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Book 3 – 50 – On The Olive Mount

[3_50:1] Winter, a bad guest, sitteth with me at home; blue are my hands with his friendly hand-shaking.

[3_50:2] I honour him, that bad guest, but gladly leave him alone. Gladly do I run away from him; and when one runneth WELL, then one escapeth him!

[3_50:3] With warm feet and warm thoughts do I run where the wind is calm—to the sunny corner of mine olive-mount.

[3_50:4] There do I laugh at my stern guest, and am still fond of him; because he cleareth my house of flies, and quieteth many little noises.

[3_50:5] For he suffereth it not if a gnat wanteth to buzz, or even two of them; also the lanes maketh he lonesome, so that the moonlight is afraid there at night.

[3_50:6] A hard guest is he,—but I honour him, and do not worship, like the tenderlings, the pot-bellied fire-idol.

[3_50:7] Better even a little teeth-chattering than idol-adoration!—so willeth my nature. And especially have I a grudge against all ardent, steaming, steamy fire-idols.

[3_50:8] Him whom I love, I love better in winter than in summer; better do I now mock at mine enemies, and more heartily, when winter sitteth in my house.

[3_50:9] Heartily, verily, even when I CREEP into bed—: there, still laugheth and wantoneth my hidden happiness; even my deceptive dream laugheth.

[3_50:10] I, a—creeper? Never in my life did I creep before the powerful; and if ever I lied, then did I lie out of love. Therefore am I glad even in my winter-bed.

[3_50:11] A poor bed warmeth me more than a rich one, for I am jealous of my poverty. And in winter she is most faithful unto me.

[3_50:12] With a wickedness do I begin every day: I mock at the winter with a cold bath: on that account grumbleth my stern house-mate.

[3_50:13] Also do I like to tickle him with a wax-taper, that he may finally let the heavens emerge from ashy-grey twilight.

[3_50:14] For especially wicked am I in the morning: at the early hour when the pail rattleth at the well, and horses neigh warmly in grey lanes:—

[3_50:15] Impatiently do I then wait, that the clear sky may finally dawn for me, the snow-bearded winter-sky, the hoary one, the whitehead,—

[3_50:16] —The winter-sky, the silent winter-sky, which often stiflenth even its sun!

[3_50:17] Did I perhaps learn from it the long clear silence? Or did it learn it from me? Or hath each of us devised it himself?

[3_50:18] Of all good things the origin is a thousandfold,—all good roguish things spring into existence for joy: how could they always do so—for once only!

[3_50:19] A good roguish thing is also the long silence, and to look, like the winter-sky, out of a clear, round-eyed countenance:—

[3_50:20] —Like it to stifle one's sun, and one's inflexible solar will: verily, this art and this winter-roguishness have I learnt WELL!

[3_50:21] My best-loved wickedness and art is it, that my silence hath learned not to betray itself by silence.

[3_50:22] Clattering with diction and dice, I outwit the solemn assistants: all those stern watchers, shall my will and purpose elude.

[3_50:23] That no one might see down into my depth and into mine ultimate will—for that purpose did I devise the long clear silence.

[3_50:24] Many a shrewd one did I find: he veiled his countenance and made his water muddy, that no one might see therethrough and thereunder.

[3_50:25] But precisely unto him came the shrewder distrusters and nut-crackers: precisely from him did they fish his best-concealed fish!

[3_50:26] But the clear, the honest, the transparent—these are for me the wisest silent ones: in them, so PROFOUND is the depth that even the clearest water doth not—betray it.—

[3_50:27] Thou snow-bearded, silent, winter-sky, thou round-eyed whitehead above me! Oh, thou heavenly simile of my soul and its wantonness!

[3_50:28] And MUST I not conceal myself like one who hath swallowed gold—lest my soul should be ripped up?

[3_50:29] MUST I not wear stilts, that they may OVERLOOK my long legs—all those enviers and injurers around me?

[3_50:30] Those dingy, fire-warmed, used-up, green-tinted, ill-natured souls—how COULD their envy endure my happiness!

[3_50:31] Thus do I show them only the ice and winter of my peaks—and NOT that my mountain windeth all the solar girdles around it!

[3_50:32] They hear only the whistling of my winter-storms: and know NOT that I also travel over warm seas, like longing, heavy, hot south-winds.

[3_50:33] They commiserate also my accidents and chances:—but MY word saith: “Suffer the chance to come unto me: innocent is it as a little child!”

[3_50:34] How COULD they endure my happiness, if I did not put around it accidents, and winter-privations, and bear-skin caps, and enmantling snowflakes!

[3_50:35] —If I did not myself commiserate their PITY, the pity of those enviers and injurers!

[3_50:36] —If I did not myself sigh before them, and chatter with cold, and patiently LET myself be swathed in their pity!

[3_50:37] This is the wise waggish-will and good-will of my soul, that it CONCEALED NOT its winters and glacial storms; it concealeth not its chilblains either.

[3_50:38] To one man, lonesomeness is the flight of the sick one; to another, it is the flight FROM the sick ones.

[3_50:39] Let them HEAR me chattering and sighing with winter-cold, all those poor squinting knaves around me! With such sighing and chattering do I flee from their heated rooms.

[3_50:40] Let them sympathise with me and sigh with me on account of my chilblains: “At the ice of knowledge will he yet FREEZE TO DEATH!”—so they mourn.

[3_50:41] Meanwhile do I run with warm feet hither and thither on mine olive-mount: in the sunny corner of mine olive-mount do I sing, and mock at all pity.—

[3_50:42] Thus sang Zarathustra.

Begin Commentary

Zarathustra is still on the continent and making his way back to his cave. There is a winter theme in this section and we will not be told the climate again until two more sections where we see an autumn theme. Indicating that his return home is the process of his reversing his leaving home.

[3_50:1] Winter, a bad guest, sitteth with me at home; blue are my hands with his friendly hand-shaking.

The German translated here as schlimmer can also be “worse than” as in not bad but worse than something else. The guest sits with him in his home, yet Zarathustra is not home. He is heading back to his cave, which is his home. It could be a temporary home. Combined with the friendly hand-shaking it implies a forced intimacy with winter. Someone Zarathustra would rather not have intruding. Blue are my hands from his friendly hand-shacking. This is its warmth and friendliness? A chilling to the touch. Winter a being that can not help but force itself into your life and suck the warmth out of you. Next line,

[3_50:2] I honour him, that bad guest, but gladly leave him alone. Gladly do I run away from him; and when one runneth WELL, then one escapeth him!

He honors winter. Not likes, not loves, not enjoys, he is doing what duty and politeness command. Note the repeating honorific. Bad Guest used twice to describe winter. Perhaps one can imagine a home owner pointing to an unwelcome guest in frustration. He honors him but would gladly escape, fleeing from his own temporary home while presumably winter notices and staggers after him.

Whatever it is that winter symbolizes in this section deserves acknowledgment of its existence but not friendship, not love. Next line,

[3_50:3] With warm feet and warm thoughts do I run where the wind is calm—to the sunny corner of mine olive-mountain.

With also via. Via warm feet and warm thoughts. Winter sits in his home, Zarathustra actively runs. Runs with warm feet full of body strength and warm thoughts that fill his soul. While winter controls his temporary home Zarathustra heads to the olive-mountain. In the bible the olive-mountain is a place to lick wounds, used by David and Jesus. Zarathustra runs from what his home, why is he so readily willing to abandon it? Because it is temporary, it is not his real home the cave. Perhaps one can imagine a student-dorm. As will be seen later the metaphor begins to shift. In Pre-Socratic Greek thought winter was believed to be caused by the god Boreas, who was said to bring the winter wind, and north of him was a warm happy place without wind. Next line,

[3_50:4] There do I laugh at my stern guest, and am still fond of him; because he clearth my house of flies, and quieteth many little noises.

There, in his place of sanctuary, which is not his temporary home, he could look back at

the stern guest and feel differently. Fond maybe better translated as grateful. As in acknowledgment that it is useful, not loved. This line with the others suggest an autobiographical of the author. He fled from academy to Italy. One could imagine him in Basel with strict professors who even being nice drained the warmth for you. And here, alone and in peace, he is willing to acknowledge the utility of such pedantic exacting men. They crush small ideas from small people, and actively silence the noise of his home. While it is unpleasant to see this suffocation can be of use. Zarathustra went from hating those types, to escaping them, to looking back with understanding, to finally now being grateful for what they do. A contrast to his Ape in the next session who provides negative utility because no one one honored him. Next line,

[3_50:5] For he suffereth it not if a gnat wanteth to buzz, or even two of them; also the lanes maketh he lonesome, so that the moonlight is afraid there at night.

The imagery directly sees winter as the force that wipes out pests, calms streets, and even seems to blunt the light. If the metaphor for the strict professors the author knew is continued the passage suggested “Herr professor does not stand for a small mind with small ideas, even if they bring reinforcements. He walks through the laughing students and silence falls. Moonlight, the borrowed light from truth associated with poor mental healthiness and cognitive impairment is afraid of Herr professor. Next line,

[3_50:6] A hard guest is he,—but I honour him, and do not worship, like the tenderlings, the pot-bellied fire-idol.

Acceptance, a being he still doesn’t like but he will always honor. With this pole of scholarship and religion put aside he addresses the other. The pot-bellied fire idol, the god of the home of domestic bliss. People fleeing from Herr Professor and their tyrant religious leaders demanding too much, the tenderhearted, go to the kindergarten teacher the warmth. Zarathustra addresses this group and explains why he choose the natural world of the olive mount instead. He would not let the winter sap his warmth and he will not orbit the flame of easy scholarship and easy faith. No stick, no carrot, just becoming. Next line,

[3_50:7] Better even a little teeth-chattering than idol-adoration!—so willeth my nature. And especially have I a grudge against all ardent, steaming, steamy fire-idols.

The double condemnation. Winter-men are still better than hearth idols. Winter-men do not want your friendship, your worship, or your material wealth, they want you to grow a spine and a mind. So willeth my nature, Zarathustra doesn’t even feel he has a say in this evaluation. It is so true to what he is if he did not believe it he would be someone else. Especially does he hate the fire-idols with their almost lustful kindness. Better the harshness of real winter that treats you

as a human than the soft domestication that makes you only fit for the being on your knees in worship. Perhaps think of the teachers you had that pointed away from themselves to the subject in contrast to the ones that wanted to be your friend. Next line,

[3_50:8] Him whom I love, I love better in winter than in summer; better do I now mock at mine enemies, and more heartily, when winter sitteth in my house.

Him whom I love. Whomever that might be, in the beginning we are told many people Zarathustra loves. Still here it is whomever. Whomever that is Zarathustra loves more under winter. Under academic hardship, under physical hardship, times when they must burn internally lest they be consumed by cold. Now, Zarathustra is in his Olive-mountain and he can mock his enemies with almost hungry zeal that his temporary home has fallen under the cold domain of winter.

Zarathustra wants enemies worth fighting as was noted in earlier sections. If the new ideas have to withstand the assault of old scholarship they will be sharpened, and worthy of combat. Next line,

[3_50:9] Heartily, verily, even when I CREEP into bed—: there, still laugheth and wantoneth my hidden happiness; even my deceptive dream laugheth.

Translation weakens it slightly, there is an air of mischievous about this sentence. An almost suppressed snickering. Seemingly Zarathustra enjoys the image of one of those granite faced German professors tearing into the small thoughts of new movements. Seeing the tenderlings squirm under the intellectual assault but also seeing how ridiculous the screamer is. A tank vs a fly and the tank is old and stiff. Also possible that this idea of concealed happiness at this junction is to setup for the end of the section. As Lampert notes Zarathustra only makes claim to two arts. The art of concealing and the art of gift-giving. Next line,

[3_50:10] I, a—creeper? Never in my life did I creep before the powerful; and if ever I lied, then did I lie out of love. Therefore am I glad even in my winter-bed.

Having moved on to a question of power. Old guard vs New Ideas Zarathustra returns to the source of the relationship between the intellectual classes and powers-that-be. This line likely Hiero by Xenophon. An essay where it is argued that the wise are to whisper to power, with the powerful in misery isolation, and the wise able to be fortunate without envy. The claim Zarathustra is making is he has never played this game. He first spoke to the people and was rejected, so he spoke onto the creators instead. If he lied at all it was not for his own gain, it was because of love. Even if this means he has to live in the coldness of poverty with his own

companion an insufferable Kantian he would still prefer that than to mingle with the powers-that-be. Who corrupt and dilute. He seems unwilling to forgive Plato. Next line,

[3_50:11] A poor bed warmeth me more than a rich one, for I am jealous of my poverty. And in winter she is most faithful unto me.

Jealous here as jealous of a lover. Zarathustra does not want anyone to have his poverty, he gives away riches, he owns his poverty exclusively. Assuming the metaphor is now shifting of Winter being scholastic to Winter being hardship this is clever perspective shift. We normally think of wealth as being what protects us, yet poverty is always faithful to us, always an option. Even in hardship. In a world where your wisdom has no connection to your material wealth, you are truly free. Connecting to the second part of Joyful Science 377 where the author announces his mistrust of his government. This understanding also comes from the previous line where Zarathustra spoke of the relationship between wisdom and the powers that be.

It is possible this changing metaphor here, this shifting sand is form of secret. A false trail for the ideal reader. Next line,

[3_50:12] With a wickedness do I begin every day: I mock at the winter with a cold bath: on that account grumbleth my stern house-mate.

Boastful of his ability to demand more from himself than ever did hardship. Keyword here is Hausfreund. Possible translation “friend of the household”. Zarathustra’s encounter progressed. Offense, disgust, fleeing, mocking, noticing utility, honor, a desire to surpass, and finally friendship. Zarathustra it seems could only really be friends with someone who sharpens him, is a force on their own right, and does not need him. Next line,

[3_50:13] Also do I like to tickle him with a wax-taper, that he may finally let the heavens emerge from ashy-grey twilight.

A wax-taper. A small candle that was used for lighting stoves. The imagery is layered. Like he is priming the pump for joy from hardship, like he is showing defiance to the cold with a laughably small weapon, like he is showing the old Herr Professor a single line of poetry to coax them out, Likely, intended all and all at once. Next line,

[3_50:14] For especially wicked am I in the morning: at the early hour when the pail rattleth at the well, and horses neigh warmly in grey lanes:—

Zarathustra is describing this story in a backwards manner. Setting the scene and describing the rational after telling us the action. A scene of pure potentiality and zero actuality. The pails are there and rattle from being empty, the horses are warm but are not moving. It is possible he is invoking some of his work on epistemology, where he declared his rejection of the concept that there is a thing and it is separate from its actions. That the idea of cause and effect could be separated. To him humans acted and then explained why. Next line,

[3_50:15] Impatiently do I then wait, that the clear sky may finally dawn for me, the snow-bearded winter-sky, the hoary one, the whitehead,—

What is clever here is Boreas, the greek god of winter was said to be the son of Eos the goddess of dawn. Boreas was associated with horses so he primed us in the previous verse to think of him. He then is not only telling the story backwards but using words to invoke that backwardsness. Dawn gave birth to winter, yet here winter gave way to dawn. He told a backwards story using words forward and those are connected to a parable that runs forward normally but backwards here. Zarathustra is pointing to that ancient way of thought, before purpose defined action, and before reaction came from purpose to pure tension of what is created and what is creating.

The stacking of descriptions is telling. Myth via snow-bearded, social via hoary, and whitehead bodily. The is what is beyond us, that we can know define a role with, that which we can be on intimate terms with. Deep time, deep values, older than our learning, and yet with us when it so chooses. Next line,

[3_50:16] —The winter-sky, the silent winter-sky, which often stiflenth even its sun!

Suggest alternative translation as “The Winter-sky, the silent one, the one that even conceals its own sun!”. Verb of silence vs Adjective of silence. Silence is what the winter-sky is, not merely what it does. Conceal as in concealing wealth. Picture leaning on a wall and pushing on a wall for the latter and authentic vs ordered action for the former. Winter conceals its depths its wisdom even its warmth. Next line,

[3_50:17] Did I perhaps learn from it the long clear silence? Or did it learn it from me? Or hath each of us devised it himself?

Zarathustra discussing the 3 ways of his time to view cause-and-effect. The first modern Darwin-Newton. He Zarathustra learned active silence from the night-sky. The second Plato-Aristotle, telos. The night-sky needed to be that way for him to learn it. Without Zarathustra's

need the supply would not be in stock. Rejecting both he points Heraclitus. The Pre-Socratic who once wrote that the way up was the way down. Next line,

[3_50:18] Of all good things the origin is a thousandfold,—all good roguish things spring into existence for joy: how could they always do so—for once only!

Roguish better translated as willful. This sentence first names two kind of things. Things that are good and just are there, and things that are willed that are good. The German is literal from or with desire. Those willed things do not merely have an origin they spring into existence. Having attacked the nature of cause and effect of both Aristotle and Newton-Darwin he now moves on to the origin of the universe itself. Pointing out that good things that we humans just have access to are over-determined. Not A leads to B, more akin to A C D E and F we get B but we could have gotten B if E is missing. Not a universe of chain reaction, a universe of grinding of movement with matter churning up the tools we use.

Willful good things spring from desire, from overflow. How could there be joy and only one act of creation? If our universe had a prime mover would it be overflowing one who only opened its fist but once? If it were content with one act of creation it was not truly joyful it was a miser and this universe is too abundant for that to be the case. In one stroke Zarathustra has attempted to demolish both views of a linear universe, one with what remained is what was fit and one where what exists to serve an end. Next line,

[3_50:19] A good roguish thing is also the long silence, and to look, like the winter-sky, out of a clear, round-eyed countenance:—

Again willful is more apt for modern ears. A good willful thing is the ability to remain silent out of a face that screams innocence. Might be wondering how we got here. We started out with winter or winter-type people. Cold, serious, needing no comfort, honored but not needing your approval, a form of power without justification or explanation. Then Zarathustra notices that winter or winter-people do not act the way they do for standard reasons, he begins to question the idea that things do happen for a reason. If winter or winter-people do not intend to teach yet the lesson occurs cause-and-effect is on shaking grounds. Once that occurs the origin of the universe is on shaking grounds. If our world has no final explanations of where it is going and where it came from, if causes and effects are intertwined in a mess, if power operates without our permission, if depth is hidden, now what? How is your life not going to be ended by those around you? What is to stop a nihilistic nightmare with you as the first victim? Zarathustra suggests act innocent and learn the art of concealment of your depths. Next line,

[3_50:20] —Like it to stifle one's sun, and one's inflexible solar will: verily, this art and this winter-roguishness have I learnt WELL!

Breaking it up. Like it, he isn't saying the winter-sky learned it from him, he isn't saying he learned it from the winter-sky, he is claiming the practice. This is not teaching, or learning, this is what he does. Sun and one's inflexible solar will. This is not a repetition. He is hide your wisdom and hide your creating force. Inflexible, as in the will the drive is still there just not seen. This art, this technique this skill is not just there, it is an art like any other that needs cultivation. At first this sentence seems to be providing us with no new information but it is repeating the boundary he has set. Silence is not to be used lightly or not used lightly. Hence the point doubled. Next line,

[3_50:21] My best-loved wickedness and art is it, that my silence hath learned not to betray itself by silence.

His best loved, wickedness. Maybe better as deception. Is that his ability to remain silent has not inadvertently attracted even more attention to himself. This is the supreme thing, to not speak and not give the impression that you are withholding back what you want to say. This is either him casting shade on people on readers who torture the text for confession, or it is giving very strong advice to people like him, or linking himself to Jesus in Mark who keeps telling people to keep quiet, or linking himself to Odysseus, or all of them at the same time. Next line,

[3_50:22] Clattering with diction and dice, I outwit the solemn assistants: all those stern watchers, shall my will and purpose elude.

Heraclitus' fragments 52 reads: time is a child playing draughts, the kingly power is a child's. Heraclitus was also associated with chance and being dark concealed, difficult to understand. This fragment strongly implies a viewpoint of a will exerting energy with no seriousness, no aim, no justice, ever-changing rules, and with ever-changing movement. If Zarathustra has cultivated the silence that does not betray itself he can escape all those stern moral authorities who wish to pin him down. Given this is the situation Zarathustra is not making a virtue out being sneaky, he is arguing for using chance and clever words to escape harm from those that would impose order. The stern authorities will demand you to declare, explain, and position yourself. A box to sit in, get out of the box. Next line,

[3_50:23] That no one might see down into my depth and into mine ultimate will—for that purpose did I devise the long clear silence.

Note the placement. Zarathustra is refusing anyone to look down into his depths and look down at his ultimate will, as that would mean someone is above him. A position he will not enter into. To stop this relationship he had to devise for himself the silence. Also, this sentence is written slightly backwards a subordinate clause prior to a main clause. The sentence hides what it holds mirroring the content of what it says. Next line,

[3_50:24] Many a shrewd one did I find: he veiled his countenance and made his water muddy, that no one might see therethrough and thereunder.

He Zarathustra found them, they were trying to hide yet they were found. Hence, they failed at hiding. The shrewd one veiled his countenance. Hence, he knew the danger and was taking an action of concealment. The shrewd one made his water muddy, his ideas were unclear. This is the error. Zarathustra walks with an unmasked face while this shrewd one shows that there is something being hidden. Muddy waters do not hide real depth, they indicate movement below. One could imagine him being interrogated and suggesting that he can not answer without first defining IS. next line,

[3_50:25] But precisely unto him came the shrewder distrusters and nut-crackers: precisely from him did they fish his best-concealed fish!

One can imagine the sitcom trope of some character trying to keep something private and when their friends spy on them they find it was not a hidden sin but something that was not meant to be shared. This shrewd one met shrewder ones who trust no one, Assume whatever is hidden hides guilt. They brought along nut-crackers. There is no art to nut cracking. Steady pressure or high impact pressure. Either will eventually work and by hook or crook the secrets will be found. What secrets did they find? His most personal and fish brought to the surface dies, not because it is weak, because it is not in its element.

[3_50:26] But the clear, the honest, the transparent—these are for me the wisest silent ones: in them, so PROFOUND is the depth that even the clearest water doth not—betray it.—

Note there are echos in this section to Joyful Science 377.

We Homeless Ones.—Among the Europeans of to-day there are not lacking those who may call themselves homeless ones in a way which is at once a distinction and an honour; it is by them that my secret wisdom and *Joyful Science* is especially to be laid to heart! For their lot is hard, their hope uncertain; it is a clever feat to devise consolation for them. But what good does it do! We children of the future, how *could* we be at home in the present? We are unfavourable to all ideals which could make us feel at home in this frail, broken-down, transition period; and as regards the "realities" thereof, we do not believe in their *endurance*. The ice which still carries has become very thin: the thawing wind blows; we ourselves, the homeless ones, are an agency that breaks the ice, and the other too thin "realities."... We "preserve" nothing, nor would we return to any past age; we are not at all "liberal," we do not labour for "progress," we do not need first to stop our ears to the song of the market-place and the sirens of the future—their song of "equal rights," "free society," "no longer either lords or slaves," does not allure us!

The author wrote a view in Joyful Science more spelled out and made it more metaphorical in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Ice are the religious scholastic institutions of Europe, and winter the producers of ice is the traditional scholarship found in Lutheranism and the Catholic Church. As the author did not think highly of the new ideas of the present and had no desire to go to the old ideas of the present he likened himself to being homeless person whose home is the future.

Note Dionysos is said to have been born in winter and been born a snake. It is possible there is a connection here with concealment and snake and Dionysos.