
HOW TO BUILD AN 'ANTI-THEOLOGY'

THE CASE OF EMIL CIORAN

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Abstract

The article lays out a recipe for a possible anti-theology, in this case that of Emil Cioran: first of all you take the main figure of a religion, God, and you envelop him in a dark aura; then you discuss that certain religion by focusing on showing that it is at least weak, dying; third of all, but not without importance, you attack the other exponential figures of that certain religion, such as prophetic figures and saints and you try to hijack their message or significant deeds for the religion they belong to.

Keywords: God, gnosticism, religion, holiness, faith

1. Introduction

Over time, the religious phenomenon has been subject to much hostile treatment, especially in the case of Christianity, where, since modern times, freedom of expression has allowed such reactions. Critical views have emerged in many cultural areas (in Philosophy we bring to mind just those of Feuerbach, Nietzsche or Marx), forming into authentic 'anti-theologies'. Thus, through anti-theology I understand any theory aimed at the religious phenomenon with the intent to contest an entire or part of a religious doctrine, a negative re-portrayal of divinity and other important figures (prophets, saints, mystics, etc.) Even though it might sound metaphoric, the concept of anti-theology is not a speculative one, as seen in the definition above.

We also find such an approach with Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran; it also comes from Philosophy, but from a special kind of philosophy, an essayistic-literary one, that uses not only arguments, but also rhetorical-expressive means to convince the reader (reason for which, in what follows, I often let the cioranian phrase flow, emphasizing, at the same time, some significant concepts and expressions). The cioranian anti-theology stretches fragmentarily, aphoristically, over thousands of pages, creating the impression of disorganization, of simple antireligious phraseology. Therefore, my approach had to employ an analytical method that implies an effort of clarification, structuring, systematizing the cioranian concepts. The reconstruction of this anti-

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theology, permeating in every relevant part of his countless essays (with precise bibliographical indications), represents the main contribution of this study. The systematic and objective approach of the cioranian anti-theology sketched here detaches itself from the other important approaches on this topic, like Fernando Savater's, that starts with Cioran's ideas to construct his own version [1], or Sylvie Jaudeau's, which is very close to a postmodernist interpretation of Cioran's conception [2].

Further, it can be said that the relationship between man and God is the lengthiest cultural page in history, a relationship that has also greatly fascinated Emil Cioran (Fernando Savater, for example, wrote that it is the principal theme of Cioran's work [1, p. 79], even though, if we were to believe the same critic, God is a literary device long gone out of use [1, p. 77]). It seems though that man's historical destiny is to carry through the idea of God - Cioran believes - using up all the forms of divine experience up to saturation, until the moment when he will finally free himself from divinity [3].

From the beginning, it has to be said that Cioran's personal relationship with divinity can best be expressed through the following words: "Passion for the absolute inside a sceptic soul! An angel grafted upon a leprous" [3, p. 132]. Such a highly-aimed spirit, contaminated by scepticism, is debating humanity's dearest notion. The result? A sort of new theology, strewn by sentences, insults, visceral shouts, a new indictment aimed more against creation than the Creator, but also a judgment of the Creator based on the quality of his work. God has his part of the blame, his own drama, being our world's source of sin and fault [3, p. 174].

2. Attacking divinity. A gnostic approach

The creation of this scandalous world, as Emil Cioran will add later on, in an utterly gnostic manner, cannot be the creation of a kind God, of the Father. This kind God would have been incapable of creating such a world. This is when the real Creator comes into play, the Demiurge, who we can imagine, in order to create, is "pray to evil, which is change, but also to good, which is inertia" [4]. (This persona is needed at least as a working hypothesis, in order to understand something from the visible world [5]). From here results a creation governed by evil, from which we cannot, however, exclude the presence of good; thus, creation itself appears as a sin, but one that overshadows the original sin committed by man - a minor sin compared to the divine one [4].

Nevertheless, the evil Demiurge is our main hold in all the trials that we face [4, p. 10-11]. We ascribe him our shortcomings and miseries; being the author of our deficiencies, he is our excuse for the evil inside of us; he offers us certainty and frees us from regrets; he is the one in which we distinguish our vices, not our virtues; he is the most useful god of all gods, because, in the end, any reprimand or hate is directed at him, since such a great injustice cannot be placed on the shoulders of man - it belongs with the Creator.

The gift of creation has also been inherited by man, from the Demiurge: “to *procreate* means to continue, in a different form and on a different scale the work that bears its name, it means to add, through a pitiful antic, another brick to his ‘creation’” [4, p. 15] (according to the principle that evil is transmitted contagiously, while good is incapable of any contagion). The hunger for life has also been transmitted to humans; they become parents, procreators, according to *Genesis*’ ‘criminal’ directive – “Be fruitful and multiply”. Flesh covers the entire surface of the Earth, a projection of the Creator’s ‘villainous’ instincts.

We rarely find the actual God, the good God, when we sometimes look back to the beginnings. We are quick to leave him, adds Cioran, fed up of asking questions and bothering him with our worries [4, p. 11].

For those uninterested in this variant of divine dualism (which can give rise to plenty of complications), Cioran also offers the image of a one and only God, with a two phase evolution: in the first phase, wise, insipid, with no desires to manifest, dormant; in the second phase, intrepid, he manifests a highly condemnable creative activity [4, p. 11-12].

It is obvious that this has nothing to do with the God from the Judeo-Christian tradition, but with a bogomilistic one, or, as it has been said, with a personal, invented god, “created from the fragments of the old one and brought to life by the insults thrown at him” [6]. Or perhaps we should accept the opinion that, in fact, Cioran never met with God, but with evil [2, p. 169].

3. A series of shortcomings ascribed to Christianity

Most of Cioran’s views on religion refer to Christianity, only natural if we consider that it was part of his environment and if we think about this religion’s global success.

The emergence of Christianity in history is considered by Cioran as a moment of involution, at least in comparison with the ancient world. The new religion appears intolerant, bitter, full of hate towards the ancient world and, to see this, it is sufficient to read a few ecclesiastic authors, starting with Tertullian and finishing with Saint Gregory of Nazianz [4, p. 27-29]. But there is no argument that the ancient society was also intolerant of this new sort of people, without country or traditions, challengers of the religious and civil institutions, despised by all and pursued by justice, but at the same time proud of all of this (according to Celsus’ diatribe from 178 A.D). A society accustomed to acknowledge all of its indigenous gods, no matter how many, could not accept the ‘crime’ of reducing them all to one, and moreover an absolutely new and unknown one: “(...) contemporary, parvenu... Him, that repulsive character, unforeseen by any *wise-man*, ‘shocked’ the most. His appearance was a scandal: it took the world four centuries to get accustomed to him” [4, p. 30-31]. The Christian God was the only one unacknowledged in Rome, as he did not belong to any particular people or any particular state. Additionally, he was a strong opponent of the other deities, I would add, indicating that, even though there was a precedent in Judaic divinity in this sense, the latter had no universal or

proselytistic desires, limiting itself to a single people and thus tolerated by the roman authorities.

The new religion brings about monotheism, which appears as a system of constraints in what regards our inner dimensions, channelling them towards a single God, inventing blind faith in a sole god. Polytheism on the other hand offered the possibility to manifest all out our tendencies and inclinations, channelling us towards more gods; polytheism implies the liberty to choose, it is tolerant and humane (which has proved fatal, in the end, generously accepting too many gods, proving a lack of instinct), while monotheism restrains, is authoritarian [4, p. 33-36]. The image becomes much clearer if we are able to conceive liberal democracy as a masked, underlying polytheism, and the authoritarian political regime as a disguised monotheism.

Christianity also introduces the concept of sin [7], the most 'original' and 'odd' of the Christian notions. Even though it exists in one form or another in the other religions, including polytheism, Christianity consolidates it and gives it a special importance. Thus, sin represents 'man's metaphysical condemnation', the curse par excellence; man's spirit is condemned, meaning his very essence. Harassed by the idea of sin, under the burden of his conscience, man lives a profound drama. It is an illusion that Jesus took upon himself the sins and suffering of mankind [7, p. 182-183], because no one can take another's suffering or the tragedy of sin, proof being that, after the sacrifice on the cross, no one was happier or more liberated from the conscience of sin. Jesus' sacrifice was necessary nonetheless (and he himself knew this) in order for his ideas to triumph; 'wicked and criminal', humans want you to guarantee the authenticity of your ideas and beliefs through your own death: Jesus' death offered them certainty, complete trust in the principles of the Christian vision [8].

The polytheistic vision seems more appropriate for the current reality than the Christian one [9]. The Greeks, for instance, saw their deities as ruthless forces, without mercy, who saw humans as mere instruments to be used for their entertainment, being even more wicked than humans. Zeus was an 'almighty fiend', capable of any atrocity. Men implored divinity, but were not expecting help, as much as they were expecting mercy. Covetous, jealous of human happiness, the Greek gods were in a kind of master-slave relationship with humans. The Christian God, good and merciful, comes into contrast with this wicked world, and seems inappropriate to rule it. Ineffective in front of evil, he disappoints and creates the impression that we are in the midst of a lie. Unfortunately, the good God much rather seems to have "the genius to deny himself through all his work" [10].

For Cioran, Christianity seems inelegant also due to the intervention or appearance of Saint Paul, called 'Christianity's campaigner' in *Tears and saints*, and in *Anger and acceptance* a 'dubious' character, 'a perverted Jew', 'a traitor'. He pads the new religion "with the most detestable traditions of the Old Testament: the intolerance, brutality and narrow-mindedness" [11]; lacking the inspiration of the old prophets, understanding and graciousness, he is a 'sectarian spirit', full of anger, hurriedness, irritated by mores first of all. He adopts a

foreign doctrine believing that he is solving his problems, his uncertainties; once in the possession of the new found truth, the great proselyte will take his vengeance upon the others for his previous anguish. With his tub-thumper talking, the neophyte would win over the masses, and in an era of ancient world decadence, the new religion would enthrone itself on the ruins of the old Greco-roman wisdom. (Out of all the figures representing Christianity, Cioran sees Luther as an acceptable example: “a humanized Saint Paul”, forefather of many emancipation movements, refusing ‘Rome’s narcotics’, unsettling the sleep of consciousnesses and ‘proclaiming God’s absolute sovereignty” [11, p. 154-155]).

After publishing his heated essay against Christianity (*The New Gods*) [4], Cioran felt some remorse: he said nothing about the aspects through which Christianity is superior to the old polytheistic religions. Thus, for instance, Christianity, as opposed to polytheism, seems to care about man, it accompanies him through suffering, it comforts him [5, p. 170]; the philosopher himself experienced this when confronted with some health problems and the return of some old distresses: Christianity helped him pull through, while paganism, too detached, offered nothing to comfort him when on “the heights of disbelief” [12].

But in this early form and in its subsequent one, of crown religion, dominating and expansionistic, that would put its mark on the Middle Ages and the modern age, Christianity still had life (and the philosopher does not exclude the possibility that, had he lived at the beginning of Christianity, in its age of utmost effervescence and purity, he too might have let himself be seduced by it [13]). Christianity reaches its peak of vitality through cruelty, fanaticism, intolerance, stakes, public executions, prisons, all in the name of absolute faith, as, however, in all religions: “A religious or political belief asserts itself through the victims it makes, over time beastliness being the primordial characteristic of any success. Heads fall where an idea succeeds; it can only succeed on the expense of all the other ideas and the heads that conceived or defended them” [14]. The same goes for the Church [13, p. 151-152]; it was strong and alive when it rejected “everything that was not as it intended”, as it happened in 1441, for example, when the Council in Florence decreed the ‘absurdity’ that pagans, Jews, heretics and schismatics would not know eternal life if they did not convert to Christianity. Nowadays, says Cioran, Christianity is finished because it has become – as had paganism at the time when Christianity appeared – tolerant, free of hate, a sweetened religion, or, in the words of Nietzsche, a true religion of cowardice, for the weak and many. Christianity is ailing, outdated, lacking aggression and can no longer deter, in turn, the appearance of new gods, if this will be the case. It is in ruin, just as paganism once was, it is at the end of its existence. A religion begins to fade when it begins to tolerate ideas that exclude it, when it shows kindness, understanding, indulgence (sings of degradation) [14]. A god is dead when people no longer kill in his name, and this is also the case with Jesus: “Christ (...) has once again been placed in his tomb,

and this time he will remain there, he will probably never leave it again: he does not have anyone left to deliver, neither on Earth, nor in its midst” [4, p. 47].

4. The analysis of the phenomenon of sanctity

Cioran’s outlook on religion would shock starting with his youth, along with the release of his 1937 volume, *Tears and Saints*. The volume was received with marked hostility by just about everyone, including friends and relatives (a notable exception being Jeny Acterian, who saw the profound torment that stood behind the book). He was refused from the very beginning for publication, because of the content of the book, even by his regular editor (who said that he had built his fortune through faith in God) and condemned by his parents as well (religious people, his father was, as it is known, a priest; his mother criticized him in a letter: “You cannot realize with how much sadness I read your book. You should have thought about your father when you wrote it.” [15] Or: “A book like this ought to have been published after our death” [16]). His efforts to convince everyone that it was “the only book on mysticism written in the Balkans”, a book that is “profoundly religious, (...) even though through negation”, were useless; thus, later on, at the release of the French edition, remembering the tempestuous reactions in Romania, the author would withdraw “all the insolence” from the book, fact he would later on regret, since, this way, the book was practically destroyed [15, p. 113-114].

A result of his vast studies on Christian doctrine, religious experiences, the biographies of mystics, prophets, saints or simply people who lived their faith intensely, the book is a re-evaluation of the passions and exaltations born out of faith and reflects the author’s interest for the religion’s moments of excess, for its ‘odd side’ – mystic side (interest he said he got from Nae Ionescu, his professor). Cioran’s tone is one to match; his writing has to rise to the level of the feelings he is describing: an exalted author talks about other people’s exaltations.

Considering that “no poet, no wise-man and no fool would ever compare” to the holy women [14, p. 196] (after spending years and years in their shadow, in the company of their confessions, he would have gladly accepted to be called the disciple of holy women [17]), in *Tears and Saints* he especially explores their ecstatic experiences in terms of faith and religious vision. Thus, the relationship between holy women and Jesus is, beyond the specific aspects of Christian prayer, a predominantly erotic one: “Anyone who reads, with an inspired discourtesy, the confessions of holy women cannot hide the impression that Jesus was sent on Earth not so much for redeeming and delivering mankind, but more for comforting the hearts of those women who where unfulfilled in love. You cannot make straight-thinking interpretations regarding saints, but it seems evident that if a terrestrial lover had stepped in between the light of Jesus and the heart of a holy woman, The Saviour would have remained a simple member of the Trinity. Jesus was the *official* lover of the holy women” [3, p. 30]. “The divine lover” is thus guilty for all their abstention and suffering,

becoming a “Don Juan of torments”, the holy women sacrificing themselves in the name of an unreturned love. Thus, Cioran imagines Jesus as having a heavy conscience, due to the responsibility of carrying so much pain on his shoulders [3, p. 43-44].

Also worth mentioning here is Cioran’s succinct-systematic analysis of the phenomenon of sainthood [3, p. 12-15]: among other things, it is characterized first of all by the delight of suffering (“to be holy, that is not to miss any chance in the infinite possibilities of suffering”); it is “a special kind of madness” materialized through a conscious effort of competing with Jesus and through excesses that represent “a Golgotha adding the refinements in torture of the Christian ages”; it is inefficient from a practical point of view, as long as it cannot reach the objective of assuming the sufferings and sins of mortals, forasmuch as no one can assume someone else’s pain and suffering; the state in which someone continues to live after life has left him [17, p. 12]; in short: “earthquake of the heart, destruction through faith, climactic expression of fanatical sensitivity, transcendental deformity...” [14, p. 200]. The mystical experience of sainthood exceeds in richness any theology (“atheists’ belief system”); the Church and Theology, the institution and the theory, do not give life to God in the way that mysticism does – “the worst mystical gibberish is closer to God than *Summa theologiae*” [3, p. 102].

Saints differ from ordinary people not through their attitude towards Heaven, but through the attitude towards the body. Saints’ ecstasy frequently exceeds the boundary of their bodies (something that never happens with the ordinary man), in such a way that finding their material bodies again becomes a true drama [3, p. 27-28]. As opposed to mystics, saints distinguish themselves through their practical effort, as a result of their inner vision, effort materialized in charity, concern about their fellow men etc.; thus, a saint may be a mystic, but on the other hand a mystic can never be a saint [3, p. 9].

Both categories, however, have had an unjust fate, with the first Church setting them aside to a secondary status, lowering them to the condition of “beggars of the supernatural” and then lifting them to the status of simple role models, when in fact they represent true “natural phenomena” [11, p. 132].

Saints emerged out of the need of The Almighty to not be alone, out of the need to be loved and even amused. Furthermore, the whole of creation does not seem to have any other explanation besides God’s fear of solitude, and the purpose of the creatures “is none other than to *amuse* the Creator. Poor puppets of the absolute, we forget that we are living dramas for the boredom of a spectator whose applause have yet to reach the ear of any mortal. And God seems so hard-pressed by the torments of loneliness that he invented the saints – pretexts for dialogue – to unload the burden of isolation” [3, p. 56-57].

5. Reactions to a shocking anti-theology

Such thoughts aroused an obvious hostility (as did, later on, the ideas presented in *The Evil Demiurge*) amongst many of Cioran's readers, even among friends, as I mentioned earlier on. Among them, in Romania, Mircea Eliade is the one who stands out, with a short article in 1939, an article about which Cioran says that he discovered later on, after 1990. Eliade writes: "*Tears and Saints*, Cioran's last book, is a tragic example of the meaning of self 'maceration', through paradox and insult. There are so many exasperating passages in this melancholic book, passages that have confused even his most enthusiastic admirers: *they cannot, in any way, be defended*. You observe them, suffer for the author – and that is all. You cannot find any excuse. It seems to you that Emil Cioran wrote them – *and published them* – only to isolate himself up until the absurd, to become impervious to his own loneliness, to discourage even his closest friends. A man truly reaches absolute solitude when he can no longer be defended" [18]. Eliade denies that this can be a case of irresponsibility; in these 'infernal' pages, Cioran was more responsible than ever.

In France, Gabriel Marcel, an exponent of Christian existentialism, writes in 'Le monde', after the release of *The Evil Demiurge*, an article with the evocative title *Is Cioran the devil?* Constantin Noica, evasive and polite, writes that the *Demiurge...* is "instructive" – "that kind of equivocal and even perfidious compliment" [19]. Besides, Cioran even avoided for a time to send copies of *The Evil Demiurge* [19, p. 70] to Romania, already knowing the local sensibility to the subject from as far back as the release of *Tears and saints*. In Spain, *Le Mauvais Démiurge* was even seized and banned by the censorship (in 1974), arguing that it was atheistic, blasphemous, antichristian, determining the author to declare that the Inquisition was still alive [19, p. 123] (the book was, however, published at a later date). Cioran himself, aware of the toughness of his discourse, characterized it at one point as "the work of a melancholic viper" [9, p. 91], but also defended it, although in a relatively modest way, considering that his book was not actually depressing, although it contained a theology of gnostic inspiration [19, p. 71].

As for the general public, at least in his home country, before such notions that shocked the common sense, the following formula prevails: "I enjoy Cioran, but I do not agree with everything that he says". Cioran is read, in spite of the adversity manifested by most towards his ideas (to be remembered is the fact that in 1990, when his books were republished, having been all but banned in the communist regime, people were queuing in front of the bookstores). But his success is not attributable to the ideas he proposed, as it is to the expressive style, Cioran himself realizing this with sadness, towards his old age. Nonetheless, there are no organizations that bring his admirers together, at least to my knowledge; his disapprovers criticize him either for not being sincere, writing the way he does just to shock or gain the interest of the public, either for having mental health problems, or for being a dangerous writer (a French doctor, a respectable person,

pointed out that his books could fall in the hands of some youngsters; Cioran, himself recounted at one point the case of a madam who, after reading one of his books, threw it in the fire).

6. A sweetened message on the religious phenomenon

These are the effects of joining a sceptic spirit to the religious phenomenon. But what determines a sceptic to focus with such ardour on an area connected to faith? In Cioran's case, we have his own answer: "Inside of me there has always existed a religious calling, *mystical* actually, not religious. It is impossible for me to have faith, but at the same time it is impossible not to think about faith. There has always been a profound temptation inside of me to believe, but the denial was greater than anything. I have a sort of negativistic and perverted pleasure of denial. I have always oscillated between the need to have faith and the impossibility to believe. Because of this I have had such an interest in religious beings, saints, those who, having the temptations, have gone all the way to the end" [15, p. 114-115]. He needed to be close to religion, without succeeding to be in its midst and to have the specific behaviour. He never succeeded with Buddhism (the only one that gives access to a religion without having faith, according to Cioran), as it also had its rigors in what regards the path one should follow in life; but, nevertheless, he said that, had he been born a Buddhist, he would have remained a Buddhist, but, born a Christian, he could only stop being a Christian, and this as far back as his early youth [20]. He had, nonetheless, a great sensibility to religious issues (it has been discussed that, even more, one of the two major obsessions that marked Cioran's life and work was that of divinity, alongside the obsession for his native lands [21]), even though he was incapable of being a believer; he had the temptation, but not the capability.

In the religious experiences he found some that were of an exceptional intensity, extraordinary feelings that greatly interested him, and that reminded him of his own feelings from the time of his adolescent insomnia, feelings that give you the impression that you have touched or even surpassed God. Such ecstatic states can be seen in the literature and in the cases described by Dostoyevsky's books, without necessarily emanating from faith. In religion, more than anywhere else, Cioran finds those limit situations that profoundly fascinate him, excess and failure, situations that arouse his envy of those who experience them.

He believed that religion in general was the most important and profound form of the human spirit (again, following Nae Ionescu), that the genuine vision of life is, generally, the religious one, even though, I have to repeat, he was not a believer [22].

Cioran appropriately realized the importance God and religion have in man's life [23], finding that God was a *solution* and that another one as satisfactory could never be conceived [13, p. 121]. Even though he sees him as the source of all our misfortunes, in the end God remains our only support:

“Whatever you do, after losing support in yourself, you can only find another in God. And if without *Him* you could still breathe, without the *idea* of him, you would lose yourself in the dark corners of your mind” [24]. The most important purpose of the idea of God is man’s need to be in dialogue with someone when he feels too lonely among men, when he can no longer share his serious problems with his fellow men: “At a certain degree of loneliness there are fewer and fewer people with whom we can communicate; we end up realizing we no longer have anyone. Once having reached this extreme point, we go towards our non-equals, toward the angels, towards God. Thus, in the absence of a dialogue companion here of Earth, we look for one elsewhere.” [5, p. 383]

Confused by the happiness experienced by those who succeeded to really believe, he was envious of their feat and had the conviction that, should he adhere to a certain faith, his problems would have disappeared (and if he would have succeeded to believe, he would have become arrogant without comparison, as he declared in an aphorism [10, p. 75]); he wanted to believe, he wanted to be among the ones happy to have experienced certainty; from here stems his effort to follow them through studies. He did not have faith, he only had the nostalgia of faith, we could say, paraphrasing a note from *Notebooks*.

He even had moments, as mentioned before, when Christianity did not appear dark: “I have attacked Christianity in all of my books. I realize that I no longer hate it, that I no longer have *dark* feelings about it, I even feel remorse for disparaging it” [12, p. 356]. Referring to Christianity’s main figure, Jesus, I believe that Cioran did not have a hostile attitude, his hostility being directed more to what followed Jesus. Christian traditions were not condemned in his writings; we even surprised him congratulating, in a letter [19, p. 21] to his parents, on the occasion of the Easter holidays, from 1947, “Christ has risen!” Also to his parents, Christian-Orthodox, with the dramatic event of his brother’s, Aurel Cioran, political arrest in 1949 (even though it can also be interpreted as a consolation, suitable for a couple of religious people), he wrote: “As long as you have faith in God, *that is, the only real comfort to be had*, it seems to me that you are well enough prepared to overcome any sorrow. Life’s greatest drama is the lack of any kind of faith... Up to a point it is the drama of my life, although I am not, to all intents and purposes, as faithless as I seem.” [19, p. 31]

As for atheism, he labelled it as detestable, the same as religious intolerance; atheism, ‘a backwards religion’ provokes the same kind of mischief. Worth remembering here is his journal note about the writing “God is dead”, found on a street sign promoting a concert: “Contemporary idiocy knows no bounds” [9, p. 30].

Although everyone sees him as a theologian of evil, it can be seen that he is not an enemy of religion, but on the contrary, as he himself suggests in many writings, especially when he responds to the critics brought upon works such as *Tears and Saints* or *The Evil Demiurge*, which stir a certain religious sensibility.

Cioran considers that generally the reference to religion has to be a sort of tireless *battle* with God and, because of this, he himself, from the religious point of view, is situated ‘farther’ than Eliade for example, who eruditely dealt with all

Gods, counting them, doing their inventory [15, p. 115]. Religious sensibility would thus be most of all defined by the affective involvement in the religious phenomenon and not so much in knowing it.

7. A few closing lines

I have showed here how an anti-theology can be built, by illustrating the process with the help of the cioranian vision. Finally, we can say that the recipe of this anti-theology is simple: first of all you take the main figure of a religion, God, and you envelop him in a dark aura; then you discuss that certain religion by focusing on showing that it is at least weak, dying; third of all, but not without importance, you attack the other exponential figures of that certain religion, such as prophetic figures and saints and you try to hijack their message or significant deeds for the religion they belong to.

How did Cioran reach such a result? Besides his way of being, which he invoked on many occasions, his vision is also the result of countless readings on the subject, as he also often confessed. This vision can be understood considering a few of the routes followed prior to its formation.

First would be the ancient sceptic philosopher Pyrrhon, to which Cioran frequently compared himself. From ancient scepticism [25], he claims to have taken the anti-dogmatic attitude, critical and negativistic in the face of all kinds of certainties, but in religion certitude is prominent. Although, originally, scepticism endorsed the possibility of knowing, Cioran extends this attitude to other areas, creating an almost generalized pessimism.

Secondly, the passion for the religious phenomenon was instilled, as we have said before, by his professor at the University of Bucharest, Nae Ionescu, who considered that the religious act merited study because it was generally human, most individuals believing in divinity, even if not all (but the religious act can have different forms, by replacing divinity with another term, like love - in the Don Juan sense, country, science, etc.) [26].

Then, an influence worthy of mention, as discussed above, is that of the gnostics (most of all Marcion), those who, trying to solve the problem of the evil that exists in creation, have introduced the idea of a primordial Demiurge who failed the act of creation, alongside the idea of a supreme God, entirely good, willing to repair as much as possible the work of his predecessor [27].

And, last, but not least, we should discuss Nietzsche's influence, even if Cioran refused any direct affiliation. Nietzsche, as it is known, is one of Christianity's most fierce critics, the one who came up with the well known term of religion of the weak, of slaves, with a moral built in the detriment of real people, of supermen [28]. The two must be placed next to each other at least for the fact that they present their ideas in the same essayistic-literary manner. But, the nietzschian vision of the religious phenomenon, at least that from the *Antichrist*, constitutes, from my point of view, another case of anti-theology.

These being said, I express my hope that highlighting the cioranian theory on the religious phenomenon following the anti-theological model described in the beginning, the goal of this study, can expand the perspective for reinterpretation in a manner similar to other theories of the same type, like Nietzsche's philosophy or science's materialistic theories.

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