

Directions in Philosophy

The Conditions of Philosophy; Its Checkered Past, Its Present Disorder, and Its Future Promise, by Mortimer J. Adler, *New York: Atheneum, 1965. xi+303 pp. \$5.95.*

Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann, *Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965. 499 pp. \$6.95.*

Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy, by R. J. Hollingdale, *Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965. xvi+326 pp. \$7.00.*

MORTIMER J. ADLER is a notable teacher of philosophy for those who are not professional or academic philosophers. His book is valuable for any mature individual who wants to walk without blinders in the labyrinth of intellectual controversy. He tries to make his writing as non-technical, or non-jargonish, as he can. He offers us a reasoned taxonomy of what philosophy is, and how it may be properly used in attacking the issues of human existence.

One of Adler's crucial positions is stated thus: "For brevity of reference in all that follows, I propose to call questions about that which is and happens, or about what men should do and seek 'first-order questions' and the knowledge that is contained in tenable answers to such questions 'first-order philosophical knowledge.'" Then, "second-order questions" are questions about our "first-order knowledge, about the thinking we do or the way we express such thoughts" (p. 44). Second-order philosophy is characteristically technical or academic philosophy. What Adler contends throughout his book is that there are proper and tenable answers (*doxa*, rather than *episteme*, that is absolute knowledge) to the kind of questions that may be commonly asked, for example, by readers of *Modern Age*. Philosophy is, therefore, part of the conservative enterprise. The positivists, analysts, and linguistic philosophers of today generally say that values and solutions in social questions are merely subjective preferences, for which no defensible answers are possible.

For philosophy to be respectable, there are five

conditions which must be fulfilled. Philosophical enterprise must be: (1) a branch of knowledge, and a mode of inquiry which aims at knowledge, i.e., *doxa*; (2) theories and conclusions must be testable or judgable by "appropriate criteria of goodness, or, in other words, they must be capable of being judged by reference to an appropriately formulated standard of *truth*"; (3) philosophy must be carried on as a public enterprise, that is, a common enterprise of discussion and exchange of rational inquiries; (4) philosophy as clearly distinct from other branches of knowledge must have a degree of independence from other branches of knowledge; (5) finally, philosophical issues must be "first-order questions," though they may also be "mixed questions."

THE MOST effective way for an American to understand German philosophy of the nineteenth century is to see what a Latin intellectual has to say about it. In *The Modern Theme* José Ortega y Gasset has said:

All the best German thought from Kant to 1900 can be subsumed under the rubric, Philosophy of Culture. We should scarcely be able to enter upon it before we perceive its resemblance, in form, to medieval theology. There has only been a substitution of certain new entities for the old: where the ancient Christian thinker said, God, the contemporary German says, Concept (Hegel), Supremacy of the Practical Reason (Kant, Fichte), Culture (Cohen, Windelbrand, Richert).

Both Kaufmann and Hollingdale are writing of the genetics of the modern mind and the contributions made to it by the German intellectuals of the last century. Whitehead once remarked that the history of philosophy is best studied as a series of footnotes to Plato, but one might add that modern philosophy is best understood as a series of flights from Hegel. Adler regards Hegel as a destructive system builder; Kaufmann sees him as a great creative mind; and in Hollingdale perhaps Nietzsche becomes a footnote to Hegel.

Kaufmann is plainly trying to naturalize Hegelian thought in America, as others like Walt Whitman and the St. Louis School have tried before. While it is all but impossible for the Anglo-American to be at ease with Hegel's Concept, which seems to mean Culture and the Actual, he will respond with delight to Kaufmann's denial that "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" is to be found anywhere in Hegel's writings. Dialectic and triads are, but not the formula so often associated with Hegel by people who should have known better. "Fichte," says Kaufmann, "introduced into German

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v-10, No. 2 (Spring 1966)

philosophy the three-step of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, using these three terms. Schelling took up this terminology; Hegel did not. He never once used these three terms together to designate three stages in an argument or account in any of his books." These terms impede any open-minded comprehension of what Hegel is doing.

Kaufmann's work is important to non-philosophers because he offers a selection of Hegel's letters and a translation with a commentary of the Preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. While readers of *Modern Age* probably have been more concerned with the *Philosophy of History* and the *Philosophy of Right*, they should welcome this translation of what many consider Hegel's most important piece of writing—and Kaufmann's impressive Commentaries—as a way of re-entering Hegelian studies. Ordinary opinion, Hegel argues, ". . . does not comprehend the difference of the philosophical systems in terms of the progressive development of the truth, but sees only the contradiction in this difference. . . [It is] an organic unity . . . in which one is as necessary as the other." Different philosophies for Hegel represent different stages of maturity (pp. 370, 371). From here on, then, the history of philosophy becomes of central importance. Furthermore, for Kaufmann, Hegel never set the state above art, religion, and philosophy, nor was he a demonic worshipper of the Prussian political order of existence.

THE FIRST time I started reading *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, I sat nearly the whole night with it. Later I read what a Frenchman once said: Nietzsche is popular because he makes all of us feel like Supermen. As a poet Nietzsche speaks with intuition about the drama of living. I do not understand how, when World War I was upon us—that destructive trauma of the West—Nietzsche could have been used as an evidence of the evil nature of the German spirit. Nietzsche fires the imagination, as Hollingdale shows in his remarkably fine study of the anguished poet of the Engadine. It is said that, upon the advice of Professor Zimmern, the Oxford students went to fight in 1914 with their Thucydides in Greek in their pockets. And it has been said that many a young German soldier has gone to war in the twentieth century with *Zarathustra* as a companion. Neither Hegel nor Nietzsche are to be forgotten in the West until the "profound" revolution comes; until then the *Phenomenology* and the *Zarathustra* will be with us.

People who write about Nietzsche with affection do so at times because they dislike his enemies. Enmity toward Richard Wagner and Elizabeth

Nietzsche Förster and her husband seems to be a powerful motivation, just as another is to rescue Nietzsche from his use by the Nazis. Indeed, one of the weaknesses of Hollingdale's study is an inadequate treatment of this episode in Nietzsche history. A clear analysis here would throw further light on the relation of the intellectuals to some of the up-ending currents in modern European thought.

In the end, argues Hollingdale, Nietzsche puts forward three hypotheses which offer naturalistic substitutes for God, divine grace, and eternal life: instead of God, the superman; instead of divine grace, the will to power; and instead of eternal life, the eternal recurrence. "The will to power and the superman evolved as a consequence of the need to account for certain implications of a non-metaphysical reality; but the eternal recurrence is the consequence of a non-metaphysical reality *as such*." It is the crown of his philosophy (p. 198). The metaphysical world has no reality, and this is the basis of his theory of the eternal recurrence (p. 239). But then it is the Wagner Case, not the attack on Christianity, which makes Nietzsche the first critical repudiator of the nineteenth century and a herald of the twentieth century (p. 252).

A FEW WORDS of conclusion: We cannot escape philosophy. Finally, we must recognize it as a legitimate part of intellectual Being. Adler, like Eric Voegelin, is a great teacher of the art of discussion and the even more noble art of truly joining issues in our discussion. We cannot escape European thought, for all in the West are Europeans; nor can we escape the German thought of the modern age. It is vast, and much of it secular. From European intellectuality, we may learn that neither pragmatism nor linguistic analysis are the philosophies of our future.

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