

Gabriela Blebea Nicolae
(Coordonator)

Credința
în epoca secularizării

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(coordonator)**

**CREDINȚA
ÎN EPOCA SECULARIZĂRII**



Editura
ARCB

2015

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Tehnoredactare și copertă: Iulia Cojocariu

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României

Credința în epoca secularizării / coord., pref.: Gabriela Blebea

Nicolae. –

București : Editura Arhiepiscopiei Romano-Catolice, 2015

ISBN 978-606-728-025-8

I. Blebea-Nicolae, Gabriela (coord. ; pref.)

348.73(498)

282:338

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www.editura-arcb.ro

Pentru comenzi prin poștă sau on-line:
Librăria Sf. Iosif
Str. G-ral Berthelot 19, sector 1, București
Tel., fax: 021-201 54 75
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Cuvânt înainte

Gabriela BLEBEA NICOLAE*

În 22 și 23 noiembrie 2013, la Facultatea de Teologie Romano-Catolică din cadrul Universității București, a avut loc conferința *Credința în epoca secularizării*. În aceeași perioadă, în mai multe capitale din Europa, au avut loc conferințe în care se discutau „Rupturile dintre Biserică și oameni” (*Disjunctions between Church and People*), temă inițiată în cadrul unui proiect care a presupus mai multe întâlniri cu Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova și George F. McLean. Sufletul acestor acțiuni, traduse în inițiativa unor conferințe și publicații, a fost și de data asta George McLean secondat de Hu Yeping.

La conferința de la București s-au înscris peste 60 de participanți.

Dintre cei prezenți o parte din ei și-au publicat lucrările în volumul *Faith and Secularization - A Romanian Narrative*, al IX-lea volum din *Romanian Philosophical Studies* care corespunde cu volumul VII din *Christian Philosophical Studies*. Volumul a apărut în 2014, la Washington și a fost coordonat de Wilhelm Dancă. Contributorii la acel volum sunt Wilhelm Tauwinkl, Violeta Barbu, Raluca Bigu, Gelu Sabău, Marius Silveșan, Mihai Maci, Wilhelm Dancă și subsemnata.

Pentru verificarea textelor în limba română din prezentul volum îi mulțumesc mai ales Danielei Varvara. Îi mulțumesc Ioanei Zirra pentru revizuirea textelor în limba engleză. Le mulțumesc și Ioanei Iliescu și Martei Andro pentru corectări și corecturi. Iuliei Cojocariu, căreia îi foarte mulțumesc, i se datorează tehnoredactarea și corectarea finală a întregului volum. Le mulțumesc tuturor celor care au citit lucrările pentru selecția lor în *peer review*. Nu în ultimul rând, îi mulțumesc părintelui profesor Wilhelm Dancă, fără susținerea căruia volumul de față nu ar fi fost posibil.

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Feuerbach, Xenophanes and the too human God

David TORRIJOS-CASTRILLEJO*

Abstract

Feuerbach is known for unmasking the concept of God insofar as he solved it in a celestial idealization of the human essence. Xenophanes already rejected the popular idea of gods, which were described as deified human beings. Our purpose is to compare the process followed by the two thinkers, because both set the human as the focus of their arguments. Xenophanes' divinity retained some aspects in common with humans and such a God, despite his being different from men and his transcendence, is so human that he cannot be taken as a rival of man. Ultimately, one should point out how Christianity fits into this humanistic line of understanding God and His relationship with man.

Keywords: God, atheism, Greek religion, human, humanism, alienation, anthropomorphism

In my contribution I want to relate two thinkers who share a sharp critique of the religion in which they are inserted and so may be taken as models of two different types of „secularization“. Both Feuerbach and Xenophanes follow a similar line, because they believe that their respective religions contain a tacit anthropomorphism¹. Their goal is, so to speak, „unmasking“ anthropomorphism, but the results are very different. Feuerbach believed that Christian anthropomorphism leads to the „alienation“ of man, to his destruction. In line with this approach, contemporary atheism and many of the most violent secularizing movements in the present, which fight against the Judeo-Christian heritage, have come to see in God the unbearable enemy of the human being. On the contrary, Xenophanes believes that anthropomorphism is harmful to religion as such, so he is revealed as a deeply religious

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¹ Therefore, Feuerbach could be considered as „a modern Xenophanes“, as says J. LESHER, „Xenophanes“, in E. N. ZALTA (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/xenophanes/>>: „Although there may be no direct line of influence, we may also consider Feuerbach's critique of religious belief as a 'projection' of human attributes [...]“.

and theistic thinker. We hope that this discussion will shed some light on the phenomenon of secularization and the different ways of tackling it. This path can be helpful for dialogue between theists and postmodern atheists, who no longer defend humanism and have not only proclaimed God's death but also man's death.

We will start with Feuerbach because his criticism against religion is maybe better known than Xenophanes' philosophy and ancient thought usually is—as we will see—strongly determined by various tacitly accepted modern presumptions. Only later we come to Xenophanes and finally to Christianity. Another reason for this ahistorical, puzzling order is the core of my proposal: an invitation to philosophy to come back to a more commonsensical way of thinking than the modern one. The latter one already revealed us all its possibilities and, insofar as it leads to atheism and then to the annihilation of the human, it is not able to guide humanity to a peaceful future. Thus, contemporary philosophy should learn from the ancient one to put God at the center of reality, because He is not an adversary of the society nor is He a rival for individual man but the guarantor for men's happiness. So Christianity, which is a perennial guide even for modern societies, incorporates all the positive aspects of ancient thinking and the possibility to realize them in a practical way.

Feuerbach

The criticism of Feuerbach against Christianity does not begin directly from his relationship with it, but rather from the opposition to the philosophy of Hegel². Hegel had understood the human being as a moment of divine being, so that Feuerbach can say: „On this process of projecting self outwards rests also the Hegelian speculative doctrine, according to which *man's* consciousness of God is the *self*-consciousness of God. [...] The true statement is this: man's knowledge of God is man's knowledge of himself, of his own nature“³. Indeed, this is the core of Feuerbach's critique of

² M. W. WARTOFSKY, *Feuerbach*, Cambridge UP, New York 1977, 198: „*The Essence of Christianity* is the direct outcome and the culmination of the *Critique of Hegelian Philosophy*. Without this context, much of its significance is lost“.

³ L. FEUERBACH, *The Essence of Christianity*, translated by M. Evans, J. Chapman, London 1854, 224, 228; *idem*, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, O. Wigand, Leipzig 1841, 18, note: „Wenn daher in der hegel'schen

religion: religion is nothing but the projection of man's being in an imagined shadow, God. All the traits that characterize the divine being as presented by religions can also be found in the human being; the only difference is that in God they are sublimated, exalted⁴. Feuerbach speaks not only about the sublimation of man's being, but also about a certain purification. This is the liberation of man from the constraints imposed by his finiteness. Now, is man's finiteness itself a bad thing? To answer this question we have to go back to Hegel. According to him, real men are particular manifestations of the divine, which is universal. So what religion calls „sin“ is nothing more than finiteness⁵. Hence Feuerbach conceives God as a bundle of universal characteristics, where no particular attribute has a place; so that the concept of God repels all determination.

Moreover, what man considers better for him is just what he attributes to God. For this reason, according to Feuerbach, in order to produce the referred sublimation, an unfulfilled desire is also necessary. The concept of God is the counterpart of that to which man aspires to but does not achieve⁶. Thus, on one hand, the man loves a non-existent entity, which is only the emptying of all human attributes via the universal, but, on the other hand, he is frustrated because he meets his own desires by projecting them

Religionsphilosophie auf dem Standpunkt der mystisch-speculativen Vernunft der oberste Grundsatz der ist: 'das Wissen des Menschen von Gott ist das Wissen Gottes von sich selbst', so gilt dagegen hier auf dem Standpunkt der natürlichen Vernunft der entgegengesetzte Grundsatz: das Wissen des Menschen von Gott ist das Wissen des Menschen von sich selbst".

⁴ „[...] Das göttliche Wesen ist nichts andres als das menschliche Wesen oder besser: das Wesen des Menschen, gereinigt, befreit von den Schranken des individuellen Menschen“ (L. FEUERBACH, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, op. cit., 20). *Idem*, *Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion: nebst Zusätzen und Anmerkungen*, O. Wigand, Leipzig, 1851, 23-24: „[...] meine Ansicht oder Lehre, nach welcher das Geheimnis der Theologie die Anthropologie ist, nach welcher das Wesen der Religion, sowohl subjectiv als objectiv nichts Anderes offenbart und ausdrückt als das Wesen des Menschen“.

⁵ See G. W. F. HEGEL, *Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Religion*, Werke 2, vol. 12, Duncker und Humblot, Berlin 1832, 211-212. L. FEUERBACH, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, op. cit., 44: „Der Widerspruch der Sünde mit Gott ist daher nur der Widerspruch des individuellen Menschen mit seinem Wesen“.

⁶ See E. COLOMER, *El Pensamiento alemán de Kant a Heidegger*, Herder, Barcelona 1990, 102.

onto a being that only is his very essence set out of him. This phenomenon is the so-called „alienation“. Man becomes strange to himself, because the more he goes out of himself to worship this fictitious God, the more he will be betraying his own essence and therefore voiding himself⁷. God is therefore a destructive concept to man and should be banished to extract from it the only beneficial thing in it, namely, human nature. Man should be the only god that man should worship⁸.

Xenophanes

Although Homeric criticism of religion in general and particularly of anthropomorphism is a constant of Greek thought from its birth, Xenophanes not only insisted more than other thinkers on this point, but also followed a similar way to that followed by Feuerbach. For example, Heraclitus openly attacked Homer (DK⁹ 22 B 42, Graham¹⁰ 25) and Empedocles criticizes anthropomorphism saying that a spherical shape is more appropriate for the god than a human form (DK 31 B 29, Graham 57). This line of argumentation would be followed by Plato, who also believed the sphere more divine than other figures (*Tim.*, 33b-34b). The founder of the Academy (*Resp.*, II, 377e-378e) assumed also another point criticized by Xenophanes, namely, immorality attributed to gods (DK 21 B 11, 12, Graham 29, 30).

However, Xenophanes attracts our attention because he agrees with Feuerbach to see Homer's description of gods as somewhat superhuman men. There are many fragments of his work in which he expresses a critique of anthropomorphism. According to him, the Greeks believed that gods were like them and therefore they imagined them with bodies similar to theirs and in fact they erected

⁷ L. FEUERBACH, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, op. cit., 30: „Um Gott zu bereichern, muß der Mensch arm werden; damit Gott Alles sei, der Mensch nichts sein [...]. Je ähnlicher daher Gott in der Wahrheit dem Menschen ist, desto unähnlicher wird der Mensch Gott gemacht oder erscheint er sich selbst. Allein diese Selbstverneigung ist nur Selbstbejahung“. See M. CABADA, *El humanismo premarxista de L. Feuerbach*, BAC, Madrid 1975, 53-55.

⁸ See L. FEUERBACH, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, op. cit., 370.

⁹ DK = H. DIELS und W. KRANZ, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Weidmann, Berlin 1951-75.

¹⁰ Graham = D. H. GRAHAM, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge UP., Cambridge 2010. For the Greek texts, I use Graham's translation.

anthropomorphic sculptures to venerate them: „But mortals think gods are begotten, and have the clothing, voice, and body of mortals“ (DK 21 B 14, Graham 31). So he throws an ironical hypothesis, to show the absurdity of their conduct: „Now if cattle, <horses> or lions had hands and were to draw with their hands and perform works like men, horses like horses and cattle like cattle would draw the forms of gods, and make their bodies just like the body <each of them> had“ (DK 21 B 15, Graham 32). If animals could have a religion, they would also worship their own idealized image. Xenophanes extends his argument and says that each people believed the gods alike in appearance to itself: „Africans <say their gods are> snub-nosed and black, Thracians blue-eyed and red-haired“ (DK 21 B 16, Graham 33).

In short, Xenophanes mainly criticized the anthropomorphic dimension of Greek religion. However, unlike Feuerbach, he does believe that he must continue to speak about God. Xenophanes, as almost all Greek philosophers, is not an „atheist“ thinker. In fact, his philosophical itinerary led him not to deny the existence of divinity, but to rethink the discourse about the divine. According to Xenophanes, divinity cannot be conceived starting from imaginary stories, but our thoughts about it must be founded on philosophical truths acquired by formal reasoning¹¹. This is the approach to the divine proposed by theistic philosophers. Thus, Xenophanes speaks about a God devoid of the anthropomorphic traits that are characteristic to Greek mythology: „One God, greatest among gods and men, not at all like to mortals in body nor in thought“ (DK 21 B 23, Graham 35). However, he describes the deity as being characterized by thought and knowledge: „All of him sees, all thinks, all hears“ (DK 21 B 24, Graham 36). Also this God has great power, but does not act going around like the Olympian gods but he is motionless and simultaneously able to influence any part of the universe: „He remains ever in the same place moving not at all, nor is it appropriate for him to flit now here, now here“ (DK 21 B 26, Graham 38). „But without any toil he shakes all things by the thought of his mind“ (DK 21 B 25, Graham 37).

¹¹ J. H. LESHER, *Xenophanes of Colophon*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1992, 114-119. DK 21 B 25, Graham 37 speaks for some cosmological causality of God. Xenophanes' God is a cosmic God and a precedent of Anaxagoras' and Socrates' one; thus, such a statement about the divinity is philosophical.

Such sketchy data concerning Xenophanes' thought give rise to a significant reflection. As mentioned, the philosopher comes to these formulations of the divinity conceiving it as very different from the Olympian gods. However, the result of his research still has many common points with the Homeric thought. Actually, Homer greatly emphasized the enormous difference between gods and men through the distinction between immortal and mortal. On the other hand, Homer himself was the first who gave considerable importance to the two main factors of Xenophanes' divinity, namely, knowledge and power. This could make us think that both properties are residues of an anthropomorphic image of the divine. In short, it might seem to us that the divinity of Xenophanes is still „all too human“, in Nietzsche's words. However, I think such a judgment about his doctrine would be too simple.

Some interpreters of the birth of philosophy in the Greek world have discerned two unilateral stages, paradigmatically exemplified with the concepts of „myth“ and „logos“, which would mutually exclude each other. This opposition cannot be solved just formally, i.e. showing the rational elements present in the mythical tale and simultaneously the fanciful and emotional elements that remain in scientific discourse¹². In fact, this antagonism would also have an important doctrinal feature. Many philosophers would agree with Xenophanes in ascribing to the divinity some specific characteristics of human beings, such as knowledge and deliberate action. Is this, as Feuerbach intended, mere anthropomorphism? So we should think, according to some commentators such as Frankfort, who characterized the personal elements attributed to divinity by mythical thinking as typical effects of an imaginative and poetic way of understanding reality; in opposition to this, rational and scientific understanding of the world eliminates all personal and anthropomorphic features and explains nature by blind causes: „[...] for modern, scientific man as regards the phenomenal world is primarily an 'It'; for ancient—and so for

¹² This was done, for example, by Kirk with myth and by Kühn and Barbour with science: see T. S. KUHN, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1962; G. S. KIRK, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, Penguin, London 1974; I. G. BARBOUR, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms. A comparative study in science & religion*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1974.

primitive—man it is a ‘Thou’¹³. However, it is dubitable that the personal status of divinity is purely the result of a series of „religious feelings“.

Theistic philosophers do not understand their discussion about the divinity as a religious discourse. Rather, they simply study reality and analyze it using formal and rational methods, i.e. universally achievable to any human being. At the end of their way, they name divine what they have found. This is how W. Jaeger, speaking about Anaximander, summarizes the respective approach:

He cannot begin with the concept of God or the Divine, but starts with experience and the rational conclusions based on it. Having arrived in this way at the conception of a first cause, the predicates of which are equal to those which earlier religious belief used to attribute to the gods, he takes the last step, which is the identification of the highest principle with the Divine. This method was followed by ancient philosophers of later centuries¹⁴.

When they attribute „mind“ or „intelligence“ to this ultimate principle of sensible things, they are not making a concession to their innermost feelings nor to the religious traditions of their people. On the contrary, these philosophers considered scientifically more reasonable to suppose that the first principle is intelligent and capable of acting deliberately. In short, that the ultimate principles of things must be material entities is a philosophical assumption to be proved. In any case, the story of the birth of philosophy does not allow us to conclude that Greek philosophers believed that all rational inquiry compels us to assume purely material causes as definitive. Indeed, several philosophers have thought that the variety, the order and the beauty of the world would be better explained by one or more intelligent causes, plus all the irrational causes, than only by the sum of blind causes. Additionally, it would be difficult to explain that the most valuable

¹³ H. and H. A. FRANKFORT, „Myth and Reality“, in: H. and H. A. FRANKFORT, J. A. WILSON, T. JACOBSEN, W. A. IRWIN (ed.), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1965, 4.

¹⁴ W. JAEGER, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, Clarendon, Oxford 1948, 203, note 44.

reality of the world, namely, intelligence and will, would be absent from the first cause.

We might think that philosophers are opening a new field, essentially different from religion. This phenomenon could be understood as being based on Feuerbach's reflections, according to which there would be a contradiction between God's metaphysical predicates and his personal characteristics. According to him, God would be, firstly, omniscient, eternal, omnipotent, etc., but on the other hand, he would also be compassionate and would take care of men¹⁵. Although Feuerbach claims that this contradiction belongs to the Christian concept of God as theology designed it, in fact, Christians did not consider the idea of a providential and merciful love of God toward man as uniquely belonging to them; hence we find similar doctrines not only in other religious groups but also among philosophers.

Thus, if we apply Feuerbach's consideration to the Greek world, we might think that philosophers had begun to pervert the notion of divinity with a series of empty metaphysical claims, but this could not but get them away from truly religious divinity, which would primarily establish a personal relationship to men. However, such an interpretation is not compatible with the evidence, because we have examples such as Plato, who, in the *Timaeus* and in the *Laws*, justifies divine providence and God's loving care of men precisely because of the „metaphysical“ properties of divinity.

Anyway, there were in fact conflicts between philosophy and popular religion and even civil religion as officially practiced in the polis. Philosophy produced a crisis in Greek religion and forced it to rethink its mythical narrative and worship. Mainly, in order to achieve what they thought was the truly religious attitude,

¹⁵ V. A. HARVEY, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1995, 124-125: „The most fundamental intellectual contradiction of Christian theology is two-fold, Feuerbach contended, in that it attempts to combine in one notion of God two mutually incompatible types of predicates metaphysical, on the one hand, and personal, on the other and then rationalizes the resulting contradictions with the assertion that the divine being is incomprehensible to the human intellect. On the one hand, the divine being is said to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and impassible; on the other hand, this God is a loving and compassionate being who is moved by human suffering“.

philosophers tried to modify religion by emphasizing points that were relegated to a second place in the popular mind: knowledge about the divinity and moral action¹⁶. In this sense, we could take Greek philosophy as a secularizing factor—broadly understand—, because it signifies a criticism of the established religion, marks limitations for it and evaluates its actions. However, it should be noted that philosophy normally represents a favorable movement to religion, although it does not understand it in the same way as traditional thinking.

Certainly, the repercussion of philosophical ideas on the majority of the population must have been very limited and we cannot appreciate great changes in this regard. For this reason, we can speak of an anomaly. If we can put it so, the religion proposed by philosophers is devoid of anchoring in a society where it can be lived—or this society is reduced to the philosophical community—and it lacks ritual elements that help to humanize religion. This is quite normal, because the divinity taught by philosophers, despite its care of men, is not in relationship with them *in a human way*. By raising the image of God in such a way, philosophers had left Him too much out of the reach of human beings. It is true that the deity mentioned by philosophers was more humane than the Homeric deity, who acted capriciously and only cared for certain men arbitrarily chosen or because there existed certain national links; on the contrary, „the God of the philosophers“ take care of all men and of the universe as a whole. However, the main way to respond to this divine care is moral conduct and intellectual contemplation. The lack of a ritual worship appears to reduce the possibility of personal contact with the divine, since there are no more physical places or determinate times to meet the divinity. If, according to Xenophanes, Zeus has no human form and, in the words of

¹⁶ G. VLASTOS, „Theology and Philosophy in Early Greek Thought“, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1952) 121-122: „[...] it is its [of pre-Socratic philosophy] peculiar genius to transpose a religious idea into the medium of natural inquiry, *transforming, but not destroying*, its associated religious values“ (my italics). Obviously, among Greek philosophers there are a lot of nuances and variations. For example, Epicurus believed that knowledge about nature leads the philosopher to know the indolence of the gods and that they do not care about men. Socrates, however, thought moral action and philosophical teaching as a service to divinity. Subsequently, for example Theophrastus, in his *De pietate*, states that the deep sense of religious worship is ethical righteousness.

Aristotle, the cosmos is the temple where he lives¹⁷, men cannot adore him so easily and naturally as they did when burning incense in front of his effigy placed on the sanctuary.

Despite these limitations of the results reached by the philosophers, one could say with one interpreter¹⁸ that their findings, rather than a denial of religion as such, are maybe perfecting it by purifying the mythological elements and formulating it in a universal way, making it more credible and, in that sense, also more human. Nevertheless, the limitations of their approach placed the history of European thinking in a positive crisis, which favored the introduction of Christianity. In this sense, classical philosophy can be viewed as a true *praeparatio evangelica*¹⁹.

Christianity

Greek thinkers move in a scheme that does not distinguish, as subsequently it will happen, between philosophical theology and

¹⁷ *De philosophia*, ed. Ross, fr. 14b.

¹⁸ E. BERTI, *In principio era la meraviglia. Le grandi questioni della filosofia antica*, Laterza, Bari 2007, 79: *Socrate da un lato non rinnega la religione ufficiale – a cui renderà omaggio anche in punto di morte, raccomandando di sacrificare un gallo ad Asclepio – ; dall'altro, mostra di avere un concetto di dio molto più raffinato e spirituale, cioè di concepire il dio come l'unico sapiente e quindi come infinitamente superiore all'uomo, un dio che non pretende dall'uomo un culto esteriore ma una fedeltà interiore, un dio che come unico precetto impone all'uomo la ricerca della verità e della virtù, ovvero la „cura della propria anima“. Per testimoniare la sua fedeltà a un tale dio, Socrate non esitò ad affrontare la morte* (my italics).

¹⁹ G. DEL POZO ABEJÓN, „La síntesis cristiana de fe y razón: el modelo de santo Tomás de Aquino“, *Revista española de teología* 68 (2008) 265. Del Pozo emphasizes the anguish that Aquinas attributed to the situation of Greek thinkers, who are devoid of revelation, even directed at her. TOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 48: *Propter has autem et huiusmodi rationes, Alexander et Averroes posuerunt ultimam hominis felicitatem non esse in cognitione humana, quae est per scientias speculativas, sed per continuationem cum substantia separata, quam esse credebant possibilem homini in hac vita. Quia vero Aristoteles vidit quod non est alia cognitio hominis in hac vita quam per scientias speculativas, posuit hominem non consequi felicitatem perfectam, sed suo modo. In quo satis apparet quantam angustiam patiebantur hinc inde eorum praeclara ingenia. A quibus angustiis liberabimur si ponamus, secundum probationes praemissas, hominem ad veram felicitatem post hanc vitam pervenire posse, anima hominis immortalis existente in quo statu anima intelliget per modum quo intelligunt substantiae separatae, sicut in secundo huius operis ostensum est* (my italics).

revealed theology, but there is only a incipient differentiation between poetical and philosophical discussion about gods. Neither is there separation between religion and the state in the Greek world, although in the Roman one this distinction begins to break through, because of the recognition of several cults other than Roman traditional religion.

With the emergence of Christianity, these distinctions are particularly important. The difference between religion and the state is interesting, but, from the philosophical point of view, the distinction between revealed theology and natural theology attracts our attention in the first place. Philosophers could not estimate myths as true exponents of revealed theology because the Greeks lacked the concept of revelation as understood in the Judeo-Christian world. Christians, however, give the same credence to faith as to philosophy. They cannot neglect revelation as a genuine source of truth; hence some Church Fathers chose to describe Christian thought as „philosophy“ rather than using the characteristic terms of the religious world of the time (like the term „theology“, which was also linked to pagan religious writings)²⁰.

Therefore, if one can broadly speak about „secularization“ from the point of view of the rational judgment on the understanding of God, it is not as possible to do so among Christians as it was in the Greek world. For Christians there are two modes of speculative rationality, both valid. Philosophy can do its work in complete freedom and not have to analyze revealed doctrines. Greek philosophers felt an obligation to review the myths to attain something salvageable from them. Both Hegel and Feuerbach act similarly to Christianity, looking for a way to make it intelligible in terms of their own philosophical premises. However, the methodology followed by Christianity for their own „enlightenment“ cannot consider its narrative as a collection of mere mythological stories, whose profound truth must be unraveled. The method of approach to Christian faith supports a new type of rationality that is the theological rationality and is based on the admission of a Revelation. Philosophy can study the

²⁰ See J. RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis*, Paulinus, Bonn 2006, 29; *idem*, *Einführung in das Christentum. Vorlesungen über das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis*, Kösel, München 2001, 103.

inherent rationality within the possibility that God is revealed through His activity in history, but is not in a position to judge whether or not the fact has occurred. Also, it can examine the (logical or ontological) non-impossibility of the propositions of faith, although it cannot verify them²¹. By contrast, theological rationality comes from the assent to the fact of revelation and the subsequent agreement with its contents, and then, based on the veracity of its judgments, it rationally examines them and shows their intimate coherence.

In my opinion, this positive acceptance of human knowledge capacities responds to the essence of Christianity as such, while it admits the possibility of God's historical intervention. The logic of the Incarnation promotes peaceful approval of the human, without conceiving it as an obstacle to the transcendence of the divine. This nuclear mystery of Christianity presupposes the affirmation of the human as truly human and of the divine as truly divine. It is not necessary for any of these factors to be denied in order to give priority to the other, because both are fully observed. On the one hand, Christianity inherited from the Old Testament tradition an understanding of divinity, which is transcendent, unconquerable, not subject to the will of man, but is the owner of all things and thus also the owner of the human being. No wonder that, even before Christ, many Jews were sympathetic to philosophical ideas. They shared with the philosophers not only a very little anthropomorphic image of God, but also the explicit rejection of idolatry and polytheistic worship. However, they also posited as necessary a loving God, Providence and so on, which, as for many Greek philosophers, did not contradict divine transcendence.

Christians entirely accept Jewish faith in the one God but they introduce a significant change in men's relationship with Him. The faith of Israel could support a much more intense religious relationship with God than that of the philosophers because, despite his transcendence, He had made the decision to link Himself to a people and their response to Him was not only in their moral conduct but also through worship. Now Christians claim that Israel's God intends to enter a relationship with all men, but, unlike the philosophers, Christians do provide new human links between

²¹ TOMA DE AQUINO, *Super De Trinitate*, pars 1 q. 2 a. 3 in c.

them, able to consolidate historically a true religion. Mainly, from this moment on, all men can establish a relationship with God because He became man. Maintaining a personal relationship with the man Jesus means entering into a relationship with the universal God. Jesus becomes a way to a God, which is transcendent, infinite, eternal, omniscient, etc.; but this is a human way, because one should only meet a man. It is therefore crucial for Christians to affirm the humanity of Jesus as such, because, indeed, it is the condition that can produce a religious contact with the unattainable God. On the other hand, they must also confess the divinity of this person we meet in the man Jesus, since otherwise the human relationship with him would not provide direct access to God.

Jesus' humanity, far from being a „metaphor“ to express the constant projection of humanity on God, as Feuerbach thought²², is authentic humanity. Contrary to the claims of the German philosopher, Christianity is based on the simultaneous affirmation of both poles, namely, God and man. It is not a union of contradictory realities. The content of the Christian faith, against all the attempts to interpret it otherwise than the ways reiterated since antiquity, implies the decided statement of non incompatibility between both poles.

Conclusion: Secularization and a New, but Theistic Humanism

I would like to conclude these reflections bringing back two works which deal with contemporary humanism regarding atheism. First, the well-known work of Henri de Lubac, whose conclusion is that atheism is able to build a civilization but such civilization would be inhumane²³. De Lubac stated the failure of the project initiated by Feuerbach, who believed that the death of God was necessary for men's life. Secondly, the recent book written by Rémi Brague, who corrects de Lubac, saying that he was too optimistic. In fact, atheism, according to Brague, can only lead to the annihilation of man²⁴.

²² L. FEUERBACH, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, op. cit., 49: „Die Incarnation ist nichts andres als die thatsächliche sinnliche Erscheinung von der menschlichen Natur Gottes“.

²³ H. DE LUBAC, *Le Drame de l'athéisme athée*, Spes, Paris 1944.

²⁴ R. BRAGUE, *Le propre de l'homme. Sur une légitimité menacée*, Flammarion, Paris 2013, 36.

Thus, the French scholar believes that only a theistic approach can be humanist.

Naturally, both theses could be subject to discussion, but I think they stimulate our thinking. As already stated, Christianity is itself a factor of secularization of thought and society in a certain way. It is a model of secularization that is sympathetic to theistic ideas, as also classical thought largely was. By contrast, a philosopher like Hegel or Feuerbach would paradoxically use a veiled survival of non-secularized thought characteristic of the ancient world, in which there are not marked boundaries between theology and philosophy but a respective freedom for both spheres. In this sense, none of the two models—neither the Greek one, nor a philosophy that is conceived as the ultimate authority of judgment—fit perfectly into a Christian society.

Given these positions, in Christian Europe, although not without many factual and historical difficulties, precisely at the time the university was invented, philosophy and theology were established in different faculties. As I see it, the discrimination between the two areas is beneficial but does not have to entail either the denial of God's existence among philosophers or the abandonment of reason by theologians. Rather, it is possible to create a friendly collaboration between the two disciplines if it is true, as some think, that the „God of the philosophers“ is the „God of the Christians“²⁵.

²⁵ J. J. ESCANDELL, „Book Review of José María Barrio, *El Dios de los filósofos. Curso básico de filosofía*, Colección libros de bolsillo n° 254. Madrid: Rialp 2013, 251 pp. ISBN: 978-84-3214-250-5“, *Espíritu* 62 (2013) 212-213: „En realidad, el verdadero creyente, el que se ordena al verdadero Dios, al adorarlo no puede sino adorar al Motor Inmóvil. El Dios que nace de una mujer, que predica en Palestina durante tres años, que muere crucificado por los romanos, que resucita y que, tras elevarse al Cielo, aún permanece en los Sagrarios, es también Motor Inmóvil, Causa Increada, Ser Necesario por Sí, Perfección Plena y Supremo Ordenador del Universo“. See, „La autonomía de la razón“, *Communio* 26 (2004) 122.