

Nietzsche and Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Becoming Gods



“It is time for man to fix his goal. It is time for man to plant the germ of his highest hope.” (Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra)

What is the Purpose of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?

God had died in Nietzsche's world. Nietzsche did not claim responsibility for the killing, but he was enthusiastic about celebrating the wake. Yet the modern world was also inhospitable to heroes, the half gods and godlike men who might redeem life through their greatness. This was Nietzsche's concern. For nihilism, the bane of modern life, was just such a denial of the heroic, the denial of all greatness, the depreciation of all striving. The Nietzschean project, in short, was to instill a passion for greatness in a world without gods. (Politics of the Soul, Leslie Thiele)

This is the message he wants to give to humankind, who are moving from theistic to post theistic culture. In the old theistic culture, God gave meaning to the earthly existence. Now that God is dead, he says, man must become the superman and create the new meaning of the earth. (Nietzsche’s Epic of the Soul, T.K Seung)

He refuses to be armed by the gods, as was the boon claimed by the greatest heroes of the ancient poets. The overman is the hero of an atheistic and morally destitute world; he presents the paradox of the avid pursuit of greatness when no transcendental standards exist. He must embody his own justification. (Politics of the Soul, Leslie Thiele)

Nietzsche in Ecce Homo writing about Zarathustra

Among my writings my Zarathustra stands by itself. With this book I have given mankind the greatest gift it has ever been given. This book, with a voice that carries over millennia, is not only the highest book that there is, the true mountain-air book — the whole fact of man lies at a tremendous distance beneath it — it is also the deepest book, born out of the innermost abundance of truth, an inexhaustible well into which no bucket descends without coming up filled with

gold and goodness. Here it is not a “prophet” who speaks, not one of those horrible hybrids of sickness and will to power people call founders of religions. Above all, one must correctly hear the tone that issues from this mouth, this halcyon tone, so as not to do pitiful injustice to the sense of its wisdom. “It is the stillest words that bring on the storm. Thoughts that come on doves’ feet rule the world — ” The figs fall from the trees, they are ripe and sweet; and as they fall their red skin splits open. A north wind am I to ripe figs. Thus like figs, my friends, these teachings fall to you: now drink in their juice and sweet flesh! Fall is all around and clear skies and afternoon — Here no fanatic speaks, here nothing is “preached,” here no belief is demanded: from an endless abundance of light and depth of happiness falls drop after drop, word after word — the tempo of these speeches is a tender adagio. Such things reach only the most select; it is a privilege without equal to be a listener here; no one is simply free to have ears for Zarathustra...So is Zarathustra not a seducer?...But what does he himself say when for the first time he again returns to his solitude? Exactly the opposite of what any “sage,” “saint,” “world savior” and other *décadent* would say in such a case...He not only speaks differently, he is different too... Now I go alone, my disciples! You too go away now and alone! So I will it! Go away from me and protect yourselves against Zarathustra! And better yet: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you. The man of knowledge must not only love his enemies, he must also be able to hate his friends. One repays a tender teacher badly if one always remains a pupil. And why do you refuse to pluck at my wreath? You revere me: but what if one day your reverence comes tumbling down? Beware lest a statue slay you! You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what does Zarathustra matter? You are my believers: but what do all believers matter? You had not yet sought yourselves: then you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all belief means so little. Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you... On this perfect day, when everything is ripening and not only the grape is turning brown, a ray of sunshine just fell upon my life: I looked behind me, I looked before me, never have I seen so many and such good things at one time. Not in vain did I bury my forty-fourth year today, I felt entitled to bury it — what was vital in it has been saved, is immortal. The first book of the Revaluation of All Values, the Songs of Zarathustra, The Twilight of the Idols, my attempt to philosophize with a hammer — all gifts of this year, even of its last quarter! How could I not be

thankful for my whole life? — And so I tell myself my life.” (Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*)

Nietzsche and the Madman - Pronouncing the Death of God

125 The Madman. - Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market - place calling out unceasingly: "I seek God! I seek God!" - As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God, he caused a great deal of amusement. Why! Is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child? said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea-voyage? Has he emigrated?-the people cried out laughingly, all in a hubbub. The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. "Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! We have killed him, - you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? - for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knives, - who will wipe the blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals, what sacred games shall we have to devise? Is not the magnitude of this deed too great for us? Shall we not ourselves have to become Gods, merely to seem worthy of it? There never was a greater event, - and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history before this!" - Here the madman was silent and looked again at his listeners; they also were silent and looked at him in surprise. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, so that it broke in pieces and was extinguished. "I come too early," he then said, "I am

not yet at the right time. This prodigious event is still on its way, and is travelling, - it has not yet reached men's ears. Lightning and thunder need time, the light of the stars needs time, deeds need time, even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is as yet further from them than the furthest star, - and yet they have done it!" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*)

Mircea Eliade on the Sacred and the Profane

Our chief concern in the following pages will be to elucidate this subject — to show in what ways religious man attempts to remain as long as possible in a sacred universe, and hence what his total experience of life proves to be in comparison with the experience of the man without religious feeling, of the man who lives, or wishes to live, in a desacralized world. It should be said at once that the completely profane world, the wholly desacralized cosmos, is a recent discovery in the history of the human spirit. It does not devolve upon us to show by what historical processes and as the result of what changes in spiritual attitudes and behavior modern man has desacralized his world and assumed a profane existence. For our purpose it is enough to observe that demoralization pervades the entire experience of the nonreligious man of modern societies and that, in consequence, he finds it increasingly difficult to rediscover the existential dimensions of religious man in the archaic societies. (*The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade)

Nietzsche's notes from *The Will to Power* - Explains the Fall of Christianity and the Rise of Nihilism

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere; for this music of the future all ears are cocked even now. For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is

growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.

Skepticism regarding morality is what is decisive. The end of the moral interpretation of the world, which no longer has any sanction after it has tried to escape into some beyond, leads to nihilism. "Everything lacks meaning" (the untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false).

The supreme values in whose service man should live, especially when they were very hard on him and exacted a high price-these social values were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as "reality," as the "true" world, as a hope and future world. Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems "meaningless"-but that is only a transitional stage.

Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, first, when we have sought a "meaning" in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged. Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long waste of strength, the agony of the "in vain," insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure--being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had deceived oneself all too long.- This meaning could have been: the "fulfillment" of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal happiness; or even the development toward a state of universal annihilation-any goal at least constitutes some meaning. What all these notions have in common is that something is to be achieved through the process-and now one realizes that becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing.- Thus, disappointment regarding an alleged aim of becoming as a cause of nihilism: whether regarding a specific aim or, universalized, the realization that all previous hypotheses about aims that concern the whole "evolution" are inadequate (man no longer the collaborator, let alone the center, of becoming).