

Absolute Affirmation, Albert Camus

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From the moment that man submits God to moral judgment, he kills Him in his own heart. And then what is the basis of morality? God is denied in the name of justice, but can the idea of justice be understood without the idea of God? At this point are we not in the realm of absurdity? Absurdity is the concept that Nietzsche meets face to face. In order to be able to dismiss it, he pushes it to extremes: morality is the ultimate aspect of God, which must be destroyed before reconstruction can begin. Then God no longer exists and is no longer responsible for our existence; man must resolve to act, in order to exist.

The Unique

Even before Nietzsche, Stirner wanted to eradicate the very idea of God from man's mind, after he had destroyed God Himself. But, unlike Nietzsche, his nihilism was gratified. Stirner laughs in his blind alley; Nietzsche beats his head against the wall. In 1845, the year when *Der Einziger und sein Eigentum* (The Unique and Its Characteristics) appeared, Stirner begins to define his position.

Stirner, who frequented the "Society of Free Men" with the young Hegelians of the left (of whom Marx was one), had an account to settle not only with God, but also with Feuerbach's Man, Hegel's Spirit, and its historical incarnation, the State. All these idols, to his mind, were offsprings of the same "mongolism" the belief in the eternity of ideas. Thus he was able to write: "I have constructed my case on nothing."

Sin is, of course, a "mongol scourge," but it is also the law of which we are prisoners. God is the enemy; Stirner goes as far as he can in blasphemy ("digest the Host and you are rid of it"). But God is only one of the aberrations of the I, or more precisely of what I am. Socrates, Jesus, Descartes, Hegel, all the prophets and philosophers, have done nothing but invent new methods of deranging what I am, the I that Stirner is so intent on distinguishing from the absolute I of Fichte by reducing it to its most specific and transitory aspect. "It has no name," it is the Unique.

For Stirner the history of the universe up to the time of Jesus is nothing but a sustained effort to idealize reality. This effort is incarnated in the ideas and rites of purification which the ancients employed. From the time of Jesus, the goal is reached, and another effort is embarked upon which consists, on the contrary, in attempting to realize the ideal.

The passion of the incarnation takes the place of purification and devastates the world, to a greater and greater degree, as socialism, the heir of Christ, extends its sway. But the history of the universe is nothing but a continual offense to the unique principle that "I am"—a living, concrete principle, a triumphant principle that the world has always wanted to subject to the yoke of successive abstractions—God, the State, society, humanity.

For Stirner, philanthropy is a hoax. Atheistic philosophies, which culminate in the cult of the State and of Man, are only "theological insurrections." "Our atheists," says Stirner, "are really pious folk." There is only one religion that exists throughout all history, the belief in eternity. This belief is a deception. The only truth is the Unique, the enemy of eternity and of everything, in fact, which does not further its desire for domination.

With Stirner, the concept of negation which inspires his rebellion irresistibly submerges every aspect of affirmation. It also sweeps away the substitutes for divinity with which the moral conscience is encumbered. "External eternity is swept away," he says, "but internal eternity has become a new heaven." Even revolution, revolution in particular, is repugnant to this rebel. To be a

revolutionary, one must continue to believe in something, even where there is nothing in which to believe.

"The [French] Revolution ended in reaction and that demonstrates what the Revolution was in reality." To dedicate oneself to humanity is no more worth while than serving God. Moreover, fraternity is only "Communism in its Sunday best." During the week, the members of the fraternity become slaves. Therefore there is only one form of freedom for Stirner, "my power," and only one truth, "the magnificent egotism of the stars."

In this desert everything begins to flower again. "The terrifying significance of an unpremeditated cry of joy cannot be understood while the long night of faith and reason endures." This night is drawing to a close, and a dawn will break which is not the dawn of revolution but of insurrection.

Insurrection is, in itself, an asceticism which rejects all forms of consolation. The insurgent will not be in agreement with other men except in so far as, and as long as, their egotism coincides with his. His real life is led in solitude where he will assuage, without restraint, his appetite for existing, which is his only reason for existence.

In this respect individualism reaches a climax. It is the negation of everything that denies the individual and the glorification of everything that exalts and ministers to the individual. What, according to Stirner, is good? "Everything of which I can make use." What am I, legitimately, authorized to do? "Everything of which I am capable."

Once again, rebellion leads to the justification of crime. Stirner not only has attempted to justify crime (in this respect the terrorist forms of anarchy are directly descended from him), but is visibly intoxicated by the perspectives that he thus reveals. "To break with what is sacred, or rather to destroy the sacred, could become universal.

It is not a new revolution that is approaching—but is not a powerful, proud, disrespectful, shameless, conscienceless crime swelling like a thundercloud on the horizon, and can you not see that the sky, heavy with foreboding, is growing dark and silent?" Here we can feel the somber joy of those who create an apocalypse in a garret.

This bitter and imperious logic can no longer be held in check, except by an I which is determined to defeat every form of abstraction and which has itself become abstract and nameless through being isolated and cut off from its roots. There are no more crimes and no more imperfections, and therefore no more sinners. We are all perfect.

Since every I is, in itself, fundamentally criminal in its attitude toward the State and the people, we must recognize that to live is to transgress. Unless we accept death, we must be willing to kill in order to be unique. "You are not as noble as a criminal, you who do not desecrate anything." Moreover Stirner, still without the courage of his convictions, specifies: "Kill them, do not martyr them."

But to decree that murder is legitimate is to decree mobilization and war for all the Unique. Thus murder will coincide with a kind of collective suicide. Stirner, who either does not admit or does not see this, nevertheless does not recoil at the idea of any form of destruction. The spirit of rebellion finally discovers one of its bitterest satisfactions in chaos. "You [the German nation] will be struck down.

Soon your sister nations will follow you; when all of them have gone your way, humanity will be buried, and on its tomb I, sole master of myself at last, I, heir to all the human race, will shout with laughter." And so, among the ruins of the world, the desolate laughter of the individual-king illustrates the last victory of the spirit of rebellion. But at this extremity nothing else is

possible but death or resurrection. Stirner, and with him all the nihilist rebels, rush to the utmost limits, drunk with destruction. After which, when the desert has been disclosed, the next step is to learn how to live there. Nietzsche's exhaustive search then begins.

## Nietzsche and Nihilism

"We deny God, we deny the responsibility of God, it is only thus that we will deliver the world." With Nietzsche, nihilism seems to become prophetic. But we can draw no conclusions from Nietzsche except the base and mediocre cruelty that he hated with all his strength, unless we give first place in his work—well ahead of the prophet—to the diagnostician. The provisional, methodical—in a word, strategic—character of his thought cannot be doubted for a moment. With him nihilism becomes conscious for the first time.

Surgeons have this in common with prophets: they think and operate in terms of the future. Nietzsche never thought except in terms of an apocalypse to come, not in order to extol it, for he guessed the sordid and calculating aspect that this apocalypse would finally assume, but in order to avoid it and to transform it into a renaissance. He recognized nihilism for what it was and examined it like a clinical fact.

He said of himself that he was the first complete nihilist of Europe. Not by choice, but by condition, and because he was too great to refuse the heritage of his time. He diagnosed in himself, and in others, the inability to believe and the disappearance of the primitive foundation of all faith—namely, the belief in life.

The "can one live as a rebel?" became with him "can one live believing in nothing?" His reply is affirmative. Yes, if one creates a system out of absence of faith, if one accepts the final consequences of nihilism, and if, on emerging into the desert and putting one's confidence in what is going to come, one feels, with the same primitive instinct, both pain and joy.

Instead of methodical doubt, he practiced methodical negation, the determined destruction of everything that still hides nihilism from itself, of the idols that camouflage God's death. "To raise a new sanctuary, a sanctuary must be destroyed, that is the law." According to Nietzsche, he who wants to be a creator of good or of evil must first of all destroy all values. "Thus the supreme evil becomes part of the supreme good, but the supreme good is creative."

He wrote, in his own manner, the *Discours de la Methode* of his period, without the freedom and exactitude of the seventeenth-century French he admired so much, but with the mad lucidity that characterizes the twentieth century, which, according to him, is the century of genius. We must return to the examination of this system of rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We are obviously concerned here with Nietzsche's final philosophic position, between 1880 and his collapse. This chapter can be considered as a commentary on *Der Wille zur Macht*. (The Will to Power).

Nietzsche's first step is to accept what he knows. Atheism for him goes without saying and is "constructive and radical." Nietzsche's supreme vocation, so he says, is to provoke a kind of crisis and a final decision about the problem of atheism. The world continues on its course at random and there is nothing final about it. Thus God is useless, since He wants nothing in particular. If He wanted something and here we recognize the traditional formulation of the problem of evil—He would have to assume the responsibility for "a sum total of pain and inconsistency which would debase the entire value of being born."

We know that Nietzsche was publicly envious of Stendahl's epigram: "The only excuse for God is that he does not exist." Deprived of the divine will, the world is equally deprived of unity and finality. That is why it is impossible to

pass judgment on the world. Any attempt to apply a standard of values to the world leads finally to a slander on life.

Judgments are based on what is, with reference to what should be the kingdom of heaven, eternal concepts, or moral imperatives. But what should be does not exist; and this world cannot be judged in the name of nothing. "The advantages of our times: nothing is true, everything is permitted."

These magnificent or ironic formulas which are echoed by thousands of others, at least suffice to demonstrate that Nietzsche accepts the entire burden of nihilism and rebellion. In his somewhat puerile reflections on "training and selection" he even formulated the extreme logic of nihilistic reasoning: "Problem: by what means could we obtain a strict form of complete and contagious nihilism which would teach and practice, with complete scientific awareness, voluntary death?"

But Nietzsche enlists values in the cause of nihilism which, traditionally, have been considered as restraints on nihilism—principally morality. Moral conduct, as explained by Socrates, or as recommended by Christianity, is in itself a sign of decadence. It wants to substitute the mere shadow of a man for a man of flesh and blood. It condemns the universe of passion and emotion in the name of an entirely imaginary world of harmony.

If nihilism is the inability to believe, then its most serious symptom is not found in atheism, but in the inability to believe in what is, to see what is happening, and to live life as it is offered. This infirmity is at the root of all idealism. Morality has no faith in the world. For Nietzsche, real morality cannot be separated from lucidity.

He is severe on the "calumniators of the world" because he discerns in the calumny a shameful taste for evasion. Traditional morality, for him, is only a special type of immorality. "It is virtue," he says, "which has need of justification." And again: "It is for moral reasons that good, one day, will cease to be done."

Nietzsche's philosophy, undoubtedly, revolves around the problem of rebellion. More precisely, it begins by being a rebellion. But we sense the change of position that Nietzsche makes. With him, rebellion begins with "God is dead," which is assumed as an established fact; then it turns against everything that aims at falsely replacing the vanished deity and reflects dishonor on a world which doubtless has no direction but which remains nevertheless the only proving ground of the gods.

Contrary to the opinion of certain of his Christian critics, Nietzsche did not form a project to kill God. He found Him dead in the soul of his contemporaries. He was the first to understand the immense importance of the event and to decide that this rebellion on the part of men could not lead to a renaissance unless it was controlled and directed. Any-other attitude toward it, whether regret or complacency, must lead to the apocalypse. Thus Nietzsche did not formulate a philosophy of rebellion, but constructed a philosophy on rebellion.

If he attacks Christianity in particular, it is only in so far as it represents morality. He always leaves intact the person of Jesus on the one hand, and on the other the cynical aspects of the Church. We know that, from the point of view of the connoisseur, he admired the Jesuits. "Basically," he writes, "only the God of morality is rejected." Christ, for Nietzsche as for Tolstoy, is not a rebel. The essence of His doctrine is summed up in total consent and in nonresistance to evil. Thou shalt not kill, even to prevent killing.

The world must be accepted as it is, nothing must be added to its unhappiness, but you must consent to suffer personally from the evil it contains. The kingdom of heaven is within our immediate reach.

It is only an inner inclination which allows us to make our actions coincide

with these principles and which can give us immediate salvation. Not faith but deeds—that, according to Nietzsche, is Christ's message. From then on, the history of Christianity is nothing but a long betrayal of this message. The New Testament is already corrupted, and from the time of Paul to the Councils, subservience to faith leads to the neglect of deeds.

What is the profoundly corrupt addition made by Christianity to the message of its Master? The idea of judgment, completely foreign to the teachings of Christ, and the correlative notions of punishment and reward. From that moment nature becomes history, and significant history expressed by the idea of human totality is born. From the Annunciation until the Last Judgment, humanity has no other task but to conform to the strictly moral ends of a narrative that has already been written. The only difference is that the characters, in the epilogue, separate themselves into the good and the bad.

While Christ's sole judgment consists in saying that the sins of nature are unimportant, historical Christianity makes nature the source of sin. "What does Christ deny? Everything that at present bears the name Christian." Christianity believes that it is fighting against nihilism because it gives the world a sense of direction, while it is really nihilist itself in so far as, by imposing an imaginary meaning on life, it prevents the discovery of its real meaning: "Every Church is a stone rolled onto the tomb of the man-god; it tries to prevent the resurrection, by force." Nietzsche's paradoxical but significant conclusion is that God has been killed by Christianity, in that Christianity has secularized the sacred. Here we must understand historical Christianity and "its profound and contemptible duplicity."

The same process of reasoning leads to Nietzsche's attitude toward socialism and all forms of humanitarian-ism. Socialism is only a degenerate form of Christianity. In fact, it preserves a belief in the finality of history which betrays life and nature, which substitutes ideal ends for real ends, and contributes to enervating both the will and the imagination. Socialism is nihilistic, in the henceforth precise sense that Nietzsche confers on the word.

A nihilist is not one who believes in nothing, but one who does not believe in what exists. In this sense, all forms of socialism are manifestations, degraded once again, of Christian decadence. For Christianity, reward and punishment implied the existence of history. But, by inescapable logic, all history ends by implying punishment and reward; and, from this day on, collectivist Messianism is born.

Similarly, the equality of souls before God leads, now that God is dead, to equality pure and simple. There again, Nietzsche wages war against socialist doctrines in so far as they are moral doctrines. Nihilism, whether manifested in religion or in socialist preachings, is the logical conclusion of our so-called superior values. The free mind will destroy these values and denounce the illusions on which they are built, the bargaining that they imply, and the crime they commit in preventing the lucid intelligence from accomplishing its mission: to transform passive nihilism into active nihilism.

In this world rid of God and of moral idols, man is now alone and without a master. No one has been less inclined than Nietzsche (and in this way he distinguishes himself from the romantics) to let it be believed that such freedom would be easy. This complete liberation put him among the ranks of those of whom he himself said that they suffered a new form of anguish and a new form of happiness. But, at the beginning, it is only anguish that makes him cry out: "Alas, grant me madness. . . . Unless I am above the law, I am the most outcast of all outcasts." He who cannot maintain his position above the law must in fact find another law or take refuge in madness.

From the moment that man believes neither in God nor in immortal life, he becomes "responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life." It is he, and he alone, who must discover law and order. Then the time of exile begins, the endless search for

justification, the aimless nostalgia, "the most painful, the most heartbreaking question, that of the heart which asks itself: where can I feel at home?"

Because his mind was free, Nietzsche knew that freedom of the mind is not a comfort, but an achievement to which one aspires and at long last obtains after an exhausting struggle. He knew that in wanting to consider oneself above the law, there is a great risk of finding oneself beneath the law. That is why he understood that only the mind found its real emancipation in the acceptance of new obligations.

The essence of his discovery consists in saying that if the eternal law is not freedom, the absence of law is still less so. If nothing is true, if the world is without order, then nothing is forbidden; to prohibit an action, there must, in fact, be a standard of values and an aim. But, at the same time, nothing is authorized; there must also be values and aims in order to choose another course of action.

Absolute domination by the law does not represent liberty, but no more does absolute anarchy. The sum total of every possibility does not amount to liberty, but to attempt the impossible amounts to slavery. Chaos is also a form of servitude. Freedom exists only in a world where what is possible is defined at the same time as what is not possible. Without law there is no freedom.

If fate is not guided by superior values, if chance is king, then there is nothing but the step in the dark and the appalling freedom of the blind. On the point of achieving the most complete liberation, Nietzsche therefore chooses the most complete subordination. "If we do not make of God's death a great renunciation and a perpetual victory over ourselves, we shall have to pay for that omission." In other words, with Nietzsche, rebellion ends in asceticism.

A profounder logic replaces the "if nothing is true, everything is permitted" of Karamazov by "if nothing is true, nothing is permitted." To deny that one single thing is forbidden in this world amounts to renouncing everything that is permitted. At the point where it is no longer possible to say what is black and what is white, the light is extinguished and freedom becomes a voluntary prison.

It can be said that Nietzsche, with a kind of frightful joy, rushes toward the impasse into which he methodically drives his nihilism. His avowed aim is to render the situation untenable to his contemporaries. His only hope seems to be to arrive at the extremity of contradiction. Then if man does not wish to perish in the coils that strangle him, he will have to cut them at a single blow and create his own values.

The death of God accomplishes nothing and can only be endured in terms of preparing a resurrection. "If we fail to find grandeur in God," says Nietzsche, "we find it nowhere; it must be denied or created." To deny it was the task of the world around him, which he saw rushing toward suicide. To create was the superhuman task for which he was willing to die.

He knew in fact that creation is only possible in the extremity of solitude and that man would only commit himself to this staggering task if, in the most extreme distress of mind, he was compelled to undertake it or perish. Nietzsche cries out to man that the only truth is the world, to which he must be faithful and in which he must live and find his salvation. But at the same time he teaches him that to live in a lawless world is impossible because to live explicitly implies a law. How can one live freely and without law? To this enigma man must find an answer, on pain of death.

Nietzsche at least does not flinch. He answers and his answer is bold: Damocles never danced better than beneath the sword. One must accept the unacceptable and hold to the untenable. From the moment that it is admitted that the world pursues no end, Nietzsche proposes to concede its innocence, to affirm that it accepts no judgment since it cannot be judged on any intention, and consequently to replace all judgments based on values by absolute assent, and by a complete

and exalted allegiance to this world.

Thus from absolute despair will spring infinite joy, from blind servitude, unbounded freedom. To be free is, precisely, to abolish ends. The innocence of the ceaseless change of things, as soon as one consents to it, represents the maximum liberty. The free mind willingly accepts what is necessary.

Nietzsche's most profound concept is that the necessity of phenomena, if it is absolute, without rifts, does not imply any kind of restraint. Total acceptance of total necessity is his paradoxical definition of freedom. The question "free of what?" is thus replaced by "free for what?" Liberty coincides with heroism. It is the asceticism of the great man, "the bow bent to the breaking-point."

This magnificent consent, born of abundance and fullness of spirit, is the unreserved affirmation of human imperfection and suffering, of evil and murder, of all that is problematic and strange in our existence. It is born of an arrested wish to be what one is in a world that is what it is. "To consider oneself a fatality, not to wish to be other than one is . . ." Nietzschean asceticism, which begins with the recognition of fatality, ends in a deification of fate. The more implacable destiny is, the more it becomes worthy of adoration.

A moral God, pity, and love are enemies of fate to the extent that they try to counterbalance it. Nietzsche wants no redemption. The joy of self-realization is the joy of annihilation. But only the individual is annihilated. The movement of rebellion, by which man demanded his own existence, disappears in the individual's absolute submission to the inevitable.

Amor fati replaces what was an odium fati. "Every individual collaborates with the entire cosmos, whether we know it or not, whether we want it or not." The individual is lost in the destiny of the species and the eternal movement of the spheres. "Everything that has existed is eternal, the sea throws it back on the shore."

Nietzsche then turns to the origins of thought—to the pre-Socratics. These philosophers suppressed ultimate causes so as to leave intact the eternal values of the principles they upheld. Only power without purpose, only Heraclitus' "chance," is eternal. Nietzsche's whole effort is directed toward demonstrating the existence of the law that governs the eternal flux and of the element of chance in the inevitable: "A child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a gamble, a wheel that spins automatically, a first step, the divine gift of being able to consent."

The world is divine because the world is inconsequential. That is why art alone, by being equally inconsequential, is capable of grasping it. It is impossible to give a clear account of the world, but art can teach us to reproduce it—just as the world reproduces itself in the course of its eternal gyrations. The primordial sea indefatigably repeats the same words and casts up the same astonished beings on the same seashore. But at least he who consents to his own return and to the return of all things, who becomes an echo and an exalted echo, participates in the divinity of the world.

By this subterfuge, the divinity of man is finally introduced. The rebel, who at first denies God, finally aspires to replace Him. But Nietzsche's message is that the rebel can only become God by renouncing every form of rebellion, even the type of rebellion that produces gods to chastise humanity. "If there is a God, how can one tolerate not being God oneself?" There is, in fact, a godnamely, the world. To participate in its divinity, all that is necessary is to consent. "No longer to pray, but to give one's blessing," and the earth will abound in men-gods.

To say yes to the world, to reproduce it, is simultaneously to re-create the world and oneself, to become the great artist, the creator. Nietzsche's message is summed up in the word creation, with the ambiguous meaning it has assumed.

Nietzsche's sole admiration was for the egotism and severity proper to all creators.

The transmutation of values consists only in replacing critical values by creative values; by respect and admiration for what exists. Divinity without immortality defines the extent of the creator's freedom.

Dionysos, the earth-god, shrieks eternally as he is torn limb from limb. But at the same time he represents the agonized beauty that coincides with suffering. Nietzsche thought that to accept this earth and Dionysos was to accept his own sufferings. And to accept everything, both suffering and the supreme contradiction simultaneously, was to be king of all creation. Nietzsche agreed to pay the price for his kingdom.

Only the "sad and suffering" world is true the world is the only divinity. Like Empedocles, who threw himself into the crater of Mount Etna to find truth in the only place where it exists—namely, in the bowels of the earth—Nietzsche proposed that man should allow himself to be engulfed in the cosmos in order to rediscover his eternal divinity and to become Dionysos.

The Will to Power ends, like Pascal's Pensees, of which it so often reminds us, with a wager. Man does not yet obtain assurance but only the wish for assurance, which is not at all the same thing. Nietzsche, too, hesitated on this brink: "That is what is unforgivable in you. You have the authority and you refuse to sign." Yet finally he had to sign. But the name of Dionysos immortalized only the notes to Ariadne, which he wrote when he was mad.

In a certain sense, rebellion, with Nietzsche, ends again in the exaltation of evil. The difference is that evil is no longer a revenge. It is accepted as one of the possible aspects of good and, with rather more conviction, as part of destiny. Thus he considers it as something to be avoided and also as a sort of remedy. In Nietzsche's mind, the only problem was to see that the human spirit bowed

proudly to the inevitable. We know, however, his posterity and what kind of politics were to claim the authorization of the man who claimed to be the last antipolitical German. He dreamed of tyrants who were artists. But tyranny comes more naturally than art to mediocre men. "Rather Cesare Borgia than Parsifal," he exclaimed. He begat both Caesar and Borgia, but devoid of the distinction of feeling which he attributed to the great men of the Renaissance.

As a result of his insistence that the individual should bow before the eternity of the species and should submerge himself in the great cycle of time, race has been turned into a special aspect of the species, and the individual has been made to bow before this sordid god. The life of which he spoke with fear and trembling has been degraded to a sort of biology for domestic use. Finally, a race of vulgar overlords, with a blundering desire for power, adopted, in his name, the "anti-Semitic deformity" on which he never ceased to pour scorn.

He believed in courage combined with intelligence, and that was what he called strength. Courage has been turned in his name against intelligence, and the virtues that were really his have thus been transformed into their opposite: blind violence. He confused freedom and solitude, as do all proud spirits. His "profound solitude at midday and at midnight" was nevertheless lost in the mechanized hordes that finally inundated Europe.

Advocate of classic taste, of irony, of frugal defiance, aristocrat who had the courage to say that aristocracy consisted in practicing virtue without asking for a reason and that a man who had to have reasons for being honest was not to be trusted, addict of integrity ("integrity that has become an instinct, a passion"), stubborn supporter of the "supreme equity of the supreme intelligence that is the mortal enemy of fanaticism," he was set up, thirty-three years after his death, by his own countrymen as the master of lies and violence, and his ideas and virtues, made admirable by his sacrifice, have been rendered

detestable.

In the history of the intelligence, with the exception of Marx, Nietzsche's adventure has no equivalent; we shall never finish making reparation for the injustice done to him. Of course history records other philosophies that have been misconstrued and betrayed. But up to the time of Nietzsche and National Socialism, it was quite without parallel that a process of thought brilliantly illuminated by the nobility and by the sufferings of an exceptional mind—should have been demonstrated to the eyes of the world by a parade of lies and by the hideous accumulation of corpses in concentration camps.

The doctrine of the superman led to the methodical creation of sub-men a fact that doubtless should be denounced, but which also demands interpretation. If the final result of the great movement of rebellion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be this ruthless bondage, then surely rebellion should be rejected and Nietzsche's desperate cry to his contemporaries taken up: "My conscience and yours are no longer the same conscience."

We must first of all realize that we can never confuse Nietzsche with Rosenberg. We must be the advocates of Nietzsche. He himself has said so, denouncing in advance his bastard progeny: "he who has liberated his mind still has to purify himself." But the question is to find out if the liberation of the mind, as he conceived it, does not preclude purification. The very movement that comes to a head with Nietzsche, and that sustains him, has its laws and its logic, which, perhaps, explain the bloody travesty of his philosophy.

Is there nothing in his work that can be used in support of definitive murder? Cannot the killers, provided they deny the spirit in favor of the letter (and even all that remains of the spirit in the letter), find their pretext in Nietzsche? The answer must be yes. From the moment that the methodical aspect of Nietzschean thought is neglected (and it is not certain that he himself always observed it), his rebellious logic knows no bounds.

We also remark that it is not in the Nietzschean refusal to worship idols that murder finds its justification, but in the passionate approbation that distinguishes Nietzsche's work. To say yes to everything supposes that one says yes to murder. Moreover, it expresses two ways of consenting to murder. If the slave says yes to everything, he consents to the existence of a master and to his own sufferings: Jesus teaches nonresistance. If the master says yes to everything, he consents to slavery and to the suffering of others; and the result is the tyrant and the glorification of murder.

"Is it not laughable that we believe in a sacred, infrangible law thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not kill—in an existence characterized by perpetual lying and perpetual murder?" Actually metaphysical rebellion, in its initial stages, was only a protest against the lie and the crime of existence. The Nietzschean affirmative, forgetful of the original negative, disavows rebellion at the same time that it disavows the ethic that refuses to accept the world as it is. Nietzsche clamored for a Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ.

To his mind, this was to say yes to both slave and master. But, in the last analysis, to say yes to both was to give one's blessing to the stronger of the two—namely, the master. Caesar must inevitably renounce the domination of the mind and choose to rule in the realm of fact. "How can one make the best of crime?" asks Nietzsche, as a good professor faithful to his system.

Caesar must answer: by multiplying it. "When the ends are great," Nietzsche wrote to his own detriment, "humanity employs other standards and no longer judges crime as such even if it resorts to the most frightful means." He died in 1900, at the beginning of the century in which that pretension was to become fatal. It was in vain that he exclaimed in his hour of lucidity, "It is easy to talk about all sorts of immoral acts; but would one have the courage to carry them through? For example, I could not bear to break my word or to kill; I should languish, and eventually I should die as a result—that would be my fate."

From the moment that assent was given to the totality of human experience, the way was open to others who, far from languishing, would gather strength from lies and murder. Nietzsche's responsibility lies in having legitimized, for reasons of method and even if only for an instant the opportunity for dishonesty of which Dostoevsky had already said that if one offered it to people, one could always be sure of seeing them rushing to seize it. But his involuntary responsibility goes still farther.

Nietzsche is exactly what he recognized himself as being: the most acute manifestation of nihilism's conscience. The decisive step that he compelled rebellion to take consists in making it jump from the negation of the ideal to the secularization of the ideal. Since the salvation of man is not achieved in God, it must be achieved on earth. Since the world has no direction, man, from the moment he accepts this, must give it one that will eventually lead to a superior type of humanity.

Nietzsche laid claim to the direction of the future of the human race. "The task of governing the world is going to fall to our lot." And elsewhere: "The time is approaching when we shall have to struggle for the domination of the world, and this struggle will be fought in the name of philosophical principles." In these words he announced the twentieth century. But he was able to announce it because he was warned by the interior logic of nihilism and knew that one of its aims was ascendancy; and thus he prepared the way for this ascendancy.

There is freedom for man without God, as Nietzsche imagined him; in other words, for the solitary man. There is freedom at midday when the wheel of the world stops spinning and man consents to things as they are. But what is becomes what will be, and the ceaseless change of things must be accepted.

The light finally grows dim, the axis of the day declines. Then history begins again and freedom must be sought in history; history must be accepted. Nietzscheism the theory of the individual's will to power— was condemned to support the universal will to power. Nietzscheism was nothing without world domination. Nietzsche undoubtedly hated freethinkers and humanitarians.

He took the words freedom of thought in their most extreme sense: the divinity of the individual mind. But he could not stop the freethinkers from partaking of the same historical fact as himself the death of God—nor could he prevent the consequences being the same. Nietzsche saw clearly that humanitarianism was only a form of Christianity deprived of superior justification, which preserved final causes while rejecting the first cause. But he failed to perceive that the doctrines of socialist emancipation must, by an inevitable logic of nihilism, lead to what he himself had dreamed of: superhumanity.

Philosophy secularizes the ideal. But tyrants appear who soon secularize the philosophies that give them the right to do so. Nietzsche had already predicted this development in discussing Hegel, whose originality, according to him, consisted in inventing a pantheism in which evil, error, and suffering could no longer serve as arguments against the divinity. "But the State, the powers that be, immediately made use of this grandiose initiative."

He himself, however, had conceived of a system in which crime could no longer serve as an argument and in which the only value resided in the divinity of man. This grandiose initiative also had to be put to use. National Socialism in this respect was only a transitory heir, only the speculative and rabid outcome of nihilism. In all other respects those who, in correcting Nietzsche with the help of Marx, will choose to assent only to history, and no longer to all of creation, will be perfectly logical. The rebel whom Nietzsche set on his knees before the cosmos will, from now on, kneel before history.

What is surprising about that? Nietzsche, at least in his theory of superhumanity, and Marx before him, with his classless society, both replace the Beyond by the Later On. In that way Nietzsche betrayed the Greeks and the

teachings of Jesus, who, according to him, replaced the Beyond by the Immediate. Marx, like Nietzsche, thought in strategic terms, and like Nietzsche hated formal virtue. Their two rebellions, both of which finish similarly in adhesion to a certain aspect of reality, end by merging into Marxism-Leninism and being incarnated in that caste, already mentioned by Nietzsche, which would "replace the priest, the teacher, the doctor."

The fundamental difference is that Nietzsche, in awaiting the superman, proposed to assent to what exists and Marx to what is to come. For Marx, nature is to be subjugated in order to obey history; for Nietzsche, nature is to be obeyed in order to subjugate history. It is the difference between the Christian and the Greek. Nietzsche, at least, foresaw what was going to happen: "Modern socialism tends to create a form of secular Jesuitism, to make instruments of all men"; and again: "What we desire is well-being. . . . As a result we march toward a spiritual slavery such as has never been seen. . . . Intellectual Caesarism hovers over every activity of the businessman and the philosopher."

Placed in the crucible of Nietzschean philosophy, rebellion, in the intoxication of freedom, ends in biological or historical Caesarism. The absolute negative had driven Stirner to deify crime simultaneously with the individual. But the absolute affirmative leads to universalizing murder and mankind simultaneously.

Marxism-Leninism has really accepted the burden of Nietzsche's freewill by means of ignoring several Nietzschean virtues. The great rebel thus creates with his own hands, and for his own imprisonment, the implacable reign of necessity. Once he had escaped from God's prison, his first care was to construct the prison of history and of reason, thus putting the finishing touch to the camouflage and consecration of the nihilism whose conquest he claimed.

The end