



## The Superman Friedrich Nietzsche

The morning after this night Zarathustra sprang from his bed, girded his loins, and came out of his cave, glowing and mighty like a morning sun coming from behind dark mountains.

“You great sun,” he spoke as he had once before, “you rich eye of joy, where would all your joy be if you did not have the people you shine on!

“And if men remain in their rooms while you keep watch and come, give, and share, how your haughty aloofness would change to fury.

“Well! These higher men still sleep while I keep watch. They are not my true comrades. I am not waiting here on my mountains for them.

“I want my work, my day, but the others do not understand what the signals of my morning are, or my pace — they hear no call to awaken.

“They still sleep in my cave, their dream still sipping at my drunken songs. Their ear that harkens to me, their listening ear, does not alert their limbs.”

This Zarathustra said to his heart when the sun arose: then he looked questioningly on high, for he heard the sharp cry of his eagle above him. “Well!” he called out, “how delightful and fitting! My animals are awake because I am awake.

“My eagle is awake and like me honors the sun. With eagle claws he stabs at the new-born light. You are my proper animals. I love you.

“But I still lack proper followers!”

Thus spake Zarathustra. But then it happened that he heard, suddenly, a sound like the swarming and fluttering of countless birds. The hum and bearing of so many wings around his head was so intense that he shut his eyes. And truly, something like a cloud fell upon him, like a cloud of arrows raining upon a new enemy. But look, here it was a cloud of love raining upon a new friend.

“What is happening to me?” Zarathustra asked his astonished heart, and sat down slowly on the great stone which lay near the exit of his cave. But while he shoved away the loving birds around and over and under him with his hands, behold, something even more strange happened to him; he accidentally gripped onto a thick, warm mane below him, whereupon a roar sounded before him, a gentle, rumbling lion roar.

“The signal comes,” said Zarathustra, and his heart was moved. And in truth as the air cleared before him a mighty yellow beast lay at his feet and nuzzled its head against his knee, constrained there by love, like a dog finding its former master again. The doves were no less eager with their love than the lion and each time a dove fluttered across the lion’s nose the lion shook its head in wonder and laughed.

Zarathustra said only one thing to them all: “My children are near, my children.” Then he was mute. But his heart melted and tears fell from his eyes and dropped upon his hands. And he ignored everything and sat there, unmoving, no longer shoving the animals away. The doves

flew back and forth and perched on his shoulder and caressed his white hair with unceasing tenderness and exultation. The powerful lion licked the tears which fell upon Zarathustra's hands, then roared and rumbled shyly. Thus were these animals compelled to act.

All this lasted a long time, or a short one; because, properly speaking, these things belong to no earthly time. Meanwhile the higher men in Zarathustra's cave awoke and assembled as a deputation to go and meet Zarathustra and wish him good morning, for they had found upon awakening that he was no longer there waiting for them. But when they reached the mouth of the cave, the sound of their steps preceding them, the lion was terribly startled, turned away at once from Zarathustra and sprang at the cave, growling wildly. When they heard its growling the higher men shrieked as with one mouth, fled back and disappeared in a trice.

But Zarathustra himself, shaken and changed, rose from his seat, looked around, stood there astonished, asked his heart, searched his mind and found himself alone. "What did I hear?" he said slowly over and over again. "What has happened to me?"

And soon the memory came to him and in an instant he grasped everything that had happened between yesterday and today. "Indeed, here is the stone," he said and stroked his beard, "on which I sat yesterday morning; and here the soothsayer came to me and here I first heard the shriek, the great shriek of misery that I just heard again.

"O, you higher men, it was indeed your misery that the old soothsayer prophecied to me yesterday morning.

"He wanted to seduce and tempt me into your misery. 'O Zarathustra,' he told me, 'I come to tempt you into your final sin.'

"To my final sin?" cried Zarathustra and laughed wildly at his own words. "What remains set aside for me as my final sin?"

And once again Zarathustra searched his mind, sat down on the great stone and brooded. Suddenly he sprang up.

"Pity! Pity for the higher men!" he cried out and his expression turned as hard as brass. "Well! That has run its course!

"My grief and my pity, to what purpose! Do I struggle toward pleasure? I struggle toward my work!

"Well! The lion has come, my children are near, Zarathustra has ripened. My hour is come.

"This is my morning. My day rises. Up, now, up, you great noonday!"

Thus spoke Zarathustra and left his cave, as glowing and mighty as a morning sun coming from behind dark mountains.

## FOR ANALYSIS

1. What distinguishes Zarathustra from the higher men at the beginning of this selection?
2. What does Nietzsche imply by having the lion sit tamely at Zarathustra's feet?
3. The higher men's fear of the lion leaves Zarathustra alone. What does this signify?
4. What is Zarathustra's final sin? How is it an important insight into Nietzsche's view of superman?
5. In terms of your own twentieth century background, how would you criticize Nietzsche's view of superman?
6. What traits does Zarathustra demand of his followers? Contrast these with the traits demanded by our own society. Do the differences group themselves into any significant pattern for you?

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. What would you say is Nietzsche's philosophy of the superman?
2. Another philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, asserted that philosophy was valid only if it expressed the Spirit of the Times. How valid was Nietzsche's philosophy of superman in terms of the character of nineteenth century industry? What does the term "rugged individualism" mean to you in connection with American industry?

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Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra. 1883. Trans. and questions from Joseph Henry Satin. *Ideas in Context*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958. Text in public domain.

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