



Ten Tips for a Great Marriage According to Friedrich Nietzsche

by Skye Nettleton

Abstract

Friendship is the highest form of love, according to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, because great friends inspire each other and can even push each other towards the ideal of the Übermensch. While he was sceptical that many people would be strong enough for this kind of higher relationship, Nietzsche saw friendship as essential to a good marriage. Sex, in contrast, creates complications, because a relationship based on romantic feelings is unlikely to endure a lifetime. Furthermore, the ontological differences between men and women tend to turn love into a war. In order to overcome the power games in the arena of love, Nietzsche thus challenges lovers to be great friends.

Drawing on Nietzsche's plethora of aphorisms on friendship, marriage, sex and power relationships, this paper outlines how Nietzsche thought the institution of and approach to marriage could be reinvigorated in ways conducive to more successful relationships and greater human achievements. While some of Nietzsche's ideas about marriage at first appear to be outrageous, much of what Nietzsche recommends is as relevant and challenging today as it was in his own time. Indeed, Nietzsche himself prophesied that the world would not be ready for his ideas until "sometime around the year 2000" (Fuss & Shapiro, 1971, p. 91).

Introduction

Nietzsche admires the ancient Greek model of relationships, where friends were great, men were warriors and women were for their recreation (1883-85/1969, p. 91). Yet he views modern marriage as another example of the collapse of standards in our hedonistic world that is heading for nihilism. In order to overcome this predicament, Nietzsche advocates a philosophy of "aristocratic radicalism" (Fuss & Shapiro, 1971, p. 104), where a few courageous and strong human beings take up the challenge of becoming an *Übermensch*. An *Übermensch* (loosely translated as "superman") is one "who transcends" (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 225), strives passionately and creatively to go beyond, lives life to the fullest,

constantly combats and overcomes obstacles to be a greater person, and rejects comfort and security. Nietzsche regards heterosexual romantic relationships as generally being an irritating distraction from this goal because of the inherent power struggles.

Two things should be noted before we begin. Firstly, Nietzsche lived from 1844 to 1900: an era in which the roles of men and women in society were very different from today. The dominant role of women was to be wife and mother, and, whilst women's rights were certainly being discussed, with the first women's rights convention held in 1848, women's suffrage and women working in areas such as academia did not become widespread in Europe until well into the twentieth century.

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Secondly, on reading Nietzsche, one might be tempted to conclude that, because Nietzsche says some critical things about women, he is a misogynist. However, current thinking in Nietzsche scholarship often warns against taking Nietzsche's writings *prima facie* (e.g. Abbey, 1996; Helm, 2004; Oppel, 2005; Secomb, 2007) – mainly because he weaves such a hugely complex web of meanings. Furthermore, Nietzsche says scathing things not only about women, but also about many different groups of people – including men – and is often contradictory. For example, in *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80/1996), Nietzsche says that “The perfect woman is a higher type of human being than the perfect man” (p. 150), which suggests that he also had great respect for women at times.

Nietzsche's aim is to challenge our assumptions about many issues – not only about gender roles, but also about Christianity, conventional morality, politics and the Enlightenment, to name just a few. I would thus agree with Secomb (2007) when she asserts that, “Despite, or perhaps because of, his unconventional approach, Nietzsche is able to challenge and disturb our most settled convictions, forcing us to rethink taken-for-granted notions and assumptions” (p. 29). Many of Nietzsche's remarks about women, loving relationships and marriage are, at face value, outrageous by modern standards. However, in the spirit of Nietzsche, my aim in exploring a few of his suggestions relating to loving relationships and marriage is to embrace his challenge, to acknowledge his contradictions, and to look beyond his provocations. In light of this, this paper analyses ten of Nietzsche's ideas about how to make marriages great.

1. Don't Marry for Love (Marry someone ugly but whom you like talking to)

Before walking down the aisle, Nietzsche advises the betrothed to ask themselves this question: “[D]o you believe you are going to enjoy talking with this woman up into your old age? Everything else in marriage is transitory, but most of the time you are together will be devoted to conversation” (1878-80/1996, p. 152). Thus, being interested in one another is infinitely more important to the success of a relationship than being attracted to each other. One hundred years before Harry met Sally, Nietzsche was advocating that, in order to preserve a friendship between a man and a woman, “a slight physical antipathy” is required (1878-80/1996, p. 151).

For Nietzsche, a marriage based only on romantic love is on shaky ground because it is fleeting: “Sensuality often makes love grow too quickly, so that the root remains weak and is easy to pull out”

(1886/1990, p. 98). It is much better if there is no sexual attraction to confuse the friendship. “How many married men there are who have experienced the morning when it has dawned on them that their young wife is tedious and believes the opposite” (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, p. 150). To avoid this complication, he recommends preparing lovers for the inevitable evaporation of attraction in order to curb the disappointment when it happens: “Sometimes it requires only a stronger pair of spectacles to cure the lover, and he who had the imagination to picture a face, a figure twenty years older would perhaps pass through life very undisturbed” Nietzsche (1878-80/1996, p. 154).

Romantic love relationships are bound to sizzle and fizzle. Zarathustra, the protagonist of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85/1969), argues that romantic love relationships are just brief follies and that it is stupid to turn a folly into a long-term commitment (p. 96). Earlier, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche stresses the insanity of love-matches: “Marriages contracted from love (so-called love-matches) have error for their father and need for their mother” (p. 151). For marriage to be based on romantic love, as modern marriages often are, undermines the whole institution by basing it on an idiosyncrasy – and “You never, ever base an institution on an idiosyncrasy” (Nietzsche, 1888/2005b, p. 215).

In *Twilight of the Idols* (1888/2005b), Nietzsche notes that marriage has become completely irrelevant and irrational (p. 215). Nietzsche had already highlighted in *Daybreak* (1881/1997) that marriage is “very often and almost as a general rule refuted” and thus has “introduced a very great deal of hypocrisy and lying into the world” (p. 21). Would it not be better to remain friends and lovers, without creating complications with vows that will inevitably be broken? If lovers continue to walk down the aisle while in love, Nietzsche suggests making it illegal:

We ought not to be permitted to come to a decision affecting our whole life while we are in the condition of being in love, nor to determine once and for all the character of the company we keep on the basis of a violent whim: the oaths of lovers ought to be publicly declared invalid and marriage denied them:- the reason being that one ought to take marriage enormously more seriously! (1881/1997, p. 98)

Instead of doing away with marriage altogether, Nietzsche seeks in *Twilight of the Idols* to reinvent it by inventing “new ideals” (1888/

2005b, p. 98). He draws us back to first principles to look at why marriage existed in the first place: it was about what was good for the family and society. Ancient Greek marriages had solid foundations because they were rational business arrangements, roles were very clearly defined, couples could not get divorced, and love was not a factor in the decision. Marriage “knew *how to be heard* above the accidents of feeling, passion, and the distractions of the moment” (Nietzsche, 1888/2005b, p. 215).

While in most western cultures today this idea seems old-fashioned, there are many cultures in which arranged marriages still exist. For the rest of us, Nietzsche advises that it would be much more sensible to marry not only because the individuals happen to be in lust, but by taking other factors into account, such as being able to talk to the spouse, and to maintain the family’s “power, influence and wealth” for future generations (1888/2005b, p. 215). To do this, strong and healthy offspring are required.

2. Make Super-Babies

If Nietzsche were a god looking down on humanity, he says he would be hugely disappointed with what he saw going on with modern marriage. With people marrying for love, mate-selection is based on chance, and making babies is, thus, a random exercise. Mankind is capable of “amazing” things, and yet “individuals are squandered” because they get so swept away with the frivolity of romantic loving that they give “no thought to the fact, indeed, that through procreation he could prepare the way for an even more victorious life” (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, p. 97). This is also a theme in *The Will to Power* (1883-88/1968), where Nietzsche explains that creating new generations of even more amazing individuals is a great achievement and even the ultimate expression of an individual’s power (p. 360). So, it is actually in the individual’s greatest self-interest to marry not for love, but in order to create strong, healthy, well-educated children.

Nietzsche advocates that we improve the human species and build great civilisations through careful mate selection. Zarathustra says: “You should propagate yourself not only forward, but upward!” (1883-85/1969, p. 95). Through discerning gene matching, the parents should be able to create children greater than themselves.

While marriage is, of course, not a necessary condition for procreation, Nietzsche thinks the family unit would certainly assist in building those new generations: “May the garden of marriage help you to do it!” (1883-85/1969, p. 95). Yet, perhaps loving and

super-baby making are not as mutually exclusive as Nietzsche might think. For, when in love, and not simply lusty animal attraction, partners tend to think very highly of each other, and thus it is logical that the lovers would also think that their partners would be able to produce good offspring.

3. Never Promise Everlasting Love

If romantic love is ephemeral, promising to love your partner forever is absurd and a lie, according to Nietzsche. Love that lasts a lifetime is the exception, not the rule. Love, like any other feeling, is not within the individual’s power. Nietzsche’s argument is as follows: love is a feeling; feelings are involuntary; and a promise cannot be made based on something that one has no control over.

What one can promise, however, are actions. In a loving relationship, one can promise actions that “are usually the consequences of love” (Nietzsche, 1878-80/1996, p. 42). It would be much more appropriate to recognise this contingency and be honest about it. To avoid deception in wedding vows, Nietzsche recommends saying something along these lines: “For as long as I love you I shall render to you the actions of love; if I cease to love you, you will continue to receive the same actions from me, though from other motives” (1878-80/1996, p. 42). This will not be deceptive, because one is promising to act *as if* still in love, rather than mistakenly promising the feeling of love.

Nietzsche is convinced that this would be perfectly acceptable and that the beloved will still say “I do” to marriage when being confronted with a partner who is uncertain about how long the loving feeling will last. He assumes the still popular view that feelings are involuntary and that love is thus not a choice. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Nietzsche that feelings are involuntary, one has to acknowledge that Nietzsche is right in recognizing the absurdity of promising a feeling. Nietzsche’s key point is that, if both partners are consciously aware of what they are promising on their wedding day, there is a much better chance of the marriage enduring. Since romantic love relationships are often not strong enough to endure a lifetime, other motivations are needed. Yet let us now consider the possibility of adapting marriage to better suit romantic love relationships.

4. Try Serial Monogamy

To avoid the problem of the temporary nature of romantic love relationships, why do people not agree to short-term marriages upfront? Nietzsche even

considered the option of a two-year marriage for himself at one stage. To understand Nietzsche's reasoning in this regard, we must first better understand Nietzsche's view of friendship. In *The Gay Science* (1882/2001), Nietzsche refers to a noble kind of friendship called a "star friendship":

We are two ships, each of which has its own goal and course; we may cross and have a feast together, as we did – and then the good ships lay so quietly in one harbour and in one sun that it may have seemed as if they had already completed their course and had the same goal. But then the almighty force of our projects drove us apart once again, into different seas and sunny zones (p. 159)

Despite many of Nietzsche's own star friendships turning sour, he glorifies them and seems to truly appreciate the short time they lasted. Applying this same concept to romantic love relationships, the risk for lovers is not only that the loving feeling may wane, but that people change too. Like ships that come together and separate in the star friendship, so too do lovers have their own personal goals and seek to pursue their own paths that may not be synergistic. Thus the custom of marriage where two people are bound together for life is naturally untenable.

In *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche suggests that it would be much better (for men, presumably) to do away with the custom of one wife for life and instead "one might very well consider whether nature and reason do not dictate that a man ought to have two marriages" (p. 156). The first marriage is the most important and necessary for a man's education; it should be when the man is twenty-two years old to a woman who is "intellectually and morally his superior and who can lead him through the perils of the twenties" (Nietzsche 1878-80/1996, p. 156). A second marriage, while useful, is not necessary; it should be during a man's thirties and to a younger disciple "whose education he would himself take in hand". Later in life, man should preferably be without a wife because marriage "is often harmful and promotes the spiritual retrogression of the man" (Nietzsche 1878-80/1996, p. 156). In a later work, Nietzsche cites a raft of great philosophers who have not been married as evidence for this incompatibility between marriage and personal fulfilment: "Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer", with only Socrates as the ironic exception (1887/1989, p. 107).

While Nietzsche does not go into detail on how serial monogamy could be of benefit to women, he recognizes that it would require generosity on their

part – hence the title he gives the aphorism discussed in the previous paragraph: 'Opportunity for female generosity' (1878-80/1996, p. 156). Nevertheless, the star friendship is not just a male domain. However, once children are introduced, this argument is in conflict with Nietzsche's view that a strong family unit is better for a child's upbringing and education. With regard to such contradictions, it could nevertheless be argued that Nietzsche is simply presenting various options to couples and by no means insisting that every suggestion needs to be accepted as indispensably part of a comprehensive and systematic solution.

5. Make It Work

For couples wanting to marry, Nietzsche proposes a trial first. Zarathustra says: "Allow us a term and a little marriage, to see if we are fit for the great marriage! It is a big thing always to be with another!" (1883-85/1969, p. 228). Nietzsche argues that people rush amorously into marriage and, when it goes wrong, it causes the couple as well as everyone around them a great deal of aggravation. Just be honest, urges Zarathustra, and say: "We love each other: let us *see to it* that we stay in love! Or shall our promise be a mistake?" (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 228). Had the lovers taken Nietzsche's advice and promised the semblance of love, not the continuation of the feeling of love, it would have been easier to keep the promise and to stay together, as expectations had already been set. Further trying to convince us that love actually is irrelevant in a marriage, Nietzsche writes:

Sample of reflection before marriage. – Supposing she loves me, how burdensome she would become to me in the long run! And supposing she does not love me, how really burdensome she would become to me in the long run! – It is only a question of two different kinds of burdensomeness – therefore let us get married! (1881/1997, p. 172)

Presumably, setting expectations low will avoid disappointment in the long run. Married couples will inevitably encounter problems, however, and Nietzsche has a couple of other alternatives for how to make marriage work.

6. Give Her a Baby

Zarathustra says that "Everything about woman is a riddle, and everything about woman has one solution: it is called pregnancy" (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 91). Pregnancy is the solution because it is the only

reason that a woman needs a man: “Man is for woman a means: the purpose is always the child” (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 91). Taking these comments at face value, Diethe (1989) reads Nietzsche as saying that women are “completely defined by the reproductive urge” and their “sole instinct is to crave for children” (p. 867); permanently craving for sex, women are predators or “vamp-like *femmes fatales*” who seduce men simply for impregnation (pp. 865, 867).

This interpretation fits nicely with Nietzsche’s idea that people should choose mates based on the criterion of attempting to produce strong offspring. It is thus only natural for women to use their skills of seduction to this end. Nevertheless, other scholars, such as Ackermann (1990, p. 123), encourage us not to jump to conclusions, because it is unclear whose pregnancy is being discussed; elsewhere, Nietzsche also uses pregnancy as a metaphor for creativity.

Yet the two interpretations – woman as sex animal and woman as stimulating creativity – are not mutually exclusive. The underlying assumption in this suggestion is that women are capable of being independent and do not need a man for anything except sperm. Woman, in her quest to create a super-baby, uses man to impregnate her. Yet it could also mean that men and women use each other as fertiliser for creativity, and as such use marriage as a launching pad to greater things and to achieve greater goals.

7. Get a Little Action on the Side

Can a woman be a good wife, “friend, assistant, mother, family head and housekeeper,” business-woman and concubine to boot (Nietzsche, 1878-80/1996, p. 157)? Nietzsche realises that all these roles and expectations put a huge strain on a woman and concedes that “it would be too much to demand of her” (1878-80/1996, p. 157). In this regard, Abbey (1997) notes that, “a century before its becoming common currency in the western world, Nietzsche saw the problem of the superwoman!” (p. 85).

Nietzsche assumes that men naturally need sex more than women do, and his solution is not to help a wife out with the housework, but to relieve women of the burden of satisfying their husband’s sexual desires by finding a “natural assistant, namely *concubinage*” (1878-80/1996, p. 157). Anticipating some resistance, Nietzsche urges women to think of the “higher conception” of marriage as a “soul-friendship” in which sensuality is “a rare, occasional means to a greater end” – that is, creating children (1878-80/1996, p. 157). This is a neat solution for Nietzsche because, as he suggests elsewhere, fidelity comes

naturally to a woman but not to a man (1882/2001, p. 228).

One compelling explanation for the concubine suggestion is that, in Nietzsche’s time, contraception was not widespread, so sex often resulted in reproduction (Diethe, 1989, p. 866). Nietzsche is simply proposing clarification of the role of woman as mother as distinct from that of woman as sex partner. While there is no supporting evidence for this essentialist idea that women are naturally faithful, one might still appreciate that Nietzsche has good intentions in seeking creative ways to reduce a wife’s stress levels. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that introducing a concubine into a marriage may only increase a wife’s stress.

8. Let Him Suffer

Whereas women naturally like peace and comfort, men want quite the opposite; men welcome challenges and obstacles, according to Nietzsche (1878-80/1996). Women hate to see men suffer and try to help them to have easier lives by removing obstacles; yet doing so is very frustrating for men. Zarathustra explains the phoenix-like rebirth that comes from the most harrowing experiences: “You must be ready to burn yourself in your own flame: how could you become new, if you had not first become ashes?” (Nietzsche, 1883-85, p. 90). Like giving birth, great creations and achievements are painful: “all becoming and growth, everything that guarantees the future involves pain” (Nietzsche, 1888/2005b, p. 228).

This idea relates to what Nietzsche had first-hand experience of, having been very ill for most of his life. In a letter to a friend he wrote: “My illness has been my greatest boon: it unblocked me, it gave me the courage to be myself” (Fuss & Shapiro, 1971, p. 114). Constantly overcoming the obstacles and challenges in life, he thought, proved strength of character and could bring the greatest rewards and creativity.

One of Nietzsche’s most enduring maxims, “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger” (1888/2005b, p. 157), was something he seemed truly to believe. The greater the challenge, the greater the achievement when it is overcome. Like a predecessor, Max Stirner, who advocated preserving life only in order to squander it, Nietzsche admires people who care more about challenging than safeguarding themselves: “I love those who do not wish to preserve themselves. I love with my whole love those who go down and perish: for they are going beyond” (1883-85/1969, p. 217).

While Nietzsche makes some sweeping generalisations about the ontological differences between men and women, there is certainly merit in acknowledging that people have different preferences. Just because two people are in love does not mean that they have to pretend to be the same – which is perhaps why they need a whip.

9. Take a Whip to Her!

“Are you visiting women? Do not forget your whip!” is a piece of advice given to Zarathustra and which has created a huge amount of speculation as to its meaning (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 93). Taken literally, one might believe it suggests disdain for women and advocates physical violence against them. Yet the context of the quotation cautions us not to jump to conclusions. The advice is given to Zarathustra by an old woman as a special gift of thanks and she warns him to keep it a secret – perhaps because in the wrong hands it would be misunderstood.

Solomon and Higgins (2000) argue that, because Zarathustra has been talking about differences in the way men and women experience and practise love, “the old woman presents the sexes as engaged in a power struggle that the male is by no means assured of winning” (pp. 7-8). Indeed, Nietzsche says elsewhere that love is war and “the deadly hatred between the sexes!” (1888/2005a, p. 236).

Shortly before *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was written, a photograph was taken of Nietzsche with two of his close friends at the time: Lou Salome and Paul Rée. The photograph shows Salome driving a pony-trap and brandishing a whip, with Nietzsche and Rée between the shafts. While the photograph, orchestrated by Nietzsche, may have simply been a bit of fun, it shows that “the men are the potential victims” (Thomas, 1980, p. 117).

One of the more interesting interpretations builds on the idea that, when in love, there is a strong desire to dissolve the feeling of otherness and ‘make the same’ (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, pp. 210-211). Nietzsche thinks this to be madness, arguing that distance is essential to keep power over oneself: “The thinker must always from time to time drive away those people he loves”, because love tends to blind one to the truth, giving lovers power to deceive and to seduce; conversely, driving lovers away tends to reveal their malice and helps one to distance oneself from them (1881/1997, pp. 197-198).

Perhaps the whip is to help Zarathustra with either creating or preserving a “motivating distance”

(Ackermann, 1990, p. 124). Distance from women is very important for Nietzsche so as not to spoil the mystery and beauty of the feminine: “The magic and the most powerful effect of women is, to speak the language of the philosophers, action at a distance” (1882/2001, p. 71). Derrida (1979), drawing on the power struggle between men and women, suggests that a man must keep his distance to avoid falling under the spell of a woman’s “beguiling song of enchantment” and as such to remain free to “seduce without being seduced” (p. 49).

It is most unlikely that Nietzsche means physical violence when Zarathustra was advised to take a whip to women. It is much more likely that the comment is metaphorical and that the whip is to be used by either or both lovers to preserve distance from one another, in order to avoid forgetting their individuality. In the context of loving relationships, we will now explore the possibility that the whip is for the great Zarathustra to give to a woman to help him be even greater. The best type of relationship is one where the partners are brave enough to ‘whip each other into shape’ so to speak.

10. Marry Your Best Friend

For Nietzsche, friendship is the “ultimate ideal” of love and “a kind of ideal of Being-with-Others” (Solomon, 2003, pp. 95, 157). He admires the ancient Greek ideal of friendships between men and agreed with Aristotle that great friends could inspire each other. This kind of friendship is neither about mutual benefit nor based on pleasure and enjoyment. While a great friendship may include all these elements, the key difference is that really great friends help one another to become better people through “a shared higher thirst for an ideal above them” (Nietzsche, 1882/2001, p. 41); in other words, each friend acts like a “catalytic muse” for the other (Lungstrum, 1994, p. 137).

Nietzsche says that “man is something that should be overcome”, and yet this is something that is extremely difficult to do on one’s own (1883-85/1969, p. 41). The individual, if left alone for too long without friends, can too easily fall into a rut. For, as Nietzsche warns in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886/1990), “He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you” (p. 102). Thus, the friend is valued not so much for his or her gaze, as Jean-Paul Sartre later envisaged, but rather for his or her ability to pull the individual up from the depths of the abyss and be a launching pad to a greater existence.

Yet being a great friend is not an easy task. The best teachers are the harshest critics and should be wary of being too sympathetic towards the friend. Zarathustra says: "Let your pity for your friend conceal itself under a hard shell" (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 83). Secomb (2007) highlights that "Friends do not unquestioningly uphold, reinforce and echo our attitudes but provide new perspectives and interrogate our presuppositions" (pp. 30-31). Indeed, sometimes great friends must be so ruthless that they are also the enemy: "If you want a friend, you must also be willing to wage war for him: and to wage war, you must be *capable* of being an enemy" (Nietzsche, 1883-85/1969, p. 82).

Nietzsche is challenging all of us to be better friends. He urges lovers not to get caught up in power games but instead to help each other find the way to becoming an *Übermensch*. While Nietzsche tends to be a little vague on what the *Übermensch* entails, he thought the best kind of love "arouses longing for the Superman" (1883-85/1969, p. 96). This kind of love propels us to want to be the best kind of person we can be. It is precisely this kind of great friendship that will make a great marriage. In fact, "The best friend will probably acquire the best wife, because a good marriage is founded on the talent for friendship" (Nietzsche, 1878-80/1996, p. 150).

Conclusion

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (2007) argues that "it is in his relentlessly serious pursuit of the problem, not in his frivolous solutions that Nietzsche's greatness lies" (p. 114). Yet this paper has shown that Nietzsche put forward at least ten practical, if at times mutually exclusive, suggestions for how to make marriages more successful, many of which are still relevant today. While initially some of these suggestions may appear frivolous, I have shown through a number of alternative interpretations that Nietzsche's solutions are extremely insightful. For example, Nietzsche provides sage and universal advice when he says that marriage should be based on something more rational than romantic loving alone, that lovers should be honest with each other from the very beginning, and that lovers should learn to stand on their own two feet

and never forget their own goals in life; so, too, when he highlights the great achievement in creating a wonderful child. The emergence of fertility clinics where parents can create "bespoke babies" by choosing physical traits and screening for defects and diseases suggests that there is indeed a demand for creating stronger and more attractive children cosmetically (Sherwell, 2009). Nietzsche is simply urging a natural form of this through partner selection rather than in test tubes.

Moreover, the issue of stay-at-home versus working mothers and the conflicting roles of mother, wife and career woman is still topical today. Alluding to the fact that all a woman needs a man for is for sperm, one might wonder if Nietzsche foresaw a diminishing need for men as breadwinners and the breakdown of the nuclear family – both of which would hinder a child's upbringing. Indeed, recent United States census data show that four out of ten births were to unmarried women. This was more than in any other year in the nation's history, and three-quarters of those mothers were 20 or older (Ventura, 2009). The wide availability of contraception puts seriously into question whether all these pregnancies were accidental. If marriage were to become obsolete, Nietzsche would have been hugely disappointed and worried about the impact of that on children's development.

Nietzsche did not have it all worked out. Indeed, he seemed to find women confusing at times, as shown, for example, as we have already seen, in his saying that they are "a riddle". Yet he saw it as natural that people fall in love and like to get married. When marriages fall apart, they can be painful, because promises get broken and people get damaged and weakened. Loving relationships, he thought, can be wonderful when they are between two strong individuals. Yet such a thing is rare, and great marriages are even rarer. Yet that does not mean that great loving relationships are impossible. He gives us ideas about how to do it well and make it work wonderfully. It will not be easy. It will create conflict. At times, the lovers will have to be enemies. Yet Nietzsche would approve because he welcomed challenges and obstacles in life.

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