

The weak and the failures shall perish: first principle of *our* love of man. And they shall even be given every possible assistance (*The Antichrist*, 570).

In the opening sections of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche raises the question of what type of man shall be *bred*, continuing a line of thought developed in *Twilight of the Idols* in relation to the Laws of Manu. In former times, Nietzsche argues, the exceptional human was a fortunate accident; it was never *willed* that an individual would become exceptional—for the most part, this was dreaded. It is this denial of the exceptional that constitutes for Nietzsche the development of the other type of breeding in man's history, that of the herd animal domesticated through Christianity.

Nietzsche argues that instead of 'progress' in the modern sense, the European of today has only degenerated over time; therefore, Nietzsche posits that as a whole (one could say as a species, insofar as this is directed against a crude form of social Darwinism) we are only getting weaker. Although Nietzsche predicts that there may be families or peoples that are of a *higher type*, he mainly argues that it is only in individual cases that one finds successful exceptional cases.

Nietzsche claims that this insight has dawned on him like "a painful horrible spectacle" because he has "drawn back the curtain from the *corruption* of man" (572) This is an interesting claim (one that recurs throughout Nietzsche's work—in *Daybreak* and *Human All Too Human*, for example, where he calls modern democracy as *decay*. Simply put, Christianity, in harvesting and emphasizing the weaknesses of mankind, has constituted one of the primary forces behind human degeneration and *cultivation of weaker values* in general. Nietzsche writes,

I understand corruption, as you will guess, in the sense of decadence: it is my contention that all the values in which mankind now sums up its supreme desiderata are *decadence-values* (572).

More specifically, corruption takes place where an individual or a species "loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it prefers, what is disadvantageous for it" (572). The disadvantage comes from cultivating weakness, because following closely in Spinoza's footsteps, Nietzsche will define what is good as that which increases power: where it is lacking is due to decline.

And it is not simply coincidental that I mentioned Spinoza. These first sections of *The Antichrist* strongly resemble Part IV of the *Ethics*. For example, there Spinoza begins with definitions of good and evil in relation to power; moreover, Spinoza is one of the few philosophers to explicitly say (as he does in the beginning of this same part of the *Ethics*) that pity is something inherently bad. This is precisely one of Nietzsche's primary attacks against Christianity: it is a religion of *pity*. It is not only that pity reduces are strength; more importantly, pity supports the superfluous who Nietzsche claims are ripe for destruction and who give life a gloomy aspect by propagating it with their failures (573).

Of course, Nietzsche consistently attacks pity as a negative and harmful (re)activity. More interesting to me is his section on Kant:

One more word against Kant as a *moralist*. A virtue must be *our own* invention, *our* most necessary self-expression and self-defense: any other kind of virtue is merely a danger.

Whatever is not a condition of our life *harms* it: a virtue that is prompted solely by a feeling of respect for the concept of “virtue,” as Kant would have it, is harmful (577).

The reason why I jump to this section is because Nietzsche claims that not only has pity been labeled a virtue, it has “been made *the* virtue, the basis and source of all virtues” (573). In a sense, pity is not a virtue that we have invented; or better, *pity was invented by the weak, for the weak*. It is not our virtue, nor is it the source from which all virtues flow. Pity comes to overcode the natural expression of *virtue* (or *power* in Spinoza’s sense, what accords to the laws of our nature insofar as we have knowledge of it) and starts to proliferate an image of respect for a certain social relation that we have come to believe is expected of us.

Pity in German is *Mitleid*, or “suffering with.” The herd is an assemblage that functions so as to mediate suffering equally within a collectivity—the herd suffers together. The shepherd suffers alone, the exceptional individual. God’s pity, too, is a suffering with, and the ugliest man (who is, consequently, not the weakest) could not take it anymore. The ugliest man, being an individual and an exception (neither by choice, more through the negative force of exclusion from the collective) is not the spotless lamb of Christ. He is the spotted beasts of Jacob, who proliferate because the cultivation of a particular weakness was actually in itself the empowerment of a singular, monumental individual.

–Taylor Adkins