

Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Death of God from *The Gay Science*, 1882

*The teachers of the purpose of existence.* – Whether I contemplate men with benevolence or with an evil eye, I always find them concerned with a single task, all of them and every one of them in particular: to do what is good for the preservation of the human race. ... Even the most harmful man may really be the most useful when it comes to the preservation of the species; for he nurtures either in himself or in others, through his effects, instincts without which humanity would long have become feeble or rotten. Hatred, the mischievous delight in the misfortunes of others, the lust to rob and dominate, and whatever else is called evil belongs to the most amazing economy of the preservation of the species. ... I mean, when the proposition “the species is everything, *one* is always none” has become part of humanity, and this ultimate liberation and irresponsibility has become accessible to all at all times. ... For the present, the comedy of existence has not yet “become conscious” of itself. For the present, we still live in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions. What is the meaning of the ever new appearance of these founders of moralities and religions, these instigations of fights over moral valuations, these teachers or remorse and religious wars? ... They, too, promote the life of the species, *by promoting the faith in life*. “Life is worth living,” every one of them shouts; “there is something to life, there is something behind life, beneath it; beware!” ... Gradually, man has become a fantastic animal that has to fulfill one more condition of existence than any other animal: man *has to* believe, to know, from time to time *why* he exists; his race cannot flourish without a periodic trust in life-without faith in *reason in life*.

*In the horizon of the infinite.* - We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us – indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity.

*The madman.* – Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: “I seek God! I seek God!” ... “Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? ... Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not

night continually closing in on us? ... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. ... How then shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? ... Is not the greatness of this dead too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us – for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.”

*Believers and their Need of Belief.* – How much *faith* a person requires in order to flourish, how much “fixed opinion” he requires which he does not wish to have shaken, because he *holds* himself thereby – is a measure of his power (or more plainly, of his weakness). Most people in old Europe, as it seems to me, still need Christianity at present, and on that account it still finds belief. ... Belief is always most desired, most pressingly needed, where there is a lack of will: for the will, as emotion of command, is the distinguishing characteristic of sovereignty and power. That is to say, the less a person knows how to command, the more urgent is his desire for that which commands, and commands sternly, - a God, a prince, a caste, a physician, a confessor, a dogma, a party conscience. ... Reversely, one could imagine a delight and a power of self-determining, and a *freedom* of will, whereby a spirit could bid farewell to every belief, to every wish for certainty, accustomed as it would be to support itself on slender cords and possibilities, and to dance even on the verge of abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit par excellence*.

*Preparatory human beings.* – I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all. For this age shall prepare the way for one yet higher, and it shall gather the strength that this higher age will require some day – the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will *wage wars* for the sake of ideas and their consequences. ... For believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – to *live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! ... Soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer.