



## God in Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937)

Matthew Del Nevo  
Catholic Institute of Sydney

For Andreas-Salomé, born in St. Petersburg, Russian Orthodoxy was the given *imaginarium* of God. Nevertheless, she was raised in the Reformed Protestant tradition with fixed beliefs that she rejected in her teens. She describes the experience of deconversion as "God's very disappearance...the unalterable fact of a universe abandoned by God...which makes it appear impossible to replace or redress the image by later formulations." (Andreas-Salomé, 1995: 9).

Andreas-Salomé never lost her sense of reverence for life (Andreas-Salomé, 1995: 11); life became a synonym for God. Nietzsche set her Hymn to Life to music. In 1910 she wrote this most important statement about God: "God is no substance, he is a form, an encompassing; he is not any figure (nor any monster), he is a garment with which humanity adorns and conceals everything that is most human, such as its festivities, or victories at which we weep and rejoice. It is in this way that God, symbol of himself, crosses the times, and whoever should try to catch him by his coat-tails will be left holding the cloth. God has always been his own usurper. This is probably what makes him above all divine, this capacity to compare himself with himself, which escapes us, but is the measure by which he designates one beyond himself. Rather than allowing himself to be blessedly deified like so many things, yes so many things, he withdraws into the void, into the rays of anti-God." (Hummel, 2016: 194)

Anti-God here means the shadow of God and includes that which is also beyond God, about which God is powerless and absent. One might say then, in Lacanian terms, God shows up in the Imaginary and/or the Symbolic but cannot be stabilised in either and slips from both, whether into the Real or not cannot be established, like life.

### Primary Sources:

Andreas-Salomé, Lou 1995. *Looking Back: Memoirs*. New York: Marlowe & Co.

Hummel, Pascale 2016. *Fille de Dieu: passage d'une âme*. Paris: Philologicum [my

translation].

### **Secondary Sources:**

Andreas-Salomé, Lou, 2016. *Sex and Religion: Two Texts of Early Feminist Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Maike Oergel and Kristine Jennings. Edited by Matthew Del Nevo and Gary Winship. New York: Routledge.

Rilke, Rainer Maria 2007. *Das Studenbuch*. Köln: Anaconda. [06|04|2021]

### **Keywords:**

Andreas-Salomé, God, Imaginary, Symbolic, Real, Nietzsche Rilke