

NOTES FROM: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, by Friedrich Nietzsche

SUMMARY: People have been misunderstanding Nietzsche and misquoting him ever since he died (and way before that), and this is perhaps his *most* misinterpreted book.

In fact, my favorite Nietzsche translator, Walter Kaufmann, helped rescue his reputation somewhat from the clutches of Nazi “philosophers” who manipulated Nietzsche’s ideas of the “Superman” and the “Will to Power” for their own nefarious and evil ends. They’d seriously rip whole passages out of context and claim that his philosophy supported their cruelty and racism. Nietzsche has never truly recovered.

But this book in particular is Nietzsche’s telling of the Persian prophet Zarathustra descending from his solitude in the mountains and proclaiming that “God is dead” (and we have killed him). What this means, of course, is that *human values must come from human beings*, rather than being handed down to us by the gods on high. A “revaluation of values” is what he calls for, and the surpassing (in intelligence, energy, and passion) of every human being who has ever lived before now.

This is not only one of my favorites of Nietzsche’s books, but probably one of my favorite books of *all time*, even though I had an extraordinary amount of difficulty deciphering it the first time I tried to read it. It’s a tough read, and Nietzsche’s not known for making himself clear! You have to work at this one, but I believe it’s worth it. No two people have to love the same books, of course. But if you hated this one the first time you read it, make sure you didn’t in fact read the 1939 translation, if you know what I mean!

“The higher we soar the smaller we appear to those who cannot fly.”

“You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame; how could you rise anew if you have not first become ashes?”

“The object of mankind should lie in its highest individuals.”

“It is unavoidable that we should look on the worthiest aims and hopes of the man of the present day with ill-concealed amusement, and perhaps should no longer look at them.”

"My most creative moments were always accompanied by unusual muscular activity. The body is inspired: let us waive the question of the 'soul'. I might often have been seen dancing in those days."

MK: Nietzsche took only ten days to write each of the three parts of Zarathustra: "During that time, I slept well, and I laughed well."

“The more important point is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. In his teaching alone do we meet with truthfulness upheld as the highest virtue.”

“Man is something that is to be surpassed.”

“Remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak unto you of super-earthly hopes! Poisoners are they, whether they know it or not.”

“To blaspheme the earth is now the dreadfulest sin.”

“I tell you: one must still have chaos within one, to give birth to a dancing star.”

“There cometh the time of the most despicable man, who can no longer despise himself.”

“To allure many from the herd - for that purpose have I come.”

“Companions, the creator seeketh, not corpses - and not herds or believers either. Fellow-creators the creator seeketh - those who grave new values on new tables.”

“Not anymore will I discourse unto the people; for the last time have I spoken unto the dead.”

“The Self desires most to create beyond itself.”

“Despisers of the body, unconscious envy is in the sidelong look of your contempt.”

“Let thy virtue be too high for the familiarity of names, and if thou must speak of it, be not ashamed to stammer about it.”

“I should only believe in a god that would know how to dance.”

“Now am I light, now do I fly; now do I see myself under myself. Now there danceth a God in me.”

“I see many soldiers; could I but see many warriors! ‘Uniform,’ one calleth what they wear; may it not be uniform what they therewith hide!”

“Open still remaineth a free life for great souls. Verily, he who possesseth little is so much the less possessed: bless be moderate poverty!”

“There, where the state ceaseth - there only commenceth the man who is not superfluous: there commenceth the song of the necessary ones, the single and irreplaceable melody.”

“Away from the marketplace and from fame have ever dwelt the devisers of new values.”

“As yet humanity hath not a goal. But pray tell me, brethren, if the goal of humanity be still lacking, is there not also still lacking - humanity itself?”

“Not only onward shalt thou propagate thyself, but upward!”

“Let the value of everything be determined anew by you!”

“Unexhausted and undiscovered is still man and man's world.”

“One requiteth his teacher badly if one remains merely a scholar.”

“Ye had not yet sought yourselves: then did ye find me. So do all believers; therefore all belief is of so little account.”

“Dead are all the gods: Now do we desire the superman to live.”

“And only when ye have all denied me, will I return unto you.”

“Could ye *CREATE* a god? Then, I pray you, be silent about all gods! But ye could well create the Superman.”

“Creating - that is the great salvation from suffering, and life's alleviation. But for the creator to appear, suffering itself is needed, and much transformation.”

“What would there be to create if there were gods?”

MK: Nietzsche has this great image in *Zarathustra* of sculpting the Superman out of the hardest and ugliest stone.

“Since humanity came into being, man hath enjoyed himself too little; that, alone, my brethren, is our original sin!”

“Great love surpasseth even forgiveness and pity.”

“Even god has his hell: it is his love for man.”

“Blood is the very worst witness to truth; blood tainteth the purest teaching, and turneth into delusion and hatred of heart.”

“And thus do almost all think that they participate in virtue.”

“How did I ever bear it? How did I survive and surmount such wounds? How did my soul rise again out of those sepulchres? Yea, something invulnerable, unburi-able is within me, something that would rend rocks asunder: it is called *MY WILL!*”

“Yea, thou art still for me the demolisher of all graves: Hail to thee, my Will! And only where there are graves are there resurrections.”

“Commanding is more difficult than obeying.”

“He who seeketh to create beyond himself, hath for me the purest will.”

“To execute great things is difficult; but the more difficult task is to command great things.”

“It is the stillest words that bring the storm.”

“Thou must yet become a child, and be without shame.”

“The pride of youth is still upon thee; last hast thou become young: but he who would become a child must surmount even his youth.”

“I stand now before my last summit, and before that which hath been longest reserved for me. Ah, my hardest path must I ascend! Ah, I have begun my loneliest wandering! He, however, who is of my nature doth not avoid such an hour: the hour that saith unto him: Now only dost thou go the way to thy greatness! Summit and abyss - these are now comprised together! Thou goest the way to thy greatness: now hath it become thy last refuge, what was hitherto thy last danger! Thou goest the way to thy greatness: it must now be thy best courage that there is no longer any path behind thee!”

“Before my highest mountain do I stand, and before my longest wandering: therefore must I first go deeper down than I ever ascended - deeper down into pain than I ever ascended, even into its darkest flood! So willeth my fate. Well! I am ready. Whence come the highest mountains? so did I once ask. Then did I learn that they come out of the sea.”

“Courage is the best slayer: courage slayeth also fellow-suffering. Fellow-suffering, however, is the deepest abyss: as deeply as man looketh into life, so deeply also doth he look into suffering. Courage, however, is the best slayer, courage which attacketh: it slayeth even death itself; for it saith: ‘Was *THAT* life? Well! Once more!’”

“Look at this gateway! It hath two faces. Two roads come together here: these hath no one yet gone to the end of. This long lane backwards: it continueth for an eternity. And that long lane forward - that is another eternity. They are antithetical to each other, these roads; they directly abut one another: and it is here, at this gateway, that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: ‘This Moment.’”

“Must not whatever *CAN* run its course of all things, have already run along that lane? Must not whatever *CAN* happen of all things have already happened, resulted, and gone by?”

“The praiser doeth as if he gave back; in truth, however, he wanteth more to be given him!”

“For they are moderate also in virtue, because they want comfort. With comfort, however, only moderate virtue is compatible.”

“All those are mine equals who give unto themselves their Will, and divest themselves of all submission.”

“For a tree to become *GREAT*, it seeketh to twine hard roots round hard rocks!”

“Love ever your neighbor as yourselves - but first be such as *LOVE THEMSELVES*.”

“Where one can no longer love, there should one *PASS BY!*”

“No one yet knoweth what is good and bad, unless it be the creating one!”

“Will the past as if it were something that you chose and would choose again.”

“We others, however, to whom life hath given itself - we are ever considering what we can best give in return!”

“For little worth is all that hath its price.”

“Unto your children shall you make amends for being the children of your fathers.”

“For I love thee, o eternity!”

“Sing! Speak no more!”

“God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died.”

“Look out, look out, mine eye! Oh, how many seas round about me, what dawning human futures! And above me - what rosy red stillness! What unclouded silence!”

“Whoever extolleth him as a God of love, doth not think highly enough of love itself. Did not that God want also to be judge? But the loving one loveth irrespective of reward and requital.”

“Didst thou ever see how captured criminals sleep? They sleep quietly, they enjoy their new security.”

“How little sufficeth for happiness!”

“Ye higher men, away from the marketplace!”

“The great despisers are the great reverers.”

“What the populace once learned without reasons, who could refute it to them by means of reasons?”

“In solitude there groweth what any one bringeth into it.”

“Doth not man's future strive and struggle in you?”

“Was *THAT* life? Will I say unto death. 'Well! Once more!’”

“The old, deep, deep midnight! Hush! Hush! Then is there many a thing which may not be heard by day.”

“Joy is deeper still than grief can be.”

MK: Nietzsche says that if you want one joy to last forever, then you also want every grief to return as well, forever and ever.

“Joys want the eternity of all things.”

“Become who you are!”