Introduction: Critique of Morality

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) called himself an immoralist; in his many writings, he disputed the existence of universal moral values, denounced the religious underpinnings of morality, and reflected on the widely varying views on morality held in different cultures. Always controversial, his published legacy incurred an even worse reputation after his death when it was manipulated by his anti-Semitic sister and appropriated by the Nazis for their own purposes. Nietzsche himself was neither an anti-Semitic nor a racist, but his attacks against the Judeo-Christian tradition were so caustic that many misread him and denounced him as a proto-Nazi.

Nietzsche’s ideas are disturbing because they challenge some of our most comforting assumptions. Drawing out the consequences of atheism, Nietzsche proclaims the death of God as a world-shattering event because it means that some of our most basic philosophical and ethical beliefs have no foundation. No God’s-eye view of the world exists to identify objective truth; no divine law specifies what is good and what is evil. Yet Nietzsche does not believe that the nonexistence of God means that everything lacks meaning and value. Instead, he insists that the meaning of human life lies in a liberating undertaking of self-transcendence and the creation of one’s own values; the meaning of human life is the Superman.

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche uses the concept of the Superman (or Overman) as a symbol for the transformation that must take place in us in order to overcome traditional, religiously based morality and to forge a human life that is healthy, vigorous, and creative. The Superman is neither a master race nor the next step in Darwinian evolution. Instead, it is the lifetime goal of self-creation—and rarely attained by any individual. But to create oneself as one’s own work of art, to furnish oneself with one’s own values, one’s own good and evil, to assume command over oneself—these are the virtues of the Superman that Nietzsche prods us to aim for, and even if we cannot attain them, we shall make our lives meaningful if we strive for them.
Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Excerpts)\(^1\)

**Zarathustra’s Prologue**

1

When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. Here he had the enjoyment of his spirit and his solitude and he did not weary of it for ten years. But at last his heart turned—and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus:

Great star! What would your happiness be, if you had not those for whom you shine!

You have come up here to my cave for ten years: you would have grown weary of your light and of this journey, without me, my eagle and my serpent.

But we waited for you every morning, took from you your superfluity and blessed you for it.

Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to take it. I should like to give it away and distribute it, until the wise among men have again become happy in their folly and the poor happy in their wealth.

To that end, I must descend into the depths: as you do at evening, when you go behind the sea and bring light to the underworld too, superabundant star!

Like you I must go down—as men, to whom I want to descend, call it.

So bless me then, tranquil eye, that can behold without envy even an excessive happiness!

Bless the cup that wants to overflow, that the waters may flow golden from him and bear the reflection of your joy over all the world!

Behold! This cup wants to be empty again, and Zarathustra wants to be man again.

Thus began Zarathustra’s down-going.

Zarathustra went down the mountain alone, and no one met him. But when he entered the forest, an old man, who had left his holy hut to look for roots in the forest, suddenly stood before him. And the old man spoke thus to Zarathustra:

“This wanderer is no stranger to me: he passed by here many years ago. He was called Zarathustra; but he has changed.

“Then you carried your ashes to the mountains; will you today carry your fire into the valleys? Do you not fear an incendiary’s punishment?

“Yes, I recognize Zarathustra. His eyes are clear, and no disgust lurks about his mouth. Does he not go along like a dancer?

“How changed Zarathustra is! Zarathustra has become—a child, an awakened-one: what do you want now with the sleepers?

“You lived in solitude as in the sea, and the sea bore you. Alas, do you want to go ashore? Alas, do you want again to drag your body yourself?”

Zarathustra answered: “I love mankind.”

“Why,” said the saint, “did I go into the forest and the desert? Was it not because I loved mankind all too much?”

“Now I love God: mankind I do not love. Man is too imperfect a thing for me. Love of mankind would destroy me.”

Zarathustra answered: “What did I say of love? I am bringing mankind a gift.”

“Give them nothing,” said the saint. “Rather take something off them and bear it with them—that will please them best, if only it be pleasing to you!”

“And if you want to give to them, give no more than an alms, and let them beg for that!”

“No,” answered Zarathustra, “I give no alms. I am not poor enough for that.”

The saint laughed at Zarathustra, and spoke thus: “See to it that they accept your treasures!

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They are mistrustful of hermits, and do not believe that we come to give.

"Our steps ring too lonely through their streets. And when at night they hear in their beds a man going by long before the sun has risen, they probably ask themselves: Where is that thief going?"

"Do not go to men, but stay in the forest! Go rather to the animals! Why will you not be as I am—bear among bears, a bird among birds?"

"And what does the saint do in the forest?"

asked Zarathustra.

The saint answered: "I make songs and sing them, and when I make songs, I laugh, weep, and mutter; thus I praise God.

"With singing, weeping, laughing, and muttering, I praise the God who is my God. But what do you bring us as a gift?"

When Zarathustra heard these words, he saluted the saint and said: "What should I have to give you? But let me go quickly, that I may take nothing from you!" And thus they parted from one another, the old man and Zarathustra, laughing as two boys laugh.

But when Zarathustra was alone, he spoke thus to his heart: "Could it be possible! This old saint has not yet heard in his forest that God is dead!"

When Zarathustra arrived at the nearest of the towns lying against the forest, he found in that very place many people assembled in the market square; for it had been announced that a tight-rope walker would be appearing. And Zarathustra spoke thus to the people:

_I teach you the Superman_. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?

All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?

What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment.

You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape.

But he who is wisest among you, he also is only a discord and hybrid of plant and of ghost. But do I bid you become ghosts or plants?

Behold, I teach you the Superman.

The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!

I entreat you, my brothers, remain true to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes! They are poisoners, whether they know it or not.

They are despisers of life, atrophying and self-poisoned men, of whom the earth is weary: so let them be gone!

Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy, but God died, and thereupon these blasphemers died too. To blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful offence, and to esteem the bowels of the Inscrutable more highly than the meaning of the earth.

Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body: and then this contempt was the supreme good—the soul wanted the body lean, monstrous, famished. So the soul thought to escape from the body and from the earth.

Oh, this soul was itself lean, monstrous, and famished: and cruelty was the delight of this soul!

But tell me, my brothers: What does your body say about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and dirt and a miserable case?

In truth, man is a polluted river. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted river and not be defiled.

Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under.

What is the greatest thing you can experience? It is the hour of the great contempt. The hour in which even your happiness grows loathsome to you, and your reason and your virtue also.
The hour when you say: "What good is my happiness? It is poverty and dirt and a miserable case. But my happiness should justify existence itself."

The hour when you say: "What good is my reason? Does it long for knowledge as the lion for its food? It is poverty and dirt and a miserable case!"

The hour when you say: "What good is my virtue? It has not yet driven me mad! How tired I am of my good and my evil! It is all poverty and dirt and a miserable case!"

The hour when you say: "What good is my justice? I do not see that I am fire and hot coals. But the just man is fire and hot coals!"

The hour when you say: "What good is my pity? Is not pity the cross upon which he who loves man is nailed? But my pity is no crucifixion!"

Have you ever spoken thus? Have you ever cried thus? Ah, that I had heard you crying thus!

It is not your sin, but your moderation that cries to heaven, your very meanness in smiling cries to heaven!

Where is the lightning to lick you with its tongue? Where is the madness, with which you should be cleansed?

Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this lightning, he is this madness!

... Zarathustra looked at the people and marvelled. Then he spoke thus:

Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss.

A dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still.

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal...

**Zarathustra’s Discourses**

**OF THE THREE METAMORPHOSIS**

I name you three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit shall become a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.

There are many heavy things for the spirit, for the strong, weight-bearing spirit in which dwell respect and awe: its strength longs for the heavy, for the heaviest.

What is heavy? thus asks the weight-bearing spirit, thus it kneels down like the camel and wants to be well laden.

What is the heaviest thing, you heroes? so asks the weight-bearing spirit, that I may take it upon me and rejoice in my strength.

Is it not this: to debase yourself in order to injure your pride? To let your folly shine out in order to mock your wisdom?

Or is it this: to desert our cause when it is celebrating its victory? To climb high mountains in order to tempt the tempter?

Or is it this: to feed upon the acorns and grass of knowledge and for the sake of truth to suffer hunger of the soul?

Or is it this: to be sick and to send away comforters and make friends with the deaf, who never hear what you ask?

Or is it this: to wade into dirty water when it is the water of truth, and not to disdain cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: to love those who despise us and to offer our hand to the ghost when it wants to frighten us?

The weight-bearing spirit takes upon itself all these heaviest things: like a camel hurrying laden into the desert, thus it hurries into its desert.

But in the loneliest desert the second metamorphosis occurs: the spirit here becomes a lion; it wants to capture freedom and be lord in its own desert.

It seeks here its ultimate lord; it will be an enemy to him and to its ultimate God, it will struggle for victory with the great dragon.

What is the great dragon which the spirit no longer wants to call lord and God? The great dragon is called "Thou shalt." But the spirit of the lion says "I will!"

"Thou shalt" lies in its path, sparkling with gold, a scale-covered beast, and on every scale glitters golden "Thou shalt."

Values of a thousand years glitter on the scales, and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: "All the values of things—glitter on me."
“All values have already been created, and all created values—are in me. Truly, there shall be no more ‘I will!’ Thus speaks the dragon.

My brothers, why is the lion needed in the spirit? Why does the beast of burden, that renounces and is reverent, not suffice?

To create new values—even the lion is incapable of that: but to create itself freedom for new creation—that the might of the lion can do.

To create freedom for itself and a sacred No even to duty: the lion is needed for that, my brothers.

To seize the right to new values—that is the most terrible proceeding for a weight-bearing and reverent spirit. Truly, to this spirit it is a theft and a work for an animal of prey.

Once it loved this “Thou shalt” as its holiest thing: now it has to find illusion and caprice even in the holiest, that it may steal freedom from its love: the lion is needed for this theft.

But tell me, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion cannot? Why must the preying lion still become a child?

The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes.

Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation: the spirit now wills its own will, the spirit suffered from the world now wins its own world.

I have named you three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit became a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.

Thus spoke Zarathustra. And at that time he was living in the town called The Pied Cow.

**Of the Despisers of the Body**

I wish to speak to the despisers of the body. Let them not learn differently nor teach differently, but only bid farewell to their own bodies—and so become dumb.

“I am body and soul”—so speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?

But the awakened, the enlightened man says: I am body entirely, and nothing beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body.

The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, and herd and a herdsman.

Your little intelligence, my brother, which you call “spirit,” is also an instrument of your body, a little instrument and toy of your great intelligence.

You say “I” and you are proud of this word. But greater than this—although you will not believe it—is your body and its great intelligence, which does not say “I” but performs “I.”

What the sense feels, what the spirit perceives, is never an end in itself. But sense and spirit would like to persuade you that they are the end of all things: they are as vain as that.

Sense and spirit are instruments and toys: behind them still lies the Self. The Self seeks with the eyes of the sense, it lives too with the ears of the spirit.

The Self is always listening and seeking: it compares, subdues, conquers, destroys. It rules and is also the Ego’s ruler.

Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage—he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body.

There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom. And who knows for what purpose your body requires precisely your best wisdom?

Your Self laughs at your Ego and its proud leaping. “What are these leaping and flights of thought to me?” it says to itself. “A by-way to my goal. I am the Ego’s leading-string and I prompt its conceptions.”

The Self says to the Ego: “Feel pain!” Thereupon it suffers and gives thought to how to end its suffering—and it is meant to think for just that purpose.

The Self says to the Ego: “Feel joy!” Thereupon it rejoices and gives thought how it may often rejoice—and it is meant to think for just that purpose.

I want to say a word to the despisers of the body. It is their esteem that produces this disesteem. What is it that created esteem and disesteem and value and will?
The creative Self created for itself esteem and disesteem, it created for itself joy and sorrow. The creative body created spirit for itself, as a hand of its will.

Even in your folly and contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve your Self. I tell you: your Self itself wants to die and turn away from life.

Your Self can no longer perform that act which it most desires to perform: to create beyond itself. That is what it most wishes to do, that is its whole ardour.

But now it has grown too late for that: so your Self wants to perish, you despisers of the body.

Your Self wants to perish, and that is why you have become despisers of the body! For no longer are you able to create beyond yourselves.

And therefore you are not angry with life and with the earth. An unconscious envy lies in the sidelong glance of your contempt.

I do not go your way, you despisers of the body! You are not bridges to the Superman!

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

**Of the Thousand and One Goals**

Zarathustra has seen many lands and many peoples: thus he has discovered the good and evil of many peoples. Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil.

No people could live without evaluating; but if it wishes to maintain itself it must not evaluate as its neighbour evaluates.

Much that seemed good to one people seemed shame and disgrace to another: thus I found. I found much that was called evil in one place was in another decked with purple honours.

One neighbour never understood another: his soul was always amazed at his neighbour’s madness and wickedness.

A table of values hangs over every people. Behold, it is the table of its overcomings; behold, it is the voice of its will to power.

What it accounts hard it calls praiseworthy; what it accounts indispensable and hard it calls good; and that which relieves the greatest need, the rare, the hardest of all—it glorifies as holy.

Whatever causes it to rule and conquer and glitter, to the dread and envy of its neighbour, that it accounts the sublimest, the paramount, the evaluation and the meaning of all things.

Truly, my brother, if you only knew a people’s need and land and sky and neighbour, you could surely divine the law of its overcomings, and why it is upon this ladder that it mounts towards its hope.

“You should always be the first and outrival all others; your jealous soul should love no one, except your friend”—this precept made the soul of a Greek tremble: in following it he followed his path to greatness.

“To speak the truth and to know well how to handle bow and arrow”—this seemed both estimable and hard to that people from whom I got my name—a name which is both estimable and hard to me.

“To honour father and mother and to do their will even from the roots of the soul”: another people hung this table of overcoming over itself and became mighty and eternal with it.

“To practise loyalty and for the sake of loyalty to risk honour and blood even in evil and dangerous causes”: another people mastered itself with such teaching, and thus mastering itself it became pregnant and heavy with great hopes.

Truly, men have given themselves all their good and evil. Truly, they did not take it, they did not find it, it did not descend to them as a voice from heaven.

Man first implanted values into things to maintain himself—he created the meaning of things, a human meaning! Therefore he calls himself: “Man,” that is: the evaluator.

Evaluation is creation: hear it, you creative men! Valuating is itself the value and jewel of all valued things.

Only through evaluation is there value: and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear it, you creative men!
A change in values—that means a change in the creators of values. He who has to be a creator always has to destroy.

Peoples were the creators at first; only later were individuals creators. Indeed, the individual himself is still the latest creation.

Once the peoples hung a table of values over themselves. The love that wants to rule and the love that wants to obey created together such tables as these.

Joy in the herd is older than joy in the Ego: and as long as the good conscience is called herd, only the bad conscience says: I.

Truly, the cunning, loveless Ego, that seeks its advantage in the advantage of many—that is not the origin of the herd, but the herd’s destruction.

It has always been creators and loving men who created good and evil. Fire of love and fire of anger glow in the names of all virtues.

Zarathustra has seen many lands and many peoples. Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than the works of these loving men: these works are named “good” and “evil.”

Truly, the power of this praising and blaming is a monster. Tell me, who will subdue it for me, brothers? Tell me, who will fasten fetters upon the thousand necks of this beast?

Hitherto there have been a thousand goals, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only fetters are still lacking for these thousand necks, the one goal is still lacking.

Yet tell me, my brothers: if a goal for humanity is still lacking, is there not still lacking—humanity itself?

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

OF THE WAY OF THE CREATOR

My brother, do you want to go apart and be alone? Do you want to seek the way to yourself? Pause just a moment and listen to me.

“He who seeks may easily get lost himself. It is a crime to go apart and be alone”—thus speaks the herd.

The voice of the herd will still ring within you. And when you say: “We have no longer the same conscience, you and I,” it will be a lament and a griev.

For see, it is still this same conscience that causes your grief: and the last glimmer of this conscience still glows in your affliction.

But you want to go the way of your affliction, which is the way to yourself? If so, show me your strength for it and your right to it!

Are you a new strength and a new right? A first motion? A self-propelling wheel? Can you also compel stars to revolve about you?

Alas, there is so much lust for eminence! There is so much convulsion of the ambitious! Show me that you are not one of the lustful or the ambitious!

Alas, there are so many great ideas that do no more than a bellows: they inflate and make emptier.

Do you call yourself free? I want to hear your ruling idea, and not that you have escaped from a yoke.

Are you such a man as ought to escape a yoke? There are many who threw off their final worth when they threw off their bondage.

Free from what? Zarathustra does not care about that! But your eye should clearly tell me: free for what?

Can you furnish yourself with your own good and evil and hang up your own will above yourself as a law? Can you be judge of yourself and avenger of your law? . . .

OF THE BESTOWING VIRTUE

When Zarathustra had taken leave of the town to which his heart was attached and which was called “The Pied Cow” there followed him many who called themselves his disciples and escorted him. Thus they came to a cross-road: there Zarathustra told them that from then on he wanted to go alone: for he was a friend of going-alone. But his disciples handed him in farewell a staff, upon the golden haft of which a serpent was coiled about a sun. Zarathustra was delighted with the staff and leaned upon it; then he spoke thus to his disciples:

Tell me: how did gold come to have the highest value? Because it is uncommon and
useless and shining and mellow in lustre; it always bespawns itself.

Only as an image of the highest virtue did gold come to have the highest value. Gold-like gleams the glance of the giver. Gold-lustre makes peace between moon and sun.

The highest virtue is uncommon and useless, it is shining and mellow in lustre: the highest virtue is a bestowing virtue.

Truly, I divine you well, my disciples, you aspire to the bestowing virtue, as I do. What could you have in common with cats and wolves?

You thirst to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to heap up all riches in your soul.

Your soul aspires insatiably after treasures and jewels, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to give.

You compel all things to come to you and into you, that they may flow back from your fountain as gifts of your love.

Truly, such a bestowing love must become a thief of all values; but I call this selfishness healthy and holy.

There is another selfishness, an all-too-poor, a hungry selfishness that always wants to steal, that selfishness of the sick, the sick selfishness.

It looks with the eye of a thief upon all lustrous things; with the greed of hunger it measures him who has plenty to eat; and it is always skulking about the table of the givers.

Sickness speaks from such craving, and hidden degeneration; the thieving greed of this longing speaks of a sick body.

Tell me, my brothers: what do we account bad and the worst of all? Is it not degeneration?—And we always suspect degeneration where the bestowing soul is lacking.

Our way is upward, from the species across to the superspecies. But the degenerate mind which says "All for me" is a horror to us.

Stay loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and entreat you.

Do not let it fly away from the things of earth and beat with its wings against the eternal walls! Alas, there has always been much virtue that has flown away!

Lead, as I do, the flown-away virtue back to earth—yes, back to body and life: that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning.

I now go away alone, my disciples! You too now go away and be alone! So I will have it.

Truly, I advise you: go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And better still: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you.

The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends.

One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels?

You respect me; but how if one day your respect should tumble? Take care that a falling statue does not strike you dead!

You say you believe in Zarathustra? But of what importance is Zarathustra? You are my believers: but of what importance are all believers?

You had not yet sought yourselves when you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all belief is of so little account.

Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you.

Truly, with other eyes, my brothers, I shall then seek my lost ones; with another love I shall then love you.

And once more you shall have become my friends and children of one hope; and then I will be with you a third time, that I may celebrate the great noontide with you.

And this is the great noontide: it is when man stands at the middle of his course between animal and Superman and celebrates his journey to the evening as his highest hope: for it is the journey to a new morning.

Then man, going under, will bless himself; for he will be going over to Superman; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at noontide.
“All gods are dead: now we want the Superman to live”—let this be our last will one day at the great noon tide!
Thus spoke Zarathustra.

ON THE BLISSFUL ISLANDS

The figs are falling from the trees, they are fine and sweet; and as they fall their red skins split. I am a north wind to ripe figs.

Thus, like figs, do these teachings fall to you, my friends: now drink their juice and eat their sweet flesh! It is autumn, all around and clear sky and afternoon.

Behold, what abundance is around us! And it is fine to gaze out upon distant seas from the midst of superficiality.

Once you said “God” when you gazed upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say “Superman.”

God is a supposition; but I want your supposing to reach no further than your creating will.

Could you create a god—So be silent about all gods! But you could surely create the Superman.

Perhaps not you yourselves, my brothers! But you could transform yourselves into forefathers and ancestors of the Superman: and let this be your finest creating!

God is a supposition: but I want your supposing to be bounded by conceivability.

Could you conceive a god—But may the will to truth mean this to you: that everything shall be transformed into the humanly-conceivable, the humanly-evident, the humanly-palpable! You should follow your own sense to the end!

And you yourselves should create what you have hitherto called the World: the World should be formed in your image by your reason, your will, and your love! And truly, it will be to your happiness, you enlightened men!

And how should you endure life without this hope, you enlightened men? Neither in the incomprehensible nor in the irrational can you be at home.

But to reveal my heart entirely to you, friends: if there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god! Therefore there are no gods.

I, indeed, drew that conclusion; but now it draws me.

God is a supposition: but who could imbibe all the anguish of this supposition without dying? Shall the creator be robbed of his faith and the eagle of his soaring into the heights?

God is a thought that makes all that is straight crooked and all that stands giddy. What? Would time be gone and all that is transitory only a lie?

To think this is giddiness and vertigo to the human frame, and vomiting to the stomach: truly, I call it the giddy sickness to suppose such a thing.

I call it evil and misanthropic, all this teaching about the one and the perfect and the unmoved and the sufficient and the transitory.

All that is transitory—that is but an image! And the poets lie too much.

But the best images and parables should speak of time and becoming: they should be a cullogy and a justification of all transitoriness.

Creation—that is the great redemption from suffering, and life’s casement. But that the creator may exist, that itself requires suffering and much transformation.

Yes, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators! Thus you are advocates and justifiers of all transitoriness.

For the creator himself to be the child new-born he must also be willing to be the mother and endure the mother’s pain.

Truly, I have gone my way through a hundred souls and through a hundred cradles and birth-pangs. I have taken many departures, I know the heart-breaking last hours.

But my creative will, my destiny, wants it so. Or, to speak more honestly: my will wants precisely such a destiny.

All feeling suffers in me and is in prison: but my willing always comes to me as my liberator and bringer of joy.

Willing liberates: that is the true doctrine of will and freedom—thus Zarathustra teaches you,
No more to will and no more to evaluate and no more to create! ah, that this great lassitude may ever stay far from me!

In knowing and understanding, too, I feel only my will’s delight in begetting and becoming; and if there be innocence in my knowledge it is because will to begetting is in it.

This will lured me away from God and gods; for what would there be to create if gods—existed!

But again and again it drives me to mankind, my ardent, creative will; thus it drives the hammer to the stone.

Ah, you men, I see an image sleeping in the stone, the image of my visions! Ah, that it must sleep in the hardest, ugliest stone!

Now my hammer rages fiercely against its prison. Fragments fly from the stone: what is that to me?

I will complete it; for a shadow came to me—the most silent, the lightest of all things once came to me!

The beauty of the Superman came to me as a shadow. Ah, my brothers! What are the gods to me now!

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Of SELF-OVERCOMING
What urges you on and arouses your ardour, you wisest of men, do you call it “will to truth”?

Will to the conceivable of all being: that is what I call your will!

You first want to make all being conceivable: for, with a healthy mistrust, you doubt whether it is in fact conceivable.

But it must bend and accommodate itself to you! Thus will your will have it. It must become smooth and subject to the mind as the mind’s mirror and reflection.

That is your entire will, you wisest men; it is a will to power; and that is so even when you talk of good and evil and of the assessment of values.

You want to create the world before which you can kneel: this is your ultimate hope and intoxication.

The ignorant, to be sure, the people—they are like a river down which a boat swims: and in the boat, solemn and disguised, sit the assessments of value.

You put your will and your values upon the river of becoming; what the people believe to be good and evil betrays to me an ancient will to power.

It was you, wisest men, who put such passengers in this boat and gave them splendour and proud names—you and your ruling will!

Now the river bears your boat along: it has to bear it. It is of small account if the breaking wave foams and angrily opposes its keel!

It is not the river that is your danger and the end of your good and evil, you wisest men, it is that will itself, the will to power, the unexhausted, procreating life-will.

But that you may understand my teaching about good and evil, I shall relate to you my teaching about life and about the nature of all living creatures.

I have followed the living creature, I have followed the greatest and the smallest paths, that I might understand its nature.

I caught its glance in a hundredfold mirror when its mouth was closed, that its eye might speak to me. And its eye did speak to me.

But wherever I found living creatures, there too I heard the language of obedience. All living creatures are obeying creatures.

And this is the second thing: he who cannot obey himself will be commanded. That is the nature of living creatures.

But this is the third thing I heard: that commanding is more difficult than obeying. And not only because the commander bears the burden of all who obey, and that this burden can easily crush him.

In all commanding there appeared to me to be an experiment and a risk: and the living creature always risks himself when he commands.

Yes, even when he commands himself; then also must he make amends for his commanding. He must become judge and avenger and victim of his own law.
Chapter 10: Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra

How has this come about? Thus I asked myself. What persuades the living creature to obey and to command and to practise obedience even in commanding?

Listen now to my teaching, you wisest men! Test in earnest whether I have crept into the heart of life itself and down to the roots of its heart!

Where I found a living creature, there I found will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master.

The will of the weaker persuades it to serve the stronger; its will wants to be master over those weaker still: this delight alone it is unwilling to forgo.

And as the lesser surrenders to the greater, that it may have delight and power over the least of all, so the greatest, too, surrenders and for the sake of power stakes—life.

The devotion of the greatest is to encounter risk and danger and play dice for death.

And where sacrifice and service and loving glances are, there too is will to be master. There the weaker steals by secret paths into the castle and even into the heart of the more powerful—and steals the power.

And life itself told me this secret: “Behold,” it said, “I am that which must overcome itself again and again.”

“To be sure, you call it will to procreate or impulse towards a goal, towards the higher, more distant, more manifold: but all this is one and one secret.

“I would rather perish than renounce this one thing; and truly, where there is perishing and the falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself—for the sake of power!”

“That I have to struggle and becoming and goal and conflict of goals: ah, he who divines my will surely divines, too, along what created path it has to go!

“Whatever I create and however much I love it—soon I have to oppose it and my love: thus will my will have it.

“And you too, enlightened man, are only a path and a footstep of my will: truly, my will to power walks with the feet of your will to truth!

“He who shot the doctrine of ‘will to existence’ at truth certainly did not hit the truth: this will—does not exist!

“For what does not exist cannot will; but that which is in existence, how could it still want to come into existence?

“Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but—so I teach you—will to power!

“The living creature values many things higher than life itself; yet out of this evaluation itself speaks—the will to power!”

Thus life once taught me; and with this teaching do I solve the riddle of your hearts, you wisest men.

Truly, I say to you: Unchanging good and evil does not exist! From out of themselves they must overcome themselves again and again.

You exert power with your values and doctrines of good and evil, you assessors of values; and this is your hidden love and the glittering, trembling, and overflowing of your souls.

But a mightier power and a new overcoming grow from out your values: egg and egg-shell break against them.

And he who has to be a creator in good and evil, truly, has first to be a destroyer and break values.

Thus the greatest evil belongs with the greatest good: this, however, is the creative good.

Let us speak of this, you wisest men, even if it is a bad thing. To be silent is worse; all suppressed truths become poisonous.

And let everything that can break upon our truths—break! There is many a house still to build!

Thus spoke Zarathustra.
Basic Existentialist Concepts

The Herd  Under various labels—"the crowd," "the public," "the they"—the concept of the herd has been a central, negative concept in existential theory. Generally, it signifies a life that is the opposite of authenticity. Instead of being a life in which an individual acknowledges and uses his freedom, the life of the herd is a mass-produced life of conformity. When we live our lives as part of the herd, we do not develop our own beliefs or create our own values, but simply adopt the prevailing beliefs and values of society. This conformity results in a lack of creativity, courage, and inauthenticity in matters that are of the utmost importance to each individual. Living as part of the herd, a person exists in a mediocre way, adhering to a leveled-down set of beliefs and values that the majority can live by without much effort.

Nietzsche's censure of the herd escalated into antidemocratic views and scathing attacks against Christian morality. He believed that we are not all born equal, that political systems that promote equality erode human creativity and genius, and that the emphasis on humility, charity, and meekness in Christianity corrodes what is healthiest in humankind.

The Superman  Nietzsche's idiosyncratic concept of the Superman (also translated as the Overman) is an ideal toward which he thinks we should be striving—humankind's most important task. He describes humanity as a tightrope strung between the animal and the Superman, thus proposing that the meaning of human existence does not lie in itself but in what lies beyond itself. The Superman is what we can become if we overcome ourselves, conquering the inner animal nature—especially the herd nature—and compelling our most powerful drives to obey our own command.

The Superman is a self-creator who gives herself values to live by and asserts her will to power. Nietzsche believes that the Superman is possible to achieve but not inevitable.

Becoming the Superman requires all of the creativity and risk taking we are capable of, even all of the rule-breaking rebelliousness that society labels as evil. In Nietzsche's metaphor of the three metamorphoses, the Superman is the child who succeeds the camel and the lion—the child who will start fresh, creating her own values unhindered by traditional morality.

Will to Power  With this concept, Nietzsche defines life in all of its facets. Not merely the will to survive or even to procreate, but the will to power is the quintessence of life. It is the drive to increase and accumulate power—the power to overcome others and to overcome oneself. At its most active, the will to power generates enhanced vitality, strength, and well-being; it is a basic principle of growth and self-transformation.

Because he believes that life is will to power, Nietzsche criticizes philosophical, religious, and moral theories that object to the pursuit of power by individuals. He also opposes theories that recommend detachment from the body and the five senses so as to achieve a non-earthly, heavenly existence. Life here on earth, with its rich terrain that inspires joy, singing, and dancing, is the only life we shall know. To live it openly as will to power—as Nietzsche believes it is in reality—is the best human life.

Transvaluation of Values  Nietzsche argues that moral values are not objective or universal; they arise from the human activity of evaluating. In the past, most people adopted
the values prevailing in their culture instead of evaluating for themselves. Because values are human inventions, nothing stops an individual from creating his or her own values except the social pressure of conforming to the herd. Nietzsche's recommendation that we each furnish ourselves with our own good and evil is a call to arms for those who are willing to overturn traditional morality and exert their will to power over themselves by creating their own values.

Turning values around—the *transvaluation of values*—occurs when there is a change in the creators of values. What was once bad becomes good, what was once good becomes bad, because the values are assessed anew; creators of values replace the old values with new ones. Historically, such changes most often occur when rulers of a society are overthrown and superseded by new rulers, because rulers wield the power to create the guiding values for their society. For example, in ancient Greece and Rome, aristocratic warrior elites were supplanted by priestly castes who espoused Judeo-Christian values after an uprising of the enslaved masses. Today, the transvaluation of values may occur individually if individuals break from the herd and become creators of their own values.

The transvaluation of values always includes destruction as well as creation; the rampages of the lion must precede the free play of the child. According to Nietzsche, those who have been the most powerful creators of values have been branded as evil in their own time because their newly invented "good" was not the "good" already prevailing in their societies. But these new creators of values also have been the greatest benefactors of humankind: Once their new values caught on, their power extended over the lives of many others, long after their own deaths.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Why does Zarathustra announce the death of God before introducing the possibility of the Superman?

2. Does the meaning of human life lie in what we are or in what we strive for? Is the Superman the meaning of human life?

3. How does Nietzsche's theory of the body differ from the views on the body held in most world religions?

4. Why do the tables of values obeyed by different peoples make it possible for them to achieve greatness?

5. Can modern individuals create their own values?