NIETZSCHE'S THEOLOGY: PERSPECTIVES FOR GOD, FAITH, AND JUSTICE

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Tod ist bei Göttern immer nur ein Vorurteil.

Whenever one speaks, with Nietzsche, of God, or even of a Nietzschean theology, one seems to convert the Devil into God's advocate. Nietzsche himself intended precisely that: to be, *as the Devil,* God's advocate. As God's advocate, he wanted to fight "the Good and Just" who had taken Him for granted. Nietzsche knew what he was talking about. In the summer of 1882, he writes: "I intentionally lived the entire contradiction of a religious nature to the fullest. I know the devil and his perspectives on God."[1]

God was the main focus of Nietzsche's thinking that summer. In his previous aphoristic works, especially in *Daybreak,* he had dealt ruthlessly with Christianity in whose spirit he himself had been raised and to which he would be ever grateful. To Christianity he owed, as he noted then, the virtue in which he "had most practice," the "virtuosity ... to bear that which I find uncomfortable, to give it justice, even to be well-behaved towards – man and knowledge" (KSA 10, VII 1 [39]) [2] It was now that the horizons of his philosophy were most open. *The Gay Science* was published, and he was preparing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* At the same time he had a joyful experience that brought unusual happiness into in his otherwise so desperate a life: he had come together with Lou Salomé. Like never before (and never after) he could exchange thoughts with someone else. He was, he writes to her, "literally knocked over by the event of gaining a 'new person' – due to an all too strict loneliness and renunciation of all love and friendship."[3] Many of the things he said during these months were said for the cosmopolitan young Russian woman and in conversations with her.

For Nietzsche, in a 'religious nature' are united a strong attachment to God with doubts, equally strong, over that very attachment. Nietzsche's doubts about religious bonds are directed towards preconceptions about God and the wishes that are usually connected with these preconceptions. He considers it a religious duty to be honest [*redlich*] with oneself, especially about one's religious commitment. Hence, for him, to keep one's doubts

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about one's own conceptions and wishes alive is a religious duty as well. On the basis of these doubts, there stands the question of how it might be possible to differentiate oneself from these conceptions and wishes, how one should be able to disassociate oneself from them. Still deeper lies the question how God *as God* could be observable and perceivable, how one could ever say anything about Him. Whenever one observes God, whenever He is perceived, or judged, He turns inevitably into an object of our conceptions and wishes. But not only that: God turns into just one object of knowledge among others, into something humans can observe, understand and judge like any other thing.

A perspective on God, Nietzsche concludes, must be a divine perspective if it is to be appropriate to Him. At the same time, however, it must never be God's own perspective. It would have to be anti-divine. There is a name for this anti-divine perspective in the religious tradition: it is the name of the devil. Whoever wants to observe, perceive and judge God (as God does), therefore, turns into the devil. "The devil," Nietzsche will write a few years later in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "has the broadest perspectives for God; therefore he keeps so far away from God – the devil being the most ancient friend of wisdom" (BGE, 129). The most ancient friend of wisdom, however, is the philosopher.

As does the religious tradition, Nietzsche as philosopher leaves open the question, to what extent God himself tolerates the devil, snakes and philosophers as His observers. Certainly, in the religious tradition, devils and snakes were considered the evil as such. They sought to see the evil in God, to import the evil into Him, into God who was supposed to be considered the good as such. An observation, a thought, a judgment about God, however, always remains within the dangerous realm of evil. If God is to be considered the good as such, He is, philosophically speaking, regarded from the perspective of the distinction between good and evil, the moral perspective. If, however, God is considered to be good and good only, then one of the two sides of the distinction, namely the evil one, must be excluded. If one side of the distinction is to be excluded, what distinction or even observation is still being made? Thus, if God is to be good, then it has to be at least intelligible that He can be evil as well.[4] By thinking this, the devil appears.

"Good and evil," Nietzsche writes in the summer of 1882, "are God's prejudices – says the snake. But the snake too was a prejudice of God." (10, VII 4 [38]). Good and evil are always what men take to be the good and the evil. Humans allowed themselves to be seduced into believing that they could tell good from evil as God does. According to the Bible, this is what

had them expelled from paradise; and although, they must now, like God, tell good from evil, they are unable to do so in the way God does. Consequently, they continue to suffer. Hence, it could be all the more of a prejudice and a presumption to regard God Himself according to the distinction between good and evil – God, who had explicitly denied humans the ability to draw this very distinction. In that case, regarding God to be the good as such would likewise be a prejudice and a presumption.

Thus, devils and snakes, which, in regard to God, allow both sides of the moral distinction and look upon Him too as good *and* evil, could be of help for the conventional perspective. According to this perspective, their point of view puts them in the wrong. Thereby, it is the devils and the snakes that let us recognize the distinction between good and evil as prejudice and presumption. It becomes possible to put this distinction into question – not only with regards to God but also with regards to humans among themselves. In this manner, one could do more justice to both God and humans than had previously been possible. "It is time," Nietzsche writes in the summer of 1882, "for the devil to be God's advocate: if He Himself wants to continue to exist" (10, VII 3 [1] 55).

This was the time of acute criticism of religion, and Nietzsche is considered to be the one who brought this criticism to its greatest efficacy. The most complete testimony of his criticism of Christianity is his "polemical pamphlet" – *On the Genealogy of Morals*.[5] Shortly before he wrote it, however, he said: "After all, only the moral god is overcome."[6] In the summer of 1882 he puts it in even clearer terms: "You call it the self-decomposition of God: but He is only changing His skin: – He is taking off His moral skin! And you shall see Him again, beyond good and evil" (KSA 10, VIII 3 [1] 432). What seemed to be an end to a lot of people was a beginning for Nietzsche.

Critics of religion like Schopenhauer and Feuerbach intended to replace religion with morals; the less religion could convince them, the more they expected from morals.[7] Nietzsche, on the contrary, suspected that the religion they criticized was based on the very morals that were in the "process of dissolution" (12, 5 [71] 2). In the later posthumous works, he writes: "The religions are ruined by the faith in morals: the Christian-moral God is untenable: thus 'atheism' – as if there could be no other kinds of gods" (12, 2 [1] 107). And he adds: "Religion as such has nothing to do with morals: the two descendants of the Jewish religion, however, are essentially moral, religions that provide prescriptions how one should lead one's life and that get their demands heard through gratification and punishment" (12, 2 [197]). If criticism, then, was directed towards morals,

it could mean that religion was made possible in a new manner. It could mean that "infinite kinds of being-able-to-be-different, even of being-God" (12, 9 [43]) become possible, an opportunity Schopenhauer was unable to see because of his declared atheism. Together with religious preconceptions, then, moral conceptions would have to be renewed as well. Nietzsche writes in the summer of 1882: "*Advocatus diaboli*–New conceptions of God and the devil (...) We have to free our-selves from morals, *in order to live morally*." (10, VII 1 [32]).

With this, the task Nietzsche posed for himself becomes clear. The gods – as imagined by people and peoples – are moral gods, gods of *their* morals. One can recognize their morals by their gods and their gods by their morals. They deified their morals and moralized their gods. Hence a criticism of morals and of the moralization of God could lead us not only to a new perspective on religion but also to a new perspective on morals, to a new moral towards morals. Nietzsche puts into question neither religion nor morals as such. He always assumed that humans, including himself, could not live without either. His doubt is directed towards the conventional relation between religion and morals. Morals, especially in the European tradition, became a criterion for religion. Moral norms have been and continue to be considered the standards for the interpretation of religion and the Holy Scriptures upon which religion is based. However, according to the story of the Fall of Man, and even more so, the Gospels, would not religion instead have to be the criterion for morals? Nietzsche wants to think a god who makes this thinkable.

In the posthumous writings from the summer of 1882, Nietzsche reduces the relation between religion and morals to four short theses, which I intend to clarify as follows:

1. "The free spirit as the most religious man existing."
2. "God killed God."
3. "Morals died of morality."
4. "The man of faith is the opposite of the religious man."

"The 'free spirit' as the most religious man existing."

The first of these theses Nietzsche himself explicated in detail in a further note:

> Why do I love the *free spirit* [*Freigeisterei*]? As ultimate consequence of existing morality. To be *just* to everything, to put oneself, beyond any inclination or aversion, into the sequence of things, to be *above oneself*, the *overcoming and the courage* not merely against the personally-hostile, the embarrassing, but also with regard to the evil in things, *honesty*, even as the nemesis of idealism and piety, even of passion, even in relation to honesty itself; *a loving mind* towards everything and everyone and the good will to discover one's *value*, one's justification, one's *necessity. To give up any action* (quietism) due to one's inability to say: 'it shall be different' – to rest in God, in a *becoming* god as it were.
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> As means of *this* free spirit [*Freigeisterei*] I recognized *selfishness* to be necessary, in order not to be devoured into things: as tie and support. This perfection of morality is only possible in an *I*: insofar as it is lively, creative, desiring, productive, insofar as it resists the absorption into things in every single moment, it keeps up its power to absorb more and more things and to make them sink into it. Thus, the free spirit is, in relation to the self and to selfishness, a becoming, a battle of two opposites, nothing done, perfect, no state: it is *the insight of morality to maintain its existence and development only by virtue of its contrary.* (10, 1 [42].

"The free spirit" [*Freigeisterei*] begins, according to this sketch, with the 'virtuosity' mentioned above, with the being 'just towards everything beyond inclination and aversion'. Nietzsche now defines it as the 'ultimate consequence of existing morality'. Accordingly, a 'free spirit' does not overcome conventional morality through disregard but through fulfillment.

Nietzsche assumes that every living thing has to continuously decide between what to engage in and in what not to, and therefore that everything reacts to all events at once with either 'inclination or aversion.' In the immediate reaction with such inclination or aversion, Nietzsche perceives the origin of morals; or, more precisely – of the variety of morals, since different living conditions lead to different morals. Hence, humans judge the convenient as good and the repulsive as evil. Instinctively, they interpret their inclinations and aversions morally, equally with regard for persons and things.[8] What is most significant for humans, however, are other humans. By judging one another morally, they then decide whether or not to engage each other.

Although the distinction between good and evil may be the first and the quickest, it nevertheless remains the most crucial. For it always concerns the person as a whole: to be rejected morally, means to be excluded from all communication, to be discriminated. The moral distinction that is supposed to guard against the 'personally hostile', the 'embarrassing,' becomes polemical itself. For instance, when others consider good that which one considers evil (or as evil that which one considers good), one tends to regard those others as evil. With increasing sophistication, this mechanism turns into a problem for the moral distinction itself. At this point, morals can demand the assessment of the 'consequence' and thereby transcend

'inclination and aversion' altogether. Such is the demand to feel neither animosity towards others nor to provoke it in them – to spare moral discrimination on both sides by 'putting oneself into the sequence of things'.

When the moral distinction itself becomes dubious, a moral towards morals develops. Nietzsche speaks of the 'loving mind towards everything and everyone'. This can manifest itself as courtesy, tact, distinction, kindness and, finally, love. To be courteous means to behave as if at court, i.e. to treat the other as higher in rank and not to bother the other with spontaneous judgments about good and evil. To be tactful is to adjust oneself to others in order not to touch upon *their* moral opinions. Whoever thinks in such a distinguished manner is able to *do* good without expecting it from the others, without pushing for reciprocity. One proves one's kindness by being capable of recognizing, and even supporting, the others' own moral conceptions. And the one who loves disregards moral distinctions altogether; he or she demonstrates 'good will to discover his or her own value, justification, and necessity' and does so no matter what others may do.

A moral towards morals in all these forms forces us to consider the others' moral conceptions to be as justified as our own. This, according to Nietzsche, presupposes 'honesty' – especially with regard to one's own conceptions. And it does so increasingly because the more one stands up for them, the more they grow to be 'idealism', 'pietism', 'passion'. For the more one stands up for them, the more one loses distance from them. Honesty ultimately becomes necessary 'even with respect to honesty itself'. For one must never take honesty for granted without being in danger of falling into self-righteousness.

The "ultimate consequence," however, would have to be: "*To give up any action* (quietism) due to one's inability to say: it should be different." Any one who says "it should be otherwise," any one who wants something different from what is or happens takes oneself "out of the sequence of things" and justifies it with reference to moral principles. If one wants one thing to be different then, ultimately, one has to want everything to be different, since everything depends on everything else. Not-to-want-anything-to-be-different becomes the core of Nietzsche's religious thinking.[9] In a letter Nietzsche writes to Lou Salomé, he calls this attitude his "fatalistic 'resignation unto God'" ('resignation unto God' in quotation marks).[10] Later he will name it "amor fati."[11] In the citation above we read it as "to rest in God, in a *becoming* god as it were": "A *becoming* god in whom one can rest – this seems to be a twofold paradox."

With this thought Nietzsche wants to think righteousness to its limits. Hence, a becoming god is a god that resists all definition, even and especially definition based on moral conceptions that are always one's own anyway. This cannot be the god, therefore, in whom one can find rest. For when one finds oneself forced to act in order to change something according to one's own purposes, this god serves as a reminder that such an action is demanded by one's own moral principles in the first place; therefore, one must not settle in them. Paradoxically, it is only possible 'to rest' if one does not find rest in one's own moral conceptions. To 'rest' is possible only if one does not allow oneself to become inflexible and self-righteous. Rest in this god means the constant disquietude in one's own moral opinions.

This is the aim and the means have to be just as paradoxical. Such a resting in God would mean losing all distance from things; it would amount to mystical 'absorption' into them if it did not find 'support' precisely in the moral conceptions one has. They push for changes and, thus, manifest the wish for things to be different. In this way, they alone provide distance from things. Therefore, their 'selfishness', as Nietzsche calls it, is 'necessary'. This leads him to suspect selfishness to be the origin of the *I* in opposition to things. The *I* explained in this way is to be thought from the very beginning as a moral *I*.[12] It remains the condition for a religious 'free spirit'. The 'free spirit' does not consist of an 'absorption into things'. On the contrary, it means the 'power to absorb more and more things and to make them sink into it'. It means to open oneself to things and to do them justice. Thus, a 'free spirit' only makes sense 'in relation to the self and to selfishness'. Only then is it 'a becoming, a battle of two opposites', one being morals that necessarily want to and do regard themselves as something 'done and perfect', the other, religion, not allowing it to be 'something done and perfect' preventing it from ever becoming 'a state'. In this sense, the religious 'free spirit', as Nietzsche sums it up, is 'the insight of morality to maintain its existence and development only by virtue of its contrary'.

Ultimately, in the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche calls Jesus himself "a 'free spirit'," even if, as he adds, he is "using the expression somewhat tolerantly ..."[13] In the summer of 1882, he writes the following: "Luke 6:4. old manusc."[14] Here the reference is: "Jesus saw somebody working on the Sabbath and said to him: *if you know what you are doing you are blessed*; if you don't, however, you are damned and a trespasser of the law." Only a little later, in a compilation of aphorisms for Lou Salome, Nietzsche himself gives an interpretation of this passage: "Jesus said to the people: 'love God as I love Him, as His son: what do we, the sons of God, have to do with morals!" And before this, he writes: "Jesus of Nazareth loved the wicked but not the good:

at the sight of their moral indignation even he burst forth with curses. Wherever someone was being judged he took sides against the judging: he wanted to be the annihilator of morals" (10, 3 [1] 67 & 68).

"God killed God."

Nietzsche's criticism of religion is a criticism of the 'most religious man existing', of morals that claim to own religion.[15] Even "God is dead," the sentence that is mainly associated with his criticism, is to be understood in this sense. In the famous aphorism 125 in the *The Gay Science* that made this sentence most prominent,[16] Nietzsche does not speak in his own name. Instead, he tells a story about a "madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place and cried incessantly: 'I seek God! I seek God!'" The 'madman' *seeks* God; he looks for Him among those who are standing around, those "who did not believe in God." He provokes "much laughter." But when he pesters them, threatens them and screams: "We have killed Him – you and I! All of us are His murderers!", they turn silent and look at him, disturbed.

Likewise, Nietzsche does not tell this story as his story either, but as a story he has 'heard' which should be known to everybody. "Have you not," he begins the aphorism, "heard about the madman who..." He passes it off as a story from hearsay, a story without an author that evidently does not depend on either facts or truth. In this way, he leaves it to the reader whether to take it as true and how to understand it. Whoever draws from this, without reservation, that God is dead (or who is angry at Nietzsche for announcing His death) must already have been convinced of it and has obviously missed the fact that the story is being told about an audience. This audience was already certain that God is dead and is now irritated *in its certainty* by the strange appearance of a strange person.

Obviously, Nietzsche is not interested in the death of God, which is taken for granted by 18th and 19th century critiques of religion. What matters to him is the certainty one can have of it. Nietzsche presses this question further: If there can be no certainty about what was most certain – whether it be that God is dead or that He is alive – then what kind of certainty remains possible at all? The audience of the story, which has been indifferent to God for so long, believes to possess a certainty that makes people who do not share it appear mad and even amusing. The madman is mad because he does not share their certainty and behaves madly to demonstrate it. However, this means that, on the matter of certainty, he has taken one step further.

Not only does Nietzsche make the madman say "God is dead!" but also adds, "we killed Him!" What kind of god is this who can be killed by humans? A god that can be killed by humans must be a god created by humans. Nietzsche is interested precisely in this creation and subsequent murder of God by humans, and the responsibility they therefore bear. Chiefly, it is the "greatness of the deed" which he has the madman ask for. Carefully, Nietzsche prepares the aphorism of the narration from hearsay with a sequence of aphorisms in his own name that deal with the 'shadows of God'. This sequence begins as follows:

> After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave– a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too. (GS 108)

God made it possible, as Nietzsche explicates in the following aphorism, for men to see an order in the world that helped them to endure their lives. This order included not only the theological concepts of God, faith, and justice. It also embraced the philosophical and scientific concepts of nature and its perception, and the ethical concepts of man and the freedom of his moral action, which were acquired interdependently by European thought over thousands of years. God guaranteed the order of *these* concepts; he was the God of *this* order. He spared men to see in the "total character of the world ... in all eternity chaos." (GS 109) It was important for Nietzsche throughout his work to demonstrate how the concepts that were guaranteed by God served to enable humans to live their lives according to their conceptions. Therefore, those concepts did not say anything about the world, freedom and God as such. On the contrary, one must suppose, according to Nietzsche, that humans cannot think nor speak anything about the world, about God or about themselves that would be independent of the conditions and needs of their lives.

However, it is precisely this which had become thinkable at the end of the 19th century. With it, that god's time had come and gone. He had become dispensable, for the order of life was now being provided by science on the one hand and by law, politics and morals on the other. All of them had, by means of an incredible progress, made life in Europe increasingly easier, more bearable and secure. The "process of dissolution" of the "Christian moral hypothesis," which Nietzsche interprets in his later work as "European nihilism,"[17] included not only the basis of morals but also of science, law and politics within European thought. These certainties too were founded upon the order of the "old God."[18] Therefore, Nietzsche did not believe that science and politics could replace the "old God." Instead he expected a "long

plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm" in the 20th and the following century. A "monstrous logic of terror" is to come, and everybody must shy away from being its prophet.[19]

Why, in the notes from the summer of 1882, the thesis is not "God is dead" or "we killed Him" but "God killed God" is explained by the following remark: "God choked on theology; and morals on morality" (10, 3 [1] 7). It seems that Nietzsche is not only thinking of 18th and 19th century historical criticism of the Bible, in which theology itself takes part. He seems to include theology from the very beginning, insofar as it had attempted to draw from the Gospels an order of life of which everybody could be certain. This order of life had become the 'Christian moral hypothesis' which now suffered from the fate of nihilism.[20]

Nietzsche's last work, *The Antichrist,* is, first of all, a pamphlet against *this* doctrine. At its center, Nietzsche tries to understand the Gospels according to his religious 'free spirit', i.e. beyond all doctrines of good and evil. There he suspects in the "Jesus type," his "blessedness in peace," his "gentleness," his "not *being able* to be an enemy," an insuperable "aversion to every formula, to every concept of time and space, to all that is solid, custom, institution, church ..." He solely wanted a "living in love, in the love without subtraction and exclusion, without distance: the incapacity for resistance becomes morality here ..." (AC, 29).[21] Jesus lacked all desire for proof, all dialectic. His "*experience* of 'life', in the only way he knows it, resists any kind of word, formula, law, faith, dogma," nor does his "faith formulate itself – it *lives*" (AC, 32). It is, says Nietzsche, "a new *practice*, the genuine evangelical practice" (AC,33). The evangelical practice, however, is, according to Nietzsche, the renunciation of the distinction between good and evil, of the discrimination by good and evil. Jesus approaches the most condemned, the whores and the publicans. "*Not* to resist, *not* to be angry, *not* to hold responsible – but to resist not even the evil one – to *love* him" (A, 35).

Thus, for Nietzsche, "resist not evil" becomes "the most profound word of the Gospels, their key in a certain sense" (A, 29). He understands it as a request for a moral towards morals. "It is not a 'faith'," he writes, "that distinguishes the Christian: the Christian *acts*, he is distinguished by acting *differently*: by not resisting, either in words or in his heart, those who treat him ill..." (A, 33) And he adds: "the genuine, the original Christianity will be possible at all times..." (A, 39)[22]

"Morals died of morality."

If the 'Christian moral hypothesis', into which the 'original Christianity' was converted in European thought, had been valid for thousands of years, then, in Nietzsche's view, it must be the European condition of existence. It is impossible to refute. In the summer of 1882 he writes: "You cannot refute conditions of existence: you can only – not have them!" (10, 1 [2])

If one wishes to refute a moral position, one will be declared immoral by the others who share it and, as a result, one will not be heard anymore. A moral can, therefore, only 'die' of its own morality – can only be superseded by itself. In the *Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche sketches how this "self-supersession" of European morals could have happened:[23] it takes place when it recognizes that it itself originated in that to which it is opposed. The morals that led European thought understand themselves as a critical instance of power. They claim a "*superiority of rank* over every other power," (GM III: 23) the right to morally justify or reject. As morals they do not seek power themselves; they know themselves to be superior to all power and obligated to truth alone. Since Socrates, their will to truth has been their criterion, their morality. But it is the will to truth, which over the course of thousands of years had turned into the need for truth, that eventually had to provide the insight: the will to truth was also a will to power, the will to power of the ones who had no power otherwise – thus, the will to power of the powerless. By all means of his genealogy, Nietzsche demonstrates that European morals in all their manifestations could be described as such a will to power of the powerless, a will to power of the suffering who found aid in these morals as a way to overcome their misery. In this way, morals became their condition of existence. However, if this becomes clear to the morals themselves, they lose justification for their existence – as the criticism of power – and, hence, they lose faith in themselves. They die of their own morality.

But what dies with this death of morals is not merely one faith that can be replaced by another. With the death of that faith which believed in the truth of its morals, Europe lost faith in truth as such; along with the faith in one meaning of its existence, it lost faith in any meaning at all of its existence. In this way Europe became nihilistic.

"The man of faith is the opposite of the religious man."

Religion comes into opposition with faith as such – insofar as faith is a faith in something, a taking-something-for-certain as a condition of existence. Nietzsche's question, the question of his theology, is therefore: Is it possible to think religion without faith, to think God without the faith in God?[24]

This would have to be a god beyond good and evil, not a god of morals but a god of a thinking that is able to think beyond morals. Such a god, such a religion, in turn, could be a criterion for morals. Nietzsche tries to think such a god within the "concept of Dionysos."

The believer, for Nietzsche, is the opposite of the religious man insofar as faith includes a "demand for certainty," for something "firm...that one does not wish to be shaken because one *clings* to it..." Faith in this sense is not a "strength" but a "weakness," and "how much one needs *faith* in order to flourish," is, according to Nietzsche, a "measure" of one's weakness. "Conversely, one could conceive," he says, "of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty..." This would be "the *free spirit* par excellence" (GS 347).

Whoever can dismiss every wish for certainty is exercised, as Nietzsche says in his famous characterization of the free spirit, which he inserts here in *The Gay Science*, "in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses"(*Ibid.*) In this image, the free spirit also recognizes his god. In the summer of 1882 Nietzsche writes: "I would only believe in a god who understood how to dance;" a sentence that he later puts into Zarathustra's mouth and that became one of his most famous ones.[25]

Later he tries to put the significance of this sentence into sharper terms. In the fall of 1887 he formulates in harsh and polemic words, as is usually the case in the posthumous work:

> The newer man has exercised his idealizing power with respect to a *god* mostly by an increasing moralization [*Vermoralisierung*] of the very same god – what does that mean? Nothing good, a decrease of h<uman> powers. –
>
> In general, the opposite would be possible: and there are indications thereof. God, thought as the having-become-free of morals, forcing the fullness of the oppositions of life into him and redeeming, justifying them in divine torture. – God as the beyond, the above the miserable corner-morals [*Eckenstehermoral*] of "good and evil."
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> The same kind of humans that wishes merely "good weather" likewise wishes merely "good people" and, in general, good properties, – at least the ever growing supremacy of the good. With a superior eye one wishes, on the contrary, the ever greater supremacy of evil, the increasing liberation of man from the narrow and timid moral constriction, the growth of power for the purpose of being able to put <the> greater natural powers, the affects, into service... (12, 10 [203] 580f.)

Humans can always have nothing but a representation of God, and they form it out of their morals, out of their lives' wishes, as their ideal. However, says Nietzsche, one is now in the position to know about this – and, therefore, one can also try not to think God *out of* but conscientiously *against* one's own wishes. One could think God not only as a god of what one considers to be good but also as a god of what one considers to be evil. Conceived with respect to good *and* evil, this god would be 'the having-become-free of morals, forcing the fullness of the oppositions of life into him and *redeeming, justifying* them in divine torture'.

In the summer of 1882 Nietzsche makes the attempt to think these "oppositions of life" within concepts of God and the devil, of the god and the devil of one and the same morals. Each *I*, he writes, "wants to give birth to its god and to see all humankind at its feet" (10, 1 [20]). It wants to "build an ideal, i.e. to *recreate* its devil as *its god.* And for that purpose one has to first have created a devil" (10, 1 [61]). Nietzsche presupposes "heroic" men; men who are willing to go to the very limit of their morals, to where the good turns into the evil and – sometimes – the evil into the good; men who also experience this turn consciously. Watching them one can see "to what extent each created god in turn creates a devil. And that is *not* the one out of which he emerged. (It is the *adjoining* ideal with which he has to fight)" (10, 1 [43]). Morals shift within the range of the "the devil's being turned [*Umschaffung*] into God" and the creation of a new devil out of this god; and they remain restless: they grow without becoming fixed, without hardening.[26]

Thus Nietzsche thinks God as the disquietude, the restlessness of morals, which are in danger of becoming firm and stiff without this god. Such a god would make it impossible "to love man": "To love man *for God's sake* – that has so far been the noblest and most remote feeling attained among men" (BGE 60). The conclusive formula of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, "Dionysos versus the Crucified," (EH, *Why I am a Destiny*, 9), has usually been read as the last and ultimate declaration of war of the "Antichrist" Nietzsche against Christ.[27] Perhaps it is only the clarification of one concept by the other. The Greek 'anti' refers, in fact, not only to an opponent or opposite, but also means "to stand in for," "to put on a par," "to outdo." And in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche expressly says: "I am, in Greek, and not only in Greek, the Antichrist." (The preliminary stage even lacks the "and not only in Greek").[28] For Nietzsche "Dionysus" is not merely another god, but a different "concept;" he speaks of the "*concept of Dionysus.*"[29]

Nevertheless, this "concept of Dionysus" is a peculiar, contradictory concept: Dionysus, a Greek god who originally was strange to the Greeks,

a god who lived and died, not only once but over and over again, a god who gave rise to ever new powers in men, who sent them into raptures and rages, and did so to such an extent that they tore him apart. Thus, we cannot speak here of a well-differentiated object of thought. Rather, for Nietzsche, the concept of Dionysus is a concept of thinking itself, a thinking that does not and is not able to do anything else but to draw distinctions, and to cancel them again. Hegel also understood thinking in this way, and he also called it "Bacchanalian."[30] Nietzsche's "novelty" is "that Dionysus is a philosopher, and that gods, too, thus do philosophy..." He shall be the "great ambiguous one and tempter" who "is always many steps ahead."[31] At the point where his followers have just refined and defined his concepts, he has already thought beyond them. He is the god of philosophy in Nietzsche's sense.

When Nietzsche explicates the "concept of Dionysus" (EH, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 6) further, he includes in it the most important common determinations of God. He calls Dionysus "*the supreme type of all beings*" and defines this type as "deepest, ... most comprehensive, ... most necessary, ... having being, ... wisest" soul that "loves itself the most." But he adds to all these attributes their opposites. Dionysus likewise puts on the most superficial masks. He "can run and stray and roam," he "plunges joyously into chance; ... wants to want and will; ... flees from himself." It is "folly" that "exhorts" his soul "most sweetly ..." Nietzsche puts these oppositions together on purpose. The concept of Dionysus is supposed to be the concept *through which* everything can be grasped. *It itself*, however, is impossible to grasp. Every single concept under which it could be subsumed could be declared null and void by a different one under which it could be equally subsumed. Therefore, Nietzsche ultimately refuses to talk in concepts but writes poetry about Dionysus, the Dionysus-Dithyrambs.[32] He thinks God in such a way that nobody can take Him for granted.

— Translated by Julia Jansen

Endnotes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlaß*, July – August 1882); *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, eds., (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 1980), Volume 10, VII 1 [70], 28. [Throughout the text, subsequent references to the *Nachlaß* writings refer to the KSA edition (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), listing specific notebook signatures not page numbers. Citations from the letters refer to the KSB (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986) — Ed.]
2. [In this and related cases, the translation given repeats the particular grammatical and semantic characteristics of the original — *Trans.*]

3. Letter to Lou Salomé of June 27th/28th, 1882 (KSB 6,123). Cf. Mazzino Montinari, *Chronik zu Nietzsches Leben*, in: KSA 15, 118-131, and Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Biography*, vol. 2 (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1978) 110-158. During the weeks they spend together in Tautenburg, Lou Salomé writes into her diary: "We always chose the chamois' passage, and if somebody had listened to us, he would have thought two devils were having a conversation."
4. Most recently, Hans Blumenberg and Niklas Luhmann (both without direct reference to Nietzsche) tried in an impressive manner the devil's perspectives on God. Hans Blumenberg develops a demonology as historical epistemology. The initial thesis is: "The devil...is indispensable. And further: Only by virtue of his indispensability, the devil exists in the economy of that which is the case." ["Sollte der Teufel erlöst werden? Kapitel einer Dämonologie," in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Dec. 27th, 1989]. According to Niklas Luhmann, the differential-theoretical approach to theology leads "in a fascinating manner" back to the devil. "Die Unterscheidung Gottes," in: Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. 4: *Beiträge zur funktionalen Differenzierung der Gesellschaft* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987), 236-253, here 243; cf. "Die Weisung Gottes als Form der Freiheit," in: Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. 5: *Konstruktivistische Perspektiven* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag,1990), 77-94, esp. 85; also "Die Soziologie und der Mensch," in: Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, vol. 6: *Die Soziologie und der Mensch* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 265-274, esp. 265f.
5. On Nietzsche's psychology and sociological approach ("psychological" and national "God-formation") cf. the *Nachlaß* writings, Spring of 1888, VIII 14 [124]-[130] (KSA 13.305-313). They are preliminary notes for the *Twilight of Idols* and the *Antichrist*. On Nietzsche's religious critique of religion, see Dieter Henke, *Gott und Grammatik. Nietzsches Kritik der Religion* (Pfullingen, Neske, 1981); Johann Figl, *Dialektik der Gewalt. Nietzsches hermeneutische Religionsphilosophie mit Berücksichtigung unveröffentlichter Manuskripte* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1984), cf., Jörg Salaquarda's review in *Nietzsche-Studies* 16 (1987): 490-497; David Booth, Nietzsche's Legacy in Theology's Agendas" in *Nietzsche* 21 (1992): 290-307; Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: Le cinquième* Evangile? (Paris: Les Bergers et les Mages, 1980), cf. Georges Goedert's review in *Nietzsche-Studien* 12 (1983): 510-512. [Given the seeming breadth of such references, the author oddly overlooks Paul Valadier, one of the more conspicuous (and voluminous) students of this very question, addressed in numerous essays and two complete books, Paul Valadier, *Nietzsche: l'Athée de rigeur* (Paris: Desclée de Brower, 1975) and *Nietzsche et la critique du christianisme*. (Paris: Editions du Cerf. 1974) — Ed.]
6. *Nachlaß*, Summer 1886-Fall 1887 ("*Lenzer-Heide-Entwurf*," 10 June 10, 1887), (KSA 12, 5 [71] 7); cf. Nietzsche's note from August-September 1885, (KSA 11, 39 [13]): "the refutation of God, practically only the moral god is refuted."
7. Cf. Nietzsche's note from the end of 1886-Spring 1887 (KSA 12, 7 [3]: "Who allowed God to leave, clings to faith in morals all the more." Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "*Deus qualem Paulus creavit, Die negatio.* Zur Denkbarkeit Gottes bei Ludwig Feuerbach und Friedrich Nietzsche. Eine Beobachtung," in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 1 (1972): 286-296, intends to show that there remains in Nietzsche's theological thinking a trace of Feuerbach.
8. Cf. Gerhardt Schmidtchen, "Der Mensch – die Orientierungswaise. Probleme individueller und kollektiver Verhaltenssteuerung aus sozialpsychologischer Sicht," in: *Der Mensch als Orientierungswaise? Ein interdisziplinärer Erkundungsgang* (Freiburg/Munich: Alber, 1982) 169-216.

9. Cf. *Nachlaß*, Spring-Summer 1888, KSA 13, 16 [44]; letter to Georg Brandes of May 23th, 1888 (KSB 7, 317-319) and *Ecce Homo*, Why I Am So Clever, 9. Cf. also Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Fluktuanz. Dilthey und Nietzsche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 344 and 363f.
10. Letter (from Naumburg) to Lou Salomé (in Stibbe) of June 18th, 1882 (KSB 6, 206).
11. Cf. GS 276 and EH, *Why I Am So Clever*, 10.
12. Cf. BGE 11, 16 and 19 and the posthumous fragment, end of 1886-Spring 1887, (KSA 12, 7 [4]), in which Nietzsche – at that time deeply involved in Kant – introduces the concept 'moral ontology'. See further my own essay, "Ontologie und Nietzsche," in: J. Simon (ed.), *Nietzsche und die philosophische Tradition*, vol. 1 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), 46-61.
13. *The Antichrist*, 32, transl. by Walter Kaufmann, in Kaufmann, ed., *The Portable Nietzsche* (London: Penguin, 1982); hereafter cited as A.
14. KSA 10, 1 [26]. For the Greek text, cf. Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, (Stuttgart: Deutscher Bibel-Gesellschaft, 1979; 10th printing 1988), 171.
15. Cf. Hubertus Busche, "Religiöse Religionskritik beim frühen Hegel und beim späten Nietzsche," in: M. Djurić and J. Simon, eds., *Nietzsche und Hegel* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992) 90-109.
16. Cf. the preliminary stages of GS 125, Fall 1881, KSA 9, 12 [77], [157] and [202], and 14 [14], [25] and [26].
17. The term "nihilism" first shows up in Nietzsche in the posthumous writings from the Summer of 1880 (KSA 9, 4 [103] and [108]). In the published work it does not appear before Book V of *The Gay Science* (#346). Shortly before Nietzsche writes *On the Genealogy of Morals* he puts together a draft on June 10th, 1887 in Lenzer Heide (KSA 12, 5 [71]); the title is 'European Nihilism'. It is Nietzsche's attempt to become clear about the connections and the structure in his work as a whole.
18. GS 343. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Wort 'Gott ist tot'" (1943), in: Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M. 1950) 193-247.
19. *Ibid.* – Cf. *Nachlaß*, Summer 1886-Fall 1887 (Lenzer-Heide-Entwurf), 5 [71] 11, 12 and 14.
20. On the responses to Nietzsche by Catholic and Protestant theology in the 20th century, cf. Peter Köster, "Nietzsche Kritik und Nietzsche-Rezeption in der Theologie des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Nietzsche-Studien* 10/11 (1981/82): 615-685. {See also Köster, *Der Verbotene Philosoph: Studien Zu Den Anfängen Der Katholischen Nietzsche Rezeption in Deutschland (1890-1918)*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998) — *Ed.*}.
21. [Kaufmann has: "without regard to station" — *Trans.*]
22. For further reference, cf. Uwe Kühneweg, "Nietzsche und Jesus – Jesus bei Nietzsche," in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 15 (1986): 382-297. A still useful compilation of sources on Nietzsche's "Jesus type" is provided by Ernst Benz, *Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums und der Kirche, Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (956). Benz mainly finds spitefullness against Christianity. Regarding the theological 'history of interpretation' of Nietzsche's Jesus-explication, cf. Ulrich Willers, "Aut Zarathustra aut Christus. Die Jesus-Deutung Nietzsches im Spiegel ihrer Interpretationsgeschichte: Tendenzen und Entwicklungen von 1900-1980," in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 60 (1985): 239-256 and 418-442.
23. Cf. KSA 10, 1 [28], 15ff.). See, further, Stegmaier, *Nietzsches 'Genealogy der Moral'. Werkinterpretation* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellsahft, 1994).

24. Rainer Bucher, *Nietzsches Mensch und Nietzsches Gott. Das Spätwerk als philosophietheologisches Programm* (Frankfurt a.M./Bern/New York: Peter Lang, 1986) (=Theol. Diss. Würzburg 1985) understands 'will to power' as a metaphysical concept and a "category of realized authenticity" (26). He develops a Nietzschean theology in which God is a "strong god of the will to power" and "the person as such." (271) Reinhard Margreiter, *Ontologie und Gottesbegriffe bei Nietzsche. Zur Frage einer 'Neuentdeckung Gottes' im Spätwerk* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1978), however, finds in Nietzsche an "ontology" as a presentation of "pure transcendentality," which leaves no room for God.
25. KSA 10, 3 [1] 137; Z I, *Of Reading and Writing*. – Markus Meckel, "Der Weg Zarathustras als der Weg der Menschen. Zur Anthropologie Nietzsches im Kontext der Rede von Gott im 'Zarathustra'," in *Nietzsche-Studien* 9 (1980): 174-208 follows the discourse about God in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. According to Meckel, the "death of God" is definitive for Nietzsche.
26. Cf. KSA 10, 1 [24]): "The life of a heroic person contains the abbreviated history of several lineages with respect to the deification of the devil. He endures the state of the heretic, the witch, the fortune teller, the skeptic, the weak, the pious and the overwhelmed."
27. Cf. Karl Löwith, "Nietzsches antichristliche Bergpredigt" (1962), in: Löwith, *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987) 467-484; Jörg Salaquarda, "Der Antichrist," in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 2 (1973): 91-136; Salaquarda, "Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten. Nietzsches Verständnis des Apostels Paulus," in: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 26 (1974): 97-124; reprinted in: Salaquarda (ed.), "Nietzsche," *Wege der Forschung*, vol. 521 (Darmstadt: Wüsenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), 288-322.
28. EH, *Why I Write Such Good Books*, 2. Cf. Nietzsche's preliminary stage: KSA 14, 483. – See, further, Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Fluktuanz*, 361ff.
29. EH, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 6. Nietzsche takes the concept of Dionysus out of his first great text, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in order to celebrate '*Zarathustra*' (the middle of his work) as his Dionysian "supreme deed" in his last writing, *Ecce Homo*. Thus the concept of Dionysos can be seen as the name of Nietzsche's œuvre as a whole.
30. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, 47, trans. A.V. Miller, with analysis of the text and foreword by J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27. On the discussion of the Dionysian in the German Romantics, especially Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel, see Ernst Behler, "Die Auffassung des Dionysischen durch die Brüder Schlegel und Fridrich Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 12 (1983): 335-354.
31. BGE, 295; cf. the notes from April-June 1885, KSA 11, 34 [181], 181-183. The 'Gay Science' ("*gai saber*") here appears as "philosophy of Dionysus"; the fragment concludes with the sentence "Thus to me spoke Dionysus."
32. Cf. regarding interpretation: Wolfram Groddeck, *Friedrich Nietzsche – 'Dionysos-Dithyramben'*, 2 vols. (Belin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991).