

[Professor Abbey](#) is surprisingly unfamiliar with the most important developments in Nietzsche-biography of the past decade, stemming from the re-opening of the Nietzsche cold-case in the medical literature:

Cybulska, Eva M., The Madness of Nietzsche: the Misdiagnosis of the Millennium? *Hospital Medicine* 61(2000) pp.571-575

Sax, Leonard What was the cause of Nietzsche's Dementia? *Journal of Medical Biography* 11(2003) pp. 47-54

Orth, M. and M.R. Trimble, Friedrich Nietzsche's mental illness *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavia* 114(2006) pp. 439 – 444.

Hemelhoet, Hemelhoet and Devreese, The Neurological Illness of Friedrich Nietzsche *Acta Neurologica Belgium* 108(2008) pp. 9-16

Nietzsche did not have syphilis, but a benign source of pressure (such as a tumor or polyp) upon his right optic nerve and frontal lobe. This source of pressure grew in fits and starts throughout his life, and caused his final breakdown in 1888. The horse-hugging anecdote is apocryphal. Nor did Nietzsche introduce the term Uebermensch into literature, but rather borrowed it from Goethe.

It must be kept in mind that Nietzsche used the term Uebermensch only in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a mytho-poetic work of allegory, fable and metaphor. To take this figure literally is to miss the point, like arguing whether Santa really lives at the North Pole, rather than understanding that Santa is a symbol for the idea of generosity. The Uebermensch is a symbol for the hope that we can sublimate our destructive tendencies into overcomings, and reach higher forms of sensibility and sensitivity. To emphasize this idea's elitism while forgetting Nietzsche's perspectivism, is to reduce Nietzsche to a proto-Nazi, the grossest misunderstanding, and mistaking him for something he simply was not.

To say that the Nazi's adopted Nietzsche is like saying they adopted Poland. They invaded, abused, despoiled and damaged Nietzsche. But they did not destroy Nietzsche: the Nietzsche who in *BGE*#251 calls all German racism idiotic stupidity and in #256 calls nationalism insanity; the Nietzsche who in *HatH II*#293 pointed out that the problem with democracy was that it was yet to come, and a few aphorisms earlier at #284 calls for disarmament as the only means to real peace; the Nietzsche who points out that the higher forms of power are love, generosity, hope, faith, and justice. The Nietzsche who refused to speak to his own sister ever again after she married the anti-Semite Brenhard Foester. The Nietzsche who fled the second Bayreuth Festival in disgust when he realized what Wagner was becoming (long before anyone else did), and thereafter denounced him in the strongest terms. The Nietzsche who taught that overcoming slavery was a far more involved process than the mere abolition of the buying and selling of humans, but also included the more difficult task of overcoming the human desire for revenge.

I am afraid your guest gives us a very blurry picture of the actual Nietzsche.