

Nietzsche and the Death of God
Note on the „Nietzsche“ by Jaspers¹
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I-IMMANENCE AND WILL TO IMMANENCE

As others have philosophized in the presence of divinity, Nietzsche has philosophized, so to speak, in the presence of the absence of divinity and this is without any doubt more awful [terrible]. Kierkegaard is “in front of God,” Nietzsche is in front of the rotten corpse of God. Far more, while Kierkegaard thinks that God wants my death, Nietzsche thinks that man must constantly want the death of God. This death is not only a fact, but the action of a will. For that man is really great, true, creative [créateur], God must be dead, God must be killed, He must be absent. Depriving man of God, I bring to man the immense gift which is entire solitude at the same time as the possibility of greatness and creation.

The fear in front of death disappears. “It makes me happy, says Nietzsche, to see that men cannot think until the end the thought of death.” “ Our only certitude, the *cernitude* [as in original] and of value, the more we be over us”³, and it is good this way. And it is good as well that “the fuller and more valuable our lives, the more we will be ready to give it for a single pleasant sensation. Man would bow towards death without fearing it: everyone towards his own death. Far more, Nietzsche often associates the idea of feast [fête] with the idea of death. Make up a feast for the death. Make death a feast. This would still be the best way to avenge the betrayal of life.

II - WILL TO IMMANENCE AND WILL TO TRANSCENDANCE

Nietzsche’s philosophy is essentially, Jaspers tells us, the affirmation of the world as pure immanence. It is this world here which is the being. But just as the belief of Kierkegaard is a doubting belief, so is Nietzsche’s negation. The absence of God is neither mistake nor truth. And this is why the thought of the absence of God is passion, is will, just as the thought of God in Kierkegaard is passion and will. As we have seen, Nietzsche lives the reality of the death of God in willing it, but at the same time without willing it. He wants God at the same time as he wants the death of God. And the thought of the absence of God does not in itself wipe out the creative instinct of God. Such is the “*existenzielle Gottlosigkeit*” that Jaspers talks about.

¹ [Footnote in the original] Karl Jaspers, Nietzsche, *Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens*, Berlin, 1936. On this work you will find a report more general on p. 28.

² We translated Jean Wahl’s article „*Nietzsche et la mort de Dieu. Note à propos du „Nietzsche de Jaspers“*“, as it appeared in *Acéphale* n° 2, janvier 1937. <https://fr.scribd.com/doc/62127436/Georges-Bataille-et-al-Acephale-2-Jan-1937> (visited 09.12.2016).

³ Here, Jean Wahl’s citation seems obscure. The whole sentence in French is: „Notre unique certitude, la cernitude et de valeur, plus nous soyons sur nous“.

III – TRANSCENDANCE

Nietzsche is shaken, then pierced by the idea of this transcendence which he denies. And the seriousness of this self-abandon that Nietzsche has accomplished, is it not, Jaspers asks, like the image of the loss and sacrifice of the self under the influence of the transcendence?

“In opposition to positivism, naturalism, and materialism, there is a universal negativity with him, a dissatisfaction without limits in front of every aspect of the being. And this thrust of dissatisfaction and negation happens with such a passion, with such a will of sacrifice that it seems to come from the same deepness as the great religions and the beliefs of the prophets.” The immorality of Nietzsche is the negation of the wrong moral; just like, Jaspers tells us, his negation of God is an authentic connection [liaison] with the being, affirmation of the **yes**, will to substance. The **no** can, if it is radical, by its own strength and passion [frénésie], transform itself into a **yes**; and transform the nihilism, the nihilism of the strong and not any more the nihilism of the weak, into positive philosophy. In this nihilism which transcends itself, which denies itself, the being reveals itself. By the very wound which he feels in himself, by his pain of a god torn apart, Nietzsche reaches the bottom of the being, the time. He has his eyes fixed, on the wheel of the eternal recurrence and at the same time, on the line, finity-infinity, of the most distant horizon, of the superman. He unifies in himself Ixion and Prometheus.

If the necessity and the will, the past and the future become dissolved, if the highest fatalism comes, after Nietzsche’s own expression, identifying itself with the chance [hazard] and with the creation, with the highest activity, if the absurd and incomplete world of perpetual dissatisfaction receiving the seal and the benediction of eternity becomes the world complete of the eternal satisfaction, is it not because the identity of the opposites is the transcendental expression of the being and as such it cannot be understood in any category? And don’t we know that the circles and antinomies are only means to touch indirectly [par biais] and in the shadow what goes beyond every law, every word, every form?