

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF MILITARISM: ITS EXPONENTS AND ITS CRITICS

WITH AN AMERICAN CONNOTATION

BY WOODBRIDGE RILEY

FIVE thinkers stand forth as exponents or critics of the metaphysics of militarism. The exponents are, German: Hegel, the pope of speculation who once ruled his faithful followers from the class room to the bureaucracy; Nietzsche, the mad philosopher, whose doctrine of the unmoral Superman is embodied in ruthless Prussia; Treitschke, "our great national historian," as the Kaiser called him, who transmuted Hegel's "Empire of the Air" into "Germany over all." The chief critics, as is to be expected, are French: Émile Boutroux, dean of the living philosophers, interpreter of the doctrine of liberty and individualism; Henri Bergson, Boutroux's colleague, author of the famous *Creative Evolution*. These two men, both visitors to America, have explained the reaction of the Gallic mind—spiritual, creative, free—against the crushing mechanism of the Teutonic overlordship.

Hegel needs a Homer to do him justice, to sing his Ulyssean wanderings through space and time. His enormous *Encyclopædia of the Philosophical Sciences* is an inchoate Odyssey, a vast metaphysical map, containing all the possible forms of thought. His *Philosophy of History* presents these forms, these categories in motion—Greece, for example, representing thought, Rome action, Germany the combination of the two. With the technical interplay of thesis and antithesis in the absolute philosophy we are not concerned, except to note that the inevitable synthesis of excellence is ever claimed for Hegel's country and Hegel's compatriots. This is the heady draught, the mixture of strong drinks that went to the head of the ab-

solutist's followers. As a synthetic formula it is pushed to incredible extremes. Seeking for a "fundamental principle which unites and reconciles all oppositions and contradictions," and carrying his philosophy of history into the philosophy of religion, Hegel gravely propounds this statement: in the cosmic unfolding, Greece is the Father, Rome the Son, and Germany the Holy Ghost.

After such a debauch of thought, Germany suffered for a time from an Hegelian headache, but the thirst for mixed metaphysics could not be overcome. "What is that one grand Idea to which every phenomenon and historical event may be traced?" they asked. Nietzsche essayed to answer, and, in a series of works as light in touch as Hegel's were heavy, expounded his doctrine of the Superman. It is a difficult doctrine, where great wits are akin to madness. Nietzsche may have been insane, but his irritability and ego-mania were symptomatic of more than his ancestry. Some say that it is false to represent him as an advocate of the arrogant and unscrupulous Superman, because he was personally scrupulous, and because he was no Superman, but only a pathetic seeker after health. But the invalid had his ideal, an ideal compounded of the qualities which he himself lacked. The contrast between reality and theory is tragic. At school he was a retiring student, yet there he wrote "Combat is the food which gives strength to the soul." At the prime of life, when he could not stand the Prussian climate and Prussian ugliness, he sought the sun of Italy and its monuments of art. Yet, at that very time he expatiates upon the Superman, that "blond barbarian of the North, who

would sweep over the civilised world and destroy temples, churches and institutions."

Nietzsche's interpreters have failed to point out this tragic paradox, this irreconcilable antithesis between that which he was and that which he wished to be. But the philosopher's sister, despite her very loyalty to her brilliant brother, has inadvertently disclosed the secret. She refers to a photograph of Nietzsche as a soldier in the Franco-Prussian War, yet recognises how a painful disability—an inherited eye strain—prevented him from being aught but an ambulance nurse. All this is meant to point out his physical, not his spiritual limitations, for he who was to embody in years of suffering the will to overcome pain, now contracted camp diseases, which impaired his health for life. Nevertheless, this is the moment when Frau Förster Nietzsche says that her brother gained his first inkling of his characteristic doctrines. She recounts how on a certain evening, at the close of a very heavy day with the wounded, he suddenly heard a roaring noise as of thunder, and a magnificent cavalry regiment—gloriously expressive of the courage of the exuberant strength of the people, flew by him like a luminous storm cloud. "Then," Nietzsche confessed, "I felt for the first time, dear sister, that the strongest and highest Will to Life does not find expression in the miserable struggle for existence, but in a Will to War, a Will to Power, a Will to Overcome."

There is a pathetic wistfulness in this description; at the same time, it contains the key to Nietzsche's philosophy of life. That philosophy begins with the past, with prehistoric man, who "hath won all his virtues from the wildest, most courageous beasts;" it continues with a denunciation of the "placid happiness of the herd;" it ends with the prophecy of the Superman engaging in vast hazardous enterprises "with a conscience of steel and a heart of brass." Between these two extremes, the past and future, stands Nietzsche—impotent in body, powerful in mind—smashing at the

dearest idols of the present bourgeois world. Now despite the attempts of critics to bowdlerise his works, we take this to be a summary of his opinions: that he held democracy an abomination since it is a cult of incompetence, and the gospel of love despicable since Christian morality is slave morality. This impression is gathered not only from scattered phrases, but from the very titles of these books, whose author believes there is no law for the overlord, because he dwells in the realm "Beyond Good and Evil," and no limit to the "Will to Power," because "the soul has skill to pluck out of battle, sweet and glorious truths."

This is Nietzsche's ideal of militarism. Whether considered a cause or an effect, a disease or a symptom, such an ideal was impossible of realisation. The two volumes of his sister's remarkable biography show this. In the one, the "young Nietzsche" is described as full of fire and self-reliant as a young lion; in the other, the "lonely Nietzsche," because of his nervous irritability, is cut off from one friend after another, from Richard Wagner to the faithful Rohde.

Like the man, like the nation. Nietzsche's overlord, writ large, makes the pan-German; his individualism, magnified, makes an insufferable people. It is an easy moral to draw, that as "young Nietzsche," the philosopher, became the "lonely Nietzsche," so the "young Siegfried" nation will find itself socially ostracised. We prefer not to draw the moral, but to adorn the tale of Teutonism. Of Germany as superhumanity, as superior to all others in manners, customs and arts, of this let Treitschke sing; Treitschke, as stone deaf to other nationals as he was physically deaf to his audience in the great Aula in the University of Berlin. There he stood forth a colossal figure with knightly frame. The contrast with Nietzsche is striking. When the latter painted the Superman with the strokes of an artist, Treitschke magnified it beyond measure. The overlord is no longer modelled after one of the Medici, but becomes a

coarse bodied Bismarck. And the chancellor's policy of ruthlessness is now taken over. When Fichte dismissed the German youth to the "Holy War" against Napoleon, Treitschke, in his speech to the students going to the Franco-Prussian war, adjures them to win at any price. Now Treitschke had come to Berlin—under Bismarck's patronage—because "empty headed liberalism" was gaining ground. His strictures upon that liberalism are illuminating. Attacking the "Sunday afternoon preachers" on politics, he asserts that socialism cannot be convinced by reason, but must be suppressed by forcible laws, that international law is mere hypothesis, Belgium and Holland being its chief centres because of their fear of attack; that the Alsatians are a deluded people who do not know what is good for them; that the strengthening of Prussia is the supreme national duty; that deeds of violence are expiated in being committed; in fine, that war is a moral necessity, an ordinance of God.

These are the authentic utterances of the Kaiser's favourite historian. And the nation also learned its lesson. Veritable echoes of this teaching are a commonplace of the present struggle, from the admonitions to the soldier in the trench to possess a heart of steel, an iron will to win, to the statement of Governor-General Von Bissing that the Belgians are "politically undisciplined children."

Now the Germans, by implication, are disciplined. How the powers that be accomplished this is a paradox. They not only led the horse to water, but they made him drink. They did this by holding up as a counterpart of the Superman, the ideal of the Super-state, the familiar Hegelian synthesis being enlarged from the one to the many, from the individual to the whole. Thus the state becomes a gigantic entity, its body a people in arms, its brains a coldly calculating beauracracy. The body does not think, it acts. What it is told to do, it does. From peasant to poet, all obey typewritten orders; on the one

hand, battle, murder and sudden rape; on the other, hymns of hate. And even the so-called intellectuals act automatically. The embattled professorate start shooting their metaphysical machine guns. After that come "reasons" for the Belgian atrocities, strangely illogical gas bombs, whose fumes make our eyes water and render us incapable of seeing the connection between "Serbia started the trouble," and "Germany is waging a war of self-defense." How can a part be greater than the whole? How can such mental processes take place? The answer is from the mechanisation of the German mind. For two generations and more those below have been made to think by those above. The gears have been shifted by a higher hand. The outward result has been a fine regularity. But while the traffic control of Teutonic thought has been a cause for astonishment, the overhead expense has been enormous. The old individuality of Goethe and Schiller has disappeared; in its place has arisen a fatal uniformity. Pull the same levers in the machine called Deutschthum and you get the same results—from Hanover to Hoboken, a nation of faithful flivvers—"my subjects," as the Kaiser calls them.

What a contrast! In the good old days there used to be differences of opinion. Now there is a monotonous similarity of sentiments; "civilisation ends at the Vosges;" "France is decadent;" "Britain is filled with the lust of power;" "America cares only for money"—all Germans sound their horns alike. And the mechanisation has gone further. The parts of the machine are interchangeable. From the professor at Harvard to the porter at the Ritz, all fit into their appointed places. Moreover the parts can be duplicated unto the third and fourth generations. Treitschke feared that a German who became a Yankee was lost to the Fatherland. He was too pessimistic. He did not know the hyphen; he would have been cheered had he found how little is the difference between the "Münchener bube" and the Milwaukee brewer's son.

The machine is really remarkable; cylinders with but a single thought; pistons that beat as one—all are but parts of one Teutonic whole.

This is the machine. Can it be smashed? Physically the job has not yet been accomplished, but intellectually the task is begun. Here the French are leaders. Bergson in a recent essay has expounded the mechanisation of the German State, but prior to that, Boutroux explains the state of mind which made that process possible. In a letter addressed to the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, early in the war, the French savant explains what is meant by a state of learned barbarism. What is it, he asks, which has made a nation which our grandparents admired and loved, a creation "contrary to nature" in the Latin sense of the word? Can we resolve the antithesis between the old and the new; between duty for duty's sake and a scrap of paper; between marvellous music and the bombardment of Rheims's cathedral? It is an insufficient answer to say that despite their science, the Germans are only slightly civilised. The true explanation is found in the saying of La Harpe: "There is a learned barbarism." This means that it is not merely by an explosion of his nature that the German in war is inhuman; it is by order. Brutality is here calculated and systematic. It is not in spite of their culture, but in virtue of it, that they act as they do. Even Fichte, in 1808, voiced the German egotism in his famous "Address to the German People." That nation, he reasoned, which is of pure Teutonic essence, compared to the outsider, is as the good to the bad. And Hegel carried out the implications of this doctrine. To him history meant not merely a succession of events that mark the life of humanity, but the judgment of God concerning the competitions of peoples. All that is, seeks to be and to endure, and struggles to impose itself on others. History tells us that such are the men and the things that Providence has selected. The sign of such selection is success. To subsist, to

grow larger, to conquer, to dominate—that is the way to prove that one has faith in one's thought, that one is the dispenser of one's power. If any people appears as designated by history to dominate the others, it is that people which is the lieutenant of God on earth, even God, visible and tangible for his creatures.

This is the first lesson in the gospel according to Hegel. The second, continues Boutroux, is that the actual existence of a people charged to represent God is not a myth; that such people does, in fact, exist, and that the German people is that people. It is unnecessary to go into the re-editing of German history from the victory of Arminius over the Romans in the Teutoburg forest to the latest lucubrations of that renegade Englishman, Austin Chamberlain. The syllogism is perfect, though the sentiments may be absurd. Force is strong, great force is noble, all powerful force is one with the Divine force; now, science brings force, and Germans are scientific; therefore, Germany is set to accomplish the task of God on earth. This is the positive side of the logical cascade; the negative is like it. Pity is weakness: suppress it; treaties are trammels for God's people: disregard them. In place, then, of sentimentality, employ scientifically organised incendiarism, methodical destruction of monuments, and—Boutroux might have added—efficient deportation of Belgians and unrestricted submarine sinkings. In fine, then, the people of God allies the maximum of science to the maximum of barbarity, and the formula of its action may be thus expressed: "barbarism multiplied by science."

The French critic is severe, but no more severe than the case demands. He applies the acid test of logic and acid burns; and in doing this, he suffers in turn. He recalls a visit to Heidelberg in 1869, when he was sent to study the organisation of German universities. To him, at that time, Germany was the land of metaphysics, of music, of poetry. What was his astonishment to see that,

outside of the courses, there was nothing talked about except the war which Prussia was going to make against France. Yet even then there were two parties: that of Treitschke, with the watch-word "Liberty through Unity," which premised the enrollment of Germany under command of Prussia, in view of a war; and that of Bluntschli, with the watch-word of "Unity through Liberty," which contemplated the unity of German states without the overlordship of Prussia. The Prussians won out. Nevertheless, is it now possible that Germany has gone back to the very cross-road at which she stood before 1870, and that, this time, she will engage upon the other part? Is it true that "the best things have to die to be reborn," and that the Germany which the world has respected and admired only *seems* dead?

There is a note of hope in the final queries raised by the French scholar. So is there in the essay of his colleague Bergson, though the path of redemption as portrayed is marked by painful steps and slow. In a short but brilliant essay, Bergson asks what is the "Meaning of the War?" The answer is, "It is life and matter at war." Following the suggestions raised in his famous *Creative Evolution*, the philosopher shows that the normal process of life is to make a choice and to adopt a lasting form, the alternative lying between the mechanical and the spiritual. Now a day came when Germany had to choose between a rigid and ready-made system of unification, mechanically superposed from without, and the unity which comes from within by a natural effort of life. This meant a choice between an administrative mechanism, into which she would merely have to put herself—a complete order, doubtless, but poverty stricken, like everything else that is artificial—and that richer and more flexible order which the wills of man, when freely associated, evolve of themselves.

The choice Germany took is familiar to all, says Bergson, and came to a head in Bismarck. Artificiality marked the

creation of Prussia. She was formed by clumsily sewing together, edge to edge, provinces either acquired or conquered. Her administration was mechanical; so was her army on which the attention of the Hohenzollerns was concentrated. Whether it was that the people had been drilled for centuries to mechanical obedience; or that an elemental instinct for conquest and plunder, absorbing to itself the life of the nation, had simplified its aims and reduced them to materialism; or that the Prussian character was originally so made—it is certain that the idea of Prussia always evoked a vision of rudeness, of rigidity, of automatism, as if everything within her went by clockwork, from the gesture of her kings to the step of her soldiers.

As time went on, continues Bergson, the mechanical tendency was intensified. Germany, instead of dissolving Prussian militarism into her own life, reinforced it by militarising herself. A further development arose in diverting science to the satisfaction of men's material wants. The old Germany devoted herself to poetry, to metaphysics, the new to industry and commerce. The latter growth was phenomenal. The nation had now but to utilise her habits of discipline, method, tenacity, minute care, precise information—and, we may add, of impertinence and spying—to which she owed the growth of her military power. . . . Reciprocally, the army and navy, which owed their growth to the increasing wealth of the nation, repaid the debt by placing their services at the disposal of this wealth. They undertook to open roads for commerce and outlets for industry. Finally, Germany persuaded herself that if force had wrought this miracle, if force had given her riches and honour, it was because force had within it a hidden virtue, mysterious—nay, divine. Yes, brute force with its train of trickery and lies, when it comes with powers of attack sufficient for the conquest of the world, must needs be in direct line from heaven and a revelation of the will of God on earth. The people to whom this power



of attack had come were the elect, a chosen race by whose side the others are races of bondmen. To such a race nothing is forbidden that may help in establishing its dominion. Let none speak to it of inviolable right! Right is what is written in a treaty; a treaty is what registers the will of a conqueror—that is, the direction of his force for the time being; force, then, and right are the same thing; and if force is pleased to take a new direction, the old right becomes ancient history and the treaty, which backed it with a solemn undertaking, no more than a scrap of paper.

Many years hence, concludes Bergson, when the reaction of the past shall have left only the grand outline in view, this perhaps is how a philosopher will speak of it. He will say that the idea, peculiar to the nineteenth century, of employing science in the satisfaction of our material wants had given a wholly unforeseen extension to the mechanical arts and had equipped man in less than fifty years with more tools than he had made during the thousands of years he had lived on the earth. Each new machine being for man a new organ—an artificial organ which merely prolongs the natural organs—his body became suddenly and prodigiously increased in size, without his soul being able at the same time to dilate to the dimensions of his new body. . . . Now what kind of a society would that be which should mechanically obey a word of command mechanically transmitted; which should rule its science and its conscience in accordance therewith; and which should lose, along with the sense of justice, the power to discern between truth and falsehood? What would mankind be when brute force should hold the place of moral force? What new barbarism, this time final, would arise from these conditions to stifle feeling, ideas, and the whole civilisation of which the old barbarism contained the germ? What would happen, in short, if the moral effort of humanity should turn in its tracks at the moment of attaining its goal, and if some diabolical contrivance

should cause it to produce the mechanisation of spirit instead of the spiritualisation of matter? . . . Germany decided to make the experiment, to ally administrative and military mechanism with industrial mechanism, but the result was very different from what had been predicted. For the moral forces, which were to submit to the forces of matter by their side, suddenly revealed themselves as creators of material force. A simple idea, the heroic conception which a small people had formed of its honour, enabled it to make head against a powerful empire. At the cry of outraged justice we saw, moreover, in a nation which till then had trusted in its fleet, one million, two millions of soldiers suddenly rise from the earth. A yet greater miracle: in a nation thought to be divided mortally against itself all became brothers in the space of a day. From that moment the issue of the conflict was not open to doubt. On the one side, there was force spread out on the surface; on the other, there was force in the depths. On one side, mechanism, the manufactured article which cannot repair its own injuries; on the other, life, the power of creation which makes and remakes itself at every instant. On one side, that which used itself up; on the other, that which does not use itself up.

This is the "Meaning of War" as interpreted by the author of *Creative Evolution*. To that interpretation is added another brilliant article contributed to the *Bulletin of the Armies of the Republic* on "The Force which Wastes and that which does not Waste." Space forbids our utilising this, as we must summarise the whole situation as to the French and German thinkers, and add a word concerning Americans. In brief, we see that France and Germany have exchanged their respective speculative rôles. A century ago France stood for materialism: "man is a machine," "the brain secretes thought," these were catchwords of the day. Across the Rhine there was an opposite outlook. Fichte, and again we quote from his "Address

to the German People," exclaimed, "Yours is the greater destiny to form an empire of mind and reason, to destroy the dominion of rude physical power as the ruler of the world." This exhortation was directed against Napoleon, who, in turn, despised the French idéologues, then coming forward as the champions of the new spiritualism against the degrading sensationalism, derived from the old system of nature. But while, again, in France eclectics, like Cousin and Jouffroy, took over and clarified the early German idealism, in Germany that idealism was prostituted to the notion of conquest. The romantic movement, which in its purity all love and all delight to honour, made an amazing marriage with materialism until, as Gustav Roethe has recently boasted: Just as Bismarck was altogether unthinkable without Goethe and romanticism, so sure may our opponents be that Faust and the Eriöica, the categorical imperative and German grammar, are fighting against them at this time as certainly as Krupp guns and Zeppelin airships. . . . Powder and books are both German inventions. Pallas Athene does not carry helm, spear and shield for naught.

This combination of metaphysics and militarism, of intellect and physical power, is a combination obviously made in Germany. In America such a combination seems impossible. By a curious irony of fate, we have the two opposite tendencies, but not the synthesis. There are two conceptions that struggle within us. On the one hand a conception of America as "God's own country," ruled over by manifest destiny: superior because successful; on the other hand, unaggressive America, the melting pot whose task is to work out the nation's salvation; a country by no means superior to those over its border because it is of itself politically corrupt; in short, bound to be pacifist, because it has troubles of its own. This, as William James would say, is the attitude of the tender-minded. To the tough-minded the conception forms a kind of humble

pie which they do not propose to eat. They do not relish it because it savours too much of a flabby pacificism, a sappy socialism. Hence those of the aggressive American type look back to the good old days of "Imperialism," when we took what came our way outside our borders, and within our borders exploited the masses and let the public be damned. At present—under certain political exigencies—the shouting of our captains of industry has died down; the old guard, if it has not surrendered, has been replaced by the leaders of "the new freedom." Politically, this group utilises publicity rather than hard cash, the bill-board rather than the bank account. They hold that all that is necessary is to send out notes, to use phrases;—"watchful waiting," "out of the trenches by Christmas," these are masterpieces in the psychology of advertising.

Philosophically, all this is akin to the so-called "new thought" which assumes that ideas are realities, that thoughts are things; that because one holds a notion, that notion is bound to come into being. Instead of facts, facts, facts—words, words, words. Project your ideas of the good, the true and the beautiful, and so forth, and you will become the same, and so forth. Perverted German idealism, high flown bureaucratic pronouncements have nothing on us. We also hypnotise by iteration, and have so organised the project that we have added the methods of Wall Street to our "new" metaphysics. For a consideration, we can obtain from the new thoughters of Chicago and Boston messages of gladness in the morning, and health waves in the evening. There are actually lists of subscribers for the new thought quotations. All this to the tender minded, is the victory of idealism over materialism. But the tough minded ask, "At what expense?" The German bureaucracy fools the people. The American people fool themselves. Is your body run down? Then dwell on pink thoughts for pale people. Is the body politic in danger? Then concentrate on the sign inscribed, "Peace, prosperity and preparedness."

# ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE AND THE WAR

BY ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

To a novelist who lays the scenes of his books in the English country, it is a speculation not altogether free from alarm how the war and what is to come after it will change the familiar face of things. Will the life of the Hall, of the parsonage, of the farm-house and the cottage go on much the same as they actually have done during all the changes of the last century, or will these three terrible years have made such a break that a novel of country life which shall be at all true in circumstance will inevitably date itself as belonging to the period before or after the war?

One thing at least is certain—that for at least a generation to come no story that is told about the lives of a group of people, gentle or simple, who inhabit an English village will be able to ignore the war. Death or disablement will leave gaps and scars everywhere, and among the young men advancing to middle-age, and the middle-aged men becoming old, there will be few to whom the war will not count as the chief event of their lives. Just how much it will have to count in any picture true to life which shall not be directly concerned with events springing out of the war, it is not yet possible to see clearly, but is interesting to speculate upon. Another matter of speculation is the social changes that the war will have brought about, and these are still more difficult to gauge, and, for a novelist whose chosen business it is to reflect the social conditions of his time, perhaps even more interesting.

If I were asked to name the English novel which best represented English country life, I think I should say *Adam Bede*. It was written in the middle of the nineteenth century, and its scene was laid at the end of the eighteenth, but in

its essence it is true to the life of the twentieth. For the essence of country life, where so many factors are constant, does not change. Brought down to the simplest form, the English parish and its inhabitants consist of the Squire in his Hall, the parson in his Rectory or Vicarage, the tenant farmers and the cottagers. You may add the village inn, and some small shops; and there will usually be on any considerable estate a few residential houses, small or medium-sized. With the exception of these last, everything and everybody was at one time supported by the land of the parish or estate. It is so no longer. No landed estate in England could now support the life that is lived by the least luxurious of landowners, as well as that of the comfortably housed tenant farmers, the labourers, and those others who live by supplying their wants, even given that the houses all of them live in are there as an asset, and need only be kept in repair.

In this respect no greater changes need be expected as a result of the war than have been going on for many years past. Landowners who still live in the houses of their fathers do so by virtue of income derived elsewhere, and the same may be said of those who have taken their places. No one would invest money in a landed estate with the expectation of living on it or by it. Houses and estates are bought for other reasons, by men who can afford them. Sales will probably be more frequent as a result of the war, but they will be made for the same reasons, by those who can no longer afford to keep up life in a country house to those who can. Now when a country estate changes hands, the life of the great majority of those who live on it does not change. If the land does not