Dr. Hanan Alghafari

Comparative Literature 2

Fourth year

Analysis of the Novel

Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Nietzsche

(to be compared with Gibran's The Prophet)

The novel opens with Zarathustra descending from his cave in the mountains after ten years of solitude. He is brimming with wisdom and love, and wants to teach humanity about the overman. He arrives in the town of the Motley Cow, and announces that the overman must be the meaning of the earth. Mankind is just a bridge between animal and overman, and as such, must be overcome. The overman is someone who is free from all the prejudices and moralities of human society, and who creates his own values and purpose.

The people on the whole seem not to understand Zarathustra, and not to be interested in the overman. The only exception is a tightrope walker who has fallen and who dies shortly thereafter. At the end of his first day among people, Zarathustra is saddened by his inability to move this "herd" of people in the marketplace. He resolves not to try to convert the multitudes, but rather to speak to those individuals who are interested in separating themselves from the herd.

The bulk of the first three parts is made up of individual lessons and sermons delivered by Zarathustra. They cover most of the general themes of Nietzsche's mature philosophy, though often in highly symbolic and obscure form. He values struggle and hardship, since the road toward the overman is difficult and requires a great deal of sacrifice. The struggle toward the overman is often symbolically represented as climbing a mountain, and the light-hearted free spirit of the overman is often represented through laughter and dance.

Zarathustra is harshly critical of all kinds of mass movements, and of the "rabble" in general. Christianity is based upon a hatred of the body and of this earth, and an attempt to deny them both by believing in the spirit and in an afterlife.

Nationalism and mass politics are also means by which weary, weak, or sick bodies try to escape from themselves. Those who are strong enough, Zarathustra suggests, struggle. Those who are not strong give up and turn to religion, nationalism, democracy, or some other means of escape.

The culmination of Zarathustra's preaching is the doctrine of the eternal recurrence, which claims that all events will repeat themselves again and again forevermore. Only the overman can embrace this doctrine, since only the overman has the strength of will to take responsibility for every moment in his life and to wish nothing more than for each moment to be repeated. Zarathustra has trouble facing the eternal recurrence, as he cannot bear the thought that the mediocrity of the rabble will be repeated through all eternity without improvement.

In Part IV, Zarathustra assembles in his cave a number of men who approximate, but who do not quite attain the position of the overman. There, they enjoy a feast and a number of songs. The book ends with Zarathustra joyfully embracing the eternal recurrence, and the thought that "all joy wants deep, wants deep eternity."

Zarathustra's Prologue

At the age of thirty, Zarathustra goes into the wilderness and so enjoys his spirit and his solitude there that he stays for ten years. Finally, he decides to return among people, and share with them his over-brimming wisdom. Like the setting sun, he must descend from the mountain and "go under."

On his way, he encounters a saint living alone in the forest. This saint once loved mankind, but grew sick of their imperfections and now loves only God. He tells Zarathustra that mankind doesn't need the gift he brings, but rather help: they need someone to lighten their load and give them alms. Taking his leave of the saint, Zarathustra registers with surprise that the old man has not heard that "God is dead!"

Upon arriving in the town, Zarathustra begins to preach, proclaiming the overman. Man is a rope between beast and overman and must be overcome. The way across is dangerous, but it must not be abandoned for otherworldly hopes. Zarathustra urges the people to remain faithful to this world and this life, and to feel contempt for their all-too-human happiness, reason, virtue, justice, and pity. All this will prepare the way for the overman, who will be the meaning of the earth.

On hearing this, the people laugh at Zarathustra. Zarathustra suggests that while it is still possible to breed the overman, humanity is becoming increasingly tame and domesticated, and will soon be able to breed only the last man. The last men will be all alike, like herd animals, enjoying simple pleasures and mediocrity, afraid of anything too dangerous or extreme. Zarathustra says, "'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink." The people cheer, and ask Zarathustra to turn them into these last men.

Just then, a tightrope walker begins walking between two towers in the town. A jester comes out behind him, following him, and mocking him for being so awkward and moving so slowly. Suddenly, the jester jumps right over the tightrope walker, upsetting him and making him fall to the ground. Zarathustra approaches the dying man, and allays his fear of damnation by explaining that there is no devil and no hell. But then, the tightrope walker suggests that his life has been meaningless and that he has been a mere beast. Not at all, Zarathustra suggests to the dying man: "You have made danger your vocation; there is nothing contemptible in that."

That night, Zarathustra leaves town with the dead tightrope walker to bury him in the countryside. A poor day of fishing, he muses metaphorically: he has caught no men, but only a corpse. On his way out, the jester approaches him and warns him to leave. The jester says that Zarathustra is disliked here by the good and the just, and by the believers in the true faith. Only because Zarathustra isn't taken seriously is he allowed to live. Outside the city, Zarathustra encounters a hermit, who insists on feeding both him and the corpse. After that, Zarathustra goes to sleep. He reawakens with the conviction that he must give up preaching to the masses, and seek out like- minded companions to join him. Rather than be a shepherd, who leads the herd, he must lure people away from the herd. The good

and the just, and the believers in the true faith will hate him even more for this, for he will appear to be a lawbreaker and a breaker of the table of values. However, Zarathustra believes this breaking of laws and values will be a glorious act of creation.

Analysis

This prologue contains the two moments in Nietzsche's writings that loom largest in popular consciousness: the declaration of the death of God and the declaration of the overman. Nietzsche first wrote "God is dead" in section 108 of *The Gay Science,* the book immediately preceding *Zarathustra.* People often mistake this phrase for the metaphysical assertion that God does not exist. In fact, Nietzsche is making the cultural observation that our idea of God is no longer strong enough to serve as the foundation for truth and morality. He is not saying that God does not exist, but that God is no longer universally accepted as giving meaning to our lives. If God was what previously gave meaning to our lives, a world without God is meaningless. Nietzsche believes his age is characterized by nihilism, lacking strong, positive goals.

The portrait of the "last man" is meant to give us the ultimate result of nihilism. Lacking any positive beliefs or needs, people will aim for comfort and to struggle as little as possible. Soon we will all become the same—all mediocre, and all perfectly content. We will "invent happiness" by eliminating every source of worry and strife from our lives.

The overman is meant to be the solution to nihilism, the meaning we should give to our lives. The German word *Ubermensch* is often translated as "superman," but Kaufmann's choice of "overman" is more accurate, as it brings out the way that this word evokes "overcoming" and "going under." The overman faces a world without God, and rather than finding it meaningless, gives it his own meaning. In so doing, he upsets the "good and just" and the "believers in the true faith" who have not yet come to recognize the bankruptcy of the idea of God. Essentially, the difference between regular humans and the overman is that we need to put our faith in something—be it God or science or truth—while the overman puts all his faith in himself and relies on nothing else.

Zarathustra suggests that humans are great only as a bridge between animal and overman. Humans are not the be all and end all of existence, as the "last men"

would see themselves. We are still largely governed by our animal instincts, which lead us to prejudice, superficiality, and to easy reliance upon faith. In order to refine our being, we must turn our instinct for cruelty upon ourselves, and carve away at our prejudices, superficiality, and faith, creating something deeper. Zarathustra speaks of the triumphant moment where we look with contempt upon all the human qualities that we once valued. This would signify our triumph over our shallow, human nature, and our progress toward the overman.

This image of humanity as a bridge is illustrated in the story of the tightrope walker. The tightrope walker is making the slow and dangerous progress between animal and overman. The jester bears some resemblance to Zarathustra: he can move lightly (lightness and dancing are praised a great deal later in the book) and he can easily leap over those who are slower—in other words, he can cross the rope toward the overman. In urging the tightrope walker to hurry up, the jester upsets him and ruins him; similarly, Zarathustra's preaching of the overman may upset and ruin the many people who are unable to deal with this news.

Nietzsche makes many allusions in this book to the New Testament and to the ministry of Jesus. For instance, we are told that Jesus also went into the wilderness at the age of thirty, though rather than enjoying his stay there, Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in the forest being tempted and tormented by the devil. Nietzsche implicitly suggests that Jesus lacked the strength of will to enjoy his solitude, and could endure his loneliness for only just over a month. We also find echoes of the New Testament in Zarathustra's musings that he has been unsuccessful in "fishing" for followers. Jesus told his apostles that they would be fishers for men. Moreover, unlike Jesus, Zarathustra explicitly says that he does not want to be a shepherd and lead a flock of sheep: rather, he wants to teach the individual to break free from the flock.

Part I: Chapters 1-10

Note: Part I contains a series of sermons and stories of Zarathustra in the town called the Motley Cow. The summaries below contain very brief synopses of what

Nietzsche is getting at in each chapter, and the commentaries in the commentary section will connect some of the dominant themes.

On the Three Metamorphoses

There are three stages of progress toward the overman: the camel, the lion, and the child. In the first, one must renounce one's comforts, exercise self- discipline, and accept all sorts of difficulties for the sake of knowledge and strength. Second, one must assert one's independence, saying "no" to all outside influences and commands. Lastly comes the act of new creation.

On the Teachers of Virtue

Zarathustra criticizes the ideal of practicing virtue and restraint in order to find inner peace. This inner peace, which he calls "sleep," is antithetical to the "waking" struggle against oneself for improvement and independence.

On the Afterworldly

We are made of flesh, and not spirit, and our physical needs dictate our values and desires. A sick or dissatisfied person will claim to be essentially spirit, and will create a God and an afterlife as distractions from the pains of this life.

On the Despisers of the Body

What we call "self" is nothing more than the body, and it underlies all reason, spirit, and sense, directing our passions and our thoughts. Those who assert that the self is really spirit are "despisers of the body" who have a sick body that hates life and wants to die.

On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions

We learn and grow most from our moments of suffering and intense feeling. They make us unique, and they should not be shared for fear of losing this uniqueness. Someone who is driven by more than one intense passion will suffer great inner conflict.

On the Pale Criminal

This section paints the portrait of a criminal who then confesses his guilt. He secretly wanted to kill, but convinced himself that he wanted only to rob, and therefore committed a murder-theft. Though he was perfectly capable of murder,

he is repelled afterward by the thought of what he's done. His crime is not so much that he murdered but that he was driven to it by his weakness and was subsequently racked with guilt. At least his crime makes him aware of his weakness, which is more than can be said for most.

On Reading and Writing

A great writer puts so much of himself into his work, and writes at such an elevated level that most people cannot understand him. Though we might be inclined to think of such writers as serious, Zarathustra characterizes them as bearing a spirit of levity and laughter. He bemoans widespread literacy, since it has encouraged writers to simplify (or "dumb down," in our modern- day parlance) their work for the masses.

On the Tree on the Mountainside

Zarathustra speaks to a youth who feels isolated and frustrated in his struggle for independence. As he distances himself from others, he earns their contempt, and often feels self-contempt as well. Zarathustra encourages the youth, urging him never to give up hope.

On the Preachers of Death

Those who preach about an eternal life preach that life is suffering, but that it must be endured in preparation for the afterlife. As such, they are preaching a renunciation of this life, and so are preachers of death.

On War and Warriors

Those who pursue knowledge must do so relentlessly and with great discipline. Zarathustra likens this pursuit to war, and claims that it is in itself noble, having done far more for humanity than Christian virtues.

ANALYSIS

The chapter "On the Three Metamorphoses" gives us some insight into what Zarathustra means by "overman." The three metamorphoses seem to follow quite closely the path of a creative genius. Let us take the example of a painter. In the first stage, he must burden himself, like a camel, with the long and careful study that will lead to a technical mastery of his art and a deep understanding of his

tradition. Next, like a lion, he must assert his independence, ridding himself of the influence of other artists. Finally, he must develop his own distinct style of expression, creating something totally new and personal. In this stage, the painter becomes like a child, because he has acquired a new innocence: any sign of past struggle is absent, and we see only what is new and fresh. When Zarathustra talks about the overman creating new values, we might understand this not so much as the creation of a new moral code as much as the creation of a new way of seeing. While we might have a hard time precisely articulating what new "values" we find in a ##Kafka##, a ##Picasso##, a Wittgenstein, an ##Einstein##, a Stravinsky, or a ##Beckett##, these twentieth-century geniuses certainly saw the world in a new light. It would be presumptuous to say that Nietzsche would consider any of these people overmen, but they are certainly far more deserving of that title than most people.

We might now understand why Nietzsche so regularly talks about the struggle, suffering, and self-overcoming necessary for becoming an overman. We master the technical aspects of an art form only by learning the rules and the ways that people have done things in the past. It takes a great deal of flexibility of mind to then question these rules, to push on them, and to break free from the influence of one's teachers. It is much easier to rest content with what one knows than to be always dissatisfied with it, always looking for something better and newer. Progress toward the overman demands a constant struggle, where a new self overcomes an old one.

In the chapter "On War and Warriors," Zarathustra likens this struggle to a war, and contrasts the "saints of knowledge"—presumably the overmen that have achieved their goal—with the "warriors" that still struggle toward it. This chapter is one of the most misquoted in all of Nietzsche's works. Lines such as "You should love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long" have been cited as evidence that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi warmonger. Those who read such passages out of context must be reminded that Nietzsche is talking about an intellectual, inner struggle, and not a literal war of violence and bloodshed.

More commonly, Nietzsche likens this struggle to climbing a mountain. We see this imagery most especially in the chapter "On Reading and Writing," where

Zarathustra speaks of the overman as standing on a mountain peak and looking down. This looking down from mountain heights is likened to a superior looking down on an inferior person. The overman has risen so high that there is nothing that he doesn't look down upon. Thus, everything—even the saddest of tragedies—is for him the subject of ridicule and laughter. Zarathustra praises levity and laughter because the overman has nothing left to look up to, nothing to take seriously. Instead, he can take everything lightly, and enjoy his freedom. This levity and freedom is frequently expressed in dancing.

With regard to Zarathustra's claims regarding the body, "the body" can be seen as representing the physical world generally. Metaphysics and religion frequently assert the existence and supreme importance of some supra-sensible world of spirit, be it the Christian heaven or Platonic Forms. Zarathustra counters that this earth is the only earth and that it is fundamentally composed of physical things. Our mental lives, including the things we value, feel, and believe in, are all responses to the needs of our bodies. Thus, he suggests that a belief in an afterlife or in God is the invention of a sick body that wants some relief from this life. A healthy body has no need of gods or of other worlds: it is sufficient unto itself. We should be clear, though, that "healthy body" is not meant to refer primarily to someone who eats well and who gets a lot of exercise. Rather, it describes people who are happy seeing themselves as primarily bodies, who are content with this life and this world. This contrasts with the chapter "On the Preachers of Death," which contains a direct criticism of the Buddha's assertion that all life is suffering, interpreting it as the utterance of a sick body.

Part I: Chapters 11-22

On the New Idol

The state has become the new idol that the masses worship. It encourages uniformity and mediocrity, pandering to the masses. Freedom can only be found outside the confines of the state.

On the Flies of the Marketplace

Those who pander to the masses earn fame and popularity, but true change and influence is silently dictated by the overman and the creator. Such creativity demands isolation from the meddlesome crowds.

On Chastity

Chastity is good for some and bad for others. While it is counter-productive to pursue sex all day long, the efforts of over-lusty spirits to repress this sex drive might only corrupt their spirit further.

On the Friend

True friends drive each other ever forward toward the goal of the overman. Because there is a great deal of struggle involved, a friend might often behave as an enemy. Zarathustra suggests that women are not capable of friendship, only love.

On the Thousand and One Goals

Different groups of people value different things, and have different conceptions of good and evil. What a people consider good signifies what they consider difficult and what they have striven to overcome. Previously, groups determined what was good and evil; now individuals should renounce this good and evil and strive instead to become overmen.

On Love of the Neighbor

If you don't love yourself, you show love to your neighbor and persuade him to love you in order to manufacture for yourself a good opinion of yourself. Zarathustra disdains such "love of the neighbor," and commends instead love for the distant goal of the overman. Any other love is just a distraction.

On the Way of the Creator

Not everyone is suited to be an overman: freedom is only good if you can do something with it. Most people can't bear the requisite loneliness.

On Little Old and Young Women

Women want men in order to make babies; men want women in order to play. A woman's greatest virtue is her love for men, particularly strong, noble men.

On the Adder's Bite

This section criticizes the Christian ethic of "turn the other cheek." If you have been wronged, you are better off releasing your anger through a little revenge than in letting it build up inside. Someone who wrongs you has done you good, and you would put him to shame if you were to turn the other cheek.

On Child and Marriage

Marriage is good only as a means to breeding the overman. If you marry to ease your loneliness, it is merely a distraction.

On Free Death

There is an art to dying at the right time: most people cling on to life too long, and some don't live long enough. A free death is chosen by the person dying and serves as an inspiration to those still living. Socrates is a perfect example: when he died he had an heir in Plato, and his courageous death inspired his followers. Zarathustra suggests that Jesus died too young: if he'd lived longer he might have learned to be cheerful and to love life on earth for its own sake.

On the Gift-Giving Virtue

Zarathustra decides to leave the town of the Motley Cow, and gives one last address. Gifts should be given only out of an over-fullness in oneself, like Zarathustra with his wisdom. He leaves them, urging them now to seek out their own paths and not simply to follow his.

Analysis

The rhetoric in the first two chapters covered in this summary is strongly anti-nationalistic: the state is a false idol, and the public forum is a "marketplace" of people and ideas up for sale, which is buzzing with pestilent flies and shallow actors. We can see in this attack on the state the same feeling that informs the attack on the wrong kind of neighbor-love and marriage. The individual who worships the state, or who devotes himself to his neighbor, or who marries out of loneliness, is simply looking for an escape or a distraction.

There is a sharp contrast between these escapist forms of love and the kind of friendship Zarathustra applauds. True friends do not serve as distractions, but

rather will challenge one another and drive one another ever forward. In Zarathustra's conception, "friend" and "enemy" are far from opposites. Both one's friends and one's enemies are one's equals, and serve to drive one forward. Both friend and enemy present challenges that one must overcome, and in overcoming them, one progresses toward the overman. Thus, it is as important to have good enemies as it is to have good friends.

The strong element of competition and rivalry mark Zarathustra's conceptions of both friends and enemies. An enemy who wrongs you has really done you a favor, and in exacting revenge you can return the favor. By revenge, Zarathustra doesn't mean petty revenge. To use a capitalist analogy for what Zarathustra means, an enemy might be seen as a rival business, who does you wrong by taking away some of your business, but in so doing, encourages you to work harder to improve your own business. In improving your business and winning back customers, you exact revenge, and also do your rival a favor in encouraging him to work harder also. In the chapter "On the Friend," he says, "in a friend one should have one's best enemy."

Zarathustra criticizes Christianity for its will not to compete. To Zarathustra, this represents a turning away from life. Rather than exacting revenge in this life, Christians endure suffering, confident that God will implement justice in the afterlife.

The chapter "On the Thousand and One Goals" is so named because Zarathustra speaks of there having been "a thousand peoples," each with their own conception of good and evil, each with their own goal for their race. He lists four examples: the Greeks, the Persians, the Jews, and the Germans. In each case, he says that what they deem to be "good" is "the voice of their will to power." This is the first mention in Nietzsche's published works of the important term "will to power." According to Nietzsche, this will is the fundamental drive that motivates all change in the universe. While we might seem to do things for the sake of survival, or pleasure, or sex, we are always fundamentally motivated by the will to power. For instance, a Christian martyr who submits to torture and death for the sake of God is clearly not acting out of an instinct for survival or pleasure. Rather he is seeking a feeling of power over his oppressors by showing that he can endure more hardship than they can dole out, and that even if his body dies, his

spirit and his cause will live on. The overman is the ultimate expression of the will to power, having gained such total freedom and power as to create new values for himself. The goal of the overman, the expression of a full-bodied will to power in a single individual, is the thousand and first goal that Zarathustra preaches.

Nietzsche's attitude toward women is infamous, and we get a good look at it particularly in the chapter "On Little Old and Young Women." His remarks about women are, as Walter Kaufmann puts it, "second-hand and third-rate," but there is always a winking acknowledgment that he knows that he is wrong to hold these views. This raises the question of why Nietzsche has not striven to overcome this weakness, and how that might reflect on the rest of his philosophy.

In "On the Gift-Giving Virtue" Neitzsche provides information that might help us to understand why he is never satisfyingly clear on what one must do to become an overman. Zarathustra urges his disciples to choose their own path. He wants to inspire the people, but not to lead them. We might extend his image of the overman as someone who has climbed a high mountain to suggest that each overman must find his own mountain peak. Zarathustra can speak about the difficulties of climbing and the rewards at the top, but he cannot guide others in climbing their own mountains. After all, he is familiar only with his own mountain.

Part II: Chapters 1-7

The Child with the Mirror

Back on his mountain, Zarathustra dreams of a child showing him a mirror in which he sees the face of a devil. Realizing that his enemies are perverting his teaching, and full of a new need to share his wisdom, Zarathustra descends from the mountain and returns to the people.

Upon the Blessed Isles

Zarathustra equates the creative will with freedom. A belief in God inhibits creativity because a creative God would leave nothing left for us to create.

On the Pitying

Pity does nobody good. If we show pity and mercy to the unfortunate, they will come to resent us for exposing their powerlessness. This resentment eats away unnoticed at the insides like a fungus. Feeling joy is better than feeling pity: in learning joy we learn not to hurt others.

On Priests

Priests see life as suffering, and so want to make others suffer as well. The uncertainty and hardships of life are too much for them, and so they have given up on life. They are little more than corpses, believing that their God and their pity are an escape.

On the Virtuous

Popular morality promises rewards for being virtuous, or at least preaches that virtue is its own reward. Popular misconceptions of virtue include being vengefully just, or being too weak to cause any harm. Zarathustra suggests instead that virtue is simply a matter of putting oneself wholeheartedly into one's deeds. This is not done out of hope for reward or punishment, but simply out of an exuberance of being.

On the Rabble

The multitudes of common people spoil everything that they touch. Suffering from nausea, Zarathustra wonders whether this rabble might actually be necessary for life. By rising above the rabble, he finds purity, peace, and valuable friendship.

On the Tarantulas

Zarathustra calls those who preach democracy, equality, and justice "tarantulas": secretly, they spread the poison of revenge. By preaching equality, they seek to avenge themselves on all those who are not their equals. Life thrives on conflict and self-overcoming. If we were to make everyone equal, how could we strive for the overman?

Analysis

Nietzsche's contempt for "the rabble" and for egalitarian sentiments goes deeper than mere snobbery or elitism. In ##*The Genealogy of Morals*##, he draws a sharp

distinction between the "master morality" of the ancient aristocracy that we find for instance in ancient Greece, and the "slave morality" that developed among the lower classes and the priestly caste. While his attitude is far more complex than simply approval of master morality and disapproval of slave morality, there is a great deal about slave morality, as expressed in Christianity and democracy, that he finds contemptible.

The weak and powerless establish slave morality as vengeance upon their aristocratic masters. We find the concept of *ressentiment,* or resentment (Nietzsche uses the French word), at the bottom of Nietzsche's account of slave morality. The weak resent the power of their masters, and resent even more their own inability to enact vengeance upon their masters. Because they are unable to strike back in any substantial way in this life, the weak invent the idea of an afterlife and of divine justice, which will avenge them after death. Thus, divine justice is the invention of a people too weak to secure justice for themselves.

The slave class also invented the concept of "evil," which Nietzsche cites as one of humankind's greatest inventions. The aristocratic masters, and everything about them—wealth, health, happiness, strength, vigor—were considered "evil" and contemptible. By contrast, then, the slaves identified the notion of "good" with everything that these masters were not: poor, unhappy, sick, weak, mediocre—in short, they identified themselves as "good." This new slave morality was a complete reversal of the older, master morality.

Nietzsche understandably identifies Christianity and democracy with slave morality. The biblical Sermon on the Mount (Matthew: 5–7) is one of the clearest examples of Christianity as slave morality. In it, Jesus commends a life of meekness and poverty, devoid of earthly riches. As for democracy, it is based on notions of equality and justice that Nietzsche would probably view as being rooted in slave morality. As we saw, Nietzsche considers the idea of justice to be the invention of those who cannot secure justice on their own. Democracy ensures that the weak do not have to suffer the abuses of the strong and that the strong cannot oppress the weak. At least, that's what democracy is supposed to do.

Nietzsche is not entirely opposed to slave morality. In particular, he admires the creativity and the sublimating power of people who are capable of reversing an

entire system of morality. However, he strongly opposes the spirit of *ressentiment* as petty and contrary to life, as it leads to the conclusion that life is something that must be suffered and that justice and happiness are to be found after this life. This spirit of *ressentiment* is fundamental to slave morality, and Christianity and democracy are doubly damned, first for basing their morality on *ressentiment,* and second, to be hypocritical enough to deny this fact. Neitzsche would say that modern Christians and democrats even lack the creativity of the originators of that slave morality. Today, they are just uncreatively perpetuating a tradition. Rather than accept a world marked by pity and forced equality, Nietzsche longs for a world of creative freedom, marked by the natural inequality between people. Here, each person will be his own chief ambition and ultimate end. While Christian virtues are in themselves unpleasant and need some external reward, Nietzsche's ideal virtues of creativity and self-improvement are pursued not because they are "virtuous" but because they are good in and of themselves. In such a worldview, pity is bad both for the pitied and the person who is pitying. Suffering is an essential part of life and growth, and the instinct to pity suffering flows from the instinct of *ressentiment* that sees inequality and thus life itself as bad.

Part II: Chapters 8-18

On the Famous Wise Men

It is impossible to serve both truth and the people. Philosophers who want to please the people will inevitably end up justifying and rationalizing popular prejudice. Granted, their relationship with the people is mutually beneficial, but the people have given up the higher pursuit of the truth. That pursuit, followed by true philosophers, carries no fame and no rewards, but only suffering and sacrifice that strengthen the spirit.

The Night Song

Zarathustra laments that he is so full of wisdom, spirit, and life that he must always give and never receive. He feels loneliness in never having to need anyone or anything.

The Dancing Song

Zarathustra sings a song to dancing girls about life and wisdom. Both are women, always changing, always seductive, and so similar to one another that one loves one because of the other, and makes them both jealous as a result. After his song, evening falls, and Zarathustra becomes sad, feeling unable to justify his being alive.

The Tomb Song

Zarathustra thinks back on his youth and the ideas and ideals he held then. All that remains unchanged from this time is his will, which has helped him to overcome his losses and to strive ever forward.

On Self-Overcoming

Zarathustra claims that everything that lives obeys, and if you can't obey yourself, someone else will command you. Commanding is more difficult and dangerous than obeying, but we are all driven to it by our fundamental will to power. The powerful obey themselves and command others. Those who are commanded submit so that they may command those who are even weaker. Because power can only be gained through obedience, life always seeks to submit, change, and overcome itself. As a result, life is characterized by change: nothing—not truth, not morality, not God—is permanent or absolute.

On Those Who Are Sublime

The solemn, sublime seeker of truth is noble in his pursuit, but he still needs to learn about beauty and laughter, and to practice graciousness and kindness. Zarathustra values lightness and kindness in a powerful person because such a person is also capable of great solemnity and cruelty. There is no virtue in being kind simply because one hasn't the power to be cruel.

On the Land of Education

Modern people accumulate the learning of all past ages and parade this knowledge as their own. They take pride in their skepticism, in being free from faith and superstition, but this is only because they themselves are empty and have created nothing of their own.

On Immaculate Perception

Zarathustra criticizes contemplative people who claim that they merely want to perceive the world without interfering with it. He says that they feel guilty imposing themselves upon the world, and so they repress their will to create. They want to reflect, like the moon, rather than radiate, like the sun. Beauty is not a thing one views from afar. Beauty is where the acts of willing and creating are at their strongest.

On Scholars

Zarathustra criticizes scholars for being uncreative and petty, accumulating knowledge as if it were an amusing pastime.

On Poets

While Zarathustra admires poets for their creativity, he complains that they try to appear deeper than they are. Ultimately, one finds old prejudices and assumptions at the bottom of their pretty writings. Zarathustra also leaves us with a little warning, saying of poets, "*we*…lie too much."

On Great Events

Great events—such as the invention of new values—are hardly noticed. The state and the church make all sorts of self-important noises, but they have no real impact on things. The people take little notice of what Zarathustra has said, as they are more interested in a ghost of Zarathustra that flew by crying out "It is time! It is high time!"

Analysis

The chapter, "On Self-Overcoming," contains one of the more comprehensive accounts of Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power. The concept of the will to power underlies all of Nietzsche's mature thought, and all of his conclusions should theoretically follow from this one principle. The principle, in brief, states that all life strives for power. This one word, "power," comprehends a number of different things, though. On the one hand, there is the externalized, physical power of the barbarian who rapes, conquers, and pillages, and on the other hand, there is the internalized, spiritual power of the ascetic monk, who fasts and meditates. In both of these cases, and in all others, we might get a better handle

on the concept of power by thinking of it as freedom from external constraint. The barbarian doesn't have to do what other people tell him to do because he can kill them, while the ascetic monk has even freed himself from the demands of his body.

The concept of self-overcoming is central to the will to power, because all great power requires power over oneself. As Zarathustra suggests, all things must obey something, and those that cannot obey themselves must obey someone else. For instance, barbarian hordes may seem powerful, but because they lack self-control and discipline, a more tightly controlled and disciplined army can overwhelm them.

Because great power can only be achieved through self-overcoming and self-mastery, the struggle of all life—its will to power—is a will to self-overcoming. We all seek the means to free ourselves as much as possible. This exercise takes place on different levels. For a slave, it might consist in seeking physical freedom, or if this is impossible, at least as much freedom and power as a slave can have. For an ascetic, as we suggested, this might be an effort to find freedom from bodily needs and desires. For a philosopher, this might be an effort to find freedom from the prejudices and assumptions of the past so as to afford a clearer view of the truth. Nietzsche's conception of the overman is based on an ideal of total freedom: nothing constrains or controls the overman but himself, so he is the creator of his entire universe.

All these efforts for increased power and freedom demand change: we must change in order to overcome ourselves. Because the will to power is the fundamental drive of all life, and because power evokes change, change is therefore the fundamental characteristic of all life. In the "Dancing Song," we see both wisdom and life portrayed as constantly changing. The only thing that remains constant, as Zarathustra suggests in the "Tomb Song," is the will that motivates this change. Thus, any attempt to see a moral code, or anything else, as permanent, represents to Nietzsche a weakening of vital forces—giving up the drive for self-overcoming. If we are to thrive, we must thrive on change.

In "On the Land of Education" we begin to witness what will be a series of attacks on the world of Nietzsche's contemporaries, focusing primarily on his contemporaries' nihilism. The scientific skepticism that precipitated the death of

God has created no new values or goals, according to Nietzsche. As a result, modern life is empty, directionless, and devoid of will. Scholars seek only an "immaculate perception" of the truth, looking to dig up knowledge without any particular goal in mind. Poets, too, craft only pretty words that invariably are founded in older moral codes that they have not yet outgrown. In the Christian world, self-overcoming was practiced with the goal of pleasing God and going to heaven. Nietzsche thinks that these goals are now absent, and that there seems to be little to replace them. Nietzsche chillingly foresees that if we put our wills into nationalistic ideals, we will unleash wars of horrific magnitude. The "great events" in this world are not so obvious and imposing as the nation-state. He has Zarathustra propose the overman as the new goal instead. Both scholars and poets could conceivably aim for such a goal, but those at present are mostly aimless.

Part II: Chapters 19-22

The Soothsayer

Zarathustra hears a soothsayer predicting a great future emptiness, where we will feel incapable of creating anything new, nor even capable of dying out. This prediction puts Zarathustra into a deep depression, during which he dreams that he is a watchman in a castle full of coffins. Suddenly, a wind comes and bursts the gates open and a coffin bursts open full of laughter. One of Zarathustra's disciples interprets this dream as meaning that Zarathustra will awaken us from our gloom and emptiness with his life and laughter.

On Redemption

Zarathustra complains that he has never yet found a complete human being, only "inverse cripples" who excel in one attribute, but who are weak in everything

else. He could not bear the present and the past if he could not look forward to a future of whole human beings that redeem this past. The trouble with the past is that we cannot change it. The will suffers, because, no matter how much change and creation it may effect in the future, it cannot change the past. We come to see this suffering of the will as a kind of punishment, and so see all life as suffering and punishment, and seek to cease trying to will anything in order to escape from this punishment. Zarathustra suggests that this pessimism results from seeing the past as an immovable thing that simply occurred without human influence. If we can come to see the past as something that we willed, we can find redemption from our suffering and punishment.

On Human Prudence

Zarathustra claims to have three kinds of human prudence. First, he suggests that it is better to be deceived from time to time than always to be on guard for deceivers. Second, he admires vain people, because their efforts to please are entertaining and because they are unaware of their own modesty. Third, he scoffs at the small things that people call "evil," suggesting that greatness is only possible through great evil.

The Stillest Hour

Zarathustra leaves the people once more to strengthen himself in solitude. He knows, but is still unable to speak about, the culmination of his philosophy (which we shall see in Part three is the eternal recurrence).

Analysis

The chapter "On Redemption" revisits the theme of the will to power. Seeking power over—and freedom from—everything external to it, our will finds itself stumped when it confronts the past. I can act in the present to direct my future, but there is nothing that I can do to change my past. All life thrives on change, and the past is a permanent, immobile reminder of our seeming powerlessness.

Zarathustra gives us two analyses of the will when it is confronted with this impediment. In the first analysis, the will suffers because it is unable to overcome this obstacle. Because the past is an immovable feature of life, we come to see all life as unchangeable suffering. The will cannot touch the past, and it suffers so long as this is the case. The only way to overcome this suffering, according to this

first analysis, is to stop the act of willing entirely. Thus, the will is turned against itself in a spiritual equivalent to suicide. In this analysis, Nietzsche is almost certainly thinking primarily of Buddhism. Buddhist meditation is essentially an attempt to extinguish the self, and all the desires and passions fueled by selfishness. The ideal of nirvana is a total extinction of the self that Nietzsche would see as the undesirable self- destruction of the will. Nietzsche views Buddhism as a retreat from life, but he does not give us enough information about Buddhism to justify his position thoroughly. Nietzsche actually knew a great deal about Buddhism, especially for a nineteenth-century German, so it is surprising that he gives no notice of the forms of Buddhism that preach a suppression of selfish desires in order to engage more fruitfully with this world. Such a view seems to express a healthier version of Nietzsche's will to power. Nietzsche's view of Buddhism is deeply influenced by Schopenhauer's interpretation, and so we are seeing more of a caricature of Schopenhauer's views. This lack of detail is not unique to Nietzsche's treatment of Buddhism either: when talking about both democracy and Christianity, Nietzsche often simplifies matters somewhat.

The second analysis that Zarathustra gives us is that the will should take responsibility for the past, and thus no longer see it as an obstacle. A person subscribing to this outlook would say, I may no longer be able to affect the past, but my past is the past I created, and so it is a permanent testament to the power of my will.

Nietzsche says that his contemporaries cannot presently take responsibility for their past because they are all inverse cripples. Those who seem great merely exceed in one particular attribute, but they are far from being whole human beings. Someone may be vastly creative in one aspect of his or her life, but then fail entirely to be creative in others. For instance, T. S. Eliot revolutionized poetry and was a creative genius, but he was also apparently an unpleasant person, an anti-Semite, a snob, and he clung to Christianity and other traditions that Nietzsche would have considered contemptible. Nietzsche himself is somewhat crippled by his sexist attitudes.

All these infirmities of inverse cripples imply that people lack the full-bodied individuality and creativity of an overman. As a result, we are not in complete

control of our destiny and thus not in complete control of our past. Until we can take full responsibility for ourselves, by gaining complete power over ourselves, we cannot redeem our past by claiming responsibility for it.

The key to the "redemption" that Zarathustra longs for is the idea of the eternal recurrence. This idea will become more and more central in parts three and four, and so we will discuss it more in depth when we get to those parts. For now, we should note the ways in which eternal recurrence has been foreshadowed throughout Part II. For instance, the ghost of Zarathustra in the chapter "On the Great Events" and the dream in "The Soothsayer" chapter both predict a coming revelation. Zarathustra's depression, which is alluded to at the end of the "Dancing Song" and in "The Soothsayer" also suggests that he has not yet found the final key. At the end of Part II, he returns to solitude precisely to discover the eternal recurrence.

Part III: Chapters 1-9

The Wanderer

Zarathustra reflects that in all one's journeys, one ultimately experiences only oneself; all discovery is self-discovery. Now he prepares for his most difficult journey yet.

On the Vision and the Riddle

Courage helps us overcome everything, even death, by helping us look lightly at what would otherwise seem serious. Zarathustra suggests that courage can teach us to say to death, "Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!" Thus, courage can also lead us to confront the eternal recurrence of the same events. If the past stretches back infinitely, then anything that could have happened must have happened already at some time in the past. By that logic, this very instant must have occurred at some time in the past. And similarly, if the future is infinite, everything—including this moment—must recur again sometime in the future. Zarathustra ends by recounting a vision where he saw a shepherd gagging on a

snake in nausea, who then bit off the head of the snake, and spat it out, erupting with laughter.

On Involuntary Bliss

Zarathustra still feels unable to confront the thought of the eternal recurrence. He waits for the pain of this thought to come upon him, but he remains happy.

Before Sunrise

Zarathustra praises the heavens, as being above all reason and above all purpose. Ultimately, the universe is not directed by reason and purpose, but by chance and accident.

On Virtue That Makes Small

Zarathustra returns among people and finds that they have grown smaller while he was away, so that he must now stoop to be among them. Their desire for contentment and above all their desire not to be hurt by anyone have made them small. They call this cowardice "virtue," which they express through a constant aim to please and to gratify. Zarathustra has no respect for people who are unable to assert their own will.

Upon the Mount of Olives

Zarathustra takes malicious pleasure in the winter and in the difficulties it imposes. If people could only see his boundless depth and happiness, they would resent him, but if they see him suffer, they will no longer feel jealous.

On Passing By

At the entrance to a large city, Zarathustra encounters a foaming fool called "Zarathustra's ape," who has learned to copy much of what Zarathustra says. He warns Zarathustra not to enter the city because it is full of small people and small minds. Zarathustra stops his tirade, saying that the ape despises these people for all the wrong reasons. He despises because he resents the people for not flattering him enough, whereas Zarathustra despises out of love for what these people could be. Zarathustra suggests that this fool should leave the city if he hates it so much: "where one can no longer love, there one should *pass by.*"

On Apostates:

Zarathustra finds to his dismay that many of his disciples have turned to God. They found it more comforting to have faith than to struggle forward alone. Zarathustra suggests that when the old gods died, they died from laughter at the God who said, "There is one God. Thou shalt have no other God before me!"

The Return Home

Zarathustra returns to his home in the mountains and delights in his solitude. He remarks on how peculiar humans are, that they talk but say nothing, and that the "good" among them are the most spiteful.

Analysis

We first encounter the eternal recurrence in the chapter "On the Vision and the Riddle," and the rest of Part III deals with Zarathustra's failed attempt to come to terms with the full consequences of this doctrine. On a very basic level, the doctrine of the eternal recurrence is simple. Events do not happen once; they recur an infinite number of times, so that every event in the present has already happened an infinite number of times in the past and will recur an infinite number of times in the future. However, placing this doctrine in the context of Nietzsche's philosophy and explaining its importance might prove a little trickier.

First, we might want to question the scientific validity of this doctrine, and also ask whether scientific validity has anything to do with it. As presented in "On the Vision and the Riddle," the doctrine of the eternal recurrence seems to be based on the claim that if time is infinite, all events must recur at some time. This claim is mathematically unsound. To follow an example by Georg Simmel, we can imagine three wheels lined up together on an axis, with a mark at the top of each wheel to show that they are lined up. If the three wheels start rotating, the first at one revolution per second, the second at two revolutions per second, and the third at one/^{1} revolutions per second, the three marks on the three wheels will never again line up with one another, even given an infinite amount of time.

While Walter Kaufmann provides evidence that Nietzsche sought some kind of scientific validation for this doctrine, Gilles Deleuze suggests that the eternal recurrence goes deeper than a simple mathematical assertion. One of Nietzsche's fundamental claims is that the universe is in a state of flux and that there are no absolutes, no constants. Nothing is permanent. If everything is governed by the

will to power, and the will to power drives everything to change itself and to overcome itself, nothing will remain fixed. According to Deleuze, the eternal recurrence is the full expression of what he calls "the being of becoming." Everything, in Deleuze's reading, is in a state of becoming, and it always has been. If there were a final state of being that things were moving toward, they would have reached it long ago, and if there were an initial state of being that things were moving from, they would never have left it. The only constant in the universe is becoming, or change. In Deleuze's reading, then, the eternal recurrence does not imply the recurrence of fixed states of being, like the lining up of marks on wheels. It is precisely the being of such states that Deleuze wants to deny. In a universe of constant becoming, the notion of being is replaced by the notion of returning, or recurrence: "Returning is the being of that which becomes," Deleuze writes. Thus, in Nietzsche's conception of the universe, there are no fixed things, like a one true God or one fixed morality or the like. All things change, but these changes recur eternally.

The eternal recurrence is mostly significant to Nietzsche in how we might confront the fact of recurrence. We would have to abandon the notions that there is some reason or purpose driving the universe, and accept the fact that chance governs these changes as much as anything else. We would also have to accept that everything we have done and everything that we will do will be repeated an infinite number of times. While it might seem delightful that our happiest moments might be repeated infinitely, we must also confront the fact that our worst moments and our mediocrity must always be repeated and never improved upon. Zarathustra cannot confront the thought of eternal recurrence, largely because he would have to recognize that the mediocrity of humanity that he so despises will never be fully overcome, but rather will be repeated over and over again.

Part III: Chapters 10-16

On the Three Evils

Zarathustra praises the three great "evils" that Christian morality condemns: sex, the lust to rule, and selfishness. Sex is only an evil for those that hate their bodies, but it can be a joyous affirmation of the present moment for others. The lust to rule is just another way of saying "will to power": it is the force that drives all change and improvement in this world and it only seems evil to those who remain subservient. Selfishness is little more than taking pride in and enjoying oneself. Only the cowardly, who have reason to be ashamed of themselves, might find selfishness unattractive.

On the Spirit of Gravity

We take life too seriously, attached to notions of universal good and evil, as if we can only be forgiven for living if we steadfastly follow the good. This is the "spirit of gravity," which sees life as a burden to be borne. Zarathustra urges us to learn to love ourselves (not an easy task, he admits) and to see life not as a test or a burden, but as a joy in which we create our own good and our own evil. Rather than look for the *only* way to live, we should be able to say, "This is *my* way; where is yours?"

On Old and New Tablets

This chapter is broken into thirty parts, and touches briefly on many of the themes of Nietzsche's philosophy. The "tablets" under discussion are different moral codes, clearly an allusion to the tablets that bore the Ten Commandments. Throughout the chapter, Zarathustra urges us to break the old tablets of our old moralities. Only the world-weary and those who hate life would suggest that they know what is good and what is evil and that these standards are eternal and fixed. The world is in a permanent state of becoming, and not in a state of being. Change is the only constant in the universe, and those who preach that there is a fixed moral code are trying to deny the dynamism of life. Zarathustra alludes to the Pharisees, who had Jesus crucified for trying to create a new system of morals. Zarathustra urges us to be creators, like Jesus, though he also feels that dancing and laughing are important ingredients in the well being of any creator.

The Convalescent

In trying to fully face the thought of the eternal recurrence, Zarathustra is overcome with nausea and falls unconscious. After regaining consciousness, he

spends the next seven days convalescing. Then he speaks about how humans are the cruelest animals: we love to watch others in pain, and we call this fascination "pity." Zarathustra's nausea comes over him with the thought that if everything recurs eternally, that means that humans, in their mediocrity and smallness, must also recur without change. Zarathustra's animals respond that his destiny is to be the teacher of the eternal recurrence.

On the Great Longing

Zarathustra addresses his soul, speaking of how he has given everything to it to enrich it. But who should be grateful: himself as the giver, or his soul as the receiver?

The Other Dancing Song

Zarathustra dances with life, portrayed as a woman. He whispers in her ear that he knows of the eternal recurrence. The chapter ends with a bell tolling and the claim that "all joy wants eternity."

The Seven Seals (or, The Yes and Amen Song)

Zarathustra finally comes to a full acceptance of the eternal recurrence, singing the joyous refrain: "For I love you, O eternity!"

Analysis

Throughout most of Part III, Zarathustra wrestles with the consequences of the eternal recurrence, finally accepting it in the final two chapters. In "The Convalescent," we find that Zarathustra has a hard time accepting the recurrence because he cannot accept the eternal recurrence of mediocre humans, but the previous chapters seem largely concerned with the fact that humans are mediocre because they cannot comprehend the eternal recurrence.

Everything that Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) criticizes about humanity can be reduced to the human inability to see the world as being in a state of change. Change is motivated by the will to power, and the will to power is the essential feature of life, so a denial of change amounts to no less than a denial of life. A desire to see things as fixed motivates us to think that there is one true morality, or one true God, or one absolute truth. Zarathustra criticizes this desire as "the spirit of gravity," insisting that we should not feel weighed down by absolutes.

The "spirit of gravity" serves the double purpose of, first, denoting the weight that we place on absolutes, and, second, denoting the seriousness of such absolutism that is so contrary to laughter and dance. If there is a "right" way of looking at the world, we will never be inspired to create our own point of view.

Given his constant criticisms of Christianity, it might seem peculiar that Zarathustra should praise Jesus as the creator of a new way of seeing, but Nietzsche's attitude toward Jesus is more ambivalent than his polemics against Christianity might suggest. While Nietzsche reviles the Gospels and despises Christendom, he has a great deal of respect for Jesus himself, as a man. While the Christian morality that Jesus preaches is often (though not always) contrary to Nietzsche's own views, Nietzsche still admires Jesus for having the courage and the will to create his own moral viewpoint. Nietzsche's attitude toward Jesus is similar to his attitude toward the Jews. On the one hand, he sees the Jews as the originators of the slave morality of *ressentiment,* which he despises. On the other hand, he deeply admires the strength of will and originality with which the Jews turned all their disadvantages into advantages.

The "three evils" of chapter ten can also be understood as being inspired by the spirit of gravity. Sex is one of the most fundamental expressions of joy in one's body and in one's earthly life. As such, it attaches us to the world of the moment and the world of change, and is contrary to the spirit of gravity. The lust to rule is little more than the will to power, and so naturally opposes the spirit of gravity. Zarathustra associates selfishness with an interest in oneself and a desire to improve oneself. Such selfishness would require self- overcoming and change, and so would also be contrary to the inertial forces of the spirit of gravity.

Zarathustra praises "evil" at a number of points in the book, which might seem odd since "evil" is such a negative word. His point is that things that are considered "evil" are only considered "evil" from a certain moral viewpoint. If we are to change, we must overcome our old moralities, and cast them aside, acting contrary to what they dictate. Thus, all change and all overcoming is necessarily "evil" according to those who are stuck in their old ways. This praise of change and the disparagement of the spirit of gravity ultimately point to the eternal recurrence. In embracing the eternal recurrence, we are rejecting the spirit of gravity, and accepting that all things change. The nature of this change is

recurrence. Zarathustra often associates laughter, joy, and dancing with such a point of view, because, in a world without absolutes, there is nothing that needs to be taken seriously. The eternal recurrence, as Zarathustra embraces it in the final two chapters, is the acceptance that every moment in one's life is not a single moment, but one that will be repeated throughout eternity. In a sense, it is the ultimate love of living in the present.

On one hand, nothing is fixed and permanent: there are no "things," no "truths," no absolutes, no God. On the other hand, everything is permanent in the sense that no moment passes for a fixed good. Every moment will be repeated eternally, but none of these moments have some ultimate meaning or purpose attached to them. Life is what we make it, and nothing more. If we can take responsibility for each moment, seeing it not as something that is happening to us, but something that we have made happen, we can enjoy each moment as a feeling of power that stretches out for all eternity.

Part IV: Chapters 1-9

The Honey Sacrifice

Rather than descend once more among men, Zarathustra ascends to the highest mountain and waits there for people to come to him.

The Cry of Distress

Sitting outside his cave, Zarathustra is joined by the soothsayer from Part II. He tells Zarathustra that he must confront his final sin: pity. Zarathustra hears a cry of distress that he assumes comes from "the higher man," and so goes in search of him.

Conversation with the Kings

On his search, Zarathustra encounters two kings on the road who are driving an ass. They have abandoned their kingdoms, as they have been made nauseous by the "good society" of mediocre people who are eager only to please and to enjoy small pleasures. The kings are delighted when Zarathustra tells them he is

searching for the higher man. Zarathustra directs them to his cave and invites them to wait for him there.

The Leech

Next, Zarathustra literally stumbles upon a man lying down in a swamp, trying to attract leeches to his arm. He represents "the conscientious in spirit," one who wishes to free himself from (or "suck away") all the prejudices and assumptions that underlie his thinking. As with the kings, Zarathustra invites him to wait in his cave, and then continues his journey.

The Magician

Zarathustra encounters a magician writhing on the ground, tortured by a thought. After a while, Zarathustra becomes angry and accuses him of counterfeiting. The magician confesses, saying he was pretending to be an "ascetic of the spirit" in an effort to test Zarathustra. Zarathustra points out that he wasn't totally pretending—that he is, in some senses, an ascetic. The magician wants to convince others that he is a great man, but he knows himself that he is not great. Zarathustra admires the magician for wanting to be great and for admitting that he is not. As with the others, he directs the magician to his cave and then continues on his way.

Retired

Zarathustra encounters the last pope, who is mourning the fact that God is dead, and who seeks out Zarathustra as the most pious of all those who do not believe in God. He tells how God died from pitying humankind too much. Zarathustra criticizes God for having made us so poorly and then punishing us for being unable to do his bidding. The pope is impressed with Zarathustra, and Zarathustra directs him to his cave.

The Ugliest Man

Zarathustra enters a valley where no animals live and encounters the "ugliest man"—the man who killed God. Though he is momentarily stunned by pity, Zarathustra overcomes his pity and returns to his senses. The great pity people feel for the ugliest man's suffering offends his sense of shame. He killed God because God could see everything and know everything about him, and most of

all because God felt pity. As with the others, Zarathustra directs the ugliest man to his cave.

The Voluntary Beggar

Zarathustra encounters a voluntary beggar, who was once rich, but who became sick of rich people and so chose to be poor. He found the poor just as nauseating as the rich, however, and so he has come to sit among cows, hoping to learn from them how to chew the cud. Zarathustra invites him to go to his cave.

The Shadow

Zarathustra finds himself pursued by his own shadow. His shadow has followed Zarathustra everywhere and has been bold in its pursuit of truth and knowledge. Now the shadow finds itself lost and without a goal. Zarathustra directs the shadow to his cave and then continues on his way without his shadow.

Analysis

Each of the men Zarathustra encounters has something of the spirit of the overman for which Zarathustra longs, but each one also falls short in some important respect. Kaufmann is astute in noting that each of the characters also represents a kind of caricature of Nietzsche himself.

The soothsayer, in Part II, predicted a heightened state of nihilism, a state that, Nietzsche might claim, we have attained today, one hundred years after Nietzsche's death. The soothsayer encourages Zarathustra's search for the higher man, suggesting that soon people will come up to Zarathustra's level. On the other hand, in his melancholy, he suggests that happiness is no longer possible. The soothsayer may represent the negative moods that Nietzsche himself often fell into: he has all the right ideals, but finds it easier to predict the worst than to aim for the best.

The two kings are of noble heritage, and they are also fed up with the superficiality of human society. They have given up their comforts and riches in order to embark on the difficult journey of seeking the higher man. Nietzsche, like a king, might have enjoyed a university pension and nursed his illness, but, instead, he abandoned all comforts in favor of his constant writing and thinking. When the kings encounter Zarathustra, they become overly worshipful,

suggesting that they might be willing to stop short at finding the higher man, and not actually become overmen themselves.

In "The Leech," the man who is conscientious in spirit and who is attracting leeches, represents Nietzsche's ideal of a good philosopher. Rather than try to build upon and try to justify assumptions and prejudices that he never questions, this man wants all dogmatism to be sucked away from him. However, he has only managed to attract leeches to himself: he has freed his spirit from earlier prejudices, but he has not been able to go farther to create something new of his own.

The magician's counterfeiting as an "ascetic of the spirit"—one who torments himself with his own thoughts—is meant to represent philosophy. Nietzsche claims that philosophy was able to claim its own ground only by wearing the "mask" of the ascetic priest, by pretending, like a priest, to be a serious keeper of deep mysteries. In truth, philosophers are pranksters and light in spirit, according to Nietzsche. Like a philosopher, the magician is aware that he has not yet become an overman, and so maintains the mask of an ascetic. While he is not yet perfect, Zarathustra admires his desire to become great and his humility in admitting that he is not yet great.

The suggestion that God died out of pity is the culmination of Nietzsche's critique of pity. The God of the Old Testament is a vengeful lawgiver, but in the New Testament he is portrayed as a God who loves and pities humans. The amount of pity necessary to empathize with the suffering of all humanity is so great that not even a God could bear it. While the last pope is keen and conscientious of spirit, he also longs for a God, for absolutes.

The ugliest man has the nobility and sense of shame to resent all the pity people feel for his ugliness. In particular, he comes to see God as a voyeur who, in pitying, exposes everything that is pitiable about him. While there is a great deal that is unattractive and unpleasant about this ugliest man, Zarathustra admires his revilement of pity. Nietzsche was constantly ill and suffering, and he too probably received all kinds of unwanted pity that he grew to resent.

The voluntary beggar, like the kings, has been made nauseous by the pretenses and prejudices of common society. His desire to learn to "chew the cud" represents his interest in learning how to think carefully over matters, and to re-

think them continually. Nietzsche often criticized his age for reading and thinking too quickly, and for not taking in anything important. However, like a cow, this beggar can only ruminate, and does not have a creative spirit.

Zarathustra's shadow displays the virtue of having searched long and unrelentingly for truth and knowledge, but now it has become discouraged that its search is in vain. While the shadow is a noble seeker, it does not have the stamina to continue the search. Also, it is never going under its own steam, but is always only following Zarathustra's lead. In order to become an overman, one must blaze one's own trail.

Part IV: Chapters 10-20

At Noon

Zarathustra lies down under a tree at noon and takes a nap, enraptured at how perfect the world seems.

The Welcome

Zarathustra returns to his cave, where he hears once more the cry of distress that he thought came from the higher man. Entering his cave, he realizes it has come collectively from all those whom he encountered during the day. Zarathustra speaks to this assembly, telling them that they are not overmen and that he has not been searching for them. They are still too weak, seeking consideration from others and bearing still some of the prejudices of the past. They are mere bridges to the overman, signs that something greater is on its way.

The Last Supper

At the soothsayer's urging, the company prepares a feast together.

On the Higher Man

At supper, Zarathustra speaks to his companions about the higher man. Zarathustra learned early on (in the Prologue) that there is no use in talking to the

mob about the overman, since they all claim that everyone is equal before God. God is dead now, and man must be overcome in order to create the overman. Self-overcoming requires courage, evil, suffering, self- motivation, and solitude. Zarathustra suggests to the higher men around him that they should not be sad that they are not overmen. What is most important is that they should mistrust everything unconditionally and should learn to laugh and to dance.

The Song of Melancholy

Zarathustra steps outside, and the magician sings to the others. The poem centers on the melancholy surmise that he is not a seeker after the truth, but only a fool or only a poet.

On Science

The man who is conscientious of spirit asserts that science originated in fear: humans feared other animals and their own animal instincts, and refined this fear into science. Zarathustra, returning to the cave, hears this last bit, and suggests that science was born from refining our courage, not our fear.

Among Daughters of the Wilderness

Zarathustra's shadow sings about a time when he was in the Orient—far from Europe—and surrounded with all sorts of delights.

The Awakening

Zarathustra steps outside again and is pleased that his companions and he have chased away the spirit of gravity. But then he sees them all inside, praying to the king's ass (donkey).

The Ass Festival

Zarathustra leaps in and chastises his guests for praying to the ass. However, he takes this as a good sign, since it shows that they are convalescing.

The Drunken Song

They all step outside into the cool night and the ugliest man says that for the first time he is satisfied with his entire life. The others agree and all turn to Zarathustra

in gratitude. Zarathustra sings a song that in many ways is the culmination of the entire book. The world is very deep, full of deep sorrows and deep joys. But while sorrow and suffering want people to aim for something else, joy wants only itself for all eternity. Because all things in the universe are intimately connected, we cannot wish for an eternity of joy without wishing for the suffering that accompanies this joy. "Joy wants the eternity of *all* things, *wants deep, wants deep eternity.*"

The Sign

Zarathustra rises the next morning and finds a lion outside his cave, which he takes to be a sign that the overman is coming. Zarathustra rises triumphantly, realizing he has overcome his final sin: pity for the higher man.

Analysis

Part IV is lined with the pervasive irony and humor that we should expect from a book that is constantly praising laughter. In the first nine chapters, we see all sorts of caricatures that are meant in part to poke fun at Nietzsche himself. The last eleven chapters contain even more light-heartedness, which reaches its epitome in the delightfully frivolous song by Zarathustra's shadow. None of Zarathustra's companions can be overmen because they all carry too much of the old world with them. For instance, the pope is weighed down by his love for God, and the ugliest man is weighed down by his resentment of pity. Zarathustra (and Nietzsche elsewhere) claims several times that the overman is something that must be bred, which explains his interest in marriage and breeding. These men are potential breeders: they have the right goal in mind, and the right intentions. Unlike them, perhaps their children may be born free of the prejudices that they themselves have worked so hard to shake off.

Zarathustra reassures his companions, urging them to dance and laugh. Above all, they should avoid the unconditional: anything that claims to be absolute, such as God, truth, or morality. This is equivalent to the claim made in the commentary on the second half of Part III, that all Nietzsche's criticisms are aimed fundamentally at the "spirit of gravity," which fails to see that nothing is permanent. The chapter "On the Higher Man" contains something of a summary of Nietzsche's thought (like "On Old and New Tablets" in Part III), and ends with a long exhortation to dance and laughter.

Immediately following this exhortation, however, we have the magician's "Song of Melancholy," in which he wonders whether this dance and laughter is merely an escape from the truth that makes them only fools or only poets. This is a moment of self-criticism and self-doubt by Nietzsche, and this song, as with all the other poems in Part four, was published elsewhere in a slightly altered version under Nietzsche's own name. Perhaps, he wonders, in all my efforts to free myself from dogmatism and absolutism, I've freed myself from everything substantial. Like a fool or a poet, perhaps I deal only with frivolous and pleasing subjects, and that's why I laugh. These doubts are immediately dismissed, and are followed by a discussion of science that is a bit out of place in this part of the book.

The final moment of self-doubt comes when the company begins praying to an ass, in an allusion to Exodus: 32 in the Bible, where the people of Israel build a golden calf just before Moses descends from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Similarly, the Last Supper, which is alluded to in the title of chapter twelve, is the moment of the Holy Eucharist, which is central to Christian worship. These moments of solemn law giving, however, become moments of laughter for Zarathustra. By alluding to these biblical passages, Nietzsche is signaling that he is about to lay down his own "commandments" in the penultimate chapter, but that these are not law-like commandments that must be obeyed by all. Rather, he lays out an exhortation to laugh and to seek joy, to mock anything serious, including ourselves, and, of course, including the scriptures that are being alluded to.

The Drunken Song contains a joyous affirmation of the eternal recurrence:

"Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, "You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!" then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants—eternity.*"

The universe is not made up of static, separate moments that can be identified and isolated. Rather, it is in constant flux, and everything in every moment is a part of this fundamental process of becoming. Thus, no moment of joy can be singled out from this flux and held on to as if it were separate from the rest. If one

can accept the eternal recurrence and what Deleuze calls "the being of becoming," one can accept that one's joys are not distinct from one's miseries. You can either take all or nothing, and if you take all, you must be willing to have it for all eternity.

The appearance of the lion in the final chapter is an allusion to the first chapter, "On the Three Metamorphoses," where the lion is represented as the second stage on the way to becoming an overman. The lion will be followed by the child, the innocent creator. On seeing the lion, Zarathustra says, "my children are near, my children."

Main Concepts in the Novel:

Overman - The goal of humanity. The overman is someone who has overcome himself fully: he obeys no laws except the ones he gives himself. This means a level of self-mastery that frees him from the prejudices and assumptions of the people around him, a creative will, and a strong will to power. Zarathustra suggests that no overman has yet existed, but that we must try to breed one. As a race, we are only justified by the exceptional people among us.

Nihilism - Essentially, nihilism means the belief in nothing. Nietzsche characterized late nineteenth century Europe as nihilistic, and would probably consider the late twentieth century even more so. He generalizes that we no longer believe that God gives meaning and purpose to our lives, but we have found nothing to replace God. As such, we see our lives as essentially meaningless, and lack the will to create or to become anything new. Nietzsche worried that without a purpose we would slide deeper and deeper into a dream world of mediocrity and comfort. He also rightly foresaw that nihilism might lead to a rabid nationalism that would cause horrific wars.

Eternal Recurrence - The doctrine that all events will be repeated over and over again for all eternity. Zarathustra outlines his vision of the eternal recurrence in Part III: If the past stretches back infinitely, then anything that could have happened must have happened already at some time in the past. By that logic, this very instant must have occurred at some time in the past. And similarly, if the future is infinite, everything—including this moment—must recur again sometime in the future. Walter Kaufmann reads

this as a scientific hypothesis that is mistaken. Gilles Deleuze reads this as a fundamental expression of the fact that the universe is in a constant state of change and becoming, and that there is no moment of fixity, or being. Nietzsche would probably agree with Deleuze. The overman can look at his past and himself as something entirely willed by himself, and be delighted by the thought that this process (which includes changes) will recur forever.

Dance - Nietzsche often uses dancing as a metaphor for a lightness of spirit. Those who are too serious, and too bogged down by absolutes, such as God, truth, or morality, will be unable to dance. An overman, or a free spirit, who has freed himself from these absolutes will not be weighed down by any seriousness, and will be able to dance. Dancing also metaphorically suggests a kind of mental flexibility and agility that allows a creative spirit to think freely and for himself.

Will to Power - Nietzsche calls the fundamental force that drives all life a "will to power," though he might just as well call it an instinct for freedom. It is the drive to be as free from constraints as possible and to command the wills of others as much as possible. A refined will to power also learns to command and obey itself. The constant struggle for power and overcoming between wills means that nothing in the universe can remain fixed in place for long. Thus, all the universe is in flux.

Overcoming - The words "overcoming" and "overman" are only two of a number of "over-" words that appear throughout *Zarathustra.* The concept of overcoming is probably the most central, however. Any improvement in a person is made at the expense of what that person used to be. Thus, in order to improve myself, I must learn to overcome myself. In ##*Beyond Good and Evil*##, Nietzsche speaks of humans as being part creature and part creator, and that our refinement consists in the fact that the creator in us can torture and re-shape the creature in us. The overman is someone who has fully overcome himself so that he can claim to be all creator and in no way a creature: he is fully responsible for everything he is.

Nausea - In *Zarathustra,* the feeling of nausea, or disgust, is usually associated with contemplating the common people. In particular, Zarathustra has a hard time in part three

facing the full consequences of the eternal recurrence, because he is overcome with nausea at the thought that the mediocrity of humanity must recur eternally without change.

Evil - This word is often given a meaning contrary to what we normally take it to mean. Something is "evil" only within the context of a given morality. In particular, anything that challenges or tries to destroy a morality is considered "evil" by that morality. Thus, for Zarathustra, "evil" is quite often good. It means doing away with older moralities in favor of something new. He often associates evil with freedom of spirit, and claims that it is essential to creating the higher man.

Laughter - Like dancing, laughter is a common characteristic of the overman. Nietzsche considers laughter to be the activity of someone looking down on someone or something else. As such, it denotes superiority. The overman has risen above everything and everybody, so there is nothing, including himself, that he does not laugh at.

Pity - One of Nietzsche's, and Zarathustra's, pet peeves. A person who shows pity is displaying a perverse and inappropriate amount of interest in the suffering of others. Furthermore, pity harms the person who is suffering, as it makes the sufferer feel pitiful and shamed.