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The God-Image of Nietzsche's 'Also Sprach Zarathustra' as Reflected in Rilke's 'Stundenbuch'.

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THE GOD-IMAGE OF NIETZSCHE'S ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA
AS REFLECTED IN RILKE'S STUNDENBUCH

A Dissertation

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Louisiana State University and
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Doctor of Philosophy

in—

The Department of Foreign Languages

by

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The concept of God found in Friedrich Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra (composed 1883-85) is reflected in the first two books of Rainer Maria Rilke's collection of poetry entitled Das Stundenbuch (written 1899-1903, after Rilke's first trip to Russia with Lou Andreas-Salomé).

Lou is the concrete link between the lives of the philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the poet Rilke (1875-1926) and is, in effect, the human channel through which Nietzschean philosophy flowed toward Rilke. Lou was associated with both men at different times, having met Nietzsche in 1882 in Rome, and Rilke in 1897 in Munich. Both men fell in love with her, and since she was a dynamic, beautiful woman, it is not surprising that she was able to exert such a strong influence first upon Nietzsche, and then upon Rilke. Nietzsche was also able to influence Lou, however, for during her brief relationship with him, she became immersed in his philosophy and, after she broke with him, she retained her knowledge of Nietzschean concepts and eventually passed it on to the young, impressionable Rilke.

The biographical details and personal relations of the three individuals in question are first discussed in the dissertation in order to establish the background for the influence of Zarathustra on the Stundenbuch. A general
discussion of the themes in Zarathustra which revolve about the God-image is then presented, namely, the death of the Christian God, the glorification of the Übermensch, the conflict between art and Christianity, and loyalty to the earth. A discussion of Nietzsche and Rilke's common motifs shows that Rilke should be considered one of the major philosophical heirs of Nietzsche, and the presence of the themes of Zarathustra in Rilke's early works preceding the completion of the Stundenbuch indicates that Rilke was very concerned with Nietzschean philosophy when he began work on his Stundenbuch.

The last, principal section of the dissertation shows that the God-image of Zarathustra can be seen in certain poems from the first two books of the Stundenbuch, "Vom mönchischen Leben" and "Von der Pilgerschaft." These poems are discussed in detail, and, supported by evidence from Zarathustra; they demonstrate the more than coincidental existence of identical moods and themes concerning the God-image in Rilke's Stundenbuch and Nietzsche's Zarathustra.
INTRODUCTION

Although there is apparent agreement among Rilke scholars that Nietzsche's influence is detectable in Rilke's early works, these observations appear to be based on surmise and assumption, not on analysis of the themes found in the works of Rilke and Nietzsche. The remarks of such scholars as Binion, Graff, Peters, Kaufmann, and the others who are cited in this dissertation are brief observations which are not supported by evidence and which do not in any way attempt to demonstrate in depth how such a Nietzschean influence originated, nor where in Rilke's Stundenbuch it can specifically be found. (Their comments are included in this dissertation only to strengthen the premise that Rilke's work was indeed influenced by Nietzsche.) Furthermore, thorough review of Rilke and Nietzsche scholarship reveals that no detailed study of this subject has been made.


Therefore, it is the purpose of this dissertation to prove the existence of a Nietzschean influence in Rilke's Stundenbuch (specifically, an influence from the God-image in Also Sprach Zarathustra) and to discuss it in a detailed manner. The poems of the Stundenbuch have been analyzed, and those which exhibit a Nietzschean influence will be discussed in depth, supported by quotations from Nietzsche's Zarathustra which prove the presence of identical attitudes and themes in the two works.

It is necessary at this point to discuss in more detail the approach which will be undertaken to arrive at the proof that Rilke's work was influenced by Nietzsche's Zarathustra. In the first chapter, a brief discussion of Rilke's life will be presented, with particular emphasis being placed on his meeting Lou Andreas-Salomé, Nietzsche's ex-companion and disciple. Then, certain aspects of Nietzsche's life will be given as background. The purpose of giving brief accounts of the lives of Rilke and Nietzsche is to show that they were both greatly influenced by the same woman.

The next section of the first chapter will deal with the relationship between Nietzsche and Lou in order to show that she had a profound effect on him, and especially on his writing of Zarathustra, and that, as a result of her association with him, she became well-versed enough in his philosophy to write a book on it. The relationship between Lou and Rilke will then be presented to emphasize the probability that it was she who introduced Rilke to Nietzschean
concepts that appeared later in the Stundenbuch, the poems of which she herself discriminatingly read. It will then be stressed that Rilke was very much in love with Lou, whose mind was still fresh from the Nietzsche experience, that Rilke valued her opinion highly, and that it is not surprising that through her so many of Nietzsche's philosophical beliefs entered Rilke's works of that period.

In the second chapter, Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra will be discussed in general terms. The major themes found in this work (the death of God, the glorification of the Übermensch, the conflict between art and Christianity, and the deification of the earth), which also appear in the Stundenbuch, are all concerned with the God-image and will be briefly enunciated and evaluated. A general discussion of the common motifs that exist in the works of Rilke and Nietzsche will then be presented to show that the themes from Zarathustra are to be found in Rilke's works and that, because of this, Rilke should be considered Nietzsche's philosophical heir. Some of Rilke's early works preceding the Stundenbuch will then be discussed to prove that they strongly exhibit Nietzschean moods and themes, and that Rilke was very involved with Nietzschean philosophy when he began working on the Stundenbuch.

The third chapter will deal with Rilke's Stundenbuch. General comments concerning its origin, its duality, and its themes will first be presented. The next section of the third chapter will be concerned with the specific themes of
the Stundenbuch. Those poems which show Nietzschean influence will be grouped and discussed along thematic lines. The Rilke poem, or part of it, will be cited, along with its first line, under the appropriate theme and will be followed by a discussion supported by evidence from Zaratustra that proves that the Rilke poem contains ideas, attitudes, and metaphors which are identical to those found in Nietzsche's work.
A discussion of the lives of Rilke, Nietzsche, and Lou Andreas-Salomé is of paramount importance for the subject of this dissertation because it shows that Lou played a major role in the lives of both Rilke and Nietzsche; she touched them, however, at different times, for her initial encounter with Rilke occurred fifteen years after her first meeting with Nietzsche. A presentation of the relationships between Nietzsche and Lou and between Rilke and Lou is also significant, for it reveals that she, as the human link between the two men, was probably the means by which Nietzsche's philosophy ultimately reached and influenced Rilke and the composition of his *Stundenbuch*.

Rilke's Life

René Karl Wilhelm Johann Josef Maria Rilke was born on December 4, 1875, in Prague. His father had given up a military career and had become a railroad official. His mother's family were manufacturers and had attained a great deal of prominence. The Rilkes claimed noble descent, but years after the poet's death, this claim was proved to be a fabrication, since in reality the Rilkes were descended from Sudeten peasants. Despite this pretext, however, Rilke grew
Rilke's childhood was characterized by a hatred and avoidance of the Czechs, which was typical of the German minority in Prague at that time, a strict Roman Catholic upbringing by his mother, ridiculous masquerades in which Rilke was dressed by his mother to impersonate his sister who had died in infancy, and domestic quarrels. His parents separated when he was only nine years old.

From September 1886 to June 1891 Rilke attended military schools at St. Pölten and Mährisch-Weisskirchen. He was quite unhappy at both of these schools; he made no friends, learned very little, and was finally removed for reasons of ill health. He spent a year at the Commercial Academy at Linz, but he later joined his father in Prague to enroll as a law student at the university.

In 1896 he transferred to the University of Munich and then in 1897 to the University of Berlin. He wrote constantly, prose and verse, during this period, for although he was studying law, he had nevertheless decided to become a writer. Rilke's early poetry is imitative of Heine, and his prose is realistic, Ewald Tragedy being particularly vivid in its depiction of Rilke's stiflingly conventional family in Prague.

It was in Munich in May of 1897 that the young Rilke met the remarkably beautiful Lou Andreas-Salomé. He became

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passionately attached to her, and she exerted a strong influence upon him until his death in 1926. As has been stated, Lou had been in close contact with Nietzsche and introduced Rilke to Nietzschean philosophical concepts. She also encouraged Rilke to learn the Russian language and to study Russian literature, and in the spring of 1899 Rilke went to Russia with Lou and Andreas, her husband. Later that year Rilke wrote the first part of the Stundenbuch, which in its entirety is a series of sixty-seven verse forms, whereby Rilke speaks as a Russian monk on the subjects of God, nature, and man.

Earlier, in 1898, Rilke had spent the spring in Florence, enjoying the life-affirming art of the Italian Renaissance. Art became for Rilke, as it had become for Novalis, the revelation of the mystery of life, and poets, as creators, became the closest things to divine beings, since they were, in effect, creators of God.

Lou (and through her Nietzsche), Florence, and Russia were major influences to be seen in Rilke's writings of this period. Rilke slightly modified the Nietzschean ideas of Lebensbejahung and Übermensch, so that for Rilke, the poet became the Übermensch, that is, the truly exceptional man who affirms life through art.

In May of 1900 Rilke made a second trip to Russia, this time with Lou alone. On his return he accepted a friend's invitation to go to an artist colony at Worpswede, a remote village near Bremen. In April 1901 he married a
young sculptress named Clara Westhoff, a pupil of Rodin, and settled down in a cottage in near-by Westerwede. In September 1901 Rilke wrote the second part of the Stundenbuch. From his marriage to Clara, a daughter was born, but the parents decided to break up their household, in order to pursue their separate careers, entrusting the child to Clara's parents.

In August 1902 Rilke received a commission from a German publisher to write a book on Rodin, so Rilke departed for Paris to meet the famous sculptor for whom he already had the greatest admiration and respect. Paris was to remain Rilke's headquarters until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, although he made several excursions in the meantime to Italy, Germany, Austria, North Africa, and Spain. Although Rilke's letters of this period praise Rodin, they express at the same time a fear of Paris and a disgust at that city's innumerable miseries and its atmosphere of indifference.

In March 1903 Rilke managed to escape from the depressing surroundings of Paris to Italy, where he wrote the final part of the Stundenbuch. In July 1902 he had already published his Das Buch der Bilder, and in 1907-8 he published Neue Gedichte, poems which show Rodin's influence. Each poem became for Rilke a work of art—as molded and polished as a work of Rodin. Most of these poems, the Dinggedichte, combine depth of thought and elegance of form.
While in Rome during the year of 1904, Rilke had begun work on his *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, continued it in Paris, and published it in 1910. This work, which can be said to be a study of the dark side of life, depicts a young artist who, like Rilke, experiences a terrifying aversion to the godless big cities.

From November 1911 to May 1912 Rilke stayed at Duino, a castle on the Adriatic coast near Trieste; it had been placed at his disposal by his friend-benefactress, Princess Marie von Thurn and Taxis-Hohenlohe. Here he was inspired to write the first two poems of what was later to be completed in 1922 and called *Duineser Elegien*.

When the war broke out in 1914, Rilke was in Germany and was exhilarated by all the excitement. As a result, he wrote five hymns addressed to the god of war. Such enthusiasm was checked, however, by Rilke's short period of war service, when from November 1915 to June 1916 he was a member of the infantry for a few weeks and a clerk in the war ministry in Vienna for a few months.

After the war, Rilke experienced doubts and hopelessness. In 1919 he accepted an invitation to Switzerland to read his poems, which indicates that perhaps temporarily at least, Rilke was overcoming his state of depression induced by the war. He remained mostly at the little Château du Muzot at Raron near Sierre in the canton of Valais from then on, and it was there that he completed his *Duineser Elegien* and *Sonetten an Orpheus*. Rilke died at Château du
Muzot on December 29, 1926, of acute leukemia.

Nietzsche’s Life

Friedrich Nietzsche, born October 15, 1844, descended from a long line of respected, upright, God-fearing Lutherans. His father was a pastor, and his grandfather, Friedrich August Ludwig Nietzsche, had written several books proclaiming the eternal survival of Christianity—the religion which contained those very concepts which his grandson paradoxically would try to destroy.

The childhood of Nietzsche was not particularly happy. His home was severely religious with strong moral demands, and as Frenzel indicates, Nietzsche rarely indulged in fanciful, carefree games, but rather spent his time writing poetry, many of these early works already displaying a sensitivity, fervor, and power of observation. Music and art were truly a joy to him, as was visiting his maternal grandparents, who were less rigid than his Nietzsche relatives.

Nietzsche grew to be a serious child, well-versed in the Bible; at the age of twelve he wrote that he had seen God in all his splendor, as the following excerpt reveals:

\begin{quote}
Von Kindheit an suchte ich die Einsamkeit und fand mich da am wohlsten, wo ich mich ungestört mir selbst überlassen konnte. Und dies war gewöhnlich im freien
\end{quote}

Nietzsche was also very aware of his being different from other children. This consciousness, together with seclusion, an intense dedication to art, difficulties in conforming, a delicate feeling for language, and even the theme of the wanderer which so frequently characterized Nietzsche's later life, were all evident in his youthful writings and constituted his personality.

Shortly after Nietzsche's confirmation in 1861, he began to show religious doubts, but the aversion to Christianity was a slow development. In the following portion of a letter to Carl von Gersdorff on April 7, 1866, however, Nietzsche expresses an already well-established antipathy toward the Christian religion: "Heisst Christentum 'Glaube an ein geschichtliches Ereignis oder an eine geschichtliche Person', so habe ich mit diesem Christentum nichts zu tun" (III, 962-63). This loss of faith is perhaps the most important event of Nietzsche's adolescence.

In 1864 Nietzsche enrolled at the University of Bonn, where he seemed destined to become a philologist. He joined a fraternity to try to meet people but soon became disgusted

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3Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, hrsgb. von Karl Schlechta (München: Carl Hanser, 1955), III, 318-19. All further references to Nietzsche's works will come from this collection and will be designated in the text by volume and page numbers.

with the shallow, bourgeois nature of fraternity life. He simply could not enjoy the pleasures of ordinary people; in addition, school was not going well, for the lectures in theology only tended to increase his skepticism of Christianity. He often quarreled with his teachers, and at the end of the second semester he transferred to the University of Leipzig.

At Leipzig Nietzsche became interested in the writings of the ancient Greek Theognis, who had advocated fraternization only with the aristocracy, an idea which seems to have influenced his concept of the Übermensch. Nietzsche then began to read Schopenhauer, whom he greatly admired. Nietzsche and Wagner, who first met in 1868, spent a great deal of time discussing their approval of Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy, and it may have been Schopenhauer's ideas, that the will of man determines his goals and that Christian moralists are nothing but philistines, which inspired Nietzsche's interest in and love for philosophy.

In February 1869, after a brief military career, an offer was extended Nietzsche from the University of Basel, and he became professor of philology there. In 1872 Die Geburt der Tragödie appeared, which marked the beginning of Nietzsche's philosophical career and the formation of his unorthodox ideas of the pessimism of strength and the glorification of the forbidden. Nietzsche developed in this work

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5Ibid., p. 20.
the concepts of Apollo (calm clarity and beauty) and Dionysus (unbound intoxication). According to Nietzsche, these forces burst forth from nature without cause, but Christianity thwarts them and should therefore be eliminated because the world has no moral justification, only an aesthetic one. Nietzsche's work was not received well; he was attacked by scholars everywhere, with the result that he never regained his academic reputation.

From 1872 on, Nietzsche was plagued by poor health and a Leiden an der Welt, that is, an inability to adjust to the world. He was constantly travelling, always in search of "a physically and psychologically wholesome environment." During this period, he was the victim of severe headaches.

In 1881 Nietzsche secluded himself in the idyllic beauty of the Inn Valley to work on his manuscripts, and the following year he went to Rome, where he was introduced to Lou Andreas-Salomé. The ultimate results of this relationship were unhappy for Nietzsche, and he fled to Geneva for the winter of 1882, when, in a sudden interval of inspiration, he composed the first part of Zarathustra in ten days.

Nietzsche's completion of Zarathustra in 1885 did not end his troubles, for he was still ill, continued to quarrel with his family, and failed to get his work published. An

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7 Frenzel, p. 72.
attempt to resume his teaching career was unsuccessful, due to his unconventional beliefs. His last years were characterized by deterioration of health, loneliness, and discomfort.

Nietzsche's last year of mental health was 1888; the following year he experienced his first breakdown and was committed to the Basel Sanatorium. The derangement worsened, and Nietzsche had to be cared for at home by his sister, who watched over him and collected (and reputedly misrepresented) his manuscripts. Nietzsche died on August 25, 1900, and was buried next to his father at Rücken.

"The Triangle"

A "triangle" of interpersonal relationships may be said to exist among Lou, Nietzsche, and Rilke, for all of the three possible pairings (Lou-Nietzsche, Lou-Rilke, and Nietzsche-Rilke) are significant. Although the pairings Lou-Nietzsche and Lou-Rilke are instances of direct contact, the last combination, Nietzsche-Rilke, is an example of indirect interaction; nevertheless, the contact between Nietzsche and Rilke is just as strong and relevant as that between Lou and Nietzsche, and Lou and Rilke. A discussion of the two examples of direct contact will indicate the nature and importance of the indirect relationship between Nietzsche and Rilke.
Lou and Nietzsche

Louise Salomé was born on February 12, 1861, in St. Petersburg, Russia; her family was of Baltic German, French Huguenot, and Danish origins and had immigrated to Russia for religious and political reasons. Lou's father was a general in the Russian army. Lou was determined to lead a life of independence and left Russia in September of 1880 in the company of her mother to study at the University of Zurich. She became ill there, and after receiving a letter of introduction to Malwida von Meysenburg from a friend, she decided to go to Malwida's home in Rome to recuperate.

She arrived at Malwida's in January 1882 and was there when Paul Rée, a friend of Nietzsche, also arrived. Rée told her of Nietzsche, and Malwida lent her Nietzsche's books, with the result that Lou became very interested in Nietzsche and anxious to meet him. They were introduced that spring in the cathedral of St. Peter in Rome, and the acquaintance quickly ripened. Nietzsche fell in love with Lou and proposed marriage twice in the spring of 1882, both times being rejected. However, Nietzsche still had hopes of marrying Lou, as the following letter of June 10, 1882, to her reveals: "Im übrigen verbinde ich mit unserem Zusammenleben so hohe Hoffnungen, dass alle notwendigen oder zufälligen Nebenwirkungen jetzt wenig Eindruck auf mich

machen" (III, 1180). This signifies that Nietzsche felt very strongly about Lou and refused to abandon the hope that they would eventually marry. Lou, however, was not interested in marriage with Nietzsche, or with any other man for that matter, for she still demanded total independence.

Sometime that month, Nietzsche told his sister about Lou and that he wished her to become a disciple of his. That Nietzsche valued Lou's opinion is revealed in a letter to Lou on July 2, 1882: "Der Himmel behüte mich vor Torheiten!—aber von jetzt ab, so Sie [Nietzsche's italics]9 mich beraten werden, werde ich gut beraten sein und brauche mich nicht zu fürchten" (III, 1182). In another letter Nietzsche wrote the following to Lou in August of 1882: "Von Herzen Ihrem Schicksale gewogen—denn ich liebe auch in Ihnen meine Hoffnungen" (III, 1187). Nietzsche saw in Lou the woman he had been waiting for. He continues in the above-mentioned letter of July 2, 1882: "Ich will nicht mehr einsam sein und wiederlernen, Mensch zu werden" (III, 1182). These letter-excerpts all show that Nietzsche was overcome by Lou's charm and hoped for nothing less than marriage.

Since Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth did not consider Lou to be suitable for her brother, the two women were constantly quarreling. Nietzsche's mother also regarded Lou as too immoral and therefore an unfavorable companion.

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9Unless otherwise stated, underlined words in quotations reflect emphasis of person being quoted.
for her son. Elisabeth had the mistaken belief that the
free-living, free-thinking Lou was chasing after her brother
and had actually ensnared him.\(^{10}\) In truth, however, "she
[Lou] admired him as a thinker and a talker and enjoyed his
company only slightly less than he enjoyed hers; but the
emotion was all on Nietzsche's part."\(^{11}\)

The ménage-à-trois which Lou, Nietzsche, and Rée eventu­
ally established was doomed, for Rée was also in love with
Lou and decided to eliminate Nietzsche as a rival. When
Lou and Rée left suddenly without notice for Stibbe in the
fall of 1882, Nietzsche, realizing that he had been deserted,
was plunged to the depths of despair and rage. He had
devoted himself to Lou as he had to no other woman, and she
had calmly walked out on him. Nietzsche wrote to Overbeck
on Christmas 1882:

Ich habe an den beschimpfenden und qualvollen
Erinnerungen dieses Sommers gelitten wie an einem
Wahnsinn....Es ist ein Zwiespalt entgegengesetzter
Affekte darin, dem ich nicht gewachsen bin...
Könnte ich nur schlafen!--aber die stärksten Dosen
meiner Schlafmittel helfen mir ebensowenig als
meine sechs bis acht Stunden Marschieren. Wenn ich
nicht das Alchemisten-Kunststück erfinde, auch aus
diesem--Kote Gold zu machen, so bin ich verloren....
Mein Misstrauen ist jetzt sehr gross: ich fühle
aus allem, was ich höre, Verachtung gegen mich
heraus....Gestern habe ich nun auch mit meiner
Mutter den brieflichen Verkehr abgebrochen; es war
nicht zum Aushalten, und es wäre besser gewesen, ich
hätte es längst nicht mehr ausgehalten....Mein Ver-
hältnis zu Lou liegt in den letzten schmerzhaftesten

\(^{10}\) R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche, the Man and His Philo-
sophy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965),
p. 183.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
Nietzsche indicates in the above letter just how deeply he was affected by his relationship to Lou. The results of his being rejected by her were, according to the following passage from Hollingdale, partial inspiration for the writing of *Zarathustra*:

Having broken with his family because of his association with Lou and Rée, and then having been deserted by them too, Nietzsche felt he was now truly alone in the world, and his health was such that, ridiculously, he could neither die nor live; had he not been an artist, we can feel tolerably certain that around the turn of the year he would have put an end to an existence grown to a painful absurdity. Being an artist he was able, instead, to translate the pains of solitude into pleasures, and in the figure of Zarathustra—who, like all imagined personages, is and is not his author—to create a type of man who desires solitude because it is his natural element.

That Nietzsche also had some type of effect on Lou cannot be doubted (although it was an intellectual or philosophical effect, and not an emotional one), since she was well-versed enough in his life and philosophical works and felt enough admiration for him as a thinker to write a book entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (1894), which is still of value today.

Although Nietzsche went the way of a loner after the split with Lou and was estranged from family and friends,

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12Ibid., p. 186.

his hopes of ever having a successful relationship with a woman shattered, Lou, on the other hand, was to be in close contact with many more men, including Rilke, who would come to share vicariously in her Nietzsche experience, an experience which she never discarded. Her Nietzsche book had only been published for three years when she met Rilke in 1897, and Nietzschean ideas were still fresh in her mind.

Lou and Rilke

As has been stated, Rilke met Lou Andreas-Salomé in 1897, while he was in Munich. Lou had already broken with Rée and had married the tempestuous Java-born Andreas, an Orientalist who became a professor at the University of Göttingen. She seemed to be unaffected by her earlier encounter with Nietzsche, although he was emotionally shaken by her rejection of him, and she was still more the type to captivate than to be conquered. Lou had no cause to dread the fire of genius, and indeed Rilke, who was thirteen years younger than she and apparently much more sensitive and vulnerable than Nietzsche ever was, seemed to be the one whom the relationship might endanger.14

That Lou was able to influence the young Rilke is suggested by the fact that Frieda von Bllow, authoress and African explorer, referred to Rilke as "Lou-man" and "Lou's

14Ibid., p. 22.
disciple" after the first Russian trip. So, just as Lou had once been called Nietzsche's disciple, so now was Rilke designated hers. Rilke himself discloses in the following excerpt from his Florenzer Tagebuch of 1898 how Lou influenced and comforted him: "Einmal kam ich ja so arm zu Dir. Fast als Kind kam ich zu der reichen Frau. Und Du nahmst meine Seele in Deine Arme und wiegtest sie." Lou was even successful in convincing Rilke that he should change his name from René to Rainer, which to her, sounded more masculine and Germanic.

Lou played a major part in inspiring Rilke's creativity, for it was she who made the young poet more conscious of his achievements and potentialities, thus heightening his self-assurance and sense of responsibility. Lou particularly had a hand in the composition of Rilke's Stundenbuch, the first part of which was written by him directly after the first Russian trip with her in 1899.

It is important to note that Rilke dedicated his Stundenbuch to Lou, a fact which suggests that she may have had a large part in inspiring his composition of this work. The dedication reads: "Gelegt in die Hände von Lou." According to Peters, Rilke had entrusted the manuscript of the Stundenbuch to Lou's care, and when it finally appeared in

15 Graff, p. 82.

16 Rilke, Tagebücher aus der Frühzeit (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1942), pp. 135-36.

17 Graff, p. 88.
book form in 1905, he dedicated it to her.  Binion states in *Frau Lou, Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple* that Lou announced in an unpublished diary entry of June 7-8, 1917, that she was responsible for the *Stundenbuch*, as the following passage reveals:

Lou insisted that Rilke's *Book of Hours*, in which his "monk's songs" later appeared, was her own on at least seven counts: she had mothered (hence borne) the author, she had put him up to writing it, it merely registered what he had learned from her, she had put the final (golden) touches to it, her Russian had elicited it from him, it was the very least due her in return for her hospitality to him and her long custody of his "monk's songs," and it was dedicated to and inscribed for her in thickest letters ("Laid in the hands of Lou").

Binion is of the belief that only the first two of Lou's claims are relevant. He says that the second count, that "she had put him up to writing it," is possibly true; the third count, that "it merely registered what he had learned from her," is, according to Binion, largely true. Even this concedes not a small influence from Lou—a recording of those concepts Rilke had learned from her. Of course, Rilke infused them with poetry, but the basic ideas, according to Binion, were from Lou, who, in the opinion of the author, had received them directly from Nietzsche.

It is believed by most Rilke scholars that Lou actually re-introduced Rilke to Nietzschean philosophy, as it were, for by virtue of the internal evidence of Rilke's works

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18Peters, p. 52.
19Binion, p. 252.
which predate his initial meeting with Lou, Rilke must have already been somewhat familiar with the writing of Nietzsche. Graff says the following regarding this subject: "Lou’s book on Nietzsche had already appeared in 1894, and we may be sure that through her Rilke’s leanings toward certain Nietzschean attitudes were given fresh perspectives."20 In other words, Lou acted as a catalytic agent in re-drawing Rilke’s attention to Nietzschean philosophy.

It is significant that in her memoirs, Lou recalls that she lost faith in God at an early age. The following excerpt from her memoirs illustrates this loss of faith:

> Wunderlich genug ergab sich aus dem Gottverlust zunächst jedoch eine unerwartete Wirkung: innerhalb des Moralischen—ich wurde nämlich davon um ein ganzes Stück braver, artiger (das Gottlose verteuflte mich also nicht); vermutlich, weil Niederschlagenheit dämpfend auf alle Ungebändigkeiten wirken mochte. Aber auch aus einem positivem Grunde: aus einer Art unabweislichen Mitgefühls mit meinen Eltern, denen nun nicht auch ich zum Ärgernis werden durfte, nachdem sie doch geschlagen worden waren gleich mir—denn auch ihnen war ja Gott verlorengegangen—sie wüssten es nur nicht.21

How Lou lost faith is really unimportant, but the fact that she did become an atheist is of consequence, for it is not difficult to realize what an influence it had on Rilke’s Weltanschauung when he heard the woman he loved and admired speak of the "inescapable reality of the universe’s godless-

20Graff, p. 84.

21Lou Andreas-Salomé, Lebensrückblick (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1968), p. 15.
ness."22 Lou must have introduced Rilke to Nietzschean philosophy at this time, particularly to Nietzsche's idea of the "Unknown God," for according to Peters, Nietzschean concepts were definitely entering Rilke's mind. In March 1898, only a year before Rilke was to go to Russia with Lou, he was already convinced that God was unknown and that the only way to contact him was through art.23 This idea of the "Unknown God" remained with Rilke for years, as the following lines from a letter to Mimi Romanelli on January 5, 1910, reveal: "Je serai etait ne conservant point de splendeur apparent, mais je cacherai en moi la conscience limpide, que nous avons prié ce matin. Prié-- vers qui? Je ne peux pas vous le dire."24

Those early years of 1897-98 when Rilke first met Lou were possibly the most important in his life, because they established his future as a poet and inspired in him the concept of a vocation which was nothing less than the founding of a religion based on art.25 Rilke recognized the void in the universe, a void which no doubt had been pointed out to him by Lou, and attempted to fill it with what would become for him the highest activity of which man was capable--art.

22Peters, p. 55.

23Ibid.


Lou's influence on Rilke was not of a temporary nature. He remained in contact with her for the rest of his life. Rilke writes to Lou from Muzot on January 13, 1923: "Kurz, bitte, schreib mir, das Jahr fängt nicht recht an, wenn ich Dich nicht erst drinnen, im neuen Raum, habe ein Paar Worte sagen hören." And a year later on April 22, 1924, Rilke writes to her: "Genug: ich möchte viel, viel von Dir, Deinen Arbeiten, Erfahrungen, Eindrücken, Einsichten wissen, es wird nicht anders gehen, Du musst einmal kommen. Denk, was wir für Tage hätten!" So even in 1924, two years before his death, Rilke still longs to hear the thoughts and opinions of the woman who had influenced him so profoundly in the late 1890's.

Conclusion

We have seen, in effect, how Lou Andreas-Salomé came into contact with Nietzsche and that she was well-versed enough in his philosophy to write an important scholarly book about it. We have also seen how Lou then came into Rilke's life and how great the influence was which she exerted upon him during the period when he began to write his Stundenbuch, by inspiring him with philosophical concepts she had learned from Nietzsche. In short, it has been shown that Lou was the human channel through which Nietzschean attitudes reached Rilke.

26Rilke, Briefe, p. 808.
27Ibid., p. 862.
CHAPTER TWO

NIETZSCHEAN THEMES

In Also Sprach Zarathustra, Nietzsche is primarily concerned with problems which center about the concept of God. There are four main themes from Zarathustra which are part of Nietzsche's philosophy of the God-image: the death of the Christian God, the exaltation of the Übermensch (the God-substitute), the clash between Christianity and art, and loyalty to the earth.

Themes from Zarathustra

The Death of God

Nietzsche proclaims throughout his Zarathustra that the Christian God is indeed dead, having died from uselessness and self-pity. According to Glicksberg, the death of this God is of necessity simultaneous with the death of tragedy.¹ No longer is man forced to be a slave to a rigid Christianity with its suppression of pleasure and its lies of an afterworld. Man is suddenly set free to chart his own course and to create gods of his own choosing and liking.²

¹Glicksberg, p. 139.
²Ibid., p. 4.
Man has come face to face with the omnipresent void of the universe, for he has actually exposed it by his denial of the existence of the Christian deity, and now he is confronted with the unenviable task of learning how to fill such a void, in order "to live meaningfully in the face of nothingness."³

Der Übermensch

In Zarathustra, Nietzsche maintains that meaning is to be found, first of all, in the Übermensch, man who has through unfettered mental and physical endeavors reached the summit of his capabilities. In other words, der Übermensch is the deification of man. Regarding the possibility of such an elevation of man, Knight says the following:

Combine the idea of the relativity of values with that of freedom, and there is no longer any reason why man should not create his own values, why God should not be replaced by man. We are here at the very heart of our modern dilemma. Can a civilization survive the extinction of its beliefs; must man believe in something beyond himself, or will he prove capable of creating and respecting his own laws?⁴

Glicksberg contends in his work, Modern Literature and the Death of God, that man has actually caused the death of God, has, in effect, murdered him. Now, to seem worthy of the deed, man must almost become a god himself, and, according to Nietzsche, the Übermensch is such a sacred being.

³Ibid., p. 40.

Man must constantly make sacrifices along the way, if the Ubermensch is to be realized. He will be the end-product of years of straining and selection—the ultimate in perfected man.

Art vs. Christianity

Meaning is also to be found in art, according to Nietzsche. Nietzsche believed that Christianity was the antithesis of art, that it feared and hated beauty that came of the senses—that it actually hated life itself and contained within itself a yearning for extinction, for another life beyond this one. Glicksberg says, "Against the sickly ascetic lie of Christianity, Nietzsche, the metaphysical rebel, raises the banner of art."5 Salvation through the magic of illusion, that is, art, is advocated by Nietzsche to help man fill the void he created by killing the Christian God. Art, rather than a supernatural being, shall be man's highest end. Man is no longer creature, but, through his art, creator, and "only as an aesthetic product can the world be justified."6 For Nietzsche, then, life should revolve about art, in order for meaning to be found on earth.7

The artist has, indeed, a special and holy mission, for

5Glicksberg, p. 65.
6Ibid., p. 66.
7Ibid., p. 65.
it is he who presents to the world of laymen the concept of the Übermensch; it is through him that man learns of his successor—the Superman. Nietzsche considered the philosopher, the saint, and the artist as the noblest types of humans. The philosopher and artist, as creators, preach, as well as bring to realization, the doctrine of the Übermensch, whereas the saint, as martyr, recognizes the beauty, necessity, and inevitability of the concept of the Übermensch and, if need be, is prepared to die for it.

So, for Nietzsche, values can be affirmed without dependence on God—through determination in a creative quest. The artist, who has for centuries been exercising powers of creation, is the only being who truly creates. By striving toward the very limits of his aesthetic aspirations, he is a kindred spirit of the Übermensch, who is God improved upon, for as Nietzsche maintains, those who no longer find what is great in God must either deny or create it. Nietzsche has denied the Christian God this greatness and has created it for the Übermensch.

Bleibt der Erde treu

The existence of an afterworld is vehemently repudiated in Zarathustra; man is rather advised to remain faithful to the earth because it is his calling, particularly as an artist, to transform it, to give it meaning, to create

8Ibid., p. 64.
infinity within its finite boundaries, now that he no longer believes in the unbounded. As Heller points out, Nietzsche stresses in his works "the eternity of the moment here and now, the irrevocability of the one and unique opportunity and test of living." 

Nietzsche has, in effect, through his revolutionary concepts, issued man a challenge: will you be defenseless in the face of the neighboring void? Nietzsche hurls man against the void, knowing that most men will be defeated by it. They will be weak and will not be able to divorce themselves from the comfortable complacency of bourgeois orthodoxy; however, those who are not defeated, those who remain after the weeding-out process, will be among the Ubermensch, dauntless beings who have been unafraid to drive their minds and bodies into forbidden spheres to attain perfection.

Nietzsche is involved with the activity of creating a new world order to replace the sterile world of the Christian God, and in *Zarathustra* he specifically modifies the traditional God-image by promulgating the death of the Christian God, by announcing the advent of the Ubermensch, by sanctifying the mission of the artist, and by transferring heaven to earth.

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10Ibid., p. 165.
Common Motifs

It is appropriate at this point to present a general discussion of those main motifs which Rilke and Nietzsche share, before Rilke's works which contain them are evaluated.

Rilke is considered by many critics to be "a greater peril to traditional values of truth than even Nietzsche, whose heir he seems in many ways to be." Both men were aware of their roles as misfits. They were out of step with the present, alienated from the past, and not yet able to enjoy the fruits of the future. Nowhere is this situation better stated than in Rilke's "Siebente Elegie" from the Duineser Elegien: "Jede dumpfe Umkehr der Welt hat solche Enterbte, denen das Frühere nicht und noch nicht das Nächste gehört." The figures of Nietzsche and Zarathustra are also among those disinherited ones who can only look to the future for meaning—toward the Übermensch.

Rilke and Nietzsche were exceptional men who found it extremely difficult to adjust to a normal life among ordinary, narrow-minded people. Loneliness, of necessity, accompanied the greatness of Rilke and Nietzsche and was

12 Rilke, Sämtliche Werke, hrsgb. von Rilke-Archiv in Verbindung mit Ruth Sieber-Rilke (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1955), I, 712. All further references to Rilke's works that appear in the text and are designated solely by volume and page numbers will come from this collection.
13 Kaufmann, p. 204.
reflected as a theme in their works. Nietzsche says in his poem "Vereinsamt,"

Die Krähen schrei'n
Und ziehen schwirren Flugs zur Stadt;
Bald wird es schrei'n,--
Weh dem, der keine Heimat hat. 14

The same mood of loneliness and homelessness is seen in Rilke's poem entitled "Herbsttag":

Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
Wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben
Und wird in den Alleen hin und her
Unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.

(I, 398)

For Rilke and Nietzsche, tradition cannot mean what it once meant, because they have, after all, broken with the past. 15 All ideas concerning religion and morals which have over the years hardened into stereotyped "truths" must be therefore re-examined and sometimes rejected. One must resolve to be open-minded and ready for one's individual calling. Nietzsche's character Zarathustra has successfully broken the hold of the past, as the following passage shows: "Nun sitzt er [Zarathustra] hier und wartet, alte zerbrochene Tafeln um sich und auch neue Tafeln,—halbbe-
schriebene" (II, 443). Rilke expresses this same belief, that tradition should yield to new feelings and experiences, in the following lines from the Stundenbuch: "Ich glaube an alles noch nie Gesagte./Ich will meine frömmsten Gefühle

14 Nietzsche, Gedichte (Wiesbaden, 1953), p. 27.
15 Kaufmann, p. 206.
Rilke, like Nietzsche, voices the conviction that the Christian God is dead, as the following lines from the Florenzer Tagebuch of 1898 testify: "Solange dieser Gott lebt, sind wir alle Kinder und unmündig. Er muss einmal sterben dürfen, denn wir wollen selbst Väter werden. Aber er ist ja tot..." 16 So, without believing in a traditional God, Rilke and Nietzsche believe that if only they will be totally receptive, they will be "addressed personally and experience a necessity, a duty, a destiny that will be just theirs and nobody else's, but no less their duty than a categorical imperative." 17 Sin now is defined as sin against the individual spirit and calling, a slavish retreat to traditional values and clichés.

Rilke and Nietzsche both express a disdain for comfort and for a place in the universe. As poet and philosopher, they felt that it was their obligation to experience the harsh and horrible realities of life by abstaining from the material comforts of an ordered, bourgeois existence, in order to arrive at some sort of meaningful reconciliation between man's possibilities and life's limitations. Rilke writes in a letter of April 12, 1923, to Countess Margot Sizzo-Noris-Crouy the following:

16 Rilke, Tagebücher aus der Frühzeit, pp. 52-53.
17 Kaufmann, p. 206.
Das Leben selbst—und wir kennen nichts ausser ihm—ist es nicht furchtbar? Aber sowie wir seine Furchtbarkeit zugeben (nicht als Widersacher, denn wie vermöchten wir ihr gewachsen zu sein?), sondern irgendwie in einem Vertrauen, dass eben diese Furchtbarkeit ein ganzes Unsitives sei, nur ein, vor der Hand, für unsere lernenden Herzen noch zu Grosses, zu Weites, zu Unumfassliches… so wie wir, meine ich, seine schrecklichste Furchtbarkeit bejahen, auf die Gefahr hin, an ihr (d. h. an unserem Zuviel) zu Grunde zu gehen—erschliesst uns eine Ahnung des Seligsten, das um diesen Preis unser ist. Wer nicht der Furchterllichkeit des Lebens irgendwann, mit einem entgültigen Entschlusse, Zustimmt, ja ihr zujubelt, der nimmt die unsäglichen Vollmächte unseres Daseins nie im Besitz, der geht am Rande hin, der wird, wenn einmal die Entscheidung fällt, weder ein Lebendiger noch ein Toter gewesen sein.23

Rilke's belief, that life must be confronted with all its horrors and discrepancies, reflects an influence from Zarathustra, in which Nietzsche maintains that the exceptional man, the creating one, cannot, will not and should not remain in the comfortable, unquestioning world of the masses. He must break away to experience life, painful though it may be at the time to execute such a break. The following excerpt from the chapter of Zarathustra entitled "Vom Wege des Schaffenden" illustrates this philosophy:


Nietzsche and Rilke also share the theme of the denial

23 Rilke, Briefe, pp. 827-28.
of a Jenseits, an afterworld. In the following passage from Zarathustra, Nietzsche expresses this view:

Ich beschwöre euch, meine Brüder, bleibt der Erde treu und glaubt denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischen Hoffnungen reden. Giftmischer sind es, ob sie es wissen oder nicht. (II, 280)

Rilke's last work, Der Brief des jungen Arbeiters, of February 1922 has the same theme, as the following excerpt reveals:


Rilke answers Nietzsche's challenge to "remain true to the earth" (II, 338), as the following letter of February 22, 1923, to Ilse Jahr shows:

So nannte ich ihn damals auch, den über mich hereingebrochenen Gott, und lebte lange im Vorraum seines Namens, auf den Knieen...Jetzt würdest Du mich ihn kaum je nennen hören...die Eigenschaften werden Gott, dem nicht mehr Sagbaren, abgenommen, fallen zurück an die Schöpfung...24

The several motifs that have been discussed are actually fused into a single experience, which Nietzsche and Rilke share. Having willfully disassociated themselves from the past, Nietzsche and Rilke develop a new piety of the future, which denies them "the security of any tradition as well as any escape from the terror of life, including even the

24Ibid., p. 819.
ancient hope for bliss in another life." But Nietzsche and Rilke are both adamant in their affirmation of this world, with all its joy and agony; as Heller says, Nietzsche and Rilke are "philosopher and poet of the same world." 26

Pre-Stundenbuch Nietzschean Influence

Nietzschean influences can readily be seen in several of Rilke's earlier works written before the Stundenbuch, particularly in Der Apostel (1896), Christus: Elf Visionen (1897), Das Florenzer Tagebuch (1898), and Geschichten vom lieben Gott (1899). Kaufmann says, "Nietzsche's influence is very apparent, if as yet very ill digested, in some of Rilke's juvenilia." 27

Der Apostel, a short story, which was conceived even before Rilke met Lou Andreas-Salomé, lashes out with unquestionable hatred at Jesus, who is depicted as a prophet of lies and weaknesses. The following is a portion of Der Apostel:


25 Kaufmann, p. 211.

26 Heller, p. 176.

27 Kaufmann, p. 200.
These same anti-Christian feelings, which condemn the virtues of brotherly love (Nächstenliebe) and pity (Mitleid), are also to be found in the following lines from Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "Meine Brüder, zur Nächstenliebe rate ich euch nicht; ich rate euch zur Fernstenliebe" (II, 325). The text of Zarathustra continues, "So seid mir gewarnt von dem Mitleiden; daher kommt noch den Menschen eine schwere Wolke" (II, 348). In addition to condemning the Christian virtues of brotherly love and pity, Rilke's passage from Der Apostel also reveals an influence from Nietzsche by stating the conviction that man is not yet ready to accept or understand the purity of love; only Giganten could grasp the meaning of such concepts, and it is these giants who are identical to Nietzsche's Übermensch.

In a letter to Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe on December 17, 1912, Rilke specifically states his attitude toward Christianity, an attitude equivalent to the one Nietzsche expresses in Zarathustra, and which Rilke himself had expressed earlier in Der Apostel. The following is an excerpt from that letter of December 17:

Übrigens müssen Sie wissen, Fürstin, ich bin seit Cordoba von einer beinahe rabiaten Antichristlichkeit....Jetzt ist hier eine Gleichgültigkeit ohne Grenzen, leere Kirchen, vergessene Kirchen—wirklich, man soll sich länger nicht an diesen abgegessenen Tisch setzen und die Fingerschalen, die noch herumstehen, für Nahrung ausgeben. Die Frucht ist ausgesogen, da heißt's einfach, grob gesprochen, die Schalen ausspucken.
Und da machen Protestanten und amerikanische Christen immer noch wieder einen Aufguß mit diesem Teegrus [sic], der zwei Jahrtausend gezogen hat; Mohammed war auf alle Fälle das Nächste; wie ein Fluss durch ein Urgebirg, bricht er sich durch zu den einen Gott, mit dem sich so großartig reden lässt jeden Morgen, ohne das Telefon "Christus", in das fortwährend hineingerufen wird: Holla, wer dort?—und niemand antwortet.28

In Christus: Elf Visionen, a series of poems from 1897, the year Rilke met Lou, Rilke displays more shadowings of Nietzschean concepts by denying the existence of God, except as the creative work of artists—an idea identical to the one found in the following line from Zarathustra: "...denn alle Götter sind Dichter-Gleichnis, Dichter-Erschleichnis" (II, 383). The old God of Christianity has died, and according to Rilke in Christus: Elf Visionen, none but the artist has the talent and calling to create a successor. For Nietzsche, the successor is the Übermensch, and for Rilke, it is the concept of the "Future God," placed on the throne by Rilke's own version of the Übermensch, the artist. The anticipation of this God of the future and his construction are important themes of the Stundenbuch.

Das Florenzer Tagebuch, known in English as The Tuscan Diary or Tuscan Journal, was written in the spring of 1898 and is permeated with Nietzschean ideas obtained from Lou, for according to Butler, Lou liberated and inspired Rilke, as is evident in The Tuscan Diary.29 In this work Rilke

28Rilke, Briefe, pp. 379-80.

29Butler, p.29.
announces the Nietzschean doctrine that religion is the antithesis of creativity, and that the creative man must divorce himself from it, in order to be productive. The following passage from The Tuscan Diary expresses this philosophy:

Die Religion ist die Kunst der Nichtschauffenden. Im Gebete werden sie produktiv; sie formen ihre Liebe und ihren Dank und ihre Sehnsucht und befreien sich so....Der Nichtkünstler muss eine Religion...30

The same ideas are presented again by Rilke in his work entitled Marginalen zu Nietzsches Die Geburt der Tragödie, in which he quotes excerpts from the Nietzsche work and follows them with brief analyses. For example, the following is a quote from Nietzsche's Die Geburt der Tragödie:

Das herrliche "Können" des grossen Genius, das selbst mit ewigen Leide zu gering bezahlt ist, der herbe Stolz des Künstlers--das ist Inhalt und Seele der äschyleischen Dichtung, während Sophokles in seinem Odipus das Siegeslied des Heiligen präjudierend anstimmt. (I, 58)

Rilke's comment ensues:

Die schaffende That des Künstlers hat ein Gleichwertiges nur im duldenden Untergang des Nichtkünstlers; durch beides geschieht eine grosse Gewaltsamkeit an den Menschen, den schwersinnigen. Über dem Grab eines Heiligen werden ebensoviel neue Menschen wach, wie vor dem unsterblichen Werke eines Schaffenden. (VI, 1167)

Rilke's Geschichten vom lieben Gott came into existence only a month after the first part of the Stundenbuch was completed in October, 1899. Regarding both works, Butler says that, although originating in Italy, they were inspired

30Rilke, Tagebücher aus der Frühzeit, p. 42.
by Russia and were derived from the Florenzer Tagebuch.\textsuperscript{31} It can be stated, therefore, that the Geschichten, as well as the Stundenbuch itself, were written in the same Nietzschean spirit of anti-orthodoxy as was the Florenzer Tagebuch, and as it has been demonstrated in this chapter, most of Rilke's early works reflect such a Nietzschean spirit.

\textbf{Conclusion}

It has been shown in this chapter that Rilke's works which antedate the completion of the Stundenbuch exhibit several Nietzschean themes from \textit{Also Sprach Zarathustra} which concern themselves with the God-image. The presence of these themes in Rilke indicates that he was very involved with Nietzschean philosophy when he began work on his Stundenbuch in 1899. It has also been demonstrated that, due to the existence of these many common themes in the works of Nietzsche and Rilke, that Rilke should be considered one of the philosophical heirs of Nietzsche.

\textsuperscript{31}Butler, p. 31.
CHAPTER THREE

RILKE'S STUNDENBUCH

General Comments

After Rilke had met Lou in Munich in 1897, and after they had returned from Russia in the spring of 1899, Rilke wrote the first part of the Stundenbuch, called "Vom münchischen Leben." In September 1901, a year after their second trip to Russia in the preceding summer, Rilke composed the second part of the Stundenbuch, which he named "Von der Pilgerschaft." In March 1903 Rilke left Paris for Italy, where he succeeded in writing the final part of the Stundenbuch, "Von der Armut und vom Tode." It was not until 1905, however, that the Stundenbuch was finally published.

The first part of the Stundenbuch is particularly rich in Nietzschean philosophy, containing approximately three times as many poems influenced by Nietzsche than are to be found in the second part. This situation can be explained by the fact that while Rilke was writing the first part, he and Lou were in closer contact than they were during the time when he composed the second part. The third part of the Stundenbuch displays virtually no influence from Nietzsche.

The Stundenbuch is the product of Rilke's duality. As a result, it is a strange mixture of two attitudes which spring from antitheses of spirit. One attitude is that of
a reverent glorification of God, while the other attitude is that of an impiety which condemns, ridicules, and has pity for an obsolete God, who, because of his inadequacy, should be discarded. This impiety reflects an influence from the God-image in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, probably via Lou, who, through her contact with Nietzsche, was very familiar with unorthodox thinking and was herself unconventional and inclined toward atheism.

There is no definite pattern of organization in the poems of the *Stundenbuch*. The poems are not grouped together in two distinct sections that correspond to the two attitudes mentioned above. Rather, a random mixture occurs, which often results in poems with opposite viewpoints following each other in direct sequence—a scheme which only serves to emphasize even more the dual nature of the *Stundenbuch*.

It is important to mention at this time that in the *Stundenbuch*, Rilke, speaking as if he were a Russian monk, is always addressing God whenever he makes use of the familiar form of the second person pronoun, *du*. This fact must be kept in mind when the poems cited from the *Stundenbuch* are read in this dissertation.

The second poem of the *Stundenbuch* describes the dualistic situation which is to follow throughout the collection of poetry, but it is the purpose of this dissertation to treat only those poems of the *Stundenbuch* which, in the author's opinion, reflect the Nietzschean concept of God.
Before specific themes of the Stundenbuch are discussed in detail, it is necessary to present a general view of the basic concepts and attitudes which are to be found throughout this work of Rilke. These general themes of the Stundenbuch (of which the specific themes are detailed extensions and ramifications) are concerned with the artist as a special type of human and his task of creating a future God.

In the Stundenbuch the artist is depicted as the kind of human who "receives the call from the earth to transform it."¹ The artist does not desert the earth, but, as Nietzsche says in Zarathustra, he "remains true to it" (II, 336). Rilke's "Neunte Elegie" from the Duineser Elegien deals with this mission of the artist:


The artist is capable of creating his own world of meaning from within himself. It is this ability which makes the artist different from his fellow humans, a philosophy expressed earlier by Novalis in Heinrich von Ofterdingen. The earth, serving as the raw material for the creative

¹Kaufmann, p. 237.
human to mold, was not formed from chaos in the dim past by some deity; rather, man is still faced with the chaos out of which he must create a world.  

Since the artist is occupied with the task of creating a new world from the confusion of the old world, his piety, according to Rilke, cannot consist of a reverence for tradition, because tradition has died with the old world. The artist's piety is rather a reverence for experiencing the present and anticipating the future.

The artist's mission is a major theme of the Stundenbuch. His masterpiece, as presented in that work, is the re-creation of God—the culmination of his efforts. Earlier evidence of Rilke's concern with this theme can be found in an essay of 1898 entitled "Über Kunst," in which Rilke stated a year before he began work on the Stundenbuch that art was nothing more nor less than the creation of future gods:


2Ibid.
in einem späten Urenkel sich vollende, mit allen Mächten und allen Namen geschmückt. Das ist die Pflicht des Künstlers. (V, 427)

For Rilke, conventional religion is thus replaced by a religion of art. Graff describes Rilke's new religion as "art, which everywhere and at all times creates the metamorphic contours of a future Godhead."³

Rilke's Stundenbuch announces the coming of this future God and depicts his creation by artists, who, by this very act of creation, give meaning to earthly existence. Mason expresses his view in the following passage concerning these artists:

"Artists will save the world by bringing God into existence. Art must fill the void of Christianity—to put back a soul, but a better soul—into the universe, in the place of the soul which departed from it when science killed the Christian God. Extending the idea of revolution, and inspired probably also in some measure by Nietzsche's idea of the Superman, Rilke arrives at the paradoxical conception of God as the final result instead of the first cause of the cosmic process, and of art as the decisive agent in bringing him into existence.⁴"

Rilke's view is possible, however, only if one accepts the belief that God is an idea sprung from the brain of men.

Since the basic themes of the Stundenbuch have been discussed, it is now appropriate to establish in general terms how these themes make Rilke Nietzsche's philosophical heir, before a more detailed presentation of proof is to be given later in this chapter.

³Graff, p. 93.
⁴Mason, pp. 37-38.
Rilke is Nietzsche's heir in many ways. Like Nietzsche, Rilke accepts the death of the Christian God. Clearly defined spheres are now objects of confused and conflicting claims; truth has dissolved into sheer illusion. By adjusting and revolutionizing, both Nietzsche and Rilke seek to replace Christian beliefs without a loss of spiritual grandeur. Man, not God, becomes the center of all things, and from perfected man (Nietzsche's Übermensch, for example) will be born the new God.

Rilke equates God with life, so that the process of creating God will take place "by living life to perfection." Only in this fashion does man create and worship God, and only thus can the visible become the invisible—inside man.

For Rilke, the artist is equivalent to Nietzsche's Übermensch. In the following excerpt from Der Apostel (1896), Rilke applies the doctrine of the Superman to artists and vigorously maintains that artists, already set apart from the mainstream of humanity, will in the future produce a greater race:

Nie kann die stumpfe, vielsinnige Menge Träger des Fortschritts sein; nur der "Eine", der Große, den der Pöbel hasst im dumpfen Instinkte eigener Kleinheit, kann den rücksichtslosen Weg seines

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5Heller, p. 159.


This philosophy of Rilke is identical to Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch, who is the culmination of years of striving by the strong and willful, after the weak and the unenlightened have fallen to the side.

The Specific Themes of the Stundenbuch

The poems of the Stundenbuch which are to be discussed in this section are organized along thematic lines. These themes have been arranged by the author of this dissertation in a sequence which, in his opinion, illustrates a mental process that occurs chronologically in the development of Rilke's thinking, as he becomes disillusioned with organized religion and must then begin the search for a better solution to life's incongruities.

First, there is expressed in the poems of the Stundenbuch a dilemma occurring within Rilke, who begins to have doubts about Christianity. He experiences the inner tension caused by the clashing of diametrically opposed forces contending for prominence. Then the failure of orthodoxy becomes clearly apparent to him, as he becomes aware of the inaccessibility of the Christian God, the lies he believes
are perpetrated by Christianity, and the weakness of the Christian God. A loss of faith, the inevitable result for Rilke, is then expressed in the Stundenbuch.

A break with the religious past becomes necessary for those who have become so disenchanted like Rilke. Of their own free will, they destroy all traces of their Christian heritage in their minds. Beliefs which had previously been suppressed by the Church and which are therefore considered forbidden, such as the pioneer spirit, a belief in an inner God, and a belief that God is the prodigal son of man, are brought to the fore and given free rein to build and characterize the future, a future that will be marked by an unaccustomed freedom from the restrictions of organized religion. The void of the universe can then be infused with earthly meaning, and according to Rilke, ultimate meaning on earth will be found through the process of constructing an earthly God.

The Dilemma

The poem which appears near the very beginning of the Stundenbuch expresses Rilke's basic problem: he is uncertain of his motivation in his search for God and is filled with doubts. He is aware that he has been searching for a long time, but he is unsure of what he will do once he succeeds in finding God. How will he react? What will be his relationship to God, favorable or unfavorable?
This second poem of the Stundenbuch reveals a man wrestling with the religious and iconoclastic attitudes at odds within him. The falcon, the storm, and the song are symbolically employed by Rilke in this poem to represent his different views of God found in the Stundenbuch, as the following poem-excerpt illustrates:

"Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen,"

Ich kreise um Gott, um den uralten Turm,
Und ich kreise Jahrtausende lang;
und ich weiss noch nicht: bin ich ein Falke, ein Sturm
oder ein großer Gesang. (I, 253)

The falcon, which symbolizes refuge in God, and the song, which represents praise of God, belong to the sphere of the pious, whereas the storm, which symbolizes the destruction of God, belongs to that of the profane.

The reader is then also faced with the dilemma of determining who or what the poet considers himself to be. Does he consider himself to be a falcon that will seek shelter in the Tower of God and at last have a resting place after long, hard years of exhaustive circling? Or, is the poet a mighty tempest howling about the stone walls, seeking to annihilate the Tower of God, which has for so long withstood the occasional onslaught of man's battering rams and nature's elements? Or, is he perhaps a great and powerful song that will praise and proclaim the merits of God as its notes approach and encircle the Tower?

This strange metaphoric mixture of falcon, storm, and song, characteristic of the Stundenbuch, must be borne in
mind, although this study will concentrate only on the poems reflecting the spirit and influence of the God-image in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, that is, those poems which show Rilke as the storm.

Indeed, Nietzsche's Zarathustra must be regarded in its entirety as one immense tempest raging about the tower of the Christian God. Nietzsche batters away continually at the tower, weakening its foundations and effecting the collapse of the walls. The characteristically Nietzschean mood of negation and destruction, evident throughout Zarathustra, is identical to Rilke's concept of the storm found in the second poem of the Stundenbuch. The following lines from Zarathustra illustrate this spirit of immanent destruction:

"'Das ist dein Unverziehlichstes: du hast die Macht, und du willst nicht herrschen.' und ich antwortete: 'Mir fehlt des Löwen Stimme zu allem Befehlen.' Da sprach es wieder wie ein Flüstern zu mir: 'Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen..."' (II, 400-01). In the ensuing passage, Nietzsche is speaking of the coming tempest that, whether with arrows or soft words, will destroy the values of traditional Christianity and its God: "Siehe die Gläubigen aller Glauben. Wen hassen sie am meisten? Den, der zerbricht ihre Tafeln der Werte, den Brecher, den Verbrecher--das aber ist der Schaffende' (II, 289). Nietzsche announces in the following excerpt from Zarathustra that a spirit of negation is necessary to bring about the annihilation of old tablets of values, in order that new tablets
may be built: "Und mag doch alles zerbrechen, was an
unseren Wahrheiten zerbrechen--kann! Manches Haus gibt es
noch zu bauen" (II, 372). Nietzsche is unconcerned about
what must be destroyed for truth's sake, for the process of
rebuilding cannot begin until the process of destruction has
been completed.

Thus we have seen how Rilke's second poem of the
Stundenbuch reflects the "tempest" of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, whose powerful winds of the future will destroy the
Christian God. Had not this philosophical concept from
Nietzsche entered Rilke's mind to complicate the ordinarily
simple act of accepting the orthodox practices of praising
God and seeking refuge in him, Rilke's dilemma expressed
in his poem would never have arisen.

The Failure of Orthodox Christianity

One of the main reasons for the existence of a dilemma
in Rilke's mind is the suspicion implanted there by
Nietzschean doctrine which maintains that traditional
Christianity is a totally unsuccessful human experiment.
This belief of Nietzsche, that organized Christianity has
failed to fulfill the needs of man, took a strong hold on
Rilke's thinking during the gestation years of the Stunden-
buch and became a principal formative theme in many of the
poems.

This failure of orthodox Christianity manifests itself
in these poems in the following themes: the Christian God
is inaccessible; Christianity is infested with lies; the
Christian God is weak and dying; and a loss of faith is
growing among discerning Christians.

The Inaccessibility of God

In the Stundenbuch Rilke expresses his conviction that
a principal failing of Christianity is that its God, as he
is defined and delineated, cannot be reached by those who
feel a need to communicate with him. He is far removed from
the earth and is covered with a thick, almost impenetrable
veil of hierarchy and ritual. As a result, interaction be­tween deity and worshiper is extremely difficult.

Weak men are overcome by depression and frustration in
failing to gain access to God, but strong men, like Rilke,
discard orthodoxy to find a god who can be reached. The
following excerpt from Rilke’s Stundenbuch depicts the
inaccessibility of the Christian God:

"Du, Nachbar Gott, wenn ich dich manchesmal"

Du, Nachbar Gott, wenn ich dich manchesmal
in langer Nacht mit hartem Klopfen störe,—
so ists, weil ich dich selten atmen höre
und weiss: Du bist allein im Saal.
Und wenn du etwas brauchst, ist keiner da,
um deinem Tasten einen Trank zu reichen;
Ich horche immer. Gieb ein kleines Zeichen.
Ich bin ganz nah.

Nur eine schmale Wand ist zwischen uns,
durch Zufall; denn es könnte sein:
ein Rufen deines oder meines Munds—
und sie bricht ein
ganz ohne Lärm und Laut.

Aus deinen Bildern ist sie aufgebaut.
In this poem, God is represented as the poet's neighbor in a tenement house. God seldom gives any indication, however, that he is living in the next apartment—it is almost as if he were not even there. The poet knows that God is there, but he cannot reach him, because they are separated by a single, thin wall; yet this wall, however thin, prevents the poet from communicating with God.

God is also in solitary confinement ("Ich weiss, Du bist allein im Saal") and is unattended, for no one comes to minister to his needs. He is divorced from human activity and is undoubtedly destined to die in obscurity, as he gradually fades from men's minds. By virtue of his isolation from man, God cannot serve earthly purposes which require attention. The same idea is found in the following lines from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, where God is depicted as being too remote from earthly events to be concerned about them: "Für einen Vater sorgt er nicht genug um seine Kinder; Menschenväter tun dies besser!...Er sorgt gar nicht mehr um seine Kinder..." (II, 430).

According to Rilke's poem, the undesirable situation of God's inaccessibility could be changed ("denn es könnte sein; ein Rufen deines oder meines Munds—/und sie bricht
ein/ganz ohne Lärm und Laut"). Before a change is possible, however, the system which placed God where he cannot be reached, that is Christianity, must first be eliminated, so that God can be re-defined and put within man's touch. At present, under the orthodox system, all communication lines are down between man and a God who is wasting away in isolated darkness.

In the following excerpt from the Stundenbuch, Rilke continues to condemn the Christian God for his inaccessibility:

"Ich bin derselbe noch, der kniete"

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Und so, mein Gott, ist jede Nacht;
immer sind welche aufgewacht,
die gehn und gehn und dich nicht finden.
Hörst du sie mit dem Schritt von Blinden
das Dunkel treten?
Auf Treppen, die sich niederwinden,
hörst du sie beten?
Hörst du sie fallen auf den schwarzen Steinen?
Du musst sie weinen hören, denn sie weinen.

Ich suche dich, weil sie vorübergehn
an meiner Tür. Ich kann sie beinahe seh'n.
Wen soll ich rufen, wenn nicht den,
der dunkel ist und nächtiger als Nacht....
(I, 310)

The general mood of this poem is one of disillusionment, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. In truly Nietzschean fashion, Rilke comments here on the failure of orthodox Christianity and its hidden God. According to the poem, Christianity, in its very definition of God as a deity of the beyond, has made it almost impossible for man to make contact with him ("immer sind welche aufgewacht,/die gehn
und gehn und dich nicht finden). God is the aloof judge who is unavailable for counsel and cannot condescend to find the time to concern himself with the thousands of paltry complaints and petitions which, in good faith, are constantly approaching his bench. He is a deaf-mute who is totally unaware of the suffering that is being experienced by those who still believe in him ("Du musst sie weinen hören, denn sie weinen").

Rilke's belief that the Christian God is hidden, out of human reach, unfamiliar, originates in Nietzsche, as the following passage from Zarathustra reveals:

Wer wärmt mich, wer liebt mich noch?
Gebt heisse Hände!
Gebt Herzens-Kohlenbecken!
Hingestreckt, schaudernd,
Halbtotem gleich, dem man die Füsse wärmt
Geschüttelt, ach! von unbekannten Piebern,
Zitternd vor spitzen eisigen Frost-Pfeilen,
Von dir gejagt, Gedanke:
Unnennbarer! Verhüllter! Entsetzlicher!
Du Jäger hinter Wolken!
Darniedergerblitzt von dir,
Du höhnisch Auge, das mich aus Dunklem anblickt:
--so liege ich,
Biege mich, winde mich, gequält
Von allen ewigen Märtern,
Getroffen
Von dir, grausamster Jäger,
Du unbekannter--Gott! (II, 491)

In another passage from Zarathustra, Nietzsche continues the theme of the inaccessibility of the Christian God by saying, "Es war ein verborgener Gott, voller Heimlichkeit.... Er war auch undeutlich. Was hat er uns darob gezürmt, dieser Zornschnauber, dass wir ihn schlecht verstanden!
Aber warum sprach er nicht reinlicher?" (II, 499-500).
words from Zarathustra show that the idea, that all means of direct communication between man and the Christian God are faulty, is a Nietzschean concept, which Rilke uses in his *Stundenbuch*.

In the following excerpt from a poem of Rilke's *Stundenbuch*, the poet returns to the Nietzschean-inspired theme of the almost total lack of communication between man and God:

"Und sein Sorgfalt ist uns wie ein Alb,"

Und seine Sorgfalt ist uns wie ein Alb, und seine Stimme ist uns wie ein Stein,--

wir möchten seiner Rede hörgig sein, aber wir hören seine Worte halb,

Das grosse Drama zwischen ihm und uns lärmt viel zu laut, einander zu verstehn,

wir sehen nur die Formen seines Munds, aus denen Silben fallen, die vergehn.

So sind wir noch viel ferner ihm als fern, wenn auch die Liebe uns noch weit verwebt,

erst wenn er sterben muss auf diesem Stern, sehen wir, dass er auf diesem Stern gelebt.

(I, 312)

In this poem Rilke asks, of what conceivable use to man is this God whose concern for humanity is like a nightmare and whose voice is like a stone? As far as man knows, God's voice is just as mute as a stone. Rilke states that the rift between man and God has been widening over the centuries, as the bonds between them have been disintegrating ("So sind wir noch viel ferner ihm als fern"). God is becoming a stranger to man, due to the fact that, as time elapsed, the concept of God, although originally pure and personal, became corrupted by a myriad of entangled hierarchies, unnecessary middlemen, ridiculously inhuman restrictions, and mendacious promises of a vague afterlife. Rilke says in his
poem that man is confronted only with God's outer form (ritual), not with his inner essence (spirit). Such a god has obviously outlived his purpose, and it is time for man to begin the process of re-evaluating and re-creating.

God is so far from the earth that, according to Rilke's poem, only after God will have died, will it become apparent to man that such a God ever existed. Rilke's admission of God's ultimate mortality is also a reflection of the God-image in Zarathustra, as the following lines prove: "Als Zarathustra aber allein war, sprach er also zu seinem Herzen: 'Sollte es denn möglich sein! Dieser alte Heilige hat in seinem Walde noch nichts davon gehört, dass Gott tot ist!'" (II, 279).

The poems which have been cited from Rilke's Stundenbuch contain the essential idea that the Christian God by definition cannot really communicate with man and is dying from disuse in some distant retreat. This concept is found in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, where Nietzsche expresses a dissatisfaction with the Christian God, who, being inaccessible, has failed to be of use to man. In conclusion, Rilke's Stundenbuch and Nietzsche's Zarathustra have been shown to be expressions of the same philosophy, which strengthens the theory that Rilke probably obtained this philosophy from Nietzsche.
According to Rilke, adherents to Christianity are never told the truth, but are constantly fed distortions and myths that are to be accepted without question. The astute person eventually becomes aware of these deceptions, however, and, if he is strong enough, is able to face and remedy them. In Zarathustra Nietzsche exposes the duplicity of Christianity, and Rilke, by continuing this Nietzschean theme in the Stundenbuch, reveals part of his Nietzsche inheritance. Both Nietzsche and Rilke issue to man the challenge to recognize Christianity as an undesirable propaganda machine which stands in the way of truth. In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke discusses the lie of Christianity:

"Sieh, Gott, es kommt ein Neuer an dir bauen,"

Sieh, Gott, es kommt ein Neuer an dir bauen, der gestern noch ein Knabe war; von Frauen sind seine Hände noch zusammengefügt zu einem Falten, welches halb schon lügt.

...............................
Noch gestern war die Stirne wie ein Stein im Bach, geründet von den Tagen, die nichts bedeuten als ein Wellenschlagen und verlangen, als ein Bild zu tragen von Himmeln, die der Zufall darüber hängt...

(I, 267)

In this poem Rilke reveals that he is strong enough to unveil the misrepresentations of Christianity and to muster his forces to strive for the acquisition of truth. Each new initiate has a hand in contributing to the building of the new deity, who personifies the sought-after truth,
according to Rilke. The novice, straight from childhood and still filled with its naïve trust and innocent piety, has long been a prey of deception. He has been a victim of lies at the hands of those who sought to indoctrinate him with the empty promises of orthodoxy, for only the impressionable mind of a child could be so easily molded and deceived.

The smooth stone in the brook represents the poet's former childlike brow. The stone was helpless as it was being shaped and fashioned by the corrosive power of the waters of the Church, which through the years had made it as slick as glass. The poet did nothing to steer his own course, but kept to the one already prescribed for him. He was continually acted upon and demanded nothing more than an occasional pictorial reassurance that some sort of Being inhabited the skies above him. There now descends upon that same brow the dark clouds of awareness, which reveal that until now, only lies have flowed over and through the poet's mind. These "dark clouds" symbolize Rilke's introduction to Nietzschean philosophy, which shook the foundations of established truths and caused the poet to question their validity. In describing the disillusionment of a Christian who begins to realize the duplicity of his religion, Rilke's poem "Sieh, Gott, es kommt ein Neuer an dir bauen" is identical to the following passage from Zarathustra:

Auf einem Eiland glaubten sie [Christians] einst zu landen, als das Meer sie herumriss; aber siehe, es war ein schlafendes Ungeheuer! Falsche
Werte und Wahn-Worte: das sind die schlimmsten
Ungeheuer für Sterbliche,—lang schlägt und
wartet in ihnen das Verhängnis. Aber endlich
kommt es und wacht und frisst und schlingt, was
auf ihm sich Hütten baute. (II, 349)

According to Rilke, Christianity has been proclaiming
falsehoods through the mouths of its priests to naive,
childlike communicants for centuries ("...sind seine Hande
noch zusammengefügt/zu einem Falten, welches halb schon
läßt"). This viewpoint is also evident in the following
excerpt from Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

Es jammert mich dieser Priester....Der, welchen
sie Erlöser nennen, schlug sie in Banden:—In
Banden falscher Werte und Wahn-Worte! Ach, dass
einer sie noch von ihrem Erlöser erlöst!....O seht
mir doch diese Hütten an, die sich diese Priester
bauten! Kirchen heissen sie ihre süßduftenden
Höhlen. O über dies verfälschte Licht, diese ver-
dumpfte Luft! Hier, wo die Seele zu ihrer Höhe
hinauf—nicht fliegen darf! (II, 349)

The following poem from the Stundenbuch pursues the
theme of Christianity's leading man astray from truth:

"Ich komme aus meinen Schwingen heim,"
Ich komme aus meinen Schwingen heim,
mit denen ich mich verlor.
Ich war Gesang, und Gott, der Reim,
rauscht noch in meinem Ohr....
(I, 286)

The poet implies here that he has been misled by orthodoxy
and its deceptions: he has strayed from the true path and
has become lost and entangled in a thicket of ritual and
dogma. The poetic equation of poet—= Gesang is reminiscent
of the term Rilke used at the very beginning of the
Stundenbuch to represent that part of his being which felt
reverently inspired to sing the praises of the Christian God,
However, the poet has fallen prey to deception, has betrayed himself by succumbing to lies, and has wandered off in error. At last he realizes that Christianity, with its many restrictions and fabrications, is unsuitable for him. The God whose merits he has been extolling with song has proved to be nothing more than an obscure, distant figment. The poet comes to his senses, recognizes traditional religion as a hoax, and returns to himself ("Ich komme aus meinen Schwingen heim").

Rilke's poem displays an inheritance from Nietzsche, for Nietzsche speaks of the return to the self after years of futile search and bitter disappointment, as the following lines from Zarathustra indicate:

Ich bin ein Wanderer und ein Bergsteiger, sagte er [Zarathustra] zu seinem Herzen, ich liebe die Ebenen nicht, und es scheint, ich kann nicht lange still sitzen. Und was mir nun auch noch als Schicksal und Erlebnis komme—ein Wandern wird darin sein und ein Bergsteigen: man erlebt endlich nur noch sich selber. Die Zeit ist abgelaufen, wo mir noch Zufälle begegnen durften; und was könnte jetzt noch zu mir fallen, was nicht schon mein Eigen ware? Es kehrt nur zurück, es kommt mir endlich heim—mein eigen Selbst, und was von ihm lange in der Fremde war und zerstreut unter alle Dinge und Zufälle. (II, 403)

Orthodoxy has infused the self with lies and has tried to reshape the self into a nondescript, pliable mass of acquiescence; but Rilke, like Nietzsche, expresses in his poem from the Stundenbuch the conviction that he has at last found his way back home to the self. Rilke has survived the deluding experience of Christianity and can now devote himself to the pursuit of truth.
Rilke resumes the theme of the lie of Christianity in the following poem from the Stundenbuch:

"Jetzt reifen schon die roten Berberitzen,"

Jetzt reifen schon die roten Berberitzen, alternde Astern atmen schwach im Beet. Wer jetzt nicht reich ist, da der Sommer geht, wird immer warten und sich nie besitzen.

Wer jetzt nicht seine Augen schliesst kann, gewiss, dass eine Fülle von Gesichten in ihm nur wartet bis die Nacht begann, um sich in seinem Dunkel aufzurichten; der ist vergangen wie ein alter Mann.

Dem kommt nichts mehr, dem stösst kein Tag mehr zu, und alles lügt ihn an, was ihm geschieht; auch du, mein Gott. Und wie ein Stein bist du, welcher ihn täglich in die Tiefe zieht.

(I, 337)

In pessimistic tone, the poet is speaking to the man who has entered "the autumn of his years," just as he speaks to him in his poem "Herbsttag" from Das Buch der Bilder (1902). He who in his youth has not remained true to himself, to his longings and capabilities, and has not fulfilled his dreams will experience nothing but disappointment and regret in his later life. He has wandered from the self and has become enslaved to the powers of established religion. He has no wealth of satisfying memories to comfort him in the night, because, according to Rilke, he has never been able "sich zu besitzen." His efforts have not been spent in trying to understand himself, for church and state have been monitoring his thoughts, actions, and desires for years. He has passively submitted to the propaganda that has been fed him, believing all the while that it was the truth. Now, as he
approaches death, he is bitterly aware that everything he has been taught is a lie ("...und alles lügt ihn an, was ihm geschieht"). He realizes that he has been the victim of a grand hoax perpetrated by Christianity. In retrospect, his life under the orthodox system must be regarded as having been nothing but senseless, shallow existence, but it is too late to correct the mistake, for there is no afterlife in which to continue, no other opportunity to live. The only chance at life has been wasted. Rilke's poem, in condemning organized Christianity and its promise of an afterlife and proclaiming that it is prevarication, exhibits an influence from Nietzsche, as the following passage from Zarathustra shows: "Überall ertönt die Stimme derer, welche den Tod predigen; und die Erde ist voll von solchen, welchen der Tod gepredigt werden muss. Oder 'das ewige Leben': das gilt mir gleich,—wofern sie nur schnell dahinfahren!" (II, 311). Both Nietzsche and Rilke denounce structural Christianity for preaching its greatest lie: the assurance of a hereafter. He who has listened to this promise and has placed his hopes in an afterlife has, according to Nietzsche and Rilke, simply squandered his only opportunity to live.

The person who still clings to the God of orthodoxy is slowly being dragged down to the depths of disaster. In Rilke's poem cited above, God is depicted as a millstone around man's neck, pulling him down ("Und wie ein Stein bist du,/welcher ihn täglich in die Tiefe zieht"). This point of view occurs in Zarathustra, where Nietzsche indicates
that the direction toward the Christian God must be down
(wheras the direction toward the Ubermensch is up). Zarathustra says the following about the way to the Christian
God: "Und andre gibt es, die werden abwärts gezogen: ihre
Teufel ziehen sie. Aber je mehr sie sinken, um so glühender
leuchtet ihr Auge und die Begierde nach ihrem Gotte" (II,
353). Nietzsche and Rilke regard the procession toward this
Christian God as the antithesis of progress. The man who
still believes in this God and still makes this journey to­
ward him is unknowingly being cheated, because in doing so,
he has betrayed himself and the earth, and all for nothing.
So the man who realizes at last that everything has been a
lie is granted remorse to plague him in his last years.

Such a man like the one described in Rilke's poem, who
suffers because he has wasted his life, should have taken
the advice Nietzsche offers in Zarathustra, where he gives the
formula for a meaningful, successful existence: "Ach, mein
Freunde! Dass euer Selbst in der Handlung sie, wie die
Mutter im Kinde ist: das sei mir euer Wort von Tugend!...
(II, 353) Wagt es doch erst, euch selber zu glauben--euch
und euren Eingeweiden: Wer sich selber nicht glaubt, lügt
immer" (II, 379).

All tragedy would have been spared the man who is de­
picted in Rilke's poem if Zarathustra's advice, to believe
only in the self, had been followed. Rilke has heeded this
advice and in his poem tells the consequences which occur
when the advice is not followed. And if remaining true to
the self means that traditional religion must first be dis-
carded, then there should be no reservations in so doing.

In Zarathustra Nietzsche proclaims that orthodox
Christianity is a religion of misrepresentations, and Rilke,
who discloses a Nietzschean influence in the Stundenbuch,
makes the same observation in his poems which have been
cited. Because of its deceit, Christianity is a failure and
must be replaced by a system whose purpose is not to mask
the truth, but to expose it.

The Weakness of the Christian God

A major failing of orthodox Christianity is that it has
not withstood the test of time; it is slowly dying, and its
God is weak and inactive. Nietzsche announces the death of
God in Zarathustra, whereas Rilke in the Stundenbuch awaits
the inevitable death of God. The death of this God is a
principal aspect of both the philosophy of Nietzsche and
Rilke, for both men concede that the death of the Christian
God must precede the emergence of a better god.

Addressing God in the following lines from a poem of
the Stundenbuch, Rilke presents a portrayal of the Christian
God's weakened state:

"Wenn ich gewachsen wäre irgendwo,"

Meine Freunde sind weit,
ich höre kaum noch ihr Lachen schallen;
und du, du bist aus dem Nest gefallen,
bist ein junger Vogel mit gelben Krallen
und großen Augen und tust mir leid.
(Meine Hand ist dir viel zu breit.)
Und ich heb mit dem Finger vom Quell einen Tropfen
und lausche, ob du ihn lechzend langst,
und ich fühle dein Herz und meines klopfen
und beide aus Angst.

Rilke employs a striking metaphor to describe the fate of
the Judaeo-Christian God in this poem. He is seen as a
small, helpless bird, too young to fly, who has fallen from
its nest and for whom the poet cannot help but feel pity.
God is a forlorn, forgotten, homeless creature whose destiny
is unavoidable, untimely death. Now that God is suddenly
exposed to the harsh realities of the elements, it is only
a question of time before he will certainly die. The
fledgling will never have the chance to learn to fly, but
will eventually be trampled to death by an unfeeling, pro-
gressive world of man.

Both the poet and the Christian God have cause to be
terrified at the prospects, as they briefly become brothers
in fear. God, unable to escape his impending doom, is fully
conscious that he has outlived his purpose and that there is
no longer a place for him on earth. Rilke’s belief that the
death of the Christian God is both unavoidable and necessary
is inspired by Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, as the following
excerpt illustrates:

Aber er—musste sterben: er sah mit Augen,
welche alles sahn—er sah des Menschen Tiefen und
Gründe, alle seine verkehrte Schmach und Hässlich-
keit. Sein Mitleiden kannte keine Scham; er
kroch in meine schmutzigsten Winkel. Dieser Neu-
gierigste, Übermitleidige musste sterben. Er sah
immer mich; einem solchen Zeugen wollte ich
Rache haben—oder selber nicht leben. Der Gott,
der alles sah, auch den Menschen dieser Gott musste
In Rilke's poem, God's death will force the poet to find purpose in a seemingly purposeless world, and he is afraid that perhaps he is not up to the challenge such an undertaking will present. This feeling of doubt is characteristically Nietzschean because it is expressed in Zarathustra by the Zauberer, who has momentary fears about his ability and strength to face a godless world, and begs God to return:

Nein! Komm zurück,
Mit allen deinen Martern!
Zum Letzten aller Einsamen
O komm zurück!
All meine Tränen-Bäche laufen
Zu dir den Lauf!
Und meine letzte Herzens-Flamme--
Dir glüht sie auf!
O komm zurück,
Mein unbekannter Gott! Mein Schmerz!
Mein letztes--Glück!
(II, 493-94)

The poet is able to live without God, however, and will find an even better substitute for God--man, an idea illustrated in the following line from Zarathustra: "Einst war der Geist Gott, dann wurde er zum Menschen..." (II, 306). Man the child, out of fear of the dark, gave meaning and form to God, and now as man enters adulthood, he casts the Christian God off with the rest of his dreams of childhood, overcomes his brief terror, bravely faces the void, and successfully fills it with the means and self-confidence known only to sole heirs.
In unconventional fashion, Rilke expresses in the following poem from the Stundenbuch a genuine concern for a God so weak and dependent that he must lose his meaning and cease to exist when the poet dies:

"Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe?"

Dein grosser Mantel lässt dich los.
Dein Blick, den ich mit meiner Wange
warm, wie mit einem Pfuhl, empfange,
wirst kommen, wird mich suchen, lange—
und legt beim Sonnenuntergange
sich fremde Steinen in den Schoss.

Was wirst du tun, Gott? Ich bin bange.
(I, 275-76)

Such a God, helplessly at the mercy of his fate, is to be pitied, and Rilke's pity for him is inspired by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, in which Zarathustra says the following:

"Gottes Weh ist tiefer, du wunderliche Welt! Greife nach Gottes Weh, nicht nach mir" (II, 555). This is certainly not the omnipotent deity of the Bible, who supposedly has everything so well under control, but a pitiable weakling who can do nothing but await his destruction.

Throughout Zarathustra Nietzsche presents the God of Christianity as having been a sickly, useless creature whose lot the sensitive man cannot help but view with momentary commiseration and anxiety; it is from Nietzsche's work that Rilke obtained his picture of a God destined for annihilation, which the following excerpt from Zarathustra shows:

"Du dientest ihm bis zuletzt," fragte Zarathustra, nachdenklich, nach einem tiefen Schweigen, "du weisst wie er starb? Ist es wahr was man spricht, dass ihm
Both Nietzsche and Rilke dare to feel pity for the doomed Christian God, to whom Rilke has said, "Du bist der Bittende und Bange" (I, 276).

Rilke again refers to the weakness of the Christian God in the following lines from a poem, part of which has previously been cited:

"Und seine Sorgfalt ist uns wie ein Alb,”

Das ist der Vater uns. Und ich—ich soll dich Vater nennen?
Das hieße tausendmal mich von dir trennen.
Du bist mein Sohn. Ich werde dich erkennen, wie man sein einzigliebes Kind erkennt, auch dann, wenn es ein Mann geworden ist, ein alter Mann.
(I, 312)

The poet cannot bring himself to follow the teachings of orthodoxy which demand that this nebulous, distant, incapacitated God be acknowledged as the father of man; such an idea is irreconcilable to him and to his own personal conception of gods and their origins in man. The poet admits his, that is, man's creation of God ("Du bist mein Sohn"), and expresses a genuine love for his child; however, he realizes that the child has become an old man, senile and nonfunctional. This attitude is derived from Nietzsche's Zarathustra, as the following excerpt reveals:

Als er jung war, dieser Gott aus dem Morgenlande, da war er hart und rachsüchtig und erbaute sich eine Hölle zum Ergötzen seiner Lieblinge.
Endlich aber wurde er alt und weich und mürbe und mitleidig, einem Grossvater ähnlicher als einem Vater, am Ähnlichsten aber einer wackeligen alten Grossmutter. (II, 499)

Only death remained for this God, and it was not long in coming.

Rilke maintains in Nietzschian fashion that the Christian God, tired and weak, is doomed to experience a death of obscurity. Such a God has no place in a progressive, dynamic future, when new values come forward. Nietzsche announces the death of God with joy, but Rilke is momentarily sad and frightened for God and man. Rilke comes to realize, however, the inevitability of God's death, and following Nietzsche's advice to prepare for the future's greatness, he looks forward to creating a new God of strength and energy.

Loss of Faith

The unavoidable result of the many failings of established Christianity is the loss of faith on the part of those who become aware of these failings. How can faith be maintained, when God is inaccessible, lies are told everywhere, and God is on his deathbed? Nietzsche in Zarathustra explains the desirability of a loss of faith in the old system, because a better solution lies just beyond the horizon—the Übermensch. Although Rilke vacillates in the Stundenbuch between affirmation and denial of faith in the Christian tradition, those moments when he loses faith can
be ascribed to an influence from Nietzschean philosophy.
Rilke, too, is aware of a better world-order in the future, when the artist will have completed the task of recon­structing God.

A loss of faith in both man and the Christian God is evident in the following lines from Rilke's Stundenbuch:

"Ich lese es heraus aus deinem Wort,"

Ich lese es heraus aus deinem Wort,
aus der Geschichte der Gebärden,
mit welchen deine Hände um das Werden
sich ründeten, begrenzend, warm und weise,
Du sagtest leben laut und sterben leise
und wiederholtest immer wieder: Sein.
Doch vor dem ersten Tode kam der Word.
Da ging ein Riß durch deine reifen Kreise
und ging ein Schrein
und riß die Stimmen fort,
die eben erst sich sammelten
um dich zu sagen,
um dich zu tragen
alles Abgrunds Brücke—

Und was sie seither stammelten,
sind Stücke
deines alten Namens. (I, 257)

The beautiful, idyllic cycle of existence was shattered early—when murder preceded the first natural death in the world. The ideal bliss of paradise vanished. Confidence and tranquility gave way to discrepancies and tormented consciences. Screams replaced soft prayers ("...und ging ein Schrein"), and man teetered on the brink of the precipice. The Christian religion split asunder ("Da ging ein Riß durch deine reifen Kreise") and can offer no solace to those who suffer within its bounds. According to Rilke's poem, there is no longer any trace of peace or harmony to be found.
Rilke’s poem, which implies that orthodoxy and dis-harmony are inseparable partners, descends in spirit from Nietzsche, who in Zarathustra explains that by instilling in man a bad conscience, the Church brought discord into the Christian world: "Neben dem bösen Gewissen wuchs bisher alles Wissen! Zerbrecht, zerbrecht mir, ihr Erkennenden, die alten Tafeln" (II, 447). Nietzsche is saying that if harmony is to be restored to the earth, one must first realize that it will not be found in institutional Christianity.

Ever since the first discord entered the world when Cain slew Abel, neither man nor God has been the same, for both have lost their innocence ("Und was sie seither stammeln,/sind Stücke/deines alten Namens"). The broken pieces of the old situation have never been reassembled, nor has the damage ever been repaired.

God, through the Christian Church, still directs man to live, be, and die ("Du sagtest leben laut und sterben leise/und wiederholtest immer wieder: Sein"), but there seems to be no justification for life, since the world is so overrun with evil and injustice. Christianity, in its weakness and adamant emphasis on the otherworldly, has done nothing to rid this world of its plight and, in fact, has only helped to worsen it.

Rilke’s poem cited above is directly followed by a Klagelied, in which the murdered Abel speaks. He laments
the fact that there are so many thriving Cains in the world, that no harm ever comes to them—rather, they inflict harm on others. They are subject to no high court of justice, and only the Abels have misfortune as their lot. Speaking of Cain, Abel says, "An mich hat die Nacht gedacht; an ihn nicht" (I, 448). The Abels of the world experience misery, however, only because they have continued to follow the good Christian advice "to turn the other cheek." Theirs has been a constant acquiescing. Rilke's sympathy does not lie with the Abels, those sickly ones who still allow themselves to be abused and ridiculed under the yoke of orthodoxy; Rilke rather joins with Nietzsche, who in the following passage from Zarathustra denounces those who still foolishly believe in the old order of Christianity:


(II, 330)

Rilke's poem is concerned with the incongruity which exists between the Christian virtues of humility and love and a world too cruel and callous to warrant such humility and love. There is nothing left in Christianity in which to believe. It is no wonder that intellectuals have experienced so great a loss of faith; such a disillusionment is part of the Nietzschean inheritance, much of which has fallen to Rilke.
Now the search for new values must begin—values that will enable man to better understand, tackle, and master his environment, as Nietzsche proclaims in the following excerpt from Zarathustra:


In the Stundenbuch Rilke follows Nietzsche’s lead by experiencing a loss of faith, accepting the reality of the Christian God’s death, and preparing for the search for new values.

The failure of Christianity produces an inevitable loss of faith in those who became aware of its many shortcomings. Everything bound up with orthodoxy is rejected in Zarathustra by Nietzsche, and Rilke, displaying a definitely Nietzschean influence in the Stundenbuch, also discards organized religion, due to a loss of faith on his part. The old order with its values must then be cast aside for a new order with new values.

Affected by the message in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra that Christianity has failed, Rilke supports this view in his Stundenbuch in poems which depict the inaccessibility of the Christian God, the lies of Christianity, the weakened condition of the Christian God, and the resulting
loss of faith on the part of disenchanted Christians. The entire heritage of conventional, historical Christianity is abandoned by Rilke, for a complete break with the past is necessary before a new world can become a reality.

The Break with Orthodox Christianity

Since the Church has in the eyes of Rilke proved to be a total fiasco, it only remains for him to disassociate himself from it. Rilke devotes a good deal of thought to the necessity for and the consequences of such a break with the religious past. Who should attempt the break? Who can make it? What is to be expected once the break has been completed? These are questions with which Nietzsche comes to terms in Zarathustra, and which Rilke inherits from Nietzsche.

In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke begins his discussion of the theme of the break with the traditions of Christianity.

"Ich habe Hymnen, die ich schweige."

Ich habe Hymnen, die ich schweige.
Es gibt ein Aufgerichtetsein,
darin ich meine Sinne neige;
du siehst mich groß und ich bin klein.
Du kannst mich dunkel unterscheiden
von jenen Dingen, welche knien;
sie sind wie Herden und sie weiden,
ich bin der Hirte um Hang der Heiden,
vor welchem sie zu Abend ziehen.
Dann komm ich hinter ihnen her
und höre dumpf die dunklen Brücken,
und in dem Rauch von ihren Rücken
verbirgt sich meine Wiederkehr.

(I, 279)
Rilke, like Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*, makes a clear distinction between the herd and the shepherd. Such a distinction must be borne in mind before any discussion is attempted which treats the break with orthodoxy. The members of the herd have neither mind nor will, and are perfectly satisfied to constantly bend the knee before those who govern them, whether politically or religiously. Individuality is unknown among them, for they have all emerged from the same mold of uncomplicated conformity.

The poet identifies himself with the shepherd ("ich bin der Hirt am Hang der Heiden"), who like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, is a being far removed physically and mentally from the masses. It is these shepherds who, according to Nietzsche, should make the complete break with the herd. Rilke's separation from the herd is not a complete one, however, for he is still unable to refrain from following after it, even though he senses that he is an outsider and has nothing in common with the herd. There still exists an unresolved conflict within him, although at the end of the poem he has obviously effected a solution, has made a final decision, and has turned away from the herd to pursue his own course ("und in dem Rauch von ihren Rücken/verbirgt sich meine Wiederkehr").

The contrast Rilke describes between the herd and the shepherd, or between the masses and the exceptional man who turns his back to them, is equivalent to the one found in *Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche condemns the existence of the
orthodox herd and issues a challenge to the shepherd to divorce himself from its ranks:


In his poem Rilke expresses that he has finally and successfully escaped from the narrow confines of the herdstall and its stiflingly provincial atmosphere. A weaker man would have been perhaps destroyed by the conflict of loyalties, and even for Rilke the herd had exerted a long, powerful influence. In the following lines from Zarathustra, Nietzsche is addressing those for whom the herd has had a lingering appeal: "'Alle Vereinsamung ist Schuld': also spricht die Herde. Und du gehörtst lange zur Herde. Die Stimme der Herde word auch in dir noch tönen" (II, 325).

But Rilke has answered "yes" to the question of Zarathustra, "Bist du ein solcher, der einem Joche entrinnen durfte?" (II, 326). Rilke must be counted among those strong ones who are able to tear themselves away from the stagnant environs of orthodoxy.

Those weaker men who cannot reconcile or eliminate their conditions of dual conflicts will succumb to them. Such men are not to be found among Nietzsche's Übermenschen, however. Rilke has heard, in addition to Nietzsche's
proclamation in *Zarathustra* that God is dead, the following words from that work:

> Mit diesen Predigern der Gleichheit will ich nicht vermischt und verwechselt sein. Denn so redet mir die Gerechtigkeit: "die Menschen sind nicht gleich."—Und sie sollen es nicht werden! Was wäre denn meine Liebe zum Übermenschen, wenn ich anders spräche? Auf tausend Brücken und Stegen sollen sie sich drängen zur Zukunft, und immer mehr Krieg und Ungleichheit soll zwischen sie gesetzt sein: so lässt mich meine große Liebe reden! (II, 358)

Therefore, since there is no God and men are unequal, it remains for those superior men, like Nietzsche and Rilke, to acknowledge their state of duality, overcome it by separating from the Christian system, and establish a better order on earth.

In the following poem Rilke expresses his newly-acquired desire to sever all ties with the inflexibilities of conventional religion—a desire accompanied by the realization that his childhood has been colored solely by the deceptions of Christianity:

> "Sieh, Gott, es kommt ein Neuer an dir bauen,"

> Denn seine Rechte will schon von der Linken, um sich zu wehren oder zu winken und um am Arm allein zu sein.

(I, 267)

As the poet approaches maturity, he understands clearly that he has been indoctrinated with lies, and desires to be free from the past restrictions of Christianity, in order to follow his own longings, to create his own values for the future, and to reach the very limits of his physical and
spiritual capabilities. These desires are symbolized in the poem by the right hand's wishing to be free of the left hand, in order to be sole ruler of the arms. Such a wish to be free, in order to act and to transform the earth, is identical with that of Nietzsche, expressed in the following lines from Zarathustra: "Und wie ertrug ich es, Mensch zu sein, wenn der Mensch nicht auch Dichter und Rätselrater und der Erlöser des Zufalls wäre! Die Vergangenens zu erlösen und alles 'Es war' umzuschaffen in ein 'So wollte ich es!'--das heisst mir erst Erlösung" (II, 438).

Rilke wishes to be at liberty to break from the masses and their beliefs and to search for and give meaning to the concept of God by himself, of his own will and power. Such a being who wants this freedom, as Nietzsche admonishes in Zarathustra, "dem Volk verhasst ist wie ein Wolf den Hunden: das ist der freier Geist, der Fessel-Feind, der Nicht-Anbeter, der in Wäldern Hausende" (II, 360). He is no longer satisfied with being told what to believe, nor with having to accept without question preconceived notions of truth. Whereas before, he had been a passive child, Rilke is now a skeptical, active adult who, due to his contact with Nietzschean philosophy, demands nothing less than the real truth. Zarathustra is speaking of this type of active person Rilke has become, when he says, "Ich sage euch: man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können" (II, 284).
In the following excerpt from a poem of the Stundenbuch, Rilke speaks of the moment when he at last leaves the world of structural religion in search of "a better prayer":

"Ich komme aus meinen Schwingen heim,"

Ich werde wieder still und schlicht,
und meine Stimme steht;
es senkte sich mein Angesicht
zu besserem Gebet.

(I, 286)

A great deal of strength and courage was required to leave the complacent surroundings of orthodoxy and seek this "better prayer." Although Christianity was soothing with all its ready answers and neat explanations concerning life, it was also deadly because a free spirit like Rilke was doomed in its midst. If Rilke had been less discerning, he would have remained within the enclosure of Christianity and would have been like those lost Arctic explorers who feel a warm, drowsy euphoria overtaking them just before they freeze to death. Rilke, like the dynamic man described by Nietzsche in the following passage from Zarathustra, has had the insight and fortitude to cut all bonds with systematized religion and the bourgeois way of life, so that he might best follow his own calling:

Frei von dem Glück der Knechte, erlöst von Göttern und Anbetungen, furchtlos und fürchterlich, groß und einsam; so ist der Wille des Wahrhaftigen. In der Wüste wohnten von je die Wahrhaftigen, die freien Geister, als der Wüste Herren; aber in den Städten wohnten die gutgefütterten, berühmten Weisen—die Zugtiere. Immer nämlich ziehen sie, als Esel—des Volkes Karren!

(II, 360-61)

In his poem, "Ich komme aus meinen Schwingen heim," Rilke refers to the return to the self, a return that heralds the release from slavery, for no longer is he subject to alien laws which force him to act contrary to his nature and conscience. He had the strength to leave Christianity and its sacred trivia behind him, in contrast to those who were either too stupid or too weak to do so—of whom Nietzsche says the following in Zarathustra:

Verhasst ist ihr gar und ein Ekel, wer nie sich wehren will, wer giftigen Speichel und böse Blicke hinunterschluckt, der AllzuGeduldige, Allgeduldiger, Allgenügsamer: das nämlich ist die knechtische Art. Ob einer vor Göttern und göttlichen Fußstritten knechtisch ist, ob vor Menschen und blöden Menschen-Meinungen: alle Knechts-Art speit sie an, diese selige Sehnsucht!

(II, 438)

Rilke heeded the message of Zarathustra and learned "sich zu wehren."

In the excerpt from the following poem, Rilke, addressing God, expresses fear and depression after he has realized that a break with the past is imminent:

"Wenn ich gewachsen wäre irgendwo,"

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

und ich fühle dein Herz und meines klopfen und beide aus Angst.

(I, 265)
The decision to sever all ties with the religious past can, indeed, be frightening, for man must remember that, after having been bold enough to leave the sphere of the established, he must then come to grips with the resulting void. It is only natural for man to be afraid after he has accomplished his courageous deed; he is at first overwhelmed by the inevitable consequences. The poet voices a feeling of fear in the poem cited above, a fear of facing a world from which the Christian God has permanently departed.

In Zarathustra Nietzsche warns that it will not be easy to abandon the ranks of ordered traditions; men will become frightened and uneasy, for danger and loneliness will be waiting for them after they forsake their bourgeois heritage. Rilke's fear stems from warnings like the following from Zarathustra:

Zarathustra aber sahe das Volk an und wunderte sich. Dann sprach er also: "Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch—eine Seil über einem Abgründe, ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben."

(Nietzsche, Zarathustra, II, 281)

Nietzsche admonishes that after an individual abandons his native faith, he will lose both courage and hope. His pride will crumble and he will be only too aware of his being alone. Everything will seem false to him. Man must destroy these feelings of fear and despair, or he will perish. According to Nietzsche, the strong man will be able to overcome fear and will be able to concentrate on building a
bright future. Rilke is such a man of strength, who has answered affirmatively to Nietzsche's question, "Es gibt Gefühle, die den Einsamen töten wollen; gelingt es ihnen nicht, nun, so müssen sie selber sterben! Aber vermagst du das, Mörder zu sein?" (II, 281).

In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke has already conquered his feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about withdrawing from institutional Christianity, and speaks of a greater future without it:

"Alles wird wieder groß sein und gewaltig."

Alles wird wieder groß sein und gewaltig.
Die Lande einfach und die Wasser faltig,
die Bäume riesig und sehr klein die Mauern;
und in den Tälern, stark und vielgestaltig,
ein Volk von Hirten und von Ackerbauern.

Und keine Kirchen, welche Gott umklammern
wie einen Flüchtling und ihn dann bejammern
wie ein gefangenes und wundes Tier,—
die Häuser gastlich allen Einlassklopfern
und ein Gefühl von unbegrenztem Opfern
in allem Handeln und in dir und mir.

Kein Jenseitswarten und kein Schauen nach drüben,
nur Sehnsucht, auch den Tod nicht zu entweihen
und dienend sich am Irdischen zu tiefen,
um'seinen Händen nicht mehr neu zu sein.
(I, 329-30)

This poem is perhaps the best expression of Rilke's condemnation of organized religion, while at the same time it is one of his most optimistic poems. Rilke envisions a future which will be free from the restrictions of the Church—when harmony and grandeur will once again be experienced by man, after having undergone the nightmare of Christianity. This longing for the future and the desirable
changes that will hopefully accompany it is typically Nietzschean, as the following passage from Zarathustra illustrates:


For Nietzsche, all efforts should be directed and channeled toward the future, the era of the Übermensch. Zarathustra says,

Ich lehre euch den Übermensch. Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr getan, ihn zu überwinden? Alle Wesen bisher schufen etwas über sich hinaus; und ihr wollt die Ebbe dieser großen Flut sein und lieber noch zum Tiere zurückgehen, als den Menschen überwinden? (II, 279)

Rilke also looks forward to the future, which is promising only because the break with orthodoxy will have been completed. At that time, man will be at liberty to perform to the very limits of his mind and body. Rilke’s Belief, “Alles wird wieder groß sein und gewaltig,” corresponds to the following words of Nietzsche in Zarathustra: "Ich bin selig, die Wunder zu sehen, welche heisse Sonne ausbrütet... und der heißeste Süden ist noch nicht entdeckt für den Menschen" (II, 398).

Rilke sees unlimited possibilities for man’s future achievements, once Christianity has been discarded. Such an ideal cannot be realized in the present, however, because the powers of organized religion are still very much in control. They not only stifle, confine, and degrade the
concept of God, but man as well. According to Rilke's poem, only after the forces of Christianity have been totally annihilated will man be able to breathe freely, progress, and prosper; only then will selflessness and sacrifice become really meaningful concepts.

Rilke's dissatisfaction with and his attack on the Christian system ("und keine Kirchen, welche Gott umklammern/ wie einen Flüchtling und ihn dann bejammern/wie ein gefangenes und wundes Tier") is part of his general Nietzschean inheritance. Throughout Zarathustra Nietzsche assails the Christian religion, condemning it as a disease which threatens all mankind and which impedes the coming of the Übermensch; the following lines from Zarathustra reveal Nietzsche's hatred for the Christian Church, a hatred Rilke reflects in the Stundenbuch:

Und lag es an unserm Ohren, warum gab er uns Ohren, die ihn schlecht hörten? War Schlamm in unsern Ohren, wohlan! wer legte ihn hinein? Zu vieles missriet ihm, diesem Töpfer, der nicht ausgelernt hatte: Dass er aber Rache an seinen Töpfen und Geschöpfen nahm, dafür dass sie ihm schlecht gerieten—das war eine Sünde wider den guten Geschmack. Es gibt auch in der Frömmigkeit guten Geschmack; der sprach endlich: "Fort mit einem solchen Gottes! Lieber keinen Gott, lieber auf eigne Faust Schicksal machen, lieber Narr sein, lieber selber Gott sein!" (II, 500)

According to both Nietzsche and Rilke, man should have the will and strength to overthrow the God of orthodoxy who has performed so miserably and take matters into his own hands. Dynamic men who are builders and creators will not be restrained or bound by a religious order which is solely
designed by and for the weak, the complacent, and the gullible. The similarities between Nietzsche's future era of the Übermenschen and Rilke's utopia, where there will be "Kein Jenseitswarten," where man will "dienend sich am Irdischen Üben," are certainly more than mere coincidences; they are in essence part of the same idea that joyfully anticipates a time when man will no longer be imprisoned by religious systems and can dedicate all his energies to the earth and its future.

Rilke advocates in the Stundenbuch a breaking with Christianity because it is an obsolete, inadequate system. Those persons who are aware that they have nothing in common with the masses and their narrow, stereotyped beliefs should be the ones to detach themselves from this system. Rilke's antipathy toward the traditions of Christianity stems from his knowledge of Nietzschean philosophy, and he is aware that the break with the past must be executed before a future can emerge that will allow mankind to shape his destiny, unfettered and unlimited. In the Stundenbuch Rilke's mind is occupied with these Nietzschean thoughts, as the excerpts from his poems have shown.

The Destruction of Orthodox Christianity

When the final and total schism with Christianity occurs in the future, then the orthodox realm and system will cease to exist. Such is the promise of Nietzsche, who in Zarathustra patiently awaits the inevitable death of the old
There will come a time when no one will be able to believe in the past, and only Übermenschen will inhabit the earth. Although at present only an enlightened few (among whom Rilke must be counted) can recognize the failure of orthodoxy and are strong enough to leave its confines, in the future a mass exodus from Christianity will have caused its disintegration. Rilke continues this Nietzschean theme in the Stundenbuch, where he also envisions a time when organized religion will crumble into nothingness, as the following poem from the Stundenbuch reveals:

"Ihr vielen unbestürmten Städte,"

Ihr vielen unbestürmten Städte,
habt ihr euch nie den Feind ersehnt?
O dass er euch belagert hätte
ein langes schwankendes Jahrzehnt.

Bis ihr trostlos und in Trauern,
bis dass ihr hungern dich ertrugt;
er liegt wie Landschaft vor den Mauern,
denn also weiss er auszudauern
um jene, die er heimgesucht.

Schaut aus vom Rande eurer Dächer;
da lagert er und wird nicht matt
und wird nicht weniger und schwächer
und schickt nicht Droher und Versprecher
und Überredet in die Stadt.

Er ist der grosse Mauerbrecher,
der eine stumme Arbeit hat. (I, 285)

In Rilke's poem, the many, prosperous cities within which the sacred values and beliefs of the masses are carefully guarded are secretly under siege. The enemy lies encamped before the walls, patiently and silently awaiting its inevitable victory. The enemy is a quiet worker, bent upon slowly eating away at the walls of these cities, in its
attempt to penetrate, seek, and destroy the bourgeoisie and their way of life.

This poem presents a situation where two opposing forces contend for possession of a city in which an individual lives, who, just as Rilke proves to be throughout the Stundenbuch, is often torn between allegiances, due to his inherent duality. Although Rilke feels a certain kinship with both forces, those of tradition and those of revolution, as the dual nature of the Stundenbuch shows, his duality momentarily dissolves and in the poem cited above, he longs for a victory of the revolutionary faction, which seeks to eradicate the establishment. In fact, he goes so far as to feel that the world would be a better place today if the forces of destruction had triumphed years ago. Nevertheless, the walls of orthodoxy are bound to topple in the future; however, it will be a slow, subtle process. The victory will be won, even before the inhabitants of the cities are aware that they have been under attack, for "der grosse Mauerbrecher" symbolizes time, gradually and secludedly effecting change.

In its prediction of a future when the Christian heritage will be demolished, Rilke's poem is quite Nietzschean in content and mood. Nietzsche announces often in Zarathustra his conviction that Christianity is a thing to be despised and eventually exterminated, as the following passage maintains:

Rilke's poem, "Ihr vielen unbestürmten Städte," tells of a war that will be waged against the cities of religious traditionalism; this theme is derived from Nietzsche's 

Zarathustra, in which Nietzsche also issues a call to war— a holy war, or jihad, to be fought against Christianity. The enemy must be uncovered and liquidated, as the following excerpt from Zarathustra advises:


(Nietzsche reminds man in Zarathustra that war is necessary to eliminate the old order before new values can be created; man must first be willing to destroy before he can create (II, 460). This war which Nietzsche predicts will bring beneficial results to man by putting an end to Christianity,
as he contends in the following passage from Zarathustra:

0 meine Brüder, es ist nicht über lange, da werden neue Völker entspringen und neue Quellen hinab in neue Tiefen rauschen. Das Erdbeben nämlich--das verschüttet viel Brunnen, das schafft viel Verschmachten; das hebt auch innre Kräfte und Heimlichkeiten ans Licht. Das Erdbeben macht neue Quellen offenbar. Im Erdbeben alter Völker brechen neue Quellen aus.

(II, 457)

It is the author's interpretation that these "new springs" to which Nietzsche refers will be seen only after "der grosse Mauerbrecher" in Rilke's poem has accomplished his task of shattering the walls of orthodoxy.

In Zarathustra Nietzsche denounces Christianity as an abomination which must be destroyed before man can be free to prosper, and foresees a time when the Christian system will be eradicated. Although Nietzsche says that this process of destruction is a slow one, it is nevertheless certain to come. Rilke, demonstrating an influence from Nietzsche, voices the same view in the poem entitled "Ihr vielen unbestürmten Städte," where he, too, predicts the gradual but sure annihilation of established religion by the forces of time and revolution.

Belief in the Forbidden

It is the existence of beliefs which are considered to be forbidden that effects the destruction of organized Christianity, for only forbidden beliefs can question traditional values and seek to completely overturn the status quo. When the powers of the Church are subdued in the
future, these prohibited beliefs that caused their ultimate defeat come into even greater prominence than before; they characterize the new order and are at the very core of its essence, as Rilke foresees. These beliefs which threaten the survival of the orthodox way of life are designated by the author as the following: a belief in the pioneer spirit, a conviction that there exists in man an inner god, and a point of view which regards God as the prodigal son of man. The employment of these unconventional beliefs brings about the death of the old order of Christianity, and their continued application furthers the growth and progress of the new order.

The Pioneer Spirit

Without a pioneer spirit, the destruction of orthodoxy and the construction of a new world are impossible. Man must first dare to believe what has never been believed before, and he must be willing to enter uncharted seas, to question established truths, and to tread on previously holy ground. Otherwise, the situation remains static. Rilke in the Stundenbuch displays a pioneering spirit, the prerequisite for overthrowing Christianity and founding a new religion.

In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke asserts his determination to dare to believe in that which has not yet been said or thought:
"Ich glaube an Alles noch nie Gesagte."

Ich glaube: an Alles noch nie Gesagte,
Ich will meine frömmsten Gefühle befrein,
Was noch keiner zu wollen wagte,
wird mir einmal unwillkürlich sein.

Ist das vermessen, mein Gott, vergieb.
Aber ich will dir damit nur sagen:
Meine beste Kraft soll sein wie ein Trieb,
so ohne Zürnen und ohne Zagen;
so haben dich ja die Kinder lieb.

Mit diesem Hinfluten, mit diesem Münden
in breiten Armen ins offene Meer,
mit dieser wachsenden Wiederkehr
will ich dich bekennen, will ich dich verkünden
wie keiner vorher.

Und ist das Hoffahrt, so las⁠ mich hoffährtig sein
für mein Gebet,
das so ernst und allein
vor deiner wolkigen Stirne steht.  (I, 259)

Rilke announces in the poem that he is a pioneer, who has
the strength, like Zarathustra, to disassociate his thoughts
and deeds from those of the masses. Zarathustra says, "Geht
eure Wege! Und las⁠ Volk und Völker die ihren gehen!—
dunkle Wege wahrlich, auf denen auch nicht eine Hoffnung
mehr wetterleuchtet!" (II, 456). Rilke's poem reveals that
he has taken this Nietzschean advice, for he has not hesi-
tated to enter the realm of the forbidden, nor to defile
the shrines of traditionalism. Nietzsche refers again to
the theme of believing in and striving for the forbidden in
the following passage from Zarathustra:

Mit dir [Zarathustra] bin ich in fernsten,
kältesten Welten umgegangen, einem Gespenste
gleich, das freiwillig über Winterdächer und
Schnee läuft. Mit dir strebte ich in jedes
Verbotene, Schlimmste, Fernste; und wenn irgend
etwas an mir Tugend ist, so ist es, daß ich
vor keinem Verbote Furcht hatte.  (II, 510-11)
These forbidden things become second nature to Rilke, since he can face the unknown and the "unsaid" without fear. He successfully escapes from the narrow confines of his religious past and releases his "most pious feelings," which Christianity had planted within him and which had governed his actions and thoughts for so many years. Rilke is prepared to renounce comfort and peace of mind for the sake of truth.

It is a difficult task to abandon everything for truth, as Zarathustra explains:

Was ist das Schwerste, ihr Helden? so fragt der tragsame Geist, dass ich es auf mich nehme und meiner Stärke froh werde...in schmutziges Wasser steigen, wenn es das Wasser der Wahrheit ist, und kalte Frösche und heiße Kröten nicht vor sich weisen. (II, 293)

The truly adventurous and inquisitive spirits like Nietzsche and Rilke are not bound by preconceptions of religion that may hinder them in their quest to unveil the real nature of the universe, or as Nietzsche phrases it in Zarathustra, "Neue Wege gehe ich eine neue Rede kommt mir: müde wurde ich, gleich allen Schaffenden, der alten Zungen. Nicht will mein Geist mehr auf abgelaufenen Sohlen wandeln" (II, 342).

In the poem cited above, Rilke recognizes the unlimited potential of man's capabilities by proclaiming that he is a firm believer in the future. Rilke's affirmation, "Ich glaube an Alles noch nie Gesagte," contains the same philosophy as the following excerpt from Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "Tausend Pfade gibt es, die noch nie gegangen sind, tausend
Gesundheiten und verborgene Eilande des Lebens. Uner schöpft und unentdeckt ist immer noch Mensch und Menschen—Erde" (II, 339). Rilke's looking forward to the future is reminiscent of Nietzsche, who proclaims that the future is the era of the superhuman who is building for mankind a super-destiny. The present and past, with all their persistent tentacles and ubiquitous, menacing spectres, can no longer have a hold on men like Nietzsche and Rilke, who have willed them into weakness and insignificance.

Rilke readily admits that it may be presumptuous and arrogant on his part to endeavor to find God in forbidden, unorthodox spheres, ("Ist das vermessen, mein Gott, vergieb"), but he is being driven onward by an extremely active spirit that demands to know the truth about God. Rilke refuses to passively accept; he boldly questions. By his vacillation to and from God ("mit diesem Hinfluten, mit diesem Münden in breiten Armen ins offene Meer"), Rilke feels that he is able better than anyone else to reach a valid conclusion concerning the true essence of God. Such an undertaking is possible only because he has liberated himself from the slavery of institutionalized religion with its rigid, antiquated concept of God, and can now for the first time look at the situation objectively. As a result, it must follow that God, as defined by Judaeo-Christian tradition, must be re-defined.

The process of re-definition must be accompanied by a process of skepticism, questioning, and denial. Only after
the old order of things has been accused, brought to trial, and condemned, can orthodoxy be re-defined to produce a new system.

The pioneer spirit inherited from Nietzsche has enabled Rilke to dare to loosen the foundations of Christianity and to seek new values elsewhere, in order to re-define and re-construct the concept of God.

The Inner God

Another forbidden belief of Rilke is the origin of God within man, not beyond him. Opposed to the orthodox teaching that God, located in a distant heaven, created man, Rilke maintains that man has created God from the inner recesses of human essence. Man created the God of Christianity, but according to Rilke, this God has failed, and now man must attempt the divine experiment again—to create a new God for the future. Rilke reflects the influence of Nietzsche when he proclaims in the Stundenbuch that the god of the future originates within man, the artist, for Nietzsche maintains in Zarathustra that the origins of all gods are found within the limits of the human mind.

The following poem from the Stundenbuch reveals Rilke's belief in the inner god:

"Ich habe viele Brüder in Sutanen"

Doch wie ich mich auch in mich selber neige:
Mein Gott ist dunkel und wie ein Gewebe
von hundert Wurzeln, welche schweigsam trinken.
In this poem Rilke refers to his own personal god that dwells deep within him. It is a god of his, Rilke's, own choosing, who answers his particular needs. Whenever the poet looks inward to his own being, he can feel his god's presence. This concept is inspired by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, where Zarathustra speaks of an inner god which originates from within the exceptional man, subject to no outward laws of church or state:


(II, 307)

This inner drive, this spark, this god from whose warmth the poet emerges, is a dark, intricate, enigmatic presence whose roots reach deep down into Rilke's very heart—a fathomless well of feeling and experience. The poet has his own set of principles, created and designed solely for him; he is answerable only to his inner god, and not to any alien system of ritual and dogma.

Rilke's inner god dictates definitions of good and evil which apply only to Rilke, and no church may establish or impose them for him. Nietzsche announces the same conviction in the following passage from Zarathustra: "Der aber, hat sich selber entdeckt, welcher spricht: Das ist mein Gutes und Böses: damit hat er den Maulwurf und Zwerg stumm gemacht,
welcher spricht: 'Allen gut, allen böś'" (II, 441). It can be seen, therefore, that Rilke displays in his poem cited above an influence from Nietzsche's Zarathustra.

By rejecting the God of orthodoxy and by replacing him with his own god, Rilke becomes, in Nietzschean terminology, an Übermensch. The internal, creative force, and not the external, supernatural force, now becomes divine. Rilke's turning inward to his personal god for inspiration is identical to Zarathustra's introspection shown in the following lines: "Aber ich lebe in meinem eigen Lichte, ich trinke die Flammen in mich zurück, die aus mir brechen" (II, 362).

According to Nietzsche and Rilke, man is the creator and has his own inner god to speak to him and to guide him in his creative activities. As an introspective being, the poet takes on the role of a god himself, for he is above the reproach and/or approbation of other men. In the above-quoted poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke is conscious of his special possession—this god inside him, but he does not fully understand it. The "hundred roots" are evidence of the complexity and variety of the poet's inner life, which accounts in part for the many contrasts of mood which a poet experiences; they are the intricate fibers which compose the complex network of feelings, thoughts, and activities that penetrate the poet's inner being. They reach down into his depths for nourishment from the life-source, and it is there where, according to Rilke, the origin of God is to be found.
In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche expresses the poet's lot when he says, "Frei von dem Glück der Knechte, erlöst von Göttern und Anbetungen, furchtlos und fürchterlich, groß und einsam: so ist der Wille des Wahrhaftigen" (II,360-61). Rilke corresponds to this description, because, as his poem shows, he is free from outward restrictions of religion which would limit and influence his inner being and its activities. He feels at liberty to create his own god, or anything else which the inner being chooses to will into existence.

Another expression of the idea that there exists within the exceptional man a "god" that directs his destiny can be seen in the following lines from *Zarathustra*: "'Was höre ich!' sprach hier der alte Papst mit gespitzten Ohren; 'O Zarathustra, du bist fremder als du glaubst, mit einem solchen Unglauben! Irgend ein Gott in dir bekehrte dich zu deiner Gottlosigkeit'" (II,500). Even an inner god opposed to the tenets of orthodoxy must be considered holy, for, according to Nietzsche, it too has emanated from the source common to all gods--man.

In the following poem from the *Stundenbuch*, Rilke speaks further of the inner god:

"Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe?"

Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe?
Ich bin dein Krug (wenn ich zerscherbe?)
Ich bin dein Trank (wenn ich verderbe?)
Bin dein Gewand und dein Gewerbe,
mit mir verlierst du deinen Sinn....

(I,275)

According to Rilke's poem, it is man who engenders God and
endows him with life and purpose, and if man should die, then the God he created must also die. Without his parent, God is too weak, too non-functional to stand alone and loses his identity, drifting into certain obscurity. Rilke maintains that God is contained within man ("Ich bin dein Krug") and is an idea sprung from mankind's brain. This concept is identical to one already mentioned in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, where it is announced that all gods are merely parables of the poets. From Rilke's poem, it can be seen that if all men were to perish from the earth, then all the notions and plans that they had been carrying in their heads about gods would perish with them. Rilke believes that every individual bears his own personal conception of God with him to the grave, for God is no longer considered to be an eternal spirit beyond the reaches of man and the effects of mortality. His life span is concurrent to that of man, and should man decide to alter his image of God, he is at liberty to demolish the old image to create a new one— all transpiring within the limits of the human mind.

Rilke continues the theme of the creation of God by man in the following poem of the Stundenbuch:

"Ich weiss: Du bist der Rätselhafte,"
Ich weiss: Du bist der Rätselhafte,
um den die Zeit in Zögern stand,
O wie so schön ich dich erschaffte
in einer Stunde, die mich straffte,
in einer Hoffahrt meiner Hand.

Ich zeichnete viel ziere Risse,
behorchte alle Hindernisse,—
dann wurden mir die Pläne krank:
es wirrten sich wie Dornegerank
die Linien und die Ovale,
bis tief in mir mit einem Male
aus einem Griff ins Ungewisse
die frömmste aller Formen sprang.

Ich kann mein Werk nicht überschaun
und fühle doch: es steht vollendet,
Aber, die Augen abgewendet,
will ich es immer wieder bauen.

(1,284)

In this poem Rilke implies that since all gods originate in the minds of men ("O wie so schön ich dich erschaffte"), then it is to be expected that they, these gods, exhibit those very imperfections which are found in men. In Rilke's poem, both man the creator and the world he has created are described as incomplete shadowings of the ideal—a Nietzschean idea found in the following passage from Zarathustra:

"Diese Welt, die ewig unvollkommene, eines ewigen Widerspruches Abbild und unvollkommenes Abbild—eine trunkne Lust ihrem unvollkommenen Schöpfer—" (II,297).

Rilke says in the poem that God was created by virtue of a daring, presumptuous act on the part of an exceptional man, but somehow this noble endeavor, at first so beautiful and rewarding, went suddenly awry ("dann wurden mir die Pläne krank"). The product, the Christian God, proved to be less than desireable, for the artist's brush and pencil had strayed from the goal, producing an inferior, confusing series of obscure lines and colors. The original concept of the Deity has, in other words, become distorted and lost among complicated and inane tenets and hierarchies, to the extent that God no longer serves man's purpose.
Rilke maintains that the concept of the Christian God will not and should not remain static. As it exists, it is not whole; it is rather a rough, unfinished product wrought by the inexperienced hands of a novice. It must be re-worked and polished by a master. (this philosophy bears a great similarity to Nietzsche's assertion in Zarathustra, that man, as a concept, is a crude, incomplete foreshadowing of a divine masterpiece of the future, namely the Superman, toward whom man is ever evolving). From this entanglement which defines the Christian God, however, has sprung a new conception that even Rilke can regard with pride and awe ("bis tief in mir mit einem Male/aus einem Griff ins Unge-wisse/die frömmste aller Formen sprang"). It is important to note that Rilke says, "tief in mir," when he refers to the origin of this new idea. This new conception, too, will give way to yet a newer one, for God is continually taking shape within man's being.

Rilke's belief that the Christian experiment has developed into a labyrinth of failures ("es wirrten sich wie Dorngerank/die Linien und die Ovale") is Nietzschean in tone, as the following passage from Zarathustra illustrates:

Nicht auch, dass ein Geist, den sie heilig nennen, eure Vorfahren in gelobte Länder führte, die ich nicht lobe: denn wo der schlimmste aller Bäume wuchs, das Kreuz,—an dem Lande ist nichts zu loben!—und wahrlich, wohin dieser "heilige Geist" auch seine Ritter führte, immer liefen bei solchen Zügen--Ziegen und Gänse und Kreuz und Querköpfe voran!—

(II,450)

Through Nietzsche, Rilke has found the Christian God to be
inadequate and in need of being refinished and improved, in order to eliminate the non-essentials and discrepancies. Rilke's poem contends that the concept of God is not complete, but ever changing ("Aber die Augen abgewendet,/will ich es immer wieder baun"). This idea of God's incompleteness is evident in the following lines from Zarathustra:

Rilke, by constantly altering his idea of God, is adhering to the same philosophy as Nietzsche who claims that there is not just one path which leads to the future, but many; there are also many ways to describe God. Alterations and additions must constantly be made, so that all possible views of God may be seen. There is no one view of God which should be considered as the sole approach to truth.

As a critical, sensitive optimist, Rilke cannot be satisfied with a God who denies life and the earth. The Christian God is a god of death and the Beyond and must be despised as well as pitied. The poet cannot rest until he has satisfactorily accomplished the creation of a god who
will completely fulfill his needs and desires. He cannot acknowledge any mediocre compromise along the way, and as a result, he is continually amending and deleting in his endless attempt to reconstruct and perfect God.

Rilke is in agreement with Nietzsche's unorthodox conviction that God's origins are in man and strongly believes that since the Christian God has been a failure, the poets will now bring about the creation of a new God, who like the old one, will be born deep within man. This for Rilke is the supreme mission of the poet—a mission which corresponds to Nietzsche's idea of man's mission to prepare the way for the arrival of the Übermensch. Both Rilke's Giganten and Nietzsche's Übermensch are future extensions of man.

God, Man's Prodigal Son

An extension of the concept of the inner god is the belief that as an idea, God is the prodigal son of man. This view is part of the system of forbidden beliefs that will play a major role in the future when, according to Nietzsche and Rilke, a new world order will come into being. The following presents the main points of the theme of God's being the prodigal son of man: man has fathered the idea of "God" (which has just been discussed); God wanders off from his source of origin, becomes defiled and corrupted; God returns to his source, repents of his errors, and is promised a prosperous future. God has been distorted under the system of organized religion, but after being refined
and improved under Nietzsche and Rilke's new plans for the future, God as an idea is destined for even greater success and will be incorporated into Nietzsche's Übermensch and Rilke's "Future God."

In the following poem Rilke depicts God as the prodigal son of man—a rather striking and extremely unusual metaphor:

"Du Ewiger, du hast dich mir gezeigt."

Du Ewiger, du hast dich mir gezeigt.
Ich liebe dich wie einen lieben Sohn,
der mich einmal verlassen hat als Kind,
weil ihn das Schicksal rief auf einen Thron,
vor dem die Länder alle Täler sind.

Ich bin zurückgeblieben wie ein Greis,
der seinen großen Sohn nichtmehr versteht
und wenig von den neuen Dingen weiß,
zu welchen seines Samens Wille geht.
Ich bebe manchmal für dein tiefes Glück,
das auf so vielen fremden Schiffen fährt,
ich wünsche manchmal dich in mich zurück,
in dieses Dunkel, das dich großgenährt.
Ich bange manchmal, dass du nichtmehr bist,
wenn ich mich sehr verliere an die Zeit.
Dann les ich von dir: der Evangelist
schreibt überall von deiner Ewigkeit.

Ich bin der Vater; doch der Sohn ist mehr,
ist alles, was der Vater war, und der,
der er nicht wurde, wird in jenem gross;
er ist die Zukunft und die Wiederkehr,
er ist der Schooss, er ist das Meer.

(I, 310-311)

Siegfried Mandel says that the text of the parable of the prodigal son found in the Gospel according to St. Luke had long been a favorite with Rilke, so it is not surprising that it should appear as a theme in the Stundenbuch. The main elements of the famous parable of Luke 15:11-32 can be

8Mandel, p. 84.
seen in the same sequence in Rilke's poem cited above. The Biblical parable is as follows: the relationship of father-son is first presented; then the separation between the father and the son occurs, the son wastes his fortune and time in sin, while the father is forced to worry about him at home; the son ultimately repents of his wrong-doing and returns home a different person to a father who receives him with rejoicing. These elements of the Biblical account will now be discussed with respect to Rilke's poem.

Rilke states explicitly in his poem that man is the father, and God is his son. This concept, that man has engendered God, is found throughout Nietzsche's works, particularly in *Zarathustra*; for example, in the chapter entitled "Auf den glückseligen Inseln," the following statements are common: "Gott ist eine Mutmassung...Gott ist ein Gedanke..." (II, 344). Rilke, exhibiting an influence from Nietzsche, has assigned to God the origin of a thought born in the mind of man.

There occurs, however, an estrangement between man and God ("Ich bin zurückgeblieben wie ein Greis/der seinen grossen Sohn nichtmehr versteht"). There is no longer any communication between them, for a schism has taken place. Rilke believes that under the present circumstances, man and God are slowly drifting apart. This view, that man and God are greatly separated by distance and are strangers to each other, is Nietzschean in spirit, as the following excerpt from *Zarathustra* shows:
Du Räuber hinter Wolken!
Sprich endlich!
Was willst du, Weglagerer, von mir?
Du Blitz-Verhüllter! Unbekannter! Sprich,
Was willst du, unbekannter--Gott?--  (II, 492)

Rilke's poem "Du Ewiger, du hast dich mir gezeigt" reveals that God can no longer attend to man's needs because he has wandered off into another world, has become corrupted, and has since then fulfilled no purpose. The father must remain at home, plagued by anxiety, uncertain of his son's fate ("Ich bebe manchmal für dein tiefes Glück"). He fears, however, that because of his son's newly acquired dissipated way of living, that he has met death. (Nietzsche maintains that this errant God of orthodoxy has already died: "Nun aber starb dieser Gott! Ihr höheren Menschen, dieser Gott war eure größte Gefahr" [II, 522]).

Rilke's poem and the Biblical parable both end with a tone of optimism. The father longs for his son's change of heart and his return. The son undergoes such a change, repents, and returns home. He has, in a sense, been reborn. Rilke realizes that, in spite of God's errors under the system of orthodoxy, God is nevertheless promised an ultimately great future—after his rebirth. And only after this rebirth occurs, that is, only after man discards the old God, revises his plans and concepts, and creates a new God, will this new God of the future (Nietzsche's Übermensch) attain his greatness. The new God will be everything that man was not—a perfected extension of man. Through his child man will himself reach greatness.
The fate of the prodigal son (and of Rilke's God) with his wandering, erring, repenting, and rebirth, is presented in the parable as follows, according to the Luther translation of the Bible:

Und nicht lang darnach sammelte der jüngste Sohn Alles zusammen, und zog ferne über Land; und daselbst brachte er sein Gut um mit Prassen.

Lukas 15, 13.

Der Sohn aber sprach zu ihm: Vater, ich habe gesündigt gegen den Himmel und vor dir; ich bin hinfort nicht mehr wert, dass ich dein Sohn heisse.

Lukas 15, 21.

Denn dieser mein Sohn war tot, und ist wieder lebendig geworden; er war verloren, und ist gefunden worden. Und sie fingen an, fröhlich zu sein.

Lukas 15, 24.

Rilke's anticipation of the future greatness of God is part of his inheritance from Nietzsche. The line in Rilke's poem "er ist die Zukunft" indicates that God's moment of glory will be in the future. In Zarathustra Nietzsche also glorifies the future, as the following excerpt reveals:

Ich liebe den, welcher, die Zukunftigen rechtfertigt und die Vergangenen erlässt; denn er will an den Gegenwärtigen zugrunde gehen. Ich liebe den, welcher seinen Gott zähtigt, weil er seinen Gott liebt.

(II, 282)

Rilke also speaks of love in his poem ("Ich liebe dich wie einen lieben Sohn"). Both Nietzsche and Rilke express love for something—Nietzsche for those who chastise their gods out of love, Rilke for his god who has wandered off into
uncharted seas. Rilke is one of those whom Nietzsche has professed to love, for Rilke has in his poem declared that he loves his god, but because this god has gone astray and has not fulfilled his true destiny, Rilke cannot help but feel disappointment and depression.

This overwhelming disillusionment subsides, however, and Rilke begins to realize that his child's ultimate greatness will come to fruition in the future. This optimism is paralleled by Nietzsche's joyful anticipation of the future era of the Übermensch: "Den Schaffenden, den Erntenden, den Feiernden will ich mich zugesellen; den Regenbogen will ich ihnen zeigen und alle die Treppen des Übermenschen" (II, 290). Rilke, although momentarily dejected over the present situation, can look forward to the future when his child (God) is fated to flourish and to enrich the further evolution of man as a race ("Ich bin der Vater' doch der Sohn ist mehr,'ist alles, was der Vater war, und der, der er nicht wurde, wird in jenem groß").

The following poem from the Stundenbuch refers again to the father-son relationship between man and God:

"Dir ist mein Beten keine Blasphemie:

Dir ist mein Beten keine Blasphemie:
als schlüge ich in alten Büchern nach,
dass ich dir sehr verwandt bin--tausendfach.

Ich will dir Liebe geben. Die und die...

Liebt man denn einen Vater? Geht man nicht,
wie du von mir gingst, Häste im Gesicht,
von seinen hülfslos leeren Händen fort?
Legt man nicht leise sein verwelktes Wort in alte Bücher, die man selten liest?
Fließt man nicht wie von einer Wasserscheide von seinem Herzen ab zu Lust und Leide?
Ist uns der Vater denn nicht das, was war;
vergangne Jahre, welche fremd gedacht,
veraltete Gebärde, tote Tracht,
verblühte Hände und verblichnes Haar?
Und war er selbst für seine Zeit ein Held,
er ist das Blatt, das, wenn wir wachsen, fällt.

(I, 311-13)

Rilke reverses the imagery in this poem, for now he refers to God as "father," not "son," as he did in the previous poem. The father-son metaphor is still of paramount importance, but in this case, man is the son who leaves God, the senile, dying father, never to return. Man is the prodigal son, who departs from his father, finds another home, undergoes a change, but unlike the Biblical account, never returns to his home; such a return is unnecessary because the father has died in the son's absence.

In his poem, Rilke speaks of two spheres— that of the old, dying father and that of the dynamic, growing son. It is to be regarded as only the natural course of events that one sphere should give way to the other, and although for the moment it may seem to be a sad occurrence, it is nevertheless a necessary, inevitable one that should not be mourned, but rather accepted, just as one must accept the withering and falling of autumn leaves. Nietzsche uses a similar metaphor in Zarathustra to describe the same philosophy that Rilke expresses in the last line of his poem: "Dass' Blätter welk werden—was ist da zu klagen! Lasse sie fahren und fallen, o Zarathustra, und klage nicht! Lieber
noch blase mit raschelnden Winden unter sie,—blase unter
 diese Blätter, o Zarathustra; dass alles Welke schneller
 noch von dir davonlaufe!" (II, 429). Thus Rilke once again
discloses part of his philosophical inheritance from
Nietzsche.

According to Rilke, change is unavoidable; a new order
is coming with the future, with new values and a new God.
Rilke's new order is to be guided by exceptionally en-
lightened men, dedicated to the new values of progress, life,
earth, and humanity—an order identical with Nietzsche's, in
which the Übermensch will play the leading role.

Rilke, following Nietzsche's lead, indicates in his
poetry a foreshadowing of a new order that will come in the
future, as the following poems (Nietzsche's "Nach neuen
Meeren" and Rilke's "Vorgefühl") illustrate:

Nach neuen Meeren

Dorthin—will ich; und ich traue
Mir fortan und meinem Griff,
Offen liegt das Meer, ins Blaue
Treibt mein Genueser Schiff.

Alles glänzt mir neu und neuer,
Mittag schläft auf Raum und Zeit—;
Nur dein Auge—ungeheuer
Blickt mich's an, Unendlichkeit!9

Vorgefühl

Ich bin wie eine Fahne von Fernen umgeben,
Ich ahne die Winde, die kommen, und muss sie leben,
Während die Dinge unten sich nicht rühren;
Die Türen schliessen noch sanft,

9Walter Urbanek, ed., Lyrische Signaturen (Bamberg,
1965), XIV, 277.
For the new order, God has been taken out of the skies and placed on earth, to be manifested solely in the emotions, thoughts, and actions of strong-willed and daring men. In the heavens there are now other ruling forces—forces that men to a certain extent can manipulate, as Zarathustra explains. "Wahrlich, ein Segnen ist es und kein Lästern, wenn ich lehre: 'Über allen Dingen steht der Himmel Zufall, der Himmel Unschuld, der Himmel Ohngefähr, der Himmel Übermut'" (II, 416).

In the Stundenbuch Rilke thus gives expression to the forbidden beliefs that God is man's prodigal son, and that, conversely, God is man's dying father—beliefs found throughout Nietzsche's Zarathustra. After being part of the unsuccessful experience of orthodoxy, the concept of God undergoes re-definition in the form of Nietzsche's Ubermensch and Rilke's "Future God," becoming in both instances the core of a new order.

The belief in the forbidden, inspired by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, has caused Rilke to separate from the traditions of Christianity, in order to find new values elsewhere. This pioneer spirit which dares to re-define the concept of

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10Ibid., p. 294.
God sets Rilke apart from the orthodox masses. The stage is now set for the development of the future greatness of man and his new God.

The Future

In Rilke's *Stundenbuch*, the failure of orthodox Christianity has been realized, the break has been made, orthodox Christianity has been sentenced to destruction, previously forbidden beliefs have been brought to the fore, and now the future must be considered. The following are the aspects of the future which will be discussed in this section: in the future, man will be able to experience a newly acquired freedom from the restrictions of organized religion, he will be at liberty to fill the void he created when he discarded Christianity and its God, and in filling the void, the guiding force will be the desire to remain true to the earth, for the new order with its God will be realized on earth, not in the heavens. This new God which Rilke announces in the *Stundenbuch* bears a striking similarity to the Übermensch in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, for they are both future, elevated extensions of humanity.

Freedom

With the destruction of orthodoxy, man is at last free to pursue his own course, to establish a new world order, and to create a new God. He can now reach his potential by being able to extend his mind and body into every sphere of
human activity. In the future, nothing will hinder his quest to arrive at the truth about life and its values.

In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke discloses his great confidence in man's future potential:

"Dass ich nicht war vor einer Weile,"

Dass ich nicht war vor einer Weile,
weisst du davon? Und du sagst nein.
Da fühl ich, wenn ich nur nicht eile,
so kann ich nie vergangen sein.

Ich bin ja mehr als Traum im Traume.
Nur was sich sehnt nach einem Saume,
ist wie ein Tag und wie ein Ton;
es drängt sich fremd durch deine Hände,
 daß es die viele Freiheit fände,
und traurig lassen sie davon.

So blieb das Dunkel dir allein,
und, wachsend in die leere Lichte,
erhob sich eine Weltgeschichte
aus immer blinderem Gestein.
Ist einer noch, der daran baut?
Die Massen wollen wieder Massen,
die Steine sind wie losgelassen

und keiner ist von dir behauen...
(I, 298)

With his newly acquired, unlimited powers, man can accomplish anything and will continue to grow and prosper, because he is now experiencing a revived freedom that had almost been forgotten—a freedom from the limitations of religion. This new freedom of Rilke's is found in Nietzsche's Zarathustra in the following lines:

"Von Ohngefähr"—das ist der älteste Adel

(II, 416)
Rilke has been released from the dungeon of religion ("es drängt sich fremd durch deine Hände/dass er die viele Freiheit fände") and is free to pursue his own course, since he is no longer answerable to any foreign God or to any other man. Rilke's dreams are suddenly unbounded—dreams to which Rilke should remain loyal. Nietzsche says in Zarathustra that man should always keep faith with his own dreams: "Ihr Schaffenden, ihr höheren Menschen! Man ist nur für das eigne Kind schwanger. Lasst euch nichts vorreden, einreden! Wer ist denn euer Nächster? Und handelt ihr auch 'für den Nächsten'—ihr schafft doch nicht für ihn!" (II, 526).

Unfortunately, the whole of humanity does not experience such freedom. There are still many who are either too ignorant or too weak to possess the insight and means to escape from the confines of the inflexible doctrines of structural religion. All ambition and optimism have been stifled in them, but Rilke cannot sympathize with such men who can only yearn for circumscription ("Nur was sich sehnt nach einem Saume/ist wie ein Tag/und wie ein Ton").

A belief in man's immortality ("So kann ich nie vergangen sein") is accompanied in the poem by an equally strong belief in the Christian God's mortality, for the Christian God alone has been assigned the tragic fate of death through oblivion ("So blieb das Dunkel dir allein"). Rilke's belief that light will come from the darkness of the dying Christian order ("Und wachsend in die leere Licht/erhob sich eine Weltgeschichte/aus immer blinderem Gestein.") is similar to
Nietzsche's philosophy expressed in the following passage from *Zarathustra*: "Diesen Rat aber rate ich Königen und Kirchen und allem, was alters-und tugendschwach ist--lasst euch nur umstürzen! Dass ihr wieder zum Leben kommt, und zu euch--die Tugend" (II, 287). A new virtue and a new life will rise from the grave of Christianity due to the efforts of recently emancipated men.

Rilke states in his poem that the Christian God will play no part in building the future of man ("und keiner ist von dir behauen"). He will be shoved to the side, to die of neglect in dark recesses. This idea, that Christianity is fated to die before the glory of the future can materialize, is inspired by Nietzschean philosophy in *Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche maintains that it is really only a question of time before the Christian religion will become useless and perish. Even Christ, had he lived long enough, would have been forced to condemn and discard his own teachings, a concept which is explained in the following excerpt from *Zarathustra*:

Wahrlich, zu früh starb jener Hebräer, den die Prediger des langsamen Todes ehren; und vielen ward es seitdem zum Verhängnis, dass er zu früh starb. Noch kannte er nur Tränen und die Schmerzmut des Hebräers, samt dem Hass der Guten und Gerechten—der Hebräer Jesus: da überfiel ihn die Sehnsucht zum Tode. Wäre er doch in der Wüste geblieben und ferne von den Guten und Gerechten! Vielleicht hätte er leben gelernt und die Erde lieben gelernt—und das Lachen dazu! Glaubt es mir, meine Brüder! Er starb zu früh; er selbst hätte seine Lehre widerrufen, wäre er bis zu meinem Alter gekommen! Edel genug war er zum Widerrufen!

(II, 335)
While the Christian God has slowly been sinking into dark oblivion, man, unfettered, has (according to Rilke) been steadily rising and progressing through the centuries of his self-made history, transforming and improving the earth. Man's past from which he has risen, represented in the poem by Gestein, is no longer needed. The stepping stones have merely served as foundations for the future and the enlightenment that will accompany it. All of these stones have been fashioned by man; God has played no role in constructing them, for man has been alone in determining his destiny and has accomplished everything by himself.

According to Rilke, the future will bring mankind freedom from the restrictions imposed by Christianity. Man will be unhindered in his endeavors to prepare the way for a new geocentric deity, Rilke's "Future God."

**Filling the Void**

The destruction of orthodox Christianity has left a void in the universe for man to fill, if meaning is still to be found on earth. This process of filling the void will be man's main task of the future, and Rilke states in the Stundenbuch how this void is to be filled—with dedicated activity to man, i.e., man's new God, and man's new heaven, i.e. the earth.

In the following poem of the Stundenbuch, Rilke refers to the new order of the future when man begins to fill the void:
"Sieh, Gott, es kommt ein Neuer an dir bauen,"

heute drängt
auf ihr sich eine Weltgeschichte
vor einem unerbittlichen Gerichte,
und sie versinkt in seinem Urteilsspruch.

Raum wird auf einem neuen Angesichte.
Es war kein Licht vor diesem Lichte,
und, wie noch nie, beginnt dein Buch.
(I, 267)

Only in the future will there be any light brought into the world, for the entire experience of traditional religion was nothing but an experiment in darkness ("Es war kein Licht vor diesem Lichte"). Rilke tells God in the poem that only when the new order is established and the religious past has been eliminated will God's "book," that is, the story of his true essence, be written, as man proceeds through the ages to fill the void with meaningful activity.

According to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the void awaits man beyond the earthly life, and since only the earthly life can be given meaning, time must not be squandered on ridiculous preparations for the hereafter; Zarathustra tells of this hereafter in the following lines: "Aber 'jene Welt' ist gut verborgen vor dem Menschen, jene entmenschte unmenschliche Welt, die ein himmliches Nichts ist" (II, 298). Rilke, by also believing that the Christian hereafter is a "heavenly naught," is disclosing part of his inheritance from Nietzsche, for the lines from Rilke's poem, "Raum wird auf einem neuen Angesichte, /Es war kein Licht vor diesem Lichte, und, wie noch nie, beginnt dein Buch," refer to a
new order of enlightenment and progress on earth, not in the skies, as Christianity had taught. After the Christian doctrine of the hereafter has been exposed as a lie, it should then be the sole occupation of the poet to fill the resulting void with art, in order to give back meaning to the earth and to provide it with a new God. Only then can the real essence of God be experienced.

The re-defining of God and the glorification of the earth will be, according to Rilke, the first true light to enter the world, because all that went before under Christianity was darkness. This belief, that Christianity and its emphasis on otherworldliness was harmful to man, is Nietzsche-inspired, as the following passage from Zarathustra reveals:


In Zarathustra Nietzsche warns that the Christian promises of an afterlife are lies and that man should devote his energy to developing the only life there is—the earthly
life. Rilke reflects this warning by advocating in his Stundenbuch the transforming of the void into an earthly heaven of material progress and spiritual enlightenment.

In the following poem, Rilke expresses his growing awareness that it is becoming man's duty to fill the void of the universe, and no longer the responsibility of God:

"Gott, wie begreif ich deine Stunde,"

Gott, wie begreif ich deine Stunde,
as du, dass sie im Raum sich runde,
die Stimme vor dich hingestellt;
dir war das Nichts wie eine Wunde,
da kühltest du sie mit der Welt.

Jetzt heilt sie leise unter uns.

Denn die Vergangenheiten tranken
die vielen Fieber aus dem Kranken,
wir fühlen schon in sanftem Schwanken
den ruhigen Pulss des Hintergrunds.

Wir liegen lindernd auf dem Nichts
und wir verhüllen alle Risse;
du aber wächst ins Ungewisse
im Schatten deines Angesichts.

(I, 279)

In the past, however, it was indeed the God of the Scriptures who had covered the void and given meaning to existence, or at least, man had attributed these capabilities to God, but now man is in control; he has taken the responsibility upon himself and has acquired the skill to fill the void with his own activity. By his own choice, man has, according to Rilke's poem, caused his star to rise, while that of the Judaeo-Christian God has begun simultaneously to sink into darkness.

The words "Jetzt heilt es leise unter uns" signify that
mankind has gradually been at work, trying to eliminate the detrimental effects of the void that accompanied the death of the Christian God. It is a vicious wound that man is slowly learning to heal. How is the void to be filled—through the creative powers of man, that is, art. According to Rilke, man is beginning to assuage the painful wound of the void through active efforts to conceal the gaping incongruities of the world ("Wir liegen lindernd auf dem Nichts/ und wir verhüllen alle Risse"). Only through these creative acts can man escape suffering and becoming engulfed by overwhelming nothingness. This concept is found in the following lines from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*: "Schaffen--das ist die grosse Erlösung vom Leiden, und des Lebens Leichtwerden. Aber dass der Schaffende sei, dazu selber tut Leid not und viel Verwandlung" (II, 345). Only through art can man face the horrors of oblivion and ultimately conquer them.

In Rilke's poem, it is stated that at first, man sat gingerly upon the void, confused and afraid, but he became strong and hardened, recognized his destiny, accepted the challenge, and set out with determination to meet it. In the following excerpt from *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche speaks of those who on the one hand are too weak to meet this challenge and those on the other hand who, like Rilke in his poem, have the drive to capably face it:

Und so ist es immer schwacher Menschen Art: sie verlieren sich auf ihren Wegen. Und zuletzt fragt noch ihre Müdigkeit: "Wozu gingen wir jemals Wege! Es ist
alles gleich!" Denen klingt es lieblich zu Ohren, das
gepredigt wird: "Es verlohnt sich nichts! Ihr sollt
nicht wollen!" Dies aber ist eine Predigt zur Knecht-
schaft. O meine Brüder, ein frischer Brause-Wind kommt
Zarathustra allen Weg-Müden; viele Nasen wird er noch
niesen machen! Auch durch Mauern bläst mein freier
Atem, und hinein in Gefängnisse und eingefangne Geister!
Wollen befreit; denn Wollen ist Schaffen; so lehre
ich. Und nur zum Schaffen sollt ihr lernen! Und auch
das Lernen sollt ihr erst von mir lernen, das Gut-
Lernen! Wer Ohren hat, der höre! (II, 452-53)

At the outset it is a rather precarious comfort that
man has created for himself after he has turned his back on
his Christian heritage, but his future is promising never-
theless. Human endeavors continue to obliterate the void
successfully, and while this process is occurring, the
Christian system and its God keeps receding into the back-
ground—an obsolete creature doomed to extinction ("du aber
wächst ins Ungewisse/im Schatten deines Angesichts"). Man
is emerging from the shadows cast by the temple ruins of
orthodoxy and, armed with those very powers he once dared
to attribute only to the heavens, he boldly faces the sun
that overlooks his realm, the earth.

Rilke continues the theme of filling the void in the
following lines from a poem of the Stundenbuch:

"Ich komme aus meinem Schwingen heim,"

................................................
Ich werde wieder still und schlicht,
und meine Stimme steht;
es senkte sich mein Angesicht
zu besserem Gebet.

(II, 286)

Man is now able to offer a "better prayer"—a prayer not to
the Christian God, but to man himself. This "besseres
"Gebet" is a reflection of the following lines from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*: "Ich will die Menschen den Sinn ihres Daseins lehren: welcher ist der Übermensch, der Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke Mensch" (II,287). In filling the void, faith may now be placed in man's projects and aspirations, and not in those of some distant, disinterested deity. Man suddenly has a new sense of direction and being. Rilke believes that after man has long been wandering under the shallow, deceptive influences of orthodoxy, he should seek and find a new piety outside orthodoxy in a realm where idealized man is supreme, and not the Christian God. This attempt on Rilke's part to find a holy purpose beyond the limitations of organized religion and its God is the same as the philosophy expressed by Nietzsche in these lines from *Zarathustra*: "Da entschloss sich mein Herz, dass ich einen anderen suchte, den Frömmsten aller derer, die nicht an Gott glauben--" (II,498).

Bleibt der Erde treu

In man's attempts to fill the void of the future, he must, according to the doctrine of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, remain true to the earth—to spend his time and energy solely in activities which will improve and beautify the earth and life upon it. This attitude is the main characteristic of the future world of the Übermensch. Rilke expresses in his Studenbuch the Nietzschean concept of remaining true to the earth and foresees an ideal future when man will be
earth-bound from birth to death, with no empty visions of an afterworld to deter or contaminate his mission to develop the earth. Rilke states in the following poem from the Stundenbuch that, in order to build the future, man must be finally rid of Christianity and its emphasis on an afterlife:

"Alles wird wieder gross sein und gewaltig."

Kein Jenseitswarten und kein Schauen nach drüben,
nur Sehnsucht, auch den Tod nicht zu entweihen
und dienend sich am Irdischen zu üben,
um seinen Händen nicht mehr neu zu sein.

(I, 329-30)

Rilke raises the question, How can men transform, improve, and even deify the earth, when all activities are channeled to the goal of the hereafter? Both Rilke and Nietzsche express their love for the earth and for those men who are loyal to it. Rilke's words, "Kein Jenseitswarten und kein Schauen nach drüben," are parallel to the following lines from Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "Also will ich selber sterben, dass ihr Freunde um meinetwillen die Erde mehr liebt; und zur Erde will ich wieder werden, dass ich in der Ruhe habe, die mich gebar" (II, 335). Rilke, inspired by Nietzschean philosophy in Zarathustra, warns that man must not look skyward with the eyes of a traitorous ingrate for guidance, but should remain on this planet, furthering his own will and world ("und dienend sich am Irdischen zu üben"), a concept which reflects these words of Nietzsche in Zarathustra: "Ja, zum Spiele des Schaffens, meine Brüder, bedarf es eines
In the following poem Rilke speaks of God's rebirth, of his return to the earth:

"In tiefen Nächten grab ich dich, du Schatz."

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ich sauge dich mit ihnen aus dem Raum} \\
\text{als hättest du dich einmal dort zerschellt} \\
\text{in einer ungeduldigen Gebärd,} \\
\text{und fielest jetzt, eine zerstäubte Welt,} \\
\text{aus fernen Sternen wieder auf die Erde} \\
\text{sanft wie ein Frühlingsregen fällt.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(I, 339)

The Judaeo-Christian tradition placed God in the heavens, far removed from the sphere of human problems and desires, but Rilke envisions a time in the future when God as a concept will return to the earth and be bound to it—how better to remain true to the earth than to place it at the very center of a new heaven? The earth becomes holy. In Zarathustra Nietzsche says the following about the glorification of the earth and the men who find purpose on it: "Bleibt mir der Erde treu, meine Brüder, mit der Macht eurer Tugend! Eure schenkende Liebe und eure Erkenntnis diene dem Sinne der Erde!" (II, 338). It can thus be seen that Rilke's dedication to the earth descends from the philosophy of Nietzsche.

Rilke's God will dwell on earth and will be manifested in man because his former world in the skies will have been destroyed ("und fielest jetzt, eine zerstäubte Welt"). Rilke is in total agreement with the statement Nietzsche
makes in Zarathustra: "—das Herz der Erde ist von Gold" (II, 388).

We have seen that it was Nietzschean philosophy which inspired Rilke's glorification of the earth in the Stundenbuch. We have also seen how Rilke has accepted the challenge of Nietzsche to remain true to the earth and has reflected this Nietzschean philosophy in his Stundenbuch, where he announces a time when man will experience unbounded freedom to execute the sacred mission of furthering earthly activities.

The Reconstruction of God

After acquiring the freedom to fill the void by keeping faith with the earth, man's major task is now the reconstruction of God. In his Stundenbuch Rilke advocates the need for such a re-building of the Christian God, a God which should be symbolized by man's own elevation, the end-product of years of sacrificing and creation on the part of dynamic, fearless men. This new God is similar to Nietzsche's Übermensch, who is also no deity of an alleged beyond, but a perfected extension of humanity.

Rilke expresses in the following poem his belief that in the past, man did not satisfactorily understand the concept of God, that orthodoxy failed in its attempts to produce a deity that man could genuinely use, only distorting and misconstruing an ideal—for this reason, it is necessary to reconstruct the idea of God:
"Die Dichter haben dich verstreut"

Die Dichter haben dich verstreut
(es ging ein Sturm durch alles Stammeln),
ich aber will dich wieder sammeln
in dem Gefäß, das dich erfreut.

Ich wanderte in vielem Winde;
da triebst du tausendmal darin.
Ich bringe alles was ich finde:
als Becher brauchte dich der Blinde,
sehr tief verbarg dich das Gesinde,
der Bettler aber hielt dich hin;
und manchmal war bei einem Kinde
ein großes Stück von deinem Sinn.

Du siehst, dass ich ein Sucher bin.

Einer, der hinter seinen Händen
verborgen geht und wie ein Hirt;
(mögest du den Blick, der ihn beirrt,
den Blick der Fremden von ihm wenden).
Einer der träumt, dich zu vollenden
und dass er sich vollenden wird.

(The Christian God has proved to be aloof, disjointed, incoherent, scattered ("verstreut"), and Rilke feels that it should be his task as a poet to help bring a better God into existence, a God more suited to man. This desire to dare to create something new from an established set of values is Nietzschean in tone, as the following words from Zarathustra show: "Neues will der Edle schaffen und eine neue Tugend" (II, 309).)

Rilke acknowledges in the poem that he is a seeker; were he not one, he would be content to weakly accept and leave undesirable situations unchanged. However, Rilke is being driven onward by a force within him that is determined to do nothing less than complete God and man—a force identical with Rilke's ego, his "Selbst." Rilke's desire to
seek ("Du siehst, dass ich ein Sucher bin") is equivalent to the contents of the following passage from Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

Das Selbst sucht auch mit den Augen der Sinne, es horcht auch mit den Ohren des Geistes. Immer horcht das Selbst und sucht; es vergleicht, bezwingt, erobert, zerstört. Es herrscht und ist auch des Ichs Beherrrscher. (II, 300)

Rilke's "Selbst" is engaged in the noble activities of transforming the past and re-building God. To do so, he has to assemble the fragments of God and man that have been accumulating over the centuries and form from them a meaningful, appropriate whole that will best serve to fulfill the needs of the future. The first stanza of the poem cited above, "Die Dichter haben dich verstreut/(es ging ein Sturm durch alles Stammeln),/ich aber will dich wieder sammeln/in dem Gefäss, das dich erfreut.", expresses Rilke's compulsion to gather together the broken pieces of God and man into a new entity—a philosophy identical to the one found in the following excerpt from Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

Ich lehrte sie all mein Dichten und Trachten; in eins zu dichten und zusammenzutragen, was Bruchstück ist am Menschen und Rätsel und grauer Zufall,—als Dichter, Rätselrater und Erlöser des Zufalls lehrte ich sie an der Zukunft schaffen, und alles, das war—, schaffend zu erlösen. Das Vergangne am Menschen zu erlösen und alles "Es war" umzuschaffen, bis der Wille spricht: "Aber so wollte ich es!" So werde ich's wollen—dies hiess ich ihnen Erlösung, dies allein lehrte ich sie Erlösung heissen. (II, 445)

A god must be made that is identical with idealized, perfected man; Rilke says in his poem that God is manifested
in man ("und manchmal war bei einem Kinde/ein großes Stück von deinem Sinn."), that is in innocent, undefiled man—the child. Therefore, any project which purports to complete God must also complete man; they are inseparable operations. The new concept of God is tied to the earth, personified by elevated man, or in other words, as Nietzsche contends, "Tot sind alle Götter: nun wollen wir, daß der Übermensch lebe" (II, 340). And what is the Übermensch other than elevated man? It can thus be seen that Rilke's Stundenbuch, by announcing the exceptional nature of the higher man and describing his mission of re-creating God, reflects an influence from Nietzsche's Zarathustra.

In the following poem from the Stundenbuch, Rilke's search for God continues, symbolized by a digging for buried treasure:

"In tiefen Nächten grab ich dich, du Schatz."

Denn alle Überflüsse, die ich sah, sind Armut und armseliger Ersatz für deine Schönheit, die noch nie geschah.

Und meine Hände, welche blutig sind vom Graben, heb ich offen in den Wind, so daß sie sich verzweigen wie ein Baum....

In tiefen Nächten grab ich dich, du Schatz.

Aber der Weg zu dir ist furchtbar weit und, weil ihm lange keiner ging, verweht.

O du bist einsam. Du bist Einsamkeit, du Herz, das zu entfernten Talen geht.

(Rilke, 339-40)

Rilke feels compelled to search for God, because he is dissatisfied with all previous attempts to define God; they are poor substitutes, all of them. Rilke is convinced that a
god must be created to replace these futile efforts that have tried to give meaning and form to God. The real glory of God has not yet been seen ("für deine Schönheit, die noch nie geschah"), but it will come with the future. Rilke's poem, in stating that the present and past have failed to define God and that a true description of God must be sought in the future, displays the effects of Nietzschean philosophy as the following excerpt from Zarathustra points out:


Only in the future will man and God be able to experience their promised greatness, because at present, both man and God are incomplete, imperfect, and corrupted shadowings of this greatness which is to come.

Rilke's striving toward the future, which he expresses in the Stundenbuch, is the same as Nietzsche's longing in Zarathustra found in the following lines:

Ich liebe die, welche nicht erst hinter den Sternen einen Grund suchen, unterzugehen und Opfer zu sein; sondern die sich der Erde opfern, dass die Erde einst des Übermenschen werde.... Ich liebe den, welcher arbeitet und erfindet, dass er dem Übermenschen das Haus baue und zu ihm Erde, Tier und Pflanze vorbereite...Ich liebe den, welcher die Zukünftigen rechtfertigt und die Vergangenen erlöst.... (II, 282)
It is not an easy task to reach for the future, for as Rilke's poem indicates, the search for the treasure of God will cause hands to bleed. Men who divorce themselves from the present and past, in order to seek a new God, will have to undergo much pain and loneliness ("Du bist Einsamkeit"). Rilke should first consider Nietzsche's question in Zarathustra, "Bist du ein solcher, der einem Joche entrinnen durfte?" (II, 325).

In the poem, Rilke says that God lies in the most remote areas ("Aber der Weg zu dir ist furchtbar weit"); however, these regions can be reached, whereas the God of the present and past is too far removed from man. Rilke is not deterred by the great expanse which separates him from the God of the future, but continues to excavate for the treasure, to the point that his hands bleed. This drive on Rilke's part to arrive at out-of-the-way and hard-to-reach places of the future is identical to the philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra expressed in the following passage:


(II, 450)

According to Rilke, the way that leads to the future has not been traveled by many, nor very often ("und, weil ihn lange keiner ging, verweht"). The ordinary man will never have the courage nor the insight to make the long, arduous
journey that must be undertaken to find God, but then, such a man is not to be found among Rilke's kindred spirits.

In Zarathustra Nietzsche contends that Christianity has failed miserably to serve mankind and must therefore be replaced. Rilke proposes the same view in his Stundenbuch, where he describes the undesirability of the Christian order and maintains the necessity for impeaching this order. Rilke states that the idea of God must be re-defined and re-built, but Rilke's God, like Nietzsche's Übermensch, will be bound to the earth, personified by flawless man.

Influenced by Nietzschean philosophy, Rilke expresses in the Stundenbuch the need for refurbishing the Christian God, and now in the following poem, he presents the actual process whereby God is rebuilt:

"Wir bauen an dir mit zitternden Händen"

Wir bauen an dir mit zitternden Händen
und wir türmen Atom auf Atom.
Aber wer kann dich vollenden,
du Dom.

Was ist Rom?
Es zerrällt.
Was ist die Welt?
Sie wird zerschlagen'
eh deine Türme Kuppeln tragen,
eh aus Meilen von Mosaik
deine strahlende Stirne stieg.

Aber manchmal im Traum
kann ich deinen Raum
überschaun,
tief vom Beginne
bis zu des Daches goldenem Grate.

Und ich seh: meine Sinne
bilden und bauen
die letzten Zierate.

(I, 261-62)
This poem depicts God as a mighty cathedral in the making, and man is seen as the contractor. According to Rilke, man has been at work on this seemingly unendless project for a long time. It is a sacred task, for the builders tremble in awe before their work ("Wir bauen an dir mit zitternden Händen").

This God is being molded to fit human needs; therefore, man, as the craftsman, willfully makes alterations on the divine image to satisfy his own personal wishes and requirements as they arise. To Nietzsche, it is indeed a holy act to create beyond the self (for example, toward the future goal of the Übermensch), as the men in the Rilke poem are doing. Zarathustra, speaking to the Christians, says the following about creation beyond the self:


(II, 301)
Rilke's men in the poem are indeed engaged in the Nietzsche-inspired process of creating beyond the self, for they are constructing a future God—a different sort of god whose ultimate manifestation will be realized in the senses of the most exceptional man, that is, the artist ("Meine Sinne bilden und bauen die letzten Zierate"). For Rilke, then, the pinnacle of the cathedral of man's new God is to be inhabited by the poet, the most divine representative of human endeavor. This new God, manifested in man the poet, replaces the old God of ritual and dogma, no longer needed. Rilke's artist, the crowning point of humanity, supplants the concept of the Christian God and lies beyond all value judgments concerning good and evil. He is a holy being who is instrumental in establishing a kingdom of heaven on earth. The concept of constructing an earthly paradise is found in the following lines from Zarathustra: "Freilich, so ihr nicht werdet wie die Kindlên, so kommt ihr nicht in das Himmelreich. (Und Zarathustra zeigte mit den Händen nach oben.) Aber wir wollen auch gar nicht ins Himmelreich: Männer sind wir worden,—so wollen wir das Erdenreich" (II, 550). The earthly heaven is a kingdom not of innocent, helpless children, but of dynamic, gifted men who by their own powers have overthrown the old regime and built a new one.

These exceptional men, poets, who effect the final completion of the construction process compose an elite
nobility of talent and strength, for they are the many gods who have dethroned the single God of the Christians, replacing monarchy with oligarchy. This philosophy that Rilke expresses in the Stundenbuch is also found in the following passage from Nietzsche's Zarathustra:


Rilke continues the theme of man's reconstruction of God in the following poem:

> "Werkleute sind wir: Knappen, Jünger, Meister,"

> Werkleute sind wir, Knappen, Jünger, Meister, und bauen dich, du hohes Mittelschiff. Und manchmal kommt ein ernster Hergereister, geht wie ein Glanz durch unsere hundert Geister und zeigt uns zitternd einen neuen Griff.

> Wir steigen in die weisenden Gerüste, in unsern Händen hängt der Hammer schwer, bis eine Stunde uns die Stirnen küsst, die strahlend und als ob sie Alles wüsste von dir kommt, wie der Wind vom Meer.

> Dann ist ein Hallen von dem vielen Hämern und durch die Berge geht es Stoß um Stoß. Erst wenn es dunkelt lassen wir dich los: Und deine kommenden Konturen dämmern.

> Gott, du bist gross. (I, 268-69)

God is again depicted as the grand cathedral stretching skyward, and man is the worker, whether he be apprentice, journeyman, or master. The task seems to be never-ending because newcomers are continually arriving at the
construction site with novel ideas and plans to further the building of the God-Cathedral, man's most noble and dynamic undertaking. Each individual involved in the work of re-constructing God contributes to the overall concept by bringing with him to the building area his own personal beliefs regarding the nature of the future deity.

Not only is Rilke voicing the unorthodox view that God was once created by man, but he is also asserting his conviction that the process of re-creation, arising from necessity as it did, is taking place even now. The scene in Rilke's poem is equivalent to the following selection from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, in which the germination and growth of the Übermensch is presented:

> Hinweg von Gott und Götttern lockte mich dieser Wille; was wäre denn zu schaffen, wenn Gött—da wären! Aber zum Menschen treibt er mich stets von neuem, mein inbrünstiger Schaffenswille; so treibt's den Hammer hin zum Steine. Ach, ihr Menschen, im Steine schläft mir ein Bild, das Bild meiner Bilder! Ach, dass es im härtesten, hässlichsten Steine schlafen musst! Nun wütet mein Hammer grausam gegen mein Gefängnis. Vom Steine stäuben Stücke; was schiert mich das? Vollenden will ich's; denn ein Schatten kam einst zu mir—aller Dinge Stillstes und Leichtestes kam einst zu mir! Des Übermenschen Schönheit kam zu mir als Schatten. Ach, meine Brüder! Was gehen mich noch—die Göttler an!

(II, 345-46)

In Rilke's poem, the workmen cease their activity at sundown; the bare outline of the cathedral can be seen against the sky. Man is almost overcome by the vastness of his work—a new God of the future, complete with a new set of values.
Rilke has described the process of reconstructing God in these poems. This activity demands the attention of all creative men in the new realm to produce a deity who will best serve man, life, and earth. This God will be elevated man: far-sighted, liberated, strong, universal, a being inspired by Nietzsche's Übermensch.
CONCLUSION

The analysis of the poems of the Stundenbuch has revealed that Rilke's concept of God in those poems is directly related and attributable to the God-image portrayed in Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra. Lou Andreas-Salomé's relationship with Nietzsche and her subsequent association with Rilke, during which she introduced him to Nietzschean philosophy, explains the presence of such a Nietzschean influence in the Stundenbuch.

The themes from Zarathustra which concern themselves with the concept of God (the death of the Christian God, the glorification of the Übermensch, the conflict between art and Christianity, and the dedication to the earth and earthly activities) have been shown to be part of the many motifs which Nietzsche and Rilke have in common. It has been demonstrated that these motifs appear frequently in Rilke's early works preceding the Stundenbuch, for example in Der Apostel, Christus, Elf Visionen, Das Florenzer Tagebuch, and Geschichten vom lieben Gott, a fact which clearly establishes him as one of the major literary heirs of Nietzsche.

The first two books of the Stundenbuch, "Vom münchischen Leben" and "Von der Pilgerschaft," display a definite reflection from the God-image of Zarathustra, which has been proved in the dissertation by evidence quoted from
Zarathustra. In these two books, Rilke follows Nietzsche's example by condemning Christianity for its failings, i.e. its God is inaccessible and therefore of no use to man, it masks the truth by filling man with empty hopes of an afterlife, its God is a weakling doomed to fade into obscurity, and it has caused a loss of faith to grow among those discerning ones who have become disillusioned because of these very failings.

It has been shown that, like Nietzsche in Zarathustra, Rilke maintains in the Stundenbuch that the disenchanted should sever all ties with the Judaeo-Christian system; Rilke also foresees a time when this system will cease to exist, a prophecy Nietzsche makes in Zarathustra. With the completion of the break with organized religion, a belief in the forbidden concepts of the pioneer spirit, the inner god, and God, the prodigal son of man, can rise to prominence to characterize a future which, according to Nietzsche and Rilke, will offer an unaccustomed freedom from the restrictions of orthodox religion. Man will then be able to infuse the void of the universe with earthly meaning by establishing a new religion based on the values of perfected man and a re-defined God.

These themes of the Stundenbuch all derive in spirit and content from Nietzsche's Zarathustra; their presence in Rilke's work proves that the poet of the Stundenbuch is one of the principal, philosophical descendants of Nietzsche.
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