

ZARATHUSTRA'S SOLITUDE:
A PARADOXICAL EMBRACE OF VITALITY, ELEVATED IRONY, AND ISOLATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Nietzsche's philosophic narrative Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In my first chapter, I focus in on the language of solitude and loneliness as it pertains to Zarathustra's narrated philosophic journey and various parables on the concept of solitude itself. I work linearly through the text examining how Zarathustra's character development reflects a specific, critical style of intellectual "becoming" in the absence of metaphysical certainty. In the second chapter, I defend the necessity of a literary interpretation to unpack the language and rhetorical conventions that Nietzsche uses to convey Zarathustra's complex development.

INTRODUCTION

“All truly wise thoughts have been thoughts already thousands of times; but to make them truly ours, we must think them over again honestly, till they take root in our personal experience.”

Goethe

Friedrich Nietzsche has been both acclaimed and scorned by philosophic, political, and aesthetic movements since his ideas entered the intellectual arena in the late nineteenth century. With debates over truth, relativity, and nihilism as inconclusive and problematic as ever in academia, Nietzsche’s ideas remain important to the future of vibrant intellectual thought. He wrote extensively, and I have chosen Thus Spoke Zarathustra for literary analysis because it hovers most profoundly between a literary text and a philosophic project. The book is a mix of genres: there are speeches, introspective reflections, poetry, and a developing story. This mixing of literary aesthetics and philosophy provides for a dramatic intellectual stage. This being said some critics argue that Nietzsche’s use of literary styles to convey philosophy only adds to the confusion of his often times bombastic, contradictory claims. This is one reason why analyzing Nietzsche’s ideas is such a complex process. There are two important risks associated with reading Nietzsche: a tendency to sum up and make a simple Truth out of his ideas and a tendency to reduce Nietzsche to a fragmentary philosopher with a multiplicity of potential “truths” that lack a coherent totality. Reading Nietzsche too hastily or without a working understanding of the large scope of his ideas can all too easily reduce the complexity of his thought to simple incoherence, which is limiting to the breath and depth of his intellectual project.

In order to combat these two problematic ways of reading, I chose to analyze a specific and important literary theme in Thus Spoke Zarathustra: solitude and loneliness. I use

“loneliness” and “solitude” because both English words are used to translate the German word “einsamkeit” in different contexts. “Solitude” and “loneliness” have very different connotations in English, but in German they are united. This is an admitted limitation of employing a close reading to interpret a translated text. The specific contexts of speeches and narrations require the use of both words, and through my interpretations I hope it will become clear why Walter Kauffman chose to translate “einsamkeit” as “loneliness” in some passages and “solitude” in others. “Solitude” is a word that brings with it more positive connotations where as “loneliness” suggests a lack and Kauffman translates accordingly. It is important to be aware of this translation complication as I work through my analysis.

Zarathustra undergoes long periods of solitude in the text and also devotes attention to this psychological state in speeches, internal discourses, and introspective reflections. Solitude, for Zarathustra, is the psychological core of his perpetual intellectual development, and Nietzsche uses complex metaphors, imagery and dramatic dialogue to elucidate the importance of this concept. Nietzsche’s use of literary conventions makes a literary analysis necessary to unpack the language and style of this text. This thesis closely analyzes the language pertaining to solitude and loneliness in Nietzsche’s text to reveal the complexity and importance of isolation for Zarathustra as a thinker, who, to use Nietzsche famous phrase, lives “beyond good and evil.” I employ close readings to analyze Zarathustra’s use of the language of solitude in order to extract the contextual meanings from each passage. Many of the passages read like poetic riddles, and close contextual readings help to unpack the ideas and paradoxes within the language. As I work through the differing contextual meanings, I compare my findings to other scholarly explorations of solitude in Nietzsche’s thought. Zarathustra’s numerous and paradoxical reflections on solitude provide fertile literary ground to reveal the complexities that

surround his philosophic journey. Close reading keeps me wedded to the text, but the plethora of contextual meanings gleaned from the reading provides me with a scaffolding to comment on Zarathustra's overall growth in the story.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is arguably Nietzsche's most influential and important text. In the philosophic narrative he unveils two of his most important philosophic concepts: the "eternal return" and the "overman." This thesis avoids these important philosophic ideas as much as possible in order to avoid the endless implications of a philosophic inquiry. But more importantly, I refrain from analyzing these concepts so that the importance of solitude and loneliness for Zarathustra's story can be magnified. As this is a literary analysis, I focus on how Zarathustra describes and "narrates" his own solitude as well as how Zarathustra "dictates" how and why solitude is critical to his followers.

This thesis, then, is a two fold project. My first section focuses closely on Nietzsche's text to reveal the multitudinous and paradoxical meanings of solitude for Zarathustra. I work linearly through Nietzsche's text focusing on important passages that reflect Zarathustra's perspectives "on" and reflections "in" solitude as he vacillates between isolation and time spent amongst his followers. Thus Spoke Zarathustra is an encrypted philosophic, psychological, and partially autobiographical text, so I could not hope to get to the impossible bottom of the "meaning" of Zarathustra's many "solitudes"; instead, I analyze some of the more pertinent speeches and narrations to show the variety of perspectives and rhetorical conventions that Nietzsche uses to show what solitude means for Zarathustra. Thus Spoke Zarathustra is broken down into four books and a prologue, and I focus on the first three books and the prologue because these sections have the most fruitful implications for an exploration of solitude. The limitations of this thesis required me to choose the most pertinent and intellectually complex

passages where solitude and/or loneliness are examined and described; thus, a full analysis of the language of “solitude” as it exists in the text could not be completely undertaken.

In the second chapter of this thesis I seek to show the importance of literary analysis for interpreting Zarathustra’s development. The importance of close reading and stylistic analysis for interpreting Nietzsche’s text will become clearer in this chapter. A literary analysis provides a unique analytic lens with which to unpack Zarathustra’s overall character development and use of complex metaphors. Literary scholars bring a textual sensitivity that is important to reveal Nietzsche’s multiplicity of literary styles and conventions. This sensitivity helps to elucidate Zarathustra’s varying rhetorical purposes and this in turn sheds light on his overall intellectual character development. Thus Spoke Zarathustra truly requires a cross-disciplinary analysis. It is a complex, philosophic narrative, and without the hermeneutic tools that literary analysis affords, many of Nietzsche’s ideas can be misconstrued outside of the varying and specific social and psychological contexts of Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In this chapter I will also incorporate a series of thinkers to provide a critical backdrop that elucidates how other philosophers and literary critics have handled the allusive literary styles and poetic qualities of Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

This second chapter will build off the close reading and interpretations from chapter one to argue that literary analysis is necessary for a critical engagement of Nietzsche’s text. I argue that Nietzsche’s philosophic narrative, which pushes literary conventions and philosophic discourses into a commingled style, helps to convey Zarathustra’s intellectual “becoming” in a unique way. By intellectual “becoming,” I mean the perpetual change, growth, destruction, renewal, and “self-overcoming” that Zarathustra experiences as the text develops. Alexander Nehamas in Nietzsche Life as Literature elaborates further on the term “becoming” as an opposition to the word “being.” In a chapter titled “How One Becomes What One Is” Nehamas

examines Nietzsche's thought as it pertains to the "self" (170-199). Nehamas argues that Nietzsche's thought focuses on concepts such as substance, the self, and the world as linguistic "illusions." Nietzsche might see these words as referential to a temporal and contingent "becoming" versus some timeless unity or evolving teleology. With this idea in mind, Zarathustra's "becoming" is a thinker's perpetual grappling "with" and creation "of" philosophic and poetic meaning in the absence of metaphysical foundations. Zarathustra requires the isolation and social distance that solitude affords to fuel his own evolving purpose and wisdoms, and a literary analysis will help to unpack the poetic language and reveal the unique character development that Zarathustra exhibits as he vacillates between "mountain tops" and "social valleys."

In this second chapter I also show how Zarathustra's conflicted narrations, critical questioning, and contradictory aspirations show the work of a heightened, ironic sense of awareness and creativity which is evidence for one of Zarathustra's self-described goals to "create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident" (251). In this chapter I also show the inspirational and aesthetic value of Zarathustra's journey. His rhetorical challenges and "lived" examples of intellectual "becoming" stand out as an ironic, ethically valuable, life-affirming attempt to persistently make meaning out of the crumbling foundations of modern critical thought.

In terms of the contemporary use of this analysis, I seek to show the depth and complexity of Zarathustra's poetic, psychological observations. Thus Spoke Zarathustra reveals to the present day reader both a poetic psychologist's varied "dictations" on the importance of solitude as well as the poetic psychologist's "narrations" of his own solitude. Present day readers will see the vitality and necessary risk of despair that Zarathustra sees waiting when we

choose to turn our eyes inward. His ideas plunge into the ambiguous realities of introspection and self-criticism. Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers who connected philosophic inquiry to psychology, and I seek to reveal what Zarathustra's lonely journey has to show us about our own ever-changing and never-ending process of introspection, interpretation and self-creation.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra was autobiographically significant for Nietzsche because the author himself endured and created meaning and purpose out of his solitude in the month leading up to the writing of his philosophic narrative. Without becoming too caught up in biography, a quick glance into Nietzsche's life reveals how important Thus Spoke Zarathustra was for his own self-creation or to use Nietzsche's own language "self-overcoming." By self-overcoming, I mean the capability for self-discipline and self awareness when suppressing, elevating, and controlling thought, instinct, and social values. In the time leading up to the writing of his philosophic narrative, Nietzsche himself dealt with his own personal frustration and anguish over events in his life. It is not important to my argument to speculate about what those events were, but it is important that he harnessed his despair and turned his life into the production of Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In a passage quoted in R.J. Holindale's Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy, Nietzsche writes in a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck on Christmas Day:

I have suffered from the disgraceful and anguishing recollections of this past summer as from a kind of madness... They involve a conflict of contrary emotions which I am not equal to... If only I could sleep! But the strongest sleeping-draughts help as little as do the six to eight hour walks I take. If I cannot find the magic formula to turn all this muck to gold, I am lost... I now mistrust everybody: I sense in everything I hear contempt towards me... Sometimes I think of renting a small room

in Basel, visiting you now and then and attending lectures. Sometimes I think of doing the opposite: of driving my solitude and resignation to the ultimate limit. (153)

The creative seeds of Thus Spoke Zarathustra are evident in this letter of despair. Hollingdale goes on to argue that Nietzsche ironically and unbeknownst to even himself foreshadows the writing of Zarathustra in this letter. He does in fact turn this “muck” of despair into “gold.” The actual reasons why Nietzsche wrote Thus Spoke Zarathustra can never be known, but he turns his despair and stifling solitude into something creative and powerful when he begins his philosophic narrative later the following year. Although it’s problematic to hypothesize about intention as such, it is critical to realize that even the author himself gained a creative rebirth out of suffering and isolation through writing his philosophic narrative.

Nietzsche wrote as a subtitle to Thus Spoke Zarathustra that his work was A Book for All and None. This idea gives the philosophic narrative the capability to challenge and influence all readers, but it is also a subjective narrative and a struggle for meaning by Zarathustra and thus “None” can ultimately “mimic” his contingent struggle. Although Zarathustra’s quest for new values and self-overcoming is on an epic level, the non-philosopher has much to learn from his quest, and a close literary reading provides the hermeneutic lens with which to unpack the complexity and paradoxes wrapped up in Zarathustra’s poetic language and journey. Solitude on its own is mere social isolation, but if it is accompanied by self-narration, profound laughter, critical thought, poetic elegance, irony, and most importantly, a passion for questioning, all of which Zarathustra in some sense possesses, then it becomes a rich and self-creative avenue for greater self-awareness and vital, purposeful growth. This is only one possible solitude, and each individual who finds him or herself distanced metaphorically or physically from the social world must decide how they will “live” and create in the presence of themselves.

CHAPTER ONE

Zarathustra's Multitudinous Narrations "of" and Dictations "on" Solitude

"The Bad Hour. Every philosopher has probably had a bad hour when he thought: what do I matter if one does not accept my bad arguments, too? And then some mischievous little bird flew past him and twittered" 'What do you matter? What do you matter?'"

Aphorism 332 The Gay Science

Zarathustra, historically, was the Zoroastrian "prophet" who first identified the concepts of "good" and "evil" as the "gears" of cultural change in the human world (Kriwaczek 31). Nietzsche fictionalizes "his" Zarathustra as a new, contemporary "type" of thinker who moves beyond this "dated" moral duality. The reader is first introduced to Zarathustra in the prologue, and it is here that Zarathustra begins his lonely journey. The prologue is written in the form of a narrative, and Zarathustras' claims and observations are made as "side commentary" to the story itself. Zarathustra's solitude is mentioned in a few passages, but I have focused on three key instances that set up important complications about Zarathustra's isolation as well as the concept of solitude itself.

Zarathustra begins his journey following a ten year period of isolation high in the mountains where he lived in the company of his "animals" and "spirit." Nietzsche does not give an explanation for Zarathustra's original ascent; instead, he picks up with Zarathustra's decision to "go under" and leave his mountain top isolation. For the ten years prior to his descent, Zarathustra lives happily in his isolation. Nietzsche writes, "Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it" (121). This first mention of Zarathustra's solitude is an objectification of the experience suggesting that, Zarathustra owned his "spirit" and his

“solitude” and did not merely “experience” it. Solitude is not a condition that Zarathustra bore as a punishment or sustained as a form of asceticism; instead, Zarathustra embraces and enjoys this isolated condition. This example asserts a common theme in the narrative, that Zarathustra separates and claims ownership over different qualities of his selfhood, in this instance “solitude” and “spirit.” “Solitude” is typically a word used to describe the common experience of social isolation, but as evidenced by the text, Zarathustra speaks of solitude as if it were a condition that he himself possesses and does not share with other isolated persons. He is not condemned to “solitude” as if solitude were a shared set of experiences that persons isolated from society experience commonly; instead, his solitude and his spirit are “happily” his own.

Drawing attention to the textual proximity of “solitude” and “spirit,” Peter H. Van Ness notes in “Nietzsche on Solitude: The Spiritual Discipline of the Godless” that it is important to see the relationship between spiritual discipline and long periods of solitude. He asserts that, “the willingness and the capacity to endure solitude best exemplifies Nietzsche’s version of disciplined spiritual practice” (346). Van Ness notes Nietzsche’s parallel use of “spirit” and “solitude” in this opening passage as evidence for this important connection. He asserts that this “spiritual discipline,” best exemplified in solitude, is a pre-condition for the type of aesthetic “ideal” that he argues Nietzsche advocates. In some sense Van Hess envisions Zarathustra’s solitude as a monk-like isolation chosen in order to arrive at the goal of creating higher forms of cultural creation. Van Hess goes on to build a more complex argument about spiritual discipline, citing various works by Nietzsche, but he begins his argument with this first key passage in Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

Although Van Hess focuses on the serious relationship between solitude and spiritual discipline, there is also a lighter interpretation of this passage that reveals a significant aspect of

the philosophic narrative. This aspect is Nietzsche's parodying of biblical passages from the gospels of Jesus to describe the experiences of Zarathustra. Many critics argue that Thus Spoke Zarathustra is in some sense a "mock gospel." Laurence Lampert in Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra notes the parallelism between Zarathustra's first mention of "enjoying his solitude and spirit" and Jesus's forty days of temptation in the wilderness. Lampert writes, "Unlike Jesus, who is driven into the wilderness, Zarathustra enters of his own accord; he is attended not by angels but by wild beasts; he neither suffers in his nor is tempted" (14). Jesus's experience in the wilderness is considered a testament to his faith and "will" because he resists the devil and temptation. For Zarathustra on the other hand, isolation is not something endured; rather, it is a happiness enjoyed.

Both Lampert and Van Hess draw attention to the quasi-religious implications of this opening passage, but what is important for my argument is the possessive pronoun "his" to describe "solitude" and "spirit." I do not contest the mock-religious connections or the serious relationship between spirituality, isolation, and discipline, but by using "his" to describe the terms "solitude" and "spirit," the text shows that Zarathustra, in some sense, psychologically possesses this socially isolated condition. More importantly, these lines show that, in solitude, Zarathustra accepts, personifies, and embraces a multiplicity of the self. It sets the precedent that solitude, at least in part, is something that Zarathustra own, enjoys, and welcomes. The question then becomes why does Zarathustra leave this idyllic isolation and descend from his mountaintop solitude to rejoin mankind?

A few lines later in the text this question is ambiguously answered and the answer is the impetus behind a significant part of Zarathustra's purpose. The following lines are in some sense the crux of Zarathustra's story because prior to this introductory "narrative" his past is

unknown. Nietzsche writes that it was a change in “his heart” that first drew Zarathustra down from the mountains. Zarathustra questions the sun in a soliloquy that first reveals this change:

You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?
For ten years you have climbed to my cave; you would have tired of your light and
of the journey had it not been for me and my eagle and my serpent. But we waited
for you every morning, took your overflow from you, and blessed you for it. Behold, I
am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands
outstretched to receive it. (121-122)

In these lines it appears that Zarathustra’s descent is based on paradoxical reasons. Joseph Beatty in “Zarathustra: The Paradoxical Ways of the Creator” argues that this “love of solitude” exemplified by Zarathustra’s ten year period of isolation and “lack in solitude” as exemplified by the above passage is a fundamental paradox throughout Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Beatty argues that “solitude has provided him (Zarathustra) with the atmosphere in which his truth could emerge, but this truth overflows the vessel of his solitude” (64). Beatty identifies two reasons why Zarathustra seeks to leave the happiness of his solitude. First, Zarathustra appears to want followers to receive the wisdom he has gathered. He goes as far as to question the value of his “wisdom” or “honey” if he has no “hands outstretched” to receive it. The second reason is “weariness” over his “wisdom” because it has become too much for him to carry, and he needs followers to receive it and thus relieve him. These two reasons seem to point to the “lack” that he experiences after ten years in happy, isolated contemplation. This change suggests that “his solitude” has limits, and these limits draw him “under” to seek “outstretched hands” to receive his “overflow.”

Stanley Rosen pushes these interpretations further in The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra. He sheds light on creative impulse behind Zarathustra's "need" to bring his wisdom to mankind. Rosen argues that this "need" should not be interpreted as an impulse rooted in Zarathustra's empathy for mankind; instead, it is an expression of Zarathustra's creative impulsive which needs appreciation. According to Rosen, Nietzsche's use of the natural imagery of "bees and honey" and "sun and sunshine" show that Zarathustra's creative impulse to distribute his wisdom is a natural process. Zarathustra gathers his wisdom from the sun and his mountaintop isolation, and then must redistribute this wisdom, just as the sun must shine. Thus, this process of creation is both natural and inevitable.

These earthly metaphors beg many questions. For instance, it is not clear how "sunshine" might be conceptualized as "overflow" because "sun light" is a phenomenon which has no "happiness," "overflow" or "potential weariness." In another slippery use of metaphor Zarathustra reflects that he is "weary" of his wisdom, "like a bee that has gathered too much honey" (122). This metaphor raises questions because "bees" do not gather honey they make it. This paradoxical and slippery use of metaphor reflects an important aspect of Zarathustra's wisdoms. He metaphorically "bends" the "natural" world toward his own end, and in doing so he grounds and blends his ideas "in" and "with" the "earthly" world around him.

Also, by using words like "overflow" to describe Zarathustra's need to go back to mankind, the image of an earthly impulse makes Zarathustra's descent in some sense compulsive and sexual. In other words, Zarathustra does not seek to go under because he wants to merely teach his "wisdom" to mankind; rather, his wisdom is a certain sexualized "overflow" of his own natural process of creation. This natural imagery is important to how Zarathustra's conceives of his earthly or natural wisdom. Using the term "natural" is at first glance problematic, but if

“natural” is defined as “earthly” and more specifically temporal and material, then the language is not as problematic. Nietzsche’s use of “earthly” metaphors to describe “purpose” and “intention” supports the idea that Zarathustra’s journey is not metaphysical or spiritual. Zarathustra is in some sense a “materialist” in that he must realize his spirituality in an “earthly” context where his interaction with the world is based in the ebb and flow of bodily impulse and critical discipline as opposed to any “straight line” or “lukewarm” “consistency” that is wrapped up in otherworldly metaphysics.

The use of earthly metaphors to describe the paradoxical embrace of “love of self in solitude” and “lack in extended periods of solitude” also reveals two fundamental aspects of Zarathustra. His solitude is the condition by which he creates his earthly wisdom, but his solitude cannot completely “contain” this creativity, so it is also the catalyst for his need to “overflow.” He is caught between a fundamental embrace of self and the fundamental need to overflow into “outstretched hands.” As his journey continues, this paradoxical relationship of an embrace of isolation in solitude and the need to overflow out of solitude will become more complex and telling of Zarathustra’s “becoming.” Also, by relying on earthly metaphors to reveal his process of creation, Nietzsche sets Zarathustra’s story firmly on the ground. Zarathustra is not a philosopher who seeks the isolation of the mountains to discover or receive new fundamental truths; instead, his solitude is the psychological space where he experiments with the multiplicity of the self and the intellectual effect of this isolation and experimentation is new earthly wisdom that creates Zarathustra’s desire “to become empty again” (122) and thus “overflow” into outstretched hands.

As Zarathustra descends his mountaintop isolation for the first time he encounters a saint who also lives in solitude. The saint tells Zarathustra that he no longer loves man because man is

“too imperfect a thing” (123). Because of mankind’s imperfections, he now loves only god, and he spends his time in solitude “singing, crying, laughing, and humming” (124) praises to god. This fellow hermit makes important observations about Zarathustra. He witnessed Zarathustra’s original ascent and remarks about the changes he sees and also questions Zarathustra’s decision to rejoin mankind. The saint remarks:

Zarathustra has changed, Zarathustra has become a child, Zarathustra is an awakened one; what do you now want among the sleepers? You lived in your solitude as in the sea, and the sea carried you. Alas would you now climb ashore? Alas would you again drag your own body? (123)

This saint has questioned Zarathustra’s descent because he views solitude as an idyllic isolation. He describes Zarathustra’s solitude as like living in the sea and this “sea” has awakened him and given him a child like disposition. In describing Zarathustra’s appearance as such, he reveals new effects of Zarathustra’s isolation. Using the term “child” and “awakened” is paradoxical. “Awakened” carries with it the connotations of knowingness, awareness, and being cognizant, where as “child” carries with it the connotations of creativity, newness, and naiveté. This subtle paradox provides the reader with a perspective on the type of person Zarathustra has become while in solitude. The priest’s observations show that in solitude, Zarathustra learns how to be both aware of new earthly wisdoms and thus “awakened,” but, also, to become free, creative and innocent, thus the word “child.” I interpret this to mean that Zarathustra has become “paradoxically enlightened” and thus capable of fresh creativity and self-aware critical analysis. The priest also questions Zarathustra’s intentions and goals because he doesn’t understand why or how Zarathustra will “drag his body” amongst the “sleepers,” who may not receive his “overflow” with “outstretched hands.”

Robert Gooding-William's interpretation of this passage reveals the importance of this juxtaposition of the "Saint" and "Zarathustra." Gooding-Williams argues that the "saint" represents a deep obstacle Zarathustra's project faces as he embarks on his quest to seek followers to receive his wisdom. The saint realizes that Zarathustra will have to exchange the "sensation of effortless becoming" that he enjoys in solitude for the "camel-like suffering of a heavy burden" that he will face as he goes back to mankind to relay his new creative wisdoms (Gooding-Williams 61). The pessimism that the Saint sees in Zarathustra's goals foreshadows the inevitable rejection and hardships he will face as he brings his "wisdom" and "overflow" down from the mountains into the towns where he will encounter people who will not receive him with open arms.

Lauren Lampert further extends the importance of the saint's conversation with Zarathustra, calling it an "encounter between the solitary lover of mankind and the solitary lover of God" (17). According to Lampert, the priest turns to solitude because he cannot bear the burden of man's imperfection. Because of this, he chooses to live in the forest "singing, crying, laughing, and humming" praises to god. His solitude is in some sense an escape from the burdens of living amongst the "sleepers." According to Lampert, Zarathustra on the other hand enters solitude to contemplate the meaning of existence after the "death of God." His solitude brings him renewed hope and happiness that exceeds the capacity of his solitary existence.

Both Lampert and Gooding-Williams reveal important aspects of this meeting between two types of solitary personas. Zarathustra's solitude on the one hand has made him both "aware" and "child like," but he faces a difficult task in bringing his new earthly wisdom to the "sleepers." This task is a continuously evolving burden and purpose, and Zarathustra alternates between time spent living amongst his followers and time spent embracing his solitude. The

story is in some sense Zarathustra's grappling with these two types of existences, which are on the one hand a love and embrace of isolation and social distance, and on the other a fundamental need to "shine," "overflow" and "share." This meeting with the Priest further complicates the assertion that Zarathustra's solitude provokes a paradox between "love of self" and "love of mankind." Loving mankind may not be as easy as Zarathustra believes as he descends his mountain isolation for the first time.

The juxtaposition of these two solitudes that Lampert draws attention to also further solidifies the idea that "solitude" is not a common experience unified by its definition of social isolation. Zarathustra's solitude has given him new paradoxical, earthly wisdoms in his quest to make meaning in the absence of objective authority, whereas the Saint's solitude has given him a means by which he can commune with an otherworldly god without the limiting effects of living amongst the imperfections of society.

From the prologue it is clear that Zarathustra's solitude is complicated by a "love of self" and a "fundamental need to overflow." The earthly wisdom that he has gained in the happiness of his solitude is paradoxical, but this paradox has fueled his quest to bring this wisdom down from the mountains. Later in the prologue Zarathustra is rejected by the people he had hoped would receive his "overflow" with "outstretched hands," so the complications of living "amongst the sleepers," as foreshadowed by the priest are confirmed. Turning next to the speeches of Book One, I will delve into Zarathustra's "mountain top" wisdoms on solitude.

The speeches in Book One are written much differently than the prologue. The prologue tells the story of Zarathustra's descent and his first encounters with people, where as the speeches of Book One are written more like parables, relaying the wisdom that Zarathustra has accumulated in solitude. The speeches are given to his followers or "friends," and they are not

directed to a general audience. This is important to consider because Zarathustra's intentions are no longer to change the intellectual path of mankind; instead, he intends to create free-thinkers capable of self-overcoming and new values creation. I have chosen four of these speeches to read closely in order to provide critical insight into the different "paradoxical wisdoms" that Zarathustra has learned about solitude. The four speeches will clarify that solitude, for Zarathustra, has many faces, dangers, and uses.

The first speech is titled "On the Flies of the Market Place." In this speech, Zarathustra warns his followers about the dangers of the "market place," although as with most metaphorical concepts in the text, Zarathustra isn't explicit about what he means by the "Market Place." However, through contextual clues and commonly agreed upon critical insight (Rosen, Van Hess, Gooding-Williams) I assume that by "Market Place" Zarathustra means a congregation of petty intellectuals, politicians, and religious men. Zarathustra asserts that the market place is full of "actors," "showmen," and "jesters" who seek gods that make a "big noise" (163-164). He calls these men "small," "fame driven," "petty," and "miserable." Zarathustra asserts that in the market place these men who preach "unconditional" truth will press his followers into a "Yes" or a "No," and Zarathustra speaks about these men saying "Do not be jealous of these unconditional, pressing men, you lover of truth! Never yet has truth hung on the arm of the unconditional" (164). In these lines, Zarathustra defines the problems of the political and intellectual debates that define the "market place." In the social debates of the market place "ideas" or "wisdom" are threatened by "big noises" and the push for a naive "yes" or "no" in critical debates. This push for a naive "yes" or "no" in critical debates speaks to the demand for simplistic moral or political solutions.

What is important for my argument is not how Zarathustra defines the market place or even why he guides his followers away from it; instead, it is his advice to his followers who face the perils inherent to the market place. Zarathustra three times advises his friends to “flee” into their “solitude” when faced with these perils. Up until this point in the text, Zarathustra has spoken of “solitude” as an embrace of self. He has defined solitude as a psychological space in which his followers and himself might reflect on their own perspectives, intuitions, and varying “wills,” but here for the first time, he conceptualizes solitude as an escape. He advises his friends to “go back to” their “security” (164). Using the word “security” is even more problematic because it brings to mind safety and an escape from fear. In this speech Zarathustra defines solitude much the same as the saint in the prologue. Mankind’s limitations and imperfections are clear in the market place, and thus they become a hindrance and danger to his followers. Solitude in this sense is a psychological escape from the “poisonous flies” that buzz in the market place. Zarathustra argues that their innumerable stings can potentially stunt the intellectual growth of his followers.

Ofelia Schutte in “The Solitude of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra” draws attention to the problem of solitude as “escapism.” Schutte argues that, in avoiding contact with the decadent, Zarathustra advocates a retreat from the world that he seeks to find new ways to embrace (211). Schutte writes, “Escapism is a reactive rather than an active choice and, psychologically speaking, it is very much linked to nihilism and resentment” (211). Nihilism and resentment are two psychological reactions that Nietzsche vehemently opposes. Zarathustra’s choice of the words “miserable,” “small,” and “poisonous” to describe these “unworthy” men of the marketplace reflects a certain “resentment.” More problematically Zarathustra’s solution to confronting the marketplace is solitude, and solitude in this instance reads like “escapism.” The

“resentment” and “escapism” wrapped into this speech makes Zarathustra’s advice to “flee into” solitude seemingly “nihilistic.”

Lawrence Lampert, a more forgiving critic, interprets this speech as a warning by Zarathustra about what the “Market Place” and the “stings” of “flies” can do to the perspective of potential free thinkers. According to Lampert, the impulsiveness and demand of the intellectual market place could provoke an emotional vengefulness in his followers, thus replacing patient, creative insight with vindictive reactions (56). Lampert argues that Nietzsche’s assertion that “It is not your lot to shoo flies” is an indication that Zarathustra wants to make clear the danger of mixing revenge with reflection. The crucial “perspective” that solitude offers is the reason why Lampert believes Zarathustra advises his followers to “flee.” Lampert argues, “Only solitude, withdrawal from contemporary debates in the marketplace of ideas, makes it possible to gain perspective that allows ideas to come to light as what they are” (56-57). From this excerpt, it is clear that Lampert believes that Zarathustra is advising his followers to envision solitude as a life affirming condition that offers a sober perspective with which to contemplate the complexity of existence.

Although I am sympathetic to Lampert’s argument, the use of the word “flee” by Zarathustra still signifies the type of escapism that Schutte draws attention to. Solitude may bring the “perspective” that Lampert argues for, but Zarathustra’s use of the word “flee” three times to describe the haste with which his followers should escape into their solitude makes the market place something that should be “escaped from” as opposed to “dealt with” through the sobriety of solitude. In any sense, this conceptualization of solitude as a place to “flee into” when confronted with a decadent social environment, makes solitude not merely a place to

embrace one's self, as evidenced by Zarathustra's language, it can function as a place to "escape" or "avoid" the imperfections of society.

"Fleeing" and "avoiding" are much different from "embracing" and "seeking," and with this speech Zarathustra makes his first clear paradoxical assertion about how solitude can function. Logically, it could be argued that Zarathustra is not being consistent, but this speech "On the Flies in the Market Place" comes after Zarathustra's negative reception in the town. After his "embrace of self" in the mountains, the reality of spreading his wisdom and engaging the intellectual "market place" has become more difficult than he imagines. If Zarathustra is "becoming" as his story unfolds, then "solitude" as a concept might be re-imagined as his journey continues. At this point in his story he has also altered the intentions of his descent. His goals have changed from bringing his "overflow" to all of mankind to creating a "narrowed" group of "free-thinkers." This change in sentiment may be why he concludes that the market place is a danger to his followers, and thus "fleeing" into solitude may now be appropriate. If this is true then this shows that Zarathustra's "wisdoms" are not objective and timeless; instead, they are contextual and temporal. His rhetorical intentions have changed, the context has changed, Zarathustra has changed, and thus his dictations have evolved. His "wisdoms" reflect his own process of intellectual "becoming"; they are always based on specific contexts that reflect his own unfolding story, state of flux, and changing rhetorical purpose.

The next key passages are a bit more psychologically complex, but I will attempt to interpret the language and stay as far away from arm chair literary psychologizing as possible. The two key passages that I have chosen to analyze come from two different speeches, both of which speak to the role of solitude in human companionship. One is titled "On the Friend" and the other "On Love of the Neighbor." The latter is written as a warning to Zarathustra's

followers about the dangers of Christian doctrine to a healthy solitude and the former addresses the relationship of solitude to friendship in general.

“On the Friend” comes after Zarathustra dictates the characteristics of strong friendship. He uses “war” metaphors to describe the importance of hardness and intuitiveness as it pertains to friendship. These metaphors help to describe a “specific context” for a specific “kind” of friendship that Zarathustra seeks for his followers. In using such metaphors, he re-colors the concept of friendship in a new image which better suits his rhetorical purpose. Zarathustra claims that “one should still honor the enemy” in a friend, and he poses the question “Can you go close to your friend without going over to him?” (167-69). This speech is geared to define friends as both companions and potential enemies. Zarathustra paradoxically creates an image of “closeness” juxtaposed against a “pathos of distance” when he states that friends must be willing to come “close” without “going over” to each other. Friends must be willing to go to “war” with and against each other, each for his self and the other’s sake. A friend should also be compassionate, but conceal this compassion “under a hard shell.” These opposing “wills” needed in friendship directly complicate and confront the “received” meanings of friendship as loyal, unquestioned companionship.

Toward the end of this speech Zarathustra remarks, “Are you pure air and solitude and bread and medicine for your friend? Some cannot loosen their own chains and can nevertheless redeem their friends” (169). The importance of compassion and hardness for friendship shines through in these lines. The words “medicine” and “bread” relay the importance of compassion, while “pure air” and “solitude” relay the importance of hardness. The importance of compassion or “bread” and “medicine” for friendship is not a noteworthy idea; however, the fundamental importance of “pure air,” “solitude,” and “loosened chains” for the redemption of friendship is

compelling. Zarathustra's use of "solitude" and "pure air" to define characteristics of companionship makes the fundamental "embrace of self," which solitude affords, critical to profound companionship. If his followers cannot "embrace their own solitude" to the point of becoming an enemy to a friend then friendship cannot rise above the "chains" of complacency that restrict individual "becoming." To Zarathustra, solitude is the only route to an "embrace of self" which would allow social chains to be loosened enough for individuality and honest companionship to be made possible. The important aspect of this passage for my argument is that "solitude" is further engrained as the only legitimate road to one's self, and further, it is the fundamental basis for any legitimate companionship that is based outside of mere complacent fellowship. Gooding-Williams extends this argument further, asserting that Zarathustra, in this speech, advocates that his followers ought to develop camaraderie in friendship in the shared but individual task of self-overcoming. Friends must be as compassionate as they are critical, using solitude as the backbone by which they become the type of individual strong enough to do both. Solitude will give his followers the capacity to act with compassion and to act with combativeness in friendship; both of which are critical to honest companionship.

The next passage on the topic of friendship and solitude comes from "On Love of the Neighbor." In this speech Zarathustra implicitly lashes out at "Christian Brotherhood." He asserts that a dissipated love of all humanity is really a "bad love" of one's self. Zarathustra opens the speech declaring, "You crowd around your neighbor and have fine words for it. But I say unto you: your love of the neighbor is your bad love of yourselves. You flee to your neighbor from yourselves and would like to make a virtue out of that: but I see through your selflessness" (172). This clear proclamation is aimed at engaging "Christian" virtues that seek to replace self-interested virtues with selfless ones. This is, in some sense, a continuation of his

argument in “On the Friend.” Compassion based solely on the need for human companionship is faulty and dangerous for Zarathustra’s privileging of self-love. Instead of “fine words” like sympathy or love of the “other,” Zarathustra compares this “Christian brotherhood” to a crowding around of one’s neighbor to dissipate feelings of aloneness. According to Zarathustra this “crowding around” is a denial and dispersal of the self-love critical to the success of a creative solitude.

Ironically Zarathustra uses the word “flee” to describe the fearful way in which some run to their neighbors. Zarathustra claims that this “fleeing” is evidence for a “bad love” of the self. Using the word “flee” is reminiscent of the way Zarathustra advises his followers to escape the decadence of the “market place.” Although here he chastises the way some people “flee” to others as an escape from themselves. This can be interpreted as a contradiction or it might be evidence for a sort of “pushing” and “pulling” of language and thought that Zarathustra experiences. If readers aim to make a Truth out of Zarathustra then they may find his use of “flee” in both contexts as contradictory and incoherent; however, if they see the text as a particular path of intellectual becoming then they may not read Zarathustra so rigidly.

Later in the speech Zarathustra asserts that “One man goes to his neighbor because he seeks himself; another because he would lose himself. Your bad love of yourselves turns your solitude into a prison” (173). From this passage it is clear that Zarathustra sees the dangers of “neighbor love.” He compares the difference between going to one’s neighbor to seek one’s self to going to one’s neighbor in order to “lose” or deny one’s self and thus dissipate individuality. Furthering this comparison, he claims that “bad love” of one’s self will ensue if self-love is replaced by complacent “neighbor love.” This “bad love,” or a fear of aloneness which catalyzes the need for “fellowship” above the need for “self-love,” will create a “prison” out of solitude. If

solitude is merely the absence of the “crowd” or social “fellowship” then all the potential for growth in critical awareness and embrace of internal conflict that solitude affords is forfeited.

“On the Love of the Neighbor” reads like a warning about the dangers of “Christian brotherhood” for solitude. Zarathustra sees the problematic implications of companionship for companionship’s sake and seeks to warn his followers of these dangers. These proclamations further some of the ideas that he proclaims in “On the Friend,” and in detailing how solitude and companionship can potentially function, he provides insight into the dangers of a superficial brotherhood to individuality and self-love. In proclaiming these speeches as types of warnings, he dictates to his followers how “cultural” givens on friendship and brotherhood can affect the potentials of creative self-growth in solitude.

Turning back to other critical insights, I will employ their interpretations to help elucidate the complex relationship between solitude and a greater social community. Gooding-Williams draws a distinction between neighbors and friends. He claims “the neighbor is the person in whose company one flees the solitude required for self-overcoming and radical spiritual change” (145). A friend, on the other hand, is someone who would challenge and compel an “other” to assert themselves as an “independent individual” (Gooding-Williams 141). This distinction furthers my interpretation of Zarathustra’s assertions about the dangers of superficial companionship to solitude, individuality, and self-overcoming. As Gooding-Williams notes, Zarathustra’s clever choice of words makes an important distinction that creates a rift in the “tidy” definition of Christian friendship where before there was none.

How should we interpret Zarathustra warnings in these passages? Zarathustra re-asserts the importance of solitude for individuality and self-love and also asserts the dangers of a common, superficial brotherhood. What is important to my argument is that the passages make

room for both honest, confrontational friendship and radical isolation. Friendship should be both combative and supportive, so that friendship is geared towards making friends stronger thinkers. Solitude is also not merely isolation for isolation's sake; it brings self-knowledge and self-awareness to one's self which in turn redeems the virtues of friendship. Honest friends are in a sense honor bound to offer criticism, empathy, and their willingness to become an enemy for the other's own goal of self-overcoming. Zarathustra places human companionship on a plain where individuals must bring the fruits of solitude and the differences that individual isolation creates so that honest companionship might be made possible. He places solitude and individuality above "common brotherhood" yet makes it critical for honest friendship. Most importantly, Zarathustra makes room for a human community within the context of radical individuality.

The final speech from Part One that I chose to analyze is "On the Way of the Creator." This is by far the most complex of the speeches from Book One. Zarathustra defines the self-creative process which is necessarily lonely and self-destructive in the sense that the self must destruct in order to be re-created new. Zarathustra begins this section warning his followers that in seeking solitude they will invite loneliness and confusion. He asserts:

'He who seeks, easily gets lost. All loneliness is guilt' thus speaks the herd. The voice of the herd will still be audible in you. And when you will say, 'I no longer have a common conscience with you,' it will be a lament and an agony. Behold, this agony itself was born of the common conscience, and the last glimmer of that conscience still glows on your affliction. (174)

This passage extends the ideas from the previous speech, "On Love of the Neighbor" because the "herd" which is characterized by superficial companionship is the sociopsychological root of the

“common conscience” and thus poses a risk to the self in solitude as Zarathustra illustrates. The “herd” is an important concept across Nietzsche’s thought, and it represents “docility” and a willingly blind complacency indicative of a “slave” like obedience to superficial moralities that negate the “fears” wrapped up in the contemplation of existence as contingent, chaotic, and indeterminate (Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil 302-04). Zarathustra claims that the “herd” is the root of the “common conscience,” and when this “common conscience” is lost “agony” follows quickly behind it. In making this judgment, Zarathustra metaphorically illustrates that totalizing moralities geared to dissipate the “fear” brought on by contemplation, implicitly reject individual criticism, and this rejection manifests itself as individual “loneliness” and despair in those who seek outside the “herd.” Zarathustra proclaims that the extreme loneliness and disorientation that solitude induces is not inherent to the self; instead, it is the last grip of social control asserting itself over the individual consciousness. Without access to a common conscience, the individual in solitude will feel a loss of social gravity that may be disorienting. Zarathustra calls this reaction “guilt” and it is clear that Zarathustra intends to show his followers that the road to productive solitude or to use Zarathustra’s language “the way to yourself” is through suffering and self-destruction.

Zarathustra goes into the dangers of solitude, warning his followers about becoming solely “lustful and ambitious” in the absence of social mores. He asserts that “there are so many great thoughts which do no more than a bellows: they puff up and make emptier” (175). This warning details another risk of solitude, about the possibility of “megalomania” that can occur in the absence of a “common conscience.” The primal and airy connotations of the words “bellowing” and “puffing up” allude to some sort of loud, shallow thinking, and Zarathustra clearly distances himself from ideas that are merely validated by self-importance or empty

rhetoric. He goes on to claim that “There are some who throw away their last value when they threw away their servitude” to socially-validated moralities (175). In using the term “threw” to describe the haste with which some thinkers may dismiss their “servitude” to a “common conscience,” Zarathustra suggests that self-criticism is not a quick dismissal of authority. Instead, embracing solitude and critical awareness is a slow process, and the growing “away from” and wrestling “with” ideology takes self-sacrifice and time. Zarathustra implicitly compares the quick, shallow thinking characterized by the “puffing” up of importance to the slow, self-aware critical thinking characterized by self-destruction. The road to solitude and one’s self is not as simple as the “puffing up” of importance and the “throwing” away of the “common conscience.”

Further along in his speech Zarathustra makes a key comment on the effects of solitude and the hardships that accompany this self-imposed isolation. He poses questions to his followers, asking:

Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your own will over yourself as a law? Can you be your own judge and avenger of your own law?

Terrible it is to be alone with the judge and avenger of one’s own law. Thus is a star thrown out into the void and into the icy breath of solitude. (175)

From this passage it becomes clear that in solitude one must become the ethical judge and avenger of one’s own self-determined laws. In this passage Zarathustra implicitly asserts that the “herd” will no longer offer the psychological protection brought on by comfortable submission. “The herd” can also no longer offer simple moral structures which provide for “neat” questions and answers. When one embraces the “void” of solitude, one implicitly accepts the task of active self-creation which includes the continual destruction of old selves and the social values that

engendered these selves, so that new creative codes and values can be made and re-made.

Solitude is the perpetual confrontation with an existential void where meaning must be made, affirmed and destroyed. Zarathustra gives solitude a “breath” whose iciness has the potential to metaphorically freeze the forward motion of creative self overcoming. Solitude is not a mere “blank page.” It is a confrontation of the multiplicity of instincts and socially determined “wills” that make up the self, and this confrontation invites disorientation and confusion.

Zarathustra will illustrate the angst and conflict brought on by solitude when he narrates his own dramatized process of self-overcoming in later chapters. This creation of meaning in solitude is always in flux, and this meaning is not the creation of new “ideas” for “idea’s” sake. The “ideas” must be consistently judged, considered, and internalized but also ultimately dismissed and invalidated. This perplexing excerpt appears to be an intellectual impossibility because all thinking and language is in some sense a product of social processes not dynamic psychological criticism, but it is in this impossibility, that Zarathustra argues, all destruction and thus “re-creation” of individually validated new value “occurs.” Only in solitude can the self lose its anchor to the implicit and explicit truth-value of social constructs, and only after “meaning” and “value” have been destroyed can a self give way to new perspectives, ideas, and creativity. Zarathustra admits that in this state of fundamental aloneness there will be times when all appears false and “solitude will make you weary” (175) and he makes no assurances or predictions about what or how his followers will endure and create. This is yet another warning about the dangers and challenges of incessant introspection.

What is fundamental to this speech is that Zarathustra does not allude at all to what type of “new values” can be gained from solitude; instead, he only defines the conditions by which

his followers might take the road of self-overcoming. In the closing of this speech Zarathustra tells his followers about the greatest danger that they must face if they go the road of the creator:

But the worst enemy you can encounter will always be you, yourself; you lie in wait for yourself in caves and woods [...] Go into your loneliness with your love and with your creation, my brother; and only much later will justice limp after you. With tears go into your loneliness, my brother. I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes. (177)

This passage further exposes the harsh conditions of solitude where his followers will become their own greatest danger. Zarathustra asserts that his followers should go “into” their solitude as if solitude was a psychological redirection of critical thinking internally as opposed to a psychologically isolated space to critically question. In this passage Zarathustra argues that solitude is most importantly an internal wrestling with conflicting ideas and wills, so that conflict can give way to creativity. He goes on to assert that “justice” ought to “limp” behind creativity. Here it seems that Zarathustra is asserting that the “will” to social justice is a weaker instinct than the “will” to creatively transfigure the self. From this it is clear that Zarathustra believes that “individual” creative instinct must not be controlled by ethical boundaries. This is certainly a risk, but for new “justices” to be created old ones must first be fully renounced.

This speech reveals the important relationship between solitude and the quest for creative new values. For Zarathustra, solitude is the “icy breath” that precipitates self-destruction, but also blows away the “tears,” “agony” and “ashes” of his follower’s former selves so that destruction can give way to fresh, hopeful perspectives. The link between suffering and solitude is also fully established by this speech. Solitude is not merely a place to embrace and love one’s self it is also a hostile place where old values, habits, and “wills” will be painfully abolished.

This co-commingling of vitality, creation, destruction, and suffering is fundamental to Zarathustra's own experience in solitude which the reader becomes more intimate with in later speeches.

In another critical insight, Laurence Lampert draws attention to the importance of "love" for creative productivity in this speech. Lampert describes the "self-love" required for self-overcoming as a kind of passionate romantic love affair. He argues that Zarathustra's assertion that reads "Lonely one, you are going the way of the lover: yourself you love, and therefore you despise yourself as only lovers despise" (177) is evidence for a relationship in which love of the self must always mean the love for something over and above the "being" of the self. The "romantic" self-lover in solitude must also despise the weaknesses in spirit and discipline which he lacks. Lampert asserts "When the beloved is the self, it is the lover's way to despise the beloved for not being good enough" (66). In asserting this, Lampert argues that the self-love required for a productive and creative solitude must be accompanied by disgust. Only when love and hope are balanced by discontent and disgust can love and hatred compliment one another to be productive in self-overcoming for the purpose of creating new values.

In more critique on this speech, Gooding-Williams draws attention to how Zarathustra describes solitude as the way of the creator. He claims that Zarathustra "says less to define that spirit" of creativity in solitude "than to point the way to the possibility of personifying it" (145). This argument extends further my observation a few paragraphs earlier that Zarathustra's speech is not so much a defining of what creativity in solitude looks like; rather, it defines the conditions by which his followers might go "the road to themselves" and thus create over and above themselves. This brings up a point that is inherent to much of Nietzsche's writing. He makes key observations about the limitations of decadent culture and herd psychology without explicitly

defining their “more life affirming” counterparts. In “On the Way of the Creator” Zarathustra makes clear the conditions of suffering, self love, self-destruction, hope, and solitude for creative self-overcoming, but he offers little in terms of concretely describing how or what one might creatively overcome. This begs too much philosophic speculation; however, it does make clear that solitude and the values created in solitude, for Zarathustra, are not definable in and of themselves for his followers. He does not seek to problematically define what creative overcoming in solitude will accomplish as this would be problematic and impossible. It is, by definition, an experience only “known” to those who experience it; however, he can and does describe the conditions by which solitude can be transformed into a creative and life affirming experience.

Gooding-Williams and Lampert share an important observation about Zarathustra. In “On the Way of the Creator,” Zarathustra has completely re-directed his speech to those who are empathetic towards his wisdom and are, using Zarathustra’s language, “free-thinkers.” In dictating the conditions and benefits of creative, productive solitude, he speaks directly to those with ears for his teachings and those capable of “going the road to themselves.” In comparison to his original confrontation with the town, this observation is crucial to showing that his rhetorical purpose has completely changed from bringing wisdom to the town (representative of society in general), to outlining the road to self-overcoming for those ripe for his teachings.

“On the Way of the Creator” marks the last passage that I’ve chosen to analyze from Book One. For the most part the speeches of Book One, with the exception of the prologue, read like biblical teachings, and by the end of Book One, Zarathustra has re-directed these teachings from a general audience to an audience of followers who, like him, are on the road to “themselves.” When the reader begins Book Two, they find Zarathustra back in his mountain top

isolation reflecting about his teachings and new found followers. From this point forward in the text, the writing that pertains to solitude evolves from speeches that read like parables to speeches that read as soliloquies, songs, and narrations of Zarathustra's own solitude.

In the first section from Book Two titled "The Child with the Mirror" the reader finds Zarathustra in "the solitude of his cave" waiting like a "sower who has scattered his seed." The sexual imagery in this passage is both distinct and paradoxical. Zarathustra appears to represent both masculinity and femininity: he is a "sower" who has scattered his seed, but he also waits in the solitude of "his cave." The spreading of seeds and the solitude of a "cave" produces clear sexual overtones that allude to sexual reproduction. It has also been "months and years" since Zarathustra has seen his followers, and his "wisdom" has grown, and it has "caused him pain with its fullness" (195). The creation of his "wisdom" in solitude is again presented in a fertility metaphor. Solitude has rejuvenated his mission and intellect, and in presenting his solitude as a "cave" the reader imagines Zarathustra's solitude as a safe haven or even "womb" that represents the genesis and nursery of new wisdoms brought on by a "sexualized" thought process.

This passage reads with an impetus to action, and Zarathustra wants to return to his followers because he fears that his "teaching is in danger." Zarathustra thinks his "enemies have grown powerful;" by his enemies he means, rather abstractly, the potential for the misinterpretation of his teachings by his followers. He realizes that without his presence the language of wisdom is always open to misinterpretation. Language is always malleable, it never roots ideas it only provides a mask for them, and thus Zarathustra must return to his followers. Solitude has increased his love for his followers and the growth of his wisdom, and it is now driving him back to the world so that he might protect them both. Zarathustra reflects:

Too long have I longed and looked into the distance. Too long have I belonged to loneliness; thus I have forgotten how to be silent. Mouth have I become through and through, and the roaring of a stream from towering cliffs: I want to plunge my speech down into the valleys. Let the river of my love plunge where there is no way! How could a river fail to find its way to the sea? Indeed, a lake is within me, solitary and self-sufficient; but the river of my love carries it along, down to the sea. (196)

Because Zarathustra “belongs” to his loneliness, in some sense he is like a child in the face of its power to force him to “look into the distance.” Solitude does not offer him a true “other” whose questions and responses might challenge or silence him. His solitude is the “self-sufficient” lake that makes his psychological world his own but accompanied with this “belonging” and “completeness” is an impetuous desire to flow like a “river” to his followers and to the “ocean” of the social world. In this sense his loneliness is the mother to his creative insight and self-sufficiency, but paradoxically it also fuels his desire to return to his followers and become silent in terms of “self-critical questioning” once again. It appears that in solitude Zarathustra is paradoxically a father, mother and child to his wisdom; thus he “belongs” to solitude as a child to his mother, but he is also pained by the “growth” of his wisdom as a mother during birth. Words such as “plunge” and the “scattering of seeds” convey the sexual nature of creativity in solitude and this further establishes creative solitude as an earthly, sexual process. Zarathustra embodies, in some sense, both the masculine and feminine because he creates out of himself and his solitude new wisdoms.

These fertility and sexual metaphors are furthered inscribed by the following passage; “My wild wisdom became pregnant on lonely mountains; on rough stones she gave birth to her young” (197). Zarathustra’s “wild wisdom” became pregnant and thus was recreated in the

harsh conditions of solitude. It was not merely the “wild wisdom” that grew new ideas in lonely contemplation; instead, “wild wisdom” was realized “in” and “through” the harsh conditions of solitude and loneliness. The archetypal versions of masculine and feminine are clear in this metaphor. Zarathustra reveals that he needs both his “wild wisdom” and the harsh conditions of isolation to create anew. Only through the harshness of solitude and the passion of his “wild wisdom” can he become both a mother and child to his new wisdoms. This passage is riddled with paradoxes and difficult metaphors; however, what is clear is that Zarathustra has become refreshed and re-inspired in solitude. He has done the impossible, in becoming like a child and a mother to bring forth new “wisdom” and “energy” in order to flow like a “river” to his followers and defend his wisdom against misinterpretation.

Stanley Rosen comments further about the importance of the sexual imagery in this speech, but he speaks less to Zarathustra’s sexualized process of thinking and more to his self imposed physical abstinence. He argues that this “restrained” passion as exhibited by Zarathustra in solitude shows Zarathustra’s power over the physical. He argues that this “restraint” focuses and turns his psycho-sexual desire into an “overflow” of spiritual creativity (135). Zarathustra’s isolation has recharged his “fullness and desire” so that he might become capable of giving to “those whom he loves.” According to Rosen, this sexual imagery naturalizes the process of “gift giving” and makes it a “passionate” and self-interested sexual process.

Rosen also draws attention to Zarathustra’s quasi-discussion with “his heart.” This is reminiscent of Zarathustra’s original descent from the mountain top in the prologue. Rosen argues that in conversing with “his heart,” Zarathustra reveals the internal discourse or “stages” which are necessary for “prophetic transfiguration” (136). In other words, this narration of a discussion between two parts of Zarathustra’s persona shows the process by which conflicting or

in this case differing parts of the psyche in some sense converse, debate, and scold each other in solitude. Solitude is where the shifting “I” debates and works through differing psychological “wills.”

Rosen’s commentary furthers the importance of solitude to the creative and “natural” process of envisioning new cultural and psychological potentials. He argues that creating wisdom in solitude is a “sexual process,” yet it is also based in physical abstinence. It is a “working out” or a “lover’s quarrel” between differing psychological “wills” of subjectivity. For example, identifying and showing conflict between “my wild wisdom,” “my heart,” and the “belonging” to loneliness shows the process of self-creation to be a negotiation of the multiplicity of the self. Most importantly for my argument, is that in this speech Zarathustra is not directly “telling” the reader what solitude means; instead, he is narrating his own solitude by dramatizing the process by which he recreates and rejuvenates his always contingent, shifting mission and purpose (136).

The next important passage in Book Two is “sung” by Zarathustra. Titled “The Night Song,” this passage for the first time fully illustrates Zarathustra’s own solitude, and because this speech is “sung” it brings fluidity to the language. Zarathustra sings this song to himself, so the musicality and loneliness of the passage provides a dramatized record of Zarathustra’s solitude. In this song Zarathustra reflects about his inability to “crave” or “receive.” He reflects “Light am I; ah, that I were night! But this is my loneliness that I am girt with light” (217). His loneliness is the catalysis of his “overflow” and “wisdom,” but it leaves him “lonely” and “girt” with light.

This “girt” of light is the new self-awareness and insight that perpetually surrounds his thinking. He is overflowing with light, but this “girt” has stifled his ability to “crave” the

perspective or light of those around him because he asks and answers his own questions and creates and destroys his own wisdom. Ultimately his reflections and self-awareness are circumscribed by a loneliness that makes his world a reflection of the “girt” of his light, and this stifles and outshines the light from those around him, making him incapable of receiving. This passage calls to mind the “genius” artist or thinker who exemplifies a heightened self-awareness and self-absorption that often stifles the capacity for “receiving” or in some cases acknowledging the world outside their own. Zarathustra sings of this inability to receive: “But I live in my own light; I drink back into myself the flames that break out of me. I do not know the happiness of those who receive” (218). He goes on to sing that he “craves” to “crave.” Zarathustra’s solitude has created a “pathos of distance” that increases his “light” but stifles his ability to receive “light” from others. He then draws attention to the limitations of his earlier teachings to his followers: “They receive from me, but do I touch their souls? There is a cleft between giving and receiving; and the narrowest cleft is the last to be bridged” (218). In this passage Zarathustra conveys the gulf that separates his wisdom from his followers and this questioning foreshadows a change in his teaching methods and rhetorical purposes. It also shows a more defined boundary of loneliness surrounding Zarathustra’s journey.

Zarathustra goes on to sing about the fullness of his light that is catalyzed by his “loneliness” and “solitude.” He realizes that his solitude has left him more “isolated” and “hungry” to “bridge” the impossible gap between “giver” and “receiver.” Zarathustra describes the inability to bridge this gap as a “hunger,” and in order to satiate this “hunger” he must “drink” the “flames” of himself back into himself. He is both hunger and the satiation of his hunger. The self-reliance, self-absorption, and fundamental aloneness is apparent in these passages and the song is clearly not directed toward his followers; instead, it is a fundamental

narration of his own journey into solitude as a thinker who is driven to share his “overflow” but is plagued by the incapacity of “receiving.” My argument is that in this passage he realizes that he has teaching limitations. His creative process has become too much to teach with a teacher’s “consideration.” Readers are privy to his lived “light,” but Zarathustra’s ideas on solitude can no longer be transfigured into “parables.” His “teachings” or “example” of creative solitude will now become a narrated process of thinking. He sings of the limiting effect of the creative process in the following passage: “Oh the loneliness of all givers! Oh, the taciturnity of all who shine” (218). His original intent of bringing his “overflow” down from the mountains has reached an impossible impasse because he realizes now that misinterpretation or the possibility of a “lack of will” in his followers will always create a gap in understanding. He also realizes that his creative solitude, has limited his abilities as a teacher. The gravity of his limitations and the impossibility of his rhetorical hope have not influenced the circumference of his “light,” but they have restricted how he can hence for communicate and shine as a thinker.

Stanley Rosen sheds light on this gap between giving and receiving even further writing: “To undergo receptive enjoyment is thus to suffer enslavement to the malice of the creator. But conversely, complete domination brings no satisfaction that is not itself slavish; the corollary to sadism is loneliness” (154). In making this claim, Rosen reasons that Zarathustra realizes that in trying to teach his followers about the “road to themselves,” he is in some sense limiting the possibility to their own road. On the one end of this spectrum of communication he argues, harshly, is sadism. If taken to the extreme, teaching or influencing can lead to “complete domination” of followers or students. It is important to note that Zarathustra’s purpose borders on the “spiritual.” It is “spiritual” in the sense that he wants to lead his followers to their own existential purposes. He wants to give them the tools to overcome themselves and create new

cultural values; thus, the risk of sadism or “complete domination” is great because his teachings run the risk of becoming “the way.” If his followers’ way to themselves is merely through Zarathustra then he has failed. Rosen argues that Zarathustra realizes in “The Night Song” that the “girt” of his “light” cannot be taught without going the road of domination. It is the fundamental problem of all existential philosophy that seeks to argue for a new “way”; thus, Rosen argues that in realizing this he sees his fundamental limitations and realizes that in some sense the “light” he experiences cannot be “given” in any traditional sense. His “light” is circumscribed by a fundamental aloneness which he cannot circumvent.

Laurence Lampert also makes note of an important change in “The Night Song.” He further articulates an interpretation which I have already noted less precisely. Lampert notes that in “The Night Song,” “the reader, after hearing the many ways in which Zarathustra speaks to others[...] is now privileged to hear how he speaks to himself, and will, from this point on, be led ever more deeply into his (Zarathustra’s) solitude” (102). This fundamental switch in rhetorical orientation marks a critical change in how I interpret Thus Spoke Zarathustra. His followers and readers alike are no longer treated as students by Zarathustra; instead, they are treated as friends at best or more appropriately observers privy to Zarathustra’s own struggle.

The final speech in Book Two finds Zarathustra distraught. In this important narration the reader is confronted with a foreshadowing of one of Nietzsche’s most important concepts, the eternal return. Zarathustra is not prepared to internalize this new wisdom, thus he must return to his solitude, “but this time the bear goes back to his cave without joy” (257). This return to solitude is not for rejuvenation or contemplation; instead, Zarathustra must return to his solitude to bear the burden of the wisdom that he is not yet “ripe” to receive. Zarathustra remarks that his “greatest stillness,” which he calls his “awesome mistress,” came to him in a dream and spoke to

him “without” voice. She tells Zarathustra that he must go back into his solitude to embrace the teaching of the eternal return. The reader has not been formally introduced to the “eternal return,” so this passage reads with the impending reality of some unspoken “truth.”

The “unspoken” dialogue continues as Zarathustra tries to resist his “awesome mistress.” He believes that this new wisdom is “beyond his strength,” but the unspoken voice of the “awesome mistress” asserts, ““you must yet become as a child and without shame. The pride of youth is still upon you; you have become young late; but whoever would become as a child must overcome his youth too”” (259). This borderline schizophrenic dialogue between Zarathustra’s mute “awesome mistress” (personified “will” to affirm the eternal return) and Zarathustra himself shows the internal conflict that Zarathustra faces as he struggles to internalize one of his greatest wisdoms. In personifying his “will” to affirm the eternal return as an “awesome mistress” he again splits himself into a sexual binary. In this instance, the feminized illusive mistress holds the power of his fate. This dramatic internal dialogue shows the conflict of a strange narrative of isolation. Zarathustra does not debate with his followers about the new meaning he is contemplating; instead, he is shamed back into solitude by one personified “will” of his psyche. In this speech, Zarathustra in some sense dramatizes the internal psychological wrestling out of ideas.

Zarathustra timidly responds to his “awesome mistress” that he does not want to face the meaning of this new knowledge, which, ironically, he already knows. After he responds to his “awesome mistress” Zarathustra remarks:

Then laughter surrounded me. Alas, how this laughter tore my entrails and slit open my heart! And it spoke to me for the last time: ‘O Zarathustra, your fruit is ripe, but you are

not ripe for your fruit. Thus you must return to your solitude again; for you must yet become mellow.” (259)

This final discourse which takes place entirely in the mind of Zarathustra finalizes his fate. He must now go back to his solitude, so that he might become “mellow” and like a “child” again. I interpret the “mellowness” required by his “awesome mistress” to be a certain resolution of internal conflicts. The eternal return has many implications for Zarathustra and it will ultimately take a wrestling out of the ideas and perspectives that will accompany this affirmation. The imagery of torn entrails and a slit heart elucidates the “physical” anguish that accompanies Zarathustra’s resistance to his fate. It is not a “fear” of affirming this “unspoken” wisdom that brings out this anguish; instead, it is laughter. The laughter that surrounds Zarathustra brings him anguish but it also makes the scene appear a bit foolish. Although Zarathustra believes he cannot affirm the eternal return, his “awesome mistress” finds this resistance worthy of laughter. This may be because his resistance to his fate is futile or it may be because Zarathustra takes himself too seriously. Whatever the case, Zarathustra must go back to his solitude against part of his will, under the command of a specific aspect of his psyche. His internal conflict is apparent. What is important to my argument is not merely that he is conflicted; instead, it is that he is shamed back into his solitude because solitude provides Zarathustra with a psychological space to become like a child so that he might become “mellow” enough to affirm his own wisdom.

Lawrence Lampert makes an important observation about this speech that signals Zarathustra’s abandonment of his followers and his assent, against “part” of his “will,” back into solitude. Lampert argues that this is a strategic teaching method by Zarathustra. In narrating his own distraught solitude, he shows his followers that the road to themselves is not simple and unconflicted. In this passage Zarathustra is portrayed as weak and submissive to his “awesome

mistress.” He must face the turmoil within himself, and rather than dictate this idea to his followers, he shows how this conflict “happens” through narration. Lampert draws attention to the next speech that begins Book Three. In this speech Lampert argues that Zarathustra, “prudently portrays himself as less than he is and less than he is determined to become. Saying that he tells them everything in order that their hearts not harden against him” (153). Lampert’s speculation makes potentially problematic psychological leaps as to why Zarathustra would portray himself in such away, but it does draw attention to the fact that he does portray himself as weak and conflicted. His followers, although potentially confused by their prophet’s confliction, must now realize that their prophet too has limitations. They, as Lampert argues, will then not “harden their hearts” and reject Zarathustra’s teachings. This passage shows his followers that Zarathustra too must suffer confusion and conflict in his own solitude.

Before continuing on to Book Three, I want to draw attention to how Zarathustra’s teachings on solitude have changed since the prologue. In the prologue Zarathustra had hoped to bring his teachings to the whole social world and to make revelations that might change the underpinnings of culture, but after his rejection in the first town, he realized that he needed to find followers sympathetic to his questions and assertions. The “dictated” speeches of Book One reflect this narrowed audience. He dictates his speeches on solitude to an audience that has open ears and minds. In Book Two his orientation changes again. He realizes that his own solitude and perspective have “teaching” limitations. Dictated speeches run the risk of inevitable “misinterpretation” or worse they might insult the “integrity” and “potential individuality” of the followers that he loves; thus his teachings on solitude evolve from “dictations” into “narrations.” In Book Two he teaches his followers through his own reflections in solitude and his own narration of solitude. As the reader enters back into Zarathustra’s story they find him even

further engrossed in his own solitude, and although as readers we are privileged to his story, his followers are nowhere to be found. Nietzsche's readers, in some sense, have now become the only non-following audience of Zarathustra's wisdom and story.

Without going too far into the first speech from Book Three titled "The Wanderer," I want to draw attention to an important summation by Zarathustra of his journey thus far. Zarathustra remarks:

I am a wanderer and a mountain climber, he said to his heart; I do not like the plains, and it seems I cannot sit still for long. And whatever may yet come to me as destiny and experience will include some wandering and mountain climbing: in the end, one experiences only oneself. (264)

This passage only affirms what Zarathustra's journey has been: a story of the perpetual growing and intellectual "becoming" of himself as a free-thinker/teacher. The "plains" and "sitting still" brings connotations of stagnation and finality whereas "mountain climbing" and "wandering" brings connotations of challenges, perpetual changes, and lofty perspectives. Zarathustra with the aid of his solitude, wanderings, and mountain climbing continually grows; from here forward, this growth leads him deeper into himself and his "work." In asserting that "in the end, one experiences only oneself," Zarathustra reaffirms the lonely premises of his journey and his ultimate orientation towards the social world.

It might be easy to hastily assume that Zarathustra is going the road of simple narcissism and psychological isolationism; but a few lines later he asserts "One must learn to look away from oneself in order to see much: this hardness is necessary to every climber of mountains" (265). This passage suggests that Zarathustra is not advocating mere self-absorption when he refers to the idea that in the end "one experiences only oneself." Fully "experiencing one's self"

is necessarily linked to the “will” to look away from one’s self. Zarathustra’s ability to evaluate culture from a distance and to also introspectively question all his evaluations is the bi-focal lens that Zarathustra uses to make his “way” a constant and vacillating shifting from “far seeing” to internal criticism and introspection.

Book Three, firstly, is the story of Zarathustra’s psychological struggle to affirm the eternal return. Each speech is a “spark of insight” that in some sense relates to why or how he must affirm this new wisdom. In Book Three, he tells the story of his struggle by making observations about the implications of the eternal return, as well as through passages where he psychologically narrates the “struggle” he “lives” as he seeks to affirm the inevitable consequences of the eternal return.

I have chosen one particularly loaded passage from Book Three on which to focus my analysis. In this speech, titled “The Return Home,” Zarathustra has not yet reconciled himself to the implications of the eternal return, but this passage marks a happy and exuberant return to his solitude. In this passage Zarathustra has personified his solitude as a motherly figure who scolds him for his “consideration of mankind” on his quest to seek new meaning for the world. Zarathustra speaks to his solitude remarking, “O solitude! O my home, solitude! Too long have I lived wildly in wild strange places not to return home to you in tears. Now you may threaten me with your fingers, as mothers threaten; now you may smile at me as mothers smile” (295). Solitude in this passage is transformed into a loving yet scolding motherly figure that “threatens” Zarathustra with her “fingers” but receives him with a motherly smile. In comparison to Zarathustra’s original experience of “his” solitude and spirit in the prologue, this passage reads in a much different light. His solitude here commands and nurtures him, and ironically, she seems to “own” him where in the prologue Zarathustra was the possessor.

Zarathustra's solitude goes on to speak back to Zarathustra. "She" scolds him for forsaking her in his quest to love and give to his followers and the greater social world. "She" goes on to position herself in his life: "Here, however, you are in your own home and house; here you can talk freely about everything and pour out all the reasons; nothing here is ashamed of obscure obdurate feelings" (295). It is clear from this passage that solitude gives Zarathustra the freedom to embrace the multiplicity of drives, questions, and reasons that he struggles to reconcile and transfigure. According to Zarathustra's solitude, the social world restricts his internal conflict and thus restricts his growth towards his own end. When I use the word "restriction" I do not mean that the social world has a power over Zarathustra per say; instead, it is Zarathustra's psychological consideration of the social world and his followers that restricts his own perspective.

His consideration for the social world and his followers has consistently fueled his need to "overflow," and this has limited the internal dialectic and life-affirming conflicts that he enjoys in solitude. This, in turn, his solitude argues, has deprived him of the love and embrace of his own perspective. Zarathustra's solitude argues that the consideration he showed to his followers in contemplating the most appropriate way to "teach" and "show" them the way to themselves has done nothing to stop him from becoming "forsaken" and alienated by his followers and the greater social world. In response to his solitude's claims, Zarathustra speaks:

"O my home, solitude! How happily and tenderly your voice speaks to me! We do not question each other, we do not complain to each other, we often walk together through open doors...Here the words and word-shrines of all being open up before me: here all being wishes to become word, all becoming wishes to learn from me how to speak. (296)

In this passage Zarathustra's appreciation for his solitude is clear. It provides him with the space and "companionship" needed to embrace his own world. In his solitude, Zarathustra learns how to make "his" language a testament to his own perspectives. The "open doors" that Zarathustra and his solitude walk through represent a reflective and linguistic freedom of motion. The "opening up" of "words" and "word-shrines" to make the "being" of language and the "becoming" of thought a testament to Zarathustra's solitude further reveals the critical and creative freedom that he and his solitude enjoy. In Zarathustra's solitude the creation of meaning is not based on the communicability of the idea; instead, it is based on the bending and shaping of language and thought to the self-interested purpose of self-overcoming.

This passage marks one of the last fundamental re-orientations of Zarathustra to his own solitude. Solitude as a personified "mother figure" provides Nietzsche with a stage for Zarathustra to converse with a mask of his solitude and thus bring greater illumination to how solitude can aid in "self-overcoming" and the creation of new values. From this point forward Zarathustra goes further and further into his own psychological self-overcoming, and in Book Four Zarathustra ascends into the mountains for last time. In these last speeches, Zarathustra is resigned to live waiting for "new" higher men who have the "will" to overcome themselves. In these speeches, Zarathustra lives quietly in the confines of his own isolation as "old man" content with his "work."

A full analysis of Zarathustra's dictations "on" and narrations "of" solitude could never be completely undertaken. As this analysis has shown, Nietzsche's text is rich and loaded with complex metaphors that are often times impossible to interpret. What I have shown is how multitudinous Zarathustra's parables "on" and internal narrations "of" solitude are in the text. Nietzsche uses an impressive arsenal of literary conventions to define Zarathustra's conceptions

“of” and experience “in” solitude. Each speech, song, and internal discourse has a unique rhetorical context and Zarathustra colors each “spark of insight” with clever metaphors, ironic underpinnings, and paradoxical language. There is no all encompassing “Truth,” “perspective,” or “purpose” that unites his speeches on solitude. Each section can and must be read on its own as a parable or small contextual truth, but these parables must also be conceptualized together in order appreciate the whole ironic, perplexing “story” of Zarathustra’s intellectual “becoming.” Because he speaks without metaphysical foundations, he is not restricted by the logical limitations of traditional philosophy, thus he develops in a nonlinear direction. Zarathustra’s perspective, audience and purpose is always changing; sometimes erratically and sometimes with poetic fluidity. What unifies all of his perspectives and speeches on solitude is his persistent “will” to grasp at and struggle with meaning in context; and more importantly to always “consider” and “wrestle” with purpose as he wanders between mountain tops and people.

Zarathustra’s speeches “on” and narrations “of” solitude also reflect one of Nietzsche’s purposes which is to transfigure, reshape, and blend contradictory ideas into new unities. Some examples in the text that show this transfiguration are evidenced in how he describes solitude at times as an affirming “embrace of self” and at times a negating “escape from society.” Solitude is also at times a psychological space to affirm, re-create, and transform the self, but it is also at other times a place to self-destruct and suffer the implications of sociopsychological homelessness. Solitude is the place where one can reject all received moralities and ethics, but it is also a place to legitimize and necessarily re-create them. Solitude is the foundation for radical individualism, but it is also the beginning of honest companionship and an aesthetically-aware culture. Zarathustra most importantly “dictates” what solitude should “be” to his followers, but

then later advises them to “reject him” because as he exclaims to his followers in the third person, “Perhaps he (Zarathustra) may have deceived you” (190).

At times during Zarathustra’s story the reader is inevitably confused and dazed by these erratic shifts in perspective that are further convoluted by Zarathustra’s bold, contradictory claims and over-dramatized internal narrations. Sonia Sikka in “Nietzsche’s Contribution To a Phenomenology of Intoxication” interprets these erratic shifts and belligerent narratives not as evidence of a sophisticated, literary unity but instead, as an expression of an intoxicated psychological state of aesthetic creation that she likens to a Dionysian Intoxication. Dionysus is a significant figure in Nietzschean thought, but ironically or at least oddly, Zarathustra never mentions Dionysus or refers to the Dionysian throughout the narrative. The Dionysian may be explicitly lacking in the philosophic narrative but there are connotations of the Dionysian throughout Zarathustra’s development. Sikka argues that “the jumble of voices, scenes, and images that make up Zarathustra” are representative of a Dionysian overflow. She goes on to assert that:

Far from constituting a well-designed whole, that jumble seems much closer to what one might expect from a ‘Dionysian’ imagination and style. It is unrestrained, profuse and irrational, generating a plethora of forms, blending them without regard for rule and measure, and tearing them up again. (25)

This less forgiving critique of Nietzsche’s self-aware literary sophistication finds that Zarathustra’s journey is more a belligerent expression of Dionysian creativity than a well planned Apollonian narrative. Thus Zarathustra’s unity of truth with untruth and dictated parable with narrated internal conflict does not exhibit an elevated irony, but instead shows an unconscious exuberance. Arguably, Nietzsche’s work can be interpreted as both a “Dionysian

exuberance” and as a new ironic form of literature and philosophy. Both interpretations provide insight into Zarathustra’s paradoxical development and are evidence of Nietzsche’s wide range of hermeneutic reception.

What I have argued for in this chapter is that Zarathustra, more soberly, salvages the critical grasp for meaning in small contexts. He also preserves the highly ironic quest to make big meaning as an aesthetic unity of individual intellectual “becoming.” He does not cease to “do” philosophy for the goal of grasping “truths,” but Zarathustra’s “truths” have specific contexts with specific audiences and purposes. Zarathustra is rhetorically aware and aesthetically ironic; he seeks, perhaps at times with a Dionysian exuberance, to transfigure the contradictory foundations of metaphysical meaning-making into a subjective grasp at aesthetic and paradoxical unity.

While these highly speculative critical judgments seek to get into and behind Zarathustra’s personal “becoming,” on a less profound level his “small truths” challenge the reader to question Zarathustra as well as him or her self. This is where the “cash value” of Zarathustra’s journey pays out. Zarathustra is the serious jester. He provokes laughter, disdain, frustration, inspiration, and critical questioning with each erratic shift in perspective and new set of ideas. Ultimately he challenges the sympathetic reader to accept his or her own helter-skelter struggle to make and question received wisdom including Zarathustra’s own “wisdoms” with as much weight and lightness as he or she can handle.

These critical observations make clear in short how many rhetorical techniques, literary conventions, and paradoxical assertions that Zarathustra makes in his speeches and narrations. What will become more important in the next chapter is how the commingling of “teaching” solitude through dictated parables and through the narration of the main character’s solitude

works to convey existential philosophy. Thus Spoke Zarathustra is in some sense an intellectual and literary experiment in how to “show” and “tell” with “irony” and more importantly how to “narrate” and “create” the story of a specific type of thinker and his own life-affirming “attempts” to see and make his world. Zarathustra’s quest preserves the intellectual search for “sublime” meaning as a contextual, ever-changing process that makes sense only within the confines of individual existence.

CHAPTER TWO

Philosophy as Narrative: Making a Truth

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson “Self Reliance”

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is clearly, at least in part a literary text, and as evidenced by my first chapter, it requires a hermeneutically sensitive critical lens to unpack the philosophic implications of Zarathustra’s character development and highly metaphoric “dictations.” It does not fit squarely into any one literary genre because it makes use of so many styles and conventions. It is a collection of parables, soliloquies, dramatic internal narrations, songs, and poetry. The most unifying characteristic of the text is that each speech, song, and internal narration is in some sense a part of Zarathustra’s subjective evolution or “intellectual becoming.” The text is in some sense the literary record of Zarathustra’s wrestling with wisdom and purpose in the absence of metaphysical foundations.

Nietzsche’s often times allusive style makes a radical break from even the most loaded philosophic fiction. It requires close attention to language and style, and it requires an elevated sense of irony from the reader in regards to Zarathustra’s contingent philosophic sublimities. Nietzsche’s telling subtitle A Book for All and None brings with it the connotations that Zarathustra’s story is partly a narrative that can and should be analyzed for useful meaning by a large audience, but it is also partly a story whose practical meaning can offer nothing to readers. As evidenced by my first chapter the audience Zarathustra addresses consistently narrows as the text evolves and ultimately the narrative becomes internally situated in Zarathustra’s solitude.

Lawrence Lampert argues that this narrowing of context and audience, undermines the “Truth” values of any one parable or even the “Truth” value of Zarathustra’s biggest “philosophic claims.” Lampert writes “To divorce the speeches from their context is to make them too general, as if they were suitable for all occasions and all audiences; such a practice refuses the lessons quietly taught by a book that enacts its subtitle and gradually shrinks Zarathustra’s audience from ‘All’ to ‘None’” (4).

This observation by Lampert makes Zarathustra’s attempts at meaning not primarily new philosophic knowledge; instead, Lampert seems to be suggesting that Zarathustra’s evolution challenges what it means to teach and wrestle with meaning in the absence of certitude. The philosophic narrative is partly Zarathustra’s development and parables, and partly his dramatic internal soliloquies. The intricate literary spectacle conveys the weight of a philosophic treatise, but not through the “ideas” or “parables” alone. Zarathustra’s example of a “new philosopher” and Nietzsche’s new creative use of style and metaphor to convey the “thought in action” of this contingent philosopher challenge more analytic modes of “reading” and “thinking” critically. In other words the reader must be sensitive to the literary conventions in order to take make sense of the philosophy that is intertwined with Zarathustra’s style of thinking and character development.

I chose to analyze Zarathustra’s use of the language of solitude as a scaffolding to comment on Nietzsche’s complex text, because Zarathustra’s journey becomes increasingly lonely as the philosophic narrative evolves. In some sense solitude is the essence behind Zarathustra’s philosophic becoming. The importance of solitude for Nietzsche’s larger philosophic project is well represented, so this too adds to the importance of the concept. The textual scaffolding that Chapter One provides reveals Zarathustra’s changing orientation towards

solitude both as a concept that he teaches and as a psychological space, imagined companion, and “womb” for his wisdom. In this chapter I will work through the multiple gaps that Thus Spoke Zarathustra bridges as it directs intellectual inquiry away from the rigid confines of philosophy “proper” and the stylistic limitations of traditional literature to innovate and create a new way to convey philosophy, self-overcoming, and life affirmation within the unstable foundations of modern intellectual thought. I will explore and work through a series of critics and their ideas in terms of how they wrestle with the allusive literary styles and poetic qualities of Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

The first of these critics is Richard Rorty. Rorty is renowned for his belief in the ethical and inspirational value of literature, and he gives high merit to creative re-describers who use specific contexts, language, stories, and characters to bring new cultural and psychological insight into the world. He argues that innovative writers do a more “useful” job of bringing new ideas into the world than their philosophic counterparts because they tell rich psychological stories about the reasons why we talk and live the way that we do, as opposed to pushing abstract principles into logical circles of explanation. It is important to note that Rorty would not privilege either discourse in terms of “Truth”; instead, he merely finds literature more intellectually useful in terms of its ability to re-describe socio-psychological contexts. In Rorty’s eyes, it is literature that makes self and social knowledge contextual, historical, and thus human, and this ability to root “ideas” in human experience gives literature its practical value in terms of re-imagining how the multiplicity of cultural and intellectual “forces” shape individual and social life. Rorty argues that great literature has, “nothing to do with eternity, knowledge, or stability, and everything to do with futurity, and hope: with taking the world by the throat and insisting that there is more to this life than we have ever imagined” (Achieving Our Country

138). Rorty wants to show that great works of literature inspire readers to see the cultural landscape and human subjectivity with new lenses. Great literature creates “hope” because it shakes individual perspective and forces its reader to imagine new cultural and psychological potentials that may not yet be realized.

With Rorty’s ideas in mind, Thus Spoke Zarathustra challenges the reader to imagine subjective philosophic “becoming” in radical new ways. Philosophy “proper” is still largely considered a rigid, logical “thought process” which works to create consistent, sound explanations of phenomenon. As Rorty argues in Achieving our Country, presently in academia, Analytic Philosophy has largely been reduced to a dry, empty mathematical language game (125-40). Even “big thinkers” who wrestle with foundations and logic to come to new more sound, totalizing “concepts” and/or “systems” rely on abstract language and shifting attempts to circumvent unstable foundations. In contrast, Zarathustra’s narrative and dictations read more like an evolving hermeneutic struggle to create and grasp meaning in order to “become” a new philosophic “way.” Thus Spoke Zarathustra reveals the “produced” parables of a thinker as well as the evolving narrative of the thinker’s orientation “to” and wrestling “with” these “parables” and wisdoms. In this sense philosophy is not a sober, objective attempt at knowledge; instead, it is a contingent almost “Dionysian” wrestling “with” meaning within the confines of the ever changing subjective experience. In this sense Nietzsche has pushed the possibility of “philosophic meaning making” into the subjective world of the thinker and has thus re-described in the Rortian sense what philosophic inquiry can mean. Nietzsche did not write a system of proofs or argue for a new set of philosophic foundations that a Zarathustrian character might make meaning in; rather, he wrote Zarathustra’s story as an attempt to describe what meaning making might look like in these conditions. This creative re-description of what philosophy can

“be” is not merely a simple linear narrative. It is a fragmented combination of dramatic narrative and dictated parables, and Nietzsche employs irony, metaphor, and imagery to push literary conventions to tell the story of this new type of philosopher.

This creative re-description also has implications for the reader as well. The reader must wrestle with abstract concepts such as the “eternal return” as much as they must wrestle with metaphor, imagery, and a shifting style. This inevitably leads to a plethora of interpretative frameworks, but it also pushes analysis away from searching for “Truths” and re-focuses analysis on more proactive and creative hermeneutic interpretation. Interpreting Thus Spoke Zarathustra requires a sensitivity to rhetorical contexts and complex metaphors in order to place philosophic ideas in a coherent relationship with Zarathustra’s character and this is evidenced by my close reading of Zarathustra’s parables and narrations.

Gooding-Williams pushes Rorty’s definition of “creative re-description” further and asserts that philosophic narratives have the power to push “worthy” philosophic discourses into new sets of questions and vocabularies. This is made clear by the philosophers who study Thus Spoke Zarathustra as a unique type of philosophic text. Gooding-Williams asserts that Nietzsche’s text serves:

As a productive act of the imagination, it creates vocabulary, concepts, questions, and concerns that stand at a distance from the mainstream of Western Philosophy.

The critical notions of the last man, the overman, the higher man, the will to power, and the eternal recurrence are introduced or first developed in Zarathustra. Together they constitute a set of anxieties, hopes, questions, and possibilities that I should like to describe as a philosophical world, or form of life. (13)

This ability of a literary text to grasp and create a “philosophical world” or “form of life” is what

makes philosophic literature so powerful. Literary characters have personalities, weakness, and strengths and their narratives and wisdoms reflect these character traits. Gooding-Williams argues that Zarathustra's contingent personality, narrative and parables reflect the type of philosopher he perpetually seeks to "become." He goes on to argue that because of or in spite of philosophic literature's ability to convey contingent grasps at totality, this genre extends the breath and complexity of philosophic discourses. The implication of studying philosophic literature is that professional philosophers must analyze Zarathustra's "character development" and "entrenched metaphors" to determine what can be gleaned from his philosophic "concepts." As I alluded to in my introduction, this makes Thus Spoke Zarathustra a text ripe for interdisciplinary analysis. It requires literary textual analysis as much as it requires philosophic dissection. The literary analysis that I have undertaken reveals the not so subtle effect of using metaphor, dramatization, and fluctuating rhetorical contexts to describe Zarathustra's philosophic "becoming."

A look to Nietzsche's own interpretation of his text reveals the deep literary and philosophic implications of Zarathustra's narrative. A particularly telling passage from Nietzsche's autobiography Ecce Homo reveals what Nietzsche considers Zarathustra's most powerful capabilities, and his critique speaks to the idea that Zarathustra is a kind of intellectual literary hero who affirms his life within paradoxical and unstable foundations. Nietzsche writes on Zarathustra that:

In every word he contradicts, this most Yes-saying of all spirits; in him all opposites are blended into a new unity. The highest and the lowest energies of human nature, what is sweetest, most frivolous, and most terrible wells forth from one fount with immortal assurance. Till then one does not know what height, what depth is; one knows even less

what truth is. [...] The most powerful capacity for metaphors that has existed so far is poor and mere child's play compared with this return of language to the nature of imagery. (305)

Zarathustra's "return of language to the nature of imagery" is the medium through which he shows the creative and contradictory task of "blending into" unity all of the paradoxical foundations of human thought, language and instinct. Zarathustra's colorful mixing of metaphor and maxim to blend paradoxical ideas, as evidenced by my first chapter, reflects Nietzsche's assertion. Metaphors, poetry, and imagery work to construct interpretive wisdom, but what this type of language gains in its capacity to aesthetically color reality it loses in its ability to pinpoint "concrete" philosophic concepts. Zarathustra's unity is not always logical, linear, or even at times completely coherent, but his attempts to both dictate paradoxical wisdoms and to also evolve throughout the text produces a consistent literary unity. His ideas are more often than not grey and unsubstantiated, but his philosophic "form of life" is "consistent," and it is characterized by Zarathustra's "will" to "become" and to interpret the ideas and confront the questions that he perpetually seeks to make sense of and address.

Nietzsche's philosophic narrative also works to personify the multiplicity of Zarathustra's conflicting often times contradictory "wills" to show a "conflicted" but "unified" character even in times of internal conflict. Dramatic language and personified "wills" are literary conventions that elevate the "meaning" and "effect" of an internal struggle. Zarathustra is still "thinking" by conventional standards, but the dramatic monologues make his struggle more important than the concepts that he seeks to teach, rectify or affirm. Zarathustra in Nietzsche's eye has no productive end beyond "blending" his own contradictory world of "wills" and "wisdoms" into a new ironic, aesthetic, life-affirming unity. In this sense Zarathustra

affirms himself through his intellectual “will” to interpret and make meaning. His critical struggles and the literary conventions that Nietzsche uses to describe and develop his character give a “context” and “personality” to the meanings he makes. Each particular context or dramatic monologue is an indistinguishable part of the philosophic concept being relayed; thus, the literary aspects of the philosophic narrative compliment and unify the contingent link between subjectivity and critical contemplation. In other words by giving Zarathustra “specific” followers, contexts, voices, and modes of expression to aid in defining his evolving purpose, Nietzsche builds a philosophic persona connected to a philosophic treatise. This makes the process of philosophy an activity that is characterized as much by the questions a thinker chooses to address as a process defined by the sociopsychological context and the personality of the thinker himself.

The interpretations that Zarathustra makes are not representative of an act of discovery below some objective surface. He makes his “truths” using metaphors and imagery to convey specific interpretations for specific purposes to specific audiences. Philosophy and psychology are contingently derived interpretations for Zarathustra, and thus his new “wisdoms” must be interpreted with an awareness of his various rhetorical purposes and his exuberant, dramatic personality. His rhetorical orientation towards his followers and his “Dionysian” character development cannot be ignored, and it requires the reader to stay sensitive to Zarathustra’s language and contexts. Zarathustra’s use of imagery and metaphor is not mere abstract “beautification” of the world. He uses literary conventions to enhance the overall persuasive and explanatory power of the “contextual truth” being narrated or relayed. Poetry enhances philosophy and philosophy strengthens poetry. Making a philosopher’s project poetic and almost prophetic increases the persuasive power of the writing as Rorty would contend, but it

begs many questions. Zarathustra's example of philosophy in action is not characterized most powerfully by his paradoxical parables as much as it is characterized by his perpetual grappling with interpretation. The writing and the spectacle of the story often overshadow the parables and ideas that are being conveyed, and Zarathustra's "style" of philosophy and life is compelling because of his conflicted, contradictory psyche and powerful, evolving sense of purpose.

Babette Babich in "On Nietzsche's Concinnity: An Analysis of Style" draws attention to the "power" as evidenced above of Nietzsche's self-deconstructive style. Babich argues that Nietzsche plays "reader" against "reader," "truth" against "untruth," and "text" against "text" to confirm and oppose the deconstructive thesis. She goes on to assert that this "style" has "astonishing power." It is "Oriented toward the reflective activity of thought, it eludes the dynamics of reaction which forces every opposition against itself" (61). This "style" guards against discipleship and the tendency of readers to seek out a firm "Truth" or new "Way" to emulate. Babich claims that "the activity of Nietzsche's text cannot be opposed because it can only be accessed by a reader for whom the text is not a conceptual inscription, but plays as a system of forces, a flow of ice, the course of a thinker's blood" (61). Babich's thesis supports the idea that Zarathustra does not claim "Truths;" instead, he lives and creates "small interpretations" which serves as evidence for the type of character that he perpetually "becomes." His hyperaware self-deconstructive style of thinking, interpreting, and "becoming" is representative of his character, but the parables themselves cannot serve as objective "Truths."

With Babich's ideas in mind, this self-deconstructive "style" is a characteristic of Zarathustra's personality that requires a literary interpretation. The literary scholar must look to how Nietzsche develops his character in the philosophic narrative to create a philosopher capable of deconstruction, creation, and philosophic evolution. Nietzsche in Thus Spoke Zarathustra does

not merely set out to articulate the psychological concept of self-overcoming; instead, he personifies this concept as part of Zarathustra's capacity and will to "evolve," and this evolution is demonstrated by his character development. Zarathustra's rhetorical orientations towards his followers change, his philosophic purpose changes, and his parables change. Throughout these changes the reader is privy to the psychological struggle that accompanies Zarathustra's persistent vacillations. In some sense Zarathustra's internal monologues and philosophic narrative is a literary example of the self-overcoming required for "meaning making" in a foundationless intellectual world.

Looking next to Zarathustra's paradoxical character development, I will show why a literary analysis is necessary to understanding how Zarathustra evolves. Zarathustra begins his journey preaching the foregone conclusion that "god is dead," but his whole narrative is based on the struggle to circumvent metaphysical ruin, so that he might create new "values" and new values creators. In his book Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Richard Rorty takes aim at this particular character trait of Nietzsche (and Zarathustra as a mouth piece for Nietzsche) to preach the downfall of metaphysics on the one hand and on the other attempt to usher in a new age of culture. Nietzsche is in some sense the great ironist and perspectivist, but he is also the "genealogist of morals" who historicizes culture and ethics so that he might get a "mountain top view" of cultural change and psychological underpinnings (106). For example, in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Zarathustra consistently judges the "mediocrity" of modernity personified by the complacency of the "last man" and in response to this complacency he prophesizes the inevitability of a higher culture just over the horizon of modern human potential. Paradoxically, however, he also preaches the necessity of solitude and individual perspective to the end that each thinker might create his own "way" and "hope" for himself and culture. This of course

would lead to radical difference; some thinkers may re-affirm Christianity as Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard do, and others may welcome the “age of the last man.” Thus Nietzsche’s vision of a high culture of self-sufficient free-thinkers would not come to fruition. This difficult paradoxical intellectual character trait inherent to Zarathustra is clear. Rorty argues that even with these paradoxes in mind, Zarathustra’s will to diagnosis “big” cultural and philosophic decadence ushers in a new age of culture and individualism, and this makes his task, at least in some sense, a symptom of Platonic philosophy (106-07).

Another clearer example of this paradox comes from my first chapter. Zarathustra dictates what solitude should “be” for free thinkers even though he realizes the limitations and circularity of “teaching” his followers the way to themselves. Rorty argues that examples such as these make Nietzsche the last of traditional philosophers. Even though he speaks to the end of metaphysics, he still wants to point humanity in his direction. Rorty argues that Nietzsche seeks “sublimity and not just beauty” because he argues for and “invents” a kind of teleology for this world (106). Because Zarathustra’s story is certainly, at least in some sense, a “grasp” at totality, Thus Spoke Zarathustra is an example of a “grasp” at the sublime that is a linkage between aesthetic beauty and a critical interpretation, so that both come together to form a unity between an aesthetic and critical valuation of the “world.” Ironically, as Rorty contends, Zarathustra deconstructs all metaphysical and cultural foundations, but then seeks to create a new anti-foundational “sublime” world view in his own image (106). If this paradoxical character trait is seen as just that a character trait, then it does not bring with it the weighty implications of a philosophic Truth. One of Zarathustra’s “wills” is to grasp at totality, but this character trait is accompanied by an elevated sense of irony and self awareness which are other character traits that accompany his intellectual development.

Although I understand Rorty's observations, I cannot agree that Zarathustra most importantly wants "sublimity over beauty" in the course of his development. Zarathustra, as my first chapter explicates, is conflicted and sensitive to the ironic and contradictory task of creating new values in the absence of an objective authority. Zarathustra is, at least partially, a philosopher and so by loose definition seeks some sort of "totality" or "sublimity," but this "sublimity" is not achieved through the "content" of his teachings; instead, it is achieved by his strength of character. This "subjective grasp" at sublimity exists as only one of his "wills." As Babich argues, this conflicted character development shows the thinking behind a wrestling "with" weighty purpose and ideas. To elucidate the "value" that Nietzsche places on this high capacity for internal conflict, Alexander Nehamas in Nietzsche Life as Literature quotes a few lines from The Will to Power to show that for Nietzsche, a strong character ought to be judged by his capacity for conflicting instincts. Nietzsche writes:

The highest human being would have the highest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant "human being" shows itself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully (e.g. in Shakespeare) but are controlled. (Nehamas 188)

If Zarathustra is interpreted with this idea in mind then his problematic character traits are not as important as his "will" to wrestle "with" and bring a "unity" to contradictory instincts. This admittedly is still a philosophic judgment: that the highest "human being" will be he or she who can control and harness the greatest multiplicity of instincts and "wills." This philosophic judgment, however, is more a matter of aesthetic taste and does not rest as firmly on objective foundations. In some sense Zarathustra's "will" to "grasp" and make meaning out of the paradoxical human condition is only one example of how to bring unity to contradiction because

there are countless ways to live and make innovative meaning. Zarathustra is paradoxical because he wants to both prophesize a new culture and deconstruct the underpinnings of all culture, but his self awareness and elevated irony makes his project not “merely” an attempt at a new cultural foundation. His multitudinous often times contradictory grasps at different levels of meaning across “differing” contexts are testaments to his ability to “see” and “interpret” through multiple lenses and incorporate different “wills” into his persona without the restriction of a dominating “Truth.” Without an eye towards literary character development, this interpretation would not be as viable because if a critical reader seeks to merely pick a part Zarathustra’s logical coherence, then he or she will lose the complexity of his persona and character.

Ultimately Zarathustra perpetually “becomes” and “becoming” is change, creation, destruction, conflict, and ultimately contradiction. This “becoming” is the type of philosophic development that is arguably best displayed through a narrative that “shows” rather than “tells.” I agree with Rorty’s claim that Zarathustra and Nietzsche both hope to destroy a specific cultural “world” because it is rooted in metaphysical “faiths” and dominating moralities that negate life experimentation and affirmation. I also agree with Rorty that they want to recreate a new world with their own quasi-metaphysical ideas. This is a contradiction, but it is a self-aware and ironic one. It is Zarathustra’s biggest rhetorical strength to make “big” claims and then ultimately deconstruct them. It shows his powerful will to affirm and create within the bounds of the foundationless foundations of human thought. Zarathustra and Nietzsche both want to grasp at “eternity” but not at the expense of becoming new “soothsayers” themselves. Zarathustra would be denying his “will” to affirm a high spiritual purpose if he chose to not to make “mythic” grasps at metaphysics, but he would also undermine his “will” to look away from himself if he claimed that his “picture” or “mythology” was the only “true” explanation of existence. Most

importantly he would risk offending his followers who sought their own “way” that may not lead through him.

Zarathustra exhibits this assertion in his closing speech from Book One. Zarathustra exclaims “Now I go alone, my disciples. You too go now, alone. Thus I want it. Verily, I counsel you: go away from me and resist Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you” (190). Even though Zarathustra speaks with a commanding presence in his dictations, his ironic modesty shines through in these lines. They speak against Rorty’s assertion that Nietzsche seeks a sublime totality for all. In these lines Zarathustra insists that his followers “resist” his wisdoms and “way,” so that they might experiment and seek to make their own. Only through a sensitive awareness to Zarathustra’s character development can this “philosophic orientation” be imagined as a set of paradoxical character traits and not as an attempt at a totalizing new theory of culture and the self.

Zarathustra’s character development and metaphorical parables are not new kernels of knowledge to be “mastered” as Truths; instead, they show, to use Babich’s words, “the course of a thinker’s blood” who consistently attempts to interpret and make meaning through the use of irony, metaphor, and dramatic narrative to relay his many purposes. Zarathustra’s purposes include: teaching, warning, and inspiring his followers as well as narrating, dramatizing, and critically evaluating his own solitude. His lonely wanderings that span social valleys and isolated mountain tops are not an example of “philosophy” that his followers can derive new Truths from or even live out; rather, Zarathustra’s story stands as “one style” of individual intellectual “becoming” in the absence of received metaphysical foundations. A narrative shows a philosophic becoming best because it narrates a thinker’s evolving, contingent struggle with meaning and it also shows the paradoxical “wisdoms” and “interpretations” that this thinking

produces. A critical disclosure by Zarathustra exemplifies this idea that Zarathustra's "teachings" and "narrations" are not the heart of Zarathustra's story; instead, it is the philosophic questioning and "experimentation" itself. Zarathustra reflects in a speech titled "The Spirit of Gravity:"

. And it was only reluctantly that I ever inquired about the way: that always offended my taste. I preferred to question and try out the ways themselves. A trying and questioning was my every move; and verily, one must learn to answer such questioning. That, however, is my taste; not good, not bad, but my taste of which I am no longer ashamed and which I have no wish to hide. 'This is my way; where is yours?' Thus I answered those who asked me "the way." For the way, that does not exist. (307)

This quite telling excerpt shows that Zarathustra is only concerned with trying, questioning, and experimenting to the "end" of making "his" way, and in some sense his story is the record of that intellectual process. Thus his single biggest intellectual contribution is not any dictation or new wisdom; instead, it is the literary record of his own narrative of intellectual "becoming" and more importantly the challenge he makes to his followers, "This is my way; where is yours?" A literary interpretation reveals the complexity and paradoxes inherent to his character development, and his story "shows" rather than "tells" his own intellectual process of making a "way." His only "definite" universalized philosophic assertion comes in the form of a challenge that puts the burden and blessing of "making meaning" on his readers and followers.

Zarathustra's story is fundamentally the experience of one thinker's perpetual striving to overcome and affirm himself through a multiplicity of perspectives and changing rhetorical contexts. As my first chapter showed, his teachings and narrations do a powerful job of showing the necessity of solitude, contemplation, and self-discipline for creativity and self-affirmation in

a world devoid of teleological purpose and metaphysical certainty. Zarathustra's journey is a philosopher's, and as such the importance he attaches to his purpose and teachings is, often, much larger than his life. His teachings on the "overman" and the "eternal return" make his journey appear highly presumptuous and almost prophetic, and thus some may find his story too weighty for their "taste." However, those with ears and sympathies for his questions and concerns may find the "ideas" themselves ethically valuable as challenges and not as "Truths." Zarathustra's most important ethical challenges provoke readers to confront and question the paradoxical underpinnings of human culture, language, and sociopsychological concepts that a deconstructive orientation will consistently reveal. He also challenges his readers to not rest in the complacency of nihilism or skepticism as a sterilizing blanket of intellectual comfort. Zarathustra's story challenges readers to seek new innovative ways to answer with a "Yes" to the contradictions, conflicts, and uncertainties of modern life. Some readers may be offended by the bombastic nature of his weighty "teachings," and they may call Zarathustra contradictory, incoherent, or hypocritical. And to this sort of reader, Zarathustra's most important challenge echoes forth, "This is my way, where is yours?" How will you make meaning out of the subtle and not so subtle chaos and contradictory foundations of a deconstructed world?

CONCLUSION

“I have moved from the house of the scholars and I even banged the door behind me. My soul sat hungry at their table too long; I am not, like them, trained to pursue knowledge as if it were nut cracking. I love freedom and the air over the fresh earth; rather would I sleep on ox hides than on their decorums and respectabilities.”

“On Scholars” Thus Spoke Zarathustra

This thesis begins with an exploration of the language of “solitude” in Nietzsche’s text, and it ends with the aesthetic and philosophic implications of telling the story of an individual intellectual “becoming.” Zarathustra’s “wandering” and “mountain climbing” is representative of a “weighty” philosophic struggle that lives up to Nietzsche’s subtitle. Zarathustra’s poetic, psychologically sophisticated, and paradoxical wisdoms make Nietzsche’s philosophic narrative a bottomless “text” which produces radical interpretations. This is as productive as it is dangerous because, Nietzsche’s text, if read without a sense of irony and heightened literary awareness can create gross misreadings. Zarathustra’s multitudinous maxims and reflections have been used as “philosophic bullets” for a plethora of critical and not so critical movements as evidenced by the many groups that claim Nietzsche as their own.

Zarathustra’s story is Nietzsche’s, and whatever wisdom readers take from Zarathustra, they must take and dissect “slowly” with “irony.” His specific ideas, reflections, and narrations pertain to one contingent literary character’s intellectual “becoming,” and if and when they are universalized, they quickly lose their rhetorical significance. What stands out about Zarathustra’s story is his quest and “will” to bring a fresh, life-affirming linguistic unity to the contradictions and paradoxes of deconstructive thought. For Zarathustra, this quest is a “lonely”

one, and he needs “solitude” as much as he needs a critical “pathos of distance.” When Zarathustra’s wanderings are read as such, his complex development serves as a challenge and inspiration to those with ears for his questions but without a hermeneutic, literary sensitivity Zarathustra can all too easily become incoherent or worse yet dogmatic.

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