

Alexandra Simon

Nietzsche

27 February 2020

A Poetic Analysis of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

On the Sheep and Shepherd

“The overman shall be the meaning of the earth,” the overman is the most creative, the most free from impurities, the most free from good and evil. An analogy of Man is that he is a rope stretching from animal to *ubermensch*, or overman or superman, one who is constantly in practice of reaching his final form, with constant hints of self-sacrifice in order to find the final form, the final self, and this is “his ongoing.” And “his downgoing” will be whatever he places as his cornerstone, wherever he places his passion and love, like the rope dancer’s joy and pride in danger. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

There is another analogy where there lives both a shepherd and a herd as a representation of the master and the slave morality. To expand this would give more justice to the beauty in the symbolism. Imagine a field in which there is a large herd of white sheep, baaing and eating their grass. And there stands the herd’s shepherd with the crook of his staff curving over the arch of the sun’s warm rays. In order to master the craft of shepherding, the shepherd (or shepherdess) must learn how to control his herd—with either the use of his staff or his love, with it whatever it may be in order to teach his herd obedience. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

The herd can be found a slave to many things, the most dangerous of which is that of another's shepherd. Commonly, sheep want to eat all of their grass, have the cleanest coat, bed all of the ewes, and this will become their highest calling. At times this herd can be distracted from their vice and can be tamed to listen and play well with each other. But there are other moments in which the shepherd cannot reach his flock, no matter how hard or loud he cries, how angrily or how nicely, no matter the sound or movement the shepherd makes—his herd cannot hear him. For they are distracted by another man giving them better food, better baths, better love. This is a paramount point in which the sheep of one herd can join another, a much larger flock that feasts in its ruler's field. Ready to hang his staff, the shepherd now has lost his herd and has nothing to herd, he is the master of nothing. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Small distractions here and there can be good for the shepherd, it is they that remind him how to act and how to lead his sheep. If he sees two rams trying to start a conflict, he remembers what he was taught: if it is a game then let them play, but if it is not then do not let it continue. The shepherd controls his herd with care and grace, as he knows they own nothing onto him. It is he that owes them the teachings of obedience, of rationale, of poise. Similarly to that of a father with his children, the sheep must be taught time and time again, in order to understand that they must follow suit. Patience is required in the shepherd, he will need to remind himself that sheep care nothing of rationality. And without patience, one can lose the original goal altogether. After long, more distractible sights can become smaller and smaller as the shepherd and herd learn to coincide with their duties, even some sheep can nip at others to keep them in accords. It is here when the shepherd and herd are together thinking as one, that the field can carry harmony and all will feel satisfied. This is the supershepherd. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

The supershepherd has taught obedience to his sheep, even when he is not there they still follow his direction. Steering clear of what problems brought them their most amount of joy, in ties with their most amount of suffering; need no longer do they stress about these things. For they know their shepherd has them taken care of, he takes heed for his herd for blinds them of otherworldly things. As if the shepherd has found a bearded collie, who sweetly rounds up the sheep and plays with them while the shepherd takes his leave to find more. The shepherd knows his herd can only grow larger if he shows other sheep what he has adopted. And in creating this new world for himself, he is also ready to master another craft. Thus spoke Zarathustra.