

2017, No 1–2, 75–97

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**THE SECRET GOSPEL OF STEFAN TSANEV
OR HOW TO LIVE IN THE WORLD AFTER THE FALL**

Abstract:

The paper is devoted to the polemic aspect of the writings of the well-known Bulgarian writer Stefan Tsanev, as it is situated in the hermeneutic light of history of ideas. The subject of reflection is Tsanev's vision of Christianity, including its (axiological) canon, in the context of the (post)modern search for an effective modus existendi. Interpreted, and treated as a coherent corpus, are the following texts which paraphrase the evangelical story: Taynoto evangelie ot Yoan ('The Secret Gospel of John') (1995), Velikata misteriya Iisus ('The great mystery called Jesus') (1995), Mravki i Bogove. Hronika na XX vek ('Ants and Gods. A chronicle of the 20th century') (2001), and Balgarski hroniki ('Bulgarian chronicles' (2006–2009). The (re)interpretation of Jesus' fate, especially of his great commandment of love (towards the enemy), leads to the recognition of a permanent crisis of values and a state of total violence, and thus builds a Gnostic vision of the world.

The analysis of the author's (quasi-)ethical notions shows that the (Judeo-)Christian and Enlightenment concepts of God and history are fundamentally devaluated and discredited. In the beginning, he refers to the idea of the Fall (i.e., exile from the paradise) as an Exit (in the sense of liberation), and afterwards – to the Liberation as a fall and an exile. As a result, the author's message occurs in the order of the Radical Enlightenment (Ch. Taylor), or the culture of fiction (Ph. Rieff), which parasitize on strongly negated traditional patterns to hide their own axiological involvement. Tsanev's ethical concept, in fact deeply esoteric, is procedural, and it expresses itself in the demand of self-alienation in the fallen world. However, in the situation of lack of the transcendental element, this translates into an attitude of a constant objection that in practice can be achieved only in the state of complete apathy. The condition of non-willingness – the new form of stoicism (Ch. Delsol) – describes the post-totalitarian rebellion against reality as the only way of moral involvement. It turns out that being faced with the alternative of "(the new) utopia or nothing," Tsanev only seemingly chooses the former when he appeals for universal and unconditional love. Although at the level of articulation he is guided by the desire to save humanity (one might say, from itself), in fact he proposes nothing.

Keywords:

Gospel, ethics, Gnosticism, enlightenment, exodus, fall, Stefan Tsanev, Bulgarian literature

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