

The power of nihilism philosophy to spark revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Thanks to popular books such as *The Stranger* and *Metamorphosis*, I have been introduced to and fascinated by modern philosophies such as absurdism and existentialism; however, nihilism has captivated my interest more than any other philosophy thus far. Nihilism, a way of thinking that is diversely applicable to individuals and groups of people, is an ideology that many people may not be familiar with, and many people may even be nihilists but are not aware of the concept. To elaborate on the term, nihilism, or more specifically existential nihilism, at its simplest, universal definition, is the rejection of all morals and religious principles; it is a belief that regards values as unnatural and existent only as a part of the human psyche. It is understandable why more and more people find themselves indifferent to this insouciant world that they reside in; we exist in an epoch where almost all information is available at the swipe of a finger — everything is increasingly abundant and convoluted that it becomes strenuous on the human spirit. There are acts of discrimination, murder, and other forlorn circumstances occurring incessantly all around the world, and many of us just cannot seem to find our place among all of it. Because a lot of people of this generation (including myself) find themselves in this peculiar state of indifferentism, I believe it to be imperative that I ask: how has nihilism shaped and impacted civilizations throughout history? Nihilism is so ambiguous and because there is so much to learn under the umbrella of the term, I need to ask the right questions relating to my principal question. Sub-questions that will aid me in my search are and not limited to the following: where did nihilism originate from, how does nihilism impact and change a government, and why do nihilists seek to be politically active? Secondary

questions such as these will help answer my focal question, and answering the focal question itself will enable me to make insightful connections between contemporary states of the past and modern-day society.

Firstly, I began my search through Google of course, and I wanted to answer my first sub-question: where did nihilism originate from? I typed in “ origins of nihilism,” and I was greeted by hundreds of thousands of results.

Instinctively, I clicked on the first link available, and this lead me to The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP). Before I read the article on nihilism, I had to make sure the source from which I was reading was credible or not, so I read the “ about” section on the website. IEP claims that, “ the submission and review process of articles is the same as that with printed philosophy journals, books and reference works.” IEP is also a considerable scholarly source, for the authors of each article are specialized in their fields, and all specialists peer-review submissions under strict criteria. Also, IEP is an “ edu” website, which means the entity owning the domain is most likely a four-year college institution. From what I gathered about IEP through the “ about” section, it was pretty safe to assume that most articles on their websites were scholarly and credible. After concluding the credibility of IEP, I began to read the article, “ Nihilism,” By Alan Pratt. According to the article, one of the first philosophers to be considered a nihilist was Max Stirner (1806-1856); he believed that “ achieving individual freedom is the only law; and the state, which necessarily imperils freedom, must be destroyed,” which are fundamental characteristics of nihilism. Furthermore, early nihilism was popularized when it appeared in “ Ivan Turgenev’s novel Fathers and Sons (1862) where he used “ nihilism” to

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describe the crude scientism espoused by his character Bazarov who preaches a creed of total negation. However, the philosopher most notably associated with nihilism is Friedrich Nietzsche; Nietzsche regards the world without objective order or structure; the only objective order or structure in the world is what we as humans give it. Nietzsche infamously says, “ Every belief, every considering something-true, is necessarily false because there is simply no true world. Nihilism is . . . not only the belief that everything deserves to perish; but one actually puts one’s shoulder to the plough; one destroys” (Will to Power).

Nihilism is remarkably gloomy, and nihilistic philosophers such as these men convey the nothingness origin of nihilism in the most pessimistic of ways. From the Nihilist’s point of view, one can be concise in saying that life is a conclusion and amoral, and ideas such as these are believed to have the potential to motivate monstrosities such as the Nazi reign of terror during the 1940s.