The Antichrist – Friedrich Nietzsche

*General Notes*

Good is anything that promotes power.

Bad is everything born of weakness.

Happiness is the feeling that power is growing, that resistance is overcome.

Mankind is not a constant development towards something higher (as per evolution), for example, the modern European is must inferior to the European of the Renaissance.

The Greek, and particularly the Roman civilisations, were the pinnacle of human evolution thus far. We peaked with them and everything since has been an attempt to recapture their glory.

The Roman Empire was destroyed from within, not by strength, but by an insipid virus that attacked the organism, Christianity.

The Renaissance was a revaluation of Christian values, it was an attempt to bring noble values back to victory. This attempt was halted and reversed by a German monk, Luther, who restored the church.

*Corruption of Man*

Nietzsche reminds us that his conception of corruption has nothing to do with morals. In fact, he means the word to apply even more strongly to those “virtuous” men. Corruption is meant in the sense of decadence.

Corruption applies when a species loses its instincts, when it chooses what is disadvantageous for it. Life is the instinct for growth, for durability, for an accumulation of forces, for power. Those values which are symptomatic of decline are nihilistic values.

*The Overman*

Nietzsche comments that it is not what shall succeed mankind in the sequence of living beings (perhaps through evolution) but what type of man shall be bred. He claims that this higher type has appeared in the past but as an accident, never as something willed. It occurred as something feared and so mankind willed and bred the opposite; the herd animal.

*Kant*

Nietzsche maintains that Kant’s philosophy was so well received because it offered a path where they could sneak back the old Christian values under cover of philosophy. Kant promised us a ‘true world’ as the thing-in-itself and the conception of a morality as the essence of the world. He made this whole edifice irrefutable by mandating that reason cannot pierce this thing-in-itself. Reality had been reduced to “appearance” and a fabricated world (the thing-in-itself) honoured as reality.

Nietzsche also criticises Kant’s morality on the grounds that it demands a respect for the concept of ‘virtue’ out of duty, *because* it is virtue. The laws of self-preservation and growth require people to develop their own categorical imperative, not adhere to universally applied and impersonal values. A people will perish when it confuses its duty with duty in general.

Nietzsche says that action demanded by the instinct of life is proven right by the feeling of pleasure that accompanies it and yet Kant recommends ignoring this thinking and feeling aspect of ourselves in favour of adhering to our ‘duty.’

Kant, ‘with his notion of “practical reason”: he invented a special kind of reason for cases in which one need not bother about reason – that is, when morality when the sublime command “thou shalt,” raises it voice’ (p579).

*Humanity*

Mankind is no longer thought to be derived from the spirit or deity; we are now back on a par with the animals. We are even worse off than the animals because we have strayed so far from our instincts.

*Christianity*

Christianity has fought against the higher type of man (overman) and judged all his strong, powerful instincts evil. It has sided with all that is weak and base and forced the strong and the values of the strong into disrepute.

Christianity is the “corruption of souls by the concepts of guilt, punishment, and immortality.”

Nietzsche calls Christianity the religion of pity. Pity robs us of strength and vitality. Pity crosses the line of development, which is the law of selection. It seeks to preserve that which is ripe for destruction. Pity is the practice of nihilism, it represents pure hostility against life.

Nietzsche attacks ‘faith’ as the practice of closing one’s eyes to oneself, and it arises from the distorted and dishonest perspective of the priest. All good conscience then becomes attached to this faulty viewpoint and no other viewpoint is considered.

All of Christianity represents a reversal of value judgements, whatever is harmful to life is called “true’ and whatever enhances life is called “false”.

Christianity has not a single point of contact with reality. All it possesses are imaginary causes (God, soul, spirit, etc), imaginary effects (sin, redemption, punishment, etc), imaginary beings (Gods, spirits, etc), an imaginary natural science, an imaginary psychology (temptation by the devil, the presence of God, etc) and an imaginary teleology (the Kingdom of God, the Last Judgement, etc). Because of this, Christianity must always be opposed to science, the wisdom of the world.

Hence, the priests dealt with this the way they deal with anything that stands in their way, the made science evil. But still man builds massive towers and so this God invents war and divides and spreads the population. Still, they aspire to knowledge, so God drowns them!

A people’s God always represents what the people need and value. In this way, they project their own values (or those they need) outside themselves and worship them. The Christian God came to represent only the good (which Nietzsche calls the weak) and because the Christian God is a God of the good only, prompts them to eliminate all the good qualities from the god of their conquerors; they take revenge on their conquerors by turning their god into the devil.

Nietzsche is amazed at how the God of Israel, that powerful God representative of ascending life, strength, bravery, degenerated into a God for the poor, weak and sick (the contradiction of life) and then further degenerated into “pure spirit”, the “Absolute”. And even more, how we view that degeneration as progress.

Genesis tells a tale of the only thing God fears; science. As a result Christianity makes its adherents sick first, enfeebling them so they are ready for taming. This enfeebling also serves to keep science down. Science can only progress in time of happiness so the priests knew that man must be made unhappy. This was another benefit to the moral world order and the conceptions of sin, guilt, reward and punishment. Man must not look outside (at the world and learn), he must only look in at himself and he must suffer, not just any suffering, but a suffering that can only be ameliorated by a priest.

The Christian conception of the devil gave man an enemy and meant that we needn’t feel ashamed of our suffering at the hands of such a powerful enemy.

Nietzsche doesn’t blame our ancestors for their mistakes because they didn’t know better, but he says his nausea begins in the modern age because we do know better. The priests today are no longer innocent; they are lying.

Nietzsche points out that truth and the faith that something is true are quite different. Christianity relies on this fact when it claims that man is sinful; as long as they can convince people of this fact, its truth matters not at all. If this faith can be elevated to a position above reason then they have successfully robbed the people of the only means they have of discrediting it.

Christianity offers a hope that is more powerful than any happiness; a hope that can never be contradicted, the hope of fulfilment in a life after death. Those who suffer, require hope to go on and Christianity provides that in abundance.

Love is a state in which man sees things most decidedly as they are not. The power of illusion to transfigure and sweeten is at its highest here. In love, man endures more and bears everything.

Thus Nietzsche calls the three Christian virtues (faith, love, hope), the three Christian shrewdnesses.

Christianity is nothing more than a morality of *resssentiment* which says ‘no’ to everything on Earth that represents an ascendency of power. To this end, it invented another world from whose point of view this affirmation of life appeared evil.

Jesus acted what he taught. He showed how one must live. Jesus never resisted, defended himself or attempted to ward off his enemies. Nietzsche attacks those who attempt to find the mark of the Christian in a *faith* (e.g. in redemption through Christ), only Christian *practice* is Christian. States of consciousness are fifth-rank matters, of complete indifference compared to the value of the instincts. ‘To reduce being a Christian, Christianism, to a matter of considering something true, to a mere phenomenon of consciousness, is to negate Christianism’ (p613). Nietzsche thinks ‘there was only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross’ (p612), everything that came after is a misunderstanding, which became cruder with each step, of an original symbolism.

All Christians point to their faith but in reality they act in accordance with their instincts. They just hide this fact *behind* their faith.

Christians say ‘“judge not,”… but they consign to hell everything that stands in their way. By letting God judge, they themselves judge; by glorifying God, they glorify themselves’ (p621). They also demand virtues that they already possess, they have simply redefined what they can’t help doing as ‘goodness’.

Originally the Jews pronounced themselves the “chosen” against everything non-Jew. Christianity did exactly the same thing except their “chosen” weren’t decided by race.

To be opposed by the Christians is a sign of worth. Nietzsche hates them so much that whatever they hate must actually be good. The first Christians hated the Pharisees and scribes, so they must have been worth something.

Nietzsche now looks at ‘faith’ and ‘believers’. The expression “faith makes blessed: hence it is true” is called the proof of strength. However the ‘blessed’ is never proven, only promised in some ‘beyond’ after we die.

But even if it were true that faith did make one blessed, Nietzsche says blessedness (that is, pleasure) can never be a proof of truth. ‘The proof of “pleasure” is a proof of “pleasure” – nothing else’ (p632). Every noble person knows that truth does not bring pleasure. In fact, the opposite is more often the case.

Nietzsche claims that it was not the decline of the noble that let the Christian rise to the top. When the chandala strata aligned with Christianity, the noble was still present in all its glory. Christianity, with its democratisation and greater numbers, triumphed over the noble. Nietzsche recalls the imagery of God on the cross. It is a symbol that all that suffers, all that is nailed to a cross is divine.

Nietzsche also criticises the eye that sees divine Providence in everything, even something as absurd as a God who ‘bids us enter a coach at the very moment when a violent thunderstorm begins’ (p636). A ‘proof for God’ like this is in fact an objection to Him.

Nietzsche points out that martyrs have distorted truth as much as anyone. Because people see a martyr die for his cause, they believe that there must have been something worthwhile to it; this is of course, false.

Christianity needs a point beyond which it can demand that all further experimentation, investigation, value creation should cease. All religions must prevent continued thought, or their ‘doctrine’ becomes fluid and impossible to enforce. Christianity achieved this with a ‘double wall’, revelation (given directly by God and so above reproach) and tradition (it has existed since time immemorial which always gives something more credence than it deserves). ‘God *gave* it, the forefathers *lived* it’ (p644).

*A history of Christianity*

Originally, the Israelites god, Yahweh, was the expression of a consciousness of power, joy and hope. He was a vestibule for victory and welfare. The Israelites were grateful to him and celebrated his strength.

But hopes continued unfulfilled. They should have abandoned him, but instead they changed his concept. Yahweh lost his oneness with Israel. In the hands of the priests, happiness became a reward while unhappiness was a punishment for disobeying God, for sin. Thus was introduced the ‘moral world order’ which overturned the natural concept of cause and effect. The moral world order means that ‘there is a will of God, once and for all, as to what man is to do and what he is not to do; that the value of a people, of an individual is to be measured according to how much or little the will of God is obeyed, that the will of God manifests itself in the destinies of a people, of an individual, as the ruling factor, that is to say, as punishing and rewarding according to the degree of obedience’ (p598).

Next these priests falsified the history of Israel (as evidenced in the Bible) translating the past of their own people into religious terms, that is, a salvation mechanism, guilt before Yahweh, punishment and reward. The exile was transformed from a great misfortune into a punishment.

The priests then used the will of God to preserve and sanctify everything necessary to preserve the kind of state that ensured their prosperity. This ‘will of God’ must then be known and hence a ‘revelation’ was discovered in a ‘holy scripture.’ The will of God had already been revealed to Moses. What happened to that? The priest now becomes indispensible everywhere, at births, marriages, funerals, sacrifices, etc. However, these occurrences are natural events which have value in themselves, but now they need a sanction after the event to obtain value, a sanction through God.

Disobeying God (that is, disobeying the priests) is called sin and can only be redeemed through the priests. It is through sin that the priest derives power over society.

Nietzsche sees Jesus (or rather Paul) as starting a rebellion against the Jewish church. It was a rebellion against the hierarchy of society, not against corruption, but against caste and privilege.

After Jesus died on the cross, a terrible problem arose for the Christian. How could their Messiah have died in such a manner? That reserved for the rabble? On the cross? There had to be a meaning. And someone responsible? The ruling Jewry, society’s highest class. Jesus died without any *ressentiment*, giving the strongest example of his doctrine, but his followers did not understand this and so the spirit of revenge arose. Retribution and judgement were needed. And so Jesus became elevated (opposite to his claims that “we are all children of God”), in the same way as Yahweh had been elevated earlier.

But the problem was still there, “How could God permit this?”And the barbaric, revolting idea of the sacrifice of the guiltless for the sins of the guilty was born. Jesus abolished the concept of guilt, he bridged the gap between man and God and lived this truth, but in one stroke, all that was forgotten and guilt and sin were thrust to the fore.

When Paul came on the scene, he destroyed everything Jesus had taught and reinvented the history of earliest Christianity. Paul added immortality to the stew that was Christianity, the promise of a ‘beyond.’ When one places ones centre of gravity not in life but in the ‘beyond’ then one deprives oneself of a centre of gravity altogether. This lie of immortality destroys all reason and everything natural in the instincts.

The poisoning doctrine of equality also spread from here, immortality conceded to every Tom, Dick and Harry. This breaking of the laws of nature for everybody appealed to the masses and assassinated *noble* humanity.

*Buddhism*

Nietzsche thought that Buddhism, like Christianity, was nihilistic, but the similarities ended there. He likes Buddhism because it is much more realistic and values thinking objectively, in the vein of philosophy. Buddhism is positive, there is no struggle against sin, only a struggle against suffering. Buddhism has practical measures (clean diet, eliminating stress, etc), no prayer, no categorical imperative and generally positive messages. Even the Buddha’s mandate not to harm your enemies stems not from weakness, but avoids revenge and *ressentiment*, by coming from a place of power where the individual is seeking to avoid things that harm him or her, i.e. the stress that comes from disharmony and fighting. Buddhism doesn’t hide suffering behind a ‘devil,’ it just admits the fact, “I am suffering” and looks for solutions.

*A Positive Religion*

A positive conception of a god must embody it with the ability to help and harm, to be a friend and an enemy. To make him a god of the good alone would be contrary to everything desirable. This god is a strong, powerful, wrathful god who knows the feeling of victory and who is one with the people.

*Natural Order*

According to Nietzsche the natural order is an order of castes. This order can be divided into three categories which naturally develop into a pyramid shape. It is nature, not a God, no divine dictate, which determines who belongs in which caste.

The highest (also the once containing the fewest members) is the most spiritual caste. They represent happiness, beauty and grace on Earth. This is the overman. They rule not because they want to but because they *are*.

The second are the guardians of the law. They are the noble warriors and the king as the highest formula of the warrior, judge and upholder of the law. They are the executive arm of the most spiritual.

‘A high culture is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base’ (p646). The last are those mediocre people who engage in all manner of professional activity; the trades, handicraft, science, agriculture, most art, etc. For them ‘to be mediocre is their happiness; the mastery of one thing, specialisation - a natural instinct’ (p647).

Nietzsche holds that ‘the *inequality* of rights is the first condition for the existence of any rights at all’ (p646).