

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche[b] (15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900) was a German 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,[c] 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.