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The death of God and the collapse of metaphysics. On the “historical” character of Nietzsche’s announcement

Das Ereigniss selbst [dass “Gott todt ist”] ist viel zu gross, zu fern, zu abseits vom Fassungsvermögen Vieler, als dass auch nur seine Kunde schon *angelangt* heissen dürfte; geschweige denn, dass Viele bereits wüssten, *was* eigentlich damit begeben hat — und was Alles, nachdem dieser Glaube untergraben ist, nunmehr einfallen muss, weil es auf ihn gebaut, an ihn gelehnt, in ihn hineingewachsen war: zum Beispiel unsre ganze europäische Moral (F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, § 343).

Nietzsche’s sentence “God is dead” has fascinated and puzzled scholars, writers, artists and the public alike ever since the publication of *The Gay*

Science in 1882. Coming from the same author of *The Antichrist. A Course against Christianity*, it would only seem natural to conclude that the first and most obvious meaning of this sentence should consist in a direct attack

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against the very foundation of Christianity, namely God himself.¹ However, when Nietzsche elaborates on this sentence in the main text (*The Gay Science*, § 125) and other passages of *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and in drafts and notes from that period as well,² he admits that it is meant to express the definitive collapse of metaphysics. This collapse had already been announced many times in the century that preceded Nietzsche, ever since the search for a foundation of metaphysics had become one of the central questions of philosophy, especially in Kant's philosophy, but the radical submission of theoretical to practical reason, i.e. the acknowledgement of the priority of the will over the intellect, had seemed to provide that new foundation and helped re-establishing the relation between God, nature and the human soul (the subjects of what was called *metaphysica specialis*) in rational terms, only now it is the will, rather than the intellect, their ultimate foundation.³ In other words, the lack of a definitive foundation of metaphysics as a theoretical science prompted late 18th and early 19th Century philosophers to turn either to practical philosophy or to a reconciliation of the theoretical and the practical, in order to allow metaphysics to rise again.

In this respect, it is worth noting that already in one his first writings, *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel admits that a certain collapse of metaphysics is even necessary for it to rise again, when he alludes to the "infinite grief [of the finite] ...the feeling that «God Himself is dead»", which expresses "the pure concept or infinity as the abyss of nothingness in which all being is engulfed", that must be understood "purely as a moment of the supreme Idea, and no more than a moment."⁴ Consequently, philosophy must ac-

1 Cf. W. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche. Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Princeton, New Jersey 1974, pp. 99–101; M. Lipowicz, *Czy "śmierć boga" jest "śmiercią społeczeństwa"? Próba połączenia wybranych aspektów filozofii Fryderyka Nietzschego z filozofią i socjologią Georga Simmla*, "Diametros" 37 (2013) n. 1, pp. 85–86.

2 Cf. W. Stegmeier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, Berlin–Boston 2012, pp. 91–92 (especially cf. note 154).

3 Cf. M. Baur, *From Kant's Highest Good to Hegel's Absolute Knowing*, in: *A Companion to Hegel*, eds. S. Houlgate, M. Baur, New York 2011, pp. 455–458.

4 G. W. F. Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 4, eds. H. Buchner, O. Pöggeler, Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Hamburg 1968, pp. 414 (transl.

knowledge this death, so that the “speculative Good Friday” can replace the historical one, in order to ascend “out of its deepest ground to the most serene freedom of its shape”. Thus, however great the feeling of loss and despair before the death of God, however deep the “abyss of nothingness” that is contained in it, Hegel sees this feeling as a necessary step, from which “the highest totality can and must achieve its resurrection.”⁵

Though less famous than Hegel’s account, but nevertheless maybe even more relevant for interpreting Nietzsche,⁶ the death of God appears in Heinrich Heine’s short treatise *A History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*. Here, the poet engages in a scathingly ironical exposition of how German religious authors distanced themselves from a rational approach, ending with pietism, a doctrine which he condemns, because it renders religion powerless, by abandoning reasoning and leaving all religious matters to faith. The final sentence of this exposition is worth noting: “Our bosom is full of abysmal compassion — it is the old Jehova himself, who

W. Cerf, H. S. Harris, Albany 1977, pp. 191).

5 He refers in similar terms to the death of the revealed God in his *Phaenomenology of the Spirit*, cf. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hrsg. W. Bonsiepen, R. Heede, Hamburg 1980, p. 401 (Hegel: Gesammelte Werke, 9): “In das letztere geht alles göttliche Wesen zurück, oder es ist die vollkommene *Entäußerung der Substanz*. Jenes hingegen ist umgekehrt das tragische Schicksal der an und für sich sein sollenden *Gewißheit seiner selbst*. Es ist das Bewußtsein des Verlustes aller *Wesenheit in dieser Gewißheit* seiner und des Verlustes eben dieses Wissens von sich – der Substanz wie des Selbsts; es ist der Schmerz, der sich als das harte Wort ausspricht, daß Gott gestorben ist”; P. Stekeler, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes. Ein dialogischer Kommentar*, Bd. 2: *Geist und Religion*, Hamburg 2014, pp. 858–935. On Hegel’s account of the death of God, cf. P. Henrici, *Der Tod Gottes beim jungen Hegel*, “Gregorianum” 64 (1983) n. 3, pp. 539–560; L. De Vos, *Gott ist tot*, “Hegel-Jahrbuch” (2003) H. 1, pp. 27–33; K. K. Lehmann, *Zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Der spekulative Karfreitag*, “Hegel-Jahrbuch” (2003) H. 1, pp. 18–26; M. Sobotka, *Hegels These vom Tode Gottes*, “Hegel-Jahrbuch” (2003) H. 1, pp. 34–37.

6 According to E. Biser, Heine’s influence on Nietzsche regarding the death of God was first proposed by Henri de Lubac in his *Le drame de l’Humanisme athée* (Paris 1944, pp. 37–39, 336 [note 65]), then followed by the studies of H. Spencer (*Heine und Nietzsche?*, “Heine-Jahrbuch” 11 (1972), pp. 126–161) and D. Sternberger (*Heinrich Heine und die Abschaffung der Sünde*, Hamburg–Düsseldorf 1976), cf. E. Biser, *Nietzsche und Heine. Kritik des christlichen Gottesbegriffs*, in: *Nietzsche as Affirmative Thinker. Papers Presented at the Fifth Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter, April 1983*, ed. Y. Yovel, Dordrecht–Boston–Lancaster 1986, p. 212. For a comparison between Nietzsche’s § 125 of *The Gay Science* and Heine’s *A History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, cf. E. Biser, *Nietzsche und Heine*, pp. 217–218.

prepares himself to die... Do you hear the little bell tingling? Kneel down — They're bringing the Sacrament to a moribund God."⁷ Since it ends with a quite enthusiastic, although somewhat ironic, praise of Hegel's philosophy, one is tempted to interpret Heine's allusion to a "dying God" as an attempt to identify pietism, Jacobi's polemic with Spinozism and rationalism, and Kant and Fichte's philosophy of religion, with the aforementioned "speculative Good Friday."⁸

Although a comparative analysis of Nietzsche's relation to these authors is worth conducting,⁹ the greatest interest of such a comparison lies in the different perspectives their respective standpoints offer regarding the function of the death of God for the resurgence or definitive collapse of metaphysics. In other words, if metaphysics is a science whose subject consists in truth "in the highest sense, in that, that *God* is the truth and *Him alone* is the truth,"¹⁰ the death of God implies that the whole science goes to the ground. Whereas for Hegel and Heine this is a momentary phase, one further step in the deployment of the consciousness the Spirit reaches about itself, for Nietzsche it is a final, definitive event (*Ereignis*): Metaphysics has

7 H. Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, in: *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, vol. 8.1, ed. M. Windfuhr, Hamburg 1979, pp. 77–78.

8 Heine's criticism of Jacobi, Kant and Fichte are quite infectious, verging on personal animosity. He calls the former a "mole" (*Maulwurf*) and characterizes him as posing as a philosopher long enough to be considered one, and then decrying all reason (H. Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, p. 62). Regarding Kant and Fichte, Heine makes very sarcastic descriptions of their lives and even quotes at length Fichte's diaries to further present them as dull figures (H. Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, pp. 80–108).

9 On the relation between Nietzsche and Hegel, see S. Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics*, Cambridge–London–New York–New Rochelle–Melbourne–Sydney 1986. On Nietzsche and Heine, see H. Spencer, *Nietzsche und Heine?*, in: H. Spencer, *Dichter, Denker, Journalist. Studien zum Werk Heinrich Heines*, Bern–Frankfurt am Main–Las Vegas 1977, pp. 65–110; H. Friedl, *Heinrich Heine und Friedrich Nietzsche*, in: *Heinrich Heine im Spannungsfeld von Literatur und Wissenschaft. Symposium anlässlich der Benennung der Universität Düsseldorf nach Heinrich Heine*, Hrsg. W. Gössmann, M. Windfuhr, Hagen 1990, pp. 195–214; E. Biser, *Nietzsche und Heine*, pp. 204–218. On Hegel and Heine, see E. Krüger, *Heine und Hegel. Dichtung, Philosophie und Politik bei Heinrich Heine*, Kronberg 1977.

10 G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 3e. Ausgabe, Hrsg. W. Bonsiepen, H. C. Lucas, U. Rameil, Hamburg 1992 § 1, 39 (Gesammelte Werke, 20).

already collapsed, a long time ago, and the world continues spinning just as if it never happened.¹¹ Unlike Hegel, who was accused of considering history *sub specie aeternitatis*, in a static rather than a dynamic sense, Nietzsche sees metaphysics as a living science, one that was born after tragedy died, and when God died did the same. In this sense, metaphysics could be considered a “historical” science, one affected by history and, most of all, by the passing of time.¹²

This article focuses on this alleged “historical” character of metaphysics, which would account for its birth and its definitive collapse, as illustrated by the death of God. It elaborates on two aspects of the announcement of this death. First, it compares the characters that present the death of God, the “deranged man” and Zarathustra, who Nietzsche had originally considered to proclaim the announcement, but later dismissed. Second, it proposes an interpretation of the images of the death of God as an outline of how the traditional notions of God have completely lost their meaning and, consequently, any power to move the world anymore, leaving metaphysics adrift “in the horizon of the infinite”.

Metaphysics as a “historical” science. The “untimely” character of the announcement of its collapse and its announcers

Leaving Hegel’s and Heine’s accounts aside, Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God was not the first of its kind nor the most strange. Already in the 1st Century a.D., Plutarch of Chaeronea told the story of the circumstances under which, on a voyage to Italy, a character that remained unseen

11 Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III § 108, p. 145 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2): “Gott ist todt: aber so wie die Art der Menschen ist, wird es vielleicht noch Jahrtausende lang Höhlen geben, in denen man seinen Schatten zeigt”; W. Stegmeier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie*, pp. 105–114.

12 Cf. B. Neymeyr, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*, 2: *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, Hrsg. Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin–Boston 2020, pp. 305–319 (Historischer und kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken, 1.2).

asked the pilot, an Egyptian called Thamus, to announce the death of “the great Pan” when passing near Palodes. This announcement was met with cries of lamentation and exclamations of amazement from the people of Palodes, who remained unseen as well. The strangeness of this event was so great, that it prompted the emperor Tiberius to make enquiries about the possibility of a conspiracy against him.¹³ However, beyond reflecting on how odd this event was and considering it to be another proof of the decline of oracles, Plutarch does not give any definite context for it, so his narration was subject to many conjectures during the centuries.¹⁴

While Nietzsche might have modelled the episode of the “deranged man” after Plutarch’s account, its philosophical character, as opposed to a simple chronicle of events, give all contextual indications, discourses and even silences, a clear and definite intention, which not only move forward the action of the story, but also give a better understanding of what are the effects and the consequences of the death of God, and open the way for a new conception of human being. In this regard, even the fact that the announcer of the death of God in a preliminary draft of this paragraph was not the “deranged man”, but Zarathustra, could be taken into consideration when interpreting the announcement, as well as the words Zarathustra pronounces in another draft, that hint at the possibility that God himself might have lead man to provoke His own death.¹⁵ In fact, this possibility is one of the consequences to be drawn from F. H. Jacobi’s critical outline of philosophy on the 7th appendix to his *On the doctrine of Spinoza in letters to Mr. M. Mendelssohn*. Since a rational account of reality

13 Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, c. 17, in: *Moralia XXVI*, ed. W. Sieveking, vol. 3, Leipzig 1929, pp. 80–81.

14 Cf. P. Bourgeaud, *The Death of the Great Pan: The Problem of Interpretation*, “History of Religions” 22 (1983) n. 3, pp. 254–283; G. Baudy, *Das Evangelium des Thamus und der Tod des “großen Pan”. Ein Zeugnis romfeindlicher Apokalyptik aus der Zeit des Kaisers Tiberius?*, “Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum” 4 (2000) n. 1, pp. 13–48.

15 F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 12 (= N V 7. Fall 1881), fr. 157, p. 501 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2): “Hier schwieg Z[arathustra] von Neuem und versank in tiefes Nachsinnen. Endlich sagte er wie träumend: «Oder hat er sich selber getötet? Waren wir nur seine Hände?»”. Nietzsche’s posthumous fragments will be quoted by the number of the notebook, followed by the number of the fragment in brackets.

reduces everything to natural terms, it is impossible for reason to account for the supernatural, i.e. God. This would be a feature of all systematic philosophy, since “all ways of demonstration can only end up in fatalism.”¹⁶

A relation between *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was very clear in the first edition of the former book, whose last paragraph is almost identical to the first chapter of the *Zarathustra*, giving them a sense of continuity. However, when Nietzsche added a fifth book on the second edition, that continuity between the two books got lost, even though this new book further elaborates on the philosophical aspects of *The Gay Science*.¹⁷ But it is not clear that if, instead of the “deranged man”, should Zarathustra had announced the death of God, this continuity would have been reinforced or rather compromised. While there are no traces on the notes nor on the letters from that period stating that he seriously considered Zarathustra to proclaim the death of God, announcing the death of God in the terms it is presented in the final text, seems unsuitable for the character, such as he appears in *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. Since his initial discourses (or “prologues”, “Vorrede”) in this book offer an interesting parallel to the announcement of the death of God in § 125 of *The Gay Science*, it is worth outlining what brings Zarathustra and the “deranged man” together and what sets them apart.

The general setting in these two passages is quite similar. First, both the “deranged man” and Zarathustra approach the people gathered at the market. Nietzsche describes those who the deranged encounters as people who did not believe in God, whereas the crowd Zarathustra meets, wait for a tightrope walker to perform his act.¹⁸ Secondly, the initial reaction of the

16 F.H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen ad den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, in: *Schriften zum Spinozastreit*, Hrsg. K. Hammacher, I.-M. Piske, Hamburg–Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1998, pp. 247–265 (Werke: Gesamtausgabe, 1.1); G. di Giovanni, *Hegel and the Challenge of Spinoza*, Cambridge 2021, pp. 1–6.

17 On the genesis of the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, cf. W. Stegmeier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie*, pp. 50–61.

18 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 158 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2): “Habt ihr nicht von jenem tollen Menschen gehört, der am hellen Vormittage eine Laterne anzündete, auf den Markt lief und unaufhörlich schrie: »Ich suche Gott! Ich suche Gott!« – Da dort gerade Viele von Denen zusammen standen, welche nicht an Gott glaubten, so erregte er ein grosses

people is to laugh at them, both at the provocation of the “deranged man” and at Zarathustra’s three successive discourses, although their reaction later turns into silence, either by the words of the “deranged man” or by the entrance of the fellow who confronts the tightrope walker and ultimately makes him fall to his death.¹⁹ Finally, both perform some symbolic actions after leaving the crowd, either entering churches to sing a *Requiem* to God, as the “deranged man” does, or exchanging some final words with the dying walker and taking care of his dead body, as Zarathustra does.²⁰

At the same time, their respective actions show a different attitude towards the people they encounter. The “deranged man” is defiant and confronts the people he set on to approach. First, he calls their attention by lighting a lantern “in the bright hours before noon” and crying that he is “looking for God” amidst people who did not believe in him; he breaks then their mockery by piercing them with his look before announcing the death of God and, finally, he throws the lantern he was carrying to the floor, which breaks and dies out, before their confused silence.²¹ Zarathustra, on the other hand, approaches the crowd with a completely different attitude, one that he explained to the holy man he ran into on the way from his cave to the town. “I love mankind”, says Zarathustra, meaning that he brings a present to the people, i.e. the proclamation of the overman.²² That love prevents him to react against the derision he encounters in the market when he makes his discourses (although presenting the “last man” is a way

Gelächter”; F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra’s Vorrede*, c. 3, p. 8 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): “Als Zarathustra in die nächste Stadt kam, die an den Wäldern liegt, fand er daselbst viel Volk versammelt auf dem Markte: denn es war verheissen worden, dass man einen Seiltänzer sehen solle”.

19 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, pp. 158–159 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2); F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra’s Vorrede*, c. 3–6, pp. 8–15 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

20 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 160 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2); F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra’s Vorrede*, c. 6–8, pp. 16–19 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

21 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 159 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

22 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra’s Vorrede*, c. 2, pp. 6–7 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

of describing that crowd as the contemptible kind of people they are) and only becomes sad in the face of that derision, while at the same time he is fully aware that the laughter hides a chilling, deadly coldness.²³

But their key difference regards their respective announcements. The “deranged man” appears only to proclaim that God is dead, and every one of his actions revolves around this fact and denotes its urgency, from lighting the lamp in broad daylight to approaching the people to breaking into churches. After that, though, he vanishes from the book and is never heard of again. In turn, whereas Zarathustra is aware of this event, as well, the death of God, his main concern, as a teacher and a proponent or intercessor (*Fürsprecher*) is to present the overman, as he states at the beginning of his first discourse: “I teach you the overman.”²⁴ However, in this teaching, the death of God is present as well, only he is not concerned with announcing it, since for him it is a known fact, a thing of the past, since the supremacy of God has been surpassed by the supremacy of the Earth, which, in turn, requires not simply human beings, but the overman to take care of it:

Once the defiance against God was the greatest defiance, but God died, and with him all these defiants died as well. Now to defy the Earth is the most terrifying thing, just as to esteem the entrails of the inscrutable higher than the sense of the Earth!²⁵

23 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra's Vorrede*, c. 3–5, pp. 8–15 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

24 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra's Vorrede*, c. 3, p. 8 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): „Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen“; cf. F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, III: *Der Genesende*, c. 3, p. 271 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): “Denn deine Thiere wissen es wohl, oh Zarathustra, wer du bist und werden musst: siehe, *du bist der Lehrer der ewigen Wiederkunft* — das ist nun *dein* Schicksal!”; M. Heidegger, *Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?*, in: M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Hrsg. von F.-W. Herrmann, Frankfurt am Main 2000, pp. 99–124.

25 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra's Vorrede*, c. 3, p. 9 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): “Einst war der Frevel an Gott der grösste Frevel, aber Gott starb, und damit starben auch diese Frevelhaften. An der Erde zu freveln ist jetzt das Furchtbarste und die Eingeweide des Unerforschlichen höher zu achten, als den Sinn der Erde!”. All translations are my own.

In fact, before arriving to the market, Zarathustra had already mentioned the death of God, not just as something that had happened, but also as something that everyone should be aware of. After his encounter with the holy man in the woods, when they parted ways “laughing like two boys laugh”, Zarathustra asks himself how could it be that the holy man had not yet heard the news that God is dead.²⁶ Later on, he will call himself “the Godless”, i.e. the only one who is capable to properly will and love, beyond all values that make everything small; he calls himself like that as well when he wakes up screaming against his most dreadful thought and when he encounters the last Pope, the one who served God until God died.²⁷ In this last instance, the last Pope recognizes some kind of piousness in Zarathustra’s godlessness, which he even thinks a God converted him to, as well as all the conditions required to bless others. Because of that, he asks Zarathustra to allow him to stay at least one night at his home. Before showing the last Pope the path to his cave, Zarathustra asks him to leave his melancholy behind, because it might be long before someone awakes his dead God, but adds: “This old God, indeed, lives no more: he is utterly and completely dead.”²⁸ Zarathustra’s insistence on the death of God does not introduce any change in the world whatsoever. God was already dead in the world he and the others live. The only thing that distinguishes Zarathustra from the rest is his awareness that God died and his longing for the overman, the one that will be able to give the Earth once again its meaning.

26 F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra’s Vorrede*, c. 2, p. 8 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): “Als Zarathustra aber allein war, sprach er also zu seinem Herzen: »Sollte es denn möglich sein! Dieser alte Heilige hat in seinem Walde noch Nichts davon gehört, dass *Gott todt* ist!«”.

27 Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, III: *Von der verkleinernden Tugend*, c. 3, pp. 211–212 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1); F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, III: *Der Genesende*, c. 1, pp. 266–267 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1); F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, IV: *Ausser Dienst*, pp. 317–322 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

28 Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, IV: *Ausser Dienst*, pp. 321–322 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1): “Wer aber nähme dir *deine* Schwermuth von der Schulter? Dazu bin ich zu schwach. Lange, wahrlich, möchten wir warten, bis dir Einer deinen Gott wieder aufweckt. Dieser alte Gott nämlich lebt nicht mehr: der ist todt”.

The “deranged man”, on the other hand, appears as a figure of the past. Although Nietzsche does not describe his appearance, his initial actions are modelled after a story Diogenes Laertius tells about Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic philosopher, who once went about the market in Athens with a burning lantern in his hand in broad daylight and, when asked the purpose of it, he said to be “looking for a man.”²⁹ Moreover, another story about Diogenes connects him even closely with the „deranged man” (although modern editors of the *Vitae Philosophorum* deem it spurious), when someone asked Plato his thoughts about Diogenes, and he replied: “A Socrates gone mad.”³⁰

The general setting of the announcement of the death of God, however, shows that Nietzsche did not intend his “deranged man” to be a raving lunatic nor a fanatic, but someone who deliberately does not accommodate to the current uses and customs of the time he lives in, so his “madness” consists in his “untimely” (*unzeitgemässe*) character.³¹ He goes to the market, with a lamp in his hand at the bright hours before noon (a symbolic gesture he will later allude to during his discourse), knowing that there were people gathered who did not believe in God. In other words, he presents himself as both a symbol and an instigator, one who first calls the attention and derision upon himself from the crowd, and then pierces them with his glance and starts to announce the death of God:

Haven’t you heard about that deranged man, who in the bright forenoon set light to a lantern, walked to the market and screamed ceaselessly: “I’m

29 Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* VI, c. 41, ed. M. Marcovich, Berlin–New York 2008, p. 400.

30 Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* VI, c. 54, ed. Marcovich, p. 408. On the life of Diogenes of Sinope, cf. D. R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism from Diogenes to the 6th Century A. D.*, Cambridge 1937, pp. 17–39; L. E. Navia, *Diogenes of Sinope: The Man in the Tub*, Westport, Connecticut 1990, pp. 1–44.

31 Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, 2. Stück: *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, in: *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Hrsg. G. Colli, M. Montinari, Berlin–New York 1972, p. 243 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 3.1): “unzeitgemäss — das heisst gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit — zu wirken”; B. Neymeyr, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen*, pp. VII–VIII.

looking for God! I'm looking for God!" — Since right over there many of those who did not believe in God were standing together, he just provoked a great laughter. So then, is he gone lost? Said one of them. Did he lose his way, like a kid? Said the other. Or does he keeps himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Is he gone away on a ship? Did he emigrate? — So they screamed and laughed boisterously. The deranged man jumped in the middle of them and pierced them with his gaze. "Where did God go?" He exclaimed. "I want to tell you where! *We have killed him*, — you and I! All of us are his murderers!"³²

Once the "deranged man" finishes his announcement and looks at the crowd, his silence is met with silence from them, who look disconcerted as well. Before addressing the people for a second time, he casts the lantern to the ground, which breaks into pieces and dies away.³³ This mutual silence, which Nietzsche leaves unexplained, contrasts with the constant derision and cold laughter Zarathustra encounters in his discourses, but also with the lamenting and crying Thamus, the Egyptian pilot who gives the news of the death of "the great Pan", hears after his own announcement. The news of this death do certainly affect the people of Palodes, and the death of God should at least have moved the people at the market, who did not believe in God, to ponder on what does living in a world without God mean.

The second discourse of the "deranged man" offers his reaction before the silence of the crowd, which further clarifies his "untimely" character:

I come too soon, he said then, I am not yet in [the right] time. This terrifying event is still on its way and wanders, — it has not yet gotten through to the ears of men. Lightbolt and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they have been done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is for them [namely, the crowd] even further than the furthest star, — although they have done it themselves!³⁴

32 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 158 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

33 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 159 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

34 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, pp. 159–160 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

Both Zarathustra and the “deranged man” share this “untimely” character, since both come too early for either the death of God or the advent of the overman to begin to dawn on humanity. Moreover, as their respective announcements show, their “untimely” character possesses a specular sense, since their actions reflect one another, and their relation to the passage of time, in opposite ways. Whereas Zarathustra is too soon for the arrival of the overman, but paves the way for his future advent, the “deranged man” is too late for people to be aware of the deed they themselves did, killing God, something that took place a long time ago and is at risk to fall into oblivion because of the time that keeps passing. This explains the urgency and the derangement of the “deranged man”, the fact that he sees that, the further the death of God by the hand of humanity drifts away from their knowledge, the greater the danger is for this event to end up falling into oblivion. This would mean that the people would continue living on under the illusion that the world order they have established on the belief in God has already collapsed, since its foundation lives no more.³⁵ This collapse, as it will be seen in the next section, can even be traced in the ways God was conceived throughout the history of metaphysics.

A brief “history” of the collapse of metaphysics. The images of the killing of God

The “deranged man” announces the death of God in his first discourse, as soon as he called upon himself the attention, the laughter and the derision of the crowd gathered in the market. He is fully aware that his search for God is useless, because he knows that God is dead, and has been for a long time, unlike the crowd of those who did not believe in God and mocked the “deranged man”, and because he knows as well that he, the crowd and all humanity are responsible for that killing, the ones that murdered God. He then goes on to describe how that murder took place, what are its effects, how impossible is for mankind to find redemption of any kind from this deed and, finally, that the generations that come after this deed belong to

35 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* V, § 343, p. 255 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

a higher history, higher than any other history that has ever taken place before.³⁶

Of all these aspects of the discourse, the most relevant for the purpose of this article concerns the images with which the “deranged man” illustrates the killing of God. However poetic they appear, they recall three of the most relevant concepts that have been traditionally associated with God. A detailed examination of these images greatly exceeds the limits of this work, but a brief outline can offer a glance at how these images further configure the “event” of the death, or rather the killing, of God.

First, God died because he was the ocean that was drunk full, it figures, by human reason. This is a clear allusion to the notion of an “ocean of infinite essence”, in the words of Gregory of Nazianzus that John Damascene quotes in his treatise *On the orthodox faith*. Later, when that treatise was translated into Latin during the 12th and 13th centuries, theologians such as Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus used that image in their own conceptions of God as an infinite being. Their respective approach to infinity, though, is founded on the sense they understand both the notion of being and the way this notion allows human reason to conceive God and his relation to creatures. For Henry, for whom there is a primacy of the notion of

36 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 159 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2): “Aber wie haben wir diess gemacht? Wie vermochten wir das Meer auszutrinken? Wer gab uns den Schwamm, um den ganzen Horizont wegzuwischen? Was thaten wir, als wir diese Erde von ihrer Sonne losketteten? Wohin bewegt sie sich nun? Wohin bewegen wir uns? Fort von allen Sonnen? Stürzen wir nicht fortwährend? Und rückwärts, seitwärts, vorwärts, nach allen Seiten? Giebt es noch ein Oben und ein Unten? Irren wir nicht wie durch ein unendliches Nichts? Haucht uns nicht der leere Raum an? Ist es nicht kälter geworden? Kommt nicht immerfort die Nacht und mehr Nacht? Müssen nicht Laternen am Vormittage angezündet werden? Hören wir noch Nichts von dem Lärm der Todtengräber, welche Gott begraben? Riechen wir noch Nichts von der göttlichen Verwesung? — auch Götter verwesen! Gott ist todt! Gott bleibt todt! Und wir haben ihn getödtet! Wie trösten wir uns, die Mörder aller Mörder? Das Heiligste und Mächtigste, was die Welt bisher besass, es ist unter unseren Messern verblutet, — wer wischt diess Blut von uns ab? Mit welchem Wasser könnten wir uns reinigen? Welche Sühnfeiern, welche heiligen Spiele werden wir erfinden müssen? Ist nicht die Grösse dieser That zu gross für uns? Müssen wir nicht selber zu Göttern werden, um nur ihrer würdig zu erscheinen? Es gab nie eine grössere That, — und wer nur immer nach uns geboren wird, gehört um dieser That willen in eine höhere Geschichte, als alle Geschichte bisher war!”

“thing” over “being”, i.e. who understands “being” as a notion that presupposes that of “thing” (following the famous passage of the first treatise of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics*, where the Persian philosopher affirms that “thing”, “being”, “necessary” and some other are the first notions that are impressed, by a first impression, in our soul), God’s infinity is the highest possible degree of perfection, one that not only entails every attribute of the divine essence in an absolute perfect way, but also all attributes that allow any other being to be what it is. In this sense, Henry’s account of infinity coincides with what later Kant will denominate “the idea of a totality of reality (*omnitudo realitatis*)”. Duns Scotus, on the other hand, although agrees with Henry on the fact that a concept of God would entail any possible perfection or reality, considers this a description rather than an actual concept of God, a description that, one might add, could never be completed, since it is, by definition, infinite, therefore inexhaustible. But Scotus considers infinity as an intrinsic mode, belonging exclusively to God, and which determines every conceivable attribute as pertaining to the divine essence, because the same attributes can be conceived as pertaining to the creatures, not as intrinsically infinite, but as finite, since creatures are intrinsically finite. Wisdom, for instance, is the same attribute or perfection, the same “thing”, whether predicated of God or the creatures, but divine wisdom is infinite and one and the same thing with the divine essence (although formally non-identical), whereas the wisdom of the creatures is finite, an attribute that is something other from the essence.³⁷ This conception of both infinity and finitude as intrinsic modes of being, which are even prior to the distinction of finite being into the classical ten genera, derives from Scotus’ position regarding a double primacy of “being” over “thing”, one that transcends the assumption that “being” means simply “existence”.

37 Cf. R. H. Pich, *Infinity and Intrinsic Mode*, ed. by R. H. Pich, *New Essays on Metaphysics as “Scientia Transcendens”*. *Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Medieval Philosophy, held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Porto Alegre / Brazil, 15–18 August 2006*, FIDEM, Louvain-la-Neuve 2007, pp. 159–214; D. Arbib, *Henri de Gand: la protensio et le tournant de l’infini*, “Les Etudes philosophiques” 91 (2009), pp. 477–503; H. Guerrero-Troncoso, *El carácter intrínseco del infinito en Duns Escoto como condición de una comprensión trascendental del ser*, “Carthaginensia” 37 (2021) n. 71, pp. 29–48.

This double approach to the notion of infinity will become, at the beginning of Modernity, the basis for Descartes' first proof of the existence of God, the one that concludes that God exists because of the presence in the *cogitatio* of an idea that in itself is so perfect, that the human *cogitatio* cannot recognize itself neither as the foundation of its objective reality nor as a sufficient cause of its existence.³⁸ At the same time, Spinoza's conception of God as an infinite substance reprises Henry's general outline, but applies it to a substance which, since is the only possible substance, is its own cause (*causa sui*), i.e. its essence entails its existence, and everything else that exists depends on it, so there is an infinite regression in the causes, because every thing there is consists of an attribute or an affection of God and, consequently, it is only one of the infinite ways God deploys its essence.³⁹ By placing infinity in the human *cogitatio* as a notion that allows to acknowledge the existence of God and, consequently, of something outside the *cogitatio*, and by establishing a dependence of all things on God such as the one Spinoza proposes, both philosophers seem to have drunk the infinite sea of substance, and successfully murdered God.

The second image, that God is dead because humanity wiped out the horizon with a sponge, seems to derive from the first, because either by placing God in the *cogitatio* or by establishing all reality as taking place in God, the distinction between the natural and supernatural, the sensible and suprasensible, God and the creatures, has been cancelled. Hence, as the image suggests, by cancelling the horizon, the line that separates the sky and the earth, the lunar and sublunar worlds, i.e. the sensible and suprasensible worlds, disappears. For that reason, there is no place left for anything that

38 Cf. R. Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, 7: *Oeuvres de Descartes*, eds. Ch. Adam, P. Tannery, Paris 1996, p. 45 (Meditatio, 3); D. Arbib, *Descartes et l'infini: le concept en question. Esquisse d'une recherche en cours*, "Laval théologique et philosophique" 69 (2014) n. 3, pp. 535–547; D. Arbib, *Descartes, la métaphysique et l'infini*, Paris 2017, 273–340; D. Arbib, *Méditation troisième*, in: *Les Méditations Métaphysiques. Objections et Réponses de Descartes. Un commentaire*, éd. by D. Arbib, Paris 2019, pp. 107–131.

39 Cf. B. Spinoza, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata* I, definitiones, axiomata, propositiones I–XVI, eds. F. Akkermann, P. Steenbakkers, in: *Oeuvres*, vol. 4, Paris 2020, pp. 100–125; Y. Melamed, *Hasdai Crescas and Spinoza on actual infinity and the infinity of God's attributes*, ed. by S. Nadler, *Spinoza and medieval Jewish philosophy*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 204–215.

transcends the sensible world, because there is no other world to go to, no “beyond”. This reflects, on one hand, what Hegel calls “the complete transformation of the philosophical ways of thinking”, mostly Kant’s establishing experience as the touchstone of knowledge, leaving all suprasensible knowledge as a mere regulative principle for speculative reason.⁴⁰ On the other hand, it also reflects Jacobi’s criticism of Spinoza and all rational philosophy in general, as unable, by definition, to apprehend the supernatural, since reason only functions in natural terms. Both aspects, which are essential characteristics of Modern thought from Descartes on, either leave God out of reach for metaphysics, or consider him the first principle, only not in supernatural terms, as Medieval philosophers struggled to do, but rather conceived in natural terms, i.e. in a way that is not adequate to its infinite essence.⁴¹

Finally, the last image, the Earth breaking loose from the chain that tied it to the Sun, completes the progression the first two images were suggesting. If drinking the sea leads to cancel the horizon, this last action causes the Earth to break the chain that held it attached to the Sun, because everything that was beyond the horizon has no place on Earth anymore. The image of the Sun to illustrate the highest degree of being, which at the same time is the source of all knowledge and life, was already used by Plato in his account of what he calls the “highest knowledge”, the idea of good, in the so-called “myth of the Sun”. In this account, he emphasizes the divine character of the idea of good and its offspring (ἔκγονος), the Sun, as well as the fact that both their reality is so great, that they are beyond the all other

40 Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Erster Band. Die Objektive Logik. Erster Buch. Das Sein (1812)*, Hrsg. Vorrede, F. Hogemann, W. Jaeschke, Hamburg 1978, pp. 5–6 (Gesammelte Werke, 11); P. Stekeler, *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik. Ein dialogischer Kommentar*, Bd. 1: *Die objektive Logik. Die Lehre vom Sein. Qualitative Kontraste, Mengen und Maße*, Hamburg 2019, pp. 97–101.

41 Cf. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, Beilage VII, pp. 244–261; C. Wirsing, *Die Begründung des Realen. Hegels “Logik” im Kontext der Realitätsdebatte um 1800*, Berlin–Boston 2021, pp. 85–99.

things (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας).⁴² It is worth noticing that, in an early draft of this passage, this is the only image that was later reworked:

Where did God go? What have we done? Is it that we have completely drunk the sea? What kind of a sponge was that, the one with which we have cancelled the whole horizon surrounding us? How did we bring this about, to wipe away this eternal solid line, where all lines and measures have coincided until now, according to which all architects of life have built until now, without which there seems to be absolutely no perspective, no order, no architecture?⁴³

The fact that this last image leads to the effects of the death of God reinforces another image Nietzsche had presented in the preceding paragraph, a ship that not only deserts the land, but actually destroys all bridges and all land to sail into an infinite ocean, where lies the “horizon of the infinite.”⁴⁴ The ocean shimmers under the sun, but it also provides no point of reference, just as the Earth cut loose from the Sun precipitates and seems to “wander through an infinite Nothing.”⁴⁵ The Sun has become powerless to bring bring all that the Ancient tradition attributed to it, and it is now human beings who grant this power to it, just as Zarathustra realizes one day when coming out of his cave, like he did for ten years, until his heart changed:

42 Plato, *Republica* VI, 507 a–509 c, ed. by S. R. Slings, Oxford 2003, p. 255; cf. H. Krämer, *Die Idee des Guten. Sonnen- und Liniengleichnis (Buch VI 504a–511e)*, in: *Platons Politeia*, Hrsg. O. Höffe, Berlin 2015, pp. 135–153.

43 F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 14 (= M III 5. Herbst 1881), fr. 25, p. 529 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2): “Wohin ist Gott? Was haben wir gemacht? haben wir denn das Meer ausgetrunken? Was war das für ein Schwamm, mit dem wir den ganzen Horizont um uns auslöschten? Wie brachten wir dies zu Stande, diese ewige feste Linie wegzuwischen, auf die bisher alle Linien und Maaße sich zurückbezogen, nach der bisher alle Baumeister des Lebens bauten, ohne die es überhaupt keine Perspektive, keine Ordnung, keine Baukunst zu geben schien?”

44 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 124, p. 158 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2); cf. W. Stegmeier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie*, pp. 114–118.

45 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* III, § 125, p. 159 (cf. note 36) (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

... and one morning he arose together with the daybreak, stepped before the Sun and spoke to it thus: "You great heavenly body! What would your happiness be if you did not have those for whom you shine! For ten years you have climbed up to my cave; without me, my eagle and my snake, you would have had enough of your light and of this road; but we waited for you every morning, took your overabundance from you and blessed you for it..."⁴⁶

If these images illustrate the collapse of the different senses in which God has been conceived throughout the history of metaphysics, the place he has occupied and the role he has played in that history, it is possible to say that the "deranged man" comes from a long time ago, that his piercing eyes have looked back enough in the past, and that is the reason for his "untimely" character. He is the only one to realize that God has been dead for a long time. Whether this death was inevitable or not, i.e. whether the progress of metaphysics as a science entailed its own collapse, is something Nietzsche considered in a preliminary draft of this paragraph, as it was mentioned before, but in the end decided against inserting it in the final text:

Here Z[arathustra] remained silent again and sank into a deep meditation. In the end, he said as if he were dreaming: "Or has he [rather] killed himself? Were we just his hands?"⁴⁷

The question remains open, whether the death of God was an event that simply took place in the course of the history of metaphysics, the result of a series of turning points that made impossible any relation with something beyond the sensible world, or rather metaphysics itself is nothing but the history of the gradual killing of God, by rendering powerless and

46 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* IV, § 342, p. 251 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2); F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I: *Zarathustra's Vorrede*, c. 1, p. 5 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 6.1).

47 F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 12 (= N V 7. Fall 1881), fr. 157, p. 501 (cf. note 15) (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

irrelevant what once was “the holiest and most powerful the world had ever possessed”.

Closing remarks

The intention of this article was to show that for Nietzsche the death of God is essentially the announcement of an “historical” event. Both the characters and the images Nietzsche chose to present this event reveal that metaphysics, unlike any other science, is subject to the passing of time, that it lives and dies and, just as the God that died, the time has come for it to go to the ground. “Historical” figures are both the “deranged man” and Zarathustra, not because they were modelled after people who lived a long time ago, but on account of their assuming the passage of time, and that makes them “untimely”. The “deranged man”, who is anything but a madman or a raving lunatic, realizes he comes too soon, even if he announces an event that took place a long time ago, one that has not yet arrived to the ears of mankind, because it is “ever more and more distant, even more distant than the most distant heavenly body”. Zarathustra, on the other hand, comes too early, because it is not yet the time for the overman to arrive, to give the Earth meaning once again. He points out to the future and calls upon mankind to rise up to the task of paving the way to the advent of the overman. “Historical” are the images of the killing of God, which show how metaphysics has rendered itself incapable of taking in God, precisely by trying to submit him to its own terms, i.e. by making human reason the touchstone, the court that decides about God. The announcers bring with them the passage of time, the images show what happened during that time that passed. “History” is the name that brings both aspects together.

There is another sense of “historical” that can further help interpreting Nietzsche’s announcement, one that appears in a note written around the time he was composing *The Gay Science*:

In ancient times, every higher man had the lust for glory — it came from that, that every one of them believed that humanity started with him and knew well to give to himself an adequate breadth and duration, so that he thought

of himself in all posterity as the tragic actors that played together in the eternal scene. My pride, instead, is “I have an *ancestry (Herkunft)*” — that is why I do not need the glory. In that, which put Zarathustra, Moses, Muhamed Jesus Plato Brutus Spinoza Mirabeau in motion, I already live as well, and in many things comes to me mature to the light of the day that, what needed, as an embryo, a couple of millennia. We are the first aristocrats in the history of the spirit — the historical sense starts just now.⁴⁸

Unlike the people from Ancient times, who looked at the future with the lightness of being the first, who could glory themselves by forming the future at their image, the ones who live now can get their pride in their origin, their ancestry, their provenance, *Herkunft*. It is the weight of the past that allows the philosopher to see the present and to expect for the future, it allows him to endure the weight of the passage of time and its “that was it”, “the greatest heavy weight”. Should Nietzsche be considered an “optimist”, as opposed to “pessimists” such as Socrates, who considered life to be a disease,⁴⁹ his announcement of the death of God, however fateful and definitive, paves the way for a resurgence quite different from Hegel’s “speculative Good Friday” and its corresponding resurrection. On the void that is left by the death of God, Nietzsche points at what human beings must become, “something, that must be overcome”, in order to be up to the task of occupying that void. Time continues its passage, so it is up to the people who can assume their “historical” character to populate the Earth, once God has died.

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48 F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragamente*, 15 (= M III 4a, Herbst 1881), fr. 17, p. 540 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

49 F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* IV, § 340, pp. 249–250 (Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5.2).

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Abstract

The death of God and the collapse of metaphysics. On the "historical" character of Nietzsche's announcement

This article focuses on what could be called the "historical" character of metaphysics, which would account for its birth and its definitive collapse, as illustrated by Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God. It elaborates on two aspects of this announcement. First, it compares the two characters Nietzsche relates to the death of God, the "deranged man" that appears in *The Gay Science* and Zarathustra, who Nietzsche had originally considered to proclaim this event, but later dismissed. Second, it proposes an interpretation of the images of the death of God as an outline of how the traditional notions of the supreme being have completely lost their meaning and, consequently, all power to move the world anymore, leaving metaphysics adrift "in the horizon of the infinite".

Keywords: Death of God, Friedrich Nietzsche, History of Philosophy, Metaphysics

Abstrakt

Śmierć Boga i upadek metafizyki. O „historycznym” charakterze zapowiedzi Nietzschego

Niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na tym, co można by nazwać „historycznym” charakterem metafizyki, który tłumaczyłby jej narodziny i ostateczny upadek, czego ilustracją jest ogłoszenie śmierci Boga przez Nietzschego. Omówiono w nim dwa aspekty tego ogłoszenia. Po pierwsze, porównuje dwie postacie, które Nietzsche odnosi do śmierci Boga, „obląkanego człowieka”, który pojawia się w *The Gay Science* i Zaratustra, którego Nietzsche początkowo uważał za proklamującego to wydarzenie, ale później odrzucił. Po drugie, proponuje interpretację obrazów śmierci Boga jako zarys tego, jak tradycyjne pojęcia bytu najwyższego całkowicie straciły swój sens, a co za tym idzie, wszelką moc poruszania światem, pozostawiając metafizykę dryfującą „na horyzoncie nieskończoności”.

Słowa kluczowe: śmierć Boga, Friedrich Nietzsche, historia filozofii, metafizyka