

God is dead? A philosophical analysis.

Prof. Dr. Hugo Brandão

PhD in Religious Sciences from the Catholic University of Pernambuco (2019). He has Degree in Philosophy from the Federal University of Alagoas (2010). Professor at Federal Institute of Alagoas. hugo.brandao@ifal.edu.br <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2511182719855807>.

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9665-089X>

Prof. Esp. Rafaella Caminha

Specialist in Religious Sciences and Graduated in Religious Sciences and Philosophy from the Federal University of Alagoas - UFAL (2019). <https://lattes.cnpq.br/2214728658557442>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9665-089X>

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I. Introduction and "death of God" in Nietzsche

The thought of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, in his philosophical reflections, disturbs human structures, especially those that refer to tradition, given the degree of complexity and depth of his speech. Nietzsche is a historical-social subject and, as such, was influenced by the time in which he lived. Throughout his investigative process and philosophical reflections, he witnesses and experiences the emergence of a new historical context, that is, the advent of Modernity: a period characterized by a spirit of repulsion towards issues linked to tradition. For Nietzsche, Modernity emerged in the 18th century with the advent of the Enlightenment:

Where, according to Nietzsche, does Modernity originate? In the 18th century Enlightenment philosophers and their critique of tradition and authority; in Kant's philosophy, which establishes the limits of knowledge and the impossibility of man knowing the supersensible, the thing-in-itself; in positive science, which becomes independent of theology; in the French revolution and its defense of 'modern ideas' of equality, freedom and fraternity; in romantic art that shows sympathy for what is suffering, unhappy and unhealthy (MACHADO, 1994, p. 21-22).

In the 18th century and, above all, in the 19th century, the decline of God was perceived, little by little his importance began to diminish, both for the natural sciences, for society, history and for individuals in general. Although, this premise does not apply in a generalized way to all individuals, nor to all cultures. The decadence of God does not seem to find exact support when we analyze current society, it seems that there was a discredit in institutional Religion, however, individuals remained religious – as we will see in the third chapter. The "disenchantment" of the world seemed taken for granted – a world without God. In the second half of the 19th century, the hypothesis was raised that God had become dispensable. History and society were perceived as something understandable and that could be explained (BRANDÃO, 2015).

"God is dead" is a famous expression from Nietzsche's works, however, this statement only occurred because there were relevant causes that, in fact, motivated him to proclaim such an expression. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the causes that led the German philosopher to be bold and proclaim the "death of God", for this, we need to resize ourselves for his time. Religion loses space in Modernity. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud made clear the great illusion that is Religion, Ricoeur called them masters of suspicion (RICOEUR, 1977).

It was a period marked by the growth of atheism among writers, philosophers, artistic and scientific circles, and other intellectuals. It was marked by distrust towards Religion, there were several conjuring and derogatory theories. The “death of God” developed throughout history and had the collaboration of several variables to end in Nietzsche’s historical era. It is not a sudden and sudden event; “it is clear that erasing the horizon is something that could never happen overnight; it could happen only over a long period of time, and with a large number of conspirators” (BENSON, 2008, p. 29). When researching the “death of God” we are faced with the vastness of this theme that goes from William Blake, through Goethe, Darwin, Freud, Hegel, Marx and even in literature, there is Dostoevsky, Strindberg, Baudelarie and, obviously, Nietzsche himself. (Cf. ALTIZER; HAMILTON, 1967, p. 14).

The “death of God” is not easy to assimilate. Most cannot understand such a sentence. It is very unlikely that the masses will be able to understand the problem of the “death of God”. For Nietzsche, few can perceive such an event, so a strong look of suspicion and concern is necessary. We note that, in Nietzsche, the “death of God” is an event entirely linked to the “aristocracy” of his time. This aristocracy is precisely represented by intellectuals. There was no concern, on the part of the author, with the popular conception of Religion, because what the people worship are only shadows (NIETZSCHE, 2001). He understood that the masses credit their beliefs in these shadows, of a dead God, to justify their fragility and that the churches were nothing more than the tombs of God, since he was dead. Although, according to Nietzsche himself, the graves will be seen for centuries, only shadows there will be seen and worshiped. In view of this, Nietzsche states:

After Buddha died, his shadow was still shown in a cave for centuries - an immense and terrible shadow. God is dead; but as men are for centuries there will still be caves in which their shadow will be shown. - As for us - we will also have to overcome your shadow! (2001, p. 135).

God no longer serves as a presupposition to construct forms of thought, as in Modernity man institutes science and gives it legitimacy, grants it the condition of truth. Humanity overlaps faith in God (theology) with faith in man (science). The death of a God, who is the personification of morality, is nothing more than the fall of customs, traditions and human values that want to acquire an a priori and necessary character. In modern thought, the idea of historical evolution, progress, technique, mastery, and measurement of life gains space, thus distancing itself from essences, divine principles, absolute values, and dogmas. There is no longer a supreme value against which to evaluate all other values. Even for Nietzsche, the “death of God” does not mean the complete absence of values, but rather the end of the claim to an absolute and universal value (VATTIMO, 2004).

The “death of God” discourse is related to the devaluation of the metaphysical world – which divides reality into two: an ideal world and the world in which we live, privileging the first to the detriment of the second.

According to Hegel, it is in the religious space that God manifests himself, as the absolute is distant from the world. “God is out there, in the world [...] God, would have deserted the world of things, and particularly the world of men. A manifestation of this disappearance of the absolute would be the famous expression: ‘God died’” (ROSENFELD, 2002, p.168).

Heidegger distinguished the discourse on the “death of God” in Nietzsche from the discourse on the “death in God” made by Hegel, since, according to him, the former spoke in a connotative-metaphysical sense, unknown to his time; while the second discussed the “death of God” in the denotative-historical sense, very common at the time to refer to the death of the martyr of Christianity (HEIDEGGER, 2003).

As we have seen, the expression “death of God” was forged under the historical-social circumstances arising from the advent of Modernity. Nietzsche’s proclamation of the “death of God” connotes the apogee of human history (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 475). Young goes so far as to state that the “death of God” is a sociological demonstration that Western society is no longer a culturally religious society, as Religion no longer exercises the power of past times, it no longer exercises the enchantment and dominion that had helped it. in its influence on the daily and psychic life of individuals (HEIDEGGER, 2003). However, just over a century after the proclamation of the “death of God”, we realize that the religious phenomenon is alive in the lives and daily lives of many people. For example, the growth of Pentecostal movements, more strongly in Latin America and the United States. We will discuss the revival of the religious phenomenon today, in more depth, in subsequent chapters.

We should not take the expression “death of God” as merely a manifestation of atheism, or even speak of a doctrine of Nietzsche (Cf. MACHADO, 1994, p.22). In academia, this issue is debated from various perspectives. Two groups advocate the “death of God”: those who profess atheism and those who understand the death of God as a purification for true religiosity – that the dead God was not the true God.

Nietzsche was not a militant atheist; his concern was to understand the appearance and “disappearance” of belief in God. The German philosopher did not aim to prove or deny the existence of God, as atheists do since Nietzsche’s thought does not have an epistemological concern, however, it seeks to show how and why the belief that there would be a God arose and disappeared (GOMES, 2004, p. 168).

The statement of the “death of God” appeared for the first time in three aphorisms, in the work *Gaia Science* of 1882, in aphorisms 108, 125 and 343. It is possible to find several mentions of the expression “God is

dead” in other works by Nietzsche, however, it stands out and gains notoriety in aphorism 125, in *Gaia C Science*, as it is “Nietzsche’s first explicit text on the issue” (MACHADO, 1999, p. 22). He agreed to call this speech “The Mad Man”, or also known as “The Fool” – depending on the translations. The thinker tells us the story of the fool who goes out into the public square looking for God, saying the following:

They didn’t hear about that crazy man who, in the middle of the morning, lit a lantern and ran to the market, and started shouting incessantly: ‘I’m looking for God! I’m looking for God!’? – And as there were many of those who did not believe in God there, he aroused a great laugh. So, is he lost? asked one of them. Did he get lost like a child? Said another. Are you hiding? Is he afraid of us? Did you board a ship? Did you emigrate? – They shouted and laughed at each other. The mad man threw himself into their midst and pierced them with his gaze. ‘Where has God gone?’ he shouted, ‘I’ll tell you!’ We killed him – you and me. We are all your killers! But how did we do this? How do we manage to drink the sea entirely? Who gave us the sponge to erase the horizon? [...] Don’t we hear the noise of the gravediggers burying God? Do we not smell divine putrefaction? – the gods also rot! God is dead! God is still dead! And we killed him! How can we console ourselves, murderers among murderers? The strongest and holiest thing the world had ever possessed bled whole beneath our daggers – who will cleanse this blood from us? (NIETZSCHE, 2001a, p.147-148).

In this speech, Nietzsche discusses who is to blame for the “death of God” and how much this issue has an impact on tradition. Modern man is guilty of the “death of God”, that is, men are responsible for excluding God from his guiding role in human life. With Modernity, God no longer occupies the place that belonged to him, as now the actions and decisions of the modern world no longer depend on him. Convinced of this, Nietzsche proclaims the “death of God”, “God is dead! God is still dead! And we killed him!” (2001a, p.148). The “death of God” is “the diagnosis of the explicit absence of God in the thought and practices of the modern West” (MACHADO, 1994, p. 22). It was men who killed God and for this reason God remains dead. We killed what was most sacred in humanity.

Those who murdered God were not atheists or those who do not express any faith, but rather those who profess faith and/or who conceive reality from a metaphysical conception. Religious people and theologians were mainly responsible for the death of God. The last blow dealt against God, that is, against the supersensible world, occurred when God was degraded to supreme value. This was the hardest blow against God and not the fact that God was “undemonstrable” or was seen as something accessible. This blow “[...] is not delivered by those who are idle and do not believe in God, but by believers and theologians” (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 519).

With the advent of Modernity, the tradition, which was responsible for sustaining the importance of God, enters crisis. There was a redirection, a redefinition, as God loses his importance, ceasing to be the driver of human life. This is because the metaphysical foundation was questioned and, consequently, all its ramifications. The metaphysical philosophical tradition is no longer the same; it has become a target of criticism and even skepticism (BRANDÃO, 2015).

Nietzsche’s “dead God” is an ontological-metaphysical discourse and, as a metaphysical being, is understood as a human creation, making historical action superior to divine action. As God is a human creation, it is only up to humanity to destroy him. Because this understanding that man created God, sentenced the end of God and metaphysics in Modernity – with modern man being responsible for the loss of trust in God: it suppressed the belief in a metaphysical world, originating from Christianity. Modern man replaces theology with science, dogmatic sleep with anthropological sleep, God’s point of view with man’s point of view (Cf. MACHADO, 1994, p. 23).

The “death of God” marks the end of an era and was characterized by the end of the Platonic model of thought, that is, the division of reality into two – what became known in Plato as the “theory of ideas”: having as its principle the division between a divine (transcendent) world and a human (material) world. Because, for Western thought, “truth” appears inherent to the Judeo-Christian Religion, the divine world (to the scriptures and to God, as the first cause and creator of all things), and Modernity breaks with this structure, “God died precisely to the extent that knowledge no longer needs to reach ultimate causes, man no longer needs to believe he is an immortal soul, etc.” (VATTIMO, 2007, p. 10).

Thus, the expression “death of God” is the observation of the disappearance of universal and absolutized values, the end of the ultimate foundation and metaphysics. It marks the rupture that Modernity introduces into the history of culture, that is, it replaces the desire for eternity with projects for the future and historical progress; replaces the authority of God and the church with the authority of man, considered as conscience or reason; and finally, it replaces a heavenly beatitude with an earthly well-being (Cf. MACHADO, 1994, p. 23).

The “death of God” was the great expression uttered by Nietzsche, which generated several controversies in the West, when the pretentious project of Modernity was built. However, “Nietzsche does not kill God, but limits himself to noting the absence of the divine in the culture of his time” (PENZO; GIBELLINI, 1998, p. 32.). Scarlett Marton writes a passage that illustrates this fact: “With the death of God, the philosopher names the fate of twenty centuries of Western history, apprehending it as the coming and unfolding of nihilism” (1997, p. 45). Nietzsche’s criticism of Religion and the philosopher’s announcement that “God had died” is not necessarily a statement of atheism, as if he were saying that God does not exist. Nietzsche’s criticism is aimed at Religion as a

whole. The thesis that God does not exist could not have been professed by Nietzsche (Cf. VATTIMO, 2004, p. 9).

Nietzsche's speech about the "death of God" is rather a criticism of Christian morals and values, it does not intend to prove that God does not exist, as atheists did and do. His interest is to point out the emergence and disappearance of the belief that there was a God. The "death of God" is the confirmation of the nihilism of Modernity; The fact that faith in the Christian God is no longer plausible shows that faith in God, which served as the basis for Christian morality, is undermined. The principle on which Christian man founded his existence has disappeared. It is a diagnosis of the increasing absence of God in the thought and practices of the modern West. The "death of God", in Nietzsche, is a perception, by someone endowed with a capacity for penetrating suspicion and a subtle look, of the 'greatest recent event': the devaluation of divine values (Cf. MACHADO, 1999, p. 47).

The "death of God" attests to the transformations resulting from the advent of Modernity, the question of the ultimate foundation of human life. There is a criticism of metaphysics, but, above all, there is a criticism of Western Christian culture, in which individuals based their realities and had it as a safe target. More than a criticism of Religion, the "death of God" in Nietzsche is a criticism of the Judeo-Christian cultural heritage that spread in the West and led to the weakening of life (BRANDÃO, 2015).

II. Nihilism and "death of God".

Several thinkers are associated with nihilism, such as: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Turgenev, among others. We soon realize that it is not easy to conceptualize nihilism. Therefore, we will begin our reflection on nihilism with the entry from Nicola Abbagnano's dictionary:

Term used most of the time with a polemical intention, to designate doctrines that refuse to recognize realities or values whose admission is considered important [...] in other cases, it is used to indicate the attitudes of those who deny certain moral or political values. Nietzsche was the only one who did not use this term for polemical purposes, using it to qualify his radical opposition to traditional moral values and traditional metaphysical beliefs (ABBAGNANO, 1998, p. 712).

From reading Abbagnano, it becomes clear that there are several interpretations regarding nihilism, as, depending on the author, the term takes on different connotations. Most of the time the expression nihilism is used in a pejorative way, which is acceptable, since the origin of the term is the Latin word nihil, that is, nothing.

However, we will discuss the nihilism discussed philosophically by Nietzsche, that is, a nihilism whose main characteristic is to despise any metaphysical value and aims to destroy morality: inducing all things to emptiness, removing from life any extraterrestrial meaning, that is, a extraterrestrial foundation is simply unjustifiable. However, we cannot understand nihilism only as a theory of destruction itself. We must also understand nihilism as a tendency of reformulation and/or reconstruction, that is, in the understanding of providing individuals with the possibility of creating their own values – equipped with their existential and material experiences (FERREIRA, 2013).

It was in contemporary times that Nihilism gained greater expression and importance. However, nihilism itself is not so recent, as it appears in the beginnings of Philosophy, specifically from the sophist philosopher Gorgias (485 BC to 380 BC) and develops throughout history.

Schopenhauer, despite not considering himself a nihilist, in his great work *The World as Will and Representation*, brought Nothingness back to the contemporary scene. Since its appearance, it has awakened the astonishment of those who decided to read it, including the young Nietzsche (BRANDÃO, 2015).

It was from Nietzsche that philosophical reflection on nihilism reached its peak. As we have seen, the term nihilism predates Nietzsche, however, in philosophical circles the term gains notoriety from his philosophy. It is from Nietzsche that the term nihilism, also called "philosophy of nothingness" "[...] gains its contemporary understanding [...] contemporary philosophical nihilism [...] It becomes the driving force of innovation, the breakdown of values and demystification of many theories considered 'true'" (FERREIRA, 2013, p. 30).

For Nietzsche, with the discredit of the supersensible world – of metaphysics – "belief in the Christian God lost its credibility" (NIETZSCHE, 2001, p. 233). The foundation on which Western man based his existence has declined. Faith in God lost its plausibility, nihilism was established. While tradition and its entire system were disregarded, there were impacts, that is, the "death of God" brought consequences. One of these consequences was nihilism, influencing the construction of what we call "post-modernity".

During the work *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche will discuss the abandonment of Modernity. For him, it is only possible to abandon Modernity through the radicalization of the very tendencies that compose it. This radicalization occurs through overcoming the superior values of civilization, above all, moral values. Nietzsche demonstrates that morality directs our forces in favor of specific interests, which although they appear to be ours, there is much more behind it all, they are not mere personal and subjective interests (as we will see in the next chapters). There is a whole process of building these interests, which define us socially, culturally, and even emotionally (NIETZSCHE, 2007).

In Nietzsche, the departure from Modernity is not understood as overcoming, in the sense of creating new concepts, but rather in the sense of replacing existing concepts, since overcoming is a typically modern category. Truth itself is a value that also dissolves. With the disintegration of the concept of truth, the first truth, which was God, disintegrates: God is dead. As Vattimo argues: “it is with this nihilistic conclusion that one actually leaves Modernity, according to Nietzsche, since the notion of truth no longer exists and the foundation no longer functions, given that there is no basis whatsoever for believing in the foundation, that is, in the fact that thought must found” (VATTIMO, 2007, p. 173). Thus, the transition from Modernity to post-modernity is characterized by the destruction of the foundation of absolute values and ideals, resulting from the “death of God”.

According to Nietzsche, humanity lost its absolute reference and what was left was nothingness, as it committed the greatest of all murders – the greatest of all acts: the “death of God”. As Nietzsche states:

We are all your killers! But how did we do this? How do we manage to drink the sea entirely? Who gave us the sponge to erase the horizon? What did we do untie the earth from its sun? Where does she move now? Where do we move? Away from all the suns? Don't we continually fall? Backward, sideways, forward, in all directions? Are there still 'above' and 'below'? Do we not wander, as it were, through an infinite nothingness? (NIETZSCHE, 2001a, p.148).

God – a metaphysical being – was a reference from antiquity to the medieval period, however, with Modernity this reference was lost, making humanity lost in the middle of nowhere. After the “death of God” a state of nothingness is established, that is, nihilism. God died both as a supersensible foundation and as the foundation of everything real. Thus, there is nothing left for humanity to base itself on and towards, as the supersensible world loses its imperative force and its constructive force (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p. 479). This state of nothingness is the consequence of a dependence on the foundation that has been exhausted. God's place was taken by emptiness. Apparently, Nietzsche perceives nihilism as harmful and undesirable, proposing a new beginning that is more real and consistent with human reality, however, he later proposes a positive nihilism (as we will see later).

Nietzsche proclaims himself to be the first complete nihilist, who lived nihilism to the end (NIETZSCHE, 1992, p.2-3). For him, there is a penalty that redeems us from the vastness of the cruelty of having murdered God and a way to overcome the void left by him: to become gods! There was a break in history with the realization that God had died, opening a variety of new possibilities of perspectives for humanity (NIETZSCHE, 2001).

Nietzsche perceives in the transvaluation of values (overcoming current and absolute values) the opportunity for the emergence of values based on physical reality and not on a metaphysical reality. These transvalued values (new values) would not become empty and would be exempt from classical nihilism, as they are based on natural reality and not on supernatural reality, in a physical reality and not in a metaphysical reality. To achieve this feat, Nietzsche conceives of the “beyond man” or “superman”, capable of transvaluing – transcending values (NIETZSCHE, 1998).

When we become aware that “God is dead” the process of a radical revaluation of values (considered supreme until then) begins. Individuals become aware and conceive of a story that is higher, experienced, and explicitly assumed as the reality of the real, world that we experience and experience, as opposed to a metaphysical reality. Normative values deteriorate and come to an end, there is not even a concern with the decline of values, but rather with projecting the new. According to Heidegger: “The nihilism 'of the devaluation of supreme values' has been overcome [...] The 'superman' is man, who is man from the reality determined by the will to power and for this” (HEIDEGGER, 2003, p 511). Both the “death of God” in Nietzsche and the end of metaphysics in Heidegger indicate that they are the same thing. Although Heidegger understands the “death of God” as the confirmation of the advent of nihilism and not as the advent of postmodernity (VATTIMO, 2007).

As individuals no longer depend on God, they become drivers of their own values. God – metaphysical reality – ceases to be a reference, individuals become free to build their ideals. In the scenario of multiple alternatives and uncertainties, nihilism is characterized as a path to autonomy and redemption, that is, to achieve a less fanatical and more authentic and friendly humanity, which is only possible if we gradually reduce absolute values and pretensions. We are victims of the true original sin: the metaphysical claim to be right. Affirming differences must be support against absolutes. Fighting absolute certainties and supreme values can be the key to understanding ourselves with others (Cf. VATTIMO, 2004).

III. The death of the moral God (ultimate foundation) and the resurgence of Religiosity and the human God.

Nietzsche criticizes the Christianity of his time and his daily life, “This Religion, which he attacks in a certainly caricatural form, is, without a doubt, in his eyes, the Religion of his environment [...] and so, in the final analysis, only discovers a moral God” (SUFFRIN, 1999. p. 66). Nietzsche noted the death of the moral God, the ultimate foundation, which, in our understanding, enables a much more human reading and interpretation of God, not the metaphysical God, but the human God. Not a supernatural Jesus, but a human Jesus who bequeathed to our world a message of affirmation and love for life.

We can consider Christianity (as Jesus' teaching, not what followed with Paul) as a nihilistic experience, since nihilism can be understood in a positive and negative way: both as a deconstruction of values, and as a constructor of values in a continuous and concomitant process. This is because Jesus removed and overcame values that were once absolute, created and/or recreated values, norms, culture..., or even re-signified existing values, which in practice would be the authentic Christian experience, that is, true Christianity (BRANDÃO, 2015).

The revival that the religious phenomenon has been undergoing in the 21st century (ALVES, 2006) puts Nietzsche back in the spotlight, since his thinking remains current, even if in a process of rumination and consideration. For the German philosopher, God and, in a certain way, Religion would not resist the advance of Modernity. However, the conception of Religion has been given new meaning, as the angle from which we viewed Religion became multiple, that is, Religion is seen from different angles. There is a substantial advance in thinking about Religion with the advent of the sciences of Religion, with a convergence in understanding Religion in an eclectic, non-absolutized way: "Philosophical or scientific truth and the truth of faith, ultimately, find their unity and their reason of being, beyond the 'different faces of truth'" (SUSIN, 2001, p. 3).

Segundo Brandão (2015), religion did not retract in post-modernity, it re-signified itself. Apparently, in this aspect, Nietzsche was correct: Religion and the notion of God have undergone a profound change, however, the philosopher was also wrong, as Religion is far from its end and has not lost its importance, since the religious phenomenon began to be interpreted and understood in a transdisciplinary, eclectic and multi-angled way, overcoming the simplistic notion of what Religion and/or religious experience is.

Nietzsche harshly criticized the culture of his time, which is a culture based on Christian ideas. He focused his criticism on Christian values and morals; however, he observed Religion, almost exclusively, from a single angle, a single perspective. Trying to define Religion from a single perspective and angle is a mistake that some of the thinkers who reflected on it made, including Nietzsche.

Religion presents itself to individuals from different angles, the interpretation of religion will be relative to the place that the thinking being is analyzing and under what psychic, social and historical conditions he is subjected, because "Interpretation, even more than information, tells us what something is. This is certainly the case with Religion [...] Religion is a result of perspective and can be seen from infinite and opposing angles" (PADEN, 2001, p. 13).

Therefore, the masters of suspicion: Freud, Marx and Nietzsche seem to have made a mistake in the way they treated and sentenced Religion in their times. They had an overly normative attitude towards religion, they did not systematically research the way that culture and religion are intertwined. "These are thinkers who not only criticized religion, but also saw it as a disease, both for the individual and for humanity. More than superfluous, religiosity would thus be highly harmful to human authenticity" (CRUZ, 2004, p. 46).

However, it is undeniable that both made a valuable contribution to the understanding of Religion, however, it was just one of the countless possible angles from which to observe the religious phenomenon. Like psychoanalysis, Carl G. Jung approached Religion in a completely different way than Freud. He highlights the role of Religion in the development of symbols in cultures and in the formative process of the collective unconscious of human groups, thus, religious traditions, and even religious dogmas and symbols, attest to profound truths of the human psyche. Due to this theory, Jung today receives great attention in the religious scenario (Cf. CRUZ, 2004), being a psychoanalyst who sees Religion from a completely different angle from the angle that Freud observed it, in both cases we are talking about psychoanalysts, from a same science, who see Religion differently.

Nietzsche's contribution in "prophesying" what was to come with his speech about the "death of God" is undeniable, enabling us to see the religious phenomenon separate from a metaphysical conception, as well as his contribution in problematizing values and morality in all its criticisms of the Christian Religion that developed in the West: there are no absolute values, the truth is not universal and unique. Nietzsche gave us greater conditions to rethink the religious phenomenon and overcome countless contradictions. We overcome the moral God and ultimate foundation with a more human and historical conception of God (BRANDÃO, 2015).

Several authors have rethought Religion and are reflecting the religious phenomenon, in a way that gives sustainability to the maintenance of Religion as an integral and essential part of human life. Because, even with the "end" of metaphysics, inaugurated by Nietzsche, as Vattimo (2007) argues, and the advent of postmodernity; even with the decline of absolute and universal values and truths; Even with all the technical-scientific advances, Religion continues to be vital for humanity, its maintenance and advancement being noticeable today, in all spheres of human life.

The "death of God" was extremely important for this inversion of values, it was the "[...] denial and devaluation of one of the most highly placed values [...]" (GONÇALVES, 2012, p. 64). Nietzsche's philosophy of criticizing metaphysics, values and absolute truths brought benefits to postmodern society, especially regarding religious practices. Since, with the advent of nihilism, marked by the absence of meaning, "this God-ultimate foundation, which is the metaphysical structure of reality, is no longer sustainable, a belief in God becomes possible again" (NIETZSCHE, 2004, p. 12). A more human and less moralizing God, a God who spreads solidarity

among men and not a vigilant and punitive God, who denies this life to the detriment of a full life in the afterlife. A God of this world, capable of valuing life and love between people, who provides social interaction and signifies, even partially, or even fully, human life and conduct.

The “death of God” discourse is in no way characterized as an apology for atheism. Nietzsche himself goes so far as to state that “Ultimately, only the moral God is overcome” (GONÇALVES, 2012, p. 69), reminding us that Nietzsche’s philosophy did not set out to defend atheism, but rather to deny the values and Christian morality, until then established as absolute truth. For the philosopher, there is no single and absolute foundation for reality. It is impossible to point to Nietzsche as the reproducer of atheistic discourse, that is, complete denial of the existence of God and/or gods, although the philosopher himself indicates that the existence of other gods is possible (GONÇALVES, 2012). If Nietzsche had pointed out atheism as a way of transvaluing values, or if he had announced that belief in God would disappear, it would have been a brutal mistake. In fact, belief in God has diminished, that is, belief in the ultimate foundational God and in the moral God, however, belief in God (a God historically and socially accepted in different segments of society, who metamorphoses through subjective experiences) persists and religiosity gains strength in post-modernity. The “death of God” discourse favors a new search for the religious dimension (BRANDÃO, 2015).

The announcement of the “death of God” does not necessarily imply the end of the religious experience nor does it definitively end the discourse regarding Religion. With the abandonment of the notion of foundation and, consequently, the advent of postmodernity, individuals seek meaning for their existence in Religion. The return of the religious is a peculiar and essential mark of the religious experience itself (DERRIDA; VATTIMO, 1995, p. 76 - 77).

The “death of God” was something positive because the moral God is the one who dies. Therefore, religious experience continues its existence exercising its importance for humanity. What is happening is the decline of moral and institutional religions and not of religiosity: “[...] from within Christian and Catholic society in Europe, it is easy to see that there are very few who observe the commandments of official Christian morality. What is dead, in a deeper sense, are ‘moral’ religions as a guarantee of the rational order of the world” (VATTIMO, 2009, s/p). Institutional Religion persists and religiosity is expanding in much of the world, as we have seen, even if unconsciously.

IV. Conclusion

We can undoubtedly say that Nietzsche's theory about the “death of God” triggered a series of profound reflections on the nature of religion and moral values in society. Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and traditional morality paved the way for a more pluralistic and eclectic understanding of religion, recognizing its resignification over time and in different cultural contexts. Although we strongly argue that Nietzsche was wrong to predict the total disappearance of religion, based, of course, on his discourse on the metaphor of the “death of God”, his provocative analysis contributed to a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the religious phenomenon. Furthermore, by questioning the absolute metaphysical and moral foundations, Nietzsche allowed an opening for the search for a more human and historical spirituality and/or religiosity, causing profound impacts on Religion, or religious experiences, such as an increasingly individualized religiosity, personalized and separated from traditional religious institutions.

However, it is worth highlighting that even with the decline of moral and institutional religions, what we call Institutional or traditional Religion, does not mean the end of religiosity, otherwise, what we perceive and observe is a transformation and adaptation of this fundamental dimension of human experience. The “death of God” discourse, therefore, enabled a review of traditional values and an opening to new interpretations and meanings of religion in the postmodern era. Therefore, the “death of God” can be seen as a catalyst for a renewal and enrichment of religious experience, providing a more flexible and inclusive understanding of spirituality in the contemporary world.

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