

THUS
SPOKE
ZARATHUSTRA

NIETZSCHE



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INTRODUCTION

BY MRS. FÖRSTER-NIETZSCHE

HOW ZARATHUSTRA CAME INTO BEING

"ZARATHUSTRA" is my brother's most personal work; it is the history of his most individual experiences, of his friendships, ideals, raptures, bitterest disappointments and sorrows. Above it all, however, there soars, transfiguring it, the image of his greatest hopes and remotest aims. My brother had the figure of Zarathustra in his mind from his very earliest youth: he once told me that even as a child he had dreamt of him. At different periods in his life, he would call this haunter of his dreams by different names; "but in the end," he declares in a note on the subject, "I had to do a *Persian* the honor of identifying him with this creature of my fancy. Persians were the first to take a broad and comprehensive view of history. Every series of evolutions, according to them, was presided over by a prophet; and every prophet had his 'Hazar'—his dynasty of a thousand years."

All Zarathustra's views, as also his personality, were early conceptions of my brother's mind. Whoever reads his posthumously published writings for the years 1869-82 with care, will constantly meet with passages suggestive of Zarathustra's thoughts and doctrines. For instance, the ideal of the Super-^{man} is put forth quite clearly in all his writings during the years 1873-75; and in "We Philologists," the following remarkable observations occur:—

"How can one praise and glorify a nation as a whole?—

Even among the Greeks, it was the *individuals* that counted.

"The Greeks are interesting and extremely important because they reared such a vast number of great individuals. How was this possible? The question is one which ought to be studied.

"I am interested only in the relations of a people to the rearing of the individual man, and among the Greeks the conditions were unusually favorable for the development of the individual; not by any means owing to the goodness of the people, but because of the struggles of their evil instincts.

"With the help of favorable measures great individuals might be reared who would be both different from and higher than those who heretofore have owed their existence to mere chance. Here we may still be hopeful: in the rearing of exceptional men."

The notion of rearing the Superman is only a new form of an ideal Nietzsche already had in his youth, that "*the object of mankind should lie in its highest individuals*" (or, as he writes in "Schopenhauer as Educator": "Mankind ought constantly to be striving to produce great men—this and nothing else is its duty."). But the ideals he most revered in those days are no longer held to be the highest types of men. No, around this future ideal of a coming humanity—the Superman—the poet spread the veil of becoming. Who can tell to what glorious heights man can still ascend? That is why, after having tested the worth of our noblest ideal—that of the Saviour, in the light of the new valuations, the poet cries with passionate emphasis in "Zarathustra":

"Never yet hath there been a Superman. Naked have I seen both of them, the greatest and the smallest man:—

"All-too-similar are they still to each other. Verily even the greatest found I—all-too-human!"—

The phrase "the rearing of the Superman," has very often been misunderstood. By the word "rearing," in this case, is meant the act of modifying by means of new and higher values—values which, as laws and guides of conduct and opinion, are now to rule over mankind. In general the doctrine of the Superman can only be understood correctly in conjunction with other ideas of the author's, such as:—the Order of Rank, the Will to Power, and the Transvaluation of All Values. He assumes that Christianity, as a product of the resentment of the botched and the weak, has put in ban all that is beautiful, strong, proud, and powerful, in fact all the qualities resulting from strength, and that, in consequence, all forces which tend to promote or elevate life have been seriously undermined. Now, however, a new table of valuations must be placed over mankind—namely, that of the strong, mighty, and magnificent man, overflowing with life and elevated to his zenith—the Superman, who is now put before us with overpowering passion as the aim of our life, hope, and will. And just as the old system of valuing, which only extolled the qualities favorable to the weak, the suffering, and the oppressed, has succeeded in producing a weak, suffering, and "modern" race, so this new and reversed system of valuing ought to rear a healthy, strong, lively, and courageous type, which would be a glory to life itself. Stated briefly, the leading principle of this new system of valuing would be: "All that proceeds from power is good, all that springs from weakness is bad."

This type must not be regarded as a fanciful figure: it is not a nebulous hope which is to be realized at some indefinitely remote period, thousands of years hence; nor is it a new species (in the Darwinian sense) of which we can know nothing, and which it would therefore be somewhat absurd to strive after. But it is meant to be a possibility which men of the present

could realize with all their spiritual and physical energies, provided they adopted the new values.

The author of "Zarathustra" never lost sight of that egregious example of a transvaluation of all values through Christianity, whereby the whole of the deified mode of life and thought of the Greeks, as well as strong Romedom, was almost annihilated or transvalued in a comparatively short time. Could not a rejuvenated Græco-Roman system of valuing (once it had been refined and made more profound by the schooling which two thousand years of Christianity had provided) effect another such revolution within a calculable period of time, until that glorious type of manhood shall finally appear which is to be our new faith and hope, and in the creation of which Zarathustra exhorts us to participate?

In his private notes on the subject the author uses the expression "Superman" (always in the singular, by-the-bye), as signifying "the most thoroughly well-constituted type," as opposed to "modern man"; above all, however, he designates Zarathustra himself as an example of the Superman. In "Ecce Homo" he is careful to enlighten us concerning the precursors and prerequisites to the advent of this highest type, in referring to a certain passage in "The Joyful Wisdom":—

"In order to understand this type, we must first be quite clear in regard to the leading physiological condition on which it depends: this condition is what I call *great healthiness*. I know not how to express my meaning more plainly or more personally than I have done already in one of the last chapters (Aphorism 382) of the fifth book of "The Joyful Wisdom":

"We, the new, the nameless, the hard-to-understand"—it says there—"we firstlings of a yet untried future—we require for a new end also a new means, namely, a new healthiness, stronger, sharper, tougher, bolder and merrier than all healthiness hitherto. He whose soul longeth to

experience the whole range of hitherto recognized values and desirabilities, and to circumnavigate all the coasts of this ideal 'Mediterranean Sea,' who, from the adventures of his most personal experience, wants to know how it feels to be a conqueror, and discoverer of the ideal—as likewise how it is with the artist, the saint, the legislator, the sage, the scholar, the devotee, the prophet, and the godly non-conformist of the old style—requires one thing above all for that purpose, *great healthiness*—such healthiness as one not only possesses, but also constantly acquires and must acquire, because one unceasingly sacrifices it again, and must sacrifice it!—And now, after having been long on the way in this fashion, we Argonauts of the ideal, more courageous perhaps than prudent, and often enough shipwrecked and brought to grief, nevertheless dangerously healthy, always healthy again—it would seem as if, in recompense for it all, that we have a still undiscovered country before us, the boundaries of which no one has yet seen, a beyond to all countries and corners of the ideal known hitherto, a world so over-rich in the beautiful, the strange, the questionable, the frightful, and the divine, that our curiosity as well as our thirst for possession thereof, have got out of hand—alas! that nothing will now any longer satisfy us!—

“How could we still be content with *the man of the present day* after such outlooks, and with such a craving in our conscience and consciousness? Sad enough; but it is unavoidable that we should look on the worthiest aims and hopes of the man of the present day with ill-concealed amusement, and perhaps should no longer look at them. Another ideal runs on before us, a strange, tempting ideal full of danger, to which we should not like to persuade any one, because we do not so readily acknowledge any one's *right thereto*: the ideal of a spirit who plays naïvely (that is to say involuntarily and from overflowing abundance and power) with everything that has hitherto been called holy, good, intangible, or divine; to whom the loftiest conception which the people have reasonably made their measure of value, would already practically imply danger, ruin, abasement, or at least relaxation, blindness, or temporary self-forgetfulness; the ideal of a humanly superhuman welfare and benevolence, which will often enough appear *inhuman*, for example, when put alongside of all past seriousness on earth, and alongside of all past solemnities in bearing, word, tone, look, morality, and pursuit, as their truest involuntary parody—and *with* which, nevertheless, perhaps *the great seriousness* only

commences, when the proper interrogative mark is set up, the fate of the soul changes, the hour-hand moves, and tragedy begins. . . ."

Although the figure of Zarathustra and a large number of the leading thoughts in this work had appeared much earlier in the dreams and writings of the author, "Thus Spake Zarathustra" did not actually come into being until the month of August, 1881, in Sils-Maria; and it was the idea of the Eternal Recurrence of all things which finally induced my brother to set forth his new views in poetic language. In regard to his first conception of this idea, his autobiographical sketch, "Ecce, Homo," written in the autumn of 1888, contains the following passage:—

"The fundamental idea of my work—namely, the Eternal Recurrence of all things—this highest of all possible formulæ of a Yea-saying philosophy, first occurred to me in August, 1881. I made a note of the thought on a sheet of paper, with the postscript: 6,000 feet beyond men and time! That day I happened to be wandering through the woods alongside of the lake of Silvaplana, and I halted beside a huge, pyramidal and towering rock not far from Surlei. It was then that the thought struck me. Looking back now, I find that exactly two months previous to this inspiration, I had had an omen of its coming in the form of a sudden and decisive alteration in my tastes—more particularly in music. It would even be possible to consider all 'Zarathustra' as a musical composition. At all events, a very necessary condition in its production was a renaissance in myself of the art of hearing. In a small mountain resort (Recoaro) near Vicenza, where I spent the spring of 1881, I and my friend and Maëstro, Peter Gast—also one who had been born again—discovered that the phoenix music that hovered over us, wore lighter and brighter plumes than it had done theretofore."

During the month of August, 1881, my brother resolved to reveal the teaching of the Eternal Recurrence, in dithyrambic and psalmodic form, through the mouth of Zarathustra. Among the notes of this period, we found a page on which is written the first definite plan of "Thus Spake Zarathustra":—

"MIDDAY AND ETERNITY."

"GUIDE-POSTS TO A NEW WAY OF LIVING."

Beneath this is written:—

"Zarathustra born on lake Urmi; left his home in his thirtieth year, went into the province of Aria, and, during ten years of solitude in the mountains, composed the Zend-Avesta."

"The sun of knowledge stands once more at midday; and the serpent of eternity lies coiled in its light——: It is *your* time, ye midday brethren."

In that summer of 1881, my brother, after many years of steadily declining health, began at last to rally, and it is to this first gush of the recovery of his once splendid bodily condition that we owe not only "The Joyful Wisdom," which in its mood may be regarded as a prelude to "Zarathustra," but also "Zarathustra" itself. Just as he was beginning to recuperate his health, however, an unkind destiny brought him a number of most painful personal experiences. His friends caused him many disappointments, which were the more bitter to him, inasmuch as he regarded friendship as such a sacred institution; and for the first time in his life he realized the whole horror of that loneliness to which, perhaps, all greatness is condemned. But to be forsaken is something very different from deliberately choosing blessed loneliness. How he longed, in those days, for the ideal friend who would thoroughly understand him, to whom he would be able to say all, and whom he imagined he had found at various periods in his life from his

earliest youth onwards. Now, however, that the way he had chosen grew ever more perilous and steep, he found nobody who could follow him: he therefore created a perfect friend for himself in the ideal form of a majestic philosopher, and made this creation the preacher of his gospel to the world.

Whether my brother would ever have written "Thus Spake Zarathustra" according to the first plan sketched in the summer of 1881, if he had not had the disappointments already referred to, is now an idle question; but perhaps where "Zarathustra" is concerned, we may also say with Master Eckhardt: "The fleetest beast to bear you to perfection is suffering."

My brother writes as follows about the origin of the first part of "Zarathustra":—"In the winter of 1882-83, I was living on the charming little Gulf of Rapallo, not far from Genoa, and between Chiavari and Cape Porto Fino. My health was not very good; the winter was cold and exceptionally rainy; and the small inn in which I lived was so close to the water that at night my sleep would be disturbed if the sea were high. These circumstances were surely the very reverse of favorable; and yet in spite of it all, and as if in demonstration of my belief that everything decisive comes to life in spite of every obstacle, it was precisely during this winter and in the midst of these unfavorable circumstances that my 'Zarathustra' originated. In the morning I used to start out in a southerly direction up the glorious road to Zoagli, which rises aloft through a forest of pines and gives one a view far out into the sea. In the afternoon, as often as my health permitted, I walked round the whole bay from Santa Margherita to beyond Porto Fino. This spot was all the more interesting to me, inasmuch as it was so dearly loved by the Emperor Frederick III. In the autumn of 1886 I chanced to be there again when he was revisiting this small, forgotten world of happiness for the last time. It was on

these two roads that all 'Zarathustra' came to me, above all Zarathustra himself as a type;—I ought rather to say that it was on these walks that these ideas waylaid me."

The first part of "Zarathustra" was written in about ten days—that is to say, from the beginning to about the middle of February, 1883. "The last lines were written precisely in the hallowed hour when Richard Wagner gave up the ghost in Venice."

With the exception of the ten days occupied in composing the first part of this book, my brother often referred to this winter as the hardest and sickliest he had ever experienced. He did not, however, mean thereby that his former disorders were troubling him, but that he was suffering from a severe attack of influenza which he had caught in Santa Margherita, and which tormented him for several weeks after his arrival in Genoa. As a matter of fact, however, what he complained of most was his spiritual condition—that indescribable forsakenness—to which he gives such heartrending expression in "Zarathustra." Even the reception which the first part met with at the hands of friends and acquaintances was extremely disheartening: for almost all those to whom he presented copies of the work misunderstood it. "I found no one ripe for many of my thoughts; the case of 'Zarathustra' proves that one can speak with the utmost clearness, and yet not be heard by any one." My brother was very much discouraged by the feebleness of the response he was given, and as he was striving just then to give up the practice of taking hydrate of chloral—a drug he had begun to take while ill with influenza—the following spring, spent in Rome, was a somewhat gloomy one for him. He writes about it as follows:—"I spent a melancholy spring in Rome, where I only just managed to live—and this was no easy matter. This city, which is absolutely unsuited to

the poet-author of 'Zarathustra,' and for the choice of which I was not responsible, made me inordinately miserable. I tried to leave it. I wanted to go to Aquila—the opposite of Rome in every respect, and actually founded in a spirit of enmity towards that city (just as I also shall found a city some day), as a memento of an atheist and genuine enemy of the Church—a person very closely related to me—the great Hohenstaufen, the Emperor Frederick II. But Fate lay behind it all: I had to return again to Rome. In the end I was obliged to be satisfied with the Piazza Barberini, after I had exerted myself in vain to find an anti-Christian quarter. I fear that on one occasion, to avoid bad smells as much as possible, I actually inquired at the Palazzo del Quirinale whether they could not provide a quiet room for a philosopher. In a chamber high above the Piazza just mentioned, from which one obtained a general view of Rome and could hear the fountains plashing far below, the loneliest of all songs was composed—'The Night-Song.' About this time I was obsessed by an unspeakably sad melody, the refrain of which I recognised in the words, 'dead through immortality.' "

We remained somewhat too long in Rome that spring, and what with the effect of the increasing heat and the discouraging circumstances already described, my brother resolved not to write any more, or in any case, not to proceed with "Zarathustra," although I offered to relieve him of all trouble in connection with the proofs and the publisher. When, however, we returned to Switzerland towards the end of June, and he found himself once more in the familiar and exhilarating air of the mountains, all his joyous creative powers revived, and in a note to me announcing the dispatch of some manuscript, he wrote as follows: "I have engaged a place here for three months: forsooth, I am the greatest fool to allow my courage to

be sapped from me by the climate of Italy. Now and again I am troubled by the thought: *what next?* My 'future' is the darkest thing in the world to me, but as there still remains a great deal for me to do, I suppose I ought rather to think of doing this than of my future, and leave the rest to *thee* and the gods."

The second part of "Zarathustra" was written between the 26th of June and the 6th July. "This summer, finding myself once more in the sacred place where the first thought of 'Zarathustra' flashed across my mind, I conceived the second part. Ten days sufficed. Neither for the second, the first, nor the third part, have I required a day longer."

He often used to speak of the ecstatic mood in which he wrote "Zarathustra"; how in his walks over hill and dale the ideas would crowd into his mind, and how he would note them down hastily in a notebook from which he would transcribe them on his return, sometimes working till midnight. He says in a letter to me: "You can have no idea of the vehemence of such composition," and in "Ecce Homo" (autumn 1888) he describes as follows with passionate enthusiasm the incomparable mood in which he created Zarathustra:—

"—Has any one at the end of the nineteenth century any distinct notion of what poets of a stronger age understood by the word inspiration? If not, I will describe it. If one had the smallest vestige of superstition in one, it would hardly be possible to set aside completely the idea that one is the mere incarnation, mouthpiece or medium of an almighty power. The idea of revelation in the sense that something becomes suddenly visible and audible with indescribable certainty and accuracy, which profoundly convulses and upsets one—describes simply the matter of fact. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives: a thought sud-

denly flashes up like lightning, it comes with necessity, unhesitatingly—I have never had any choice in the matter. There is an ecstasy such that the immense strain of it is sometimes relaxed by a flood of tears, along with which one's steps either rush or involuntarily lag, alternately. There is the feeling that one is completely out of hand, with the very distinct consciousness of an endless number of fine thrills and quiverings to the very toes;—there is a depth of happiness in which the pain-fullest and gloomiest do not operate as antitheses, but as conditioned, as demanded in the sense of necessary shades of colour in such an overflow of light. There is an instinct for rhythmic relations which embraces wide areas of forms (length, the need of a wide-embracing rhythm, is almost the measure of the force of an inspiration, a sort of counterpart to its pressure and tension). Everything happens quite involuntarily, as if in a tempestuous outburst of freedom, of absoluteness, of power and divinity. The involuntariness of the figures and similes is the most remarkable thing; one loses all perception of what constitutes the figure and what constitutes the simile; everything seems to present itself as the readiest, the correctest and the simplest means of expression. It actually seems, to use one of Zarathustra's own phrases, as if all things came unto one, and would fain be similes: 'Here do all things come caressingly to thy talk and flatter thee, for they want to ride upon thy back. On every simile dost thou here ride to every truth. Here fly open unto thee all being's words and word-cabinets; here all being wanteth to become words, here all becoming wanteth to learn of thee how to talk.' This is *my* experience of inspiration. I do not doubt but that one would have to go back thousands of years in order to find some one who could say to me: It is mine also!—"

In the autumn of 1883 my brother left the Engadine for

Germany and stayed there a few weeks. In the following winter, after wandering somewhat erratically through Stresa, Genoa, and Spezia, he landed in Nice, where the climate so happily promoted his creative powers that he wrote the third part of "Zarathustra." "In the winter, beneath the halcyon sky of Nice, which then looked down upon me for the first time in my life, I found the third 'Zarathustra'—and came to the end of my task; the whole having occupied me scarcely a year. Many hidden corners and heights in the landscapes round about Nice are hallowed to me by unforgettable moments. That decisive chapter entitled 'Old and New Tables' was composed in the very difficult ascent from the station to Eza—that wonderful Moorish village in the rocks. My most creative moments were always accompanied by unusual muscular activity. The body is inspired: let us waive the question of the 'soul.' I might often have been seen dancing in those days. Without a suggestion of fatigue I could then walk for seven or eight hours on end among the hills. I slept well and laughed well—I was perfectly robust and patient."

As we have seen, each of the three parts of "Zarathustra" was written, after a more or less short period of preparation in about ten days. The composition of the fourth part alone was broken by occasional interruptions. The first notes relating to this part were written while he and I were staying together in Zurich in September 1884. In the following November, while staying at Mentone, he began to elaborate these notes, and after a long pause, finished the manuscript at Nice between the end of January and the middle of February 1885. My brother then called this part the fourth and last; but even before, and shortly after it had been privately printed, he wrote to me saying that he still intended writing a fifth and sixth part, and notes relating to these parts are now in my possession. This

fourth part (the original MS. of which contains this note: "Only for my friends, not for the public") is written in a particularly personal spirit, and those few to whom he presented a copy of it, he pledged to the strictest secrecy concerning its contents. He often thought of making this fourth part public also, but doubted whether he would ever be able to do so without considerably altering certain portions of it. At all events he resolved to distribute this manuscript production, of which only forty copies were printed, only among those who had proved themselves worthy of it, and it speaks eloquently of his utter loneliness and need of sympathy in those days, that he had occasion to present only seven copies of his book according to this resolution.

Already at the beginning of this history I hinted at the reasons which led my brother to select a Persian as the incarnation of his ideal of the majestic philosopher. His reasons, however, for choosing Zarathustra of all others to be his mouthpiece, he gives us in the following words:—"People have never asked me, as they should have done, what the name Zarathustra precisely means in my mouth, in the mouth of the first Immoralist; for what distinguishes that philosopher from all others in the past is the very fact that he was exactly the reverse of an immoralist. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things. The translation of morality into the metaphysical, as force, cause, end in itself, was *his* work. But the very question suggests its own answer. Zarathustra *created* the most portentous error, *morality*, consequently he should also be the first to *perceive* that error, not only because he has had longer and greater experience of the subject than any other thinker—all history is the experimental refutation of the theory of the so-called moral order of things:—the more important point is

that Zarathustra was more truthful than any other thinker. In his teaching alone do we meet with truthfulness upheld as the highest virtue—*i.e.*: the reverse of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist' who flees from reality. Zarathustra had more courage in his body than any other thinker before or after him. To tell the truth and *to aim straight*: that is the first Persian virtue. Am I understood? . . . The overcoming of morality through itself—through truthfulness, the overcoming of the moralist through his opposite—*through me*—: that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth."

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