

philosophers Rousseau and Shaftesbury, is a religion based on human sentiments. While sometimes considered to be a form of deism, religion of the heart is a "natural" religion, notable for its lack of "artificial forms of worship" and metaphysical grounding. Instead, emphasis is placed on natural human emotions.

4. Fideism: One of the single most important works to come out of the Enlightenment was David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In *Dialogues*, which was published in 1779 after Hume's death, Hume (an atheist) criticizes the supposition that the world must have been created and authored by a supreme being because human existence and reason exist. Fideism states that no matter what, rational criticism cannot get rid of religious belief because religious belief is so "natural." Essentially, according to fideism, one does not need reasons to have religious belief; all one needs is faith. Some forms of fideism even go so far as to say that religious beliefs can be legitimate even if those beliefs oppose or conflict with reason. Through its rejection of the traditional, pre-established thought of the ancient Greeks and its emphasis on human knowledge and reason, the Enlightenment completely revolutionized the ways in which people viewed philosophy, science, politics, and society as a whole, and forever changed the shape of Western philosophy.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900)

Life-affirmation

Friedrich Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844, in Röcken, Germany. Nietzsche's father, a Lutheran pastor, died when Nietzsche was just four years old. Six months after his father's passing, Nietzsche's two-year-old brother died, leaving Nietzsche with his mother and two sisters. Nietzsche later said that the passing of his father and brother had a profound impact on him.

From the age of fourteen to nineteen, Friedrich Nietzsche attended one of the best boarding schools in Germany, and as he continued his education at the University of Bonn and the University of Leipzig, he gravitated toward philology (an academic discipline that revolved around the interpretations of biblical and classical texts). During this time, Nietzsche, who had been composing music since he was a teenager, became acquainted with famous composer Richard Wagner (who also happened to be an idol of Nietzsche's), and the close friendship that resulted between the two men would prove to have an incredible impact on Nietzsche throughout his life (twenty years later, Nietzsche would recall their friendship as being the "greatest achievement" of his life). By the time he was twenty-four years old, having not even completed his doctorate, Nietzsche was offered a faculty position at the University of Basel department of philology.

After a brief stint serving as a medical orderly in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War (where he contracted dysentery, syphilis, and diphtheria), Nietzsche returned to the University of Basel, and

in 1872, Nietzsche published his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. The book, while praised by Wagner, was met with negative criticism, particularly by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, who would go on to become one of the leading German philologists of the time.

Nietzsche remained at the University of Basel until 1879. By 1878, it had become clear that Nietzsche was more interested in philosophy than philology, and his book *Human, All-Too-Human* marks the shift in his philosophical style (and the end of his friendship with Wagner, whose anti-Semitism and German nationalism disgusted Nietzsche). At the age of thirty-four, Nietzsche's health had deteriorated so much that he had to resign from the university.

From 1878 to 1889, as his health severely declined, Nietzsche moved around between German, Swiss, and Italian cities and wrote eleven books. On January 3, 1889, Nietzsche suffered from a nervous breakdown (possibly as a result of syphilis) when he watched a man whip a horse on the street. Nietzsche collapsed on the street and never regained his sanity. He would spend the next eleven years in a vegetative state until his death on August 25, 1900.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

During his period of insanity, Nietzsche's half-sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, cared for him. Elisabeth, who had been married to a prominent German anti-Semite and nationalist, selectively published Nietzsche's writings. Though completely unaware, Nietzsche had taken on celebrity status in Germany and was viewed later as a Nazi icon because what was published was a misleading selection of his work that was then used to promote the Nazi ideology. It was only

once World War II ended that the world came to know the true beliefs of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nihilism

Nietzsche is perhaps most famous for his quote, "God is dead." During the late nineteenth century, with the rise of the German state and advancements in science, many German philosophers viewed their present-day life with great optimism. Nietzsche, on the other hand, viewed these as troubling times marked by a fundamental crisis in values.

In his book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche tells the story of a man named Zarathustra who, at the age of thirty, goes into the wilderness and enjoys it so much, he decides to live there for the next ten years. Upon returning to society, he declares God to be dead. From *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche argued that the advancements of science made it so that people no longer turned to the prominent sets of values brought about by Christianity, and that there was no longer that powerful grasp on civilization, brought about by Christianity, that determines what makes something good and what makes something evil.

While he was actually a critic of Christianity, Nietzsche was an even larger critic of atheism, and feared it would be the next logical step. Nietzsche did not claim that science introduces a new set of values to people that replaces those values set forth by Christianity. Instead, he claimed that it is nihilism, the abandonment of any and all beliefs, that will come to replace the moral code set forth by Christianity.

Nietzsche believed that there is always a need for people to identify a source of value and meaning, and he concluded that if science was not that source, it would appear in other ways, such

as aggressive nationalism. Nietzsche did not argue that there is a need to return to the traditions of Christianity. Rather, Nietzsche wanted to discover how to get out of this form of nihilism through an affirmation of life.

The Will to Power

Nietzsche's theory of the will to power can be broken up into two parts.

First, Nietzsche believed that everything in this world is in flux, and that a fixed being simply does not exist. Matter, knowledge, truth, and so on, is always changing, and the very core of this change is something known as the "will to power." The universe, according to Nietzsche, is made up of wills.

Second, the will to power is an individual's fundamental drive for power, which comes about through dominance and independence. The will to power is much stronger than the will to sex or the will to survive, and it can appear in different ways. While the will to power, according to Nietzsche, could appear as violence or physical dominance, it could also be turned inward and make one pursue mastery of his own self (as opposed to mastery of someone else).

Nietzsche believed that the notion of the ego or soul is simply a grammatical fiction. To Nietzsche, "I" is actually a mix of competing wills that constantly and chaotically try to overcome each other. Since the world is in flux and change is the most fundamental part of life, any attempts at viewing life as objective and fixed, whether in regard to philosophy, science, or religion, are viewed as life-denying.

Therefore, in order to live based on a life-affirming philosophy, one must embrace change and understand that change is the only constant.

The Role of Man

According to Nietzsche, there are animals, humans, and then the overman. When humans learned to control their instincts and natural impulses in order to attain greater gains (like civilizations, knowledge, and spirituality), they stopped being animals. Our will to power shifted from outward (controlling others) to inward (self-mastery); however, this process of self-mastery is difficult, and there is a constant temptation for humanity to give up (two such examples of humanity giving up, according to Nietzsche, are nihilism and Christian morality). In attempting to gain self-mastery, humans are on their way to becoming the overman, an entity that possesses self-mastery (which is lacking in animals) and good conscience (which is lacking in humans). The overman has a deep love of life and willingly accepts the constant struggle and suffering without ever complaining. Therefore, according to Nietzsche, humanity is not the destination; it is a transition into becoming the overman.

Truth

Nietzsche believed that "truth," the idea that there can only be one correct way to consider something, is proof that our thought process has become inflexible. According to Nietzsche, being flexible and recognizing that there can be more than one way to consider a matter is a sign of a healthy mind, and to have an inflexible mind is to say "no" to life.

Values

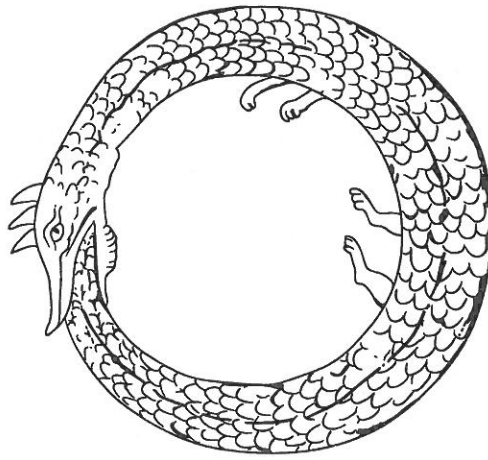
In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche attempts to expose morality's psychological foundations. To Nietzsche, humans would be a healthier species if they did not have morality. He equated morality to fiction, and believed that values needed to be

re-evaluated, for they are not objective. Nietzsche was particularly critical of Christian morality, and claimed that on a fundamental level, Christian morality is opposed to life and even an enemy of life. For example, according to Nietzsche, Christianity's notion of the afterlife devalues an individual's natural instincts and makes this life not seem as important, therefore promoting weakness.

In exposing the truth of morality, Nietzsche did not wish to replace Christian morality with some other form. Rather, he believed that, after realizing the truth behind morality, people would start to become more honest and realistic with regard to their motives and attitude toward life.

Eternal Recurrence

Perhaps Nietzsche's most intricate theory was his metaphysical theory of eternal recurrence. While complex, the core of his theory, like the rest of his work, revolves around an affirmation of life.



The idea of eternal recurrence has been around for centuries. A classic depiction of eternal recurrence from the Renaissance era is the Ouroboros, a dragon or snake eating its own tail.

One part of Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence is the notion that time is cyclical, meaning people will live each moment of their entire life over and over an endless amount of times, and each time will be the same. Every moment one experiences, therefore, occurs for an eternity, and we should embrace this fact and feel supreme joy about this.

The second part of Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence is that "being" does not exist because everything is constantly changing—therefore, everything is constantly "becoming." Nietzsche asserts that reality is intertwined and that we cannot distinguish "things" from other "things" due to the fact that everything is constantly changing. Therefore, one cannot judge one part of reality without judging all of reality. By coming to terms with the fact that our lives are in a constant state of becoming, we can either say "yes" or "no" to all of life. Considered to be one of the first existentialist philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche had an influence on philosophy that was truly incredible. Above all else, Nietzsche's emphasis of "life-affirmation" and his challenges to morality and Christianity made him one of the most important philosophers of his time.