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“Nietzsche’s Responsibility for the War”

Benjamin Tucker

October 2, 1914

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London

Dear Mr Schumm:

I have heard from the Hetzels (as indeed you have written me yourself) that you think me mistaken regarding Nietzsche’s responsibility for the war. I enclose a letter from wm. Archer to Gerhardt Hauptmann, showing that not only Archer, but Hauptmann himself, takes my view.

How do you account for the writings of Treitschke, Bernhardi, H. S. Chamberlain, and others? Are not these evidently an outgrowth of the reading of Nietzsche? And have these not dictated the military policy of Germany? It is no answer to argue that Nietzsche meant this, or that, or the other. The apologists for E.G. use the same argument when confronted with the acts of her disciples. In both cases there may be some slight misunderstanding of the teacher, but I think that both may fairly be held responsible. Certainly, if Hauptmann is misled, the Kaiser may well be. And I think that Archer’s quotation

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from Nietzsche illustrates with sufficient exactness the German treatment of Belgium.

Yours sincerely,

Benj R. Tucker

(Excerpt from a letter of 10/11/14)

I enclose some clippings. That signed W. Bulloch expresses my view of the actual results of Nietzsche's influence, while not failing to do justice to Nietzsche by showing that these results have not taken the exact form that he looked for or would have approved.

In reading these clippings, of course, you will entertain no suspicion that I share the tendency of the writers to champion Christian influences. I am the same egoist as always. The egoism of Germany does not disturb me; given the Germans' domineering instincts, I am glad that they have no scruples about satisfying them; and my answer to their brutality would be to slay them as speedily as possible and put them forever out of the way, in order that egoists of another type, who love peace and liberty, may enjoy their preferences undisturbed.

November 25, 1927

Dear Mr. Schumm:

I wrote you of the proposition of the National Institute for the Blind regarding 'The Ego and His Own'. It turns out to be a bit less encouraging than the first letters to Fifield indicated. Not bad, though, after all. What it amounts to is this; a copy is to be cut in raised type, by hand, by a volunteer, for Helen Keller, and a duplicate is to be put in the general library of raised type for the blind. I suppose, then, that Helen Keller is interested, or, if not, that some enthusiastic person hopes to interest her.

One sees now in Russia the perfect realization of "peace at any price," a land that knows not hate, the flowering of the gospel of universal love, Tolstoyism gone to seed. What a spectacle does that unhappy country present today! Simple, stupid, sodden; reeking, rotting, rampant; a deliquescent nest of life

that crawls and creeps, she melts, she sprawls, she slops, she stinks! A gigantic Camembert, in the last disgusting stage.

Yours sincerely,

Benj R. Tucker

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