

“No trivial matter”



Nietzsche's Urge

for the

TRUTH

What, then, is **TRUTH**?

A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are. (On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense)

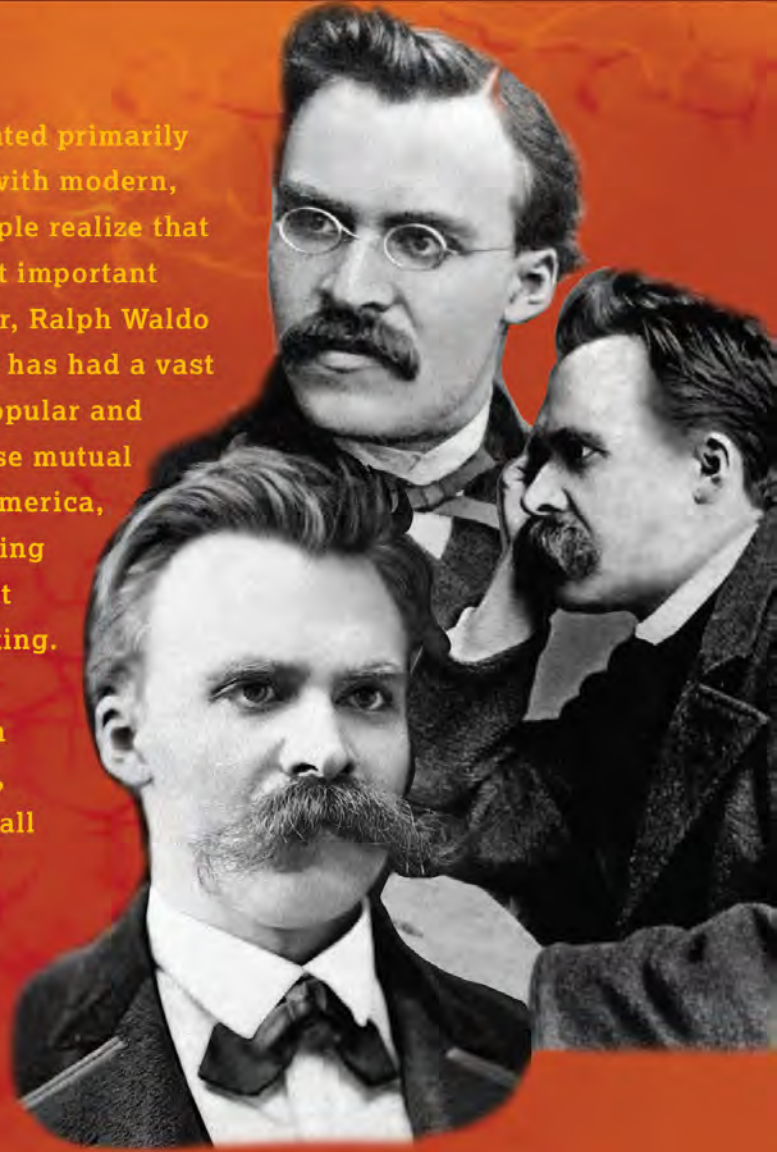
One day the wanderer shut a door behind him, stood still, and wept. Then he said: "Oh, this inclination and impulse towards the true, the real, the non-apparent, the certain! How I detest it! Why does this gloomy and passionate taskmaster follow just me? I should like to rest, but it does not permit me to do so. (The Gay Science)

“No trivial matter”

Nietzsche's Urge for the Truth

Friedrich Nietzsche is certainly one of the most important and influential modern thinkers. Most of us have heard of famous Nietzschean tropes like the “death of God,” the advent of the “superman,” the “will to power,” “nihilism” or the “eternal return of the same.”

However, his ideas are often associated primarily with European history, and less so with modern, “liberal” American culture. Few people realize that not only was Nietzsche's single most important “teacher” in fact an American author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, but that Nietzsche himself has had a vast impact on American culture, both popular and academic. This exhibit explores these mutual influences between Nietzsche and America, looking at history but also highlighting some of the “Nietzschean” ideas that still shape our common way of thinking. This “American” Nietzsche gives a surprising new meaning to his claim of being a “prophet” of a new world, the harbinger of a “transposition of all values.”



I know my destiny.

There will come a day when my name will recall the memory of something formidable—a crisis the like of which has never been known on earth, the memory of the most profound clash of consciences, and the passing of a sentence upon all that which theretofore had been believed, exacted, and hallowed. I am not a man, I am dynamite. [...] All the mighty realms of the ancient order of society are blown into space—for they are all based on falsehood: there will be wars, the like of which have never been seen on earth before. Only from my time and after me will politics on a large scale exist on earth. (from Ecce Homo, 1908)

Timeline



1844

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is born in the village of Rocken in the German region of Saxony-Anhalt. He is the oldest of three children born to Carl Ludwig and Franziska Nietzsche. His father, a fervent Lutheran pastor in the Pietistic tradition, dies when Friedrich is only four years old.

1858-1864

Attends Pforta, near Naumburg, Germany's most elite Protestant boarding school. In addition to excelling in theology, German, and Classical languages, he gets involved in musical and literary groups and writes music and poems of his own.

1864

Enrolls as student of theology and philology at the University of Bonn, in preparation for ordained ministry. But after reading thinkers like Ludwig Feuerbach and David Strauss, he loses his faith in Christianity and focuses instead on his philological studies.

1865-1869

Transfers to the University of Leipzig to follow his mentor, philologist Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl. In Leipzig he flourishes as a young scholar, publishing numerous works in Classical philology. He discovers the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and meets Richard Wagner. In 1869 the University of Leipzig confers on him the doctorate without examination or dissertation on the strength of his published writings.

May 1878

Publishes *Human, All Too Human*, first in a series of volumes of aphorisms that include *Mixed Opinion and Maxims* (1879), *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1879), *Dawn* (1881), *Idylls from Messina* (1882) and *The Joyful Science* (1882).



1879-1889

As his health steadily deteriorates, he wanders around Europe, living in boarding houses with limited human contact. He spends time in different parts of Switzerland, on the French and Italian Riviera, in Venice and finally in Turin.

1883-1885

Publishes his major literary & philosophical work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in four parts.

1886

Publishes *Beyond Good and Evil*.

1887

Publishes *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

April 1888

Arrives in Turin. In Turin he writes *The Case of Wagner*, *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist*, *Ecce Homo*, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*.

January 1889

Suffers a major mental breakdown in Turin. He loses his mental faculties completely.

1889-1897

Lives under the care of his mother in Jena and Naumburg.

Easter 1897

His mother dies. His sister Elisabeth moves him to Weimar.

August 25, 1900

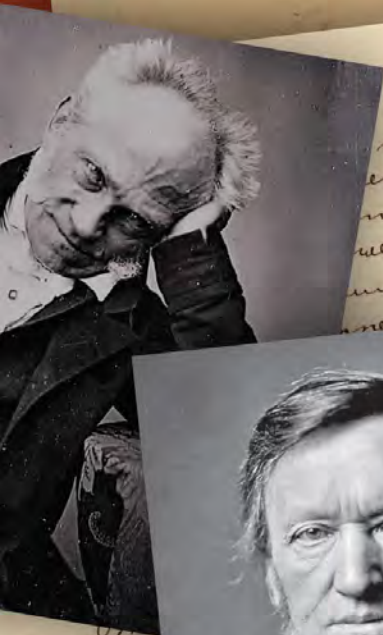
Nietzsche dies in Weimar.



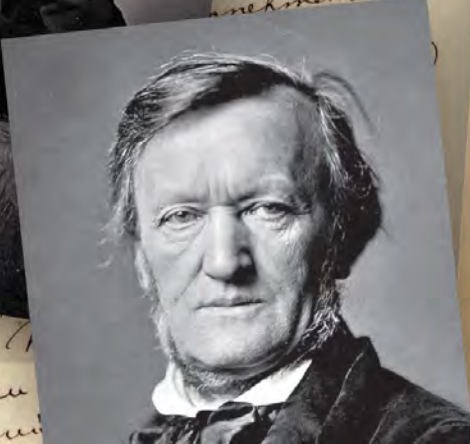
Nietzsche's intellectual formation was influenced by the major schools of thought of his time: German Idealism, Enlightenment thought, and Darwinian evolution. He was fascinated by their capacity to **challenge tradition and authority**, but he questioned several of the conclusions they came to. Above all, he was wary of any separation between philosophy and life. As he wrote, "I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example." **Thus, he disapproved of "rationality at all costs" which neglects the irrational, sensual and ultimately tragic aspects of human experience.**

In this respect two very important influences were philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and composer Richard Wagner.

Nietzsche was fascinated by Schopenhauer's dark, deeply pessimistic sense of the human condition, and hoped that Wagner's musical genius would be able to overcome it through art, by accepting life even if it is tragic. Soon, though, he detached himself from both. He could not accept Schopenhauer's attitude of pessimistic resignation, **which escaped from the tragedy of life rather than accepting it and taking it head on.** And he came to see Wagner's art as a form of decadent Romanticism, **which also escaped from life into a fantastic, pseudo-religious world.**



*...in wieder
es für eine
unlöslichen
welche ich jetzt
unersinnlich,
nehme...*



"In this book [Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*], in which every line cried out renunciation, denial, and resignation, I saw a mirror in which I espied the whole world, life and my own mind depicted in frightful grandeur. In this volume the full celestial eye of art gazed at me; here I saw illness and recovery, banishment and refuge, heaven and hell. **The need of knowing myself, yea, even of gnawing at myself, forcibly seized me.**"

(from a letter to his sister)

*...dann
sehen
sich...*

There was, however, a third author who had a major impact on the young Nietzsche, and surprisingly he was American: Ralph Waldo Emerson. In recent years, scholars have come to appreciate better how much Emerson's influence is decisive in order to understand Nietzsche's thought, his reception in the US and his enduring impact on our culture.

"Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration has broken out in a great city, and no man knows what is safe, or where it will end."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

At age 16, Nietzsche read Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays for the first time. He would read this volume, and others by Emerson repeatedly, throughout his life. As he read, Nietzsche underlined, annotated, and commented in the margins, leaving a vivid trail of his engagement with Emerson's ideas. Nietzsche's affinity for Emerson was so profound that he described him to a friend as a "brother soul."



Nietzsche found in Emerson someone who was asking the same questions as he was, a thinker who rejected the authority of tradition and eschewed received philosophies, and a man who sought to answer the fundamental question **"How must I live?"**

"For Nietzsche, Emerson represented a new Aura and fauna of thought. He discovered in this American essayist and poet a new kind of thinker who believed that ontology and epistemology were useful only insofar as they addressed the fundamental question of philosophy: not What is the nature of being? What are the conditions of knowledge? Or How do I know? but rather, as Emerson put it, "How shall I live?" Nietzsche admired the ease with which Emerson made philosophy an ally of, rather than a retreat from or a corrective to, one's own experiences and longings."

-American Nietzsche, Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen

Both Emerson and Nietzsche spent their lives exploring what it means to live authentically. **They locate the responsibility for living well in the individual.** Those unafraid of nonconformity will stand out from "the herd" and achieve greatness. "No one can construct for you the bridge upon which precisely you must cross the stream of life, no one but you yourself alone."

Living Without

Absolutes

Nietzsche drew from Emerson the idea of life and philosophy without foundations, without absolutes. Being and thought are essentially “becoming” and life is “plastic power,” meaning *the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken molds.* (Untimely Meditations)

As he also writes,

There is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed- the deed is everything. (On the Genealogy of Morals)

Similarly, there is no objective knowledge, but only a multitude of experiences heavily dependent on our perspective

Let us, forsooth, my philosophic colleagues, henceforward guard ourselves more carefully against this mythology of dangerous ancient ideas, which has set up a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge’; let us guard ourselves from the tentacles of such contradictory ideas as ‘pure reason,’ ‘absolute spirituality,’ ‘knowledge-in-itself’...There is only a seeing from a perspective, only a ‘knowing’ from a perspective, and the more emotions we express over a thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we train on the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘idea’ of that thing, our ‘objectivity.’ (On The Genealogy of Morals)

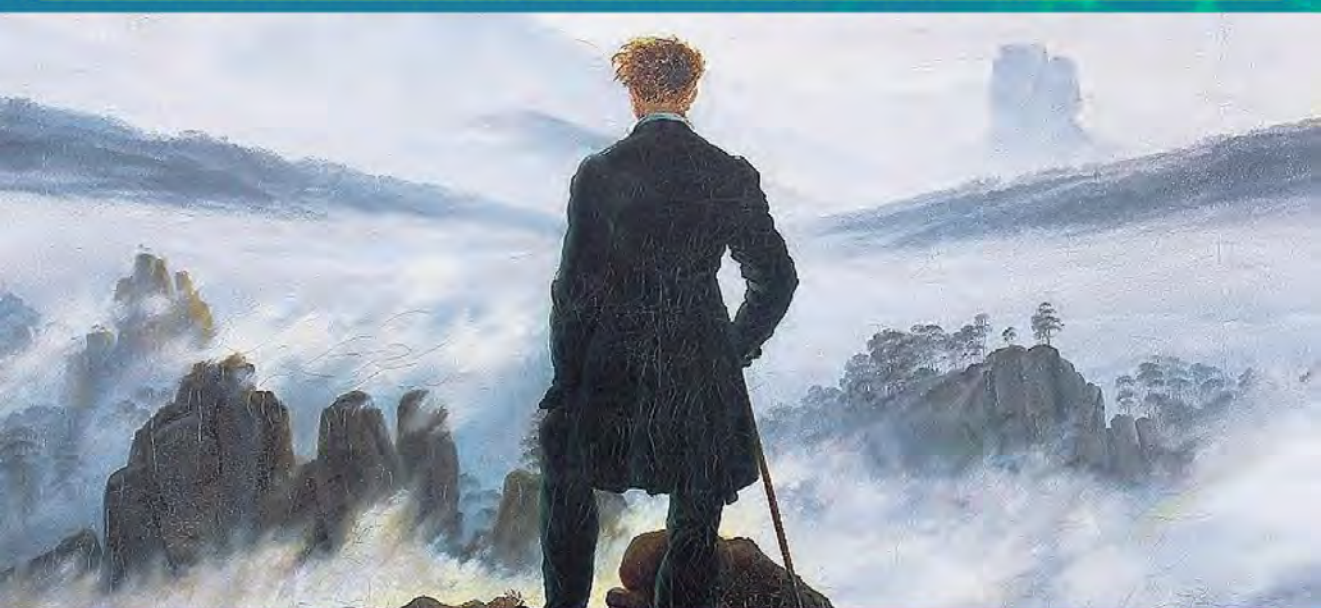


Rejection

of all Authorities

In Nietzsche's view, the loss of all foundations, of all fixed points of reference is the distinctive feature of modern people.

Thou wilt never more pray, never more worship, never more repose in infinite trust—thou refusest to stand still and dismiss thy thoughts before an ultimate wisdom, an ultimate virtue, an ultimate power.



His idea of the death of God is not primarily a philosophical or theological statement, but the recognition of a historical fact: religion has lost its power to direct people's lives.

The madman jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. "Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! We have killed him,—you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Back-wards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness?"

The death of God marks the end of a whole civilization, of "our entire European morality." We now have the exhilarating task of creating a new one, "beyond good and evil," but this task will be accompanied by great turmoil, like the world has never seen before

The most important of more recent events—that "God is dead," that the belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief—already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe. [...] This lengthy, vast and uninterrupted process of crumbling, destruction, ruin and overthrow which is now imminent: who has realized it sufficiently to-day to have to stand up as the teacher and herald of such a tremendous logic of terror, as the prophet of a period of gloom and eclipse, the like of which has probably never taken place on earth before?

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra)

No Other Authority than the Self

The death of God brings to the fore what had been forgotten: that values are human creations. "Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values, does the world revolve; inaudibly it revolves." Ultimately, the only source of values is the self.

Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed ... your educators can only be your liberators."
(Untimely Meditations)

Also in this respect, Nietzsche was inspired by Emerson, who began his well-known essay "Self Reliance" with a Latin quote: *Ne te quaesiveris extra*. "Do not seek for things outside yourself"

Truly, men have given to themselves all their good and bad. Truly, they took it not, they found it not, it came not to them as a voice from heaven. Values did man only assign to things in order to maintain himself - he created only the significance of things, a human significance! Therefore, calls he himself "man," that is, the valuator. Valuing is creating: hear it, you creating ones! Valuation itself is the treasure and jewel of the valued things. Through valuation only is there value; and without valuation the nut of existence would be hollow.

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra)



If there are no absolute good and evil, each man has to define his own virtue.

My brother, when you have a virtue, and it is your own virtue, you have it in common with no one. [...] Once you had passions and called them evil. But now you have only your virtues: they grew out of your passions. You set your highest goal in the heart of those passions: then they became your virtues and joys. And though you were of the race of the hot-tempered, or of the lustful, or of the fanatical, or the vengeful; in the end, all your passions became virtues, and all your devils, angels.

Embracing

the Will to Power

The greatest men are those who most strongly can smash the values forced on them by society and create their own values, the “deviants.”

The deviants, who are so frequently the inventive and fruitful ones, shall no longer be sacrificed; it shall not even be considered infamous to deviate from morality, in thought and deed; numerous new experiments of life and society shall be made; a tremendous burden of bad conscience shall be removed from the world.

(On the Genealogy of Morals)

What will be, then, the supreme value in the new civilization that is being borne? Above all, the expansion of life as such, vitality or, as Nietzsche calls it, the will to power. “A living being wants above all else to release its strength; life itself is the will to power.”

What is good?—Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man.

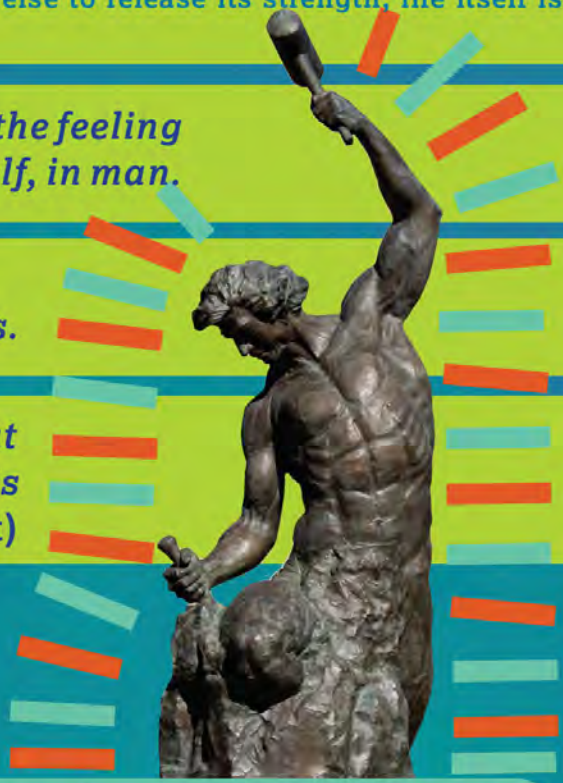
What is evil?—Whatever springs from weakness.

What is happiness?—The feeling that power increases—that resistance is overcome. (The Antichrist)

Power is revealed as the “secret love” that lay hidden behind the hypocrisy of Christian morality, and which can now be freely and joyously embraced:

The Christian concept of a god—the god as the patron of the sick, the god as a spinner of cobwebs, the god as a spirit—is one of the most corrupt concepts that has ever been set up in the world: it probably touches low-water mark in the ebbing evolution of the god-type. God degenerated into the contradiction of life. Instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yea! In him war is declared on life, on nature, on the will to live! God becomes the formula for every slander upon the “here and now,” and for every lie about the “beyond”! In him nothingness is deified, and the will to nothingness is made holy!

(The Antichrist)



Be Faithful

to the Earth

The new Nietzschean morality commands faithfulness to the earth. The human task is to create the meaning of an otherwise meaningless world.

A new pride my I taught me, and that I teach to men: no longer to thrust one's head into the sand of heavenly things, but to carry it freely, a terrestrial head, which creates a meaning for the earth [...] Remain true to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! Let your bestowing love and your knowledge be devoted to be the meaning of the earth! Thus do I pray and appeal to you. Let it not fly away from the earthly and beat against eternal walls with its wings! Ah, there has always been so much flown-away virtue! Lead, like me, the flown-away virtue back to the earth - yes, back to body and life: that it may give to the earth its meaning, a human meaning!
(Thus Spoke Zarathustra)



This will mark the rise of a new humanity, which Nietzsche calls the "overman." The overman is precisely a future new type of man who will be able to overcome nihilism by creating new, "completely earthly" values

Behold, I teach you the overman! The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The overman shall be the meaning of the earth!
(Thus Spoke Zarathustra)

The man of the future who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and anti-nihilist; this victor over God and nothingness - he must come one day.
(On the Genealogy of Morals)

The Morality of the Strong

However, Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values" also means replacing the "morality of the slaves, which is driven by resentment (and which he identifies with Christianity) by the "aristocratic morality of the strong." He exalts the fierce, independent individual, who unabashedly affirms himself and follows his "healthy" instincts and strives for greatness.

It is the business of the very few to be independent; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it, even with the best right, but without being OBLIGED to do so, proves that he is probably not only strong, but also daring beyond measure.

(Beyond Good and Evil)

Nietzsche's notion of freedom is individualistic but not "bourgeois." It is the freedom of the warrior, of the man who is ready to fight and sacrifice to affirm his own greatness, to feel fully alive.

War educates for freedom. For what is freedom? Having the will to responsibility for oneself. Maintaining the distance that separates us. Becoming indifferent to trouble, hardships, deprivation, even to life. Being ready to sacrifice people to one's cause, not excluding oneself. Freedom means that the manly instincts, the instincts that celebrate war and winning, dominate other instincts, for example the instinct for 'happiness.' The human being who has become free, not to mention the spirit that has become free, steps all over the contemptible sort of wellbeing dreamt of by grocers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats. The free human being is a warrior.

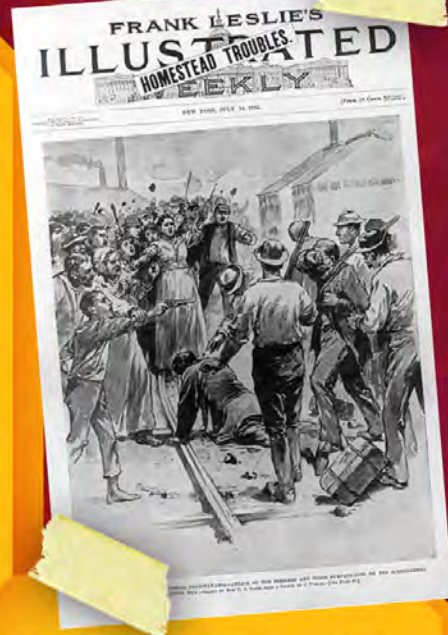
(The Twilight of the Idols)



Influence in

Europe and America

Ironically, Nietzsche's work started to be recognized only after his descent into madness. Already in the early 1890s appreciation for his thought started spreading in Europe and North America. It addressed the philosophical needs of a younger generation that had been raised in the suffocating atmosphere of scientific positivism but was not interested in the speculative metaphysics of the past. Nietzsche rejected both "scientism" and metaphysics, as two different expressions of the idea of a universal truth. What made his thought radically new was precisely that he called into question the "value of values" (including the value of "absolute" knowledge and truth).



His appeal cut through the conventional opposition of right and left. He found an immediate audience in left-wing, "liberationist," progressive circles (including anarchists, socialists, feminists) because of his rejection of traditional authorities, his exaltation of individual freedom and creativity, his assault on bourgeois conformity. He was viewed as a "free thinker" who, by obliterating religion-based institutional authority, prophesized a future liberation based on the autonomous self. But he also appealed to right-leaning people who welcomed his "aristocratic radicalism," his contempt for democratic mediocrity, humanitarianism and egalitarianism, his appreciation for the "strong man."



"Nietzsche began his American career sliding easily along the political register as radicals from the Far Left to the Far Right feared the intellectually deadening forces of modern capitalism and democracy. Though their Nietzsches spoke in different keys, all revealed a thinker who divested himself of illusory states of belonging and external authority—either to a supernatural religion, the state, metaphysical philosophy, a market economy or pluralist society – in order to experience the liberation of a modern self-begotten self" (American Nietzsche)

Nietzsche

As a Mirror

In the following decades, many more people became fascinated with Nietzsche, but also projected on him their own concerns. Traditional Christians saw him as the most radical modern atheist, the relentless critic of Christian belief, piety and practice as human inventions motivated by the will to power. To the advocates of the Social Gospel he became the symbol of individualism and materialism. Pragmatists saw him as a precursor, who rather than asking if beliefs are true asked what benefits they provide. Liberal Protestants enlisted him to support their own anti-dogmatism, and to develop a post-theistic spirituality, a Christianity without absolutes. The radical intellectuals of the early 20th century viewed him as their spiritual progenitor, the first modern intellectual who heralded the advent of the unique and autonomous self.

*We may well call Nietzsche the prophet and embodiment of those habits of thought which are dominant among the thinking men of the world today. Humanity is questioning and making ready to reject its ancient moral ideas. The masses on the surface are still law-abiding and religious, but even among the lowest of the slave cast there is a mute, uncertain sort of willingness to follow any iconoclast whose crusade contains aught of romance. It will be many years before the great plain people come to regard marriage other than as a holy sacrament – just as it will be many years before they cease to regard smoking, by women, as a crime – but already they have begun to differentiate between empty platitude and actuality. (H.L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*)*

Fascists and later Nazis looked at him as the theoretician of raw power uninhibited by archaic moral constraints, as the philosophical mastermind of totalitarianism.

*The superman, here is Nietzsche's great creation! ... To understand it, a new species of free spirits will come, fortified in war, in solitude, in great danger. These spirits will be familiar with ice and the winds, with the snows on the high mountains, and will know how to gauge the deepest abysses serenely in their gaze. They will be spirits endowed with a sublime kind of perversity, spirits who will free us from the love of neighbor, from the will to nothingness, giving back to the earth its purpose and to men their hopes – new, free, very free spirits who will triumph over God and Nothingness! (Mussolini, *La filosofia della forza*, 1908)*



The New

Nietzsche

The 1960s saw the dawn of yet a “New Nietzsche” through the writings of European postmodern philosophers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. These postmodern thinkers saw themselves as continuing Nietzsche’s work of moving past foundational truth claims by calling into question notions of selfhood, meaning, and overarching historical and moral metanarratives.

Derrida took Nietzsche’s claim that “there are no facts, only interpretations” to new extremes. His theories about literature had a major impact on the study of the humanities with his assertion that readers cannot “locate the author” or his “intended meaning” in a text, extending Nietzsche’s “death of God” theory to the “death of the author.”

Foucault focused on Nietzsche’s idea that one must “struggle” in order to become one’s true self. Selfhood is not something passively received or discovered, but something we must “create” for ourselves. Foucault placed heavy emphasis on the ways that people and institutions in power impose their own self-seeking conceptions of selfhood onto individuals.

In the 1980s, it was two American scholars, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who brought the postmodern readings of Nietzsche into the academic mainstream. Sedgwick asserted that Nietzsche’s “anti-essentialism was essential for queer theory.” And Butler argued that Nietzsche “helped show how gender categories were not ‘natural’ but ‘contested sites of meaning.’”

“We might state as a corollary [to Nietzsche]: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.”

-Judith Butler



As postmodern thought spread throughout American universities and pop culture, conservative thinkers began expressing their reservations more publicly. Allan Bloom’s 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind* “railed against the ‘value relativism’ he believed left-wing professors were peddling to their students, eager for Nietzsche’s authoritative license of their moral licentiousness.” Bloom asserted that the “American mind,” in taking too many cues from the “New Nietzsche,” “had become “too radically open, too indiscriminate to understand Nietzsche’s subtle moral criticism and his warnings about nihilism.”

Nietzsche in

Today's Culture

In the last twenty years, Nietzsche's thought has inspired intellectuals and artists from a vast array of ideological persuasions. Public intellectuals like Camille Paglia and Jordan B. Peterson, highlight Nietzsche's aesthetics and master-morality, and eschew poststructuralist readings of Nietzsche that downplay the role of free will and the arts. Similarly, art critics Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova of the Red Scare podcast decry the aesthetic and metaphysical poverty and resentment of performative social justice activists, often citing Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals in their commentary. Books like the Bronze Age Mindset take direct inspiration from Nietzsche, lamenting the deprivation of agency from everyday men by deceptive elites.

His ideas are referenced even in pop culture, from films like Little Miss Sunshine and TV shows like HBO's The White Lotus, to songs by artists like Kanye West and Kelly Clarkson.

His legacy continues to inspire ideas and trends, whether it be on the new frontier of gender identity and the calling into question of socially constructed identity categories, or the tribalist, self-reliant rhetoric of the "alt-right," which draws on an ethic of pulling oneself up by their bootstraps and fostering one's own strength.



*"Nietzsche and Proust both viewed suffering as essential in spiritual progress...After talking with Frank, Dwayne realizes that nihilism doesn't mean giving up on life; Nietzsche may have attacked existing structures of belief, but he also put forward a life-affirming philosophy that emphasizes self-determination and the will to power. Dwayne uses Frank's lesson to deepen his understanding of Nietzsche, resolving, 'If I want to fly, I'll find a way to fly. You do what you love and f**k the rest.'"*

-Jin-Young Sohn on Little Miss Sunshine

Quiz

Nietzsche in today's culture

Can you tell which Nietzschean ideas are echoed in these quotes by some of our contemporaries?

A-Living Without Absolutes

B-Modernity as Rejection of all Authorities

C-No Other Authority than the Self

D-Embracing the Will to Power

E- Be Faithful to the Earth

F-The Morality of the Strong

"I am an adherent to the cult of personal responsibility. Which is not to say that I dismiss or discount external factors that may be contributing to your oppression. Only that you have to treat everything as if it's a matter of personal responsibility. Like, if I get struck by lightning I think it's my fault. You have to adapt to the situation, be anti-fragile...there's no point in living in a nostalgic cloud of blaming your parents, your teachers, the system... [Too many people] are always very down on this whole 'bootstrapping' ethos...as a matter of moral concern for the less-thans, when it's really a means for expiating their own guilt and absolving themselves of responsibility."

-Anna Khachiyan

A

B

C

D

E

F

"We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, so to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start." -Judith Butler

A

B

C

D

E

F

"To stand up straight with your shoulders back is to accept the terrible responsibility of life, with eyes wide open. It means deciding to voluntarily transform the chaos of potential into the realities of habitable order. It means adopting the burden of self-conscious vulnerability, and accepting the end of the unconscious paradise of childhood, where finitude and mortality are only dimly comprehended. It means willingly undertaking the sacrifices necessary to generate a productive and meaningful reality (it means acting to please God, in the ancient language)...So, attend carefully to your posture. Quit drooping and hunching around. Speak your mind. Put your desires forward, as if you had a right to them—at least the same right as others. Walk tall and gaze forthrightly ahead. Dare to be dangerous. Encourage the serotonin to flow plentifully through the neural pathways desperate for its calming influence."

-Jordan Peterson

A

B

C

D

E

F

"We are not what other people say we are. We are who we know ourselves to be, and we are what we love. That's okay."

-Laverne Cox

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"[We must] face the hard, gruesome, evil, problematic aspect of existence...Aggression comes from nature...Society is not the criminal but the force which keeps crime in check. When social controls weaken, man's innate cruelty bursts forth...Feminists, seeking to drive power relations out of sex, have set themselves against nature...As Freud asserts, identity is conflict. Each generation drives its plow over the bones of the dead."

-Camille Paglia

A

B

C

D

E

F

"We're not supposed to conform, we're not supposed to be like somebody else, we're not supposed to act like somebody else — and as long as you stay true to exactly who you are, you will be rewarded in ways that you can't imagine."

-Ellen DeGeneres

A

B

C

D

E

F

"The nerd is a creature of will, under the direction of a petty will in the everyday sense, and all of his thoughts, concepts, and designs have a forced quality because they refer always to need and desire for some kind of gain...In men of intellect the desire for prestige is often the most disgusting, especially when there's no native manliness, because this leads to cowardice and lies, to others and oneself. For this reason Nietzsche said manliness is the first requirement of the philosopher, but there's no one farther from the philosopher than the unmanly nerd, and there's no enemy more implacable of the human race and of the genius of the species, than just this nerd and everything he represents. The attempt to 'mimic' life through algorithms, through the brute-force of trial-and-error, will never create either life or 'consciousness'—just what would such a machine be 'conscious' of?—but just that, a mimicry or parody of the middling human intellect. A mirror and exaltation of the false intellect of the nerd, that never leaves the stream of words, syllogisms, motives and desire, that is always forced and contrived, because it's under pressure of some petty need."

-Bronze Age Mindset

A

B

C

D

E

F

"Follow your gut and don't feel like you owe any sort of explanation to anyone. Your sexuality is yours only so build with it at a pace that works for you."

-Daya

A

B

C

D

E

F

Quiz

Nietzsche in today's culture

Can you tell which Nietzschean ideas are echoed in these quotes by some of our contemporaries?

A-Living Without Absolutes

B-Modernity as Rejection of all Authorities

C-No Other Authority than the Self

D-Embracing the Will to Power

E- Be Faithful to the Earth

F-The Morality of the Strong

"One of the most fascinating lessons I've absorbed about life is that the struggle is good."
-Joe Rogan

A

B

C

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F

"Got everything, I got everything
I cannot complain, I cannot
I don't even know how much I really made, I forgot, it's a lot
F that, never mind what I got..
Came up, that's all me
Stay true, that's all me (Yeah)
No help, that's all me
All me for real"

-Drake

A

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"It isn't until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are - not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within - that you can begin to take control."
-Oprah Winfrey

A

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"I'm very spiritual, and I find that I connect with every religion. There's that my-way-is-the-right-way thing in human nature, but for me it's not about my god or your god. I kind of just call on whoever is willing to be there for me."
-Bella Hadid

A

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"I see spirituality as living life according to the experience and understanding of the awakening of the presence of awareness within. Our true self is the source of love, creativity, intelligence and happiness. As we enliven these values in our lives, we transform our minds, bodies and social interaction. This is how spirituality creates a revolution from the inside out. It does not necessarily replicate religious morality. Orthodox religion as we currently see it, is largely a set of external prescriptions that have been laid down in the past of what to do or not do, believe in or not believe in order to receive divine blessings or forgiveness."
-Depaak Chopra

A

B

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Nietzsche's Quest

For Freedom

Nietzsche was fervently committed to taking the risk of using his own freedom, without "outsourcing" it to an external authority or entity. He refused to blindly follow anyone or any ideas handed down to him, and instead chose to follow only himself and create his own values.

Here the spirit becomes a lion; it will seize freedom, and become master in its own wilderness. Here it seeks its last master: it will fight him, and its last God; for victory it will struggle with the great dragon. What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer inclined to call Lord and God? "You shall," is what great dragon is called. But the spirit of the lion says, "I will."

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra)

Nietzsche was put into conflict when encountering figures like Emerson who attracted his freedom. His determination not to follow any authorities ended up turning his passion for freedom against itself.

Nietzsche's rejection of authority and tradition in the name of unfettered freedom could be compared to the parable of the prodigal son. Having grown up in a stifling, puritanical religious environment, he was repelled by the prospect of becoming like the older son, who "is free in name only." Like the younger son he "wanted to break the ties that kept him bound to a tradition, and go far away. Nothing could get in the way of the fulfillment of his desires. The road would be completely open...Reality soon wakes him from his dream." He realizes that "nothing lives up to his desires... The absence of constraints begins to show its true face: loneliness." (Julian Carron).

You call yourself free? Free from what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free for what? Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good, and hang your own will over yourself as a law? Can you be your own judge and avenger of your law? Terrible is to be alone with the judge and avenger of one's own law. ... the time will come when solitude will make you weary, when your pride will double up and its courage gnash its teeth. And you will cry: "I am alone!" (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)



This cry shows that although Nietzsche may never have "returned home" to a "father," his heart indeed remained very much alive.

Nietzsche

the Mystic

At least twice, while Nietzsche was surrounded by the sublime beauty of the Swiss Alps in Sils Maria and of the Mediterranean sea along the coast of Liguria in Rapallo, he had sudden ecstatic experiences, which left him shaken to the core and convinced of having received a sort of final revelation about the ultimate nature of reality. This is why some scholars, including Henri De Lubac, have aptly spoken of "Nietzsche as a mystic."

In our everyday life we usually take for granted that things around us, the world as a whole, and ourselves exist. However, in mystical experiences, all of a sudden, the fact that the world and everything in it exists becomes a source of intense awe and wonder. This astonishing realization overwhelms Nietzsche first with dread, then with joy, which he expresses as "a great Yes" and as "amor fati", "love of fate." Nietzsche realizes that "at every moment existence commences" (Zarathustra); therefore, at each moment he can say an unconditional yes to everything that happens, accept it as if he had chosen it himself, and "love fate" no matter what kind of fate it is.



*I am in a mood of fatalistic 'surrender to God' I call it amor fati, so much so, that I would be willing to rush into a lion's jaws.
(Letter to Overbeck, Summer 1882)*

Here, fascinatingly, extremes almost touch one another: The great atheist Nietzsche's unconditional 'yes' to existence seems to mirror the radical abandonment of the greatest Christian saints, such as St. Therese of Lisieux, to God's will. Nietzsche even comes to see Christ's 'yes' to the Cross as a supreme expression of Nietzsche's own 'yes' to existence.

Despite Nietzsche's rejection of religion and metaphysics, his dissatisfaction with Enlightenment rationalism's view of reality and humanity have opened a path to rediscovering certain metaphysical truths "through the back door."



Postmodernist theories of the social self have not explicitly acknowledged the religious implications of what they are about. But if you read them closely, you will see that more and more of them are talking about the human mystery in terms that resemble those of the subtlest traditional theologies. -Wayne C. Booth

Nietzsche's

Tragedy

Since his youth, Nietzsche was a radical truth seeker who, by developing consistently his atheistic presuppositions, was forced to call into question the value of the truth (and thus his own journey) because he understood that the idea of truth is inseparable from the idea of God. This contradiction put Nietzsche in an unsustainable position, and is perhaps the key to his descent into madness.



This absolute will to truth: what is it? Is it the will not to allow ourselves to be deceived? Is it the will not to deceive?... But why not deceive? Why not allow oneself to be deceived? ... Thus the question Why is there science? leads back to the moral problem: What in general is the purpose of morality, if life, nature, and history are "non-moral"? There is no doubt that the conscientious man in the daring and extreme sense in which he is presupposed by the belief in science, affirms thereby a world other than that of life, nature, and history; and in so far as he affirms this "other world," what must he not just thereby—deny its counterpart, this world, our world?... even we knowing ones of to-day, landless and anti-metaphysical, still take our fire from the conflagration kindled by a belief a millennium old, the Christian belief, which was also the belief of Plato, that God is truth, that the truth is divine.... But what if this itself always becomes more untrustworthy, what if nothing any longer proves itself divine, except it be error, blindness, and falsehood;—what if God himself turns out to be our most persistent lie?

(The Gay Science)

And yet, as late as 1888, he wrote

Man has had to fight for every atom of the truth, and has had to pay for it almost everything that the heart, that human love, that human trust cling to. Greatness of soul is needed for this business: the service of truth is the hardest of all services. (The Antichrist)

The nobility of his "tragic atheism" was precisely that he could not give up on this "urge for the truth" even though it contradicted his own "truths."

... in the end, for all those who somehow still had a "God" for company, what I experience as "solitude" really did not yet exist. My life now consists in the wish that it might be otherwise with all things that I comprehend, and somebody might make my "truths" appear incredible to me (letter to Overbeck, 7/2/1885)