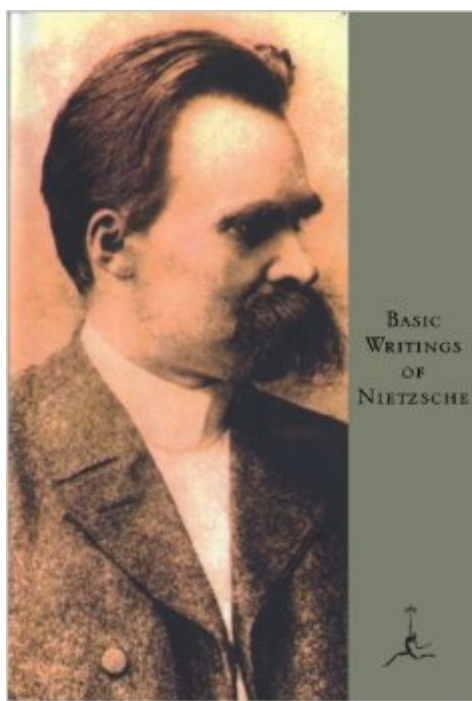


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Basic Writings Of Nietzsche



Synopsis

Introduction by Peter Gay Translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann Commentary by Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus, and Gilles Deleuze One hundred years after his death, Friedrich Nietzsche remains the most influential philosopher of the modern era. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* gathers the complete texts of five of Nietzsche's most important works, from his first book to his last: *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *The Case of Wagner*, and *Ecce Homo*. Edited and translated by the great Nietzsche scholar Walter Kaufmann, this volume also features seventy-five aphorisms, selections from Nietzsche's correspondence, and variants from drafts for *Ecce Homo*. It is a definitive guide to the full range of Nietzsche's thought. Includes a Modern Library Reading Group Guide

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Customer Reviews

This book is the best collection of Nietzsche's writings. Kaufmann's translation is incomparable; it has energy, wit; its language is a delight. In other translations Nietzsche comes off as much more ponderous. *The Birth of Tragedy* is a good place to start for knowledge of the early Nietzsche and is an indispensable book for understanding what came later. *The Genealogy of Morals* is the least aphoristic of Nietzsche's writings and provides an extended treatment of Nietzsche's famous and infamous views on morality, especially Christian morality. *Beyond Good and Evil* is aphoristic brilliance containing many of Nietzsche's most famous ideas. The one thing that would make this book perfect is the addition of Kaufmann's translation of *The Gay Science*. For those interested in

Nietzsche there is no better place to start than this book. Nietzsche like Plato and unlike most philosophers really knew how to write. His writing is brilliant, original, and his style has no peer. Kaufmann produces English that is without peer in his translation of Nietzsche's works. Whether you love him or hate him, exposure to Nietzsche can be a life-changing experience.

The first work of Philosophy I slogged through was Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, in a standalone edition translated by Kaufman. I suppose that is as good a place to start as any. The most important thing that this volume highlights is how easily anything Nietzsche said can be so easily taken out of context and abused by anyone who so chooses. For example, his "blond beast" is quite literally a lion, and not an Aryan Superman.

Work by work analysis:

The Birth of Tragedy -- Only attempt this as your first Nietzsche book if you already have a good understanding of how Greek Tragedy works. At the very least, you should have read Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles' *Theban Plays*, some Euripides, Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, Plato's *Apology*, and if possible, Aristotle's *Poetics*. Also, as Kaufman makes clear, the last ten sections, about Wagner, should be taken with a shakerful of salt.

The Aphorisms -- It is very easy to take these gems especially out of context. However tempting it is to browse them for a few good quotes, I strongly urge you against it. They are, however, very helpful when Nietzsche refers to them.

Beyond Good and Evil -- This is as good a place as any to start your exploration of Nietzsche. The problem is, even though it is supposed to be a more straightforward approach at communicating the message found in *Zarathustra*, this is still written very pithily. The prose is very joyful, poetic, and requires thought. Then again, if you weren't willing to commit some thought to Nietzsche, then it's not worth picking up Nietzsche.

On The Genealogy of Morals -- A sequel to *BG&E*. I don't suggest starting here. The prose is more straightforward than *BG&E*, he is attempting polemic in essay form. Yet still, it is still a voice in your head, conspiring with you, coaxing you toward understanding. Here, the prose style of *BG&E* becomes apparent.

The Case of Wagner -- This is a good shakerful of thought to take the last ten sections of *Birth of Tragedy*. In fact, this is a good shakerful of thought to take all of Nietzsche's work. I read this with only the very barest background on Wagner, that is I've heard one Aria from *The Ring* (Three minutes of Brunhilde), *The Flight of the Valkeries* (I still see tanks), and I know somewhere, *Vahalla* burns down. Still, the work makes sense. Stylistically, this work is absolutely amazing. It's very relaxed and informal, again, conversational. Nietzsche doesn't even sound angry, but just wants to clear the air a little, almost naively.

Ecce Homo -- This would seem like a very pretentious work. It is not. He comes off almost modestly here. This too, clears the air of all that is rotten about what has been said about him. It is as if he had guessed what evil things would

be said about him. Oh yes, and if it seems like I wrote this assuming that you already ordered the work, I have.

In any edited text, one needs to be cautious of the editor's biases and potential heavy-handedness (e.g. intentional omissions). In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, the editor, Walter Kaufmann, has selected five of Nietzsche's volumes (*The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *The Case of Wagner*, and *Ecce Homo*) which touch on aspects of Nietzsche's overall trajectory. Also included are selections from *Human, All-Too Human*, *Mixed Opinions and Maxims*, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, *The Dawn*, and *The Gay Science*. Kaufmann is not ashamed to refer the reader to his own works on Nietzsche, especially *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* and his edited *The Portable Nietzsche*, which contains the full-texts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ*, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, and miscellaneous, yet relevant shorter excerpts, essays, and letters. Together, these two edited collections offer the reader a full-scope introduction to the life, thought, and writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, a genuine master of criticism and insight.

My purpose is to advise new readers of Nietzsche to trust W. Kaufmann's handling of Nietzsche's works. Apart from Hollandale, few good English translations of N's works would exist were it not for W.K. It is not essential to agree with all of W.K's interpretations of N. in order to refer to the present work as an important introduction and overview. As W.K. will himself advise you, there is no substitute for reading the original works of N., but some definite value can be made from taking W.K's interpretations and applying them as a counterpoint to your own investigations. Consider your encounter with N. as a process. W.K. is an important part of engaging N's unique mind and extraordinary outputs in the English language.

This is very simply an extraordinary book. Some of Nietzsche's best writings are included in this book, all translated by Walter Kaufmann - Kaufmann being, of course, one of the greatest scholars of German literature (and Nietzsche in particular) of the twentieth century. The translation seemed very good to me, and I've enjoyed Kaufmann's translations before - particularly his book "Goethe's Faust" is one of the best poetic translations I've ever read.

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