

Chapter 1: Spirit's Logic:

Zarathustra as the becoming of being-nothing

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Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has perhaps the most famous and profound openings in all of philosophy. We encounter the character Zarathustra, as an enlightened being spiritually overflowing with joy and enthusiasm for life. He is a “doing-going” to humanity from his mountain top, after a decade of solitude and silent withdrawal, and he wants to share his now well-known message: the meaning of the Earth is the Overman (First Part, 3 — Prologue):

“The Overman is the meaning of the Earth. Let your will say: the Overman shall be the meaning of the Earth!”

In this message, what is clear is that Nietzsche via Zarathustra *does not identify with humanity*, but rather identifies with its *potential for self-overcoming* (First Part, 4 — Prologue):

“What is great about human beings is that they are a bridge and not a purpose: what is loveable about human beings is that they are a *crossing over* and a *going under*.”

However, what is perhaps less well-known, is that he opens his masterpiece the same way he closes it: with a metaphorical homology in relation to the Sun as the centre of being which seems to depend on the other. To be specific, he reflects on what his joy and enthusiasm would mean if it were not for those for whom he shines (First Part, I — Prologue):

“You great star! What would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine?”

And again, after perhaps decades in the actual narrative of the text, at the very end (Fourth and Final Part, 20 — The Sign):

“You great star [...] what would all your happiness be if you did not have *those* for whom you shine?”

What captures our attention in this article is simple: what actually transpires between these two nearly-identical reflections at totally different moments of Zarathustra's becoming? Do we have an identity that has included within itself a new meaningful difference, after decades of long struggle in communicating his teaching of the Overman as the meaning of the Earth to his spiritual children? And if so, what is the nature of this difference?

I think the most common interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, or at least the interpretation that is most glaringly obvious, is that we are dealing with, from the very beginning, an enlightened being attempting to communicate the meaning of the Earth to those capable of understanding the meaning of the Earth as the Overman. Here when we think about “those capable,” we are referring to being's striving in the abyss for self-overcoming, which requires a total affirmation of *THIS LIFE, THIS BODY, THIS WORLD*, and so forth; and at the same time, requires dispelling any illusions of an *OTHER LIFE, OTHER BODY, OTHER WORLD*, and so forth.⁶ This structural flip we are dealing with is precise:

- From humanity communally organised around God with hopes of a future Soul in Heaven separated from the fallen World, to the emergence of a selective organisation of human-friends capable of

⁶ In this context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, we are dealing with an “Other” in the form of Christian metaphysics of the “Perfect Soul-Body in Heaven with God.”

self-overcoming, organised around the Overman striving for the highest embodiment of their Soul (Concept) in this World

While our contemporary time has mostly done away with ideas of an Other-Worldly God, or an Other-Body/Life in Heaven, this precise structural flip towards the Overman, is absolutely missing.⁷ How this Life, this Body, and this World would appear to such beings, is left to the imagination, since Zarathustra reflects at the end of the work, that his “children” are “near” but not actual and present (Fourth and Final Part, 20 — The Sign). What we do know is that this future world organised by the Overman, would certainly be charged (like a lightning bolt) with a higher intensity and a deeper meaning, than the Life, Body, and World that historical humans have known (and know now).

However, there is another, less common interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and that involves not only the communications of an enlightened being to those capable of striving for the Overman, but also, the *self-mediation of Zarathustra as an enlightened being to Zarathustra as an enlightened leader*. This distinction between *enlightened being* and *enlightened leader* is a critical difference, namely, because it involves, not only an *enlightened self-relation*, but an *enlightened self-other relation*. In short, while we do start the text *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with an already-enlightened being, we do not find this enlightened being with any special capacity to lead a “creative community,” i.e. *we do not find an enlightened leader*. This is why, in the Prologue, and on the first day of Zarathustra’s “doing-going” to humanity, he reflects on his

⁷ For a deeper meditation on contemporary atheism, see: Last, C. 2022. Necessity of Absolute Knowing. In: *Enter the Alien: Thinking as 21st Century Hegel*. Garner, D. & Last, C. (Eds.). Independently Published, Philosophy Portal Books.

failure in communicating his message (First Part, I — Prologue):

“Zarathustra stood up and said to his heart: [...] I want to teach humans the meaning of their being, which is the Overman, the lightning from the dark cloud ‘human being.’ But I am still far away from them, and I do not make sense to their senses. For mankind I am still a midpoint between a fool and a corpse.”

Thus, we can say that while we find Zarathustra at the start of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as an already-enlightened being — in-between those aforementioned near-identical reflections on ‘happiness’ and ‘shining for others,’ which separate the beginning and ending of the text — we get the chance to study an *other type of becoming*. This other type of becoming is not about the becoming of a human to the overhuman (or inhuman) standpoint of enlightenment. This goal is only what structures Zarathustra’s explicit discourse on a first-order, and in relation to his spiritual “children.” Rather, this other type of becoming is the becoming of an enlightened overhuman (or inhuman) towards someone who can lead other humans to the same standpoint. This dimension of the leader is something which *deeply troubles* Zarathustra throughout the text at key transition moments or breaking points (First and Second Part, Second and Third Part, Third and Fourth and Final Part, etc.). This dimension is also something that is only communicated through a “voiceless voice” or in silent isolated self-reflection (and never with his potential spiritual children). Consider the end of the “Second Part,” where Zarathustra finds himself in a terrifying soul-shattering dialogue with a (feminine) “voiceless voice” about his inability to command (i.e. lead) his spiritual children (Second Part, 22 — The Stillest Hour):⁸

⁸ For another reflection inspired by The Stillest Hour, see George Dyck’s contribution to this anthology (Interlude 4).

“[Humans] mocked me when I found and walked my own way; and in truth my feet trembled at that time.’ [...]

Then it spoke to me [...] without voice: ‘What does their mockery matter! You are one who has forgotten how to obey; now you shall command! Do you not know who is needed most by everyone? The one who commands great things. To accomplish great things is difficult; but what is even more difficult is to command great things. That is what is most unforgivable in you: you have the power, and you do not want to rule.’ —

And I answered: ‘I lack the lion’s voice for all commanding.’

Then it spoke to me like a whispering: ‘The stillest words are those that bring the storm. Thoughts that come on the feet of doves steer the world. Oh Zarathustra, you shall go as a shadow of that which must come; thus you will command and lead the way commanding.’ —

And I answered: ‘I am ashamed.’

Then it spoke to me again without voice: ‘You must become a child again and without shame. The pride of youth is still on you, you became young at a late time; but whoever would become a child must also overcome his youth.’ —

‘And I thought for a long time and trembled. At last however I said what I had said at first: ‘I do not want to.’ [...]

And it spoke to me one last time: ‘Oh Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits! Then you must return to your solitude[.]’ [...]

I am still the most tightlipped of human beings — and I want to be so! [...] [Zarathustra] was overcome by the force of his pain and the nearness of parting from his friends, so that he wept out loud; and no one was able to comfort him. At night, however, he went away alone and left his friends.”

I think the aspect of this quote I would like to especially highlight, from the voiceless voice: ‘Oh Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits!’ Here I would situate this distinction in the key difference between the “enlightened being” (whose fruits are ripe), and the “enlightened leader” (who is also ripe for his fruits).⁹ Thus, throughout the actual narrative arc of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, what we can clearly see is a *deepening oscillation around negativity between the weird unity being and nothing*, and that what is at stake in this deepening oscillation around negativity, is not the “ripening of his fruits” (which are already ripe) but of “becoming ripe for his fruits” (which seems to open the possibility to command or lead his children, and even, as we find out, his own inner child).

Consequently, from First Part to Second Part to Third Part to the Fourth and Final Part of the text, Zarathustra oscillates from being an enthusiastic teacher for his spiritual children (a bright sun of a being), to withdrawing back into solitude, whether in his mountain stillness or in his hiking difficult and impossible pathways (a simple nothingness). With each oscillation his being seems higher (what he often expresses in relation to the “high noon”), and his nothing seems to be deeper (what he often expresses in relation to “deep midnight”). The higher being

⁹ This distinction—interestingly enough—may be captured by the Hegelian distinction which structures the totality of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, between the “in-itself” (ripe fruits qua being) and “for-itself” (ripe for his fruits qua being).

allows him great strength and glow for his potential higher men, and the deeper nothing challenges him with new riddles about the mystery of the soul, time and tragedy.¹⁰ Here it is important to note that *both* his “high noon” *and* his “deep midnight” are necessary for the form of greatness that structures the becoming of the overman. Zarathustra always reminds us that the overman “wants it all,” i.e. the “joy and the sorrow,” the “wickedness and the kindness,” the “pains and the pleasures.” And perhaps this is part of what separates the enlightened being and the enlightened leader: *not only the capacity to know the deepest joy and kindness and pleasure, but the capacity to work with the paradox of these dimensions in a becoming.* This means that while the stereotype of the enlightened being is a being who sits in a meditative joy without inner difficulty or troubles, the enlightened leader is someone who actively exposes himself to new dimensions of becoming (perhaps beyond enlightenment itself), in ways that will make life even more difficult and challenging, but at the same time, richer and fuller (like a “thick honey”). What is joy without sorrow, kindness without wickedness, pleasure without pain, day (high noon) without night (deep midnight)? Or, as is now infamous whenever discussing Nietzsche: good without evil?¹¹

After these oscillations which comprise the main narrative of the text, his full capacity to lead seems to emerge at the beginning of the “Fourth and Final Part,” in a section titled “The Honey Sacrifice,” where he has his

¹⁰ For a specific meditation on time/tragedy, see Layman Pascal’s contribution to this anthology (Chapter 3).

¹¹ This is why, philosopher Alenka Zupančič emphasises we should see Nietzsche’s Zarathustra as a “moment of splitting”, when “one turns into two.” She argues the notion of “Two” is representative of the minimal-irreducible difference of the one, generating its permanent-inherent tension: the other scene. In an absolutely crucial move for philosophy and for this anthology, Chetan Anand has developed Zupančič’s Nietzsche, situating the tension-riddled figure of the two as the Nietzschean real over the figure of a pure Deleuzian multiplicity in his paper “Thinking Jouissance and Nietzschean Negentropy” (Chapter 9).

grand vision, beyond all shame, and with a “lion’s voice,” focused on “the Zarathustra empire of a thousand years” (Fourth and Final Part, 1 — The Honey Sacrifice). What strikes us in this opening of the Fourth and Final Part is his relation to solitude has very much “ripened” (i.e. not his fruits ripening, but rather he has become ripe for his fruits). This ripening seems to have occurred in relation to overcoming an unconscious selfishness related to a clinging or a grasping onto life out of bitterness of limitation (ultimately, death, the absolute nothing), and an ingratitude of the life that is given (bestowed) to us. One can see this unconscious drama playing itself out towards the end of the Third Part, where Zarathustra is engaged again with a (feminine) voiceless voice, this time in the form of life itself. Zarathustra claims he wants more life, but life tells him that he does not love life as much as he claims to love life, and that really he will leave soon. Zarathustra and life end up crying together in the deepest midnight, which opens Zarathustra up to a type of revelation of an eternal joy in becoming (Third Part, 15 — The Other Dance Song). He calls this eternal joy in becoming the “woman” whom he loves and wants to have ‘children’ (Third Part, 16 — The Seven Seals (Or: the Yes and Amen Song):

“Never yet have I found the woman for whom I want children, unless it were this woman whom I love: for I love you, oh eternity! *For I love you, oh eternity!*”

In any case, by the time we do reach the opening of the Fourth and Final Part, we encounter this unmistakably transformed tone in relation to the ending of the Second Part where Zarathustra is struggling with his courage to lead. Now Zarathustra is capable of “sacrificing” himself in a way that he no longer perceives it as a sacrifice at all,

since it is only what was bestowed (given) to him.¹² He releases himself into becoming (Fourth and Final Part, 1 — The Honey Sacrifice):

“What’s happening to me is common to all fruits that ripen. It’s the honey in my veins that makes my blood thicker and also makes my soul calmer.’ [...]

[He] found he was alone now — then he laughed with his whole heart, looked around and spoke thus: That I spoke of sacrifices and honey sacrifices was merely a sleight of speech and, truly, useful folly! [...] What sacrifice! I squander what was bestowed me [...]: How could I call that — sacrificing! [...] If the world is like a dark jungle and a pleasure garden for all wild hunters, to me it seems even more, and preferably, an abysmal rich sea[.] Especially the human world, the human sea — toward *it* I now cast my golden fishing rod and say: open up, you human abyss! [...] With my best bait today I bait the oddest human fishes!

Biting on my sharp hidden hooks, they have to emerge into *my* height[.] That’s what I am, after all, at bottom and from the start; reeling, reeling in, raising up, raising, a raiser, a cultivator and taskmaster who not for nothing once told himself; ‘Become who you are!’ [...]

What must come someday and may not pass by? Our great *Hazar*, that is our great distant human empire, the Zarathustra empire of a thousand years —

How distant might such a ‘distance’ be? What do I care! [...] — [...] Out, out my fishing rod! Into and down, bait of

¹² Daniel Garner of O.G. Rose develops his Nietzsche in the Spirit of *Belonging Again* (2023, Bowker), where Nietzsche becomes a figure that helps us move from givens qua bestow-centrism (linked to Plato’s Cave) to releases qua becoming (Nietzsche’s Children) (Chapter 2).

my happiness! Drip your sweetest dew, my heart's honey!
Bite, my fishing rod, into the belly of all black gloom!"

First (around his animals — his faithful and unequalled eagle and snake), he again makes the point about his ripeness. But after they have left, and he was alone, his being is a whole-hearted laugh, and not only is he not resistant to becoming a leader (qua sacrificing himself), as we find Zarathustra at the end of the Second Part, but he has even transcended the need to frame it as a sacrifice, which suggests that he has ripened (or is ripening, as we will later find out) to his fruit.¹³ In other words, at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we have an emerging enlightened leader, who is *becoming spiritually rich enough* to commit himself to the “abysmal rich sea,” the “human sea” with the “oddest human fishes,” with the secret aim of “reeling in” and “raising up” as a “cultivator” and “taskmaster” towards his “height.” Thus, in-between the opening of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and towards the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we do see the emergence of some other form of becoming (even if the full picture of what this is has yet to be revealed).

Throughout the Fourth and Final Part, we find the character of Zarathustra engaged in his “fishing work” with (really) “odd fishes” in the “human sea.” He attempts to lift these odd fishes — all of whom represent (in ‘Hegelo-Lacanes’) key lacks in the society’s Religious Idea qua Other — towards the potential heights of the Overman.¹⁴ This cast of characters include “The Soothsayer,” “The Two Kings,” “The Conscientious of Spirit,” “The Magician,” “The Retired Pope,” “The Ugliest Human Being,” “The Voluntary Beggar,” and finally, “The (Zarathustra’s) Shadow.” The character of The Soothsayer

¹³ In Hegelian terms, the “in-itself” has become “for-itself”.

¹⁴ Or something equivalent to Hegel’s Absolute Knowing/Lacan’s end of analysis, as per standard Žižekianism.

represents the greatest challenge to Zarathustra's ripeness for his fruits, suggesting that "all is the same" and "nothing is worth it" (Fourth and Final Part, 2 — The Cry of Distress):¹⁵

"[Soothsayer:] 'All is the same, nothing is worth it, searching does not help, and there are no blessed isles anymore!' — [...]"

[Zarathustra:] 'No! No! No! Three times no!' he cried in a strong voice, stroking his beard. 'That I know better! There are still better isles! Be silent about that, you sighing sadsack!'"

The Two Kings represent the failure of powerful leaders to "Rule the Earth," instead of succumbing to being servants of a lustful rabble (a theme throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, between "Famous Wise Men" and the "Rabble"). The Two Kings have lost their true fighting spirit against the "fake," "crooked," and "monstrous," and are thus not the "First Men" and true "Rulers of the Earth" (Fourth and Final Part, 3 — Conversation with the Kings):¹⁶

"[King 1:] The highest man, you see, should be the highest ruler on earth. There is no harder misfortune in all human destiny than when the powerful of the earth are not also the first human beings. Then everything becomes fake and crooked and monstrous. [...]"

When swords ran every which way like red-stained snakes, our fathers warmed to life; the sun of all peace seemed lump and lackluster to them, but the long peace

¹⁵ One is here reminded of the challenge framed so well by James Wisdom re: "nothing matters" (see: Chapter 16).

¹⁶ For a meditation on Kingly authority and music, see: "Music's Crown" (Interlude 8).

caused them shame. How they sighed, our fathers, when they saw gleaming bright, dried up swords on the wall!”

The Conscientious of Spirit represents the spirit striving for the Overman through real knowledge only through one’s own blood (Fourth and Final Part, 4 — The Leech):

“Oh Zarathustra: ‘Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life,’ that induced and seduced me to your teaching. And truly, with my own blood I increased my own knowledge!”

Although, it should be noted, that The Conscientious of Spirit is still not capable of seeing the bigger picture, later represented by his vision of science as building virtue out of fear of the inner beast, as opposed to its courageous confrontation in the abyss, which is the precise opposite of Zarathustra’s vision of “gay” science (Fourth and Final Part, 15 — On Science). Thus, he remains trapped by a narrow, and even reductionist, vision of life.¹⁷

“The Magician” represents the facade that many professionals put on when they desire to be great, but are in fact, not great at all (Fourth and Final Part, 5 — The Magician):¹⁸

“I am weary of and nauseated by my arts, I am not great, why do I pretend! But, you know it well — I sought greatness! I wanted to represent a great human being and I persuaded many; but this lie was beyond my powers.”

¹⁷ I am indebted to Max Macken for this critical interpretation (see: Sons of Nietzsche 5, Philosophy Portal). For a method that may be helpful in precisely overcoming the limitations of The Conscientious of Spirit, see Max Macken’s contribution to this anthology (Chapter 6).

¹⁸ One may here benefit from the voice and presence of one Tim Adalin, whose vision for spiritual leadership cannot be one conjured up by the image of greatness, but must be rather grounded in real address (see: Chapter 12).

Here we later find out that this being is actively and consciously exploiting the Death of God and the void-potential of the Overman, through spreading a melancholic vision, due to his own inability to confront his “truth-madness” (Fourth and Final Part, 14 — The Song of Melancholy).

“The Retired Pope” represents a man who has served “God’s will” his entire life, and consequently, has no knowledge of his own will, finding himself lost and depressed (Fourth and Final Part, 6 — Retired):¹⁹

“I served this old God until his final hour. But now I am retired and without a master, and yet I am not free, nor merry for a single hour unless in my memories.”

One could think of this man as someone totally cut off from life source, or libido, having totally outsourced this drive to an imaginary perfect Other. His merriness in memory, we may assume, are the memories of his childhood, when he was connected to his will. In contrast The Retired Pope, who has done nothing but serve this imaginary perfect Other, we have The Ugliest Human Being, who has done the precise opposite: *he is the murderer of God*. The Ugliest Human Being who could not bare a being that knew everything about his will (qua libido or life source), and has consequently, become paralysed by shame (Fourth and Final Part, 7 — The Ugliest Human Being):²⁰

“He always saw *me*: I wanted revenge on such a witness — or to no longer live myself.”

¹⁹ In many ways, what “The Retired Pope” struggles with is a dramatic disconnection from the Child Spirit. For meditations on that topic, see Dimitri Crooijmans article (Chapter 7) and Alex Ebert’s article (Chapter 8).

²⁰ Here we get the paradox, that if one is not capable of listening to a message from hell (within), then one may become hell itself. For such wisdom, see Owen Cox’s “A Message from Hell” (Chapter 5).

It is no coincidence that The Ugliest Human Being, is responsible for starting “The Ass Festival,” as a type of false idol worship, after “The Last Supper,” in Zarathustra’s cave (Fourth and Final Part, 18 — The Ass Festival).

The Voluntary Beggar represents a man who seeks happiness on earth after finding that financial wealth does not bring happiness, but who was also not accepted by the poor due to “rabble pride,” and so he made home with the animals (Fourth and Final Part, 8 — The Voluntary Beggar).²¹

“[Zarathustra:] ‘Are you not the voluntary beggar who once threw away great wealth — who once ashamed of his wealth and of the wealthy, and fled to the poorest people, to give them his fullness and his heart?’ [...]

[The Voluntary Beggar:] ‘But they did not accept me, [...] you know it already. So in the end I went to the animals. [...] The kingdom of heaven is among the [animals]. [...] What do ‘poor’ and ‘rich’ mean anymore today!’”

This materialist disorientation (via-a-vis rich and poor) is used to contrast the emerging importance of Zarathustra’s “meaning of the Earth” as the “Overman,” who does not use human, all too human, measures for orientation (sex, money, status), but rather attempts to overcome the human condition itself.

Finally, “The Shadow” represents his own running away from his own self, his own lostness, and also an

²¹ One gets the idea that this character may be the grounded wisdom of “letting” that Thomas Winn develops so well in his contribution (see: Chapter 23).

acceptance that he cannot run away from himself anymore (Fourth and Final Part, 9 — The Shadow):²²

“[Zarathustra’s Shadow:] ‘Too often, to be sure, I followed on the heels of truth: and it kicked me in the head. Sometimes I believed I was lying and behold—that’s where I first hit—the truth. [...] Nothing that I love lives anymore—how am I supposed to still love myself? [...] Where is—my home?’ [...] Oh eternal everywhere, oh eternal nowhere, oh eternal—in vain!’

Thus spoke the shadow, and Zarathustra’s face lengthened at these words. ‘You are my shadow!’ he said at last, with sadness. ‘Your danger is no small one, you free spirit and wanderer!’ [...] To such restless one as you even a jail ends up looking like bliss. Have you ever seen how captured criminals sleep? They sleep peacefully, they enjoy their new security. Beware that you are not captured in the end by a narrow belief, a harsh, severe delusion!”

It is also no coincidence, that after accepting his shadow, Zarathustra immediately experiences a type of perfect eternity (on the edge of waking and sleeping), which serves the function, not of lifting him away from this world, but rather a type of perfect eternity that helps Zarathustra to become a “ship” within the “ stillest bay” leaning against the Earth. This occurs throughout an elevation of his being into an even rounder and riper shape (Fourth and Final Part, 10 — At Noon).

Zarathustra invites all of these characters to his cave for “The Last Supper,” where he teaches them of the Overman. After long discourses on the nature of the Overman and his path (Fourth and Final Part, 13 — On

²² Here we get the dimension of Zarathustra which has to reflect on the primordial contradiction, something which Quinn Whelehan develops well in this anthology (see: Chapter 15).

The Higher Men), as well as a mediation on the deepest midnight at midnight (Fourth and Final Part, 19 — The Sleepwalker Song), Zarathustra concludes that his role as an enlightened leader, at this stage, has failed, or perhaps more accurately, he has not found his children (Fourth and Final Part, 20 — The Sign):

“They’re sleeping still, these higher men, while *I* am awake: *they* are not my proper companions! Not for them do I wait here in my mountains. I want to go to my work, to my day; but they do not understand what the signs of my morning are, my step — is not a wake up call for them.

They are sleeping still in my cave, their dream still ruminates on my midnights. [...] My animals are awake, because I am awake. My eagle is awake and like me he honours the sun. With Eagle’s talons he grasps for the night light. You are my proper animals; I love you.

But I still lack proper human beings!—“

Zarathustra already knew or at least anticipated that this was the situation before he started his speeches at “The Last Supper” on the Overman, but in confronting the reality of it, there is a brief sense of disappointment or defeat. In other words, we get the sense that, while he is now capable of leading, the actual task of founding a community that leads to a world of Overmen, is something which must still wait.²³ Whether this waiting implies that the character of Zarathustra is off on yet another mission towards this

²³ There are speculations that Nietzsche planned to write a Fifth Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and if that were to have ever appeared, my hypothesis would be that it would involve this dimension of becoming. An idea that comes to mind here is one that appears if one studies the community-result of tantric spiritual master Osho, who, after successfully becoming an enlightened leader (and not merely an enlightened being), his community produced what was often referred to as a “Buddha-Field,” which could exist above and beyond its dependence on the speech and leadership of Osho himself. Are “Buddha-Fields” (or in Christian terms: the Holy Spirit), the way “1000 year empires” or better, civilisational paradigms, born?

aim, or whether this task awaits individuals who transcend Zarathustra's being, seems unclear. However, whatever the situation, Zarathustra admits that not only did he make significant advance towards the future emergence of the Overman, but that in-and-through this work as an enlightened leader, *the final metamorphosis unfolded inside of his being* (Fourth and Final Part, Part 20 — The Sign):²⁴

“But then it happened that he suddenly heard himself swarmed and fluttered around as if by countless birds — but the whirring of so many wings and the thronging around his head was so great that he had to close his eyes. And truly, like a cloud it descended upon him, like a cloud of arrows pouring down upon a new enemy. But see, here it was a cloud of love, and it poured over a new friend.

‘What’s happening to me?’ thought Zarathustra in his astonished heart[.]. ‘*The sign is coming*’ said Zarathustra and his heart transformed. And in truth, as it grew brighter around him, there at his feet lay a yellow powerful beast, and it pressed its head against his knee and did not want to leave him out of love, acting like a dog that finds its old master again. [...]

To all of this Zarathustra had only one thing to say: ‘*My children are near, my children*’ — then he became completely mute. But his heart was freed, and from his eyes tears dropped and fell onto his hands. [...] All this lasted a long time, or a short time: for, properly speaking, there is *no time* on earth for such things —. [...]

Well then! The lion came, my children are near,
Zarathustra becomes ripe, my hour came — This is *my*
morning, *my day* is beginning: *up now, up, you great noon!*

²⁴ For an explication of the detailed symbolism needed to make sense of Zarathustra's transformations, see Andrew Sweeny's contribution to this anthology (Chapter 24).

— Thus Spoke Zarathustra and he left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun that emerges from dark mountains.”

Here we get an explicit confirmation: “Zarathustra becomes ripe, my hour came,” even if this hour does not include his actual spiritual “children.” No longer are we dealing with just an “enlightened being,” whose fruits have become ripe, but rather, a fully actualised “enlightened leader,” who is “ripe for his fruits.” This qualitative shift between the beginning and the ending of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is one that needs a deeper logical mediation for our time, for it is not enough that we mature ourselves to the level of “ripe fruits,” but rather, we must also become “ripe for these fruits.” What is on the line here is precisely the capacity to courageously lead in uncertainty and complexity, to be the type of being that not only shines inside, but also shines for others on the outside (and perhaps, the distinction between inside and outside, past and future, vanishes or evaporates here).

Now the harder task requires intellectual mediation: how are we to make sense of this difference, *philosophically*. Unless we understand this distinction philosophically, we have little chance of really understanding the meta-level gesture of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for our culture. As suggested above, we are not simply dealing with an enlightened being immediately communicating the meaning of the earth as the Overman. We are in fact dealing with a self-mediation of an enlightened being’s own process of becoming an enlightened leader (which is not made explicit by Zarathustra himself). In short, how are we to understand philosophically the distinction between Zarathustra pre and post-enlightened leader? First we need to understand the nature of the enlightened being and his teachings, and second we need to understand the

nature of the enlightened leader, and his final metamorphosis.

Here my hypothesis is derived from attempting to read *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the narrative development of the character Zarathustra, through a philosophical lens as a distinctly post-Hegelian phenomenon. For this, I attempt to approach the very embodied being of Zarathustra through the lens of Hegel's *Science of Logic* as an example of someone who not only understood this logic abstractly, but took it to its logical conclusion as a concrete result, or determinate being.²⁵ This connection is important philosophically, because much of 20th century philosophy created an unbridgeable rift between Hegel and Nietzsche, a rift which leaves us unable to bring together the meta-structure of Spirit's dialectical becoming (through the shapes Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason, Spirit, Religion), and the absolute singularity of the enlightened being attempting to become a real enlightened leader (Absolute Knowing).

In Hegel's *Science of Logic* we find a formula for becoming which includes within itself both being and nothing (i.e. a becoming that is for-itself through wrestling with its own birth and death in the mediation of every moment, we might say), as distinct from a becoming which is just in-itself (which may be the level of the Heraclitean notion). Hegel's first category of being is one derived from meditation on Parmenides, the second category of nothing is one derived from meditation on Buddha, and the third category of becoming is one derived from meditation on Heraclitus. Here Hegel takes these three ancient pillars of

²⁵ Hegel's *Science of Logic* was, importantly and purposefully, published after the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the mediation of ordinary consciousness to the standpoint of Absolute Knowing). For a deeper meditation on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see: Last, C. & Garner, D. (Ed.) 2022. *Enter the Alien: Thinking as 21st Century Hegel*. Independently Published, Philosophy Portal Books.

philosophy and spirituality, and thinks them through the historical dialectic (Hegel 1830, p. 60-62):²⁶

“The *Eleatics* were the first to give voice to the simple thought of *pure being* — notable among them Parmenides, who declared it to be the absolute and sole truth. In his surviving fragments, he did it with the pure enthusiasm of thought which has for the first time apprehended itself in its absolute abstraction: *only being is, and nothing is not absolutely*. — In the oriental systems, essentially in Buddhism, it is well known that nothing, the void, is the absolute principle. — Against that simple and one-sided abstraction, the profound Heraclitus proposed the loftier, total concept of becoming and said: *being is no more than nothing*; or also, *all flows*, that is, all is *becoming*. — The popular proverbs, particularly the oriental ones, that all that exists has the germ of death in its very birth, that death is on the other hand the entrance into a new life, express at bottom the same union of being and nothing. But these expressions have a substrate in which the transition takes place; being and nothing are held apart in time, represented as alternating in it; they are not thought in their abstraction and also, therefore, not so that they are the same in and for themselves. [...]

If the result that being and nothing are the same seems inherently startling or paradoxical, there is no much to be done about it. We should be amazed rather at this amazement that appears so refreshing in philosophy but forgets that the determinations that occur in this science of logic are quite different from those of so-called common sense — which is not exactly sound understanding but an understanding schooled rather in abstractions and in the belief in abstractions, or more accurately in the superstitious belief in them. It would not be difficult to

²⁶ For an extended meditation on the relation between Hegel's notion of Essence and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, see: (Chapter 11).

demonstrate the unity of being and nothing in every example, in *every* actual thing or thought. The same must be said of *being* and *nothing* [...], *that nowhere on heaven or on earth is there anything which does not contain both being and nothing in itself.* [...]

All further logical determinations besides *becoming* itself [...] are therefore examples of this unity [of being and nothing]. [...]

We cannot hope to address all the confusions in which ordinary consciousness lands itself in connection with this logical proposition, for they are inexhaustible.”

Here we can say that, when Zarathustra joyful and enthusiastically enters his “down-going” to humanity from his mountain top (which is of course preceded by a deep internalisation of nothingness), and attempts to teach the Overman to humanity (as humanity becoming-other to itself in a striving for self-overcoming), I think we can safely assume that we are dealing with a being (Zarathustra) who has internalised the logic that being-nothing are a unity in becoming. Here Zarathustra finds that “ordinary consciousness” (to use Hegel’s term), is inexhaustibly confused about this logical fact of Spirit’s Nature. Indeed, it is no coincidence that, in Zarathustra’s very first attempt to teach the Overman to humanity, his greatest success is in relation to a man who ends up *dying* in the process of becoming great (see: First Part, 6 — Prologue). That is, in his very first attempt to teach the Overman to humanity, Zarathustra attempts to show that one cannot really *become* unless one views the birth of (human) being as inextricably unified with nothing (death). To take it even further: it is in this very unity of being-nothing (birth-death) that one starts to perceive the potentiality of the Overman as a process of becoming.

To both clarify and speculate further, we find Zarathustra at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a *being that is unified with nothing*, and from this unification, we find a style of becoming that is other to the style of becoming found among ordinary consciousness of human beings, or to use Nietzsche's term: the (lustful) rabble. Consider also that we can make a structural argument that Nietzsche's mountain-climbing Zarathustra is a perfect example of a being that has climbed the Hegelian "phenomenological ladder" qua "shapes of ordinary consciousness" (i.e. Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason, Spirit, Religion), overcoming the opposition of consciousness itself in Absolute Knowing, and now exists in a "state of flight" which no longer needs mediation by positive objects (i.e. Zarathustra is a being unified with nothing and thus a new shape of becoming as something overhuman). However, this whole problem in this "state for flight," what we can call Absolute Knowing, is his struggle to "teach flight to others."²⁷

Furthermore, he finds the religion (and the religious) of his day, fundamentally flawed, unable to even touch the state of knowing that allows flight, leading to the degeneration of the shapes of ordinary consciousness in a reverse order (i.e. Spirit, Reason, Self-Consciousness, Consciousness). And so, from this *crisis of authority*, one could say the lack of "first men," the character of Zarathustra falls into isolated oscillations with a deepening form of nothing (as mentioned, this oscillation comprises the whole narrative arc of the text itself). This deepening form of nothing seems to be what opens the condition of possibility to becoming the being of an enlightened leader, which, potentially at least, opens the door to a re-establishment of some form of religious layer (something

²⁷ Perhaps this is why Hegel published the *Phenomenology of Spirit* before *Science of Logic*, since one's own standpoint of knowing must be raised to his height, before it could grasp the science of logic itself.

which Zarathustra refers to only as a future “empire” at an unknown “distance”).

In any case, throughout the text, we find many references to the idea that indeed, Zarathustra’s being is a being that has unified being-nothing. Consider many of Zarathustra’ meditations in “The Speeches of Zarathustra” which seem to constantly invoke a becoming that has processed both being-nothing. First, on the body and the soul (First Part, 4 — On the Despisers of the Body):²⁸

“‘Body am I and soul’ — so speaks a child. And why should one not speak like children? But the awakened, the knowing one says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body.”

Or on cultivating virtue (First Part, 5 — On the Passions of Pleasure and Pain):

“Human being [...] must be overcome, and therefore you should love your virtues — for of them you will perish.”

Or confronting our deepest violent urges (First Part, 6 — On the Pale Criminal):

“It is not enough that you reconcile yourself with the one you kill. Let your sadness be love for the overman — thus you justify that you still live!”

Or becoming great itself (First Part, 7 — On Reading and Writing):

“Whoever climbs the highest mountain laughs at all tragic plays and tragic realities.”

²⁸ For a meditation on the importance of the body, see Pamela von Sabljar’s contribution to this anthology (Interlude 5).

Or the nature of the “hinterworldly” (First Part, 9 — On the Preachers of Death):

“The earth is full of people to whom departure from life must be preached. The earth is full of the superfluous [...] may they be lured from this life with the “eternal life!” [...] They have not even become human beings, these terrible ones: may they preach departure from life and pass away themselves!”

Or on the nature of those people who are capable of a natural and effortless chastity (First Part, 13 — On Chastity):

“Indeed, there are chaste people through and through; they are milder of heart, they laugh more gladly and more richly than you. They laugh at chastity too and ask: ‘what is chastity?’ [...] We offered this guest [chastity] hostel and heart: now it dwells with us — may it stay as long as it wants!”

Or on the nature of human value systems (First Part, 15 — On a Thousand and One Goals):

“A thousand goals have there been until now, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the fetters for the thousand necks are still missing, the one goal is missing [...] if humanity still lacks a goal, does it not also still lack — humanity itself?”

Or the nature of creativity (First Part, 17 — The Way of the Creator):

“With your love go into your isolation and with your creativity, my brother; and only later will justice limp after you. With my tears go into your isolation, my brother. I

love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes.”

Or on passing on to the next generation (First Part, 21 — On Free Death):

“The free death that comes to me because I want. And when will I want it? — Whoever has a goal and an heir wants death at the right time for this goal and heir.”

Thus, what becomes clear in “The Speeches of Zarathustra” is that Zarathustra is a teacher of a form of becoming that contains the odd couple of being-nothing, in a very embodied form, or we could say, as a determinate being, and as such he is that:

- The “soul is the body” (being) and “nothing more” (nothing);
- That we should justify our life (being) by reconciling with the one we kill (a nothingness that, in psychoanalytic terms, could be thought in the form of a patricidal killing drive), but also in our sadness that the overman is not yet present (an even deeper nothingness made present by the fact that we do in fact, want to kill);
- That we become someone who climbs the highest mountains (being), so that we can laugh at all tragic realities (nothing);
- That those who live this life for an eternal life (being), must be viewed from the perspective of an immanent passing away (nothing);
- That there really are beings with mild heart who laugh fully (being), but that these people have cultivate a genuine chastity (nothing);
- That there have been thousands of goals and value systems in history (being), but that they are

all organised by the absence of the overman (nothing);

- That you can become a great creator (being), but that this capacity is dependent on the capacity for deep solitude (nothing);
- That one can create a new goal and heir (being), but that this is dependent on wanting to die at the right time (nothing);
- And so on...

Zarathustra's stance of an enlightened being, capable of teaching the standpoint of this being, revolves around a form of becoming that can contain the odd couple of being-nothing. This established, what now concerns us is what unfolds after "The Speeches of Zarathustra," that is after he realises that, while he may be able to embody and teach about this odd couple of being-nothing, his path to becoming an enlightened leader capable of birthing the Overman is only beginning.

This may be because, to become an enlightened leader, one's becoming not only has to actually contain being-nothing inside oneself but also help mediate that same process in *others*.²⁹ Thus, one would only be able to remain in "communion" or "community" with others, once they have successfully *internalised* this same odd couple.³⁰ The *affective* challenge is deeply related to, but not precisely symmetrical with, the psychoanalytic dimension of transference. In the psychoanalytic dimension of transference, one forms both close and meaningful intimate bonds with others (on the level of a parental-bond or on the

²⁹ Recall here how both the start and end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are organised around the idea of shining for others, i.e. his implicit message to the "enlightened being" is: "What would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine?"

³⁰ Perhaps in this situation, we have the conditions of possibility for a "Buddha-Field" or "Holy Spirit" or, perhaps: a "Hegelo-Nietzschean Field-of-Ecstatic Dreams."

level of a deep love-partnership), and also have others form close and meaningful intimate bonds with you (on the level of a parental-bond or on the level of a deep love partnership), *only for these relationships to end as a process of vanishing mediation*. This is precisely what introduces new challenges for the enlightened being in its self-mediation towards an enlightened leader.³¹ This is why, in the very last section of “The Speeches of Zarathustra,” he not only leaves all of his disciples or pupils behind for a new encounter with an even deeper solitude, but tells them directly to beware the trappings of idolatry, and that his function in the “speeches” was only to be interpreted on the level of vanishing mediation (First Part, 22 — On the Bestowing Virtue):

“The person of knowledge must not only be able to love his enemies, but to hate his friends too. One repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil only. [...] Beware that you are not killed by a statue! You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what matters Zarathustra! You are my believers, but what matters all believers! You had not yet sought yourselves, then you found me. All believers do this; that’s why all faith amounts to so little. Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you.”

What is taking place here is a fascinatingly complex dance between the disciples or pupils striving for the position of an enlightened being, and the self-mediation of an enlightened being to the position of an enlightened leader. On the side of the striving disciples or pupils, we have the struggles with static-fixed images, within which

³¹ I would add that this is also a different challenge than the challenge of psychoanalysis, where it is true that the analyst functions as a vanishing mediator, but his goal is not to become an enlightened leader for the birth of a community of Overmen, but rather to simply dissolve psychic symptoms in the other.

one's own unconscious psyche can attach eternal beliefs. On the side of the self-mediation of the enlightened being to enlightened leader, we have the recognition that all of his teachings are still merely propositional discourse, and not capable of getting into the real of the being of these individuals, which now, due to risks of idolisation, seems to require his absence (e.g. "only when you have all denied me will I return to you").

In the very next section, the beginning of the Second Part, we get a deeper glimpse into the problems of Zarathustra's self-mediation to the standpoint of an enlightened leader. From his "higher being" in teaching his pupils, he now finds himself in a "deeper nothing," separated from his pupils. This deeper nothing is in part a consequence of his journeys mediated by higher being, because while the initial oscillation between being-nothing involved detaching himself from, and ultimately transcending, his normative human identity mediating shallow relationships, now in the second oscillation between being-nothing, it involves detaching himself from an identity that was mediating much higher relationships, and relationships where he was genuinely giving much needed love (Second Part, 1 — The Child with the Mirror):

"Zarathustra returned again to the mountains and to the solitude of his cave and withdrew from mankind, waiting like a sower who has cast his seeds. [...] This is the hardest thing: to close the open hand out of love[.]"

There is a lot of depth in this idea of the "hardest thing": to close the open hand out of love. To know that you could give more, and to know that the other wants more, but to pull back, to withdraw, because you know there are challenges for the other in relation to over-identification. The hand must be closed. The trap here, where surely many attempting to self-mediate the transition from

enlightened being to enlightened leader fail, involves the secret desire to become a guru, to be idolised by followers. But Zarathustra is clear: *he does not want followers... he wants children*. And what is the difference between followers and children? Followers will forever remain submissive and subordinate to your speech. Children will inevitably start to differentiate, children will inevitably find their own voice, not necessarily against you, but necessarily beyond you, beyond you as a finite-mortal being.³² It is a very different thing to want children, and those who want followers probably do not want the pains of the parent or have somehow avoided and repressed that pain. The price they pay for this repression is to be surrounded for eternity, by followers, unable to think for themselves (i.e. to differentiate).

While Zarathustra returns in the Second Part to save his teachings, which turn out to be in danger because he left too soon and his children were unable to save them from the onslaught of the rabble and their new challenges, what really awaits Zarathustra is the challenge towards a deeper isolated self-mediation. Zarathustra had to confront even deeper discourses with the nothingness where the voiceless voice appears (as mentioned, the most critical mediations occur here towards the end of the Second Part and Third Part). From these discourses with the deeper nothingness, we do get an “other type of becoming,” which is not so easy to categorise. What really is this “other type of becoming” setting Zarathustra apart from all his contemporaries?

This question will have to be saved until the end: Chapter 25. We will see that what Nietzsche himself calls

³² It is in this distinction between differentiating through negation of the master, and differentiating through negating this negation itself, where one finds “true differentiation.” A differentiation based on negation of the master, is still a false energy, one that reflects the Freudian Oedipal-impulse to “kill the father.”

this other type of becoming is a becoming of flight, a becoming against and above the spirit of gravity. Furthermore, he sets this other type of becoming as distinct from the (perhaps necessary) fantasmatic mediation of the cross and the fall, the pull of the Spirit of Gravity (which should be conceived within the sociohistorical context of the scientific universe). Perhaps everything in Nietzsche's work is at stake in this tension between the Cross and the Fall governed by the Spirit of Gravity, and the actualisation of the Overman's Flight. Here we will be looking to see if there are already actual signs in the historical process, especially beyond Nietzsche's existence, of whether this flight is already soaring or not.