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Beyond Good and Evil

PRELUDE TO A PHILOSOPHY OF THE FUTURE

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

TRANSLATED, WITH COMMENTARY, BY WALTER KAUFMANN

BEYOND
GOOD and EVIL



Prelude
to a
Philosophy of the Future

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Translator's Preface

Nietzsche was controversial to the marrow. He sought controversy and is still controversial. But the area of agreement about him is growing. What the Germans and the French have known for some time is gradually being recognized in the English-speaking world as well: Nietzsche was one of the greatest German writers and philosophers of all time and one of the most interesting and influential Europeans of the nineteenth century. *Beyond Good and Evil* is one of his most important books, and its nine parts with their descriptive subtitles are designed to give the reader a comprehensive idea of Nietzsche's thought and style.

For all that, the book, like all of Nietzsche's best volumes, is easily misunderstood. For readers who come to it with no previous knowledge of Nietzsche or with erroneous preconceptions about him, I have ventured to offer something of a commentary in the form of copious footnotes. *All of the footnotes are mine; none are Nietzsche's.*

I have chosen to use notes for elucidation of major and minor points in the text rather than a long introduction or interlarded commentaries because such notes can provide immediate clarification or interpretation for the reader who requires such assistance. On the other hand, the reader can skip the notes if he wishes, and read Nietzsche straight through without the intrusion of the editor's commentaries.

Another possibility would have been to offer the commentary on facing pages, as I myself have done in the case of Hegel's long Preface to the *Phenomenology*. But Nietzsche's book is not *that* difficult: one can read it like an ordinary book, and many pages require no elucidation. Everything considered, then, it seemed best to offer the commentary in the form of notes—none on some pages, several on others.

To keep down the length of the commentary and to avoid excessive repetition of material available elsewhere, I have referred to detailed discussion of many points in my own *Nietzsche* volume.

A word about the text: it was originally published in 1886, following *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which is generally and rightly regarded as Nietzsche's first attempt to present his whole philosophy. All of his previous works had been stages in his development: with *Zarathustra* the final phase begins; a comprehensive vision has been attained but is far from easy to communicate. *Zarathustra*, though much of the work consists of apparently direct preaching, is a form of "indirect communication," to use Kierkegaard's term: the form is literary and there is an abundance of symbolism. For those who know the author well, the book is a stunning epitome of his thought; for those who do not, some other approach is needed. It was with this in mind that Nietzsche wrote *Beyond Good and Evil*. And on September 22, 1886, he wrote Jacob Burckhardt: "Please read this book (although it says the same things as my *Zarathustra*, but differently, very differently—)."

The first edition was the only one that Nietzsche himself supervised. In a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck, he wrote: "I am making the experiment of having something published at *my* expense: assuming 300 copies will be sold, my expenses will be covered and I might be able to repeat the experiment some time. The firm of C. G. Naumann permits the use of its highly respectable name. This between us. The neglect by Schm.¹ was monstrous: for ten years now no copies distributed to bookstores; neither any review copies ... no promotion—in short, my writings beginning with *Human, All-Too-Human* are 'anecdotal Of *Zarathustra* 60–70 copies each² have been sold, etc., etc."³

The book of which Nietzsche had hoped to sell 300 copies was *Beyond Good and Evil*, but a year later, June 8, 1887, he writes Peter Gast: "This time, for Bey. G. & E., everything necessary (and even a little more than that) has been done as far as the book trade is concerned: so Herr Schmeitzner cannot be blamed any more, as I had done so far. *In spite of all this*— the result is the same as with Schmeitzner: rather, it is still worse! Altogether only 114 copies have been sold (while 66 copies have been given away to newspapers and journals).

"Instructive! Namely, one simply does not want my literature; and I—may no longer afford the luxury of print."⁴

By 1903, 17,000 copies were in print; by 1906, 36,000. Since then new editions and translations into other languages have mushroomed.

The first edition has become a great rarity and has never been reprinted exactly as published in 1886. All subsequent editions contain a few very minor deviations. Karl Schlechta's edition of Nietzsche's works in three volumes⁵ is widely considered vastly superior to all previous editions, at least philologically, although it contains much less of Nietzsche's *Nachlass*⁶ than some earlier editions; and Schlechta claims unequivocally that he has

followed the original edition, published by C. G. Naumann (Leipzig, 1886),⁷ but he has not. Where the standard editions differ from the original edition, he follows the later editions.⁸ No matter of philosophical substance is involved; the deviations are very small; but the fact remains astonishing. Notwithstanding all sorts of sensational claims, none of the scholarly corrections of the older editions of Nietzsche's writings, published since World War II, are important philosophically, and it is ironical that the editions of Schlechta and Podach⁹ are by no means models of belated philological soundness.¹⁰ This translation follows the first edition. In my footnote commentary, deviations of the later editions are pointed out

I have taken two liberties. Nietzsche occasionally uses dots, usually four, as a punctuation mark; for example, but by no means there alone, at the end of sections 62 and 227. In serious works in the English-speaking world dots are so generally taken *to* indicate omissions that it did not seem advisable to follow Nietzsche's usage. Dashes have therefore been used instead. Moreover, Nietzsche often employs dots or dashes in the middle of lengthy paragraphs. In such cases I have often begun a new paragraph to mark the break; and beyond that, I have generally broken up long paragraphs. The reader may always assume that in the original a numbered section constitutes a single paragraph; even if it is as long as the whole Preface or sections 25, 26, and 28.

Beyond Good and Evil has been translated into English twice before. The first translator, Helen Zimmern, was an English writer who had met Nietzsche in Site Maria in the summer of 1886—the period when the book was completed, printed, and published. Indeed, Nietzsche mentions her in the margin of the letter to Franz Overbeck previously cited: “Till the middle of September I shall stay here. There is no dearth of old acquaintances Miss Helen Zimmern ...”

In the index of names at the end of Nietzsche’s *Briefe an Peter Gast*, Helen Zimmern is identified as an “English writer”; in the index to *Briefe an Mutter und Schwester* (letters to mother and sister, Leipzig, 1909), as “engl. Litteratin,” which is less respectful. Neither volume mentions that she translated *Beyond Good and Evil* What Nietzsche wrote (September 19, 1886) about her to his mother or sister was: “I had the privilege of introducing this ‘champion of women’s rights’ (Frl. von Salis) to another ‘champion’ who is my neighbor at meals, Miss Helen Zimmern, who is extremely clever, incidentally not an Englishwoman—but Jewish. May heaven have mercy on the European intellect if one wanted to subtract the Jewish intellect from it.”¹¹ In 1885, the year before, Nietzsche’s sister had married Bernhard Forster, one of the leaders of the German anti-Semitic movement.¹²

Helen Zimmern (1846–1934), two years Nietzsche’s junior, had published *Arthur Schopenhauer: His Life and His Philosophy* (1876) and *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: His life and His Works* (1878); she also published many other books and translations, including several from the Italian. About her version of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Dr. Oscar Levy reported in 1913 in a short essay on “The Nietzsche Movement in England” (in the last volume, the eighteenth, of his edition of *The Complete Works*): “But in 1907 the party had somewhat recovered its spirit, and as a last experiment brought out a translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*—this time at private risk, for no publisher could be induced to take up an author twice repudiated. This translation was one which had been made nearly ten years ago, but until then had never seen, and was never expected to see, the light of publicity. It turned out to be a success—a half-hearted success perhaps, but one that at last told the few inmates of the Nietzschean ark that the waters of democracy had diminished, and that at least some higher peaks of humanity were free from the appalling deluge. The success encouraged them once more to take up their old project of the publication of the complete works...”

The “inmates” in England were a very different lot from those who were by then writing about Nietzsche in Germany and France: English professional *philosophers*, for example, had developed curious versions of Hegelianism after Hegel had gone into eclipse on the continent, and at the beginning of the twentieth century the young G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell were trying to

emancipate philosophy from the influence of the leading Idealists, F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart. The tone of the English Nietzscheans, in turn, helped to create a public image of Nietzsche that did not attract philosophers to him.

It was over fifty years after *Beyond Good and Evil* had originally appeared in 1886 that professional philosophers began to publish studies of Nietzsche's philosophy in English.

Meanwhile, the Zimmern translation of *Beyond Good and Evil* found its way into the Modern Library, and it was until 1955 the only version through which myriads of readers knew the book. In preparing the present edition, I hoped at first that I might merely revise her version, modernizing her somewhat Victorian prose and correcting mistakes; but I soon gave up. The mistakes were too numerous, and in Nietzsche's case nuances are so important that it would be difficult to say at what point an infelicitous rendering becomes downright wrong.

The second translator, Marianne Cowan, is not a philosopher either. Her version is modern and very readable. But the merits are somewhat offset by errors of understanding, and therefore I have pointed out a few such instances in my notes.

Often it seems helpful to call the reader's attention to crucial passages in some of Nietzsche's other works. These are cited in each instance according to sections, to enable the reader to find them in any edition; but in the case of material included in a volume of Nietzsche translations that I published in 1954¹³ I have also given the page numbers in parentheses.

About the title of the book: like many of Nietzsche's titles, phrases, and coinages, it is brilliant, unforgettable, and usually misconstrued. The following sections of the book are relevant to an understanding of what Nietzsche meant by "beyond good and evil": the author's Preface and sections 2,4, 32, 33, 56, 153, 164, 202, 212, the end of 241, 260, and 284. This is not to say that the other sections are not relevant nor that the reader would be best advised to look up these passages first. Rather, it would be well to read the book with an open mind and a readiness to distinguish the many connotations of its striking title. And it might be helpful to read the editor's note for section 250 at the start

To an extent at least it may help many readers to relate several themes of the book to other great writers, and some such comparisons will be found in the notes. One theme, however, should be stated here at the outset. Ibsen's Dr. Thomas Stockmann says at the end of *An Enemy of the People*: "He is the strongest man in the world that stands alone." This leitmotif of the play illustrates Kierkegaard's influence on Ibsen, to which Georg Brandes referred in a letter to Nietzsche, March 7, 1-888: "Intellectually, he has been very dependent on Kierkegaard." We may recall Kierkegaard's remarks on "That Individual"¹⁴ with its refrain "The crowd is untruth." The fourth act of Ibsen's play could almost be subtitled "Variations on a Theme by Kierkegaard." Witness Dr. Stockmann's words:

The most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom among us—is the compact majority. Yes, the damned, compact, liberal majority ...

The majority has *might*— unfortunately—but *right* it is not Right—are I and a few others. The minority is always right

I have a mind to make a revolution against the lie that the majority is in the possession of truth. What kind of truths are those around which the majority usually gathers? They are truths that have become so old that they are on the way toward becoming shaky. But once a truth has become that old, it is also on the way toward becoming a lie ... A normally constituted truth lives, let us say, as a rule seventeen or eighteen years; at most twenty, rarely more. But such aged truths are always exceedingly thin. Nevertheless it is only at that stage that the majority makes their acquaintance ... All these majority truths ... are rather like rancid, spoiled ... hams. And that is the source of the moral scurvy that rages all around us..."

A generation later, Freud said on the second page of his autobiographical *Selbstdarstellung* (Leipzig, 1925) that, as a Jew at an anti-Semitic university, "I learned early to know the lot of standing in opposition and being placed under a ban by the 'compact majority.' Thus the ground was laid for a certain independence of judgment."

One reasonable perspective for *Beyond Good and Evil* is to see it somewhere between Kierkegaard and Ibsen on the one hand and Freud and Sartre on the

other. And considering how much Nietzsche has to say about “nobility” in this book, it is good to recall that the old Freud said in a letter about Nietzsche: “In my youth he signified a nobility which I could not attain.”¹⁵

Such sections as 212 and 296, to name only two among a great many, invite comparison with some of the phrases cited here. But it would be pointless to attempt a long list, for what is at stake is not just a verbal similarity here or there but rather one way of seeing the whole book. There are many others.

It would be foolish for a translator, and even for a commentator, to attempt to foist his own estimate of a book with which he has been living for some time on those who will henceforth share his experience to some extent. But in the spirit of Zarathustra’s “This is *my* way; where is yours?”¹⁶ I shall venture a suggestion.

This is one of the great books of the nineteenth century, indeed of any century, despite much with which the modern reader might disagree. There is much in it with which I too do not agree; but that is also true of Plato’s and Aristotle’s writings, of all great philosophical works and, making due allowances for the different genre, of Dante’s and Dostoevsky’s ideas and of the Bible. There are some passages that strike me as blemishes without which the book would be better; for example, the tedious remarks about women, the mercifully briefer comments on the English, and the poem at the end.

It is possible to say briefly what makes the book great: the prophetic independence of its spirit; the hundreds of doors it opens for the mind, revealing new vistas, problems, and relationships; and what it contributes to our understanding of much of recent thought and literature and history. Readers might ask, for example, about the relation of various passages to psychoanalysis, to analytical philosophy, or to existentialism. But even a far longer list would not do justice to the book. There remains another dimension. This is one of those rare books in which one encounters not only a great thinker but also a fascinating human being of exceptional complexity and integrity.

One final caution. *Beyond Good and Evil* is not a collection of aphorisms for browsing. Each of the nine major parts, with the possible exception of part four, is meant to be read straight through. Each pursues one complex of problems, and what is said in one section is frequently qualified decisively in the next, or a few pages later. The often surprising developments of an idea constitute one of the major charms of this work. And it is in part on their account that this book, like all great books—for this is part of their definition or, as Nietzsche might say, a criterion for the order of rank—needs to be read more than once. It is a book to reread and live with.

September 1965

w. K.

¹ Ernst Schmeitzner had been Nietzsche’s publisher.

- ² The reference is to the first three parts, published separately in 1883 and 1884. Of [Part Four](#), only forty copies had been primed privately, and only seven were distributed among friends.
- ³ Written from Sils Maria, summer 1886; Number 255 in *Friedrich Nietzsches Briefwechsel mit Franz Overbeck* (Friedrich Nietzsche's correspondence with Franz Overbeck), Leipzig, 1916, p. 341.
- ⁴ *Friedrich Nietzsches Briefe an Peter Gast* (Friedrich Nietzsche's letters to Peter Gast), Leipzig, 1908.
- ⁵ *Werke in drei Bänden*, Munich, 1954–56; *Nietzsche-Index*, Munich, 1965.
- ⁶ The notes, fragments, lectures, and drafts he had not published himself. Moreover, the three volumes include only 278 of Nietzsche's thousands of published letters and none of his early scholarly articles.
- ⁷ "Philological Postscript," in Vol. III, p. 1,387.
- ⁸ Sections 65a, 73a, 186, 237, 247, 269, and 270.
- ⁹ *Friedrich Nietzsche Werke des Zusammenbruchs* (the work of Nietzsche's collapse), Heidelberg, 1961.
- ¹⁰ See W. Kaufmann, "Nietzsche in the Light of His Suppressed Manuscripts," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, October 1964.
- ¹¹ Cf. the similar remarks about her in letters to Gast, My 20, 1886, and January 6, 1888: "Of course Jewish:—it is terrific to what extent this race now holds the Writ [*Geistigkeit*]' in Europe in its hands," and, "the clever Englishwoman (resp., Jewess) who introduced Schopenhauer to the English,. (Summer before last she was in Sils Maria, sitting next to me at meals)."
- ¹² Cf. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, [Chapter 1](#), section III, where Nietzsche's letters about the marriage and his opposition to anti-Semitism are quoted. For full-length portraits of the Försters see E. F. Podach, *Gestalten um Nietzsche* (persons around Nietzsche, Weimar, 1932), [Chapter 4](#).
- ¹³ *The Portable Nietzsche*, which contains complete versions of *Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *Antichrist*, and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, as well as selections from Nietzsche's other books, his notes, and his letters.
- ¹⁴ Included in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Meridian Books, 1956), pp. 92–99.
- ¹⁵ Included by Ernest Jones in his *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York, Basic Books, 1957), III, 460. For details of the image of Nietzsche communicated to Freud in the early eighteen-eighties by his friend Dr. Paneth who met Nietzsche in Nice, see Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (Garden City, N. Y., Anchor Books, 1960), pp. 323f.
- ¹⁶ End of the chapter "On the Spirit of Gravity" in [Part III](#) (*Portable Nietzsche*, p. 307).

Acknowledgments

But for Jason Epstein, this volume would never have come into being. He urged me for years to make more new translations of Nietzsche, before I finally consented to go over some of the old versions to eliminate outright errors. This proved to be a thankless, endless, and all but impossible undertaking. So I gave up and began some more new translations, of which this is the first to appear. The commentary, not anticipated, took form as the translation progressed.

But for Berenice Hoffman, this volume would be much less satisfactory. As an editor, she went far beyond the call of duty, putting me in mind of my not altogether literal translation of the conclusion of Goethe's *Faust*:

The Eternal-Feminine
Lures to perfection.

As for the Index, almost all of the work on that was done by Stephen Watson. Soma Volochova made many additions to the Index and greatly increased its value.

It was often extremely difficult to decide what phrases in the text required notes. Mr. Watson, as a University Scholar at Princeton University, called to my attention many points on which he thought students needed help, and he also helped me with the proofs. I am grateful to him and to Princeton's excellent program of undergraduate research assistantships.

WALTER KAUFMANN

Bibliographical Note

Nietzsche's works are generally cited by section numbers, as these are the same in all editions. But *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* are not composed of consecutively numbered sections; on the other hand they are available in a single volume, along with *The Antichrist* and selections from Nietzsche's other books, from his notes, and from his letters: *The Portable Nietzsche*, selected and translated, with an introduction, prefaces, and notes, by Walter Kaufmann, The Viking Press, New York, 1954. Page numbers refer to this volume. The same translation of *Zarathustra*, with preface and notes, is also available separately as a Compass Book paperback, The Viking Press, New York, 1966.

Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ* (originally published by the Princeton University Press, 1950; revised paperback edition with different pagination, published by Meridian Books, New York, 1956), is cited by chapters and sections to facilitate ready reference.

**Jenseits
von Gut und Böse.**

**Vorspiel
einer
Philosophie der Zukunft.**

**Von
Friedrich Nietzsche.**



Leipzig
Druck und Verlag von C. G. Naumann,
1886.

Preface

Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far¹ have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won—and today every land of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged, If it is left standing at all! For there are scoffers who claim that it has fallen, that all dogmatism lies on the ground—even more, that all dogmatism is dying.

Speaking seriously, there are good reasons why all philosophical dogmatizing, however solemn and definitive its airs used to be, may nevertheless have been no more than a noble childishness and tyronism. And perhaps the time is at hand when it will be comprehended again and again *how little* used to be sufficient to furnish the cornerstone for such sublime and unconditional philosophers' edifices as the dogmatists have built so far: any old popular superstition from time immemorial (like the soul superstition which, in the form of the subject and ego superstition, has not even yet ceased to do mischief); some play on words perhaps, a seduction by grammar, or an audacious generalization of very narrow, very personal, very human, all too human facts.

The dogmatists' philosophy was, let us hope, only a promise across millennia—as astrology was in still earlier times when perhaps more work, money, acuteness, and patience were lavished in its service than for any real science so far: to astrology and its “supra-terrestrial” claims we owe the grand style of architecture in Asia and Egypt. It seems that all great things first have to bestride the earth in monstrous and frightening masks in order to inscribe themselves in the hearts of humanity with eternal demands: dogmatic philosophy was such a mask; for example, the Vedanta doctrine in Asia and Platonism in Europe.

Let us not be ungrateful to it, although it must certainly be conceded that the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far was a dogmatist's error—namely, Plato's invention of the pure spirit and the good as such. But now that it is overcome, now that Europe is breathing freely again after this nightmare and at least can enjoy a healthier—sleep, we, *whose task is wakefulness itself*, are the heirs of all that strength which has been fostered² by the fight against this error. To be sure, it meant standing truth on her head and denying *perspective*, the basic condition of all life, when one spoke of spirit and the good as Plato did. Indeed, as a physician one might ask: “How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contract such a disease?”

Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all? Could Socrates have been the corrupter of youth after all? And did he deserve his hemlock?”

But the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for “the people,” the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia—for Christianity is Platonism for “the people”—has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals. To be sure, European man experiences this tension as need and distress; twice already attempts have been made in the grand style to unbend the bow—once by means of Jesuitism, the second time by means of the democratic enlightenment which, with the aid of freedom of the press and newspaper-reading, might indeed bring it about that the spirit would no longer experience itself so easily as a “need.” (The Germans have invented gunpowder—all due respect for that!—but then they made up for that: they invented the press.)³ But we who are neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, we *good European*⁴ and free, *very free* spirits—we still feel it, the whole need of the spirit and the whole tension of its bow. And perhaps also the arrow, the task, and—who knows?—the *goal*——

*Sits Maria, Upper Engadine,
June 1885.*⁵

¹ *Bisher* (so far) is a word that recurs constantly throughout *Beyond Good and Evil*. It helps to color the word “beyond” in the title.

² *Grossgezüchtet*: *züchten* means to breed, grow, or cultivate animals, plants, or qualities. Nietzsche uses the word frequently, and in these pages it is most often rendered by “cultivate.” In his usage the connotation is generally spiritual.

³ Cf. the Preface to *The Antichrist*: “One must be skilled in living on mountains —seeing the wretched ephemeral babble of politics and national self-seeking *beneath* oneself” (*Portable Nietzsche*, p. 568). In the daily newspaper the concern with ephemeral matters is institutionalized and cultivated at the expense of genuine “spirituality.”

⁴ Nietzsche’s coinage, initially introduced by him in *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878), section 475 (*Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 61–63).

⁵ The book was written “summer 1885 in the Upper Engadine and the following winter in Nizza” (letter to Georg Brandes, April 10, 1888). This is borne out by other letters, except that additions and revisions were made until June 1886. The book was printed in June and July and published the beginning of August 1886.

Content¹



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¹ The Table of Contents appears here in the original edition, but not in the later standard editions or in Schlechta

PART ONE



ON THE PREJUDICES OF PHILOSOPHERS

Part¹ One

1

The will to truth which will still tempt us to many a venture, that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with respect—what questions has this will to truth not laid before us! What strange, wicked, questionable questions! That is a long story even now—and yet it seems as if it had scarcely begun. Is it any wonder that we should finally become suspicious, lose patience, and turn away impatiently? that we should finally learn from this Sphinx to ask questions, too? *Who* is it really that puts questions to us here? *What* in us really wants “truth”?

Indeed we came to a long halt at the question about the cause of this will—until we finally came to a complete stop before a still more basic question. We asked about the *value* of this will. Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?

The problem of the value of truth came before us—or was it we who came before the problem? Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx? It is a rendezvous, it seems, of questions and question marks.

And though it scarcely seems credible, it finally almost seems to us as if the problem had never even been put so far—as if we were the first to see it, fix it with our eyes, and *risk* it. For it does involve a risk, and perhaps there is none that is greater.