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Nietzsche and Badiou: Event, Intervention, “God is dead”

In this text I will try to draw attention to a certain parallel between Nietzsche’s and Badiou’s theory of the event, which Badiou, in my view, has evaded through a kind of strategic relocation.¹ My interest is not so much directed at (and even less against) Badiou’s philosophy, but I am interested in the possible impact of this relocation on Badiou’s interpretation of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche and Badiou are, of course, names that are usually placed on opposite shores of modern philosophy. The tone of Badiou’s discussions of Nietzsche in the aftermath of *Being and Event* does not hide a certain affection for the “prince of the sophists,” with regard to whom Badiou admits that the twentieth century was in many respects Nietzsche’s century,² and with whom he even found himself at one point in an unlikely alliance – namely when the French *nouveaux philosophes* pompously renounced Nietzscheanism in the name of ethics. But although he wrote at the time that “when I see Messrs Ferry and Renault raising high the banner of anti-Nietzscheanism, I say to myself, by a conditioned reflex, that I must be a Nietzschean myself in some way or another,”³ it is also clear that Badiou recognizes in Nietzsche the opposite of his philosophical undertaking at practically every step of the way.

This opposition is understandable. Nietzsche, who wrote that “the struggle against Plato [...] has created a magnificent tension of spirit in Europe, the likes of which the earth has never known,”⁴ cannot of course, serve as a model for

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² Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. A. Toscano, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, p. 115.

³ Alain Badiou, “Zgodovino sveta prelomiti na dvoje”, trans. P. Klepec, *Filozofski vestnik*, 21 (3/2000), p. 104.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. J. Norman, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 4.

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a philosopher who has set himself the goal of a renewal of philosophy on the very basis of a revival of its “original Platonic gesture.” It is no less obvious that Badiou, who, in accordance with this “Platonic gesture,” seeks to reintegrate and recentre philosophy around *the category of truth*, will not find a comrade in arms in the thinker who put forward the famous thesis that after centuries of being asked countless questions in the name of truth, it is now time for us to turn things around and *direct a few questions at truth ourselves*.⁵

While Badiou argues that any definition of philosophy must distinguish philosophy from sophism, Nietzsche is openly sympathetic to sophism, whereas with regard to philosophy itself he oscillates between vehement attempts to reassert its leading, dominant role,⁶ and a critical distance that can sometimes give the feeling that Nietzsche sees himself as something other than a philosopher, or perhaps even as a new evolutionary stage of the philosopher. In mathematics, to which, according to Badiou, philosophy must surrender its traditional centre in ontology, Nietzsche sees nothing more than a “distortion of the world by number.” The extent to which the fervent communist Badiou and Nietzsche are far apart in their political views is sufficiently illustrated by the following sardonic comment of Nietzsche on the workers’ question: “The hope is now completely gone that a modest and self-sufficient sort of human being, a Chinese type, could build itself up into a class here.”⁷

Perhaps the most concrete manifestation of all these philosophical, attitudinal, ideological oppositions can be seen in the case of the two famous interpretations of St Paul – Nietzsche’s *The Antichrist* and Badiou’s *St Paul*: for Nietzsche, Paul of Tarsus is undoubtedly the darkest figure of Christianity, the one who has caused Christianity to evolve into the most perverted form of religion possible – a religion of love, from which boundless hatred grows against everything external, non-Christian. In complete contrast, for Badiou, it is Paul who is the key personality who, through his tireless activism, brought out of Christianity its true gift to humanity, the principle of universality.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. Polt, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing, 1997, p. 77.

If we add up all these fundamental differences, it should not be surprising that Badiou – again along the lines of the original Platonic gesture – does not simply see Nietzsche as an opponent of his own philosophical positions, but rather understands Nietzsche’s work as admirable thinking, which, nonetheless, *in its essence, embodies the opposite of philosophy as such*. In other words, Badiou discovers in Nietzsche a virtually ideal protagonist to fill up all those spaces that Badiou – one could almost say – accumulates at the outer limits of philosophy: for him, Nietzsche is not only “the prince of the sophists,” a kind of “Gorgias of our age,” but he also constitutes, along with Wittgenstein and Lacan, the core group of contemporary “antiphilosophers.”

I do not think that this positioning should be taken in a purely negative sense; I would rather say that, on the one hand, it even sets the stage for a kind of reconciliation, while, on the other hand, together with it – within the framework of Badiou’s perception of Nietzsche – a sort of point of the unthinkable is thus established.

When I say “reconciliation”, I clearly do not mean a convergence with Nietzsche’s view of the workers’ question. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Badiou’s central thesis on Nietzsche overlaps with a certain turn in the understanding of the connection between Nietzsche and politics. While Badiou went on to write in *Being and Event* that “it is well known what kind of pessimistic political conclusions and nihilist cult of art are drawn from this evaluation of the will in ‘moderate’ (let’s say: non-Nazi) Nietzscheanism,”⁸ the thesis he later developed in the text “Who is Nietzsche?” is characterized by a different emphasis, which gives a much more marginal significance to the confusion of Nietzsche’s political views – which range from his sympathy for the *Manu Code* and his recognition of certain advantages of the Indian caste system, to his declaration of war against Bismarck, his pan-Europeanism, his glorification of the European South versus the North, and his “death sentence” against anti-Semites.

In fact, one could even say that from the point of view from which Badiou has set out his thesis on Nietzsche, it is noticeable that any attempt to approach the essence of Nietzsche’s thought through an assessment of his political positions remains trapped in a dead end. For Nietzsche, according to Badiou’s interpreta-

⁸ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham, New York, Continuum, 2005, pp. 202–203.

tion, was essentially interested *in a single political*, and indeed only *inherently political*, question: *how to make philosophy transcend the effects of the political event by its own means alone*, and without even stepping onto the terrain of proper political thought.

For this tendency towards a *radical philosophical act*, which he places at the very centre of Nietzsche's work and which, although not apolitical in its ambitions, touches politics in the real sense only with the tips of its fingers, Badiou coined a new term, "archi-politics", and explained it as follows:

I would say that this act is archi-political, in that it intends to revolutionise the whole of humanity at a more radical level than that of the calculations of politics. Archi-political does not here designate the traditional philosophical task of finding a foundation for politics. The logic, once again, is a logic of rivalry, and not a logic of foundational eminence. It is the philosophical act itself that is an archi-political act, in the sense that its historical explosion will retroactively show, in a certain sense, that the political revolution proper has not been genuine, or has not been authentic.⁹

It is clear that for Badiou, who takes the position that there is only one politics – left, progressive, emancipatory politics – "archi-politics", with all that this description entails (the tendency to bypass politics in the strict sense and to retroactively undermine the authenticity of the political revolution), in principle denotes an inclination towards the political right. However, this swing to the right, rather than being linked to a right-wing political outlook, must be explained as a spontaneous effect of the workings of the very essence of Nietzsche's archi-politics, which, as Badiou puts it, centres entirely around the problem of the "power of philosophy." The optimization of the power of philosophy, of course, does not itself look either "left" or "right". But since it clashes with the competition of politics, and in particular with the competition of its revolutionary potential, there can arise within it an obsession to develop a philosophical idea whose effect on humanity would be so fundamental that the significance of the political event would be revealed as a kind of surface noise in the face of it. In this sense, the obsessive aim of archi-politics is to develop a thought *with the effect and weight of an action* that can occupy (or destroy) the place of the po-

⁹ Alain Badiou, "Who is Nietzsche?", trans. A. Toscano, *Pli*, 11 (2001), p. 4.

litical event; and it is precisely in this archi-political obsession, and the related problem of a philosophical act, that Badiou also sees the key to understanding the singularity of Nietzsche's thought, which, in his view, precisely at this point partly eluded both Heidegger and Deleuze.

The notion of a philosophical act, however, also constitutes a link with Badiou's other, broader label for Nietzsche's work, "antiphilosophy", which Bruno Bosteels, as regards its arguably most important feature, described as follows:

The notion of the act is without a doubt the most important element in the formal characterization of any antiphilosophy, namely, the reliance on a radical gesture that alone has the force of dismantling, and occasionally overtaking, the philosophical category of truth. All antiphilosophers posit the possibility of some radical act such as Pascal's "wager", Kierkegaard's "leap of faith", Nietzsche's "breaking in two of history", or Lacan's own notion of the "act", as in the still unpublished book XV of Lacan's seminar from 1967-1968, precisely titled *The Psychoanalytical Act* and appropriately interrupted by the events of May 68[.]¹⁰

There is in this respect a very clear analogy between archi-politics and antiphilosophy, the sole difference being that archi-politics, through the construction of a philosophical act – which opts to either destroy or take possession of it (as in the case of Nietzsche's proclamation of the "great politics") – is in competition with politics, whereas antiphilosophy is characterized by entering, through the construction of a philosophical act, into a very similar competitive relationship with the *philosophical category of truth*, which oscillates between the (typical of Nietzsche in particular) tendency to adopt a kind of active stance in relation to truth as such, and the articulations of its dismantling. We cannot, of course, go into the ways in which this antagonism between a philosophical act and truth is reflected in the individual thinkers listed – certainly the gap between Lacan, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche is considerable – but that is not decisive at this point. More than the subtleties of the differences, what is crucial for Badiou's characterization of antiphilosophy is the (antiphilosopher's) general conviction that such a philosophical act – which, to formulate it

¹⁰ Bruno Bosteels, "Nietzsche, Badiou, and Grand Politics: An Antiphilosophical Reading", in K. Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, London and New York, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 225.

in Nietzsche's pungent vocabulary, *does not place itself in a receptive position in relation to truth, but dictates truth* – is possible at all.

Badiou, of course, rejects this belief, and sees in it an illusion, even a path to madness. Nevertheless, the rejection of the antiphilosopher's "active attitude" towards truth, as the following example shows, concerning Christianity and another anti-philosopher, Pascal, is not entirely unambiguous:

In Christianity and in it alone it is said that the essence of truth supposes the eventual ultra-one, and that relating to truth is not a matter of contemplation – or immobile knowledge – but of intervention.¹¹

But isn't there also something distinctly Nietzschean in this description, especially in the second part? If there is some continuity between Christianity and Nietzsche, the most famous critic of Christianity, it is undoubtedly to be found in this view, expressed by Nietzsche, that the discovery of truth does not take place as "disinterested contemplation," as Nietzsche himself puts it. The forthcoming of truth, on the contrary, is always correlative to a certain incision, to *an intervention*: is this not, after all, the central point of Nietzsche's critique of objectivity?

It is well known that Badiou's interpretation relies considerably on Nietzsche's "hammering" notes from the last two months of his writing, in particular on excerpts from Nietzsche's last letters and drafts of letters, first collected in the French milieu and brilliantly commented on by Pierre Klossowski in his book *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*.¹² The emphasis on these late writings that already show the outbursts of megalomania that ultimately abruptly interrupted Nietzsche's philosophical path, is of course not accidental. Badiou's thesis reaches its dramatic climax in a sort of demonstration that in the form of Nietzsche's madness, which is already taking hold of these writings, it is possible to behold the tragic truth of the whole of Nietzsche's archi-political antiphilosophy. Nevertheless, perhaps the most crucial passage that allows Badiou to make his case for Nietzsche's archi-politics is to be found in the chapter "On the Great Events" of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

¹¹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 212.

¹² Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. D. W. Smith, London, Continuum, 1997.

In this key passage, which takes place against the spectacular backdrop of a volcanic peak, through which a path is said to lead to the deepest underworld, Zarathustra addresses one of the two "skin diseases" that afflict the Earth: the first is called "human being", and the second skin disease – and it is this that Zarathustra has chosen to challenge on the volcanic peak and to measure its true depth – is called the "fire hound." There is no doubt that the "fire hound" represents the revolutionary political event to which Zarathustra dedicates the following words:

"Freedom" the lot of you are best at bellowing, but I lose faith in "great events" as soon as they are surrounded by much bellowing and smoke.

And just believe me, friend Infernal Racket! The greatest events – these are not our loudest, but our stillest hours.

Not around the inventors of new noise does the world revolve, but around the inventors of new values; *inaudibly* it revolves.

And just confess! When your noise and smoke cleared, it was always very little that had happened. What does it matter that a town becomes a mummy and a statue lies in the mud!¹³

It seems hard to find better evidence for Badiou's archi-political argument. Let us first look at how he himself comments on this passage:

The opposition here is between din and silence. The din is what attests externally for the political event. The silence, the world pregnant with silence, is instead the name of the unattested and unproved character of the archi-political event.¹⁴

Nietzsche, then, according to Badiou, contrasts the "noise" of the political event, which, "once all the smoke cleared," leaves behind little actual effect, with "silence," which, according to Badiou, is "the name for the unattested and unproven character of the archi-political event" – that is, of a philosophical act that has yet to happen, an act for which we have no guarantee except Nietzsche's prediction that it might occur; an act that Nietzsche clearly observes

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 104.

¹⁴ Badiou, "Who is Nietzsche?", p. 8

as *inherent in the potential of his own thought*, and whose “common name” is “the revaluation of all values.”

Badiou also explains convincingly where Nietzsche’s belief in the shallowness, the superficiality of political revolution comes from: Nietzsche’s opposition to revolutionary events had nothing to do with being reactionary or conservative. On the contrary, Nietzsche was convinced that political revolution *could not be radical enough*, that it could not cut deep enough: because it is itself a political manifestation of Christian ideals, of the “equality of all before God”; revolution, even if it is fervently initiated under the banner of atheism, is incapable of overturning the most fundamental determination of Western society, which, under the rule of Christian morality, is sliding into nihilism. Hence the necessity or (rather) the opportunity for deeper, more radical action, which cannot be produced by any politics, but only by “creators of new values.”

Badiou’s reading of the passage is undoubtedly correct in principle – it is not even a question of disputing it in general, but rather a question of a certain nuance. And this nuance refers first of all to *silence*.

As we have seen, Badiou, here but also elsewhere, interprets Nietzsche’s frequent emphasis on the silence that usually accompanies the announcement of a groundbreaking act as a sign of the uncertainty, the unascertainability, of the announced archi-political event. In contrast, Alenka Zupančič, particularly on the basis of her treatment of the figures of “midday” and “the stillest hour,” has put forward the thesis that the opposition between noise and silence, which pervades the entire book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, must be understood primarily as the opposition between the explosive exteriority of the event and the silence that reigns at its epicentre:

Furthermore, why does Nietzsche propose, as the emblem and the “time” of the event, the figure of *midday*, which he describes as “the stillest hour” (this does not simply imply some sort of “lull before the storm,” since midday is defined by Nietzsche as the moment when “One turns into Two,” namely, as the very moment of a break or a split)? Why is he so insistent that “it is the stillest words that bring the storm,” and that “thoughts that come on dove’s feet guide the world”? [...] In reading Nietzsche, we must never lose sight of this irreducible obverse of his bombastic expressions (silence, solitude, playfulness, lightness, nuance,

minimal difference). Yet as I suggested above, the silence is not something that takes place before or after the explosion – it is the silence at the very heart of the “explosion,” the stillness of the event.¹⁵

This divergence in the assessment of the meaning of silence is, I think, more far-reaching than it may seem at first sight. When he explains silence as Nietzsche’s “name for the unattested and unproven character of the arch-political event,” Badiou is also referring to an *essential absence of theory and concept*. For the predicted philosophical act – it is on this basis, in a sense, that also rests its evental character – “does not take the form either of a project or of a program.”¹⁶

The “revaluation of all values” that Nietzsche contrasts with the shallowness of the revolutionary event is, as Badiou puts it, merely the *common name* of Nietzsche’s philosophical act. What can be said without any reservation, says Badiou, about this admittedly crucial but famously vague notion of Nietzsche’s philosophy is that the revaluation of all values “is life itself against nothingness.”¹⁷ However, this revaluation, whose central term is life, or rather the affirmation of life against nothing and the negative – against the nihilism of the metaphysical supersensible world and of Christian values, which place the centre of gravity of life in nothing, and thus take away the centre of gravity of life altogether – collides with an internal paradox, which, according to Badiou, is summed up by what he considers to be the decisive axiom of Nietzsche’s philosophy, which is: “*the value of life cannot be assessed.*”¹⁸

Nietzsche’s problem, therefore, is that his aim is the affirmation of life, which, if we try to assign a value to it, we *devalue* it at best. Equally, just as any attempt to determine the meaning of life is repelled by the infinite heterogeneity of life, so too is any attempt to determine the value of life, which also falls into the field of the abstract and the negative. Therefore, at the decisive moment of revaluation – that is, at the moment when “evaluation, values and meaning” fade into the shadow of life – its fate is entirely left to the “trial posed by the act.”¹⁹ This act,

¹⁵ Alenka Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow*, Cambridge (MA) and London, MIT Press, 2003, pp. 8–9.

¹⁶ Badiou, “Who is Nietzsche?”, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, p. 13.

¹⁹ Badiou, “Who is Nietzsche?”, p. 3.

which is divested of meaning and evaluation, an act inherent in life, however, can no longer properly be called by the name of a concept, the “revaluation of values,” which betrays it by its generality, but in its essential “opacity” can only be called by the proper name “Nietzsche.”

The most likely criticism that Badiou could address to Zupančič in terms of his interpretation, then, is that Zupančič attributes to Nietzsche a concept of the event that Nietzsche not only does not have, but *also must not have*, since the “essential opacity” of the philosophical act is contradicted by the idea of a concept or theory standing behind it. Nietzsche can only rush blindly towards the predicted event that will occur in the form of himself. And also the silence that inhabits the conceptual figures of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* must, from this point of view, be understood more as a kind of thick whiteness in which Nietzsche loses himself in order to find himself again, but no longer as a person, but as *an event*.

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Of course, it is hazardous to talk about a theory of event on the basis of complex figures such as “the stillest hour” and “midday”. If such a theory of event in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* really exists, then it must be almost entirely contained in its *actualization*, just as the sculptor’s knowledge is expressed in the sculpture and not in aesthetic theory. I believe – and I am certainly not alone in this – that Nietzsche develops this mute theory from inside an event which bears the name “God is dead.” I also think that Badiou, starting from his own theory, would have to agree in principle that the protagonist of the event – that is, the philosophical subject who acts inside the event and, at the same time, retroactively only makes it manifest – is *bound by a certain rule of interpretive ascesis* that does not allow much more than giving the event a name that must be “torn from the void.” Of course, Badiou himself thinks that the basic problem of Nietzsche’s archi-politics is precisely that it necessarily lacks a real event, and that is why Nietzsche himself is forced to step into the place of the real.

Among other things, we will therefore be interested to know where, in the context of Badiou’s interpretation, the “death of God” has disappeared: that event which, after all, is given a central place in Nietzsche’s philosophy by Heidegger and Deleuze, with whom Badiou is engaged in polemics in his discussion. The

least that can be said is that the story of this "disappearance" – which, at least in my opinion, is anything but a disappearance – is very intriguing.

But let us bring the discussion down to more concrete ground. The first cue for my argument is a thesis of Nietzsche, which at first sight seems remarkably simple, but which nevertheless constitutes one of the key points of his critique of the mind. It concerns the notion of *understanding*.

"To understand" means merely: to be able to express something new in the language of something old and familiar.²⁰

We can immediately see the multilayered nature of this thesis, which presents understanding as a regression in time. One could say that it implies a classical dialectical form and links it to a minimalist expression of one of the most fundamental problems of theories of the event, including Badiou's.

The dialectical formula, to begin with, would be this: understanding (as the "translation of the new into the old") is the negation of *the essence of its object* (the "new"; that which is to be understood) and, consequently, the negation of itself. Of course, we will stop before the "negation of negation", or synthesis, since Nietzsche's intention is precisely to draw attention to an irremediable contradiction of understanding as such.

The understanding of the new is no doubt only possible in the way that the novelty we seek to understand is linked to something we already understand. But even if we are so attentive to the otherness of what the novelty brings – in short, even if we describe the novelty through the determination of its differences in relation to the already existing knowledge – it is clear that in this way (i.e. by placing it in a differential correlation to what is already known) we are also already

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufman, New York, Vintage, 1986, p. 266. "The origin of our concept of 'knowledge' – I take this explanation from the street; I heard one of the common people say 'he knew me right away' - and I asked myself: what do the people actually take knowledge to be? what do they want when they want 'knowledge'? Nothing more than this: something unfamiliar is to be traced back to something familiar. And we philosophers – have we really meant anything more by knowledge?" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. J. Nauckhoff, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 214).

accommodating the novelty to the already established schemata of our understanding. This means that with each step of our understanding – the better we understand a novelty – we also cut off from it a piece of what we truly seek to understand, that is, the novelty itself.

This paradox of understanding is most pronounced in the case of radical breakthroughs, pure discontinuities, new beginnings, that is to say, *events*. In his *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche describes historical events which were so colossal and which took place so rapidly that, even though they transformed us as a species almost instantaneously, we only become aware of them and understand them from a great distance in time. An example of such an event is the emergence of “bad conscience” – that moment when the “human beast,” which had found itself trapped overnight in the grip of the State, turned its aggressive instincts on itself – which Nietzsche accompanied with the comment that this emergence of bad conscience took place “as a breach, a leap, a compulsion, an inescapable fate that nothing could ward off, which occasioned no struggle, not even any resentment.”²¹ One of the lessons of the *genealogical theory of the event* – in this respect, there is no doubt that Nietzsche possesses such a theory; the whole of genealogy is constructed out of events – is therefore that the more decisive and colossal an event is, i.e. the greater its transformative power, *the less it will be noticeable within the situation on which it produces change*. In some cases, such as the emergence of “human memory,” the first rudiments of the conditions for understanding the event are *only established by the event itself*; realistically speaking, such an event launches the possibility of its understanding into a distant millennium.

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The most radical ruptures and discontinuities can only be observed, if at all, at the moment of their occurrence, as a kind of *vague disturbance in understanding*. To discover them, one must actually swim against the current of understanding that washes away the novelty, in a sense resisting the temptation to explain, and focusing, as it were silently, on that which somehow does not fit the account. But let us look at another, related, Nietzschean thesis, which in a narrower sense refers to “genuine experience”:

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. C. Diethe, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 58.

Our real experiences aren't chattery at all. They couldn't communicate if they wanted to. That means that there are no words for them. When we have words for something, we've already gone beyond it. In all speaking there is a grain of contempt. Language, so it seems, was invented only for what is mediocre, common, communicable. In language, speakers *vulgarize* themselves right away.²²

Although in some ways they belong to different fields, it is not difficult to see the deep connection between the two passages. In the last passage, the main focus is on the problem of language, or more precisely, on the problem of the *discrepancy between the generality of language and the singularity of "authentic experience"*. Klossowski has shown that this problem – which began to preoccupy Nietzsche with all its force after the "thought of the eternal recurrence" revealed itself to him in spectacular circumstances – constitutes one of the most intense areas of Nietzsche's research, bringing together in the terrain of language such problems as: evaluation in the sense of the distinction between "high" and "low" mental states (or as Klossowski calls it, "tonalities of the soul"), psychology, semantics, and epistemology.

According to Nietzsche, languages, which have evolved as means of communication and transmission, and which therefore spontaneously follow the ideal of intelligibility for all, gravitate towards the general and the "average". Therefore, if we try to articulate the singularity of "genuine experience" in ordinary language, we are at best vulgarizing ourselves by speaking. The connection with the paradox of understanding – the translation of something new into the language of something old – is clearly shown in the sentence "when we have words for something, we've already gone beyond it": ordinary language flows smoothly only on the ground where the singularity of experience and novelty have already been resorbed into an established meaning; the word comes into play at the point where the "translation into the language of something old" covers the trace of the singularity or the novelty.

Nietzsche does not resolve this problem dialectically: he does not attempt to bring singularity and commonness to a point where they mirror each other – which Nietzsche would see as merely an unhealthy compromise to the detriment of "genuine experience." His solution to the problem of the articulation

²² Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, pp. 65–66.

of the singular, on the contrary, places its entire stake on that universal means which language itself has provided us with as a counterweight to its generality – namely, *naming*.

One could say that Nietzsche – as we all do, but with an additional emphasis – counteracts the generality of language by anticipating the (already familiar) “word” and giving the still mute singularity a name of its own, thus protecting it from erosion into the generality of language, and in this way, if nothing else, *buying it time*. This “buying time”, in the case of *singularities of the eventual type*, is anything but trivial: since, as we have seen, one of the specific possible properties of the event with which we must always reckon is *that the event itself potentially only creates the conditions of its understanding*, it means to “buy time” for the event, by means of its naming, *to preserve some small possibility of catching up with it even at the time of its action*, in short, before the closure of its sequence, when the possibilities of intervening in the event have expired.

Nietzsche’s naming usually has the quality of being both an explosion of meaning and at the same time something opaque from which all meaning is reflected. Of course, there is a general quality of the proper name to be seen in this, but Nietzschean names such as – “God is dead,” “the eternal return of the same,” “Dionysus versus the Crucified,” “the seventh solitude,” “the ascetic ideal,” “Zarathustra,” and perhaps also “Nietzsche” – raise it to a certain higher potency. With these designations, Nietzsche not only stops the erosion of the singular, its drift towards the general of the language, but also in a sense turns the vacuum of understanding in his favour: his designations are a magnet for countless interpretations which – precisely in so far as they necessarily halt at what cannot be tied to meaning in a name – in a sense encircle and mark the place of the singular.

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However, the effect of naming is not only to stop the erosion of the singular; another essential feature of naming is that – as François Wahl said in relation to Badiou’s concept of naming – every naming always carries with it a risk, a kind of “roll of the dice”: the fate of what we have named becomes *indistinguishable from the effects of the name* we have given it.

Thus, we have gathered four related concepts, from which we can draw the first few parallels with Badiou’s theory of the event. I will list them in a slight-

ly modified order to facilitate comparison: a) the genealogical rule of the *minimal observability* of an event during its duration; b) the *paradox of understanding*, which dictates that this minimum observability of novelty must be extricated from the danger of resorption into a pre-existing meaning, or rather, as Nietzsche wrote, it must be preserved from its "premature understanding"; c) the likelihood that the conditions of its understanding are *inherent in the event itself*; d) *the emphasis on naming*, which protects the singularity from erosion in the generality of language and thus "buys time" for the inherent establishment of the conditions of its understanding.

For the complex of these four concepts taken as a whole, I will use the expression *interpretive ascesis* – perhaps a surprising term, given the broader context of Nietzsche's philosophy. For they all intersect in the recognition that, in the duration of an event, no grand *interpretation* of it is really possible. On the contrary, it follows from these four concepts that a grand interpretation in the sense of a clamour of grand general words – for instance, the cry of "freedom" with which Zarathustra reproaches the followers of the "fire hound" – can only signify a kind of contamination of the event, in both the epistemological and value senses.

When it comes to the comparison with Badiou, one must, of course, start from an irreducible difference, which is that Badiou derives all his implementations from his *definition of the event*, which has a background and a basis in his mathematical ontology. Because of this divergence of starting points, the first round of comparisons, at least, can only be a kind of description of external affinities. The comparison refers exclusively to what might be called the "operational" part of the theory of the event, in short, not to its ontological background, but to the concept that Badiou calls "intervention." Of course, here we will also have to give up on following Badiou's long and complex transitions between the different concepts.

Badiou's definition of an event is:

*I term event of the site X a multiple such that it is composed of, on one hand, elements of the site, and on the other hand, itself.*²³

²³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 179.

Badiou's event is thus composed of elements that belong to the site of the event, but in addition, it includes *an elusive surplus* that cannot be included among the elements of the site of the event, but is constituted by the event itself, only this time taken *as its own internal element*. Badiou explains this doubling of the event with the example of the French Revolution. On the one hand, the French Revolution is, of course, the great political event that brought together everything that took place within it between 1789 and 1794 – the convocation of the Estates, the storming of the Bastille, the slogan “equality, fraternity, liberty”, the Jacobins, the deposition of the king, the guillotine, Robespierre, Marseillaise. But the Revolution is not only this broadest framework of historical occurrences, it is also *the central term* of the Revolution itself – and one that, unlike all the others, cannot be clearly located, and about which there was constant uncertainty among the revolutionaries themselves.

When, for example, Saint Just declares in 1794 ‘the revolution is frozen’, he is certainly designating infinite signs of lassitude and general constraint, but he adds them to the *one-mark* that is the Revolution itself, as this signifier of the event which being qualifiable (the Revolution is ‘frozen’), proves that it is itself *a term* of the event it is.²⁴

This essential duality of the event, which includes itself as its central term, is the key to understanding several major concepts, such as the “two”, which Alenka Zupančič has linked to Nietzsche's philosophy, and the conceptual meaning of “naming”.

However, the basic and fundamental corollary that Badiou draws from his definition of the event is that the event – which in itself, in the form of itself, includes an elusive surplus that cannot be counted among the “positive” elements of the evental site – can only be something “undecidable,” i.e., something about which it is impossible to decide, from the point of view of the situation in which it takes place, whether it belongs to that situation at all.

If there exists an event, *its belonging to the situation of this site is undecidable from the standpoint of the situation itself*.²⁵

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

And of course, the reverse is also true: within the very situation in which it unfolds, the event is noticeable at first only and exclusively as the undecidable. The event, then, initially escapes all other identification, except the absolutely minimal one, which is that it cannot be subsumed into what Badiou calls the "language of the situation." So, it is only if we can see that something is going on within the situation that does not fit into it – something that interferes with our understanding of the situation – that we can begin to suspect that we are witnessing the occurrence of an event.

An intervention consists, it seems, in identifying that there has been some undecidability, and in deciding its belonging to the situation.²⁶

The event is only revealed in a true sense *retroactively*, through the course of the event itself – more precisely, through the "retroaction of an interventional practice." One of the key concepts of Badiou's theory of the event is therefore "intervention," which he first defines in a very general way: "I term intervention any procedure by which a multiple is recognized as an event."²⁷

However, intervention breaks down into two procedures: the first is to *give a name* to what we recognize as the undecidable within a situation; the second is to *expose the implications of this naming for the situation* of the site of the event.

The essence of the intervention consists – within the field opened up by an interpretive hypothesis, whose *presented* object is the site (a multiple on the edge of the void), and which concerns the 'there is' of an event – in naming this 'there is' and in unfolding the consequences of this nomination in the space of the situation to which the site belongs.²⁸

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Although this path undoubtedly leads to the real of the event, i.e. to what has actually happened independently of the intervention, we can nevertheless observe that the whole process takes place in the *relation of naming and its consequences for the site of the event*; the event itself, in short, the real of the event, does not move from the place of the "undecidable" in the whole process.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Moreover, the only event to which the interventional practice refers in the *classical sense of interpretation* is not the actual event that is taking place at all, but a past event in relation to which the actual event, according to the interpretive hypothesis, *reveals itself as its essential repetition*. This concept of “evental recurrence” will be important in what follows – it is almost impossible to avoid the impression that it is Nietzschean from head to toe, but in fact it is also the basis of a key divergence.

The problem that Badiou solves with the concept of “evental recurrence” is in fact – although he does not mention it in *Being and Event* – very close to the problem of that deadly loop that is usually considered to be at the core of Badiou’s thesis on Nietzsche. This problem is: How to prevent the intervention, which, given the undecidability of the event, is the *only visible part* of its presentation, from confusing itself with *the real of the event* (which in reality conditions it)?

In order to avoid this curious mirroring of the event and the intervention – of the fact and the interpretation – the possibility of the intervention must be assigned to the consequences of another event. It is evental recurrence which founds intervention. In other words, there is no interventional capacity, constitutive for the belonging of an evental multiple to a situation, save within a network of consequences of a previously decided belonging.²⁹

From here, Badiou draws two more critical implications, which are very probably directly (but in my opinion unjustifiably) directed at Nietzsche: the first is the opposition to the figure of the philosophical *hero* of the event, and the second, which is directly evident in the concept of “evental recurrence,” is the critique of the absolute new beginning.

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But first let us summarize this, outer, circle of comparison. Although it is obvious that Badiou’s theory is permeated with a completely different spirit, and although the difference between the two starting points is more than evident – it is nevertheless also noticeable that the basic conceptual structure of Badiou’s event-intervention relation contains all the elements that I have previously called interpretative ascesis, on the basis of my treatment of Nietzsche: the minimal observability of the event at the time of its occurrence (the undecidable); its

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

perceptibility exclusively in that which does not fit into the "language of the situation"; the inherent conditions of the event's cognition, which are only revealed by the (event-contingent) intervention; and the reduction of interpretation to a naming that "buys time" for the intervention. We have also already mentioned the concept of "evental recurrence", which is undoubtedly Nietzschean at its root. To all this we must add that affinity which we pointed out at the outset – namely, the tendency towards "actively" relating to truth, which is most clearly expressed in Nietzsche's critique of objectivity, and which also reveals itself in Badiou's priority of intervention over interpretation.

Of course, all these affinities, in themselves, fall into nullity. The essential question is: Where can we find in Nietzsche what is most essential for Badiou in his theory of the event, namely, the link between the event and truth? In order to answer this question, let us first focus once again on the very core of Badiou's thesis on Nietzsche, in short, on the famous "event Nietzsche." The point of Badiou's thesis is succinctly made in the following two passages:

I think that this circle is the circle of any archi-politics whatsoever. Since it does not have the event as its condition, since it grasps it – or claims to grasp it – in the act of thought itself, it cannot discriminate between its reality and its announcement. The very figure of Zarathustra names this circle and gives the book its tone of strange undecidability with regard to the question of knowing whether Zarathustra is a figure of the efficacy of the act or of its prophecy pure and simple.³⁰

The archi-political declaration misses its real because the real of a declaration, of *any* declaration, is precisely the event itself. Thus it is at the very point of this real, which he lacks and whose presence and announcement he cannot separate, that Nietzsche will have to make himself present. And it is this that will be called his madness. Nietzsche's madness consists in this, that he must come to think of himself as the creator of the same world in which he makes his silent declaration, and in which nothing proves the existence of a break in two.³¹

Badiou's argument can be summarized in three points.

³⁰ Badiou, "Who is Nietzsche?", p. 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

1. Even the very core of Badiou's thesis is derived from the concept of archi-politics. Nietzsche's archi-political antiphilosophy attempts to intervene in the field of the political, but – since its aim is not a positive political programme, but *the triumph over politics* and the annulment of the political event – Nietzsche's archi-politics deprives itself from the outset of the very bases that would enable it to intervene in the first place: precisely, politics and the grounding of the intended intervention in the *real* of a political event.
2. This lack of the “real”, or of a real political event, is compensated for by Nietzsche with an event that is intrinsic to his thinking. We have seen that the common name of this event is “the revaluation of all values,” but its true name can only be “Nietzsche.” Another, more familiar formulation of Badiou's is that Nietzsche compensates for the lack of the real event by himself stepping into the place of the real and announcing himself as the event that will “break the history of the world in two.”
3. The price Nietzsche paid for insisting on this event without a real background, which, one way or another, was to appear *as the direct continuity of his thinking*, is that – as his last writings prove – Nietzsche, from a certain moment onwards, was no longer able to distinguish between the *prediction* of this event and its *reality*.

This last point is probably true:

*We have just entered into great politics, even the very greatest... I am preparing an event which, in all likelihood, will break history into two halves, to the point that one will need a new calendar, with 1888 as Year One.*³²

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It also seems likely that Nietzsche at some point came to see himself as an event of sinister proportions:

*It is not inconceivable that I am the first philosopher of the age, perhaps even a little more. Something decisive and doom-laden standing between two millennia.*³³

³² Letter to Brandes (December 1888), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 4.

³³ Letter to Von Seydlitz (February 1888), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 5.

It is also a fact that Badiou's interpretation offers an explanation for one of the more enigmatic features of Nietzsche's philosophy, which is perhaps most clearly expressed in the figure of Zarathustra himself, about whom, in fact, as Badiou says, we do not come to a clear conclusion, whether he is merely the prophet of a tectonic break and the "overman," or whether this break itself is already speaking out of him, and whether the words of Zarathustra are the first words uttered by an "overman,"

Nevertheless, Badiou's interpretation lacks something: namely, it lacks some *minimal explanation* of the absence of that famous event that Nietzsche does not relegate to an obscure future, but describes *as a recent, silent, terrestrial explosion, the waves of which are just beginning to reach us* – I am speaking, of course, of the event to which Nietzsche gave the name "God is dead." In other words, we have to ask ourselves whether Nietzsche's philosophy is really, as Badiou claims, groundless in the reality of the event – and, if so, what the status of the "death of God" is.

This minimal clarification that one would expect from Badiou could include many things: for example, we could easily understand if Badiou were to dismiss the "death of God" in a similar way as Lacan, who saw in this phrase of Nietzsche more a dramatic interjection rather than a serious philosophical thesis, because, according to him, the "death of God" has always already occurred within Christianity. One could also understand if Badiou, for example, had expressed the view that the emphasis placed by other philosophers on the "death of God" is exaggerated, and that it does not occupy the central place within the edifice of Nietzsche's "antiphilosophy" that is often attributed to it. Ultimately, one could even understand that Badiou simply would not have paid much attention to this notorious phrase.

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However, Badiou did not write and speak a great deal only about Nietzsche; he also wrote and spoke a great deal – and in decisive places – about the "death of God": however, in doing so, he managed to achieve something rather extraordinary – *namely, that the philosopher and the event virtually do not meet at all in his texts.*

In the text "Who is Nietzsche?", despite his polemics with Heidegger and Deleuze, both of whom attribute to the "death of God," I would say, an almost

ontological significance, Badiou does not mention the dictum “God is dead” at all. If for no other reason, this is strange because the “death of God” in these debates is at least intrinsically related to the decline of the concept of the One that is so relevant to Badiou.

In the text entitled “God is Dead”, with which he opens his *Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, the reference to Nietzsche is obvious, but in that essay Badiou mainly gives his own vision of the rupture marked by this famous phrase. What is certainly decisive here is that Badiou’s implementation goes in a direction opposite to that of Lacan’s – in short, “God is dead,” according to Badiou, undoubtedly marks the site of a real breakdown of religions.³⁴

Now, my conviction on this matter is the opposite. I take the formula “God is dead” literally. It *has* happened. Or, as Rimbaud said, it has passed. God is finished. And religion is finished, too. As Jean-Luc Nancy has strongly stated, there is something irreversible here.³⁵

Does this not mean that Badiou thus tacitly ascribes to the “death of God” an eventual-reality, or, to put it naively, does he not *understand it as a truth*, even though it is also clear that he does not, and cannot characterize it as an event-truth of his own type – also because it is impossible to allocate the “death of God” to any of his “generic processes of truth.”

The most decisive moment, in my opinion, however, takes place earlier: in *Being and Event*, Badiou chooses the “death of God” as the *formal model of his theory of the event*, on the basis of which he clarifies and concretizes all the key concepts of this theory – but not the Nietzschean version, according to which “God also remains dead,” but the original Christian Death of the Son of God on the Cross.

³⁴ Alenka Zupančič has argued very well that this emphasis is not necessarily Nietzsche’s, and that Nietzsche’s phrase “God is dead” should precisely be followed by “and Christianity has survived it.” The question that arises here is only whether Christianity, at least as far as Nietzsche is concerned, has really survived the “death of God” in *the form of religion*: for Nietzsche points out in several places that the Church itself, with its clumsiness and obsolescence, has become the greatest obstacle to the irresistible march of Christianity, which in the meantime has already transformed itself into many other forms.

³⁵ Alain Badiou, *Briefings on Existence*, trans. N. Madarasz, New York, State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 23.

I find it hard to resist the impression that in this case the original is a forgery, and the repetition is the place of the truth.

This raises three questions for me. First, is the Christian event, "the death of God," really at all separable from the resurrection of the Son of God? Secondly, is not this very "death of God" – notwithstanding Badiou's description of it as an "evental recurrence" in relation to Adam's sin, from which Christ redeems us by His death – the very synonym of an absolutely new beginning to which Badiou is opposed in principle. And thirdly, why choose as an example of event-truth a model that can only be formal – for it is clear that Badiou is reluctant to accept Christian truth – if we also have a model at our disposal of the nominally same event, the "death of God," whose truth, so to speak, has in fact reached us?

The second, inner circle of comparison – this will be made somewhat easier by the fact that Badiou, as it were, groups his main concepts of the theory of the event precisely around the model of the "death of God" – can only begin in one way, namely with the famous proclamation "God is dead," which Nietzsche entrusted to the voice of an unknown madman.

The madman. – Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? – Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? 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 to 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? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit in the morning? Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? – Gods, too, decompose! God is dead!

God remains dead! [...] Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed – and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!’ Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; they too were silent and looked at him disconcertedly. Finally, he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. ‘I come too early,’ he then said; ‘my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars – *and yet they have done it themselves!*’³⁶

The first thing to notice is that “God is dead” is by no means an event that Nietzsche describes as inherent in his thinking. Anything rather than that: the most fundamental characteristics of this proclamation are, on the contrary, the *universal participation of absolutely everyone* in the “murder of God” and the *anonymity of the proclamation* itself. In fact, we can observe that Nietzsche – in complete contrast to Badiou’s “event Nietzsche” – completely evacuates himself from the centre of this event, in which he plays no more part than any other of us who, although the news of his death has not even reached us yet, have murdered God.

The death of God is therefore an act that took place independently of Nietzsche’s thinking; in fact, one might rather say that Nietzsche discovers the event of “God is dead,” or the real of this event, in the retroaction of that, in Badiou’s terms, “interventional practice” which in Nietzsche is undoubtedly constituted by his *critique of Christian morality* – that is, he discovers it as that *rupture within Christianity itself* which, in a certain epochal sense, only made this critique possible. The “evental site” – to cash in on another of Badiou’s key concepts – in the case of the “God is dead” event, is undoubtedly Christianity; in fact, we can be even more precise: the murder of God undoubtedly took place within a form of Christianity which, on the one hand, *sharpened to the extreme the truthfulness of Christian morality*, which gradually could *no longer tolerate the naivety and intellectual inconsistencies of Christian dogma*, and which, on the other hand, demanded a personal relationship with God, a relationship without priestly in-

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³⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, pp. 119–120.

termediaries, no longer symbolic, but as much as possible with *a living God* with whom the individual is in constant dialogue – and the strand of Christianity that made *God alive enough to die* is undoubtedly Protestantism. Nietzsche is quite clear on this point: God has been murdered by Christian morality itself, with its increasing truthfulness, and it is precisely this breakdown of dogma that has made possible the next stage of this event, when this morality turns against itself, when it starts to dismantle itself.

Another of the main aspects of the madman's proclamation is partly also related to this point. The madman's proclamation, for which he was widely ridiculed, was made before a predominantly atheist crowd. Of course, it is precisely for atheists that the "death of God" is an event which – at least as long as it is taken literally, and there is something *fatally literal about this event* – makes no sense: how could someone who never existed die? But Nietzsche's point here is by no means that the "death of God" in its true sense can only be experienced and understood by one who – as, after all, Nietzsche himself did in his youth – believed in God. Anything but that: Nietzsche made it very clear in *Ecce Homo* that his personal drama with God, this "highlander hypothesis," was practically minimal, and even the biographies of his youth show that Nietzsche dealt with God – especially given the circumstances of his upbringing in a pastoral family and his intended priestly vocation – relatively early, very rationally, and without particular personal drama.³⁷

The discrepancy between the "God is dead" event and atheism must be explained differently, and on several levels. This discrepancy shows clearly that there is something about the "God is dead" event that cannot be articulated in the form of any kind of outlook (or, to use Badiou's phrase, in the "language of the situation") – even if it is an outlook like atheism, which is, in a sense, a consequence and a corollary of the death of God. One could say that the event itself has already overtaken all possible points of view, and, at the moment of its proclamation, presents itself only in the form of Nietzsche's intervention – in the form of his critique of Christian morality – which has long since left behind the church and the priests, and is now focused on those forms of Christian morality that have survived and even gained strength within atheism itself. What is

³⁷ See Daniel Blue, *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche. The Quest for Identity, 1844–1869*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

certain, though, is that the “death of God” is “undecidable” within what Badiou would have called “the situation of the evental site.”

But how then to account for that most famous and much-vaunted feature of the madman’s proclamation – its description of a meaningless delusion through nothingness, and the dissolution of all meaning that is supposed to occur as a consequence of the event?

The dissolution of sense can occur for two reasons: either as a consequence of that which bore the name of God no longer existing, that is to say, as *a consequence of some loss*; or, on the contrary, it can also occur as *a consequence of the coming into being of that in the face of which all sense always somehow loses its ground*, and that is some new truth. There is no doubt that Nietzsche’s declaration “God is dead” contains both meanings, which are in some way connected. It is in this context, in fact, that we can bring into circulation two more of Badiou’s categories: “naming” and the “two”. We have said that Badiou’s basic rule for naming an event is that this name must be torn from the void; we have also seen that an event is a “two” – the event itself and the same event as the central term of this event.

Nietzsche’s “death of God” is also characterized by a specific duality. I would say that it takes place on two stages – in a kind of split between the *name* God and *nothing*. The “death of God” can only occur as a kind of *shadow* in nothingness. For God, even if He were the “living”, experienced God, can only be an *informed nothing*: the greatest masterpiece of all the great religions, according to Nietzsche, is that they bring us – sooner than representing a remedy for the *horror vacui* – into some intimate relationship with nothing.³⁸ However, as Alenka Zupančič has shown in her interpretation, Christianity is a step ahead of other religions in this respect: unlike Buddhism or Taoism, where meditation on emptiness severs us from the world, and turns the world and its burdens into an almost transparent veil, Christianity rather relies on nothing *as the active principle of all passionate will*. In order to really passionately will *something*, one must also will the *nothing itself*, and it is precisely to this – as Zupančič posits, nothing as the “transcendental condition” of all will – that Christianity has given the name

³⁸ On this topic, particularly in relation to Hegel’s “absolute negativity”, see Aleš Bunta, “To Annihilate Nothing?”, *Filozofski vestnik*, 26 (2/2005), pp. 129–143.

God and made the central object of its passionate devotion.³⁹ In this sense – because we were no longer able to sustain God as the platform for this nothing perceived as the condition of a passionate will to be kept in place by our belief – the “death of God” marks the beginning of a great crisis of the will that Nietzsche, in the narrower sense, calls nihilism. And in this sense, the death of God is a real event, albeit a shadow in nothing, that marks both a loss and an advent of truth.

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³⁹ Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow*, p. 126.