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## RESEARCH ARTICLE | SPECIAL ISSUE: PHILOSOPHY

# Defeating the Shadow of God: Nietzsche on the Death of the “Christian God”

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**Abstract:** In the preface to his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant characterizes his own critical metaphysics as the main opponent of dogmatism, which inevitably results in the assertion of conflicting dogmas especially about the existence of God, the freedom of the will and the immortality of the soul. Simultaneously, Kant subtly distinguishes his critical philosophy from three other stances opposing dogmatism: the skepticism of Descartes and Hume, the empiricism of John Lock, and the indifferentism of thinkers who, without rejecting metaphysical assertions, refute any attempt to argue for them systematically and rigorously. Refusing indifferentism, Kant somehow admits a commonsensical view similar to that of indifferentism regarding principal issues of metaphysics. Touching very briefly on Kant’s view, the paper examines Nietzsche’s take on especially the issue of the existence of the Christian God. Defending a kind of stance similar to skepticism or even, in some aspects, to indifferentism, Nietzsche’s chief endeavor is to look at the issue from the different perspectives of genealogical and axiological critiques in order to pave the way for an entire overlooking the issue. In this respect, such an endeavor results in a stance contrary to Kant’s commonsensical position, ending up in Nietzsche’s talk of the Death of God and the Death of the True World.

**Keywords:** Dogmatism; Skepticism; Indifferentism; the Death of God; Moral Order.

## Introduction

New battles- After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries - a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. - And we - we

must still defeat his shadow as well!  
(Nietzsche, 2007: §108)

Indifferentism occurred when metaphysical dogmatism has been “betrayed” by the history of dogmatic metaphysics itself and, in its wake,

made the exhausted reason become indifferent to its defining problems. This indifferentism, however, is not to be understood as a way leading up to thinking the defining problems away. Rather, it led to dismissing the metaphysical investigation entirely regarding those problems because they were thought to be indecisive and unnecessary. Hence, a retreat, or appealing, to the more consoling ways of common sense thinking became popular. It, in turn, called forth the same answers dogmatic metaphysics had already provided us. This time, as Nietzsche writes, these old answers appeared in the guise of "a consolation, an obligation, an imperative" of critical philosophy - the same old bright sun, but now in a "Nordic, Konigsbergian" appearance, "through fog and scepticism" (Nietzsche, 2005: *Twilight of the Idols*, IV). In the first section, I briefly discuss the manner in which Kant's critical philosophy raised and protected God's shadow by allowing such commonsensical beliefs, *Popularphilosophen*,<sup>1</sup> to hover around. Then, through an interpretation of Nietzsche's often quoted announcement, that "God is dead", I follow the steps he thinks we need to take in order to unfold the significance of the announcement, getting rid of the Christian God's shadow and opening up the prospect of the new seas of the future.

Far from an atheist by default, Nietzsche was raised in a pious religious household. His father was a local pastor and on his death, Nietzsche was expected to fill his father's shoes. He wrote many sentimental Christian poems

as a teenage boy. Heidegger called Nietzsche 'that passionate seeker after God and the last German philosopher' (Fraser, 2002: 1). Even there are several important religious and theological interpretations of Nietzsche's death of God by passionate Christian theologians who acknowledge "that 'the death of God' did name a certain sort of death, the death of a certain way of doing theology and religion". It was regarded as "an aid in the search for an authentic voice in which to speak the Christian Gospel". Thomas Altizer, for example, writes "once we recognize that radical Christianity is inseparable from an attack upon God, then we should be prepared to face the possibility that even Nietzsche was a radical Christian." Some others, following Nietzsche, reject what one might call the 'philosophical' approach to the question of God (see *ibid*: chapter 1). Whatever interpretation we choose, there is no doubt that Nietzsche deep inside is above all a religious thinker and his views "have a great deal in common with those of many of his German contemporaries who were similarly alive to, in Holderlin's word, the 'destitution' of modernity" (see Young, 2006: Epilogue). So, my discussion here depicts just a small portion of a very big picture, just a threshold, and should be regarded as such.

### **Kant and Safeguarding the Shadow: the Farce after the Tragedy<sup>2</sup>**

In his vast and far-reaching critical works, Kant's main proposal is to at least pave the way for the emergence of a critical philosophy far from dogmatism: metaphysics in its traditional

<sup>1</sup>see Beiser, 1987: 165-90

<sup>2</sup>After explicating the first *Critique*, Heine writes: "There is still one play left. After the tragedy comes the farce" (Heine, 2014: 87).

meaning. This philosophy, however, is not and needs to not be skeptical. Rather, the critical philosophy is an attempt to respond to skepticism, like that of Descartes or Hume, while overturning dogmatism based on their cherished doubts. Kant is clear on what his critical philosophy aims to achieve. It is all about laying the foundations both for the uncontroversially universal, necessary and objective certainty of modern science and its causal determinism and, at the same time, the possibility of human's moral agency and autonomy, despite such solid certainty.

So, early in his critical career, Kant sets out to take, or rather fight this dualistic defense on several fronts against different intellectual positions as they are presented or reinforced in the modern area. Given Kant's intellectual background, the main opponent, of course, is dogmatism in the manner that is manifested in the metaphysical pretensions of the rationalistic school of Christian Wolff and his followers. Such dogmatic rationalism consists mainly in an uncritical assertion of laws for nature and morality that is not grounded in any antecedent critique of human rational powers, which inevitably results in the assertion of conflicting dogmas especially about the existence of God, the freedom of the will and the immortality of the soul. According to Kant, the "despotic" dogmatism of the rational metaphysics leads to a skeptical answer (Kant, 1998: A vii-ix) and although there are never enough skeptical "nomads to prevent the dogmatists from rebuilding their

metaphysical castles in the air altogether, there are always enough around to poke holes in the rebuilt castles, thus creating a never-ending cycle of dogmatism and skepticism" (Guyer, 2014: 145; see also Kant, 1998: introduction). Kant also describes this situation as a battle, albeit a battle in vain, between dogmatism and skepticism:

Both parties fence in the air and wrestle with their shadows, for they go beyond nature, where there is nothing that their dogmatic grasp can seize and hold. Fight as they may, the shadows that they cleave apart grow back together in an instant, like the heroes of Valhalla, to amuse themselves anew in bloodless battles. (Kant, 1998: A 756/B 785)

No opponent has been able to defeat the other, this way depicting the spectacle of an endless and barren desert which in all probability leads to "tedium and complete indifferentism"<sup>3</sup> regarding the simultaneously non-provable and irrefutable claims of metaphysics (Ibid: A x). Kant, however, attempts to argue that the indifferentism, of those who did not reject metaphysical assertions themselves but did reject any attempt to argue for them systematically and rigorously, cannot be maintained. He argues that we as human beings cannot ignore the general importance and especially the moral significance of the questions that are natural to our reason and have long been pursued through traditional metaphysics. As Kant puts in *Prolegomena*, "the demand for it can never be exhausted", quoting the Horace poem,

<sup>3</sup>This is a reference to popular Enlightenment philosophy, such as that of Johann August Eberhard (1739-1809), J. G. Feder (1740-1821), Christian Garve (1742-1798), Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811), and Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786). It emphasized

appeals to healthy common sense over rigorous argument, and the popular dissemination of progressive ideas with practical import over the investigation of metaphysical questions, toward which they often expressed contempt" (Kant, 1998: 714-715 n.5).

Rusticus exspectat, dum defluat amnis, at ille//Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis aevum (“A rustic waits for the river to flow away, but it flows on, and will so flow for all eternity.”) (Kant, 2004: 6).

By claiming that dogmatist metaphysics induces skepticism and indifferentism, Kant mostly has that kind in mind which concerns the main topics of metaphysics that he collects under the title of “antinomies” in the “Transcendental Dialectic” of his first *Critique*. These are different from doubts about the first principles of ordinary knowledge and the possibility of the universal and necessary knowledge in science that are mainly induced by the English empiricism of Hume. The latter doubts are refuted in the “Transcendental Analytic” section of the first *Critique*. The antinomies of pure reason consist most importantly in the antinomies of the existence of God, free will and immortal soul. They depict another frontline where the human reason is confronted with seemingly sound and plausible arguments for opposite propositions on both sides, engendering a tricky situation that makes our reason challenge the trustworthiness of the very faculty of reason that calls forth these contradictory arguments. Kant’s famous distinction between the world of phenomena and the world of noumena on the one hand, and introducing the practical aspect of reason on the other, are the basis of his attempt to get rid of a never-ending cycle of dogmatism, skepticism, and indifferentism. This way, he links his critical philosophy to indifferentists’ take on metaphysical issues. As Guyer correctly admits:

And while he wanted to prove to the indifferentists that a science of metaphysics is important, he also wanted to embrace part of

their position, since he thought that in regard to some insoluble metaphysical questions, indeed the most important of them, we can defend a kind of commonsense belief - in God, freedom and immortality – because our moral outlook has an inescapable stake in them (Kant, 1998: 3).

Kant’s attempt to safeguard the metaphysical assertions posed by dogmatist philosophers amounts to taking a stance between skepticism and indifferentism in his theoretical philosophy and turning to the practical utility of these assertions to justify our moral ideals and keep their shadows in the cave of the nominal world. That is because he was not happy just to “play the role of the tragic hero.” It is true that “he has stormed the haven, he has disposed of the whole crew”, but old Lampe, Kant's servant,

...stands there with his umbrella under his arm, watching in dismay, his face dripping with anxious sweat and tears. Seeing this, Immanuel Kant takes pity and shows that he is not merely a great philosopher but also a good person. He thinks, and half with goodwill and half with irony, he speaks: “Old Lampe has to have a God, otherwise the poor man cannot be happy – people, however, should be happy in this world – that is what practical reason says – well, what do I know? – may be we can let practical reason vouch for the existence of God. (Heine, 2014: 87)

However, the problem remains in Kant's philosophy of why we, in our picture of the world, don't entirely emancipate ourselves from shadows of the belief in God, shadows that make us project on to the world our own moral and aesthetic values, purposes and aims, lawful order and organization, perfection, blessedness and then, on the basis of all that,

inevitably needing to deduce the existence of the same epistemologically indemonstrable God without which all these values lose their foundation.

### **Nietzsche and the Shadow in the Cave of the Unknown: "Incipit tragoedia"<sup>4</sup>**

Nietzsche's take on the immortality of the soul is clear. There is not such a thing as the immaterial soul, let alone something immortal. Plato's invention of "pure spirit" and "the Good in itself", which both refer to the inner moral order of the world, or as Kant puts it, "the inner worth of the world" (Kant, 1997: 125; Nietzsche, 2007: §55), has been the "most prolonged" and "dangerous errors" produced by "dogmatic philosophy" (see Nietzsche, 2002: Preface). Nietzsche's take on the existence of God, however, seems to be more complicated than what appears at first glance.

In a famous and often quoted statement, Nietzsche says that "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 2007: §§109, 125). First of all, Nietzsche here has mostly a "Christian idea of God" in mind, an idea which "is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God the world has ever seen". A God who "rewards and punishes", "The Father", "the Judge" and "the Reward-giver", who loved but not beyond discrimination, retribution, and revenge. A "concealed god, full of secretiveness" who

endorses none other but the code of the priests, who sends no one but them into the world as His mouthpieces and plenipotentiaries; an afterlife in which the great punitive machine is intended to operate from the outset, and to this end the 'immortality of the soul'; the conscience in man, as consciousness that good and evil are immutable, that when the voice of conscience recommends conformity with priestly precepts it is the voice of God Himself who speaks.... The notion 'God' represents an aversion to, and a critique of, life; it represents a condemnation of life itself (see Nietzsche, 2017: §141; 2002: §53; 2006: IV, 6; 2005: *The Anti-Christ*, §§16-19).

Secondly, God's death is not first announced by Nietzsche. Others, including Hegel, quoted or referred to it a few times.<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche, however, is the sole champion of the debate, turning our attention to the direct consequences it might present. Instead of engaging in the arguments for or against the existence of God, he mainly considers God's death as having the status of a "tremendous event" which encumbers us, the humanity, with the task of giving it a new form and significance. This humanity emerges in the wake of God's death by giving it a sense and a meaning, and will be very different from the humanity that preceded it. This newcomer also has a new task and a philosophy of the future

<sup>4</sup>Nietzsche, 2007: Preface, §2

<sup>5</sup>The most important one is Hegel's talk of it in *the Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Heine, greatly admired by Nietzsche, also comments on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Do you hear the little bell tinkle? Kneel down—one brings the sacraments for a dying God". He considers "Kant's first *Kritik* as the sacrament brought to a dying God.... For Heine, as Kant swept God out of the

epistemological realms of both sense awareness and pure thought, he thus relegated any possible consciousness of God's existence to the realm of faith, not the conditioned, clarified faith of Augustine or Aquinas but the absurd faith of Tertullian"(for a detailed discussion of the metaphor's origin and history see: Higgins, 2000: chapter five; Nietzsche, 1974: 100n).

(see Nietzsche, 2007: §§344, 346). This announcement, however, takes us directly to the best starting point to understand and investigate Nietzsche's take on the issue of the existence of God, and to fully realize his bottom line when he says that along with the belief in God a number of related ideas also lose credibility, such as "an essentially moral order," or a "true, valuable world" beyond this one (Nietzsche, 2017: §57).

According to "God is dead", God is some being that is now dead. So, He was once alive and now He is dead, which means that God is an entity that like all other entities can die. But the religious God or the philosophers' God by its very nature is not something that can be born and die. So, as far as Nietzsche speaks of the death of God, he ought to have "the belief in God" in mind, and not God himself: "God is dead," as he puts later in the book, means that "dass der Glaube an den christlichen Gott ungläubwürdig geworden ist" <sup>6</sup> (the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable[/unworthy of belief<sup>7</sup>/ incredible/ it is no longer credible to believe in the Christian God<sup>8</sup>])" and "we do not want to go back once more into what we deem outlived and decayed, into anything at all 'unworthy of belief,' call it God, virtue, truth, justice, or love thy neighbor" (Nietzsche, 2007: §343; 2011: Preface, §4). Nietzsche's interpretation clearly indicates that the announcement does not amount to saying that there is no God as a metaphysical entity; that is, it doesn't intend to

be a usual refutation of the existence of an entity called God. What has died, as Heidegger correctly puts it, is "our inherited conception of God and the worldview based upon it" (Higgins, 2000: 96). This announcement is not about the status of an entity in the ontological construction of the world. Rather, "God is dead" is a statement about the status of one of our beliefs and values - a very basic and fundamental one among the entire system of our beliefs and values. Here "our" in particular means we European who has experienced "the 16th and 17th centuries' scientific revolution, the 18th century's enlightenment philosophies, the industrial revolution, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, and the moral skepticism fostered through Christianity's own teachings" (Langer, 2010: 314). It is also more than a feeling of skepticism concerning the existence of God, a willingness that the belief should be merely suspended: the belief in God is "dead," not just questionable. The belief in God has been killed, frozen, ceased to be of importance anymore, devaluated or revaluated. It is not credible anymore, or as he puts earlier, it is "discredited" (Nietzsche, 1995: §28) and "people have ceased to believe that a god largely directs the destinies of the world" (ibid: §25)

So, by declaring the death of God, Nietzsche firstly intends to proclaim that the belief in the Christian God no longer exists or is at work in European societies. The next important point here, as contained in the word

<sup>6</sup>For the original German see <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW>. Glaubwürdig means credible, reliable, believable, trustworthy, plausible, and more literally, worthy of belief, see also: <https://www.dict.cc/?s=glaubw%C3%BCrdig>

The two English translations, that of Kaufman (Nietzsche, 1974) and that of Cambridge Edition, (Nietzsche 2006) translated ungläubwürdig as unbelievable.

<sup>7</sup>Reginster in 2006: 40 prefers "unworthy of belief".

<sup>8</sup>As is translated in Langer, 2010: 134.

“unglaublich, is concerning the belief in the Christian God. Nietzsche’s attempt is not focused on showing the truth or falsehood of the belief itself. A belief can be shown to be true or false. But if we cannot somehow demonstrate either its truth or its falsehood with certainty, it might induce skepticism and suspension or indifferentism (which, as Kant has shown us are two different stances). As far as epistemology is concerned, Kant agrees that this belief or proposition can’t be proven or refuted, but practically speaking, we cannot remain skeptical or indifferent towards its significance. Here is where Nietzsche’s attempt to discredit the belief. The difficult process of discrediting a belief looms large when not only the truth or falsehood of a belief cannot be demonstrated, but also when the very possibility of its truth can no longer be taken seriously. It is shown to be no longer worthy of believing, it is “unworthy of belief” or must be devaluated or revaluated. Through this process, we grow “mistrust in a belief”, making it “unworthy of belief” and causing us “no longer allowed to believe in it” (Nietzsche, 1994: §21).

### A Freezing Method

In what follows I draw an outline of Nietzsche's aforementioned method:

1- Following Kant in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, and without feeling the compulsion to engage himself in deliberating on the value and validity of various proofs and disproofs of God’s existence, Nietzsche takes for granted that no sound and certain proof for or against the existence of God has been yet presented in the long history of thought. Furthermore, it could not be presented in principle, given

the limits of our reason established by Kant and Schopenhauer or any other reason. (This last point, however, is not crucial for our argument. What matters is the fact that no uncontroversial proof for the existence of God has been produced so far, whatever or whoever the fault is). Such a situation might engender a skeptical attitude or indifferentism in terms of epistemology, or as Nietzsche puts it, “God is unknowable and indemonstrable to us - the hidden meaning behind the epistemological movement;” (Nietzsche, 2017: §254).

2- Given the above situation, should we still wait for a moment in the future which shows us how to avoid the dead end? In this case, we still take the issue of the existence of God seriously, thinking that we have found other ways to bring God back. So, while “old Kant” succeeded in defining the limits of our metaphysical speculations which rendered belief in a simultaneously personal and transcendent God nearly unbelievable, he

helped himself to the ‘thing in itself’ - another very ridiculous thing! and was punished for this when the “categorical imperative” crept into his heart and led him astray—back to “God,” “soul,” “freedom,” and “immortality, “like a fox who loses his way and goes astray back into his cage. (Nietzsche, 2007:§335).

Such endeavors are essentially other secret paths to the same old religious ideal which reveals itself in the concepts of ‘real world,’ of morality as the essence of the world which was” once more, thanks to a crafty-sly skepticism, if not actually demonstrable, then at least no longer refutable” (Nietzsche, 2005: *The Anti-*

*Christ*,§10). And as far as we take the question of the existence of God seriously, these secret paths would be numerous. However, the problem still remains of why we should take the existence of a religious God so seriously. Why don't we ignore the issue - thinking it away entirely? How long should we keep waiting for definitive proof for the existence of God to turn up? Is it permissible or plausible, to give ourselves "the right to regard certain positions as irrefutable - that is, as beyond all possibility of refutation (the current expression for this clever dodge is 'Kantian critique')" (Nietzsche, 2017: §251), hoping that better proofs finally cause the clouds of doubt in the sky of our faith to dispel.

If we can show that there are other reasons not to take the issue itself seriously, we can discredit the very belief. Here, we don't intend to refute such a simultaneously indemonstrable and irrefutable proposition. Rather, our other studies concerning its origin and history bring us into a position to put it aside and disregard it. To do so, Nietzsche produces genealogical and psychological arguments in an attempt to show how the belief in God comes into existence. In other words, Nietzsche tries to expose the "human, all-too-human" origin of our belief in God and the "metaphysical world" over which He is thought to preside, a "world" which "is fabricated solely from psychological needs" (Nietzsche, 2017:§12).Such genealogical investigations into the roots and ground, perhaps the underground, of our most cherished beliefs and ideals and thereby to discredit them, in principle differ from a mere refutation. Here, "the ideal", and above all God, "is not refuted—it is *frozen* to death". This process of freezing makes the ideal lose all its

living powers over our hearts and minds. We no longer see the ideal as something rooted in some beyond, since the torch of genealogy illuminates the underworld dungeon of this otherwise secure mountain. Rather, we see its "human, oh, only all-too-human" roots. "One mistake after another is calmly put on ice ...Here, for instance, 'genius' is frozen; in another corner 'the saint' is frozen; ... in the end 'faith' freezes... 'the thing in-itself' is frozen almost everywhere". This is also the same as the process of "liberating oneself, "to become free", the process of not letting the Ideals creep into the hiding-places where they are at home (Nietzsche, 2005: *Ecce Homo*, III 'Human, All-Too- Human' §1). In another important passage, he calls this freezing process a historical, or to use mature Nietzsche's expression, genealogical refutation and regards it as definitive. Here "one", instead of proving that there was no God as it is practiced traditionally, "demonstrates how the belief in the existence of God could come into being and by what means this belief attained its gravity and importance: thus, a counterproof that there is no God becomes superfluous. -When in former times one had refuted the proposed proofs of the existence of God, doubt still remained as to whether better proofs might turn up than the ones just refuted. Back then the atheists were not skilled at making a clean sweep"(Nietzsche, 2011:§95).Many will think that this traps us into committing the genetic fallacy here, while if we take this strategy for what it is, that is, as a move towards disregarding the belief, the trap begins to dismantle.

Logically speaking, Nietzsche's argumentative strategy proceeds in the following manner: so far there has not been any

definitive and uncontroversial proof produced concerning a proposition P (either for P or against P). Maybe it is because of the inherent structural limitations of our cognitive faculties, Kant's claim, or something related to the nature of P, like its hiddenness. P might be true or false. However, it seems that we are not essentially in a position to be able to know. So what kind of stances toward P, among possible stances, should we take? Are we still justified to embrace P in whatever guise it might take, hoping for some decisive argument to arrive sometime in the future? According to Nietzsche, if we find reasons which justify us not to wait or hope for any other proof regarding the truth or falsehood of P, then P is discredited. Such reasons might presumably make the possible truth of P less likely, although not refuted altogether. For example, if these reasons show us that we began to entertain P in the first place—due to some particular mistake, sensual error or a certain pipe dream—these may well give us plausible reasons not to take the possible truth of P seriously and therefore to stop looking for further proofs. In other words, to rule out the possibility of a belief being true, we must ask ourselves what prompted us to hold P in the first place. If the answer is that the necessity of fulfilling certain “psychological needs” such as

“fear” or “need for meaning” or “gratitude”, for instance, makes us entertain P (see Nietzsche, 2005: *The Anti-Crist*, §16; 2017: §12; 2007: §1; 1994: III, §28), then we might well be justified in taking the possibility of its truth less seriously, or perhaps not seriously at all.<sup>9</sup> This process can be construed as the process of showing a belief to be “unworthy of taking seriously” or the process of freezing it almost to death.

3- Investigating the genealogical and psychological roots of our belief in God, and showing that the weight and significance of this highest value could be traced back to our human all-too-human needs and desires, vulnerability and fragility may still be appealing for philosophers like Augustine, Pascal, and most religious thinkers. We can equally maintain that since our true and ultimate destiny lies in union, or reunion, with God the creator, we will naturally feel insecure, restless and fragile until we find Him and relinquish our longing for security, blessedness, rest and contentment in Him alone. The very value of our belief in God resides in its power to take care of these needs of human beings. Belief in God and the afterworld provide us with the most powerful metaphysical and psychological comfort and hope; this way makes our life here in this world

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<sup>9</sup>Prof. Reginster illustration regarding the point is worth quoting at length:

A simple analogy should illuminate the idea of discrediting a belief. Suppose a child believes there are ghosts in her room and asks me to take a look. I do, but I find no evidence of ghosts. Of course, this does not mean that there actually are no ghosts: they could have left, or they could be invisible to ordinary observation. Suppose that I then

discover that the child was deeply impressed earlier that evening by a scary nighttime game or a horror movie. This discovery, which tells me something about the origin of her belief that there are ghosts in her room, gives me a reasonable ground to stop taking the possibility of its truth seriously (Reginster, 2006: 42)

of misery and becoming a better life (see Cottingham, 2003: 10-11)

Shifting from the theoretical aspects of the belief in God into its practical utilities and in order to react to the above suggestions and consolations, Nietzsche emphasis on "the secondary importance" of "the mere question of Christianity's 'truth', whether in regard to the existence of its God or the historical accuracy of the legend of its origin" compared to "the question of the value of its morality and if it is "good for anything, or ... a shame and a disgrace" (Nietzsche, 2017: §251). Here the most aggressive aspect of Nietzsche's take on Christianity and its God appears and his main proposal is to rebut any claim to beneficence or forward driving force of the Christian idea of God:

The concept of 'God' invented as a counter-concept to life— it makes a terrible unity of everything that is most harmful, poisonous, slanderous, the whole deadly hostility to life! The concept of the 'beyond', the 'true world', invented in order to devaluate the *only* world there is,— to deprive our earthly reality of any goal, reason of task!(Nietzsche, 2005: *Ecce Homo*, IV §8; see also 2017: §298).

There are much better and "healthier" ways to create God or gods, as the Greeks did. Many new gods are possible and "the god-making instinct" is at work in many different and diverse ways (Nietzsche, 2017: §1038). In this regard, Nietzsche distinguishes himself from others atheists in that he doesn't "regard what has been honored as God, not as "divine," but as pitiable, as absurd, as injurious; not as a mere error, but as a crime against life"(Nietzsche, 2005: *The Anti-Christ*,

§47). Religious objects of worship are, in one way or another, a projection of the needs of a people. In Greek religion, this projection is that of health and the affirmation of life; in Christianity, on the contrary, this projection was produced out of the needs of weakness, illness, and revenge. Hence, from his early works on Nietzsche makes an important distinction between the Greek gods and Christian God:

The Greeks did not see the Homeric gods above them as masters and themselves her beneath as slaves, as did the Jews. They saw, as it were, only the mirror image of the most successful specimens of their own caste, hence an ideal, not an antithesis of their own being. They feel related to each other; there exists an interest on both sides, a sort of *symmachia*. A human being thinks nobly of himself when he gives himself such gods and puts himself in a relationship like that of the lesser nobility to the higher;... Wherever the Olympian gods stepped back; Greek life was also more dismal and fearful. -By contrast, Christianity crushed and shattered human beings completely and sank them as if into slimy depths: then suddenly, in the feeling of complete depravity, the gleam of a divine pity could shine in, so that someone surprised and stunned by grace let out a cry of rapture and for a moment believed that he bore the whole of Heaven within him. All the psychological discoveries of Christianity work upon this pathological excess of feeling, upon the deep corruption of head and heart necessary for it: it wants to destroy, shatter, stun, intoxicate; there is only one thing it does not want: measure, and hence it is, when understood most

profoundly, barbaric, Asiatic, ignoble, non-Greek (Nietzsche, 1995: §114, see also §111).

We, Nietzsche writes, mostly thanks to the sciences have no reason to believe in the existence of "order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called" (Nietzsche, 2007: §109; 207: §853). On the contrary, at least with the death of God, we have the wonderful opportunity of looking at the world from other perspectives, especially from an aesthetic one. Nietzsche takes the opportunity very seriously and cheerfully. In an early lecture, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, he depicts the world from an aesthetic perspective as a play,

....play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming to be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the world plays with itself. It builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. From time to time it starts the game anew. (Nietzsche, 1962: §7).

Such perspective surely creates a "god who knows how to dance" (Nietzsche, 2006: I, vii), or the eternally living fire, Aeon, who "plays, builds, and knocks down: strife, this opposition of different characteristics, directed by justice, may be grasped only as an aesthetic phenomenon, excluding even more any moralistic tendencies to think teleological here" concerning this the cosmic child-god (Nietzsche, 2001: 70). So, the shadow of God is

first and foremost our belief in the moral significance and order of the world, while beneath all is the chaos of existence. This shadow is to still take the question of the existence of God and all related questions seriously, like salvation of soul or sin and guilt, instead of all other questions that have to be asked and taken seriously: "question of nutrition, residence, spiritual diet, treatment of the sick, cleanliness, weather" (Nietzsche, 2005: *Ecce Homo*, IV, §9), questions that are not "all sad and gloomy, but much more like a new and barely describable type of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn". This makes

our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation - finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an 'open sea' (Nietzsche, 2007: §343).

### Conclusion

The status quo of proofs put forward for or against the existence of God has long been one of uncertainty and controversy. Should we keep waiting for better proofs to show up? It seems to be waiting in vain to do so after so many centuries. Nietzsche found Kant's move particularly ridiculous, "given the Prussian's tortured détente between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and God's existence on the one hand, and human beings subject to physical laws and an obviously Christian-sourced morality and 'free will' on the other" (More, 2014: 74). Kant's appeal to the moral order of the world and subsequent deduction of the existence of God

from such order is not appealing at all, because in the first place we have no reason to believe in the existence of such order or significance, mostly thanks to the sciences. The death of God, in a similar vein to Hegel and Feuerbach, means that through a Christian idea of God we have emptied and alienated ourselves so far from our true selves and the only real place in which we reside. The tremendous event brings us a precious moment to recover our true humanity; to "remain faithful to Earth" and restore its meaning and deities. The time has finally come to mobilize all our intellectual artillery and literary wiles available to vanquish the last shadows of the Christian God, in its place instating our new dancing, human all-to-human gods:

He was also unclear. How He raged at us, this wrath snorter, because we understood Him poorly! But why did He not speak more purely! And if the fault was in our ears, why did He give us ears that heard Him poorly? If mud was in our ears, well then – who put it there? He failed at too much, this potter who never completed his training! But that He avenged Himself on his clay formations and His creations because they turned out badly for Him – that was a sin against good taste. In piousness too there is good taste; it said at last: “Away with such a God! Rather no God, rather meet destiny on one’s own, rather be a fool, rather be a god oneself!” (Nietzsche, 2006: IV, 6).

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## شکست سایه خدا: نیچه در مرگ «خدا میسیحی»

حمیدرضا محبوبی آرائی<sup>۱</sup> 

**چکیده:** کانت، در پیشگفتار بر ویراست نخست نقد عقل محض، موضع نقادانه متافیزیکی خود را معارض اصلی جزم‌باوری، یعنی باور جزمی و بدون بررسی نقادانه قوای عقلی به حقایق متافیزیکی از جمله وجود خداوند می‌داند. در عین حال به نظر وی، فلسفه نقادانه را باید با ظرافت از سه موضع دیگری که در برابر جزم‌باوری قرار می‌گیرند نیز متمایز ساخت: این سه موضع، عبارت‌اند از شکاکیت از نوع دکارتی و هیومی، تجربه‌گرایی از نوع جان لاک و مکتب بی‌تفاوتی، که منکر هر گونه تلاش برای ارائه پاسخ‌های متافیزیکی نظام‌مند به پرسش‌های فلسفی است. کانت در عین حال رد این موضع در علم، در مورد سه مسئله اصلی متافیزیک یعنی خداوند، آزادی اراده و نامیرایی نفس، موضع عرف عامی مشابه موضع اصحاب این مکتب در پیش می‌گیرد. مقالاً حاضر ضمن تقریر مختصری از نظر کانت درباره این پنج موضع فلسفی، به‌طور خاص به بررسی موضع نیچه درباره یک مسئله متافیزیک، مسئله وجود خداوند می‌پردازد و نشان می‌دهد که نیچه با دفاع از نوعی شکاکیت و گاه نوعی مکتب بی‌تفاوتی نسبت به مسئله خداوند سعی می‌کند از چشم‌اندازهای دیگری، از جمله نقد تبارشناسانه و نقد ارزش‌شناسانه به معنای خاص نیچه‌ای، سر از موضعی یکسره مخالف موضع عرف‌عامی کانتی درآورد و از مرگ جهان حقیقی و مرگ خداوند سخن بگوید. بر وفق استدلال من در این مقاله، «خدا مرده است» نه به معنای انکار وجود هستومندی متافیزیکی، بلکه بیانگر راهبرد استدلالی نیچه در مواجهه با این مسئله در سه گام (۱) قبول موضع کانتی در دیالکتیک استعلایی، (۲) ورود به موضع لادری‌گری یا شکاکیت و در نهایت (۳) گام برداشتن فراسوی این موضع براساس چشم‌اندازهای غیرمتافیزیکی و غیرفلسفی به معنای سنتی آن است.

**واژه‌های کلیدی:** دکماتیسیم، بدبینی، بی‌تفاوتی، نظم اخلاقی.



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