianically determined precisely in eternity, in the Divine Sophia. However, this ontological determination has nothing in common with predestination, which annuls the world's originality…[644]

Whilst the idea of predestination implies that God pre-determines all human actions, radically annulling human freedom, in the case of determination, God determines only 'prescribed themes'. Bulgakov is quick to add that these themes are nevertheless 'inexhaustible and infinite'. The inexhaustibility and infinity of the themes is obviously the *sine qua non* of human freedom. But the infinity of God-prescribed themes exists only in relation to history because, as we read, the themes are no longer infinite in eternity, into which they 'pour' but where they are nevertheless sophianically determined. The prescribed themes are therefore infinite solely from the creaturely point of view. Since

[643] Bride, 226.
[644] Bride, 227.

human freedom is essentially dependent on this infinity, but infinity is non-existent from God's position, then the human is free only in a symbolical and modal sense. This becomes apparent from the following quotation, 'in divine eternity there is a *determination* that covers the whole reality of the world and all the possibilities contained in it. All these possibilities are actualised by creaturely freedom, which, like all creative activity, *contains something new in this sense. But it is new only for creation, not for God*.'[645]

I argue that there is an evident parallel between Bulgakov's pair of concepts Divine Sophia/creaturely sophia and Berdyaev's notion of uncreated freedom or the *Ungrund*. Both thinkers introduce their respective concepts hoping to provide a freedom for the creation in its relation to God. It is possible to regard Bulgakov's Divine Sophia in relation to created sophia and history as a version of *tzim-tzum*, a space of freedom that God creates for the world *inside* of Himself.[646] God's kenosis and the creation of a 'kind of mystical primordial space'[647] is the *nihil* that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* refers to.[648]

In Bulgakov's case, the *nihil* or space of freedom is operative only on the level of temporality because 'in divine eternity there is a *determination* that covers the whole reality of the world and all the possibilities contained in it'. Bulgakov's theory creates a sharp distinction between the Absolute God (God in eternity) and God the Father (God in

[645] Ibid. 227. Also, 'Creaturely freedom, as a modal freedom, does not create the world with its givenness. But it informs the world, fulfilling the plan of the world in one way or another, by one path or another, with reference to unchangeable foundations of being.' Ibid. 233.
[646] We find a similar idea in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann who borrows the concept of *tzim-tzum* from Isaac Luria. Moltmann explains that '*tzim-tzum* means concentration and contraction, and signifies a withdrawing of oneself into oneself. Luria was taking up the ancient Jewish doctrine of the Shekinah, according to which the infinite God can so contract his presence that he dwells in the temple. But Luria applied it to God and creation.' Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and The Spirit of God. The Gifford Lectures* 1984-1985, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 87. See also Scaringi, 139.
[647] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 139.
[648] Scaringi, 139.

time).[649] Since, however, the ultimate criterion of truth is eternity, this creates a dilemma as to how we are supposed to understand God's involvement in history.

Bulgakov refuses to accept the idea of the divine self-determination that would be both eternal and temporal probably because he believes that in this way God's omnipotence is preserved and pantheism avoided. However, the shrill distinction between eternity and history renders the doctrine of Incarnation as well as the idea of theandricity or God-manhood ineffective.

As a consequence, we have here two different concepts of God. In each of these cases God loves His world so much that He chooses to limit His omnipotence and omniscience. According to Bulgakov's concept, God loves the world but it seems that He almost vacillates whether He really should endow the human with a genuine freedom. God hesitates whether He really wants to break the chain of causality and not only to disguise it under the mask of the 'inexhaustible and infinite' themes, themes that are however 'prescribed' and therefore appear as infinite only to the creature. According to Berdyaev's concept, God loves the world and *out of love* decides to genuinely limit His omnipotence and omniscience – to limit them both in eternity and time – by 'allowing' uncreated freedom 'outside' of Him.

I argue that only on the basis of 'external' meonic freedom could we claim that God genuinely creates *ex nihilo*, finally breaking the chain of causation. This is because, if the creation is to preserve its originality in the future Age, the chain of causation ought to be

[649] For a nuanced exposition of the relation between immanent Trinity and economic Trinity see David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), pp. 155-187. According to Hart, Trinitarian theology is facing two perils: first, the abolition of the difference between God's immanence and His presence in the history. Ibid. 156. Second, the abandonment of the economic for the immanent Trinity. Ibid. 168. Nonetheless, Hart's viewpoint, just like Bulgakov's, is always obscured by his concern that God's freedom is jeopardized if God is in 'need' of the human. Thus, Hart remains within the limits of the patristic paradigm, its main concern being to emphasize that God's act of creation was not bound by any kind of necessity.

broken on the level of eternity. The full meaning of the creation out of nothing lies precisely in this: that God eternally-temporally ceases to be the first cause.[650] Therefore, Bulgakov's inauguration of the Divine Sophia and creaturely sophia does not fulfill its principal goal of providing the basis for human freedom. For a true, ontological freedom it is not enough to say that the world is sophianic in its nature; the sophianicity of the world needs to be actualised or it remains tragic. The line that separates the concept of Divine Sophia from meonic freedom is very fine but nevertheless it is a limit between two fundamentally different notions of freedom. Because Divine Sophia is located in God, in the final analysis it inexorably leads to full determination of human freedom. Bulgakov believes that his theory provides the basis for an authentic creaturely freedom, but his theological execution fails simply because he cannot accept the possibility that God's self-limitation includes His kenosis before the *Ungrund*, before the meonic freedom.[651] Yet it is difficult to understand why God would humble Himself in so many ways – by becoming flesh, by accepting to be crucified, etc. – but would refuse to crown His kenotic act of love by humbling Himself before the *Ungrund*.

In history we still interrelate with God, but only by using 'prescribed themes'. Whatever is historical from the divine perspective cannot be infinite. Therefore, the

[650] The principal reason why the Church Fathers inaugurate the doctrine of creation against the emanationist theory is to explain that God in His creative act is not bound by necessity. God creates out of nothing, unbound by anything existing parallel with Him. Secondly, the doctrine of creation aims at overcoming Platonic and Neo-Platonic ontology of the created world according to which there is a sharp division between the noumenal world and the world of phenomena. In the world of appearances, according to the Platonic view, nothing is a true being. Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, transl. Mario Domandi (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2000), pp. 16-17. Yet this paradoxically suggests that God's act of creation was after all a necessity. If God did not succeed in creating an autonomous being, a being created in His image and likeness, it would turn out that His act of creation was a descent rather than an ascent; that it was a failure rather than a success. If a created being is not free it follows with an inexorable logic that God Himself is not free. Or, in different words, God is free only if his creation is free.

[651] Scrutinising Chalcedonian dogma, Bulgakov concludes that 'here we have only a dogmatic, not a theological, synthesis; until the present day, a theological synthesis is still being sought by theological thought.' *Lamb*, 443.

'newness' of human creativity is only symbolical and modal, i.e., from God's ultimate perspective it is relative.[652] In eternity, however, even this kind of modal creativity will cease.[653] Bulgakov leaves no doubt about this when he writes, 'in divine eternity there is a *determination* that covers the whole reality of the world and all the possibilities contained in it. All these possibilities are actualised by creaturely freedom, which, like all creative activity, contains something new in this sense. But it is new only for creation, not for God.'[654]

If the ultimately truthful eternity implies cessation of the existence of the non-ontological many, eventually the world is going to be dissolved in the One. The created being truly escapes the watermill of causality only on the condition that, by being both created and an autonomous existential centre, it is capable of generating essential surplus in being. If the world is autonomous, it is not enough to say that this autonomy is only potential; it ought to be actualized and become manifest.[655] As if directly arguing with Berdyaev, Bulgakov writes,

> Let us repeat, *all* the possibilities of creaturely being, having their roots in the Creator's knowledge,[656] are open to this knowledge, since they belong to the world created by Him and are included in this world's composition… In this sense, creation… cannot bring anything ontologically new into the world; it cannot surprise or enrich the Creator Himself.[657]

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[652] Moltmann clearly confirms this view when he writes, 'A historical novelty is never totally new.' *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 118.

[653] The only other solution one could think of is that we are going to exist in eternity as historical beings. However, in that case, the Incarnation and the doctrine of human deification are rendered meaningless.

[654] *Bride*, 227.

[655] Bulgakov on the other hand believes that human person is only potentially absolute while always being relative and limited in its actuality. *Svet*, 302. Bulgakov repeats the same idea when he claims that the human, being created in the divine image, feels the urge for absolute creativity, but this characteristic is only a formal possibility. Ibid. 300. Bulgakov argues that Berdyaev and Fichte confuse the created person with the Uncreated one. Ibid. 300, n1. His understanding of the human being, it has to be admitted, is multi-layered. Bulgakov argues that one could see human person as concurrently created, begotten, and emanated. Ibid. pp. 303-304.

[656] That is, having their roots in created freedom.

[657] *Bride*, 238.

To sum up, Bulgakov's theory of the creaturely Divine Wisdom does not fulfil its goal of providing a sustainable theological background for the doctrinal claim that human freedom 'includes freedom as creative self-determination not only in relation to the world but also in relation to God'.[658] If we understand human freedom as ontological in its nature, then Bulgakov's decision to tackle the problem on the two different levels—of eternity and history—fails to give the desired results; the alleged infinity of the creaturely historical choice is finally abolished in eternity.

Bulgakov's doctrine of human freedom seems to be in fact a doctrine of free will and freedom of choice, which, from the divine perspective, is a choice between a finite number of possibilities. In order to soften what he sees – which is quite in the vein of Berdyaev -as 'the tragedy of creativity' or 'the suffering of non-absolute absoluteness',[659] Bulgakov is forced to introduce the notions of love and obedience. The human is a tragic being but he bears his tragedy in a dignified way, loving God and submitting himself to God's will. Bulgakov's final words, just like Zizioulas's, leave a bitter aftertaste of freedom as 'benevolent necessity'. He concludes, 'man does not reject God's supreme gift, creaturely freedom; rather, he desires to realise it by a free submission to God's will, according to the image of the God-Man, in whom, according to the dogma of the sixth ecumenical council, human will freely "follows" God's will.'[660] One cannot help but ask: Are humility and love really capable of annihilating the feeling of the tragedy of non-absolute absoluteness? Is one's incapacity to accept humility and love as the solution to the

[658] Bride, 237.
[659] Svet, 301.
[660] Bride, 234.

problem of freedom simply a sign of one's proud titanism, or is it rather a sign of one's inherent godlikeness?

5.2 Berdyaev's Concepts of Genius and Geniality

As his principal philosophical task Berdyaev sets out to challenge doctrines such as Bulgakov's, that he sees as responsible for the tragedy of creativity and therefore the tragedy of the human. In order to be a revelation of a genuine freedom, argues Berdyaev, Christianity needs to embrace the amended doctrine of creation according to which God creates the human in order to have a fully reciprocal 'other'. This would involve the replacement of the essentially passive concept of the human *differentia specifica* by an active and creative one. Christian theology needs to complement the 'monophysite' description of the human in terms of the passive concept of saintliness—a natural offspring of the traditional doctrine of the human—with the notion of genius. In the following section I shall seek to elucidate Berdyaev's concept of genius and geniality [661] and the corresponding understanding of freedom.[662]

5.2.1 Geniality

For Berdyaev geniality is the term that best describes the most fundamental trait of human nature. 'Genius', writes Berdyaev, 'is the revelation of man's creative nature, his calling to creativity'.[663] Genius or geniality is inherent to the human nature; it is the quality

[661] The English translation renders the Russian 'genialnost' as 'the quality of genius'. MCA, 174. STv, 208.
[662] Berdyaev sometimes uses the terms genius and geniality as synonyms while making a clear distinction between them.
[663] MCA, 174. STv, 208.

of the human and not only of an artist, scientist, or thinker; it is integral being and universal quality. 'Genius', explains Berdyaev, 'is a special exertion of the entire human spirit, and not a particular talent.'[664] Since Berdyaev understands geniality as the power to overcome the burden of givenness he uses it as a synonym for artistic capacity.

a) Geniality, genius, talent

What is the difference between geniality and genius? Berdyaev stresses that geniality is broader than the genial personality. There is a bit of geniality in every human person, explains the Russian philosopher, but very few real geniuses are born. 'Potential genius is inherent in man's creative nature and there is something of genius in every universal creative effort', writes Berdyaev.[665] In order to explain his understanding of genius Berdyaev combines it with the notion of talent. Geniality, I must emphasise, is radically different from talent. Talent is a differentiated gift, corresponding to the specific demands of various forms of culture and art, and not the universal quality.[666] Genius, on the other hand, is the union of geniality with a specific talent. 'Thus an artist who is genius combines in himself the "genial" nature with artistic talent', remarks Berdyaev.[667]

[664] MCA, 174. STv, 208. This sentence is missing from the English translation.
[665] MCA, 174. STv, 209.
[666] In contemporary psychoanalysis we find qualitative versus quantitative mental distinctions between genius and talent. According to one theory, a genius simply possesses much more talent than a near-genius; the talent is, however, of the same type; according to a different position, 'a genius manifests a qualitative difference in faculties that is not a matter of simply having a superabundance of one kind of element, but a differing element altogether.' Emanuel E. Garcia, 'Rachmaninoff and Scriabin; Creativity and Suffering in Talent and Genius', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3, (June 2004), 424. As Marie-Louise von Franz observed, it is the quality of genius to produce the unexpected and thus one can never predict what a creative person will produce. M. L. von Franz, *Alchemy: An Introduction to the Symbolism and the Psychology* (Toronto, Inner City Books, 1980), 159.
[667] MCA, 175. STv, 209.

b) The main characteristic of geniality

What is the main characteristic of geniality? Geniality, explains Berdyaev, is 'religious' in nature; it is religious because it entails resistance to 'this world'; also, because it implies 'victory over the burden of necessity', and because it is a universal assumption of another world and a universal impulse towards it. In Berdyaev's terminology, as mentioned, an activity is 'religious' when it is ontological, when it overcomes 'the world' by creating new world. In contrast to geniality, talent is only functional, and not ontological.[668] 'Genius is "another world" in man, man's nature "not of this world"', adds Berdyaev.[669] In other words, he contends that an impulse for overcoming necessity is inherent to human nature.

Remembering that, for Berdyaev, 'the world' denotes givenness in general, it follows that if freedom is created or is a freedom of 'prescribed themes', then it represents a form of necessity. Since geniality is 'another world' within the human, and since geniality is ontological, it follows that geniality is actualisable only on the basis of uncreated freedom.[670] And since it stems from the abyss of uncreated freedom, geniality, unlike talent, does not know the security and comfort of obedience to the rules.

> From the point of view of culture, genius is not canonic while talent is. In genius man's whole spiritual nature palpitates with his desire for another type of being. In talent the differentiated function of the spirit is incarnate, adapted to the world's requirements… Talent is moderate and measured. Genius is always measureless. The nature of genius is always revolutionary. Talent acts in the midst of culture, with its 'art and sciences'. Genius

[668] MCA, 175. STv, 210.
[669] MCA, 174. STv, 209.
[670] Although he does not use the notion of uncreated freedom, Harold Bloom hints at a similar concept when he writes that, according to the teaching of Gnosticism, genius is a knowledge that frees the creative mind from any form of divinity that would have a circumscribing effect on what is the most imaginative in the self. Bloom quotes Hans Jonas who said of the ancient Gnostics that they 'experienced "the intoxication of unprecedentness"'. *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), xviii. It is not insignificant for our investigation that a parallel could be made between Berdyaev's proclivity towards Gnosticism and Bloom's judgment that, 'after a lifetime's meditation upon Gnosticism', Gnosticism is 'pragmatically *the religion of literature*'. Ibid.

> acts in ends and beginnings and knows no bounds whatever. Talent is obedience; genius is boldness and daring. Talent is of 'this world'; genius of another. In the fate of genius there is the holiness of sacrifice that is not found in the fate of talent.[671]

5.2.2 Geniality and Artistic Creativeness

In order better to explain what he implies by the creativity of genius Berdyaev refers to art.[672] 'Artistic creativeness', he argues, 'best reveals the meaning of the creative act'.[673] He writes,

> Art is primarily a creative sphere. It is even an accepted expression to call the creative element in all spheres of spiritual activity 'artistic'. A clearly creative attitude towards science, social life, philosophy or morals, we consider artistic. And even the Creator of the world is considered in the aspect of the great artist. The expectation of the creative epoch is the expectation of an artistic epoch, in which art will have the leading place in life. *The artist* [i.e., genius] *is always a creator. Art* [that is, geniality] *is always a victory over the heaviness of 'the world'—never adaptation to 'the world'.... The essential in artistic creativity is victory over the burden of necessity.*[674]

Since geniality – or artistic creativity – is inherent to human nature, one may conclude that every human, being created in the image of the Great Artist, has a vocation from God to be genius or, *mutatis mutandis*, to be artist.[675] There is here a strong resonance with Nietzsche and his contention that art, and not morality, is the true metaphysical

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[671] MCA, 175. STv, 210. Garcia stresses that genius is not simply a result of a supreme intellectual gift, and that it also requires courage and character. 'It requires courageousness and attributes of character that can withstand prejudice and ignorance and persist in dedication to a line of development that runs contrary to commonly accepted notions.' Garcia, 426.

[672] Not enough has been written so far about Berdyaev's views on art. Roger Wedell, for example, laments the fact that 'the writings of Nicholas Berdyaev pertaining to theology and art have [also] received scant attention. They have been dismissed as unorthodox statements by an unsystematic and flamboyant mind.' 'Berdyaev and Rothko: Transformative Visions' in D. Apostolos-Cappadona (ed.) *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 304.

[673] MCA, 225. STv, 261.

[674] MCA, 225. STv, 261. 'The artistic genius', remarks Garcia, 'is the most mysterious, most incomprehensible and most beautiful of all, for its mission is most purely creative, most purely an act of love, least tied to practical power and advantage.' Ibid. 425.

[675] It would not be perhaps superfluous to emphasize again that artistic creativity, regarded as the distinguishing human property, should never be divorced from love. 'It would be very eccentric to see art as central to the distinctively human and at the same time as operating independently of love.' Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 166.

activity of the human person.[676] Artistic creativeness, once again, is not necessarily related to any form of differentiated art; any creative attitude towards life in general is considered to be art.[677]

As the first step in our investigation we shall look at Berdyaev's notion of the 'tragedy of creativity'. Another phenomenon that will help us in this investigation is the 'height of culture'.

5.3 Tragedy of Creativity

Because of its monophysite traits, traditional Christianity, argues Berdyaev, cannot respond to the needs of modern human beings who have experienced the 'tragedy of creativity'.

> Christianity, as a religion of training and guardianship of the immature, as a religion of the fear of temptation for the immature, is being deformed and is becoming torpid. *But only a religion of freedom, a religion of daring and not of fear, can answer to man's present age, to the times and seasons of to-day*.[678]

Christians, contends Berdyaev, cannot pretend that they do not already belong to a new world-epoch in which the old concept of human freedom is no longer satisfying. Berdyaev insists that Christians should prepare themselves for a new revelation about the

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[676] F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1999), 8, 14.

[677] Every human is artist if he makes things in the right way, argues Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: 'The normal view assumes, in other words, *not that the artist is a special kind of man, but that every man who is not a mere idler and parasite is necessarily some special kind of artist… Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 98. David Jones argues that one can find the nature of art in exceedingly diverse activities such as strategy, birthday-cake making, religious rite, and painting. He quotes James Joyce contention that 'practical life of "art" … comprehends all our activities from boat-building to poetry.' D. Jones, 'The Preface to Anathemata', in H. Grisewood (ed.), *Epoch and the Artist* (London: Faber&Faber, 2008), 108. The nature of art, contends Jones, is inseparable from the nature of the creature we call human. What we find in these four examples must be sought for in all the makings of the human, and this is because, explains Jones, 'the activity of art, far from being a branch activity, is truncal and … the tree of man, root, bole, branches and foliage, is involved, of its nature, in that activity'. Ibid. pp. 175-176.

[678] MCA, 159. STv, 192.

human being. 'The whole meaning of our epoch', he writes, 'is in the fact that it is passing over to the revelation of man.'[679] In somewhat prophetic tone Berdyaev writes,

> We can no longer refuse the time of freedom: Christian men are now too old, not only ripe but over-ripe for that. At the end of the Christian path there dawns the consciousness that God expects from man such a revelation of freedom as will contain even what God Himself has not foreseen. God justifies the mystery of freedom, having by His might and power set a limit to His own foreseeing. Those not free are not needed by God, they do not belong in the divine cosmos. Hence freedom is not a right: it is an obligation. Freedom is a religious virtue.[680]

Berdyaev argues that the world is now moving towards new types of asceticism. Since God needs us only as long as we are free, humility, one of the main virtues of saintliness, is no longer sufficient. Moreover, 'the old experience of humility and obedience has turned into something evil'.[681] Berdyaev writes, 'And it is necessary to enter the way of religious disobedience to the world and the evil of the world when the spirit of death is sensed in the fruits of obedience. Man is to face the world not with humble obedience but rather with creative activity ... Genius is the sainthood of daring rather than of obedience.'[682]

If Christianity remains only a partial revelation of freedom, it will continue to be irrelevant for the most gifted men, who, in their quest for genuine ontological liberty, have experienced the tragedy of creativity. It will remain a 'childish or infantile religiosity', or a religiosity of a 'religious tutelage'.[683] Berdyaev therefore believes that the 'tragedy of

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[679] MCA, 321. STv, 357.
[680] MCA, 159. STv, 192.
[681] MCA, 167. STv, 201.
[682] MCA, 167. STv, 201.
[683] MCA, pp. 332-333. STv, 368. To be able to grasp Berdyaev's vision of different religious epochs we need to know that he differs between two religious ages, one of which is purely individualistic and the other that is universal. The individualistic consciousness, writes Berdyaev, does not acknowledge the stages of the world development, making the degree of revelation solely dependent on the level of the individual's progress. However, Berdyaev warns that this understanding betrays religious individualism, which is in conflict with the very idea of the Church as a universal body that lives its own super-individual life. Both man as individual and the Church as organism are growing. It is impossible, Berdyaev argues, to measure Christianity by the individual age of man and his personal conversion, because each one of us inherits the previous life and

creativity', manifested as the 'crisis of culture', has become the most urgent problem that Christianity needs to face if it hopes to find a satisfying answer to the question of freedom. 'The tragedy of creativity', he writes, 'and the crisis of creativity form the basic problem passed on by the nineteenth century to the twentieth.'[684] We should add that the tragedy of creativity is in fact a tragedy of the human conceived of as an 'ontological' being, as a co-creator and *homo theurgos*, which means that his actions affect, transform, and change the substance of the world. And yet, the human is faced with the impossibility of actualising his ontological urge to create new reality, of realizing his otherness and freedom. What is the reason for the ineffectiveness of the human inherent godlikeness - for the tragedy of creativity and freedom?

5.3.1 The Height of Culture

In analyzing the 'tragedy of creativity' we need to elucidate Berdyaev's concept of the 'height of culture'. His argument is that modern person is dissatisfied with the old Christianity not because one has become more perfect, but because, after experiencing the 'height of culture', one's consciousness has changed and matured: 'Man has now matured into readiness for the new religious Church, not because he has become sinless and perfect, not because he has fulfilled all the commandments of the church of Peter, but because man's consciousness at the height of culture has attained mature and final acuteness…'[685]

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experience of the Church as a universal organism. The Christian Church is old and it is going through a crisis that has to do with the seasons of the world. Ibid. 168.

[684] MCA, 226. STv, 262. I shall argue in this chapter that this problem remained unsolved in the last century and therefore passed on to the present one.

[685] MCA, pp. 332-333. STv, 368.

I therefore argue that Berdyaev uses the terms 'tragedy of creativity' and 'height of culture' with a threefold meaning. First, 1) they denote a moment in which human consciousness has attained ultimate awareness that genuine freedom is in the power to create new being; second, 2) that humans can never again accept any concept of freedom that would offer less than the power to create new reality; third, 3) it implies a question of whether culture as a form of human creativeness is solely a psychological activity, unable to change the essence of the created.

The failure of Christian theology to respond to this burning problem of modernity means that it will remain a religion with an unsatisfactory concept of freedom. It will thus continue to be of little importance to the most gifted who acutely experience the tragic side of their talents, intuiting that freedom implies a God who, 'in His almighty and omniscient will', conceals from Himself what the human will create.

> God the Creator, by an act of His almighty and omniscient will, created man—His own image and likeness, a being free and gifted with creative power, called to be lord of creation… By an act of His almighty and omniscient power the Creator willed to limit His own foresight of what the creative freedom of man would reveal, since such foreknowledge would have done violence to and limited man's freedom in creation. The Creator does not wish to know what the anthropological revelation will be. Herein is the great and sublime wisdom of God in the work of creation. God wisely concealed from man His will that man should be called to be a free and daring creator and concealed from Himself what man would create in his free courageous action.[686]

If God wants the human to be a free and daring creator, this means that the nature of human gifts is ontological, religious, and spiritual. This amended notion of God and the human would have been probably satisfying even for Nietzsche, who 'burned with creative desire' but 'knew only the law and the redemption in neither of which is the creative

[686] MCA, 100. STv, 132.

revelation of man', and hated God because he believed that if God exists man's creativeness is impossible.[687]

In authors like Nietzsche and Ibsen, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, in the new French and Russian symbolism,[688] Berdyaev sees the crisis of creativity reaching its final intensity. The problem of the relation of art to life, of creativity to existence, has never been put so acutely, writes Berdyaev. Never before has there been such a strong craving to pass over from the creativity of producing art to creating life itself. The human of the final creative day desires to create something unprecedented and in his creative rupture oversteps all the bounds and all the limits.[689] Berdyaev explains,

> In the new symbolism creativeness outgrows itself. Creativeness presses forward, not towards cultural values but towards new being. Symbolism is a thirst for liberation from symbolism through recognition of the symbolic nature of art. Symbolism is a crisis of cultural art, a crisis of every medium culture… Symbolism is the final word of the world-epoch of redemption and the entrance court into the world-epoch of creativity.[690]

The new symbolism, Berdyaev maintains, is valuable first of all as an indication of the crisis of culture. What its enemies saw as decadence is related to the great crisis of human creativeness. The new symbolism is asking a question of the impossibility of art as cultural value and the creative act is transferred from culture into being. 'Symbolism', writes Berdyaev, 'is culture's dissatisfaction, an unwillingness to remain in culture: it is a way to being'.[691]

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[687] MCA, 106. STv, 138. Berdyaev probably here has in mind Nietzsche's assertion, 'Away from God and gods this will lured me; what would there be to create, after all, if there were gods?' *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

[688] Berdyaev here has in mind the art of new French Catholics such as Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Léon Bloy, Verlaine, Barbey d'Aurévilly, E. Hello, and Huysmans. MCA, 241. STv, 277. Among the symbolists Berdyaev also mentions Mallarmé and Maeterlinck, and V. Ivanov, A Byelii, and especially the composer Alexander Scriabin, from Russia. MCA, 240. STv, 277.

[689] *Filosofiia tvorchestva, kul'tury i iskusstva (2)*, (Moskva: Izdadeilstvo Iskusstvo, 1994), 400.

[690] MCA, pp. 240-241. STv, 276.

[691] MCA, 243. STv, 279.

Therefore, the new aestheticism, in Berdyaev's view, was not an example of classical art for art's sake. Rather, it endeavoured to transcend culture as an immanent phenomenon and to become *a new religion*, to be a bridge from the disfigured world into the world of beauty. Aestheticism tried to be 'everything', to be another life, and it desired the transformation of being into art. As a new religion, argues Berdyaev, aestheticism had its own kind of asceticism and its own ascetics, such as, for example, Huysmans.[692]

Nonetheless, in the religion of aestheticism beauty is typically contrasted with the existing world; beauty is external to being. Aestheticism does not create a new world but a phantom world. Berdyaev's conclusion is that, because it does not believe in the possibility of the creation of new world, aestheticism is not fully theurgic.[693] Berdyaev therefore sees symbolism as the 'final word of the world-epoch of redemption and the entrance court into the world-epoch of creativity'.[694] The new aestheticism suffers from an irreconcilable inner conflict. Whilst thirsting to cease being merely a cultural activity, to become a new *religion*, a being-making action, aestheticism nonetheless did not believe in the ontological and theurgic capacity of art. According to Berdyaev, this was the reason why aestheticism could not succeed in its ambition to create being.

It remains unclear however whether this is the only reason for the failure of aestheticism. If it were not, what would be other reasons due to which the new symbolism—and this question is related to all other forms of art—remained merely a psychological creativity? Is it only our desire that one action should be ontological, or simply our awareness that it could be ontological, that transforms the character of our actions from merely immanent into transcendental? Berdyaev claims, as we have seen, that

[692] MCA, pp. 244-245. STv, 280.
[693] MCA, 245. STv, 281.
[694] MCA, 241. STv, 277.

artistic creativity is ontological in its nature. Nonetheless, how does he explain the fact that one act of creativity remains futile whereas another succeeds? To answer this question, we need to look at Berdyaev's analysis of the different types of art. The main question concerns the reasons for art's failure to fulfill its ontological nature and to create a new way of being.[695] This question is of vital importance for our scrutiny of Berdyaev's theory of freedom. If Berdyaev believes that the failure of art is definite then his concept of freedom is not essentially different from that of Zizioulas or Bulgakov.

5.3.2 Symbolic vs Ontological Nature of Art

Art is theurgic in its nature, and yet fails to create new world. What, according to Berdyaev, are the reasons for this debacle of art? Berdyaev's position on art, as we have seen, seems to be highly ambiguous. His theory of art was mainly expressed in his seminal book *The Meaning of the Creative Act*. He was well aware that in this book his argument was not particularly systematic. However, this was the case because the work 'was written at a time of well-nigh intoxicating ecstasy' due to which 'my thoughts and the normal course of philosophical argument seemed to dissolve into vision'.[696] Berdyaev admits that this is 'an impulsive, unpremeditated and unfinished work' and that he was 'least of all satisfied with the section on Art'. Nonetheless, he stresses that the book contains, although in a raw form, all his dominant and formative ideas and insights. Berdyaev also wrote that

[695] Clearly, this question already contains an affirmation, i.e., that artistic creativity and art are potentially ontological endeavour. A dilemma inevitably arises as to the theological background on the basis of which we could talk about the ontological nature of artistic creativity and art in particular? We need be aware that Berdyaev attempts to give a justification of art not simply as a *means* to salvation. He develops, we stress again, an *ontological* defence of artistic creativity and art, in which the nature of art is theurgic and sacramental. However, we shall answer this question at a later stage in this chapter and concentrate now on Berdyaev's view on the different types of art.

[696] DR, 210. SP, 266.

it is his 'misfortune that, owing partly to the distraction provided by other themes and problems and partly to my unsystematic manner of thinking, I was never able to work out the principal thesis of this work'.[697] *The Meaning of the Creative Act* holds a particular place in Berdyaev's religious philosophy being a result of a strong spiritual experience. This experience was a turning point in Berdyaev's life because it marked the beginning of the 'creative' period in his thinking.

> I can remember how one summer day just before dawn I was suddenly seized by a tumultuous force, which seemed to wrench me away from the oppressive spell of my despondent condition, and a light invaded my whole being. I knew then that this was the exalting call to creativity: henceforth I would create out of the freedom of my soul like the great artificer whose image I bear.[698]

On the one hand, the Russian thinker was aware that in artistic creativity we see the tragedy of all creativity, that is, the gap between the goal and realisation. He writes,

> The aim and purpose of the artistic creative act is theurgical. The realisation of the creative artistic act is the production of a differentiated art, of cultural aesthetic values. Creativeness goes out not into another world, but into the culture of this world. Artistic creativeness does not attain ontological results: it creates the ideal rather than the real, symbolic values rather than being. In artistic creativeness there is clearly revealed *the symbolic nature of all cultural creativeness*.[699]

In a clear contradiction with his former claim, Berdyaev asserts that the *nature* and accordingly the scope of every creative act is theurgical.[700] Furthermore, he unequivocally

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[697] DR, pp. 210-211. SP, 265.
[698] DR, ibid.
[699] MCA, 226. STv, 262. Also, 'In art new being is not created but only signs of new being, its symbols… The final reality of being is created in art only symbolically. For the creative act, truly final and secret being is attainable only symbolically… Symbolism points to *the eternal tragedy of human creativeness*…' MCA, 239. Italics added. In Berdyaev's view not only art but also all culture is symbolic. This includes economic culture as well. Economic culture is merely a sign and symbol of the human final power over nature. Ibid. Nonetheless, Berdyaev did not deny the validity of culture and civilization. 'Man is committed by virtue of his mundane destiny to the making of culture and civilization. And yet such making should not blind us to the fact that it is but a token of real transfiguration, which is the true, though unattainable, goal of creativity. "Realistic" creativity, as distinct from "symbolic" creativity, would, in fact, bring about the transfiguration and the end of this world'. DR, 214.
[700] MCA, 226. STv, 275.

maintains that 'artistic creativity is ontological rather than psychological in its nature'.[701] Thus, in Berdyaev's view, 'art, also, may be the redemption from sin'.

> Art, also, may be the redemption from sin. There is redemption in classic, canonic art whose attainments are in contrast to the aims of the creative act; and there is redemption, also, in romantic art, breaking all the canons and surpassing all limits. In art, as everywhere else in the world, the sacrifice on Golgotha is repeated.[702]

How are we to understand these two conflicting claims? I argue that Berdyaev talks about two major types of art. 1) The first type of art is 'differentiated' art and its outcome is merely a cultural value. Berdyaev uses the term 'differentiated' to denote an art that has alienated itself from its primordial sources. 2) The second type of art is 'non-differentiated' and it is in harmony with its primeval origins. This art is ontological and sacramental.

1) *Differentiated art* did not fulfill the potential originally embedded in its nature. Was this only because the differentiated art has gone astray from its origins? If this is the case, we need to ask two questions: a) what is the origin of art in Berdyaev's opinion and, b) what role did art play in its primordial form?[703]

a.i) Cult as the origin of art; two major types of cult

All culture and art, including differentiated art, believes Berdyaev, springs from the religious *cultus*.[704] Nonetheless, Berdyaev discriminates two major types of cult: the first type is symbolic and it includes a) the cult of antiquity and, b) the Christian medieval cult; the second type of cult is ontological and it belongs to the new world-epoch and it is a

[701] MCA, 225. STv, 261.
[702] MCA, 236. STv, 272.
[703] It needs to be emphasised, however, that our elucidation of art is not 'for art's sake'. Art is taken here as an example of human creative nature because, in Berdyaev's words, 'it best reveals the meaning of the creative act'.
[704] 'Utonchenaya Thivaida', in *Filosofiya tvorchestva, kulturi, iskustva,* (Moskva, Izdatelstvo "Iskusstvo", 1994), II, 362. It is possible to argue that the noun 'culture' comes from 'cult'.

theurgic or ontological cult. The symbolic cult gives birth to differentiated art. The ontological cult is the cradle of theurgic art.

An art is 'differentiated' because it either no longer belongs to the organic unity of life centred on cult, or because it stems from a symbolic cult.[705] In antiquity and in the Middle Ages art was still very much part of cult, but this cult was merely symbolic. If we closely scrutinise Berdyaev's writings we shall see that in his view the first type of cult believes in its symbolic nature, it is structured according to its idea of symbolism, and as a result it engenders symbolic act. However, this is not what a genuine cult should be about, argues Berdyaev. Let us look at differences and similarities between the pagan cult and the Christian cult.

5.3.3 Symbolic cult, pagan and Christian

The very symbolic character of the pagan cult is due to its specific ontology. According to the pagan worldview, writes Berdyaev, the heavens are closed, and no abyss appears above or below. Heaven itself is a closed and complete dome beyond which there was nothing.[706] Therefore, the creation of a radically new reality—and that is precisely what Berdyaev sees as the role of cult—is impossible.

Christian culture is symbolic precisely because of the symbolic nature of the Christian cult, argues Berdyaev. Inasmuch as culture represents the 'tragedy of creativity',

[705] Berdyaev's term 'organic unity' needs further elucidation. As the Russian thinker explains, the end of the Renaissance coincides with the disintegration of everything organic, of an organic mode of life. The organic life is hierarchical or cosmic, which means that the parts are subordinated to the whole, maintaining relation to the centre. In an organic unity of life the centre imbues the parts with the goal of life. An activity becomes 'differentiated' when it separates itself from the organic centre, thus subjoining itself to a lower goal. 'The End of the Renaissance; Regarding the Contemporary Crisis of Culture', in *SOPHIA: Problemy dukhovnoi kul'tury I religioznoi philosophii* (Berlin: Obelisk, 1923), pp. 21-46.
[706] MCA, 228. STv, 264.

cult is the 'tragedy of the human relationship with God'.[707] This is because in the Christian religious cult we find only symbolic expression of the eschatological truth.[708] In its visible manifestation, the nature of the Church is cultural and this is why the Church only enhances the tragedy of creativity already existing in culture.[709] When he argues that the Christian cult is symbolic, Berdyaev wants to say that the human part in the cult is regarded merely as non-ontological and non-sacramental. Is it really possible to have another type of cult in Christianity, a theandric cult, on the basis of the doctrine of creation that postulates non-sacramental character of human nature?

Berdyaev calls the Christian medieval type of culture 'angelic' culture in contrast to a purely human culture. Medieval culture was theocratic and hierocratic in its nature and all creativity was in subordination to the religious principle conceived as the sovereignty of the angelic principle over the human principle.[710] The angelic principle is a 'principle passively-intermediary (*passivno-mediumicheskoe*), transmissive of Divine grace, but not an active-creative principle'.[711] Berdyaev argues that the Christian cult is angelic because the traditional form of Christianity is shaped according to 'angelic' image of the human as a passive being. The traditional Christianity defines itself solely as a religion of salvation— prayer for redemption being the only human meaningful and 'sacramental' act— without envisaging a possibility that human creation could be a sacral activity.

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[707] V. V. Bychkov, 'Krizis kulturi i iskusstva v eshatologicheskom svete filosofii Nikolaya Berdyaeva', in V. Porusa (ed.) *N. A. Berdyaev i krizis evropeiskogo duha* (Moskva: Bibleisko-bogoslovskii institute Sv. Apostola Andreya, 2007), 211.

[708] It remains unclear if by saying that the Christian cult is only symbolic, Berdyaev questions the 'real presence' of Christ in bread and wine. Given that he regarded himself as an Orthodox believer, it is more likely that Berdyaev here wants to stress that in the transformation of bread and wine the human remains passive. The human, therefore, contributes to the sanctification of the creation merely in a passive way and thus his actions are only symbolical.

[709]. Bychkov, 'Krizis', 211.

[710] N. Berdyaev, 'Spasenie i tvorchestva; Dva ponimaniya khristianstva; posvyaschaetsya pamyati Vladimira Solov'eva', in: *Filosofiya tvorchestva, kulturii i iskusstva*, (Moskva, Izdatelystvo "Iskusstvo", 1994), 345.

[711] Ibid. 344.

> Salvation is the matter of the first sort, the one thing necessary, creativity however is a matter of the second or third sort, applicable to life, but not the very essence of it. We live beneath the sign of a deepest religious dualism. Hierocraticism, clericalism in the understanding of the Church is the expression and justifying excuse of this dualism. The Church hierarchy in its essence is a hierarchy that is angelic, and not human… The system of hierocraticism, the exclusive sovereignty of the priesthood in the life of the Church, and through the Church in the life of the world also, is a suppression of the human principle by the angelic, a subordination of the human principle to the angelic principle… But the suppression of the human principle, the non-allowance of its unique creative expression, is an impairment of Christianity, as being the religion of Godmanhood.[712]

Berdyaev illustrates the suppression of the human principle by telling seemingly a simplistic parable about St Seraphim of Sarov, the greatest Russian saint, and Pushkin, the greatest Russian poet.

> At the beginning of the nineteenth century there lived the greatest Russian genius, Pushkin, and the greatest Russian saint, Seraphim of Sarov. Pushkin and St. Seraphim lived in different worlds; they did not know each other, and never had contact of any kind. Two equally noble majesties of holiness and of genius—they are incomparable, impossible of measurement with one standard—it is as though they belonged to two different sorts of being. The Russian soul may be equally proud of Pushkin's genius and of the saintliness of Seraphim. And it would be equally impoverished if either Pushkin or St. Seraphim should be taken away from it. And here I pose a question: For the destiny of Russia, for the destiny of the world, for the purposes of God's providence, would it have been better if in the Russia of the early nineteenth century there had lived not the great St. Seraphim and the great genius Pushkin, but two Seraphims—two saints—St. Seraphim in the Tambov Government and St. Alexander in Pskov? If Alexander Pushkin had been a saint like Seraphim he would not have been a genius, he would not have been a creator. But a religious consciousness which recognizes saintliness like that of Seraphim as the only way of spiritual uprising will have to recognize genius like that of Pushkin as void of religious value, imperfect and sinful. It was only because of his religious frailty, his sinfulness and imperfection, that Pushkin was a poet-genius and not a saint like Seraphim. It would have been better for the divine purpose if two saints had existed, rather than one saint and one poet.[713]

Berdyaev here asks whether the enormous effort and sacrifice of so many artists was meaningless and redundant, simply a result of their 'religious frailty, their sinfulness and imperfection'. Is it true that, had they been able to become saints like Seraphim, they would have rejected their geniality as something inferior? Berdyaev also asks why, if God has endowed humans with profuse creative gifts, is all they can create merely a phantom

[712] Ibid.
[713] MCA, pp. 170-171. STv, 204. In the last sentence Berdyaev obviously expresses the opinion held by the most of Christians.

world? Behind all these dilemmas there lurks a fundamental question – is there a 'religious meaning of creativeness'?[714] Does creativeness have a 'spiritual' dimension or is it only a 'worldly' activity?

> And now the question arises: In the creative ecstasy of the genius is there not perhaps another kind of sainthood before God, another type of religious action, equal in value to the canonical sainthood? I deeply believe that before God the genius of Pushkin … is equal to the sainthood of Seraphim… The way of genius is another type of religious way, equal in value and equal in dignity with the way of the saint. The creativity of the genius is not 'worldly' but truly 'spiritual' activity.[715]

Religiosity that recognizes only the saintliness like that of Seraphim excludes geniality and moreover regards it as utterly superfluous. Where there is saintliness there is no need for a genius or a poet.

> The 'worldly' work of Pushkin cannot be compared with the 'spiritual' work of St. Seraphim. In the best case Pushkin's creative work is admitted and justified by religious consciousness but it is not considered a religious work.[716] And it would have been better for Pushkin to imitate Seraphim, retire from the world into a monastery, and enter the way of ascetic spiritual wrestling. In that case Russia would have been deprived of its greatest genius, would have suffered loss of its creativity. But the creativity of genius is only the reverse side of sin and religious poverty. Thus think the fathers and teachers of a religion of redemption. For redemption, creativeness is not necessary, only saintliness.[717]

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[714] MCA, 109. STv, 142.

[715] MCA, 172. STv, 206.

[716] Berdyaev here possibly implies that a more sensitive representative of the redemptive religiosity would justify Pushkin's work but only as long as it serves the purpose of his religion. The problem is, however, that religion and therefore 'religious purpose' is defined too narrowly and thus art ought to serve to these narrow ends without having any autonomous goal. Art is no doubt justified, but solely as a means, observes G.M. Hopkins. 'I want to write still, and as a priest I very likely can do that too, not so freely as I should have liked, e.g. nothing or little in the verse way, *but no doubt what would serve the cause of my religion*. *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins Including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, 2nd ed., ed. Claude Colleer Abbott, (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), 231. Hopkins writes in a similar vain to R.W. Dixon: 'Our Society values… and has contributed to literature, to culture; but only as a means to an end.' *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, 2nd ed. Claude Colleer Abbott (London: Oxford University Press 1955), 93. As Robert Graves writes referring to Hopkins and others: 'It has become impossible to combine the once identical functions of priest and poet… The poet survived in easy vigour only where the priest has been shown the door.' *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth,* (New York, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1966), pp. 425-426. Quoted in Philip A. Ballinger, *The Poem as Sacrament; The Theological Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 63.

[717] MCA, 171. STv, 205. That Christianity of redemption looks with suspicion at artistic gifts, and regards them as 'eccentricities', was clear from the life of G.M. Hopkins. In one of his letters he writes, 'you give me a long jobation about eccentricities. Alas, I have heard so much about and suffered so much for and in fact have been so completely ruined for life by my alleged singularities that they are sore subject.' *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1955), 126. Hopkins assumed that his case was not a lonely example. He laments that the 'flower of the youth of a country in numbers enter the Jesuit order. Among these how many poets, how many artists of all sorts, there must have been! But there

Berdyaev adds that religious consciousness, at best, justified creativity but this very justification presupposes that creativeness is not a religious way. For the soteriological understanding, the very idea that creative experience does not need religious permission but is itself a 'spiritual' way would have seemed godless. Due to the theological presuppositions on which it is based, 'the old religious consciousness could only put the question of the justification of creative experience', explains the Russian thinker. However, he stresses that,

> The new religious consciousness puts the question of creative experience as in itself religious, as in itself justifying, rather than needing justification. Creative experience is not something secondary and hence requiring justification. Creative experience is something primary and hence justifying. Creative experience is spiritual, in the religious sense of that word … Such a statement of the problem could arise only in our time, in an epoch when the world is passing the divide into a new religious epoch of creativeness.[718]

Berdyaev believes that the human is not only above all the hierarchical grades of nature, but also higher than the angels. The role of the angels is static because they merely mirror God's glory. As humans, we are dynamic and we have a vocation to continue the creation of the world. It is humans, stresses Berdyaev, who are created in the image and likeness of God, and not angels. 'The Son of God', writes Berdyaev, 'became a man and not an angel… Man is created in the image and likeness of God; the beast in the image and

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have been very few Jesuit poets and, where there have been, I believe it would be found on examination that there was something exceptional in their circumstances or, so to say, counterbalancing in their career.' *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, pp. 93-94.

[718] MCA, 162. STv, 195. Because creativeness was not regarded as the primary and the distinguishing human capacity, 'in the religious epoch of the law and the redemption the religious problem of creativeness was unknown. Only the 'worldly', cultural problem of creativeness was posed and solved. In various ways man tried to combine the ascetic Christian way with the justification of worldly creativeness, i.e., culture. But in all these Christian justifications of the creation of culture, one always felt a strain, an eclectic compromise. The problem of creativeness was never considered religiously and could not be so considered, since the very putting of that question was already an entrance into the religious epoch of creativeness. Creative ecstasy is religious ecstasy: the way of the creative shaking of man's whole being is a religious way. This is a new, as yet unknown, religious consciousness – the consciousness of the creative epoch in the world.' Ibid. 162.

likeness of the angels. Hence we find in the world a dynamic-creative, divine-human hierarchy, and the uncreative, static, angel-animal hierarchy.'[719]

Bulgakov's view on angels is in many ways similar to Berdyaev's, but Bulgakov, in accordance with his non-ontological vision of the human, does not think that the angel-likeness of the Christian cult is a problem. He remarks that God gave to the human an autonomous domain together with a vocation to be a self-determined ruler. Angels, on the other hand, do not have their own realm; they only enunciate God's will. Therefore there is a clear parallel between the angelic and the office of priesthood.[720] Bulgakov immediately reminds us that the human cannot be described solely in terms of his priestly vocation; we are also prophets and kings - although the theurgic power belongs solely to the priesthood. In other words, the human is 'theurg' only by exercising the angelic, priestly, or passive-intermediary role; his prophetic and the royal gift of self-determination are merely symbolic, and not ontological or theurgic. The source of theurgy *par excellence* is the Eucharist. Bulgakov in fact adds that the Eucharist is the chief but not the only source of theurgy.[721] The prophet is also a theurg. But if we examine how Bulgakov understands prophetic vocation, we shall see that, in spite of claiming that a prophet is not at all a mere medium for God, and although prophesizing requires individual endeavour and daring, 'in his words a prophet does not experience his will, but God's commandment'.[722] The only difference between prophet and priest is that the former has an individual character and a specific role in history whereas in the case of the latter the individual traits are absorbed by

[719] MCA, 73. STv, 103.
[720] Svet, 308.
[721] Svet, 373.
[722] Svet, 376.

the generality of his Levite vocation.[723] We should stress that the prophet's individual effort does not add an iota to the theurgic action;[724] Bulgakov is clear that theurgic deeds, that is, ontological actions, are solely in God's power.

> Can we talk about theurgy when we consider human creativity; can human action be theurgy, i.e., divine activity? We have to distinguish between God's activity in the world, which is performed in the human and via the human (and which is theurgy in the exact sense of the word), and human activity, which is exercised by the power of divine sophianicity bestowed upon the human… We have to distinguish these possibilities, theurgy and sophiurgy… Theurgy is God's activity…[725]

It is not difficult to see that, in Berdyaev's view, the medieval Christian cult bears the essential trait of the Christianity of redemption with its tendency towards monophysitism. The sway of the passive angelic principle or the principle of priesthood over the human active principle is an impairment of Christianity as a religion that entails not only belief in God but also belief in the human.[726] Berdyaev maintains that the medieval angelic type of cult should be replaced by a cult of Godhumanity or—the term that I would like to inaugurate here—with the theandric cult.

5.3.4 Amended Concept of Sacraments

Theistic doctrine of creation allows only for the Christianity of redemption in which the sole purpose of human life is salvation and from which ensues a radical depreciation of

[723] Svet, 379.
[724] 'However, the prophet's human characteristics are not the well-spring of that supra-human trait that mesmerizes us in the prophet as he enunciates God's will and bears God's power. Because that is God himself…' Svet, 402.
[725] Svet, 372.
[726] Berdyaev stresses that 'Christianity is the religion of the divine Trinity and Godhumanity. It presupposes faith in man as well as in God, for humanity is a part of Godhumanity.' FS, 206; FSD, 245.

history and all the human historical endeavours.[727] The human as a sacramental being, however, would require a different understanding of sacraments.

According to the Catechism's definition, sacrament is 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'.[728] The most important trait of this definition—the one so generally accepted that it simply passes almost unnoticed—is that God is the only wellspring of the sacramental.[729] More precisely, it is only God that enriches human life and a reciprocal action is not envisioned as a possibility. Sacrament is that which a 'generous God'[730] endows upon the world. When Colman E. O'Neill, for example, writes that 'sacraments should give meaning to life… Sacramentology must begin there, facing its ever-present assumption that God can give meaning to human life, that man does not deny himself by turning to God',[731] we see that his position is fully theistic. In the picture of 'a generous God' we have only one-way relationship between God and the creature because it is always God who gives meaning to human life—i.e., enriches the life of the human—and our role is simply to be passive receptors.[732] Thus, we have an example of imposed

[727] George Florovsky, 'Faith and Culture', (New York City, St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly, 1955-1956), Vol. IV, 34. Florovsky distinguishes several types of such a pessimistic attitude towards history and human nature: Pietist or Revivalist, Puritan, Existentialist, and the resistance of the 'Plain Man'. What they all have in common is the view that 'nothing is to be achieved in history.' Ibid. pp. 34-36. Florovsky rightly observes that behind this discussion we find the deepest theological issues, and that no solution can ever be reached unless the theological character of the discussion is acknowledged and grasped. Florovsky underlines a need for a theology of culture. Ibid. 37. In his famous book *Christ &Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr writes about the question from the title of his work as an 'enduring problem'. According to Niebuhr, 'not only Jews, but also Greeks and Romans, Medievalists and Moderns, Westerners and Orientals have rejected Christ because they saw in Christ a threat to their culture.' R. Niebuhr, *Christ & Culture*, (New York, Harper One, 2001), 4.

[728] See for example David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

[729] It is true, we have to admit, that according to this understanding the human is seen as a performer of a sacramental act, i.e., that the human performs an outward sign of an inward grace. Nevertheless, the problem is that in his action the human is merely a tool and a passive mediator of the divine grace.

[730] Brown, 6.

[731] Colman E. O'Neill O.P., *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (Princeton: Scepter Publishers; Chicago: Midwest Theological Forum, 1998), 20.

[732] Paul Tillich comes very close to the core of the problem when he asks 'whether religion is … considered as a creative element of the human spirit rather than as a gift of divine revelation.' Tillich explains that if we reply that religion is an aspect of the human's spiritual life, some theologians will turn away. For them, adds

generosity within a totalitarian ontology according to which it almost seems that God creates the human because He does not feel comfortable to praise Himself and therefore needs a creature to do the job. We reach a paradox according to which praising God is the meaning of human life although praise does not belong to the human since he is unable to create anything that would be new to his Creator.

If God, however, creates the human as a created but autonomous existential centre, we could claim—being fully aware of the ultimate difference between the Uncreated God and the creature—that the human, to use O'Neill's expression, gives 'meaning' to divine life or in other words enriches it. This means that the human fulfills the role bestowed upon him by God, that is, to be a full dialogical interlocutor.

Traditional understanding of the creation and the traditional sacramentology defines sacrament as that which is non-perishable, everlasting, that which is already eternal and will continue to exist in Eternity. If human creativity however enriches God's life it follows that every human creative act already becomes eternal, here and now, which means that God created the human as a sacramental being. If that is the case, the human is construed as a being whose works are endowed with a potential power to vanquish the fallen world and create a new and imperishable world. The most important consequence of this assumption is that we cannot speak anymore about sacraments as exclusively the results of the divine actions; both God and the human are the source of the sacraments—because they both draw

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Tillich, 'the meaning of religion is that man received something which does not come *from* him, but which is given *to* him and may stand against him. They insist that the relation to God is not a human possibility and that God must first relate Himself to man… Man's spirit, they would continue, is creative with respect to itself and its world, but not with respect to God. With respect to God, man is receptive and only receptive. He has no freedom to relate himself to God. This, they would add, is the meaning of the classical doctrine of the Bondage of the Will as developed by Paul, Augustine, Thomas, Luther, and Calvin.' P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 3-4. It is worth noting that the here mentioned classical doctrine of the Bondage of the Will is an offspring of the classical doctrine of the creation.

from uncreated freedom—and this is why we need to talk about *theandric* sacraments or sacraments of Godhumanity.

A logical result of the conception of 'theandric sacraments' is that the human should be henceforth regarded not merely as a *homo religiosus*[733] but as a *homo theurgos*. I venture to inaugurate the concept *homo theurgos* because to the best of my knowledge it is the only term that expresses two vital traits of human nature: 1) the human capacity to create radically new realities; 2) new realities created by the human are ontological and transcendental in their very nature, that is, they continue to exist in the Aeon to come.

Consequently, I want to stress the equivalence between the terms priest, saint, and angel, in contrast to the notion of poet, genius, and the human, as I use them in this work. The fullness of God's idea about the human, and the fullness of human freedom, is attained only if the passive principle is conjoined with the active principle, i.e., if priest is concurrently poet or if saint is also genius. We may now understand why, given his fascination with the creative power of language, Joyce writes that his hero Stephen Daedalus 'had given himself to none of his former fervours with such a whole heart as to this endeavour; the monk now seemed to him no more than half the artist.[734] It is perhaps this kind of new ascetic creativity that Berdyaev had in mind when he wrote that 'future monasticism will be monasticism of creative people in the world.'

We understand now that art could be differentiated not only because it has separated itself from cult, but because cult—as is the case in antiquity—does not aspire

[733] When Tillich argues that 'religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth, in all of its functions', he claims that man is *homo religiosus*. What I see here as a problem is not that the human should be defined as a religious being, but that the concept of religion itself is too narrow and denotes only 'ultimate concern': 'Religion, in the largest and the most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern.' *Theology of Culture*, pp. 7-8. Thus, I find the description of the human as *homo theurgos* more appropriate since it connotes the human capacity for sacramental, divine-enriching creativity.

[734] J. Joyce, *Portrait*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Penguin books, 1992), 37.

towards the creation of new world, and—as is the case in the Middle Ages with the Christian cult—in the creation of new reality the human role is exclusively passive and therefore symbolic. The Christian cult betrays the same tendency towards monophysitism as the Christianity of the redemption. It is not a theandric cult or a cult of Godmanhood and accordingly it is natural that the only type of art it engenders is non-sacramental, symbolical, and differentiated art.

5.3.5 The Differentiation of Art Due to Its Separation from Cult

The logical way out of the *cul-de-sac* seemed to lead through the establishing of the balance between the divine and the human element in the Christian cult. This is how Berdyaev understands the reaction of the Renaissance.[735] Berdyaev therefore believes that the Renaissance was a reaction against the monophysite tendency in the medieval image of the human and against the non-theandric type of cult. At its very beginnings, the Renaissance was an attempt at discovering purely human activity.

> At the beginning of this path it seemed to the new European man that for the first time there was discovered purely human activity, supressed in the medieval world… At the very beginning of the free erupting of the powers of the new European man, it marked a splendid and unprecedented flourishing of human creativity. Never yet, it would seem, had man attempted such a creative ascent, as during the Renaissance era. Back then had begun the free creativity of man, his free artistry.[736]

However, the discovery of free human creativity was still taking place within the Christian worldview. The Renaissance, argues Berdyaev, began in the High Middle Ages

[735] The Renaissance, argues Berdyaev, could not be regarded solely as a return to antiquity. Renaissance people searched for the roots of human creativity in antiquity, but they were not solely in the spirit of antiquity. Their souls were battlefields of clashing antique and medieval principles. The classical completeness and sereneness was forever lost, the new soul was looking for redemption and was filled with striving towards another world. 'Konets renesansa', in: *Padenie svyaschennogo russkogo tsarstva*, (Moskva, Publitsistika, Izdatel'stvo Astrel', 2007), pp. 808-853.
[736] 'Konets', 814.

and was built on fully Christian foundations. The Christian soul's awakening to creativity began already in the 12th and the 13th Centuries. The early Italian Renaissance, contends Berdyaev, was in fact a Christian revival. In the lives and works of St Dominic and St Francis, Joachim of Fiora and Thomas Aquinas, as well as Dante and Giotto we already find the genuine Renaissance, the rebirth of human creativity that has not lost the connection with antiquity.[737]

> In the era of the Renaissance, medieval and Christian, there was already a creative attitude towards nature, towards human thought, towards art—towards the whole life. The early Renaissance in Italy—the Trecento [1300-1399]—was the greatest era of European history, the highest point of ascent. The arisen powers of man were as though an answering revelation by man to the revelation of God. *This was a Christian humanism, conceived from the spirit of St Francis and Dante.* But he was still nigh close to the spiritual wellsprings of his life, he had not yet withdrawn so remotely from them onto the surface level of life. The man of the Renaissance was a twofold man, belonging to two worlds. And this tended to determine the complexity and the richness of his creative life.[738]

Within the context of this symbolic or differentiated art Berdyaev discriminates two types of artistic creativity, pagan and Christian.[739] Pagan art is classical and immanent. The art of the Christian epoch is romantic and transcendental.

Pagan art

Pagan, classical, or canonic art[740], according to Berdyaev, is immanent because it seeks only cultural values and does not desire new being.[741] For pagan art the existing world is a place where beauty is to be attained. Behind this attitude lies the already-

[737] 'Konets', 815.
[738] 'Konets', 814.
[739] MCA, 227. STv, 264.
[740] This is yet another term Berdyaev uses to describe pagan art. MCA, 226. STv, 263.
[741] MCA, 227. STv, 264.

mentioned pagan ontology. In the art of the pagan world it is impossible to find signs of longing for a transcendent world. Its ideal is fully related to the existing world. [742]

The classic completeness of the pagan world shapes the tradition of classical art and produces the canon for the achievement of the final form.[743] Consequently, pagan, classical or canonic art, argues Berdyaev, 'does not permit creative energy to pass over into another world; it retains it in this world; it admits only symbolic signs of another being, but does not admit the reality of such being itself.'[744] Canonic art remains obedient to the results of sin and represents the adaptation of the artist's creative energy to the given world. Canonic art aspires to create only cultural values and not new being. Berdyaev argues that canonic art was never creativity in the religious sense of the word and it belongs to the epoch of the law and the redemption. The fundamental principle of canonic art is therefore the law of obedience. This means that canonic art is fundamentally opposite to the creative act of an artist, the essence of which is the non-submission to the world.[745] Thus, pagan or classical art is differentiated because it does not set as its purpose the creation of new reality.

Christian art

Christian art is of another spirit, possessing a romantic and transcendental intention. 'Transcendental' here implies that in Christian art there is a longing for the creation of another world. As has already been shown, the best example of an art that creates the unparalleled, and yet finishes in the tragedy of creativity, is the art of new symbolism. This

[742] MCA, 228. STv, 265.
[743] MCA, 229. STv, 266.
[744] MCA, 226. STv, 263.
[745] MCA, 238. STv, 274.

art 'marks the birth of a new spirit and a form of creativeness hitherto unknown'.[746] The new symbolism is the best example of the real nature of art, claims Berdyaev, explaining that 'artistic creativeness, like knowledge, is not merely a reflection of actuality: it always adds to the world's reality something that has never been before'.[747] Yet, although the true nature of all artistic creativity is revealed only in symbolism, it is also in symbolism that the tragedy of creativity reaches its apex.[748]

In the nineteenth century the contrast of pagan or classical and Christian or romantic takes a form of the disparity between realism and symbolism. Realism, in contrast to classicism, does not even strive to create an immanent beauty or beauty as a cultural and aesthetic value. Unlike classicism, it is not obedient to the canon of beauty, but rather to the data of the world. In other words, pagan or classical art at least endeavoured to create a beauty that, although merely an aesthetic and psychological value, would be different from the givenness of this world. The only ambition of realism, nonetheless, is to mirror the already existing. This is why Berdyaev concludes that 'realism is the furthest removed from the essence of every creative act: it is the least creative form of art'.[749] Furthermore, realism quenches and extinguishes the artist's creative impulse, the essence of which, as seen, is not mimetic but theurgical and ontological.[750]

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[746] MCA, 238. STv, 274.
[747] MCA, 238. STv, 274. There is a clear similarity between Berdyaev's view on the essence of art and Tillich's. Tillich writes, ' in the arts something which is rooted in the ground of being is discovered, and this discovery presupposes the freedom of man from the given; it presupposes his power to introduce the discovered into the realm of the given in forms which transcend the given. This is what has been called the miracle of art.' P. Tillich, *On Art and Architecture* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 19.
[748] MCA, 238. STv, 274.
[749] MCA, 237. STv, 273.
[750] Berdyaev points to the imprecision of the term 'realism'. '"Realism" may be no less false than "idealism". There is a realism that betrays nothing but enslavement to this fictitious world of ours, which, it is believed, men ought to take for granted… A true realism and a true idealism issue from the recognition of Mystery beneath and beyond this world: it is the attitude of him whose eyes do not tell what they know or do not know. He who knows no mystery lives in a flat, insipid, one-dimensional world. If the experience of flatness and insipidity were not relieved by an awareness of mystery, depth and infinitude, life would be no longer

But how can the symbolic activity of art, and in particular in the form of canonic art— whose aims are in contrast to the goals of the creative act—offer 'redemption from sin'? A problem here is that Berdyaev uses the term 'art' with twofold meaning. The first type of art is differentiated art, which includes both pagan and Christian art. The second type, however, is the art of the new epoch, the epoch of creativity and the Spirit. This art is non-differentiated; it is still 'art' but in this case a 'theurgic art' created by the 'artist-theurg'.[751]

Another paradox is that Berdyaev seems to designate the old art *en bloc* as symbolical while claiming that some of its works have managed to produce another kind of being. Berdyaev writes,

> I think there was some demonic poison in the nature of Leonardo. But in Leonardo's creative act the demonism was consumed and transformed into another kind of being, free from 'this world'. The demonism of Leonardo's nature is glimpsed in his *Giaconda*, in *John the Baptist*. But are the great creations of Leonardo's genius condemned to burn in the fires of hell? No, for in these creations the evil in Leonardo's nature has already been consumed and his demonism transformed into another kind of being, by passing through the creative ecstasy of the genius. In the *Giaconda* there is eternal beauty that will enter eternal life… A real picture or poem no longer belongs to the physical plane of being… they enter the free cosmos.[752]

How can we explain this inconsistency? In my interpretation, the real distinction between the two types of art is that the old art is oblivious of its cultic origins. By 'cultic origins' I imply that, according to Berdyaev, all culture, including art, originates from

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livable… But for him who does not yield to this objectivity mystery abides and only moves on to another sphere. Then the very emergence of the objective world becomes a source of wonder.' DR, 310. SP, 413. Marcel Proust expresses a similar opinion on realism. 'Some… wanted the novel to be a sort of cinematographic procession. This conception was absurd. Nothing removes us further from the reality we perceive within ourselves that such a cinematographic vision… If reality were that sort of waste experience approximately identical in everyone… if reality were that, no doubt a sort of cinematographic film of these things would suffice and "style", "literature" isolating itself from that simple datum would be an artificial hors d'oeuvre. But is it so in reality?' M. Proust, *Remembrance of the Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Stephen Hudson (London: Wordsworth Edition, 2006) II, pp. 1157-1165

[751] MCA, 249. STv, 285.

[752] MCA, 165. STv, 198.

cult.[753] Berdyaev argues that religious knowledge, religion, and cult are the most elementary basis of culture, writes V.V. Bychkov.[754] The central role of cult is to transform and immortalise the beings. The old art has drifted from its origins and, in Heidegger's terms, represents the 'oblivion of Being' or, in the words of Paul Tillich, 'a subjective outcry'.[755] It is a kind of truth that is a product of self-referential subject, and not truth as the human's artistic interpretation or 'discovery'[756] of what is 'rooted in the ground of being'.[757] That is, the old art does not reflect truth as *αλήθεια* or the 'unconcealment of beings'.[758]

In other words, the art of the previous world-epochs has forgotten that its very origin is hidden in the experience of Being. Consequently, oblivious of Being, the old art cannot transform the world and creates only a phantom-world. However, we need to assume that some of the old artists, whether intuitively or consciously, knew that art springs from the cultic role to transform and immortalise the world, and therefore they drew their inspiration from the being. The new art on the other hand, differs from the old one because it deliberately returns to its primeval source.

[753] As S. V. Kolyicheva observed, in Berdyaev's view culture is a result of the differentiation of the cult. Berdyaev believed that all philosophical thought, scientific knowledge, architecture, iconography, sculpture, music, and poetry existed in the cult in an organic and undifferentiated form. All culture (even material culture) is the culture of spirit; all culture possesses spiritual ground, it is a product of the creative activity of spirit over natural elements, concludes Kolyicheva. 'N. Berdyaev o krizise kulturi', in V. Porusa (ed.) *N. A. Berdyaev i krizis evropeiskogo duha* (Moskva, Bibleisko-bogoslovskii institute Sv. Apostola Andreya, 2007), 246.
[754] V.V. Bychkov, 'Krizis kulturi i iskusstva', 211.
[755] On Art, 19.
[756] On Art, 18.
[757] Ibid.
[758] M. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28.

5.3.6 Mystic Realism

We have claimed that Berdyaev uses the term 'art' in two different senses. The first kind of art is symbolical, creating signs of new being rather than new being itself. Berdyaev adds that, although art cannot be realistic, either in the empirical sense, or in the mystical, symbolism cannot be the final motto of artistic creativity. 'Beyond symbolism' explains Berdyaev, 'is mystic realism'.[759] Mystic realism is a type of creativity that already exceeds the bounds of art as a differentiated cultural value. A final, mystic realism would mean the subjugation of the tragedy of creativeness.[760]

What is then 'mystic realism' in Berdyaev's view? This question is rather important since it is only mystic realism that surpasses the tragedy of creativity. Mystic realism is still art, but this time art in its primordial and cultic form,[761] capable of creating new being. When Berdyaev writes that after symbolism comes mystic realism and after art, theurgy,[762] he speaks about theurgic art in which 'the creative artistic act is transfused from culture into being'.[763] Theurgic art is 'a sacrificial denial of art, but through art and within art itself'.[764] Art and culture are abandoning their symbolical forms, returning to their cultic roots, when culture was an integral part of the religious cult.[765] Art and culture are not denied but embraced in their original form, and this is why 'the sacrifice of culture for the sake of higher being will be super-cultural, and not pre-cultural or extra-cultural. It will justify the highest meaning of culture and art, as its great expression.'[766] Culture and art must not be

[759] MCA, 239. STv, 275.
[760] MCA, 239. STv, 275.
[761] Bulgakov also believes that there is an obvious relation between culture and cult. *Svet*, 379.
[762] MCA, 239. STv, 275. Second part of the sentence is missing from the English translation.
[763] MCA, 243. STv, 279.
[764] MCA, 244. STv, 280.
[765] In Bulgakov's view, art's attempt to transform the world is a 'scandal of magic'. *Svet*, 356.
[766] MCA, 244. STv, 280.

rejected because they are rooted in human geniality, which is our power to continue the creation of the world. Art must not be scorned, because this would mean to scorn the human. Instead one needs to grasp the immense power of art, which implies also immense responsibility.

> Art, like culture, must be lived out by man. The creative crisis of art should be immanent and super-cultural rather than barbaric and uncultural. Cultural values are sacred, and any nihilistic attitude towards them is godless… Only an immanent-creative conquest of art and science, as of all culture, rather than an external and nihilistic conquest, is possible for the sake of higher being.[767]

Berdyaev's cultic concept of art is vague insofar as he is never explicit about his understanding of cult. It also remains unclear what the exact role of art was within the cult. The medieval Christian cult, being angelic and passive, is symbolic; hence Berdyaev probably talks about a Renaissance – theandric and theurgic – type of religious cult that would imply an active human role. A religion that fails to conceive of such a cult is in danger of being superseded by a new form of the so-called 'secularized' religiosity, or a religion that better meets the spiritual needs of people. This is why 'the problem of theurgy, of theurgic creativeness – [is] the basic problem of our time.'[768]

Another issue with Berdyaev's concept of theurgic creativeness is that it is largely doctrinal. He never outlines a theological or phenomenological analysis of theurgy. What we read is that theurgic art is synthetic and ecumenical, a not-yet-revealed pan-art.[769] Theurgic art is also universal action in which all forms of human creativity meet. In theurgy the creation of beauty in art is merged with the creation of beauty in nature. In theurgy

[767] MCA, 247. STv, 283.
[768] MCA, 247. STv, 283.
[769] MCA, 249. STv, 285.

'word becomes flesh' and 'art becomes power'.[770] Finally, the future of art belongs to synthetic, theurgic art.[771]

Although he failed to produce a full theological and phenomenological justification of art, Berdyaev has provided an important doctrinal preparation. Even synoptically, such a phenomenological expounding would require extensive work. We should nevertheless try to indicate the basic contours of such an apology.

5.4 Phenomenological Outline of an Ontological Justification of Art

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines cult as, first, an act of paying reverential homage to a divine being, i.e., a religious worship. Second, cult is a particular form or system of religious worship as expressed in a ceremony or ritual directed towards a specified object or figure. What Berdyaev implies by 'cult' however is not only an action of veneration but also of the creation of a new being. Cult is an action similar to the Eucharist; but the Eucharist lacks human creative dimension. Cult is therefore identified with theurgy, which is an action of 'man working together with God… It is divine-human creativeness.'[772] Theurgy is an action superior to magic for it is an action performed together with God.[773]

[770] MCA, 247. STv, 283.
[771] MCA, 250. STv, 286. Berdyaev dismisses Wagner believing that his art still remains within symbolic culture. Only Scriabin forebodes the new world epoch. Ibid.
[772] MCA, 247. STv, 283.
[773] MCA, 249. STv, 285. The word theurgy, *theourgia*, is derived from the Greek words *theos*, god, and *ergon*, activity or work. Theurgy is thus divine activity, but for the pagan Neoplatonists theurgy also implies human activity participating in the divine. The word theurgy is just one of several used to describe similar ritual action. Others include sacred rites, *hierougia,* initiated mysteries, *mystagogia*, sacred art, etc. Jeffrey S. Kupperman, *Living Theurgy* (London: Avalonia, 2013), 175. The term theurgy originated with the second-century Platonists to describe the deifying power of Chaldean rituals. It is seen as a 'work of gods' capable of transforming the human to a divine status. Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2014), pp. 5-6.

Although Berdyaev does not specify what was the precise role of art in cult he is clear that 'the final depths of all true art are religious', and this is so because 'art is absolutely free; art is freedom, not necessity'.[774] The only true cult therefore has to be artistic cult. This is so because cult is the creation of a radically new being, which is achievable only through artistic creativity. The terms cult, theurgy, and art are therefore closely related. Cult is the creation of a new being—i.e., theurgy—which is possible only on the basis of the 'absolutely free' artistic capacity. Originally, the artist was an 'artist-theurg'.[775] We also read that in theurgy 'word becomes flesh'[776] and thus 'the tragic opposition of subject and object is removed.'[777]

In order to understand the meaning of cult we should look for its original form and therefore ask what the first cultic action was.

5.4.1 The Original Cultic Action

I contend that Adam's naming of the animals should be taken to be the archetypal cultic action. God first summoned the animals before the angels but they were unable to name them. Adam however carried out the task of naming, and he also named himself and God.[778] The episode sparks several important questions. It is noteworthy that the first thing God asked Adam was not to offer praise or thanksgiving to God. Eucharistic or the act of thanksgiving was not the initial form of cult.[779] Unlike the Eucharist,[780] the naming of the

[774] MCA, 248. STv, 284.
[775] MCA, 249. STv, 285.
[776] MCA, 247. STv, 283.
[777] MCA, 248. STv, 283.
[778] *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*, trans. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1939), XVII, 4. When counseling about the creation of man, God tells the angels that Adam's wisdom will exceed theirs.
[779] Heidegger is therefore right in saying that to think is to thank. 'The Old English *thencan*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank, are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thonk*—a thought, a grateful thought, and the expression of such thought.' *What is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glen Gray (New

animals is a theurgic and theandric cult with a clear active human dimension. Adam's naming of the cattle is the best example of the human priesthood of creation and a description of the method used for the transformation and deliverance of the world. It is also the proto-poetic act whose archetype is repeated in every work of art coming out from an experience of beings. The balance between the divine and the human salvific work is achieved only when an ontological poetic creation, akin to Adam's naming, is acknowledged as religious and theurgic. Just as the notion of saintliness needs to be merged with that of genius, and the concept of priest with that of poet, so the Eucharistic sacrament needs to be paired with poetic sacrament. Whilst the Eucharist is a theistic/angelic sacrament, ontological art is a theandric sacrament. The human was not created only for thanksgiving.[781] Although to think means to thank,[782] Heidegger adds that to thank is possible only by thinking 'what is there solely to be thought' and named.

> How can we give thanks for this endowment, the gift of being able to think what is most thought-provoking, more fittingly than by giving thought to the most thought-provoking? The supreme thanks, then, would be thinking? And the profoundest thanklessness, thoughtlessness? Real thanks, then, never consists in that we ourselves come bearing gifts, and merely repay gift with gift.[783] Pure thanks is rather that we simply think—think what is really and solely given, what is there to be thought.[784]

We now need to look at a cosmological background that would make an ontological apology of art possible.

York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 2004), 139. As we shall see, Heidegger adds that to thank is to think. The thinking he has in mind is not arbitrary, but the 'thinking of being.' M. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 247. Thinking of being, according to Heidegger, is 'the most thought-provoking food for thought.' *What is Called Thinking,* 143.

[780] In line with his modal concept of the human freedom, Bulgakov identifies the Church sacraments, and the Eucharist in particular, as the only context of theurgy. Theurgic power belongs solely to the priesthood. Thus, Saint Seraphim of Sarov is the *par excellence* theurg. Svet, 373. Bulgakov does not see any need for human creativity in the Eucharist and rejects the appeals for a 'new liturgical creativity'. Ibid. 379.

[781] In his *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius writes that 'human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God.' George E. Ganss (ed.), *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works,* in *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, Paulist Press, 1991), 130.

[782] The word 'Eucharist', as it is well known, means 'thanksgiving'.

[783] One has an impression that here Heidegger is describing the priest carrying the offerings in the Orthodox Eucharistic procession.

[784] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 139. See also Chrétien, 119.

5.4.2 Cosmological Background

An ontological justification of art rests on a specific metaphysical and cosmological background, common for different mystical traditions and for various thinkers and artists, according to which the hylic material of the world is linguistic and logos-like.[785] One of the most striking examples of the linguistic theory of the world is found in *Sefer Yetzirah* (*Book of Creation*). According to this most important of all early Hebrew mystical texts, the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are the fundamental building blocks of creation.[786] *Sefer Yetzirah* describes letters as stones and words as houses, that is, temples

[785] 'In all the major mystical traditions… language as a psychcospiritual means of radical reorientation and purification is present. And its presence points to the inherent linguistic element in spirituality: language is integral to mystical practice.' Steven T. Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning', in S.T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15. It needs to be stressed that I am using the term 'language' in its broadest sense, to encompass also the language of shapes, colours, and sounds. One could argue that the linguistic language of concepts appears as such only at a late stage of the development. In its original form, language consisted of the shapes of letters and phonemes or sounds, which points clearly to its pictorial and musical nature. It is interesting, for example, that in the theurgical-theosophical Kabbalah the study of the text consists not only of the analysis of its meaning but also of the graphic facet of letters—the hierogrammatic perception of letters—which is considered to symbolize the configuration of the divine attributes. Idel, *op. cit.,* pp. 49-50. It would not be therefore impossible to argue for a hierophomenic theory of letters. That Idel is indeed aware of this possibility is clear from his mentioning Buber's and Rosenzweig's concern about proper rendering of the auditive part of the Hebrew Bible in their translation into German. Ibid. 72. In some trends of Kabbalah there is a significant stress on the vocal aspect of the letters. By emitting the sounds of the letters the mystic is believed to be able to affect the divine realm. Ibid., 67. Rimbaud, as we know from his poem '*Voyelles*', is making a connection between vowels and colours. It is noteworthy that several Kabbalistic texts encourage the visualization of each letter in a colour corresponding to a Sefirotic force on high. Ibid. 66. On the influence of Kabbalah, alchemy, Hermeticism and occult teaching in general on Rimbaud see for example Françoise Meltzer, 'On Rimbaud's Voyelles', *Journal of Modern Philology* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 76, no. 4, May 1979), pp. 344-354. To this list we should add 'body language', mainly used in theatre. In some Buddhist sects, like Shingon, the emphasis is on sacred movements (mudras), harmonized with mantras (chants), and thoughts. The practice is known as 'Shin, Kou, Yi.' Yoshi Oida, *An Actor Adrift* (London: Methuen, 1992), 117. Therefore, the world is affected in its essence not only through linguistic language but also through the semantic systems of sounds, shapes, movements, and colours.

[786] Katz, 16. In his ontology of language Gershom Scholem also draws on *Sefer Yetzirah*, underscoring that the world was not created only through ten configurations of the Sephirot but also through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Shira Wolosky, 'Gershom Scholem's Linguistic Theory', Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, G. Scholem, In memoriam, vol. 2, Mendel Institute for Jewish Studies, pp. 165-205.

in which one will encounter God.[787] This text contributed to the theory that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet entered the process of creation not only as creative forces but also as the elements of its hylic structure.[788]

Another remarkable example of the linguistic theory of the created is to be found in the Greek patristic thought and the idea of the *logoi* or the 'essences' of beings.[789] Although this idea has an important Biblical resonance its immediate origin lies in the convergence of two strands within Greek philosophy, namely, in Plato's *Timaeus* and Philo of Alexandria's *On the Making of the World.*[790] The fullest exponent of this teaching in the later patristic period was Maximus the Confessor who in his *Mystagogy* writes that 'the whole intelligible world seems mystically imprinted on the whole sensible world in symbolic forms, for those who are capable of seeing it, and conversely the whole sensible world subsists within the whole intelligible world.'[791] In Maximus's view, humans redeem the creation by 'giving to the Lord the intellectual meaning of things'.[792] The 'intellectual meaning of things', I believe, could be compared with what Hopkins termed *inscape,*[793]

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[787] Moshe Idel, 'Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism', in S. Katz (ed), *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 42-43.
[788] Idel, *op. cit.,* 47.
[789] Drawing on Duns Scotus, Hopkins believed that created reality is 'worded' by Christ and thus it conveys Christ. Ballinger, 91.
[790] David Bradshaw, 'The Logoi of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought' in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. Bruce Foltz and John Chryssavgis (Fordham University Press, 2013), 9.
[791] Quoted in Bradshaw, 18. According to Maximus, Christ's taking of the human body was his third incarnation. The first one was in the logoi of the world and the second in the words of the Scripture. See Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos, The vision of St Maximus the Confessor,* (Crestwood, New York 10707, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 75; Alain Riou, *Le Monde et l'Eglise selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Edition Beauchesne, 1973), 62.Walter Benjamin asserts that 'the whole nature, too, is imbued with a nameless, unspoken language, the residue of the creative word of God.' Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harvest/HJB Book, 1978), 331. Quoted in Shira Wolosky, ibid. 179. Another example of a writer who was influenced by the hieroglyphic nature of things was James Joyce. His *Ulysses* draws on Jacob Böhme's *Signatura Rerum* according to which the signature is the external body of things hinting at the presence of a symbolic nature. Enrico Terrinoni, *Occult Joyce: The Hidden in Ulysses* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 9.
[792] *Ad Thalassium* 51; PG 90, 480A.
[793] Ballinger, 90.

what Joyce called *quidditas* or *whatness*,[794] what Proust named *the general essence of things*.[795]

5.4.3 Anthropological Background

Since the creation is linguistically structured it follows that it could be transfigured and saved only by hermeneutic and linguistic means. The point of intersection of the two realms is a correspondence between the human - the microcosm (who is the *omphalos* or *axis mundi*[796]), and the world - the macrocosm.[797] Here I would like to draw a parallel between Greek philosophy and the Greek Fathers, and Heidegger's view of Dasein described as a 'living being endowed with logos'. Heidegger writes, 'in the word and as word the Being of beings is given in relation to the essence of man in such a way that the Being of beings, in virtue of this relation to man, lets man's essence emerge and lets it receive the determination that we call the Greek one.'[798] Heidegger's example is especially significant because the essence of beings for him is not simply linguistic, but *poetically* linguistic.[799] If the being of the created is artistic it follows that the path to ontological relationship with the world is open only for art. Only art or art's poetic language is the

[794] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (New York: New Directions Press, 1944), pp. 211-213.
[795] Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du temps perdu*, 2: *A l' Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 24, 182.
[796] Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to early Medieval Landscape*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.
[797] The idea is present in various esoteric traditions, in Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and Christian Kabbalah, as well as in the works of Jacob Böhme and Emmanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg's idea of correspondence between the human body and the body of Heaven was another major influence for Joyce's *Ulysses*. Terrinoni, 8. Coleridge bases his view of art as mediatress between nature and human mind, with its role 'to make nature thought and thought nature', on Schelling's metaphysics of psycho-natural parallelism. M.H. Abrams, *Mirror,* pp. 52-53.
[798] *Parmenides,* trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1992), 68.
[799] For Nietzsche, art is the basic occurrence of beings. M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperOne, 1991), 72.

'house of being'.[800] For Heidegger beauty is the truth of beings and the essence of art.

What I see as Heidegger's ontological defence of art rests on the three major premises: 1) without art we cannot approach and cognize beings as they are, i.e., as beauty; 2) only poetic language can reach and transform beings; 3) poetic naming is not simply a mimesis but engendering of radical newness and creation of surplus in being. Let us now briefly explicate these three points.

1) Art is not simply manufacturing but a genuine way of cognizing. Heidegger writes that in its original meaning the Greek word *technē* (art) did not mean making or manufacturing but knowledge as the disclosing of the beings as such.[801] Art therefore implies *meletē* or *epimeleia*, that is, 'the mastery of a composed resolute openness to beings': 'The unity of *meletē* and *technē* characterizes the basic posture of the forward-reaching disclosure of Dasein, which seek to ground beings on their own terms.'[802] The world needs to be 'brought forth in a knowing guidance' when with the 'utter clarity' we could see its essence.[803] Art is not simply genuine cognizing but the only true way of existing, which does justice both to the beings and the human being. This is how Heidegger interprets Hölderlin's verse 'poetically man dwells.'[804] A disinterested gaze of art approaches truth as the 'unconcealedness of that which is as something that is', and thus 'truth is the truth of Being.'[805] But the truth of Being does not appear otherwise as beauty. 'When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance – as this being truth in work

[800] Heidegger, *Letter on 'Humanism'* in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (London, Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 217.
[801] *Nietzsche,* pp. 81-82.
[802] *Nietzsche*, pp. 164-165.
[803] *Nietzsche*, 69.
[804] M. Heidegger, *Poetically Man Dwells*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York, Perennial Classics, 2001), 211.
[805] M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art,* in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Horstadter, (New York, Harper Colophone Books, 1971), 81.

and as work – is beauty.'[806]

2) To 'think' the truth of being as beauty is feasible only with poetic language, and this is why 'thinking of being is the primordial form of poeticizing.'[807] But to 'think' in Heidegger's vocabulary means also to establish an ontological relation with what is thought. The wellbeing of the world depends on the character of our thinking. Hence 'the poeticizing essence of thought preserves the sway of the truth of being'.[808] We understand that a power, cultic and sacramental, is hidden in the poetical use of language. Far from being a play in an ivory tower, and seemingly 'the field of "the most innocent of all occupations" [poetic language is nevertheless] "the most dangerous of all goods."'[809] It is 'those who think and those who create with words [that are] guardians of this home' of being [language].[810] 'The human being', writes Heidegger, 'is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of beings.' The human being *is called by the being itself* into preservation of being's truth.[811]

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[806] *Origin*, 81.
[807] M. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 247.
[808] Ibid. 247.
[809] M. Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, (New York, Humanity Books, 2000), 54. Some trends of Kabbalah teach that if a letter was taken from the Law or added to it, the entire universe would immediately collapse. Terrinoni, 34. On the influence of Kabbalah on J. L. Borges see George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 67.
[810] *Letter*, 239. The nature of language is essentially theurgic and eschatological, i.e., re-creative in its core. The syntax of the human speech rebels against any form of givenness and petrifaction. It requires constant negation of the already-achieved and represents a vital invitation to the absolute newness. The nature of human speech is Christ-like in the sense that it follows the same path of golgothian dying and resurrection. Michael Edwards claims that 'the constitution of language itself, even prior to writing, suggests a latent propensity for the contradicting and re-saying of the fallen fact. Verbs, for example, reach out of the-world-as-given in tenses and moods such as the conditional, the subjunctive, the optative; a 'syntax of counter-factuality and contingency' opens to a realm of possibility, of liberating hypothesis. And if the way we make language attests to an obscure, partly conscious desire to elaborate it as a strategy of renewal, it is already just such a strategy. Language, however little we ask of it, is already a process of death and resurrection, and is thereby related to the process fundamental to everything. M. Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 146-147.
[811] *Letter,* 260. Also, 'the human being is thrown into the truth of being by being itself, so that ek-sisting in this fashion he might guard the truth of being.' Ibid. 252.

The epicentre of our ontological apology of art is that the human being, understood as artist, is called by Being itself to preserve the truth of beings. The truth of beings is preserved only through the poetic use of language, of which the archetype is Adam's naming of the cattle. Adam's naming, we have claimed, is the archetypal cultic act. The source of cult, therefore, is beings' longing, and beings' call to the human person, that its truth should be preserved and transformed. But the truth of beings is maintained only via the poetic cognizance and the creation of poetic language. Guardianship of beings is the essential trait of human nature. This means that the fount of human priestly and cultic vocation is concurrently the very source of art. Thus, we can now better understand why Berdyaev claimed that art was an integral part of cult. However, we also see that art was not simply a part of cult, but the cult's very essence. Only by being poet it is possible to be the priest of a theandric cult: such a priest, 'a priest of eternal imagination, [is] transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life.'[812]

3) The third point of Heidegger's apology of art is probably also the most complex one since it involves the critique and reinterpretation of Platonic ontology and its depreciation of the created. For Plato, only the Creator can create the *Ideas*, and the world of phenomena 'is' because the *Ideas* let it 'be'.[813] Translated into the language of Christianity, the *Ideas* are the essences of the things, i.e., their eternal identity. The human, in Plato's view, is not the creator of the *Ideas*. Human creation is only a mimesis, creation of transitory things that are bound to vanish when the many are again united with the One. In Heidegger's view, the most important question that arises here is why god allowed *only*

[812] Joyce, *Portrait*, 170.
[813] *Nietzsche*, 176.

one idea to go forth for each realm of individual things.[814] Heidegger's answer is that 'unity and singularity are proper of the *idea*', which means that if God were to allow more than one idea, one of them would have to be a copy. Since God 'knew of the ascent of representation from a manifold to a unity [he] wanted to be the essential producer of the essential thing'.[815] A logical question arises as to what the essence of Being is ultimately grounded on for Plato. Heidegger answers that the ground of Being lies in the action of a creator who essentiality appears to be saved only when what he creates is something singular in each case.[816] In other words, the 'God' is 'saved' only when what he creates is 'singular' or 'one'. Both expressions are another name for 'absolute'. Plato's God is thus an Absolute, who in order to preserve his absoluteness and omnipotence, cannot afford to have alongside him another creator of singular/absolute things. What strikes us here is a similarity between the Christian theistic God and Plato's Absolute. Platonic Ideas reappear in Christianity under the disguise of 'prescribed themes' (Bulgakov), which, inexhaustible and infinite in history, are determined in eternity. Hence, what is manifold in history is consumed and abolished by the One in eternity.

Plato's artist is not only not *phytourgos* (the 'shaper of essences'), he is also not even *demiourgos* (craftsman who produces a material thing); the artist is only *mimetēs* or 'a copier of the things of which those others are the producers for the public'.[817] But in order to be ontologically justified, art has to be ontologically creative. To be an artist, and to be a human being, means to be able to create something unparalleled.[818] Similarly to Berdyaev,

[814] *Nietzsche*, 183.
[815] *Nietzsche*, 183.
[816] *Nietzsche*, 184.
[817] *Nietzsche*, 184.
[818] This radically self-determining aspect of Heidegger's view of artistic/human vocation is probably still understudied. It is reminiscent of Berdyaev's characterization of art as an absolutely free activity.

Heidegger maintains, 'with this being, the artist, Being lights up for us most immediately and brightly. Why? Nietzsche does not explicitly say why; yet we can easily discover the reason. To be an artist is to be able to bring something forth. But to bring forth means to establish in Being something that does not yet exist.'[819]

The truth is the truth of Being, argues Heidegger, but here we see that Being 'lights up most brightly' when, starting from what already *is*, the artist establishes in Being something that is still *not*. Clearly, the first two points of Heidegger's ontological apology of art are preconditioned by the third, which requires a reinterpretation of the concept of the divine absoluteness. Both doctrinal and phenomenological justification of art as an ontological activity is achievable only if Heidegger's philosophy of language is grounded upon Berdyaev's metaphysical principle of uncreated freedom.

Berdyaev argued that the human being is an 'artist-theurg' who attains full freedom only when, as *phytourgos*, he is able to create new essences, new beings of beauty. Theurgic—we may even say, alchemic—longing is immanent in every true artist,[820] in every human being, wrote Berdyaev. Some trends of modern art justify his words. Art's nature is not so much in the *what* of the themes but in the *how* of their rendering. The created reality is transformed and saved only if, using that which is already existing, the artist brings forth something new. To be 'saved' thus means to be constantly renewed. Salvation is dependent on the creation of surplus.

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[819] *Nietzsche*, 69. Interestingly, language is regarded by the Kabbalists as an instrument capable of affecting even the divine. Idel, ibid. pp. 50-51. For Rowan Williams, art is ontological, but this is because it starts from our knowledge of being. Williams seems to agree with Jacques Maritain that art seeks to reshape the data of the world so as to make their essential structure visible. Therefore, artist does set out to change the world, but – and this is the paradox – to change it into itself. Williams, GN, pp. 17-18.

[820] MCA, 248. STv, 284.

Thus, the role of art, first and foremost, is the creation of a new being. In his urge to show his theurgic power, and to be as close as possible to the Creator who creates *ex nihilo*, the modern artist takes the '*nihil'* of this world, the *massa confusa* or the *prima materia* of Alchemy,[821] trying to prove that even from the seemingly most absurd, trivial, and contemptible[822] he can create a 'radiant body of *everliving life*'. The exaltation of the trivia reaches its zenith in the work of the German painter Kurt Schwitters, who worked with the contents of his dustbin in order to create 'a cathedral for things'. Schwitters's work is probably an unconscious offspring of the tradition of the hermetic Christian brotherhoods of the Middle Ages, and of the alchemists, who conferred, even on matter, the dignity of their religious contemplation.[823]

In the famous letter to Witold Hulewicz, his Polish translator, Rilke explains that in the conversion of the 'beloved visible and tangible into the invisible… we prepare for ourselves not only intensities of spiritual nature but also, who knows, new bodies, metals, nebulae and constellations'.[824] Rimbaud, however, did not share this similar careful optimism: At the age of twenty-one he abandoned poetry because art, as he believed, creates only chimeras. He wrote, 'I tried to invent new flowers, new planets, new flesh, new languages. I thought I had acquired supernatural powers. Ha! I have to bury my

[821] Aniela Jaffé, *Symbolism in the Visual Arts*, in C. G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (London: Aldus Books, 1964), 309.
[822] As Joyce told to his brother, 'it is my idea of the significance of trivial things that I want to give the two or three unfortunate wretches who may eventually read me.' Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press,1959), 169.
[823] Jaffé, 291.
[824] *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, Vol. 2 1910-1926,* trans. Jane Bannard Green and M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1947), 374.

imagination and my memories! What an end to a splendid career as an artist and storyteller!'[825]

Some might find Rimbaud's decision to abandon poetry because of its incapacity to create 'new planets' immature and impulsive. Rimbaud's profound experience of the 'tragedy of creativity', however, illustrates that 'theurgic longing', and a dormant theurgic power, is inherent in every true artist. Rimbaud's case – who knows – might as well serve as an example that 'the most innocent of all occupations' is indeed 'the most dangerous of all goods'.

[825] Arthur Rimbaud, *Farewell* in *Arthur Rimbaud, Complete Works,* trans. Paul Schmidt (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 242.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the concept of ontological freedom in the works of John Zizioulas and Nikolai Berdyaev. It has been argued that freedom is not about freedom of will or freedom of choice. Rather, freedom is about being *other* in an absolute ontological sense. Being *other* and being ontologically *free* are two aspects of one and the same reality.

Berdyaev never used the exact term ontological freedom but this is how we have interpreted his view that liberty is the capacity to create radical newness in being. One of the main arguments of the thesis is that since to be means to act, and since to act means to create, *to be* in an ontological sense must a imply human capacity to create an ontological novum.

Berdyaev argued that the theology of the Church Fathers is monistic and that it suffers from a propensity towards monophysitism. As a result, he stressed, Christianity has failed to reveal itself as a religion of freedom. Berdyaev's main concern was to ontologically justify the human being. Following the idea that theology should start neither from God nor from the human but from God-Man, Berdyaev borrowed the notion of bottomless freedom or the *Ungrund* from Jacob Böhme with a significant amendment that the freedom is now 'uncreated' and 'outside' of God. Without uncreated freedom, he argued, what is created remains always ontologically determined. Uncreated freedom as the foundation of being, however, provides a non-determined origin for human nature, which

means that each human hypostasis is a bottomless and infinite mystery even for God. God is now seen as omnipotent not because He determines everything that happens in the world but because He wishes to bring the human hypostasis into being from the original Nothing of freedom. What we imply when we say that God creates *ex nihilo* is therefore that God uses the *nihil* of the undetermined freedom as the building block for the human hypostasis. Nothing of the *ex nihilo* contains the essential trait of the human person as *imago Dei* and that is the radical power of self-determination.

Berdyaev has never undertaken a rigorous analysis of any particular theological work to demonstrate his verdict about Christianity's lack of a genuine concept of freedom. Therefore, one of the primary goals of this thesis has been to test this assertion of Berdyaev's by scrutinising the work of John Zizioulas, a highly influential contemporary Orthodox theologian and someone whose work draws from the theology of the Church Fathers. An obvious similarity between Berdyaev's and Zizioulas's interest in ontological freedom has not yet been established prior to this thesis. Furthermore, Zizioulas's theory of ontological freedom has never been approached critically in the light of Berdyaev's notion of the *Ungrund*. This thesis, therefore, has tried to demonstrate that ontological freedom is theologically conceivable only on the basis of a concept similar to the *Ungrund*. Without the *Ungrund* we can only speak about modal freedom or freedom of choice.

Chapter One investigated Zizioulas's theory of ontological freedom, arguing that freedom cannot remain potential; it needs to become manifest in the creation of a radical surplus in being. If God, however, is conceived as omnipotent in the traditional sense this would make the affirmation of ontological freedom impossible. It was argued that Zizioulas fails to produce a sufficient theory of freedom due to his theistic understanding of God's

omnipotence. Zizioulas's God is conceived as Being-in-itself without a relation to a dialectical non-being. This God does not envisage a space of freedom for the human person, not even in a form of a *tzim-tzum*, i.e., in a form of freedom that, being 'interior' to God and therefore controlled by Him, does not have the potential of Berdyaev's *Ungrund.*

Chapter Two analysed the problem of ontological freedom in the work Maximus the Confessor as the patristic author who was the main source of inspiration for Zizioulas's theology. I particularly concentrated on Maximus's interpretation of the notions of *perichoresis* (mutual interpenetration) and *eos-mehri* (so long as), which are the backbone of Maximus's notion of positive freedom. I ask whether Maximus is also guilty of the tendencies towards monophysitism as well as whether it is possible to speak about ontological integrity of the human nature if we understand God as the first cause who radically determines every second cause? Just like in Zizioulas's case, we drew a conclusion that ontological otherness is predicated on an infinite and undetermined void of freedom similar to Berdyaev's *Ungrund*.

Chapter Three closely examined Berdyaev's concept of the *Ungrund*, focusing primarily on criticism coming from the patristic angle. According to this view, patristic texts already contain a notion similar to that of groundless freedom—i.e., the divine 'Nothing' of Dionysius the Areopagite—and therefore Berdyaev's introduction of the *Ungrund* becomes altogether redundant. We argued, however, that Dionysius's Nothing is a bottomless abyss of potentialities similar to the *Ungrund* but the two theories are still essentially different because Nothing is not 'external' to God. In the case of Nothing, the chain of causation is not broken and God still remains the all-determining first cause.

Chapter Four analyses Berdyaev's critique of the classical doctrine of divine omnipotence and the consequent teaching on creation. These traditional doctrines fundamentally shape our understanding of saintliness as the highest form of human freedom. Since God does not 'need' human person, person's only meaningful action could be prayer for redemption. Thus, only the moral virtues of freedom *from* are important: repentance, prayer, and humility, etc. It is the *Ungrund* again that endows the human person with ontological otherness, allowing her to be God's eternal other and infinite source of inspiration. Berdyaev suggests a synthesis between negative and positive freedom, which is achieved in the symbiosis of saintliness and geniality or the human priestly and poetic vocation.

Chapter Five argues that since Christianity seems to have committed to the idea of created freedom, it has failed to produce an ontological justification of the human being, creativity, and art. Since majority of theologians do not see art as capable of creating ontological excess, art could have been justified solely as a means towards higher ends. Berdyaev believes that, in comparison to the Middle Ages, humankind has matured and reached the 'height of culture'. We are now facing the 'tragedy of creativity' as an acute awareness that freedom essentially depends on our capacity to create new being. The problem of the relation of art to life, of creativity to existence, has never been put so acutely, and never before there has been such a strong craving to pass over from the creativity of producing art to creating life itself. Crisis of creativity, argues Berdyaev, has become the most basic philosophical problem of our time. I argue that Berdyaev has failed to produce a full theological and phenomenological justification of art, but has nevertheless

provided an important doctrinal preparation. Accordingly, the final section of the chapter proposes some basic phenomenological outline of an ontological apology of art.

The classical concept of the omnipotent deity allows only for one ontological or sacramental human activity and that is prayer for redemption. Only the virtues of freedom *from*, such as prayer, humility, and repentance lead towards saintliness. We might agree that 'without art we should not fully see what *sanctity* is about'; that 'a holiness, a fullness of virtue, that was seen simply as a static mirroring of God's perfection would in fact not be real holiness.' [826] But then we also need to clarify that creation implies ontological newness and not a choice between already prescribed themes that are already known to the omniscient God.[827]

If we are not lamps but only mirrors, we would need to agree with the Christianity of redemption, that it would have been better if in the Russia of the early nineteenth century there had lived not the saint Seraphim and the genius Pushkin but two saints. This is a message Christian doctrine has been emitting, implicitly or explicitly, for centuries, echoing Fr. Matthew Konstantinovsky's advice to Gogol: 'Deny Pushkin!' It was only because of their religious imperfection that Bach and Kafka, Rilke or Van Gogh were geniuses and not saints like Seraphim. Creativity of genius is only the reverse side of sin and religious poverty. It would have been better for Pushkin to imitate Seraphim, retire

[826] Williams, GN, pp. 166-167. Another patristic idea is that the human was created in order to continue the creation of the world, but without uncreated freedom it is possible to speak only about re-shaping of the given.

[827] In spite of seeing the created world as 'good' The Old Testament reserves the verb *bara*, to create, only for God's power to create out of nothing, whereas the verb *yatzar* depicts human fashioning of fabrication. Claude Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque*, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962), 26. For J. R. Tolkien's view of sub-creation, for example, see his *On Fairy-Stories,* ed. Verlyn Flieger & Douglas A. Anderson (London, HarperCollins*Publishers*, 2008). C. S. Lewis expressed his view on the issue in *Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's To Be Said* in *Of the Other Worlds; Essays and Stories* (London, Harcourt, Inc. 1994).

from the world in a monastery, and enter the way of ascetic spiritual wrestling. Thus think the teachers of Christianity of redemption.[828]

But the fact that the moral side of human nature prevailed in the religious epoch of law and redemption, and that it outweighed the aesthetic and cognitive side, is only a symptom of the subjection of human nature by sin. There was a temptation, argues Berdyaev, to identify the religious with the moral. Although in redemption the moral element is mystically transfigured and grace shines forth, still the moral predominates over the aesthetic and cognitive. Berdyaev asks,

> But can the same goal [of sanctification] be reached by religious-aesthetic or religious-cognitive perfection? Can God refuse a man for his ugliness and want of knowledge if the man is morally perfect? Can man be refused because he does not create beauty or knowledge? Can man be saved by great accomplishments in beauty and knowledge? For man's eternal life, does God require only the moral man, or also the aesthete and the knower? Every kind of perfection, in everything like the perfection of God, *ontological* and not only moral perfection, all fullness of being, must be participant in eternal life.[829]

Contrary to the teachers of redemption, Berdyaev believed that it would have been a loss had the genius of Pushkin not been given to us from above – 'a whole group of saints could not make up for such a loss. With the sainthood of Seraphim, alone, without the genius of Pushkin, the creative purpose of the world cannot be achieved.'[830]

If there is no movement in God towards eternal generation of newness, it would be easy to believe that redemption was the final purpose of being, that it was God's final word in history, as if God did not have anything more to offer. In that case, not only are we closing the door before a new epoch of Spirit announced by Christ Himself but we are also denying a theoretically reasonably legitimate possibility that many new and unforeseen

[828] MCA, 171. STv, 205. Reacting to this kind of mentality, 'Nietzsche cursed the good and the righteous because they hate those who create.' MCA, 90. STv, 122.
[829] MCA, 104. Italics added. STv, 137.
[830] MCA, 172. STv, 206.

epochs could be yet in store for us. Instead of understanding its goal as multiplication of life, we interpret the purpose of being as waiting: waiting for the life of the world to come. But if I do not have something that belongs to me, and me alone, what is it that is 'saved' for eternity from my being? Can we accept eternity in which even the most beautiful and profound human works are not needed? If Christianity of redemption claims that life's final purpose is simply salvation from sin, perhaps rather than taking it for granted we should be concerned about its future, since this objective is not so satisfying?

A final creative purpose of being, believed Berdyaev, lies far beyond redemption, beyond the message of Christianity of the New Testament.

> For the religious consciousness of the man of the new epoch there is only one way out: the religious realisation of the truth that New Testament Christianity is a religion of redemption… This is one of the stages on the spiritual road. The second Gospel covenant of God and man has direct relationship only to redemption from sin… But does the mystery of salvation take in the whole of life? Is life's final purpose only salvation from sin? … The final aims of being lie far beyond, in a positive creative purpose. Redemption from sin is only one epoch of the mystic life of the world… But the process of the world's life cannot be limited to redemption.[831]

Berdyaev believed that if by desiring a permanent and endless redemption it continues to impede the third religious epoch, Christianity is doomed to perish.[832] He saw the Church of Golgotha, in which Christological truth is not completely revealed, as standing against the Church of the integral Christ, through which the whole truth about the human Christological nature will become manifest. 'To transform the Golgothan truth of redemption into a force hostile to creative revelation of man is a sin, a human falling-away…'[833]

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[831] MCA, pp. 95-96. STv, 126.
[832] FS, 46. FSD, 68. 'A creative revelation about man is the only way to a rebirth and new development of the Church's waning life. Christianity has remained an unfinished revelation about the absolute significance and calling of man.' MCA, 331. STv, 366.
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