

Marianna Toth: *Jesus – in Nietzsche's view*. PhD Dissertation
Consultants: Prof. Dr. Dezso Csejtei, Prof. Dr. Zoltan Gyenge,
Dr. Tamas Pavlovits
University of Szeged Faculty of Arts
Gorgy Malnasi Bartok Philosophy Doctoral School
Szeged, 2012.

Thesis of PhD Dissertation

I. Abstract

- The subject matter of my dissertation is a less examined area of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy namely the philosopher's interpretation of Jesus. There has been an innumerable interpretations published on Nietzsche's criticisms of religion, the ecclesiastical form of Christianity and Christian moral which he considered to be life-denying. Albeit the philosopher considered Saint Paul to be the real founder of Christianity and not Jesus, whom he differentiated from Christ representing Christian values and protected from the attack launched against religion. Nevertheless Nietzsche's opinion of "Jesus separated from Christianity" has not been examined so thoroughly. This is marked by the fact that even today the relevant literature raises the issue of a full circle analysis of Nietzsche's Jesus interpretations including the sources as well as the *Legacy*. The subject matter of my thesis proves to be a *stop-gap* since it examines an element of Nietzsche's philosophy the research of which has been relegated to the background so far.
- The explanation for the subject matter being relatively ignored is the fact that not the Christianity of Jesus but that of Saint Paul's that stood in the focus of Nietzsche's critique of Christian values. So there are only scattered references to Jesus the contents of which are often contradictory and hard to be matched that result in a fairly ambivalent interpretation. However when inspecting some of the philosopher's works and particularly the notes in his legacy you can find a fair number of shorter and longer descriptions of Jesus, and his work titled *The Antichrist* offers a complete portrait of *the psychology of the Redeemer*. Therefore, merely by its extent, it can be asserted that Jesus takes an especially important place in Nietzsche's thinking. Though the portrait pieces in his oeuvre show a considerable ambivalence we shall try to find such conceptual motives on the basis of which it becomes possible to outline a coherent picture of Jesus.

II. Antecedents to the Research

- The examination of Nietzsche's view of Jesus is peripheral in the research of the philosopher's views on religion. The relevant literature on the topic picks only one element of the philosopher's Jesus interpretations at each time – which, in most cases means the analyses of the lengthiest portrait, *The Psychology of the Redeemer* –, but the analyses do not include the analyses of other Jesus interpretations so light is never thrown on the sequence of thoughts existing among them.
- The relevant literature examining the philosopher's Jesus interpretation did not define clearly till the mid 1980's to whom the notions like "Jesus," "Christ," "Redeemer," "Crucified," "God on the Cross" used by Nietzsche referred to which made the examination of the Jesus-image impossible. To some extent this confusion of ideas caused that the Nietzschean separation of Jesus and Christianity did not get the proper emphasis for a long time.
- Furthermore, an exaggerate interpretation of Nietzsche is noticeable in the relevant literature, especially in his early reception. However, the subject of the exaggerate interpretations is actually not Nietzsche's image of Jesus but Nietzsche's relation to Jesus.
- A large number of the interpretations primarily try to find an answer to the question whether Jesus was an ideal for Nietzsche or was Jesus rather rejected by Nietzsche together with Christianity. For drawing up a final conclusion of Nietzsche's evaluation of Jesus it is indispensable to carry out a comprehensive examination of the different Jesus illustrations in his oeuvre.
- Most sources of the philosopher's Jesus interpretation are still to be explored.
- The theological relevance of the subject matter is also to be mentioned. The theologian interpreters of Nietzsche primarily analyze whether the philosopher's Jesus image is Christian or rather anti-Christian.
- The most important findings of the research are the following ones:
 - The early reception of Nietzsche's Jesus image is characterized by inhomogeneity and extremism due to the above mentioned confusion of notions. One group of researchers talks about Nietzsche's affirmation of Jesus while the other talks about his rejection.
 - The foundations of the research were laid down by Karl Jaspers, Ernst Benz and Martin Dibelius. Jaspers thoroughly studied Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity (*Nietzsche und das Christentum*, 1938), the research by Benz also covered the sources of the Jesus-image (*Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums und der Kirche*, 1956), and Dibelius also examined other Jesus illustrations by the philosopher besides the Portrait of

the Redeemer (*Der „psychologische Typus des Erlösers“ bei Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1944).

- A study by Jörg Salaquarda (*Dionysus versus the Crucified One: Nietzsche's understanding of the apostle Paul*, 1985) brought a decisive turn in the research. The study clarified that the term Redeemer can be identified with Jesus while the term Crucified with the Christ of the Church. Walter Kaufmann (*Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 1974) significantly contributed to the research as well.

- The most significant theological interpretations can be linked to the name of Ulrich Willers (*Friedrich Nietzsches antichristliche Christologie – Eine theologische Rekonstruktion*, 1988) and Eugen Biser (*Nietzsche – Zerstörer oder Erneuerer des Christentums?*, 2002). Biser argues for the theologian usefulness of Nietzsche's Jesus image while Willers argues against it.

- The latest findings of the research can be attributed to Andreas Urs Sommer, Daniel Havemann and Heinrich Detering. Urs Sommer studies the Portrait of the Redeemer in his volume of comments written for *The Antichrist (Friedrich Nietzsches Der Antichrist – Ein philosophisch-historischer Kommentar*, 2000), Havemann does it in relation to the image of Paul (*Der „Apostel der Rache“ – Nietzsches Paulusdeutung*, 2002), while Detering approaches it from the side of the science of literature (*Der Antichrist und der Gekreuzigte*, 2010).

- One can find remarkable initiations in the early Hungarian reception of Nietzsche for the interpretation of the Jesus image by Jako Blazovich, Jenő Henrik Schmitt, Béla Brandenstein and Lajos Fulep (*„Nietzsche-tár“ – selected pieces of the Hungarian language Nietzsche literature till 1956*). The topic of Jesus emerges in the works of Dezső Csejtej (*Prometheus - on low flame*, 1993), Otto Hevezi (*Nietzsche's understanding of Christianity*, 2011) and Andras Czeglédi (*Incipit Nietzsche – notes to the late picture of nihilism and aesthetic quality of Nietzsche*, 2008).

III. Hypothesis to be Justified by the Dissertation

- The main reason for the Jesus-topic being pushed into the background is the fact that most of the researchers find that the Jesus representations by Nietzsche are too varied and contradictory to make a coherent interpretation of it. Nevertheless the fundamental assumption of the dissertation is that the different Jesus interpretations by the philosopher can be “reduced to a common denominator“ since you can find returning elements on the basis of which you can create some coherence among the different pieces of the portraits. In our hypothesis we suppose that Nietzsche's Jesus-portraits are composed along such conceptual lines, motives which make it possible to typify and group certain Jesus-portraits consequently the evolution of the Jesus-interpretations by Nietzsche becomes homogeneous.

- Our hypothesis is based on the observation that although the Jesus interpretations of the philosopher show a considerable heterogeneity and ambivalence this can be explained by the fact that the differentiation between the person of Jesus and Christianity gradually became more and more significant in the philosophy of Nietzsche: this assumption was dim and occasional for a long time and intensified gradually, while at the end of Nietzsche's oeuvre you could see a radical separation, even contrast.
- So the research of the Jesus-image is always accompanied by the methodological dilemma according to which the interpreter has to be acquainted with Nietzsche's philosophy as well and decide on the basis of the context whether the Jesus allusions really refer to Jesus or to the Christ of the church. It might give some help that with the increasing differentiation a kind of gradual consequentiality can also be discovered in Nietzsche's works who in an orderly manner – but not without exception – refers to the historic figure with the name “Jesus” and to the representative of Christianity he refers to with the name “Christ”.
- Later with the differentiation between Jesus and Christianity a more and more positive opinion is formed of the historic figure in the philosophy of Nietzsche whose description is not free of contradictions in this way either. Our hypothesis is that the heterogeneous descriptions, regardless of the remaining ambivalences, represent a homogenous and coherent Jesus interpretation. Since the final, fully developed Jesus-portrait, *The Psychology of the Redeemer* by Nietzsche can already be considered homogenous and if you do not wish to treat the portrait of the Redeemer isolated but in relation to other Jesus pictures of the oeuvre than those are to be considered as the antecedents of the Redeemer's image.

IV. Methodological procedures applied in the dissertation

- We shall have to find such interpretative tendencies, motives for the justification of our hypothesis which can be strung as a string of thoughts that make it possible to analyze the separate Jesus portraits and to establish connections among them. During the development from heterogeneity to a homogeneous image some of these recurring motives fall into the background or totally disappear but some of others become stronger and more dominant while finally the most persistent motives converge into a final elaboration of the Jesus-image in *The Portrait of the Redeemer*. For the exploration of these general directions we shall survey Nietzsche's published writings about Jesus in chronological order and those that can be found in his *Legacy* in such a way that we discuss Nietzsche's *Legacy* of a certain period together with the published works. At the end of this chronological overview we get to the Jesus-image of *The Antichrist*, to the *Psychology of*

the Redeemer which – already being aware of the antecedents – we shall analyze profoundly.

- In our analysis we shall also examine the most important influences and pay special attention to two essential elements of the Redeemer's image, namely Nietzsche's idea of the analogy between Jesus and Buddha and antagonism between Jesus and Paul.
- Since the aspects of the questions of Jesus's personality take an outstanding place in Nietzsche's thinking between 1887 and 1888 as it is noticeable in the *Legacy* the examination of the last years takes a more thorough emphasis.
- After forming a uniform picture of the Jesus descriptions we shall be able to undertake the problem of the clarification of Jesus's evaluation. For this we shall have to put into words the philosopher's idea of ideal life or personality of the ideal man to compare it with the portrait of the Redeemer.
- In our research we shall have to spare some time for the examination of the topic from the literary and theological points of view as well. So for example we shall have to examine the Jesus descriptions of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy for the analyses of Nietzsche's Jesus descriptions. We shall compare Nietzsche's image of Jesus with the Jesus-image of liberal theology as well as with the Gospel of St. John as a source.
- The dissertation will get to its research findings through the interpretation of texts and contexts. The method of examination of the dissertation is basically *hermeneutic* and *reconstructive*. The procedure of interpretation applied in the dissertation has both its analytical and evaluative aspects as well since it attentively weighs the importance of certain texts and tries to define the importance of the achieved analyses.

V. The dissertation

1. Introduction

1.1.) Nietzsche's Jesus-image – in first approach

- Determination of the subject matter of the dissertation: a “stop-gap” interpretation in the research of Nietzsche's description of the Jesus-image gradually moving away from ecclesiastical Christianity.
- An outline of the structure of the dissertation: first we shall examine the most important development stages of Nietzsche's Jesus-image in his works to be published and notes left in the *Legacy* than we pay special attention to the most thoroughly elaborated portrait *The Psychology of the Redeemer*. The research shall also cover the sources of the Jesus-image. The dissertation closes with the problem of evaluation of Jesus by Nietzsche.

1.2.) History of interpretation of the Jesus-image by Nietzsche

- Reception history overview based on a study on the early reception of the Jesus-image by Ulrich Willers („*Aut Zarathustra aut Christus*“ – *Die Jesus-Deutung Nietzsches im Spiegel ihrer Interpretationsgeschichte: Tendenzen und Entwicklungen von 1900-1980*, 1985/86).
 - Theological reception of the Jesus-image: contradictory interpretations of Nietzsche by Willers and Biser.
 - Philosophical reception of the Jesus-image: the research findings of Jaspers, Benz, Dibelius, Salaquarda, Kaufmann, Urs Sommer, Havemann and Detering.
 - Approximations of the Jesus-theme in the Hungarian reception of Nietzsche.
- 1.3.) The background of the Jesus-portrait by Nietzsche**
- Before the philosopher's Jesus interpretation there comes a review of a wider intellectual context and the discovery of the possible influences effecting Nietzsche.
 - The theological background of Nietzsche's Jesus-image: historic inquiry, anti-dogmatism with an emphasis on the ethical-social-practical aspects of the gospel against the eschatology and apocalypse in the 19th century theology. Past and present of the Jesus-research: research on the historic figure of Jesus done by liberal theology – „Leben-Jesu-Forschung“ – and adaptation of the life of Jesus in the form of novels in the 19th century. Theological estimation of the possibilities (Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack) and limitations (Bultmann, Schweitzer) of scientific understanding of the personality of Jesus.
 - Jesus biographers influencing Nietzsche: Jesus descriptions by Strauss (*Das Leben Jesu*) and Schenkel (*Das Charakterbild Jesu*).
 - Influences of Wellhausen and Overbeck on Nietzsche's opinion on Christianity. Jesus images of the German spiritualism and German Christianity.
 - Philosophical influences behind Nietzsche's Jesus-interpretation: Christianity and Jesus images of Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Emerson and Schopenhauer and Schopenhauer's interpretation of the similarities between Christianity and Buddhism.

2. Development of the Jesus-image in Nietzsche's philosophy

- Definition of the methodological concepts of the dissertation: finding interpretation guidelines, connections, motives when examining the major stages of development of the Jesus-image (we follow the periodization of Willers).
 - Major motives:
- 2.1.)** Jesus “the noble enthusiast” and “world-wide deception” – the first approximations of Jesus in the philosophy of Nietzsche (*David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer; On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*)

- In the early stages of Nietzsche's philosophy the Jesus allusions are occasional.
 - Although the interest towards the historic figure can already be recognized the differentiation between Jesus and Christ of the church is still uncertain.
 - The Jesus interpretation by Nietzsche comes forward with the further development of the motive of deception which is one of the firmest characteristics of "world-wide deception" taken over from Strauss. Later, the theory of "swindling" is used as a starting point for the separation of Jesus and Christianity.
- 2.2.)** Further attempts for the interpretation of Jesus: the egoist founder of a religion who was mistaken (*Human – All Too Human; The Dawn; The Gay Science*)
- The tones of sympathy and mockery alternate in the occasional Jesus references.
 - Nietzsche characteristically examines the figure of Jesus in relation of the Jewish environment.
 - Early development of the image of St. Paul: the designation of St. Paul's role in Christianity based on the theory of swindling.
 - A long lasting motive appears in 1882: the motive of the *amoral* Jesus who stands above morals. The image of the rebellious revolutionist who confronts Jewishness stands close to the liberal Jesus interpretation.
- 2.3.)** Zarathustra's dual judgment on Jesus who is incapable to laugh (*Thus spoke Zarathustra*)
- The problem of the comparison of Zarathustra and Jesus from the stylistic-linguistic point of view.
 - Contrasting statements of Zarathustra on Jesus: the exemption of the noble, immature Jesus who died too early and the condemnation of the "unconditional one" (*Unbedingter*) who curses those who laugh.
 - The motive of the "unconditional one" which first appears in his work titled *Zarathustra* is one of the fundamental pillars of the Jesus interpretations by Nietzsche, which however goes through significant changes.
 - The most peculiar Jesus-portrait of the *Legacy* is the one titled: *An Innocent Little Story*.
- 2.4.)** The principal voices of the Jesus-interpretation: Jesus the unconditional one and Jesus who stands above morals and who is used as an allurement (*Beyond Good and Evil; On the Genealogy of Morality; Twilight of the Idols*)
- The Jesus-image of the philosopher becomes more and more homogeneous with the repeated rethinking of the motives of the "unconditional one," amorality and deception, in which these three motives become the most dominant before the composition of *The Antichrist*.
 - The infiltration of the Jesus-interpretation into the criticism of Christian moral from the genealogical-psychological point of view.

- The Portrait of the Redeemer in *The Antichrist* shapes up with the development of these three major motives the antecedents of which can already be seen in the earlier Jesus descriptions so when talking about the development of the Jesus-image we cannot talk about a fracture but rather a continuous development to the effect of which it gradually becomes more and more homogeneous.

3. The Jesus-portrait of *The Antichrist*

3.1.) *The Antichrist* as the *Revaluation of All Values*

- The genesis of *The Antichrist*, the program plan for the *Revaluation of All Values*.

3.2.) Who is that Antichrist? – potential meanings of the title

- Interpretation alternatives as far as the identity of the Antichrist is concerned, its identification with Nietzsche's ideal and the church as well based on the two contradictory interpretations by Christianity.
- According to Salaquarda Nietzsche uses the notion of the Antichrist according to the understanding of Schopenhauer which in this way expresses anti-morality.

3.3.) The outline of the composition of *The Antichrist*

- An overview of the structure and major content elements of *The Antichrist* in order to appoint the place of the Portrait of the Redeemer. We shall follow the division of Urs Sommer for the separation of the five major elements.
- Nietzsche's antichristian strategy is the genealogical approach criticism of moral values with the demonstration of those being life-denying.
- The philosopher traces the Christian moral back to the spirit of resentment. In the introduction of the history of *décadence* the Portrait of the Redeemer unfolds on the basis of the motive of deception the function of which is the undervaluation of Christianity.

3.4.) Hermeneutical difficulties of *The Psychology of Redeemer*, the influence of Renan and the political Jesus-image

- Nietzsche's methodological segregation from the scientific Jesus-research. Nietzsche's antagonism to liberal theology is manifested in the method and aim of the Jesus-description in so far as Nietzsche finds the scientific methods of historic research of no use and his aim is not the renewal but the undervaluation of Christianity. The Redeemer's image by Nietzsche is a portrait put into words with intuition about the historic Jesus whom the philosopher does not consider to be Redeemer in its dogmatic sense. Nietzsche does not intend to give a newer Jesus biography but he is rather interested in the psychological type of the historical figure.
- Nietzsche was highly influenced by Renan's picture on (*The Life of Jesus*). Nietzsche illustrates the Redeemer as an *idiot* who is incapable to resist in contrast with Renan's interpretation of Jesus as a *hero* and *genius*.

- Before the Portrait of Redeemer we can find another political illustration of Jesus as the “Saint Anarchist” which description shows a strong influence by Renan where the motive of Jesus in conflict with morality reappears. Later however, Nietzsche finally breaks away with the interpretation of Jesus as a political revolutionist. The Portrait of the Redeemer free of politics already shows the influences of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in the first place.

3.5.) Tolstoy and the authentic Christianity

- Tolstoy had a huge influence on the philosopher with his idea about the authentic Christian practice attributed to Jesus who summarizes the practice in his work titled *My religion* in five rules of life based on the principle of non-resistance according to which you can reach heaven on earth, piece for humanity.

3.6.) Dostoevsky and the type of the „Idiot”

- Nietzsche admired the psychologist in Dostoevsky and most probably Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of his novel titled the “*The Idiot*” was the literary prefiguration of the “idiot” Redeemer. The notion of the idiot is related to the figure of the Russian “Holy Fool” and to the early stereotypes of epileptic personality.
- The description of the euphoric feeling of unity before a seizure of the epileptic Myshkin and Kirillov who is a character in the *Demons* is the model for the interpretation of the Redeemer’s internal heaven as a psychological symbol.

3.7.) The *Psychology of the Redeemer*

- Nietzsche’s final, fully developed Jesus description, the detailed analyses of the portrait of the Redeemer in *The Antichrist* form paragraph to paragraph.
- The harmonization of the three dominant motives of the earlier Jesus descriptions in the Redeemer’s image: Jesus turns into someone who practices love instead of someone who demands unconditional love. Jesus as a result of his inability to deny things conflicts with morality with his amoral practice of love, while the framework of the Jesus-image is made up of the theory of swindling where Saint Paul is referred to as a user of Jesus’s falsified doctrine.
- 29. p.: Two fundamental pillars of the portrait of the Redeemer are the practice of non-resistance and the character of the idiot. The unworldly idiot is an anti-realist if he lives within his inner world.
- 30. p.: The physiological-pathological basis of the psychological portrait is the instinctive avoidance of resistance of the oversensitive Redeemer type. The religion of love of the Redeemer reminds one on Epicurus’ hedonism: its aim is to run away from suffering the instrument for what is love and non-resistance.
- 31. p.: The decadent idiot-type is separated from its environment by virtue of its being apolitical and symbolist. The problem of misunderstanding of Jesus: the distance of the Buddha like creature from Renan’s description of

the political Jesus. Nietzsche considers the psychological type of the Redeemer imaginable and sets up a claim on the basis of the falsification of the truth attributed to Christianity for the legitimization of his own Jesus-construction as the reconstruction of the original type.

- 32. p.: Nietzsche gives a description on the original Christianity of Jesus versus the ecclesiastical dogmas. According to the philosopher the teaching of Jesus is to be interpreted as a psychological symbolism. The anti-realist Redeemer is incapable to deny so his practice of life is absolutely apolitical.
 - 33. p.: Nietzsche does not accept authentic Christianity as a faith but rather as a practice of life which Tolstoy describes with rules. The Redeemer lives in unity with God without religious accessories in the evangelical practice. The amoral practice is beyond the notion of sin. The unity of love beyond morals is expressed in the practice of non-resistance.
 - 34. p.: The philosopher contrasts the psychological symbols of Jesus which refer to an internal unity with the divine one, a timeless condition of salvation to the doctrine of resurrection through which he erases eschatology from the original form of Christianity. According to Nietzsche heaven is an internal condition and not a place of an otherworldly salvation.
 - 35. p.: Nietzsche summarizes the importance of Christianity in the practice of non-resistance, the best example of which he sees to be expressed in his way of dying interpreting the Redemption as an exemplification. He summarizes the life teaching of Jesus on the psychological reality of Heaven in the intentionally distorted paraphrase of the scene with the thieves.
 - You can find further allusions to Jesus up to the 42nd paragraph in *The Antichrist*. Nietzsche builds the portrait of the Redeemer into the moral genealogy criticism of Christianity on the basis of the theory of deception. According to the philosopher, Jesus was misunderstood by his disciples and Paul already used the figure of the Redeemer in order to create the resentment-moral.
 - The portrait of the Redeemer fulfils its role in the undervaluation of Christianity as a relative revaluation: Nietzsche raises the value of Jesus in relation to Christianity to make the religion falsifying the original meaning of the gospel, seem to be even more negative. Nietzsche raises Jesus towards Christian moral in a way that he exempts the amoral practice of love of the Redeemer from resentment.
 - Nietzsche cuts every string between Jesus and the ecclesiastical form of religion when he states that there was only one Christian in the world – Jesus himself. However, the philosopher thinks that although the properly called Christian practice has not been followed by anybody its realization is possible at any age, moreover it is necessary for certain people.
- 3.8.) Nietzsche's image of Paul and his interpretation of Buddhism in the light of the portrait of the Redeemer**

- The philosopher considers Paul to be the founder of Christianity and sees him as his personal opponent as a personification of morals. As the personification of priest greedy for power he holds Paul to be responsible for the misinterpretation of the original Christianity. As the genius of hatred, Paul is an opposite type of personality of Jesus, the idiot of love and as someone who reevaluates things Paul is the opponent of Nietzsche.
 - In a least radical way being opposed to Paul is a characteristic of other thinkers like Fichte, Overbeck, Tolstoy, Lagarde, Renan as well. The contemporary opinion of Paul was mainly developed by H. Lüdemann (*Die Anthropologie des Apostels Paulus*).
 - Although attacking him, Nietzsche also recognizes Paul's greatness. He wishes to carry out the revaluation of values against Paul's revaluation. Jesus being exempted is left out of the polemics against Christianity.
 - The philosopher evaluates the authentic Christianity of Jesus similarly to Buddhism and ranks the figure of the Redeemer with Buddha. The Buddhism-interpretation of *The Antichrist* shows a surprising similarity with the portrait of the Redeemer: similarly the avoidance of suffering rooted in physiological weakness results a higher, resentment free, amoral practice of life on earth. According to Nietzsche's description the portrait of Jesus and Buddha show uniformity in type. Similarly to the Christianity of Paul Nietzsche raises the value of the original religion of these two persons.
 - Nietzsche's portrait of the Redeemer is closest to that of John's as far as the evangelical descriptions of Jesus are concerned.
 - The philosopher uses the terminology of John's Gospel for the description of the psychological symbols of Jesus and his idea about the unity of love shows the influence of John's as well.
 - The Jesus figure of the non-canonized, gnostic gospels also shares similarities with Nietzsche's Redeemer.
 - The ideal moral of Dostoevsky releasing the separation of the ego, which terminates its separation, can be matched to Nietzsche's description of the hearty internal heaven. Tolstoy's principle of non-resistance gains importance in the practice of love, mapping the supra-personal consciousness as the maintainer of the experience of unity. However the condition considered ideal by Dostoevsky does not coincide with the ideal life of Nietzsche according to which we need distance for creating ourselves.
- 3.9.) Additional material to the *Psychology of the Redeemer***
- The remarkable large number of references to Jesus indicates the growing interest towards the person. On the basis of the *Legacy* the influence of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Renan can be justified in the formulation of the Jesus image.
 - Comparing the portrait of the Redeemer in *The Antichrist* with the notes in the *Legacy* between 1887 and 1888 the Jesus interpretation is supplemented

with two important details: with the nihilism of Jesus and with the timeliness of the realization of authentic Christianity.

- According to a fragment found in the *Legacy* Nietzsche finds Jesus a nihilist since he misses goals and tasks from Epicures' practice and he finds that his escape from suffering expresses an unconscious wish to free from life.
- In a number of notes Nietzsche compares his own age to the age of the birth of Buddhism according to what he finds the realization of Jesus' Christianity similar to Buddhism especially timely. However this does not mean that the philosopher would demand evangelical practice as well which he finds exemplary for certain type of people.
- His self-description in *Ecce homo* and his last letters show identity with the spheres of action of the Redeemer but not with the type of the Redeemer.

4. Opponent or ideal? – Nietzsche's evaluation of Jesus

- One can often read extremist opinions on Nietzsche's evaluation of Jesus and the portrait of the Redeemer is treated isolated in the relevant literature. We shall strive to avoid both extremes.
- According to the findings of our investigation the common feature of Nietzsche's Jesus descriptions is the desire for being loved which feature is attributed to Jesus. A rethinking of the above is the portrait of the Redeemer where Jesus changes into a "practitioner of love" from an "unconditional follower of love."
- The relevant literature offers contrasting answers concerning the question whether Jesus was an ideal for the philosopher: some researchers talk about rejection of the decadent Jesus others talk about his idealization.
- The most essential point of being different from Nietzsche's ideal is that the type of the Redeemer does not affirm suffering since the practice of love serves exactly the avoidance of suffering.
- According to Nietzsche the touchstone of decadent people is that they are too weak for reality and their most important aim is to get away from reality in order to avoid suffering which is an attribute of life on earth. The philosopher sees the other-worldliness of Christianity and the unworldliness of Jesus as an equally decadent denial of reality though he sets a higher value on the latter one because it does not undervalue life morally it just shows a lifestyle which is freed of suffering.
- According to Nietzsche's perception suffering is part of life and it is impossible to be eliminated from it, and those who reject suffering reject life itself. In this sense Jesus escaping from suffering qualifies to be a nihilist but here we talk about an uncommitted nihilism which is expressed in giving up resistance and loving everything.
- In Nietzsche's philosophy suffering represents an asset in so far as its bearing and constructive transformation serves the extension of power and

the surpassing of the self. The Dionysian ideal in life of the philosopher is the “amor fati,” the love of fate in which a “yes” is said to life as a whole. According to Nietzsche’s interpretation it is possible to beat nihilism threatening the value of life only with such degree of love of life that includes the affirmation of suffering as well as part of life – a testing of this is the idea of eternal recurrence.

- The conclusion of the analyses is that Nietzsche finds the Christianity of Jesus to be the most valuable alternative within the decadence the upgrading of which is achieved against the underrated ecclesiastical Christianity but it does not mean the idolization of Jesus. The Redeemer escaping from suffering cannot be matched to Nietzsche’s idea of the ideal man who says “yes” to life as a whole. The ambivalence of Nietzsche’s image of Jesus is that this image of the Redeemer showing a relative greatness is almost idealized at places, which is done possibly unintentionally.

VI. Research findings

- As a stop-gap in the research the dissertation tries to give a thorough analysis of Nietzsche’s Jesus interpretation.
- We have examined the Jesus interpretations by the philosopher taking his entire oeuvre under survey. The examination of these often reference like fragments of portrait showing considerable heterogeneity will take place in their contexts. We have tried to find interpretation guidelines and tendencies.
- By this way the dissertation has given an overall picture on the changes, motives and development of Nietzsche’s Jesus interpretation into a homogeneous one. The central argument of the thesis is that the Jesus descriptions can be collected grouped around three major motives like (being unconditional, amorality and swindling).
- The most thorough and most elaborate Jesus portrait of the philosopher *The Psychology of the Redeemer* will get a special attention in the research which the dissertation does not treat isolated but it strives to reveal its context with the other Jesus images of the oeuvre. The common idea according to the analyses is the desire of Jesus for being loved.
- The analyses have included the investigation of the Jesus descriptions in the *Legacy* as well.
- The dissertation also undertakes the examination of the influences behind the Jesus image and besides outlining their wider contexts it thoroughly examines the closest resources like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Renan. According to the research findings of the dissertation the influence of Tolstoy is much stronger than it has so far been suggested by the relevant literature since in the concept of the original Christian practice Nietzsche relies on Tolstoy to a great extent and takes the rules of life of the evangelical practice over from him from word by word. Although more light

has been thrown on the influence of Dostoevsky in the research the demonstration of the physiological-psychological relations of the “idiot-type” can be considered to be the novelty of the dissertation. The study of the influence of Russian writers lead to that certain recognition of the dissertation how Tolstoy’s non-resistance is related to the portrait of the idiot who practices amoral love in the type of the Redeemer. In the interpretation of the complex idea of the idiot-type taken over from Dostoevsky the dissertation found that the idea of the idiot is significantly related to the perception of epileptic personality of the age. The dissertation points out the relation between the description of the epileptic aura by Dostoevsky and Nietzsche’s perception of heaven as a psychological symbol.

- The novelty of the dissertation is the comparison of Nietzsche’s image of the Redeemer with the Jesus interpretation of liberal theology with special regard to the influence of Renan.
- The investigation reaches beyond the boundaries of philosophy as a specialized branch of science in so far as it examines the research of the theological Jesus and the description of Jesus as a literary figure (by Dostoevsky) as well as the medical relations of the idiot-type.
- The dissertation thoroughly examines the problems of Nietzsche’s comparison of Jesus and Buddha. An achievement of the dissertation is the conclusion gained from the analysis of the *Legacy* according to what Nietzsche finds the realization of original Christianity especially timely in his age and he compares both the Europe of his age and the Christianity of Jesus to the intellectual environment of Buddhism.
- The illustration of the similarities between Nietzsche’s portrait of the Redeemer and the gnostic Jesus image as well as the influence of the Gospel of John on the love concept of the *psychology of the Redeemer* can be considered as original pieces of the dissertation.
- After a thorough examination of the Jesus image the dissertation wants to give a realistic judgment on the problems of Nietzsche’s evaluation Jesus the interpretation of which is often exaggerated and unfounded in the relevant literature. The dissertation gives a reception history overview on the most important interpretation tendencies. According to the research findings of the dissertation the distance between the Redeemer’s type and Nietzsche’s ideal man is based on Nietzsche’s understanding of the value of suffering. A novelty of the dissertation is the demonstration of the fact that in what sense the aim of Jesus to avoid suffering could be considered nihilism, and how Nietzsche’s Dionysian ideal of life differs from that, which is expressed by the idea of eternal recurrence and the principle of *amor fati*.

VII. Publications on the topic of the dissertation:

- Marianna Toth: „The development of the Jesus image in Nietzsche’s philosophy.” In Imre Garaczi – Zoltan Kalmar (editor): *Pro Philosophy Almanac*. Veszprem Foundation for Human Studies, Veszprem, 2008. pgs.: 188-209.
- Marianna Toth: „Jesus, the Superhuman Human – The Nietzschean interpretation of the personality of the Redeemer in the novel by Sandor Marai titled Thirty Pieces of Silver.” In Imre Garaczi –Zoltan Kalmar (editor): *Pro Philosophy Almanac*. Veszprem Foundation for Human Studies, Veszprem, 2009. pgs.: 39-53.
- Marianna Toth: „Nietzsche’s interpretation of the *Psychology of the Redeemer* and the Jesus of Liberal Theology.” In Peter Egyed (chief editor): *Surplus*. Volume III. No. 3. (IX.) LIBROFIL Publisher, Kolozsvár, November 2011. pgs.: 29-49.
- Marianna Toth: „Nietzsche’s interpretation of Buddhism.” In Tamas Pavlovits (chief editor): *difference. Philosophy Journal*. Volume XII. No. 1. University of Szeged Faculty of Arts Department of Philosophy, Innovariant Publisher, Szeged, May 2012. pgs.: 127-150.
- Marianna Toth: „The meaning of the concept of the ‘Idiot’ in the *Psychology of the Redeemer*.” In Sandor Laczko – Emese Farago (editor): *Footnotes to Plato 10. The reason*. Pro Philosophia Szegediensi Foundation, Hungarian Philosophical Company, Status Publisher, Szeged, 2012. pgs.: 324-339.

VIII. Other publications on the topic:

- Marianna Toth: „The Beauty of Transience.” In Eva Kissne Novak – Sandor Laczko (editor): *Don Quijote.hu – or the Wanderings of Philosophy. Studies and Other writings in honour of Dezsó Csejtei on the occasion of his 60th birthday*. Pro Philosophia Szegediensi Foundation, Szeged, 2011. pgs.: 57-68.
- Marianna Toth: „Comparative analyses of The Old by Sandor Weores and September Devotion by Dezsó Kosztolányi.” In Janos Gog (chief editor): *Sand. Literary Journal*. Volume X. No. 3. RaszteR Publisher, Csongrad, March 2009. pgs.: 27-30.
- Marianna Toth: „Reflections on Katalin Gulyas’s Volume of Poems titled Years Perpetrated from Poems.” In Janos Gog (chief editor): *Sand. Literary Journal*. Volume X. No. 4. RaszteR Publisher, Csongrad, April 2009. pgs.: 23-24.
- Marianna Toth: „The Gift of Mortality.” In Janos Gog (chief editor): *Sand. Literary Journal*. Volume X. No. 4. RaszteR Publisher, Csongrad, April 2009. pgs.: 27-31.