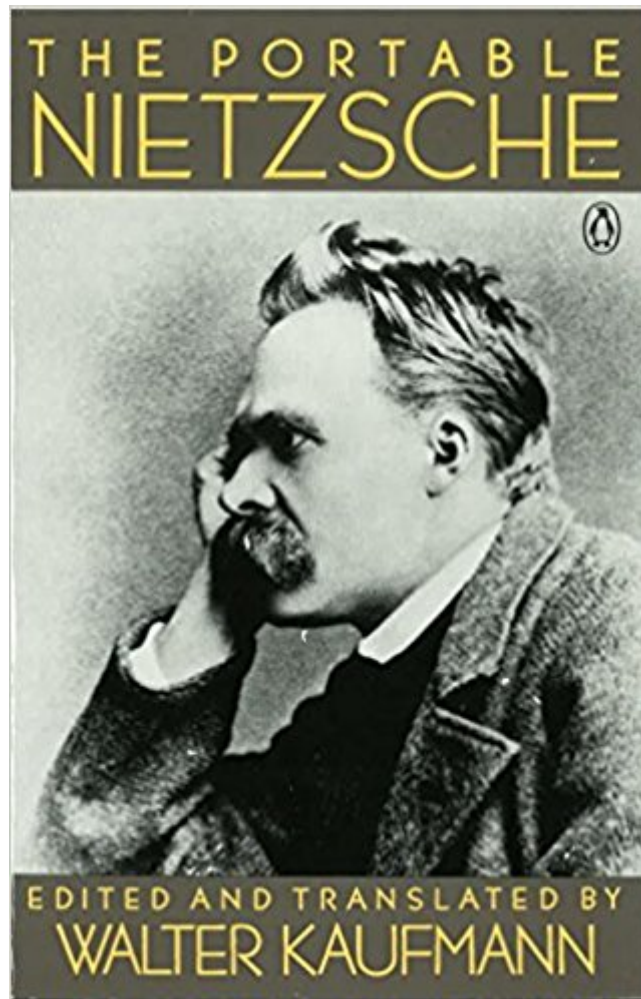


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The Portable Nietzsche (Portable Library)



Synopsis

The works of Friedrich Nietzsche have fascinated readers around the world ever since the publication of his first book more than a hundred years ago. As Walter Kaufmann, one of the world's leading authorities on Nietzsche, notes in his introduction, "Few writers in any age were so full of ideas, and few writers have been so consistently misinterpreted. The Portable Nietzsche includes Kaufmann's definitive translations of the complete and unabridged texts of Nietzsche's four major works: *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist*, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In addition, Kaufmann brings together selections from his other books, notes, and letters, to give a full picture of Nietzsche's development, versatility, and inexhaustibility. In this volume, one may very conveniently have a rich review of one of the most sensitive, passionate, and misunderstood writers in Western, or any, literature."

—Newsweek

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Customer Reviews

I once heard that the two main philosophers that are the most widely read by non-philosopher types are Nietzsche & Plato (not necessarily in that order). After reading this book and some of Plato's better dialogues, it is not difficult to understand why. Both write with a passion & provide a remarkable contrast to the incredibly dry (and many times verbose) prose of such philosophers as Aristotle, Hegel, Heidegger and Kant. If nothing else, Plato and Nietzsche are EXCITING to read. It is this which furnishes them with their popularity - even more than the fact that they are two of the greatest intellectuals who ever lived. Like all "portable" books in the Viking series, this one contains

excerpts from works. This is not all bad, but it is not all good, either. I have always felt that it is much better to read works in their entirety rather than edited snippets. With this in mind, the book's #1 virtue is the fact that it contains an excellent complete & unabridged translation of "Also Sprach Zarathustra." In his book "Beyond Good And Evil" Nietzsche stated that "Books for all the world are always foul-smelling books: the smell of small people clings to them." (p. 43, Walter Kaufmann, translator). Well, if this be the case, then "Zarathustra" is most decidedly NOT a book for all the world. It is not written for (nor, indeed is even read by very often) individuals with small minds. It is an epic poem that was mostly written while this German fellow was stoned on opium. That fact notwithstanding, it is an astounding achievement. (It seems that Nietzsche produced some of his best art while he was influenced by opium - just like Edgar Allen Poe and Hector Berlioz). "Zarathustra" is a work that is of interest to both philosophy & literary types. It would be entirely justified for this work to be read in a German or World literature class as opposed to being confined to just university level philosophy courses. Due to his trenchant insights on art as well as his awe inspiring ideas and wonderful command of language, it is little mystery that Nietzsche exercised such a profound influence over such artists as Thomas Mann, William Butler Yeats, Franz Kafka, George Bernard Shaw, Maria Ranier Rilke and Eugene O'Neill (among others). Again much like Plato's Republic, "Zarathustra" is a work which must be read at least a half dozen times before one can really say he or she has read it once. The imagery and metaphors are dense & it is beautifully written - even in translation (Kaufmann deserves much credit for this). The elegance of Nietzsche and the grandiose and fervent style of his thoughts has made him an attractive figure to engage - even by those who disagree with most of or everything he has to say. But perhaps there is one single thing that I like about Mr. Nietzsche more than anything else; indeed, this is why I keep on coming back to him again & again. It is the fact that he does not expect or even want you to agree with what he says. Rather, he wants you to re-think what you believe & challenge the premises that your beliefs stand upon. In doing so (and Kaufmann has argued this point as well), he wants above all else for his reader to grow.

"The Portable Nietzsche" contains four complete works, including Nietzsche's most famous - Thus Spoke Zarathustra - along with excerpts from his other books and writings, painting a detailed portrait of the life of this intriguing genius. The translation is wonderful, as the fury and passion that makes Nietzsche's philosophy so popular bursts through in Kaufmann's words. Obviously, this work is a challenge to understand, and even after several readings one will still be finding new insights hidden within Nietzsche's words. The works contained within this book are decidedly anti-Christian,

so be forewarned. Overall, this is a great introduction to Nietzsche, contained in a compact and reasonably-priced single volume.

This tremendous volume is what gave me confidence that philosophy was not only accessible to me, but more than just academic abstraction. Critics who say that Nietzsche is "obvious" often miss the fact that his thinking was once considered blasphemous & unheard of. In an era that he felt was bogged down in nostalgia & blandness driven by mindless veneration, Nietzsche felt compelled to state what he thought people were denying. If you don't get this, then you won't see how he is still relevant today in a similar era of chronic rehashing of old values whose uselessness is forgotten or hidden by the varnishing given them in a post-global world. In fact, part of Nietzsche's challenge to thinking man is that the "obvious" without critical faculties hides untapped potential. It is only your attitude that is "obvious". This is the crux of his idea of the "reoccurring theme": do you use nostalgia as reflection? Restoration? Irrelevance? Do you go beyond it? Or do you sit idly fawning & worshipping it like a permanent acolyte; never going beyond the instruction manual? An early insight & major clue is given at the VERY BEGINING of this book in a "Letter To His Sister". In a reply to a comment she made about truth being "obvious", his answer condenses to a statement that NOTHING is "obvious" until someone WORKS IT OUT first in the course of human history. Nietzsche even had the foresight to see that his concise style would be often quoted without being truly understood, and he frequently says so in many writings included here. This is why this volume is so indispensable (i.e. you might flatter yourself that you KNOW Nietzsche, but you probably don't unless you've poured over him for awhile and had a "re-evaluation of all values" with his works). Ironically, he wanted it that way because he realized that the subtle is more often than not lost within style. Fortunately, he was a writer of BOTH great style AND substance; his style goes down easy while his substance is difficult, and this is the great misunderstanding of reading Nietzsche. Tragically, Nietzsche's statement ,God is dead, is easily quoted out of context by anyone wishing to re-establish blind belief in unquestioned authority by ripping him apart as simply an apologist for uncontrolled libertinism. Nothing is further from the truth, because the original, full statement (here quoted in its pre-Zarathustra form in the tale of "The Madman" as well) is "God is dead. WE HAVE KILLED HIM YOU & I..." It is a broadside to the quote from the Bible saying "God is love": we are capable of killing love, we can crush people's spirits & guilt, AFTER THE FACT, as preached by religion, is too late to undo memory. "Forgive & forget?" If forgiving takes forgetting, we will all wind up as amnesiacs... Fortunately, Walter Kaufmann is an excellent translator and guide. Much of his annotation in this book is as priceless as the philosopher himself. This is an essential volume of

philosophy, and only as "obvious" as the reader.

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