

## Document 8.8

### From Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (1895)

Translation by H.L. Mencken (1920)

Friedrich Nietzsche Society: <http://www.fns.org.uk/ac.htm>

#### PREFACE

*This book belongs to the most rare of men. Perhaps not one of them is yet alive. It is possible that they may be among those who understand my "Zarathustra": how could I confound myself with those who are now sprouting ears?--First the day after tomorrow must come for me. Some men are born posthumously.*

*The conditions under which any one understands me, and necessarily understands me--I know them only too well. Even to endure my seriousness, my passion, he must carry intellectual integrity to the verge of hardness. He must be accustomed to living on mountain tops--and to looking upon the wretched gabble of politics and nationalism as beneath him. He must have become indifferent; he must never ask of the truth whether it brings profit to him or a fatality to him... He must have an inclination, born of strength, for questions that no one has the courage for; the courage for the forbidden; predestination for the labyrinth. The experience of seven solitudes. New ears for new music. New eyes for what is most distant. A new conscience for truths that have hitherto remained unheard. And the will to economize in the grand manner--to hold together his strength, his enthusiasm... Reverence for self; love of self; absolute freedom of self.....*

*Very well, then! of that sort only are my readers, my true readers, my readers foreordained: of what account are the rest?--The rest are merely humanity.--One must make one's self superior to humanity, in power, in loftiness of soul,--in contempt.*

FRIEDRICH W. NIETZSCHE.

#### 2.

*What is good?--Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man.*

*What is evil?--Whatever springs from weakness.*

*What is happiness?--The feeling that power *increases*--that resistance is overcome.*

*Not contentment, but more power; not peace at any price, but war; not virtue, but efficiency (virtue in the Renaissance sense, *virtu*, virtue free of moral acid).*

*The weak and the botched shall perish: first principle of *our* charity. And one should help them to it.*

*What is more harmful than any vice?--Practical sympathy for the botched and the weak--Christianity...*

#### 3.

*The problem that I set here is not what shall replace mankind in the order of living creatures (--man is an end--): but what type of man must be *bred*, must be *willed*, as being the most valuable, the most worthy of life, the most secure guarantee of the future.*

*This more valuable type has appeared often enough in the past: but always as a happy accident, as an exception, never as deliberately *willed*. Very often it has been precisely the most feared; hitherto it has been almost *the* terror of terrors ;--and out of that terror the contrary type has been *willed*, cultivated and *attained*: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick brute-man--the Christian. . .*

4.

Mankind surely does *not* represent an evolution toward a better or stronger or higher level, as progress is now understood. This "progress" is merely a modern idea, which is to say, a false idea. The European of today, in his essential worth, falls far below the European of the Renaissance; the process of evolution does *not* necessarily mean elevation, enhancement, strengthening....

5.

We should not deck out and embellish Christianity: it has waged a war to the death against this *higher* type of man, it has put all the deepest instincts of this type under its ban, it has developed its concept of evil, of the Evil One himself, out of these instincts--the strong man as the typical reprobate, the "outcast among men." Christianity has taken the part of all the weak, the low, the botched; it has made an ideal out of *antagonism* to all the self-preservative instincts of sound life; it has corrupted even the faculties of those natures that are intellectually most vigorous, by representing the highest intellectual values as sinful, as misleading, as full of temptation. The most lamentable example: the corruption of Pascal, who believed that his intellect had been destroyed by original sin, whereas it was actually destroyed by Christianity!—...

7.

Christianity is called the religion of *pity*.-- Pity stands in opposition to all the tonic passions that augment the energy of the feeling of aliveness: it is a depressant. A man loses power when he pities... Pity thwarts the whole law of evolution, which is the law of natural selection...

8.

It is necessary to say just *whom* we regard as our antagonists: theologians and all who have any theological blood in their veins--this is our whole philosophy. . . . The idealist, like the ecclesiastic, carries all sorts of lofty concepts in his hand (--and not only in his hand!); he launches them with benevolent contempt against "understanding," "the senses," "honor," "good living," "science"; he sees such things as *beneath* him, as pernicious and seductive forces, on which "the soul" soars as a pure thing-in-itself--as if humility, chastity, poverty, in a word, *holiness*, had not already done much more damage to life than all imaginable horrors and vices. . . . The pure soul is a pure lie. . . . So long as the priest, that *professional* denier, calumniator and poisoner of life, is accepted as a *higher* variety of man, there can be no answer to the question, What *is* truth? Truth has already been stood on its head when the obvious attorney of mere emptiness is mistaken for its representative.

9.

Upon this theological instinct I make war: I find the tracks of it everywhere. Whoever has theological blood in his veins is shifty and dishonourable in all things. The pathetic thing that grows out of this condition is called *faith*: in other words, closing one's eyes upon one's self once for all, to avoid suffering the sight of incurable falsehood. People erect a concept of morality, of virtue, of holiness upon this false view of all things; they ground good conscience upon faulty vision; they argue that no *other* sort of vision has value any more, once they have made theirs sacrosanct with the names of "God," "salvation" and "eternity." I unearth this theological instinct in all directions: it is the most widespread and the most *subterranean* form of falsehood to be found on earth. Whatever a theologian regards as true *must* be false: there you have almost a criterion of truth. His profound instinct of self-preservation stands against truth ever coming into honour in any way, or even getting stated. Wherever the influence of theologians is felt there is a transvaluation of values, and the concepts "true" and "false" are forced to change places: what ever is most damaging to life is there called "true," and whatever exalts it, intensifies it, approves it, justifies it and makes it triumphant is there called "false."... When theologians, working

through the "consciences" of princes (or of peoples--), stretch out their hands for *power*, there is never any doubt as to the fundamental issue: the will to make an end, the *nihilistic* will exerts that power...

### Questions for Discussion

1. How does Nietzsche define good and evil? What makes people happy? How are his visions of these concepts different from the Christian worldview?
2. What does Nietzsche think of the idea that humanity has been constantly progressing, as had been the dominant view since the Enlightenment?
3. Why does Nietzsche have a problem with pity?
4. In section nine, what criterion for truth does Nietzsche propose?

### Critical Thinking:

5. According to Nietzsche, why would a theologian promote Christian values?
6. What does Nietzsche mean by a "transvaluation of values?"
7. What is your reaction to Nietzsche's philosophy as presented in the above excerpts?