

# NIETZSCHE'S THOUGHT

WALTER A. KAUFMANN: *Nietzsche*. Princeton University Press. London: Cumberlege. 40s.

Mr. Kaufmann does not disdain to stir his readers with paradox, as when he heads a chapter "Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates." Yet the passages which he there assembles are impressive enough, although they do not cancel out the well-known passages in which Nietzsche speaks of Socrates with anything but admiration. Which did Nietzsche really mean? There can be no doubt that he meant both, for he carried to an extreme the attitude expressed in his dictum: "A very popular error: having the courage of one's convictions; rather it is a matter of having the courage for an *attack* on one's convictions!!!" Here is another reason, in addition to the diverse and disconcerting character of those who have proclaimed themselves followers of Nietzsche, why men have become chary of professing their discipleship; if you applaud some observation of Nietzsche you are always liable to find that he himself rejects this opinion with contumely in another place. Hence we think that Mr. Kaufmann aims too high when he "aims to show that [Nietzsche's] thought cannot justly be charged with ambiguity, basic inconsistency, or incoherence." An intellectual individualist of Nietzsche's type is not content merely to differ from other men; he must also differ from himself at other moments.

This, however, is a good book on Nietzsche, and it is all the better for being sympathetic. Even if we hold in the end that Mr. Kaufmann paints too favourable a picture, he presents his case clearly and offers the relevant material for judgment. He maintains that Frau Förster-Nietzsche's editing of her brother's works was tendentious and laid excessive stress on the notes brought together as *The Will to Power*, thus giving currency to the view of Nietzsche which regards him as a kind of proto-Nazi. The will to power, he claims, is a will to self-fulfilment which involves a self-overcoming; it is as far from a lust for domination as it is from the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. Nietzsche, he says, could admire men whose beliefs he respected but criticized, while he allowed himself to despise their followers; he applies this distinction not only to Schopenhauer and Wagner but also to Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates and towards Christ. "His critique of Wagner might be epitomized by saying that he accused Wagner of having become a Wagnerian."

While this kindly view of Nietzsche can be supported from his works, it would be at least equally easy to cite passages which support the more usual and more violent view. The truth is surely that anyone who tries to extract a body of doctrine from Nietzsche will in the end be disconcerted by the subject's failure to stay put; those who admire Nietzsche will always be those who sympathize with him as a man and appreciate him as a sign of the times. For the clear-cut alternative to the universal reason of Socrates is an arbitrary individualism, and the clear-cut alternative to Christianity is man's apotheosis of himself. Nietzsche thought that God was dead and that the Hellenic tradition of philosophy was finished, but it was not without courage that he faced the complete alternatives. If there is something of Satan in him, there is also something of the stature of the Miltonic Satan. On the road "beyond good and evil" lay not "joyful knowledge" but madness, and we need not attack a man who paid that price. Our understanding of this important historical figure will be enhanced by considering, whether in agreement or

in disagreement, the careful analysis of his thought which Mr. Kaufmann has provided.

## INDIAN PHILOSOPHER

*Radhakrishnan*. Comparative Studies in Philosophy Presented in Honour of His Sixtieth Birthday. Allen and Unwin. 25s.

Professor Radhakrishnan has a materialistic value for the ordinary man which he may well regard as the highest tribute to his work. Judgment on what he himself has written on his contribution to pure philosophy must be left to such people as those who constitute the editorial board of this book. It may be that someone else could have explained the philosophy of the Upanishads, and many have in fact written treatises on the beautiful Bhagavadgita. But no one has so delved into the spirit, thoughts and ideals of eastern and western minds as to reach a level at which both can meet with appreciation and understanding.

It has been said that in Europe the purpose of philosophy is to understand the world in which we live, while in India it is to rise above it and attain freedom. Yet Indians have acutely logical minds and fully understand the demands that life makes upon them. It is interesting to remember that Professor Radhakrishnan plays an important role in the diplomatic affairs of his country. Western philosophers, too, clearly do not confine themselves to the purely objective. Thus the possibilities of synthesis are there, and Professor Radhakrishnan will be remembered as the man who made possible, by his own eagerness, a shared understanding between East and West. His *Indian Philosophy* is the most outstanding contribution yet written, and seems likely long to remain so.

The present book is a richly earned tribute to Professor Radhakrishnan on his sixtieth birthday and a vindication of the belief that philosophy is life's pilot. There are some 21 studies, of which several deal with the particular subject of the synthesis of eastern and western philosophy. They are direct and scholarly, and they avoid the tortuous language that clogs the understanding of much philosophical writing. All subjects have their own language, whether science, art, politics or diplomacy. That language is clear and simple to the masters and exponents of the subject, but seems unnecessarily involved to all others. In philosophy this is particularly so, and the charming clarity of these studies will help to give them a general appeal. It is a clarity that springs from the clearness of vision of a man who knows and to whom, therefore, obscurity is impossible. These studies are a real contribution to the understanding that Professor Radhakrishnan so urgently desired. Others deal with related subjects but all have the same note: history, art, religion are discussed, all on this plane. One of the most fascinating and the most easily read—it has the rather awe-inspiring title "Comparative Study of Consciousness"—draws a comparison between theologians and socialists that is not easily forgotten.

One study alone stands out as striking a violently discordant note, and one so foreign to philosophic ears as to make its inclusion here difficult to understand. "Radhakrishnan and Indian Civilization," with its passions and prejudices and its vague mysticism, is an odd choice even though the author does claim personal friendship with Professor Radhakrishnan.