

# Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900) was a Prussian philosopher. He began his career as a classical philologist, turning to philosophy early in his academic career. In 1869, aged 24, Nietzsche became the youngest professor to hold the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel. Plagued by health problems for most of his life, he resigned from the university in 1879, and in the following decade he completed much of his core writing. In 1889, aged 44, he suffered a collapse and thereafter a complete loss of his mental faculties, with paralysis and vascular dementia, living his remaining 11 years under the care of his family until his death. His works and his philosophy have fostered not only extensive scholarship but also much popular interest. Nietzsche's work encompasses philosophical polemics, poetry, cultural criticism and fiction, while displaying a fondness for aphorisms and irony. Prominent elements of his philosophy include his radical critique of truth in favour of perspectivism; a genealogical critique of religion and Christian morality and a related theory of master–slave morality; the aesthetic affirmation of life in response to both the "death of God" and the profound crisis of nihilism; the notion of Apollonian and Dionysian forces; and a characterisation of the human subject as the expression of competing wills, collectively understood as the will to power. He also developed influential concepts such as the *Übermensch* and his doctrine of eternal return. In his later work he became increasingly preoccupied with the creative powers of the individual to overcome cultural and moral mores in pursuit of new values and aesthetic health. His body of work touched a wide range of topics, including art, philology, history, music, religion, tragedy, culture and science, and drew inspiration from Hebrew and Indian literature, Greek tragedy as well as figures such as Zoroaster, Arthur Schopenhauer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Richard Wagner, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. After Nietzsche's death his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, became the curator and editor of his manuscripts. She edited his unpublished writings to fit her German ultranationalist ideology, often contradicting or obfuscating Nietzsche's stated opinions, which were explicitly opposed to antisemitism and nationalism. Through her published editions, Nietzsche's work became associated with fascism and Nazism. Twentieth-century scholars such as Walter Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale and Georges Bataille defended Nietzsche against this interpretation, and corrected editions of his writings were soon made available. Nietzsche's thought enjoyed renewed popularity in the 1960s and his ideas have since had a profound impact on 20th- and 21st-century thinkers across philosophy—especially in schools of continental philosophy such as existentialism, postmodernism and post-structuralism—as well as art, literature, music, poetry, politics, and popular culture.