

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - God, Man, Universe



Different emotions and passions are gradually formed in man deriving from his simultaneous relation with God and the Universe. The phenomenon of fear, for instance, is in a state of constant growing in the course of hundreds of years, reaching at present considerable heights. This fear comes from God, as well as from the Universe. In relation to both these factors, Man seems small and vulnerable. This calls for philosophical anthropology to consider the influence of God and the Universe on Man, because to a certain extent Man is God's creation and part of the Universe, being its crown. God creates Man and creates the Universe. Man, being created together with the tangible world, becomes its dominator. Therefore, Man's function is to rule the world. Although Man is closely connected with the tangible world, his likeness is only with God, encompassing at the same time the confirmation of absolute impossibility for Man to be reduced to the 'world'. Following Berdiaeff, "Man is a go-between God and Himself" **[i]**. To a certain extent God is what Man needs, He inspires him, and leads him in the infinite existence of the Universe. This is when God possesses us and seeks the deepest nooks in our souls. "God reveals Himself within me, within the last depth of 'myself' - or I reveal myself to Him in that last depth" **[ii]**. This mutual penetration allows God to talk through Man, and Man to strive to be like his Creator. This does not imply that Man becomes God, but this inner relation between God and Man will always be there, notwithstanding that there have been deep incongruities with which Man has had to live. For instance, the transition between 'initial innocence' to the 'original sin' places man in a state, differing considerably from his previous one. And breaking the prohibition of the Creator brings it about. Until he has tasted the forbidden fruit, Man is outside the bounds of knowing good or bad. Breaking the prohibition, Man finds himself in a new situation and from this moment on he is in a state of corrupted existence. These two states are very important from the point of view of philosophical anthropology, since they mark a new turning point of the human essence. Man is torn between the memory of the lost paradise and the feeling of guilt and sin. From his close uniformity with God to his breaking away Man loses his peace of mind. Just as Fromm says:

“Paradise has been lost forever. Man is alone in the world – a stranger who find himself in a boundless and wrought with menaces reality. The new freedom inevitably engenders a deep feeling of insecurity, powerlessness, doubt, loneliness, anxiety. He has to rid himself of this feeling in order to succeed in life” **[iii]**.

In a way, Man becomes free, takes his fate in his own hands. But the feeling of sin does not leave him. Some anthropologists hold the view that with the knowledge or rather the differentiation between good and bad we could have delineated the boundaries of our morale. We could say that the original sin makes us not only free, but also turns us into moralists **[iv]**. According to Berdyaev, the myth of the original sin not only degrades, but enlightens Man, because his ‘spirit’ comes to the fore. But a spirit, born in fear, rooted in the original sin.

As a result, Man experiences a duality. On the one hand, the feeling of guilt, on the other, the feeling of freedom, and third, the feeling of fear. Man starts building himself in the conditions he is now, but his relation with God never dies. Although they lay the foundations of a new morale, God’s commandments still occupy an essential place in the relation God-Man. “Thou shall not commit adultery” “He, who has looked at a woman with desire, has already committed adultery in his heart” **[v]**. We find here not only an ethical, but also an anthropological element, since man carries in his heart both the desire and the shame **[vi]**. With lust comes shame. While lust dominates over the body, the shame takes hold of our soul. A battle for supremacy between the two ensues not in both an ethical and anthropological perspective, since the issue of body/soul is fundamental to philosophical anthropology.

The question inevitably arises whether after the original sin our essence remains the same. Whether God preserves that part of our being which makes us relate to Him. Does Man become weaker, more vulnerable, or does he start looking for strength within himself to compensate the broken relationship with God? In this respect Simeon Frank comments thus: “for the spiritual life this means that Man has realized he is an earthly god. When Man has lost and rejected God, he begins to believe in himself **[vii]**”. In this way Man finds inexhaustible capabilities in his being, connected with his power to subjugate, to perfect, to spiritualize the world, whose derivative he himself is **[viii]**.

Initially Man experiences fear of the Universe, because he is too small in it and for it. In his contact with the Universe he feels a longing for infinity. “The present

carries the feeling of the transient, the past – of the perishable. This is the root of the eternal fear of the irreversible, the accomplished, the final, the transitional, of the world itself as the reality in which the boundaries of birth and death are set[**ix**]“. But on the other hand, the Universe engenders an irresistible longing to go deeper into it. At the threshold of the Universe Man once again feels hesitant, divided. “On the one hand, as a being as if for ever existing in God’s bosom (or, on the contrary, keeping in himself as if in a woman’s bosom God’s seed) and, on the other, as a free individual, as a responsible autonomous representative of God on earth – here is this ambiguity between the sphere of his intimate, inner, God-enlightened life and the sphere of independence, autonomous-human creativity, the conscious construction of the world of human life[**x**]“. With his spirit Man creates worlds, which makes him resemble God. Thus Man is free to create without severing his ties with God.

Man has the freedom of will, which no other loving being possesses. Through it Man achieves self-realization. And he exercises it when he makes a choice. Making a choice, Man looks for the best possibilities in order to materialize his being. Confronted with choice we are always guided by God’s morality. We are not gods, after all, and make mistakes. More often than not, it is not purposeful, it is unconscious, but this does not mean that this is part of our own self. Man will constantly be faced with different situations of choice, but will not always be ready for making the right choice. Often we are too weak and too afraid and in order to survive we take options that are in conflict with morality. The godly part of us can often give way to more basic instincts which we carry within us as a result of the evolutionary path of our biological development. Like other living beings we feel threatened and act spontaneously within active participation of our free will.

Man is free, but at the same time is trapped in the chains of his being, which we have formed in the interval of time given for our life. There is no other being that feels measurable to God and at the same time knows that death is his end. And the later it comes, the more grandiose plans we make.

The eschatological problem about the end of the world, of life, is deeply ingrained in our souls. That is why many philosophical anthropologists have created ‘a philosophy of hope’, which delineates our future. Even as God’s creations we cannot escape from our last hour and will leave many unmaterialized hopes behind us. Therefore, we do not think about the end of the world, of its doom, but always have optimistic expectations. They span the distance between Man and

God, Man and the world. Outside of them, they have no basis and we have no hopes for our being.

“Hence, in order to clarify the essence and conditions of man’s existence, we have to consider synthetically his relations to the world and God, to see Man as a being that is between the world and God and is as if a connecting brink between these two heterogeneous instances of existence” **[xi]**.

Faced with the infinity of the Universe and the immeasurability of God, Man lives that part of his life that they have allotted him and during which he feels equal to them.

NOTES

[i] N. Berdiaeff. *On destination of man*. Moscow, 1993, p. 61.

[ii] S. Frank. *Reality and Man. The metaphysics of human existence*. Sofia, 1992, p.177.

[iii] E. Fromm. *Escape from freedom*. Sofia, 1992, p. 47.

[vi] N. Berdiaeff, *ibid.*, p.47.

[v] Giovanni Paolo II. *Uomo e donna lo creo*. Sofia, 1993., p. 48.

[vi] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[vii] S. Frank. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[viii] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[xi] O. Spengler. *The Decline of the West*, vol. I, Sofia, 1994., pp. 144-145.

[x] S. Frank. *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

[xi] S. Frank. *Ibid.*, p. 271.