

After his death, Nietzsche's ideas, especially that of the superman, were co-opted by the Nazis to justify their policies. After WWII he was so strongly associated with Nazism that no serious academic would dare discuss his ideas in a positive light.

**Tenants:** Nihilism is the belief that nothing is real and that people should believe nothing, have faith in nothing and give no loyalty. There is no "true" reality, there is only what we choose to believe. Most Nihilists are anarchists, believing that modern society is based on beliefs in false concepts and that the destruction of governments, society and even culture will improve human lives. Nietzsche believed that realization of meaninglessness was an inevitable progression of society. This society will eventually collapse, as past societies have, under the weight of this nihilist realization. After modern society collapses, chaos and amorality will reign.

Nietzsche believed that every being is motivated by the 'will to power': the desire to control everything around it. To Nietzsche, brutality is natural. Humans, furthermore, are not created equal. Some are naturally more powerful than others and are born to lead humanity. Yet religion has been created by the weak to steal power from these natural

leaders by calling on the authority of a fictional god. Religion lulls people into 'herd animal morality' in which personal will and creativity is suppressed.

Nietzsche believed that after the collapse of society the ubermensch, or supermen, would arise again as the rulers of humanity. They wouldn't be disabled by nihilism but neither would they allow a fictional god to dictate their morality. They would be strong enough to hurt others, which would make them strong enough to be truly creative. The supermen would not need laws, they would be ruled by their own self-discipline and they would sublimate their animal drives into creativity. The supermen would realize that reason is false, that people are not born equal, and that creativity is of paramount importance.

**What Scares People:** Nihilism is strongly associated with radical and violent anarchism (and sometimes with fascism). Nihilism posits that none of the beliefs which modern people hold dear are true.

**Major Works:** "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" (1885) is perhaps the most metaphysical of Nietzsche's works, where the famous phrase 'God is dead' is used.



*Russian Nihilists*