

NIETZSCHE'S TRAGIC PHILOSOPHY ON GOD'S MURDER AS ANTHROPOLOGY

Juan Manuel ESCAMILLA GONZÁLEZ ARAGÓN

University of Sussex

juanmescamilla@gmail.com

N.º ORCID: 0000-0002-7657-2756

DOI: 10.60940/comprendrev26n1id427366

Article rebut: 08/02/2023

Article aprovat: 20/09/2023

Abstract

This article evaluates Nietzsche's tragic philosophy on the death of God. The forefather of modernist radical humanism, Nietzsche put Jesus' historical crucifixion at the center of philosophy to exile the notion of a transcendent God from philosophy. Meanwhile, discarding theology as metaphysics and replacing it with an anthropology of how human persons become divinized, Nietzsche contributed to unearthing the scapegoating mechanism as a god-making device at the center of human culture. Nietzsche's focus on the murder of God, rather than Their death, suggested René Girard's martyrdom's crucial role in the foundation and the preservation of culture. Following Girard, I read the madman's parable of God's death in *The Joyous Science* alongside paragraph 1052 of *The Will to Power*, where Nietzsche recognized that the difference between Dionysos and the Crucified can only be seen clearly from the perspective of Calvary.

Key words: philosophical anthropology, metaphysics, Nietzsche, martyrdom, mimetic theory.

1. Introduction

After centuries of colonising the world under the pretext of spreading the true faith, European Christianities now appear to traverse a secular age of widespread religious indifference. Nixey laments that the early Christian temples of Antiquity were raised upon the ruins of the Greco-Roman temples ransacked by the fanaticism of rising Christians once they stopped being scapegoated and adopted the standpoint of perse-

cutors instead.¹ Soon enough, their theological disputations fuelled heretics' hunts. In contrast, churches in our secular age are being discretely repurposed rather than destroyed by the iconoclastic passions of ransacking mobs. Frequently, churches are sold to compensate for clerical abuses. As the modernist theologian and champion of the Gospel's demythologisation Rudolf Bultmann famously pointed out,² the spiritual teaching of the Scriptures seemed outdated in the XX century. It appeared impossible to believe in «the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament» in an age of electricity and radio.³ Over a century has passed since the demise of the prophet of God's death, Nietzsche. In the eyes of Albert Camus, Nietzsche, a forefather of literary and theological modernism, found God «dead in the soul of his contemporaries».⁴ Now, the triumph of secularism appears almost complete in a Europe that spread Christianity worldwide. Now that the secularisation hypothesis is being challenged, noting that secularisation as the decline of religious institutions' public and private authority occurred simultaneously as a religious revival marginal to established religions during the twentieth century,⁵ Nietzsche's prophecy seems to us as something that is long ago fulfilled. The challenge to the secularisation thesis appears to offer no more than archaeological interest in a post-metaphysical epoch. Metaphysics' anthropological turn led to Nietzsche's formulation of God's death as a prophecy of our «secular age»⁶ of radical or exclusive humanism, artificial intelligence and nuclear power.

God may be dead, but philosophical theology dies hard. The formulation of the death of God philosophical theology, at the heart of modern religious and philosophical normative and epistemic crises, is as closely related to the rise of secular, radical humanism as it is to the simultaneous religious revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The death of God problem, first stated by Hegel, is unprecedented in the earlier philosophical tradition. For instance, premodern scholastics clearly distinguished between philosophy, a rational endeavour, from revealed theology, which required reason but could not be attained by reason alone. As any scholastic would have, Thomas Aquinas considered Christian mysteries beyond the grasp of natural reason and, therefore, beyond philosophical elucidation.⁷ Unlike metaphysical topics, such as

¹ Cf. Catherine NIXEY, *La edad de la penumbra: Cómo el cristianismo destruyó el mundo clásico*. Madrid: Taurus, 2018, pp. 125-128.

² Cf. Rudolf BULTMANN, *New Testament and mythology and other basic writings*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984.

³ Cf. *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

⁴ Albert CAMUS, *The rebel: An essay on man in revolt*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991, p. 34.

⁵ Cf. Pericles LEWIS, *Religious experience and the modernist novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 28.

⁶ Cf. Charles TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 19.

⁷ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentiles. On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Book One: God*. New York: Image Books, 1955, II, § 2.