

KEY IDEAS OF NIETZSCHE'S *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL* [PENGUIN EDN]

Item	Idea	Sect
1.	The truth must be reached by subtle seduction, not by asserting unthinking dogmas	Pref
2.	Philosophical foundations (e.g. belief in the soul or self) have rested on superstitions and verbal errors	Pref
3.	The worst dogma (a bit like astrology and Vedanta) has been Plato's belief in spirit and the good	Pref
4.	The struggle against this impersonal error (and its Christian popularisation) has created great tension	Pref
PART ONE: ON THE PREJUDICES OF PHILOSOPHERS		
5.	All philosophers desire the truth, but what creates this desire, and what is the value of the truth?	1
6.	Metaphysicians are idealists, and deny that the will to truth could originate in humble worldly conflict	2
7.	They believe in the antithesis of values (e.g. truth/falsehood), even though the antithesis may not exist	2
8.	Perhaps appearances, deception, selfishness and appetite have a positive value of their own	2
9.	It may be that the traditional 'good' values are actually linked to (or identical with) the 'wicked' ones	2
10.	It requires new philosophers to face up to such dangerous speculations as these	2
11.	Most philosophical thinking is secretly guided by instinct, motivated by self-preservation	3
12.	Even logic is actually based on values, such as those of definiteness, precision and truth	3
13.	We place a high value on many false judgements, because they enhance and preserve life	4
14.	Axioms of logic, maths about nature, and a priori synthetic judgements are all false but essential to life	4
15.	Seeing that untruth has value is a rejection of tradition, and places philosophy 'beyond good and evil'	4
16.	Philosophers like Kant and Spinoza just present their prejudices, dressed up with reason and dialectic	5
17.	All philosophies are based on moral intentions and the individual philosopher's own life	6
18.	A few scholars and scientists do aim at pure knowledge, but they don't really care what they work on	6
19.	Pure philosophy, though, is always very personal, based on the natural ordering of the person's drives	6
20.	The Greeks never really appreciated Epicurus , who resented the theatricality of Plato and his followers	7
21.	Stoics believed in following ' nature ', but their own version, not the true one, which is cold and indifferent	9
22.	All philosophy is a spiritual will to power , which deliberately distorts reality to suit its own purposes	9
23.	In the appearance/reality debate, the weak philosophers hang on to certainty, and end in nihilism	10
24.	Good philosophers want to escape the cautious modern view, and believe in something more exciting	10
25.	Kant claimed to have discovered a faculty of mind which made a priori synthetic knowledge possible	11
26.	In fact this faculty, and the 'moral faculty', and 'intuition', were invented, and didn't explain anything	11
27.	We should understand that we have to believe in a priori synthetic judgements , even if they are false	11
28.	Faith in materialist atoms has been abandoned, along with the belief that the earth stands still	12
29.	The Christian belief in the atomic unchanging soul should also be abandoned (but not the 'soul' itself)	12
30.	There is room for a new view of the soul, perhaps as mortal and multiple, based on society and biology	12
31.	Self-preservation is not the main drive of a living creature, but a consequence of its ' will to power '	13
32.	Physics is an inferior interpretation of the world based on a plebeian faith in nothing but the senses	14
33.	Platonism is nobler, and moves beyond the senses (which otherwise leave nothing more to aspire to)	14
34.	The external world can't be conjured up by our organs, because organs themselves need explanation	15
35.	'I think' is not self-evidently true , as it assumes an 'I', needed for thought, which causes the thinking	16
36.	Thinking itself must first be identified, which implies comparison with other types of state	16
37.	There are many prior questions (why an 'I'? why is thought caused? what is a cause? why seek truth?)	16
38.	"A thought comes when 'it' wants, not when 'I' want" , and only our interpretation assumes a thinker	17
39.	Perhaps we can dispense with the 'I' or the 'it', just as physics does not require atoms to explain forces	17
40.	The belief in 'free will' retains its charm as a challenge to thought, even though it has been refuted	18
41.	Schopenhauer's belief in 'the will' as a single self-evident thing is just a prejudice based on a word	19
42.	Willing is actually a complex relationship between many separate parts of our souls	19
43.	Sensation, thinking, emotion and concentration are involved, and one part of the soul obeying another	19
44.	Philosophical concepts are interrelated systematically, and varied philosophers follow the same paths	20
45.	This is based on the grammar of each main family of languages , which is rooted in biology	20
46.	It is absurd human pride to believe in the self-causation and total responsibility for actions of 'free will'	21
47.	'Unfreedom of will' is equally false, as causation is a human concept, not a fact of the material world	21
48.	The strong-willed believe in responsibility , and the weak-willed in unfreedom (and fatalistic socialism)	21
49.	The belief of physicists in 'nature's conformity to law' is just the modern democratic belief in equality	22
50.	Nature could also be described as the result of tyrannical will to power - but they are both interpretations	22
51.	Moral prejudices currently stop us from seeing clearly the internal structure and development of the mind	23
52.	It is 'dangerous' to believe that 'bad' impulses are linked to (or essential for) all the 'good' impulses	23
53.	Psychology is the road to solving fundamental problems, but only if we abandon morality, even our own	23
PART FIVE: ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MORALS		
54.	Actual morality is highly developed and subtle (and needs careful description) while theory is still crude	186
55.	Philosophers always take morality for granted, and try to provide rational grounds for it	186
56.	They accept a narrow local view of morality, and don't understand its variety in other times and places	186

57.	Schopenhauer and others just have a blind faith in conventional morality, and avoid basic questions	186
58.	He is a typically hypocritical philosopher, who affirms pessimism, but accepts morality and enjoys music	186
59.	Each moral theory in some way reflects the desires of its author (justify, soothe, humiliate, dominate...)	187
60.	Kant's categorical imperative asserts a love of obedience, and a desire to make everyone obedient	187
61.	Every morality is a restraint of nature or reason (to which we cannot object)	188
62.	Utilitarians and anarchists object to restraint, but everything valuable comes from it	188
63.	"Obedience in one direction" is what produces " virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality "	188
64.	Even restraining reason, in order to prove what is already known in advance, brings benefits	188
65.	Nature's imperative is obedience, even stupidity, if mankind wishes to flourish with self-respect	188
66.	The English work harder because they do nothing on Sundays	189
67.	All dynamic human drives achieve more energy if they are sometimes restrained	189
68.	Thus stoicism showed restraint in philosophy, and love flourished under medieval Christianity	189
69.	Plato didn't agree with Socrates' view that no one deliberately does wrong [<i>akrasia</i>]	190
70.	Socrates dislikes badness only because it causes trouble and is unpleasant	190
71.	Plato tried (with all his great powers) to make something noble out of this view	190
72.	In fact the Platonic Socrates consists almost entirely of pure Plato	190
73.	The conflict between instinct and reason (which seeks usefulness) goes back to Socrates	191
74.	Initially Socrates followed pure reason, and laughed at unjustified instinctive noble values	191
75.	Eventually he found he too lacked justification, and admitted the dominance of instinct	191
76.	Plato wanted to prove the equality and unity of reason and instinct in one goal [<i>the Good</i>]	191
77.	We have followed Plato, and instinct (or 'the herd') has triumphed (aiming at God, or the good)	191
78.	Descartes returned to pure reason, but he was superficial; reason is "only an instrument"	191
79.	In all traditional 'sciences' the will to believe something comes first , and observation follows later	192
80.	Similarly we approach the arts, foreign languages, and even trees, with emotional prejudices	192
81.	We even read people's expressions with our presuppositions, and habitually lie to ourselves	192
82.	Experience in our dreams shapes our expectations and happiness just as much as real experiences	193
83.	Character is not only revealed by values, but by what people count as actually 'possessing' something	194
84.	A man can possess a woman sexually, or by her self-effacement, or by her loving his worst traits	194
85.	Similarly dictators, charity workers and parents impose their will on the people they 'possess'	194
86.	The Jews 'inverted values' , so that 'rich' means 'godless', and 'violent' and 'sensual' mean 'evil'	195
87.	They branded the 'world' as a bad thing, and caused 'poor' to mean the same as 'holy' and 'friend'	195
88.	The ancient Jews had the mentality of slaves, and started 'the slave revolt in morals'	195
89.	There are many hidden forces in human psychology, just like dark stars in astronomy	196
90.	There is nothing 'sick' about predators, or their human equivalent - 'tropical man' (e.g. Cesare Borgia)	197
91.	Describing such people as hellish or miserable results from timidity and dull mediocrity	197
92.	Most moralities advocate achieving happiness by restraining all emotions which contain any danger	198
93.	This is an absurd generalisation about life, and is the product of prudence and stupidity	198
94.	The Stoics, Spinoza and Aristotle all recommend a dull suppression of emotions and extremes	198
95.	Those who favour emotion (like Goethe) thin it down, and keep it for old age and safe occasions	198
96.	Human beings live in 'herds', so the great herd virtue of obedience has become predominant	199
97.	Consequently natural commanders feel guilty, and pretend to obey some 'higher commands'	199
98.	People glorify the virtues which make them tame, like public spirit, industriousness, moderation and pity	199
99.	Where leadership is essential, clever herd-men unite into groups such as parliaments	199
100.	The appearance of a real commander like Napoleon is a 'release from burden', and brings happiness	199
101.	Eras of collapse and racial mixing tend to produce inner conflict and a dull longing for peace of mind	200
102.	Such conflict occasionally produces the most dynamically successful and seductive type of men	200
103.	The clearest examples are Alcibiades, Caesar, Friedrich II and Leonardo da Vinci	200
104.	Pure preservation of a community has no room for pity and sympathy, which are outside morality	201
105.	The moral virtues are then concerned with taming dangerous qualities (needed to <i>protect</i> communities)	201
106.	Independent will, and even intelligence, become 'evil' , and fairness and obedience become 'good'	201
107.	We even end up sympathising with criminals because we hate the severity of punishments	201
108.	The modern aim of progress and morality is just to eliminate everything which frightens us	201
109.	First Christianity, and now democracy, have tried to make herd-morality the <i>only</i> morality possible	202
110.	Democrats, socialist and anarchists all reject leadership, and prefer equality to a variety of rights	202
111.	They think pity (even for animals!) the highest virtue, and see 'community as the saviour'	202
112.	Democracy is the whole human race in decay, so the future needs new philosophers and commanders	203
113.	The human will must be asserted, to reverse these moral values which are held to be 'eternal'	203
114.	It is terrible when an extraordinary man misses the chance to lead, and worse if humanity degenerates	203
115.	Mankind's potential is still unexhausted, but we must avoid the horrible ideal of "equal rights" for all	203

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MISTAKEN VIEWS ABOUT THE SOURCES OF HUMAN VALUES

- **God:** there is no God, so clearly that is no longer a possible source of values. ("God is dead" - *The Gay Science* para 125)
- **The Absolute:** the enormous variety of human cultures and values that have been discovered shows that there are no absolute and fixed values (i.e. relativism), and the Platonic world of unchanging ideas does not exist. [3,56]
- **Reason:** whenever you trace reasoning back you find that it starts in intuitions and unquestioned prejudices. Therefore values are in place before reasoning starts. [12,16,18,27,75,78,79]

THE TRUE SOURCE OF HUMAN VALUES

- In keeping with modern scientific views, the only possible source of values is human beings. We create our own systems of values, and they are selected by **taste, instinct and sheer force of personality**. [8,11,13,31,105]

UNSATISFACTORY CANDIDATES FOR HUMAN VALUES

- **Humility and pity:** [*Judaism and Christianity*] This is the result of the inversion of moral standards, so that the values of the 'slave' replace those of the 'master'. [60,86-8,98,104,107,111]
- **Freedom and equality:** [*Socialism, anarchism and democracy*] They are the consequence of Christian weakness and the stifling of what is best in human nature. [88,90,110,112,115]
- **Duty:** [*Kant*] The love of following a strict moral rule is merely a symptom of weakness, a love of obedience, and the denial of the 'will to power'. [60]
- **Contentment:** [*Bentham*] The pursuit of a state of 'happiness' is the worst sort of passive denial of life. Its ideal is a state more like that of a herd-animal than a human being. [70,92,105,108]
- **Self-interest:** [*Socrates*] At best this is a totally uninspiring ideal for values, and at the worst it consists of not asserting any values at all. [70]

THE VALUES PREFERRED BY NIETZSCHE

- **Evolution:** [*Darwin*] He values intense life and energy - the survival of the 'fittest'. [13,24,63,90,115]
- **Self-Discipline:** The ideal is to be both dynamic and restrained, because all achievement needs restraint. [62,64,67,93]
- **Nobility:** [*Plato*] The finest individuals show leadership, ambition, sincerity and ruthlessness. [48,71,74,76,90,113,114]
- **Heroic Individuals:** Models are Alcibiades, Caesar, Frederick II, Leonardo, Cesare Borgia, and Napoleon. [100,102,103]
- **Great Civilisations:** The finest people are conquerors and creators, in art, science, law, literature and philosophy. [63,66,115]

OBJECTIONS TO NIETZSCHE'S VIEWS

- He wants self-discipline, but surely that means that reason must rule?
- His ideas lead to a world which either contains no values at all, or where criminals can justify their evil.
- He misinterprets Darwin, seeing 'fitness' as a virtue, instead of as a mere neutral fact.
- As he offers no arguments to support his views, we can just reject them if they don't appeal to us.
- His dream of great leaders was understandable in the age of the sword, but not of machine gun, bomber and hydrogen bomb.
- Great leaders need followers, so why does he criticise the 'sheep'?
- The 'will to power' is seen in democracy, trade unions, peace and charity, as well as in dominant aggressive individuals