



## **My Nietzsche**

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reads selections from  
Friedrich Nietzsche's writings

Introductory Lecture by Michael Lahr

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The 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was a thorn in the side of the traditional moralists of the society and culture of his time. In his writings he transgressed borders and opened the way to existentialism and postmodern thinking. He was a foreigner in his own generation, calling himself a "posthumous thinker" whose time would come in the future. Many regard Nietzsche as the pioneer of a new objective morality, not bound by any religious framework, while others blame him for being the forerunner of Nazi ideology.

Until today Nietzsche continues to fascinate. Next to Hegel he was the most important German-speaking philosopher of the 19th century. But unlike Hegel, who left behind an elaborate philosophical system when he died in 1831, Nietzsche strongly opposed any attempt to press his thoughts into a systematic form. Instead, most of his books are a collection of aphorisms, some as short as one sentence, others a few pages long. Nietzsche loved the disguise. He often hid behind masks and cultivated a polemic and ironic style, which makes it difficult for the reader to decipher the essence of his thoughts.

Born in 1844 as the son of a protestant pastor, he soon became an adamant disciple of Richard Wagner. But in 1878 he broke with Wagner. Until the very end, the examination of Wagner's thoughts and music remained an important aspect of Nietzsche's work. Other crucial influences were Arthur Schopenhauer and the ancient Greek culture. In 1879, Nietzsche retired from his position as a professor of Greek language and dedicated his life as a free spirit to the creation of philosophical and literary works. Because of his famous thesis "God is dead" many viewed him as the anti-Christ. As the "Prophet of the Superman" he criticized the philistine behavior and the superficial morality of his contemporaries. He looked for a new foundation of morality "beyond good and evil". With his "Will to Power" and his "Eternal Return" he coined formative ideas of the Fin de Siècle. Before he fell silent owing to his mental derangement, he signed his last writings with "Dionysos", or "The Crucified". In 1900 he died in Weimar.

Today, Nietzsche is celebrated as a philosopher in the best tradition of the enlightenment, and a brilliant pioneer of modernity. His powerful poems, his profound aphorisms, his astute analysis of society, culture and politics continue to provoke thought and discussion.

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