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Book 3 – 51 – On Passing By

[3_51:1] Thus slowly wandering through many peoples and divers cities, did Zarathustra return by round-about roads to his mountains and his cave. And behold, thereby came he unawares also to the gate of the GREAT CITY.

[3_51:2] Here, however, a foaming fool, with extended hands, sprang forward to him and stood in his way.

[3_51:3] It was the same fool whom the people called “the ape of Zarathustra:” for he had learned from him something of the expression and modulation of language, and perhaps liked also to borrow from the store of his wisdom. And the fool talked thus to Zarathustra:

[3_51:4] O Zarathustra, here is the great city: here hast thou nothing to seek and everything to lose.

[3_51:5] Why wouldst thou wade through this mire? Have pity upon thy foot! Spit rather on the gate of the city, and—turn back!

[3_51:6] Here is the hell for anchorites’ thoughts: here are great thoughts seethed alive and boiled small.

[3_51:7] Here do all great sentiments decay: here may only rattle-boned sensations rattle!

[3_51:8] Smellest thou not already the shambles and cookshops of the spirit? Steameth not this city with the fumes of slaughtered spirit?

[3_51:9] Seest thou not the souls hanging like limp dirty rags?—And they make newspapers also out of these rags!

[3_51:10] Hearest thou not how spirit hath here become a verbal game? Loathsome verbal swill doth it vomit forth!—And they make newspapers also out of this verbal swill.

[3_51:11] They hound one another, and know not whither! They inflame one another, and know not why! They tinkle with their pinchbeck, they jingle with their gold.

[3_51:12] They are cold, and seek warmth from distilled waters: they are inflamed, and seek coolness from frozen spirits; they are all sick and sore through public opinion.

[3_51:13] All lusts and vices are here at home; but here there are also the virtuous; there is much appointable appointed virtue:—

[3_51:14] Much appointable virtue with scribe-fingers, and hardy sitting-flesh and waiting-flesh, blessed with small breast-stars, and padded, haunchless daughters.

[3_51:15] There is here also much piety, and much faithful spittle-licking and spittle-backing, before the God of Hosts.

[3_51:16] “From on high,” drippeth the star, and the gracious spittle; for the high, longeth every starless bosom.

[3_51:17] The moon hath its court, and the court hath its moon-calves: unto all, however, that cometh from the court do the mendicant people pray, and all appointable mendicant virtues.

[3_51:18] “I serve, thou servest, we serve”—so prayeth all appointable virtue to the prince: that the merited star may at last stick on the slender breast!

[3_51:19] But the moon still revolveth around all that is earthly: so revolveth also the prince around what is earthliest of all—that, however, is the gold of the shopman.

[3_51:20] The God of the Hosts of war is not the God of the golden bar; the prince proposeth, but the shopman—disposeth!

[3_51:21] By all that is luminous and strong and good in thee, O Zarathustra! Spit on this city of shopmen and return back!

[3_51:22] Here floweth all blood putridly and tepidly and frothily through all veins: spit on the great city, which is the great slum where all the scum frotheth together!

[3_51:23] Spit on the city of compressed souls and slender breasts, of pointed eyes and sticky fingers—

[3_51:24] —On the city of the obtrusive, the brazen-faced, the pen-demagogues and tongue-demagogues, the overheated ambitious:—

[3_51:25] Where everything maimed, ill-famed, lustful, untrustful, over-mellow, sickly-yellow and seditious, festereth pernicious:—

[3_51:26] —Spit on the great city and turn back!—

[3_51:27] Here, however, did Zarathustra interrupt the foaming fool, and shut his mouth.—

[3_51:28] Stop this at once! called out Zarathustra, long have thy speech and thy species disgusted me!

[3_51:29] Why didst thou live so long by the swamp, that thou thyself hadst to become a frog and a toad?

[3_51:30] Floweth there not a tainted, frothy, swamp-blood in thine own veins, when thou hast thus learned to croak and revile?

[3_51:31] Why wentest thou not into the forest? Or why didst thou not till the ground? Is the sea not full of green islands?

[3_51:32] I despise thy contempt; and when thou warnedst me—why didst thou not warn thyself?

[3_51:33] Out of love alone shall my contempt and my warning bird take wing; but not out of the swamp!—

[3_51:34] They call thee mine ape, thou foaming fool: but I call thee my grunting-pig,—by thy grunting, thou spoilest even my praise of folly.

[3_51:35] What was it that first made thee grunt? Because no one sufficiently FLATTERED thee:—therefore didst thou seat thyself beside this filth, that thou mightiest have cause for much grunting,—

[3_51:36] —That thou mightiest have cause for much VENGEANCE! For vengeance, thou vain fool, is all thy foaming; I have divined thee well!

[3_51:37] But thy fools'-word injureth ME, even when thou art right! And even if Zarathustra's word WERE a hundred times justified, thou wouldst ever—DO wrong with my word!

[3_51:38] Thus spake Zarathustra. Then did he look on the great city and sighed, and was long silent. At last he spake thus:

[3_51:39] I loathe also this great city, and not only this fool. Here and there— there is nothing to better, nothing to worsen.

[3_51:40] Woe to this great city!—And I would that I already saw the pillar of fire in which it will be consumed!

[3_51:41] For such pillars of fire must precede the great noontide. But this hath its time and its own fate.—

[3_51:42] This precept, however, give I unto thee, in parting, thou fool: Where one can no longer love, there should one—PASS BY!—

[3_51:43] Thus spake Zarathustra, and passed by the fool and the great city.

Being Commentary

[3_51:1] Thus slowly wandering through many peoples and divers cities, did Zarathustra return by round-about roads to his mountains and his cave. And behold, thereby came he unawares also to the gate of the GREAT CITY.

This is in 3rd person format. This is not Zarathustra relating something happening, it is a story about him. A question posed in the first sentence: how could there have been a great city that he was unaware of by his cave? We are told in the beginning that he was in his cave for ten years and he was not aware of a great city close by? Also the city being unnamed think is key to understanding. Bit of an echo back to section 15 which had the opening line “Many lands saw Zarathustra, and many peoples”. Next line,

[3_51:2] Here, however, a foaming fool, with extended hands, sprang forward to him and stood in his way.

The logistics of the first sentence are compounded here. How did the fool know Zarathustra would come by? Was he waiting for weeks? What if Zarathustra had taken a different route? From here I argue, with later passages as well that this story is to be read as if there is some community multiple centuries in the future reading this account that has not yet been refined to the point it fits in with a real gospel. The facts were known

1. There was a wandering sage
2. There was a city that vanished leaving very little traces of its existence

Slowly the myth evolved. Human narratives love a crossover, of course the sage would have visited the city that later on was destroyed. Of course he a sage would have foreseen the destruction. Why didn't he warn them? One of his students tried but he personally knew it was a doomed project. In addition this passage has the form of a sandwich story. It echoes the ideas but the fool was not shown as a student or the city referenced before or after. All pointing to an invented myth within the future followers of Zarathustra. A word of warning to missionaries of the faith. Next line,

[3_51:3] It was the same fool whom the people called “the ape of Zarathustra:” for he had learned from him something of the expression and modulation of language, and perhaps liked also to borrow from the store of his wisdom. And the fool talked thus to Zarathustra:

Think there is a connection here between the Ape mentioned during the tightrope walker scene in the beginning. The tightrope walker claims to be an ape and Zarathustra assures him that he is not. Here is a would be Zarathustra and Zarathustra cuts him to size. Next line,

[3_51:4] “O Zarathustra, here is the great city: here hast thou nothing to seek and everything to lose.”

The fool speaks after grabbing Zarathustra. The fool starts with an invitation. HERE is the great city, then says how bad it will be to enter. It is a flair for the dramatic. It is pointing to the thing and saying how awful it will be for you. The fool assumes that Zarathustra must not be aware of the situation there, despite it being by his home, because he can't see how anyone aware would still go. In once action and sentence we see that the fool presumes to know better than his teacher and yet need his teacher to validate his pain. This sentence also echoes a biblical warning, the lord commanding a prophet to go speak to the doomed city. Here the prophet is warned not to. By calling it the “great city” instead of by name the passage is generic and timeless. It could be a social media site or Babylon.

Of note in German the sentence begins “hast du” vs “hast sie”, the fool uses an informal address. Basically the fool presumes to know better than his teacher and yet needs his teacher to agree with him or all his pain means nothing. So he springs up to Z, no hello old teacher no inquiry of his health, and by his word choices demonstrates that he thinks the relationship has changed. He is the teacher now. The man who taught him to burn has a student demand that he agree the flame hurts. The sage said to overcome the world, his student needs him to admit that the world can not be overcome. You said the world could be great and I need you my former teacher to admit that I was right in giving up on it. It was a scam. Next line,

[3_51:5] Why wouldst thou wade through this mire? Have pity upon thy foot! Spit rather on the gate of the city, and—turn back!

Again the fool commands his teacher. Mire is a nicer term the German is Kotstadt literal feces-city. Possible O.T. reference in that it is a reverse Moses, Moses was commanded to go to a corrupt place to free people, here Zarathustra is commanded not to go somewhere. Possible anti-gospel theme Jesus rides on a donkey into the city, Zarathustra walks and is begged to leave before entering. One must imagine the author walking thru the unclean streets of a German city in the late 19th century. The fool tells us Zarathustra that his sense of touch via his foot will be offended. Of note the Fool lists the first level of corruption the city brings: physical. Next line,

[3_51:6] Here is the hell for anchorites' thoughts: here are great thoughts seethed alive and boiled small.

Deep thoughts are reduced to a point that they can be digested, an anchorite is a hermit-like figure. The city takes ideas that are whole and difficult and large makes them small and weak. The ideas are not even allowed a proper death and instead are boiled while still alive. In modern terms what is normally a difficult concept the top minds of the field grapple with is

presented to the public in pop-science form. The fool tells Zarathustra that his sense of taste will be offended, boiled meat is rather bland. This is the second form of corruption of the city. It replaces deep thought with shallow thought. Next line,

[3_51:7] Here do all great sentiments decay: here may only rattle-boned sensations rattle!

Sentiment as in emotions. All real emotions are left to rot and decay while all fake emotions are doing the work. Rattle-boned is an older English term for a work animal so thin its bones could be seen, notice the play on words. Rattle as in make noise rattle-boned as in without strength. The only feelings those of the town feel are cleaned up, watered down, and without nourishment. There is no wailing there are “thoughts and prayers”. The fool tells Zarathustra that his hearing will be offended with the rattles.

This is the third corruption of the city. It replaces big authentic emotions with small ones by making small ones louder. The man openly crying is avoided but the slogan that a political leader said they care is everywhere. Next line,

[3_51:8] Smellest thou not already the shambles and cookshops of the spirit? Steameth not this city with the fumes of slaughtered spirit?

Fool moves on to the 4th sense, smell. Telling Zarathustra that you can smell the offense of spirit being cooked. To the author spirit occupies that place with our creative drives and thinking. It is the domain of the brain that can forge new values. The scale of this sentence is different. The mire is incidental, it is on the ground and no one cared, great thoughts are boiled almost at kitchen level, great feelings are allowed to rot, but here the geist the very mind of man is slaughtered to a scale that even at the gates one can smell it. All creativity and capacity to think is made into a commodity and crushed to be served. This is the 4th corruption of the city the mind is assaulted. Next line,

[3_51:9] Seest thou not the souls hanging like limp dirty rags?—And they make newspapers also out of these rags!

Fool moves on to the 5th sense, sight. Note difference between souls and spirit. Soul is generally what can not be put into words except vaguely. A formulation, Spirit builds meaning; soul bears value. The soul of the people in the great city has no shape it just flops down. And yet they makes newspaper out of it. What has been wrung out its still not allowed to just allowed to die. You read what was left of someone who once had a soul. This is the 5th corruption of the city the soul is assaulted. Next line,

[3_51:10] Hearest thou not how spirit hath here become a verbal game? Loathsome verbal swill doth it vomit forth! -And they make newspapers also out of this verbal swill.

Now passed the senses language itself. Our highest values become yet another game we play. Who can care less, who can care more, who can be made to care, who can be made to not? What motivates you to let factions of the city win? The words needed to change the spirit to win the points to win the game. This is the 6th corruption of the city, language is assaulted.

The word here that swill comes from is Spülicht there is an alternative translation of used dishwater, think it is the more apt translation since it matches the sentence two sentences back about limp souls hanging. Presumably after being washed and wrung out. Vomit is a key word choice here since it is an involuntary act. It would seem the spirit of the city itself is vomiting on the inhabitants. A frightful mental image. Instead of spirit of the city uplifting the residents to higher values it instead covers them in offensive material. The city turns personal anecdotal soul, previous line Seest thou not the souls hanging like limp dirty rags?, and sells it and takes the city soul and sells it. One can imagine the news of the city full of writers claiming authority for what they claim to value and what they claim the values of the city are. You can not trust the founding myth of the city and you can not trust the origin story of author. Both are invoked to sell you outrage. The talking-heads of the city are corrupt which is the 7th corruption. Next line,

[3_51:11] They hound one another, and know not whither! They inflame one another, and know not why! They tinkle with their pinchbeck, they jingle with their gold.

People are pursued and no one is even sure where the victims are running too. It is reactive instead of creative. The population turns themselves from equals to pursued and pursuer the 8th corruption.

Anger each other and they 1. don't intend it 2. intend it but aren't sure why. People are not elevated in the city they are antagonized unintentionally or intentionally but not with a goal in mind. Impotent rage strikes them leading to resentment the 9th corruption.

Pinchbeck is a form of fake gold. This passage indicates that the both the rich and people who can appear rich do so for notice. They jingle with their wealth. The value substance equation is broken. You could imagine them valuing a watch over how much clout it gives you over the quality of the build. The 10th corruption. Next line,

[3_51:12] They are cold, and seek warmth from distilled waters: they are inflamed, and seek coolness from frozen spirits; they are all sick and sore through public opinion.

Booze is used to bring you up and bring you down. Instead of using your passions as an engine a chemical is used to dampen them. When you feel nothing and are numb you drink to feel anything, when you were upset by someone you drink to feel relaxed. The population is fully reactive and reactive to itself. If modern life has you feeling numb and withdrawn do not bother to learn to be your own engine, take a shot. If modern life makes you upset do not bother to learn to regulate or use your own passion instead take another shot.

Basically when they can't handle what they did to each other, via inflaming and hounding, they self medicate vs what Zarathustra would advise to live with that passion and use it. You are angry? Thank the universe for that blessing and carve some wood don't dampen it with poison. It is also a word play that if self-medication doesn't work go find that calm person in your life and spend time with them. Next line,

[3_51:13] All lusts and vices are here at home; but here there are also the virtuous; there is much appointable appointed virtue:—

One can find any base pleasure, the fool admits that there a few good people around, however the majority of the virtue is for employment. People do not do what they consider right unless it benefits their position in the city. Abraham haggles with god to even 10 saints, but Zarathustra doesn't haggle. Geist matters not numbers. Perhaps best mental image would be a society where the rules are followed by those lacking power to break them out of blind obedience not by choice. No one chooses to return a wallet you left by accident in the restaurant the corporate guidelines state employees are to do that. The choice is not what is right and what is wrong the choice is will you follow the rule or will you not. Next line,

[3_51:14] Much appointable virtue with scribe-fingers, and hardy sitting-flesh and waiting-flesh, blessed with small breast-stars, and padded, haunchless daughters.

The city product is clerical staff with hands for paperwork and bodies for meetings plus waiting rooms, an economy of ribbons and children for appearance not strength. Corruption 11 and 12 and 13. It turns the civil servants into paperwork pushers enshrines mediocrity as medal worthy and turns the children into ornaments. Next line,

[3_51:15] There is here also much piety, and much faithful spittle-licking and spittle-backing, before the God of Hosts.

Trouble with this one. Step by step. There is here piety as in they do have religion. Faithful spittle-licking as in the religion is cared out by sucking up. God of hosts is the old testament way to refer to god indicating that this is not the god of love and truth they worship. This is the god that outranks them. They don't true to align with Christian ideal of a perfectly good being they try to praise a bronze age god who is to be feared. Which ties into the previous line in that they have extended their ideas of a civil service up to theology. God is your boss, you salute the rank not the person. Next line,

[3_51:16] "From on high," drippeth the star, and the gracious spittle; for the high, longeth every starless bosom.

Contrast the sun that he likens unto the truth that overflows the cup in the prologue vs the stars here that drool on people and they are so deprived so poor that they are grateful for the drool. It is a revolting image. In the prologue he imagines himself a bee that has gather too much honey it has to give it away here the city residents aren't feasting on spare honey they are groveling for spittle. Starless bosom perhaps refers to people who seek recognition for their work in medals. Next line,

[3_51:17] The moon hath its court, and the court hath its moon-calves: unto all, however, that cometh from the court do the mendicant people pray, and all appointable mendicant virtues.

The moon doesn't illuminate, it borrows from the sun. The authority here is on borrowed power. Moon-calves refer to a fable that harmful moonbeams would cause low intelligence. Yet even this borrowed authority surrounded by fools do the people grovel to with false virtues.

The government is led by someone with no ideas of their own and attracts people even more foolish. Yet despite second-hand ideas people grovel to it and put the motions of virtues while not having those virtues. They aren't humble but they address the powers that be with the proper titles, they aren't patriotic but they will say the correct words. Suggest rereads of this passage to get a visual on the court of the moon. Dark except a faint reflection, groveling people to those who they can not see clearly. Next line,

[3_51:18] "I serve, thou servest, we serve"—so prayeth all appointable virtue to the prince: that the merited star may at last stick on the slender breast!

The first phrase is I serve, thou servest, we serve is marked in the German equivalent of air quotes. The fool is mocking a phrase that goes around the town. An inversion of the Plato ideal that the rulers of the city serve the city only for excellence while the government officials

here serve for worthless medals. Good to keep in mind the extraordinary complex social world the author lived in regarding medals, who had them, who had which, etc.

The fool really takes issue with virtue that looks real but is not. The mentality of a man who gives a customer the correct change not because a sense of giving everyone their due but because the corporate handbook says too. Over and over the fool screams of appointable virtue. The population shows appointable virtue so they may be given the award of a medal, a star on their breast by the prince of who leads the moon court. Not only due they pursue virtue for approval but the approval itself a parody of actual honor. Next line,

[3_51:19] But the moon still revolveth around all that is earthly: so revolveth also the prince around what is earthliest of all—that, however, is the gold of the shopman.

A reverse of the Plato order. Merchants rule Government and Government rules celestial. Since the government decides what virtue really is and the wealthy decide what the government does gold is their form of the good. Also we can see the author's point of view as the so called nobility was hollowed out and bought out by the rising industrial leaders. The German nobility did not die with a bang but with a buyout. Next line,

[3_51:20] The God of the Hosts of war is not the God of the golden bar; the prince proposeth, but the shopman—disposeth!

The god of hosts is the one of the bible. An active force in our world used to justify who rules and what decisions are to be made the god of a golden bar is not a living force but a dead metal. The fool is stating that the city, much like the ancient Israelites, have forsaken their real god for Mammon or Money. The prince doesn't rule via divine fiat the prince follows what his employers say. The last sentence is a play on words of the expression man purposes god disposes. Next line,

[3_51:21] By all that is luminous and strong and good in thee, O Zarathustra! Spit on this city of shopmen and return back!

The fool is now starting to repeat himself. Still luminous is a talented connection to the court of the moon earlier in the rant. The fool repeats himself because he is stuck in a resentment loop. He is not overcoming. Good or gut is an interesting choice of word here. Zarathustra seeks to go beyond good and evil and the fool is still clinging to the herd terms. Connecting back to the first part of this section when the fool is described as someone who can imitate some of what Zarathustra says but misses the point. He isn't even asking Zarathustra to create anymore. He

wants him to not try to save the city, or just walk away, he wants Zarathustra to spit on the city and then leave. Next line,

[3_51:22] Here floweth all blood putridly and tepidly and frothily through all veins: spit on the great city, which is the great slum where all the scum frotheth together!

The blood of the city itself is septic. Beyond saving. Heraclitus might be invoked here. He said you can never step in the same river twice because of constant change, the fool insists that the river doesn't change it merely rots. Pretty vile mental image here instead of blood nourishing all parts of the body it moves all that is awful around. Another illusion to Plato and his idea of a city that acted as an individual human. Next line,

[3_51:23] Spit on the city of compressed souls and slender breasts, of pointed eyes and sticky fingers—

Compressed souls, what is the highest most unexpressionable in us is hammered and dented, compressed in a word. Slender breasts lacking all health and strength. Pointed eyes watching everyone and watching who is watching who and finally sticky fingers always stealing. Zarathustra gives freely, the residents of the city put a price on everything. One can imagine the dead stares of men beaten into obedience, malnourished and thin, constantly looking at one another out of fear and stealing all they think they can. The city can not create it can only steal. Next line,

[3_51:24] —On the city of the obtrusive, the brazen-faced, the pen-demagogues and tongue-demagogues, the overheated ambitious:—

They do not mind their own concern, they are shameless, their public figures write to inflame the masses, the people do not have healthy ambition they have frenzy ambition trying to accomplish what others deem valuable. Perhaps imagine the last part as a roaring steam engine that is leaking and can not move the train. Next line,

[3_51:25] Where everything maimed, ill-famed, lustful, untrustful, over-mellow, sickly-yellow and seditious, festereth pernicious:—

All of it is injured, all of them have a bad reputation, all of them have no control over their desires, all of them do not trust one another, all are “over-mellow” like fruit with a decayed softness, all of them are almost physically sickly, all of them conspire against one another, and lastly they festereth pernicious. As in they don't only stink they fester and pernicious as in its a

hidden rot. Two observations here the word fester in English might not be the best translation. Fester implies change a wound festers when it gets worse, the German term could also be translated as boiled over. A mental image of churning water in a pot. Connecting it back to our steam engine before there is something going on but its not directed to movement forward only on to itself. The boiler is boiling but the steam isn't getting to the engine.

The second observation is that the fool mentioned ill-famed. Now Zarathustra would not care about reputation so why does the fool invoke it? The fool is still mixing values of the city with values of Zarathustra. But what is interesting is that the fool just explained how the people in the city care a lot about how they look and now is saying they fail at it. Even their own awful low virtues they can not reach. Next line,

[3_51:26] —Spit on the great city and turn back!—

The fool again is repeating himself. Locked in the cycle of resentment. Next line,

[3_51:27] Here, however, did Zarathustra interrupt the foaming fool, and shut his mouth.—

And here is where Zarathustra has heard enough. The fool has looped back. Best seen in text not audio but the proceeding two lines had dashes in them. Indicating that the fool was pausing and hoping Zarathustra would agree. He has worn himself down after having enraged himself up. He needs his old teacher to assent and Zarathustra is going to speak. Next line,

[3_51:28] Stop this at once! called out Zarathustra, long have thy speech and thy species disgusted me!

A double insult. Not only what you said but what kinda man you are that you said it. Next line,

[3_51:29] Why didst thou live so long by the swamp, that thou thyself hadst to become a frog and a toad?

The metaphor is clear, the city is a swamp and the fool has become an animal of it by staying so long. Frogs sit between land and water, endlessly croaking. The fool sits at the gate of the city ranting. Toads are more foul and are associated with poison ugliness. This is a double attack the fool is not only loud he is toxic. Next line,

[3_51:30] Floweth there not a tainted, frothy, swamp-blood in thine own veins, when thou hast thus learned to croak and revile?

Here Zarathustra pushes home his metaphor and says the fool has swamp water in his veins. The fool thought the corruption was outside the city but by being there he allowed it in himself. Note the doubling again at the end. Croak and revile, from frog and toad, and from speech and species. Zarathustra has done something clever here. Speech-frog-croak, then, species-toad-revile. A triplet. Next line,

[3_51:31] Why wentest thou not into the forest? Or why didst thou not till the ground? Is the sea not full of green islands?

You had other options fool. I have told you what resulted and now I am showing your culpability in it. Three options are presented: forest, farm, and sea. A match to the 3 forms we saw earlier camel, lion, and child. Of note Zarathustra went to the forest and the green islands earlier in the book and made references to seeds and sowing as well. Another phrasing is build the tangible, build a peace, find somewhere else to be. Next line,

[3_51:32] I despise thy contempt; and when thou warnedst me—why didst thou not warn thyself?

Taking a step back Zarathustra asks why the fool wasn't able to warn himself of the city. While Zarathustra often talks about contempt it is to get you moving forward not to attach yourself to what is beneath you. Next line,

[3_51:33] Out of love alone shall my contempt and my warning bird take wing; but not out of the swamp!

Straightforward contempt with love is a driving force not contempt with hate. Next line

[3_51:34] They call thee mine ape, thou foaming fool: but I call thee my grunting-pig,—by thy grunting, thou spoilest even my praise of folly.

The ape initiates Zarathustra is placing the pig even lower. Worth noting that pigs thrive in three environments named; forests, farms, and green islands. Zarathustra is really twisting the knife here. Not only were other options open but the fool would have thrived in them. It is not an illusion of choice. Praise of folly part is tricky. Fools make folly and Zarathustra praises folly but not this fool and not this folly. Suggest the reading is that Zarathustra praises folly it is a folly of a child higher play and joy not the folly of bad decisions that confine you to poison. Next line,

[3_51:35] What was it that first made thee grunt? Because no one sufficiently FLATTERED thee:—therefore didst thou seat thyself beside this filth, that thou mightiest have cause for much grunting,—

You did not get praised so you decided to sit there to have a lot to complain about. As before Zarathustra is not saying the fool was wrong about the city he is upset about the choices and speech of the fool. Not the action the reaction. Next line,

[3_51:36] —That thou mightiest have cause for much VENGEANCE! For vengeance, thou vain fool, is all thy foaming; I have divined thee well!

You are vain meaning you depend on the opinions of others. Which when denied leads you to resentment and from their moralizing and ranting. You could have choose any of the 3 metamorphoses and been successful. Camel the farm and productive labor, the forests the lion and independence, or the green islands child and exploration. Instead the fool stayed seeking vengeance on those that did not heap praise on him. Next line,

[3_51:37] But thy fools'-word injureth ME, even when thou art right! And even if Zarathustra's word WERE a hundred times justified, thou wouldst ever—DO wrong with my word!

You sought to hurt the Great City but really you are hurting me, your former teacher. Even when you are correct about the Great City, even if you were the most correct person whomever was correct about anything you would still misuse what I taught you. It was the process of application not the physics underlying it. Truth in the wrong hands becomes poison. What is more because he is aping Zarathustra the ideas of his teacher become associated. It is guilt by association. People will see the fool and think that is what Zarathustra is saying.

[3_51:38] Thus spake Zarathustra. Then did he look on the great city and sighed, and was long silent. At last he spake thus:

Rant is over counter rant is over, five animal metaphors, and one swamp. The croaking the vengeance the demand for silence. Zarathustra does not just walk away at this point he looks at the Great City and sighs. It really does corrupt everything, including one of his former students and by extension Zarathustra himself. The fool is not merely a fool he is the bastard child of the city and Zarathustra. And all the damage this place has done it is well, still here.

The silence adds to the drama of the moment. The fool can be silenced but the city abides.

Of note that most sections end with Thus Spoke Zarathustra but this one restarts, if the theory holds that this section is fictional within the novel universe and was part of a community folk tale much later this could be the type of restart that we see in Gospel of Mark. Next line,

[3_51:39] I loathe also this great city, and not only this fool. Here and there— there is nothing to better, nothing to worsen.

Zarathustra is not speaking to the fool anymore and it is not clear who is being addressed. We are not told of any onlookers to the exchange. Feeds into the idea that this sandwich story is part of the community that came much later. They are the intended audience. The line itself the fool is the symptom the Great City is the disease. The city can not be made worse and it can not be improved, a line that will make more sense soon. Next line,

[3_51:40] Woe to this great city!—And I would that I already saw the pillar of fire in which it will be consumed!

We see in the gospels, written decades later, Jesus predicting the destruction of the temple. Here we have Zarathustra predicting the fall of the Great City. Two problems are solved in one line

1. why didn't the historical Zarathustra build a community there if it was right by his cave?
2. Why the city fell. Because Zarathustra condemned it. Sure. Why did he condemn it however? Well we were just told by the fool.

The pillar of fire is telling very biblical.

It would seem that the Great City not only corrupted the fool but has even corrupted Zarathustra a bit by extension through the fool. Here he is wishing destruction not love on the city. Also a reversal of the biblical prophets. The prophets argue and plead with god they lament the bloodbath that is coming. Zarathustra does not.

Speculation of what it must have been like the day the Great City fell. Pundits and influencers and nepo babies and so-called leaders watching the flooded dam crack. All agreeing it is someone's fault while the one or two plumbers who are left blink, think of their credit card debt, and welcome the waves. Next line,

[3_51:41] For such pillars of fire must precede the great noontide. But this hath its time and its own fate.—

Noontide is discussed as an allegory in other sections of the book. At noon wisdom, the sun, is at its highest. All that is left is the steady act of going under. All shadows become their smallest and life must be said yes to or not. The Great City must be destroyed before this occurs. When humans can live on earth without delusion or small thoughts. And we can almost feel the aside as Zarathustra tells us that this Great City has its time and fate. There is no need to bring the destruction early it will happen. Next line,

[3_51:42] This precept, however, give I unto thee, in parting, thou fool: Where one can no longer love, there should one—PASS BY!—

Zarathustra has returned to role of teacher, he is not just yelling at the fool he is yelling at all of us who uses his words. When you can no longer love, when you can no longer say yes again to it, pass by. Do not do as the fool and wallow. It is survival so you do not get infected and self-discipline in that you have to be prepared to do the very hard act of letting it have its time and place. This is perhaps the hardest challenge Zarathustra hands us, natural problem solvers having to know when to walk away. Next line,

[3_51:43] Thus spake Zarathustra, and passed by the fool and the great city.

Jesus entered on a donkey, Zarathustra passed by. The sheer totality of the Great City. You remember that scene in the OT when Abraham pleads for Sodom and the city cant even produce ten? Genesis 18. There is no sense it does not offend, no class worth mentioning, their top thinkers/rulers/spiritual leaders/artists even the middle class even the children even the infrastructure. Nothing is worth saving. Your options are to stay in Sodom and become even worse than the residents or to pass by.

Of note Weaver Santaniello in the Death of God suggests that the fool is actually asking Zarathustra to go away, not join him on the outskirts but actually go away. Leave him to wallow. Also that Eugen Dühring might be who Nietzsche had in mind when writing about the fool.

Weaver Santaniello. "Nietzsche: American Idol or European Prophet? The 'Death of God' in America and Nietzsche's Madman." American Journal of Theology & Philosophy, vol. 38, no. 2–3, 2017, pp. 201–22. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.5406/amerjtheophil.38.2-3.0201>. Accessed 13 July 2025.