

<http://www.historyteacher.net/APEuroCourse/DocPackets/DocsPacket-Nietzsche.pdf>

Questions to Address Using the Included Documents and Notes:

1. What general ideas seem to flow through the selections of Friedrich Nietzsche?
2. Why does Nietzsche criticize Socrates?
3. According to Nietzsche, how was “Socratic culture” undermined in the 19c?
4. What does Nietzsche feel are a human being’s most elemental desire?
5. Why did Nietzsche attack democracy and socialism?
6. What were Nietzsche’s thoughts concerning power, God, and Christianity?
7. What does Nietzsche value?
8. How does Nietzsche embody the “revolt against reason” that was current at the end of the 19c?
9. Why does he say that God is dead?

Document 1

...Once we have fully realized how, after Socrates, the mystagogue (a teacher who initiates followers into the mysteries of his discipline) of science, one school of philosophers after another came upon the scene and departed; how generation after generation of inquirers, spurred by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, explored every aspect of the universe; and how by that ecumenical concern a common net of knowledge was spread over the whole globe, affording glimpses into the workings of an entire solar system—once we have realized all this, and the monumental pyramid of present-day knowledge, we cannot help viewing Socrates as the vortex and turning point of Western civilization. . . .

. . . Socrates represents the archetype of the theoretical optimist, who, strong in the belief that nature can be fathomed, considers knowledge to be the true panacea and error to be radical evil. To Socratic man the one noble and truly human occupation was that of laying bare the workings of nature, of separating true knowledge from illusion and error. So it happened that ever since Socrates the mechanism of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms [logical arguments] has come to be regarded as the highest exercise of man's powers, nature's most admirable gift. Socrates and his successors down to our own day, have considered all moral and sentimental accomplishments—noble deeds, compassion, self-sacrifice, heroism, even that spiritual calm, so difficult of attainment, which the Apollonian' Greek called *sophrosyne*—to be ultimately derived from the dialectic of knowledge, and therefore teachable. Whoever has tasted the delight of a Socratic perception, experienced how it moves to encompass the whole world of phenomena in ever widening circles, knows no sharper incentive to life than his desire to complete the conquest, to weave the net absolutely tight. . . .

Our whole modern world is caught in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the man of theory, equipped with the highest cognitive powers, working in the service of science, and whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates. All our pedagogic devices are oriented toward this ideal. Any type of existence that deviates from this model has a hard struggle and lives, at best, on sufferance. It is a rather frightening thought that for centuries the only form of educated man to be found was the scholar. Even our literary arts have been forced to develop out of learned imitations, and the important role rhyme plays in our poetry still betokens the derivation of our poetic forms from artificial experiments with a language not vernacular but properly learned. To any true Greek, that product of modern culture, Faust, would have seemed quite unintelligible, though we ourselves understand it well enough. We have only to place Faust, who storms unsatisfied through all the provinces of knowledge and is driven to make a bargain with the powers of darkness, beside Socrates in order to realize that modern man has begun to be aware of the limits of Socratic curiosity and to long, in the wide, waste ocean of knowledge, for a shore. Goethe once said to Eckermann, referring to Napoleon: "Yes indeed, my friend, there is also a productivity of actions." This aperçu [insight] suggests that for us moderns the man of action is something amazing and incredible, so that the wisdom of a Goethe was needed to find such a strange mode of existence comprehensible, even excusable.

We should acknowledge, then, that Socratic culture is rooted in an optimism which believes itself omnipotent. . . .

The blight which threatens theoretical culture has only begun to frighten modern man, and he is groping uneasily for remedies out of the storehouse of his experience, without having any real conviction that these remedies will prevail against disaster. In the meantime, there have arisen certain men of genius who, with admirable circumspection and consequence, have used the arsenal of science to demonstrate the limitations of science and of the cognitive faculty itself. They have authoritatively rejected science's claim to universal validity and to the attainment of universal goals and exploded for the first time the belief that man may plumb the universe by means of the law of causation. The extraordinary courage and wisdom of Kant and Schopenhauer have won the most difficult victory, that over the optimistic foundations of logic, which form the underpinnings of our culture. Whereas the current optimism had treated the universe as knowable, in the presumption of eternal truths, and space, time, and causality as absolute and universally valid laws, Kant showed how these supposed laws serve only to raise appearance . . . to the status of true reality, thereby rendering impossible a genuine understanding of that reality: in the words of Schopenhauer, binding the dreamer even faster in sleep. . . .

. . . Socratic culture has been shaken and has begun to doubt its own infallibility. . . . The man of theory, having begun to dread the consequences of his views, no longer dares commit himself freely to the icy flood of existence but runs nervously up and down the bank.

SOURCE: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1872.

Document 2

720 (1886-87)

The most fearful and fundamental desire in man, his drive for power—this drive is called "freedom"—must be held in check the longest. This is why ethics . . . has hitherto aimed at holding the desire for power in check: it disparages the tyrannical individual and with its glorification of social welfare and patriotism emphasizes the power-instinct of the herd.

728 (March – June, 1888)

....A society that definitely and instinctively gives up war and conquest is in decline; it is ripe for democracy and the rule of shopkeepers—In most cases, to be sure, assurances of peace are merely narcotics.

751 (March – June, 1888)

"The will to power" is so hated in democratic ages that their entire psychology seems directed toward belittling and defaming it....

752 (1884)

....Democracy represents the disbelief in great human beings and an elite society: "Everyone is equal to everyone else." "At bottom we are one and all self-seeking cattle and mob."

753 (1885)

I am opposed to 1. socialism, because it dreams quite naively of "the good, true, and beautiful" and of "equal rights" (--anarchism also desires the same ideal, but in a more brutal fashion); 2. parliamentary government and the press, because these are the means by which the herd animal becomes master.

762 (1885)

European democracy represents a release of forces only to a very small degree. It is above all a release of laziness, of weariness, of weakness.

765 (January – Fall, 1888)

....Another Christian concept, no less crazy, has passed even more deeply into the tissue of modernity: the concept of the "equality of souls before God." This concept furnishes the prototype of all theories of equal rights: mankind was first

taught to stammer the proposition of equality in a religious context, and only later was it made into morality: no wonder that man ended by taking it seriously, taking it practically, socialistically, in the spirit of the pessimism of indignation.

854 (1884)

In the age of suffrage universal, i. e., when everyone may sit in judgment on everyone and everything, I feel impelled to reestablish order of rank.

855 (Spring – Fall, 1887)

What determines rank, sets off rank, is only quanta of power, and nothing else.

857 (January – Fall, 1888)

I distinguish between a type of ascending life and another type of decay, disintegration, weakness. Is it credible that the question of the relative rank of these two types still needs to be posed?

858 (November, 1887 – March, 1888)

What determines your rank is the quantum of power you are: the rest is cowardice.

861 (1884)

A declaration of war on the masses by higher men is needed! Everywhere the mediocre are combining in order to make themselves master! Everything that makes soft and effeminate, that serves the ends of the “people” or the “feminine,” works in favor of suffrage universal, i. e., the dominion of inferior men. But we should take reprisal and bring this whole affair (which in Europe commenced with Christianity) to light and to the bar of judgment.

862 (1884)

A doctrine is needed powerful enough to work as a breeding agent: strengthening the strong, paralyzing and destructive for the world-weary. The annihilation of the decaying races. Decay of Europe.—The annihilation of slavish evaluations.—Dominion over the earth as a means of producing a higher type.—The annihilation of the tartuffery [hypocrisy] called “morality.”...The annihilation of suffrage universal; i. e., the system through which the lowest natures prescribe themselves as laws for the higher.—The annihilation of mediocrity and its acceptance. (The one-sided, individuals—peoples; to strive for fullness of nature through the pairing of opposites: race mixture to this end).—The new courage—no a priori {innate and universal} truths (such truths were sought by those accustomed to faith!), but a free subordination to a ruling idea that has its time: e. g., time as a property of space, etc.

870 (1884)

The root of all evil: that the slavish morality of meekness, chastity, selflessness, absolute obedience, has triumphed—ruling natures were thus condemned (1) to hypocrisy, (2) to torments of conscience—creative natures felt like rebels against God, uncertain and inhibited by eternal values.... In summa: the best things have been slandered because the weak or the immoderate swine have cast a bad light on them—and the best men have remained hidden—and have often misunderstood themselves.

874 (1884)

The degeneration of the rulers and the ruling classes has been the cause of the greatest mischief in history!

Without the Roman Caesars and Roman society, the insanity of Christianity would never have come to power.

When lesser men begin to doubt whether higher men exist, then the danger is great! And one ends by discovering that there is virtue also among the lowly and subjugated, the poor in spirit, and that before

God men are equal—which has so far been the...[height] of nonsense on earth! For ultimately, the higher men measured themselves according to the standard of virtue of slaves—found they were “proud,” etc., found all their higher qualities reprehensible.

997 (1884)

I teach: that there are higher and lower men, and that a single individual can under certain circumstances justify the existence of whole millennia—that is, a full, rich, great, whole human being in relation to countless incomplete fragmentary men.

998 (1884)

The highest men live beyond the rulers, freed from all bonds; and in the rulers they have their instruments.

999 (1884)

Order of rank: He who determines values and directs the will of millennia by giving direction to the highest natures is the highest man.

1001 (1884)

Not "mankind" but overman is the goal!

1067 (1885)

...This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!

SOURCE: Friedrich Nietzsche, excerpts from *The Will to Power*, 1901.

Document 3

2. What is good?—All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man.

What is bad?—All that proceeds from weakness.

What is happiness?—The feeling that power increases—that a resistance is overcome.

Not contentment, but more power; not peace at all, but war; not virtue, but proficiency (virtue in the Renaissance style, *virtù*, virtue free of moralistic acid).

The weak and ill-constituted shall perish: first principle of our philanthropy. And one shall help them to do so.

What is more harmful than any vice?—Active sympathy for the ill-constituted and weak—Christianity. . .

3. The problem I raise here is not what ought to succeed mankind in the sequence of species (—the human being is an end—): but what type of human being one ought to breed, ought to will, as more valuable, more worthy of life, more certain of the future. This more valuable type has existed often enough already: but as a lucky accident, as an exception, never as willed. He has rather been the most feared, he has hitherto been virtually the thing to be feared—and out of fear the reverse type has been willed, bred, achieved: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal man—the Christian. . . .

5. One should not embellish or dress up Christianity: it has waged a war to the death against this higher type of man, it has excommunicated all the fundamental instincts of this type, it has distilled evil, the Evil One, out of these instincts—the strong human being as the type of reprehensibility, as the "outcast." Christianity has taken the side of everything weak, base, ill-constituted, it has made an ideal out of opposition to the preservative instincts of strong life; it has depraved the reason even of the intellectually strongest natures by teaching men to feel the supreme values of intellectuality as sinful, as misleading, as temptations. The most deplorable example: the depraving of Pascal, who believed his reason had been depraved by original sin while it had only been depraved by his Christianity! . . .

7. Christianity is called the religion of pity.—Pity stands in antithesis to the tonic emotions which enhance the energy of the feeling of life: it has a depressive effect. One loses force when one pities. . . .

15. In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. Nothing but imaginary causes ("God," "soul," "ego," "spirit," "free will"—or "unfree will"): nothing but imaginary effects ("sin," "redemption," "grace," "punishment," "forgiveness of sins"). . . .

18. The Christian conception of God—God as God of the sick, God as spider, God as spirit—is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God arrived at on earth: perhaps it even represents the low-water mark in the descending development of the God type. God degenerated to the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yes! In God

a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life! God the formula for every calumny of "this world," for every lie about 'the next world'! In God, nothingness deified, the will to nothingness sanctified! . . .

21. In Christianity the instincts of the subjugated and oppressed come into the foreground: it is the lowest classes which seek their salvation in it. . . .

43. The poison of the doctrine "equal rights for all"—this has been more thoroughly sowed by Christianity than by anything else; from the most secret recesses of base instincts, Christianity has waged a war to the death against every feeling of reverence and distance between man and man, against, that is, the precondition of every elevation, every increase in culture—it has forged out of the (resentment] of the masses its chief weapon against us, against everything noble, joyful, high-spirited on earth, against our happiness on earth. . . . "Immortality" granted to every Peter and Paul has been the greatest and most malicious outrage on noble mankind ever committed.—And let us not underestimate the fatality that has crept out of Christianity even into politics! No one any longer possesses today the courage to claim special privileges or the right to rule, the courage to feel a sense of reverence towards himself and towards his equals—the courage for & pathos of distance. . . . Our politics is morbid from this lack of courage!—The aristocratic outlook has been undermined most deeply by the lie of equality of souls; and if the belief in the "prerogative of the majority" makes revolutions and will continue to make them—it is Christianity, let there be no doubt about it, Christian value judgment which translates every revolution into mere blood and crime! Christianity is a revolt of everything that crawls along the ground directed against that which is elevated: the Gospel of the "lowly" makes low....

SOURCE: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 1888.

Document 4

Have you not heard of that mad man who on a bright morning lit a lantern, ran to the market place, and shouted incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!" Among the many of those who do not believe in god and who were standing around there, he provoked much laughter. Shy, did god get lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he left on a boat? Has he migrated? Thus they shouted and laughed. The man jumped into their midst and pierced them with his glances.

"Whither is God?" he shouted. "I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. We all are his murderers. But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the ocean? Who gave us the sponge to wipe out the whole horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not falling continually? Falling backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through infinite nothingness? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not yet hear the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not begin to smell god's putrefaction? Gods, to, putrefy. God is dead. God will remain dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers comfort ourselves? The holiest and mightiest of all that the world has ever owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? With what water can we clean ourselves? . . . Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods in order to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed: whoever will be born after us, will be on account of this deed part of a higher history than all prior history."

Here the mad man became silent and glanced at his listeners; they too had become silent and stared at him with a strange feeling. Finally, he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and was extinguished. Then he said: "I have come too soon, my time has not come yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, it has not yet reached the ears of man. Lightning and thunder require time, the light of the stars requires time, deeds require time even after they are done, to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they themselves have done it."

On the same day, we are told, the mad man entered a number of churches and there sang his requiem aeternam deo. Led out and questioned, he, according to the report, gave always the same reply, "What are these churches now if they

are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

SOURCE: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1882