

ZAID LUNDBERG

## *Macrocriticism: A Comparison of Nicolai Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi*

Zaid Lundberg ([zaid.lundberg@malmo.mediogymnasiet.nu](mailto:zaid.lundberg@malmo.mediogymnasiet.nu)) is an educator (Wilmette Institute), independent researcher, and PhD candidate in History of Religions (Lund University, Lund, Sweden) with a bachelor's degree in Psychology, and a master's degree in History of Religions.

### **Introductory observations**

Some perceptive authors<sup>1</sup> have recognized points of similarities between the writings of Nicolai Berdyaev<sup>2</sup> (1874-1948) and the corpus of the Bahá'í Faith but, as this article will show, more work needs to be done in this field.

While Colin Chant states that Berdyaev is “the most widely read of the Russian religious philosophers,”<sup>3</sup> Oliver Fielding Clarke writes that Berdyaev “is *par excellence* the Christian philosopher.”<sup>4</sup> Boris Jakim even refers to Berdyaev as “one of the greatest religious thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, his biographers have not noticed the recognition of Berdyaev as a major macrocritic of the twentieth century.

Although *Encyclopedia Britannica* has an entry on Shoghi Rabbaní Effendi<sup>6</sup> (1897-1957), his “religious thinking” has not been acknowledged *outside* of the Bahá'í community. Even *within* the Bahá'í Community, Shoghi Effendi is mainly

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1. Mikhail Sergeev, “The Sophiology of Nicholas Berdyaev and the Bahá'í Teachings,” presentation made at the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion, New Orleans, November 1996. Ian Kluge, *The Call into Being: Introduction to Baha'i Existentialism*. 2002, [www.bahaiphilosophystudies.com/articles/?p=21](http://www.bahaiphilosophystudies.com/articles/?p=21)

2. Also spelled Nicolas or Nikolay, and Berdyayev or Berdiaev.

3. S. Brown, D. Collinson, and R. Wilkinson, eds. *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 62.

4. Oliver Fielding Clarke, *Introduction to Berdyaev* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 6, italics original.

5. Boris Jakim, “A Brief Overview of Nikolai Berdyaev’s Life and Works,” in N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (Berkeley, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), p. 225. S. Brown, D. Collinson, and R. Wilkinson, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1996) has an entry on Berdyaev.

6. Shoghi Effendi was born Shoghi Rabbaní. Effendi is a title of respect that means “Sir.”

known as a religious *leader* (“Guardian of the Cause of God”)<sup>7</sup> and his role as a *major macrocritic* of the twentieth century has not been fully recognized.<sup>8</sup>

Before we delve into the field of macrocriticism a few words should be said about the similarities and differences of the lives of Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi.

On a geopolitical and historical level Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi both lived through crumbling and chaotic empires. Berdyaev was born during the nineteenth-century Russian and Tsarist Empire and lived through its end during WWI and the Bolshevik Revolutions of 1917. Berdyaev further witnessed the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922 and the reign of Stalinism until his death in Paris in 1948. Shoghi Effendi was born in ‘Akka, Palestine, and witnessed not only the rule of the British Mandate in Palestine (1920) but also the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. Shoghi Effendi also experienced the dismantling of the British Mandate in 1948 and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 until his sudden death in London in 1957.

Another similarity is that Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi were both exiles. Berdyaev was imprisoned in 1898 for his participating in an anti-governmental student demonstration and in 1901-1902 he was exiled to Vologda. His final expulsion, however, was in 1922 when Lenin finally put him – together with 160 other intellectuals – on the “philosopher’s ship.” After that he lived two years in Berlin (where he established a Religio-Philosophic Academy) but eventually settled down in Paris in 1924 and where he lived during the rest of his life. Besides working for the YMCA and working as an editor for a journal in Paris, what is important to notice is that all his major works were written in exile. Shoghi Effendi, on the other hand, was never imprisoned, but he was a descendant of Iranian exiles (the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) where the former had been imprisoned and executed and the latter had both been imprisoned and banished several times during their lives.<sup>9</sup> Although Shoghi Effendi had studied in Lebanon/Syria, and the UK, he traveled several times to Europe (mainly Switzerland and France) and traveled twice through the continent of Africa, but he never visited Iran.

Other similarities are that both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi were deeply religious and prolific writers. Linguistically too, Berdyaev spoke Russian, German and French and Shoghi Effendi was fluent in Persian, Arabic, English and French. Even though Berdyaev was a Marxist for a brief period he was a critical Russian Orthodox and refers to himself a “Christian socialist.”<sup>10</sup> In his youth Shoghi Ef-

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7. [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/541427/Shoghi-Effendi-Rabbani](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/541427/Shoghi-Effendi-Rabbani), *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*.

8. For an in-depth discussion on this theme, see my forthcoming PhD dissertation: Zaid Lundberg, *Ominous Signs of End Times: Shoghi Effendi’s Macrocritique, Apocalyptic Jeremiad, and Rhetorical Vision as Theodicy in the Age of Catastrophe* (Lund: Lund Univ. Press, 2012).

9. E.g., W. S. Hatcher, & J. D. Martin, *The Bahá’í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 28-56.

10. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time* (1924) (Berkeley, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), p. 204.

fendi was studying in different Christian schools<sup>11</sup> but he was literally raised in the Bahá'í Faith and, from 1922 until his death in 1957, he was its appointed leader. Although Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi entered matrimony, both their marriages remained childless.

In comparing Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi it is also important to note some differences. Berdyaev was an intellectual academic,<sup>12</sup> a philosopher and a theologian. Shoghi Effendi, although educated at Oxford,<sup>13</sup> was primarily a full-time religious leader. Whereas Berdyaev wrote about 50 books and numerous articles, Shoghi Effendi only published two books.<sup>14</sup> Yet, it should be mentioned that Shoghi Effendi translated some of the major works by Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb<sup>15</sup> and, most importantly in the context of this article, is that he wrote about 16,000-26,000 letters to Bahá'ís around the globe.<sup>16</sup> Some of these letters have subsequently been compiled and published as books.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, as this article will show, Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi were also major macro-critics of the twentieth century and the main purpose of this article is to show that their macro critique are not only comparable but also, in many respects, similar.

### Macrocriticism

Macrocriticism is a neologism and an umbrella term for the following theoretical<sup>18</sup> areas of criticism: *Cultural* criticism, including concepts like “counter-culture”<sup>19</sup> and “cultural pessimism”<sup>20</sup>; *Social* criticism<sup>21</sup>; and *Civilizational* criti-

11. In Haifa he attended Collège des Frères (a French Jesuit school) and in Beirut he studied at the Syrian Protestant College (later known as the American University of Beirut).

12. Chair of Philosophy at the University of Moscow although he never earned an official degree.

13. Riaz Khadem, *Shoghi Effendi in Oxford* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1999).

14. *God Passes By* (1944) (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979) is the only book that Shoghi Effendi wrote in English. He also composed a shorter version of it in Persian, known as *Lawh-i-Qawm*.

15. Morten Bergsmo, ed., *Studying the Writings of Shoghi Effendi* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1991), pp. 29-30.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 25. These letters were privately addressed to individuals or collectively addressed to local, national assemblies and Bahá'í communities.

17. E.g., *The Promised Day is Come* (1941) (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), which is about 100 pages in length, and *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh – Selected Letters* (1929-36) (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), which is a collection of major letters sent to North America.

18. I state that these areas are “theoretical” since in practice, i.e., in the actual texts, these areas are intermingled.

19. Theodor Roszak *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968).

20. Oliver Bennett, *Cultural Pessimism: Narratives of Decline in the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2001).

21. Michael Walzer *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), and *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

cism.<sup>22</sup> It also includes related areas such as *Anti-modernism*<sup>23</sup>; *Orientalism/Occidentalism*<sup>24</sup>; *Postcolonial* criticism<sup>25</sup>; *Dystopianism*<sup>26</sup>; *Counter-Enlightenment*<sup>27</sup>; *Eco* criticism<sup>28</sup> and *Gender* criticism.<sup>29</sup> In other words, macrocriticism is a field that looks at critique directed not only at *one* aspect or dimension of a social entity (technology, politics, economics, ecology, etc), but it includes *several* dimensions or critique directed towards “society-at-large” or “the-world-at-large.”

In my readings of both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi, and inspired by Kenneth Burke’s concept of the “Pentad,”<sup>30</sup> I have divided the field of macrocriticism into five dimensions or clusters:

- 1) The World/Society/Civilization<sup>31</sup>;
- 2) History/The Age/Times;
- 3) Mankind/Humanity;
- 4) Progress/Science/Technology;
- 5) Ethics/Religion/Secularization.

This paper is delimited to dimensions 1, 2 and 5.<sup>32</sup>

### **The World/Society/Civilization**

Although it should be clear that all dimensions or clusters of macrocriticism are intimately intertwined in the actual texts, the identification of five clusters is used here as a theoretical and heuristic device. For example, Berdyaev’s expression

22. John Zerzan, *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2005).

23. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983).

24. E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). I. Buruma, & A. Margalit *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004).

25. B. J. Moore-Gilbert, G. Stanton, & W. Maley, eds., *Postcolonial Criticism* (Harlow Essex: Longman, 1997).

26. M. K. Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994).

27. Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 1979).

28. C. Glotfelty & H. Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (London: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1996).

29. Judith Spector, ed., *Gender Studies: New Directions in Feminist Criticism* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, 1986). In this article I will focus only on Cultural, Social, and Civilizational criticism.

30. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1945). Burke’s “Pentad” is inspired from Dramatism and includes the following five areas and questions: 1) scene (Where is the act happening?), 2) act (What happened?), 3) agent (Who is involved in the action?), 4) agency (How do the agents act?), and 5) purpose (Why do the agents act?).

31. This dimension also includes such areas as continents and countries.

32. For a more detailed description of these dimensions/clusters, see my forthcoming PhD dissertation.

“this doomed world of modern times”<sup>33</sup> and Shoghi Effendi’s concept of a “New World Order” have both a temporal and spatial dimension. Yet, it is possible to locate passages in the writings of both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi where they directly criticize *the state of the world*, or *society-at-large*, or *civilization*. Sometimes they are more specific in their criticism, which they direct towards e.g., the West/East, certain continents, empires and countries. Berdyaev writes, for example, in 1923 of “the calamities which not only *Russia* but the whole of *Europe* and of *the whole world* have undergone.”<sup>34</sup> In lengthier passage from the same year Berdyaev describes “The old worn-out world to which we can never go back” as a world of rationalist prophets, of individualism and Humanism, Liberalism and democratic theories, of imposing national monarchies and imperialist politics, of a monstrous economic system compounded of Industrialism and Capitalism, of vast technical apparatus, of exterior conquests and practical achievements; a world of unbridled and endless covetousness in its public life, of atheism and supreme disdain for the soul, and, at last, of Socialism, the end and crown of all contemporary history. We gladly echo the words of the revolutionary song, “Down with the old world!” – but we understand by that term this doomed world of modern times.<sup>35</sup>

In another passage Berdyaev writes that the “world is in confusion” and that it tends towards the construction of a spiritual order analogous to that of the Middle Ages. Decay precedes a middle age, and it is needful to mark the course of those elements that are dying and those that are coming to birth. . . Individualism, the “atomization” of society, the inordinate acquisitiveness of the world, indefinite over-population and the endlessness of people’s needs, the lack of faith, the weakening of spiritual life, these and other are the causes which have contributed to build up that industrial capitalist system which has change the face of human life and broken its rhythm with nature. The power of the machine and the chronic “speeding-up” that it involves have created myths and phantoms and directed man’s life towards these figments which, nevertheless, give an impression of being more real than realities . . . monstrous manufactories of useless things or of weapons for the destruction of life, in the ostentation of their luxury . . . The whole economic system of Capitalism is an offshoot of a devouring and overwhelming lust . . . It is the result of a secularization of economic life, and by it the hierarchical subordination of the material to the spiritual is inverted. The autonomy of economics has ended in their dominating the whole life of human societies: the worship of Mammon has become the determining force of the age.<sup>36</sup>

Berdyaev’s critique of the world in these two passages are good examples of macrocritique since he enumerates not only *one* area of society but a very wide range of critique: individualism and humanism, liberalism, industrialism and capi-

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33. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, pp. 78-79.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76, italics added.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

talism, atheism, secularization and the lack of faith, socialism, over-population, weapons of destruction, luxury, etc. Although Berdyaev singles out a few political-economic systems above, he writes elsewhere “*All systems* of ideas and political and social forms throughout the world are going through a period of crisis. They are all in practice worn out and there is no longer anything that rouses the enthusiasm of civilized peoples.”<sup>37</sup>

As early as 1923 Shoghi Effendi elaborates on the “Condition of the World” where he describes the world as being in a state of cataclysm. In another letter from the same year he writes of “world’s evil plight” and “the ever-increasing confusion of the world, threatened as never before with disruptive forces, fierce rivalries, fresh commotions and grave disorder.”<sup>38</sup> In the same compilation of letters Shoghi Effendi writes of “these days of world-encircling gloom, when the dark forces of nature, of hate, rebellion, anarchy and reaction are threatening the very stability of human society, when the most precious fruits of civilization are undergoing severe and unparalleled tests.”<sup>39</sup>

In a letter of 1934 Shoghi Effendi writes, “The world is drawing nearer and nearer to a universal catastrophe which will mark the end of a bankrupt and of a fundamentally defective civilization.”<sup>40</sup> In another passage from 1936 Shoghi Effendi writes:

As we view the world around us, we are compelled to observe the manifold evidences of that universal fermentation which, in every continent of the globe and in every department of human life, be it religious, social, economic or political, is purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established. A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet.<sup>41</sup>

Like Berdyaev, Shoghi Effendi also states that the crisis of the world is not limited to a specific compartment but it is truly macroscopic (global) and pervasive. Hence he writes that it is in “every continent of the globe and in every department of human life” and that it also includes the “religious, social, economic or political.”

Other passages in the writings of both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi testify to a critique towards specific continents, empires and countries. For example, Ber-

37. *Ibid.*, p. 200, italics added.

38. Shoghi Effendi (1922-32) *Bahá’í Administration* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 50.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

40. Shoghi Effendi, *The Light of Divine Guidance*, vol. 1 (1922-39) (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá’í-Verlag, 1982), p. 53.

41. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 169.

dyaev states that “Europe is spending her strength extravagantly, she is exhausted”<sup>42</sup> and that “We are now taking part in the beginnings of the barbarization of Europe.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Shoghi Effendi is highly critical towards especially the Qájar Dynasty in Iran and its “Unbridled Barbarism”<sup>44</sup> and the Ottoman Empire (which he calls “The Ottoman Ramshackle”).<sup>45</sup> Shoghi Effendi,<sup>46</sup> and especially Berdyaev, also directs relentless critique towards Russia and the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup>

Although Shoghi Effendi is generally praising especially North America, he also highly critical towards its “excessive and enervating materialism” which is “now prevailing in their country”<sup>48</sup> and the “racial prejudice, the corrosion of which, for well-nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society.”<sup>49</sup> He further criticizes North America for its “corrupt and pleasure-seeking generation,” “the deceitfulness and corruption that characterize the political life of the nation and of the parties and factions that compose it,” and “the moral laxity and licentiousness which defile the character of a not inconsiderable proportion of its citizens.”<sup>50</sup>

### **Ethics/Religion/Secularization**

This dimension of cluster of macrocriticism looks at the critique directed towards ethics/morality as well as critique directed towards religious *and* secular ideologies and institutions (or the process of secularization). Above it was stated that Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi were deeply religious authors, yet it will be seen that they also direct sharp critique towards religious institutions. We will start by looking at Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi’s critique towards ethics/morality, and then continue with their critique towards religion, secularization and secular ideologies.

In the spirit of macrocritique Berdyaev writes that “The decline and crisis of humanism are likewise manifest in the sphere of *moral life*” and that “There can be no shadow of doubt that we are living in an epoch marked by *the bankruptcy of that humanist morality* which had been the guiding light of modern history.” But Berdyaev goes on to write “the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries [have] demonstrated its final collapse. The Great War in par-

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42. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 27.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

44. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 133-34.

45. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 62.

46. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 160.

47. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, pp. 209-58.

48. Shoghi Effendi (1939), *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), pp. 16-17.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

ticular, and its lasting consequences, dealt a death-blow to its illusions.”<sup>51</sup> Writing about the dehumanization and “the mechanization of human life, turning man into a machine” Berdyaev also writes, “This proves that the whole of our social organism is afflicted with a terrible spiritual and *moral disease*, a truly bestial attitude of man to man.”<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Shoghi Effendi distinguishes between “The signs of moral downfall, as distinct from the evidences of decay in religious institutions.” In this passage, entitled “Signs of Moral Downfall,” Shoghi Effendi elaborates on “The perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct,” and he goes on to write that when “the light of religion is quenched in men's hearts” then human character is debased, confidence is shaken, the nerves of discipline are relaxed, the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame is obscured, conceptions of duty, of solidarity, of reciprocity and loyalty are distorted, and the very feeling of peacefulness, of joy and of hope is gradually extinguished.<sup>53</sup>

Shoghi Effendi continues in this passage to enumerate several areas of macrocriticism, which are all pertinent to the ethical dimension (or the effects of irreligious life):

The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those “prophets of decadence” who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction.<sup>54</sup>

When it comes to a critique of religion Berdyaev writes, “Our time is a time of spiritual decadence, not of ascent”<sup>55</sup> and that modern man “has lost his eternal

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51. Nicolai Berdyaev (1923), *The Meaning of History* (Berkeley, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), p. 166, italics and clarification added.

52. Nicolai Berdyaev (1934), *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (Berkeley, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), p. 81, italics added.

53. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 187.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

55. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 15.



spiritual bearings and so there he is today – a prey to the devastating forces of our time.”<sup>56</sup> Berdyaev even states, “Man without God is no longer man.”<sup>57</sup>

In several places in his writings Berdyaev refers to the “decaying West” as “a soulless and atheistic civilization,”<sup>58</sup> that “Modern capitalist civilization is essentially atheistic and hostile to the idea of God” and that “The crime of killing God must be laid at its [modern capitalist civilization] door rather than at that of revolutionary socialism.”<sup>59</sup>

In a lengthier passage Berdyaev clarifies the difference between the atheism of socialism and capitalism:

The popularity of pragmatism in America, the classical land of civilization, need cause no surprise. Socialism, on the other hand, repudiated pragmatism; but it pragmatically defends atheism as being more useful for the development of life forces and worldly satisfaction of the larger masses of mankind. But the pragmatism and utilitarian approach of Capitalism had been the real source of atheism and spiritual bankruptcy.<sup>60</sup>

In a later work Berdyaev writes about the “wolf-like life of capitalist society” and “the false civilization of capitalism.”<sup>61</sup> Besides criticizing socialism and capitalism Berdyaev is critical towards “all Communists, all Fascists, all National-Socials and all others possessed by the demon of the will to power” since “In the dictatorial states, fascist or communist, there is a development of thirst for power and violence, a desire for bloodshed and cruelty.”<sup>62</sup> Yet, it is important to notice that Berdyaev states that:

From the Christian point of view, Hitlerism [Nazism] is more dangerous than Communism, since the latter struggles openly and directly against Christianity as against all religion, while Hitlerism demands a violent deformation of Christianity from within, altering the Christian faith itself in favour of the racialist theory and the dictatorship of the Third Reich.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to writing about socialism, capitalism, fascism and Nazism, Berdyaev also writes about “The pagan tendencies of our times.”<sup>64</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

58. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp. 207, 208, 218.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 218, clarification added.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

61. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, pp. 15-16, 18.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 47. See also pp. 60-64.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 102, clarification added.

64. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 36.

On the one hand Berdyaev writes that “Christianity is the greatest of religions”<sup>65</sup> and that “Christianity has gone on living in man in a secularized form” and “it is she [Christianity] who has kept him from disintegrating completely.”<sup>66</sup> On the other hand Berdyaev also writes about “the failure of Christianity” which is not “the failure of God, as the adversaries of Christianity maintain, but of man.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, he writes, “Europe has not made its Christianity real, but has distorted and betrayed it.”<sup>68</sup> In a later work Berdyaev writes, “. . . now Christianity, in its old age, is old and burdened, with a long history in which Christians have often sinned and betrayed their ideal.”<sup>69</sup> He continues to write that “All too often Christianity has been anti-human” and that “The religion of love and mercy has been transformed into a proclamation of cruel and relentless attitudes toward men.”<sup>70</sup>

Whereas Berdyaev writes of spirituality/religion in general and of Christianity in particular, Shoghi Effendi writes of religion in general, and he specifically writes about the decline of Christianity *and* Islam. As an example of the first case Shoghi Effendi writes of “an unbelieving world”<sup>71</sup> and of “the decline of religion as a social force, of which the deterioration of religious institutions is but an external phenomenon, is chiefly responsible for so grave, so conspicuous an evil.”<sup>72</sup>

In that same work Shoghi Effendi writes that:

. . . the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit.<sup>73</sup>

Shoghi Effendi thus seems to be in agreement with Berdyaev of the resurging paganism. Shoghi Effendi continues to write, “the chill of irreligion creeps relentlessly over the soul of mankind”<sup>74</sup> and that the “forces of irreligion are weakening the moral fiber, and undermining the foundations of individual morality.”<sup>75</sup> Hence Shoghi Effendi sees an intimate relation between ethics/morality and religion. In another work and in a lengthy passage, Shoghi Effendi writes of the results of “A world, dimmed by the steadily dying-out light of religion” as heaving with the ex-

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65. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, p. 72.

66. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 27, clarification added.

67. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp. 200-01.

68. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 61.

69. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, p. 23.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

71. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 34.

72. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

74. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 25.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

plosive forces of a blind and triumphant nationalism; scorched with the fires of pitiless persecution, whether racial or religious; deluded by the false theories and doctrines that threaten to supplant the worship of God and the sanctification of His laws; enervated by a rampant and brutal materialism; disintegrating through the corrosive influence of moral and spiritual decadence; and enmeshed in the coils of economic anarchy and strife -- such is the spectacle presented to men's eyes, as a result of the sweeping changes which this revolutionizing Force, as yet in the initial stage of its operation, is now producing in the life of the entire planet.<sup>76</sup>

More specifically, Shoghi Effendi writes of Islam and Christianity. For example he writes of "The Decline of Islam"<sup>77</sup> and the "Collapse of Islam"<sup>78</sup> as well as the "Deterioration of Christian Institutions."<sup>79</sup> In Islam this process includes both "The collapse of the power of the Shi'ih hierarchy"<sup>80</sup> as well as "The overthrow of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the twin pillars of Sunni Islam."<sup>81</sup> With regard to Christianity Shoghi Effendi writes of the "de-Christianization of the masses," "a notable decline in the authority, the prestige and power of the Church"<sup>82</sup> and that the "Christian Religion . . . has now fallen into such a state of impotence."<sup>83</sup> Continuing to write about "the rapid dechristianization of the masses in many Christian countries" Shoghi Effendi surveys "the fortunes of Christian ecclesiastical orders" as follows:

. . . to appreciate the steady deterioration of their influence, the decline of their power, the damage to their prestige, the flouting of their authority, the dwindling of their congregations, the relaxation of their discipline, the restriction of their press, the timidity of their leaders, the confusion in their ranks, the progressive confiscation of their properties, the surrender of some of their most powerful strongholds, and the extinction of other ancient and cherished institutions.<sup>84</sup>

Shoghi Effendi is especially critical towards Christianity during World War II:

What a sorry spectacle of impotence and disruption does this fratricidal war, which Christian nations are waging against Christian nations – Anglicans pitted against Lutherans, Catholics against Greek Orthodox, Catholics against Catholics, and Protestants against Protestants – in support of a so-called

76. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

77. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 169.

78. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 97.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

84. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. 103-04.

Christian civilization, offer to the eyes of those who are already perceiving the bankruptcy of the institutions that claim to speak in the name, and to be the custodians, of the Faith of Jesus Christ!<sup>85</sup>

Writing on the phenomenon of secularization Berdyaev writes of “the secularization of society at large.”<sup>86</sup> More elaborately he states “Science, art, political and economic life, society and culture now become autonomous” and that this “processes of differentiation is synonymous with the secularization of human culture. Even religion is secularized. Art and science, the state and society, enter the modern world along a secular path.” Continuing on this theme Berdyaev writes:

The bonds holding together the various spheres of social and cultural life now become relaxed, and these spheres become independent. That is the essential character of modern history. The transition from mediaeval to modern history is synonymous with one from the divine to the human aspects of the world, from the divine depths, interior concentration and the inner core, to an exterior cultural manifestation. This divorce from the spiritual depths, in which man’s forces had been stored and to which they had been inwardly bound, is accompanied not only by their liberation, but by their passage from the depths to the periphery and the surface of human life, from the mediaeval religious to secular culture; and it implies the transference of the centre of gravity from the divine depths to purely human creation. The spiritual bond with the centre of life grows gradually weaker. Modern history therefore conducts European man along a path, which removes him ever further from the spiritual centre. It is the path of man’s free experience and the trial of his creative forces.<sup>87</sup>

In a later work Berdyaev writes that “Apostasy from the Christian faith, abandonment of spiritual principles and disregard of the spiritual ends of life, must necessarily lead first to the stage called Capitalism and then to the stage called Socialism.”<sup>88</sup>

Although it was seen above that Berdyaev is more positive towards socialism than capitalism he also writes that “The worship of Mammon instead of God is a characteristic of Socialism as well as of Capitalism”<sup>89</sup> and that “The socialist state . . . is a government by Satan.”<sup>90</sup> To further clarify Berdyaev’s view on communism he describes it as “anti-individualist, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-

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85. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

86. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 84.

87. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp. 130-31. See also Berdyaev’s *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, p. 70.

88. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 192.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

humanist,” that it is “hierarchical in its way; it denies modern formal liberties and equalities and builds up its satanist order of subordination,” and that it is “a false church, a communion of lies.”<sup>91</sup>

Shoghi Effendi similarly, writes of “the slow and hidden process of secularisation” that is “invading many a government department under the courageous guidance of the Governors of outlying provinces” and he continues to state that “in all of these a discerning eye can easily discover the symptoms that augur well for a future that is sure to witness the formal and complete separation of Church and State.”<sup>92</sup> In a later work Shoghi Effendi writes of “the wave of secularisation,”<sup>93</sup> “the rising tide of secularism”<sup>94</sup> and the “menace of secularism” that has attacked Islam and is undermining its remaining institutions, that has invaded Persia, has penetrated into India, and raised its triumphant head in Turkey, has already manifested itself in both Europe and America, and is, in varying degrees, and under various forms and designations, challenging the basis of every established religion, and in particular the institutions and communities identified with the Faith of Jesus Christ. It would be no exaggeration to say that we are moving into a period, which the future historian will regard as one of the most critical in the history of Christianity.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, it is important to notice that although both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi are writing of the social pervasiveness and its global spread of secularisation, Shoghi Effendi states that it is challenging not only Christianity and Islam but “the basis of every established religion” and he also writes of “a world . . . whose religious systems have become anemic and lost their virtue.”<sup>96</sup> It is because these processes that Shoghi Effendi also writes that “the lights of religion are fading out,”<sup>97</sup> and that “the bright flame of religion is fast dying out.”<sup>98</sup> More specifically, Shoghi Effendi sees a relationship between secularism and irreligion in that “flagrant secularism” is “the direct offspring of irreligion.”<sup>99</sup> In the same work Shoghi Effendi continues to write of “irreligion and its monstrous offspring” as a “triple curse that oppresses the soul of mankind in this day . . . responsible for the ills which are so tragically besetting it . . .”<sup>100</sup> Shoghi Effendi identifies this triple curse as “The chief idols in the desecrated temple of mankind” which are none other than the triple gods of Nationalism, Racialism and Communism, at whose altars governments and peoples, whether democratic or totalitarian, at peace or at

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91. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

92. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 148.

93. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 229-30.

94. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

97. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 29.

98. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 16.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

100. *Ibid.*, p.114.

war, of the East or of the West, Christian or Islamic, are, in various forms and in different degrees, now worshipping. Their high priests are the politicians and the worldly-wise, the so-called sages of the age; their sacrifice, the flesh and blood of the slaughtered multitudes; their incantations outworn shibboleths and insidious and irreverent formulas; their incense, the smoke of anguish that ascends from the lacerated hearts of the bereaved, the maimed, and the homeless.<sup>101</sup>

In the same work Shoghi Effendi enumerates another set of forces as “the forces of nationalism, paganism, secularism and racialism.”<sup>102</sup> Berdyaev also writes that “Racialism is worse than communism since its ideology includes eternal hatred; communism, on the other hand, decrees hatred as a way. . . .”<sup>103</sup> and he further writes, “Racialism is a ruder form of materialism.”<sup>104</sup> Berdyaev also writes that “Modern nationalism bears marks of bestial inhumanity,” that “nationalism and racialism are worse than communism” and that “modern Nationalism means the dehumanisation and bestialization of human societies.”<sup>105</sup>

Thus, whereas Berdyaev identifies communism and capitalism as responsible for the rise of materialism and atheism (and other social ills) he clearly sees capitalism, Nazism, nationalism and racialism as greater evils. Yet, Berdyaev ultimately admits that “The roots of all this must be sought in the plane of the spiritual, in the crisis of Christianity and of religious consciousness in general, in the decline of spirituality.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, according to Berdyaev “De-christianization led to dehumanization.”<sup>107</sup>

Although Shoghi Effendi writes of “unbridled capitalism”<sup>108</sup> he also states “There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism.”<sup>109</sup> Another difference is that whereas Berdyaev is highly critical towards both fascism and Nazism, Shoghi Effendi just mentions them in passing.<sup>110</sup>

Their macrocritical emphasis is thus somewhat different but both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi identify the following modern phenomena as conjointly evil and responsible for, or as manifestations of, social ills or crises: nationalism, racism, paganism, secularism/atheism and communism (capitalism).

Despite all the critique towards religion and, particularly Christianity, Berdyaev also writes that “There is no possibility of a perfect society and a perfect

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

103. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, p. 29.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 83. See also p. 107.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

108. Shoghi Effendi (1947-57), *Citadel of Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 154.

109. Shoghi Effendi qtd in Helen Hornby, ed., *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 550.

110. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 36-37.

culture without . . . real spiritual life, that is, without a religious rebirth.”<sup>111</sup> Thus, Berdyaev believes that “Christianity is coming back to its pre-Constantinian situation . . . that is the position in which the Russian Orthodox Church is already” while admitting that “It may well be that Christians are being called to go further back yet, to the catacombs, and from there to conquer the world anew.”<sup>112</sup> Berdyaev consequently writes that “modern history” on the one hand “draws to an end,” while “giving place to a new era” which he refers to as “a new Christian renaissance.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, Berdyaev writes that “Only Christianity holds the resolution to the problem of the relationship of man and God, only in Christ is the image of man preserved, only within the Christian spirit are there created both society and culture, non-destructive to man.”<sup>114</sup> In a later work Berdyaev states that “Only in the second coming of Christ, in the form of Christ, the coming One, will the perfection of man appear in its fullness.”<sup>115</sup> In this context of Christian renaissance it is significant that Berdyaev also schematically portrays “four periods or states in man’s historical destiny” as “barbarism, culture, civilization and religious transfiguration.”<sup>116</sup>

Rather than looking *back* to a pristine state of Christianity, or looking *forward* to the Second Coming of Christ, Shoghi Effendi views the Bahá'í Faith “in the course of its sure yet toilsome march towards the salvation of the world”<sup>117</sup> and he endorses Bahá'u'lláh's (the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith) claim as *the fulfillment* of the Second Coming of Christ, the Judge, the Lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new “Universal Cycle,” as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization.<sup>118</sup>

### History/The Age/Times

This final dimension or cluster of macrocriticism is critique directed towards the *Zeitgeist* or the Spirit of the Age. It is significant that both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi refer to the epochal changes by using *volcanic* metaphors. For exam-

111. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 199.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

113. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, p. 181.

114. Nicolai Berdyaev (1932), “The Spiritual Condition of the Contemporary World,” *Put'*, no. 35 (Sept. 1932): 68.

115. Nicolai Berdyaev (1941), *The Beginning and the End* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1957), p. 250.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

117. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 60.

118. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 93-94.

ple, in 1923 – four years after World War I and six years after the Russian revolutions – Berdyaev writes that:

There can be little doubt, I think, that not only Russia but Europe and the world as a whole are now entering upon a *catastrophic period* of their development. We are living at a *time of immense crisis, on the threshold of a new era*. The very structure or historical development has suffered a profound change. It is now essentially different from what it was prior to the World War and the Russia and the European revolutions. This change can only be regarded as catastrophic. *Volcanic sources* have opened in the historical substrata. Everything is tottering, and we have the impression of a particularly intense and acute movement of historical forces.<sup>119</sup>

In 1924 Berdyaev writes in a similar vein that “It would indeed seem that *the old, secular foundations of the West are trembling*, things apparently stabilized by use and wont are shifting. Nowhere and in no single matter is solid earth felt underfoot: *we are on volcanic ground* and any eruption is possible, material or spiritual.”<sup>120</sup>

A year before (1923) Shoghi Effendi writes that:

Four years of unprecedented warfare and *world cataclysms* followed by another four years of bitter disappointment and suffering, have stirred deeply the conscience of mankind, and opened the eyes of an unbelieving world to the Power of the Spirit that alone can cure its sicknesses, heal its wounds.<sup>121</sup>

Berdyaev continues to write in 1924:

. . . the world is undergoing a *gigantic revolution*; not the communist revolution which, at bottom is everything that is most reactionary, a mess of all *the rotten elements of the old world*, but a true spiritual revolution. To call to a new middle age is a call to this spiritual revolution, to a complete renewal of consciousness.<sup>122</sup>

In 1931 Shoghi Effendi writes of “*that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope* which humanity is in this age bound to undergo. That the forces of a *world catastrophe* can alone precipitate such a *new phase* of human thought is,

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119. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp. 1-3, italics added. See also p. 168 and Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 12.

120. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 12, italics added.

121. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 34-35, italics added.

122. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 80, italics added.



alas, becoming increasingly apparent.”<sup>123</sup> After World War II, in 1947, Shoghi Effendi writes of “The *steadily deepening crisis* which mankind is traversing, on the morrow of the severest ordeal it has yet suffered, and the attendant tribulations and commotions which *a travailing age* must necessarily experience, as a prelude to the birth of the *new World Order*, destined to rise upon the ruins of *a tottering civilization*. . . .”<sup>124</sup>

Note that although Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi write that “everything is tottering” or that civilization is defective, bankrupt, and tottering, that it is “a time of immense crisis” or “a “steadily deepening crisis,” a “gigantic revolution,” and a “universal catastrophe,” they are also in agreement that humanity, and the whole world, is entering a “threshold of a new era” or a “new World Order.” These two processes, one destructive (the old, death) and one creative (the new, birth) are seen not as excluding or contradictory but as parallel and simultaneous phenomena.

Both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi argue that the current modern phase of history is *transitional*. Berdyaev describes it above that “We are living at a time of immense crisis, on the threshold of a new era” and Shoghi Effendi writes that “this Age of Transition” and its tribulations “are the precursors of that Era of blissful felicity.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi utilize the metaphor of darkness/light in connection with the ages. Berdyaev writes for example that “we have passed from an era of light to an era of darkness”<sup>126</sup> and “Now night is on us. We are going into a period of senility and decay.”<sup>127</sup> Similarly, Shoghi Effendi writes of “that turbulent Age, into the outer fringes of whose darkest phase we are now beginning to enter.”<sup>128</sup>

It is important to notice that Both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi synoptically view the current phase of history as analogous to that of the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages. For example, Berdyaev writes that “Our age resembles that of the fall of the Roman Empire, the failure and drying-up of Greco-Roman culture. . . .”<sup>129</sup> and that “our epoch is the end of modern times and the beginning of a new middle age.”<sup>130</sup> Berdyaev does not see this as a “renaissance but the dark beginnings of a middle age, and that we have got to pass through a new civilized barbarism.”<sup>131</sup>

Berdyaev continues to write in 1924 “The beginning of *this new era* was marked by a general barbarization” and that:

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123. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 45, italics added.

124. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 29, italics added.

125. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 171.

126. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 70.

127. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

128. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 171.

129. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, pp. 57-58.

130. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

. . . the whole historical order that had built up the past was overrun by a torrent of disordered forces. And here we may well remind ourselves that the most terrible wars and revolutions, *wrecking of civilizations, fall of empires*, are not due solely to man's will but are also in a measure the work of divine providence. *Our age is like that, which saw the passing of the ancient world.*<sup>132</sup>

Ten years later (1934) Shoghi Effendi writes in a similar vein and asks the following:

Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which, in the course of the past twenty years, have so deeply agitated every continent of the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming *the agonies of a disintegrating civilization* . . . the signs of an impending catastrophe, *strangely reminiscent of the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West*, which threatens to engulf the whole structure of present-day civilization . . . a tumult which will grow in scope and in intensity as the implications of this constantly evolving Scheme are more fully understood and its ramifications more widely extended over the surface of the globe.<sup>133</sup>

Notice that both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi write of “a torrent of disordered forces” or “signs of an impending catastrophe,” and the wrecking of civilizations” and “the agonies of a disintegrating civilization.” External barbaric tribes do not – like the Roman Empire – bring about the wrecking and disintegration of modern civilization but it is *civilization itself*, which is barbaric. Thus, both authors view not only the age but also the current civilization as highly dysfunctional, obsolete and ultimately dying.

Consequently, both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi see “this constantly evolving Scheme” as part of a greater historical cycle. Berdyaev, for example, writes of “the destinies of peoples, societies, cultures,” and that “they all pass through the clear-cut stages of *birth, infancy, adolescence, maturity, efflorescence, old age, decay and death.*”<sup>134</sup> Berdyaev hence consider peoples and societies as “living organisms” that exist “within the framework of history,” that they “are doomed to whither, decay and dies as soon as their efflorescence is past,” that “No great culture has been immune from decadence” and that “Every great national society and culture has been subject to this process of decay and death.”<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Shoghi Effendi writes of:

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132. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 74, italics added. See also pp. 144, 155.

133. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155, italics added.

134. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, p. 194, italics added.

135. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

The long ages of *infancy* and *childhood*, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background. Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of *adolescence*, when the impetuosity of *youth* and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the *maturity* that characterize the stage of *manhood*. Then will the human race reach that stature of ripeness, which will enable it to acquire all the powers and capacities upon which its ultimate development must depend.<sup>136</sup>

Although both authors include the stages of infancy, adolescence, and maturity, only Berdyaev includes in this scheme birth, efflorescence, old age, decay and death.

What is then, the goal of the next stage or age? Here again, both Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi seem to be in agreement. Berdyaev writes that “We are entering an epoch which at many points makes one think of the age of Hellenic universalism,” and although there been previous “attempts at world-unification,” he continues to write that:

Today the organization of each people affects the state of the whole world; what happens in Russia has repercussions in every country and upon every race. There has never before been such a close contact between the Eastern and Western worlds, which have lived so markedly separate. Civilization is ceasing to be European and becoming “of the world”: Europe will have to renounce her pretension to a monopoly of culture.<sup>137</sup>

Berdyaev continues in the same work to write of “The modern world, rent by the violent quarrels of countries, classes, and individuals, prone to suspicion and hate,” and yet that it “is drawn from every side towards a universal unification, to a conquest over that national exclusivism which has been responsible for the fall of nations.” Thus, he continues to write of “if we examine deeply enough there certainly can be discerned a stirring towards a world-wide unification more vast than a unified Europe.”<sup>138</sup>

Similar ideas of “globalization” can be found in later writings were Berdyaev writes, “Only progress in the direction of lessening sovereignty of national states and toward a world-federation of peoples will save us . . .” and “Along the bursting forth of militant Nationalism we see the universalization of mankind.”<sup>139</sup>

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136. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 117, italics added.

137. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*, p. 98.

138. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

139. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, pp. 107, 108.

Similar pioneering ideas of “globalization” can also be seen in the early writings of Shoghi Effendi.<sup>140</sup> In a chapter entitled “The Goal of the New World Order” Shoghi Effendi refers to “political and economic unification of the world” as “a principle that has been increasingly advocated in recent times” but he continues to write that “the unification of mankind in this age” is part of “God’s divinely appointed scheme.” Shoghi Effendi continues to write that “It is towards this goal – the goal of a new World Order, Divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, equitable in principle, challenging in its features – that a harassed humanity must strive.”<sup>141</sup> In a later letter Shoghi Effendi writes of “the political unification of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres,” but he views this process as a prelude to “the emergence of a world government, and the establishment of the Lesser Peace.”<sup>142</sup>

In a more elaborate way Shoghi Effendi describes the goal of the Bahá’í Faith “is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations” which is “signalizing . . . the coming of age of the entire human race.” Shoghi Effendi continues to state that the unification of mankind is “marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man’s collective life on this planet” and that:

The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture – all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá’í Era – should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society.<sup>143</sup>

Although Shoghi Effendi is writing in 1941 that the present state of the world and “indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark,” he continues to write, “Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant – so radiant that no eye can visualize it.”<sup>144</sup> Thus, it should be clear that despite their severe macrocritique, Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi are both ultimately optimistic about the future collective life of humanity on this planet.

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this article was to portray and compare Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi as major macrocritics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I have thus introduced the novel concept of macrocriticism and used three dimensions of their macrocriti-

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140. For a more detailed discussion on Shoghi Effendi and Globalization, see Zaid Lundberg, “Global Claims, Global Aims: An Analysis of Shoghi Effendi’s *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*,” in M. Warburg, ed., *Bahá’í and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus Press, 2005).

141. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 33.

142. Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 25.

143. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 163.

144. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 116.

tique: 1) The World/Society/ Civilization; 2) Ethics/Religion/Secular-isation; and 3) History/The Age/Times. From the passages quoted and examined it is clear that not only do Berdyaev and Shoghi Effendi direct severe critique within all three dimensions, but also their criticisms are also very similar.

In addition, both authors also portray a revival of religion/spirituality beyond the current secular, chaotic and critical phase of history. Berdyaev puts his hopes on a Christian renaissance or the Second Coming of Christ. Shoghi Effendi believes in the Messianic claims of Bahá'u'lláh and the present and future redemptive role of the Bahá'í Faith.

Finally, even though both authors reveal a highly critical picture of an obsolete and dying civilization or era, they simultaneously depict the birth of an emerging *global* civilization or era beyond the cataclysmic crises of dysfunctional nationalist states.

*Lund University, Lund (Sweden)*