

THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche is often considered the “bad boy” of modern philosophy for his rejection of organized religion, popular morality, and his radical ideas concerning the “superman” (Übermensch) and the “will to power.” Because his philosophy was twisted by the Nazis to justify their expansionistic wars and extermination of the Jews, Nietzsche’s reputation suffered in the years following the Second World War. In more recent years, however, Nietzsche has begun to be recognized as a groundbreaking and visionary philosopher—one of the first existentialist and post-modern thinkers in philosophy. In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, from which a selection has been included below, Nietzsche invents the character of Zarathustra, a prophet, who announces the death of God and the coming of the superman—a being who represents the final evolution of mankind.

ZARATHUSTRA'S PROLOGUE

1

When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and the lake of his home, and went into the mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and solitude, and for ten years did not weary of it. But at last his heart changed,—and rising one morning with the rosy dawn, he went before the sun, and spoke thus to it:

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

For ten years you have climbed into my cave: you would have wearied of your light and of the journey, had it not been for me, my eagle, and my serpent.

But we awaited you every morning, took from you your overflow and blessed you for it.

Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like the bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to take it.

I would bestow and distribute, until the wise have once more become joyous in their folly, and the poor happy in their riches.

Therefore must I descend into the deep: as you do in the evening, when you go behind the sea, and

give light also to the underworld, you exuberant star!

Like you I must *go down*, as men say, to whom I shall descend.

Bless me, then, you tranquil eye, that can behold even the greatest happiness without envy!

Bless the cup that is about to overflow, that the water may flow golden out of it, and carry everywhere the reflection of your bliss!

Behold! This cup is again going to empty itself, and Zarathustra is again going to be a man. “

Thus began Zarathustra's down-going.

2

Zarathustra went down the mountain alone, no one meeting him. When he entered the forest, however, there suddenly stood before him an old man, who had left his holy cot to seek roots. And thus spoke the old man to Zarathustra:

“No stranger to me is this wanderer: many years ago passed he by. Zarathustra he was called; but he has altered.

Then you carried your ashes into the mountains: will you now carry your fire into the valleys? Don't you fear the incendiary's doom?

Yes, I recognise Zarathustra. Pure is his eye, and no loathing lurks about his mouth. Does he not walk

along like a dancer?

Zarathustra is changed; a child has Zarathustra become; an awakened one is Zarathustra: what will you do in the land of the sleepers?

As in the sea have you lived in solitude, and it has carried you up. Alas, will you now go ashore? Alas, will you again drag your own body?"

Zarathustra answered: "I love mankind."

"Why," said the saint, "did I go into the forest and the desert? Was it not because I loved men far too well?"

Now I love God: men, I do not love. Man is a thing too imperfect for me. Love to man would be fatal to me."

Zarathustra answered: "Did I speak of love! I am bringing gifts to men."

"Give them nothing," said the saint. "Take rather part of their load, and carry it along with them—that will be most agreeable unto them: if only it be agreeable to you!"

If, however, you will give anything to them, give them no more than alms, and let them also beg for it!"

"No," replied Zarathustra, "I give no alms. I am not poor enough for that."

The saint laughed at Zarathustra, and spoke thus: "Then see to it that they accept your treasures! They are distrustful of hermits, and do not believe that we come with gifts.

The fall of our footsteps rings too hollow through their streets. And just as at night, when they are in bed and hear a man abroad long before sunrise, so they ask themselves concerning us: Where does the thief go?"

Go not to men, but stay in the forest! Go rather to the animals! Why not be like me—a bear amongst bears, a bird amongst birds?"

"And what does the saint do in the forest?" asked Zarathustra.

The saint answered: "I make hymns and sing them; and in making hymns I laugh and weep and mumble: thus do I praise God.

With singing, weeping, laughing, and mumbling do I praise the God who is my God. But what do you bring us as a gift?"

When Zarathustra had heard these words, he

bowed to the saint and said: "What should I have to give you! Let me rather hurry away lest I take something away from you!"—And thus they parted from one another, the old man and Zarathustra, laughing like schoolboys.

When Zarathustra was alone, however, he said to his heart: "Could it be possible! This old saint in the forest has not yet heard of it, that *God is dead!*"

3

When Zarathustra arrived at the nearest town which adjoineth the forest, he found many people assembled in the market-place; for it had been announced that a rope-dancer would give a performance. And Zarathustra spoke thus unto the people:

I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have you done to surpass man?

All beings so far have created something beyond themselves: and you want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man?

What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a thing of shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock, a thing of shame.

You have made your way from the worm to man, and much within you is still worm. Once were you apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than any of the apes.

Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become phantoms or plants?

Behold, I teach you the Superman!

The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!

I conjure you, my brethren, *remain true to the earth*, and believe not those who speak to you of superearthly hopes! Poisoners are they, whether they know it or not.

Despisers of life are they, decaying ones and poisoned ones themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so away with them!

Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy; but God died, and with him also died

those blasphemers. To blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful sin, and to rate the heart of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth!

Once the soul looked contemptuously on the body, and then that contempt was the supreme thing:—the soul wished the body meagre, ghastly, and famished. Thus it thought to escape from the body and the earth.

Oh, that soul was itself meagre, ghastly, and famished; and cruelty was the delight of that soul!

But you, also, my brothers, tell me: What does your body say about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and pollution and wretched self-complacency?

Truly, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted stream without becoming impure.

Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is that sea; in him can your great contempt be submerged.

What is the greatest thing you can experience? It is the hour of great contempt. The hour in which even your happiness becomes loathsome unto you, and so also your reason and virtue.

The hour when you say: “What good is my happiness! It is poverty and pollution and wretched self-complacency. But my happiness should justify existence itself!”

The hour when you say: “What good is my reason! Does it long for knowledge as the lion for his food? It is poverty and pollution and wretched self-complacency!”

The hour when you say: “What good is my virtue! As yet it hath not made me passionate. How weary I am of my good and my bad! It is all poverty and pollution and wretched self-complacency!”

The hour when you say: “What good is my justice! I do not see that I am fervour and fuel. The just, however, are fervour and fuel!”

The hour when you say: “What good is my pity! Is not pity the cross on which he is nailed who loveth man? But my pity is not a crucifixion.”

Have ye ever spoken thus? Have you ever cried thus? Ah! would that I had heard you crying thus!

It is not your sin—it is your self-satisfaction that cries to heaven; your very springness in sin cries to heaven!

Where is the lightning to lick you with its

tongue? Where is the frenzy with which you should be inoculated?

Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is that lightning, he is that frenzy!—

When Zarathustra had thus spoken, one of the people called out: “We have now heard enough of the rope-dancer; it is time now for us to see him!” And all the people laughed at Zarathustra. But the rope-dancer, who thought the words applied to him, began his performance.

4

Zarathustra, however, looked at the people and wondered. Then he spoke thus:

Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman—a rope over an abyss.

A dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous trembling and halting.

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what is lovable in man is that he is an *over-going* and a *down-going*.

I love those that know not how to live except as down-goers, for they are the over-goers.

I love the great despisers, because they are the great adorers, and arrows of longing for the other shore.

I love those who do not first seek a reason beyond the stars for going down and being sacrifices, but sacrifice themselves to the earth, that the earth of the Superman may hereafter arrive.

I love him who lives in order to know, and seeks to know in order that the Superman may hereafter live. Thus he seeks his own down-going.

I love him who labours and invents, that he may build the house for the Superman, and prepare for him earth, animal, and plant: for thus he seeks his own down-going.

I love him who loves his virtue: for virtue is the will to down-going, and an arrow of longing.

I love him who reserves no share of spirit for himself, but wants to be wholly the spirit of his virtue: thus he walks as spirit over the bridge.

I love him who makes his virtue his inclination and destiny: thus, for the sake of his virtue, he is

willing to live on, or live no more.

I love him who desires not too many virtues. One virtue is more of a virtue than two, because it is more of a knot for one's destiny to cling to.

I love him whose soul is lavish, who wants no thanks and doth not give back: for he always bestows, and desires not to keep for himself.

I love him who is ashamed when the dice fall in his favour, and who then asks: "Am I a dishonest player?"—for he is willing to succumb.

I love him who scatters golden words in advance of his deeds, and always does more than he promiseth: for he seeks his own down-going.

I love him who justifies the future ones, and redeemeth the past ones: for he is willing to succumb through the present ones.

I love him who chastens his God, because he loves his God: for he must succumb through the wrath of his God.

I love him whose soul is deep even in the wounding, and may succumb through a small matter: thus he goes willingly over the bridge.

I love him whose soul is so overfull that he forgets himself, and all things are in him: thus all things become his down-going.

I love him who is of a free spirit and a free heart: thus is his head only the bowels of his heart; his heart, however, causes his down-going.

I love all who are like heavy drops falling one by one out of the dark cloud that lowers over man: they herald the coming of the lightning, and succumb as heralds.

Behold, I am a herald of the lightning, and a heavy drop out of the cloud: the lightning, however, is the *Superman*.—

5

When Zarathustra had spoken these words, he again looked at the people, and was silent. "There they stand," said he to his heart; "there they laugh: they understand me not; I am not the mouth for these ears.

Must one first batter their ears, that they may learn to hear with their eyes? Must one clatter like kettledrums and penitential preachers? Or do they only believe the stammerer?

They have something of which they are proud. What do they call it, that which makes them proud? Culture, they call it; it distinguishes them from the goatherds.

They dislike, therefore, to hear of 'contempt' of themselves. So I will appeal to their pride.

I will speak to them of the most contemptible thing: that, however, is the *last man!*"

And thus spoke Zarathustra to the people:

It is time for man to fix his goal. It is time for man to plant the germ of his highest hope.

Still is his soil rich enough for it. But that soil will one day be poor and exhausted, and no lofty tree will any longer be able to grow in it.

Alas! there will come the time when man will no longer launch the arrow of his longing beyond man—and the string of his bow will have unlearned to whizz!

I tell you: one must still have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: you have still chaos in you.

Alas! There will come the time when man will no longer give birth to any star. Alas! There will come the time of the most despicable man, who can no longer despise himself.

Behold! I show you *the last man*.

"What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?"—so asks the last man and he blinks.

The earth has then become small, and on it there hops the last man who makes everything small. His species is ineradicable like that of the ground-flea; the last man lives longest.

"We have discovered happiness"—say the last men, and they blink.

They have left the regions where it is hard to live; for they need warmth. One still love one's neighbour and rub against him; for one needs warmth.

Turning ill and being distrustful, they consider sinful: they walk warily. He is a fool who still stumbles over stones or men!

A little poison now and then: that makes for pleasant dreams. And much poison in the end for a pleasant death.

One still works, for work is a pastime. But one is careful lest the pastime should hurt one.

One no longer becomes poor or rich; both are too burdensome. Who still wants to rule? Who still wants to obey? Both are too burdensome.

No shepherd, and one herd! Every one wants the same; every one is equal: he who has other sentiments goes voluntarily into the madhouse.

“Formerly all the world was insane,”—say the subtlest of them, and they blink.

They are clever and know all that has happened: so there is no end to their mockery. People still fall out, but are soon reconciled—otherwise it spoils their stomachs.

They have their little pleasures for the day, and their little pleasures for the night, but they have a regard for health.

“We have discovered happiness,”—say the last men, and they blink.—

And here ended the first discourse of Zarathustra, which is also called “The Prologue”: for at this point the shouting and mirth of the multitude interrupted him. “Give us this last man, O Zarathustra,”—they called out—“make us into these last men! Then will we make you a present of the Superman!” And all the people exulted and smacked their lips. Zarathustra, however, turned sad, and said to his heart:

“They do not understand me: I am not the mouth for these ears.

Too long, perhaps, have I lived too long in the mountains; I have listened to long to the brooks and trees: now I speak to them as to the goatherds.

Calm is my soul, and clear, like the mountains in the morning. But they think me cold, and a mocker with terrible jests.

And now do they look at me and laugh: and while they laugh they hate me too. There is ice in their laughter.”

6

Then, however, something happened which made every mouth mute and every eye fixed. In the meantime, of course, the rope-dancer had commenced his performance: he had come out at a little door, and was going along the rope which was stretched between two towers, so that it hung above the market-place and the people. When he was just midway across,

the little door opened once more, and a gaudily-dressed fellow like a buffoon sprang out, and went rapidly after the first one. “Go on, halt-foot,” cried his frightful voice, “go on, lazy-bones, interloper, sallow-face!—lest I tickle you with my heel! What are you doing here between the towers? In the tower is the place for you, thou should be locked up; to one better than yourself you block the way!”—And with every word he came nearer and nearer the first one. When, however, he was but a step behind, there happened the frightful thing which made every mouth mute and every eye fixed—he uttered a yell like a devil, and jumped over the other who was in his way. The latter, however, when he thus saw his rival triumph, lost at the same time his head and his footing on the rope; he threw his pole away, and shot downwards faster than it, like an eddy of arms and legs, into the depth. The market-place and the people were like the sea when the storm comes on: they all flew apart and in disorder, especially where the body was about to fall.

Zarathustra, however, remained standing, and just beside him fell the body, badly injured and disfigured, but not yet dead. After a while consciousness returned to the shattered man, and he saw Zarathustra kneeling beside him. “What are you doing there?” said he at last, “I knew long ago that the devil would trip me up. Now he will drag me to hell: will you prevent him?”

“On my honor, my friend,” answered Zarathustra, “there is nothing at all to what you say: there is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even sooner than your body: fear, therefore, nothing any more!”

The man looked up distrustfully. “If you speak the truth,” said he, “I lose nothing when I lose my life. I am not much more than an animal which has been taught to dance by blows and scanty fare.”

“Not at all,” said Zarathustra, “you have made danger your calling; in that there is nothing contemptible. Now you perish by your calling: therefore will I bury you with mine own hands.”

When Zarathustra had said this the dying one did not reply further; but he moved his hand as if he sought the hand of Zarathustra in gratitude.

7

Meanwhile the evening came on, and the marketplace veiled itself in gloom. Then the people dispersed, for even curiosity and terror become fatigued. Zarathustra, however, still sat beside the dead man on the ground, absorbed in thought: so he forgot the time. But at last it became night, and a cold wind blew upon the lonely one. Then arose Zarathustra and said to his heart:

Truly, a fine catch of fish hath Zarathustra made today! It is not a man he hath caught, but a corpse.

Sombre is human life, and as yet without meaning: a buffoon may be fateful to it.

I want to teach men the sense of their existence, which is the Superman, the lightning out of the dark cloud of man.

But still am I far from them, and my sense speaks not to their sense. To men I am still something between a fool and a corpse.

Gloomy is the night, gloomy are the ways of Zarathustra. Come, you cold and stiff companion! I will carry you to the place where I shall bury you with my own hands....

THE THREE METAMORPHOSES

Three metamorphoses of the spirit do I designate to you: how the spirit becomes a camel, the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.

Many heavy things are there for the spirit, the strong load-bearing spirit in which reverence dwells: for strength demands the heavy and the heaviest burdens.

What is heavy? so asks the load-bearing spirit; then it kneels down like the camel, and wants to be well laden.

What is the heaviest thing, you heroes? asks the load-bearing spirit, that I may take it upon me and rejoice in my strength.

Is it not this: To humiliate oneself in order to mortify one's pride? To exhibit one's folly in order to mock at one's wisdom?

Or is it this: To desert our cause when it celebrates its triumph? To ascend high mountains to tempt the tempter?

Or is it this: To feed on the acorns and grass of knowledge, and for the sake of truth to suffer hunger of soul?

Or is it this: To be sick and dismiss comforters, and make friends of the deaf, who never hear your requests?

Or is it this: To go into foul water when it is the water of truth, and not disclaim cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: To love those who despise us, and give one's hand to the phantom when it is going to frighten us?

All these heaviest things the load-bearing spirit takes upon itself: and like the camel, which, when laden, hastens into the wilderness, so hastens the spirit into its wilderness.

But in the loneliest wilderness there happens the second metamorphosis: here the spirit becomes a lion; freedom will it capture, and lordship in its own wilderness.

Its last Lord it here seeks: hostile will it be to him, and to its last God; for victory will it struggle with the great dragon.

What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer inclined to call Lord and God? "Thou-shalt," is the great dragon called. But the spirit of the lion saith, "I will."

"Thou-shalt," lies in its path, sparkling with gold—a scale-covered beast; and on every scale glitters golden, "Thou shalt!"

The values of a thousand years glitter on those scales, and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: "All the values of things—glitter on me.

All values have already been created, and all created values—do I represent. Truly, there shall be no 'I will' any more. Thus speaks the dragon.

My brothers, why is there no need of the lion in the spirit? Why is the beast of burden, which renounces and is reverent, not sufficient?

To create new values—that, even the lion cannot yet accomplish: but to create itself freedom for new creating—that can the might of the lion do.

To create itself freedom, and give a holy "No" even to duty: for that, my brothers, there is need of the lion.

To assume the right to new values—that is the

most formidable assumption for a load-bearing and reverent spirit. Truly, to such a spirit it is preying, and the work of a beast of prey.

As its holiest, it once loved “Thou-shalt”: now is it forced to find illusion and arbitrariness even in the holiest things, that it may capture freedom from its love: the lion is needed for this capture.

But tell me, my brethren, what the child can do, which even the lion could not do? Why has the preying lion still to become a child?

Innocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new

beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea.

Yes, for the game of creating, my brothers, there is needed a holy “Yes” unto life: *its own* will, wills now the spirit; *his own* world wins the world's out-cast.

Three metamorphoses of the spirit have I designated to you: how the spirit became a camel, the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.—

Thus spoke Zarathustra.