

Le marlou, notre voisin, rôte et tousse. Il a trop bafgré, il soupire: 'Merde, j'ai une de ces envies de pisser . . .' Lucie répond entre haut et bas: 'Il fallait y penser avant' et ajoute: 'Celui-là à l'arrivée je lui casserai la gueule'. Le marlou ricane: 'De quoi, de quoi, on verra bien . . .' Je n'aime pas beaucoup ça, il pèse deux fois mon poids.

Tous les souffles sont coupés par un dialogue en allemand derrière la tôle. Un soldat demande à son camarade: '*Hast-du diesen Wagen ausgezucht?*' Aussitôt une pair de bottes a sauté dans le wagon, un bruit de crosse et le soldat fourrage dans les chaussures avec le canon de son mousqueton.

Lucie est une statue de sel, dont les cheveux vivants me chatouillent la joue.

F. MCEACHRAN

## FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

### A CENTENARY

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, the centenary of whose birth we celebrated last month, is one of the most quoted, least understood, most condemned and (probably) least read of modern philosophers. I noted for example only the other day in the Bodleian at Oxford that the eighteen volumes of the authorized English edition, translated under the auspices of Dr. Oscar Levy, were still uncut (since 1913), and I have little doubt that a similar situation exists in other university libraries in Britain. Yet the recent publication of two important works on Nietzsche in England and America, *Friedrich Nietzsche* by Father Copleston, S. J., and *What Nietzsche Means* by C. A. Morgan, suggests that serious interest is at last beginning to show itself in Anglo-Saxon countries. The general lack of knowledge which undoubtedly still prevails will serve, I hope, as an excuse for the elementary facts which I am venturing to present in this essay.

The central idea in Nietzsche's philosophy (although not its final end) is the conception of the Superman, which can be descried in embryo in the work which first attracted public attention to Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). In this study of Greek drama and in an essay of about the same date on the early

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Greek philosophers Nietzsche laid down that Greek religion was based not only on the worship of Apollo the god of dream-like repose and harmony, but also on Dionysus the god of ecstasy and strife, and that Greek tragedy, in its best days (Aeschylus) attempted a fusion of the two. The nucleus of a drama such as *Prometheus Vincit* is the choric song, the original dionysiac ritual, round which the non-choric plot had grown up under the influence of the worship of Apollo.

Every tragic hero was in fact really an incarnation of Dionysus. Later this figure of Dionysus reappears in more poetical form in the hero of Nietzsche's masterpiece *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and was developed further into the Superman of the later works (*The Will to Power*, etc). An important fact about Dionysus, as interpreted by Nietzsche, is that the Greeks when inspired by him were enabled to contemplate unmoved the pathos of human existence. Like the god himself they could see beyond the human tragedy into a world that was 'beautiful' rather than 'good'. This faculty, which belongs also to the Superman, brings us to the doctrine of eternal recurrence (*Ewige Wiederkunft*).

Nietzsche preferred the early Greek world to the later and in particular the philosophers and artists of the sixth century to those of the fifth and fourth. His favourite philosopher was Heraclitus with his activist doctrine: 'All things flow' and the periodic destruction and rebirth of the world in successive world cycles. How far Nietzsche was influenced by Heraclitus (and other Greek thinkers such as Pythagoras and the Stoa), how far he really developed the doctrine from a sort of mystic intuition of his own (as he asserts) is not easy to say, but next to that of the Superman it is central to his *Weltanschauung*. The physics on which he bases it is not impressive and need not delay us: much more significant is the ethical teaching which he draws from it. The world as we know it has already recurred an infinite number of times, and it will occur again an infinite number of times in the future. It is your duty then (although 'duty' is not a term Nietzsche would use) to live so that you will want your life to be repeated an infinite number of times. Moreover, and this is the crux of the matter, the infinite recurrence provides the ultimate test of your 'super-humanity'. For since all things return, not only the good and glorious and wonderful, the marvellous and strong, the beautiful and noble, but also the sordid and the painful, the monstrous and the

terrible—all these return too. Can you contemplate this prospect and be thrilled at it?<sup>1</sup> If so then you are a Superman, who says 'Yes' to life.

Nietzsche's theory of morals is individualist rather than collectivist. He is *par excellence* the noble anarchist. The State to him is anathema, 'the coldest of all cold monsters'. But his anarchism is based not on freedom or equality, but on individual power of will—the will-power of the strong individual, who is noble because he is strong. It is here in his criticism of all previous systems of morality that he shows a certain originality and a very radical point of view. Morality as a code arose originally in the primitive society born of conquest, in which the 'blond beast' vanquished weaker peoples. 'Good and bad' are an antithesis peculiar to the noble caste of rulers; 'evil' and 'good' (in reverse order) to the tame 'herd' which is ruled. 'Noble', 'beautiful', 'strong', are allied terms in the vocabulary of the rulers and sum up the qualities of 'good' men as they conceive of goodness. 'Bad' in the same vocabulary signifies 'contemptible', 'ugly', 'weak', and applies to members of the 'herd' which is ruled over. On the contrary in the moral language of the herd the primary concept is 'evil', since the herd is timid, oppressed and anxious to live at any price. 'Evil', therefore, is the herd name for the 'beautiful', 'proud', 'strong' people of the ruling class, and 'good' by antithesis describes the herd qualities of mildness, weakness, excessive sociability, etc. This was roughly the *natural* morality of primitive people, and may be seen exemplified above all in Nietzsche's favourite Greeks of the sixth century B.C. before Socrates and Plato invented an absolute ethics. It was also, according to Nietzsche, the morality of the Jews of the days of David and Solomon whom he admired. From this consideration we can explain easily enough how he came to his peculiar theory of history, which is based on the *devaluation* of the values outlined above.

History went wrong, according to Nietzsche, at two nodal points, the era of Socrates and Plato and the Babylonian exile of the Jews. Socrates and still more Plato made the frightful mistake of trying to base ethics on reason instead of the strong will and, in the case of the latter, placed το καλόν in a transcendent world. This was the first great evasion, by virtue of which Plato reveals himself as a Christian before his time. This surrender of the old aristocratic instincts in favour of democratic 'logic' and devitalized

<sup>1</sup> *Amor Fati* is the name Nietzsche gave to this.

'dialectic' was itself bad enough, but worse was to follow. In the fifth century B.C. the Hebrew tribes in exile made a similar surrender for the sake of 'living at any price', and they too proceeded to 'devalue' the old values. Under the ægis of their priestly caste they denounced the virtues of their conquerors, and exalted the servile qualities which alone by insidious methods promised a future, the virtues of the plebeian, of the weak and the ugly. Then came the Christians<sup>1</sup> and above all the apostle Paul who spread the anti-natural doctrine like a virus round the civilized world, like a vampire sucking the living blood of its victim. The Christian Church destroyed the vitals of the aristocratic empire and in the place of the noble Cæsar put the ascetic priest. Some of the really exciting pages of Nietzsche are those in which he vituperates his pet aversion St. Paul, and denounces the ascetic life of the Middle Ages. Only during the period of the Renaissance was there a brief renewal of the antique view of life—a fleeting glimpse of the beauty that might be—and even this was stamped out all too quickly by the German Reformation of which the arch-villain was the Pauline Luther. The depths of corruption, however, were not to be plumbed till the nineteenth century, and the rise of the second German Empire of the Hohenzollerns. Here was the poisoned fountain of disguised Christian 'herd' values, masquerading as socialism, Marxism, anarchism, Benthamite utilitarianism, even Hegelianism, all of which are nothing more or less than the old Christian values in a new form—the *utopianism* of 'the botched and the bungled' seeking a Christian heaven on earth. Only by a radical *transvaluation* of all values, and rejection root and branch of the traditional herd-values and a return to the natural values of the master-class will the world and the human race be saved.

This very brief account of the substance of Nietzsche's philosophy may give a somewhat perverted idea by its very oversimplification. A characteristic of Nietzsche's mind is its penetrating subtlety and one of the attractions of his writings is the way he will pursue a line of thought through infinite ramifications. Although he criticized Christianity severely he also gave it credit for a number of qualities, one of which is the emphasis it lays on truth and the need to attain it. Precisely the invention

<sup>1</sup>Not Jesus, whom Nietzsche admired. 'There was only *one* Christian, and he died on the Cross.'

of 'conscience' and 'guilt' which he so bitterly condemns, by his own admission turned the thoughts of men inward and so taught them (albeit in the wrong interests) to examine their inmost thoughts. This is only one among many of Nietzsche's qualifications even of his worst attacks.

Nietzsche went mad in 1889 when his doctrine, first popularized by the Danish critic Brandes, was just beginning to spread throughout Europe. Hardly recognized in his own lifetime—indeed the lack of any sympathy on the part of his contemporaries was a contributory cause of his breakdown—his rise to fame was almost spectacular from 1900 onwards. Resistance to his doctrine was, of course, very considerable, and most of all in England and America, and the English-speaking countries generally. The apparent atheism of his doctrine does not go down with the Anglo-Saxon public, amongst which it is simply 'not done' to attack Christianity, and we must confess that at times Nietzsche's onslaughts sound more akin to the ravings of a maniac than the carefully reasoned argument of a philosopher. On the other hand, in France, where minds are perhaps broader on the religious issue or perhaps where attacks on the Roman Church are more welcome, some very good work on Nietzsche has been done. The monumental volumes of Charles Andler for example are probably the best that have been written so far on the philosopher, and even the Italians in the work of M. Castiglione have contributed their share. But apart from research which is only just beginning, the really significant phenomenon of our age has been the systematic distortion and debasement of his philosophy in the interests of German Fascism. 'The philosopher,' quoted by the mouth of Goebbels, will not easily be commended to an inquiring universe.

It should be stressed at the outset that two of the main platforms of Fascism in Germany, (1) the totalitarian State, and (2) the racial doctrine with its anti-semitic bias and doctrine of the *Herrenvolk*, are flatly denounced by Nietzsche in everything he wrote at all pertaining to the subject. He denounced the State completely, and in particular the State doctrine of Hegel who in any case was a *bête noire* because of his doctrine of the Absolute, a sort of red rag to the Nietzschean bull. Secondly with regard to the racial doctrine he denounced it simply as 'race' swindle and refused to have anything to do with its protagonists, including the anti-semites. He was in fact very angry with his sister for marrying

the anti-semitic Förster. True he despised Hebrew values, but as he identified them with the Christian there is no anti-semitic capital to be raised on that score. As for the idea that the Germans might be the *Herrenvolk* he would have burst with indignation at the thought, his opinion of the Germans being worse than his opinion of any European nation (not excluding the English). He even went so far as to blame them for every major European evil in the last four centuries, of which the two greatest were the Reformation and the War of Liberation against Napoleon. On paper at least he disowned them and refused even to live in their country. Only on a third count, his theory of morals, especially his doctrine of *hardness*, can his thought be to any extent confused with that of the Nazis, and here a good deal of qualification needs to be made.

Nietzsche's general outlook is the most human (in the literal sense) ever conceived. The universe to him is chaos and the mind of man (including the subconscious mind) brings *order* into it (like the *voûs* of Anaxagoras, another of his favourite philosophers). The driving impulse behind all human activity is the 'will to power' and it is this will to power which explains the rise of logic, science, etc., in the human sphere. Man prefers the stable, the permanent, because it enables him to consolidate his power more easily, so he invents concepts such as 'substance' and laws like the 'law of identity', etc., to make this easier. The highest man, the superman to come, does this on the highest level and consolidates his power in the world to the fullest extent. Whatever is life-promoting (and life includes cultural and spiritual qualities) is 'good' and there is no other criterion of 'good' except what men 'will'.

The *Superman* as Nietzsche conceived him will be strong, mentally, physically and spiritually, and he and his like will rule the earth as philosophic kings not unlike those of Plato. Below him will be the executive or the soldier type, who keep order, and below the soldier the merchant and professional class who do the everyday work of life. As Nietzsche sees it, living becomes easier as you go down the scale, harder as you go up, and he definitely meant by *hardness* a hardness towards oneself, with even a touch of the ascetic. Even his praise of war, for example, which has often been quoted against him, applies mainly to the spiritual war of the members and means really that a man who wishes to lead must

integrate himself. The man at the top must be hard, cold, philosophic, sensitive to beauty, far-seeing, but hard and cold, not through lack of feeling but because he has overcome feeling, unsympathetic, not because he has no sympathy, but because he feels it deeply and has risen above it. Above all he must be overflowing with spontaneous vitality, a generosity flowing naturally from his own inexhaustible strength.

The men of this type who are to be the future 'lords of the earth' will arise through the interbreeding of the best European stocks, not excluding the Jews, who in the end, he thought, would be assimilated. Thus Nietzsche was international in outlook. He wanted 'good Europeans' and a 'united' Europe. He saw only ruin and endless slaughter in the rising national feeling of his own day and prophesied a series of chaotic nationalistic wars in the twentieth century. The effect of these wars would be so terrible that an age of 'nihilism' would ensue in which men would cease to believe in anything. The prevailing religious outlook would be a sort of Buddhism, which he regards as the religion most natural to exhausted peoples. After this period in some undefined way the 'race' of supermen would arise, and, with Europe as their centre, would rule the earth. After this 'Great Noon' the universe would again repeat itself and so on for ever and ever.

Nietzsche's services to mankind may be summed up very briefly. First the emphasis on the deeper instincts as against the mind, the first stirring of the psychotherapy of the subconscious which has been so developed in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Secondly the view of the universe as *beautiful*, which, however much it may offend the narrow-minded, has long been needed and may be essential to human well-being. Thirdly the tragic view of human life and the acceptance—cheerful and secure in the highest degree—of its dualist and antagonistic nature. *Amor Fati* is the name Nietzsche gave to this view, and it is not dissimilar, although he would hardly admit it, to the view of more intellectual Christians with regard to the crucifixion of the Lord. Fourthly his criticism of the totalitarian State and of the 'general will' of Rousseau and Hegel which lies behind it, is the best possible tonic in the world we are now living in today. And lastly his description of men as they might be in the Supermen—with certain important qualifications—is the most inspiring reading to be found in any modern writer.

<sup>1</sup> A. Adler, *Individual Psychology*.



In conclusion there are two points in his *Weltanschauung* which link him up far more closely than he would be willing to admit with traditional religion. Few will deny that in all religions two essential features are always present, without which no religion can really endure: one the promise of *eternal life* and the other the promise of *moral cleansing* or purification (known in Christianity as the 'forgiveness of sins'). Both of these Nietzsche denounced with no small vigour and both of them in a new form he introduced into his system. There is no doubt whatever that the doctrine of 'eternal recurrence' is simply his way of 'overcoming death' and that of the Superman his version of the 'redeemed' sinner. The long illness of conscience and guilt healed by the Cross for Christians is brought to an end for the Nietzschean by the identification with the Superman—beyond good and evil—and both have as their background a similar religious and tragic view of life. Nietzsche thus represents more than most the crisis of modern man, which perhaps first became apparent in Goethe's *Faust* of more than a century ago. Faust had lost faith and he too sought healing through the power of beauty (in the Helena of Part II). In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* the struggle is more intense and the soul more shaken. For this fact alone, that he brings us back to the fundamental religious problem, Nietzsche should be read today. And to those who are too easily misled by his doctrine of hardness there is the reminder that he too loved the world (i.e. the test of the Superman), and in one famous aphorism told us a truth worthy of Christ:

• 'Thoughts, which come on doves' feet, rule the world.'

E. MARY MILFORD

## A MODERN PRIMITIVE

THAT is the house, with its two green street doors, its barred windows, its narrow white-washed roofs, squeezed among crowded neighbours in winding Ananda Chatterji Lane in North Calcutta. There at any time, on any day I could find Jamini Roy working. He seldom went out, he seldom went away. His days passed smoothly between one exhibition and the next in unhurried work, letting his brush move in those faultless curves that