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AUTHORS: Gürhan ÖZPOLAT

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# THE INTELLECTUAL GENEALOGY CONNECTING STIRNER, NIETZSCHE AND FOUCAULT

Gürhan ÖZPOLAT\*

## ABSTRACT

*In this paper, I shall discuss an unusual but unexplored relationship between Max Stirner (1806–1856), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Michel Foucault (1926–1984) with reference to the link from ‘the death of God’ to ‘the death of Man’. I will put forward that Hegel is present in the philosophy of these thinkers as the enemy and the startling similarities between these thinkers are because of post-Hegelian philosophy that drove them in the same direction.*

**Keywords:** Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, the death of God, the death of Man, anti-humanism

## (Stirner, Nietzsche ve Foucault’yu Birbirine Bağlayan Entelektüel Soyağacı)

## ÖZET

*Bu yazıda, Max Stirner (1806–1856), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) ve Michel Foucault (1926–1984) arasındaki sıra dışı fakat henüz keşfedilmemiş olan bir ilişkiyi ‘tanrının ölümünden’ ‘insanın ölümü’ne uzanan bağlantıdan hareketle tartışacağım. Hegel’in üç düşünürün felsefelerinde de ortak bir düşman olarak mevcut bulunduğunu ve bu düşünürler arasındaki şaşırtıcı benzerliklerin onları aynı istikamete iten post-Hegelyen felsefenin bir sonucu olduğunu öne süreceğim.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Tanrının ölümü, İnsanın ölümü, anti-humanizm

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\* Munzur Üniversitesi Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü öğretim elamanı.  
gozpolat@munzur.edu.tr

*The Intellectual Genealogy Connecting Stirner, Nietzsche And Foucault*

*Stirner was the audacious dialectician who tried to reconcile the dialectic with the art of the sophists. [...] He knew how to make it the essential question against Hegel, Bauer and Feuerbach simultaneously.*

—Deleuze, 2002: 159

*We have every reason to suppose that Nietzsche had a profound knowledge of the Hegelian movement, from Hegel to Stirner himself.*

—Deleuze, 2002: 162

*We are informed, in the manner of Feuerbach, that man takes God's place, that he recuperates the divine as his own property or essence, and that theology becomes anthropology. But who is Man and what is God?*

—Deleuze, 2002: 158

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The revival of Max Stirner's thought is simultaneous with the re-discovery of Friedrich Nietzsche with whom he is compared many times.<sup>1</sup> Some of the scholars who studied Stirner's philosophy claim that most of the radical ideas, philosophical inferences and aphorisms that constitute Nietzsche's philosophical underpinnings are derived from Stirner's intellectual arsenal.<sup>2</sup> A comparative reading between Stirner and Nietzsche could reveal some significant parallels that might provide material for these assertions. Indeed, a well-known aphoristic phrase, which is often associated with Nietzsche, actually belongs to Max Stirner, who wrote of 'the death of God' in his work *The Ego and Its Own*, in 1844.<sup>3,4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. S. Stepelevich, "The Revival of Max Stirner", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 1974, pp. 323-328.

<sup>2</sup> K. Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1964, pp. 187.

<sup>3</sup> J. Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace - The Anarcho-Psychological Critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky*, London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 15-20.

<sup>4</sup> I. M. Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1994, p. 113.

Despite the fact that Stirner is often considered as a member of the Young Hegelians,<sup>5,6,7</sup> even the last Hegelian,<sup>8,9</sup> there are good reasons to see him as an anti-Hegelian and precursor of some of the contemporary poststructuralist thinkers.<sup>10,11,12</sup> Considering poststructuralism as a political and social event, which is the prominent thought from the beginning of the 1960s until the late 1970s and an intellectual generation attempting to flee Hegel and the Hegelian tradition with the help of Nietzschean uprising, it is possible to say that Stirner had as much influence on contemporary poststructuralists as Nietzsche.<sup>13</sup> Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* can be seen not only as an early radical rejection of Hegelian philosophy but also a destructive critique of all Western metaphysics. In this book, Stirner rejects not only the notion of God but also the validity of abstract concepts such as human kind and humanity that have been radically believed to be sacred by the humanists.<sup>14</sup> From this point, it is possible to realize some considerable similarities between Stirner's critique of the Enlightenment and humanism, and parallel critiques developed by the poststructuralist thinkers namely Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze.<sup>15</sup>

According to Foucault, in a Nietzschean sense, "the death of God and the last man are engaged in a contest with more than one round", therefore 'the death of God' is the affirmation of 'the end of man'.<sup>16</sup> As opposed to Derrida, who deals with Stirner and his relationship with Marx and analyses Stirner's concept of 'spectres' in his book, *Spectres of Marx*, and Deleuze, who partly mentions him in *The Logic of Sense* and *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Foucault seems not to be aware of the existence of Stirner (I have not been

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<sup>5</sup> N. Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*.

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, London and New York: Continuum, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> D. McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, London: Macmillan, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> L. S. Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1985, pp. 597-614.

<sup>10</sup> A. Koch, "Max Stirner: The Last Hegelian or the First Poststructuralist?", *Anarchist Studies*, 5, 1997, pp. 95-107.

<sup>11</sup> S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> S. Newman, "Stirner and Foucault: Towards a Post-Kantian Freedom", *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 13/2, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*, p. 115.

<sup>15</sup> Newman, "Stirner and Foucault: Towards a Post-Kantian Freedom".

<sup>16</sup> M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002a, p. 420.

able to find one single reference to the work of Stirner, neither in his classical books, nor in any other publication). Yet, similar to Stirner, Foucault believes that 'man is an invention of recent date' and announces 'the end of Man' in the conclusion pages of *The Order of Things*. In this respect, the link between Stirner to Foucault through Nietzsche seems startling.

In this paper, I shall discuss this unusual but unexplored relationship between these thinkers with reference to the link from 'the death of God' to 'the death of Man'. A review of the literature suggests this link has not been discussed so far in the case of this debate. I believe that the startling similarities between these thinkers are because of post-Hegelian philosophy; "the inalterable logic of post-Hegelian philosophy" drove not only Stirner and Nietzsche<sup>17</sup> but also Foucault in the same direction. Thus, it is highly possible to misunderstand not only Nietzsche<sup>18</sup> but also Stirner and Foucault if we overlook the fact that Hegelian concepts are present in the philosophy of these thinkers as the enemy. I shall look at, first of all, *The Ego and Its Own* in order to provide a better framework of Stirner's philosophy. Secondly, I shall attempt to show Stirner's [possible?] influence on Nietzsche's amoral themes and nihilistic philosophy, including the debate on 'the death of God'. Finally, I shall elucidate the thematic connection between Foucault and Stirner through Nietzsche, particularly, with respect to the concepts 'anti-humanism' and 'the death of Man'.

Johann Kaspar Schmidt (1806–1856), also known as Max Stirner, is an undervalued philosopher of the German philosophical tradition in whose writings many thinkers and scholars of the late 19th and the 20th centuries found philosophical inspirations.<sup>19, 20</sup> Stirner's philosophy is often associated with individualist anarchism, nihilism and egoism; however, he also found admiration, through Nietzsche, in 20th century existentialism.<sup>21, 22</sup> The revival of Max Stirner is simultaneous with the discovery of Friedrich Nietzsche in the beginning of the 20th century; however, with the emergence of

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<sup>17</sup> J. Glassford, "Did Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) Plagiarise from Max Stirner (1806-56)?" , *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, No. 18, 1999, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 159-162.

<sup>19</sup> J. H. Mackay, *Max Stirner: His Life and His Work*, California: Booksurge Publishing, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> S. Newman, "Introduction: Re-encountering Stirner's Ghosts" in S. Newman, (eds), *Max Stirner*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*.

<sup>22</sup> D. Leopold, "Max Stirner", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011.

poststructuralist anarchism, Stirner's political thought once again became popular in 21st century political theory as well as the contemporary anarchist tradition.<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that he is often considered as the founder of individualist anarchism, and *The Ego and Its Own* is mostly understood as an extreme example of the proclamation of the absolute egocentrism; to consider Stirner as a 'black sheep' of the anarchist tradition or associate his philosophy with merely nihilism and egoism would be misleading. Unlike his contemporaries, he never believed the notion of human essence. Moreover, Stirner emphasized that the notion of human essence is not only questionable but also politically dangerous.<sup>24</sup> Above all, he is one of the pioneer thinkers, like Nietzsche, who pointed out the dark side of the Enlightenment, and realized the totalitarian aspect of modernity as well as rational philosophy at the end of the 19th century.<sup>25</sup> In his book, Stirner rejects the tyranny of philosophical abstractions, every 'higher essence' that was imposed by rational philosophy such as Reason, Truth, Justice, Mankind, Humanity, Freedom, the People and so on.<sup>26,27</sup> Therefore, there are good reasons to see *The Ego and Its Own* not only as an early radical rejection of the Cartesian logic and German philosophical idealism but also a destructive critique of all Western metaphysics, any kind of 'fixed idea' that tries to subject 'Man' to itself.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Ego and Its Own*, Stirner draws attention to a distinction between 'the unique one' and 'the Man' as a species or human being. For him, being a man is just a qualification of the ego and it cannot be considered as if it surrounds all existence of the unique one. Man is only something pointing out the quality of our existence.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the unique one is not just a man, he is more than man: "I do not need to begin by producing the human being in myself, for he belongs to me already, like all my qualities".<sup>30</sup> Stirner writes, "it is believed that one cannot be more than man" but "rather, one

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<sup>23</sup> R. Kinna, "Anarchism" in M. Bevir, (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Political Theory*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 2010, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Newman, "Introduction: Re-encountering Stirner's Ghosts", p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> V. Murthy, "Chinese Revolutionary Thought" in Bevir, M. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Political Theory*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 2010, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup> M. Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, London: Rebel Press, 1993, p. 333.

<sup>27</sup> Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> A. Bonanno, "The Theory of the Individual: Stirner's Savage Thought" in *The Anarchist Library*, 1998, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.

cannot be less”.<sup>31</sup> Western philosophy has always tried to subject the ego to an impersonal being since the beginning. For Stirner, on the other hand, “the ego is prior to everything, prior to all presumption, reflection or mediation”.<sup>32</sup> What Stirner particularly seeks to attack is the rationalists who try to replace the spirit of God with the spirit of humanity, especially Feuerbach’s ‘theological attempt’, *The Essence of Christianity*, in which he tries to replace the idea of God with the idea of Man. This is because, while it seems as if Feuerbach attempts to save us from the spirit of God, he also lets us be a victim of a new kind of theology, the spirit of Man and humanism. For Stirner, Feuerbach “claiming to have overthrown religion, merely reversed the order of subject and predicate”, but, he does nothing in order to destroy “the place of religious authority itself”.<sup>33</sup> Feuerbach, putting ‘Man’ and ‘humanity’ at the centre of the universe, replaces theology with anthropology; however, he cannot move beyond theological explanations, and simply falls into another type of religious thinking, a secular one.<sup>34, 35</sup> This is the point from which Stirner builds his own philosophy and attacks Western metaphysics. Stirner notes: “the activity of the spirit, which ‘searches even the depths of the Godhead,’ is theology, [...] even the newest revolts against God are nothing but the extremist efforts of ‘theology’, that is, theological insurrections”.<sup>36</sup> In Feuerbach, ‘Man’ or ‘human essence’ by taking the place of God, becomes “the last metamorphosis of Christianity”;<sup>37</sup> therefore, Feuerbach, Stirner argues, is “the high priest”<sup>38</sup> or “the last prophet”<sup>39</sup> of a new religion that is called ‘humanism’. In the case of Christianity, values were imposed by God, in the case of humanism by the idea of Man and humanity. Yet, according to Stirner, there is no essential difference between ‘the God’ and ‘the Man’ because both wants to overawe us.<sup>40</sup> For Stirner, Man is a “new discovery”,<sup>41</sup> “spirit”,<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>32</sup> D. R. Mitchell, D. R., *Heidegger's Philosophy and Theories of the Self*. Wiltshire: Ashgate, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace*.

<sup>36</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>38</sup> Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan*, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace*, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 184.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

“spook”,<sup>43</sup> even “the last evil”,<sup>44</sup> “the most deceptive or most intimate, the craftiest liar with honest mien, the father of lies”;<sup>45</sup> therefore, as can be seen in Nietzsche, “man is something that must be overcome”.<sup>46</sup> Stirner even sees this ‘new invention’ as more dangerous than the spirit of God, because

the new essence betrays, in fact, a more spiritual style of conception than the old God, because the latter was still represented in a sort of embodiedness or form, while the undimmed spirituality of the new is retained, and no special material body is fancied for it.<sup>47</sup>

According to Stirner, every attempt that seeks “the thing in itself”, “the essence”, and “the thing behind the un-thing” behind the real world only re-produces religious alienation.<sup>48</sup> This tendency, especially, reaches a peak with the philosophy of Hegel. Stirner writes, “Hegel has shown that even philosophy is religious”.<sup>49</sup> What Stirner criticizes is this “Hegelian way out, following Plato”<sup>50</sup> that “carries the idea through everything” and looks for “reason, holy spirit or ‘the real is rational’” in everything.<sup>51</sup> In this respect, Hegel does nothing but “give a systematic expression, bringing method into the nonsense and completing the conceptual precepts into a rounded, firmly-based dogmatic”.<sup>52</sup> Stirner even sees Hegel’s system as “the most extreme case of violence on the part of thought, its highest pitch of despotism and sole dominion, the triumph of mind, and with it the triumph of philosophy”.<sup>53</sup> In the Hegelian system people believe as if ‘the thinking spirit’ can think and act alone.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the Cartesian and Hegelian logic, for Stirner, the subject exists before his thinking. From this point of view, thinking cannot be preceded by an idea: “before my thinking, there is – I”.<sup>55</sup> What is thought or

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 158.

<sup>47</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>50</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, p. 147.

<sup>51</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*



what is not thought can be exist at the same time.<sup>56</sup> From this perspective it follows that, according to Stirner, an 'independent thinking', a 'thinking spirit' does not exist at all.<sup>57</sup>

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Whether Nietzsche read Stirner and to what extent he was influenced by Stirner is still a question that has not been answered. It seems that unless new historical documents emerge, we will probably never be completely sure whether Stirner had influence on Nietzsche. Yet, there is no other example of two thinkers whose works resemble each other that much and bear such a strong similarity.<sup>58</sup> For instance, Stirner's egoist who only cares about realising himself brings to mind, Zarathustra's motto 'become who you are!'.<sup>59</sup> Whereas Stirner notes "God is spirit" and "Man, mankind – in short, all ideals; the man finds himself as embodied spirit",<sup>60</sup> Nietzsche echoes in a similar voice: "once the spirit was God, then it became human".<sup>61</sup> Stirner also employs the same aphoristic style that reaches a peak with Nietzsche. In this respect, if "Nietzsche is the poet of the doctrine, Stirner its prophet".<sup>62</sup>

There are also many similar points between Nietzsche's 'superman-ascetic priest dichotomy' and Stirner's 'egoist-cleric contrast'.<sup>63</sup> It is even possible to say that Stirner can be considered as 'the first immoralist' due to the fact that he searches for the roots of modern man in a moral system instead of political or economic repression.<sup>64</sup> According to Carroll, both Stirner and Nietzsche attack the values of Christianity in their critique of ideology.<sup>65</sup> Similar to Nietzsche, Stirner is against all forms of sanctity, all forms of ideologies.<sup>66</sup>

Stirner attacks the fundamental thinkers and categories of Western thought, especially Hegel and the concept spirit. In the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* can be seen the same understanding of 'the spiritual philosophy' that we see in *The Ego and Its Own*: "most protracted, and most dangerous of all

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>58</sup> Glassford, "Did Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) Plagiarise from Max Stirner (1806-56)?" , p. 78.

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 192.

<sup>60</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>61</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> J. G. Huneker, "Max Stirner", *The Anarchist Library*, 2011, p. 3

<sup>63</sup> Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*, p. 115.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace*, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> A. Bonanno, "The Theory of the Individual: Stirner's Savage Thought", xp. 10.

errors up to now has been the error of a dogmatist, namely, Plato's invention of the purely spiritual and of the good as such".<sup>67</sup> Not only ancient but also modern types of Platonism are the biggest enemy of Stirner and Nietzsche. Moreover, both thinkers have a common understanding of 'the Truth'. Stirner does not believe 'the Truth' but truths. For Stirner "truth", so to speak, is a toolbox not a 'thing-in-itself':

Truths are phrases, ways of speaking, words (lógos); brought into connection, or into an articulate series, they form logic, science, philosophy. For thinking and speaking I need truths and words, as I do foods for eating; without them I cannot think nor speak.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, Stirner sees 'the Truth' not only as a lie but also as politically hazardous: "if there is even one truth only to which man has to devote his life and his powers because he is man, then he is subjected to a rule, dominion, law; he is a servingman".<sup>69</sup> We can see the same emphasis in Nietzsche's philosophy; similar to Stirner, Nietzsche does not believe 'the Truth' as an abstraction, but he prefers to call them 'my truths'.<sup>70</sup> In this respect, he criticizes Kant and Hegel for establishing philosophical abstractions, 'truths' that represent themselves in the form of dominance.<sup>71</sup>

Above all, there is something more important than the other similarities, which shows the most possible influence of Stirner on Nietzsche: that is a well-known anti-Christian use of the phrase 'God is dead', which is often remembered with Nietzsche but actually belongs to Stirner who writes on the death of God in the second part of *The Ego and Its Own* in a 'proto-Nietzschean' sense:

At the entrance of the modern time stands the 'God-man.' At its exit will only the God in the God-man evaporate? And can the God-man really die if only the God in him dies? They did not think of this question, and thought they were through when in our days they brought to a victorious end the work of the Illumination, the vanquishing of God: they did not notice that Man has killed God in order to become now – 'sole God on high.' [...] God has had to give place, yet not to us, but to – Man. How can you believe that the God-man is dead

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<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 347.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 144.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

before the Man in him, besides the God, is dead?<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, neither Nietzsche nor Stirner was the first or the last thinker who announced 'the death of God'. When they announced the death of God in an anti-Christian way, the idea of 'God is dead' had already become a matter of philosophical interests due to the fact that Hegel had interpreted 'the spirit of his age' with theological propositions.<sup>73</sup> The first philosopher was, therefore, the "Lutheran Hegel"<sup>74</sup> who integrates 'the death of God' into his philosophy by saying "God godself is dead"<sup>75,76</sup> (and the last thinker of the death of God was Feuerbach).<sup>77</sup> For Hegel, the idea of the death of God is based on the fact that "God realizes himself concretely in his infinity and identity with and as humanity".<sup>78</sup> In other words, in Hegel "God finitized Godself, as the self-negation of God" and this God "does not desire to be 'in and for himself' and does not desire to forsake the world in its finitude".<sup>79</sup> In this respect, in the Hegelian thought, 'thinking spirit' takes the place of God, and the death of God demonstrates the significance of the Enlightenment movement. Yet, when Nietzsche and Stirner proclaimed the death of God, they basically drew attention to the fact that the Western philosophical tradition is based on religious insurrections. It is precisely for this reason that Hegel's pronouncement 'God godself is dead' carries a thought different from that contained in the words of Stirner and Nietzsche. For both Nietzsche and Stirner, God is "the greatest objection to existence so far".<sup>80</sup> Because if there is a divinity either in the form of God or Man, 'the I' cannot realize himself. Therefore, in the philosophy of Stirner and Nietzsche not only God is dead, but also 'the place of God' is annihilated.<sup>81</sup>

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche by pronouncing the word 'God is

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<sup>72</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 154.

<sup>73</sup> E. Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983, pp. 63-64.

<sup>74</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 92.

<sup>75</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, pp. 63-100.

<sup>76</sup> P. C. Hodgson, P., "Introduction", in G. W. F. Hegel, *Theologian of the Spirit*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997, p. 15.

<sup>77</sup> G. Deleuze, *Foucault*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. 129-130.

<sup>78</sup> W. Franke, "The Death of God in Hegel and Nietzsche and the Crisis of Values in Secular Modernity and Post-secular Postmodernity", *Religion and the Arts*, Vol.11, 2007, p. 217.

<sup>79</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 74.

<sup>80</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> D. B. Bergoffen, "Nietzsche's Madman: Perspectivism without Nihilism" in Koelb, C. (eds) *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 65.

dead' "speaks of the destining of two millennia of Western history".<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the death of God means, for Nietzsche, the end of metaphysics or in his word Platonism.<sup>83</sup> This was an explicit break from not only theology but also anthropology. For Foucault, Nietzsche is the first thinker who "awaken[s] us from the confused sleep of dialectics and of anthropology".<sup>84</sup> However, in contrast to Foucault's claim, the 'epistemological break' from anthropological thought does not start with Nietzsche but Stirner.<sup>85</sup> In this context, the anti-humanist critique of philanthropy and anthropology is more indebted to Stirner than to Nietzsche. The concept of God's death in Hegel and Feuerbach resulted in the theologising of humanity and Man took the place of God. For Stirner and Nietzsche, to kill God is to become god oneself. Therefore, "the grand permutation Man-God which has satisfied [transcendental] philosophy for so long"<sup>86</sup> or in Stirner's word, "God-man", had to die with God within him.<sup>87</sup> Foucault in a Nietzschean sense significantly interpreted the death of God and the death of Man as engaged, but he was not aware of the fact that it had been pronounced by Max Stirner.

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Despite the fact that Kelly states "Foucault himself never actually announced the death of anything",<sup>88</sup> neither God nor Man;<sup>89</sup> Foucault ends both *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things* with an inauspicious prophecy:

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.<sup>90</sup>

You may have killed God beneath the weight of all that you have said; but don't imagine that, with all that you are saying,

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<sup>82</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York; London: Harper & Row, 1977, p. 58.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> M. Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984 - Volume 2*, New York: The New York Press, 1998, p. 76.

<sup>85</sup> S. Newman, "Politics of the Ego: Stirner's Critique of Liberalism", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 5, Issue: 3, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, London: The Athlone Press, 1990, p. 106.

<sup>87</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 154.

<sup>88</sup> M. G. E. Kelly, *Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 2009, p. 83.

<sup>89</sup> C. Colwell, "The Retreat of the Subject in the Late Foucault", *Philosophy Today*, 38, no. 1, 1994, p. 56.

<sup>90</sup> M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002b, p. 232.

you will make a man that will live longer than he.<sup>91</sup>

It is true that Foucault never says 'Man is dead', but he clearly implies that he will be dead soon and the process has already started. For Foucault, the death of Man started when Nietzsche showed us that the death of God is not the emergence but abolishment of Man, due to the fact that they were both the twins and father-and-son.<sup>92</sup> Claiming the death of God and the last man are bound, Foucault simply argues that the death of God is not only an event that influences our contemporary culture, but also a process that still "continues indefinitely tracing its great skeletal outline".<sup>93</sup> According to Foucault, Nietzsche announces, in this respect, not only the death of God, but also the death of God-Man that was imagined by nineteenth century philosophical thought; therefore, when Nietzsche declared the arrival of superman, he was not pronouncing someone who was more like God than human, but he was pronouncing a new human species who has no relation with God but still does continue to carry on having the image of God.<sup>94</sup>

In Foucault, as in Stirner, the concept of the death of God, death of Man, death of metaphysics and death of humanism are bound. From this point of view, Foucault, similar to Stirner, attempted to provide a way of thinking beyond the discourse of the Enlightenment that located the human and humanism at the centre of the universe.<sup>95</sup> What Foucault rejects is this 'anthropocentric' dominance over the subject:

What I am afraid of about humanism is that it presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom. I think that there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism.<sup>96</sup>

Similar emphasis can be found in *The Ego and Its Own*. According to Stirner, humanism or in his words 'human religion' forces us to make a separation

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<sup>91</sup> M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 422.

<sup>92</sup> M. Foucault, *Felsefe Sahnesi, Seçme Yazılar 5*, İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2004, p. 34.

<sup>93</sup> M. Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, p. 71.

<sup>94</sup> M. Foucault, *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996, p. 53.

<sup>95</sup> N. Power, "Subject" in Bevir, M. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Political Theory*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 2010, p. 1343.

<sup>96</sup> M. Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview" in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, p. 15.

between ourselves and 'proper ourselves':

it exalts 'Man' to the same extent as any other religion does its God or idol, because it makes what is mine into something otherworldly, because in general it makes out of what is mine, out of my qualities and my property, something alien – to wit, an 'essence'; in short, because it sets me beneath Man, and thereby creates for me a 'vocation'.<sup>97</sup>

Like Stirner, Foucault sees the classical Kantian notion of freedom as very problematic and attempts to move beyond a post-Kantian sense of ownness;<sup>98</sup> therefore, by taking an anti-humanist position and tracing the thematic connections between the appearance of Man, humanism, and anthropology in *The Order of Things*, he seems to conclude the fact that theology is overturned by anthropology.<sup>99</sup>

Similar to Stirner, the question of the death of God is not a central concern of Foucault, but the death of Man is what concerns him: the problem is neither the death of God nor whether he exists or not, the problem is the end of Man. Since, when Man killed God, he also took over his place, even 'his language', 'his thought', and 'his laughter'.<sup>100</sup> It is precisely for this reason that "the death of God profoundly influenced our language".<sup>101</sup> According to Foucault:

[...] in our day, the fact that philosophy is still –and again– in the process of coming to an end, and the fact that in it perhaps, tough even more outside and against it, in literature as well as in formal reflection, the question of language being posed, prove no doubt that man is the process of disappearing.<sup>102</sup>

As shown, there are startling similarities between Stirner and Foucault not only in the case of the death of God and the end of Man debate, but also in their consideration of Man, of freedom, of anthropology, of humanism, and so on. It is clear that there is no reference to Stirner in Foucault's writings; similar to Nietzsche, Foucault never mentions Stirner.

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<sup>97</sup> Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 176.

<sup>98</sup> Newman, "Stirner and Foucault: Towards a Post-Kantian Freedom".

<sup>99</sup> Han-Pile, B. (2010) "The "Death of Man": Foucault and Anti-Humanism" in T. O'Leary and C. Falzon (eds) *Foucault and Philosophy*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p. 121.

<sup>100</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 420

<sup>101</sup> M. Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 420

Then, how can the thematic connections between these three thinkers be interpreted? At this point, in my opinion, Glassford's relevance is clear by concluding that startling similarities between Stirner and Nietzsche are because of post-Hegelian philosophy;<sup>103</sup> in like manner, it is possible to say that the "inalterable logic of post-Hegelian philosophy" drove not only Stirner and Nietzsche but also Foucault in the same direction. It is precisely for this reason that Deleuze, maybe the most radical anti-Hegelian, introduces *Nietzsche and Philosophy* in 1962 as against Hegelian philosophy. Similar to Deleuze, Foucault was also a member of the intellectual movement attempting to flee Hegel with the help of Nietzsche's critical reading of Western metaphysics.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have attempted to provide a general framework of Stirner's radical thought and demonstrate his possible influence on Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy. I have also tried to reflect on the link between Foucault and Stirner through Nietzsche, particularly emphasizing their anti-humanist positions and their considerations of Man and humanity. In relation to this, I have suggested a way of conceiving the intellectual genealogy connecting Stirner, Nietzsche and Foucault. Besides, I have put forward that among them is Hegel's implicit presence, that is to say, Hegelian themes are the common enemy in these thinkers' philosophies. Each thinker deals with the problems of Western metaphysics as well as the 'dark legacy of post-Hegelian philosophy' in his own way. It is precisely for this reason that their thoughts resemble each other significantly and bear such a strong similarity. In this respect, Stirner can be considered as the first thinker of an intellectual tradition which attempts to avoid the tyranny of philosophical idealism.

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<sup>103</sup> Glassford, "Did Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) Plagiarise from Max Stirner (1806-56)?", p. 76.

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