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No One Man Should Have All That Power: Rhetoric and Its Reception in Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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No One Man Should Have All That Power:
Rhetoric and Its Reception in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College
by
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I would like to thank Daniel for advising my project; the fantastic professors I've had here at Bard; my friends for supporting me throughout this process and beyond; and my wonderful family for the all countless things they have done for me.

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Introduction

I began this project hoping to write about *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in relation to some work of literature. I knew I wanted to write about *Zarathustra*, since no other work of philosophy consistently interests me or speaks to me like it does. Since it has been influential to multiple generations of authors; many (too many) options presented themselves as worthy. I eventually rejected this idea, deciding that I wanted to focus as closely as possible on one work at a time. Next, I thought about concentrating on the literary qualities on display in the book. Unlike the majority of philosophical works, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has a plot and characters; unlike the majority of philosophical works, it is highly stylized and often quite poetic. But eventually I realized that what I was actually interested in was not merely its literary qualities, but what I saw those qualities as serving in the text, and what I saw them as allowing me to do with the the text. One reason *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is so uniquely powerful is that its form allows for ideas to emerge slowly and subtly, usually not given to the reader outright, but suggested, teased, in parable and metaphor, action and interaction. Nietzsche does not shy away from having Zarathustra make speeches seemingly intended to state his doctrines, but even such statements are often ambiguous and cannot be fully explained without first looking at what events have just occurred, or who he is speaking to, or what his goals are in that particular section. This final iteration of my project began with my looking at Zarathustra's attempts to communicate with an audience; that led me to what you see before you today.

In this project, I want to show that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is an experiment in a new way of communicating philosophy, one in which Zarathustra not only attempts to espouse a philosophy, but also to consider both the implications of living that philosophy, and the

implications of others beginning to follow that philosophy. Zarathustra is the first adherent of his own philosophy, and so we see these implications emerge as we move with him through his life and work. They include not only what his philosophy seems to promise (which I will not be examining in detail); but also an intense need to give to humanity even as he feels estranged from almost everyone around him, and a feeling of alienation even around his followers. This reading undercuts the optimism expressed at various points in the book, and calls into question if *Zarathustra* as a whole can be considered a hopeful work. I will present three chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of Zarathustra's communication. In the first chapter, I will argue that there is a tension between Zarathustra's need to appeal to an audience, and his attempt to faithfully represent his philosophy, looking at the intricacies of the rhetoric Zarathustra uses, which includes everything from the appearance of the text to his physical gestures. I will be focusing mainly on the first part, in which Zarathustra attempts to recruit followers and refines his rhetoric. In the second chapter, I will argue that Zarathustra's communication of his philosophy is both a means by which to teach the will to power, and a demonstration of his will to power as the driving force behind his philosophy, looking at the bestowing virtue as an example of the will to power's omnipresence. I will be focusing mainly on the first and second parts of the book, where the will to power is introduced and fleshed out. In the third chapter, I will argue that Zarathustra ultimately considers this attempt to communicate his philosophy within his own surrealistic world a failure, looking at his relationship with those with whom he communicates, his disciples. I will be looking at all four parts but focusing mainly on the third part, where Zarathustra comes to terms with his new relationship to his disciples.

Chapter I

I will be spending the second chapter of my project looking at how Zarathustra's communication of his philosophy is a demonstration of the will to power, and the third chapter of my project looking at how the eventual failure of Zarathustra's attempt to communicate to his disciples; in this opening chapter I would like to look at how Zarathustra attempts to appeal to his audiences in the first place. He plays a number of roles in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, by turns an instigator and a wisdom-giver; a warrior and a counselor. He changes his appearance as the situation demands, presenting himself in myriad ways depending on the topic and the audience. And yet, it is not the core principles of his philosophy that change depending on the situation, but his way of presenting it: most of all, it is his rhetoric¹ that changes. I would like to accomplish two things with this chapter. I would first like to show that there is a tension between Zarathustra's need to appeal to an audience, and his attempt to faithfully represent his philosophy. He tries to both win over followers and establish his philosophy, and it is not always clear where the lines are drawn between the two. I would also like to look at some specifics of Zarathustra's rhetoric, both because it provides a frame for my analysis, and because it provides a window into some of the technical aspects of how Zarathustra builds his experiment in a new way of communicating philosophy. I will be focusing mostly on the first part of the book in which he attempts to court and keep disciples. In some cases, it is not merely how he presents his words to his audience that constitutes the rhetorical effect, but the intricacies of the sentences themselves. In these cases, the the words within a particular statement demonstrate, enact, or perform the larger meaning of the sentence. In other cases, he attempts to impart his philosophy

¹ I use rhetoric to refer to Zarathustra's communication with his audiences with the intent to persuade, not to convey that his words are empty or lacking in sincerity.

with the audience (that is, those around him in the text, not the reader) more directly in mind. He might change how he presents his beliefs depending on (for instance) the audience's age, or their trade or whether they are already sympathetic to his beliefs. I will also look at that parts of the text that describe Zarathustra's speeches but are not said by him. From these descriptions we get an idea of how the physical aspects of Zarathustra's performance work with his spoken rhetoric in order to win over those listening to him.

Before we dive into my argument concerning what Zarathustra uses his rhetoric to do, let me outline what I see as essential features of that rhetoric. First, "performativity." J.L. Austin was the first person to isolate the performative statement as something altogether different than the simple statement, the latter of which either "'describe[s]' some state of affairs, or... 'state[s] some fact'" (Austin 1). He gives the example of the statement "I do," which, in addition to stating a fact (that one agrees to marry someone), also creates and validates the marriage. In this case, says Austin, "we should say that in saying these words we are *doing* something – namely, marrying, rather than *reporting* something, namely *that* we are marrying" (13). The other main sense in which the word is used was pioneered by Judith Butler. Butler does not speak of the sentence, but rather of a particular mechanism that she claims governs the way in which we think of gender identity. In the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble*, she states that "much of my work in recent years has been devoted to clarifying and revising the theory of performativity" that she outlined ten years previously, and offers a clear definition: "the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself" (7). In *Bodies That Matter*, she says such an anticipation "bring[s] about what it names" (13). Clearly, Austin and Butler's respective definitions deal with different (though similar) ideas. Whereas Butler focuses on how,

for instance, the expectation of a certain type of maleness will produce that maleness without it actually being innate, Austin is working only at the level of the statement: how certain statements produce an effect even as they describe it.

In what sense, then, do I use the word in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*? My use can be considered a hybrid (or possibly bastardization) of the two definitions, but it is perhaps closer to Butler's usage. Finding examples that fit under Austin's technical definition has proven to be challenging, since Zarathustra's "doing" is usually less literal than the sort that Austin imagines. And for Butler, a performative's power "is not the function of an originating will" like Zarathustra's creating in his own surrealistic world is, but it is rather a function of a system already in place; when someone says "I do," the words would have no meaning if it were not for the institution of marriage that gives them meaning. Nonetheless, Zarathustra does attempt to "do" something with his words – namely to create the state of affairs contained in his words. When he says "the overman is the meaning of the earth," it is not clear that this is true in the time in which he says it. He is, however, attempting to "bring about what he names." There is no instantaneous change in a state of affairs like there is with "I do," but he does set in motion with his words a process that may eventually lead to a change. It is not enough for him merely to work with his deeds towards his goals when his goals involve shifts not in the physical world but in thought. This may not be performativity in the strictest sense of Austin and Butler, but it is one of the best examples of the subtle way in which Zarathustra tries to communicate (and of the link between his attempt to communicate his philosophy and his attempt to establish it).

I am also interested in the way Zarathustra uses words in a way that either mirrors, in a smaller sense, the larger meaning of the statement or section. This could also be considered a

variant of the thing I am calling performativity. For instance, when Zarathustra says “I am a north wind to ripe figs,” and he is also *doing* – attempting to create himself through defining himself to others; attempting to become one who presents wisdom that is ripe for sharing (Nietzsche 65). By positioning himself in the metaphor – he is the “north wind,” that which knocks down the figs which represent his “teachings” – he attempts to establish an identity for himself that will be made real when it is borne out by his actions and the beliefs of those around him. More to my point, he is also creating, on a smaller level, in the way that he advocates later in the chapter when he says “what you called world, that should first be created by you” (65). He is creating what he calls world through his speech. We might say in cases like these that the statement *enacts* or *demonstrates* a larger meaning.

Finally, the idea of “performance” is related to performativity in an obvious superficial way, but I do not use them to denote the same thing. Instead, my use of performance denotes something located in the descriptions of Zarathustra’s speeches rather than in the speeches themselves. His tone and his physical actions affect the way he imparts his philosophy to the audience around him, and compliment his spoken rhetoric. For example, in *On the Tree on the Mountain*, Zarathustra sees a young man “leaning against a tree, gazing wearily into the valley” (29). He tells the young man that “we are bent and tormented worst by invisible hands.” In order to demonstrate the truth of his words, he physically grasps the tree, and points out that the unseen wind could do much more damage to the tree than his hands ever could. Moments of physicality like this force us to remember that Zarathustra’s speeches are not merely a vehicle for the thoughts they detail, but that there is something fundamentally important about the way in which they are presented.

From the very first pages of the book, Zarathustra speaks as though he has an audience that he is trying to persuade. The opening of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* finds him in the mountains, after having left his home of thirty years, enjoying his “spirit and his solitude” (3). We are presented with a less filtered version of Zarathustra, since there are no humans present, and is not attempting to court followers. Even so, it is not his thoughts that we read, but a speech, similar in many ways to his later speeches. In this case, he addresses the sun, asking “what would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine?” (3). In this we see, in its first iteration, Zarathustra’s idea of what having an audience means to the one who has attracted it. Even the sun, of essential importance to all beings on earth, is dependent on “those for whom [it] shine[s]” for its happiness – without acknowledgement of its power over others, even its central achievement is made hollow (3). The sun does not truly change its actions for its audience, however. Rather, it has made what it already does essential for those for whom Zarathustra says it does it. For “ten years” it has made the same route to Zarathustra, but the only thing that truly differentiates those ten years from all the years the came before and are yet to come is Zarathustra’s presence. He compares himself to the sun, so “overflow[ing]” with wisdom that he is compelled to “*go down*” or under (emphasis his) to distribute to the masses of earth; there is not, however, a one to one correspondence in this metaphor (3). It seems as though Zarathustra is dependent on his audience in a far more significant way than the sun is dependent on Zarathustra and his “eagle and snake” (3). What are we to make of this metaphor if it is not meant to strictly illuminate similarities?

Its meaning is twofold. First, it is an “arrow of longing,” a lofty comparison that Zarathustra cannot truly live up to (by virtue of its impossibility) but aims for anyway (7).

Zarathustra would like to make his philosophy essential for the people to whom he will speak. He would like to have the same position of necessity in relation to his audience that the sun has in the chapter. In his comparison to the sun, he is already implicitly attempting to bring about what he names. Second, and more generally, it introduces the ecological and directional language that will be so prevalent in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; this language is a consistent presence throughout the book, even though Zarathustra constantly plays with exactly what is represented by going under or over. Zarathustra asks, in his first speeches that his audience “remain faithful to the earth,” much in the way that the sun has (6). The physical aspects of his performance in this chapter reinforce this language as well: he “[rises] with the dawn,” already moving upwards, and “[steps] before the sun,” ending a progression that begins with “the lake of his home,” and continues with the mountains into which he ascends (3). Zarathustra speaks not in order to persuade, but to sets up themes and motifs that will be present for the rest of the book. It is not often we see Zarathustra without an audience, but even though he is not speaking in order to persuade in this chapter, he is already focused on how he should relate his philosophy to an audience.

Once Zarathustra does have an audience, he tries to convey his philosophy to them in a number of different ways, each of which presents his philosophy in a different light. His audience is not distinguished in any respect except for their proximity; he speaks to the population of the “nearest town” (5). At this point he seems to have forgotten, or not yet appreciated how divisive his message is, and does not attempt to tailor his message to someone who might be resistant to his ideas. Zarathustra refers to the crowd around him specifically, asking “what have *you* done to overcome [being human]?” and “*you* want to be the ebb of this

great flood and would even rather go back to animals than overcome humans?” (emphasis mine in both cases) (5). The presentation of the speech is designed to provoke contempt in the gathered crowd for their own actions and states of mind – he refers to the way in which the human (clearly implicating all those watching) shall be a “laughing stock or painful embarrassment” to the overman (6). Zarathustra then preaches that the very feeling that he hopes to have created with his performance – not merely momentary embarrassment but a more existential contempt – this feeling is exactly what is needed in order for the overman to be possible. This sort of rhetoric goes beyond merely stating that one’s “hour of great contempt” is necessary for the overman to exist; it seeks to create that feeling of contempt in the audience and thus enacts Zarathustra’s philosophy more viscerally (6). His message is always married to the way in which he presents it: that contempt for oneself as a human being is necessary in order that humans might create the overman is brought out by the way he tries to communicate to his audience. In this chapter, Zarathustra communicates in a way that is obviously different from the first; his words are lofty and expressive, designed to provoke a reaction in his audience. He speaks with the confidence of one who knows they are right, but his audience sees it as confidence undeserved by a speaker who appears out of nowhere to point out their flaws.

Once the audience makes their dissatisfaction with Zarathustra’s first attempt at communicating his philosophy known, he changes tack, and focuses on an aspect of his philosophy that he seems to think might go over better (Lampert 31). In this change, we see that Zarathustra has quickly realized that he cannot merely recite his philosophy and expect his audiences to accept them, much less act upon them. As the tightrope walker begins to slowly stride across his rope, Zarathustra begins speaking of what he loves about human beings, a

subject that he seems to think will appeal to this audience more than his speech about their flaws. Of course, the things he loves about human beings are not current attributes, but possibilities, qualities that point towards the overman. Zarathustra describes how he conceives of humankind such that the walk across the rope becomes a performance of his rhetoric. In this conception, mankind becomes “a rope fastened between animal and overman – a rope over an abyss” (Nietzsche 7). That the “crossing over” and “going under” that must occur are not isolated phrases, but rather key ingredients in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*’s conceptual underpinning highlights Zarathustra’s method of tailoring his performance to the time and place in which he is speaking. The performance hints the tension Zarathustra feels between his desire to faithfully communicate his philosophy, and his desire to win over this specific audience. He is “amazed” that he must change his rhetoric in the first place, and though he represents his philosophy in a way that is consistent with how he represents it later in the book, he appears uncomfortable that he must do it in such a dramatic fashion (7).

Though the drama appears in the content of his words, Zarathustra’s speeches are presented to the reader in a form that reinforces his imagery. The way in which the text is punctuated in this chapter is service of the tightrope imagery. The dash between the two parts of “mankind is a rope fastened between animal and overman – a rope over an abyss” immediately calls to mind that very rope (7). It also becomes a mark of progress in “a dangerous crossing, a dangerous on-the-way...” pointing forward as it is interspersed with each word of “on-the-way” (7). We are prompted to think of that same dash again when Zarathustra mentions the “arrow of longing for the other shore” (7). Jumping forward, it appears after “herald of the lightning” (9) and “he moved his hand as if seeking Zarathustra’s hand in gratitude –” (12). In

the first case it points forward as the herald does; in the second case it seeks as the jester's hand does. The focus on text over the spoken word serves to remind the reader that, just as the words Zarathustra's audience hears are formulated to get across his philosophy in a way that will appeal to them, so the words we read are also a type of rhetoric; we are also a type of audience to be appealed to.

Zarathustra has a moment after his speech on what he loves in human beings in which he speaks not to an audience, but to himself. The people "laugh" and "do not understand" him, so he confers with himself in order to best reach them (9). He does not use any sort of ordinary mode of communication; he speaks "to his heart"(9). Though it is tempting to read Zarathustra's speaking to his heart as him continuing to perform for himself, even in this moment of seeming authenticity, it seems more likely that this is simply a way to say that Zarathustra is thinking. He is certainly not speaking out loud, for he "[falls] silent" before the passage begins (9). Since we do not have access to Zarathustra's innermost thoughts, his thinking can only be expressed to us as a speech, but this is no reason to doubt their authenticity. Indeed, such moments are when we are likely to see Zarathustra at his most authentic. In this aside, he bemoans the state of the crowd, who do not react even to his more dramatic second speech and asks "must one first smash their ears so that they learn to hear with their eyes?" (9). We see him analyze their character, identify a new rhetorical strategy, then decide on a subject to which he can apply that strategy. Once Zarathustra begins speaking to the people again, his tone changes: it becomes more pointed, and less searching. He tries to appeal to the crowd's pride, and speaks not of what should embarrass them or what he loves, but of what he believes they are still capable of. Humankind's soil is "still rich enough" to "plant the seed of their highest hope"; they "still have

chaos” in themselves such that they can “give birth to a dancing star” (9). This is the sort of performativity I have described: he is willing his words might become reality as he says this. We do not know for sure if what he says is true, but his saying it is the first step towards it being realized as true. He tempers these more encouraging sentiments with reproaches: the time is fast approaching when these “stills” will not apply, the “time of the last human being” (9). Once again, the way in which he presents his thoughts helps to enact or demonstrate the thoughts themselves. He urges humankind (via the gathered crowd) to “plant the seed of their highest hope” at the beginning of his speech (9). The speech grows out of this beginning, becoming more dynamic and urgent as it branches out into subtopics of the initial idea. Zarathustra then speaks of all the ways in which this seed might not take root, each demonstrating what he believes will happen if the progression towards mediocrity that comes with a lack of any sort of challenge or conflict continues.

Zarathustra’s earlier speech about the overman is performed, quite literally, by the tightrope walker, though not as Zarathustra is giving it, but after. This performance is not taken to completion (indeed, we do not yet know what completion would mean), but is instead interrupted by a new character: a colorful fellow resembling a jester” (11). It captures the crowd’s attention more than anything Zarathustra has preached: it “[strikes] every mouth silent and [forces] all eyes to stare”; it doesn’t, however, help Zarathustra get his point across, since they do not interpret the events as an allegory but instead perceive them as a spectacle (11). In fact, it contributes to the same tension that Zarathustra’s attempt to communicate to his audience has created. The audience will not walk away from Zarathustra’s speeches thinking of his words but of the spectacle; Zarathustra will walk away from the encounter believing he was not able to

properly represent his philosophy. The tightrope walker emerges from a “little door” and walks across a “rope suspended between two towers” (11). The scene is set up such that every object and event in it corresponds to another: he has found his way out of the first tower, which represents the sort of thinking that currently anchors humankind (we have learned earlier that humankind is the rope that stretches between the two towers). The door the tightrope walker moves through represents the opportunity presented by someone like Zarathustra, who wants to give humankind a chance to create something beyond themselves (it is purely volitional, however: he opens the doors, but does not push them through it).

The tightrope walker moves through the air, treading over humankind in multiple ways: he walks on both the metaphor provided by the rope, as well as the actual humans watching from below. However, he does not make it all the way across the rope; when he is “at the midpoint of his way,” the jester interrupts him (11). This jester has been let through that same door opened by Zarathustra’s teachings; however, he does not want to take advantage of them in the same way. The jester, whose colorful way of dressing might represent the plurality of modern society, stands in for the cynics of the modern age, who look down on “free spirits” like Zarathustra. He berates the tightrope walker, saying “you should be locked away in the tower, for you block the way for one who is better than you” (11). He then leaps over him, causing the tightrope walker to fall and mortally injure himself. This performance of Zarathustra’s teachings serves to remind the reader of the stakes inherent in the creation of the overman: though the path to the last human being is not a quick and violent one, it is still a matter of life and death. It also serves to remind the reader that the path to realizing Zarathustra’s teachings will not be straightforward; the changes in values he wills in his performative statements will not be easy to

enact people's hearts and minds Zarathustra's rhetoric is enacted in the actions of the tightrope walker and the jester, only to end in failure, prompting him to change strategies even more drastically in the next chapter.

Zarathustra's realization that he needs to change strategies occurs in a sequence of near-revelation. He wakes from his first rest since he has descending from the mountains and sees as if with new eyes: "amazed Zarathustra looked into the woods and the silence, amazed he looked into himself" (14). He sees a "new" truth – not *the* truth, but another truth, one which is more relevant to him in the present. He does not want to merely be the "shepherd and dog of the herd," speaking to the masses in a vain attempt to change their ways; he would rather "be called a robber by the shepherds," attempting to "lure" away companions, people receptive to his ideas (14). Zarathustra's discovery, the revelation that "amaze[s]" him, is that the best way to represent his philosophy is not by speaking with the great unwashed, but with people already favorably disposed to his teachings. In a particularly pithy summary of his goals, he says "I need... companions who follow me because they want to follow themselves – wherever I want" (14). Zarathustra's goals involve convincing others of the rightness of a philosophy that would have them think for themselves on many levels; but they are still *his* goals, and he wants followers to further his goals before any others. Zarathustra wants to relieve some of the tension between his need to appeal to an audience, and his attempt to faithfully represent his philosophy. He hopes to spread his philosophy to those to whom he will be able to present his it without worrying about whether his words will be laughed at, or worse, ignored. In this chapter, Zarathustra is described once again as "[speaking] to his heart" (14). As before, this phrase denotes that we get a relatively rare moment of access to Zarathustra absent any attempt to appeal to an audience.

There is an emphasis on Zarathustra's actions, his physical performance: first he opens his eyes and looks around, then "[stands] up quickly" (14). He is shocked and elated "like a seafarer who all at once sees new land (14); he speaks to himself like someone trying to process a discovery. His typical rhetorical devices are also intact. For instance, he performatively elegizes the tightrope walker, saying to his corpse "and you, my first companion, take care" (14). In calling the fallen tightrope walker his first companion, Zarathustra makes it so: before this utterance, the tightrope walker was not related in this way to him. In doing so, he also sets a precedent for what being a companion to Zarathustra might signify. Thankfully, this does not turn out to merely mean "dying before one's time," but the willingness to stand outside of society even at a great personal cost remains the ideal for Zarathustra's companions.

Once Zarathustra begins to speak directly to those sympathetic to him in hope that they might join him, his approach changes. He begins to outline his philosophy in a more systematic way. The loftiness of his speeches in the market place lingers, but he begins to focus less on his general aims, and more on his specific beliefs. He begins to focus on the details of his philosophy rather than only presenting in explicit terms what is arguably one crux of his thinking (the progression to the overman). One of the ways in which Zarathustra tries to appeal to those whom he thinks might follow him is through parables. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has a number of obvious (and subtle) biblical allusions, often direct references to the text inverted or subverted in some way. The parable is an example of an indirect reference to the bible, simply mirroring the style without using specific details. Jesus' parables have strong moral lessons that helped to establish the sorts of values that Zarathustra takes on in his speeches; Zarathustra tends to subvert those values in his parables. The scene with the tightrope walker could be said to be a

parable itself, but the first parable we encounter that is told by Zarathustra rather than existing as part of the narrative is his speech entitled “On the Three Metamorphoses.” We get no hint of any physical performance in this chapter, or, indeed, any hint of any context at all. All that we are given is the text of the speech.

And in “The Three Metamorphoses,” the form of the text communicates as much the subject matter of the essay. The three metamorphoses present the progression of the “spirit” from a conventional view of the world to someone who can question established values, and eventually create their² own. Zarathustra uses motifs he has already introduced – from the act of being a warrior to the ecological world to physicality – to illustrate what must take place in order for the three metamorphoses to take place. First, we meet the “carrying spirit” (16). It asks “what is heaviest, you heroes?” and what follows is a list of the “heaviest things,” such as “abandoning our cause when it celebrates victory” or “being ill and sending the comforters home” (16). We get an example of how a point Zarathustra makes is enacted or demonstrated on a textual level: each example is loaded on top of the sentence “all of these heaviest things that carrying spirit takes upon itself” (16):

Is it not this: lowering oneself in order to hurt one’s pride? Letting one’s foolishness glow in order to mock one’s wisdom?

Or is it this: abandoning our cause when it celebrates victory? Climbing high mountains in order to tempt the tempter?

² I try to use non-gendered terms in this project and pronouns unless the meaning of a passage rests on gender, or the gender of a subject or term is explicitly laid out in the text.

Or is it this: feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and for the sake of truth suffering hunger in one's soul?

Or is it this: being ill and sending the comforters home and making friends with the deaf who never hear what you want?

Or is it this: wading into dirty water when it is the water of truth, and not shrinking away from cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: loving those who despise us, and extending a hand to the ghost when it wants to frighten us?

It takes these weighty sentences on its back, and only after the sentences appear does it move, “like a loaded camel that hurries into the desert” (16). The pace immediately changes, and the sentences become shorter and more declaratory as the “spirit becomes lion”: “Here it seeks its last master, and wants to fight him and its last god. For victory it wants to battle the great dragon” (16). Zarathustra is more immersed than ever in the textual intricacies of his rhetoric in this chapter; his parables do away entirely with any access to Zarathustra as a person. The focus in this chapter is no longer on Zarathustra's attempts to win over a general audience, and he is able to step aside and speak through a parable that exists outside of any events in the actual world.

As Zarathustra begins to attract followers, a question emerges that I would like to use the second part of my first chapter to examine: why is he reluctant to share much of himself in his rhetoric? In “On the Way of the Creator,” we get a glimpse of how he interacts with the individuals that have chosen to follow him. Zarathustra builds upon figurative language already

established earlier in the work to make an argument about the importance of one's relationship with oneself. He does not choose his metaphors lightly. Each metaphor, besides illuminating whatever he happens to be speaking of at the time, also connects to a broader symbology built up over the course of the work, and is often presented in a way that has the specific language within the metaphor mirror a broader point. In this chapter, Zarathustra speaks to a young man who presumably has been attracted to his teachings. This young man wants to "go into isolation." Zarathustra, familiar with isolation and all that it entails, asks him to "linger a bit longer and listen [to him]" (46). Zarathustra takes the idea of isolation, and moves from its most literal sense to a more figurative type of isolation: the isolation experienced by one whose voice no longer "resonate[s]" with the "herd" (the majority of humankind) (46). Fittingly, the audience is comprised of a single individual when Zarathustra speaks of the singularity of isolation; once again, the smaller case demonstrates the larger. The chapter deals with the isolation of the free thinker within society, as structured metaphorically by the actual seclusion on top of some lonely place in nature. Absent are any references from Zarathustra to his own experiences, though they are in the shadows of everything he says. He sets forth a sequence of happenings that are specific enough to seem as though they have come from personal experience and diagnoses them as what is occurring within the young man:

But one day solitude will make you weary, one day your pride will cringe and your courage will gnash its teeth. One day you will cry "I am alone!"

One day will you will no longer see your high, and your low will be all too near; your sublimity itself will frighten you like a ghost. One day you will cry:

"Everything is false!" (47)

As usual, Zarathustra tailors his rhetoric to the situation at hand. He appeals to the young man on a personal level in that he speaks directly to the young man's situation – his speech reads almost like a letter one might write to a younger friend to give advice. But Zarathustra doesn't ever explicitly say he speaks from experience. Instead, he hints at it, uses it as part of his rhetoric, uses it to appeal to his audience (even when his audience is a single person), without ever giving us access to that part of himself. He is reluctant to fully embrace sharing his personal experiences in order that he might win over his disciple; the young man must leave feeling that he knows little more of Zarathustra than he did when Zarathustra began speaking.

The paradox of the limited access to the “authentic” Zarathustra is that he does preach a philosophy originating in the self. He calls love of the other or love of the “neighbor,” “bad love of the self,” and thinks that we “flee to [our] neighbor to escape [ourselves]” (44). His philosophy is hardly solipsistic; it is grounded in the self's relationship with the earth, and with other people; nonetheless, even his general imperatives are aimed first at individuals. However, Zarathustra spends years and years of his life preaching to others. His task of imparting his philosophy is inherently oriented towards others, and since even his time spent in isolation is spent deepening a philosophy he wants to share with humankind, we might ask: exactly how he Zarathustra combatting the “selflessness” he condemns? (44). A clue to this, and a key to understanding why Zarathustra does not reveal much of himself in his rhetoric is provided in “On the Bestowing Virtue.” I will be looking at this chapter as it relates to the will to power in much more detail in my own second chapter, but for now, let us think of bestowing in the context of selflessness. Zarathustra frames his sermon on the “highest virtue” in terms of gold. Gold is “uncommon and useless and gleaming and mild in its luster; it bestows itself always,” and that is

why it is valued so highly (56). The bestowing virtue is valued highly for the same reasons – it too is useless to the bestower (inasmuch as they bestow without expecting anything in return) and uncommon and beautiful. The healthy person “strives for treasures and gems” not simply to accumulate these metaphorical riches of the soul, but in order that they may bestow to others. Implicit in this chapter is the language of the friend with their “overflowing heart,” the person whom Zarathustra calls “the creating friend who always has a complete world to bestow” (45). He guesses of his disciples “like me you strive for the bestowing virtue” (56). It is because he possesses this highest virtue that Zarathustra’s project of imparting his philosophy, which seems like a work of selflessness, is actually grounded in his self. He is the most advanced student of his own philosophy, and, “having amass[ed] all riches in [his] soul,” he wants to overflow and bestow upon humanity (56). Zarathustra’s love of humanity is possible because his love for himself is so healthy and beneficent that he has enough of it to share with all of humankind.

Of course, Zarathustra’s rhetoric in this chapter is directed, in contrast to earlier chapters, not to all of humankind, who would not yet know what to do with what he bestows, but to a small group of people who are already sympathetic to his teachings. This bestowing virtue, this radical love based in the self must, he says, “become a robber of all values” (56). He knows it will be condemned as selfishness by humankind at large, and therefore does not bother speaking on this subject to humankind at large. His speech is peppered with appeals to the audience he is speaking to, and he uses their admiration of him to make his points. It is “like [*him*]” that they “strive for the bestowing virtue”; he asks “what do *we* regard as bad and worst?”; and he refers to the group listening to him as “[*his*] brothers” (emphasis mine in all cases) (56). Zarathustra

refrains from doing this for much of the text, and indeed, it seems that he becomes worried about his influence on his disciples almost immediately after doing so.

I will be looking at Zarathustra's relationship with these disciples in more detail in my third chapter, but let us briefly touch upon it in the context of his attempt to main authentic while appealing to them. Zarathustra is well aware of the tension inherent in having disciples when he preaches a philosophy so grounded in the self. The disciples do not, however, merely appear as foils, existing only so that Zarathustra can recite his philosophy. His audience is essential to and helps to shape his teachings. The act of being a disciple seems to be something that does not originate in the self in any way; identifying as a disciple would seem to be identifying first in relation to someone else. Navigating this tension is an important part of Zarathustra's journey. He does not actually resolve it – it bothers him, irritates him, drives him to send his disciples away from him entirely at the end of the first part. “Indeed,” he says, “I counsel you to go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you” (59). He says of his disciples that they had “not yet sought [themselves]” before they found him (59). This reaching out to others to fill a lack in oneself is antithetical to Zarathustra's philosophy, but is, on the face of things, inherent in being a disciple.

One possible way to relieve at least some of this tension is found in the way Zarathustra delivers his wisdom. Pay attention,” he says, “to every hour where your spirit wants to speak in parables: there is the origin of your virtue” (57). For Zarathustra, virtue is in bestowing. In terms of bestowing wisdom or philosophy, however, bestowing in parables and metaphors is much different than simply stating it plainly. A parable requires that the audience give something of itself when it interprets. In this way, the gift does not shame the one who

accepts it, for it is not a merely passive submission to someone else's wisdom, but also an active process of creating one's own meaning out of someone else's wisdom. "I do not give alms," says Zarathustra. "For that I am not poor enough" (4). Zarathustra's rhetoric throughout the work exists in the tension of attempting to bestow *his* philosophy on *his* terms, but in a way that remains consistent with his own doctrine on bestowing. Since Zarathustra presents the same core concepts (such as the progression to the overman) in radically different forms, different audiences might interpret just what it means in different ways. This further obfuscates any attempt at getting the "true" version of his thinking. Is he merely trying to appeal to different audiences with different forms of presentation, or is he attempting to express the multiple truths contained in one concept?

I have spent most of this chapter looking at Zarathustra's attempts to communicate his philosophy and gain followers in the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; now I would like to briefly look at how he behaves in his solitude in the beginning of the second part of the book before turning to my next chapter and how this communication we have been examining is a demonstration of his will to power. The first chapter of the second part, "The Child with the Mirror," opens with Zarathustra once again living in "the mountains and the solitude of his caves," accumulating and refining his wisdom (63). We can begin our reading of this part in light of the previous: in his solitude, Zarathustra does not give parables to others, but rather is presented with parables for his own interpretation. Indeed, the second chapter, "On the Blessed Isles," begins with one of his most fully realized and extended parables, which subsequently frames the whole rest of the chapter's discussion of creation. If his own wisdom speaks in parables, the world around Zarathustra and his unconscious wisdom also presents itself as

parable to be interpreted when Zarathustra is alone. And, in the same way Zarathustra's audience is meant to actively interpret his wisdom, Zarathustra too creates a meaning true to himself and that which he is interpreting out of the ambiguity presented by parables. In this case, the parable comes from a dream Zarathustra has that "frighten[s] [him] so...that it wake[s] [him]" (63). The dream is merely of a child carrying a mirror and presenting Zarathustra's image to himself, but his "heart [is] shaken" by it (63). The child, which we know in some capacity represents "innocence and forgetting, a new beginning" (17), offers Zarathustra a new direction. His image is distorted and appears as a "devil's grimace," which Zarathustra interprets as a sign that his teaching too has been distorted and "is in danger" (63). This prompts him to return once again to his teachings.

In his solitude, Zarathustra is able to exist in his most authentic manner. He is addressing himself as well when he tells his disciples to "be ashamed of him" (59); he needs to exist without their influence upon him in order regroup enough to teach them again. For Zarathustra this shame doesn't merely reflect a need to turn away from his teachings, but to stop teaching in order that those listening can actually apply them to their lives. It is the "hardest thing: to close the open hand out of love, and to preserve a sense of shame as a bestower" (63). In the previous part, he reminds himself that the origin of his virtues can be found when his spirit speaks in parables, when his "heart flows broad and full like a river, a blessing and a danger to adjacent dwellers" (57); his next act is to go back to the mountains and restore himself. And in "The Child with the Mirror," he can come to terms with what has happened in his absence prompts him to return to spreading his teachings. Even his dream can be thought of as a performance, even though it does not perform to him wisdom already present in his conscious

mind: some part of Zarathustra tells another part of him something that can only be presented in this way. He commences his most physical act of the chapter: he “[leaps] to [his] feet...not like a frightened person fighting for air, but instead more like a seer and a singer upon whom the spirit has descended” (63). As in the revelatory sequence that signals the beginning of Zarathustra’s speeches that search for companions, his speech to his heart represents rare access to Zarathustra’s thoughts, even if they are still represented in the form of a speech. He is not speaking in an attempt to work through a decision he must make, but rather speaking a justification already worked through, in order that it become real through speech; initiated into his rhetoric with this performance.

In this chapter, I tried to show how Zarathustra attempts to appeal to the various audiences he preaches to in the first part and the beginning of the second part of the book. In the beginning, there is a tension between that need to appeal, and his desire to faithfully represent his philosophy, but as he begins to speak to those who have sympathy for his views, that tension begins to resolve itself. The question of exactly what motivates Zarathustra in his radically self-based philosophy also emerges in this part of the book. I have given one answer here in my analysis of the bestowing virtue. Moving into the next chapter, I will look in more depth at the bestowing virtue, this time also looking at the deepest motivation for Zarathustra’s teaching: the will to power.

Chapter II

In reading *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it can be tempting to treat his speeches as the “substance” of his philosophy, and regard the narrative and expository portions as the means by which the frame which allows the speeches to take place is able to exist. And it is true that many of Zarathustra’s most famous proclamations – on concepts like the overman or the three metamorphoses – can be found in his speeches. Moreover, an obvious importance is placed on such speeches; they make up the majority of the text in each part. Nonetheless, such a reading misses not only the portions of his philosophy that emerge in interactions with others in this surrealistic world; it also misses that the interactions themselves are part of the philosophy being taught in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra’s communication of his philosophy is both a means by which to teach the will to power, and a demonstration of his will to power as the driving force behind his philosophy. He is not merely imparting his philosophy as the result of some impartial search for truth, but also as a way to see his own “highest hopes” – everything from a new philosophy grounded in the earth, to the reach towards the overman – realized in and by those who listen to him. This demonstration necessarily takes the form of a narrative, a space where we can see not only philosophy-as-will-to-power, but also a representation of how that drive for power impacts others. I will be focusing mainly on the bestowing virtue, as an example of how the will to power is present in every action and interaction.

But before we examine how Zarathustra treats the will to power, and how it appears between him and those with whom he converses, let us attempt to sketch out exactly what he means by those words. After all, Zarathustra does not offer us a clear definition of power. In fact, he problematizes any clear definition of power. For instance, as I will address in detail, he points

to “bestowing” as an instance of exercising one’s will to power, whereas a more conventional definition of power might see the exchange moving from the giver to the receiver, and place the power with the one who “profits” from the exchange. Power does not work only between individuals and groups: Zarathustra speaks of commanding *oneself* in multiple chapters, sometimes as prescription: “the noble person commands himself not to shame” (67) and sometimes in action “thus my great love commands me to speak” (78). We should be careful not to conflate terms, but commanding seems to imply an interplay of power between the commander and the commander. But, characteristically, any definition of power that contains “power is...” is absent from the text. We therefore must ask: is it really possible to write about the will to power if we do not have a definition of what Zarathustra means by power? It may be instructive to look at how Zarathustra uses the word in instances that are *not* the will to power, in order to build a working, contextual, ostensive definition of power.

The word first appears in the context of the three metamorphoses, specifically with regard to the spirit-as-lion. Power here is expressed as a hypothetical, a possibility, something one possesses but does not necessarily use in order for it to be called power. Zarathustra asserts that the lion can bring about a reality in which it can create: “to create freedom for itself for new creation” is “within [its]...power” (17). This expression of power, then, is very much a positive thing within the context of Zarathustra’s larger philosophy. It is what allows those fighting against the dusty and tired “values of millennia” to win the *freedom* to create new values. But it is notably not power *over*. The power of the lion is not a sustained relationship with the other. Rather, this power is in order to “create freedom *for itself*” (emphasis mine), so that it may then create the sort of values it holds up as good. The lion does not have the power to *create* new

values, and Zarathustra does not mention power when speaking of the one who *can* create new values, the child. Of course, the three metamorphoses is far from a literal description of how power works, and the lion and the child are not different beings at all, but merely different manifestations of the same “spirit.” What we can take from this is that Zarathustra locates the expression of one type of power not in the creation he holds so dear throughout the book, but in the work done before creation that enables one to create in the first place. Power is, in this chapter, primarily destructive when used, forcefully removing what is already there in order that creation may then take place. It is not motivated by any desire to do harm to others (though that may very well be a side-effect of such a destructive compulsion), but rather by the desire for a space in which one can fully manifest one’s capacity to create.

In “On the New Idol,” we learn that power is not only the lion’s capacity for destruction in order to create; it is also the more petty, everyday power of politics. “On the New Idol,” deals with the state, that which uses the values people hold highest to “lie[] in all the tongues of good and evil” (34). Here Zarathustra speaks of power as something desired by those who have none of it, and money as a means to that end: “Just look at these superfluous! They acquire riches and yet they become poorer. They want power and first of all the crowbar of power, much money – these impotent, impoverished ones!” (35). He mocks their desire to rule in conventional ways, noting that the fulfillment of that desire would not leave them better off than before: “They all want to get to the throne, it is their madness – as if happiness sat on the throne! Often mud sits on the throne – and often too the throne on mud” (35). Commanding is spoken of highly in other places in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but we can be assured that Zarathustra is not talking about this particular type of commanding, which he views as commanding without the proper character to

command (this character is possessed by those with noble character, the “great souls” he mentions later in the chapter (36), who are directly contrasted with the “mud” above). We can glean from this use of power that power is not a necessarily a creative capacity; it is in this case merely exercising control over others. This control obviously differs from the type of power illustrated in the three metamorphoses. It stems from a lack of, and a desire to displace others while retaining the current structure, whereas the power of the lion wants to create anew. Those who would try to gain control of the throne in “On the New Idol” are essentially interchangeable with those who currently have control. Power, then, is not an inherently positive thing, nor is it something that can be possessed only by the noble, or the “great souls.” It also is the mundane material of petty rulers and political machinations.

Zarathustra names “commanding” and “obeying” as constitutive of the will to power in one of the actual formulations of the will to power in “On Self-Overcoming” (89); It is therefore worth looking at how he uses those words as well. Commanding and obeying, almost always used together, help to show an aspect of power that is related to the self in a different way than the lion’s creating freedom for itself. The terms are first introduced in “On War and Warriors.” In the context of Zarathustra’s larger philosophy, the warrior is interesting, because they are considered noble without, on the surface, possessing the independence of thought that Zarathustra advocates elsewhere. Zarathustra asserts that obeying is not only not shameful for warriors, it should be constitutive of their way of life. He believes that the warriors should “let [their] nobility be obedience”; that to disobey is actually less noble: “rebellion” is “the nobility of slaves” (34). Rebellion for Zarathustra is, we see, not the lion’s destruction of old values, but more similar to the “mud” trying to change their own status without fundamentally changing

anything else. Someone reading the text for the first time would probably assume that the warrior is being commanded by someone outside themselves, but that is not made explicit in every part of the commanding and obeying that we see in this chapter. He insists that the warriors that should value only that which they can obey: “everything you hold dear you should first have commanded to you,” but he does not mention who should be doing the commanding (34). We will soon learn that not all commanding takes places between more than one individual; one can command oneself as well. Eventually he does instruct the warriors on one person whom they should obey – Zarathustra himself. He enlists them in his project to create the overman:

To a good warrior “thou shalt” sounds nicer than “I will.” And everything you hold dear you should first have commanded to you.

Let your love for life be love for your highest hope, and let your highest hope be the highest thought of life!

But you shall have your highest thought commanded by me – and it says: human being is something that shall be overcome. (34)

In this claim about the values of warriors, we see that not everyone has the capacity or should have the capacity to be the commander, but that where one cannot command, one should not try to. There is room for the warrior to have the same love for life as the noble, the great souls, without attempting to enact a fundamental change of values. Commanding, then, is introduced to us as something that the noble do to those not meant to command. There is nobility to commanding, but there is still dignity in being commanded – more dignity than there would be in “rebellion,” or the attempt to overthrow what one should not.

In “On the Bestowing Virtue,” in a passage that deals with the will to power without ever using those words in that order (“will” and “power” are both mentioned separately) Zarathustra claims that commanding is of essential importance not only in matter of war, but also when one gives to another. Speaking of the “origin of [one’s] virtue,” he tells his disciples that they have command of the bestowing virtue only under certain conditions: “when you are sublimely above praise and blame, and your will wants to command all things, as the will of a lover” (57). The bestowing virtue is more than simply giving a gift: “it is power, this new virtue; it is a ruling thought and around it a wise soul: a golden sun and around it the snake of knowledge” (57). In this passage, unlike the one in “On War and Warriors,” we see commanding from the perspective of the one actually doing it. The one who commands possesses the bestowing virtue – giving itself is then a command of sorts. This person loves the one whom one expects to obey, and has a sense that they know what is best for the one they love. Only when one is “sublimely above praise and blame” can one afford to give gifts in the spirit of the bestowing virtue. I will be looking at the bestowing virtue in greater detail at multiple points later in this project, but for now, let us simply note this instance of commanding formulated as giving, and giving formulated as power.

Commanding is also something one does to oneself to ensure that one is true to one’s values. It is first mentioned in this light in “On the Pitying.” Speaking of the human being as “the animal that has red cheeks,” Zarathustra asserts that shaming others is something the noble person tries to avoid: “the noble person commands himself not to shame; shame he demands of himself before all sufferers” (67). In other words, the noble person does not make others feel shame, but rather feels shame that he sees others at a low point: “for inasmuch as I saw the

sufferer suffering, I was ashamed for the sake of his shame; and when I helped him I severely violated his pride” (68). Any “pity” they feel is not for the suffering that these people are going through, but rather that they had witnessed something that might embarrass the sufferer, whose identity is more than simply the sum of their suffering. In this case, the noble person commands themselves because there is some part of them that *wants* to shame. They recognize an impulse in themselves (perhaps a leftover piece of “thou shalt” morality), and fight against it in an attempt to replace it with their own values. Commanding, seen this way, is something one does to oneself for oneself, in order that one can behave in accordance with one’s own values (despite another part of oneself that does not want to behave that way – and thus must be commanded).

Zarathustra gives us his most detailed treatment of commanding and obeying in “On Self-Overcoming,” and elaborates on both of the senses of commanding we have looked at above. In a passage addressed to the “wisest ones (he also speaks in this passage to the (singular) “seeker of knowledge,” seemingly as part of the same frame), he speaks of commanding and obeying as constitutive parts of life and of the living. He does not claim the words he imparts as his own, but rather the result of his “captur[ing]” the “glance” of life with a “hundredfold mirror” in order that “its eyes could speak to [him]”; in this way he relays his doctrine on commanding and obeying:

However, wherever I found the living, there too I heard the speech on obedience. All living is an obeying.

And this is the second thing that I heard: the one who cannot obey himself is commanded. Such is the nature of the living.

This however is the third thing that I heard: that commanding is harder than obeying. And not only that the commander bears the burden of all obeyers, and that this burden easily crushes him: –

In all commanding it seemed to me there is an experiment and a risk; and always when it commands, the living risks itself in doing so.

Indeed, even when it commands itself, even then it must pay for its commanding.

It must become the judge and avenger and victim of its own law. (88-89)

Though Zarathustra emphasizes the difficulty and nobility of commanding, he reminds us from the beginning that everyone – even those born to be commanders – must obey. Indeed, in this passage, in these words he found in the eyes of life, it is obeying that is the most fundamental part of life. Living itself is an obeying; those who command are not exempt from this requirement of living. Those who command are, then, more rare than those who merely obey, since “commanding is harder than obeying” (89). The commander is responsible not only for themselves, but for those who obey them. When the one who obeys is obeying their own orders, they bear the burden of both sides, a doubly heavy burden.

What, are we left with after working through Zarathustra’s use of power and commanding/obeying? Power is, first, that which enables people to create. The expression of power (located in the lion in the three metamorphoses), is what allows the creator to create without worrying about structures in place that would inhibit that creation. Implicit in this manifestation is conflict of some sort – the old structures will not be destroyed without some sort of fight. To possess power is to possess the strength necessary to fight that which stands in the way of creation. Second, it is the ability to exercise control over others. Having power is not

necessarily a “noble” thing; it is not only possessed by the sort of people Zarathustra is trying to reach with his teachings. In “The New Idol,” we learn that power is also the mundane stuff that lets rulers rule and kings retain control. The “crowbar” of power is money, but money itself is not power, it is the means to controlling others. Those with this type of power are not trying to create, but to maintain the status quo that allows them to be on top. Loosely, the lion uses its power in order to seek change; the mundane rulers use their power in order to preserve the current structures.

For Zarathustra, those who are not meant to wield power should instead obey those who are meant to wield power. If the rulers in “On the New Idols” are an example of people who seek power who do not possess the capacity to use it well, then the warriors in “On War and Warriors” are an example of how those who are not meant to wield power should act. Not everyone is meant to command; obeying is not a weakness in those not meant to command. Here, Zarathustra uses commanding and obeying in order to illustrate the flow of power between two entities. In this, we see that wielding power need not entail seeking conflict. Zarathustra tells the warriors “you may have your highest thought commanded by me” and enlists them in his project to create the overman; though this project may eventually call for the conflict instigated by the lion, in this instance, Zarathustra’s power lies in commanding the warriors and knowing he will be obeyed. Any hope of a simple definition of commanding as it relates to the will to power is complicated further by the chapter on the bestowing virtue. Commanding is not only the right thing to do if one possesses the right temperament to command: the bestowing virtue originates when one’s will wants to “command all things” (57). This virtue “is power,” says Zarathustra, but this sort of power is certainly different than the lion’s conflict-seeking power, or the power Zarathustra

possesses over the warriors. The two entities involved in commanding and obeying are not necessarily the self and another being; one can command and obey oneself. “All living is an obeying,” he says, and one can either obey oneself or obey others. Commanding is harder than obeying, since the commander is responsible for themselves as well as those who obey them. This summary, far from condensing Zarathustra’s views on power into one synthesized definition of the will to power, has only exposed the variety of meanings power could hold when speaking of the will to power.

Now that we have traced Zarathustra’s use of “power” and “commanding/obeying” through the text, let us look at how the will to power contains these concepts, and what implications this has for my treatment of the flow of power between Zarathustra and his audience. The will to power is first mentioned, though not given a full treatment or definition, in “On a Thousand and One Goals.” Zarathustra begins the chapter by speaking of the “many lands” he has travelled to, and the “many peoples’ good and evil” he discovered along the way (42). He asserts that people “esteem” first for themselves – for no “people could live that did not first esteem,” but also must have a different good and evil than their neighbor “to preserve themselves” (42). He uses the language of “tablets,” introduced in “The Speeches of Zarathustra,” to show the importance of these values: “a tablet of the good hangs over every people. Observe, it is the tablet of their overcomings; observe, it is the voice of their will to power” (42). They consider holy “whatever stems from the highest need and still liberates, the rarest, the most difficult” (42). We retain in this chapter the sense of power as the destructive capacity of the lion, for the will to power is a will to have one’s values triumph over one’s neighbors: “change of values – that is the change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always

annihilates” (43). Power as the mundane reality of ruling and attempting to rule – the mud vying for the throne – is absent from this chapter. The will to power as Zarathustra presents it here is concerned with much more weighty desires – the urge to do better than one’s neighbors, and have one’s own values succeed rather than one’s neighbor’s.

Zarathustra does not explicitly connect commanding and obeying to the will to power until “On Self-Overcoming.” We have already looked at the rules that Zarathustra said were provided to him by life – now let us look at how he connects that wisdom, framed as gleaned from outside himself, to his own concept of will to power. He begins the chapter by criticizing the “wisest ones,” who believe that they are driven in their philosophical pursuits by the will to truth. Instead, he says, they are driven by the “will to thinkability of all being,” which is merely a form of the will to power. They want their values to be the right values, so they “bend” all being in order that it might conform to their expectations. Their values are obviously different than Zarathustra’s – they want to create the world “before which [they] could kneel” (88), a world “a world fit for reverence” (Lampert 112). If in our typology of power we have the power of control, and the destructive power of the lion that enables creation, here we see that the will to power is a combination of both. The language is of change – the wisest ones want to “*make*” (emphasis his) all being thinkable where it was previously not; they want to “bend” that which already exists into an image of their liking. But it is also of control – they place their “skiff” of values atop the river of the “unwise,” and thus keep their values afloat and dominant in the world. We know that life told Zarathustra that all living is an obeying; now Zarathustra says that his own study of life provides an additional rule: “wherever I found the living, there I found the will to power; and even in the will of the serving I found the will to be master (Nietzsche 89).

Even those who are meant to obey do it in order that they may command others; their will wants “to be master over what is still weaker” (89). Life itself tells Zarathustra that life is less important to life than the will to power is: “I would rather perish than renounce this one thing; and truly, wherever there is decline and the falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself – for power!” (89). It is not the will to truth nor the will to existence that is the most basic motivation behind all actions, but the will to power. All of “the living” are subject to this will, whether they are weak or strong, commanders or obeyers; it is a fundamental part of the world in which we exist.

The will to power as we have looked at it so far might appear to be a violent process, written in large events and weighty proclamations of value. However, the will to power is written into the very fabric of existence, and thus appears in all parts of Zarathustra’s philosophy (indeed, Zarathustra’s teaching of his philosophy itself is a demonstration of the will to power: it is his will to have his values, his own highest hopes realized in the world). Even an impulse which one might think is the least selfish of all, the impulse to give, is governed by the will to power. The “bestowing virtue” provides a way for us to see the subtle centrality, the always-presentness of the will to power in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. We also see why the will to power must be demonstrated as Zarathustra demonstrates it: the narrative form shows the results of interactions between individuals in a way that is able to show the reverberations and after-effects of the will to power.

Zarathustra is motivated by a desire to “bestow” from the very beginning of the text; this bestowing is a demonstration of his will to power. We see his wisdom portrayed as something that builds up to the point where it becomes a burden – he becomes “weary” of it,

“like a bee that has gathered too much honey” (3). He bestows as the sun bestows: he does not bestow merely because he wants to; he bestows because he *needs* to. Bestowing is intimately connected to his interactions with others, even where no physical goods are exchanged: though we see few if any exchanges between Zarathustra and others as equals in the strongest sense of the term, bestowing does inform his thoughts on friendship. The friend, the real, ideal friend for Zarathustra is the one who can equally bestow, “who always has a complete world” to give to companions (45). Such friends are rare – if they exist at all – in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; in most people whom Zarathustra encounters, their purpose in the text seems to be to learn from him, or to illustrate his teachings. Zarathustra loves solitude, but he is not “the lonely one” only by choice. Indeed, in “The Night Song,” he bemoans that he must bestow, and that he always remains a bestower, even to his friends:

This is my poverty, that my hand never rests from bestowing; this is my envy, that
I see waiting eyes and the illuminated nights of longing.

Oh misery of all bestowers! Oh darkening of my sun! Oh craving to crave! Oh
ravenous hunger in satiety! (82)

In this passage, Zarathustra implies that those who bestow, those who *have something worth bestowing*, do not usually find those ideal friends (indeed, one of the instances in which Zarathustra is referred to as the “lonely one” is found in the Chapter directly after “The Bestowing Virtue” (63)). Why, then, is bestowing such a central motivation for Zarathustra? Why does he need to bestow? And how is bestowing, which causes one to either lose something or lose sole ownership of something, a form of the will to power? In order to answer these

questions, let us first look at “The Bestowing Virtue,” the chapter in which bestowing is given its more detailed treatment.

It is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s narrative form that allows for this presentation of the bestowing virtue: we are already familiar with the characters in this chapter and their relationship to one another; Zarathustra can thus demonstrate what the bestowing virtue looks like instead of telling us what the bestowing virtue is. The “Bestowing Virtue” begins with Zarathustra leaving the city in which he has been preaching, and declaring to his disciples that he must go alone now, “for he [is] a friend of walking alone” (55). As we know, his disciples give him a staff as a parting gift, “upon whose golden knob a snake encircled the sun” (56) (the sun, of course, is the prototype of all bestowers). Zarathustra is placed here in the opposite position that he is usually in: receiving, rather than giving. However, he does not receive from his disciples in the same way that they receive from him, nor is the gift of the same type. Zarathustra's receiving in “The Bestowing Virtue” is an act of generosity: when he accepts the gift of his disciples, he is accepting a gift that they give not out of the overflow of the heart of the powerful, as the golden light coloring all that it touches, but as a collective expression of gratitude. Zarathustra does not condemn the gift – he is “delighted” – but it is made evident by the proceeding pages, and his sketch of what the bestowing virtue should look like, that this gift does not fulfill his idea of the bestowing virtue. For Zarathustra, the bestowing virtue is not the stuff of everyday giving and receiving: it is “uncommon” and “useless”; it is “the highest virtue” (56). The description of the bestowing virtue ends up looking very similar to Zarathustra's description of the will to power. Zarathustra diagnoses a desire to attain the bestowing virtue in his disciples: “this is your thirst: to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves, and therefore you thirst to amass all riches in your

soul” (56). In order to bestow, one must “compel all things to and into yourselves”: we are reminded of the desire to command, to have the hopes and desires and values of others go through oneself before they are expressed (56). He calls this selfishness “hale and holy.” One who possesses the bestowing virtue bestows not in order to win the favor of others (as Zarathustra seems to think partially motivates his disciples), but because they are complete enough in what they have that they must give or be overfull – just as Zarathustra’s ideal ruler commands others because they have complete command of themselves.

One might wonder how the bestowing virtue can be a form of the will to power, since the bestowing virtue is described as “uncommon and useless,” and we know the will to power is that which is present in all aspects of life. The answer is simple: the bestowing virtue is not the only form of the will to power, and not the form that governs most interactions. Indeed, we have already seen that the will to power is not one unified concept: it can be seen in the destructive power of the lion (17); in the petty power of the “mud” vying for the throne (36); and in Zarathustra commanding warriors (34). Each of these types of power is not only declared as doctrine by Zarathustra, but demonstrated through interactions and touched upon in other, seemingly unrelated speeches– often not explicitly – throughout the book. Indeed, Zarathustra reflects on the connection between the bestowing virtue and another form of the will to power, the “lust to rule,” in “On the Three Evils” (151). At this point, Zarathustra has left his disciples, and ponders in solitude and fresh mountain air. He wonders how we can properly name the lust to rule when it appears not as the low (the mud) wishing for power, but as the “high long[ing] downward”: “oh who would find the right christening and glistening name for such longing!”(151). He gives us one such name: ““bestowing virtue” – thus Zarathustra once named

the unnameable” (150). This might seem like yet another contradiction – isn’t the bestowing virtue a kinder, gentler gesture than the lust to rule, motivated by a need to share overflowing wisdom, not to exercise control over others ? Similarly, how can the will to power exist not purely as an expression of the drive to always be *above*, to look down at others, but as something which appears to be motivated by the impulse to benefit others?

In order to answer these questions, let us look more closely at each concept: they are more nuanced than it initially might appear, and the similarities between the two are not simply moments of overlap but constitutive parts of their respective definitions. “Lust” has negative connotations, which Zarathustra acknowledges in the beginning of the chapter devoted to it: it is “the searing scourge of the hardest of the hard hearted, the creepy torture that is reserved for the very cruelest person, the dark flame of living funeral pyres” (151). But gradually, its necessity begins to surface; it is harsh, but it spurs change when change is needed: it is “the terrible teacher of the great contempt who preaches “away with you!” to the faces of cities and empires – until they themselves cry out “away with me”” (151). And eventually, we learn that it is even a virtue: a way for the high to interact with the low, a relationship of equals never having been possible; it is necessary in order that “the solitary height not isolate and suffice itself eternally; that the mountain come to the valley and the winds of the height to the lowlands” (151). The relationship between ruler and ruled would not work if it was reversed; it exists in the way it does because of the way the balance of power is distributed between each entity.

The bestowing virtue is a meeting of self and other similar to that of the lust to rule. The bestower “compel[s] all things to and into [themselves] so that they may gush back from [their] well as the gifts of [their] love”; the bestowing is primary, but the “compelling” must take place

first. (56). After being presented with the staff with the golden sun (a motif that the reader can trace throughout the book even when its meaning is not explicitly defined), Zarathustra speaks to his followers on “the origin of [their] virtue” (that is, the bestowing virtue) (57). Pay attention, he says, to “when you are sublimely above praise and blame, and your will wants to command all things, as the will of a lover: there is the origin of your virtue.” This bestowing virtue sounds almost “disinterested” when described in this way, in that one’s will must be above any sort of outside positive or negative influence in order to truly will to bestow in the fashion Zarathustra describes. It is, however, not disinterested in the sense that one must have no personal stake in the bestowing – bestowing as Zarathustra conceives of it is very much based in the self. This is not in the sense of “everything for me,” he is quick to warn us. Rather, it frames the “thirst” to possess as a thirst motivated by the need to have everything come through one’s orbit before letting it back into the world with one’s own stamp on it – one’s will to power dictating that one must dominate and control, even when bestowing. The sun, as we have seen, is the first and one of the most repeated examples of a bestower; it “pours gold into the sea from its inexhaustible wealth – such that even the poorest fisherman rows with golden oars” (159). The power that the sun yields is immediately evident in such a passage – it colors everything around it, reframes everything to include something of itself. It is thus an expression that one holds enough power that one can freely bestow without diminishing said power; that the one bestowed to is now in one’s debt is a side effect. Zarathustra himself demonstrates this in his need to teach, to release the all the knowledge that he has compelled to himself. Indeed, though the bestowing virtue is explained in the most detail in the chapter devoted to it, how it appears in actual interactions between people can only be demonstrated in narrative form.

Zarathustra's followers, pupils as they are to Zarathustra, and thus always positioned beneath him, cannot truly bestow to their teacher. They do not give from a position of power, and thus their giving cannot be bestowing. Though Zarathustra does not explicitly reflect on the respective positions of power he and his disciples hold in this chapter, the narrative thus far has positioned him as a teacher, advice-giver, and reluctant role-model, and the reader can easily see for themselves how Zarathustra and his disciples fit within the system he has described. Zarathustra is not a static character, however, and as he changes within the book, the views he espouses can sometimes seem to contradict what he has said earlier. In "On Great Longing," Zarathustra speaks to his soul, and reflects on the relationship between the bestower and the receiver:

Oh my soul, I gave you everything and all my hands have become empty on you – and now! Now you say to me smiling and full of melancholy: "Who of us is supposed to be thankful?
– does the giver not have to give thanks that the receiver received? Is bestowing not a bare necessity? Is receiving not – mercy?" (180)

Here, bestowing is characterized as "bare necessity," that which one must do in order to live, while receiving is characterized not as something that puts the receiver in one's debt, but as an "act" of mercy that helps the bestower in the fulfillment of that necessity. Moreover, the bestower loses something of theirs if the gift is physical; if the gift is knowledge or a teaching, then the bestower loses exclusive access to that gift. Does this call into question the bestower-receiver relationship that I have laid out? Is bestowing here no longer an expression of the power one holds?

This passage might initially appear to contradict that relationship, but it is important to look who exactly is bestowing and receiving, and place it in the greater context of the narrative. The narrative form of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* allows Zarathustra to tease out subtleties in the bestowing virtue, presenting passages that seemingly contradict each other without comment, trusting that the differences will be evident from the context in which the passages appear. This passage appears after Zarathustra has left his disciples, in a melancholy brought on by thoughts of the eternal return – already a contrast to the initial chapter on the bestowing virtue, in which Zarathustra is still optimistic about his ability to communicate to those who follow him. His speech is therefore not in the mode of teaching, and not focused on getting across his beliefs or values. Bestowing might be necessary, but it is still an expression of the will to power. Indeed, it is the fact that the will to power is necessary that Zarathustra is truly bemoaning here, in a moment of melancholy. The will to power is found wherever the living are found – no one can opt out of its influence. One either bestows or receives, and, just as “commanding is harder than obeying” (89), so is bestowing harder than receiving; the position with more power is not the easiest position.

He is also speaking not of bestowing from one individual to another, but bestowing from himself to his soul (though we do not get a full definition of soul, we can assume it is not an ontological assertion, but rather takes place on a similar level as “commanding oneself”). The same relationship of power as between him and his disciples does not apply here, because Zarathustra’s soul is not a separate entity in the same way that Zarathustra’s disciples are. It makes sense that Zarathustra, in a low moment, would feel the burden of bestowing. Indeed, at other moments, he focuses on the pleasures of bestowing. The “friend and his overflowing heart”

bestows with a sense of joy, the focus not on necessity but on love - this friend is one in whom “the world stands complete, a bowl of goodness – the creating friend who always has a complete world to bestow” (45). It recalls the sun in the beginning of the book, which he describes as “the cup that *wants* to flow over” (emphasis mine) – in order that it can leave its mark on everything, that “everywhere carries the reflection of [its] bliss” (3). Just how hard it is to bestow is often lost in the joy of the earlier passages on the bestowing virtue (although Zarathustra does ask the sun “what would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine” (3)); the narrative form allows Zarathustra not only to assert that “bestowing can also be hard,” but demonstrate exactly how that “necessity” can become a burden.

I have spent this chapter looking at the driving force behind Zarathustra’s experiment in a new way of communicating philosophy, the will to power. Moving through the text in order to gain an understanding of how Zarathustra uses “power,” we saw that he does not do so merely in one way; the will to power permeates all of life, and thus power can be the power of lofty ideals or the power of petty everyday interactions. Bestowing as Zarathustra conceives of it is the highest virtue, certainly not a petty gesture; nonetheless, an analysis of it forces us to think of what separates it from everyday “giving,” and thus provides a nice way to look at a portion of the will to power that covers the full spectrum of what power can be. In my next chapter, I would like to turn from what drives Zarathustra’s communication to look at the eventual failure of Zarathustra's first attempt to communicate his philosophy to his followers.

Chapter III

Zarathustra is compelled by the will to power to which he is subject to attempt to spread, and therefore to attempt to communicate his philosophy (a philosophy that includes arguments about how one should communicate philosophy). There is a curious quality to Zarathustra's ideas, however: the meta-arguments that he makes that would seem to empower the individual might also work against him: the values they create might not be the same as his own. Yet he knows he cannot strive towards the Overman by himself; he needs to win over masses of people in order to do so. With this in mind, he teaches a philosophy that has the potential to inspire followers who do not share his values, even though they would forge those values out of the same process of immersion, rejection and creation described in "The Three Metamorphoses." However, the story of Zarathustra's relationship to his disciples is not the story of his followers using Zarathustra's methods to reject his teachings. Indeed, one has the sense that Zarathustra would welcome the sort of challenge to his ideas that he potentially creates in teaching his philosophy. But the story of Zarathustra's relationship to his disciples is one of a slow realization that they are not ready – and thus, presumably, the world is not ready – for his ideas. I would like to look at the relationship between Zarathustra and his disciples, and argue that Zarathustra ultimately considers his attempt to communicate his philosophy within his own surrealistic world a failure, at least in this particular time and place. I will look at Zarathustra's ideal – how he hopes his values will be transmitted and challenged – and the gradual breakdown of that ideal, catalyzed by his failure to properly grapple with and communicate the eternal return.

The Three Metamorphoses set up the way in which Zarathustra's disciples would ideally be empowered to create and thus potentially work against his project. Though this does not come

to pass, taking a closer look at them, this time in the context of his disciples instead of the will to power, will help us illustrate why he will eventually believe his disciples have failed him – or that he has failed to properly convey his message to them. In *The Three Metamorphoses*, Zarathustra outlines a relationship of the values of the individual to the values of the outside world. As with the rest of Zarathustra's speeches, these words are presented both as a way for us to learn about how he thinks people should act, and as a way to find people sympathetic to him – the words his disciples do not truly understand are also the words that presumably attract them to his philosophy. First, we see the carrying spirit, who takes the “heaviest things” upon its back – things that reflect the conventional values that Zarathustra will reject and call for others to reject, such as “lowering oneself in order to hurt one's pride” or “loving those who despise us” (16). This carrying spirit thus becomes a camel, and feels the true weight of the values it bears. In this we see that the spirit, who will eventually reject these values, does not merely do so out of a superficial dislike: they had been at one time an intrinsic part of it. In “*On the Way of the Creator*,” Zarathustra sees in a disciple disaffected with the current order of things the potential for at least this first step: “The voice of the herd will still resonate in you too. And when you will say “I no longer am of one conscience with you,” then it will be a lament and a pain” (46). But though Zarathustra speaks to this disciple as though having this realization is simply a matter of time, the chapter ends not with the disciple going out on his own to feel the true weight of the values impressed upon him, but with Zarathustra's words of encouragement. We never are told what happens to this disciple – perhaps he does complete this first step – but there is certainly no mention of any attempt to complete the rest of the three metamorphoses.

The camel goes into the desert, where it undergoes another change: it “becomes lion, it wants to hunt down its freedom and be master in its own desert” (16). The lion’s foe is the “great dragon” named “thou shalt” (17). This dragon represents all value that has already been accounted for or established. The lion cannot create new values, but it can pit its “I will” against the dragon’s “thou shalt.” Zarathustra emphasizes the love the lion – the same spirit that used to bear all the heaviest things – once had for the values on which it now must “prey.” It does not fight this dragon merely out of hate or self-righteousness; it is a rejection of all it “previously held as its most sacred” (17). Once the lion has defeated “thou shalt,” it must because a child – symbolizing “innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying” (17). Zarathustra refers to his disciples as his children, but this does not denote that they have begun to innocently create; the possessive instead indicates that they are part of Zarathustra’s own creation, subsumed under his will to power. The child is the only form of the spirit that can truly create, without the memory or attachments or fighting spirit that the lion had. The structure presented in the three metamorphoses is one that appears multiple times throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It mirrors Zarathustra’s own journey in some ways, but in the (at least somewhat) less figurative world in which he resides, he oscillates between stages, appearing as both the destroyer and creator of values at different points.

In “On the Way of the Creator,” he becomes discouraged by the blind acceptance of his words by his disciples, and he wonders if they are missing a fundamental part of what he is trying to convey. He asks one of his disciples to consider whether he has it in him to be a creator in the way Zarathustra imagines: “Can you give yourself your own evil and good and hang your will above yourself like a law? Can you be your own judge and the avenger of your law?” (46).

It seems that Zarathustra's disciples have taken this part of his teachings to heart, but they miss the most important part of this teaching. They accept all of Zarathustra's values but they do not retain the spirit of questioning and creating for oneself. Zarathustra's disciples do not heed much of what he argues, but this does not appear as the sort of rejection of his truth and subsequent discovery of self-truth that he envisions; rather, they miss many of the basic points he is trying to make. They are attracted by some of the elements of his philosophy – for instance saying “yes” to life, which seeps into the popular consciousness in later parts of the book – and disregard others. This may be the result of Zarathustra's concerted effort to win over followers: they are attracted by the eloquence of his rhetoric rather than the particulars of his philosophy. Rather than taking to heart the need to become intimately acquainted with the values, reject them, then create anew, his disciples take as gospel Zarathustra's own progression through those steps – his personal rejection and subsequent newly created values become what they take away instead of simply the framework.

Once again, the chapter on the bestowing virtue becomes important to our analysis. At the end of the longest piece of counsel Zarathustra gives his disciples, we also see the greatest piece of doubt as to whether they can truly understand what he is saying. He counsels his disciples on the bestowing virtue, then “weigh[s] the staff” they gifted to him and considers it “doubtfully.” This gift, a symbol of their love for him, is also indicative of their desire to be accepted, respected and loved in turn by Zarathustra, and thus does is not a manifestation of their bestowing virtue proper; it is not the sort of bestowing virtue that is a sort of ambiguous double of the will to power. Zarathustra, despite his optimism in the end of the previous chapter of the bestowing virtue (in which he speaks of a bright future that would seem to include people like

his disciples), here realizes the limits of his disciples' grasp of his teaching. When he speaks again, his voice is transformed (a foreshadowing of the "new speech" he seeks two pages later), and his words are sterner and less hopeful. He tells his disciples that he is going "alone" now, and bids them to do the same. In an acknowledgment of his sway over them, a sway about which he seems uneasy, he tells them "thus I want it" (58). He asks them to play the part of the three metamorphoses that they have not grasped at this point, and certainly not put into action: that of the lion. He wants his disciples to reject him, to "be ashamed of him" and "guard themselves against him" (59). He tells them that they should find their own way, since "one repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil only," and asks them to why they do not challenge his ideas, wondering "why would you not want to pluck at my wreath?" (59). He is critical of how they treat him like just another "savior," telling them that they follow before they are truly ready: "you had not yet sought yourselves, then you found me. All believers do this; that's why all faith amounts to so little" (59). Not only does their blind faith do a disservice to Zarathustra's philosophy, they do a disservice to themselves: Stanley Rosen writes in *The Mask of Enlightenment* "if those who receive his gift remain simply his disciples, they have misunderstood him and transformed the gift into poison" (134). He attacks their faith in him, something he has already criticized in "On the Hinterwordly." In "On the Hinterwordly," he says "I overcame myself...invented a brighter flame for myself" and learned to set aside faith in that outside himself. Now he counsels his disciples to do the same – to lose [him] and find [themselves]" before he will return to them (Nietzsche 20).

Though Zarathustra becomes more and more frustrated with the disciples he follow him as the book progresses, he also seems to genuinely love them (insofar as that is possible to

discern from his words and actions). More generally, despite the flaws he is fond of pointing out, Zarathustra loves humanity, or at least what humanity has the potential to become. The first words he speaks to another human in the book are “I love mankind”; it is a belief that is foundational to his philosophy. The only reason he undertakes this project at all is because he loves the possibility in mankind enough to worry about whether that possibility can be realized. As such, Zarathustra certainly does not hate those who are genuinely attracted to what he says, even if they have a shaky grasp on the implications of those words. His disciples represent his hope for the future he wants to create with his teachings. His attitude towards the portion of humanity that is not sympathetic to his teaching or does not live in the way he advocates fluctuates. And of course, the sort of sympathy to his teachings he courts is left mostly undefined. We hear of it only as a negation, since he never finds the disciples he is truly looking for in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Of course, though he says he loves mankind, and revisits humanity multiple times after leaving, his periods of distaste for humanity provide a sharp contrast to that love. In “On the Rabble,” he puts forward a scathing indictment of the “unclean” many, the great unwashed. He describes cutting off his senses, “like a cripple who became deaf and blind and dumb” in order to avoid “the power-, the scribble-, the pleasure- rabble” (74). In “The Homecoming,” he does something similar: he walks “disguised” among human beings, one who does not fit in, and ends up weary of all he encounters, “covered in bites by poisonous flies, and hollowed out, like a stone, by drops of malice” (148). In both chapters, the antidote to this disgust is higher regions: both the literal higher regions of his mountains, and his more metaphorical “nest in the tree called future” (76). He rejoices in his solitude: “with blissful nostrils I can once again breathe mountain freedom” (149). In these higher regions he is free

from the humanity that by turns frustrates and endears itself to him. It is only in his solitude that he is with someone who understands his philosophy.

The question, then, is of how much he truly expects from his disciples, especially in those moments when he feels the need to leave them. They are not the rabble; Zarathustra loves them more than he loves the rabble. But by the end of the second part of the book, he is forced to accept that the people with whom his message will truly resonate do not yet exist, even if he is still disappointed in this fact. There are moments when he gets caught up in his disappointment, then collects himself and adjusts his expectations. We see those wheels turning in Zarathustra's head at the end of "The Soothsayer," in a sequence that gives us an unusual amount of access to Zarathustra's thought process, which is written clearly in his facial expressions and actions. Zarathustra has just related a dream to his disciples, a dream that has him become a "night watchman and guardian of graves" and appears as he is wrestling with the eternal return, immediately after he has taken the pessimistic words of a soothsayer to heart (107). A disciple offers an interpretation that utterly contradicts the grim tone of the dream, which would have Zarathustra personified as all the elements of the dream that are *not* him: "the wind with its shrill whistling," and the "coffin full of colorful sarcasms and the angelic grimaces of life" (108). Zarathustra is taken aback by such a loose and worshipful interpretation, and reacts strongly:

But Zarathustra sat upright on his bed and with a strange look. Like someone who returns home from long sojourns abroad, he gazed at his disciples and examined their faces; and still he did not recognize them. But as they lifted him and helped him to his feet, behold, all at once his eyes transformed; he comprehended all that had happened, stroked his beard and said in a strong voice: "Well then! This has

its time; but for now see to it, my disciples, that we prepare a good meal, and quickly! Thus I plan to do penance for bad dreams! (107)

Zarathustra does not immediately respond, but a “strange look” appears on his face (108). He has a moment where he seems to consider his disciples in a new light, looking deep into their faces without recognizing them. He regains his footing in a literal and figurative sense shortly thereafter, however. He comprehends “all that had happened” – a phrase which presumably includes not only how the dream relates to the words of the soothsayer and the eternal return, but also how Zarathustra’s disciples view their teacher and his teachings. The disciple that offered this reverent interpretation is not merely a particularly fawning follower: he is described as “the disciple whom [Zarathustra] loved most” (107). This sequence concretely illustrates Zarathustra’s acceptance that not even the best of his followers understand his philosophy. Zarathustra is still disappointed: “he gazed long into the face of the disciple who had served as the dream interpreter, and he shook his head” (108). But his attitude towards his followers seems changes from that point onward and he more readily accepts their lack of understanding, even as he becomes even more obsessed with how to communicate that which prompted this realization, the eternal return.

In the very next chapter, “On Redemption,” Zarathustra continues to grapple with the implications of the eternal return, which brought him to his knees in “The Soothsayer.” His speech is by turns defiantly optimistic and despairingly fatalistic. He finds a reason for hope in the will’s ability to transform the contingency of the past into self-created meaning: “All ‘it was’ is a fragment, a riddle, a grisly accident – until the creating will says to it: ‘But I will it thus! I shall will it thus!’” (112). He nonetheless wonders “has it ever spoken thus?”, and interrogates

himself and his disciples with questions in the same vein, finally asking ““but how shall this happen? Who would teach it to also will backward?”” – whereupon he suddenly stops short (112). His face betrays his inner turmoil: he looks “entirely like one who is appalled in the extreme” (112). As he looks at his disciples, he appears to be searching their souls, attempting to understand how they conceive of what he is saying: “his eyes penetrat[ing] their thoughts and their secret thoughts as if with arrows” (112). As with “The Soothsayer,” he eventually collects himself and speaks more cheerfully to his disciples: ““It’s difficult to live with people because keeping silent is so hard. Especially for someone who is talkative.” –” (112). And also as the “The Soothsayer,” the chapter ends with words that emphasize the disconnect between him and his followers, this time said by the hunchback who prompted the whole exchange in the first place: “why does Zarathustra speak otherwise to his pupils – than to himself?” (112). He cannot bring himself to convey the true gravity of the eternal return in a way that they will understand, and instead puts on a cheerful face in order to avoid this task.

Indeed, at the end of the third part, in “The Stillest Hour,” Zarathustra is tortured by his thoughts of the eternal return and his inability to properly convey it. He speaks to those who follow him, in obvious distress:

What happened to me, my friends? You see me distraught, chased away,
reluctantly obedient, prepared to go – alas, to go away from you!

Yes, once again Zarathustra must return to his solitude; but this time the bear
returns to his cave unwillingly! (115)

Zarathustra has tried to communicate the eternal return, but he knows that it has not been enough. He relates a dream “as a parable” to his disciples, in which his “terrible mistress,” the

stillest hour of the night, speaks to him “without voice” (115). This dream begins with the stillest hour saying to him ““You know it Zarathustra, but you do not speak it!”” (115). The stillest hour seems to be referring to the eternal return; only two chapters earlier, Zarathustra suddenly broke off his speech at the end of “On Redemption” just as he began to ask whether it could ever be possible to “will backward” and so be redeemed, afraid of what he might have been about to say to his disciples. But the way the stillest hour continues to interrogate Zarathustra, and the way he continues to answers points to Zarathustra’s reconsidering much more than simply his attempts at communicating the eternal return: he seems to be reconsidering his whole philosophy; his whole experiment in a new way of communicating. Zarathustra answers the stillest hour ““indeed, I know it, but I do not want to speak it!”” to which it replies ““You do not want to, Zarathustra? Is this even true? Do not hide in your defiance!”” (116). This is the breaking point; Zarathustra “we[eps] and tremble[s] like a child” and says “Oh, I wanted to, yes, but how can I?” (116). It is a moment of abject defeat the likes of which we have not encountered in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

After this moment of defeat, the dialogue becomes more general, and less focused on the eternal return in particular, as the lonely one begins the process of questioning that will cause him to change direction entirely in his quest to spread his philosophy. Zarathustra wonders if he is worthy at all, and realizes that his attempt to communicate has failed; so far his “words have moved no mountains, and what [he] spoke did not reach mankind” (116). At this point, Zarathustra speaks as though hopeless. He remembers the cruel words of the rest of humanity towards him, how “they mocked [him] when [he] found and walked [his] own way” (116). He wonders if he is even “worthy” of the philosophy he attempts to communicate. The stillest hour,

does not accept Zarathustra's assertion that it is because he is not worthy. Its role in this dream is not merely to point out that Zarathustra has failed in his current endeavor, but to prompt Zarathustra to renew his commitment to his project even if he must choose another means by which to accomplish it. The rest of the dream is spent convincing Zarathustra that he must continue on, but in a new way: "You must become a child again and without shame," it says to him. Zarathustra realizes the magnitude of change this must involve, and is reluctant to undertake his project in this new way. He is distraught, but the stillest hour urges him on:

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

Then laughter broke out around me. Alas, how this laughter tore my entrails and slit open my heart!

And it spoke to me one last time: "Oh Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits!

Thus you must return to your solitude, for you shall yet become mellow." – (117)

It is not Zarathustra's thought that is lacking, rather, it is something in his self that is lacking. This something cannot be fixed merely by attempting to say the same thing over and over with different words; in order to figure out how to communicate not just the eternal return, but to really communicate his whole philosophy, he needs to go into solitude once again. Though Zarathustra is resolute in what he needs to do at the end of the chapter, he is nevertheless disconsolate. He says to his followers "Oh my friends! There is still something I could tell you, there is still something I could give you! Why do I not give it? Am I stingy? –" (117). Though it seems within the space of the dream that Zarathustra has realized that his followers have not

grasped his philosophy as a whole, when he speaks to them directly, he still speaks as though communicating the eternal return is the largest problem he has. This cycle of acceptance and denial continues until “On Unwilling Bliss,” when he recovers from his pain, and begins to contemplate the future.

After this point, Zarathustra’s attempts to communicate to his disciples take on a different sort of character. Though his disciples do not entirely disappear from the narrative after this point, he does not use the term again in the third part of the book; indeed, it disappears after the end of “On Redemption.” For all of the third part (and the fourth part, though they are no longer part of the narrative), he refers to them as “friends” or “brothers.” No longer does he refer to them as his disciples; they now stand on presumably more equal ground. They do not, however, look like the ideal friend Zarathustra describes in “On Love of the Neighbor,” at least not for Zarathustra, who has much more to give them than they have to give him. They are not able to give with the friend’s “overflowing heart,” since, as we have seen, they cannot bestow in the manner Zarathustra has described (45, 55-59). They are not “the friend in whom the world stands complete, a bowl of goodness – the creating friend who always has a complete world to bestow” (45). Nonetheless, they are no longer best described as disciples, and Zarathustra no longer preaches to them as he once did. He has lost hope of those who follow him at this moment in time becoming true inheritors of his philosophy, but he has not lost his human regard for those who follow him. On the contrary, he remains attached to his companions. Part Two ends with him reeling from the imminence of parting, “overcome by the force of his pain and the nearness of parting from his friends” (117). The last sentence shows him repeating what he did at the end of the first part, except this time leaving in tears instead of with a speech; this time blaming

himself rather than those around him: “at night, however, he went away alone and left his friends” (117). The end of part two is the low point of the book, but to expect a narrative arc back to the (figurative) heights of the beginning would be a mistake; the third and to some degree the fourth part deal are more about dealing with the fallout than restoring to greatness.

Zarathustra does eventually begin to come to terms with his failure to communicate to the people he used to call his disciples, but he is still uneasy without a clear way to spread his teachings. The third part opens with two chapters that do not mention his friends at all, in which Zarathustra continues his struggle with the implications of the eternal return. Once he reaches some relative peace from the “visions and riddles” of the previous chapter, Zarathustra finally has some remove from the pain of leaving his friends, and begins to think about what exactly his relationship with those formerly known as his disciples should be. With solitude comes a clearness of thought: Zarathustra sees his departure from his friends as merely another chapter in his quest to spread his philosophy. He describes three “afternoons”: “in the afternoon I once found my friends for the first time,” (presumably when he first attracts followers), “in the afternoon then a second time” (when he returns to them in part two he says “It is autumn all around and pure sky and afternoon” (65)); now “again it is afternoon” for Zarathustra (128). These afternoons are a time of possibility: “the hour when all light grows stiller” (128). He has not failed in his attempt, but neither is his job over: Lawrence Lampert writes that “the creator of disciples once saw that act as the fulfillment of his task, but now he knows himself to be in the “middle” of his work, not at its end. Now that the disciples are not the means to perfection, Zarathustra must perfect himself for their sake” (172). In this third afternoon, the focus is no longer on teaching as a means to reaching the overman. At this point, Zarathustra’s speeches are

focused on himself as he wanders without the clear goal he had in the first two parts. He is especially disenchanted with the rest of humanity; “On Virtue that Makes Small” is spent denouncing the modest aims of the people in the cities he comes across; “On Apostates” takes aim at those who once believed in his teachings but have since “become pious again” (Nietzsche 144).

One might object at this point that there are points within the third part where Zarathustra addresses a group of people sympathetic to his teachings, seemingly (though not explicitly) those formerly known as his disciples. “Oh my brothers,” he says in “On Old and New Tablets” “whoever is a firstborn is always sacrificed. But now we are the firstborns” (160). Does this not undercut my point that Zarathustra feels as though he has failed to communicate to those who followed him and thus must return to “complete” himself? (129). Who is Zarathustra talking to if not the people I have said he knows he must abandon? In “On Old and New Tablets.”, Zarathustra wonders when he will be able to return to mankind once again: “when will my hour come?” (156). Until that hour, he speaks to himself, and does not mention any other sort of audience; indeed, he is both melancholy and impatient, and bemoans that “no one tells me anything new, and so I tell myself to myself” (156). The first three sections of the chapter are without question written in this mode: Zarathustra speaks in terms of himself rather than his teachings (even his teachings are presented in relation to him), looking back upon his early addresses to mankind, and speaking of what he still hopes to accomplish. But in the rest of the chapter, he speaks in a manner similar to how he speaks in the second part of the book when he is teaching most earnestly. In section four of the chapter, he wonders, looking upon a “new tablet,” where the people are who could truly help him; “where are my brothers to help me carry

it to the valley and into hearts of flesh? (159). The rest of the chapter is spent speaking of these new tablets, which condense Zarathustra's teachings he presented in the first two parts into half page summaries (which is not to say that the teachings are identical; they reflect the same values, but they are often developed and refined from their earlier appearances). Whereas he began the chapter speaking "to [him]self," soon enough he begins phrases with "oh my brothers" or simply inserts "my brothers" in his preachings; it appears on every page except for the last one after section six of the chapter. What exactly is happening in this chapter?

The most logical answer is that Zarathustra is not speaking to the same group of people he once called his disciples when he says "my brothers," at least not as they are currently. Instead, he is speaking to a group of people who he hopes will surround him in the future. Perhaps this group of people will include his disciples, for whom he still has great fondness. But for the time being, he has purposefully estranged himself from them: earlier in the chapter he said, comparing them to young, green trees, "I want to dig them up and set each one apart so that [they] learn[] solitude and defiance and caution" (128). It is evident that they are not at all with him, certainly not in the physical sense. Though he uses "my brothers" in this chapter, we know from the end of "On Apostates" and "The Homecoming" that Zarathustra is living on his mountain once again, with only his animals for company (146). And the chapter after "On Old and New Tablets," "The Convalescent," takes place "one morning not long after his return to his cave" (173). Presumably Zarathustra has not left his cave in between. Why then, does he use "my brothers?" It is because he cannot simply wait for those who will follow him in the future. Though he believes he must go into solitude, he is still overflowing, compelled to share what he knows even without a proper audience. He goes "unwillingly" (115). When he asks "where are

my brothers to help me carry it to the valley and into hearts of flesh?”, he gets no answer; obviously these people are not within easy reach in the time in which he speaks. But one gets the sense that by the time “On Old and New Tablets” appears, Zarathustra does not know what to do with himself as he prepares for the group of people who will truly understand his teachings: he “wants to go under like the sun; now he sits and waits, old broken tablets around him and also new tablets – partially written upon” (159). And though part three often finds Zarathustra dwelling more frequently on the past, and analyzing what exactly happened that he failed to convey his message, it also looks towards the future in a way that is more explicit than the earlier two parts. He spend the first section of the part pondering exactly how it is he can continue advocating for his philosophy when he is ready but no one else is. Zarathustra returns for one chapter to his old mode of address as he continues to attempt to come to terms with what he must now do in order for his philosophy to truly be realized.

In the last section of “On Old and New Tablets,” Zarathustra does not use “my brothers” to address his statements. Instead, he shifts his attention, speaking to his will. He asks it to “preserve [him] from all small victories”; Zarathustra must continue to focus on himself, and not worry about those who will follow him until the time is appropriate, or revel in the bits of his philosophy that have stuck with those who followed him. For he hopes that the day will come, eventually, “that [he] may one day be ready and ripe in the great noon; ready and ripe like glowing bronze, clouds pregnant with lightning and swelling udders of milk” (173). The rest of the third part finds Zarathustra speaking to his soul, to life and to eternity, but no longer to his disciples, his brothers, or his friends. His small victories have not not made up for his great failure to communicate to those who followed him. And indeed, in the chapters following “On

Old and New Tablets,” he returns to the subject that tormented him and prompted his realization that he had failed: the eternal return.

Does the fourth part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* contradict my conclusion that Zarathustra must consider his attempt to communicate his philosophy a failure? His rhetoric has undeniably spread far and wide. Though he lives in his cave on his mountain, isolated from humanity, he receives many visitors in this part from those whom his words have reached. Moreover, the book ends in a blaze of optimistic glory, Zarathustra finally receiving the sign he has been waiting for since “On Old and New Tablets,” when he says “signs must come to me first that it is my hour – namely the laughing lion with a swarm of doves” (158). That is exactly what happens; Zarathustra finds himself surrounded by the creatures he had spoken of many years earlier. It is a particularly surreal passage, described vividly: “the doves with their love were no less eager than the lion; and each time when a dove flitted over the nose of the lion, the lion shook its head and was amazed and laughed” (265). He falls onto his hands and knees and cries ““*My children are near, my children*”” (emphasis his) (265). Nonetheless, I believe his attempt to communicate cannot be considered a success. Though his rhetoric is prominent in the world, it has been distorted and appropriated. Much of the fourth part appears, in some ways, as the moments of misunderstanding between Zarathustra and those who call themselves his followers if they were taken to their logical extreme. The higher men who seek him out on his mountain end up worshipping an ass because the “Hee-yaw” sound it makes when it brays sounds to them like the “yes” of Zarathustra’s affirmation of life (254). And though the fourth part ends with Zarathustra walking out of his cave “glowing and strong,” off to find the true inheritors of his philosophy, his children (if we are to trust the symbols that herald their appearance), this was his goal from the

beginning. Zarathustra's experiment in communication is not over and it may yet succeed, but within the confines of the book, it cannot be considered a success.

Conclusion

I have spent this whole project avoiding mentioning the literal, real-world author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I felt that it was easy to get muddled up in questions of authorial intent, especially considering my focus on the literary, narrative nature of the book. But there is undeniably a parallel between Zarathustra's teaching of his philosophy to his disciples and other residents of his surrealistic world, and Nietzsche's attempt to teach, us, the reader, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. For instance, I spoke of the rhetorical effect of certain parts of the narration, or even the visual effect of certain parts of the text – that is meant to appeal to us, the reader, and not the audience. It is Nietzsche's rhetoric, the way in which he uses the narrative to try to convey his philosophy. I spoke of the will to power as that which drives Zarathustra to communicate – Nietzsche is also governed by his will to power, and if Zarathustra's speeches are an expression of his will to power, then the whole of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is an expression of Nietzsche's will to power. I spoke of Zarathustra's attempt to communicate his philosophy to his disciples, and said that Zarathustra must view it as a failure. Does the same hold true for Nietzsche? Should we view his attempt to communicate to the reader via *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to be a failure? The parallel is not quite as straightforward as it is with the first two comparisons. We have the disadvantage of knowing how Nietzsche's story ends: he went mad and passed away before his philosophy gained popularity. And yet, he could be said to have anticipated the some of the misuse and misinterpretations of his philosophy that would occur in the years after his death. In the fourth section of the book, Zarathustra is confronted with distorted versions of his philosophy that have gained popularity; Nietzsche would have been as well, had he lived long enough to see them. But perhaps we will never truly be able to answer this question. We last see Zarathustra

moving towards a new future and an attempt to find his followers, but we never get to see that future or those followers; perhaps we should similarly view *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as looking towards the future, waiting for the reader that will finally be able to understand Nietzsche's experiment in a new type of communication.

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