**Friedrich Nietzsche**

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| **Friedrich Nietzsche** |
| Nietzsche in Basel, c. 1875. |
| **Born** | Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche(1844-10-15)15 October 1844[Röcken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B6cken) (near [Lützen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BCtzen)), [Province of Saxony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Province_of_Saxony), [Kingdom of Prussia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Prussia) |
| **Died** | 25 August 1900(1900-08-25) (aged 55)[Weimar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar), [Saxony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach), [German Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire) |
| **Residence** | Germany |
| **Nationality** | [German](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germans) |
|  |
| **Era** | [19th-century philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/19th-century_philosophy) |
| **Region** | [Western philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_philosophy) |
| **Main interests** | [Aesthetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics) **·** [Ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics)[Metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics) **·** [Nihilism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nihilism)[Psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology) **·** [Ontology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontology)[Poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry) **·** [Value theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_theory)[Voluntarism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntarism_%28metaphysics%29) **·** [Tragedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy)[Fact–value distinction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fact%E2%80%93value_distinction)[Anti-foundationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-foundationalism)[Philosophy of history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_history) |
| **Notable ideas** | [Apollonian and Dionysian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonian_and_Dionysian)[*Übermensch*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbermensch) **·** [Ressentiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ressentiment)"[Will to power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_to_power)" **·** "[The Death of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead)"[Eternal recurrence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_recurrence) **·** [*Amor fati*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amor_fati)[Herd instinct](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_behavior#Herd_behavior_in_human_societies) **·**[Tschandala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tschandala)"[Last Man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Man)" **·**[Perspectivism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspectivism)[Master–slave morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master%E2%80%93slave_morality)[Transvaluation of values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaluation_of_values)[Nietzschean affirmation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzschean_affirmation) |
| **Signature** |  |

**Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche** ([/ˈniːtʃə/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_English) or [/ˈniːtʃi/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_English); German: [[ˈfʁiːdʁɪç ˈvɪlhɛlm ˈniːt͡sʃə]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA_for_German); 15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900) was a German philosopher, [cultural critic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_critic), poet, composer, and Latin and Greek scholar. He wrote several critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy, and science, displaying a fondness for [metaphor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphor) and [irony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irony).

Nietzsche's key ideas include [perspectivism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspectivism), the [will to power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_to_power), [master-slave morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master-slave_morality), the [death of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_God), the [*Übermensch*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbermensch) and [eternal recurrence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_recurrence). One of the key tenets of his philosophy is "[life-affirmation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzschean_affirmation)", which embraces the realities of the world in which we live over the idea of a world beyond. It further champions the creative powers of the individual to strive beyond social, cultural, and moral contexts. Nietzsche's attitude towards religion and morality was marked with [atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism), [psychologism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologism) and [historism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historism); he considered them to be human creations – effects of a historical development, mistaken as its first cause. His radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth has been the focus of extensive commentary, and his influence remains substantial, especially in schools of [continental philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_philosophy) such as [existentialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism), [postmodernism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism), and [post-structuralism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-structuralism). His ideas of individual overcoming and transcendence beyond structure and context have had a profound impact on late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century thinkers, who have used these concepts as points of departure in the development of their philosophies.

Nietzsche began his career as a [classical philologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_philology)—a scholar of Greek and Roman textual criticism—before turning to philosophy. In 1869, at age 24, he became the youngest-ever occupant of the Chair of Classical Philology at the [University of Basel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Basel). He resigned in 1879 due to health problems that plagued him most of his life. In 1889, at age 44, he suffered a collapse and a complete loss of his mental faculties. The breakdown was later ascribed to atypical general [paresis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paresis) due to [tertiary syphilis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_syphilis), but this diagnosis has come into question. Nietzsche lived his remaining years in the care of his mother (until her death in 1897) and then his sister [Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_F%C3%B6rster-Nietzsche). He died in 1900 of what was thought to be a stroke, however re-examination of Nietzsche's medical evaluation papers show that he almost certainly died of brain cancer.

As his caretaker, his sister assumed the roles of curator and editor of Nietzsche's manuscripts. Förster-Nietzsche, the widow of prominent [German nationalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_nationalism#1871_to_World_War_I.2C_1914.E2.80.931918) and [anti-Semite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism) [Bernhard Förster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernhard_F%C3%B6rster), reworked Nietzsche's unpublished writings to fit her own ideology. Often she did so in ways contrary to her brother's stated opinions, which were strongly and explicitly [opposed to antisemitism and nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche#Nietzsche.27s_criticism_of_anti-Semitism_and_nationalism). Through Förster-Nietzsche's editions, Nietzsche's name became associated with [German militarism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prussian_militarism) and [Nazism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism), although later 20th-century scholars have counteracted this conception of his ideas.

**Life**

**Youth (1844–69)**

Born on 15 October 1844, Nietzsche grew up in the small town of [Röcken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B6cken), near [Leipzig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leipzig), in the [Prussian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Prussia) [Province of Saxony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Province_of_Saxony). He was named after King [Frederick William IV of Prussia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_William_IV_of_Prussia), who turned forty-nine on the day of Nietzsche's birth. (Nietzsche later dropped his middle name "Wilhelm".) Nietzsche's parents, Carl Ludwig Nietzsche (1813–49), a [Lutheran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism) [pastor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor) and former teacher, and Franziska Oehler (1826–97), married in 1843, the year before their son's birth. They had two other children: a daughter, [Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_F%C3%B6rster-Nietzsche), born in 1846, and a second son, Ludwig Joseph, born in 1848. Nietzsche's father died from a brain ailment in 1849; Ludwig Joseph died the next year, at age two. The family then moved to [Naumburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naumburg), where they lived with Nietzsche's maternal grandmother and his father's two unmarried sisters. After the death of Nietzsche's grandmother in 1856, the family moved into their own house, now [Nietzsche-Haus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzsche-Haus%2C_Naumburg), a museum and Nietzsche study center.

Nietzsche in 1861

Nietzsche attended a boys' school and then, later, a private school, where he became friends with Gustav Krug, [Rudolf Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Wagner), and Wilhelm Pinder, all of whom came from highly respected families.

In 1854, he began to attend Domgymnasium in Naumburg but since he showed particular talents in music and language, the internationally recognized [Schulpforta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pforta) admitted him as a pupil. He transferred and studied there from 1858 to 1864, becoming friends with [Paul Deussen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Deussen) and Carl von Gersdorff. He also found time to work on poems and musical compositions. At Schulpforta, Nietzsche received an important grounding in languages—Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and French—so as to be able to read important [primary sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_source); he also experienced for the first time being away from his family life in a small-town conservative environment. His end-of-semester exams in March 1864 showed a 1 in Religion and German; a 2a in Greek and Latin; a 2b in French, History, and Physics; and a "lackluster" 3 in Hebrew and Mathematics.

While at Pforta, Nietzsche had a penchant for pursuing subjects that were considered unbecoming. He became acquainted with the work of the then almost-unknown poet [Friedrich Hölderlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_H%C3%B6lderlin), calling him "my favorite poet" and composing an essay in which he said that the mad poet raised consciousness to "the most sublime ideality". The teacher who corrected the essay gave it a good mark but commented that Nietzsche should concern himself in the future with healthier, more lucid, and more "German" writers. Additionally, he became acquainted with [Ernst Ortlepp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Ortlepp), an eccentric, blasphemous, and often drunken poet who was found dead in a ditch weeks after meeting the young Nietzsche but who may have introduced Nietzsche to the music and writing of [Richard Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wagner). Perhaps under Ortlepp's influence, he and a student named Richter returned to school drunk and encountered a teacher, resulting in Nietzsche's demotion from first in his class and the end of his status as a prefect.

Nietzsche in his younger days

After graduation in 1864, Nietzsche commenced studies in [theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology) and classical philology at the [University of Bonn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Bonn). For a short time he and Deussen became members of the [Burschenschaft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burschenschaft) *Frankonia*. After one semester (and to the anger of his mother) he stopped his theological studies and lost his faith. As early as his 1862 essay "Fate and History", Nietzsche had argued that historical research had discredited the central teachings of Christianity, but [David Strauss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Strauss)'s *Life of Jesus* also seems to have had a profound effect on the young man. In 1865, at the age of 20, Nietzsche wrote to his sister Elisabeth, who was deeply religious, a letter regarding his loss of faith. This letter ended with a following sentence:

"Hence the ways of men part: if you wish to strive for peace of soul and pleasure, then believe; if you wish to be a devotee of truth, then inquire..."

[Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schopenhauer)'s philosophy strongly influenced Nietzsche's earliest philosophical thought.

Nietzsche subsequently concentrated on studying philology under Professor [Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wilhelm_Ritschl), whom he followed to the [University of Leipzig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Leipzig) in 1865. There, he became close friends with his fellow student [Erwin Rohde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erwin_Rohde). Nietzsche's first philological publications appeared soon after.

In 1865, Nietzsche thoroughly studied the works of [Arthur Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer). He owed the awakening of his philosophical interest to reading Schopenhauer's [*The World as Will and Representation*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_World_as_Will_and_Representation) and later admitted that Schopenhauer was one of the few thinkers whom he respected, dedicating to him the essay "[Schopenhauer as Educator](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Schopenhauer_as_Educator)" in the [*Untimely Meditations*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Untimely_Meditations_%28Nietzsche%29).

In 1866, he read [Friedrich Albert Lange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Albert_Lange)'s [*History of Materialism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geschichte_des_Materialismus). Lange's descriptions of Kant's anti-materialistic philosophy, the rise of European [Materialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Materialism), Europe's increased concern with science, [Charles Darwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Darwin)'s theory of evolution, and the general rebellion against tradition and authority intrigued Nietzsche greatly. The cultural environment encouraged him to expand his horizons beyond philology and continue his study of philosophy, although Nietzsche would ultimately argue the impossibility of an evolutionary explanation of the human aesthetic sense.

In 1867, Nietzsche signed up for one year of voluntary service with the Prussian artillery division in Naumburg. He was regarded as one of the finest riders among his fellow recruits, and his officers predicted that he would soon reach the rank of captain. However, in March 1868, while jumping into the saddle of his horse, Nietzsche struck his chest against the [pommel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saddle) and tore two muscles in his left side, leaving him exhausted and unable to walk for months. Consequently Nietzsche turned his attention to his studies again, completing them and meeting with [Richard Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wagner) for the first time later that year.

**Professor at Basel (1869–78)**

Mid-October 1871. From left: [Erwin Rohde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erwin_Rohde), Karl von Gersdorff, Nietzsche.

In part because of Ritschl's support, Nietzsche received a remarkable offer to become professor of [classical philology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_philology) at the [University of Basel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Basel) in Switzerland. He was only 24 years old and had neither completed his doctorate nor received a teaching certificate. Despite the fact that the offer came at a time when he was considering giving up philology for science, he accepted. To this day, Nietzsche is still among the youngest of the tenured Classics professors on record. Before moving to Basel, Nietzsche renounced his Prussian citizenship: for the rest of his life he remained officially [stateless](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stateless_person).

Nevertheless, Nietzsche served in the Prussian forces during the [Franco-Prussian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-Prussian_War) (1870–1871) as a medical [orderly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orderly). In his short time in the military, he experienced much and witnessed the traumatic effects of battle. He also contracted [diphtheria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diphtheria) and [dysentery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysentery). [Walter Kaufmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kaufmann_%28philosopher%29) speculates that he might also have contracted [syphilis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syphilis) along with his other infections at this time. On returning to Basel in 1870, Nietzsche observed the establishment of the [German Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire) and [Otto von Bismarck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_von_Bismarck)'s subsequent policies as an outsider and with a degree of skepticism regarding their genuineness. His inaugural lecture at the university was "[Homer and Classical Philology](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Homer_and_Classical_Philology)". Nietzsche also met [Franz Overbeck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Overbeck), a professor of [theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology) who remained his friend throughout his life. [Afrikan Spir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrikan_Spir), a little-known Russian philosopher responsible for the 1873 *Thought and Reality*, and Nietzsche's colleague the famed historian [Jacob Burckhardt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Burckhardt), whose lectures Nietzsche frequently attended, began to exercise significant influence on him during this time.

Nietzsche had already met Richard Wagner in Leipzig in 1868 and later Wagner's wife, [Cosima](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosima_Wagner). Nietzsche admired both greatly and, during his time at Basel, he frequently visited Wagner's house in [Tribschen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribschen) in [Lucerne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Lucerne). The Wagners brought Nietzsche into their most intimate circle and enjoyed the attention he gave to the beginning of the [Bayreuth Festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayreuth_Festspielhaus). In 1870, he gave Cosima Wagner the manuscript of "The Genesis of the Tragic Idea" as a birthday gift. In 1872, Nietzsche published his first book, [*The Birth of Tragedy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_Tragedy). However, his colleagues within his field, including Ritschl, expressed little enthusiasm for the work, in which Nietzsche eschewed the classical philologic method in favor of a more speculative approach. In his [polemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polemic) *Philology of the Future*, [Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulrich_von_Wilamowitz-Moellendorff) dampened the book's reception and increased its notoriety. In response, Rohde (then a professor in [Kiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiel)) and Wagner came to Nietzsche's defense. Nietzsche remarked freely about the isolation he felt within the philological community and attempted unsuccessfully to transfer to a position in philosophy at Basel instead.

Nietzsche in c. 1872.

In 1873, Nietzsche began to accumulate notes that would be posthumously published as [*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_in_the_Tragic_Age_of_the_Greeks). Between 1873 and 1876, he published four separate long essays: "David Strauss: the Confessor and the Writer", "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life", "Schopenhauer as Educator" and "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth". These four later appeared in a collected edition under the title [*Untimely Meditations*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Untimely_Meditations_%28Nietzsche%29). The essays shared the orientation of a cultural critique, challenging the developing German culture along lines suggested by Schopenhauer and Wagner. During this time, in the circle of the Wagners, Nietzsche met [Malwida von Meysenbug](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malwida_von_Meysenbug) and [Hans von Bülow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_von_B%C3%BClow), and also began a friendship with [Paul Rée](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_R%C3%A9e), who in 1876 influenced him into dismissing the pessimism in his early writings. However, he was deeply disappointed by the [Bayreuth Festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayreuth_Festival) of 1876, where the banality of the shows and baseness of the public repelled him. He was also alienated by Wagner's championing of "German culture", which Nietzsche felt a contradiction in terms, as well as by Wagner's celebration of his fame among the German public. All this contributed to Nietzsche's subsequent decision to distance himself from Wagner.

With the publication in 1878 of [*Human, All Too Human*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human%2C_All_Too_Human) (a book of [aphorisms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphorisms) ranging from metaphysics to morality to religion to gender studies), a new style of Nietzsche's work became clear, highly influenced by [Afrikan Spir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrikan_Spir)'s *Thought and Reality* and reacting against the pessimistic philosophy of Wagner and Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's friendship with Deussen and Rohde cooled as well. In 1879, after a significant decline in health, Nietzsche had to resign his position at Basel. (Since his childhood, various disruptive illnesses had plagued him, including moments of shortsightedness that left him nearly blind, migraine headaches, and violent indigestion. The 1868 riding accident and diseases in 1870 may have aggravated these persistent conditions, which continued to affect him through his years at Basel, forcing him to take longer and longer holidays until regular work became impractical.)

**Independent philosopher (1879–88)**

Living off his pension from Basel and aid from friends, Nietzsche travelled frequently to find climates more conducive to his health and lived until 1889 as an independent author in different cities. He spent many summers in [Sils Maria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sils_im_Engadin/Segl) near [St. Moritz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Moritz) in Switzerland. He spent his winters in the Italian cities of [Genoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genoa), [Rapallo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapallo), and [Turin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turin) and the French city of [Nice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nice). In 1881, when [France occupied Tunisia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_occupation_of_Tunisia), he planned to travel to [Tunis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunis) to view Europe from the outside but later abandoned that idea, probably for health reasons. Nietzsche occasionally returned to Naumburg to visit his family, and, especially during this time, he and [his sister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_Forster-Nietzsche) had repeated periods of conflict and reconciliation.

While in [Genoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genoa), Nietzsche's failing eyesight prompted him to explore the use of [typewriters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typewriter) as a means of continuing to write. He is known to have tried using the [Hansen Writing Ball](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hansen_Writing_Ball#Nietzsche.27s_Hansen_Writing_Ball), a contemporary typewriter device. In the end, a past student of his, Heinrich Köselitz or [Peter Gast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_K%C3%B6selitz), became a sort of private secretary to Nietzsche. In 1876, Gast transcribed the crabbed, nearly illegible handwriting of Nietzsche for the first time with Richard Wagner in Bayreuth. He subsequently transcribed and proofread the galleys for almost all of Nietzsche's work from then on. On at least one occasion on February 23, 1880, the usually broke Gast received 200 marks from their mutual friend, Paul Rée. Gast was one of the very few friends Nietzsche allowed to criticize him. In responding most enthusiastically to *Zarathustra*, Gast did feel it necessary to point out that what were described as "superfluous" people were in fact quite necessary. He went on to list the number of people [Epicurus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicurus), for example, had to rely on even to supply his simple diet of goat cheese.

To the end of his life, Gast and Overbeck remained consistently faithful friends. Malwida von Meysenbug remained like a motherly patron even outside the Wagner circle. Soon Nietzsche made contact with the music-critic [Carl Fuchs](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carl_Fuchs&action=edit&redlink=1). Nietzsche stood at the beginning of his most productive period. Beginning with [*Human, All Too Human*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human%2C_All_Too_Human) in 1878, Nietzsche would publish one book or major section of a book each year until 1888, his last year of writing; that year, he completed five.

[Lou Salomé](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lou_Andreas-Salom%C3%A9), [Paul Rée](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_R%C3%A9e) and Nietzsche, 1882.

In 1882, Nietzsche published the first part of [*The Gay Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gay_Science). That year he also met [Lou Andreas Salomé](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lou_Andreas_Salom%C3%A9), through Malwida von Meysenbug and Paul Rée. Nietzsche and Salomé spent the summer together in [Tautenburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tautenburg) in [Thuringia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thuringia), often with Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth as a chaperone. Nietzsche, however, regarded Salomé less as an equal partner than as a gifted student. Salomé reports that he asked her to marry him and that she refused, though the reliability of her reports of events has come into question. Nietzsche's relationship with Rée and Salomé broke up in the winter of 1882–83, partially because of intrigues conducted by Elisabeth. Amidst renewed bouts of illness, living in near-isolation after a falling out with his mother and sister regarding Salomé, Nietzsche fled to Rapallo. Here he wrote the first part of [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra) in only ten days.

By 1882 Nietzsche was taking huge doses of opium but was still having trouble sleeping. In 1883, while staying in Nice, he was writing out his own prescriptions for the sedative [chloral hydrate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chloral_hydrate), signing them "Dr. Nietzsche".

After severing his philosophical ties with [Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schopenhauer) (who was long dead and never met Nietzsche) and his social ties with Wagner, Nietzsche had few remaining friends. Now, with the new style of *Zarathustra*, his work became even more alienating and the market received it only to the degree required by politeness. Nietzsche recognized this and maintained his solitude, though he often complained about it. His books remained largely unsold. In 1885, he printed only 40 copies of the fourth part of *Zarathustra* and distributed only a fraction of these among close friends, including [Helene von Druskowitz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helene_von_Druskowitz).

In 1883 he tried and failed to obtain a lecturing post at the [University of Leipzig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Leipzig). It was made clear to him that, in view of the attitude towards Christianity and the concept of God expressed in *Zarathustra*, he had become effectively unemployable by any German university. The subsequent "feelings of revenge and resentment" embittered him: "And hence my rage since I have grasped in the broadest possible sense what wretched means (the depreciation of my good name, my character, and my aims) *suffice* to take from me the trust of, and there with the possibility of obtaining, pupils."

In 1886 Nietzsche broke with his publisher Ernst Schmeitzner, disgusted by his antisemitic opinions. Nietzsche saw his own writings as "completely buried and unexhumeable in this anti-Semitic dump" of Schmeitzner—associating the publisher with a movement that should be "utterly rejected with cold contempt by every sensible mind". He then printed [*Beyond Good and Evil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_Good_and_Evil) at his own expense. He also acquired the publication rights for his earlier works and over the next year issued second editions of *The Birth of Tragedy*, [*Human, All Too Human*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human%2C_All_Too_Human), [*Daybreak*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dawn_%28book%29), and [*The Gay Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gay_Science) with new prefaces placing the body of his work in a more coherent perspective. Thereafter, he saw his work as completed for a time and hoped that soon a readership would develop. In fact, interest in Nietzsche's thought did increase at this time, if rather slowly and hardly perceptibly to him. During these years Nietzsche met [Meta von Salis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta_von_Salis), [Carl Spitteler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Spitteler), and [Gottfried Keller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Keller).

In 1886, his sister Elisabeth also married the [anti-Semite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism) [Bernhard Förster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernhard_F%C3%B6rster) and travelled to [Paraguay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraguay) to found [Nueva Germania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nueva_Germania), a "Germanic" colony—a plan to which Nietzsche responded with mocking laughter. Through correspondence, Nietzsche's relationship with Elisabeth continued through cycles of conflict and reconciliation, but they met again only after his collapse. He continued to have frequent and painful attacks of illness, which made prolonged work impossible.

In 1887 Nietzsche wrote the polemic [*On the Genealogy of Morals*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Genealogy_of_Morals). During the same year, he encountered the work of [Fyodor Dostoevsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fyodor_Dostoevsky), to whom he felt an immediate kinship. He also exchanged letters with [Hippolyte Taine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyte_Taine) and [Georg Brandes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Brandes). Brandes, who had started to teach the philosophy of [Søren Kierkegaard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%B8ren_Kierkegaard) in the 1870s, wrote to Nietzsche asking him to [read Kierkegaard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kierkegaard_and_Nietzsche_comparisons#Relation_to_S.C3.B8ren_Kierkegaard), to which Nietzsche replied that he would come to Copenhagen and read Kierkegaard with him. However, before fulfilling this promise, he slipped too far into illness. In the beginning of 1888, Brandes delivered in Copenhagen one of the first lectures on Nietzsche's philosophy.

Although Nietzsche had previously announced at the end of *On The Genealogy of Morals* a new work with the title [*The Will to Power*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Will_to_Power_%28manuscript%29)*: Attempt at a* [*Revaluation of All Values*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaluation_of_all_values), he eventually seems to have abandoned this idea and instead used some of the draft passages to compose [*Twilight of the Idols*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight_of_the_Idols) and [*The Antichrist*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Antichrist_%28book%29) in 1888.

His health seemed to improve, and he spent the summer in high spirits. In the fall of 1888, his writings and letters began to reveal a higher estimation of his own status and "fate". He overestimated the increasing response to his writings, however, especially to the recent polemic, "[The Case of Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Case_of_Wagner)". On his 44th birthday, after completing *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*, he decided to write the autobiography [*Ecce Homo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecce_Homo_%28Nietzsche%29). In its preface—which suggests Nietzsche was well aware of the interpretive difficulties his work would generate—he declares, "Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else". In December, Nietzsche began a correspondence with [August Strindberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Strindberg) and thought that, short of an international breakthrough, he would attempt to buy back his older writings from the publisher and have them translated into other European languages. Moreover, he planned the publication of the compilation [*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzsche_Contra_Wagner) and of the poems that made up his collection *Dionysian* [*Dithyrambs*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dithyramb).

**Mental breakdown and death (1889–1900)**

Drawing by [Hans Olde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Olde) from the photographic series, *The Ill Nietzsche*, mid-1899.

On 3 January 1889, Nietzsche suffered a mental collapse. Two policemen approached him after he caused a public disturbance in the streets of [Turin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turin%2C_Italy). What happened remains unknown, but an often-repeated tale from shortly after his death states that Nietzsche witnessed the flogging of a horse at the other end of the Piazza Carlo Alberto, ran to the horse, threw his arms up around its neck to protect it, and then collapsed to the ground.

In the following few days, Nietzsche sent short writings—known as the *Wahnbriefe* ("Madness Letters")—to a number of friends including [Cosima Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosima_Wagner) and [Jacob Burckhardt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Burckhardt). Most of them were signed "[Dionysos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysos)", though some were also signed "der Gekreuzigte" or "the crucified one". To his former colleague Burckhardt, Nietzsche wrote: "I have had [Caiaphas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caiaphas) put in [fetters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fetters). Also, last year I was crucified by the German doctors in a very drawn-out manner. Wilhelm, [Bismarck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_von_Bismarck), and all anti-Semites abolished." Additionally, he commanded the German emperor to go to Rome to be shot and summoned the European powers to take military action against Germany.

The house Nietzsche stayed in while in [Turin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turin) (background, right), as seen from across Piazza Carlo Alberto, where he is said to have had his breakdown. To the left is the rear façade of the [Palazzo Carignano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Carignano).

On 6 January 1889, Burckhardt showed the letter he had received from Nietzsche to Overbeck. The following day, Overbeck received a similar letter and decided that Nietzsche's friends had to bring him back to Basel. Overbeck travelled to Turin and brought Nietzsche to a psychiatric clinic in Basel. By that time Nietzsche appeared fully in the grip of a serious mental illness, and his mother Franziska decided to transfer him to a clinic in [Jena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jena) under the direction of [Otto Binswanger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Binswanger). In January 1889, they proceeded with the planned release of *Twilight of the Idols*, by that time already printed and bound. From November 1889 to February 1890, the art historian [Julius Langbehn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Langbehn) attempted to cure Nietzsche, claiming that the methods of the medical doctors were ineffective in treating Nietzsche's condition. Langbehn assumed progressively greater control of Nietzsche until his secretiveness discredited him. In March 1890, Franziska removed Nietzsche from the clinic and, in May 1890, brought him to her home in Naumburg. During this process Overbeck and Gast contemplated what to do with Nietzsche's unpublished works. In February, they ordered a fifty-copy private edition of *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, but the publisher [C. G. Naumann](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=C._G._Naumann&action=edit&redlink=1) secretly printed one hundred. Overbeck and Gast decided to withhold publishing *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* because of their more radical content. Nietzsche's reception and recognition enjoyed their first surge.

In 1893, Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth returned from [Nueva Germania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nueva_Germania) in Paraguay following the suicide of her husband. She read and studied Nietzsche's works and, piece by piece, took control of them and their publication. Overbeck eventually suffered dismissal and Gast finally co-operated. After the death of Franziska in 1897, Nietzsche lived in [Weimar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar), where Elisabeth cared for him and allowed visitors, including [Rudolf Steiner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Steiner) (who in 1895 had written one of the first books praising Nietzsche), to meet her uncommunicative brother. Elisabeth at one point went so far as to employ Steiner as a tutor to help her to understand her brother's philosophy. Steiner abandoned the attempt after only a few months, declaring that it was impossible to teach her anything about philosophy.

[Peter Gast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_K%C3%B6selitz) would "correct" Nietzsche's writings after the philosopher's breakdown and did so without his approval, an action severely criticized by modern scholars.

Nietzsche's mental illness was originally diagnosed as [tertiary syphilis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_syphilis#Tertiary), in accordance with a prevailing medical paradigm of the time. Although most commentators regard his breakdown as unrelated to his philosophy, [Georges Bataille](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Bataille) dropped dark hints ("Man incarnate' must also go mad") and [René Girard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Girard)'s postmortem psychoanalysis posits a worshipful rivalry with [Richard Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wagner). Nietzsche had previously written, "all superior men who were irresistibly drawn to throw off the yoke of any kind of morality and to frame new laws had, if they were not actually mad, no alternative but to make themselves or pretend to be mad" (Daybreak,14). The diagnosis of syphilis has since been challenged and a diagnosis of "[manic-depressive illness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bipolar_disorder) with periodic psychosis followed by vascular dementia" was put forward by Cybulska prior to Schain's study. [Leonard Sax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Sax) suggested the slow growth of a right-sided retro-orbital [meningioma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meningioma) as an explanation of Nietzsche's dementia; Orth and Trimble postulated [frontotemporal dementia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontotemporal_dementia) while other researchers have proposed a hereditary stroke disorder called [CADASIL](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CADASIL_syndrome). Poisoning by mercury, a treatment for syphilis at the time of Nietzsche's death, has also been suggested.

In 1898 and 1899 Nietzsche suffered at least two strokes which partially paralyzed him, leaving him unable to speak or walk. He likely suffered from clinical hemiparesis/hemiplegia on the left side of his body by 1899. After contracting pneumonia in mid-August 1900, he had another stroke during the night of 24–25 August and died at about noon on 25 August. Elisabeth had him buried beside his father at the church in [Röcken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B6cken) bei [Lützen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%BCtzen). His friend and secretary Gast gave his funeral oration, proclaiming: "Holy be your name to all future generations!" Nietzsche had written in *Ecce Homo* (at that point still unpublished) of his fear that one day his name would be regarded as "holy".

[Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_F%C3%B6rster-Nietzsche) compiled [*The Will to Power*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Will_to_Power_%28manuscript%29) from Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks and published it posthumously. Because his sister arranged the book based on her own conflation of several of Nietzsche's early outlines and took great liberties with the material, the scholarly consensus has been that it does not reflect Nietzsche's intent. (For example, Elisabeth removed aphorism 35 of *The Antichrist*, where Nietzsche rewrote a passage of the Bible.) Indeed, [Mazzino Montinari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mazzino_Montinari), the editor of Nietzsche's [*Nachlass*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nachlass), called it a forgery.

**Citizenship, nationality, ethnicity**

General commentators and Nietzsche scholars, whether emphasizing his cultural background or his language, overwhelmingly label Nietzsche as a "German philosopher". Others do not assign him a [national](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalism) category, Germany had not yet been unified into a nation-state but Nietzsche was born a citizen of [Prussia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prussia), which was then part of the [German Confederation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Confederation). His birthplace, [Röcken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B6cken), is in the modern German state of [Saxony-Anhalt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxony-Anhalt). When he accepted his post at Basel, Nietzsche applied for the annulment of his Prussian citizenship. The official response confirming the revocation of his citizenship came in a document dated April 17, 1869, and for the rest of his life he remained officially [stateless](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statelessness).

Nietzsche believed that his ancestors were [Polish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_people), at least toward the end of his life. He wrote in 1888, "My ancestors were Polish noblemen (Nietzky); the type seems to have been well preserved despite three generations of German mothers." At one point Nietzsche becomes even more adamant about his Polish identity. "I am a pure-blooded Polish nobleman, without a single drop of bad blood, certainly not German blood." On yet another occasion Nietzsche stated "Germany is a great nation only because its people have so much Polish blood in their veins [...] I am proud of my Polish descent." Nietzsche believed his name might have been [Germanized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanized), in one letter claiming, "I was taught to ascribe the origin of my blood and name to Polish noblemen who were called Niëtzky and left their home and nobleness about a hundred years ago, finally yielding to unbearable suppression: they were Protestants."

Most scholars dispute Nietzsche's account of his family's origins. Hans von Müller debunked the genealogy put forward by Nietzsche's sister in favor of a Polish noble heritage. [Max Oehler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Oehler), the curator of the [Nietzsche Archive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzsche_Archive) at [Weimar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar), argued that all of Nietzsche's ancestors bore German names, even the wives' families. Oehler claims that Nietzsche came from a long line of German [Lutheran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran_Church) clergymen on both sides of his family, and modern scholars regard the claim of Nietzsche's Polish ancestry as a "pure invention". Colli and Montinari, the editors of Nietzsche's assembled letters, gloss Nietzsche's claims as a "mistaken belief" and "without foundation." The name *Nietzsche* itself is not a Polish name, but an exceptionally common one throughout central Germany, in this and cognate forms (such as *Nitsche* and *Nitzke*). The name derives from the forename *Nikolaus*, abbreviated to *Nick*; assimilated with the Slavic *Nitz*, it first became *Nitsche* and then *Nietzsche*.

It is not known why Nietzsche wanted to be thought of as Polish nobility. According to biographer [R. J. Hollingdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._J._Hollingdale), Nietzsche's propagation of the Polish ancestry myth may have been part of the latter's "campaign against Germany".

**Relationships and sexuality**

Nietzsche never married. Nietzsche proposed to Lou Salomé three times, but his proposal was rejected each time. The Nietzsche scholar [Joachim Köhler](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joachim_K%C3%B6hler&action=edit&redlink=1) has attempted to explain Nietzsche's life history and philosophy by claiming that Nietzsche was [homosexual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality). Köhler argues that Nietzsche's syphilis, which is "usually considered to be the product of his encounter with a prostitute in a brothel in Cologne or Leipzig, is equally likely, it is now held, to have been contracted in a male brothel in Genoa". Köhler also suggests Nietzsche may have had a romantic relationship as well as a friendship with [Paul Rée](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_R%C3%A9e). Köhler's views have not found wide acceptance among Nietzsche scholars and commentators. Allan Megill argues that while Köhler's claim that Nietzsche was in confrontation with homosexual desire cannot simply be dismissed, "the evidence is very weak" and Köhler may be projecting twentieth-century understandings of sexuality on nineteenth-century notions of friendship. Other scholars have argued that Köhler's sexuality-based interpretation is not helpful in understanding Nietzsche's philosophy. Some like [Nigel Rodgers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigel_Rodgers) and [Mel Thompson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mel_Thompson) have argued that continuous sickness and headaches hindered Nietzsche from engaging much with women. Yet, they bring other examples in which Nietzsche expressed his affections to other women, including Wagner's wife [Cosima Wagner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosima_Wagner).

**Philosophy**

Friedrich Nietzsche in 1869.

Main article: [Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche)

Because of Nietzsche's [evocative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evocative) style and his often outrageous claims, his philosophy generates passionate reactions. His works remain controversial, due to varying interpretations and misinterpretations of his work. In the Western philosophy tradition, Nietzsche's writings have been described as the unique case of free revolutionary thought, that is, revolutionary in its structure and problems, although not tied to any revolutionary project.

In [*Daybreak*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dawn_%28book%29) Nietzsche begins his "Campaign against Morality". He calls himself an "immoralist" and harshly criticizes the prominent moral philosophies of his day: [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), [Kantianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kantianism), and [utilitarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilitarianism). Nietzsche is also known for being very critical of the [Western](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture) belief in [egalitarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egalitarianism) and [rationality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationality). Nietzsche's concept "[God is dead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead)" applies to the doctrines of Christendom, though not to all other faiths: he claimed that [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) is a successful religion that he compliments for fostering critical thought. Still, Nietzsche saw his philosophy as a counter-movement to nihilism through appreciation of [art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art):

Art as the single superior counterforce against all will to negation of life, art as the anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, anti-Nihilist par excellence."

Nietzsche claimed that the Christian faith as practiced was not a proper representation of Jesus' teachings, as it forced people merely to believe in the way of Jesus but not to act as Jesus did, in particular his example of refusing to judge people, something that Christians had constantly done the opposite of. He condemned institutionalized Christianity for emphasizing a morality of [pity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pity) (*Mitleid*), which assumes an inherent illness in society:

Christianity is called the religion of pity. Pity stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality: it has a depressing effect. We are deprived of strength when we feel pity. That loss of strength which suffering as such inflicts on life is still further increased and multiplied by pity. Pity makes suffering contagious.

In [*Ecce Homo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecce_Homo_%28book%29) Nietzsche called the establishment of moral systems based on a dichotomy of [good and evil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_and_evil) a "calamitous error", and wished to initiate a [re-evaluation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaluation_of_all_values) of the [values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_%28personal_and_cultural%29) of the Judeo-Christian world. He indicates his desire to bring about a new, more naturalistic source of value in the vital impulses of life itself. While Nietzsche attacked the principles of [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), he was not antisemitic: in his work [*On the Genealogy of Morality*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Genealogy_of_Morality), he explicitly condemns antisemitism, and pointed out that his attack on Judaism was not an attack on Jews as a people but specifically an attack upon the ancient Jewish priesthood whom he claims [antisemitic Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitic_Christians) paradoxically based their views upon.

**The "slave revolt" in morals**

Main article: [Master–slave morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master%E2%80%93slave_morality)

In [*Beyond Good and Evil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_Good_and_Evil) and *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche's [genealogical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogy_%28philosophy%29) account of the development of modern moral systems occupies central place. For Nietzsche, a fundamental shift took place during human history from thinking in terms of "good" and "bad" toward "good" and "evil".

The initial form of morality was set by a warrior [aristocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristocracy_%28class%29) and other ruling castes of ancient civilizations. Aristocratic values of "good" and "bad" coincided with and reflected their relationship to lower castes such as slaves. Nietzsche presents this "master morality" as the original system of morality—perhaps best associated with Homeric Greece. To be "good" was to be happy and to have the things related to happiness: wealth, strength, health, power, etc. To be "bad" was to be like the slaves over which the aristocracy ruled, poor, weak, sick, pathetic—an object of pity or disgust rather than hatred.

"Slave morality" comes about as a reaction to master-morality. Here, value emerges from the contrast between good and evil: good being associated with other-worldliness, charity, piety, restraint, meekness, and submission; and evil seen as worldly, cruel, selfish, wealthy, and aggressive. Nietzsche sees slave morality as pessimistic and fearful, values for them serving only to ease the existence for those who suffer from the very same thing. He associates slave-morality with the Jewish and Christian traditions, in a way that slave-morality is born out of the [ressentiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ressentiment) of slaves. Nietzsche argued that the idea of equality allowed slaves to overcome their own condition without hating themselves. And by denying the inherent inequality of people (such as success, strength, beauty or intelligence), slaves acquired a method of escape, namely by generating new values on the basis of rejecting something that was seen as a perceived source of frustration. It was used to overcome the slave's own sense of inferiority before the (better-off) masters. It does so by making out slave weakness to be a matter of choice, by, e.g., relabeling it as "meekness." The "good man" of master morality is precisely the "evil man" of slave morality, while the "bad man" is recast as the "good man."

Nietzsche sees the slave-morality as a source of the nihilism that has overtaken Europe. Modern Europe and Christianity exist in a hypocritical state due to a tension between master and slave morality, both values contradictorily determining, to varying degrees, the values of most Europeans (who are [*motley*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motley)). Nietzsche calls for exceptional people to no longer be ashamed of their uniqueness in the face of a supposed morality-for-all, which he deems to be harmful to the flourishing of exceptional people. He cautions, however, that morality, per se, is not bad; it is good for the masses, and should be left to them. Exceptional people, on the other hand, should follow their own "inner law." A favorite motto of Nietzsche, taken from [Pindar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pindar), reads: "Become what you are."

A long standing assumption about Nietzsche is that he preferred master over slave morality. However, the Nietzsche scholar [Walter Kaufmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kaufmann_%28philosopher%29) rejected this interpretation, writing that Nietzsche's analyses of these two types of morality were only used in a [descriptive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descriptive_ethics) and historic sense, they were not meant for any kind of acceptance or glorifications.

**Death of God and nihilism**

Main articles: [God is dead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead) and [Nihilism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nihilism)

The statement [*God is dead*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_dead), occurring in several of Nietzsche's works (notably in [*The Gay Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gay_Science)), has become one of his best-known remarks. On the basis of it, most commentatorsregard Nietzsche as an [atheist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism); others (such as Kaufmann) suggest that this statement reflects a more subtle understanding of divinity. Recent developments in modern science and the increasing [secularization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization) of European society had effectively 'killed' the Abrahamic God, who had served as the basis for meaning and value in the West for more than a thousand years. The death of God may lead beyond bare perspectivism to outright [nihilism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nihilism), the belief that nothing has any inherent importance and that life lacks purpose. Here he states that the Christian moral doctrine provides people with [intrinsic value](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intrinsic_value_%28ethics%29), belief in God (which [justifies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodicy) the evil in the world) and a basis for [objective knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivity_%28philosophy%29). In this sense, in constructing a world where objective knowledge is possible, Christianity is an antidote to a primal form of nihilism—the despair of meaninglessness. As [Heidegger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Heidegger) put the problem, "If [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) as the suprasensory ground and goal of all reality is dead, if the suprasensory world of the ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory and above it its vitalizing and upbuilding power, then nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself."

One such reaction to the loss of meaning is what Nietzsche calls 'passive nihilism', which he recognizes in the [pessimistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pessimism) philosophy of [Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer). Schopenhauer's doctrine, which Nietzsche also refers to as [Western Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Buddhism#Philosophical_interest), advocates separating oneself from will and desires in order to reduce suffering. Nietzsche characterizes this [ascetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asceticism) attitude as a "will to nothingness", whereby life turns away from itself, as there is nothing of value to be found in the world. This moving away of all value in the world is characteristic of the nihilist, although in this, the nihilist appears to be inconsistent:

A nihilist is a man who judges that the real world ought *not* to be, and that the world as it ought to be does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, [suffering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffering), willing, feeling) has no meaning: this 'in vain' is the nihilists' pathos—an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, KSA 12:9, *taken from The Will to Power, section 585, translated by* [*Walter Kaufmann*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kaufmann_%28philosopher%29)

Nietzsche approaches the problem of nihilism as a deeply personal one, stating that this problem of the modern world is a problem that has "become conscious" in him. Furthermore, he emphasizes both the danger of nihilism and the possibilities it offers, as seen in his statement that "I praise, I do not reproach, [nihilism's] arrival. I believe it is one of the greatest crises, a moment of the deepest self-reflection of humanity. Whether man recovers from it, whether he becomes master of this crisis, is a question of his strength!" According to Nietzsche, it is only when nihilism is *overcome* that a culture can have a true foundation upon which to thrive. He wished to hasten its coming only so that he could also hasten its ultimate departure. Heidegger interprets the death of God with what he explains as the death of [metaphysics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics). He concludes that metaphysics has reached its potential and that the ultimate fate and downfall of metaphysics was proclaimed with the statement *God is dead*.

**Apollonian and Dionysian**

Main article: [Apollonian and Dionysian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonian_and_Dionysian)

The *Apollonian and Dionysian* is a philosophical concept, or [dichotomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dichotomy), based on certain features of ancient Greek mythology: [Apollo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo) and [Dionysus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus). While the concept is famously related to [*The Birth of Tragedy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_Tragedy), poet [Hölderlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_H%C3%B6lderlin) spoke of them before, and [Winckelmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Joachim_Winckelmann) talked of [Bacchus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus). One year before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche wrote a fragment titled "On Music and Words". In it he asserted the [Schopenhauerian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer) judgment that music is a primary expression of the essence of everything. Secondarily derivative are [lyrical poetry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyric_poetry) and [drama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama), which represent mere [phenomenal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenon) appearances of objects. In this way, [tragedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy) is born from [music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music).

Nietzsche found in classical Athenian tragedy an art form that [transcended](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendence_%28philosophy%29) the pessimism found in the so-called [wisdom of Silenus](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wisdom_of_Silenus&action=edit&redlink=1). The Greek spectators, by looking into the abyss of human suffering depicted by characters on stage, passionately and joyously affirmed life, finding it worth living. A main theme in *The Birth of Tragedy* was that the fusion of Dionysian and Apollonian "*Kunsttrieben*" ("artistic impulses") forms dramatic arts, or tragedies. He goes on to argue that this fusion has not been achieved since the ancient Greek tragedians. Apollo represents harmony, progress, clarity and logic, whereas Dionysus represents disorder, intoxication, emotion and ecstasy. Nietzsche used these two forces because, for him, the world of mind and order on one side, and passion and chaos on the other formed principles that were fundamental to the [Greek culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Greece). Apollonian side being a dreaming state, full of illusions; and Dionysian being the state of intoxication, representing the liberations of instinct and dissolution of boundaries. In this mold, man appears as the [satyr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyr). He is the horror of the annihilation of the principle of [individuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individuation) and at the same time someone who delights in its destruction. Both of these principles are meant to represent [cognitive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognition) states that appear through art as the power of nature in man.

The relationship between the Apollonian and Dionysian juxtapositions is apparent, in the interplay of tragedy: the tragic hero of the drama, the main protagonist, struggles to make order (in the Apollonian sense) of his unjust and chaotic (Dionysian) fate, though he dies unfulfilled in the end. Elaborating on the conception of [Hamlet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet) as an intellectual who cannot make up his mind, and therefore is a living [antithesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antithesis) to the man of action, Nietzsche argues that a Dionysian figure possesses knowledge to realize that his actions cannot change the eternal balance of things, and it disgusts him enough not to be able to make any act at all. Hamlet falls under this category – he has glimpsed the supernatural reality through the Ghost, he has gained true knowledge and knows that no action of his has the power to change this. For the audience of such drama, this tragedy allows them to sense an underlying essence, what Nietzsche called the *Primordial Unity*, which revives Dionysian nature. He describes this primordial unity as the increase of strength, experience of fullness and plenitude bestowed by [frenzy](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/frenzy#Noun). Frenzy acts as an intoxication, and is crucial for the [physiological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physiology) condition that enables making of any art. Stimulated by this state, person's artistic will is enhanced:

"In this state one enriches everything out of one's own fullness: whatever one sees, whatever wills is seen swelled, [taut](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/taut#Adjective), strong, overloaded with strength. A man in this state transforms things until they mirror his power—until they are reflections of his perfection. This having to transform into perfection is—art."

Nietzsche is adamant that the works of [Aeschylus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeschylus) and [Sophocles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophocles) represent the apex of artistic creation, the true realization of tragedy; it is with [Euripides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euripides), he states, that tragedy begins its "*Untergang*" (literally "going under", meaning decline, deterioration, downfall, death, etc.). Nietzsche objects to Euripides' use of [Socratic rationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method) and [morality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality) in his tragedies, claiming that the infusion of [ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics) and [reason](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason) robs tragedy of its foundation, namely the fragile balance of the Dionysian and Apollonian. [Socrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates) emphasized reason to such a degree that he diffused the value of [myth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth) and suffering to human knowledge. [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) continued with this path in his dialogues and modern world eventually inherited reason at the expense of artistic impulses that could be found only in the Apollonian and Dionysus dichotomy. This leads to his conclusion that European culture from the time of Socrates had always been only Apollonian and thus [decadent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decadence) and unhealthy. He notes that whenever Apollonian culture dominates, the Dionysian lacks the structure to make a coherent art, and when Dionysian dominates, the Apollonian lacks the necessary passion. Only the beautiful middle, the interplay of these two forces, brought together as an art represented real Greek tragedy.

An example of the impact of this idea can be seen in the book *Patterns of Culture*, where [anthropologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology) [Ruth Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Benedict) uses Nietzschean opposites of "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" as the stimulus for her thoughts about Native American cultures. [Carl Jung](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung) has written extensively on the dichotomy in [*Psychological Types*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_Types). [Michel Foucault](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault) has commented that his book [*Madness and Civilization*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madness_and_Civilization) should be read "under the sun of the great Nietzschean inquiry". Here Foucault references Nietzsche's description of the birth and death of tragedy and his explanation that the subsequent tragedy of the Western world was the refusal of tragic and, with that, refusal of the sacred. Painter [Mark Rothko](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rothko) was influenced by Nietzsche's view of tragedy, which were presented in *The Birth of Tragedy.*

**Perspectivism**

Main article: [Perspectivism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspectivism)

Nietzsche claimed the death of God would eventually lead to the loss of any universal perspective on things, and along with it any coherent sense of objective truth. Nietzsche himself rejected the idea of objective reality arguing that knowledge is [contingent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contingency_%28philosophy%29) and conditional, relative to various fluid perspectives or interests. This leads to constant reassessment of rules (i.e., those of philosophy, the scientific method, etc.) according to the circumstances of individual perspectives. This view has acquired the name [*perspectivism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perspectivism).

In [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra), Nietzsche proclaims that a table of values hangs above every great person. He points out that what is common among different peoples is the act of esteeming, of creating values, even if the values are different from one people to the next. Nietzsche asserts that what made people great was not the content of their beliefs, but the act of valuing. Thus the values a community strives to articulate are not as important as the collective will to see those values come to pass. The willing is more essential than the intrinsic worth of the goal itself, according to Nietzsche. "A thousand goals have there been so far," says Zarathustra, "for there are a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal." Hence, the title of the aphorism, "On The Thousand And One Goals". The idea that one value-system is no more worthy than the next, although it may not be directly ascribed to Nietzsche, has become a common premise in modern social science. [Max Weber](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Weber) and [Martin Heidegger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Heidegger) absorbed it and made it their own. It shaped their philosophical and cultural endeavor, as well as their political understanding. Weber for example, relies on Nietzsche's perspectivism by maintaining that objectivity is still possible—but only after a particular perspective, value, or end has been established.

Among his critique of traditional philosophy of [Kant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant), [Descartes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren%C3%A9_Descartes) and [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) in [*Beyond Good and Evil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_Good_and_Evil), Nietzsche attacked [*thing in itself*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing_in_itself) and [*cogito ergo sum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito_ergo_sum) (*I think, therefore I am*) as [unfalsifiable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falsifiability) beliefs based on naive acceptance of previous notions and [fallacies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallacy). Philosopher [Alasdair MacIntyre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alasdair_MacIntyre) puts Nietzsche in a high place in the history of philosophy. While criticizing nihilism and Nietzsche together as a sign of general decay, he still commends him for recognizing psychological motives behind Kant and [Hume](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hume)'s moral philosophy:

For it was Nietzsche's historic achievement to understand more clearly than any other philosopher...not only that what purported to be appeals of [objectivity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivity_%28philosophy%29) were in fact expressions of subjective will, but also the nature of the problems that this posed for philosophy.

**Will to power**

Main article: [Will to power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_to_power)

A basic element in Nietzsche's philosophical outlook is the [*will to power*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_to_power) (*der Wille zur Macht*), which provides a basis for understanding human behavior—more so than competing explanations, such as the ones based on pressure for adaptation or survival. As such, according to Nietzsche, the drive for conservation appears as the major motivator of human or animal behavior only in exceptions, as the general condition of life is not one of emergency, of 'struggle for existence'. More often than not, self-conservation is but a consequence of a creature's will to exert its strength on the outside world.

In presenting his theory of human behavior, Nietzsche also addressed, and attacked, concepts from philosophies popularly embraced in his days, such as Schopenhauer's notion of an aimless will or that of [utilitarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utilitarianism). Utilitarians claim that what moves people is mainly the desire to be happy, to accumulate pleasure in their lives. But such a conception of happiness Nietzsche rejected as something limited to, and characteristic of, the bourgeois lifestyle of the English society, and instead put forth the idea that happiness is not an aim *per se*—it is instead a consequence of a successful pursuit of one's aims, of the overcoming of hurdles to one's actions—in other words, of the fulfillment of the will.

Related to his theory of the will to power, is his speculation, which he did not deem final, regarding the reality of the physical world, including inorganic matter—that, like man's affections and impulses, the material world is also set by the dynamics of a form of the will to power. At the core of his theory is a rejection of [*atomism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomism)—the idea that matter is composed of stable, indivisible units (atoms). Instead, he seems to have accepted the conclusions of [Ruđer Bošković](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ru%C4%91er_Bo%C5%A1kovi%C4%87), who explained the qualities of matter as a result of an interplay of forces. One study of Nietzsche defines his fully developed concept of the will to power as "the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation" revealing the will to power as "the principle of the synthesis of forces." Of such forces Nietzsche said they could perhaps be viewed as a primitive form of the will. Likewise he rejected as a mere interpretation the view that the movement of bodies is ruled by inexorable laws of nature, positing instead that movement was governed by the power relations between bodies and forces. Other scholars disagree that Nietzsche considered the material world to be a form of the will to power. Nietzsche thoroughly criticized metaphysics, and by including the will to power in the material world, he would simply be setting up a new metaphysics. Other than aphorism 36 in Beyond Good and Evil, where he raised a question regarding will to power as being in the material world, it was only in his notes (unpublished by himself), where he wrote about a metaphysical will to power. Nietzsche directed his landlord to burn those notes in 1888 when he left Sils Maria for the last time.

**Eternal return**

Main article: [Eternal return](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_return)

Eternal return (also known as "eternal recurrence") is a concept which posits that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a self-similar form an infinite number of times across infinite time or space. It is a purely [physical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics) concept, involving no supernatural [reincarnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation), but the return of beings in the same bodies. The idea of eternal return occurs in a parable in Section 341 of [*The Gay Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gay_Science), and also in the chapter "Of the Vision and the Riddle" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, among other places. Nietzsche contemplates the idea as potentially "horrifying and paralyzing", and says that its burden is the "heaviest weight" imaginable ("*das schwerste Gewicht*"). The wish for the eternal return of all events would mark the ultimate affirmation of life, a reaction to [Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer)'s praise of denying the will‐to‐live. To comprehend eternal recurrence in his thought, and to not merely come to peace with it but to embrace it, requires [*amor fati*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amor_fati), "love of fate".

Not only does Nietzsche posit that the universe is recurring over infinite time and space, but that the different versions of events that have occurred in the past may at one point or another take place again, hence "all configurations that have previously existed on this earth must yet meet..." And with each version of events is hoping that some knowledge or awareness is gained to better the individual hence "And thus it will happen one day that a man will be born again, just like me and a woman will be born, just like Mary - only that it is hoped to be that the head of this man may contain a little less foolishness..."

[Alexander Nehamas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Nehamas) writes in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* of three ways of seeing the eternal recurrence: "(A) My life will recur in exactly identical fashion." This expresses a totally fatalistic approach to the idea. "(B) My life may recur in exactly identical fashion." This second view conditionally asserts cosmology, but fails to capture what Nietzsche refers to in *The Gay Science*, 341. Finally, "(C) If my life were to recur, then it could recur only in identical fashion." Nehamas shows that this interpretation exists totally independently of physics and does not presuppose the truth of cosmology. Nehamas draws the conclusion that if individuals constitute themselves through their actions, then they can only maintain themselves in their current state by living in a recurrence of past actions (Nehamas 153). Nietzsche's thought is the negation of the idea of a history of salvation.

**Übermensch**

Main article: [Übermensch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbermensch)

Another concept important to an understanding of Nietzsche's thought is the *Übermensch* (translated variously as "overman", "superman", or "super-human"). Developing the idea of nihilism, Nietzsche wrote [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra), therein introducing the concept of a value-creating Übermensch, not as a project, but as an anti-project, the absence of any project. According to Lampert, "the death of God must be followed by a long twilight of piety and nihilism (II. 19; III. 8). ... Zarathustra's gift of the overman is given to a mankind not aware of the problem to which the overman is the solution." Zarathustra presents the overman as the creator of new values, and he appears as a solution to the problem of the death of God and nihilism. The overman does not follow morality of common people since it favors mediocrity but instead rises above the notion of [good and evil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_and_evil) and above the [*herd*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herd_behavior). In this way Zarathustra proclaims his ultimate goal as the journey towards the state of overman. He wants a kind of spiritual evolution of self-awareness and overcoming of traditional views on morality and justice that stem from the [superstition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstition) beliefs still deeply rooted or related to the notion of God and Christianity.

While interpretations of Nietzsche's overman vary wildly, here is one of his quotations from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Prologue, §§3–4):

I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?... All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood, and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is ape to man? A laughing stock or painful embarrassment. And man shall be that to overman: a laughingstock or 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, too, man is more ape than any ape... The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth... Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss ... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end.

Zarathustra contrasts the overman with the [last man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_man) of egalitarian modernity (most obvious example being [democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy)), an alternative goal which humanity might set for itself. The last man is possible only by mankind's having bred an [apathetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apathy) creature who has no great passion or commitment, who is unable to dream, who merely earns his living and keeps warm. This concept appears only in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and is presented as a condition that would render the creation of the overman impossible.

Some have suggested that the notion of eternal return is related to the overman since willing the eternal return of the same is a necessary step if the overman is to create new values, untainted by the spirit of gravity or [asceticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asceticism). Values involve a rank-ordering of things, and so are inseparable from approval and disapproval; yet it was dissatisfaction that prompted men to seek refuge in other-worldliness and embrace other-worldly values. It could seem that the overman, in being devoted to any values at all, would necessarily fail to create values that did not share some bit of asceticism. Willing the eternal recurrence is presented as accepting the existence of the low while still recognizing it as the low, and thus as overcoming the spirit of gravity or asceticism. One must have the strength of the overman in order to will the eternal recurrence; that is, only the overman will have the strength to fully accept all of his past life, including his failures and misdeeds, and to truly will their eternal return. This action nearly kills Zarathustra, for example, and most human beings cannot avoid other-worldliness because they really are sick, not because of any choice they made.

**Critique of mass culture**

Friedrich Nietzsche held a pessimistic view on modern society and culture. His views stand against the concept of popular culture. He believed the press and mass culture led to conformity and brought about mediocrity. Nietzsche saw a lack of progression, leading to the decline of the human species. According to Nietzsche, individuals needed to overcome this form of mass culture. He believed some people were able to become superior individuals through the use of will power. By rising above mass culture, society would produce higher and healthier human beings.

**Reading and influence**

The residence of Nietzsche's last three years, along with archive in [Weimar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar), Germany, which holds many of Nietzsche's papers.

Main article: [Library of Friedrich Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche)

A trained philologist, Nietzsche had a thorough knowledge of [Greek philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_philosophy). He read [Kant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant), [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato), [Mill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill), [Schopenhauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer) and [Spir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Spir), who became his main opponents in his philosophy, and later [Spinoza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spinoza), whom he saw as his "precursor" in many respects but as a personification of the "ascetic ideal" in others. However, Nietzsche referred to Kant as a "moral fanatic", Plato as "boring", Mill as a "blockhead", and of Spinoza he said: "How much of personal timidity and vulnerability does this masquerade of a sickly recluse betray?".

Nietzsche's philosophy, while innovative and revolutionary, was indebted to many predecessors. While at Basel, Nietzsche offered lecture courses on pre-Platonic philosophers for several years, and the text of this lecture series has been characterized as a "lost link" in the development of his thought. "In it concepts such as the will to power, the eternal return of the same, the overman, gay science, self-overcoming and so on receive rough, unnamed formulations and are linked to specific pre-Platonics, especially Heraclitus, who emerges as a pre-Platonic Nietzsche." The [pre-Socratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Socratic) thinker [Heraclitus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus) was known for the rejection of the concept of [being](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Being) as a constant and eternal principle of universe, and his embrace of "flux" and incessant change. His symbolism of the world as "child play" marked by amoral spontaneity and lack of definite rules was appreciated by Nietzsche. From his Heraclitean sympathy, Nietzsche was also a vociferous detractor of [Parmenides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parmenides), who opposed Heraclitus and believed all world is a single Being with no change at all.

In his *Egotism in German Philosophy*, [Santayana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Santayana) claimed that Nietzsche's whole philosophy was a reaction to Schopenhauer. Santayana wrote that Nietzsche's work was "an emendation of that of Schopenhauer. The will to live would become the will to dominate; pessimism founded on reflection would become optimism founded on courage; the suspense of the will in contemplation would yield to a more biological account of intelligence and taste; finally in the place of pity and asceticism (Schopenhauer's two principles of morals) Nietzsche would set up the duty of asserting the will at all costs and being cruelly but beautifully strong. These points of difference from Schopenhauer cover the whole philosophy of Nietzsche."

Nietzsche expressed admiration for 17th-century French moralists such as [La Rochefoucauld](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_de_La_Rochefoucauld_%28writer%29), [La Bruyère](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_de_La_Bruy%C3%A8re) and [Vauvenargues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vauvenargues_%28writer%29), as well as for [Stendhal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stendhal). The [organicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organicism) of [Paul Bourget](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Bourget) influenced Nietzsche, as did that of [Rudolf Virchow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Virchow) and [Alfred Espinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Espinas). Nietzsche wrote in a letter in 1867 that he was trying to improve his German style of writing with the help of [Lessing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold_Ephraim_Lessing), [Lichtenberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Christoph_Lichtenberg) and Schopenhauer. It was probably Lichtenberg (along with [Paul Rée](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_R%C3%A9e)) whose aphoristic style of writing contributed to Nietzsche's own use of [aphorism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphorism) instead of an [essay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay). Nietzsche early learned of [Darwinism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darwinism) through [Friedrich Albert Lange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Albert_Lange). [Hippolyte Taine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolyte_Taine) influenced Nietzsche's view on [Rousseau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rousseau) and [Napoleon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon). Notably, he also read some of the posthumous works of [Charles Baudelaire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Baudelaire), [Tolstoy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Tolstoy)'s *My Religion*, [Ernest Renan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Renan)'s *Life of Jesus* and [Fyodor Dostoyevsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fyodor_Dostoyevsky)'s *Demons*. Nietzsche called Dostoevsky "the only psychologist from whom I have anything to learn." [Harold Bloom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Bloom) has often claimed that the essays of [Ralph Waldo Emerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson) had a profound and favorable influence on Nietzsche. While Nietzsche never mentions [Max Stirner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Stirner), the similarities in their ideas have prompted a minority of interpreters to suggest a [relationship between the two](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationship_between_Friedrich_Nietzsche_and_Max_Stirner). In 1861 Nietzsche wrote an enthusiastic essay on his "favorite poet", [Friedrich Hölderlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_H%C3%B6lderlin), mostly forgotten at that time. He also expressed deep appreciation for Stifter's [*Indian Summer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Nachsommer), Byron's [*Manfred*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manfred) and Twain's [*Tom Sawyer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Adventures_of_Tom_Sawyer).

**Reception**

Main article: [Influence and reception of Friedrich Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influence_and_reception_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche)

Portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche by [Edvard Munch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edvard_Munch), 1906.

Nietzsche's works did not reach a wide readership during his active writing career. However, in 1888 the influential Danish critic [Georg Brandes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Brandes) aroused considerable excitement about Nietzsche through a series of lectures he gave at the [University of Copenhagen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Copenhagen). In the years after Nietzsche's death in 1900, his works became better known, and readers have responded to them in complex and sometimes controversial ways. Many Germans eventually discovered his appeals for greater [individualism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualism) and personality development in [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra), but responded to them divergently. He had some following among left-wing Germans in the 1890s; in 1894–1895 German conservatives wanted to ban his work as [subversive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subversive). During the late 19th century [Nietzsche's ideas were commonly associated with anarchist movements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism_and_Friedrich_Nietzsche) and appear to have had influence within them, particularly in France and the United States. [H. L. Mencken](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._L._Mencken) produced the first book on Nietzsche in English in 1907, [*The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Philosophy_of_Friedrich_Nietzsche), and in 1910, a book of translated paragraphs from Nietzsche, increasing knowledge of his philosophy in the United States. Nietzsche is known today as a precursor to [expressionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionism), [existentialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism), and [postmodernism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_philosophy).

[W. B. Yeats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._B._Yeats) and [Arthur Symons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Symons) described Nietzsche as the intellectual heir to [William Blake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake). Symons went on to compare the ideas of the two thinkers in [*The Symbolist Movement in Literature*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Symbolist_Movement_in_Literature) while Yeats tried to raise awareness of Nietzsche in Ireland. A similar notion was espoused by [W. H. Auden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._H._Auden) who wrote of Nietzsche in his *New Year Letter* (released in 1941 in [*The Double Man*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Double_Man_%28book%29)): "O masterly [debunker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debunker) of our liberal fallacies [...] all your life you stormed, like your English forerunner Blake". Nietzsche made an impact on [composers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composer) during the 1890s. Writer on music [Donald Mitchell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Mitchell_%28writer%29) notes that [Gustav Mahler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Mahler) was "attracted to the poetic fire of Zarathustra, but repelled by the intellectual core of its writings." He also quotes Gustav himself, and adds that he was influenced by Nietzsche's conception and affirmative approach to nature, which Mahler presented in [Third Symphony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._3_%28Mahler%29) using [Zarathustra's roundelay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zarathustra%27s_roundelay). [Frederick Delius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Delius) has produced a piece of choral music [A Mass of Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mass_of_Life) based on a text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, while [Richard Strauss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Strauss) (who also based his [Also sprach Zarathustra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Also_sprach_Zarathustra_%28Strauss%29) on the same book), was only interested in finishing "another chapter of symphonic autobiography". Famous writers and poets influenced by Nietzsche include [André Gide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Gide), [August Strindberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Strindberg), [Robinson Jeffers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinson_Jeffers), [Pío Baroja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%ADo_Baroja), [D. H. Lawrence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._H._Lawrence), [Edith Södergran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith_S%C3%B6dergran) and [Yukio Mishima](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yukio_Mishima).

Nietzsche was an early influence on the poetry of [Rainer Maria Rilke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainer_Maria_Rilke). [Knut Hamsun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knut_Hamsun) counted Nietzsche, along with [Strindberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Strindberg) and Dostoyevsky as one of his primary influences. Author [Jack London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_London) wrote that he was more stimulated by Nietzsche than by any other writer. Critics have suggested that the character of David Grief in [*A Son of the Sun*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Son_of_the_Sun_%28novel%29) was based on Nietzsche. Nietzsche's influence on [Muhammad Iqbal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Iqbal) is most evidenced in [*Asrar-i-Khudi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Secrets_of_the_Self) *(The Secrets of the Self)*. [Wallace Stevens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallace_Stevens) was another reader of Nietzsche and elements of Nietzsche's philosophy were found throughout [*Harmonium*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmonium_%28poetry_collection%29). [Olaf Stapledon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olaf_Stapledon) was influenced by the idea of Übermensch and it is central theme in his books [*Odd John*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odd_John) and [*Sirius*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirius_%28novel%29). In Russia, Nietzsche has influenced [Russian symbolism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_symbolism) and figures such as [Dmitry Merezhkovsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitry_Merezhkovsky), [Andrei Bely](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Bely),[Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyacheslav_Ivanovich_Ivanov) and [Alexander Scriabin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Scriabin) have all incorporated or discussed parts of Nietzsche philosophy in their works. [Thomas Mann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Mann)'s novel [*Death in Venice*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_in_Venice) shows a use of Apollonian and Dionysian, and in [*Doctor Faustus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Faustus_%28novel%29) Nietzsche was a central source for the character of Adrian Leverkühn. [Hermann Hesse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Hesse), similarly, in his [*Narcissus and Goldmund*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narcissus_and_Goldmund) presents two main characters in the sense of Apollonian and Dionysian as the two opposite yet intertwined spirits. Painter [Giovanni Segantini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Segantini) was fascinated by *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and he drew an illustration for the first Italian translation of the book. The Russian painter [Lena Hades](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lena_Hades) created the oil painting cycle "[Also Sprach Zarathustra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Also_Sprach_Zarathustra_%28painting%29)" dedicated to the book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

By World War I, Nietzsche had acquired a reputation as an inspiration for both right-wing German [militarism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militarism) and leftist politics. German soldiers received copies of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as gifts during World War I. The [Dreyfus Affair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dreyfus_Affair) provides a contrasting example of his reception: the French antisemitic Right labelled the Jewish and Leftist intellectuals who defended [Alfred Dreyfus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Dreyfus) as "Nietzscheans". Nietzsche had a distinct appeal for many [Zionist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism) thinkers around the start of the 20th century most notable being [Ahad Ha'am](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahad_Ha%27am), [Hillel Zeitlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_Zeitlin), [Micha Josef Berdyczewski](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micha_Josef_Berdyczewski), [A. D. Gordon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._D._Gordon) and [Martin Buber](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Buber) who went so far as to extoll Nietzsche as a "creator" and "emissary of life". [Chaim Weizmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim_Weizmann) was a great admirer of Nietzsche; the first president of Israel sent Nietzsche's books to his wife, adding a comment in a letter that "This was the best and finest thing I can send to you". [Israel Eldad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Eldad), the ideological chief of the Stern Group that fought the British in Palestine in the 1940s, wrote about Nietzsche in his underground newspaper and later translated most of Nietzsche's books into Hebrew. [Eugene O'Neill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_O%27Neill) remarked that *Zarathustra* influenced him more than any other book he ever read. He also shared Nietzsche's view of [tragedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy). Plays [*The Great God Brown*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_God_Brown) and [*Lazarus Laughed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazarus_Laughed) are an example of Nietzsche's influence on O'Neill. Nietzsche's influence on the works of [Frankfurt School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_School) philosophers [Max Horkheimer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Horkheimer) and [Theodor W. Adorno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_W._Adorno) can be seen in the popular [*Dialectic of Enlightenment*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialectic_of_Enlightenment). Adorno summed up Nietzsche's philosophy as expressing the "[humane](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humane#Adjective) in a world in which humanity has become a sham".

Nietzsche's growing prominence suffered a severe setback when his works became closely associated with [Adolf Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) and the German Reich. Many political leaders of the twentieth century were at least superficially familiar with Nietzsche's ideas, although it is not always possible to determine whether they actually read his work. Hitler, for example, probably never read Nietzsche and, if he did, his reading was not extensive, although he was a frequent visitor to the Nietzsche museum in Weimar and did use expressions of Nietzsche's, such as "lords of the earth" in [*Mein Kampf*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mein_Kampf). The Nazis made selective use of Nietzsche's philosophy. [Mussolini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini), [Charles de Gaulle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle) and [Huey P. Newton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huey_P._Newton) read Nietzsche. [Richard Nixon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Nixon) read Nietzsche with "curious interest," and his book *Beyond Peace* might have taken its title from Nietzsche's book *Beyond Good and Evil* which Nixon read beforehand. [Bertrand Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand_Russell) wrote that Nietzsche had exerted great influence on philosophers and on people of literary and artistic culture, but warned that the attempt to put Nietzsche's philosophy of aristocracy into practice could only be done by an organization similar to the Fascist or the Nazi party.

A decade after World War II, there was a revival of Nietzsche's philosophical writings thanks to exhaustive translations and analyses by [Walter Kaufmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Kaufmann_%28philosopher%29) and [R.J. Hollingdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.J._Hollingdale). Others, well known philosophers in their own right, wrote commentaries on Nietzsche's philosophy, including [Martin Heidegger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Heidegger), who produced a four-volume study and [Lev Shestov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Shestov) who wrote a book called *Dostoyevski, Tolstoy and Nietzsche* where he portrays Nietzsche and Dostoyevski as the "thinkers of tragedy". [Georg Simmel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Simmel) compares Nietzsche's importance to ethics to that of [Copernicus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copernicus) for [cosmology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmology). Sociologist [Ferdinand Tönnies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_T%C3%B6nnies) read Nietzsche avidly from his early life, and later frequently discussed many of his concepts in his own works. Nietzsche has influenced philosophers such as [Martin Heidegger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Heidegger), [Jean-Paul Sartre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre), [Oswald Spengler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswald_Spengler), [George Grant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Grant_%28philosopher%29), [Emil Cioran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emil_Cioran), [Albert Camus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Camus), [Ayn Rand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand), [Jacques Derrida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Derrida), [Leo Strauss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Strauss), [Max Scheler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Scheler), [Michel Foucault](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault) and [Bernard Williams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Williams). Camus described Nietzsche as "the only artist to have derived the extreme consequences of an aesthetics of the [absurd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absurdism)". [Paul Ricœur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Ric%C5%93ur) called Nietzsche one of the masters of the "school of suspicion", alongside [Karl Marx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx) and [Sigmund Freud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud). [Carl Jung](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung) was also influenced by Nietzsche. In [*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memories%2C_Dreams%2C_Reflections), a biography transcribed by his secretary, he cites Nietzsche as a large influence.

Aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, especially his ideas of the self and his relation to society, also run through much of late-twentieth and early twenty-first century thought. His deepening of the romantic-heroic tradition of the nineteenth century, for example, as expressed in the ideal of the "grand striver" appears in the work of thinkers from [Cornelius Castoriadis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius_Castoriadis) to [Roberto Mangabeira Unger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roberto_Mangabeira_Unger). For Nietzsche this grand striver overcomes obstacles, engages in epic struggles, pursues new goals, embraces recurrent novelty, and transcends existing structures and contexts. No social or cultural construct can contain this idealized individual. Inspired by this ideal, Unger elevates it to a philosophy of human nature, removing Nietzsche's formulations from the application to only a few higher beings and re-grounding them in the fundamental characteristics of our humanity so that each individual is embodied with this striving and context overcoming aspirations. Rather than identifying a few exemplary individuals, Unger makes it central to human personality and the basis of our moral and political action. From here, Unger goes on to articulate a social vision of institutions of a social, political, and economic structure that will not entrap us or hold us back, but rather are open to transformation and will become an expression of our will. Political and social arrangements, for Unger, should be open to constant revision rather than the concrete givens expressed by the thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**Works**

The *Nietzsche Stone*, near [Surlej](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surlej), the inspiration for [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra)

Main article: [Friedrich Nietzsche bibliography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche_bibliography)

*See also:* [*List of works about Friedrich Nietzsche*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_works_about_Friedrich_Nietzsche)

* [*The Greek Music Drama*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Greek_Music_Drama&action=edit&redlink=1) (1870)
* [*The Greek State*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Greek_State&action=edit&redlink=1) (1871)
* [*The Birth of Tragedy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_Tragedy) (1872)
* [*On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_Truth_and_Lies_in_a_Nonmoral_Sense) (1873)
* [*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_in_the_Tragic_Age_of_the_Greeks) (1873)
* *We Philologists* (1874, posthumous)
* [*Untimely Meditations*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Untimely_Meditations_%28Nietzsche%29) (1876)
* [*Human, All Too Human*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human%2C_All_Too_Human) (1878)
* [*The Dawn*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dawn_%28book%29) (1881)
* [*The Gay Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gay_Science) (1882)
* [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thus_Spoke_Zarathustra) (1883)
* [*Beyond Good and Evil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_Good_and_Evil) (1886)
* [*On the Genealogy of Morality*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Genealogy_of_Morality) (1887)
* [*The Case of Wagner*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Case_of_Wagner) (1888)
* [*Twilight of the Idols*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight_of_the_Idols) (1888)
* [*The Antichrist*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Antichrist_%28book%29) (1888)
* [*Ecce Homo*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecce_Homo_%28book%29) (1888)
* [*Nietzsche contra Wagner*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nietzsche_contra_Wagner) (1888)
* [*The Will to Power*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Will_to_Power_%28manuscript%29) (unpublished manuscripts edited by [Elisabeth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_F%C3%B6rster-Nietzsche))

**See also**

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|  | [***Philosophy portal***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3APhilosophy) |
|  | [***Atheism portal***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AAtheism) |
|  | [***Germany portal***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AGermany) |

* [Anarchism and Friedrich Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism_and_Friedrich_Nietzsche)
* [The Antichrist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Antichrist)
* [Friedrich Nietzsche and free will](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche_and_free_will)
* [Genealogy (philosophy)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogy_%28philosophy%29)
* [The Ascent of Man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ascent_of_Man)

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