

NIETZSCHE'S THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

IN NIETZSCHE'S

THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

by

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Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

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One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call "form" as content, as "the matter itself". To be sure, then one belongs in a topsy-turvy world: for henceforth content becomes something merely formal -- our life included.

Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 818.

PREFACE

This essay is conceived as a defense of the thesis that Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a sustained philosophical argument with a philosophically significant literary structure.

It is divided into two chapters. The first, introductory, chapter creates a thought context for approaching Zarathustra, and is full of quotations from Nietzsche's other books to give a more sure idea of his thought and my interpretation of it. I felt such an introduction was absolutely necessary because unless one shares somewhat the Nietzschean perspective -- that perspective being so different from any other philosopher's -- analysis of particular problems in his philosophy will have to be superficial.

The long main chapter presents the thesis. It first clarifies the problem, then describes the style of philosophizing Nietzsche rejected, and then it analyses his style in general, the structural component of style as he realized it in writing Zarathustra in particular, and it establishes what type of argument Zarathustra is. It concludes with an overview of the whole argument in Zarathustra, emphasizing its structure.

The thesis of this essay is unique in English language

Nietzsche scholarship. Nowhere is Thus Spoke Zarathustra understood as a philosophical whole, which just means it is not understood. Because of this, and despite its great popularity, Nietzsche's magnum opus still goes to waste after eighty-five years, as Nietzsche himself saw it had gone to waste for lack of comprehending readers in the first five years after its publication.

* * * * *

In this essay Nietzsche's books will be referred to simply by their English title, followed by the section. This will permit the reader to look up a reference easily in whatever edition he is using. Nietzsche's earlier writings are not broken down into small sections, so to these I will add a page reference to the English edition I am using, which can be determined by consulting the Bibliography.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra will be referred to as Zarathustra, followed by the numbers of the Part (I to IV), the chapter, and then, if the chapter is subdivided by Nietzsche, by the subdivision number. Nietzsche did not himself number the chapters. I use Kaufmann's form of enumeration (in the Viking Portable Nietzsche), where the first chapter (Zarathustra, I, 1), "Of the Three Metamorphoses", is the chapter following "Zarathustra's Prologue". (Wilson Knight, for example, numbers "Zarathustra's Prologue" as Z, I, 1.)

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

	Page
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION	1
A - The Difficulty of Reading and Understanding <u>Zarathustra</u>	1
B - The Character of <u>Zarathustra</u>	2
C - A Background for <u>Zarathustra</u>	3
1. Nietzsche and Kant	4
2. Supposing Truth is a Woman	6
3. Image of Man	10
CHAPTER II - THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT IN <u>THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA</u>	15
A - The Problem of Structure in <u>Zarathustra</u>	15
B - Nietzsche's Anti-Systemism	17
C - Nietzsche's Style and To Whom It is Addressed	23
D - Toward a Structural Understanding of <u>Zarathustra</u> : Nietzsche's Imagery	32
E - Is There an Argument in <u>Zarathustra</u> ?	40
F - Toward a Structural Understanding of <u>Zarathustra</u> : "Art Imitates Nature"	45
G - Recapitulation: An Overview of the Structure of <u>Zarathustra</u>	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	61

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A - The Difficulty of Reading and Understanding Zarathustra

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a most ambiguous book of philosophy to most of its readers, and it is ambiguous both in itself and as the exemplary document of the whole philosophy of Nietzsche. The ambiguity could be said to be due to its dramatic and poetic form, which is a stumbling block to many readers of philosophy who are used to prose which at best attains to programmatic clarity or idealistic loftiness. But the ambiguity of Zarathustra is due to more: to our inability to read meditatively, what Nietzsche calls "rumination",¹ and this is a document designed for rumination;² to our times, in which very few have as yet awakened to the fact that we have killed our God and have destroyed the possibility of replacing him with any other metaphysical, moral, or scientific ground. And even among those few who realize that our entire cultural heritage radiates from God, the Good,

¹The Genealogy of Morals, Preface, VIII.

²Zarathustra, I, 7.

and the finality of Truth, fewer still have the strength of imagination and longing necessary to rise above the bog of nihilism to Zarathustra's heights.

B - The Character of Zarathustra

"He who no longer finds what is great in God, will find it nowhere. He must either deny or create it."³ --I take these words of Nietzsche's to summarize his task and its spirit in Zarathustra. Nietzsche's philosophy starts from his perception that man's greatness consists in self-overcoming, and in the time of the death of God overcoming cannot consist in any form of transcendence toward God, Nirvana,⁴ altruism, or the truth. He who longs to overcome the ordinary life of the human herd must create a doctrine of greatness for himself, and Thus Spoke Zarathustra is Nietzsche's enchiridion of overcoming for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries,⁵ his New Testament.

This must be kept in mind when searching for the structure of the argument in Zarathustra. How could his

³Quoted by Erich Heller, "The Importance of Nietzsche", The Artist's Journey into the Interior, p. 189.

⁴The Anti-Christ, 7.

⁵The Will to Power, Preface, 2.

argument be structured as a chain of logical necessity from start to finish, when he is teaching that logic⁶ and mind find their raison d'être in life and the body, not vice versa, and when he is teaching a way of life, not a system of philosophy? Zarathustra must be studied as a doctrine designed to communicate to life-furthering instincts when ruminated. It might to this extent be considered a religious⁷ or cultural handbook of definitions, descriptions, and inspiration comparable to the Torah, The Odyssey, John's Gospel, or, especially, to the Zoroastrian Avesta. And as these cultural and theological epics have their idiosyncratic and appropriate structures as they argue, however dogmatically, for a peculiar way of life (cultus), so does Zarathustra. Its unusual form does not mean it is not philosophy or is poorly constructed philosophy, but is rather a clue to a new approach to philosophy and life created by Nietzsche out of European decadence.

C - A Background for Zarathustra

What is Nietzsche's new approach to philosophy in Zarathustra? Let me focus on three topics for purposes

⁶On the significance of logic for Nietzsche, see Hollingdale's Appendix B in his translation of Twilight of the Idols.

⁷But Nietzsche definitely doesn't write for faith. See The Anti-Christ, 24 and 54; many references in The Will to Power; Ecce Homo, Preface, 4; and Zarathustra, I, 22.

of introduction to the Nietzschean perspective: 1) the relation of the Nietzschean philosophy to the Critical Philosophy of Kant; 2) Nietzsche's hypothesis that truth is a woman; and 3) his concern that an heroic "image of man" be erected for our age of consummate decadence.

1. Nietzsche and Kant: Nietzsche took it as proven by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason that the intellect could not penetrate to the inner reality (noumenon) of things, but was only capable of comparing the phenomenal images of things as they appear to us -- and not just appear, but are reconstructed by the mind. Nietzsche, camel-like,⁸ took upon himself the full burden of the first Critique.⁹ He expressed his emotion under this burden in the words of Kleist:

Recently, I became acquainted with Kantian philosophy -- and I must now pass on to you one of its ideas, since I have no reason to fear it will move you as deeply and painfully as it did me. We cannot decide whether what we call truth is really truth, or whether it merely appears as such to us. If the latter is the case, the truth which we collect here dies with us, and all effort to acquire a possession which would follow us to the grave is in vain. If the point of this thought does not pierce your heart, do not smile at another who feels himself wounded by it in the

⁸Zarathustra, I, 1.

⁹ Nietzsche's burden is expressed in the opening words of the Critique of Pure Reason: "Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer." (A, vii).

The task of the overman is to subdue man's eternal

innermost recesses of his soul. My highest, my only goal has disappeared, and I have no other.¹⁰

Kant had destroyed the transcendental foundation for meaning created by Mediterranean culture by undermining the notion that there can be known timeless truths about the essences of things. Truth was no longer possible, or, to put it as positively as possible, truths are, at best, noble fictions and superficialities.¹¹

Nietzsche saw that after Kant -- and Kant did not create the problem, he demonstrated what was already a fact -- a new type of wisdom and honesty were needed, a new philosophy was needed to guide men of noble passions in their efforts of self-overcoming.¹² Kant, despite the greatness of his first Critique, lacked the new honesty it called for¹³ because in his later writings he inconsistently redemonstrated the reality of the God of eternal truth and goodness whose demise he had in principle demonstrated in the Transcendental

and pointless metaphysical hunger, to triumph over it "without any detriment to the glory of life". Heller, loc. cit., 193-94.

¹⁰Kleist quoted in Schopenhauer as Educator, Ch. III, p. 24. See pp. 23-25 on Kant.

¹¹Beyond Good and Evil, 24: Heller, loc. cit., 187-88.

¹²On ennobling the passions, see Twilight of the Idols, "Morality as Anti-Nature", 1.

¹³On Kant's achievement and failure see The Anti-Christ, 9-12; The Will to Power, especially 253 and 414, also 95, 25, 101, 271, 331, 410; and Ecce Homo, "The Untimely Ones", 3, and "The Case of Wagner", 2.

Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic of the first Critique.

The new and courageous honesty implicitly demanded there is explicitly called for by Nietzsche:

The desire for truth is itself in need of critique. Let this be the definition of my philosophical task. By way of experiment, I shall question for once the value of truth.¹⁴

2. Supposing truth is a woman: Nietzsche went beyond Kant and the phenomena-noumena distinction, recognizing its implicit but radical nihilism -- denial of the reality of the "real world"; and he revealed the groundlessness of modern intellect by showing that if the "real world" disappears, then the apparent world logically must go with it.

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!

(Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of man-kind; incipit Zarathustra.)¹⁵

¹⁴Quoted by Heller, loc. cit., 187-88.

¹⁵Twilight of the Idols, "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth", 6. On Nietzsche's rejection of both sides of the Kantian polarity, phenomena-noumena, and also of the Schopenhauerian polarity, idea-will, see Rose Pfeffer, "Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's Philosophy", Review of Metaphysics, XIX, 2 (December 1965), 283-84. Nietzsche's rejection of such "clumsy" principles is closely related to his development of a dynamic theory of causality against mechanism (using quanta of energy for units instead of quantities of matter), and Pfeffer takes this up in detail.

The old dogmatism must now give up, and its dogmas, Truth and "real world" among the most important of them, will be forgotten. The experimental method, with methods for first principles, has proven its superiority everywhere but in philosophy, and now it is time:¹⁶ Nietzsche, by way of experiment, questions the value of truth itself with this hypothesis, "Supposing truth is a woman -- what then?".¹⁷

The whole Nietzschean philosophy is grounded on experiments like this, and his character, Zarathustra, symbolizes and embodies Nietzsche's conception of what a life based on these experiments must be like.

Supposing truth is a woman -- what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won -- and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. If it is left standing at all! For there are scoffers who claim that it has fallen, that all dogmatism lies on the ground -- even more, that all dogmatism is dying.¹⁸

¹⁶The Anti-Christ, 13.

¹⁷Nietzsche said, "Perhaps I am the first psychologist of the eternally feminine" (Ecce Homo, "Why I Write Such Good Books", 5). See also Hollingdale's translation of Zarathustra, note 19, p. 340, referring to Zarathustra, II, 2.

¹⁸Beyond Good and Evil, Preface.

Nietzsche uses this hypothesis-simile in two slightly different ways. In Beyond Good and Evil¹⁹ it points up the clumsiness of the old topics and principles of philosophy as tools of inquiry today. All but the most thorough-going skeptics are inept suitors of truth. Take the example of Kant, again: his very great achievement in the Critique of Pure Reason is a bit of "gruesome seriousness" and hesitancy on the threshold of a whole new horizon. What the philosophy of the future (now the present) needs is much intellectual lightness of foot²⁰ -- and dancing is an important image in Zarathustra. Supposing truth were a woman who could be had by the old philosophic dogmatisms, who would want her -- and, why?

An example of the other use of the hypothesis of the femininity of truth is found in Twilight of the Idols, where Nietzsche suggests that the meaning of woman for man was the meaning invented by man out of his hunger for peace and quieting of passion, i.e., he invented an ideal woman figure out of his lack of vitality. And Nietzsche further insinuates the suspicious similarity of European man's lust for his image of woman and his love of knowledge; and that both are impotent sublimations and alienations from their proper passions.

¹⁹ Ibid., and 220.

²⁰ Twilight of the Idols, "What the Germans Lack", 7.

Man created woman -- but what out of? Out of a rib of his God, of his 'ideal'. . . .21

The real world, unattainable for the moment, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man ("to the sinner who repents").

(Progress of the idea: it grows more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible -- it becomes a woman, it becomes Christian)22

The "Real world" of God, the True, and the Good is promised by Platonic-Christian culture, but on its terms: subjection of body to spirit, of the person to the priest-philosopher, interiorization of its values, worship of the Virgin, castration of reason.²³

Either way, the hypothesis leads to one important conclusion, verified symbolically in the achievement of Zarathustra. Truth is not there waiting for us; the very concept, truth, is a human invention; and if we lust for truth then the individual must invent his own truth. In other words, truth and the "real world" always were and always will be human creations, but the form truth has taken has been life-denying. Zarathustra is Nietzsche's experiment in conceiving a life-furthering truth and more than truth, a life -- to which truth is subordinate -- of overcoming the present and given.

²¹Twilight of the Idols, "Maxims and Arrows", 13.

²²Ibid., "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth", 2.

²³Ibid., "Morality as Anti-Nature", 1.

The measure of a person's vitality is his ability to live in a meaningless world without succumbing to the nihilism of dying Platonic-Christian culture, by conceiving a small truth of his own.

It is a measure of the degree of strength of will to what extent one can do without meaning in things, to what extent one can endure to live in a meaningless world because one organizes a small portion of it oneself.²⁴

And above the self-created small truth, though it is the ground of the individual's being and overcoming, must over-arch -- not God, not the Good, and not Truth, be it appearance or reality -- but the will to ignorance:

It is not enough that you understand in what ignorance man and beast live; you must also have and acquire the will to ignorance. You need to grasp that without this kind of ignorance life itself would be impossible, that it is a condition under which alone the living thing can preserve itself and prosper: a great, firm dome of ignorance must encompass you.²⁵

3. Image of Man: In The Use and Disadvantage of History for Life, Nietzsche divides historical scholarship into three kinds, antiquarian, which merely records; critical, which passes judgment, and monumentalistic. "Monumentalistic

²⁴The Will to Power, 585A.

²⁵Ibid., 609.

history concentrates on past heroes in order to confront contemporary mediocrity with the possibility of greatness."²⁶

In another of his Untimely Meditations of that year, Schopenhauer as Educator, 1874, he also focused on the need to confront society. In that essay he spoke of European society's need for educators -- he gives Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer as examples -- to give an "image of man" to contemporary culture from which individuals might "derive the incentive to transfigure their own lives".²⁷

There is no doubt that at the approach of periods such as this, humanity is, if anything, more in danger than it is during the actual collapse and chaotic turmoil; and that fearful expectation and the greedy exploitation of the moment bring out every form of cowardice and selfish drive of the soul: whereas real emergency, usually inspires and improves men. Given these dangers of the epoch, who will now be the guardians and champions of humanity, of that inviolable treasure which the most heterogeneous races have gradually accumulated? Who will erect the Image of Man, while everyone frees in himself the serpent of selfishness and swinish fear, and in this way has fallen away from the image into bestiality or even automatism?²⁸

²⁶Walter Kaufmann, art., "Nietzsche, Friedrich", Encyclopedia of Philosophy, V, 507.

²⁷Schopenhauer as Educator, ch. IV, p. 40.

²⁸Loc. cit.

Nietzsche saw his time as part of an era "of atomistic chaos" stretching into the next two centuries in which public morals and manners would be determined by "the crudest and the worst forces", business and the military.²⁹

Nietzsche later used the word "nihilism" to describe the atomistic chaos and lack of spiritual strength and vitality.

The entire idealism of mankind hitherto is on the point of changing suddenly into nihilism -- into the belief in absolute worthlessness, i.e., meaninglessness.

The destruction of ideals, the new desert; new arts by means of which we can endure it, we amphibians.

Presupposition: bravery, patience, no "turning back", no haste to go forward, (N.B. Zarathustra adopts a parodistic attitude toward all former values as a consequence of his abundance.)³⁰

The problem for man at that point in history, and still today (1970), was that the depths of nihilism had not yet been reached.³¹ All around are vain efforts and hopes to escape this decline of spirit. And, as he said in Schopenhauer as Educator, the process of decline saps spiritual vitality much more than the chaos at the end of the decline which could be an inspiration for creating new

²⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

³⁰ The Will to Power, 617.

³¹ Ibid., 28.

values on the rubble of the old.³²

Nietzsche will take this theme up in Zarathustra in 1883, and will have Zarathustra descend from the heights of his vision and aspiration into the incomplete nihilism of the world to reveal to a few followers the complete nihilism in germ in the decline of Western values and order, that seeing total nihilism they and he might rise above their times and, while the old era is still declining, create a radically new set of values. And radically new means: beyond good and evil, beyond the distinction that was the key-stone of the chaos-producing Platonic-Christian value system.

The educator forms an image of man to inspire individuals to transcend their times. This is the hero of monumentalistic history that Nietzsche spoke of in The Use and Disadvantage of History for Life. But even there he saw the need for an ideal for his hero, a transcendent standard of self-overcoming, a suprahistorical man "who does not envisage salvation in the process but for whom the world is finished in every single momentWhat could ten new years teach that the past could not teach".³³ Nietzsche evaluated the principal educators of the modern era of nihilism and found them wanting. In their place he self-

³²Note the image of convalescence in Zarathustra.

³³Kaufmann, loc. cit., quoting Nietzsche. See also Zarathustra, II, 13 (end).

consciously proposed himself as the ultimate educator, and made Zarathustra his hero and image of man, and created beyond him the overman. And the characters of Zarathustra and Nietzsche ultimately blend. Nietzsche's most untimely meditation, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, could be subtitled, Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) as Educator.³⁴

³⁴Kaufmann quotes Nietzsche: ". . .in Schopenhauer as Educator my inmost history . . .is inscribed . . .actually not 'Schopenhauer as educator' but . . .'Nietzsche as educator' is described . . .". Nietzsche, 3rd ed. (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 160, quoting from Ecce Homo, "The Untimely Ones", 3.

CHAPTER II
THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT IN
THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

A - The Problem of the Structure of Zarathustra

However much Nietzsche limited the powers of reason and logic, and subordinated them to unconscious life forces, nonetheless he laid great stress on being logical, and he found too little logic in the thinking and writing of modern philosophers. He criticizes the Germans for their inability to think and write with logical clarity, and called Kant "that most deformed conceptual cripple there has ever been".¹ Besides this concern for logic, he was greatly concerned with style: "My sense of style, of the epigram as style, was awakened almost instantaneously on coming into contact with Sallust One will recognize in my writings, even in my Zarathustra, a very serious ambition for Roman style, for the 'aera perennius' in style".² Yet for all his professed concern with these matters, many readers of Zarathustra find it curiously lacking both logical and stylistic coherence.

¹Twilight of the Idols, "What the Germans Lack", 7.

²Ibid., "What I Owe to the Ancients", 1.

For example, the German-American Nietzsche scholar, Walter Kaufmann, says,

Thus Spoke Zarathustra . . . contains the first comprehensive statement of Nietzsche's mature philosophy. Nietzsche called it "the most profound book" of world literature It is widely considered Nietzsche's magnum opus Magnificence alternates with parodies, epigrams with dithyrambs, wit with bathos. Part IV derides the holy mass, as well as various types of men who were attracted to Nietzsche's philosophy. Unlike the first three parts, it relates a continuous story. It is full of laughter, some at Zarathustra's expense. Philosophically, there is an utter lack of sustained argument, but Nietzsche's later works support and develop the same ideas with attention to detail and ramifications.³

It is curious that Kaufmann values Nietzsche's later works so much higher than Zarathustra, and that many readers find the former works more profound than the latter, while in those later works Nietzsche himself values Zarathustra as his greatest creation.

The problem of understanding Zarathustra, once one has some sympathy for Nietzsche's ideas in his other writings, is primarily the problem of seeing a structure in it -- how to make Zarathustra translate itself into a mental shape, one shape, instead of remaining, as it often appears, a mere collection of repetitious and disconnected aphorisms.

³Kaufmann, "Nietzsche, Friedrich", Encyclopedia of Philosophy, V, 509.

I believe the problem is that of thinking a multi-dimensional logic rather than a merely one-dimensional, or linear-sequential, logic; of thinking an area rather than a line, spatially rather than linearly, and looking for a logical atmosphere rather than a mere chain of syllogisms.

B - Nietzsche's Anti-Systemism

In chapter I, I sketched a background for viewing Nietzsche's philosophy as expressed in Zarathustra. The points I made there might seem to have to do with content more than structure, but these two are inseparable in the mature philosophy of Nietzsche.

The death of God, for example, has an immediate structural meaning for anyone who would perceive it as a fact and who would go on to write his philosophy. Once God's death is confirmed and appreciated, all focus goes out of life and reason. In neither content nor form can philosophy describe a pyramid reaching from the shadows to the One, or a microcosmic circle of truth as in the philosophies of Aquinas and Hegel.⁴ If focus can be put back into philosophy in the time of the death of God, then it must be on a terrestrial point, an ideal of natural

⁴Sed contra: Cardinal Newman's diametrically opposed views on both the structure and content of philosophy are beautifully described in A. Dwight Culler, The Imperial Intellect (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955).

perfection not claiming supernature. And if the totality of meaning cannot be said to be in one being, then a comprehensive philosophy in an architectonic form is ruled out on principle. Even Zarathustra's philosophy of the overman must be a small truth within a great dome of ignorance.

Further, the architectonic style, or even just an extended syllogistic sequence, seems to do scant justice to multi-faceted reality if one values intellectual lightness of foot. "Thinking has to be learned the way dancing has to be learned, as a form of dancing . . . being able to dance with the feet, with concepts, with words: do I still have to say that one has to be able to dance with the pen -- that writing has to be learned?"⁵ If truth must be created out of one's fullness, or won without being violated, can the clumsy dogmatic-architectonic philosophies succeed?

Nietzsche clarified his objection to the old forms of systematization, and tied together with his objections some of his main doctrines, in this one statement:

There are schematic minds, those which hold a thought complex to be truer when it can be inscribed in previously designed schemes or tables of categories. There are countless self-deceptions here. But the fundamental prejudice is: that order, perspicuity, system must belong to the true being of things, conversely that disorder, the chaotic, uncalculable appear only in a false or incompletely known world -- is an error in short --: which is a moral prejudice derived from the fact that the truthful, trustworthy man is wont to be a man of order, or maxims, and in general something calculable and pedantic.

⁵ Twilight of the Idols, "What the Germans Lack", 7.

But it is quite indemonstrable that the nature [an sich] of things behaves according to this recipe for a model official.⁶

The order Nietzsche objected to was the abstract, logical, and common sense order of most philosophers and officials. Nietzsche wanted an idea of order and style that corresponded to the richness of nature and not just to abstract categories.

Let us not hide and spoil the actual way in which our thoughts have occurred to us. The profoundest and least exhausted books will most likely always have something of the aphoristic and sudden character of Pascal's Pensées. The driving forces and valuations are far beneath the surface; what emerges is an effect.⁷

But Nietzsche's advocacy of a style that captures the actual way in which our thoughts occur to us, and particularly their sudden character, might seem to advocate fragmentariness of style and structurelessness, and thus explain why he could justify himself in writing Zarathustra in an apparently piecemeal style. However, he explicitly rejects fragmentariness:

We have no right to isolated thoughts, whether truthful or erroneous. Our thoughts should grow out of our values with the same necessity as the fruit out of the tree. Our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts should all be intimately related and bear testimony to one will, one health, one soil, one sun. Supposing you find these fruits unpalatable? What concern is that of the trees -- or of us, the philosophers?⁸

⁶Quoted in George Allen Morgan, What Nietzsche Means (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965; original edition 1941), p. 21.

⁷The Will to Power, 424, quoted in and translated by Morgan, op. cit., p. 22.

⁸The Genealogy of Morals, Preface, 2.

In other words, Nietzsche strove for an organic structure in his writings, a vindication of the Aristotelian "art immitates nature", the Nietzschean philosophy being an art of the first order, a creating of truths where there was only nature and opinion.

In approaching the problem of structure in Zarathustra I have emphasized the richer part of the Nietzschean philosophy by relating the problem to his main philosophical tendencies, and then relating them to the problem in his own terms. However, Professor Kaufmann emphasizes another aspect,⁹ one that is particularly relevant to Zarathustra. Before Nietzsche used "nihilism" to characterize his age and the coming centuries, he spoke of them as "decadent", that is, declining in natural vitality and virtù. And typical of these times is a peculiar style of decadence.

What is the mark of every literary decadence? That life no longer resides in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, and the page comes to life at the expense of the whole -- the whole is no longer a whole. This, however, is the simile of every style of decadence: every time there is an anarchy of atoms.¹⁰

But Nietzsche, as would be expected knowing his other doctrines, saw that this style was all his time could produce,

⁹Nietzsche, ch. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 73, quoting Nietzsche.

it was historically necessary, and he took it -- and its larger implications, as expressed in "the death of God" -- as the only metaphysical ground available on which to build. He went down into the style of decadence just as Zarathustra went down from the mountain (i.e., with the same necessity of the sun's going down¹¹), to give to those depths his fullness and to be nourished and reinvigorated by the danger.

Kaufmann doesn't bring out the thematic parallel of Zarathustra's down-going with the style of decadence, but he does point out that Nietzsche's "'style of decadence' is methodically employed in the service of Nietzsche's 'experimentalism'Each aphorism or sequence of aphorisms . . . may be considered as a thought experiment".¹² And as for Zarathustra, we can regard each chapter as either a new experiment of Nietzsche's or the record of an old and important one, one he had lived.

The aphoristic-experimental style is Nietzsche's experiment in laying the foundations for a philosophy of the future (though he always remembered his debt to Pascal's style and commitment).

¹¹Zarathustra, Prologue, 1.

¹²Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 85.

A new species of philosophers is coming up . . . these philosophers of the future might require in justice, perhaps also in injustice, to be called attempters [Versucher, attempters or experimenters]. This name is only an attempt and, if one prefers, a temptation [Versuchung].¹³

Philosophy must be aphoristic and experimental because "every philosophy is a foreground philosophy", that is, there is something arbitrary and very suspicious in why the philosopher asks such and such a question, and not another, or only goes so far here, and into great detail there.¹⁴ Philosophy is thus, for all its apparent depth, condemned to superficiality and a very small truth. Therefore, Nietzsche says,

I treat problems as I would a cold swim -- quickly into them and quickly out again. That in this way one does not get . . . deep enough down, that is the superstition . . . of the enemies of the cold water, they speak without experience.¹⁵

Scholars and philosophers are willing enough, sometimes, to dive deep if the waters are warm and comfortable. Nietzsche's irony is simultaneously hilarious, and frightening in its demand.

¹³ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁴ Beyond Good and Evil, 289.

¹⁵ Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 87, quoting The Joyful Wisdom, 381. As for Nietzsche's "shallowness", Ernest Jones, in his biography of Freud, said Freud "several times said of Nietzsche that he had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live". Quoted by Kaufmann, "Nietzsche, Friedrich", Encyclopedia of Philosophy, V, 505.

C - Nietzsche's Style and to Whom it is Addressed

According to Zarathustra all former Redeemer-myths were full of holes, and these intellectual holes were pasted over with "God".¹⁶ The various religions all have their "ruling idea" but lack a "subtle soul",¹⁷ that is, a coherent philosophy that doesn't need to fill up holes with supernatural facts. But men, even the "higher men" who are closest to Zarathustra, seem to need an inspired teacher and scripture, and a goal, and that is what Nietzsche gave us in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Like the gospels it speaks "in the clearest parables",¹⁸ but unlike the earlier scriptures its authority as scripture, its inspiration, comes from and is attested by its philosophical radicalism and coherence -- and its philosophical coherence overcomes the fragmentariness of earlier revelations. But to whom is this new gospel addressed? Who can hear it?

Like any scripture Zarathustra speaks only to those who have ears to hear. And this is the problem under discussion: how can Zarathustra be heard as a unified whole

¹⁶Zarathustra, II, 4. Cf. Ecce Homo, "Why I Am So Clever", 1: "God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers".

¹⁷Zarathustra, II, 22, 1.

¹⁸Zarathustra, II, 7.

philosophy? Thomas Mann pointed out that Nietzsche was an "ear-man" rather than an "eye-man", noting that while Nietzsche was so passionately interested in music, as listener, composer, and player, he had almost no interest in graphic and plastic arts.¹⁹ If we are to ask how Nietzsche formed Zarathustra, we certainly must take as a clue that Nietzsche was an "ear-man", and liable to "orchestrate" his philosophical writing -- and, to the extent that we imagine he must have had a visual component in his style, we can think that he "choreographed" Zarathustra.

Many passages in Zarathustra that are normally examined only for the content of Nietzsche's teaching also can be interpreted structurally or formally for clues to the form of Nietzsche's philosophy, and for the meaning of his forms. For example,

I call it evil and misanthropic, all this teaching about the one and the perfect and the unmoved and the sufficient and the intransitory.

All that is intransitory -- that is but an image. And the poets lie too much.

But the best images and parables should speak of time and becoming: they should be a eulogy and a justification of all transitoriness.²⁰

The doctrine or content of Zarathustra's teaching is fairly clear here: the substance of reality is temporal, and Being

¹⁹ Thomas Mann, Past Masters (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 142.

²⁰ Zarathustra, II, 2.

is Becoming. But the last sentence quoted does more than just re-emphasize the first, it itself teaches that a temporally based philosophy at its best should take on the form of time and beings-in-time, or have a time signature as a piece of music does.

To take on the form of time means much more than to progress through a sequence. Any writing must do that, and the bulk of written philosophy progresses, from the beginning of a book to its end, as a simple linear flow, attaining, at best, syllogistic precision, but lacking a peculiar rhythm and emotion. Martin Heidegger discovered the importance of the temporal rhythm of beings as the key to Being in Nietzsche, and appreciated the unity of form and content in Nietzsche's central work. Commenting on the Nietzschean theme that appeared as the subtitle of Ecce Homo, "How One Becomes What One Is", Heidegger says, "Zarathustra must first of all become who he is. Zarathustra recoils in horror from this becoming. That horror pervades the entire work [Thus Spoke Zarathustra]That horror determines the style, the hesitant and constantly arrested course of the entire book".²¹ This "hesitant and constantly arrested" rhythm is a large part of the philosophical meaning of the four part

²¹Martin Heidegger, "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?", translated by Bernd Magnus, The Review of Metaphysics, XX, 414.

symphony, Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

And in Zarathustra the economical Roman aphoristic form finds new perfection. However compelling Pascal's Pensées might be, they lack the unity of form and content that Zarathustra possesses. Hölderlin's Hyperion (1797)²² attains it, and its philosophy and rhythm are strikingly similar to Zarathustra, but Zarathustra excels even it in philosophical integration of structure and doctrine.

Nietzsche himself saw the difficulty of others understanding Zarathustra, after he had published it. In Beyond Good and Evil (1886, two years after Zarathustra appeared) he wrote,

It is hard to be understood, especially when one thinks and lives gāṅgāśrotgati [as the River Ganges flows] among men who think and live differently -- namely, kūrmagati [as a turtle moves], or at best "the way frogs walk", mandūkagati (I obviously do everything to be "hard to understand" myself!) -- and one should be cordially grateful for the good will to some subtlety of interpretation.²³

Unlike the prudent and moderate bourgeois, Nietzsche lived and thought and wrote like the Ganges: filling to overflowing, rushing forward mercilessly, then subsiding to a very slow and level flow, only to flood anew. The image of the rhythm

²²Hölderlin was a great influence on Nietzsche and Heidegger.

²³Beyond Good and Evil, 27.

of the Ganges suits the thought and structure of Zarathustra. Zarathustra's most abysmal thought, in which the whole book finds its meaning, is of the eternal recurrence of the same, the recurrence of the same moments and situations because the only energy available is already given and finite. The structure of Zarathustra begins as a sea full of themes and images ("Zarathustra's Prologue"), the four Parts unfold in a series of crescendos and diminuendos, with their high point, perhaps, at the beginning of Part III, but with the same themes and images criss-crossing, joining, disappearing and reappearing throughout all four parts.

Nietzsche chastizes the Germans for their lack of a "third ear" for reading and writing, and stresses that the art of reading and writing is the art of understanding tempo. They don't have an ear for tempo or art in writing, "and thus the strongest contrasts of style go unheard, and the subtlest artistry is wasted as on the deaf;"²⁴ Nietzsche recognizes the waste of his own style. He sees himself as one "who handles his language like a flexible rapier, feeling from his arm down to his toe the dangerous delight of the quivering, over-sharp blade that desires the bite, hiss, cut".²⁵ Nietzsche's style continues to go to waste in

²⁴Beyond Good and Evil, 246.

²⁵Loc. cit.

several ways: there are those who are put off by it and find nothing but raving; others find a few interesting doctrines, such as the death of God and eternal recurrence, amid the raving; others call it literature or poetry, and at best only secondarily philosophy. Almost none of the writers on Zarathustra recognize it as a triumph of philosophical art, unifying form and content in one meaning, a meaning -- call it eternal recurrence, or the overman -- which is taught as much by the structure itself as by the content.

Zarathustra's structure of short units, in alternately rising and falling flow, with complex intertwining of imagery and philosophical themes, Nietzsche calls (by implication) a "bold and merry tempo (which leaps over and obviates all dangers in things and words)", the language full of "daring nuances of . . . free-spirited thought", buffoon and satyr's language, opposed to "everything ponderous, viscous, and solemnly clumsy" and long-winded.²⁶ By buffoon-talk he means the high seriousness of Aristophanes and Petronius.²⁷ Recall the buffoon in "Zarathustra's Prologue" who jumps over the admirable but too conscientious tight-rope walker, and kills him;²⁸ and Nietzsche's autobiographical characterization of his destiny, to be the buffoon who

²⁶Beyond Good and Evil, 28.

²⁷Loc. cit.

²⁸Zarathustra, Prologue, 6.

announces the most terrible truth: God's obituary and the eternal recurrence of the same.

I do not want to be a holy man; sooner even a buffoon. -- Perhaps I am a buffoon. -- Yet in spite of that -- or rather not in spite of it, because so far nobody has been more mendacious than holy men -- the truth speaks out of me. -- But my truth is terrible; so far one has called lies truth.²⁹

In Ecce Homo (written in 1888) Nietzsche analyses his life and writings. He clearly saw Zarathustra as his greatest achievement and the greatest work of literature and philosophy of the modern era.³⁰ In Ecce Homo we have much of the problem of why Zarathustra has been so hard to understand analysed for us, and at least the beginning of an answer to the questions posed earlier, To whom is Zarathustra addressed? and Who can hear it?

Keep in mind that Nietzsche subtitled Zarathustra, "A Book for Everyone and No One". That is why the question, Who can hear it, who can receive it, who can understand it? is crucial, for it is addressed to everyone, but Nietzsche knew when writing it that there would be few who could understand it. And his later experiences, recorded in Ecce Homo, indicate there were few indeed.

²⁹ Ecce Homo, "Why I Am a Destiny", 1.

³⁰ Ibid., Preface, 4.

It is no fanatic that speaks here [in Zarathustra]; this is not "preaching"; no faith is demanded here; from an infinite abundance of light and depth of happiness falls drop upon drop, word upon word
Such things reach only the most select.
It is a privilege without equal to be a listener here. Nobody is free to have ears for Zarathustra.³¹

And later in Ecce Homo he qualifies the subtitle of Zarathustra: it is "for Everyone",

Always presupposing that there are ears -- that there are those capable and worthy of the same pathos, that there is no lack of those to whom one may communicate oneself. -- My Zarathustra, for example, is still looking for those -- alas, it will have to keep looking for a long time yet! -- One must be worthy of hearing him.

And until then there will be nobody to understand the art that has been squandered hereThe art of the great rhythm, the great style of long periods to express a tremendous up and down of sublime, of super-human passion³²

Nietzsche does not mean, here, that to understand Zarathustra one must have a special aesthetic bent or training that will open up his art to them. Rather only those who are "capable and worthy of the same pathos" as Zarathustra will be able to understand Nietzsche's new philosophical style. Only those who groove on reality as Zarathustra does, who suffer and

³¹Loc. cit.

³²Ibid., "Why I Write Such Good Books", 4.

rejoice in the eternal recurrence of the same things with Zarathustra's own passion, are open to the Nietzschean style. Nietzsche thus remarks about his style,

To communicate a state, an inward tension of pathos, by means of signs, including the tempo of these signs -- that is the meaning of every styleGood is any style that really communicates an inward state, that makes no mistake about the signs, the tempo of the signs, the gestures³³

The signs -- and by extension, the metaphors, themes, personification, and even doctrines -- the signs, the tempo and the gestures, intonations, and postures suggested by the tempo: all these coherently combined become the structure of a peculiar atmosphere, the world, inscape, or "inward tension of pathos" of Zarathustra into which anyone may enter, if he can. And such an ability has one principal prerequisite, through-going dissatisfaction with "present-day man" and his ideal, the ultimate man,³⁴ and the "great health"³⁵ to overcome the present out of love for the overman. -- And to understand the subtle meaning of this "physiological pre-supposition", remember Nietzsche's own very bad health, and

³³ Loc. cit.

³⁴ Zarathustra, Prologue, 5.

³⁵ Ecce Homo, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", 2.

the theme of "convalescence" in Zarathustra.³⁶

D - Toward a Structural Understanding of Zarathustra:

Nietzsche's Imagery

I have utilized the conventional distinction between "form" and "content": they are normally taken as extremes; in between is the "style", combining various degrees of formal and content components, according to this model, and "structure" would equate with form, or be the purely formal aspect of style.

Zarathustra is commonly treated as if its form were literary, and its content were philosophical. My point is that Zarathustra is philosophy in content, style, and form, while at the same time being great literature through and through as well. I'm little concerned with explaining the principal doctrines -- content -- of Zarathustra; I have just treated Zarathustra's style (negatively, in Chapter II, B, and in general in II, C); and now I want to treat the structure. "The Structure of the Argument" in Zarathustra is under question: I will mainly explain that there is a philosophical structure in Zarathustra, show what it is (in outline), show its philosophical significance, and argue that, should there be any doubt, Zarathustra constitutes a sustained argument also.

³⁶ Zarathustra, III, 13, and see Ecce Homo, "Why I Am so Wise", 2; "Human, All-Too-Human", 4; etc.

In moving from an understanding of Nietzsche's style and trying to comprehend the structure of Zarathustra, Nietzsche's choice of images can be more revealing than his explicit statements regarding the proper style for his philosophy. A person's imagery always reveals more than the explicit content of his speech or writing, and a poet is particularly conscious of how he chooses his images. I will proceed on the assumption that Nietzsche's imagery is there to be fully exploited in understanding particular problems of his mature philosophy -- fully exploited, that is, within the context of his thought, and with careful analysis.³⁷

The Horatian ode, which Nietzsche admired so highly, he called a "mosaic" of words, in which each part of the mosaic -- as sound, as locus, as concept -- shines on the parts nearby and thus contributes to the brilliance and unity of the whole.³⁸ If Zarathustra seems fragmentary -- and thus, to use Nietzsche's judgement, decadent -- perhaps it is a mosaic, and we are looking at the pieces too closely to see that they are each complementary parts of a whole, held together by one theme.

The best example of the mosaic image of the structure

³⁷I was persuaded to make this assumption largely by the suggestiveness of Nietzsche's imagery, and partly by Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (New York: Macmillan, 1935), chapter I.

³⁸Twilight of the Idols, "What I Owe to the Ancients", 1.

of Zarathustra is Zarathustra, Part I (after the prologue). All the twenty-two chapters are different mosaic segments of the theme of modern man's decadence qua fragmentariness. Zarathustra gives his teaching in the town called The Pied Cow, and images such as "pied", "motley", and "spotted" are common. But Nietzsche's twenty-two fragments represent a fully-conscious down-going into fragmentariness and decadence, only to overcome it by turning the twenty-two fragments into a unified mosaic. The literary integrity of Part I is thus trans-fragmentary because the same unifying theme is suggested by each chapter, and this literary overcoming of literary decadence ipso facto teaches and illustrates -- in fact, becomes and is -- an instance of the philosophy of overcoming modern spiritual chaos.

"Diamond" is a more complex structural metaphor, but essentially similar to "mosaic". "My whole Zarathustra is a dithyramb on solitude or, if I have been understood, on cleanliness-- Those who have eyes for colors will compare it to a diamond."³⁹ The "cleanliness" is in contrast to the filth of the resentment of the masses: diamond cleanliness opposed to motley decadence. A diamond is faceted and spectroscopic, but its many sides and colors are

³⁹ Ecce Homo, "Why I Am So Wise", 8. See also Ecce Homo, "The Gay Science".

the antithesis of the spotted, motley, and fragmented aspect of the rabble Nietzsche claims to escape from and overcome in his solitude. And Zarathustra can be read, if it is read carefully, "the way good old philologists read their Horace",⁴⁰ as a diamond-unity of one hundred and seventy-four facets, the chapters and their subsections.

The images of crossing-over, "bridge" and "tight-rope", which appear in Zarathustra from the prologue onward, suggest a literary-philosophical structure for crossing over. "Man is a bridge", "man is a rope", "man is something to be overcome": thus speaks Zarathustra, and the very structure of Zarathustra teaches the same. Zarathustra can be seen as a linear structure which crosses over from The Pied Cow to the will to power, and again from there to eternal recurrence, etc.

Nietzsche very often compares his philosophizing to living on mountain peaks, and even to jumping from peak to peak -- remember also his love for living in the Alps. His images of mountains and mountain peaks gets right to the core of his concept of the intellectual life. In Ecce Homo he wrote,

⁴⁰Ecce Homo, "Why I Write Such Good Books", 5.

Those who can breathe the air of my writings know that it is an air of the heights, a strong air. One must be made for it. Otherwise there is no small danger that one may catch cold in it. The ice is near, the solitude tremendous -- but how calmly all things lie in the light! How freely one breathes! How much one feels beneath oneself!

Philosophy, as I have so far understood and lived it, means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains -- seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence, everything so far placed under a ban by morality.⁴¹

And a little further on he calls Zarathustra, "the book that is truly characterized by the air of the heights".⁴²

And in "Of Reading and Writing" in Zarathustra, Zarathustra says,

He who writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read, he wants to be learned by heart.

In the mountains the shortest route is from peak to peak, but for that you must have long legs. Aphorisms should be peaks, and those to whom they are spoken should be big and tall of stature.⁴³

Later, in The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche says, "Zarathustra is a scepticMen of conviction simply do not come into consideration where the fundamentals of value and disvalue are concerned. Convictions are prisons. They do not see far enough, they do not see things beneath them . . .".⁴⁴

⁴¹Ecce Homo, Preface, 3.

⁴²Loc. cit., 4.

⁴³Zarathustra, I, 7.

⁴⁴Section 54.

What all these quotations from Nietzsche about mountains and mountain peaks and looking down add up to is this: that Nietzsche writes from peak to peak, from aphorism to aphorism, not for those who simply read, looking for protracted logical arguments, but for those who can jump from peak to peak and who want to learn by heart -- those for whom dangerous jumping is a more efficient way of learning,⁴⁵ and who less want to look up and learn and would rather look down and evaluate, order, and rank all that is beneath them. Nietzsche's philosophy in concept and form speaks clearly only to those who are above the multitude and confident of their own nobility.⁴⁶ The lively tempo and jumpy structure -- jumpy, that is, when seen up close, from aphorism to aphorism, paragraph to paragraph, and even chapter to chapter, but there the jumping ends and the four parts flow smoothly together -- complement and complete Zarathustra's character and teaching. Nietzsche's philosophy, especially in his later works, is a unity of life, concepts, style, and structures.

I could go on and on showing how Nietzsche's own imagery, and especially some of the key images in Zarathustra,

⁴⁵"To you, the bold venturers and adventurers . . . who are intoxicated by riddles, who take pleasure in twilight . . . where you can guess you hate to calculate . . .". Zarathustra, III, 2, 1.

⁴⁶Zarathustra, I, 8.

imply a unity of structure and content that was uniquely important to Nietzsche among philosophers. But to the images of linear unity, jumping, and mosaic or multi-faceted unity I will add just one more type of image, the organic, which is a pregnant clue to the problem of finding a structure in Zarathustra; and I will single out one organic image as being particularly vivid: "blood". With this image I can complete and recapitulate my earlier points.

The first Part of Zarathustra is unified by the theme of integrity -- Zarathustra's own goal of psychic integration of his noble aspirations, as contrasted there to the fragmentariness of the modern psyche. Nietzsche felt it important enough to include a chapter on reading and writing in this Part. Zarathustra speaks:

Of all writings I love only that which is written with blood. Write with blood: and you will discover that blood is spirit.

It is not an easy thing to understand unfamiliar blood: I hate the reading idler.

He who knows the reader, does nothing further for the reader. Another century of readers -- and spirit itself will stink.

That everyone can learn to read will ruin in the long run not only writing, but thinking too.

Once spirit was God, then it became man, and now it is even becoming mob.

He who writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read, he wants to be learned by heart.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Zarathustra, I, 7.

He continues, as quoted earlier, about philosophizing and writing "from peak to peak". Note that Nietzsche intimately connects or identifies spirit, blood, thinking, reading, writing, etc. He writes with blood -- and pumping furiously: each Part was finished in ten days -- that is the pathos of Zarathustra. But the blood Nietzsche wrote Zarathustra with did not pump only in the writer, it is there in his book, in the tempo, in its spiritual purity and severity, and in the structure. Blood is our most vivid image of organic being, a thing structured organically. That is how Zarathustra is structured. It is a complex of "organs", the chapters, each one contributing to the vitality of the whole, and each one being a peculiar relation to each other organ -- that is, each chapter to some extent takes its life and significance from association with each other chapter in the book, and not just from its two contiguous chapters. This structure thereby imparts a particularly vivid life to the thought of Zarathustra. Zarathustra has one blood in common with all its chapters. Kaufmann, quoted earlier, complained that Zarathustra utterly lacks sustained argument. But, certainly, blood (in the sense here under consideration) is the greatest argument. For example, compare the gospels: that they have argued a case with the greatest effect is undeniable. And the gospels' effect is due to the unifying and vivifying blood of Jesus connecting their various units. His blood was his spirit. Nietzsche's blood is, according to

Nietzsche, far more vivifying because it is not the blood of a martyr, and is the spirit of the earth, not heaven. Whereas the Holy Ghost was the advocate (paraclete) of eternal truth, Zarathustra is the advocate of life and eternal recurrence.

E - Is There an Argument in Zarathustra?

After a thorough study of Zarathustra, Kaufmann's complaint is incomprehensible to me, unless he is stressing that Zarathustra just isn't an argument, however coherent, unified, and persuasive that book might otherwise be.

What defines a speech or writing as argument perhaps is ambiguous, but Zarathustra can be defended as argument if appeal is allowed to Aristotle's explanations in the first two chapters of his Rhetoric. However, Aristotle's explanations can be of only limited use, in that they do not clearly anticipate the forms of modern philosophy, and Nietzsche's philosophy is surely one of the most novel of those.

Aristotle first distinguishes the arts of dialectic and rhetoric. The first concerns itself principally with the weighing of evidence, rather than with advocating a case or cause. Rhetoric uses methods analogous to those of dialectic, namely examples and syllogisms, but stresses advocacy of a cause. Thus dialectic pertains to philosophy, while rhetoric to the law. Aristotle then distinguishes rhetoric

into discursive and forensic (judicial).

But already we must distinguish the Nietzschean and Aristotelian notions of philosophy. The life of philosophy for Aristotle would have been a supreme effort to submit the individual's appetites to his reason, and ultimately he advocated that "so far as we can [we] make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us,"⁴⁸ the best thing in us being our power to contemplate the truth. Thus for Aristotle too, man is a bridge, but a bridge to immortality through the intellectual capacity for contemplation. Nietzsche, however, finds will everywhere, even in contemplation, and found it necessary to place will rather than intellect in the supreme position in his metaphysic. Thus Zarathustra calls philosophy a will-to-truth which is one of the most powerful examples of the will-to-power,⁴⁹ and he accuses those philosophers who would see it otherwise -- those of the Platonic-Aristotelian contemplative tradition -- of the will-to-venerate:⁵⁰

⁴⁸Nicomachean Ethics, X, 7. (1177b33).

⁴⁹Zarathustra, II, 12.

⁵⁰Zarathustra, II, 8.

"You want to create the world before which you can kneel: this is your ultimate hope and intoxication".⁵¹ That is, whether you like it or not, philosophers, the world you contemplate is a world you created. And Zarathustra further teaches that philosophy has to do primarily with willing, in the form of evaluating, and secondarily with observing and reasoning. "All life is dispute over taste and tasting! . . . Woe to all living creatures who want to live without dispute over weight and scales and weigher!"⁵²

If Aristotle's distinction between dialectic and rhetoric is re-evaluated in light of the Nietzschean philosophy, then the highest philosophical art of speech and writing will be rhetorical, with a dialectical base. So I can call Zarathustra rhetorical philosophy.

To call Zarathustra rhetorical does not mean that its argument is based only on emotional appeal, however. Forensic rhetoric relies mainly on winning over its audience by playing on their feelings, whereas discursive rhetoric, like dialectic, demonstrates its point. In place of demonstration forensic rhetoric places techniques of emotional persuasion, lawyers' courtroom methods.

But discursive rhetoric relies on enthymeme, an

⁵¹Zarathustra, II, 12.

⁵²Zarathustra, II, 13.

artistic and dialectically incomplete form of syllogism which attempts to make up for its lack of syllogistic completeness by using many examples. Aristotle says that discursive rhetoric will be used in situations where both the arguer and those who will judge his argument are concerned with their common interests, and thus are of a similar frame of mind (whereas in the court room the defence and prosecution have different interests, and the judge must decide in favor of one set of interests against the other).

I think Zarathustra can be taken as an argument, in Aristotle's sense, under the heading of discursive rhetoric. As I have already established in my discussion of Nietzsche's mountain peak imagery, Nietzsche intended Zarathustra for those who had ears to hear it, those who suffered Zarathustra's pathos -- that is, those who, before reading Zarathustra, already shared Zarathustra's hope and experiences. Aristotle said that the links in the chain of discursive rhetorical argument must be few, " -- seldom as many as the links in a normal chain of deductions. Thus, if one of the premises is a matter of common knowledge, the speaker need not mention it, since the hearer will himself supply the link".⁵³ This relates

⁵³ Rhetoric, I, 2 (1357a17).

directly to what I called the "jumpy" structure of the chapters (and of the aphorisms within them) of Zarathustra. Zarathustra everywhere skips links and leaves the premises of his judgements implicit, but that is no argument against Zarathustra's being an argument. Thus Zarathustra is an argument to those who share Nietzsche's perspective: within that perspective it argues or demonstrates, mainly by examples, and it achieves for those who already share its perspective, clarification, coherence, and precision, its goal being to strengthen and inspire the individual wills underlying that common perspective.

But further than that -- and here is one of Nietzsche's great achievements -- the structure of Zarathustra is as much as part of its argument as any of its examples (i.e., themes, images, aphorisms, chapters, etc.). The "jumpy" structure, by juxtaposing the examples it does, demonstrates their coherence within the Zarathustra-perspective, and thereby argues for that perspective and for certain summary formulations of it, Zarathustra's "doctrines", especially Will to Power, The Overman, Eternal Recurrence, and the centrality of ressentiment in European thought patterns.⁵⁴

⁵⁴This is not the place to discuss the coherence theory of truth. But my analysis, above, suggests that that theory may serve as a model at what I called the rhetorical or higher level of the Nietzschean philosophy, while the correspondance theory may or may not apply at the lower, dialectical level.

F - Toward a Structural Understanding of Zarathustra:

"Art Imitates Nature"

The five images examined previously are rich in suggestions of the type of structure Nietzsche would have been led to by his general philosophical direction and by his particular goal in his magnum opus. The images are a little contradictory because originally they were used in diverse contexts and not chosen by Nietzsche to be used together, but by concentrating on their complementary aspects we can see better the literary-philosophical space, atmosphere, and structure he aimed at in Zarathustra.

The mosaic image suggests Zarathustra's structure forms a picture out of many fragments. In a mosaic the fragments have a broad diversity of color, shape, constitution, and the fragments qua fragments demonstrate nothing much until a unifying structure creates a picture out of them. The mosaic image in particular suggests a philosophical unity quite different from the much more typical linear, sequential, and syllogistic structure of most philosophy books.

The spectroscopic or diamond image suggests the brilliance, hardness, and cleanness such a non-linear structure might hope to achieve. Even more than "mosaic" it suggests a dimension, color -- and a broad range of colors, that the normal linear structure couldn't possibly

attain. Both the mosaic and diamond images are keys to Nietzsche's so-called "style of decadence", in which Nietzsche, like Zarathustra, goes down into the modern fragmentary style and overcomes its fragmentariness by turning the fragments into a mosaic, or showing them to be the many facets of one diamond. Part I of Zarathustra most conveniently illustrates the philosophical unity of content and structure in Zarathustra in terms of these images, since its theme is "integrity" as such. The weakness of this type of image is that Nietzsche's unifying theme can be read in each chapter, if not in each aphorism, whereas you can't tell the picture from just looking at a fragment of a mosaic.

The bridge or cross-over image, and those like it, suggest a linear component in Zarathustra's structure not suggested so much by any of the others. (There is a linear component in Nietzsche's structural concept of Zarathustra, but unlike normal philosophical writing, it does not dominate the structural concept.) While each of the Parts of Zarathustra can be seen as mosaic pictures, the whole book, and especially Parts I to III (which were originally published as a whole without Part IV), must be seen as a progression: from Zarathustra's teaching of the Overman, through Part I's analysis of the various aspects of fragmentariness, to the overcoming of fragmentariness in will-to-power, which becomes the theme of Part II. That theme in turn suggests eternal recurrence of the same, and that becomes the theme of Part III,

which ends in a fuller grasp of the meaning of the Overman.

The images of philosophizing from mountain peaks, and jumping from peak to peak, again suggests a collection of fragments (peaks with cold space between them), but also the overcoming of their fragmentariness. The chapters, and possibly even the aphorisms, are seen through this image as vantage points and experiments. Thus Zarathustra's fragmentary or jumpy structure itself teaches that the philosophy of the future must be superficially decadent, but overcoming its decadence via its experimentalism. The mountain peaks image is closely related to Nietzsche's image of doing philosophy as one would take a cold swim, quickly in, quickly out.

But most suggestive and vivid is the organic image of Nietzsche's blood. The linear, though diverse, flow of blood provides a link with the bridge image. But the further suggestion of the organic life that blood nourishes makes this image comprehend and even go beyond the mosaic image. Whereas the fragments of the mosaic form a picture, parts formed in an organic unity create life and suggest further creation. And while the parts of a mosaic serve only the whole, organs, through their common blood link, directly serve both the whole and many or all the other individual organs as such.

These images thus suggest how the structure of Zarathustra is an integral unity with the content or message of Zarathustra, and that the argument of Zarathustra

is in large part to be discovered in the structure of the content. That is, the structure, even if abstracted from the other stylistic elements and also from any "content", teaches that the philosophy of the future can and must overcome modern spiritual disintegration -- fragmentedness, nihilism, decadence -- by first incorporating it materially and spiritually and turning it into a unity. Further, this message of will-to-integrity is at once the thematic concept of the philosophical content of the whole Nietzschean philosophy, and of the structure of Zarathustra: thus the material and ideal elements of the Nietzschean philosophy, as expressed in its central book, are united in one concept. To speak as Hegel: in Zarathustra, for the first time in written philosophy, the material and ideal polarities are self-consciously and materially "aufgehoben" because of the conceptual identity of its literary structure and its philosophical content. The meaning of this unique overcoming is the meaning of Nietzsche's whole philosophy, the overcoming of dualism, a dualism that transfixed the European mind in the form of the Platonic-Christian metaphysic, insinuating the good-evil duality into the idea of Being; and the reassertion of a unified appreciation for life and becoming within the idea of Being. Platonism, and its popularized form, Christianity, had moralized metaphysics and turned "Being" and "the Good" into concepts of total ressentiment against moral and

physiological vitality and becoming.⁵⁵ The conceptual unity of structure and argument in Zarathustra can be seen then as a successful experiment in overcoming ressentiment.

This is why when Nietzsche summarizes his whole life and work in the last chapter of his autobiography, "Why I Am a Destiny", he refers again and again to Zarathustra. I must quote him at length.

I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name of Zarathustra means in my mouth, the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous historical uniqueness of that Persian is just the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to consider the fight of good and evil the very wheel in the machinery of things: the transposition of morality into the metaphysical realm, as a force, cause, and end in itself is his work. But the question itself is at bottom its own answer. Zarathustra created this most calamitous error, morality; consequently, he must also be the first to recognize it. Not only has he more experience in this matter, for a longer time, than any other thinker -- after all, the whole of history is the refutation by experiment of the principle of the so-called "moral world order" -- what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His doctrine, and his alone, posits truthfulness as the highest virtue; this means the opposite of the cowardice of the "idealist" who flees from reality -- Am I understood? -- The self-overcoming of morality, out of truthfulness; the self-overcoming of the moralist, into his opposite -- into me -- that is what the name of Zarathustra means in my mouth.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The Anti-Christ is the primary source on the Platonic-Christian moralization and dualization of metaphysics.

⁵⁶ Ecce Homo, "Why I Am a Destiny", 3.

.....
Definition of morality: Morality -- the
 idiosyncrasy of decadents, with the ulterior
 motive revenging oneself against life --
 successfully.⁵⁷

.....
 Have I been understood? -- I have not
 said one word here that I did not say five
 years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra.⁵⁸

.....
 Have I been understood? -- Dionysus
versus the Crucified. -- 59

This theme was adumbrated by Hölderlin,⁶⁰ and has been
 continued mainly by Heidegger. But Nietzsche gave it its
 first thorough working-out, and Zarathustra is his central
 statement of the problem and its solution.

It was the original analysis of the blood image that
 led to demonstrating that Zarathustra constitutes a proper
 philosophical argument, like the type of argument called
 discursive-rhetorical by Aristotle in the Rhetoric. This
 recapitulation and interrelating of the five images has in
 turn tended to confirm the conclusion I drew then, that
 because of its organic structure Zarathustra can proceed

⁵⁷ Ecce Homo, "Why I Am a Destiny", 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁰ Hölderlin, Hyperion, 30th letter, quoting Heraclitus.

as a peculiar form of philosophical argument without making its syllogisms explicit in a linear manner. All things considered, what Zarathustra might lack in programmatic clarity it more than makes up for by its organic structure. And only the latter structure can directly grapple with modern decadence since it is superficially similar enough to its fragmentariness to incorporate it, yet is itself a principle of reintegration and thus overcomes the fragmentariness it incorporates. The philosophical vitality of this structural method, a vitality that overcomes the sickness within itself, is mirrored in one of Nietzsche's autobiographical statements: "Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite. My proof for this is, among other things, that I have always instinctively chosen the right means against wretched states; while the decadent typically chooses means that are disadvantageous for him". When Nietzsche was physically sickest, he continues, "I turned my will to health, to life, into a philosophy".⁶¹ This is the meaning of overcoming, in Nietzsche's life, and in the structure of Zarathustra.

In writing his major work Nietzsche instinctively chose the right means to philosophize against decadence and for health. His means was a style that imparted vitality,

⁶¹Ecce Homo, "Why I Am So Wise", 2.

and its basis was an organic structure. Nietzsche's art in Zarathustra clearly "imitates nature", that is, the natural structure of life rather than the teleological, linear, syllogistic, goal or conclusion-oriented structure hitherto characteristic of European philosophy.

Structure, in any literature, including the literature of philosophy, is the structure of probabilities that are designed to convince the reader. In the simpler and more conventional style of written philosophy, probabilities are more antecedently explicit, and the pure form of such linear explicitness is the syllogism. But probability in nature is not antecedently explicit; at least in its larger course -- e.g., we know the leaves will fall off the trees again next autumn, but we have no idea of the future evolution of the maple tree -- probability in nature only becomes explicit in a backward glance, such as Darwin's, and in the case of human nature, Nietzsche's. If a style is to capture a relatively more natural structure, rather than a relatively more syllogistic one, -- as I have, in this essay, seen in Zarathustra in my backward glance -- then it must involve the reader in a web of natural implications which will be instinctively identified with through natural, and most likely unconscious, sympathy. A philosophy that can be described with this more "organic" structure is ipso facto more firmly grounded -- if it desires to be grounded on this earth rather than in some ideal world. Because of its organic

structure, Zarathustra is supremely credible and influential for those readers who are prepared to share Nietzsche's this-worldly perspective.

Zarathustra teaches that the philosophy of the future, if it is to overcome the dualism of transcendence versus immanence that has in principle died with the Platonic-Christian God, must formulate itself, i.e., structure itself as thought, questioning, experimenting, and teaching, in organic unity with and organic illustration of its doctrines. Zarathustra is Nietzsche's greatest work, and far more important than even his later writings, because it is a triumph of organic unity in written philosophy, a type of unity that had previously been possible only in non-philosophical literature -- and, of course, Nietzsche's achievement further obscures the distinction between literature and philosophy. Sartre, for example, noticed this and his written philosophy is a melange of novels and plays on the one hand, and philosophical treatises on the other. But only Nietzsche so far has succeeded in combining high literary achievement with philosophy in one concept and work.

If there is any further basic obscurity as to the meaning of the organic structural unity of Zarathustra, compare it to any of the major philosophies and theologies in which a matter-form, subject-properties, or analogous

distinction is radically important. The very structure of Zarathustra is implicitly saying of the "idealistic" philosophies that because they teach a transcendent Good, God, Truth, or Spirit, in their written form the discursive and teleological has to dominate any suggestion of the organic, for the former linear structure alone is able to suggest transcendence of sensible nature, its linearity pointing to something beyond sensible experience. Nietzsche said that all former philosophies were based on resentment of the natural, essentially time conditioned world, and their linear structures bear this out.

G - Recapitulation: An Overview of the Structure of Zarathustra

The first three Parts of Zarathustra were published as a unit by Nietzsche. Part IV was to be the first of a three-part addition, but no more was written. There is a unity between Part IV and the first three Parts, but not as strong a unity as among the three.

Part I begins with a long prologue in ten sections, and the rest of Part I contains twenty-two chapters.

"Zarathustra's Prologue" is a sea full of images -- I counted twenty-three images, themes, symbols or personifications in its first three sections alone -- and this generosity with images is a clue. Section 1 of the prologue keynotes the book: Zarathustra is forced by history to be a solitary,

and he enjoys his destiny, but he grows weary of the wisdom of his solitude and must descend from his cave and teach it, teach the Overman. Zarathustra is overfull, and he spills over by inner necessity. That is his down-going and his generosity. Zarathustra's nature is to love, to give himself, and he is commanded by his own overfulness, not by an external law -- his love is beyond good and evil. Zarathustra's generosity is the one theme uniting all four Parts.

Zarathustra goes down, and going down soon meets a hermit of the old religion. The hermit personifies the "higher men" that will be the subject of Part IV. But in the prologue Zarathustra goes down past him to the rabble, where he first teaches the Overman and his opposite, the Ultimate Man. But he finds that was a mistake, the rabble are so far from Zarathustra's perspective that he has nothing in common with them, as he had with the hermit. From this episode the main part of Zarathustra is characterized as a teaching of the Overman and the way to him, on the one hand, and of the Ultimate Man and the way to him on the other, but taught to those caught in the middle, the higher men, who aspire to nobility but who are pulled by the decadence of rabble-virtues to despair of their noble aspirations.

"Zarathustra's Prologue" and Part IV, especially its last chapter, frame Nietzsche's main philosophical development in Parts I to III. This development is quite clear -- at least in the "backward glance" I spoke of above --

although it goes unrecognized in English language Nietzsche scholarship. The clue to the nature of the development of the teaching is further given in the first chapter of Part I, and the last chapter of Part IV. In the former Zarathustra names the three metamorphoses of the spirit: camel, lion, and child. In the later, he is joined by a lion as his new companion. Zarathustra had gotten to his peak by climbing, as a camel, with the burden of all past philosophy on his back. On his peak he enjoyed his overfullness for a time, but then is overcome by it, and, lion-like, descends from his lair to teach his overcoming to those below. In Zarathustra's last Chapter, Zarathustra turns away from the higher men and is met by a lion -- Nietzsche's "blond beast" -- who recognizes Zarathustra as if he, Zarathustra, were a lion and not a man.

The special theme marking Part I off as a unity is integrity, or the overcoming of the fragmentation of the modern spirit. Zarathustra's teaching proceeds mainly by contrasts, as he parodies conventional virtues and truths and shows up their hollow pretentiousness, lack of vitality, and "incomplete nihilism". At the tenth chapter, where themes of war and the state are brought in, Zarathustra starts to teach how to safeguard one's integrity amidst disintegration, and here we find the hint that the way to integrity is will-to-power -- but that such a will is more an obeying of oneself

than a commanding of others. The last chapter, "Of the Bestowing Virtue", clarifies the overall theme of Zarathustra's generosity.

Will-to-power was suggested by Part I, and becomes the unifying theme of Part II. Part II begins with Zarathustra realizing his teaching on integrity is endangered, and so he teaches integrity through will-to-power, emphasizing will-to-power rather than integrity in this Part. He teaches will-to-power also largely by contrasts, e.g., contrasting it to the scholar's will-to-venerate. In chapter 19, "The Prophet", the notion of the eternal recurrence of the same is suggested, anticipating Part III and linking Parts II and III, as Parts I and II had been linked when the will-to-power doctrine was anticipated in Part I.

Part III enunciates the doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same -- to believe in eternal recurrence, the most abysmal thought, is the greatest will-to-power of a lion-destiny. After announcing this doctrine in the second chapter, Zarathustra returns to the theme of integrity and will, but now in the light of his ultimate truth. The three-Part unity is concluded in chapters 13-16, starting with "The Convalescent", and they depict Zarathustra's final grappling with his abysmal thought in a final victory. "Of the Great Longing", chapter 14, is perhaps the most important chapter of the book, but its importance cannot be seen until the whole book is ruminated and understood as an organic

whole.⁶²

Zarathustra's philosophy reaches its climax in Part III. Part IV, like "Zarathustra's Prologue", is to be seen, as I said earlier, as part of the frame around the main three Parts. It takes an idea from what went before, pity, and makes it its theme -- but pity for the higher men, which is evidently Zarathustra's and Nietzsche's most persistent temptation. Again the piercing pathos of Zarathustra: Nietzsche's longing for companions, an impossible longing because he is too high above even the higher men. Part IV is particularly striking coming as it does after all that Zarathustra had achieved earlier; even after mastering his most abysmal thought and his great longing, still he is tempted by the higher man. Part IV concludes Zarathustra's teaching as the passion narrative concludes Jesus' teaching in the gospels.

The structure of the argument of Zarathustra can be seen, briefly, in the light of the mosaic image (for example). The first Part of Zarathustra is the first mosaic, its theme is integrity versus fragmentariness. The second mosaic-Part: the overcoming of this decadence by will is the unifying theme. The third: the essence of will to power

⁶²Heidegger, loc. cit., p. 417, points this out and comments on it.

is illustrated by its hardest and most powerful and typical act, the willing of eternal recurrence of the same. The final mosaic Part establishes a realistic context of the experience of the foregoing argument, namely, the constant battle with pity, especially pity for one's would be companions, as the context for achieving spiritual integrity through will-to-eternal recurrence.

There is, certainly, a unity to the argument of Zarathustra, and it is expressed in the intertwining of several modes of its unity. The most overt, explicit unity is Zarathustra himself. Secondly, it is the sequence of aphorisms and chapters all illustrating the same theme within each Part. Thirdly, it is the binding together of these with an intertwining imagery-structure so that aphorisms and chapters that are not contiguous or even in the same Part still imply and clarify one another -- thus Zarathustra is bound together by a network of implication which will cause the ruminative reader to look forward and back within Zarathustra from any given point. Fourthly, it is the unity of logical implication among the imagery and teachings. For example, the doctrine of eternal recurrence implies Zarathustra's descent and ascent, and also implies the doctrine of will-to-power, will-to-power as a will to live the generous ascending-descending rhythm of life. And fifthly and finally, these four modes of unity are themselves unified in the concept of the Overman.

But the Overman is not, in the strict sense, an ideal -- that is, imparting ultimate meaning from outside (human) nature, having a purely spiritual nature himself. The structure of Zarathustra is "organic", an imitation of nature, as I have already argued, and Nietzsche's argument for the Overman is grounded on that natural foundation. And such a structure for such a doctrine is fitting and even necessary. The Overman is the suprahistorical educator and image of man promised in The Use and Disadvantage of History for Life and in Schopenhauer as Educator, but he transcends history by overcoming resentment of it, not by existing above and outside it. Zarathustra is a successful philosophical-literary unity because its central doctrine, the Overman, is homologous with its organic structure. The structure of the argument for the Overman is its most convincing demonstration: it demonstrates that a noble "ideal" can be united to a material base, on its (material) terms. The structure is, basically, the only argument in Zarathustra.

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NOTE:

For the notion that a peculiar structure sets up a corresponding atmosphere, and for a spatial rather than linear notion of literary structure, I am indebted especially to:

Knight, G. Wilson. The Wheel of Fire. London: Methuen, 1962. (original edition Oxford University Press, 1930), chapter I,

and also to:

Goodman, Paul. The Structure of Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954, chapter I.

I consulted many other books and articles in preparing this essay which I haven't cited because they did not contribute to the solution of the specific problem under consideration. Among those I consulted translations and commentaries on the Avesta and the Gathas of Zarathustra, but I did not pursue structural comparisons of them and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, as being beyond the scope of this essay, perhaps beyond my competence, and perhaps irrelevant. However, I want to call attention to one especially thought provoking exegesis comparing the original and modern Zarathustras:

Assaad-Mikhaïl, Fawzia. "Zarathoustra interprète de Zarathoustra", Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 74^e année, no. 2 (avril-juin 1969), 161-200.