

Theology of N. Berdyaev's Culture

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Abstract - the paper considers the specificity of the cultural concept of N. Berdyaev. In this work we analyze philosophical and methodological prerequisites of his culture concept and reveal the duality and antinomy of the cultural creativity phenomenon within the framework of Berdyaev's "crisis" concept. The reconstructed dynamics of Berdyaev's religious search and a comparative analysis of cultural concepts by Berdyaev and Spengler reveal the specificity of Berdyaev's cultural-cultural concept and show that his philosophy was based on philosophical theologism and philosophical religiosity. The main features of the philosophy of life, the life of the Spirit entirely determine the originality of the concept of culture by Berdyaev. In our paper we justify that mysticism and creativity according to Berdyaev is a spiritual substitute for religion. It is argued that Berdyaev's desire to create a philosophical analogue of religion is nothing more than an attempt to create a cultural analogue of theology, that is, theology of culture. The work provides a brief overview of the most characteristic themes of different versions of cultural theology and it is alleged that in one context or another, the understanding and disclosure of these themes is in the culturally sensitive concept of Berdyaev. This allows us to qualify Berdyaev's concept of culture as a theology of culture, in contrast to the morphology of culture by O. Spengler.

Keywords - cultural theology, N.A. Berdyaev, artistic spirit, philosophy of spirit, culture, theurgy, existential philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that Berdyaev's cultural concept has existed for over a hundred years, the cultural component of his work was on the periphery of research interest of both his opponents and his followers.

In a previous study we managed to isolate the cultural concept of N. Berdyaev [1] and to present it as an integral part of his philosophical system, since the cultural issues are presented not just independently and specifically, but as a part of the philosophy of history, philosophical anthropology and social philosophy.

As it turns out the concept of culture in N. Berdyaev's work is significantly different from its "academic" interpretations in the history of cultural thought.

Tracing the evolution of N. Berdyaev's perspective, we find that the long path of spiritual pursuit ends with a recognition of the supremacy of freedom over being, the spirit over nature, subject over object, person over

universally acceptable general, creation over evolution, dualism over monism, love over the law.

From Motroshilova's point of view "the philosophy of Berdyaev, primarily and predominantly is the philosophy of spirit, and, therefore, as a consequence, a philosophy of life" [2, p. 275]. According to Berdyaev, true life, true reality exists in man and in the outside world only through the spirit.

Moreover, the concepts of "life" and "spirit" in Berdyaev's philosophy of life imply each other and refer to each other. However, according to Berdyaev, the spirit is sure to be the prioritizing and primary: "the Spirit is not an objective reality, it is not even a being as rational category. As the real thing the spirit is nowhere and has never been. The philosophy of spirit should be neither a philosophy of life, nor ontology, but the philosophy of existence. The spirit is a reality not only different from the reality of the spirit of nature and the reality of objects, but it is a reality in a very different way. Using the terminology of Kant, in whose writings however we do not find the very word "Spirit", we can say that the reality of spirit is the reality of freedom, not the reality of nature" [3].

Thus, Berdyaev's philosophy of life is primarily the philosophy of the spirit, for true life, true reality exists in man and in the outside world only through the spirit. Berdyaev notes: "A conscious shift from the abstract philosophy of self-sufficient reason to the specific philosophy of a holistic life of the spirit, not the philosophy of feelings but the philosophy of organic spirit, enables to positively solve the problems of reality, freedom, and identity" [4].

It is this point that reveals a fundamental difference between the concept of Berdyaev and "philosophy of life" of O. Spengler as well as the concepts of Western philosophy, which, for one reason or another were classified as "philosophy of life". In the book "Sense of creativity" (1916), commending the composition of A. Bergson's "Creative evolution" (1907), Berdyaev wrote: "the Book is completely scientific and technical. All of it is imbued with biology, which is one of the Sciences. Everything is based on biological material and biological exercises" [4].

Biologism has the same dependence of philosophy on science as mathematics. Basically, true criticism of

biologism is given by Rickert in the article "The value of life and cultural values" in the "Logos" (1912 – 1913 the first and the second books). The trouble is that Bergson's "life" has a biological flavor. But "life" can be completely free from any biologism, and then the criticism Rickert will not hit the target" [4, p. 540]. Berdyaev saw the advantage of the philosophy of existence in the fact that life in it is understood "ontologically," and, therefore, it is not associated with biological interpretation, but with the philosophy of mind.

In O. Spengler's conception not only "life" is a biological category, but his entire morphology of culture is based on the principle of biocentrism. According to Spengler culture is an organism. However, all the romantic predecessors had recognized it, although none was so consistent and adamant. All the diversity, all the blooming complexity of culture is simplified by Spengler to plant organism, and the formation and development of different cultures is reduced to a purely biological processes of birth and decay.

We came to Spengler's most important conclusion that culture is a failure. It is clear that such a culture (in the horticultural sense of the word, tissue culture of peony or narcissus) inevitably turned out to be a culture of death. The failure of the culture according to Spengler is the failure of life. The destruction of culture is the death of the organism, the inevitable death of all living things. Spengler goes all the way: the concept of the body covers his entire history.

So, the fundamental separation of Berdyaev and Spengler concerns the fundamental issues of "life": according to Berdyaev, "life" in philosophy is understood not in a "scientific" manner - not in imitation of natural science, but exclusively in connection with the theme of "life of the spirit" and in a plane not grasped by any pseudo-scientific analytics of philosophical analysis specificity. All his explanations are directed to the fact that in philosophy one should not simply link up, but even identify "life" with "life of the spirit".

All the foregoing identifies the essential difference between Berdyaev's concept of culture from the concept of culture of O. Spengler, as well as determines its features and uniqueness. At first glance, there is much in common among Russian and German philosophers. Both are representatives of the "philosophy of life," both are alien to academic philosophy, both are fundamentally anti-scientific and anti-theoretical, militant irrationalists, both are breaking with epoch of gnoseology in philosophical thought, but they do not go ontological, build no ontology, both are pessimists of civilization, "diagnosticians" of their era, and in both cases their culture-philosophical model copied the autobiographical one.

Feeling of fear, loneliness, misunderstanding characterized both the life of Berdyaev and Spengler. Berdyaev and Spengler have one and the same technique of the counterspell of fear. They both did an incredible job to

better understand their own fears and their own loneliness and they transformed it all into the cultural symbolism of their philosophical concepts. Paradoxical thinking is typical both for Berdyaev and Spengler.

II. BERDYAEV AND SPENGLER

According to Berdyaev and Spengler paradox is a degree of cognition. This is what they have in common at a cursory glance at the work of both philosophers. However, important and essential for understanding the specificity of the concept of Berdyaev's culture is that Berdyaev's theme of culture conceals the theme of man's relationship to God and to the world. And the dramatic nature of these relations explains the tragedy of culture itself. In the concept of Spengler, the question of man as the creator of culture does not arise at all. In the concept of Berdyaev, however, a man comes to the fore precisely as a person, and a free creative person stands above culture.

If Spengler connects the "decline" of culture with the establishment and development of civilization, Berdyaev sees a deeper foundation for the withering and destruction of culture, rooted in the very nature of cultural creativity. However, in Spengler's concept of the genesis of history, not only man, but also its source, the Creator, is lost. Spengler never concealed the fact that his picture of history is the living nature of Goethe. However, Goethe's basic intuition, which recognizes God, who sees through the historical changes and unrest - "peace in God", remains not realized by Spengler.

Spengler's subtle polarization of the idea of fate to the idea of the law seems to be unconvincing and incomprehensible, in other words, the categories of historical comprehension are the categories of abstract knowledge.

It is impossible to call destiny the constant and eternal way from infancy to old age, the path of awakening and fading, which is nothing but the biological law of nature.

Spengler's plan, his desire to overcome external, descriptive historicism and to penetrate into the depths of the historical process is broken against the historical relativism of Spengler. There is no subject of history within this frame, there is nothing that would correspond, for example, to the concept of Hegel's "absolute spirit", but there is only a material substratum of history, represented in that "Urseelentum", from which the souls of cultures are born.

Without this, all Spengler's attempts to achieve universal orientation in history, to achieve a truly "Copernican" view of history are futile.

This requires an entirely different approach, an approach to understanding history from the standpoint of its super-temporal unity. Only in this case does history appear as a dramatic elimination of the integral meaning of humanity, where every event has its own value, and is comprehended from its connection with the destiny of mankind.

From this point of view, we see the history as the process of the achievement of man's full potential or potency, the tragic realization of the ultimate meaning of humanity. Each stage of this realization is self-sufficient, and it has to be recognized that they are indissolubly bound up with the unity of the world existence. Berdyaev points out that "for Spengler the historical fate, the fate of culture exists only in the sense in which the fate of the flower does. The historical fate of humanity does not exist. There is no single humanity, or a single subject of history "[5].

Cultures, like organisms, are closed monads, with their own destiny, their history. The birth, dawn and withering of these cultures, which do not have a single destiny, a single super-temporal goal, seems completely meaningless. Denying the meaning of history inevitably leads to the denying the philosophy of history.

So, Spengler is non-religious. In Berdyaev's opinion: "He seems to have atrophied a religious feeling. He is not religious himself, and he does not understand the religious life of mankind. He missed the role of Christianity in the establishment of European culture. This is the most staggering in his book. Herein lies its spiritual ugliness, almost monstrosity. You do not need to be a Christian to understand the significance of Christianity in the history of European culture. The pathos of objectivity urges to do so "[5].

He writes a lot about the styles of various religious cults, constantly emphasizing that culture is religious, unlike a non-religious civilization, but he does not comprehend religious value in culture. Unlike Berdyaev he does not recognize the closest connection between culture and worship, and he does not understand that every culture is born from a cult and grows out of the bowels of a certain religious spirit.

He doesn't have Berdyaev's religious intuition, his philosophical intuition is the artistic one, and religion itself is replaced by aesthetic metaphysics. According to Spengler the artistic spirit creates not only music, poetry, paintings, not only culture itself, but it also creates God and the state. Religion, science and culture are all subordinated to the creative artistic spirit, that is, the idea of a religious spirit is replaced by the idea of an artistic spirit. All allusions to the deeper and holistic power remain just allusions.

Using Berdyaev's terminology, it is possible to accuse Spengler that he sees the world, culture and a person exclusively "from below" and sees only the "bottom", in his conception of culture metaphysical depth of existence is not disclosed and it remains in the power of objectification.

Also it is quite possible to understand and recognize Berdyaev's correctness who isn't satisfied by such philosophy which is applied to the fact of spirit objectification and even glorifies this specific fact of human culture. The world of culture, which is powerfully and colourfully described by Spengler, for Berdyaev is

only the Spirit objectivization: "Culture alone isn't the transformation of life and the phenomenon of a new human. It designates the return of a person's creativity back to that objective world where he wanted to escape" [6].

Culture in all its manifestations is a failure of existence transformation. Culture crystallizes humans' failures. From the point of Berdyaev's view "all the achievements of culture are symbolic but not realistic" [4].

Not cognition but cognition symbols, not beauty but beauty symbols, not love but love symbols are achieved in culture.

Berdyaev heralds about eliminating and the demise of the middle art, cultural creativity of the differentiated culture values: "Culture is a great good, a person's way and it shouldn't be allowed barbarians to deny it. But it is inevitable for culture to face the highest court in heaven, there is a culture apocalypse. Culture as well as the whole earth has to be transformed into a brand new life, it can't continue infinitely in its middle range, in its legalistic alienation." [6].

Thus, culture is a great failure considering both Berdyaev and Spengler, but on different bases and in different meaning. Spengler's failure of culture is above all "failure" of life. Demise of its culture is so natural as the death of any living organism in the natural world. And there is no religious metaphysics. There are other bases to consider culture as a failure taking Berdyaev. Failure of culture is a "failure" of a human ruin in the fallen world. It is a failure and a tragedy of human creativity, tragic discrepancy between a creative act, a creative plan and a creative product. Failure of culture is an impossibility to reach the transformation of beingness. It is a failure of spirit.

Berdyaev considers the failure of culture as transition to a brand-new creativity – theurgy in religious-eschatological outlook. Theurgy is not only a creativity of culture, but a creativity of new genesis, theurgy is beyond cultural. Berdyaev stresses that "theurgy – an art creating another world, another being, another life, beauty as a thing in existence". [4]. It's necessary to understand that the problem of theurgy is not a problem of Christian creativity for Berdyaev. Theurgy is a problem of Christian genesis but it is not a Christian culture for him, it is a problem of religious transformation of life into a new land and a new sky. He is sure that "he that doesn't know that theurgy exists whoever mixes it up with religious trend in art". [4, p.458]. Considering Berdyaev's theory, theurgy adumbrates the final overcoming of any differentiated art: literature, music, painting and culture of itself. According to Berdyaev theurgy is a new, upper state of creativity. It's a cocreation with God. It's an anthropomorphical creativity. N. A. Berdyaev connects this creativity by itself with a new religious epoch and with the idea of the third revelation.

Detecting the loss of culture Spengler by contrast with Berdyaev means the loss of European culture.

He convincingly describes the “decline” of old European culture having been bloomy recently, having had its own philosophy, its own religiosity, its own spirituality, its own superior art.

Culture being opposed to civilization is one more point of intercrossing of Berdyaev’s and Spengler’s culturological conceptions. We have already mentioned Spengler’s unoriginality considering this problem in our research. This topic was put with extraordinary acuity of Russian thoughts (Khomyakov, Dostoevsky, Leontiev). The topic about culture and civilization was the most important one for Berdyaev. He wrote: “There is no more acute issue for life and for development of knowledge in our epoch then the issue about culture and civilization, about their diversity and interaction. This is the issue about the expecting us destiny ...” [7].

Binary opposition of culture and civilization being presented by Berdyaev nearly literally repeats Spengler’s one. However, Spengler has been doing nothing to search into the meaning of this archetypal phenomenon of history. N.A. Berdyaev keeps going further and doesn’t stop contrasting culture with civilization or in the parlance of Berdyaev: “fateful dialectics” [7].

III. CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

Researching the sociocultural crisis in Europe Berdyaev has come to conclusion about an opportunity of alternative historical development. As distinct from Spengler he believes that “civilization is not the only way of moving from culture with its tragic contrast to “life” to conversion of life itself” [7, p. 82]. As many Russian thinkers he believes in possibility of religious conversion of life, also he believes that “Will believing in the wonder of life conversion, not mechanics conversion but organically – spiritual” must appear in the epoch of civilization [7].

First of all, he connects the possibility of religious life conversion with Russia because according to him exactly “It may have been true that a great capability to find out will to miracle of religious life conversion in the soul of Russian people” [7, p. 83]. In other way and in different context he defines the famous Spengler’s prophesies about “Europe decline” avoiding Spengler’s culture-historical pessimism. For Berdyaev Europe decline is only the end of European monopoly in culture.

In “Europe decline” we can see triumph of dark, demobilizing soul of dramatic effect, absence of chivalrous readiness to defend superior intellectual culture in front of coming civilization with mechanical consumer attitude, the absence of any will to opposition. Having displaced godly, having displaced spiritual intimate founding with the nature of life unintentional Spengler’s mythologema has brought in its own contribution in the matter of unloved civilization by author and distractions of culture-spiritual founding.

Composition of N.A. Berdyaev’s philosophic system is culminated by making Spirit understanding. Radicalism of Berdyaev’s new evolution stage – in negation of any objective world, any ontology. Regardless inconsistency of views we can find topics to those N.A. Berdyaev was faithful till last days. This is the topic of human and the topic of creativity.

Throughout his life he saw his life goal in turning philosophy to a human problem to make it fundamentally open deep philosophical anthropology. To set up a problem of a human means at the same time to set up a problem of freedom, creativity, person, spirit and history in the context of Berdyaev.

The foundation of Berdyaev’s existential philosophy is philosophical anthropology. In point of fact Berdyaev’s philosophy by itself is the experience of faith cultivation through creativity.

Such ideas as creativity and objection, creativity and evolution, creativity and effluence are researched in the conception of creativity.

N. A. Berdyaev hasn’t just realized the religious meaning of creativity, hasn’t just seen a religious doing in creativity but he has realized creativity in the meaning of new religion proving new anthropology.

Such philosophic world outlook became the basis of Spengler’s culturological conception and could be defined as objective philosophy, monistic philosophy, statically ontology-based philosophy, naturalistic philosophy using Berdyaev’s terminology. Philosophic theology and philosophic religious became the basis of his culturological conception considering Berdyaev but they didn’t suited to neither orthodox religious nor different kinds of theology and religious philosophy taking place in those times.

The question is about Berdyaev’s type of culture theology. The basis, sense bearing of Berdyaev’s culture conception is presented by positive, religious, personalistic culture conception by its character that has outgrown into a true “religious of creativity” according to Titarenko A. S. [8]. It includes the conception of “Absence of Essential”, a new synthesis of Christology and anthropology, an objectivization problem and symbolization of Spirit, an experience of person’s justification, an ethics of creativity and eschatologism as inherent part of ethics.

Other main topics of his conception such as: sources of culture, meaning of culture, its fatal dialectic, correlation of culture an civilization, culture typology and others will become meaningful and will be presented from the perspective of this philosophic theologism, its existentialistic philosophy, from a perspective of life philosophy of Spirit.

In particular it will allow Berdyaev to disclose religious meaning of culture, its symbolism; to show that the sources of culture are sacral, that culture is born from cult in a temple and “ comes to the world leaving the temple ”; it will allow to disclose religious meaning of creativity, to

realize creativity as a new track of religious experience, to perceive the great meaning and the role of Christianity in culture and in history, to build religious-eschatological perspective of biological creativity (theurgy) and connect it with a new religious epoch (Epoch of Spirit) and with the idea of the third religious revelation.

Thus, in Berdyaev's philosophy culturological conception has by no means peripheral place. The main features of life philosophy, Spirit's life are projected and entirely stipulate the originality, "otherness" of Berdyaev's culture conception.

Mystics and creativity are spiritual substitution considering Berdyaev N. A. P. Tillich (protestant theologian) specifies Berdyaev's attempt to create philosophical analog of religious as aspiration of creating theology of culture [9].

Inside the belly of theology, the processes of orthodox settings development have taken place and have led to the appearing of a new way that has got a new title – theology of culture due to the researches made by famous theologian P. Tillich.

Theology of culture can be characterized as one of the direction of theology modernism in which the problems of culture are considered on the basis of systematize foundations one or another doctrinal statement of Christian religion. Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox kinds interpretations of culture problems differ in Christian thought.

There are main problems engaged in theology of culture, among them are conceptualization of modern culture crisis, searching its sources and the ways out of it; creation of theology model of culture as per main Christian doctrine; explaining the place and the main role of God in culture; analysis of God and a human interconnection in

culture-historical process; dilemma of culture and civilization. The topic of contrariety and despiritualization of the modern world, culture and a human has become a keynote in the whole theology of culture.

A brief review of the most indicative topics of different kinds of theology of culture shows that in one or another context we can find interpretation and realizing these topics in N.A. Berdyaev's conception of culture. This can allow us to qualify Berdyaev's conception of culture as theology of culture in distinction from O. Spengler's morphology of culture.

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