



Nietzsche





## Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

October 1844 - August 1900

**N**ietzsche was a German philosopher, poet, composer, cultural critic, and classical philologist. He wrote critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy, and science, displaying a fondness for metaphor, irony, and aphorism.

Nietzsche's key ideas include the "death of God", the Übermensch, the eternal recurrence, the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy, perspectivism, and the will to power. Central to his philosophy is the idea of "life-affirmation", which involves questioning of all doctrines that drain life's expansive energies, however socially prevalent and radical those views might be. His influence remains substantial within philosophy, notably in existentialism, post-modernism, and post-structuralism, as well as outside it. His radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth has been the focus of extensive commentary, especially in the continental tradition.

Nietzsche began his career as a classical philologist before turning to philosophy. In 1869, at the age of twenty-four he was appointed to the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel (the youngest individual to have held this position), but resigned in the summer of 1879 due to health problems that plagued him most of his life. At the age of forty-five in 1889 he suffered a collapse and a complete loss of his mental faculties. The breakdown had been ascribed to atypical general paralysis

attributed to tertiary syphilis, but this diagnosis

has since come into question. He lived his remaining years in the care of his mother until her death in 1897, then under the care of his sister until his death in 1900.

His sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche acted as curator and editor of Nietzsche's manuscripts during his illness. She was married to a prominent German nationalist and antisemite, Bernhard Förster, and she reworked some of Nietzsche's unpublished writings to fit her husband's ideology, often in ways contrary to Nietzsche's opinions, which were strongly and explicitly opposed to anti-Semitism and nationalism (see Nietzsche's criticism of anti-Semitism and nationalism).

Through Förster-Nietzsche's editions, Nietzsche's name became associated with German militarism and Nazism, but twentieth century

In Heaven all the interesting people are missing.

— Nietzsche



scholars have worked hard to counteract the abuse of Nietzsche's philosophy by this ideology and rediscover the original writings of Nietzsche, unedited by his sister.

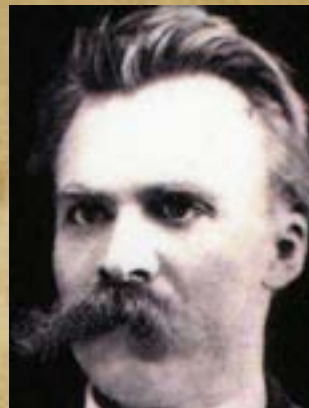
## Youth (1844-1869)

Born on October 15, 1844, Nietzsche grew up in the small town of Röcken, near Leipzig, in the Prussian Province of Saxony. He was named after King Frederick William IV of Prussia, who turned forty-nine on the day of Nietzsche's birth. (Nietzsche later dropped his given middle name, "Wilhelm".) Nietzsche's parents, Carl Ludwig Nietzsche (1813-49), a Lutheran pastor and former teacher, and Franziska Gehler (1826-97), married in 1843, the year before their son's birth, and had two other children: a daughter, Elisabeth Förster-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, where they lived with Nietzsche's paternal 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 a museum and Nietzsche study centre.

Nietzsche attended a boys school and then, later, a private school, where he became friends with Gustav Krug, Rudolf Wagner and Wilhelm

Pinder, all of whom came from very respected families.

In 1854, he began to attend Pforta in Naumburg, but after he showed particular talents in music and language, the internationally recognised Schulpforta admitted



him as a pupil, and there he continued his studies from 1858 to 1864. Here he became friends with Paul Deussen and Carl von Gersdorff. He also found time to work on

poems and musical compositions. At Schulpforta, Nietzsche received an important introduction to literature, particularly that of

the ancient Greeks and Romans, and for the first

What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.  
— Nietzsche

time experienced a distance from his family life in a small-town Christian environment. His end of semester exams in March 1864 showed a 1 in Religion and German, a 2a in Greek and Latin, 2b in French, History and Physics, and a "lackluster" 3 in Hebrew and Mathematics.



# Übermensch

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche posits the Übermensch (often translated as "overman" or "superman") as a goal that humanity can set for itself.

While interpretations of Nietzsche's overman vary wildly, here are a few of his quotes from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

I teach you the Übermensch. 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 Übermensch: 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 Übermensch is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the Übermensch shall be the meaning of the earth... Man is a rope, tied between beast and Übermensch—a rope over an abyss... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end...

