

*A conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in November 2002 that was entitled "Issues Confronting the Post-European World" and that was dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907-1977). **The Organization of Phenomenological Organizations** was founded on that occasion. The following essay is published in celebration of that event.*

Essay 51

The Place of the Human in the Philosophies of Scheler and Berdyaev



© Olga Vishnyakova
Moscow Academy of Labor and Social Relations
olga_v1@mail333.com
Discussion Group on Phenomenology and Existentialism.

Abstract

This essay approaches the distinction between two different philosophical attempts to understand the place of the human in the world, her nature and duality of her being. Two philosophers are taken as representatives of philosophical anthropology, one of whom was a phenomenologist and the other an existentialist: Max Scheler and Nikolai Berdyaev. Both exceeded the narrow bounds of belonging to certain philosophical schools, as they were original thinkers in their own right. Phenomenology found a big response in Russia at the turn of the 20th century and Berdyaev was one of Russia's thinkers who felt the need to reply to this new philosophical tendency. In spite of appearing to many as a dull and overly logistical discipline, phenomenology provided a new approach to the issues of many philosophical problems and Scheler used the phenomenological method in an exemplary way to investigate the human being. My essay has sought common ideas in the thoughts of both philosophers and has found nonessential differences in many cases, as their major focus of investigation was in philosophical anthropology, where I found mostly differences in stress and emphasis, rather than in the essence of their thought.

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“... at no time in his history has man been so much of a problem to himself as he is now.”¹

Max Scheler

“Man is not fractional or separate part of the world; he embodies in himself the whole mystery and solution of the world.”²

Nikolai Berdyaev

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was an interesting turning point in the history of mankind. The changes in social life, economical development, the new moods in cultural and philosophical thought, all presented the occasion for new perspectives on traditional philosophical problems. The problem of the human and her place in the world, along with the axiology of the human being became prevalent in philosophical research in that time. It seems that some thinkers, whom we might call prophetic, felt a strong need to protect the human being, to save the fragile human soul that would soon be tortured by the human negligence of the Bolshevik and Nazi regimes. Indeed, some philosophers at this time had a strong intimation of the catastrophe that soon became reality; an intimation that the world would turn out to be insane as these regimes attempted to liberate humankind without first thinking deeply about the human being herself. This false attempt to build a new world, called by Nikolai Berdyaev “the new middle ages,” was experienced by many philosophers as their own tragedy. In response they created great patterns of spirituality and beauty in their thoughts, in their effort to protect and warn the world.

Two philosophers who left deep traces in the history of philosophy in connection with anthropological philosophy are Max Scheler and Nicolai Berdyaev. In spite of the difference in the philosophical origin of their thinking, they have a lot in common with respect to their understanding of human nature. Although their thoughts were shaped in different philosophical environments, their main interests were the same: the human, her place in the world, her connection to God, and the problem of the being of the human. The common thing in their thoughts is their concern with the human as a being that is not disconnected from the world, passively viewing it from the outside, but one that is actively involved in the process of development and cooperation with the world, with the Absolute, in solidarity with all creatures. This means for both

¹ Max Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, tr. and Introduction by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Noonday, 1969), 6.

² Nikolai Berdyaev, *O Naznatchenii Tcheloveka. Opyt Paradoksal'noi Etiki (The Destiny of Man. An Essay in Paradoxical Ethics)* (Moscow: Republic, 1993), 54.

thinkers that the human is not just a small piece of sand in the world, a meaningless part of evolution, or, vice-versa, i.e., a powerful subject over a reality that can be neglected by an attitude of ruthlessness, destructiveness, and irresponsibility to nature. Rather, as interpreted by both philosophers, the human is a responsible subject of history. The unstable being of the human person, which is the result of its attempt to become complete by struggling with its ambiguous nature, can lead to the realization of this completeness in different ways. One of the ways is to show her weakness through power, through destructive forces, or through a responsible answer to the instability, where a person feels the tragedy of the modern world and makes an attempt to change it, to rebuild her connection to God, in order to become human. Another similarity of Scheler and Berdyaev is their attempt to use scientific research about the human in their philosophical thoughts, wherein they tried to find corroboration for the basis of a human nature beyond the world, and to show that only her orientation to something beyond the world of things, toward supernatural cultural values, could give her a real sense of being; as a result we can find a deep connection between philosophy and religion in their thoughts that appeared as the search for human participation in divinity and a reply to the call of God.

Phenomenology was very popular in Russia in the beginning of the 20th century. Perhaps all thinkers and not only philosophers found a response to their thoughts in phenomenology. The first translation of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* was a Russian translation in 1909 and "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" appeared in translation in Russia in 1911-1912. Even those who never became phenomenologists had judgments about Husserl's work. In the strict sense of the word we can say that in Russia the Husserlians were: Gustav Shpet, Nikolai Zhinkin, Nikolai Volkov, Alexander Akhmanov, Alexander Zak, Aleksei Tsires. In modern Russia their names speak almost nothing to people, however, as the Bolshevik regime interrupted the normal process of philosophical thinking and the exchange of philosophical ideas.

Berdyaev's thought was influenced by phenomenology even though he rejected it. Berdyaev, like Husserl, disagrees with the subject-object division in epistemology and thinks that the person, as the bearer of the world, is more fundamental than the subject-object relationship. Berdyaev's main disagreement with the phenomenology of Husserl concerns its goal of describing pure consciousness and its method of seeing essences (*Wesensschau*). For Berdyaev Husserl sees real objects as existing directly in essences, which means that being is understood in a logistical and objectivistic manner. For Berdyaev, however, existence has primacy and cognition must be understood as the immersion of the

subject in the mystery of existence, in the depth of being, and not merely in terms of objective being. "The creative act of a cognizer, as to be in being and existence, is a dynamic of life in being and existence, is something new inside him, but not about him."³ As the world of sense emerges inside of the human itself with this act of spirit, the universalization of the human is the content of its creativity. The active and creative character of cognition is a consequence of the humanity of being, with its priority of freedom in relation to being. The element of freedom in cognition is a major source of the human's creativity, but it is a source of mistakes too, which is equally the result of the human's freedom, the source of insurmountable contradictions, which can be overcome only in the order of divinity.

If for Husserl the truth manifests itself as an infinite horizon, for Berdyaev, in contrast, truth is present to the subject of consciousness as a given sense, with an essence that is both eternal and final. If phenomenology works on the problem of the purpose of consciousness's relation to objects, Berdyaev explores the purpose of the human's relation to the divine logos, to God.

"Discovery of Truth is a creative act of spirit, man's creative act, a creative act that surmounts slavery from the objective world. Cognition is active, not passive. Phenomenology in essence demands a passive cognizer, since activity for it is limited by psychologism. This is the reason why the phenomenology of Husserl needs to be recognized as unfavorable for existential philosophy."⁴ At the same time, however, in his Christian existentialism Berdyaev also agrees with phenomenology's understanding of the orientation of the whole subject to the world, and not just the subject consciousness. Berdyaev agrees with the phenomenological conception of "world horizon," but according to him the way into the world is realized not by horizontal transcendence, but by means of a vertical movement, a movement of depth. In this movement, transcendence is so powerful that it unites the moment of existentiality with God. But Berdyaev is not interested in the issue of methodology; he never was interested in 'how' something happened, but was always concerned with 'what'; he thus attempts to describe what has opened itself to an existential person, but not how it in reality could be so opened.

Moreover, Berdyaev thinks that Scheler achieved certain results in ethical and ontological cognition, because he was not always loyal to Husserl's

³ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Ya i mir ob'ectov* (The Self and The World of Objects) In *Philosophia Svobodnogo Dukha* (The Philosophy of the Free Spirit) (Moscow: Republic, 1994), 260-261. Hereinafter cited as *The Self and The World of Objects*.

⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Tsarstvo Dukha i Tsarstvo Kesarya* (The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar) (Moscow: Republic, 1995), 290.

phenomenology. Scheler aimed at the disclosure of practical possibilities of the phenomenological method for philosophy, in the center of which he put the theme of the value of the world and the human. According to Scheler, values are always given in emotional contemplation, which makes it impossible to encounter them on the basis of reductions from the common characteristics of objects and phenomena and to describe them in terms of logical thought. "The phenomenology of values and the phenomenology of emotive life are completely independent of logic, having an autonomous area of objects and research."⁵ I think that Berdyaev acclaimed the fact that Scheler was not limited by the phenomenological reduction as a judgment about reality and therefore realized phenomenology in terms of the freedom of vital passions, vital impulses, along with recognition of the possibility of biological and social determination. Berdyaev always struggled against any determination, when it can limit the freedom of the human as a responsible and full of individual features proper to human being, against the power of society that uses the human like a means for its purposes. Scheler also understands a fundamental quality of the human as the ability to distinguish essence from existence and its realization in the act of ideation. This direct comprehension of essences where pre-sensuous intuition splits causality from necessity is what attracts Berdyaev to Scheler's thought.

On the other hand, by the time Scheler encountered Husserl he already had his own understanding about the nature of consciousness that had a lot in common with the ideas of Husserl. We can say that Scheler himself was more than only a phenomenologist, as he imagined phenomenology to be not just the project of a new science that would replace all previous philosophy, but also as a new method of resolving eternal philosophical questions. "He was never a student of Husserl in any sense of the term. His primary concern was never the phenomenological investigation of the transcendental ego or the ontological question of Being; it was rather the Being of Man, here and now, in his biological, social, ethical, metaphysical, and religious dimensions – and, ultimately, man as the bearer of love."⁶

Scheler was not only interested in phenomenology itself, but also in other areas of philosophy, especially philosophical anthropology. Scheler's phenomenological interests are close to Russian philosophers such as Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), Vasiliy Rozanov (1856-1919), Gustav Shpet (1879-1937), Semion Frank (1877-1950), and Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). However,

⁵ Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values. A New Attempt Toward A Foundation of An Ethical Personalism*, tr. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Foreword, xiv.

as a representative of philosophical anthropology, Nikolai Berdyaev is closer to Scheler than anyone else in Russian philosophy.

Scheler is a representative of phenomenology. Probably he was one of the least academic philosophers in Germany. He used a transcendental-metaphysical method to describe the problems of cognition and of life itself. Berdyaev was an existential philosopher. However, he represented existentialism not as the philosophical school that took shape in 1930s, but in terms of the main ideas that existential philosophy is interested in, which were always part of the metaphysical research of Russian thinkers. Berdyaev was not initially considered to be an existentialist thinker. Before this school was born in Western Europe and with it, the problems of human being and the destiny of the person became the basis of a new understanding of human existence, Russia had already come through the hardship and sorrow of broken and unstable existence, rooted in the border-line situation in society, in each family, and in each soul. Consequently, these issues became reflected in a new philosophical understanding of reality. But the October revolt that caused the end of the Russian Empire did not allow philosophical life to develop in a peaceful way, where new tendencies could be recognized. "I always belonged to the kind of philosophy that now is commonly called existentialism."⁷ In accordance with this expression of the issue, there was already an existential moment in Russian philosophy and literature, because of the stress Russian thinkers and writers placed on the cognitive person as existent. Feodor Dostoevsky is the most famous of these writers to the West. The thought behind this stress is articulated by Berdyaev when he wrote: "Existence cannot to be an object of cognition, it is a subject of cognition or even deeper, it is located beyond the separation of subject and object."⁸

If Scheler's thought belongs to the German philosophical tradition and its emphasis on the logicality of ideas, Berdyaev belongs to the very bright, but non-linear thinkers. Acknowledging this, he called himself an aphoristic philosopher. But at the same time by reading Scheler we can find that he was often driven by passion, "he did not hesitate to use literally aphoristic or journalistic language in order to increase the persuasiveness of his arguments."⁹

Berdyaev tried to build his epistemology on a basis of an anthropocentric doctrine. According to him all previous systems were not rooted in knowledge about the human, but in knowledge about transcendental consciousness and the

⁷ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie (Self-knowlegment)* (Moscow: DEM,1990), 88. Hereinafter cited as *Samopoznanie*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁹ Introduction. In Max Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, xi.

gnoseological subject, whereas by his understanding they should be rooted in an ontology of the human.

Another commonality between Scheler and Berdyaev is their awareness of the destiny of the person. For Scheler the place of the human in the world is essentially important. He wrote in *Philosophische Weltanschauung* (Philosophical Perspectives), that only from a substance point of view about the world, which is a subject of investigation for philosophical anthropology, and moving toward the acts of spirit, which are coming from the center of the human, is it possible to discern and render determinate the real attributes of the final basis of all things.¹⁰

Berdyaev rejected the attitude toward the person in Russian society that was prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century, as the renaissance enjoyed by all parts of Russian cultural life at this time was, on his interpretation, characterized by decadence in the case of their understanding of the person. Those views were rooted in the popular idea of Richard Wagner about the entire nation sharing a culture in community, where understanding of individualism was overcome by the idea of a return to the source of nature, guided by the mystic's understanding of the reality of the Earth, and the religion of the cosmos. This idea of a mass culture found its expression during the Soviet time in a culture of realism and in a specific understanding of popular mass culture, which killed all innovative tendencies unconnected with the Bolshevik understanding of community.

The recognition of the other was a big topic in Russian philosophy, specifically, the idea of a spiritual union of people who recognized one another as allied souls, which is referred to by special term "sobornost" in Russian philosophy. A simple gathering together of people in a collective unity does not capture what is at issue in the sobornost of human souls. Nor does the falsely understood idea of sobornost promoted by the collectivism of the Soviet period, where any personal act was supposed to be correlated with the culture of the national community. Nevertheless, like a lot of representatives of the Russian intelligentsia—people who were not only educated, but bearers of the cultural and spiritual values of society—Berdyaev was carried away at the turn of the century by Marxism; he accepted its economic theory, but not its understanding of the person. In his autobiography (*Samopoznanie*) Berdyaev wrote that his concern with socialism took shape before his interest in Marxism, as it was rooted not only in the tendency that took place at that time in society, but has adherence to the idea of freedom, the liberation of the human being from the

¹⁰ See: Max Scheler, *Philosophical Perspectives*, tr. Oscar Haac (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

fetters of society (based on his aversion to any constraint placed upon the person). Everybody in Russian society was aware of changes, but the theoretical Marxism that came to Russia was different from what became Bolshevism. Berdyaev defined the enthusiasm about Marxism as stemming from a crisis in the Russian intelligentsia and he introduced himself not as a social revolutionary, but an ethical revolutionary.

The first Russian rebellion in 1905 was a landmark that turned away a lot of thinkers from the revolution. Many of them turned to idealism and religion. One result of this was the publication of a collection of articles (including one by Berdyaev) called *Vekhi* (Signposts)¹¹, in which representatives of the Russian intelligentsia tried to analyze what had happened in society and what would happen to it if nobody learned the lesson of the 1905 revolution. Besides the authors of *Vekhi*, only few people accepted their judgment, almost all the politicians disagreed with their views, branding this collective work “reactionary.” This was the time when everybody felt an impending collapse of the old Russia, and in society there was what Berdyaev characterized as “an agitation and a tension, but was no real joy.”¹² This disturbing time defined Berdyaev’s personal choices in philosophy and in life, choices that rejected being dependent on an ideology, a group of people, a party; he always had his personal judgment, which was rooted in a strong need to protect his person from society. These choices defined his orientation as a personalist, an existentialist, and, as he named himself, a philosopher of free spirit.

In the evolution of their thoughts Scheler and Berdyaev had two periods. Scheler went from neocatholicism to pantheism, Berdyaev went from a Marxist point of view to that of an Orthodox-Russian philosopher. These tendencies allow us to say that while Scheler tried to build his anthropology on the basis of a man-godhood understanding, Berdyaev did it according to orthodox-Russian tradition of a god-manhood understanding. What the reversal of these two terms means will become apparent in the course of discussion below.

Berdyaev nevertheless found similar thoughts in Scheler, and he referred to Scheler’s book *Vom Umsturz der Werte* where Scheler wrote that the idea of the human itself could be formed only through the idea of God. Moreover, he was receptive to Scheler’s view that “all essential communities of individual persons are not founded in some ‘rational lawfulness’ or in an abstract idea of

¹¹ See: *Vekhi* (Signposts). In *Vekhi. Iz Glubiny* (Signposts. De Profundis) (Moscow: Pravda, 1991). In English: *Signposts: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Intelligentsia*. Tr. by Marshall S. Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman (Irvine Calif: C. Schlacks Jr, 1986). Berdyaev’s article is titled “Philosophic Verity and Intelligentsia Truth”.

¹² Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie*, 129.

reason, but solely in the possible community of these persons and the person of persons, i.e., in the community with God. All other communities of a moral and legal character have this community as their foundation.”¹³ In connection with this Berdyaev wrote: “Man, as a being stands in the center of being and is called to take center place in the world, cannot have a positive content of life if God does not exist and the world does not exist, if what is above and what below him does not exist.... The creation of life always assumes for man an existence of the other.”¹⁴

Both philosophers interpreted the nature of the human as ambiguous and dualistic. They said that the human could not be understood merely as the result of nature, and thus that the human is more than just a biological object. “man can be either more or less than animal, but never an animal.”¹⁵ “‘Person,’ as applied to man, therefore, must be envisaged as the center of acts raised beyond the interaction and contrast between organism and environment.”¹⁶ The human in contrast to an animal could be defined as a bearer of spirit. The spirit appears in the person. According to Berdyaev the human is a creature that overcomes both herself and the world. He agreed with Scheler that only the human as a person can rise above herself as a living creature and transform everything into an object of her cognition, including herself; the human as a subject is an act, and as a being is the free realization of her acts; other persons cannot be objects. Human freedom leads to the role of sublimation in spiritual life, “Man is the kind of being who, by means of the spirit, can take an ascetic attitude toward life. He can suppress and repress his own vital drives and deny them the nourishment of perceptual images and representations. Compared the animal that always says ‘Yes,’ to reality, even when it avoids it and flees from it, man is the being who can say ‘No,’ the ‘ascetic of life,’ the protestant par excellence, against mere reality.”¹⁷ In the act of sublimating her energy of attraction, what Scheler calls ‘*bestia cupidissima rerum novarum*’ (the creature always seeking and desiring), can be transferred to spiritual activity.

If Scheler defined the human as a child of God and nature, Berdyaev represented human nature as a child of God and meonic freedom. Berdyaev borrowed this term from the German mystical philosopher Jacob Boehme (1575-

¹³ Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, 397.

¹⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, “*Philosophia Svobodnogo Dukha*” (The Philosophy of the Free Spirit) In *The Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, 136.

¹⁵ Max Scheler, *Man’s Place in Nature*, tr. and Introduction by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Noonday, 1969), 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

1624),¹⁸ although he extended its meaning. While Boehme's meonic freedom has its source in God as His dark side, Berdyaev put his understanding of the 'meonic' beyond God, into the divine nothing. It allowed him to take the responsibility for evil away from God and make the human responsible for it, as she is not only a child of God, but also a child of meonic freedom at the same time, because Berdyaev could not accept any pressure from any determination of the essence of the human, even from God. The free spirit needs to understand that total self-responsibility follows from the Fall. On the one hand, Berdyaev said that the result of the Fall is the origin of good and evil, and the ethics that is a consequence of this process; on the other hand, the human can liberate herself from eternal childhood and assume the vocation of God to be a creator and a co-creator in the world, wherein appears the trial of human freedom. This is one of the paradoxes of human existence according to Berdyaev.

Love assumes a very important place in the thoughts of both philosophers. Scheler represents the human as *ens amans*, a loving creature. Love for him has priority above cognition in the basis of the human essence as the law of *ordo amoris*. "Love is always what awakens both knowledge and volition; indeed, it is the mother of spirit and reason itself."¹⁹ Thus Scheler refused the classic European logo-centric understanding that put cognition and theoretical relations in a position of privilege in the integral understanding of the human. In the period of his creation of an axiology Scheler disputed the understanding of the human as an "animal rationale" and rejected the position of reason as the leading principle of the human spirit. The person, according to Scheler, is not the subject of reason, is not a "Vernunftperson," and is also not the subject of a rational will either. The person is primarily "*ens amans*," a loving being, but not "*ens cogitans*," a thinking being, and also not "*ens volens*," a willing being.²⁰

The definition of the person that is based on reasoning is the equivalent to its exclusion of personhood, as reason is the same among all people and acts of reasoning are therefore supraindividual. Creatures whose acts are limited by reasoning cannot be referred to as having personhood, but should be rather characterized as logical subjects. Personhood is a concrete unity, whose essence consists of the sum total of its acts that are crowned by the emotionalism of spirit. The human as *ens amans* is a concrete and finite subjectivity who exists in

¹⁸ Jacob Boehme, *Christosophia (Sammtliche Schriften)* (St.Petersburg: A-CAD, 1994).

¹⁹ Max Scheler, "Ordo Amoris," In *Selected Philosophical Essays*, tr. and Introduction by David Lachterman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 110.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

the local world of value, who has the possibility nevertheless to define the world as a whole.

The real world, in Scheler's understanding, is above all the world of love and value preferences. The possibility of loving qua spiritual love becomes for Scheler the same thing as the possibility to transcend the self limited to local small worlds and the attempt to love the whole divine world, the entire complex of the cosmos. Emerging from the love of neighbor to the love of the distant other, spiritual love appears as the first opportunity for transcendence. Love is always creativity, not repetition; it is an active transcendental act that moves from lower to the highest values. Sexual love according to him is a personal encounter of the highest cosmic concentration, as it is an expression of universal love, where loving persons are its instruments. This cosmic-mystical understanding of love, as participation in the creation of life, includes the Christian sense of love as a spiritual feeling, a sacrament that lifts the human above animal existence. Love between humans is an imperfect, drowsy love in its urge toward God. "Every love is love for God, still incomplete, often slumbering or self-infatuated, often stopping, as it were, on its way."²¹

According to Scheler, the knowledge of the ranking of what can be loved in accordance with the inner values of things is the central problem of all ethics. All values are based on the order of love and hatred and, as such, they are opposites that could not exist one without the other, although love has primacy over hatred. "Love is that movement wherein every concrete individual object that possesses value achieves the highest value compatible with its nature and ideal vocation; or wherein it attains the ideal state of value intrinsic to its nature. (Hatred, on the other hand, is a movement in the opposite direction)."²² The heart of man is the microcosm of the world of values and it has its own logic just as the mind has its own logic. The heart's logic is not a chaos of blind feeling-states; the heart has its own laws and understanding of the order of things towards which the mind may be deaf and blind. The heart has its own judgment and is able to love or hate just as blindly or insightfully as the mind does.²³

These thoughts of Scheler did not move Berdyaev with any great passion as the questions of love, the other, and sympathy always have been important for Russian writers and philosophers. Berdyaev did not pay as much attention as Scheler did to the heart. In Russian philosophy a number of philosophers had already investigated this problem, such as Pamphil Yurkevich in his article "The

²¹ Ibid., 109.

²² Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, tr. Peter Heath; Introduction by Werner Stark (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954; Reprinted, Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), 161.

²³ Max Scheler, "Ordo Amoris," In *Selected Philosophical Essays*, 116-117.

Heart and its Meaning in The Spiritual Human Life” (1860), Boris Vysheslavtcev in his article “The Meaning of the Heart in Religion” (1925) and the book *The Heart in Christian and Indian Mystics* (1929), and Dmitri Tchezhevski in his *Philosophy in Ukraine* (1929). Nevertheless, we can find in Berdyaev’s book *Spirit and Reality* that the idea of the human as a spiritual-mental-corporal organism, whose spirit is reduced to the soul, is a mistake of German idealism. The person for Berdyaev is realized through the victory of the spirit over the chaotic elements of the mental and corporal. While the soul is the heart and core of human being, the spirit is understood as something distinct from the soul and should be united with the soul to impart to it the highest quality and sense. A spiritual life is thus a spiritual-psychic life.²⁴ The understanding of the heart in Eastern Christianity is a very special topic; according to it the heart is the main core of the human being and her spiritual life. In such an understanding the heart is not an emotional-mental element in the human, but a spiritual-psychological whole, where there is a place for a transfiguration of the mind. This understanding was investigated in the works of Russian philosophers, but as we can see Scheler is close to this point of view.

Love has an important role in the philosophy of Berdyaev too, but he is less concerned with the order of values and the opposition between love and hatred. For him the origin of ethics is the Fall, as ethics is the result of the discerning and evaluating that have their origin in the distinction between good and evil. Here the meonic freedom leads to a severance of ultimate principles from God, but when such a distinction came into existence, according to Berdyaev, this distinction became a necessity of life itself. Indeed, this is the fundamental paradox upon which he based his entire ethics. Berdyaev agreed with Scheler that the person is associated with love, as it is through love that the person realizes herself, overcomes solitude and carries out the realization of communication. Thus he writes that “love assumes another person, this is the relation of person to person, the coming out from himself of one person to another person, the recognition of the person and its assertion for eternity.”²⁵ And moreover in Scheler “love is the most personal of attitudes, but a thoroughly objective one none the less, in the sense that in it we are ‘objective’ insofar as we free ourselves (in an unaccustomed fashion) from bondage to our own interests, wishes and ideas; but for all this the element of the personal in man can never be disclosed to us as an ‘object’. Persons cannot be objectified, in

²⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Dukh i Real’nost’* (Spirit and Reality). In *The Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, 383. Hereinafter cited as *Spirit and Reality*.

²⁵ Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Self and the World of Objects*, 313.

love or any other genuine act, not even in cognition. Personality is that unity of substance, baffling observation and eluding analysis, which the individual experiences as inherent in all the acts he performs.”²⁶

Love is related to God in Scheler’s and Berdyaev’s thoughts. The sphere of the Absolute is necessary for the spiritual center of the human. When this sphere is missing, the self-consciousness of the person is filled by quasi-images, idols, or fetishes such as money, the nation, etc. As a consequence of this the spiritual center becomes empty, which destroys the heart. As Dostoevsky wrote in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “If God does not exist, it means that everything is allowed.”²⁷ Only through the purification of self-consciousness from those idols can the human become able to contemplate the sphere of the Absolute, in free philosophical thought and thereby to become a person. For Scheler, the person is the monarchy that regulates the structure of spiritual acts, the unity of essence, the way to God through the great movement of sympathy and love, mediated by Dionysus. Love takes the place in Scheler’s thoughts as the center of the person and source of creativity, while in Berdyaev’s thoughts this center is creativity itself, which is rooted in freedom, and love is an aspect of its realization.

According to both Scheler and Berdyaev the human is an ambivalent creature who bears in herself a fundamentally paradoxal ambiguity. The human is the most well known creature among all existents, but at the same time the most mysterious. Scheler wrote that the human is the most wonderful creature, even though she comes from nature, she can transcend herself, both her own and any “life.” Berdyaev likewise maintains that the human recognizes herself as not only as a natural being, but as a spiritual being. “There is a source of Prometheus in man and this is a sign of his God-likeness, but it is not demonic, as is sometimes thought.”²⁸ This refers us to Scheler’s understanding of the spirit, on which point Berdyaev disagrees with Scheler.

According to Scheler the spirit is passive and life is active. The lowest form of life is the most powerful and the highest form is the weakest. The reciprocity of an originally powerless spirit (*Geist*) and a demonic drive (*Drang*) that is blind to any spiritual ideas and values is the aim and end of all being and process for Scheler. Drive and spirit (*Drang-Geist*) are attributes of a tragically bifurcated being. The idea of *ens per se* (substance or the basis of the absolute) where the spirit is passive and the drive is active, finds its realization from

²⁶ Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, 167.

²⁷ Cf. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, tr. by Constance Garnett; Introduction by Mark Slonim (New York: Random House, 1955), 78-79 and *passim*.

²⁸ Nikolai Berdyaev, “*Problema Tcheloveka*”(The Problem of Man), *Put’/The Path*, 50, (Mar./Apr.1936), 4.

bottom to top, but not vice-versa. "It is not permitted to do what Scheler does, take activity out of the spirit and transfer it to life. Only spirit is active and life itself, in the biological sense, is passive."²⁹ But at the same time Berdyaev agreed with Scheler that spirit could not be understood as an epiphenomenon of the life process.

Scheler's human is the place where spirit and drive meet each other, which provides the opportunity for the realization of the co-creativity that characterizes the human. As he writes in *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Man's Place in Nature): "The logos 'according to' which the world comes into being becomes in man an act in which he can cooperate. Thus, according to this view, the birth of man and the birth of God are, from the outset, reciprocally dependent upon each other."³⁰ At the same time, however, spirit and drive as the two attributes of being are not its final shape, as their manifestations are inseparable from the history of the human spirit and the evolution of life. Thus for Scheler the human is seen as the place where spirit and life meet. "For us the basic relationship between man and the Ground of Being consists in the fact that this Ground comprehends and realizes itself directly in man, who, both as spirit and as life, is but a partial mode of the eternal spirit and drive."³¹

Likewise, too, in Berdyaev: "God needs man as man needs God." Nevertheless, we can see their difference in not so much their words and definitions, but in the accents that each philosopher stress in their thoughts. Berdyaev strongly disagrees with Scheler's interpretation of the relationship between the spirit and drive where the spirit is passive, as for him the creativity of the person is the main source of human self-realization. According to Berdyaev, this is one of the ways to heal the human ambivalence mentioned above. God does not create Spirit, as it is rooted in freedom, which has its source not in God, but in man, according to him. This is why freedom has primacy for him over being, which already is an attenuating of freedom. Spirit is not defined by a being that is already shaped, finished, but, as a consequence of this unfinished state, the spirit is able to be creative, to create new being.

Berdyaev wrote that we cannot use the principle of causality to understand the spirit and its life. God did not create spirit as a nature; spirit emanated from God, as an exhalation, as it were, into the human. In this special understanding of the God and spirit relationship there is still a strong connection between them. Spirit is from God and spirit is oriented to God, as it is a reply to

²⁹ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, 379.

³⁰ Max Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

God from the human, a reply originating in her creative activity and freedom. Berdyaev's point of disagreement with Scheler is his understanding of spirit as emanating not only from God, but also as having its source in meonic freedom, in the Ungrund. The paradox of the spirit is, on the one hand, that it is an emanation from God, while the other hand, the spirit can reply to God, can respond in a manner that comes not from God, but from meon.³² Spirit is not only divine, it is god-man-like, god-world-like, it is freedom in God and freedom from God. Berdyaev said that this is a mystery, about which a theory cannot be created; as such, it can only be approached roughly through myth and symbols.

On this point, the human is a creator who creates nonbeing. This is a mystery not only of creativity, but of evil too. On the one hand, the human is standing in front of this mystery as a natural being, while the other hand, as a spiritual being. In creativity the human realizes her likeness to God, to the Creator who signifies a completely different self-consciousness, the surmounting of suppression and degradation. According to Berdyaev to be a creator does not necessarily mean that one should believe in God; it means first and foremost the ability to be a creator, which nevertheless depends on the existence of God.

Scheler's drive gives to passive spirit the impulse that allows it to act in reality, to transcend itself beyond itself; Berdyaev goes along with this, but called the spirit active, or more precisely, held the view that only the creative act should be called active. As in all acts in human life, the attitudes at issue in human relations that are not stagnant represent the creation of a new life. Every act of love is a creative act, while non-creative acts are essentially passive.

We can say that even though Scheler's human is passive in front of spirit, and Berdyaev's man is a creator that has become similar to God the Creator. Nevertheless, for both of them, the human is a co-creator, a co-developer of the ideal order of formation in the world process and herself in it. If Berdyaev's human, as a creative person in moral act, originates it as a unique act, as far as a person is unique and the situation itself is nonreplicable, we can find a correlation in Scheler. This is the case because for him "every moment of life in the development an individual represents at the same time a possibility for the individual to know unique values and their interconnections, and, in accordance with this, the necessitation of moral tasks and actions that can never be repeated; such tasks and actions are predetermined, as it were, in the objective nexus of the factual-moral value-order for this moment (and for this individual, for example) and, if not utilized, are lost forever."³³

³² Nikolai Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, 379.

³³ Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, 493.

The thoughts of both philosophers could be defined as a raw nerve in their souls as they felt all the pain of the world and sickness of humanity as their personal pain. During all their philosophical creativity they tried to understand the nature of the human, the ambiguity of her being. Anthropology was a very important part of their philosophical thoughts: for Scheler it was the main line in his philosophy, while Berdyaev defined the problem of man as a fundamental problem of philosophy. The thoughts of both philosophers were non-linear, often driven by passion and contented with antagonistic, incompatible influences. This may be unusual for German philosophy, but not for Russian philosophy, which always was close to literature during its historical development.

Nevertheless, we can speak about them not only in terms of their being representatives of old philosophical traditions, but as thinkers who brought new dimensions to the understanding of old problems; what was proved became uncertain, what was doubtful became paradoxical. Socrates' questioning about knowledge became actual again as the human did not know or was not sure any more who she is, or knew what she did not know. The destiny of their countries became their own destinies that only can prove the rightfulness of Scheler's and Berdyaev's awareness of the human in the modern world and showed that new philosophical problems could not be resolved in a traditional way.

We can say that the main ideas in Scheler and Berdyaev are the same, but they resolve them in essentially different ways. They were interested in the real person, who has a twofold aspect, and they declared the human's unique metaphysical place in the universe, a place replete with contradictions of being and a nature that cannot be defined as an object, cannot be a passive participant in the world, but has one way or another to take an active part in it by struggling all her life in the attempt to realize her personality.
