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AN AMERICAN EX-NIHILIST
EXPOSING POSTMODERN ERRORS:
EUGENE ROSE
ON THE PERILS OF NIHILISM¹

AMERYKAŃSKI BYŁY NIHILISTA
WOBEC BŁĘDÓW PONOWOCZESNOŚCI.
EUGENE ROSE O ZAGROŻENIACH NIHILIZMU

Abstract

This article presents Eugene Rose's critique of nihilism, the philosophy which he had himself embraced and was devastated by before his conversion to Orthodoxy, before his monastic tonsure and ordination to priesthood. The article argues that Rose's treatise is not just an ex-nihilist's and neophyte's defence of Christianity, but a philosophical analysis of the errors and perils of nihilism, whose relevance today is manifested, for instance, by Putin's policy and his war in Ukraine.

Streszczenie

Artykuł przywołuje antynihilistyczny traktat Eugeniusza Rose'a, napisany po jego nawróceniu na prawosławie, a przed obraniem drogi monastycznej ascezy i kapłaństwa, na kanwie poprzedniej fascynacji nihilizmem i doświadczenia jego katastroficznych skutków. Analiza

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istoty nihilizmu i apologia teizmu, a zwłaszcza chrześcijaństwa jako drogi ku prawdzie i wyzwoleniu z zagrożeń nihilizmu nie są jedynie świadectwem eks-nihilisty i neofity, lecz także filozoficzną myślą Rose'a, szczególnie aktualną dziś w kontekście polityki i wojny Putina.

Keywords: nihilism, postmodernity, death of culture, theism, Christianity

Słowa kluczowe: nihilizm, ponowoczesność, śmierć kultury, teizm, chrześcijaństwo

Mario Vargas Llosa, a Noble Prize winner of 2010, diagnoses the “death of culture”,² viewing postmodernity in terms of T.S. Eliot’s anticipation that there will come “a period, of some duration, of which it will be possible to say that it will have *no culture*”;³ culture, being understood in Eliot’s terms simply “as that which makes life worth living”.⁴ “We now live in a world of confusion, in which, paradoxically, since there is no way of knowing what culture is, [...] everything is culture and nothing is”, Vargas Llosa claims,⁵ voicing his concern about the apparent death of culture, which might sound somewhat surprising, considering the diversity and multitude of what today passes for manifestations of culture. Yet, what he means is that the classical ideals of truth, beauty, aesthetics and moral influence, both religious and secular, as well as values which used to be the common denominator of social interaction and communication, have been discredited.⁶ One example should suffice: a performance of a Colombian artist, Fernando Pertuz (born in 1968), who in his *La indiferencia* [*Indifference*] performance, voided excrement publicly in an art gallery and then started to eat and drink it “with total solemnity”.⁷ Such “artistic performances” in art galleries can occur, so it seems, only thanks to the legitimisation they receive from the underlying philosophy of relativity, absurdism and meaninglessness, when “culture” exists in popular opinion only as long as it is a spectacle attracting intense media coverage. The death of culture results from the death of values and the lack of any objective validity based on a transcendent foundation, inasmuch as, in Nietzsche’s words, there are no facts: “facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations”.⁸ Marcus Harvey’s portrait of Myra Hindley, a British serial murderer of children, consisting of children’s handprints, may thus only inspire interpretations,

² M. Vargas Llosa, *Notes on the Death of Culture*, trans. John King, London, Faber and Faber, 2022, pp.1–5.

³ T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, London, Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁵ M. Vargas Llosa, *Notes...*, op. cit., pp. 61–62.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 62–64.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁸ F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, Random House, 1967, section 481, p. 267.

just like glass boxes filled with human bones and the remains of a foetus displayed in a gallery by another postmodern “artist”.⁹

Facing the agony of culture, what postmodern thinkers tend to identify as the underlying philosophy of dissipation is nihilism. “While a contentious and problematic tradition,” Ashley Woodward notes, “the discourse of nihilism provides a philosophical framework for thinking through the problem of meaning in the contemporary world that otherwise stands in danger of remaining too amorphous to analyse”.¹⁰ Thus, although Woodward does not place an equal sign between postmodernity and nihilism, he argues that it might be impossible to approach today’s (hyper)reality without reference to nihilism.¹¹ Echoing Nietzsche and following Gianni Vattimo’s thought, Matthew Harris defines nihilism as a “self-devaluing of the highest values”¹² occurring after the death of God, in the post-Christian and post-truth era, when “it is no longer possible to believe in epistemic foundations or certainty”.¹³

Remarkably, today’s nihilism differs from its ancestral form, since the postmodern species of nihilism, according to Jean Baudrillard, “no longer comes from a Wel-tanschauung of decadence nor from a metaphysical radicality born of the death of God and of all the consequences that must be taken from this death”.¹⁴ Postmodern nihilism not only delegitimises systems which used to provide “frameworks for meaning and value” but also denies a possibility of constructing any new normative structures by promoting overall deconstruction, critique of the subject, of reason, of humanism, and announcing the end of history, to mention the least.¹⁵ Humanities and art can no longer humanise.¹⁶

Moreover, unlike its previous “dark” ancestor, today’s nihilism appears to be “one of transparency”, which, as Baudrillard asserts, “is, in some sense more radical, more crucial than in its prior and historical forms, because this transparency, this irresolution is indissolubly that of the system, and that of all the theory that still pretends to analyse it”.¹⁷ The nihilistic “irresolution” and transparency (or blankness and emptiness) disbar any traditional axiomatic belief, accusing it of being firm,

⁹ M. Vargas Llosa, *Notes...*, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 1–2.

¹² M. Harris, *Vattimo, Nihilism and Secularisation: The Trojan Horse Effect on Christianity, “Parrhesia”* 2014, no. 19, p. 51; see F. Nietzsche, *The Will...*, op. cit., section I.2, p. 9.

¹³ M. Harris, *Vattimo...*, op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁴ J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 159.

¹⁵ A. Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity: Lyotard, Baudrillard, Vattimo*, Aurora, The Davies Group Publishers, 2009, pp. 12–19.

¹⁶ See M. Vargas Llosa, *Notes...*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁷ J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra...*, op. cit., p. 159.

resolute, and, consequently, (paradoxically), dark, violent, and radical.¹⁸ A metaphysical search for truth and foundational thought rest upon absolutes, a union of faith and reason, and on binary systems of clearly-defined oppositions, such as good and evil, right and wrong, sense and nonsense, truth and falsehood (post-truth in newspeak), and imply evaluation and judgement by a point of some “external reference” and a “transcendent referee”,¹⁹ thus violating and demonising, as nihilists maintain, the postmodernist mode of universal arbitrariness, self-indulgent subjectivity, and irreducible plurality of endlessly revisable interpretations.²⁰ Woodward claims that any attempt to overcome nihilism, such as metaphysics and religion, creates an impasse of “oppositional negation” and promotes “religious nihilism”,²¹ to the detriment of the recommended policy of passivity and of “overcoming a desire to overcome nihilism”.²²

The postmodern anti-theistic philosophy, which stems from Nietzsche’s proclamation that “truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are”,²³ has deconstructed and debunked truth. To Simon Critchley, religion is a preposterous illusion, which proves not only impossible but also fallacious and harmful.²⁴ In his study dedicated to the postmodern “religious disappointment”, Critchley remarks that this disenchantment “is born from the realisation that religion is no longer (presuming it ever was) capable of providing a meaning for human life”.²⁵ Moreover, he contends that philosophy must not be theistic, and supports this stance with Heidegger’s comment on Nietzsche’s writings: “philosophical research is and remains atheism, which is why philosophy can allow itself ‘the arrogance of thinking’”,²⁶ banishing any element of faith.

Thus, Critchley dismisses the validity of religion and metaphysics as a contradiction of thinking itself and a ridiculous anarchism of pre-modern naivety, or “the attempt to reject the legacy of modernity and return to premodern forms of thought, belief, and valuation”.²⁷ He derides the philosophical stance of Pope John

¹⁸ S. Critchley, *Very Little... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 10.

¹⁹ E. Meganck, *Secularisation and Violence: Girard vs Vattimo*, “Journal of Dharma” 2015, vol. 40, no. 3, p. 10.

²⁰ A. Woodward, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 173.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 172.

²³ F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, 1873, [in:] *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann, New York, Penguin, 1954, pp. 46–47.

²⁴ S. Critchley, *Very Little...*, op. cit., ‘Preamble. Travels in Nihilon’, unpaginated.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ M. Heidegger, *The History of the Concept of Time*, trans. T. Kisiel, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 80.

²⁷ A. Woodward, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 170.

Paul II,²⁸ whom he equates with a “pre-nihilist metaphysician”, and discards Pope’s “call for philosophy to turn away from the nihilism of postmodernism and back to the metaphysical search for the truth”, arguing that “[i]n the light of Nietzsche’s thought, [...] such a response to the nihilism of modernity and postmodernity appears as a preservation or reinstitution of religious nihilism, with its faith in transcendent categories of valuation and consequent devaluation of life”, the “devaluation of life” meaning “denying the validity of the intellectual and cultural currents that have brought about this breakdown”.²⁹

Critchley, Woodward, Vattimo, and other postmodern thinkers who follow Nietzsche’s legacy, for instance Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*, 2006), and Christopher Hitchens (*God is not Great. How Religion Poisons Everything*, 2007), reject theism as an untenable and immature response to postmodern nihilism.³⁰ This is counterbalanced by an apology of theism based on a rigorous scientific methodology propounded, among others, by Charles Townes, a Noble Prize winner in physics (*The Convergence of Science and Religion*, 1966), Richard Swinburne (*The Coherence of Theism*, 1977, rev. 1993; *The Existence of God*, 1979, 2nd ed. 2004, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 2013), and Alvin Plantinga (*God, Freedom and Evil*, 1974; *Science and Religion*, with Daniel Dennett, 2010).³¹ This article addresses one of the earliest 20th c. theistic and anti-nihilistic voices in Western philosophy, namely Eugene Rose’s *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age*,³² written just after Rose’s conversion to Orthodoxy (1962), before he established *The Orthodox Word*³³ journal (1965) and St. Herman of Alaska Monastery³⁴ in Platina,

²⁸ As expressed especially in John Paul II’s Encyclical Letter *Faith and Reason*. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html [accessed 11.11.2024]. All online sources quoted in this article were accessed on the same day.

²⁹ S. Critchley, *Very Little...*, op. cit., p. 12, cf. A. Woodward, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 170.

³⁰ A. Woodward, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 170.

³¹ This is a random selection of their oeuvre in defence of theism. Townes and Plantinga are Protestant Christians, while Swinburne is an Orthodox Christian.

³² Rose had written a monumental work of 14 chapters, the treatise on nihilism being Chapter Seven, the only part printed so far; see Hieromonk Damascene, ‘Editor’s Preface’ to Rose’s *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age*, Platina, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2020, p. 7.

³³ It is a bimonthly journal issued by Saint Herman Press at the Platina Monastery and blessed upon its inception in 1965 by St. John Maximovitch. Available at: <https://www.sainthermanmonastery.com/product-p/1yeardigital.htm>.

³⁴ Since 2000 it has been a part of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Western American diocese; see *Saint Herman Monastery*, <https://sainthermanmonastery.org/about-us/>. During Rose’s lifetime the monastery belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), which had separated from the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in 1927 due to ROC’s policy of Sergianism (an unconditional subservience of the Patriarchate of Moscow to the Soviet regime and Stalinism), see B. Talantov, *The Moscow Patriarchate and Sergianism*. Available at: http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/cat_tal.aspx. On May 17, 2007, ROCOR and ROC were reunited during a liturgy attended

California (with Gleb Podmoshensky, in 1967), before his monastic tonsure (1970) and hieromonk ordination (1977).³⁵

Eugene Rose (1934–1982), later known as Father Seraphim Rose, was an American convert, Orthodox hieromonk and ascetic born to a Californian family of “lapsed Catholic and denomination-hopping Protestant roots”,³⁶ who had been seeking truth in Taoism, and later in atheism, nihilism, and the Beat movement of the 1950s, to emerge as an ex-nihilist who had been “in hell”,³⁷ sharing insider knowledge to warn against the traps and snares of the destructive philosophy, and arguing that nihilists, to whom he had belonged himself, in fact express a desperate and “intense hunger for Christ.”³⁸ Although Rose never uses the terms “postmodern” and “postmodernity”, as they were first introduced probably by Jean-François Lyotard in *La Condition postmoderne (The Postmodern Condition)* in 1979,³⁹ and instead speaks of modernity, his study includes the early stage of postmodernity and is viewed in this article also as a critique thereof.

First of all, Rose agrees with Nietzsche and nihilists that nihilism is the predominant philosophy of the 20th century which does not only involve the “devaluation of life”, to use Critchley’s phrase attributed to religion, but, in general, the devaluation of truth, faith, and man, for, as Rose argues, nihilism “has error for its root, and error can be conquered only by Truth”.⁴⁰ Rose stresses the ubiquity of nihilism and its reliance on man’s inaction (overcoming the desire to overcome nihilism), observing that nihilism “exists in all, and those who do not, with the aid of God, choose to combat it in the name of the fullness of Being of the living God, are swallowed up in it already”.⁴¹ Rose recognises the abysmal nature of nihilism, identified also by Woodward half a century later,⁴² and would probably have agreed with Vattimo’s diagnosis that “we begin to be, or to be able to be, accomplished nihilists”,⁴³ but would

by Vladimir Putin, President of Russia; see Yuri Zarakhovich, *Putin’s Reunited Russian Church*, “Time”, May 17, 2007. Available at: <https://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1622544,00.html>.

³⁵ M. Kotar, *About My Spiritual Guide, Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose)*, September 10th, 2021. Available at: *Orthodox Christianity*, <https://orthochristian.com/141667.html>.

³⁶ W.W. Klimon, *A Review of ‘Not of This World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose’ by Damascene Christensen*, “Chesterton Review” 1993, vol. 22, no. 3, Forestville, Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, p. 362.

³⁷ Rose, qtd. in Hieromonk Damascene, ‘Editor’s Preface’, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁸ Quoted by idem; ibidem, p. 6.

³⁹ R. Wolin, *Jean-François Lyotard*, [in:] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 6th August 2023. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Francois-Lyotard>.

⁴⁰ E. Rose, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., pp. 11–12.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁴² Ibidem, p.11.

⁴³ G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, trans. John R. Snyder, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, pp. 19–20.

have strongly objected to Vattimo's "positive revaluation"⁴⁴ of nihilism and to his statement that "an accomplished nihilism is today our only chance".⁴⁵ Having reaped the bitter fruits of his fascination with nihilism, whose ideas used to "resonate in [his] soul with an electric, infernal power",⁴⁶ leading him to the bottom of addiction and existential frustration, Rose warns against its grave perils, and argues that foundational thought, religion, and Christianity in particular, is the only remedy for nihilism:

We have been brought to the edge of the abyss of nothingness, and whether we recognize its nature or not, we will, through affinity with the ever-present nothingness within us, be engulfed in it beyond any hope of redemption – unless we cling in full and certain faith (which, doubting, does not doubt) to Christ, without Whom we are truly nothing.⁴⁷

Rose's zeal of a neophyte never wavered till his sudden death in 1982 and informs his apology of theism and Christianity against the deadly disease of nihilism. Rose disagrees with the statement that traditional values have devalued themselves and that religion has proved inadequate to address the contemporary reality, claiming that the only subject who has changed is man, who has crippled the wings of faith and spirituality:

God is dead in the hearts of modern man: this is what the 'death of God' means, and it is true of the atheists and Satanists who rejoice in the fact, as it is of the unsophisticated multitudes in whom the sense of the spiritual reality has simply disappeared. Man has lost faith in God and in the Divine Truth that once sustained him.⁴⁸

Rose argues that what informs all human activity and knowledge is faith, and "if it is not to fall prey to subjective delusions, it must be rooted in truth".⁴⁹ He claims that "the first principles of scientific faith – for example, the coherence and uniformity of nature, the trans-subjectivity of human knowledge, the adequacy of reason to draw conclusions from observation – are founded in absolute truth; if they are not, they can be no more than unverifiable probabilities".⁵⁰ What Rose attempts here is a scientific argument for the existence of absolute truth, without which, "the whole scientific edifice" would be left on "shifting sands", devoid of "sure defence against the irrational winds that periodically attack it".⁵¹ To Rose, if anything can be believed to be true in science, it is possible thanks to the existence of an absolute truth, which

⁴⁴ A. Woodward, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴⁵ G. Vattimo, *The End...*, op. cit., pp. 19–20.

⁴⁶ Damascene, 'Editor's Preface', op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

makes truth possible, and whose negation nullifies the existence and verifiability of anything. Rose does not expand on this stance, yet its essence seems to have been addressed in detail by a number of thinkers propounding natural theology, for instance such famous and yet diverse scholars as C.S. Lewis or Richard Swinburne.

Just like other theists, notably Swinburne, Rose notes that the union of faith and reason, *Fides et Ratio*, is the only way to seek truth, for, as John Paul II notes in the Encyclical Letter, repudiated by nihilists,

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.⁵²

Rose argues what John Paul II expressed later in another work, namely that “man without God cannot understand himself”,⁵³ which is why (post)modernity suffers acutely from existential frustration and anxiety. Rose observes that “every man [...] lives by faith”, and hence, less obviously, but no less certainly, “every man [...] is a metaphysician”.⁵⁴ Thus, undermining metaphysical thought and man’s “natural thirst for truth”⁵⁵ is not only a nihilistic negation of epistemological foundations, of humanism, of religion, and of culture, but also of man, and by taking such a stand “the Nihilist takes an active part in the work of Satan (for such it is)”, inasmuch as:

The claim to any knowledge whatever – and no living man can refrain from this claim – implies a theory and standard of knowledge, and a notion of what is ultimately knowable and true. This ultimate truth, whether it be conceived as the Christian God or simply as the ultimate coherence of things, is a metaphysical first principle, an absolute truth.⁵⁶

If this, logically unavoidable, principle is acknowledged, then the rejection of the ultimate truth and the theory of the relativity of truth prove impossible, Rose asserts, the relativity of truth itself “being revealed as a self-contradictory absolute”.⁵⁷ If any truth is to be accepted, then it must be grounded in an absolute truth, and a certainty of there not being an absolute truth is an absolute that contradicts itself, which he calls a “negative metaphysics”, because, although negative, it is a firm belief in something, “a metaphysics all the same”.⁵⁸ Rose illustrates this incongruity of

⁵² John Paul II, *Fides and Ratio*, op. cit.

⁵³ Idem, The Apostolic Letter *Dilecti Amici* to the Youth of the World, 1985. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html.

⁵⁴ E. Rose, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 32.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

nihilism with an example of the 19th c. Russian nihilists, whose “purely materialistic and egoistic theory” was accompanied by “an altruistic and idealistic practice”, or, in other words, their Darwinism mixed with Christianity, as captured by Vladimir Solovyov’s comment on that paradox: “Man is descended from a monkey; consequently we shall love one another”.⁵⁹

Furthermore, analysing the profound crisis of truth in postmodern thought, Rose observes that a “denial or doubt of absolute truth leads (if one is consistent and honest) to the abyss of solipsism and irrationalism; the only position that involves no *logical* contradictions is the affirmation of an absolute truth which underlies and secures all lesser truths; and this absolute truth can be attained by no relative human means”, but through a Revelation of truth “from without” that engages both faith and reason.⁶⁰ Indeed, it is “Divine Revelation, the Christian Revelation”, which “so repels the rationalist”.⁶¹ Rose concludes that “logic cannot deny absolute truth without denying itself; the logic that sets itself up against the Christian Revelation is merely the servant of another ‘revelation’, of a false ‘absolute truth’: namely Nihilism”.⁶²

Rose’s words have resonated powerfully both in the West and in the East, for his concern is every human being, but, as his friends testify, “Father Seraphim lived for Russia”: “He, an American, lived for the idea of Holy Russia”, and during the Communist period and religious persecutions he “awaited the resurrection of Orthodox Russia”.⁶³ This desire proves perhaps even more relevant today, when Putin’s Church has betrayed its Orthodox tradition and faith, and his war in Ukraine has put the pure evil of nihilistic wilful destruction of values into practice. As Constantin Sigov remarks:

This war is nihilism made systemic. It is not only waged against a neighbouring state, but against reality.[...] The only way for Putin to escape the international tribunal is to not just systematically deny reality verbally but also destroy it concretely. When you see the destruction of houses, it is not just a metaphor. It is real, just as real as the destruction of the semantic field. [...] The relationship to the dead also illustrates this nihilism. [...] The falsification of the truth is also a falsification of the past.⁶⁴

Rose refers to this destructive desire as “pure Nihilism”: “the Nihilism of Destruction [...] unique to the [post]modern age”; “a rage against creation and against

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 15. This is probably Rose’s own translation of Solovyov’s words, cited in original by K. Mochulsky in his work on *Gogol. Solovyov. Dostoyevsky*, Moscow, Respublika, 1951, p. 22.

⁶⁰ E. Rose, *Nihilism*..., op. cit., pp. 17–18.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 18.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 20.

⁶³ M. Kotar, *About*..., op. cit.

⁶⁴ C. Sigov, *The War in Ukraine is Nihilism Made Systemic*, Georgetown University, 1 March 2023. Available at: <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/the-ukraine-war-is-nihilism-made-systemic>.

civilisation that will not be appeased until it has reduced them to absolute nothingness”,⁶⁵ which corresponds to Nietzsche’s tenet that nihilism is not “merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy”.⁶⁶ In the postmodern world, there are no facts, only interpretations; “there is no truth; all is permitted”.⁶⁷

Although he remains a controversial thinker in the Orthodox Church due to his passionate defence of the Old Order, of traditional liturgy, calendar, the teaching of Holy Fathers, his theology (the belief in telonia)⁶⁸, and criticism of ecumenical tendencies which he viewed as furthering the Latinisation and modernisation of Orthodoxy, Rose was undoubtedly one of the major 20th c. Orthodox ex-nihilists, uniting the West with the East, and spreading awareness of the imminent perils of nihilism which have brought many to the abyss of “nothingness, anxiety, incoherence, antitheism, and hatred of truth”.⁶⁹ “It is later than you think”, Rose warns,⁷⁰ for “everything, in short, has become questionable”.⁷¹ The postmodern “nihilisation” of values and truth, the “affirmation of the Abyss” and of meaninglessness, and the “return of the world to that nothingness out of which God first called it”⁷² produce, Rose seems to conclude, absurdism and uncertainty “of everything except the absence of God”, and are conducive to the death of culture and decline of humanity.

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⁶⁵ E. Rose, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 54.

⁶⁶ F. Nietzsche, *The Will...*, op. cit., p. 18.

⁶⁷ Idem qtd. by Karl Jaspers in *Nietzsche and Christianity*, Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1961, p. 83.

⁶⁸ See A. Cholewa-Purgał, *Elementy duchowości prawosławnej ocalone od zapomnienia w Anglosferze: Mytarstwa w myśli Ojca Serafina Rose’a*, “Kultura Słowian. Rocznik Komisji Kultury Słowian PAU”, vol. 18, pp. 173–188.

⁶⁹ E. Rose, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 72.

⁷⁰ Qtd. in Rassophore Monk Lawrence (Campbell), *Father Seraphim Rose Speaks*. Available at: <http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/frseraphimspeaks.aspx>.

⁷¹ E. Rose, *Nihilism...*, op. cit., p. 106.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 107.

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