Nietzsche's Zarathustra: An Internal-External Dialectic Representing the Rediscovered Self of Modern Man

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Abstract

Nietzsche's Zarathustra embodies modern man's endogenous quest, instead of an exogenous one, to rediscover his self as a dynamic balance between opposites, an internal-external dialectic. On a deeper and more psychological level, Zarathustra not only provides a genuine insight into the dilemma of the human condition but also portrays an exorcising power, helping us overcome the ontological predicament of our own human existence.

The first section of this paper will deal with the spiritual dilemma of modern man and the fundamental contradictions lying in the self. The second section will be concerned with Nietzsche's use of parody as a reflection of the self dialectic. The third section will delineate Zarathustra as the rediscovered self, an exorcising power on the ontological predicament of human existence. As a matter of fact, Zarathustra embodies an integration/reconciliation of Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives, that is, the opposites within the self. In other words, Zarathustra represents a dynamic organism, an internal-external dialectic.
I. Introduction

Exploring the many kinds of human experience and ways to self-realization, Zarathustra in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* seeks a way to believe in himself rather than in the outward God, since he claims that *God is dead*. Through the manipulation of the rhetorical device of "parody" which possesses a dialectical nature, Nietzsche subtly dissolves, absorbs, and transforms the traditional Christian God and Platonic Ideas to fit into a new context of a pantheistic religious system, that of the modern era. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Christian salvation has been replaced by the affirmation of man’s potentiality for progress which is exemplified in "the overman," and by the affirmation of life as the ultimate meaning of human existence, embodied in "the will to power" and "the eternal recurrence." Human life thus becomes "a purposeful unfolding from within" rather than "the passive consequence of forces, natural or divine, from without" (Clarke 144).

In fact, Zarathustra illustrates modern man’s endogenous quest, rather than exogenous one; the former attempts to rediscover his self as a dynamic balance between opposites, an internal-external dialectic, and the latter is controlled by outward religious faith and materialism. Therefore, on a deeper and more psychological level, Zarathustra not only provides a genuine insight into the dilemma of the human condition but also portrays an exorcising power, helping us overcome the ontological predicament of our own human existence.

The first section of this paper then will deal with the spiritual dilemma of modern man and the fundamental contradictions lying in the self. The second section will be concerned with the dialectical, self-critical process which Zarathustra embodies. The
rhetorical device of "parody" provides a ready vehicle by which we may penetrate to the psychological inner "self," since both parody and the self possess a dialectical nature. The third section will discuss Zarathustra as a rediscovered self who has transformative/exorcising power in the spiritual dilemma of modern man. In terms of Jung's conception of the psyche and the process of individuation, Zarathustra actually embodies an integration/reconciliation of Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives, that is, the opposites within the self. Therefore, Zarathustra represents a dynamic organism, an internal-external dialectic.

II. The Spiritual Dilemma of Modern Man

The crux of modern man's spiritual crisis has been the problem of "fragmentation, specialization, one-sidedness, estrangement, and lack of the sort of psycho-cultural unity which the Ancient Greeks supposedly possessed" (Jung, CW6 101). "The 'lovely veil' of psychic unity which characterizes Catholic medieval Europe" (Clarke 156) has been torn down by the rise of modern science which has destroyed all traditional myths and metaphysical certainties, and has turned our attention from the outward spiritual world to the material one. However, this attempt to rebuild certainty through modern science is doomed to fail since the invention of the industrial culture represents the creation of a small cosmos which obeys only the human will and gives man a false impression that Nature is under his control.

Therefore, both authentic religious doctrines and modern scientific practices deepen the inner disharmony of the individual because they have deprived him of the capacity for self-realization. They serve only as personae, masks of "the collective psyche," that
"feigns individuality, making others and oneself believe that one is an individual, whereas one is simply acting a role" (Jung, CW7 245). They provide opportunities for the individual to "escape the burden of individuality and freedom, by adopting a rigid and socially contrived pattern of behavior" (Clarke 157). Therefore, the return to the spiritual needs of the individual, to the rediscovery of the self will be the most effective remedy for the "overvaluation of consciousness, a characteristic feature . . . of modern Western civilization with its inordinate faith in science and rationality" (Clarke 159).

Self-analysis, insight, and growth toward his highest psychic potential are the ways for modern man to transcend control by outward religious faith and materialism. Hence, it becomes an inevitable and indispensable tendency to turn from the exogenous to the endogenous, from the outward to the inward path, if modern man will rediscover his self as a dynamic balance between opposites.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra serves as a mirror through which modern man can understand his insecurity, forlornness, and fragmentation and revive the harmonious interactions between the conscious and the unconscious spheres of his psyche, so that he can feel a sense of wholeness, a sense of certainty, and a sense of self.

"New civilizations are often able to face challenges because they have a living myth (an ideal, philosophy, or religion) to guide them. However, when this dominant myth weakens and loses its effectiveness, then the nation faces a time of troubles." (Gunter 209)

It is this transitional uncertain period in which Zarathustra/Nietzsche is situated:

"At such a juncture, according to Toynbee's reading of world events, men and women here and there turn from the macrocosm of the outer world to the microcosm of the human psyche." (Gunter 209, emphasis added)

This relationship between macrocosm and microcosm reminds us of Plato's sun/cave
one in *The Republic*, in which the sun symbolizes rationality/consciousness and the cave
passion/unconsciousness. Besides, Nietzsche’s Apollo and Dionysus also reflect this
contrast, since Apollo represents the illusion of self-identity and Dionysus the
disillusion/chaos of the self. Therefore, "when Zarathustra was thirty years old he left
his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains" (Nietzsche 121).
However, after ten years’ retreat from human society, one morning he decided to step
out of the mountain cave and embrace the sunlight again:

"... after their psychic withdrawal into the unconscious, they return 'transfig-
ured in a new capacity and with new powers.'" (Gunter 210)

Zarathustra then felt an urge to "descend to the depths," just as the star which goes be-
hind the sea and brings light to the underworld. He is going down among the common
people, just as the sun sets into the darkness. Nevertheless, the sun sets in order to
rise, to be reborn again the next morning. Therefore, Zarathustra is exemplifying a
model for man’s spiritual rebirth. It is a pattern of individual rebirth through
descent/withdrawal, whether external or internal:

"Before any great task that begins a new life and calls upon untried character,
the need seems to arise for some introversion of the mind upon itself and
upon its past--a plunging into the depth, to gain knowledge and power over
self and destiny." (Bodkin 124-125)

This descent suggests an exploration into the mysterious realm of the devil--the uncon-
scious side of our inner psyche--and symbolizes a confrontation between opposite forces.
It is a preparatory stage for man’s maturity, a bridge between past and future, a realm
full of spiritual torments which man has to undergo in order to gain rebirth. This re-
birth then implies the successful transformation of destructive powers into a positive
impetus, and rebuilds an autonomous, dynamic organism as the rediscovered self.
Therefore, the self is by nature an internal-external dialectic which suffers from the discord and conflict of opposites. These fundamental contradictions within the self are embodied by Zarathustra in various aspects.

First of all, when Zarathustra declares that he is going down among men "once again to be a man," the mountain represents the realm of the spirit, and the lowlands the realm of the body. However, Zarathustra's objective--to communicate with others throughout the whole book--never succeeds. He fails early in his efforts to communicate with the circus crowd. And at the end of the book he even fails to communicate with his own disciples.

Besides, Zarathustra also demonstrates the fundamental conflicts within the self. Zarathustra's animals, the eagle and the serpent, represent the divided nature of man: the former is the creature of the upper air, whereas the latter is the one which moves closest to the earth. They symbolizes heaven and earth, good and evil, and constructive and destructive powers respectively. Therefore, Zarathustra becomes a dualistic dialectic and embodies an on-going process of becoming.

Another revelation of Zarathustra's inner conflict appears in the chapter "On the Vision and the Riddle" of Part Three. A dwarf sits on Zarathustra's shoulder as he climbs a mountain path. Zarathustra wants to go upward but the dwarf wants to pull him back to the earth. Zarathustra says to himself:

"Upward--defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward--although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain." (Nietzsche 268)

However, the dwarf whispered mockingly:

"O Zarathustra, you philosopher's stone! You threw yourself up high, but ev-
ery stone that is thrown must fall. . . . You threw yourself up so high; but ev-
ery stone that is thrown must fall." (Nietzsche 268)
The dwarf is the image of the devil that dwells within Zarathustra/Nietzsche. It sym-
bolizes the shadowy, diabolic side of human nature. In this same chapter, the image of
a young shepherd with a heavy black snake hanging out of his mouth also illustrates
man’s inner contradiction. Zarathustra cried out "Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!" The
shepherd "bit with a good bite. Far away he spewed the head of the snake—and he
jumped up. No longer shepherd, no longer human—one changed, radiant, laughing!"
(Nietzsche 271) The serpent, like the dwarf, represents thedestructive force within the
self. The biting therefore implies the conquest of the bestial side of human nature and
the successful transformation of the destructive power into a positive impetus. However, the shepherd did not swallow the head; instead he spit it out. This action
implies the rejection of the underside of human nature. On this point, I do not agree
with William Barrett’s view that this action suggests a "fatal flaw" in "Nietzsche’s utopi-
an conception of the Superman" (Barrett 196). If the shepherd swallows the serpent,
that means a final consummation of opposite forces within the self. Yet the serpent is
spit out because the dialectical tension is necessarily preserved always, since the self has
to open to an on-going dialectical process of becoming.

III. Nietzsche’s Use of Parody as a Reflection of the
Dialectic of the Self

"Parody" is the most appropriate starting point to decipher the dialectical and am-
bivalent aspects in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Parody is a prominent rhetorical device
which serves to solve the fundamental contradictions of self/world because parody in itself is ambivalent—"it mocks and imitates at one and the same moment" (Esslin 230). Therefore, in imitating the traditional canon, a parody criticizes the conventions at the same time. In constructing a character, parody at the same moment provides an excellent vehicle through which the character can comment on himself/herself, that is, exert a self-critical function.

This dual nature of parody thus reflects the basic human conflict between inside and outside, between the soul and the body, between reason and instinct. The self is by nature a dialectic which suffers from the discord and conflicts of opposites. Therefore, it is not untenable to suggest that parody with its dualistic mocking-imitating nature, may embody an exploration of the inner self. Parody in rhetorical terms and the self in psychological terms both involve a dialectical process which is based on a never-ending power relation among anti-thesis, thesis, and synthesis in Hegel's terms. This never-ending power relation between opposites suggests an on-going, infinite dialectical process of change. It is through the delineation of this dialectic that Nietzsche's Zarathustra gives a genuine insight into the dilemma of the human condition. For man is doomed to suffer from the conflict between opposites and the discord between extremes.

Not only does parody reflect the dialectical nature of the self, but its dual nature also functions as an introspective debate on the problem of human existence. Nietzsche's portrait of Zarathustra actually parodies Christ and Socrates and therefore deconstructs the Platonic-Christian tradition. Zarathustra's parody of Christ is apparent at the beginning of the prologue: "When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it" (Nietzsche 121). This description reminds
us of the thirty-year-old Christ. He withdrew from human society and wandered in the desert, but returned to fulfill his mission which led to his death at the age of thirty-three. Although Zarathustra resembles Christ, he differentiates himself from his Christian model at the same time. Like Christ, he withdrew from human society and meditated on the problem of human existence while in solitude, and then returned to the society to teach the common people what he had discovered. But Zarathustra is different from Christ in that he preaches the death of God and a continuous process of self-overcoming or rebirth instead of death as prerequisite for rebirth in Heaven.

Zarathustra's flight from his community, from the sun into the cave, is an inversion of Socrates' myth of the cave in which the true philosopher undergoes a movement from the cave to the sunlight. Although Zarathustra finally decides to step out from the mountain cave to the sunlight again, his easy acceptance of the sunlight is totally different from the perplexing effect it has on him when the philosopher for the first time looks at the sunlight. Thus darkness and sunlight can exist within the character of Zarathustra. They are both indispensable in constructing a whole man. However, in the classical model, Socrates seems to praise the sun, the symbol of reason, and to despise the sensual side of human nature.

Through his parodic attack on Christ and Socrates, Nietzsche not only broadens the horizon of our problematic human existence but also satirizes Christianity and Platonism, since "Christianity and Platonism offered the individual a sense that the activities of this life were meaningful by referring them to unchanging realities outside life" (Higgins 134). What Nietzsche intends in the portrait of Zarathustra is, in contrast, the emphasis on the balance between the otherworldly existence and the mundane existence which has been repressed in the Christian and Platonic tradition.
IV. Zarathustra as the Rediscovered Self, an Exorcising Power, helping us overcome the Ontological Predicament of Our Own Human Existence

Zarathustra's problematical journey brings about spiritual regeneration and self-awareness which catalyzes the birth of a new life. Instead of outward succor, this spiritual regeneration requires the retreat into one's inner world, the withdrawal into the psychological exploration of the self. This withdrawal represents a problematic middle period, "the dilation of being" (Parker 54). In Neo-platonic terms, it is "the 'Emanation' of being, its procession out from, and its return to, the Source or the One" (Parker 57). In Christian terms, it corresponds to the time between First and Second Coming. This uncertain interval of searching for self-realization corresponds to the process of individuation in Jung's psychology:

"Individuation, in Jung's psychology, is precisely the realization of ego with the Self archetype. Parallel with this insight is the realization of the new life or rebirth in which all oppositional elements in the personality, such as good and evil, are seen to be parts of a transcendent, integrated unity. This condition, if realized, creates, in effect, a 'union of opposites.'" (French 175)

After the loss of the old self which is based upon outward certainty, the dark exploration into one's inner world is an indispensable prerequisite for rediscovering a new self which is built upon the reintegration of the external and the internal.

Zarathustra precisely embodies the integration/reconciliation of Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives in Nietzsche's conception, the opposites within the self:
"The Apollonian perspective is sunlike, portraying the world as an orderly whole that can be clearly understood by the human mind. Because the world is orderly, the individual can use his rational faculties to orient himself within it. On Nietzsche’s view, the Dionysian perspective offers a more faithful but darker portrait of individual existence. It shows life as a tumultuous flux that has no ultimate respect for anything individual or orderly, although this flux is the substratum of every individual life." (Higgins 136)

Nevertheless, the combination of the Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives within Zarathustra does not make him a fixed character. On the contrary, he is always learning from his errors and his inner idiosyncrasies. In other words, he becomes a dialectic, a dynamic organism.

V. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we see that Zarathustra provides a genuine insight into the dilemma of the human condition and portrays an exorcising power which can help us overcome the ontological predicament of human existence. Self-analysis, insight, and growth toward his highest psychic potential—"going under" in order to "go over"—are the ways for modern man to transcend his control by outward religious faith and materialism, by society and history. Hence, man must turn from his exogenous to the endogenous in order to rediscover his self as a dynamic balance between opposites. And Nietzsche’s Zarathustra embodies this endogenous formative process, this process of growth through self-overcoming, self-creation.
Works Cited


尼采筆下的查拉圖斯特：呈現現代人重拾自我的「內在－－外在」辯證體

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摘要

尼采筆下的查拉圖斯特具體表現了現代人的內在追尋，而非向外探索，以重拾其內在衝突的動態平衡，亦即一「內在－－外在」的辯證體。更進一步從心理的層次來看，查拉圖斯特不僅深刻洞察人類存在的處境，並且在人類生存的本體論困境中扮演一種驅魔避邪的力量。

本文擬從三方面來探討這個問題。第一部分將論及現代人的精神困境及自我內在的根本矛盾。第二部分著重在尼采如何運用修辭上的諷喻技巧作為自我辯證體的反射。第三部分則描述查拉圖斯特為一重拾之自我，亦即現代人生存的本體論困境中之驅魔避邪的力量。事實上查拉圖斯特也就是尼采的阿波羅及戴奧尼修斯二觀點的重新整合，也就是對自我內在衝突的重新統合。換句話說，查拉圖斯特代表一種動態的有機體，一個融鑄綜合與分析的辯證體。