

Thanos and the Infinity Wars

By Dr. Orlando Gutierrez Boronat

[ORLANDO GUTIERREZ BORONAT · FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2018 · 5 MINUTES](#) 8 Reads

For Juan B. and Jose J., who are actually reading this stuff

Third Installment

There is after all, something attractive about Thanos, the ubervillain of Marvel's Infinity Wars. Infinity Wars is basically his story, the showcase for his philosophy. I imagine it's the same attraction that makes so many wear the Che Guevara face on their clothing or that inspired multitudes in Europe to acclaim parading SS troopers. Thanos is powerful, Thanos is committed, Thanos is moved by love, Thanos is noble and philosophical. Sure, he wants to wipe out half of human life in the universe because he is absolutely certain that he had understood a hidden supreme law of nature that he, and only he, was destined to understand. A balance must be restored, because the principle of material reality, the pillar of the universe is not love, or justice, or order, it is "balance." And for some reason that only Thanos can fathom, life is a chaotic, uncontrollable factor that threatens that balance. Of course, he doesn't offer to restore that balance by destroying himself, it does not cross his mind that he may be absolutely wrong in wanting to kill billions for an ideological principle only he can understand, no, on the contrary he must kill others, not himself, so as to restore that balance. Thanos is the Marvel incarnation of the justification for the dominant race or for the social class destined to inherit history after brutal revolutionary struggle: determinist forces that disavow the illusion of choice, that render asunder the misconception of a moral hierarchy as the core of reality. For this mindset, there is nothing in the universe but predatory forces feeding off each other in frenzy of desire for survival. Thanos possess the very qualities his world view intrinsically denies: goodness, courage, nobility...these can only exist if a universal moral order can validate them. In a savage, chaotic universe there can be nothing else but endless wars for

survival. Thanos seeks only to watch the sun rise, as if that affirmed the existence of an order that can have value only if the values that human life discerns are existent beyond human life. That is to say, reason can only be a value, intelligence can only be a value, within a cosmic scheme where the concept of value exists...within the universe that Thanos would generate there can be none of the humanity that he prides himself on having, or at least of having transcended because life itself has ceased to be a value. Thanos in reality is a powerful being, the symbol of a once powerful civilization, that which developed in the Martian moon of Titan, whose soul, whose mind, has fallen prey to several civilizational illnesses which may, in turn, constitute one great spiritual virus which infects the souls of great cultures at a certain moment in their lifespan. As he tells Thor after the god of thunder stabs Thanos through the heart with an axe in their climactic duel: "You should have gone for the head..." Because the disease lies there. The disease lies in believing that the incidence of death is far more revealing of a hidden universal order than the persistence of life, the belief that the laws of the universe are consequently hidden, to be discovered only through the intervention of those with the will and the power to engage them fully and brutally, that words have no meaning because metaphysics are hollow, that the void can only be filled by our own construction of what humanity should be, and that this construction can only emerge from the recognition of the material fabric of the cosmos. Those powerful enough to face these supposed realities, be they the overlords of the Bactrian-Harappan empire, the revolutionary vanguard envisaged by Marx, Lenin or Che Guevara, or the superior race dreamed of by Hitler, have a common creed: the negation of the intrinsic freedom of the human soul. Confronting Thanos are the descendants in symbolic, philosophical and historical terms of those Indo-Aryan legions who waged war on the banks of the Indus River, those whom believed that obedience to duty was not merely an external sociologically necessary expression of human existence, but moreover, an internal mandate of a human condition linked to a source transcendent of the visible universe inhabited by man. Thanos is our modern and post-modern totalitarianism. In confronting Thor or Captain America or Iron Man and the rest of the heroes, he is confronting the ancient, classical and contemporary, pagan and Christian, scientific and religious symbols of this sense of human freedom.

Thanos is totalitarian ideology, Thor and his Avengers the symbol of organic human heroism without which, humanity would not recognize itself. Yes, without which humanity would not recognize itself. That Rousseauian moment when man discovers his humanity in the eyes of a fellow human creature is not an anthropological or material one: it is spiritual. The Other lies within us. And the attempt to destroy that Other, amputates our very humanity.

Thanos actually developed as a character from Marvel's attempt at reproducing Jack Kirby's trend-setting New Gods series in the early 1970s in DC comics. Anyone with a passing interest in comics will recognize that there is Darkseid with Thanos. In the New Gods series, a Highfather linked to the sacred Source, leads a civilization of New Gods in a world of freedom known as New Genesis, for the sake of the survival of the universe he has entered into a truce with an enslaving leader of a prison planet known as Apokolips. The leader of Apokolips is Darkseid, a ruthless entity seemingly made of ashen stone. Highfather and Darkseid traded sons to seal their pact: Orion, Darkseid's son, to be raised by Highfather, Scott Free, Highfather's son, to be raised by Darkseid. The New Gods were as Abrahamaic as you could make it, it gave a mythological basis for a pop culture rendering to the profound psycho-social intricacies of the Cold War, but it was also more, it was about the actual nature of godhood and humanity, and the moral universality of existence itself. Thanos is the modern or post-modern totalitarian evil that comes from the Satanic figure existing in the Abrahamaic universe.