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**NIETZSCHE, THE PHILOSOPHER OF THE
"WORLD AS FABLE":
Critique of the religious imaginary from the
Kantian dialectic**

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ABSTRACT: This article starts from the assumption that, based on his own "extemporaneous" analyses, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), for many atheists, because of his sentence on the death of God, in "Zarathustra", and his book entitled "The Antichrist", he, Nietzsche, was rather dialectical, taken here in the Kantian (transcendental) sense, a sense that we will see in this article, than a prophet of religious atheism. This is because, within Nietzsche's own bias, the world manifests itself not as Truth, but as "fable and representation". Exactly, in fact, as the representation he made of himself of an anti-Christian philosopher, but which, on the contrary, in "approximations" with his work, we analyze in him, immersed in this vaunted atheism, rather transcendental than fatalistic, deterministic or moralistic, from the mention of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus, in the First Nietzsche, to the balance of his life, at the age of 44, with "Ecce homo" (1888). We conclude, basing ourselves, above all, on the conceptual triad mentioned above (that of "dead God", that of "antichrist" and, as if a synthesis of both, the transcendental "imaginary" representation), a tripod that serves as a methodological lever, that Nietzsche was not a convinced or definitive atheist, but, tragically and dialectically speaking, intuitive (in Kant's terms). **KEYWORDS:** Friedrich Nietzsche. Philosophy. Religion. Imaginary. Dialectics. Rhetoric

ABSTRACT: This article assumes that, based on his own "untimely" analyses, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), an atheist for many because of his sentence on the death of God in "Zarathustra" and his book

entitled "The Antichrist", he, Nietzsche, was more of a dialectician than a prophet of religious atheism. This is because, within the Nietzschean bias itself, the world manifests itself not as Truth, but as "fable and representation". Exactly, in fact, like the representation he made of himself as an anti-Christian philosopher, but who, on the contrary, in "approximations" with his work, we analyze in him, immersed in this vaunted atheism, the hypothesis of a dialectic based on the religious imaginary between God and anti-Christianity, from his mention of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus, in the First Nietzsche, to the assessment of his life, at the age of 44, with "Ecce homo" (1888). We conclude, basing ourselves, above all, on the conceptual triad cited above (that of "dead God", that of "Antichrist" and, as a synthesis of both, the "imaginary" representation), a tripod that serves as a methodological lever, that Nietzsche represented, conceptually speaking, an eternal cycle of "becoming", that which is, therefore, mutable. In other words, that which "is", changes. And that Nietzsche, at least in our line of reasoning, was not a convinced or definitive atheist. But tragic and dialectical.

KEYWORDS: Friedrich Nietzsche. Philosophy. Religion. Imaginary. Dialectic. Rethoric

It is one thing to take the conceptual differences between the German philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in ethical or moral terms. It is quite another thing to construct, also conceptually speaking, in fact, a possible relationship, from the epistemological point of view, between them, as we propose here, with a "dialectical"

background. And what would this relationship be? Let us therefore be clear from the outset. If Nietzsche was not "categorical" - a semantic ambiguity that leads us to be irreducible as well as the so-called "Kantian categories" or pure concepts, which do not depend on sensory impressions, which Nietzsche would reject because he defended an instinctive bias against sovereign Reason - it does not mean to remove him, en bloc, that is, by taking his work (quite "imprecise", in fact) as a whole, of the considerations of a Kant, in this case, dialectical, in the sense of the differences between intuition and concepts (2012, p. 96). However, in order to move forward, we need to clarify two ideas. First: on what aspect of Kantian dialectics does our focus fall? Second: an anti-dogmatic Nietzsche.

In "The Prologue of Zarathustra", still in the first part of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (1998), Nietzsche reiterates - through his protagonist, in the style of a prophetic Jesus Christ, the supreme incarnation, perhaps, of his, in Nietzsche's case, thesis of the "superman", in the sense that "[...] man is something to be overcome" (1998, p. 36) - his belief, too, in the divine. Divine as, according to him, Christ himself had been. Nietzsche, soon after, declares: "I love him who punishes his God, because he loves him: for he must perish from the wrath of his God" (NIETZSCHE, 1998, p. 39). Now, if Nietzsche pronounces on "his" (some) God, it is because he believes in Him: in some way, therefore. We reiterate: some God. But what is this God, for Nietzsche? And it is not our objective, in this article, to "advance" in this, that is, the "theology" ("discourse on God"), but to illustrate this Nietzsche, here, dialectical, with a transcendental Kantian bias. An intermediary Nietzsche of the

Christian God and, *a priori*, of the "dead God". Intuition and concepts, in Kant, are, for us, polarities in which we consider this Nietzschean dialectic.

This is because, and it is with this hypothesis that we work here, the various mentions of Jesus Christ make him, *in a way*, a Christian. And there are countless references by him, Nietzsche, to a God (monotheism), the God of Christianity, or to the various Greek gods, because in Greece, according to Nietzsche, the "tragic" feeling of a life (between pain and pleasure) was manifested through Art. The "in a way" does not mean "at all". Now, this is not a conclusive statement, but, for our hypothesis, that of a dialectical reflexive resource in Nietzsche's work on the religious imaginary, based on the dialectical constitution in Aristotelian philosophy³ of probable argumentative principles, Rhetoric, which points us not to an irrefutable fact, but to a probability of a Nietzsche, *in a way*, religious, the son of a Protestant pastor in the small German Röcken. The personal formation of Nietzsche, the son of a Lutheran pastor, manifested itself intuitively as religiosity and also as conceptualism. Hence the reference to dialectical Kantianism.

And it is from this dialectic of *Kantian hue*, in principle, considering that it occurs, initially, by the relationship - at the same time antagonistic and complementary - between its two

³ In relation to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 B.C.), according to which dialectics, in the first chapter of "Rhetorical and Poetic Art", has an analogy with Rhetoric, in the defense of a thesis, presenting a defense or an accusation. The objective here, however, is not to delve into the Aristotelian concept of dialectics.

poles, from the Aristotelian argumentative point of view, that our hypothesis can be justified in this article. That Nietzsche, the author of "The Antichrist", but who, by the recurrent mention of the religious imaginary of a "dead God", had cultivated, within his model of Christianity, paradoxically, a spiritual bond – despite his effort to condemn metaphysics. We'll see that later. It is, therefore, an existential dialectical mode that is only justified, therefore, by taking as a reference a *pole* contrary to the other, the intuitive and the conceptual (as we have argued from Kant). Originally, a dialectic, from its Greek origins, cannot be justified by the existence of an isolated *pole*. We can even isolate it ourselves, as long as it is in relation to another referent, but after already having a manifest dialectic, that is, a contrary one. Nietzsche's intuitive-conceptual dialectic was between "his God" (intuition) and the "dead God" (concept).

From there, from this intuitive-conceptual Kantian dialectic, that in other words, one cannot interact in a vacuum, we can also advance, here, on our thesis, that Nietzsche, therefore, paradoxically speaking, because he believes in "some God", as we have seen (his God), announces the death of the Christian God, but as long as he confronts him with the *pole* opposite, that is, the spirituality of one "their God". Therefore, Nietzsche's "dead God" can only exist in opposition to the opposite pole, "his God" (some God), but, for him, a non-superior God. We conclude, but not definitively, that the concept of God in an intuitive Nietzsche, therefore, at the limit, is dialectical. For this reason, that is, that a dialectic is only justified in the relationship, of origin, between two opposite poles (we emphasize again: intuition and concepts), we would

also have to accept that Nietzsche would intuitively admit the idea of God, but not conceptually speaking. And those who intuitively admit the idea of God cannot be a true atheist, because the "true" is an interpretation of oneself.

The Nietzschean antichrist, then, is both a rhetorical and an epistemological resource. Resource as fable. And all epistemology is dialectical, in the sense of Kantian transcendental logic, in the second part of the "Critique of Pure Reason".⁴ Nietzsche's so-called atheism, therefore, as is generally thought from these two of the main motives listed above (repeating: the "dead God" and the "Antichrist"), is, therefore, relative. We could also add to the relativism of Nietzsche's "concepts" of the religious imaginary in him, Nietzsche, the term "nihilism". But it is not our intention. In other words, considering him an atheist does not make him an atheist. *A-teu* (from the Greek "a-theos") means "without-God". The idea of an "atheist Nietzsche" here, because of his "dead God" and "The Antichrist", must therefore be *nuanced*. Nuanced. Nietzsche had a speculative philosophy, deep down and in appearance. We are dealing with a Nietzsche, here, who speculated on a religious imaginary of the death of God and the antichrist, but who, as a rebound effect, made it metaphysical. Against his will to power.

And it is this distance that we intend to shorten, because, in our assessment, Nietzsche had a dialectical contribution between the intuitive and the conceptualism rather than atheist.

⁴ We refer to the relationship between intuitive and conceptual modes of knowledge.

For example, when he refers, at the beginning of his essay on "The Antichrist", to the effect that "[...]we all have the potential to be Hyperborean" (p. 17, undated). According to Nietzsche, "Hyperboreans" (a term that originates from "hyper", above, plus "Boreians", referring to "boreal") were a mythical people among the Greeks who could only be reached with the help of the "gods" (we repeat: gods) and who had the blessings of the "God" Apollo. Again a God. Here it does not matter whether a Christian or a Greek God. Bringing, therefore, our justification for argumentative dialectics, we know that, according to Heraclitus of Aesephus, considered one of the philosophers of Nature, perhaps the Father of Dialectics, we are and (also) are not. Or, in other words: "[...] Contrarians are confused. "Good and evil are the same thing" (Heraclitus *apud* MARITAIN, p. 37).

In fact, atheism and Christianity are confused in Nietzsche. The statement in "Zarathustra", when he was going down the mountain alone and, already in the forest, came across an Old Man, who had sustained his love for God, no longer for men ("Too imperfect thing is, for me, the human being", 1998, p. 34), was: "Is it possible? That old saint in his forest does not yet know that *God is dead!*" (NIETZSCHE, 1998, p. 35). Since then, Nietzsche, in general, has been considered an atheist, but without an analysis of the epistemic character of all antagonism in a dialectical equation of the Kantian type between our most cherished intuitions and our conceptualisms or rational statements. Moreover, every relationship between dialectical polarities has an interpretative character. And, being interpretive, it remains under suspicion. But never definitive. The "Celebrant's Salutation" in Catholicism, for example, refers

to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Father is God, Son is Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the mystery. He is suspected because *mystery* exists only *mysteriously*.

And precisely for this reason, that is, for his recurrent practical idealism, but also metaphysical, against his manifest will, Nietzsche, according to our hypothesis, here is not configured as a definitive atheist, but rather as one who follows the same mystery – and criterion – with which the image of an interpretative Holy Spirit is surrounded. Any and all manifestations of the divine in Nietzsche – a manifestation of both God the Father and a Dionysus or Apollo, two of the Greek gods with whom he sustains his dialectical philosophy of the beginning of his "career", that of a tragic otherness – above good and evil, expresses rather the paradox between "his God" and the "dead God". In "Ecce homo" (1995, p. 93), Nietzsche, for example, insists, obsessed as he was with the dialectical reflection opposed between men and the gods: "Away from God and gods this desire attracted me", said Nietzsche, referring to the "will to generate" (1995, p. 92). And the greater the "will to generate", the greater Nietzsche's desire, the further he moved away from an ultimate Truth.

Nietzsche used verbal paroxysm, as in "The Antichrist" (undated), to try to convince himself of what he himself was not sure about, the "death of God". The dialectical scenario seems clear to us: "One must be accustomed to living at altitude to see *below* oneself the lamentable current verbiage made up of politics and the selfishness of peoples" (NIETZSCHE, undated, p. 15). The terms *altitude* and *below*, in that passage, corroborate his dialectical bias. The same dialectic, which is by no means

negligible in relation to his renowned and robust moustache. This mustache that, for Lesky, "[...] it was a protective mask as in primitive cultures" (1976, p. 49). This means that, for Lesky, Nietzsche's motivation to keep his mustache with that characteristic of a singular nature, like his fingerprint, in addition to "[...] removing man from the powers that are hostile to him" (1976, p. 49), also served as a "magic mask, which transfers strength and other properties to the bearer" (idem). Nietzsche thus masked his religiosity.

The same Lesky considers Nietzsche's mustache a "disguise so as not to reveal his true nature" (1976, p. 49). Lesky signals, here, an analogy between a real Nietzsche and a mythical Nietzsche, giving importance to both one thing and the other. Every myth is an epiphany. And every epiphany is linked to mystery. The mystery of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of myth and the mystery of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's supposed atheism, returning to after Lesky, seems "ideological" rather than inclusive. Any epiphanic or inscrutable dimension of the divine in Nietzsche is rejected in order to direct him to an ideology – and every ideology is reductive – of a probable atheism. Who is interested in conceptualizing him as an atheist? To all discourse with a rigorous (not to say narrow) ideological bias, for better or for worse, this is due to the fact that ideology is not interested in diversity or in today's so-called *dialogy*, as in Morin, in which we can admit an intuitive-conceptual equation of things in terms of notions that are at once antagonistic and complementary.

Therefore, from the examples and justifications above, Nietzsche was not a CONVINCED atheist. Nietzsche could

manifest himself as an anti-Christian, but in countless and countless reflections, he was tragic. When, in the same "The Antichrist" (undated), Nietzsche referred, with admiration, to the "[...] higher type: something that, compared to humanity as a whole, seems a kind of superhuman" (undated, p. 20), was a reference to Jesus Christ (son of God) or to himself in counterpoint to the idea, for Nietzsche false, of "progress" of modern man. The author of "The Gay Science" and "Aurora" did not want to fit into the ideology of the modern or postmodern (a term that did not exist in his time), that is, a man, according to him, represented by the OBJECTIVE, against which he cries out his supposed hatred against Christianity. But we say it again. This so-called atheism of Nietzsche is given as a figure of rhetoric that Nietzsche himself had the necessary distance in admitting it because he considered THIS world, the "true world" as a "fable" and "representation" (2006, p. 31).

The virulence with which he (re)turns against the Christian theologian in "The Antichrist" (undated), ending, in the final two pages (undated, p. 126-127), with his "Law against Christianity (Published on the day of Salvation, first day of year One, September 30, 1888 of the false calendar)", in which he decrees "War to the death against vice: vice is Christianity" (undated, p. 126), is a stylistic exaggeration of a Nietzsche as allegorical as his atheist Zarathustra. Now, the atheism attributed to Nietzsche is, to say the least, dubious. What Nietzsche said about Schopenhauer, that is, the fact that he, Schopenhauer, "[...] was hostile to life and that, *therefore*, compassion became a virtue in his eyes" (undated, p. 24), was valid for himself in relation to Christianity. Perhaps we could

affirm it, paraphrasing Nietzsche himself about Schopenhauer, that he, Nietzsche, was hostile to religion and that, *therefore*, Christianity became a virtue in his eyes." A virtue that he, Nietzsche, did not admit because he was too Nietzsche: human, too human.

Nietzsche, something that the imaginary of religious ideological discourse omits, was a free thinker. And, because he was free, he did not follow, according to Nietzsche's own words, the "herd" or the average German. Nietzsche, unlike the label he received as an atheist for a book whose subtitle, by the way, is designated as an "essay", that is, a free and speculative discourse, adds: "God is dead. AND WE KILLED HIM." Nietzsche's "dead God" is metaphysics. Metaphysics as an extreme philosophical discourse. To remove it from the discussion, abdicating from dialectics, excludes one of the original polarities of all dialectical antinomy. Being dialectical, in other words, admits opposites. And the opposite of an atheist Nietzsche is a Christian Nietzsche. But a Christian Nietzsche does not contemplate the ideology of an atheist Nietzsche. It is said that Nietzsche was a "convinced atheist", on the back cover of "The Antichrist" (undated). False. Nietzsche was a philosopher, according to Derrida, of multiple contradictory truths: "There is no truth in itself" (2013, p. 75).

According to Vattimo, author of a thesis that deals with a so-called "Weak Thought" (or "Weak"), that is, without the imposition, in the postmodern world, of a vertical philosophy, but rather secular, states that, in relation to Nietzsche, "[...] the death of God is not a simple declaration of atheism" (2017, p. 193). And he adds: "In this sense, it has the same ambiguity as

the end of metaphysics as a system of thought and as a mode of individual and social existence" (VATTIMO, 2017, p. 196). Still for Vattimo, Nietzsche's discourse against eternal salvation "[...] it claims from man the possibility of existing, finally, without crutches, without objective limits and also without guarantees (2017, p. 195). Like the pre-Socratic philosophers, whom Nietzsche confessed to having great admiration for, his struggle, Nietzsche, was a personal struggle, according to Vattimo, "with his problematic of the constitutive principles of reality, of the struggle of opposites" (2017, p. 91). A struggle of opposites is also a dialectical struggle. The only concept that does not admit opposites, even for Nietzsche, is that of God in himself.

Also according to Vattimo, Nietzsche's "scandalous" affirmation of the "dead God" is not a "metaphysical thesis argued and demonstrated", but a "report of an experience, the appeal to others to discover it in themselves, establishing a we about which, and in the name of which, Nietzsche can speak" (1992, p. 64).⁵ Nietzsche, in aphorism 62 of his "The Antichrist", decrees a verdict according to which the Christian Church "spared nothing in its corruption, made a non-value of all value, a lie of all truth, a villainy of the soul of all integrity" (undated, p. 124). If we take as a basis what Nietzsche himself considers a "fable", he too, in this argument about the "antichrist", is aware of what he supposes to criticize. Therefore, Nietzsche's critique of the Christian Church is itself also a fable of the "true world,"

⁵ In Spanish, according to our reference, as follows: "[...] una tésis metafísica argumentada y demostrada; the report of an experience, the appeal to others in order to discover it in itself, establishing a *nosotros* to which, and in the name of which, can Nietzsche speak" (VATTIMO, 1992, p. 64).

which, for Nietzsche, does not exist. If the world is a "fable" and a "representation", and Nietzsche is part of that same world, so is Nietzsche. We can even contest the thesis of the "world as fable", but accepting it, everything is interpretive. And not fact.

Let us not forget that, for Nietzsche, "the true world" is an idea that "is no longer good for anything, no longer obliges to anything, an idea rendered useless, soon refuted: let's eliminate it!" (2006, p. 32). The same would be true, therefore, for his own anti-Christian manifestation, that is, that Nietzsche's radical critique of Christianity may be false in itself, since he, Nietzsche, does not believe in the Truth or in a "true world", including his own world, Nietzsche, in relation to the Christian religion. For Vattimo, "God is dead due to the excessive improvement of religiosity, and the same must be said of all supreme values, such as truth itself" (2010, p. 203). The same Vattimo suggests that Nietzsche's active nihilism, which we, in this article, consider to be that of his anti-Christianity, is a "radical pragmatism" (2010, p. 247). Even contrary to the dialectical spirit of an ultimate resolution between two antagonistic polarities, Nietzsche himself, in decreeing the death of God, cannot escape this dialectical relationship between the "anti" and Christianity in "antichrist".

Unlike modern aesthetics, which, according to Nietzsche, is modeled on a causal dialectic of guilt and punishment or virtue and happiness – among other binary pairs – "his" tragic hero does not recognize, because it is not part of his existence, the dialectical optimism of the antinomy cause and consequence. Basically, this form of dialectical relationship with the world is, for Nietzsche, rhetorical, which does not

characterize the tragic bias of nature, in his first reflections, Dionysian-Apollonian. We see, also in this case, that Nietzsche used a dialectical vision, even though he criticized it later, which later justified his greater interest in the Dionysian rapture or drunkenness. According to Nietzsche, the dialectical hero represents a comfortable existence, because "in the self-forgetfulness of the Dionysian states, the individual set with his limits and measures, and a twilight of the gods was imminent" (2005, p. 24). Thus, unlike the Apollonian hero, tragic thought was born, which, according to Nietzsche, grew stronger the stronger "the spirit of Apollonian art thrived." (2005, p. 11).

Therefore, Nietzsche made the fable a rhetorical statement, including his own, considering rhetoric a mode of discourse below and beyond dialectical polarities. There is only Rhetoric, against which Socrates stood because he had the pretension of always revealing the Truth, that is, defending the classical dialectic according to which *a thing is* and what *it is* cannot do anything *other than itself*. The rhetoricians, on the other hand, "defended" that *nothing is*. Now, if *nothing is*, from the point of view of a Gorgias⁶, for example, with whom

⁶ Plato's dialogue "Gorgias", as we know, seeks to present, as its main argument (and "argument" is quite the term) a debate between the philosopher homonymous to the title of the book, this one signed by Plato, but having Socrates as its protagonist as an "objector" to the thesis of Rhetoric of a sophist nature not only of Gorgias, but of the sophists as a whole. It is not our intention to expand on this or other Platonic dialogues in this article, however, it is worth clarifying. Rhetoric would be distinguished from a dialectic of a Socratic nature. This means that the Rhetoric practiced by Gorgias, in this case, would produce an adhesion in an opinionated scenario, which would result, in turn, and this is precisely the critique of maieutics - giving birth to

Socrates argues, as we see in the Platonic dialogues about Socrates, *everything is*. But Kant, the philosopher of "antinomies", in which one *thing exists* in relation to *another contrary thing*, even if diametrically opposed, introduces a driving element in this dialectical dynamic of contrary polarities: intuition. It is from this tripod, as we said at the beginning, that we consider the supposed – supposed because not definitive – Nietzschean atheism. In other words, no one can be an atheist, since the concept of God (whether we like it or not) is absolute. If the same is true in Rhetoric, the discussion is different.

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knowledge as in childbirth - that is, in the fact that, according to Socrates, for them, the Sophists like Gorgias, everything can be right and at the same time wrong or think they possess an Art that, for him, Socrates, it is not founded on Reason (because it would not have the slightest foundation). And why would it not have "the slightest foundation"? Because, for Socrates, in Dialectics, unlike Rhetoric, there could not be A and non-A at the same time. What is A is A and *not* "not-A". But let us leave that aside for now.



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