Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was his exposition to the world, bringing word of “the overman”, “the meaning of the earth.” Although the definite moral nature of his work places it in relation to other pieces by such authors as Hawthorne, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky, there are also marked differences in style and delivery. Nietzsche’s work is almost Milton-esque in its arrogance and overdone grandiloquence. The underlying impression is not only that Nietzsche is some sort of self-made prophet, flourishing his new enlightened gospel, but that he would, quite smugly, concur.

The point of this essay, of course, is not to complain about Nietzsche’s character flaws, but it will grasp at psychiatry instead. Nietzsche’s grasp at grandeur, though adamant at face value, whispers of insecurity to the reader. Nietzsche’s work, although grandiose and pretentious, is empty. It has no soul. Though pain and love scream from the pages of Dostoevsky, though Kierkegaard’s faith like a thief in the night clutches at the heart unseen, though Hawthorne conjures up the fragrance of trees and the flit of birds and the twit of shadows, Nietzsche has only his words. There is not the passion of the confident writer. There is not the passion of a writer who truly with all his heart believes what he proclaims.

Nietzsche’s writing is highly convoluted, presumably intentionally. He seems to imply, “If you fail to understand, then so be it: you are not the Übermensch.” Where Zarathustra finds disdain and his message rejected, he moves on. Zarathustra’s teachings strike the ear as slightly Oriental or Middle-Eastern, similar in some ways to the sayings of Confucius, similar in others to the Judeo-Christian Proverbs with its metaphors and rhythmic cadence. It differs sharply from the more conventional writing styles of the Christian authors aforementioned, which are formed into more orthodox narratives or essays. Although *Thus Spake Zarathustra* has a rudimentary storyline, mostly laid out in its Prologue, the emphasis is on Zarathustra’s teachings rather than his doings.

As a result of this, Zarathustra’s background and character are only briefly and lightly outlined. In contrast to Hawthorne and Dostoevsky, whose characters are always symbolic of certain ideals or ideas, it is apparent Nietzsche was not so inclined. If anything, Zarathustra is reminiscent of Prometheus, revealing the secrets of the gods, although Prometheus would not have denied the existence of the gods when he bore their treasure to men.
Kierkegaard’s writing, despite being largely expositional (his *Fear and Trembling* primarily considered here), always carries behind it a common theme. Whatever subject he is exploring or questioning, there is an underlying recurring factor of a return to God’s love or faithfulness. As Nietzsche is proclaiming a new system of morality himself, the Biblical wisdom books (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.) should be acknowledged to display this same aspect of a returning storyline of disobedience, salvation, and redemption, as well. However, in Nietzsche’s writing, this is lacking entirely. Because to Nietzsche there is only Nietzsche and naught else, he doesn’t appeal to any overarching ideas or themes in his piece. This causes an unusual staccato, disconnected feel to the work because while it is always word of the overman, there is no flow from discourse to discourse, no enveloping meaning.

This constitutes another difference between Nietzsche and the Christian authors, for all three write with clear motifs behind them, making evident to the reader the concepts which confuse, inspire, or impassion them. Hawthorne has his transcendentalism, Kierkegaard his faith, and Dostoevsky his nationalism. Nietzsche has nothing. There is no rhyme or reason to the Übermensch, it simply is. Hawthorne’s house of the seven gables with its many rooms and the large painting exist not only in his imagination or under his pen but in reality, conceptually, as the manifestation of something larger. Kierkegaard did not actualize his teleological suspension of the ethical for its own sake, but in order to resolve something higher. Dostoevsky’s Sonya, in her love for her family, in the innocence which she sacrifices for that love, is in herself only a young depraved and destitute pauper, and yet on a deeper sphere embodies Christ in a beautiful way. Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and his overman ring hollow, empty. They lack the vibrancy of truth. They have no spiritual or emotional backing or basis, no substance, existing merely for themselves.

Thus does Nietzsche’s motivation come into question. For whom and for what reason does he write of the Übermensch? By the very nature of his choices, he has failed to overcome morality and surpass society. If he has emulated Prometheus, then he has forgotten Prometheus’ fate: forever estranged from both those he betrayed and those he blessed. In reality Nietzsche has done no good for society, even supposing that his farfetched theories held water. Historically, Nietzsche’s glorified overmen, Alexander and Napoleon and Genghis, needed no philosopher to tell them what they could or could not do. The Übermensch triumphs not only over the morality of society, but the ideas of society. Even Adolf Hitler, in his discipleship of Zarathustra, chose to go further, to create his own race of overmen. To remain a disciple is to remain fettered.
Perhaps, then, Nietzsche wrote for himself, his grasp at grandeur a grasp at straws. Perhaps, and this is simply conjecture, he was Zarathustra’s only disciple: praying that it is all true, that he need not suffer for his sins, that in the end he can of himself triumph over an end he cannot avoid.