

C.G.Jung and Nikolai Berdyaev: Individuation And The Person – A Critical Comparison

Georg Nicolaus. (2011). London: Routledge.

We could say that for Berdyaev the creative process of writing had the psychological significance of actualizing the transcendent function

(Nicolaus, G., 2011: p 19)

Although I am a consciousness researcher, and not a Christian, I can see this is a sensitive, thoughtful book about the existential Christian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who provided a mediating position between the traditional religious attitude, and Carl Gustav Jung. The book is attractively presented, over 203 pages, with 4 illustrations, not including 6 pages of notes, a useful 10 page bibliography, and an 11 page index. This book contains much theology, it nevertheless remains psychological, and concerns all aspects of human life; as the totality of human experience always includes these dimensions. Berdyaev's philosophy is inseparable from his life experience, and so the book offers an overview of some biographical details, which convey a flavour of his personality. His belief that new religious consciousness begins when one becomes conscious of Christ's Church as the cosmic kingdom, is explored. Religion has to do with an existential relation to transcendence, whereas Jungian thinking substitutes this with psychological religion based on a metaphysics of the unconscious. Berdyaev tries to divine intuitively what happens behind transcendental consciousness, perhaps a superconsciousness, a mostly unnoticed dimension of the complex tapestry of our actual experience. It is the sixth chapter, which is the strongest, entitled, '*Person and God Image*', where Jung and Berdyaev look forward to the third age of the Spirit, which will be the new dawn after the '*death of God*'. The spiritual ethics of individuation, and the complementary perspectives on the actual phenomenology of lived experience are then studied. The author concludes by discussing the divine spirit, and states, '*fear of God remains but it is the fear to be separated from love*', (Nicolaus, G., 2011: p 203).

Berdyaev was born near Kiev in 1874 when the collapse of Tsarist Russia was already in the air. He was imprisoned twice, lived through two revolutions and the First and Second World Wars, and spent the second half of his life in forced exile in Paris. He was always soulful and never felt at home in this world. His family belonged to the disintegrating Russian nobility, and there was in his ancestry, aristocracy, inherited mysticism, the best traditions of military valour and ancient chivalry and independence of thought. As a student though, he would rebel against his noble descent and join the social revolutionaries, unable to recognize true spirit in the

aristocratic society, his sympathies were with the pilgrims, tramps and vagabonds of 'Holy Russia'. It is characteristic that he had a greater kinship with simple uneducated peasants, as he admired their vivid language and imagery, which seemed daringly original.

Berdyaev's philosophy was a function of life, and he thought it ought to transform life itself from its very foundations. The term *Weltanschauung* emphasizes this intimate link between the creative activity of philosophizing and the process of individuation, which engages the whole person. He wrote that only a Christian Renaissance uniting the principle of personality with that of community is capable of assuring victory over the depersonalisation and dehumanisation menacing the world. The theme of God becoming man so that man may become divinized is consistent throughout the work – the *anthropos*, the divine man. The supraconscious is the sphere in which genuine self-transcendence (*agape*), with respect to the other, to nature, to God takes place. So spirit for Berdyaev is not abstract and ethereal, it is the most concrete and dynamic dimension of existence. An ever deepening participation to the vast tides of life moving through the *anima mundi*, will eventually lead to the process of individuation. The fear of madness can be the fear of the unknown, even where the latter may be sublime, graceful and redeeming. The archetypal image of the *anthropos*, buried under the ashes of materialism, may rise out of these ashes like the Phoenix. Such mysticism in this broadest sense, can be considered life at its deepest.

Prophetic mysticism is that of the Holy Spirit. It is Russian mysticism par excellence

(Berdyaev in Nicolaus, G., 2011: p 110)

This is when Christ enters the heart and changes the whole nature of man, so he becomes another creature. Prophets broke through the boundaries of the biblical understanding of God, no longer was He a revengeful murderous God, but now He has love, and above all God is love. He becomes manifest as the creative Holy Trinity.

Only the myth of God's longing for man and man's love can bring us near to the final mystery,

(Berdyaev in Nicolaus, G., 2011: p 125)

So the God of Berdyaev's Trinitarian gnosis seeks in man his other. Both a deification of man and a repudiation of man take place. For both Jung and Berdyaev the symbol of the cross becomes a reconciliation of opposites – freedom, and the light, and dark side of God. The vertical dimension is oriented towards the transcendent ideal, while the horizontal dimension is the kind of integrity of the assimilation of one's own darkness. This tension is well symbolized by the cross.

The penultimate chapter discusses individuation and the ethics of creativity in depth. The law always has a social character and is the expression of herd morality, it knows nothing of the inner man. The primitive tribal participation mystique is where the individual remains entirely dissolved within the group. Thus, the Freudian superego can relate to the ethics of law as an intra-psychic executioner. Although, the Freudian approach is incapable of understanding the psychology of schizophrenia. Both Jung's and Berdyaev's understanding of the person refer to a larger personality born in the process of individuation. The awakened heart will apprehend the spiritual beyond its objectifications in the collective social domain. Be sure not to create a distorted, phantasmagorical world; make good the creative, spiritual struggle, that should never seem dull, and commonplace. Berdyaev wishes to free us from our condition of inner dividedness via divinely human ethics, and then make good the human separation from the Divine.

This is the passage to superconsciousness, possible only by divine grace, which for Berdyaev takes the form of the creative struggle for a universal apocathastasis because everyone is responsible for everyone else

(Nicolaus,G., 2011: p 195)

For the existential practitioner this is a complicated book, written in a very scholarly, academic style, with content which is highly original. The book would be useful for Slavic clientele, Russian speakers, and sophisticated bohemians. So, the text targets a specific audience, but certainly has the potential of becoming a classic title as a precise spiritual exploration for serious readers, concerned with the mysteries of the person.

As a graduate from the 'Centre for International Education', Moscow State University I was delighted by this work, and I think that culture not only from Russia, but also Central Asia could provide inspiration for practitioners. Perhaps, for instance one day, a scholarly, psychotherapeutic book will be written about the passion and consciousness of Uzbek and Tajik qalandars.

Gregory M. Westlake

Moving Images: Psychoanalytic Reflections On Film

Andrea Sabbadini. (2014). Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

With his edited books *The Couch and The Silver Screen* (2003) and *Projected Shadows* (2007), both, like this latest offering, published by Routledge, and, just as impressive, his directorship since 2001 of the European Psychoanalytic Film Festival, Sabbadini may justifiably be regarded as