



## What Nietzsche Really Said

By Robert C. Solomon, Kathleen M. Higgins

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Friedrich Nietzsche's aggressive independence, flamboyance, sarcasm, and celebration of strength have struck responsive chords in contemporary culture. More people than ever are reading and discussing his writings. But Nietzsche's ideas are often overshadowed by the myths and rumors that surround his sex life, his politics, and his sanity. In this lively and comprehensive analysis, Nietzsche scholars Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins get to the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy, from his ideas on "the will to power" to his attack on religion and morality and his infamous *Übermensch* (superman).

**What Nietzsche Really Said** offers both guidelines and insights for reading and understanding this controversial thinker. Written with sophistication and wit, this book provides an excellent summary of the life and work of one of history's most provocative philosophers.

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## What Nietzsche Really Said By Robert C. Solomon, Kathleen M. Higgins Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #825469 in Books
- Published on: 2001-01-30
- Released on: 2001-01-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .60" w x 5.20" l, .58 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 263 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Kathleen Higgins and Robert Solomon's comprehensive, lucid, and often humorous overview of Nietzsche's philosophy sings with the joy of his own work--a joy, the authors point out, that is often misunderstood or overlooked. Central to Nietzsche's thought is the call to celebrate life for its own sake. Yet, as Nietzsche himself realized, this often requires provocation. Through both the style and substance of his work, Nietzsche sought to inspire heated dialogue, encouraging readers "to say yes to philosophy, and to life." Many factors get in the way of recognizing and rising to the challenge, however--not the least of which are the rumors surrounding his life, work, and sympathies; his provocative views and prose; and his vivid attacks on systems of thought and individuals. With sense and sensitivity, Higgins and Solomon, both philosophy professors at the University of Texas at Austin, debunk 30 common rumors, offer questions to help guide our reading, provide brief annotations of Nietzsche's works, and examine his heroes and nemeses (sometimes the same people). In addition, they thoughtfully assess concepts central to Nietzsche's philosophy, including those critical to his "affirmative philosophy." This thorough approach, combined with clear writing and a sense of playfulness (attributes Nietzsche would have appreciated), offers insight into Nietzsche's philosophy without sacrificing its nuance or power--a substantial gift, indeed. --*Stephanie Wickersham*

#### From Publishers Weekly

About a decade ago, the late Allan Bloom published his immensely successful polemic, *The Closing of the American Mind*. In it he denounced the erosion of intellectual culture in the U.S., listing Nietzsche as one of the main villains in the story of American decline. Our moral fiber, so the argument goes, has been vitiated by a relativism, skepticism and godlessness that can be traced to the baleful influence of Nietzsche. Bloom's is merely one version of a common view. Higgins and Solomon--both professors of philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin--have much to say in favor of a clear, sober and precise understanding of Nietzsche's writings. In particular, they aim to bring into focus "Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy, his positive suggestions, along with his famously misunderstood doctrines and his enthusiasms. To think of Nietzsche as nothing but negative, 'the great destroyer,' is to misunderstand him profoundly." In brisk, forthright prose, Higgins and Solomon debunk widely accepted myths and rumors about Nietzsche: he was not a German nationalist, not an anti-Semite, did not hate women and plainly opposed everything the Nazis would later stand for. In addition, Higgins and Solomon give an especially sound presentation of Nietzsche's ethically motivated "immoralism" along with the various other positions that are basic to his writings, including the much misunderstood "will to power." The concept, they say, is largely a later creation of Heidegger and other interpreters who combed Nietzsche's unpublished notes for whatever jetsam might aid their own undertakings. Higgins and Solomon regard "the will to power" with judicious skepticism, wisely preferring the books Nietzsche did write to those he didn't. (Feb.)

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#### From Library Journal

Solomon and Higgins (philosophy, Univ. of Texas, Austin) have written a clear, concise, level-headed but restrained overview of Friedrich Nietzsche's life, thought, and influence. They introduce the reader to his provocative ideas about God, values, creativity, perspectivism, the will to power, the future overman, and the eternal recurrence. Particularly helpful are their brief annotations of Nietzsche's 14 books and short analyses of the thinkers who influenced him, e.g., Darwin, Wagner, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer. Nietzsche offers a this-worldly, life-affirming philosophy grounded in a cyclical cosmology and unabashed atheism.

Unfortunately, to make him palatable, his controversial concepts are often misrepresented. Of course, there is

no substitute for reading the original works, especially Thus Spake Zarathustra, but what emerges in this unique guideline is a holistic glimpse of Nietzsche as a person and thinker. Both insightful and inspiring, this engaging book is recommended for all philosophy collections.

-H. James Birx, *Canisius Coll., Buffalo*

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