

Nietzsche's Project of Religion: His Critique, Analysis, and Functionalization of Religion

1. Self-Critical Critique of Religion: Leeway for Religiosity and Irreligiosity

With religion, as with metaphysics, Nietzsche was finished very soon; and yet, they kept him occupied until the end of his life. For him, both are inherently connected. A religion – this is how he connected the two – may, if it dissolves, leave behind a desire for metaphysics until eventually even this metaphysics, which emerges in this process, becomes untrustworthy through science.¹ Paradigmatic for this was, for Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, the strict atheist, who got lost in a metaphysics of redemption, which Nietzsche, after his initial enthusiasm shared with his friends and with Richard and Cosima Wagner, soon dismissed being “free spirit” and through his “gay science.”

To consider religion, metaphysics, and science as stages in humanity's and any thinking individual's development was in the 19th century already a widespread conception made famous especially by Auguste Comte. But Comte and his followers celebrated “positivism” as a religious cult again, and its core was a metaphysics of progress. The belief of positivism in undeniable facts was for Nietzsche, given the perspectivity of all orientation, untenable; positivism appeared to him indeed as an important stage in the history of dissolving the “error” of the “true world” of religion and metaphysics, but it too was merely a stage.² Perspectivism takes away from

1 See Marco Brusotti, *Kern und Schale. Wissenschaft und Untergang der Religion bei Nietzsche*, in: Carlo Gentili, Cathrin Nielsen (ed.), *Der Tod Gottes und die Wissenschaft. Zur Wissenschaftskritik Nietzsches*, Berlin, New York 2010, 67-81.

2 “Gray Morning. Yawning of Reason. Cockcrow of Positivism.” (TI, How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable”).

religion and from metaphysics and science everything unconditional; they all emerge, and gain its validity, only under specific conditions – standpoints, horizons, living conditions, languages, cultures, historical eras, etc.³ One of the conditions, however, could also be something like “religiosity.”⁴ This makes the critique of religion for Nietzsche complicated – and interesting.⁵

“Metaphysics” involves, for Nietzsche, following a long tradition in this regard too, in its core a specific doctrine of things existing as such, independent of any perspectives on them, be it a doctrine of being or of becoming, of the world as such, of God, of a common reason equally shared by everyone, or of free will. He finds the reason for such doctrines, which Christian theology oftentimes integrated in Christian religion, in a basic human orientation need: it is “that impetuous demand for certainty that today discharges itself in scientific-positivistic form among great masses – the demand that one wants by all means something to be firm,” a “demand for foothold, support.” If one’s control is insufficient, then it becomes an “instinct of weakness that,

3 See Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Orientierung*, Berlin, New York 2008; abridged and updated English edition under the title *What is Orientation? A Philosophical Investigation*, translated by Reinhard G. Mueller, Berlin, Boston, 2019.

4 Concerning Nietzsche’s critical and specific use of the term of religiosity, see also: HH I 115 (“People whose daily life appears to them too empty and monotonous easily become religious”), GS 127 (“Aftereffects of the oldest religiosity”: belief in a will) and BGE 49 (“religiosity of ancient Greeks”).

5 However, this – to get straight to the point – does not justify that Julian Young, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion*, Cambridge et al. 2006, makes, in his “revisionist approach” (as it is called in Anglophone Nietzsche research), Nietzsche’s critique of religion into a semi-concealed, semi-open apologetics of religion and ascribes – going even further – a “religious communitarianism” to him. According to Young, Nietzsche’s “highest value” is the “flourishing of community,” which “can happen only through the flourishing of communal religion” (2). Nietzsche is then, for him, less an atheist but rather “a religious reformer” (2). Young seeks to prove this, not very convincingly, by chronologically going through Nietzsche’s oeuvre. He thereby supports attempts in the Anglophone Nietzsche research of tying Nietzsche to the unconditional value of truth (Maudemarie Clark, Brian Leiter) or the unconditional truth of values (John Richardson) – here to religion as true value. For further new publications concerning Nietzsche’s philosophy of religion and the religion of his philosophy, see the discussion by Michael Skowron in *Nietzsche-Studien* 36 (2007), 425-439.

to be sure, does not create sundry religions, forms of metaphysics, and convictions but does – preserve them” (GS 347; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff).

Now, however, Nietzsche argues, the certainties of the Christian religion have completely lost their credibility even for just semi-free spirits. In the third part of HH I, *The Religious Life*, he summarizes this:

A god who begets children on a mortal woman; a sage who calls upon us no longer to work, no longer to sit in judgement, but to heed the signs of the imminent end of the world; a justice which accepts an innocent man as a substitute sacrifice; someone who bids his disciples drink his blood; prayers for miraculous interventions; sin perpetrated against a god atoned for by a god; fear of a Beyond to which death is the gateway; the figure of the Cross as a symbol in an age which no longer knows the meaning and the shame of the Cross – how gruesomely all this is wafted to us, as if out of the grave of a primeval past! Can one believe that things of this sort are still believed in? (HH I 113, transl. by R. J. Hollingdale)

By now, religious appeals, he argues, may in fact discredit a philosopher:

Every philosophy that exhibits a gleaming religious comet-tail in the darkness of its ultimate conclusions thereby casts suspicion on everything in it that is presented as science (HH I 110, transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).

Later, in the third part of BGE, *The Religious Character*, where he expands on the third part of HH I, Nietzsche ascertains that, as he found it in “various conversations,” the “religious instinct is indeed growing vigorously – but that it rejects any specifically theistic gratification with profound distrust” (BGE 53, transl. by Judith Norman, modified). Prior to any theological doctrines, Nietzsche reckons with a religious instinct, and he considers it as one of the conditions of human orientation; the religious instinct may drive to ever-new religious doctrines. But Nietzsche deals with it from great distance.⁶ “*Religious after-pains*” may indeed occur even in free spirits like himself, for instance the joy of “encountering religious moods and sentiments,” i.e. in

⁶ Against the 19th century tendency of dealing with “‘religion’ as an anthropological constant,” Nietzsche’s positions are most of all “resolutely negative and critical in character” (Peter Köster, *Art. Religion*, in: Henning Ottmann (Ed.), *Nietzsche-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, Stuttgart, Weimar 2000, 308-311, here 310a; our translation).

painting or in music. But he warns especially philosophers against this: "One involuntarily believes that the religiously coloured departments of a philosophy are better established than the others; but at bottom the case is the reverse; one only has the inner desire it may be so – that is to say, that what makes happy should also be what is true" (HH I 131; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).

Even skepticism, which "cools down the fiery stream of beliefs in ultimate definitive truths" (HH I 244; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale) is not protected from such temptations. Nietzsche initially expects a "probable victory" for skepticism (HH I 21, transl. by R. J. Hollingdale) but then grows skeptical about it. The best way to counter "religious after-shoots" is to fundamentally reorient oneself in matters of certainty. It must become clear to oneself that for a confident orientation one does not require "these certainties regarding the furthest horizons":

Nothing could be more wrongheaded than to want to wait and see what science will one day determine once and for all concerning the first and last things and until then continue to think (and especially to believe!) in the *customary* fashion – as we are so often advised to do. The impulse to desire in this domain *nothing but certainties* is a *religious after-shoot*, no more – a hidden and only apparently sceptical species of the 'metaphysical need,' coupled with the consideration that there is no prospect of these ultimate certainties being to hand for a long time to come and that until then the 'believer' is right not to trouble his head about anything in this domain. We have absolutely no need of these certainties regarding the furthest horizons to live a full and excellent human life: just as the ant has no need of them to be a good ant. (HH II, WS 16; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale)

And from this, Nietzsche concludes methodically:

What we need, rather, is to become clear in our minds as to the origin of that calamitous weightiness we have for so long accorded these things, and for that we require a *history* of the ethical and religious sensations. (ibid)

But even against this history, skeptical caution is needed. For this history may likewise be aimed at final truths and values; even scientists and scholars are, with their "faith in the truth" that belongs to their profession, "*still pious*," and this faith "is still a

metaphysical faith" (GS 344, transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff). One must therefore go philosophically "to the bottom" with this question and highlight the *alternative* to this desire for certainty: "Granted, we will truth: *why not untruth instead? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?*" (BGE 1; transl. by Judith Norman). The will to untruth could be, as precisely religion shows, not less necessary for life than the will to truth. When asking about the meaning or function of religion, of the religious instinct or of religiosity, then one must ask about the *problem of 'hold' in orientation as such*.

Biographically, this was for Nietzsche certainly a personal problem – though this is of course not everything. As someone who escaped twice – first from the religion of his beloved father who died early on, a Protestant minister; second from the metaphysics of his great philosophy teacher Schopenhauer – he was sufficiently self-critical to not underestimate his own religious and metaphysical needs. Nietzsche attentively observed, with disappointment and moral outrage, how his admired master and friend Richard Wagner, a supposedly convinced atheist, would again "crawl to the cross" of Christianity (Za III, On Apostates; transl. by Adrian Del Caro; see also: HH II, pref. 3). And Nietzsche saw himself forced to admit that he too was unable to escape the seduction of the *Parsifal* prelude,⁷ which eloquently prepares the genuflection – even if he was convinced that Wagner's *Parsifal* is a "work of malice, of vindictiveness, a secret poisoning of the presuppositions of life, a *bad work*" (NCW, Wagner as Apostle of Chastity 3; transl. by Judith Norman). He was deeply moved when the idea suggested itself to him to eventually understand the type of Jesus, just as Wagner's *Parsifal*, as a pure fool, who, for Nietzsche, was capable of living without any will to power and whose "being awash in symbols and ungraspables" (AC 31; transl. by Judith Norman, modified) puts into question Nietzsche's own philosophy of wills to power.⁸ But for him, Jesus' "symbolism *par excellence*" was of course "positioned outside [...] all cult concepts, all history, all

⁷ See the letter to Heinrich Köselitz from Nizza from January 21, 1887; KSB 8.12.

⁸ See Werner Stegmaier, "Nietzsches Kritik der Vernunft seines Lebens. Zur Deutung von ‚Der Antichrist‘ und ‚Ecce homo,‘" *Nietzsche Studien* 21 (1992), 163-183.

natural science, all experience of the world, all knowledge, all politics, all psychology, all books, all art" and "outside all religion" (AC 32; transl. by Judith Norman). His profound emotion concerning his "type Jesus" was, however, not simply religious – as particularly theological interpreters tend to assume.⁹

Nevertheless, there was, behind Nietzsche's own philosophy of the wills to power, something else, something deeper. It is not necessarily a religion; but the best way to track it is by following the traces of religion and religiosity. By asking about the meaning of the desire for hold and certainty in the structures of human orientation, Nietzsche established with his self-critical critique of religion a leeway to explore not only the conditions of religion, metaphysics, and science, but also of his own philosophy. This leeway is also addressed in the much-discussed aphorism No. 125 of the *Gay Science*, which is about the "madman" who opens with his search for God – after "we have killed him" – the scenario of a deep disorientation: the sentences "Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing?" (GS 125; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff) are, for Arne Grøn, about a "radical disorientation" and "basic life orientations," but not about religion.¹⁰ Nietzsche is not concerned with the question of "religiosity" or "irreligiosity"¹¹ but with the leeway, within which this alternative, at all, comes up.

9 See, for instance, Eugen Biser, *Nietzsche – Zerstörer oder Erneuerer des Christentums?*, Darmstadt 2002. Already the psychopathologist and philosopher Karl Jaspers recognizes "Christian drives" in Nietzsche's critique of the Christian religion (*Nietzsche und das Christentum*, Hameln 1946, 42). Michael Skowron, "Nietzsche weltliche Religiosität und ihre Paradoxien," *Nietzsche-Studien* 31 (2002), 1-39, however considers Nietzsche's "religiosity," which he connects with the comparison of religions, as "worldly."

10 Arne Grøn, "Jenseits? Nietzsches Religionskritik revisited. Zum Stand der Forschung in Sachen Nietzsche und die christliche Religion," *Nietzsche-Studien* 34 (2005), 375-408, 399.

11 Nietzsche uses the term of "irreligiosity" for artists (HH I 125) and for "every better and better gifted man" (HH I 472).

The consequences in Nietzsche's oeuvre are well-known: Nietzsche has appeared as the main figure of his main work a semi-historical, semi-mythical Persian founder of a religion who believes in nothing but himself and "life" – the word 'religion' does not occur in *Za*, though Nietzsche lets his Zarathustra speak with strong Biblical echoes. The fact that he praised *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to his publisher as the "fifth gospel"¹² does not entail he himself considered it a religious work. The fact that he creates Dionysus as a new god for his own philosophizing (BGE 295) and eventually portrays himself as a "bearer of glad tidings" explicitly does not mean that he thereby wants to create a new religion (EH, *Destiny* 1; transl. by Judith Norman).¹³ The fact that it is still difficult today to consistently comprehend and connect the 'doctrines' of the death of God, of nihilism, the *Übermensch*, of the wills to power and of the eternal recurrence of the same does not mean that they are religious "mysticism"; and the fact that Nietzsche was eventually grateful to the Christian religion for the "victory of the European conscience won finally and with great difficulty; as the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* of faith in God" (GS 357; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff) does not entail that he considers himself to be further bound by religion. What remains, for Nietzsche, after this victory is "intellectual cleanliness at any price" (*ibid.*); it has its hold only in itself and in this regard no final certainty.

2. Analyzing Religious Desires: Their Origins in Life Needs

Nietzsche's analysis of religious needs in human orientation focuses in the third part of *HH I* on "the religious life" and in that of *BGE* on "the religious affairs", in German: "*Das religiöse Wesen*" with a significant ironic nuance. In *HH I* he still rather presents observations; in *BGE* he, on the one hand, offers far-reaching speculations and

12 Letter to Ernst Schmeitzner from February 13, 1883, KSB 6.327.

13 See Werner Stegmaier, "Schicksal Nietzsche? Zu Nietzsches Selbsteinschätzung als Schicksal der Philosophie und der Menschheit (Ecce homo, Warum ich ein Schicksal bin 1)," *Nietzsche-Studien* 37 (2008), 62-114.

argues, on the other, *ad hominem*, with a stronger focus on specific “homines religiosi” (BGE 45), since in their cases it is easier to grasp religious needs. Besides that, the topic of religion permeates Nietzsche’s entire oeuvre beginning with BT. When he shifts in his late writings from an initially distanced and calm way of dealing with religion to an emotional and sharper tone then this does not entail that he becomes religious again; with his increasingly polemic style not only regarding this topic, he primarily wants to attract attention so that he would eventually be heard. We classify his most important contributions to religion in a systematical way; but since Nietzsche deals with it over time in a more and more fundamental way, there arises also a chronological order.

Very early Nietzsche already coined the formula: “The waters of religion are ebbing away and leaving behind swamps or stagnant pools” (SE 4; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). Like a classic Enlightenment philosopher he initially assumes that the remaining waters will eventually completely evaporate if they have received the sunlight of science long and thorough enough. The desires for religion (and metaphysics) will vanish the more, the clearer their grounds and abysses are recognized; they now appear so low that one will be ashamed of their evaporations. Different than the Enlightenment philosophers in the 18th century, especially the French, Nietzsche is less concerned with the Church and its power but rather with religious desires themselves and with what they unleash.

Religious needs will, Nietzsche is sure about this (we are no longer so sure today), dry out not only because of the enlightenment but also because the living conditions in Europe will make them less urgent and life conditions altogether become easier due to scientific, technological, and medical progress. This is based on Nietzsche’s *heuristics of needs*,¹⁴ i.e. the research hypothesis that the desire for certainty and perhaps for reorientation arises in pressing life situations. This means for the case of religion and metaphysics: if they cannot remedy long-lasting life hardships,

14 See Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsche zur Einführung*, Hamburg 2011, 3rd edition 2019, 154-156.

they may at least alleviate them by giving those hardships a supposedly sacred meaning – and this thus, by orienting them to a different “higher world,” an “imaginary world” (D 33; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale), permits forgetting them.

Life hardships may take, Nietzsche observes, very different forms, such as physical, psychological or social; they may vary depending on the current circumstances and cultures, and they are perceived differently. The life hardships in the past cannot simply be observed, not least because religion and the old reverence it created still conceal them. One therefore has to, as Nietzsche highlights again and again, step by step explore them based on equivocal clues, indicators and signs, whose relationship can only be guessed; where life becomes most interesting it is also most difficult to comprehend. Nietzsche does not succumb to the temptation of giving easy explanations. He rather risks being inconsistent; especially in matters of religion he is especially focused on discovering and disclosing, not on justifying and giving proof – particularly because justifications and proof presuppose discoveries. This is also the case in his genealogy of morals. What always helps him in his heuristics of needs are comparisons; Nietzsche observes – especially pertaining to “different worldviews, customs, cultures” in history and the present – an “age of comparison” (HH I 23; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale, modified). With regard to the Christian religion, which is usually his focus, his yardstick for comparison is mainly the religion of ancient Greece, but also of Buddhism, or at least what Nietzsche knew of it.¹⁵

The *methodic instruments* Nietzsche uses to analyze religious needs would today be called: the historizing, psychologizing, and sociologizing of religion or rather the history, the psychology, and the sociology of religion; they cannot be clearly divided. The history of religion had in Nietzsche’s time already a long tradition in the historical criticism of the Bible; it witnessed a new high point with David Friedrich Strauss regarding the New Testament and with Julius Wellhausen regarding the Old Testament; and Nietzsche owes much to both though he does not point this

¹⁵ See Johann Figl, *Nietzsche und die Religionen. Transkulturelle Perspektiven seines Bildungs- und Denkweges*, Berlin, New York 2007.

out. The psychology and the sociology of religion only began developing in Nietzsche's time.¹⁶ But there is more to Nietzsche's kind of science of religion: a physiology and eventually a psychopathology of religion¹⁷ wherever sick mental weaknesses seem to bear religious fruit.

In the Enlightenment approach, analysis and criticism go hand in hand. Most crucial for Nietzsche is first of all the *historization* of religion, which was already accomplished in Europe in his time. Once the heavenly message has got an earthly, all-too-earthly history, then it is more difficult to believe in it: "*Historical refutation as the definite refutation*" (D 95; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). Since religious needs continue to have effects, even if the message is no longer credible, Nietzsche asks further questions concerning the psychology of religion. There is first of all the religious *cult*, which lives on in certain *moods*,¹⁸ for instance the music of Bach.¹⁹ In the Christian religion, the *cult of sacrifice* became especially significant. Religion feeds in Christianity from the "capacity for great self-sacrificing resolution and self-denial (which, protracted and grown to a habit, constitutes holiness)" (HH I 138). The crucial

16 See Andreas Urs Sommer, *Nietzsche und die Religionswissenschaft*, in: Helmut Heit, Lisa Heller (Ed.), *Handbuch Nietzsche und die Wissenschaften. Natur-, geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Kontexte*, Berlin, Boston, 2014, 290-304. Sommer deals with Nietzsche's reception of the writings of Paul de Lagarde, Louis Jacolliot, and Julius Wellhausen.

17 Concerning the current state of research of the pathology or psychiatry of religion, see <https://www.dgppn.de/presse/stellungnahmen/stellungnahmen-2016/religiositaet.html>.

18 Sampsa Saarinen, *Nietzsche, Religion, and Mood* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, No. 71), Berlin, Boston 2019, proceeds from this aspect. Saarinen shows insightful parallels, on the one hand, to William James and to Martin Heidegger, on the other. He does not see the parallel to Kierkegaard, which proffers itself. Saarinen focuses on the "joyfulness" of the gay science opposite to the "seriousness" of the Christian religion; he searches for an "ideal mood," which Nietzsche is supposed to have aimed for, and finds it in a "mood of joy in doubt" (227) that is, for him, the "mood of the future" (244). This, however, is not very informative regarding Nietzsche's project of religion.

19 See HH I 219: "the spirit of the Counter-reformation is the spirit of modern music (for the Pietism in Bach's music is also a kind of Counter-reformation). This is how profoundly indebted we are to the religious life." Also HH II, WS 149: "Insofar as one does *not* listen to Bach's music as a complete and experienced expert in counterpoint and every species of the fugal style of composition, and must consequently do without the actual artistic pleasure it affords, it will seem to us when we hear music as though (to employ a grandiose expression of Goethe's) we were present as *God was creating the world*" (translated by R. J. Hollingdale).

point for Nietzsche however is not sacrifice itself, neither as the action nor as the object of it, but rather psychologically the “higher excitation” that accompanies sacrifice. “Under the influence of violent emotion” one wants “the great, tremendous, prodigious”; if then the sacrifice of others is insufficient or unavailable, then one may also sacrifice oneself. In the psychological viewpoint, everything depends on the “discharge” of “emotion,” and the utmost consequence is then “a divinity who sacrifices itself”; that is the “most effective symbol of this kind of greatness” (HH I 138; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).²⁰

Discharge of emotions – this reverberates Aristotle’s psychological theory of Greek tragedy, which Nietzsche otherwise fought against. The Christian self-denial, which includes the “sacrifice of all freedom, of all pride, of all self-confidence of the spirit” and even “enslavement and self-derision, self-mutilation” (BGE 46; transl. by Judith Norman) was, for Nietzsche, in any case completely foreign to Greek thinking. On the other hand, the tradition of “religious cruelty” continued in Christianity (BGE 55); it here led, as Nietzsche demonstrates in GM, to the cruelty against oneself. Even this can still be understood in psychological terms: if the “violent emotion” can no longer discharge itself externally, then it becomes the *ressentiment* suffocating all freedom and cheerfulness; in HH I Nietzsche calls it a deep “discontent” with oneself (HH I 132; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). The “general burden of human dissatisfaction and imperfection” is even heightened if the object of sacrifice, which the violent emotion springs from, is an innocent and blissful being, which will one day act as everyone’s judge. The psychological need of the “profound depression of spirits” about this evokes, after such a “purely psychological” explanation, eventually the religious “*need of redemption*” (HH I, 132; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).

20 See Andrea Christian Bertino, “Der Mensch als Opferwesen bei Nietzsche,” *Internationales Jahrbuch für philosophische Anthropologie* 7.1. (2017), 121-136, and “Die Aktualität von Nietzsches Opferkritik,” *Friedrich Nietzsche: Erbe und Perspektiven (russisch-englisch-deutsch)*, Ed. Ekaterina Poljakowa, Julia Sineakaya, Moskau 2017, 787-796.

Nietzsche summarizes how the psychological need of this desire can be interpreted in various ways in HH I 142: as one can observe in the case of those striving for saintliness, it is a

Defiance of oneself that is a close relation of lust for power and bestows the feeling of power even upon the hermit; now his distended sensibility leaps out of the desire to allow his passions free rein over into the desire to break them like wild horses under the mighty impress of a proud soul; now he desires a complete cessation of sensations of a disturbing, tormenting, stimulating kind, a waking sleep, a lasting repose in the womb of a dull, beast- and plant-like indolence; now he seeks conflict and ignites it in himself, because boredom has shown him its yawning face: he scourges his self-idolatry with self-contempt and cruelty, he rejoices in the wild riots of his desires, in the sharp sting of sin, indeed in the ideas that he is lost, he knows how to lay a trap for his affects, for example that of the extremest lust for power, so that he passes over into the extremest abasement and his hunted soul is wrenched utterly out of joint by this contrast; and when, finally, he comes to thirst for visions, for colloquies with the dead or divine beings, it is at bottom a rare kind of voluptuousness he desires, but perhaps that voluptuousness within which all other kinds are knotted together. (HH I 142; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale)

To conceive of all this as a desire for redemption and to therefore succumb to Christian promises of salvation is "a certain false psychology, a certain kind of fantasy in the interpretation of motives" (HH I 135; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). In TI, Nietzsche includes the realms of morals and religion in the "concept of *imaginary cause*" (TI, The four great errors 6; transl. by Judith Norman).

As far as the religious need is very widespread and a general religion may emerge from it, Nietzsche approaches it via a *sociology of religion*. He tries to explain religious needs for redemption from societal circumstances of the time and assumes: "To excite, animate, enliven at any price – is that not the watchword of an enervated, over-ripe, over-cultivated age?" (HH I 141; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). The life needs of fatigue and boredom make one desire new violent emotions, "a new species of stimulant"; the pleasure of the "sight of animal and human combats" in the old world was surpassed by the drama in the "proximity of the final decision in regard to endless new vistas of life," the inner mental strife saints know how to report (HH I

141; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). In his own time, Nietzsche likewise sees everywhere fatigue, decadence, needs of refined stimuli – and the *new religious needs for redemption* may be a part of them.

On the other hand, the modern world of work and amusement, Nietzsche argues in BGE 58-60, leaves hardly any time for religious performances such as prayer; among scholars, religion is no longer a topic to arouse great emotions; there is rather a certain fear of contact with religious people; religious stimuli altogether alleviate; religion becomes superficial. This *religious superficiality* may in turn help protecting against too abysmal views into existence so that one now seeks in religion less redemption but rather idealization. *Homines religiosi* have always wanted, like artists, to see existence “distorted, diluted, deified, and cast into the beyond”; their whitewashing and idealizing of the truth is “the last and most subtle monstrosity produced by fear of the truth,” a “will to invert the truth, the will to untruth at any price” (BGE 59; transl. by Judith Norman). And part of this could even be the idea of “lov[ing] humanity for the sake of God,” which Nietzsche is still enchanted by: he indeed announces that he is willing to praise the human being who “first felt and ‘experienced’ all this” and “who has flown the highest so far and has got the most beautifully lost!” (BGE 60; transl. by Judith Norman). But he did get “lost”: Christ is for Nietzsche not an object of religious faith; in all his aesthetic admiration, he keeps his critical distance.

Precisely Christ is then to whom Nietzsche applies his strictest physiological yardstick; he recognizes “a condition where the *sense of touch* is pathologically over-sensitive and recoils from all contact, from grasping any solid objects.” If one were to translate “this sort of physiological *habitus* to its ultimate consequence – as an instinct of hatred for every reality, as a flight into the ‘unimaginable,’ into the ‘inconceivable,’ as an aversion to every formula, to every concept of space and time, to everything solid, to every custom, institution, church, as a being-at-home in a world that has broken off contact with every type of reality, a world that has become completely ‘internal,’ a ‘true’ world, an ‘eternal’ world,” then “the rigorous language of

physiology would use a different word here: the word 'idiot'" (AC 29; transl. by Judith Norman). The word idiot has, for Nietzsche, various and carefully nuanced meanings;²¹ in its physiological sense, as used here, it refers to 'mentally deficient.' Religion, the Christian religion, in perhaps its deepest sense as mere "evangelical practice" (AC 33) is for Nietzsche pathological: "an infantilism that has receded into spirituality. Physiologists, at least, are familiar with cases where delayed puberty is the result of an organism's degeneration" (AC 32; transl. Judith Norman).

Prior to this, in GM, Nietzsche ascribes the emergence of religions, such as Christianity or Buddhism, to a "physiological feeling of obstruction," which spreads through the masses and whose cure could be „sought and tested only on the psychological-moral level" – simply because the physiological knowledge for this was lacking. Nietzsche defines that which is "usually called a 'religion'" even by such a feeling of obstruction (GM III 17; transl. by Carol Diethe). This may in turn spring from various sources, which he more or less tries to pinpoint:

For example, as a result of crossing races that are too heterogenous (or estates – estates always indicate differences in descent and race as well: the European 'Weltschmerz,' the pessimism of the nineteenth century, is essentially the result of a foolishly sudden mixing of estates); or it could be brought about by unsound emigration – a race ending up in a climate for which its powers of adaptation are inadequate (the case of the Indians in India); or by the after-effects of a race's age and fatigue (Parisian pessimism from 1850 on); or by a faulty diet (alcoholism of the Middle Ages; the nonsense of the vegetarians [...]); or by corruption of the blood, malaria, syphilis and such like (German depression after the Thirty Years' War, which infected half of Germany with ruinous diseases and thus prepares the ground for German servility, German faint-heartedness). (GM III 17; transl. by Carol Diethe)²²

21 See Paulo Stellino, "Jesus als 'Idiot.' Ein Vergleich zwischen Nietzsches 'Der Antichrist' und Dostojewskijs 'Der Idiot,'" *Nietzscheforschung* 14 (2007), 203-210; Andreas Urs Sommer, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches 'Der Antichrist,' 'Ecce homo,' 'Dionysos-Dithyramben,' 'Nietzsche contra Wagner,'* in: *Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed., Historischer und kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken, Vol. 6/2, Berlin, Boston 2013, 155-157,* and Werner Stegmaier, "Beselgende Freiheit der menschlichen Orientierung. Nietzsches 'Typus Jesus,'" *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 13 (2014), 35-53.

22 See, prior to this: GS 134, GS 145, GS 147.

The psychological and physiological aspect of the religious needs eventually lead for Nietzsche to a *psychopathology of religion*. Footholds for Nietzsche are here “the visions, terrors, states of exhaustion and rapture experienced by the saint” that “are familiar pathological conditions which, on the basis of rooted religious and psychological errors, he only *interprets* quite differently, that is to say not as illnesses” (HH I 126; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). He especially targets sexuality as repressed by Christianity, the violent emotions of its simultaneous stimulation and suppression (HH I 141) that may grow into a “religious neurosis,” especially if connected “with three dangerous dietary prescriptions: solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence”; the “sudden and dissipated display of voluptuousness, which then turns just as suddenly into spasms of repentance and negations of the world and will: perhaps both can be interpreted as epilepsy in disguise?” As such, religion is thus a matter of “psychiatrists in almost every European country” (BGE 47; transl. by Judith Norman).

The life needs that create religious desires may however, Nietzsche ascertains, also be pleasant, for instance the need of having to act in a difficult situation and of having to decide for or against a certain way of acting: being able to rely on the work and will of God then creates the mood of “cheerful resolution” (D 28; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale) which makes successful acting more likely. In this way, one decided

not for the most reasonable course, but for that course the image of which inspired the soul with hope and courage. The good mood was placed on the scales as an argument and outweighed rationality: it did so because it was interpreted superstitiously as the effect of a god who promises success and who in this manner gives expression to his reason as the highest rationality. (D 28; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale)

Such a mood may of course also be used politically by “clever and power-hungry men” when they want to assert themselves among a religious people (D 28; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).

If a risky action is successful under unexpectedly lucky circumstances and everything fits perfectly together, then another desire arises that may become a need:

to give thanks to someone. If there is nobody one could give thanks to, God proffers Himself again: one

projects the pleasure [one] takes in oneself, [one's] feeling of power, into a being that [one] can thank for all of this. Whoever has wealth will want to give; a proud people needs a god to *sacrifice* to . . . On this supposition, religion is a form of gratitude. One is grateful for oneself: and this is why one needs a god. (AC 16; transl. by Judith Norman, modified)

If fortunate success does not come or takes too long, then the religious attitude likewise changes: in broken trust, one quickly becomes "modest and full of fear, [one] will cringe in corners and recommend 'peace of soul,' forbearance, an end of hatred, and 'love' of friends and enemies" (AC 16; transl. by Judith Norman). In such cases, the "feeling of power" is sufficient; for the sick the simple "feeling of health," in both cases "an extraordinary feeling of fortune and exhilaration" in order to "believe in God, that God is near" (N 1888, 14[124], KSA 13.306; our translation).

3. (Non-)Localization of Religion: Shaping the Undetermined

The analysis of religious needs and their origins in life needs must not presuppose any definite term of religion; what is understood as religion must come from this analysis. What Nietzsche found is the "violent emotion" of going all out, of wanting "the great, tremendous, prodigious," be it, in Christianity, assuming an almighty God or an all-encompassing unconditional love. Going all out is a kind of "self-transcendence" of human orientation into the superhuman;²³ it leads to the "higher sphere," as one says and as Nietzsche sometimes calls it,²⁴ of religion and, in a cooled-down form, even metaphysics, including the kind of metaphysics inherent to science. It is this sphere's characteristic that it is initially completely undetermined; and it may therefore receive

23 Arne Grøn, *Jenseits? Nietzsches Religionskritik revisited*, 405.

24 For instance, in N 1888, 12[1] (258), KSA 13.206.

various characters, e.g. in various religions. This sphere permits a vast leeway to shape it, and this leeway is what Nietzsche is interested in.

Connected with this leeway, all religions have their history. For instance, the ancient Greeks went, out of "the most profound compulsion," from the gruesome gods who represent the "Titanic forces of nature" to the "divine order of Olympic joy" because it helped them face "the terrors and horrors of existence" and endure them (BT 3; transl. by Ronald Speirs). But in this way religion may also die: "when the mythical presuppositions of a religion become systematized as a finished sum of historical events under the severe, intellectual gaze of orthodox dogmatism, and people begin to defend anxiously the credibility of the myths while resisting every natural tendency within them to go on living and to throw out new shoots – in other words, when the feeling of myth dies and is replaced by the claim of religion to have historical foundations" (BT 10; transl. by Ronald Speirs). In the case of ancient Greece, this process may have started already with Hesiod's ordering theogony; in Christianity the same process repeated when Paul resolutely dogmatized Jesus' "evangelic practice" in order to teach it all over the world.

Hence, a part of religion is for Nietzsche – this is the inconspicuous backside of his critique and analysis – the unorganized, the undetermined, the uncertain, the surprising and thus that which can be shaped: "The whole of nature is in the conception of religious men a sum of actions by conscious and volitional beings, a tremendous complex of *arbitrariness*" that one can influence through magic; "the sorcerer is older than the priest" (HH I 111; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). But this is not about truth: "a religion has never yet, either directly or indirectly, either as dogma or as parable, contained a truth" (HH I 110; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). But what is created is a special reality where one cannot be less at home than in the earthly one: the religious and the moral man "supposes that what he has essentially at heart must also constitute the essence and heart of things" (HH I 4; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). Yet, moral and religious feelings are "in truth [...] rivers with a hundred tributaries and sources. Here too, as so often, the unity of the word is no guarantee of the unity

of the thing" (HH I 14; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). Here everything "has become and is changeable, unsteady, everything is in flux: but everything is also flooding forward, and towards one goal." It may or may not form itself into a religion; it may also simply become a "habit," without any doctrines, dogmas, metaphysics and theories, and then be replaced by "a new habit, that of comprehending, not-loving, not-hating, surveying" that for instance developed into science (HH I 107; transl. by Ronald Speirs).

This is where Nietzsche sympathizes with polytheism, the "wonderful art and power of creating gods," which stiffens in monotheism, the "belief in a normal god next to whom there are only false pseudo-gods"; in this he recognizes "perhaps the greatest danger to humanity so far" (GS 143; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff). Nietzsche, the non-believer, discovers the value of religion for humanity in the creative forces it unleashes, even if this brings about illusions. "The unexplained is to be altogether inexplicable, the inexplicable altogether unnatural, supernatural, miraculous"; here Nietzsche positions himself on the side of "religious people and metaphysicians," but on that "of the artists, too, when they are also thinkers" (HH I 136; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). And then he is not bothered when the "entire horizon of his judgement and sensibility will be clouded round and religious shadows will flit across it" (HH I 121; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale). Critical of religion, but also with some regrets, Nietzsche speaks of the "astonishing effects of the religious feeling," which "has had its time and many very good things can never thrive again because it was only out of it they could grow. Thus there will never again be a life and culture bounded by a religiously determined horizon" (HH I 243; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale).

The rest is well-known: Nietzsche has his Zarathustra explicitly call for the creation of new gods, and he creates with Dionysus a god for his own philosophizing (BGE 295). According to the logic of creation, a god that was once created may then obstruct new creations ("Away from God and gods this will lure me; what would there be to create, after all, if there were gods?," Za II, On the Blessed Isles; transl. by

Adrian Del Caro). Dionysus, however, is a god who by himself brings order into disorder and disorder into order, a god of creation par excellence.

4. The Process of Religious Interpreting: The Founding of a Religion

The power to shape religions seems to be the power of the religion-founders. It is easier to observe them instead of the needs they respond to; and Nietzsche thus deals with them again and again.²⁵ He conceives of them as religious interpreters who register religious moods and feelings, articulate them, and display them to the masses in such a way that these masses completely surrender. The spiritual achievement that drives such interpretations and the capacity for such display are for Nietzsche, even if he considers them seductive and deceptive, nevertheless to some degree astonishing and admirable.

The founding of a religion is for Nietzsche less a matter of doctrines. Nor does he proceed from an allegedly complete revelation, but he focused on the process through which saints become saints in their world. Even who they are as persons is less significant: the person is for Nietzsche rather a projection surface that reflects and transforms widespread needs; the faith in them as persons grows depending on how much they can concentrate and amplify that which they are being confronted with. This kind of interpretation or of interpretation process can, in terms of Niklas Luhmann, be called 'condensation and confirmation': sparse footholds in the life situation of the society of a time are condensed and consolidated to such a degree that it creates the

²⁵ Concerning Nietzsche's "Analysis and critique of the 'founders of religion,'" see Johann Figl, *Nietzsche und die Religion*, 312-318. Figl focuses on GS 353 and EH, *Why I am a Destiny* 1. With regards to the, for Nietzsche, most important founder of a religion Paul, see Daniel Havemann, *Der 'Apostel der Rache.'* *Nietzsches Paulusdeutung* (Monographien und Texte der Nietzsche-Forschung, Vol. 46), Berlin, New York (De Gruyter) 2002. It is Paul's accomplishment that he interprets the disgraceful death of Christ as a sign of the suffering that represents everyone's sufferings and to thus help them affirm their sufferings. Paul makes possible that they understand their sufferings as a form of religious experience.

impression of a dense and solid and eventually familiar reality.²⁶ What, for Nietzsche, contributes to this is the “discipline of the head” and “men’s [...] labour” concerning the “generality and universal bindingness of a faith,” a “law of agreement” in the most essential matters of society, “regardless of whether these things are true or false” (GS 76; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff, modified). This pertains to “everything that is necessary and everything that is customary,” “eating und living and procreating, trading, income, business – just social life” (N 1881, 14[18]), thus also established routines of everyday life. Whoever, with or without intention, founds through such processes of condensation and confirmation a religion that becomes plausible to large groups of a society so that they “inevitably, with all of the *vis inertiae*,” as Nietzsche says, “roll into a faith,” he or she then accomplishes an extraordinary achievement of orientation.

Who Nietzsche seems to have had mind was a figure such as Francis of Assisi. He characterizes him in his notes (only here) as “in love, popular, poet,” as someone who fights against aristocracy and against the “rank order of souls in favor of the lowest people” – something that must have been very well received among the suppressed and suffering masses (N 1887, 9[19]; our translation). In a physiological viewpoint, Nietzsche considers Francis an exemplary “mix of transferred sensibility and prayer-rutting” (N 1887, 7[65] 5; our translation). In a psychopathological perspective, he is for him “neurotic, epileptic, visionary, like Jesus” (N 1888, 11[363]; our translation). According to this image, what Nietzsche says about the sacred in general could at least partially also apply to Francis (and in the background also to Jesus Christ, i.e. Assisi’s model for life):

It is not what the saint *is*, but what he *signifies* in the eyes of the non-saints, that gives him his world-historic value. Because he was mistaken for what he was not, because his psychological states were interpreted falsely and he was set as far apart as possible from everyone else as though he were something altogether incomparable, strange and supra-human: that is how he acquired

26 See Niklas Luhmann, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main, 1990, 108f.

the extraordinary power with which he was able to dominate the imagination of whole nations and whole ages. He himself did not know himself; he himself deciphered the characters of his moods, inclinations and actions by means of an art of interpretation that was as exaggerated and artificial as the pneumatical interpretation of the Bible. What was perverse and pathological in his nature, with its coupling together of spiritual poverty, deficient knowledge, ruined health and over-excited nerves, was concealed from his own sight just as it was from that of his spectators. He was not an especially good man, even less an especially wise one: but he *signified* something that exceeded the ordinary human portion of goodness and wisdom. Belief in him lent support to belief in the divine and miraculous, in a religious meaning of existence, in an imminent Day of Judgement. In the evening glow of the sun of the coming end of the world that shone over all Christian peoples the shadow of the saint grew to monstrous size to such a height, indeed, that even in our own age, which no longer believes in God, there are still thinkers who believe in the saints. (HH I, 143, transl. by R. J. Hollingdale)

In this regard, founding a religion involves above all the idealization of its founder or its saints; the same applies, according to AC, to Jesus. Concealed by the mantle of interpretation that was put over the saints, it is therefore difficult to guess what in fact may have moved them. Jesus, according to Nietzsche, believed

that there was nothing from which men suffered more than their sins. That was his error – the error of one who felt himself free of sin and who lacked experience of it! Thus his soul filled itself with that wonderful fantastic compassion for a torment that was rarely a very great torment even among his people, who invented sin! But the Christians have found a way of retroactively vindicating their master and of sanctifying his error into ‘truth.’ (GS 138; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff)

The idealizing process of interpretation was certainly not always successful. “Pythagoras and Plato, perhaps Empedocles as well, and the Orphic enthusiasts much earlier yet, were out to found new religions; and the former two had souls and talents which were so much those of founders of religions that one cannot wonder enough at their failure; yet all they managed to found were sects” (GS 149; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff). According to Nietzsche’s interpretation, nobody is simply free to found a

religion; one must become the function for a need that is not at one's disposal, but one sacrifices oneself for it. Saints are the

consecrated, chosen, sacrificed for the common good – they believe themselves sacrificed to God – , to whom the people can spill their hearts with impunity and *get rid of* their secrets, worries and worse (– for he who 'unbosoms' himself is relieved of himself, and he who has 'confessed,' forgets). Here reigns a great necessity: drainages and their clean, cleansing waters are needed also for the spiritual refuse; swift streams of love are needed, and strong, humble, pure hearts who prepare and sacrifice themselves for such an office of non-public health care – for it is a sacrifice; a priest is and remains a human sacrifice... (GS 351; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff)²⁷

While Nietzsche usually foregrounds a strong personality, a genius, a sovereign individual, he comments with regard to the founder of a religion: he "may be unimportant, a matchstick, nothing more" (N 1884, 25[419]; our translation). More important than the interpretation which a founder of a religion provides for a "way of life" is this way of life itself: it

was usually already in place, though alongside other ways of life and without any consciousness of its special worth. The significance, the originality of the religion-founder usually lies in his *seeing* and *selecting* this way of life, in his *guessing* for the first time what it can be used for and how it can be interpreted. Jesus (or Paul), for example, discovered the life of the small people in the Roman province, a humble, virtuous, depressed life: he explained it, he put the highest meaning and value into it [...]. The religion-founder must be psychologically infallible in his knowledge of a certain average breed of souls who have not yet *recognized* one another as allies. He is the one who brings them together; and to the extent, the establishment of a religion always turns into a long festival of recognition. – (GS 353; transl. by Josefine Nauckhoff)²⁸

27 See GS 378: This aphorism addresses the topic of the *Übermensch*, without calling it by that name; about this matter, see: Werner Stegmaier, "Der See des Menschen, das Meer, des Übermenschen und der Brunnen des Geistes. Fluss und Fassung einer Metapher Friedrich Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 39 (2010), 145-179; abridged reprint: "Das Meer des Übermenschen. Zarathustras Lehre im Fluss der Metaphern" *Nietzscherforschung* 18 (2011), 139-153.

28 In this regard, the theologian and philosopher Schleiermacher preceded Nietzsche in many aspects. See: Werner Stegmaier, "Von Religionsstiftern lernen: Deutungsmacht als Kraft zur

In the newly recognized and valued way of life human beings can recognize, respect, and trust each other and they can thus orient themselves to each other.

5. Functionalizing Religion: The Philosopher as Educator

As Schleiermacher began thinking of God without religion, so did Nietzsche want to have effects like those of the founder of a religion – not to further spread religion, but to cut the ground from under its feet. He wanted to show the unadorned realities of human life with the means he had as a writer: his inventive heuristics of need; his art to create violent emotions through the pathos of his style; the “*magic of the extreme*” regarding his suppositions (N 1887, 10[94]; our translation); his cult of the sacrifice of the many for the few and his own self-sacrifice for philosophy which he often speaks about. In all this, he felt himself from the very beginning committed to the “most comprehensive responsibility” of a philosopher, who – as he learned from his “educator” Schopenhauer – “bears the weight of the overall development of humanity: This philosopher will make use of religion for his breeding and education work, just as he will make use of the prevailing political and economic situation” (BGE 61; transl. by Judith Norman). Nietzsche wanted – this still makes us gasp today – to make religion a function for philosophy and philosophy a function for the “higher-breeding of humanity” (EH, BT 4; our translation).

Thus, his critique of religion moved via the analysis of religious needs and of the process of the founding of religions to a project of religion for the sake of humanity’s reorientation. This idea is not so outrageous as it sounds: at the latest since Plato, philosophers have made plans for such projects of education; the Church adopted them; in the Enlightenment and the German idealism, they were brought to

Orientierung,” *Deutungsmacht: Religion und belief systems in Deutungsmachtkonflikten*, ed. Philipp Stoellger (Tübingen 2014), 121-138. For a contextual interpretation of aphorisms 351 and 353, see Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der ‘Fröhlichen Wissenschaft,’* Berlin, Boston, 2012, 221-257.

new heights; in Nietzsche's time they were ubiquitous. Nietzsche's project of religion connected with his kind of science of religion: if the religious needs remain even in times less driven by basic needs, then one would have to use them for new goals; and given the importance of religion in the past millennia, the only honorific goal has been the advancement of humanity. The extreme consequence Nietzsche draws from this is: whoever – despite all Enlightenment in the past century and despite all demands of forming one's own opinion as a free spirit – still needs religion (religion in its traditional sense of "complete subordination to the will of another or to a comprehensive law and ritual"), whoever still has the will to "unconditional obedience" and the desire to follow others (HH I 139; transl. by R. J. Hollingdale), hence whoever require others' orientations in his or her entire life, then he or she should also receive it. Yet, this life orientation must no longer lie in the hands of "priests." The need for a religion shows, for Nietzsche in his time, a limited capacity for orientation calling for a superior orientation. But having a superior orientation gives power, and a responsible way of exercising power in the sense of a more circumspect and farsighted orientation is, for Nietzsche, most likely to be expected from philosophers, as they have been dealing with this task for millennia – or, as far as they are not here yet, from future philosophers who still need to learn to take on this task in modern circumstances.

Christian religion still offers – Nietzsche highly appreciates it in this regard – great work of education. It offers many "triggers and temptations to take the path to higher spirituality and try out feelings of great self-overcoming, of silence, and of solitude." It provides – Nietzsche says in a language that appears inhumane today but that was quite common back then – "an invaluable sense of contentment with their situation and type; it puts their hearts greatly at ease, it glorifies their obedience, it gives them (and those like them) one more happiness and one more sorrow, it transfigures and improves them, it provides something of a justification for everything commonplace, for all the lowliness, for the whole half-bestial poverty of their souls" (BGE 61; transl. by Judith Norman, modified). The Christian religion keeps down, in

the sense of "enduring, bearing, helping, reciprocity" and "love," the "feelings of rivalry, *ressentiment*, envy, all the all-too-natural feelings of those who have come off badly (*Schlechtweggekommenen*), – it deifies them even in light of the ideal of humility and obedience being-a-slave, being controlled, being poor, being sick, being at the bottom." This then also explains "why the governing classes and races and the individuals of all time have maintained the cult of selflessness, the gospel of the lowest, 'the God at the cross'" (N 1888, 14[29]; our translation).

But this task must go – if the 'Europeans' (a term that for Nietzsche also encompasses the 'Americans') do not want to stay on the same level facing a completely changed world, if the "*still undetermined animal*" wants to newly open its possibilities of becoming – into less selfish hands (BGE 62; transl. by Judith Norman). As such, Nietzsche calls upon the "*true philosophers*," who are yet to come, as "*commanders and legislators*" (BGE 211; transl. by Judith Norman). They cannot, as philosophers, support their commands and laws with administrative means; but they can offer orientations that are so plausible that people voluntarily follow them, simply because they do not see any alternatives. Yet, philosophers will do this, simply because they do not have any political power, always in competition with other philosophers so that everyone can freely choose this or that orientation. Nietzsche expects from philosophers a grand politics of religion – not *for the sake* of religion but in order to go beyond it. Where to: he does not say. A thinking freed from religion knows that it must newly create its goals and values again and again going with the times.

Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller