

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

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MANY people who have never read the works of Nietzsche possess some vague notion of what he taught. For them the philosophy of Nietzsche is represented by a few floating ideas—"Superman," "Will to Power," and even perhaps "blond beast." Others again have learnt a little more about Nietzsche and perhaps read something of what he actually said; yet the net result is an impression of a passionate and destructive thinker, who launched his attacks on this side and on that, without any regard for consistency. For them there can be no philosophy of Nietzsche: they know that he often wrote in the form of aphorism and they picture his thought in general as a series of detached utterances, many of which are mutually exclusive. It may then be of use to some, if we attempt to set forth the guiding inspiration and leading ideas of Nietzsche, for when these have been grasped, it will be seen that it is by no means absurd to speak of a philosophy of Nietzsche. It may well be impossible to reconcile all his utterances, at least so far as the words are concerned—though Nietzsche is of course not the only philosopher who betrays inconsistency in his thought—but it should be remembered that Nietzsche was not given to standing still: his thought developed. Moreover, he often spoke in an exaggerated form, so that some of the apparent inconsistencies may be ascribed to over-emphasis. In any case, even granting the presence of irreconcilable inconsistencies in his thought, Nietzsche's various theories not only may, but must, be seen as a whole, if they are seen in the light of his guiding ideas and inspiration.

Yet to say that the thought of Nietzsche is a philosophy, a whole, is not the same as to say that it is a cut-and-dried, fully articulated system. For Nietzsche's philosophy is not meant to be a complete and final statement of what *is*, of Reality, so much as an instrument of creation: it looks to the future, to what is not yet but *is to be*. A good deal therefore remains vague and shadowy, and must necessarily remain so. It is absurd for example to complain that Nietzsche has given no clear-cut and well-defined delineation of Superman, since the latter is essentially man-surpassed: he is not yet but is to be. It is not to be expected, then, that Nietzsche should portray the "Übermensch" in clear relief; his thought is largely prophetic and an appeal to creation. The real disciples of Nietzsche are not those who abide by the *ipse dixit* of the Master, but those who have grasped the dynamic character of his ideal and who have drunk of

PHILOSOPHY

his spirit. (The present writer, it may be remarked, is not a Nietzschean but only one who has attempted, so far as he can, to understand the thought of Nietzsche. No one can lay claim to infallibility of interpretation—and the present writer would be very glad of correction where he has gone wrong—but it is to be regretted that some who write about Nietzsche have apparently made little effort to understand the spirit of the philosopher.)

Nietzsche is above all things a philosopher of culture. Those who see in Nietzsche merely the Nihilist, the spirit of attack and destruction, are unjust to him: Nietzsche's great desire was not the destruction of culture but the attainment of a higher type of culture. This is made quite clear even in his early works. For instance, in his lectures on "The Future of our Educational Institutions" and in "Thoughts out of Season" it is made abundantly obvious that Nietzsche did not criticize the contemporary German "Kultur" in an anti-cultural spirit but because he passionately desired a higher state of culture. To him German "Kultur" was not really a culture at all; it had no "unity of artistic style" but was "Alexandrine" in character, to be compared with an old curiosity shop. It was purely historical, a knowledge *about* culture—past culture—rather than a living culture in its own right. This was the culture that the German culture—Philistines fondly imagined to have proved victorious over French culture in the Franco-Prussian war. Nietzsche ridiculed this notion, pointing out that it was German military prowess that had won the war and not German "Kultur," and that in any case German "Kultur" was by no means superior to the French variety. The German victory was, in Nietzsche's eyes, a national disaster, since it confirmed the Germans in their belief that their culture was a superior article and that they had a mission to spread their culture in Europe, a culture which was in reality no culture at all—in the deeper sense of the word at least. The attack delivered by Nietzsche on German "Kultur," as we see it, for example, in the essays on David Strauss and on "The Use and Abuse of History," was thus by no means a mere piece of wanton destruction: it was indeed destructive, but at the same time it was an incitement to and an appeal for a higher type of culture.

Nietzsche often praised Greek Culture, and particularly that of the sixth century B.C., but it should not be imagined that he was advocating a mere return to Greek culture. He believed that the Greeks possessed a living culture of their own, a true unity of artistic style: they did not merely prey on the past—as happens in a predominantly "historical" or Alexandrine culture—but, however much they may have owed to the past, they had integrated all inherited elements in a higher synthesis, in a culture which was not a mere knowledge about culture but a lived culture. Nietzsche never denied

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

the fact that the Greeks owed a debt to, e.g., Egyptians and Babylonians; but he insisted that the question of the origins of Greek culture was a small point compared with the fact that the Greek was not a scholar, who amassed information concerning past civilizations, but a living embodiment of culture. He praised the Greeks then for this fact, without however preaching a literal return to the Greeks: he wanted us to go forward—in the spirit of the Greeks of the best period—to a still higher type of culture. Any attempt at a literal reproduction of Greek society would be to fall into the very fault that Nietzsche decried: we have not to reproduce a former historical period, which is an impossible task in any case, but to *create*. The dynamism of Nietzsche, his place in the anti-rationalist reaction, is here apparent: we are summoned, not simply to know the present or even the past, but to create the future.

Nietzsche therefore is a philosopher of culture; but culture is obviously a state of man in society. The whole world might be filled with art-galleries and museums, with splendid monuments of architecture and copious relics of the past; yet if men and women were themselves inferior, uncultured creatures, moving among their splendid surroundings like ants crawling over the ruins of the Parthenon, we should not be justified in speaking of a state of culture. Culture without man is meaningless: man is the bearer and creator of culture. If therefore we are to attain a higher state of culture, man himself must be elevated. Hence it is that the philosophy of Nietzsche may be said to centre round the elevation of man. Nietzsche's philosophy is often said to be a philosophy of Life—and this is true: he has his place in the current of the "Lebensphilosophie"—but it is human life of which he is thinking first and foremost: he is concerned with ascending life, the ascending life of man, a future which cannot be left simply to a mechanical process of evolution but has to be created. It was one of Nietzsche's complaints against Plato, that the latter substituted the Idea, the subsistent concept, for man, whereas it is man who should stand in the centre of the picture.

Once this has been grasped, it becomes clear how Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with contemporary culture and his dissatisfaction with contemporary man go hand in hand. Diogenes Laërtius relates of the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, that the latter lit a candle in the daytime and explained his strange action by the words, "I am looking for a man." Nietzsche might have re-echoed the words of Diogenes: he was looking for a man, or rather for a higher type of man, and he did not find him. In the *Wanderer and his Shadow*, Nietzsche expressly refers to the saying of Diogenes, and he frequently expressed his disgust with man as he found him, petty and miserable. Does he not put even into the mouth of the saint in the

PHILOSOPHY

prologue to *Zarathustra* the words: "Now I love God: men, I do not love. Man is a thing too imperfect for me. Love to man would be fatal to me"? Nietzsche, however, does not love God (in Whom he does not believe) but he protests that he does love man. Zarathustra, in opposition to the "saint," will abide in the world and help man, out of love to man: he has conquered his disgust, that disgust which is the great danger. Recognizing this disgust for man as the great danger, this feeling of contempt for man—"blacker than the blackest melancholy"—Nietzsche will not abandon man, but will attempt to raise him above himself, speaking to those who have ears to hear. Though he recognizes contempt for man as his greatest danger, Nietzsche recognizes it also as the spring of his love for man. It is the great despisers of man—those who recognize man for what he is and are *not satisfied*—that become man's greatest benefactors. A man who has never felt disgust and contempt for mankind, has never really loved them: he has no consuming thirst for the elevation of man, for the coming of the real, the integral man. It is because Nietzsche loves man, that he despises man—or rather it is because he knows what man is in potency, what he can be, and loves him as such, that he recoils before man in his stunted and imperfect state. It is a great mistake then to isolate the passages in which Nietzsche speaks of his contempt for man and to depict him as a misanthrope, for he loves man as he might be, man with all his great possibilities. His final position is even that he loves man *as he is*—because man as he is embodies tremendous possibilities. Nietzsche therefore contrasts "die Nächstenliebe" with "die Fernstenliebe": he appeals, he looks to the future, he is a prophet—of man.

The philosophy of Nietzsche centres then round this guiding inspiration, the attainment of a truly higher culture through the elevation of the type, man. A higher culture can only be attained through the realization of the higher man, and Nietzsche preaches love towards the higher man. We must accordingly say that Nietzsche is an "idealist": not, that is to say, in the philosophical senses of the word, but in the ordinary sense, of a man who possesses an ideal. Perhaps everybody might seem to be an idealist in this sense, for all have some ideal, even if it be only the ideal of comfort or the negative ideal of the avoidance of pain as much as possible, but such "ideals" are ideals for man as he is, without reference to the elevation of man as a type: moreover, they tend to belittle or neglect man's highest faculties and potentialities and so are but pseudo-ideals. Nietzsche was never content with such complacency and acquiescence, looking, as he did, to man's possibilities of higher development. His ideal of man hovered before his eyes—somewhat vaguely, it may be—and on this ideal his gaze was set; he loved man as a potentiality for the realization of this ideal. Nietzsche said some

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

very sharp things about idealists; but he was unquestionably an "idealist" in the practical sense, that he never acquiesced in things simply and solely as they were. He called on us to be true to the earth, *this* earth, but the whole of his intense soul went out towards the future in passionate longing. The second period of his personal development, the period in which he praised Socrates and professed a "Wissenschaftsideal" was of short duration, and was really but an interlude or breathing-space on his onward march. No static ideal of ice-cold knowledge could satisfy Nietzsche: he was a creative and prophetic philosopher, who did not attempt to philosophize with reason alone.

Who then is the higher man, what sort of a type is he and how are we to conceive of him? He is the more *complete* man, the noble and aristocratic man. We are to conceive of the "higher man" as physically healthy and strong, as powerful and devoid of weakness, but Nietzsche does not stop there, for his ideal is not that of the barbarian, the blond beast. Compared with certain other types of men Nietzsche may have preferred the "blond beast," but when he calls for the attainment of a higher state of culture through the higher man, he is not thinking of the fair-haired and physically strong barbarian, and it is unjust to interpret him in this sense. The "higher man" is endowed, not merely with physical vigour and strength, but also with intellectual power, independence of soul, artistic perception and appreciation, psychological insight. Nietzsche lays great stress on nobility, independence, truthfulness, and unwavering courage: moreover, he makes it quite clear that the higher man has command over himself, is slave to no passion or lust, although he in no way despises the body or practises asceticism from other-worldly motives. The higher man emancipates himself from morality, from the code of ethics asserted by the herd, and is a *creator of values*; but that is not to say that he is a slave to the lusts of the flesh or to any other lust, for he is the very opposite of a slave. The noble man is the embodiment of Life, of ascending life—and Life is, according to Nietzsche, the Will to Power. The noble man, the true aristocrat, embodies therefore the Will to Power but it is the Will to Power of the higher type of man.

This conception of the Will to Power has occasioned a great deal of misunderstanding, perhaps naturally enough, since it has suggested that Nietzsche's higher man is the embodiment of brutal physical force or of political domination. But Nietzsche's conception should not be narrowed down to these factors: the power of which he is thinking is primarily power of personality, of soul, interior power. "The noble man honours in himself the powerful one, him also who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silence, who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and

PHILOSOPHY

hardness, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard.”¹ This conception of hardness is responsible for a good deal of the abuse of Nietzsche; for does he not say that the higher man is to be hard? Does he not teach hardness in place of sympathy and pity? Yes, Nietzsche does indeed, in opposition to Schopenhauer, the “Soothsayer,” condemn pity and exalt hardness; but we ought to realize that for Nietzsche hardness is not the same as brutality or wanton cruelty. In speaking of the noble man he says, that “in the foreground there is the feeling of plenitude, of power, which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of a wealth which would fain give and bestow: the noble man also helps the unfortunate, but not—or scarcely—out of pity, but rather from an impulse generated by the superabundance of power.”² The noble man may be an egoist, but he is not “selfish” in the ordinary petty use of the term; he may be hard, but he is not brutal or wantonly cruel; he gives, but gives out of a superabundance of power, from the bestowing or radiant virtue. He gives, because it is of the nature of superabundance to overflow. We may not like Nietzsche’s higher man, who is really the “natural” man raised to the highest pitch of development, psychical and physical, but that is no reason why we should caricature him. It may well be that an attempt to reduce Nietzsche’s theories to practice leads to disastrous results, to a very ignoble type of man (and this is bound to be so, if we grant that man’s vocation is “supernatural” and that he cannot be perfect and merely a “natural” at the same time), but that does not justify us in interpreting Nietzsche as though he foresaw and willed those consequences. That Nietzsche would have recognized in the Nazi “élite,” for example, a concrete realization of his “higher man,” is inconceivable: they may or may not be a concrete and practical application of his theories, but, if they are, they embody an application unwilled by Nietzsche himself.³

It has been mentioned that the higher man emancipates himself from morality and creates his own values. According to Nietzsche, one of the main drags on the higher man and on the evolution of a higher type of culture is morality, above all Christian morality. Christian morality is, in Nietzsche’s eyes, a phenomenon of decadence, of weakness, of hostility to life. The Christian, like Plato, preaches the existence of a “Beyond,” and sets a life “there” over against life “here,” as true life over against apparent life or half-life. He thus calumniates this life and this world and is hostile to all

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 260. (Quotations from Nietzsche are taken from the trans. published by Messrs. George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., and edited by Dr. Oscar Levy). ² *Ibid.*

³ See my article on “Nietzsche and National Socialism” in the *Dublin Review* for April, 1941.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

ascending life on this planet. As Nietzsche rejected the doctrine of a transcendental "Beyond" and regarded *this* life as true life, indeed as the only life, it is easy to understand why he was so vehement in his attack on Christianity, for he regarded it as enchaining and shackling free and noble spirits, deceiving them with transcendental phantasies and preventing their free expansion. He did not want to eliminate Christianity from the hearts of *all*—on the contrary, let the plebs keep their comforting mythology!—but he did want to liberate the higher men.

Nietzsche regarded Christianity as the expression of the Will to Power of the herd. The herd, the inferior and weak majority of men, desire to protect themselves, and out of this desire—and because of their jealousy and resentment against all that is noble and lofty, all that is not inferior and weak—they proclaim a code of morals which inculcates those virtues which are useful to the herd, such as sympathy, loving-kindness, brotherly love, and they proclaim too its universal binding-force, thus chaining down all those who would, if left to themselves, rise above the herd. This is the psychological origin of Christian morality and it expresses the herd's instinct of self-protection, the herd's Will to Power. Accordingly Nietzsche calls upon the free spirits, the higher men, to emancipate themselves from this bondage and to create their own values, setting a "master-morality" over against the "slave-morality," the antithesis "noble" and "despicable" over against the antithesis "good" and "evil." The free spirits are the exceptions, the herd constitutes the majority: let the herd therefore retain its own valuations and by all means let the slave-morality hold good among the slaves; but let not the noble aristocrats of culture, the proud and fearless ones, the free and independent, be any longer enslaved by a morality which professes to be absolute and of divine origin, but which in reality is but the expression of the herd's Will to Power and the herd's desire to protect itself.

Now from what we have just said it is clear that for Nietzsche there is no absolute morality, no universally-binding moral code. Moral valuations are relative, relative to their authors, one morality being the expression of the Will to Power of the noble spirits, another morality being the expression of the herd's Will to Power. But at this point a formidable difficulty arises, As we have seen traditional morality expresses the herd's Will to Power. Now, according to Nietzsche, *Life* is the Will to Power. Christian morality, therefore, as expressing the Will to Power of the herd must express Life. But does not Nietzsche declare that Christian morality expresses decadence, hostility to life? There would then appear to be a blatant inconsistency; for on what grounds can Nietzsche condemn one set of values in favour of another, if both sets express the Will to Power?

PHILOSOPHY

He cannot say that one set is the valid and absolute set and condemn the other, for he did not believe in an absolute morality: all moral valuations are relative in his opinion. On what grounds then can he legitimately prefer one to the other, except on those of personal taste?

The key to the difficulty would seem to lie in the fact that we must judge of moral valuations according to the *kind of life* which they tend to promote. Thus, in Nietzsche's eyes, "master-morality" is the expression of and tends to promote ascending life, fuller life, while the "slave-morality," pre-eminently Christian morality, expresses decadent life, descending and poorer life. Yet it may be objected, that here again an absolute standard slips in. For the judgment is not simply that one type of life is more congenial to some people's taste than another type, but that one type of life is, absolutely speaking, superior to another type. And if this be so, then the corresponding moral valuations should be subject to comparison from an absolute standpoint and are no longer merely relative. Even if, to escape from the difficulty, a distinction were drawn between an absolute and static scale of values and a dynamic or to-be-created scale of values, the question might still be asked, how the values we create can have any claim upon us, unless they are *really* superior to hitherto-accepted values. Nietzsche might answer that they have no claim—for they are so far non-existent, and in any case there are no subsistent values in Platonic style—but that they are simply the expression of the higher man's Will to Power. These values express the higher man's Will to Power and those others the herd's Will to Power; and that is all that we can say: there is no question of comparison from an absolute standpoint, for the absolute standpoint is *ipso facto* the *standpoint of the herd*, which proclaims an universal and absolute morality.

This does appear to be some sort of answer to the charge of inconsistency; but all the same it is very difficult, when reading Nietzsche, to rid oneself of the impression that in his heart of hearts he believes in an absolute set of values, even if those values are not those of Christian morality as he understood it. Theoretically he does not believe in an absolute standard, but practically he seems to accept it. It is perhaps worthy of note that Professor Nicolai Hartmann, who does believe in an abiding world of values, incorporates into his valuational field several Nietzschean values—for example, if my memory of his great work on ethics does not betray me, "die Fernstenliebe" and "die schenkende Tugend." Nicolai Hartmann would say that Nietzsche had "discovered" hitherto-unrecognized values, not that he had created them. If this were so, then Nietzsche's claim to transvalue all values would involve a misconception: he would really have been revealing to the eyes of contemporaries values to

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

which they had been formerly blind. This is no place to enter on a discussion or criticism of Nicolai Hartmann's Ethics; but we would point out that his treatment of values opens up the possibility of a fresh line of approach to Nietzsche.

To return to the "higher man," the creator and determiner of values. Nietzsche finds types of higher men, or approximations thereto, in history. Goethe, for instance, "the last German whom I respect,"¹ is cited in Nietzsche's Notes on *Zarathustra* as one of his predecessors along with Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Spinoza. Among others Dante, Michelangelo, Pascal (whom Nietzsche regarded as having been ruined by Christianity), Caesar and Napoleon are also mentioned as exceptional men. Nietzsche's fondness for Napoleon has naturally led to the "warlord" conception of the higher man. And does he not declare that "higher man is a combination of the monster and the superman" and that "these opposites belong to each other"?² Yes, but Nietzsche himself admits that Napoleon "was corrupted by the means he had to stoop to" and "lost noblesse of character." In any case it must be remembered that to Nietzsche these higher men of history were by no means flawless: they were very far from being the realization of his ideal. Just as he looked at contemporary man and, filled with disgust and shame, evolved the conception of "higher man," so, looking at the approximations to higher men which he found in history—those that stood "beyond good and evil"—he saw that they fell far short of the ideal, that they remained "human, all-too-human." The result was that the ideal tended to become more transcendental, to be pushed into the future: in other words, the result was the conception of Superman. (I do not mean to imply that Nietzsche did not continue to praise Napoleon and other great figures of history *after* he had evolved the conception of Superman, for Nietzsche proclaims Superman in *Zarathustra* and yet later speaks of Napoleon in, e.g. the "Will to Power," but my meaning is that Nietzsche's discontent with *all* historical men, even the men of the Renaissance whom he so greatly admired and never ceased to admire, was responsible for his conception of Superman.)

Historical man being thus insufficient, Superman appears on the scene: the higher man is projected into the future as "Übermensch." "I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed—What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a thing of shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock, a thing of shame."³ "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman—a rope over an abyss."⁴ We must not be misled by the mention of the ape into imagining that the doctrine of Superman is simply an extension of Darwinism. Nietzsche certainly thought

¹ *Twilight of the Idols*, sect. 51.

² *Will to Power*, II, 1027.

³ *Zarathustra's Prologue*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

PHILOSOPHY

that Darwinists were unjustified in speaking as though evolution had stopped with the species man, and he implied on occasion that man is a fresh species, but this is to be understood as meaning that Superman is man raised above himself, man-surpassed, man developed to the highest possible degree. This Superman is the lightning out of the future, he is the meaning of the earth (not in the sense of a meaning given *ab extra*—for Nietzsche rejected such teleology, being an atheist in theory, even if not in psychological attitude—but in the sense of a meaning *to be given, to be created, by man*).

People are sometimes disappointed that Nietzsche gives no clear picture of the Superman. But how could he possibly do so? Precisely, because the Superman is Superman, he cannot be clearly delineated; he does not yet exist, but *is to be*, and it is surely difficult to describe him who as yet is not. Nietzsche can only speak of Superman in prophetic tones as he discerns him dimly in the light of the coming dawn. He calls on us to work for the coming of Superman, to make the meaning of our lives the creation of Superman. "Let your will say: the Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth";¹ Nietzsche professes to be but the herald of the lightning, the lightning itself being Superman—whose beauty "came unto me as a shadow." Superman is thus to come, to be created, and Nietzsche urges those who enter on marriage to have as their highest hope the creation of "one that is more than those who created it." Ultimately he asks: "Thirst in the creating one, arrow and longing for the Superman: tell me, my brother, is this thy will to marriage?"²

We have seen that Nietzsche's criticism of Christian morality was directed by his desire for a higher culture and by his "Fernstenliebe." The same must be said of his criticism of (i) Democracy and Socialism, and (ii) the State. Nietzsche condemns the doctrine which he ascribes to partisans of Democracy and Socialism, that all men are equal. He insists that all men are not equal, and that the dogma of their equality and social theories founded thereon, are simply weapons in the hands of the herd, which they use to protect themselves and prevent the emergence of a natural aristocracy, the noble and free spirits. In other words, Democracy represents the Will to Power of the herd, the inferior majority, the crowd of weak persons who club together to protect themselves and who look with eyes of watchful resentment on all those who strive to rise above the herd and free themselves from its slavery. Among much else that Nietzsche has to say on both Democracy and Socialism we may mention that he diagnosed—and rightly, I believe—the Christian themes that linger on in non-religious democratic theory. For example, does not the ideal of the French Revolution, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité," derive ultimately from Christian morality? God and supernatural

¹ *Zarathustra's Prologue.*

² *Zarathustra*, chapter xx.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

religion were omitted, but much of the driving-force in democratic theory has been of Christian origin, even if social theorists and revolutionaries have not been conscious of the fact.

(In case it may be thought that Nietzsche was merely "reactionary" in politics, we may mention his shrewd observation that if the wealthy do not like Socialism and dread its advent, then they had better alter their behaviour, since it is largely their luxury and display of wealth and their tone of life that cause the Socialistic movement. He points out to the wealthy that the state of mind of proletariat revolutionaries is simply what *their*, i.e. the wealthy's, state of mind would be were they in the position of the poverty-stricken proletariat. Both are actuated by lust of possession, and psychologically speaking, there is little to choose between them.)

Leaving aside Nietzsche's interesting theories on the origin and natural function of the State, it is worth drawing attention to the very hard blows that he delivers against State-idolatry, worship of the "cold monster," the "new idol." The State, in what we would call its totalitarian form, wants only so much culture as will serve its own ends. It sets itself up as an object of worship, and all culture must be subordinated to the monstrous idol. "Higher men" are not wanted—only servants of the State. The State is accordingly judged by Nietzsche in its relation to culture. In so far as it promotes culture, he will commend it: in so far as it debases culture and prevents the free growth and the evolution of free and independent minds, he condemns it. Because in his opinion our culture must be European in character, he condemns all narrow-minded ultra-nationalism, "bovine nationalism," as he trenchantly calls it. It is therefore absurd to make the Nietzschean philosophy equivalent with the Nazi ideology, for Nietzsche's theory rises above all race theories—a "mendacious swindle"—all excessive nationalism and all ideas of German domination. Did he not declare that wherever Germany extends her sway she *ruins* culture? Nietzsche is the prophet, not of the Super-race nor of the Super-nation, but of *Superman*. His philosophy may well be false, but it is most certainly not a Nazi philosophy.

It may be in place to say something of Nietzsche's attitude towards religion, towards the Christian religion in particular. Nietzsche says many things that are, as they stand, most undoubtedly blasphemous in character. Yet it would be wrong to think that Nietzsche's attitude towards Christianity is that of a Hyde Park secularist or "rationalist." He was not concerned to rob believing Christians of their faith: on the contrary, he always counselled believing Christians not to read his books. We might indeed ask, as did one of his friends, why then did he publish his books; but he wrote them primarily with a view to "disciples," to speak to the ears of the "higher men"

PHILOSOPHY

and to liberate them from the thralldom of Christian morality those who no longer believed in Christian dogma but who still gave their allegiance to Christian moral values, as though the values could retain a universal significance when the transcendental foundation had disappeared. Nietzsche did not want to be a mere *Nihilist*: in other words, it was very far from being his aim to rob of their religious beliefs and moral standards those men who had nothing to put in the place of what they lost and were unable to follow Nietzsche along the path of his positive philosophy. His aim was to stimulate the "noble" and "free" spirits to break the shackles of herd-morality and to determine their own values: he summoned his followers after him, not to a holocaust of all values but to a *transvaluation of values*. Those who could not follow him through the valley of destruction out onto the mountain-heights of creation had better leave his writings alone and unread: he did not want to lure men into the valley of destruction and then to leave them there to die of despair—or to content themselves with the husks of swine. It is essential for anyone who wishes to understand Nietzsche to grasp this point: otherwise there is a danger of portraying him as an advocate of libertinism in conduct and merely destructive rationalism in thought. That such might be the practical effect of his writings, may no doubt be true, but it was not Nietzsche's intention.

Moreover, although Nietzsche was an atheist, his psychological attitude, as manifested in his writings, scarcely gives the impression of being that of a naturally irreligious man. A deep earnestness and seriousness, an almost religious pathos, is visible throughout. He sprang from a pious Lutheran family with generations of pastors behind him; and in his youth he had been a pious boy who wanted for a time to be himself a pastor. He came indeed to discard the Lutheran religion of his upbringing, but it is very doubtful if he ever succeeded in shaking himself altogether free from Christ, Whom he never ceased to revere and Whom he professed to consider the one true Christian. For the matter of that Nietzsche always respected sincere Christians, in spite of all his attacks on their religion; and it is perhaps not fanciful to discern in the depths of his soul a growing inner tension between the way he had chosen and the Christ Whom he had renounced, a tension which probably contributed to his final breakdown. It is significant that some of the letters he wrote after madness had seized him were signed "Der Gekreuzigte." Moreover, his psychological attitude towards Superman is markedly religious in character; we are reminded of a Hebrew prophet looking forward to the advent of the Messiah.

But whatever Nietzsche's psychological attitude may have been, the foregoing remarks should not be taken to mean that the present writer wishes to make out that Nietzsche was not, or did not remain,

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

a professed atheist. “*God is dead*,” he proclaimed and he continued to proclaim it, denying all transcendence of this life and this world. What is more, he *willed* this atheism; he *willed* the assertion of a pure “*Diesseitigkeit*”; God *must* die—in order that Superman may live. “Now, however, this God hath died! Ye higher men, this God was your greatest danger.” “God hath died: now do *we* desire—the Superman to live.”¹ This news of the death of God is the great liberation. “We philosophers and ‘free spirits’ feel ourselves irradiated as by a new dawn by the report that the ‘old God is dead’; our hearts overflow with gratitude, astonishment, presentiment and expectation. At last the horizon seems open once more, granting even that it is not bright. . . .”² This liberation is *willed*. “God is dead”—“And we—we have still to overcome his shadow!”³ In other words, Nietzsche wills a pure “*Diesseitigkeit*,” in order that man may out of his own resources, in unhampered freedom and power of will, surpass himself and create Superman. It is certainly true, that Nietzsche felt at times appalled by this thought: witness a poignant letter to his sister in which he declares that “A profound man needs friends unless indeed he has a God. And I have neither God nor friend!” Yet in spite of this feeling Nietzsche not only resolutely exposed what he regarded as the illusion of the Transcendental, but willed the death of God—that Superman might live. And he sealed this will to “*Diesseitigkeit*” by the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, the doctrine that there is a cyclical process in the universe and that all returns, even my action here and now, thus effectually barring all “supernatural” intervention and the “Beyond.”

So far then as open profession goes, Nietzsche’s philosophy contains a resolute will to “*Diesseitigkeit*.” But it cannot be denied that his thought is ever pressing beyond the given, beyond even that which seems humanly possible: God is dead, *must* be dead, in order that men may be gods, transcending themselves. There are of course two sides to Nietzsche’s hope for man: there is on the one hand the insistence on the full development of man as he is, leading to the “higher man,” the flower of culture that is rooted in an actual and historical soil, and there is on the other hand the insistence on the more-than-man, the divinization of man (needless to say, not in the theological sense), in short, Superman. By this latter path a tendency to transcend pure “*Diesseitigkeit*” creeps in unawares. Nietzsche *wills* pure “*Diesseitigkeit*,” but restless and discontented with *all* the given as he is, his philosophy passes beyond itself into what Professor Karl Jaspers calls “Unphilosophie,” transcending all actual horizons and leaping into what very nearly becomes a “Beyond!” But as Nietzsche has “exposed” or rejected or passed by all props and bridges and stable positions in his unceasing onward

¹ *Zarathustra*, chapter lxxiii. ² *Joyful Wisdom*, p. 276. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

PHILOSOPHY

march, there is no actual content to this self-transcendence of his philosophy: it remains vague and unformed, a tendency, an appeal, a longing for the more-than-empirical-and-historic. His philosophy is resolutely atheistic, but it is a very peculiar brand of atheism; for although he rejects religion he does not embrace Positivism (in spite of his second phase); although he condemns Christianity as hostile to Life—expressing *his* hostility in the antithesis “Dionysos versus Christ”—he will not content himself with any of the customary alternatives, the life of unbridled lust or the life of bourgeois pleasure or the life of high-and-dry-scholarship or indeed any other form of human life as he saw it. Destroying, attacking, Nihilistic, yet with a will to the assertion of positive values and aims, Nietzsche reaches out beyond every temporary halting-place and every stable position: the will to pure “Diesseitigkeit” contains within itself an unavowed, doubtless unconscious, will to transcendence. He yearns for Being but cannot content himself with any actual state of being.

This all-devouring Nihilism, coupled with a terrific will to the positive Transvaluation of all Values and the attainment of a higher culture through the elevation of the type, man, this denial of the Transcendental coupled with a radical dissatisfaction in the actual, renders it practically impossible to assign a definite and at the same time stable content to Nietzsche’s philosophy, to label it and put it away in a compartment side by side with other systems: it extends beyond all labels, all compartments: it is perhaps rather a philosophizing than a “philosophy.” Hence the failure of all those who attempt to use Nietzsche for the furtherance of their own particular aims. If the Positivist attempts to use Nietzsche’s denial of the Transcendental to support his own attitude, Nietzsche eludes his grasp, refusing to be caught in the trammels of Positivism and reaching out into the invisible future: if the Nazi attempts to use Nietzsche’s doctrine of the Will to Power, of the Order of Rank, of hardness, he is confronted with Nietzsche’s ridicule of the Race-theory, of State-idolatry, of “Deutschland über Alles,” of mere militarism: if the lover of the life of the senses attempts to find support in Nietzsche’s acclamation of sense and instinct, in his insistence on life and loyalty to the earth, he suddenly finds Nietzsche preaching self-control, self-command, hardness towards oneself, devotion to a vague and ideal future. In short, he who attempts to rest on any one “platform” in Nietzsche’s thought will sooner or later find that platform sink beneath him—or drawn upwards after Nietzsche in the philosopher’s restless quest as, breaking with past and present, he passes onwards beyond all horizons. Are we perhaps to draw the conclusion that the will to pure “Diesseitigkeit” defeats itself and that the immanent logic of Nietzsche’s idealistic Nihilism simply opens the way once more to the Transcendental?