Nietzsche

Paul Elmer More

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Introduction

If the number of books written about a subject is any proof of interest in it, Nietzsche must have become one of the most popular of authors among Englishmen and Americans. Besides the authorized version of his Works appearing under the editorial care of Dr. Levy, [1] every season for the past three or four years has brought at least one new interpretation of his theories or biography of the man. Virtually all of these books are composed by professed and uncritical admirers, but even without rectifying our judgment by comparison with the equally violent diatribes of his enemies in German, we can see the figure of Nietzsche beginning to stand out in its true character. He was not quite the Galahad of philosophy that he appeared to his sister; [2] above all we begin to see that the roots of disease were more deeply implanted in his nature than those would have us believe who think to find in his works a return to sanity and strength; yet neither was he the monster of immorality which frightened us when first his theories began to be bruited abroad. The stern, calculating Superman turns out on inspection to be a creature of quivering nerves and of extreme sensitiveness to the opinion of his fellows, yet with a vein of dauntless resolution through it all.

Part I

1. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche. The first complete and authorized English translation. Edited by Dr. Oscar Levy. London: T. N. Foulis; New York: The Macmillan Co. 18 volumes. Eight volumes have already appeared.

2. Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsche's. Von Elisabeth Forster−Nietzsche. Leipzig, 1895, 1897, 1904. The best biography in English is The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche, by Daniel Halevy; translated [from the French] by J. M. Hone; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1911.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, to give his full baptismal name, was born in the little village of Rocken, October 15, 1844. His father, a Lutheran clergyman of scholarly and musical tastes, suffered a severe fall when the child was four years old, and died after a short period of mental aberration. In 1850 the widow went with her son and her daughter Elisabeth to live with her husband's mother and sister in Naumburg−an−der−Saale. There Friedrich grew to be a solemn, thoughtful boy, nicknamed by his comrades "the little pastor." "With his sister and one or two friends he raised about himself a fantastic world of the imagination, in which he played many heroic roles. Yet always he felt himself alone and set apart. "From childhood," he wrote in his boyish journal, "I sought solitude, and found my happiness there where undisturbed I could retire into myself."

At the age of fourteen he received a scholarship at the school of Pforta, situated on the Saale about five miles from Naumburg. In this cloistered institution, where the ancient discipline of the Cistercian founders still prevailed over its Protestant curriculum, Nietzsche acquired that thorough grounding in the classics which served him later in his philological studies; and for a while he felt in his heart the influence of the religious, almost monastic life. But the spirit of weariness and rebellion soon supervened. "The existence of God," he wrote in an exercise for a literary society, "immortality, the authority of the Bible, Revelation, and the like, will forever remain problems. I have attempted to deny everything: ah, to destroy is easy, but to build up!" And further: "Very often submission to the will of God and humility are but a covering mantle for cowardly hesitation to face our destiny with determination." −− So early was the boy preluding to the life−work of the man.

At Pforta, Nietzsche had become intimate with Paul Deussen (afterwards the eminent Oriental scholar and disciple of Schopenhauer), and with Deussen and another friend he began his university career at Bonn. But from his comrades there he soon fled, "like a fugitive," he says, and went to Leipzig. These were his days of Sturm und Drang. Here he came under the influence that was to shape his whole literary career. Chancing one day at a bookshop on a copy of The World as Will and Representation, he heard as it were a daemon whispering in his ear: "Take the book home with you." This was his Tolle, lege; the message had found him. Rebel as he might in later years against Schopenhauer's pessimistic doctrine of blind, unmeaning will; try as he might to construct a positive doctrine out of that blank negation, he never got the poison out of his blood. Much of the pose and lyric misanthropy of Zarathustra is really an echo of what he read in his room on that fateful day. It is probable, too, that his careful use of language is partly due to the influence of Schopenhauer. In Leipzig also he met the man who was to be the great joy and the great torment of his life. One memorable evening, at the house of a friend, he was introduced to Wagner, heard him play from the Meistersinger, and learnt that the "musician of the future" was a disciple of Schopenhauer.

Meanwhile he had not neglected his classical studies and had already published several philological essays in the Rheinisches Museum. In 1869, through the recommendation of his master and friend, Ritschl, he was appointed Professor of Philology in the University of Basle, and took up his residence in the Swiss town, not without misgivings over his youth and his unfitness for the routine of teaching. Nevertheless, he threw himself into the task with zeal and was, in the beginning at least, successful with the students.

At that time Richard and Cosima Wagner were living in seclusion at Triebschen on the lake of the Four Cantons, not far from Lucerne, while the master was completing his great tetralogy. Here Nietzsche renewed the

acquaintance which had been begun at Leipzig, and was soon deeply absorbed in Wagner's ideas and ambitions. "I have found a man," he wrote in a letter after his first visit to Triebschen, "who more than any other reveals to me the image of what Schopenhauer calls 'genius,' and who is quite penetrated with that wonderful, fervent philosophy.... No one knows him and can judge him, because all the world stands on another basis and is not at home in his atmosphere. In him rules an ideality so absolute, a humanity so profound and moving, an earnestness of life so exalted, that in his presence I feel myself as in the presence of the divine." Under the sway of this admiration Nietzsche wrote and published his first book, The Birth of Tragedy, in which he broke lance with the pedantic routine of philology as then taught in the universities, and held up the Wagnerian opera as a reincarnation of the spirit of Greek tragedy and as the art of the future. "Anything more beautiful than your book I have never read! all is noble!" was the comment of the complaisant master. Nietzsche always maintained that those were the happiest days of his life; for a little while he was excited out of imprisoning egotism and caught up into another egotism greater than his own. But the cause of his happiness was also the cause of its instability. No doubt the scandalous rupture between the two friends was due in part to philosophical differences, for in the Wagnerian opera Nietzsche came later to see all the elements of romantic idealism which were most abhorrent to him. But deeper yet lay the inevitable necessity that two personalities, each of which sought to absorb the world into itself, should separate with fire and thunder. In his last days Nietzsche insinuated that there had been love between him and Cosima, but this was no doubt a delusion of madness. The friendship and quarrel are easily explained as a tragic and humorous incident of romanticism.

But to return to Basle. The routine of university life soon became irksome to Nietzsche. He felt within himself the stirring of a new philosophy, to develop which he needed leisure and independence. His health, too, began to alarm him. In one of the recesses of his Leipzig years he had been drafted into a Prussian regiment of artillery, despite his exemption due to short sight, and had served reluctantly but faithfully, until released on account of an injury caused by falling from his horse. His strength was never the same after that, though the seat of his disease was deeper than any accidental hurt. At Basle he began to suffer severely from insomnia and various nervous ailments, and at last, in 1879, he broke his connection with the university, and went out into the world to seek health and to publish his new gospel.

For a while he lived with his sister, and projected with her great schemes for a kind of monastic seminary, wherein a few noble spirits, dissatisfied with the world and, needless to add, devoted to himself, should dwell together and from their studious seclusion pour out a stream of philosophy to regenerate society. After his sister left him −− they parted not on the best of terms −− he passed his time in Italy and Switzerland. He was always a lover of the mountains, and especially in the pure air of the Engadine he found temporary relief for the ills of the body and refreshment of spirit after contact with unsympathetic mankind. He walked much, and his later books −− with the exception of Zarathustra, which possesses some thread of composition −− are not much more than miscellaneous collections of pensees jotted down as they came to him by the way. A flattering portrait of him in these lonelier years was drawn by his enthusiastic disciple, Fraulein Meta von Salis−Marschlins, in her Philosoph und Edelmensch. Not all was yet cloud and gloom about his brooding soul, and the Superman was still capable of gay comradeship and of the most approved German revery over the beauties of nature. His conversation, when he felt at ease, was copious and brilliant But he was slipping more and more into bitter, self−consuming solitude. "I have forty−three years behind me," he wrote one day, "and am as alone as if I were a child."

The end was unrelieved darkness. With the neglect or vilification of his books, with the alienation of one friend after another, and with the growth of the taint in his blood, his self−absorption developed into fitful illusions and downright megalomania. His last work he called Ecce Homo, and to Brandes, the well−known critic, he wrote:

Friend George,−− Since you have discovered me, it is not wonderful to find me: what is now difficult is to lose me.

The Crucified

After lingering some time in imbecility under the care of his sister at Weimar, he died on the 25th of August, 1900.

Part II

One may begin the perusal of the life of with a feeling of repulsion for the man, −− at least that, I confess, was my own experience, −− but one can scarcely lay it down without pity for his tragic failures, and without something like admiration for his reckless devotion to ideas. And all through the reading one is impressed by the truth which his ardent worshipper, Fraulein von Salis−Marschlins, has made the keynote of her characterization: "He −− and this is the salient point −− condemned a whole class of feelings in their excess, not because he did not have them, but just because he did have them and knew their danger." That truth is as important for judging the man as for understanding his philosophy. He was a man terribly at war with himself, and in this very breach in his nature lies the attraction −− power −− fully felt but not always clearly understood −− of his works for the modern world. No doubt, if we look into the causes of his growing popularity, we shall find that a considerable part of his writing is just the sort of spasmodic commonplace that enraptures the half−cultured and flatters them with thinking they have discovered a profound philosophical basis for their untutored emotions. But withal he cannot be quite so easily disposed of. He may be, like Poe, "three−fifths of him genius and two−fifths mere fudge;" but the inspired part of him is the provocative and, it might be said, final expression of one side of the contest between the principles of egotism and sympathy that for two centuries and more has been waging for the polity and morals of the world. We cannot rightly understand unless we find his place in this long debate, and to do this we must take a rapid glance backward.

The problem to which gives so absolute an answer was definitely posed in the eighteenth century, but its peculiarity is best shown by comparing it with the issue −− different in substance though somewhat similar in terms −− of the preceding age. To the dominant moralists of the seventeenth century the basis of human nature was a pure egotism. La Rochefoucauld gave the most finished expression to this belief in his doctrine of amour−propre, displaying itself in a vanity that takes pleasure in the praise of ourselves and a jealousy that takes umbrage at the praise of others. In England the motive of egotism had already been developed by Hobbes into a complete philosophy of the state. "In the first place," said Hobbes, "I put forth, for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death." The natural condition of mankind, therefore, is that every man's hand should be against every other man, and society is the result of a compact by which individuals, since each is unable to defend himself alone against the passions of all others, are driven to mutual concessions. The contrary principle of natural sympathy was involved in the political theories of Grotius and his followers. It is even more fully implied in the vagaries of certain of the sects commonly called Levellers, underlying, for example, the protest of the fanatic company of Diggers who, when arrested for starting a communistic settlement in Surrey, declared that "the time of deliverance was at hand; and God would bring His People out of slavery, and restore them to their freedom in enjoying the fruits and benefits of the Earth.... That their intent is to restore the Creation to its former condition.... That the times will suddenly be, when all men shall willingly come and give up their lands and estates, and submit to this Community of Goods."

In this opposition of Hobbes's notion of the natural condition of man as one of warfare, with the humble effort of the Diggers to restore mankind to a primitive state of equality and fraternity, one may see foreshadowed the ethical theories of self−interest and benevolence which were to be developed in the next century. But there was an element in the theorizing of the seventeenth century which quite separates these men from their successors. Above the idea of nature hovered, more or less distinctly, the idea of a supernatural power. Even Hobbes, though he was repudiated by his own party as an atheist, completes his conception of the civil commonwealth dependent on the law of nature with a Christian commonwealth based on supernatural revelation and the will of God. So, on the other hand, the political schemes of fraternity were almost universally subordinate to notions of theocratic government. Of purely natural sympathy, as it was later to be developed into the sole source of virtue, the epoch had comparatively little thought. This distinction is of the utmost importance in the history of ethics, and may be rendered more precise by consideration of a few lines from that erudite scholar, but crabbed poet, Dr. Henry

More. In his Cupid's Conflict the Platonist becomes almost lyrical when this theme is touched:−−

When I my self from mine own self do quit And each thing else; then an all−spreaden love To the vast Universe my soul doth fit, Makes me half equall to All−seeing Jove. My mightie wings high stretch'd then clapping light I brush the starres and make them shine more bright. Then all the works of God with close embrace I dearly hug in my enlarged arms, All the hid paths of heavenly Love I trace And boldly listen to his secret charms.

The same idea occurs more than once in the mystical doctor's prose, which was, if truth be told, a good deal more poetical than his verse. "And even the more Miserable Objects in this present Scene of things," he somewhere writes, "cannot divest him of his Happiness, but rather modifie it; the Sweetness of his Spirit being melted into a kindly compassion in the behalf of Others: Whom if he be able to help, it is a greater Accession to his joy; and if he cannot, the being Conscious to himself of so sincere,a compassion, and so harmonious and suitable to the present State of things, carries along with it some degree of Pleasure, like Mournful Notes of Musick exquisitely well fitted to the Sadness of the Ditty."

It is clear that this sense of compassion is a motive utterly different in kind from the sympathy which meant so much to the next age; to pass from one to the other a great principle had to be eliminated from the philosophy of human conduct, and this principle was manifestly the sense of the divine, of the infinite which stood apart from mortal passions and of which some simulacrum resided in the human breast. The man who effectcd this revolution, partly by virtue of his own genius and partly as spokesman of his time, was John Locke, whose Essay Concerning Human Understanding, published in 1690 as the result of eighteen years of reflection, became the bible, so to speak, of the next century. Locke did not expressly deny the existence of a supernatural world. To explain our sense of morality he still had recourse to a law of God imposed upon man by decree and without any corresponding law in nature; and he began his philosophical discussion by a kind of apology, declaring that "God having endued man with those faculties of knowing which he hath, was no more obliged by His Goodness to plant those innate notions in his mind, than that, having given him reason, hands, and materials, He should build him bridges or houses." But, having thus apologetically cleared the field, Locke proceeded to elaborate a theory of sensations and ideas which really leaves no place in the human soul for anything outside of the phenomenal laws of nature.

One of the first and strangest fruits of this new naturalism was Mandeville's Fable of the Bees, which undertakes to show by the apologue of a hive of bees that the welfare of a State is the result of the counterbalancing of the passions of its individual citizens, that, in a word, private vices are public virtues:−−

Thus every Part was full of Vice, Yet the whole Mass a Paradise.

The poem in itself was not much more than a clever jeu d'esprit, but the Remarks and the Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue, which he published in defence of his thesis, are among the acutest psychological tracts of the age. "I believe man," he says, "(besides skin, flesh, bones, etc., that are obvious to the eye) to be a compound of various passions, that all of them, as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no." The passions which produce the effect of virtue are those that spring from pride and the sense of power and the desire of luxury. "Pity," he adds, "though it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our passions, is yet as much a frailty of our nature, as anger, pride,or fear. The weakest minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which reason none are more compassionate than women and children." Such a theory of the passions is a legitimate, if onesided, deduction from the naturalistic philosophy as it left the hands of Locke; the ethical conclusions, it will be observed, have a curious similarity with the later system of Nietzsche. The theory of Mandeville was too violently in opposition to the common sense of mankind to produce much direct influence, but it remained as a great scandal of letters. It brought the author an indictment before the grand jury of Middlesex for impiety; and as late as 1765 Diderot, in his criticism of a large and inartistic painting, could be understood when he exclaimed: "What shall we do with such a thing? You who defend the Fable of the Bees will no doubt say to me that it brings money to the sellers of paints and canvas. To the devil with sophists! With them good and evil no longer exist!"

The real exegete of Locke's Scripture, he who made naturalism current by finding within it, without recourse to any extrinsic law, a sufficient principle of moral conduct, was David Hume. Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, published in 1739 and 1740, fell dead from the press, and was in part repudiated when, in 1751, he put forth his shorter Inquiry into the Principles of Morals. Yet there is in reality no fundamental difference between his earlier

and later theories, and the doctrines which passed to Rousseau and Kant were fully and definitely pronounced in the Treatise written before the author had completed his twenty−ninth year. Those doctrines had been foreshadowed, so to speak, by Shaftesbury, but Shaftesbury, though one of the leading influences of the age, was too confused or indolent a thinker to clear his ideas of the gorgeous rhetoric that involved them. With Hume rhetoric was supplanted by an insatiable desire of analysis. He begins by resolving the world into an absolute flux, wherein the only reality for us is a succession of sensations, beyond which all is a fiction of the imagination. I enter a room and perceive a certain chair; if after an interval of time I return to the room and perceive the same chair, the feeling that this object of perception and the former are identical is merely created by my "propensity to feign." Our notion of cause and effect is likewise a fiction, due to the fact that we have perceived a certain sequence of phenomena a number of times, and have come to associate them together; we have no real assurance that a similar sequence will happen another time.

And human nature is equally a flux, without any element of unity or identity. An idea is nothing more than a reproduced and fainter sensation, and all knowledge is nothing more than probability. There is no persistent self, but only a "succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness." In this flood of sensations pleasure and pain alone can be the motives of action, and to pleasure and pain alone our notion of virtue and vice must be ultimately reduced.

In his analysis of the moral sense Hume begins with the conception of property, upon which he raises the superstructure of society. Self−interest is fundamentally opposed to admitting the claims of others to possession, but the only way I can be assured of retaining what I possess is by allowing my neighbor to retain what he possesses. Justice, then, is a mutual concession of self−interests for the advantage of each. A just act is an act that is useful at once to society and the individual by strengthening the security of property. But a just act is not in itself virtuous −− the sense of virtue is the agreeable emotion, or passion, as Hume calls it, that comes to us when we perceive a man perform an act of justice which, by the power of throwing ourselves sympathetically into the position of others, we feel to be indirectly useful to ourselves. The pleasurable emotion of self−interest is the motive of just action, the pleasurable emotion of sympathy with an act of justice in which we are not immediately concerned is the sense of virtue.

Besides this passion of justice which is necessary for the very existence of society, Hume recognized certain minor passions, such as benevolence, which are not instigated by mutual self−interest, but spring directly from the inherent tendency of man to sympathize with his fellows. Manifestly there are serious difficulties in this reduction of virtue and vice to agreeable and disagreeable passions. It leaves no motive for virtue when the individual has become conscious of the basis of justice in the mutual concessions of self−interest, and asks why he should not foster this concession by the appearance of surrendering his native rights while secretly grasping all in his power; it furnishes no clear difference between the passions which actuate the hero and the gourmet, a Nathan Hale uttering his regret that he had only one life to give for his country and a Talleyrand saying placidly, "Fate cannot harm me; I have dined." The lacunae point to some vital error in Hume's philosophy, but his theory of self−interest and sympathy was none the less the first clear expression of a revolutionary change in thought and morals.

Twenty years after the date of Hume's Treatise his friend Adam Smith published The Theory of Moral Sentiments, in which the doctrine of sympathy was carried a long step forward. Utility is still the measure of virtue and vice, but a man now not only has the sense of virtue from sympathy with an act of justice, but is himself led to act justly through a sense of sympathy with the feelings that his conduct will arouse in others. Furthermore, through the habit of reflection we come to harbor a kind of impersonal sympathy with, or antipathy to, our own acts similar to that which we feel for the acts of others. "It is not" says Smith, "the love of our neighbor, it is not the love of mankind, which upon many occasions prompts us to the practice of those divine virtues. It is a stronger love, a more powerful affection, which generally takes place upon such occasions; the love of what is honorable and noble, of the grandeur, and dignity, and superiority of our own characters." Thus in the system of Adam Smith sympathy becomes the actuating cause of virtue and is even able to transform self−love into a motive wearing the mask of absolute virtue.

Part III

Not the least significant feature of the advance from Hume's philosophy is the introduction of the word "sentiment" into the title of Adam Smith's treatise, for during the remaining years of the century the chief development of the doctrine of sympathy in England is found in the novelists of the sentimental school. "Sentimental! what is that?" is the record in Wesley's journal after reading Sterne's Sentimental Journey. "It is not English: he might as well say Continental. It is not sense. It conveys no determinate idea; yet one fool makes many. And this nonsensical word (who would believe it?) is become a fashionable one!" The hypercritical might have been told that if the word conveyed no determinate idea, it at least represented a very definite force and had a perfectly clear origin. It was nothing else but the logical outcome of Hume's and Adam Smith's theory of sympathy entirely dissevered from any supernatural principle as the source of virtue. From 1760 to 1768 Sterne was issuing the successive volumes of Tristram Shandy and the Sentimental Journey, in which this virtue of sentimental sympathy, reduced to pure sensibility, if not to morbidly sensitive nerves, and utterly freed from reason or character or the law of cause and effect, appears full−blown. Whatever practical moral these books may have is to be found in the episode of my Uncle Toby tenderly letting the buzzing fly out of the window or in the tears of the pilgrim over the carcass of a dead ass. If Sterne's sentiment was apt to grow a trifle maudlin, that of his contemporary, Henry Brooke, was a constant downflow of soul. "This is a book of tears," says a modern editor of Brooke's Fool of Quality; "but they are tears that purge and purify with pity and compassion." I am inclined to think the purging for many readers to−day would come more from ridicule than from pity; but the book is notable as an attempt to depict a life made completely virtuous by the new sentiment of sympathy for all mankind. Hearken for a minute to one of the sermons of the pious Mentor of the story to his youthful charge:−−

I once told you my darling [he says], that all the evil which is in you belongs to yourself, and that all the good which is in you belongs to your God.... Remember, therefore, this distinction in yourself and all others; remember that, when you feel or see any instance of selfishness, you feel and see the coveting, grudging, and grappling of the creature; but that, where you feel or see any instance of benevolence, you feel and see the informing influence of your God. All possible vice and malignity subsists in the one; all possible virtue, all possible beauty, all possible blessedness, subsists in the other.

Now two things are remarkable in this passage, and would stand out even more plainly if I should quote at greater length. First, we have got completely away from the utilitarian theory of social virtue as a mutual concession of self−interests, which was propounded by Hobbes and essentially retained by Locke and Hume and Adam Smith, though gradually overlaid by the modifying power of sympathy. In Brooke's philosophy self−interest and benevolence are finally and absolutely sundered: the one is all vice, the other is all virtue. And, secondly, we may see here how far this newer notion of sympathy is removed from the compassion of Hobbes's Platonizing contemporary; the contrast is even more vivid from the fact that Brooke gives a thoroughly Christian turn to the expression of the "eternal law of benevolence," as he calls it. In Henry More the "kindly compassion" for the world is entirely subsidiary to the rapture of a spirit caught up in celestial contemplation, whereas in The Fool of Quality love is indeed planted in us by a divine hand as a force contrary to what Brooke calls "the very horrible and detestable nature of Self," but its total meaning and effect are in a sentimental dissolution of man's self in the idea of humanity. We have reached, that is to say, the genuine springs of humanitarianism.

Meanwhile the doctrine of sympathy had passed in France into the pen, if not into the heart, of one whose genius was to give it a new color and a power sufficient to crush and remould societies. It is not necessary to go at large into the well−known theories of Rousseau. In his Discourse on Inequality (1755) and his Social Contract (1762) he, like his English predecessors, starts with the motives of self−interest and sympathy, but soon gives them a different direction. He saw, as did Hobbes and Hume, that property depends on the mutual concessions of self−interest, but he saw further that on this basis alone society and traditional morality were in a condition of unstable equilibrium, were in fact founded on injustice and not on justice at all. He perceived no relief from this

hazardous condition except through counteracting self−interest by the equally innate and human force of sympathy, which was somehow to be called into action as the volonti generale, or mystical will of the people, embracing and absorbing the wills and desires of individuals into one harmonious purpose.

One step more and we shall have ended this preliminary history of the growth of sympathy as the controlling principle of morals. From Rousseau it passed into Germany and became one of the mainsprings of the romantic movement. You will find its marks everywhere in that literature: in the peculiarly sentimental attitude towards nature, in the impossible yearning of the schone Seelen for brotherhood, in the whole philosophy of feeling. It lurks in Kant's fundamental rule of morality: "Act on a maxim which thou canst will to be law universal;" it lives and finds its highest expression in Schleiermacher's attempt to reunite the individual with the infinite by dissolving the mind in sympathetic contemplation of the flowing universe of things. And in this heated, unwholesome atmosphere of German romanticism sprang up and blossomed our modern ethics of humanitarianism. The theories of socialism are diverse and often superficially contradictory; they profess to stand on a foundation of economic law and the necessity of evolution, but in reality they spring from Rousseau's ideal of sympathy working itself out as a force sufficient in itself to combine the endless oppositions of self−interest in the volonte generale, and from the romantic conception of the infinite as an emotion obtained from surrender of self to the universal flux. From the former come the political schemes of humanitarianism; from the latter its religious sanction and fanatical intolerance.

Part IV

This survey of the growth of self−interest and sympathy may seem a long parenthesis in the study of Nietzsche, but I do not see how otherwise we can understand the problem with which he struggled, or the meaning,of his proposed solution. Now, Nietzsche's writing is too often, as I have said, in a style of spasmodic commonplace, displaying a tortured effort to appear profound. But it is in places also singularly vivid, with a power of clinging epithet and a picturesque exaggeration or grotesqueness that may remind one of Carlyle. Consider, for example, part of the chapter of Zarathustra entitled Redemption:−−

As Zarathustra one day passed over the great bridge, he was surrounded by cripples and beggars, and a hunchback spake thus to him:−−

"Behold, Zarathustra, even the people learn from thee, and acquire faith in thy doctrine; but for these to believe fully in thee, one thing is yet needful −− thou must first of all convince us cripples." ...

Then answered Zarathustra unto him who so spake: ... Yet is this the smallest thing to me since I have been amongst men, that one man lacks an eye, another an ear, a third a leg, and that others have lost their tongue, or their nose, or their head.

I see and have seen a worse thing and divers things so monstrous that of all I might not speak and of some I might not keep silence: I have seen human beings to whom everything was lacking, except that of one thing they had too much −− men who are nothing more than a big eye, or a big mouth, or a big belly, or something else big −− reversed cripples I name such men.

And when I came out of my solitude and for the first time passed over this bridge, then I could not trust my eyes, and looked, and looked again, and I said at last: "That is an ear! an ear as big as a man!" I looked still more attentively; and actually there did move under the ear something that was pitiably small and poor and slim. And in truth this immense ear was perched on a small thin stalk −− and the stalk was a man! With a glass before your eyes you might even recognize further a tiny envious countenance, and also that a bloated soullet dangled at the stalk. The people told me, however, that the big ear was not only a man, but a great man, a genius. But I never believed the people when they spake of great men −− and I hold to my belief that it was a reversed cripple, who had too little of everything and too much of one thing....

Verily, my friends, I walk amongst men as amongst the fragments and limbs of men!

This is the terrible thing to mine eye, that I find men broken up and scattered as on a field of battle and butchery.

And when mine eye fleeth from the present to the bygone, it findeth always the same: fragments and members and fearful chance −− but no men!

The present and the bygone upon earth −− alas, my friends, that is to me the intolerable; and I should not know how to live were I not a seer also of that which must come.

A seer, a willer, a creator, a future itself, and a bridge to the future −− and, alas, also as it were a cripple upon this bridge: all that is Zarathustra....

To redeem what is past, and to transform every "It was" into "Thus would I have it!" −− that alone I call redemption....

To will liberateth; but what is that named which still putteth the liberator in chains?

"It was" −− so is named the Will's gnashing of teeth and loneliest tribulation. Impotent before the thing that has been done, of all the past the Will is a malicious spectator. [3]

That is not only an example of Nietzsche's vivid and personal style at its best, but it also contains the gist of his message to the world. For there is this to be observed in regard to Nietzsche's works: to one who dips into them at random, they are likely to seem dark and tangled. His manner of expressing himself in aphorisms and of uttering half−truths in emphatic finality gives to his writing an appearance of complexity and groping uncertainty, if not of self−contradiction; but a little persistence in reading soon shows that his theory of life, though never systematized, was really quite simple, and that he had in fact only a few ideas which he repeated in endlessly

diversified language. Any one of his major works will afford a fairly complete view of his doctrine: it will be found in Human All−Too−Human to implicate pretty fully the Bergsonian philosophy and two or three other much−vaunted philosophies of the self−evolving flux; in Beyond Good and Evil the ethical aspects of the new liberty are chiefly considered; in Zarathustra, on the whole the greatest of his works, he writes in a tone of lyrical egotism and prophetic brooding on his own destiny; in The Will to Power there is an attempt to reduce his scattered intentions to a logical system, but unfortunately that work was never finished, and is printed largely from his hasty notes. What probably first impresses one in any of these books is Nietzsche's violent antipathy to the past, −− "'It was' −− so is named the Will's gnashing of teeth and loneliest tribulation; impotent before the thing that has been done, of all the past the Will is a malicious spectator." In this apparently sweeping condemnation of tradition all that has been held sacred is denounced in language that sounds occasionally like the fury of a madman. So he exclaims: "To the botching of mankind and the allowing of it to putrefy was given the name 'God';" and to our long idealization of the eternal feminine he has only the brusque reply: "Thou goest to women? Forget not thy whip!"

But as we become better versed in Nietzsche's extreme manner of expression, we find that his condemnation of the past is by no means indiscriminate, that in truth his denunciations are directed to a particular aspect of history. In the classical world this distinction takes the form of a harsh and unreal contrast between the Dionysiac principle of unrest and growth and creation for which he expresses the highest regard, and the Apollonian principle of rest and renunciation and contraction for which, as Platonism, he has the deepest aversion. The same distinction really holds in his attitude towards religion, although here his feelings are not so clearly defined. For the Old Testament and its virile, human poetry, for instance, he admits great reverence, reserving his spleen for the New Testament and its faith. In one of the aphorisms of his virulent attack on Christianity, entitled appropriately Antichrist:, he writes:−−

One does well to put on gloves when reading the New Testament. The neighborhood of so much impurity almost forces one to do so.... I have searched the New Testament in vain for a single sympathetic trait; there is nothing in it that could be called free, kind, frank, upright. Humanity has not taken its first steps in this book −− instincts of purity are lacking. There are only bad instincts in the New Testament; and there is not even the courage of these bad instincts. All is cowardice in it, all is closed eyes and self−delusion. Any book is pure after one has read the New Testament; for example, immediately after St. Paul, I read with delight that charming wanton mocker, Petronius, of whom one might say what Domenico Boccaccio wrote about Cesare Borgia to the Duke of Parma: e tutto festo.

To understand these diatribes we must remember that there were two elements in Christianity as it developed in the early centuries: on the one hand, the strong aspiring faith of a people in the vigor of youth and eager to bring into life fresh and unworn spiritual values, and, on the other hand, the depression and world−weariness which haunted the decadent heterogeneous people of Alexandria and the East. Now it is clear that for the former of these Nietzsche had no understanding, since it lay quite beyond his range of vision, whereas for the latter he had a very intimate understanding and a bitter detestation. Hence his almost unreserved rejection of Christianity as a product of corruption and race impurity.

It is a mistake [he says in The Will to Power] to imagine that, with Christianity, an ingenuous and youthful people rose against an old culture.... We understand nothing of the psychology of Christianity, if we suppose that it was the expression of revived youth among a people, or of the resuscitated strength of a race. It is, rather, a typical form of decadence, of moral softening, and of hysteria, amid a general hotch−potch of races and people that had lost all aims and had grown weary and sick. The wonderful company which gathered round this master seducer of the populace, would not be at all out of place in a Russian novel: all the diseases of the nerves seem to give one another a rendezvous in this crowd.

And elsewhere he says, more generally:−−

Long pondering over the physiology of exhaustion forced upon me the question, to what extent the judgments of exhausted people had percolated into the world of values. The result at which I arrived was as startling as it could possibly be −− even for one like myself who was already at home in many a strange world. I found that all prevailing valuations −− that is to say, all those which had gained ascendancy over humanity, or at least over its tamer portions −− could be traced back to the judgment of exhausted people.

Part V

3. The quotations from Nietzsche in this essay are for the most part based on the authorized translations of his works, but I have had the German text before me and have altered the English at times considerably.

Now all this is the perfectly correct statement of a half−truth, as any one must admit who is familiar with the religious history of Alexandria; it is largely correct also as regards the romantic revival of Alexandrianism, which in Nietzsche's eyes made up the whole of modern Christianity. The fact is that his mind was really concerned with certain aspects of society as it existed about him, and his hostility to the past was not to the dead centuries in themselves, but to what remained over from them in the present −− for what, after all, is there for any man in the past to hate or fear, except as it lives and will not be put away? In the sickness of his soul looked abroad over the Western world, and saw, or thought he saw, everywhere futility and purposelessness and pessimistic uncertainty of the values of life. An ideal, as he sees it, is embraced only when a man's grip on the real world and its good has been weakened; in the end such supernatural ideals, as they are without foundation in fact, lose their hold on the human mind, and mankind, having sacrificed its sense of actual values and having nursed the cause of decay, is left helpless and joyless. This condition he calls Nihilism. "People have not yet seen what is so perfectly obvious," he says, −− "namely, that Pessimism is not a problem but a symptom −− that the term ought to be replaced by 'Nihilism'; that the question, 'to be or not to be,' is itself an illness, a sign of degeneracy, an idiosyncrasy." And in the first part of The Will to Power he unfolds this modern disease in all its hideousness. The restless activities of our life he interprets as so many attempts to escape from the gloom of purposelessness, as so many varieties of self−stupefaction. No one can read his list of these efforts without shuddering recollection of what decadent music and literature and painting have produced:−−

In one's heart of hearts, not to know, whither? Emptiness. The attempt to rise superior to it all by means of emotional intoxication: emotional intoxication in the form of music, in the form of cruelty in the tragic joy over the ruin of the noblest, and in the form of blind, gushing enthusiasm over individual men or distinct periods (in the form of hatred, etc.). The attempt to work blindly, like a scientific instrument; to keep an eye on the many small joys, like an investigator, for instance (modesty towards one's self); ... the mysticism of the voluptuous joy of eternal emptiness; art "for art's sake" ("le fait"), "immaculate investigation," in the form of narcotics against the disgust of one's self; any kind of incessant work, any kind of small foolish fanaticism.

The attempt to maintain Christianity amidst a nihilistic society which has lost even its false ideals, can have only one result. As these supernatural ideals were evoked by the weaker mass of the race to cover its subjection to the few stronger individuals, so when belief in the other world has perished, the only defence that remains is the humanitarian exaltation of the humble and common and undistinguished in itself as a kind of simulacrum of Christianity, the unideal sympathy of man for man as a political law, the whole brood of socialistic schemes which are based on the notion of universal brotherhood. These, the immediate offspring of Rousseauism and German romanticism, are, as Nietzsche saw, the actual religion of the world to−day; and against these, and against the past as the source of these, his diatribes are really directed. His protest is against "sympathy with the lowly and the suffering as a standard for the elevation of the soul."

Christianity [he exclaims] is a degenerative movement, consisting of all kinds of decaying and excremental elements.... It appeals to the disinherited everywhere; it consists of a foundation of resentment against all that is successful and dominant: it is in need of a symbol which represents the damnation of everything successful and dominant. It is opposed to every form of intellectual movement, to all philosophy; it takes up the cudgels for idiots, and utters a curse upon all intellect. Resentment against those who are gifted, learned, intellectually independent: in all these it suspects the elements of success and domination.

All this is merely Nietzsche's spasmodic way of depicting the uneasiness of the age, which has been the theme of innumerable poets of the nineteenth century −− of Matthew Arnold, to take an instance, in his gloomy

diagnosis of the modern soul. And to a certain point the cause of this Nihilism, to use Nietzsche's word, is the same for him as for Arnold. They both attribute it to the shattering of definite ideals that had so long ruled the world, and especially to the waning of religious faith. But here the two diagnosticians part company. Arnold looked for health to the establishing of new ideals and to the growth of a fresh and sounder faith in the Eternal, though he may have failed in his attempt to define this new faith. Nietzsche, on the contrary, regarded all ideals and all faith as themselves a product of decadence and the sure cause of deeper decay. "Objection, evasion, joyous distrust, and love of irony," he says, "are signs of health; everything absolute belongs to pathology." Nihilism, as the first of the loss of ideals, may be a state of hideous anarchy, but it is also the necessary transition to health. If, instead of relapsing into the idealistic source of evil, the eyes of mankind are strengthened to look boldly at the facts of existence, then will take place what he calls the Transvaluation of all Values, and truth will be founded on the naked, imperishable reality. There is no eternal calm at the centre of this moving universe; "all is flux;" there is nothing real "but our world of desires and passions," and "we cannot sink or rise to any other 'reality' save just the reality of our impulses −− for thinking itself is only a relation of these impulses to one another." So be it! When a man has faced this truth calmly and bravely and definitely, then the whole system of morality which has been imposed upon society by those who regarded life as subordinate to an eternal ideal outside of the flux and contrary to the stream of human desires and passions −− then the whole law of good and evil which was evolved by the weak to protect themselves against those who were fitted to live masterfully in the flux, crumbles away; that man has passed Beyond Good and Evil.

Mankind is thus liberated from the herd−law, the false values have been abolished, but what new values take their place? The answer to this question found by going to Darwinism and raising the evolutionary struggle for existence into new significance; he would call it, not the Schopenhauerian will to live, but the Will to Power. He thus expresses the new theory in the mouth of Zarathustra:−−

Wherever I found a living thing, there found I Will to Power; and even in the will of the servant found I the will to be master....

And this secret spake Life herself unto me. "Behold," said she, "I am that which must ever surpass itself." ...

He certainly did not hit the truth who shot at it the formula: "Will to Existence;" that will −− doth not exist!

For that which is not, cannot will; that, however, which is in existence −− how could it still strive for existence!

Only where there is life, is there also will: not, however, Will to Life, but −− so teach I thee −− Will to Power!

This is Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values, the change from the morality of good and evil depending on supernatural rewards to the non−morality of the purely natural Will to Power. And as the former idealism resulted in the suppression of distinction and in the supremacy of the feeble, so the regime of the Will to Power must bring back into society the sharp division of those who have power and those who have it not, of the true philosophers who have the instinct to surpass and the slaves whose function it is to serve and obey. The philosopher, to use Nietzsche's famous term, is the Superman, the Uebermensch. He has passed beyond good and evil, and often describes him in language which implies the grossest immorality; but this is merely an iconoclast's way of emphasizing the contrast between his perfect man and the old ideal of the saint, and it would be unfair to take these ebullitions of temper quite literally. The image of the Superman is, in fact, left in the hazy uncertainty of the future; the only thing certain about him is his complete immersion in nature, and his office to raise the level of society by rising on the shoulders of those who do the menial work of the world. At the last analysis the Superman is merely a negation of humanitarian sympathy and of the socialistic state of indistinguished equality.

Part VI

Nietzsche's conception of the Will to Power may seem to have brought us back by a long circuit to Hobbes's definition of human nature as "a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death;" but in reality there is a whole world between the two. In the levelling principles against which Hobbes directed his theory of government there was little or nothing of that notion of sympathy which is rooted in Locke's naturalism and has its flower in German romanticism; nor, on the other hand, is there in the Hobbian picture of the natural state of mankind as a warfare of self−interests any touch of that morbid of the ego which developed as an inevitable concomitant of romantic sympathy.

At the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy there is, in fact, a colossal self−deception which has no counterpart in Hobbism, and to which we shall find no key unless we bear in mind the long and regular growth of ideas from Locke to the present day. Nietzsche looked upon himself as, if not the actual Superman, at least an imperfect type of what the Superman was to be; he thought of his rebellion as an exemplification of the Will to Power; whereas the hated taint of decadence had struck deep into his body and mind, while his years of philosophizing were one long fretful disease. He has himself, with the intermittent clairvoyance of the morbid brain, pointed to the confusion of phenomena which has led his followers to admire his intellectual productivity as a proof of fundamental health. "History," he observes "discloses the terrible fact that the exhausted have always been confounded with those of the most abundant resources.... How is this confusion possible? When he who was exhausted stood forth with the bearing of a highly active and energetic man (when degeneration implied a certain excess of spiritual and nervous discharge), he was mistaken for the resourceful man. He inspired terror."

By a similar illusion Nietzsche regarded the self−assertive Superman as a true reaction against the prevalent man of sympathy and as a cure for the disease of the age. That much of Nietzsche's protest against the excesses of humanitarianism was sound and well directed, I for one am quite ready to admit. He saw, as few other men of our day have seen, the danger that threatens true progress in any system of education and government which makes the advantage of the average rather than the distinguished man its first object. He saw with terrible clearness that much of our most admired art is not art at all in the higher sense of the word, but an appeal to morbid sentimentality. There is a humorous aspect to his quarrel with Wagner, which was at bottom caused by the clashing of two insanely jealous egotisms. Nevertheless, there is an element of truth in his condemnation of Wagner's opera as typical of certain degenerative tendencies in modern society; and many must agree with him in his statement that Wagner "found in music the means of exciting tired nerves, making it thereby sick." Not without cause did Nietzsche pronounce himself "the highest authority in the world on the question of decadence." But the cure proposed for these evils was itself a part of the malady. The Superman, in other words, is a product of the same naturalism which produced the disease it would counteract; it is the last and most violent expression of the egotism, or self−interest, which Hume and all his followers balanced with sympathy as the two springs of human action. Sympathy, as we saw, gradually usurped the place of self−interest as the recognized motive of virtue and the source of happiness, but here this strange thing will be observed: where sympathy has been proclaimed most loudly in theory, self−interest has often been most dominant in practice. Sympathy first came to excess in the sentimental school, and the sentimentalists were notorious for their morbid egotism. There may be some injustice to Sterne in Byron's sneering remark that he preferred weeping over a dead ass to relieving the want of a living mother, but in a general way it hits exactly the character of which the author of the Sentimental Journey was a type. I came by chance the other day upon a passage in an anonymous book of that age, which expresses this contrast of theory and practice in the clearest terms:−−

By this system of things [that is, the sentimental system] it is that strict justice is made to give way to transient fits of generosity; and a benevolent turn of mind supplants rigid integrity. The sympathetic heart, not being able to behold misery without a starting tear of compassion, is allowed, by the general suffrage, to atone for a thousand careless actions, which infallibly bring misery with them. In commercial life, the Rich oppress the poor, and contribute to hospitals; a monopolizer renders thousands and tens of thousands destitute in the course of traffic;

but cheerfully solicits or encourages subscriptions to alleviate their distress. [4]

As for Rousseau, the great apostle of humanity, it is notorious that the principal trait of his disposition was an egotism which made it impossible for him to live at peace with his fellow men. "Benevolence to the whole species, said Burke, having Rousseau in mind, "and want of feeling for every individual with whom the professors come in contact, form the character of the new philosophy." No one who has read the annals of the romantic group of Germany need be told how their pantheistic philosophy was contradicted by the utterly impractical individualism of their lives. Nor is the same paradox absent from the modern socialistic theories that have sprung from romanticism; it would be possible, I believe, in many cases to establish from statistics a direct ratio between the spread of humanitarian schemes of reform and the increase of crime and suicide.

The truth is, this inconsistency is inherent in the very principles of romantic naturalism. In a world made up of passions and desires alone, the attempt to enter into the personal emotions of others will react in an intensifying of our own emotions, and the effort to lose one's self in mankind will be balanced by a morbid craving for the absorption of mankind in one's self. The harsh contrast of sympathy and egotism is thus an inevitable consequence of romanticism, nor is it a mere chance that Tolstoy, with his exaltation of Rousseauism and of absolute non−resistance and universal brotherhood, should have been the contemporary of a philosopher who made Napoleon his ideal and preached war and the Superman as the healthy condition of society. Nietzshe himself, in one of his moments of insight, recognizes this coexistence of extremes as a sign of decadence. That they spring from the same source is shown by the unexpected resemblance they often display beneath their superficial opposition. Perhaps the book that comes closest to Zarathustra in its fundamental tone is just the Leaves of Grass, which in its avowed philosophy of life would seem to stand at the remotest distance. Nietzsche denounces all levelling processes and proclaims a society based frankly on differences of power; Walt Whitman, on the contrary, denies all differences whatsoever, and glorifies an absolute equality: yet as both start from the pure flux of naturalism, so they both pass through a denial of the distinction of good and evil based on the old ideals and end in an egotism which brings aristocrat and democrat together in a strange and unwilling brotherhood.

Part VII

To any one caught in this net, life must be a onesided fanaticism or a condition of vacillating unrest. The great tragedy of Nietzsche's existence was due to the fact that, while he perceived the danger into which he had fallen, yet his struggles to escape only entangled him more desperately in the fatal mesh. His boasted transvaluation of all values was in reality a complete devaluation, if I may coin the word, leaving him more deeply immersed in the Nihilism which he exposed as the prime evil of modern civilization. With Hume and the romantic naturalists he threw away both the reason and the intuition into any superrational law beyond the stream of desires and passions and impulses. He looked into his own heart and into the world of phenomena, and beheld there a ceaseless ebb and flow, without beginning, without end, and without meaning. The only law that he could discover, the only rest for the mind, was some dimly foreseen return of all things back into their primordial state, to start afresh on the same dark course of chance −− the Eternal Recurrence, he called it. "No doubt," he once wrote, "there is a far−off, invisible, and prodigious cycle which gives a common law to our little divagations: let us uplift ourselves to this thought! But our life is too short, our vision too feeble; we must content ourselves with this sublime possibility." At times he sets up the ability to look undismayed into this ever−turning wheel as the test that distinguishes the Superman from the herd. And this is all Nietzsche could give to mankind by his Will to Power and his Transvaluation of all Values: the will to endure the vision of endless, purposeless mutation; the courage to stand without shame, naked in a world of chance; the strength to accomplish −− absolutely nothing. At times he proclaims his creed with an effrontery of joy over those who sink by the way and cry out for help. Other times pity for so hapless a humanity wells up in his heart despite himself; and more than once he admits that the last temptation of the Superman is sympathy for a race revolving blindly in this cycle of change −− "Where lie thy greatest dangers? In compassion." As for himself, what he found in his philosophy, what followed him in the end into the dark descents of madness, is told in the haunting vision of The Shadow in the last section of Zarathustra:−−

"Have I −− yet a goal? A haven towards which my sail is set?

"A good wind? Alas, he only who knoweth whither he saileth, knoweth also what wind is good and a fair wind for him.

"What still remaineth to me? A heart weary and flippant; a wandering will; fluttering wings; a broken spine.

"This seeking for my home: ah, Zarathustra, knowest thou well, this seeking hath been my home−sickening; it devoureth me.

"Where is −− my home? For it I ask and seek and have sought, but have not found it. Oh eternal everywhere, oh eternal nowhere, oh eternal −− in−vain!"

Thus spake the Shadow, and Zarathustra's countenance grew longer at his words. "Thou art my Shadow!" said he at last, with sadness.

The end of it all is the clamor of romantic egotism turned into horror at its own vanity and of romantic sympathy turned into despair. It is naturalism at war with itself and struggling −− to escape from its own fatality. As I leave I think of the ancient tragedy in which Heracles is represented as writhing in the embrace of the Nessus−shirt he has himself put on, and rending his own flesh in a vain effort to escape its poisonous web.