

work. Get them all paying full fees, give them loans instead of grants, and you will still have the same reformers, the same anarchists, and the same nihilists among them.

It is quite true that if you put your universities on a proper footing, with proper costing, proper pricing, and proper remuneration (*à la* Professor Johnson), you might then be better able to meet student demands. Certainly you can meet those of the reformers, and some of those of the simple anarchists in a free community. But you will still not be able to meet the destructive demands of the nihilists, who do not want universities to work but only, through violent confrontation and intimidation, to break down.

I do not think you can cost or price the nihilists out of the universities. And I do think that if you pretend to be liberating the universities while in fact intending to purge them, you are playing into the hands of those who talk conspiratorially about the toils of "monopoly

capitalism." I applaud the attempt to put the universities on an economic footing. But I believe here, as everywhere else, in the primacy of politics.

No university, however costed or priced, however tied to or freed from public money, can survive as a university with a nihilist element large enough to call the tune. Every university has much room for changes in constitution, curriculum, and character to meet the calls of reformers and even, as I think, of anarchists. But every one, to exist, has to be able to rebut and repudiate its nihilists—and that is a task, not for the price mechanism, not for the hidden hand, but for the continuing members of each university community, which means its own academic staff. It is a responsibility that they cannot dodge or argue away. It is not enough to count the real costs of their business; they have to stand up to be counted themselves as well—against those who want to paralyse the universities, not to liberate them at all.

Donald Tyerman

Nietzsche as Scapegoat

A Reply to Alasdair MacIntyre — By WALTER KAUFMANN

IT IS difficult to know with Professor MacIntyre's "Philosophy and Sanity: Nietzsche's Titanism" [ENCOUNTER, April] where to begin or how to get hold of a thesis that could be discussed fruitfully. At the outset the question is asked, half playfully, whether Nietzsche's insanity was somehow "the outcome of thinking Nietzsche's thought"; and in the end we get an affirmative answer, qualified with a "perhaps." In between no evidence *pro* or *con* is considered, and Nietzsche's medical history is ignored. From an ordinary journalist one might expect no more, but when prominent philosophers and sociologists write in this vein we must enquire *why* they do. What makes so many serious writers publish pieces of this sort?

Before we try to find an answer, let us take a quick look at the essay. In the second paragraph it is suggested that Nietzsche's "life is relevant to the understanding of his philosophy"; but nothing at all is said in support of this claim, and Nietzsche's life is ignored in what follows. Apparently the point was merely to establish that Nietzsche's notes (and specifically those in *The Will to Power*) are of

"special interest." This conclusion is a commonplace, but the reason given for it is a bit odd.

If the "interest" were really mainly biographical, then each note should be considered in the context of Nietzsche's development and compared with what he said in his books. My edition of *The Will to Power* makes it easy to do this, but this is not the path taken in "Philosophy and Sanity." MacIntyre quotes from a single note that happens to antedate most of Nietzsche's major works and calls it, without giving any reasons for this curious claim, "the foundation of Nietzsche's doctrine." *Doctrine* here seems to refer to Nietzsche's whole philosophy, but after that quotation we lose all contact with Nietzsche's writings. The reader may well wonder whether the evidence for all that follows comes from Nietzsche's books or from hasty notes—or rather from the author's vague recollections.

Three paragraphs from the end we are suddenly brought up short: "If my argument is correct, then. . . ." But the "then" clause is palpably false. (That the "vulgarity" here attributed to Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* (overman) depends on crude misunderstandings I have tried to show in detail in my *Nietzsche*,¹ and it would be tedious to repeat the demonstration here.) Hence it appears that the "argument" is *not* correct.

¹ *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950); 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, Princeton University Press, and Random House Vintage Books (1968).

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But here I am scoring a debater's point. The crass misrepresentation of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* is not at all entailed by the preceding pages, and hence its untenability does not *prove* the preceding argument wrong. In fact, we are not offered anything that closely resembles an argument; we are much closer to a stream of consciousness. Hence it may be inappropriate to offer any comments; one does not prick soap bubbles with a sword.

WHAT WAS SAID of Spinoza almost two hundred years ago, is true of Nietzsche: people have been treating him like a dead dog. Again and again, highly respected professors have written with pity or contempt of Nietzsche's madness, his irrationality, his unscholarly excesses, or his "intellectual responsibility for making the ideological task of the Nazis easier," while the very essays in which these sentiments were voiced showed exceedingly little regard for scholarship or rational argument or the "intellectual responsibility" that the writers of such essays might incur.

MacIntyre's article on "Nietzsche's Titanism" considers it crucial "that an argument as subtle and sophisticated as Nietzsche's does issue in such vulgarity" and "that a mind as splendid as Nietzsche's should reach so banal a conclusion"; and this is held to be "perhaps a further sign that it was the dilemma of a whole culture and not merely a private problem." But if the vulgarity and the banal conclusion cannot be attributed to Nietzsche; if they must be charged to his interpreters—what becomes of the dilemma of a whole culture? For the idiosyncrasies of this or that interpreter are of no concern to me, and I have no wish to subject them to the sort of speculation that they are so fond of lavishing on Nietzsche. But what *is* wrong with a culture that keeps producing such essays?

Sometimes interpreters of this type bring to mind painters of former centuries who included in their pictures small self-portraits that most viewers did not recognise as such. The difference is, of course, that these interpreters fail to recognise their own self-portraits. The psychological term for this is "projection"; and speaking in religious terms, it seems almost like a form of penance. But it has no purgative power until it ceases to be unconscious. Since Socrates and Plato the idea of the philosopher as a physician is familiar. One of the functions of a philosopher may well be to raise the unconscious into consciousness, not merely for the individual but for a whole culture.

Misinterpretations of a man's philosophy must first of all be refuted in detail. That is a task that cannot be eschewed by taking refuge

in psychology or sociology. The texts come first. But once this task is accomplished, it would be rather unhumorous to keep repeating oneself when misinterpretations persist. Eventually it becomes reasonable to ask *why* they persist—not among those who do not read scholarly books but among professors who write books and articles and reviews.

ENDLESS MISINTERPRETATIONS are the price of immortality. This is almost a tautology because what we mean by calling a book, an *oeuvre*, or a man immortal is that they keep being interpreted; and the more is written about them, the more misinterpretations we get. But my epigram also points to a psychological phenomenon. Misinterpretations often represent the revenge of the small against the great; they are the price that mortals exact for immortality.

By becoming immortal a man breaks the bounds set for his fellow men as surely as if he had committed a crime; hence he may be turned into a scapegoat on whom those frustrated by their limitations can vent their accumulated resentment. To some extent, everyone who gets into print—by writing or by running for office or by being elected, especially to a high position—becomes the subject of obscene comments. But not all of the immortals become scapegoats; some are deified more or less and misunderstood with boundless generosity, like Sophocles and some religious figures.

Why, then, did Nietzsche become an almost archetypal scapegoat on whom any writer is allowed to vent his spleen with complete impunity? Before we answer this question, we must try to understand the need for scapegoats.

In our culture, the most obvious scapegoat is the criminal. Those who feel a strong emotional need to see a criminal punished usually have two motives. If the lawbreaker did what they would have *liked* to do but, in obedience to the law, perhaps afraid of punishment, did *not* do, they would feel like timid fools who had missed out on something for no good reason if he got away with it. He must be punished to justify them and show that they were not silly and scared but prudent and righteous. Moreover, the law that prohibits so many expressions of hatred and aggression provides this legal outlet: the outlaw.

The world of scholarship provides a parallel. Again decorum prohibits frank expressions of contempt or pity, hatred, and resentment against fellow scholars. Most reviews in the scholarly journals are, therefore, exceedingly dull. Nor is this just decorum. If a scholar is old, one does not want to hurt his feelings and make him sad; if he is young, one hesitates to blast his career. Of course, there are exceptions,

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and occasionally "scholarly" books are attacked *almost* without inhibitions. Sometimes the nastiness of such reviews bears ample evidence of pent-up resentment; sometimes it is redeemed by wit. In fact, book reviews provide most scholars with the only opportunity to transmute resentment and wit into print. But some inhibitions remain; some holds are barred. Even when a book is treated without mercy, its *author* is almost always shown some consideration; the possibility is allowed that some of his other writings may be better, and reviewers do not feel free to offer psychological speculations about living philosophers or to question their sanity. Confronted with literary works, critics often go further, but even here mental illness is generally considered taboo and not mentioned even in cases where it is beyond question.

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM is the opposite of the truth as far as most scholars and critics are concerned. If a writer has the decency to let his work die with him, one says nothing about him once the eulogies are over. But it is in the ranks of the immortals that scholars seek their scapegoats about whom they can write as they never would about the living. Who would care to count the living philosophers who are incom-

parably more unscholarly, irrational, and irresponsible than Nietzsche ever was? That is the point. What could not be said about them is said about him.

The question remains why Nietzsche became a scapegoat when so many other philosophers did not—at least not to the same extent. His very brilliance is part of the reason, and his literary excellence is also relevant. Great writers are considered fairer game than great philosophers or scholars, and a philosopher who had the temerity to write as well as Nietzsche did breaks the rules as surely as an outlaw.

Still, this is not the whole story. What other writer of equal genius had given so much offence to so many, including Christians, Germans, and Englishmen? The vast resentment he aroused did its share to turn him into one of the major scapegoats of all time. This explanation may seem much too simple to be true; but it is striking how appreciative of him the French have been, whom he so often praised so handsomely; and this is also true of such Irish writers as Shaw and Yeats, Joyce and O'Neill, who clearly did not feel offended by his lack of affection for the English and for Christianity.

Once it was established by the force of ample precedent that utterly unscholarly and unfair articles and books on Nietzsche did not impair their authors' reputations even when they were exposed, writers with no particular reason for resenting Nietzsche joined the fray to blow off steam. Nietzsche-baiting had become an institution.

The implications for our "whole culture" are dismal. Not only decorum but also the intellectual conscience makes demands that even leading intellectuals resent. Even among them rationality is often only skin-deep. They require outlets for occasional rebellions against the demands of scholarship and sanity. One socially approved method is to write about Nietzsche, accusing him of having done what one is in the process of doing oneself.

Have I, too, criticised the very things that I myself am doing in these pages? I think not. Beginning with my first book, I have made it a point of honour to defend the dead and attack the living who can fight back. More than that, I have long admired Nietzsche's pronouncement in *Ecce Homo*:²

I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity.

² "Why I am So Wise," section 7, p. 688 (in my *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Random House Modern Library, 1968).

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