

Someone asked me if I could recommend a book on Nietzsche after one of the lectures, and I hesitated, and said I would get back to them. Here's the 'getting back' at last.

My hesitation was due to two things. Firstly, Nietzsche himself is such a good writer that there is really no need for an intermediary: my advice is to go straight to the *Gay Science* and to start at aphorism 151 and read through to 275. If that's going well, you might like to press on to 383, or to go back and read from 1 to 150. Or else you might at that point go back and read the first third of the *Birth of Tragedy*, and the second *Untimely Meditation* ("Use and Abuse of History for Life"), or else to go forward and to read the carefully constructed *Genealogy of Morals*. Then perhaps back to *Human All Too Human* book three ("The Wanderer and His Shadow"), even dipping into *Daybreak* or delving back into earlier parts of *Human All Too Human*. Only once you begin to see the main themes developing should you then turn to the works of 1888: *Twilight of the Idols* in particular is a gem. And of course, all the while this reading should circle around *Zarathustra*, which only begins to make sense as you understand the other works.

This is to approach Nietzsche in the way he himself asked to be approached: "The worst readers are those who behave like plundering troops: they take away a few things they can use, dirty and confound the remainder, and revile the whole." (*HatH* II 137) - Nietzsche asks us to read slowly, because he "writes slowly", such that we with Nietzsche can be "friends of *lento*" (*Daybreak* intro #5).

All good and well you may very well say, but life is short and books are many, and not all of us are in a position to set out on a twenty-year full-time journey of reading Nietzsche slowly, patiently, carefully and closely!

So being a bit more flexible, we need to admit that a good introduction, like a good guide-book, need not necessarily detract from the journey itself, all though that danger remains ever-present. And here's my second hesitation, for the Nietzsche secondary literature is enormous and of wildly varying quality - although looked at from another angle, this literature forms a fascinating world of its own, symbolizing all sorts of interesting things about us. The danger is that the secondary literature becomes an ersatz for reading Nietzsche himself, and a reader can easily thereby get lost in gossip, and never get to meet Nietzsche himself - despite the fact that Fritz waits patiently for these lost readers to come and meet him, and not settle for other's second-hand impressions. Here the irony threatens that a kind of priestly ruse could re-assert itself, and a caste of "Nietzsche experts" surround Nietzsche and turn him into either a monument or an antique.

That being said, and taking as implicit the basic message "read Nietzsche," I will list here some of the introductions and important secondary literature.

Introductory:

R. Kevin Hill *Nietzsche: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2007)
Michael Tanner *Nietzsche* (Oxford, 1994)
Robert Wicks *Nietzsche* (Oneworld Oxford, 2002)
Aaron Ridley *Nietzsche On Art* (Routledge, 2007)
Gianni Vattimo *Dialogue With Nietzsche* (Columbia, 2006)

More Specialized:

Lawrence Lampert *Nietzsche's Task* (Yale, 2001)
R. Hinton Thomas *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society 1890-1918* (Open Court, 1983)
Peter Bergmann *Nietzsche: the Last Anti-Political German* (Indiana U.P., 1987)
Mark Warren *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (M.I.T., 1988)

Roger Hollingrake *Nietzsche, Wagner and the Philosophy of Pessimism* (Allen & Unwin, 1982)
Stanley Rosen *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge, 1995)

Classics still worth reading:

Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, 4th edn 1974; 1st ed 1950)
Karl Jaspers *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity* (German 1935, Eng tr. 1965)
Tracy Strong *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Univ. of Cal. Pr. 1975)

There are many many biographies, including:

Reg Hollingdale *Nietzsche, the Man and his Philosophy* (Cambridge 1965, revised ed. 1999)
Rudiger Safranski *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Norton, 2002)
Curtis Cate *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Biography* (Pimlico, 2002)
Joachim Köhler *Zarathustra's Secret* (Yale, 2002)
Ivo Frenzel *Freidrich Nietzsche: An Illustrated Biography* (Pegasus, 1967)
Janko Larvin *Nietzsche: A Biographical Introduction* (Scribner's 1971)
Sander Gilman (ed.) *Conversations with Nietzsche* (Oxford, 1988)

Biographically Fascinating:

Ben MacIntyre, *Forgotten Fatherland* (Picador, 1992)
H.F. Peters, *Zarathustra's Sister* (Marcus Wiener, 1977)
Rudolph Binion *Frau Lou* (Princeton, 1968)

Historically Interesting:

Ernst Bertram *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology* (German 1919, Eng. tr. Illinois, 2009)
H.L. Mencken *Freidrich Nietzsche* (Unwin, 1908)
Fr. Copleston *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture* (Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1942)
Crane Brinton *Nietzsche* (Harvard, 1941; Harper&Row Torchbook reprint, 1965)

Avoid like the plague:

Laurance Gane and Kitty Chan *Introducing Nietzsche* (Icon/Totem, 1997)
Lesley Chamberlain *Nietzsche in Turin: The End of the Future* (Quartet, 1996)
"Freidrich Nietzsche" (actually, Samuel Roth), *My Sister and I* (Boar's Head, 1951; Amok, 1990)

Note:

Martin Heidegger, Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski and Gilles Deleuze all have books with Nietzsche's name in the title. These are all fascinating and important books, but they are not about Nietzsche: they are about Martin Heidegger, Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski and Gilles Deleuze.