

From Sunrise To Sunrise

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The hour of day plays an important role in the life and teachings of Zarathustra. References to many hours can be found throughout the book, with one usually complimenting another. Certain times, like noon or midnight, have a higher prevalence throughout Zarathustra's teachings and dreams. Although the time of day is not a major concept of importance in Zarathustra's speeches, the quantity of occurrences throughout Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All makes me believe that Nietzsche regarded various temporal moments to hold a special esoteric significance. In the following, I will traverse the many temporal references – noon, afternoon, sunset, midnight and sunrise – so as to not only disclose the trajectory of Zarathustra's affirmation of an eternal recurrence, but also to lay out a pathway for a similar affirmation in an individual life.

Noon

One of the most prevalent times of day is noon, a time which can be associated with the midpoint of day, the end of morning, or a time to stop everything for a break, with many of these interpretations leaning toward a distinct separateness or a transition between different periods. Zarathustra refers to noon as “the perfect noon hour”, where the world seems to stand still and sleep, and everything looks as if it has stopped and given all its attention to this hour (Nietzsche 276). Noon not only seems to have an enticing effect on everything around, but it also draws Zarathustra into a dreamlike state, which he views as a “dreadful abyss” (Nietzsche 277). The dreadful abyss of falling into the dreamlike state is like falling into the well of eternity for Zarathustra (Nietzsche 277). The sleep that he falls into makes the whole world slowly dissolve away, which prompts him to repeatedly ask, “Did not the world become perfect just now?”, for he is very transfixed by the feeling of noon (Nietzsche 277).

This “great noon” is often anxiously expected, for it represents the “sword of judgement” to Zarathustra, a time when the higher men of the world will be ready for Zarathustra to come down from the mountains to share his knowledge (Nietzsche 191). Throughout the entire book, Zarathustra changes his style of communication as he learns more of the world. Although he feels like his teachings are misinterpreted, he knows that one-day his life’s work will be meaningful and understood. Zarathustra often looks for signs of the hour of noon, for it is revealed that the great noon is a representation that the higher men of the world will be ready to rise and prepare the world for the overman. When Zarathustra receives the sign that his hour has come, or his hour to go back down from the mountains, he proclaims, “this is *my* morning, *my* day is breaking: *rise now, rise, thou great noon!*” (Nietzsche 327).

Afternoon

Afternoon for Zarathustra has been associated with many things, such as when he is alone, when he met his friends the first and second time, and “when all lights grow quieter” (Nietzsche 160). Between afternoon and evening one day, Zarathustra is visited by his mistress, whom he calls “*my stillest hour*” (Nietzsche 45). During his stillest hour, there was so much stillness around him that “the clock of <his> life drew a breath” (Nietzsche 145). Amid this constant referral to time, Zarathustra is faced with the dissatisfaction that he has not adequately taught the joy of eternal life. The still hour could be a slight pause of his purpose, or a setback from his goal. Usually, Zarathustra regards the still aspects of the world around him as a relaxing and reflective moment, but this time he is faced with the intimidation of woe, which he would regard as a lack of normal joy for the eternal. His stillest hour is very disturbing for him, for after reflection, this stillness becomes as if it were “a double stillness”

(Nietzsche 147). During afternoon, Zarathustra repeatedly thinks, “O afternoon of my life!” for he mourns the solitude he must undergo to perfect himself for his friends, or children (Nietzsche 161). He has a growing resentment for the hour because since he met his friends, he has realized that he must set aside the happiness of companionship in order to accomplish his life work. Afternoon is the blame for meeting his friends, and as evening nears, his happiness shall set as with the sun (Nietzsche 163). Once, Zarathustra apologized to his disciples, saying, “Forgive me my sadness. Evening has come; forgive me that evening has come” (Nietzsche 110). He knew that his happiness with the afternoon would soon be over.

Sunset

Dying is greatly associated with the sunset, especially a slow death. This association resembles the dying of the sun in one sense, for as the sun goes over the horizon, the light slowly fades from the sky until no light is left except for the stars and moon. After listening to a soothsayer, Zarathustra feared a “long twilight” in which the world would realize its failure (Nietzsche 134, 219), and all people would find no hope in anything, even the hardest working would grow weary of life (Nietzsche 133). Zarathustra often viewed himself as a light, a light that would shine toward others even in the dark to share the wisdom and knowledge of his solitude. For fear of this twilight, he worried if he could keep his light glowing, for it was to be “a light for distant worlds and even more distant nights” (Nietzsche 134). Zarathustra was unsure that his eternal life would be worthwhile if he lost his light, or the ability to steer man toward his goal of the overman and joy of the eternal. He is comforted when one of his disciples explains to him that when this twilight may come, he “will not set in our sky” for he is an “advocate of life” (Nietzsche 136).

Midnight

Midnight is another significant temporal moment in the narrative of Zarathustra. During a dream of Zarathustra's, he dreamt that he gave up on life—this for him would mean to stop striving for the overman and not being satisfied with the eternal life before him. He dreamt that he was a watchman over the castle of death, of whom “the brightness of midnight... loneliness...and death-rattle silence” were always about him (Nietzsche 134). Zarathustra actually enjoyed wandering through the light of midnight, he felt his solitude was not loneliness, and he respected silence for giving him his stillest hour. This dream helped him to know what it felt like to be one of the men whom he preaches to, a man who feared or was weary of death because he had not accepted life. These men would be frightened of the things with which he was able to find comfort and calmness. The hour of midnight, and the echoes of death that come with it, would only frighten those people who have not accepted the joy of eternal life. Feeling the fear that others experience with death helps to establish how important it is for Zarathustra to help humankind achieve the ideals of the overman.

During a conversation with life, Zarathustra is accused of wanting to leave life whenever he hears the bell strike the hour of midnight. When he hears this bell, he recites:

One! / O man, take care! / *Two!* / What does the deep midnight declare! / *Three!* / ‘I was asleep— / *Four!* / ‘From a deep dream I woke and swear: / *Five!* / ‘The world is deep, / *Six!* / ‘Deeper than day had been aware. / *Seven!* / ‘Deep is its woe; / *Eight!* / ‘Joy—deeper yet than agony: / *Nine!* / ‘Woe implores go! / *Ten!* / ‘But all joy wants eternity— / *Eleven!* / ‘Wants deep, wants deep eternity.’ / *Twelve!* (Nietzsche 227-8).

This poem, which is later repeated when Zarathustra is with the higher men at his cave, is called “‘Once More’ and whose meaning is ‘into all eternity’” (Nietzsche 324). The poem is the focus and the eventual goal of Zarathustra who wishes man to conquer through his teachings. Yet, Zarathustra can not directly transform man into a being desiring the joys of an eternal life, he must slowly construct the men to view the world without the petty concerns

that have grown throughout the population. He must deconstruct the ideals of metaphysical devotion and construct a love and respect for the surrounding beauty the world offers them. The constant repetition of the tolling hours outlines the day in respect to the growing realization that the eternal life exists, whether humans accept it or not, and that humans may as well take joy in it for death is no escape from life (Nietzsche 227-228). The tolling is like a countdown toward death, with twelve being the start of a new life. The countdown will continue without man's interference or belief.

When Zarathustra was with the higher men, they finally began to feel comfortable and happy with the world as they all stood in silence with the stillness of the night. As midnight approached, Zarathustra urged them to prepare, for he says, "*Come! Come! Midnight approaches*", so, they waited for the midnight bell to toll (Nietzsche 319). Zarathustra relates what the bell speaks of to the men, for the midnight bell seemed to have all knowledge of the day before and of *all* days before. As with noon, midnight also reflects a certain transition between periods that must be regarded. Whereas noon seems to reflect an interval, midnight has this sense of completion or summarization of the whole, a death of the day. Zarathustra proclaimed, "Gone! Gone! O youth! O noon! O afternoon! Now evening has come and night and midnight" (Nietzsche 322). In comparison to an individual person, midnight represents the elderly or knowledgeable person and day is the young, youthful child that will grow as the hours turn through the day. The sequence of hours through the day is also a model of the recurrence of lives through which a person goes. With midnight representing death, a new life will start again before the sunrise of the next day, just as a new day starts after the twelve tolls and a new year starts after twelve months. Zarathustra views death and midnight as "the drunken happiness of dying at midnight" (Nietzsche 321). Just like at noon,

Zarathustra repeats of midnight “Did not my world become perfect just now”(Nietzsche 321) and “Just now my world became perfect; midnight too is noon” (Nietzsche 323), symbolizing the similarities that are held between these two times that hold the number twelve.

Sunrise

Sunrise represents birth or renewal, just as a new sun rises toward a new day. As the sun begins to slowly cast its light over the earth, everything is awakened to the senses. Much secrecy is put between the night and the new day, for Zarathustra says to the sky, “Not everything may be put into words in the presence of the day. But the day is coming, so let us part” (Nietzsche 166). The night, which is very deep and understanding because it knows all of what has been in the day before, is very different from the new day, which is youthful to the world. This new day is considered jealous for it steals away the dreams and the night with its light (Nietzsche 186-187). This light is overwhelming for the world, which can not escape the beauty of its glow. One morning Zarathustra said, “And once you are awake, you shall remain awake eternally” (Nietzsche 215). This is just like the dawn, which will also awaken a person into a new day, or will awaken a person into a new eternal life.

The eternal life of an individual could also be seen as the hours of the day. A youth or child is born unto the sunrise, new to the world and the joys of life. By the time noon comes, this person should have lost some of his youthfulness of the world. During the afternoon, the time for stillness, much reflection into life should be sought, just as an adult would be able define the woe and joy of his or her life. Evening is a time for the adult to face the hostilities one may have in life and resolve all problems. The day which Zarathustra hosted the higher men, he made a comment that evening that the spirit of gravity was fleeing (Nietzsche 310). The spirit of gravity represents all the enemies, or anything that holds man back from

achieving the ideals of the overman (like religion, education, and other teachings Zarathustra had against the crooked ways of men). The fleeing of the spirit of gravity fits into the wiser person achieving a sense of higher good over the everyday ideals of man. The overman has overcome man. By sunset, one should have achieved a sense of joy with the eternal life and be prepared to die, for one has accepted the eternal life. The sunset period of one's life should have one so ready to die, that when dying the "spirit and virtue should still glow like a sunset around the earth" (Nietzsche 73). Finally, when the new sun rises the next morning, the cycle of eternal life will continue.

Zarathustra strongly believed that he was the light that was to show the way to the overman. He once said, "My love overflows like a river, downward toward sunrise and sunset" (Nietzsche 84). He believed that his teachings from his solitude in the mountains would flow down, like a river, to the people, and they would learn of the eternal life and how important the sunrise and sunset would be in the great cycle of time. In questioning people, Zarathustra would ask, "Why would you have your pride in the morning and your resignation in the evening?" (Nietzsche 41). Zarathustra believed that man must convert back to an innocent state of childhood without the constraints of youth, which having this quality would make one proud in the evening when they have learned this knowledge. This pride should only be felt once a person has conquered their spirit of gravity and rose above the weariness of death. Finding joy in life is a great accomplishment. For man to find his way would take a long time, because the corruption of misleading teachings have strayed man from the path. "And what even yesterday was still too hard for time itself and its tooth, today hangs...out of the mouths of the men of today" (Nietzsche 185).

Zarathustra knows that the men of the world are not ready for the goal of overman. He sits in solitude waiting for his sign—his sign to walk with men and to show them the way. Yet, he can not show the way until he has found it himself. The sign he was waiting for, to help man find the overman, was really a sign for himself that he had become the overman.

This book is the story of how he found his way. He is a man of “today and before...but there is something in <him> that is of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and time to come” (Nietzsche 128). Zarathustra has become an overman. He is riding on the sunset, waiting for the new day to shine its light over him.

Work Cited

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1954.

Zarathustra and times of the day

Before Sunrise

“Not everything may be put into words in the presence of day. But the day is coming, so let us part” (Nietzsche 166). Grasps for the new light (sun) (324). Dawn, jealous dawn (186-7). Like dawn, it awakens one, and once awake, eternal (215).

Sunrise

My love overflows like a river, downward toward sunrise and sunset (84).

Morning

Before Noon

It is near, the great noon (191). Signs of his hour (196).

The Great Noon

“At the perfect noon hour” “Secret, solemn hour when no shepherd plays his pipe” (275). The old noon sleeps. “Did not the world become perfect just now?” (277). Sleep is a thief of time. Cheerful, dreadful abyss of noon (277). “Zarathustra has ripened, my hour has come, this is my morning, my day is breaking! Rise now, rise, thou great noon!” (327).

Afternoon

“Yesterday, toward evening, there spoke to me my stillest hour” (145). You start to fall asleep, you start to dream (145). Time when one answers questions about life and purpose (145). Afternoon stuff: all lights grow quieter, “O afternoon of my life!” (160). Time for me to leave...and the stillest hour (162). As yet the hour of my struggle has not come to me...bless them before evening with my happiness...over night (163).

Evening

Zarathustra apologizes to his disciples, saying, “Evening has come; forgive me that evening has come” (Nietzsche 110). Evening they talk of him, which...(168). Evening, fleeing the spirit of gravity (310).

Sunset

In your dying, your spirit and virtue should still glow like a sunset around the earth (73). My love overflows like a river, downward toward sunrise and sunset (84). As a reaction to soothsayer: “long twilight” and “light for distant worlds...distant nights”(134). Long twilight and weariness of death (136). Long twilight—soothsayer reaction (219).

Before Midnight

There were great revelations of joy (317).

Midnight

<The Drunken Song> At midnight, everything is more quiet and secret, everything listens. Old deep, deep midnight. Speaks secretly, terribly, cordially to you. Where is time gone? Drunken happiness of dying at midnight (317). Did not my world become perfect just now? (321) “Gone! O afternoon! O youth! O noon! O afternoon!” (322). Just now my world became perfect, midnight too is noon...night too is a sun (323).

References to midnight in dream (134). Hour of midnight—then you think between one and twelve (poem) (226-7).

Night

Zarathustra almost tires of night, for Zarathustra is like a light who always speaks to the dark, or one who is different or enlightened who speaks or shines out to the unenlightened (105). The cool reflective night. Secrecy of the night (317). A different look at night (136).

Individual as a day

Why would you have your pride in the morning and your resignation in the evening (41)? My today refutes my yesterday (42). Moon like man—look at earth with eyes (122). When sun rises—look at moon now (124). (Solar love) “I am of today and before...(128)” Night and evening, how we used to be (184).

Eternal Recurrence as a day

Yesterday was still too hard for time itself and its tooth, today it hangs...(185).