



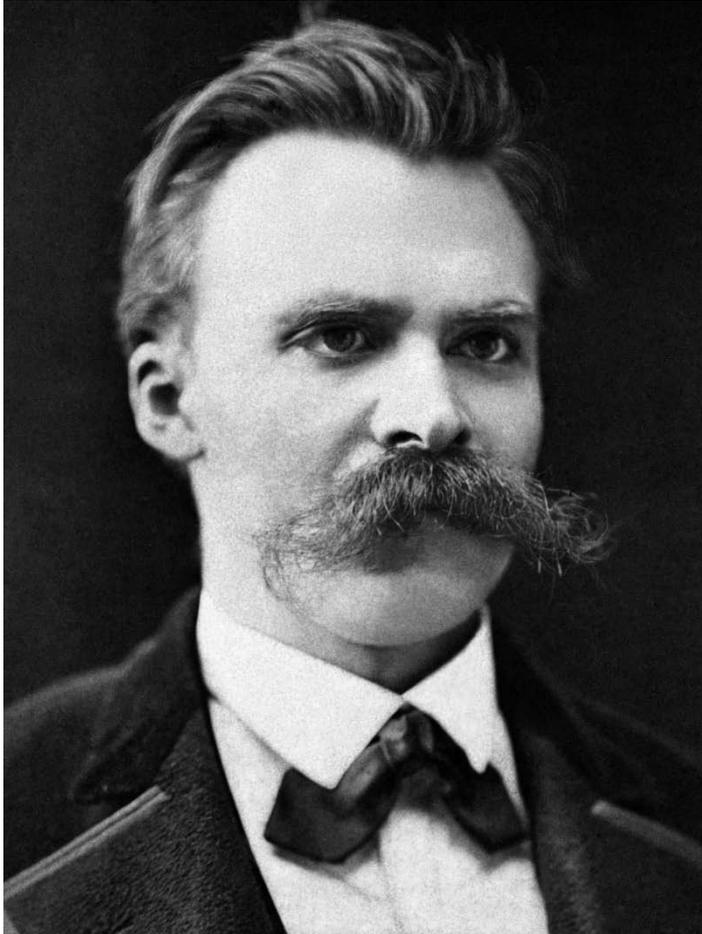
# NIETZSCHE

Monterey Peninsula College

GENTRAIN 13: The End of Innocence

# Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

## (1844-1900)



- Philosopher, composer, poet, and cultural critic → work had deep and wide influence on the modern world
- Scholar of Latin and Greek sources → started work as a classical philologist
  - Age 24: Was the youngest ever to be the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel
  - Resigned 10 years later due to health problems, and produced most of his writings in the decade following this resignation
- Age 44 (1889): collapsed and had a complete loss of mental faculties. Was put in the care of his mother and then his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, until his death in 1900.

# Themes in Nietzsche's writings

- Master-Slave Morality: two fundamental types of morality
  - ▣ **Master morality**: values pride and power; judges actions as good or bad (classical virtue ethics)
  - ▣ **Slave morality**: values kindness, empathy; judges good and bad based on intentions (Christian virtues and vices; Kantian deontology)
- The Death of God: "God is dead: but considering the state the species Man is in, there will perhaps be caves, for ages yet, in which his shadow will be shown." (*The Gay Science*, 1882).
- Apollonian and Dionysian: two central themes in ancient Greek culture
- The Will to Power: completing wills as the expression of the human
- Übermensch: the "overman" or "superman"; the goal for humanity → the creator of new values to banish nihilism after the death of God



Caspar David Friedrich, Wanderer Above the Mist, 1818

# Übermensch

- Fictional character in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*
- Translated variously as "Beyond-Man," "Superman," "Overman," "Superhuman," "Hyperman," "Hyperhuman"
- This-Worldliness: contrasts with the other-worldliness of Christianity  
→ Zarathustra gives meaning to live on Earth
  - Christianity required the creation of an otherworldly soul → leads to the denigration of the body
  - *Übermensch* grasps the world with relish, gratitude and joy
- Death of God: idea of God can no longer grant values → *Übermensch* gives new values to fight against nihilism
  - But new values must be rooted in a love of life, not a return to Christian values
- Humanity's goal: the *Übermensch* is a goal that humanity sets for itself, rather than a goal put forward by "history" or "God"

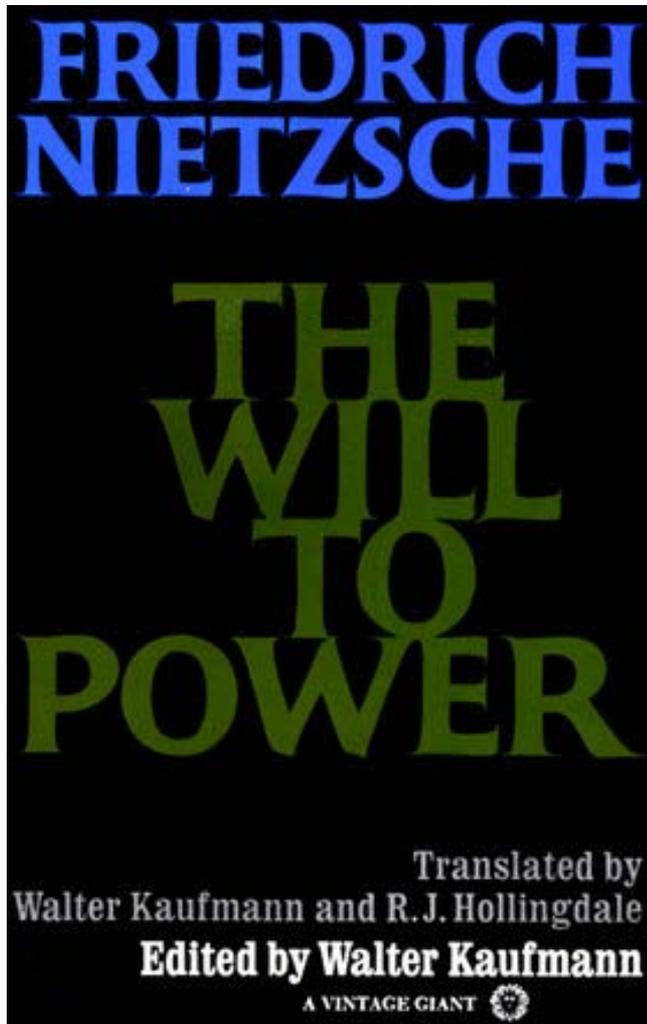
# Apollonian and Dionysian

## *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)

- Both Gods in the ancient Greek pantheon representing opposing values
  - ▣ Apollo: light, reason, harmony, balance and prophesy
  - ▣ Dionysus: wine, revelry, ecstatic emotion and tragedy
- **The Apollonian**: analytic distinctions; structure; sculpture; rational thought; distinction and categorization
- **The Dionysian**: inability or unwillingness to make these distinctions; opposed to the Apollonian; drunkenness; madness; the arts; instinct; chaos; emotion
- Both are musicians: music is structured, but also it appeals to our instinctive and chaotic emotions
- However, it is Dionysian compassion and not Apollonian logic which keeps us from committing horrible crimes.
- One must submit to Dionysian madness in order to attain the state of primordial unity → a state beyond social barriers and narrow thinking.



# The Will to Power



- Book of literary notes and remains
- Drawn together by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, and Peter Gast (Heinrich Köselitz)
- Title comes from a work that Nietzsche had considered writing.
- First English translation in 1910; Walter Kaufmann 1968 translation most popular

# Morality and Teleology

- “Moralities and religions are the principal means by which one can make whatever one wishes out of man, provided one possesses a superfluity of creative forces and can assert one’s will over long periods of time—in the form of legislation, religions, and customs.”
- “What is the *counterfeiting* aspect of morality? It pretends to *know* something, namely what is ‘good and evil’. The means wanting to know why mankind is here, its goal, its destiny. That means wanting to know that mankind *has* a goal, a destiny—”

# Human progress and civilization

- “Fundamental instinctive principle of all philosophers and historians and psychologists: everything of value in man, art, history, science, religion, technology must be proved to be of moral value, morally conditioned, in aim, means and outcome. Everything understood in the light of the supreme value: e.g. Rousseau’s question concerning civilization: ‘Does man become better through it?’—an amusing question, since the reverse is obvious and is precisely that which speaks in favor of civilization.”

# Morality is mere fiction

- “In the entire evolution of morality, truth never appears; all the conceptual elements employed are fictions; all the *psychologica* accepted are falsifications; all the forms of logic dragged into this realm of lies are sophistries. What distinguishes moral philosophers themselves is a complete absence of cleanliness and intellectual self-discipline: they make ‘beautiful feelings’ for arguments: they regard their ‘heaving bosom’ as the bellows of divinity—Moral philosophy is the scabrous period in the history of the spirit.”

# Nietzsche and Fascism



- After Nietzsche's death, his sister Elisabeth edited his manuscripts
- Re-worked them to better fit her own German nationalist ideology
- Often removed or contradicted Nietzsche's own expressed opinions, which were opposed to antisemitism and nationalism
  - At one point, Nietzsche disowned his sister for her antisemitism
- By WWI, through her edited editions, his work became associated with Nazism (but was popular among left-wing radical thinkers, as well)
- German soldiers received copies of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as gifts during World War I.

# Nietzsche and the twenty/twenty-first century

- Soon after, scholars became to contest these interpretations, and created new corrected editions
- This brought a renewed popularity to his ideas → though he was still popular among fascist groups in the twentieth century, and is popular among the “Alt-Right” in the twenty-first century
- Had appeal for Zionist thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century → Martin Buber called him “creator” and “emissary of life”
- Nietzsche's influence on the works of Frankfurt School: philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) heavily influenced by Nietzsche
- Adorno: Nietzsche's philosophy expresses the "humane in a world in which humanity has become a sham".

