

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

*Thus Spoke
Zarathustra
A Book for All
and None*

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Listen! Listen! How it moans with evil memories – or evil forebodings?

Yes, I am sad along with you, you dark monster, and for your sake annoyed even with myself.

Oh that my hand does not possess sufficient strength! Gladly indeed would I redeem you from evil dreams! –

And as Zarathustra spoke thus he laughed at himself with melancholy and bitterness. “What, Zarathustra!” he said. “Do you want to sing comfort even to the sea?”

Oh you loving fool Zarathustra, you who are over-blessed with trust! But you have always been so; always you came trustingly to all that is terrible.

You wanted to caress every monster. A hint of warm breath, a bit of soft shag on the paw – and already you were prepared to love it and lure it.

Love is the danger of the loneliest one, love of everything *if only it lives!* Laughable indeed are my folly and my modesty in love!” –

Thus spoke Zarathustra and he laughed once again. But then he remembered the friends he left behind – and as if he had violated them with his thoughts, he became angry for his thoughts. And suddenly the laughing one began to weep – for wrath and longing Zarathustra wept bitterly.

On the Vision and the Riddle

I

When it was rumored among the sailors that Zarathustra was on the ship – for a man who came from the blessed isles went on board at the same time as him – then a great curiosity and anticipation arose. But Zarathustra kept silent for two days and was cold and deaf with sadness, such that he answered neither to glances nor questions. On the evening of the second day, however, he opened his ears again, even though he continued to be silent; for there was much that was peculiar and dangerous to be heard on this ship, which had come from far away and wanted to go still farther. But Zarathustra was a friend of all who make distant journeys and do not like to live without danger, and so, finally, his own tongue was freed while listening, and the ice of his heart broke: then he began to speak thus:

To you, bold searchers, researchers,¹ and whoever put to terrible seas
with cunning sails –

to you, the riddle-drunk, the twilight-happy whose souls are lured by
flutes to every maelstrom:

– because you do not want to probe along a thread with cowardly hands;
and because where you can *guess*, there you hate to *deduce* –

to you alone I tell the riddle that I *saw* – the vision of the loneliest one. –

Darkly I walked recently through cadaver-colored twilight – darkly and
hard, biting my lip. Not only one sun had set for me.

A path that climbed defiantly through boulders, a malicious, lonely
path consoled neither by weed nor shrub – a mountain path crunched
under the defiance of my foot.

Striding mutely over the mocking clatter of pebbles, crushing the rock
that caused it to slip; thus my foot forced its way upward.

Upward – in defiance of the spirit that pulled it downward, the spirit
of gravity, my devil and arch-enemy.

Upward – even though he sat atop me, half dwarf, half mole, lame,
paralyzing, dripping lead into my ear, lead-drop thoughts into my
brain.

“Oh Zarathustra,” he murmured scornfully, syllable by syllable. “You
stone of wisdom! You hurled yourself high, but every hurled stone must –
fall!

Oh Zarathustra, you stone of wisdom, you sling stone, you star crusher!
You hurled yourself so high – but every hurled stone – must fall!

Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning; oh Zarathustra, far
indeed you hurled the stone – but it will fall back down upon *you!*”

Then the dwarf became silent, and that lasted a long time. But his
silence oppressed me, and being at two in such a way truly makes one
lonelier than being at one!

I climbed, I climbed, I dreamed, I thought – but everything
oppressed me. I resembled a sick person whose severe agonies make him

¹ *Euch, den kühnen Suchern, Versuchern* . . . When the prefix *ver-* is added to *suchen*, to seek or to search, the verb is modified to mean try, attempt, but also tempt, so that the noun *Versucher* means both one who attempts and one who tempts. The noun *der Versuch*, meanwhile, means both attempt and experiment. Nietzsche frequently alludes to his favorite deity, Dionysus, as the *Versucher-Gott*, i.e. as the tempter god, attempter god (experimenter). I render this wordplay as “searcher” and “researcher” to preserve the wordplay, but wherever this particular combination occurs in *TSZ* or elsewhere, one should suspect Nietzsche is exploring the relationship between searching, attempting (experimenting, researching) and tempting.

weary, and who is then jarred out of falling asleep by an even worse dream. –

But there is something in me that I call courage: this so far has slain my every discouragement. This courage at last commanded me to stand still and to say: “Dwarf – you or I!” –

Courage after all is the best slayer – courage that *attacks*; for in every attack there is sounding brass.

But the human being is the most courageous animal, and so it overcame every animal. With sounding brass it even overcame every pain, but human pain is the deepest pain.

Courage also slays dizziness at the abyss; and where do human beings not stand at the abyss? Is seeing itself not – seeing the abyss?

Courage is the best slayer; courage slays even pity. But pity is the deepest abyss, and as deeply as human beings look into life, so deeply too they look into suffering.

But courage is the best slayer, courage that attacks; it slays even death, for it says: “Was *that* life? Well then! One More Time!”

In such a saying, however, there is much sounding brass. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

2

“Stop, dwarf!” I said. “I – or you! But I am the stronger of us two – you do not know my abysmal thought! *That* – you could not bear!” –

Then something happened that made me lighter, for the dwarf jumped down from my shoulder, the inquisitive one, and he crouched upon a stone there before me. But right there where we stopped was a gateway.

“See this gateway, dwarf!” I continued. “It has two faces. Two paths come together here; no one has yet walked them to the end.

This long lane back: it lasts an eternity. And that long lane outward – that is another eternity.

They contradict each other, these paths; they blatantly offend each other – and here at this gateway is where they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed at the top: ‘Moment.’

But whoever were to walk one of them further – and ever further and ever on: do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?” –

“All that is straight lies,” murmured the dwarf contemptuously. “All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle.”

“You spirit of gravity!” I said, angrily. “Do not make it too easy on yourself! Or I shall leave you crouching here where you crouch, lamefoot – and I bore you *this high!*”

See this moment!” I continued. “From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane stretches *backward*: behind us lies an eternity.

Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?

And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already – have been here?

And are not all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come? Therefore – itself as well?

For, whatever *can* run, even in this long lane *outward* – *must* run it once more! –

And this slow spider that creeps in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things – must not all of us have been here before?

– And return and run in that other lane, outward, before us, in this long, eerie lane – must we not return eternally? –”

Thus I spoke, softer and softer, for I was afraid of my own thought and secret thoughts. Then, suddenly, I heard a dog *howl* nearby.

Had I ever heard a dog howl like this? My thoughts raced back. Yes! When I was a child, in my most distant childhood:

– then I heard a dog howl like this. And I saw it too, bristling, its head up, trembling in the stillest midnight when even dogs believe in ghosts:

– so that I felt pity. For the full moon had passed over the house, silent as death, and it had just stopped, a round smolder – stopped on the flat roof just as if on a stranger’s property –

that is the why the dog was so horror-stricken, because dogs believe in thieves and ghosts. And when I heard it howl like this again, I felt pity once more.

Where now was the dwarf? And the gateway? And the spider? And all the whispering? Was I dreaming? Was I waking? I stood all of a sudden among wild cliffs, alone, desolate, in the most desolate moonlight.

But there lay a human being! And there! The dog jumping, bristling, whining – now it saw me coming – then it howled again, it *screamed*: had I ever heard a dog scream like this for help?

And truly, I saw something the like of which I had never seen before. A young shepherd I saw; writhing, choking, twitching, his face distorted, with a thick black snake hanging from his mouth.

Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread in one face? Surely he must have fallen asleep? Then the snake crawled into his throat – where it bit down firmly.

My hand tore at the snake and tore – in vain! It could not tear the snake from his throat. Then it cried out of me: “Bite down! Bite down!

Bite off the head! Bite down!” – Thus it cried out of me, my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all my good and bad cried out of me with one shout. –

You bold ones around me! You searchers, researchers and whoever among you ever shipped out with cunning sails onto unexplored seas! You riddle-happy ones!

Now guess me this riddle that I saw back then, now interpret me this vision of the loneliest one!

For it was a vision and a foreseeing: *what* did I see then as a parable? And *who* is it that must some day come?

Who is the shepherd into whose throat the snake crawled this way? *Who* is the human being into whose throat everything that is heaviest, blackest will crawl?

– Meanwhile the shepherd bit down as my shout advised him; he bit with a good bite! Far away he spat the head of the snake – and he leaped to his feet. –

No longer shepherd, no longer human – a transformed, illuminated, *laughing* being!

Never yet on earth had I heard a human being laugh as *he* laughed!

Oh my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter – and now a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that will never be still.

My longing for this laughter gnaws at me; oh how can I bear to go on living! And how could I bear to die now! –

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

On Unwilling Bliss

With such riddles and bitterness in his heart Zarathustra traveled across the sea. But when he was four days removed from the blessed isles and