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Three Readings of the Eternal Return

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THREE READINGS OF THE ETERNAL RETURN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Master of Arts

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by
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To the greatest of them all: Sanford L. “Sandy” Bauman, ordinary philosopher.

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ABSTRACT

I argue that Deleuze's "onto-ethical" reading of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return of difference in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) is necessarily the correct reading. The doctrine of recurrence basically says that flux or change is our "at base" perceptual experience. From the philosophical and actual position of chaos, our lived experience is of percepts repeating mutable patterns. Deleuze's insight (1962): the lived experience of change re-produces, from madness, a decision-making principle, namely, the principle of the return of difference. Simply stated, the principle of difference is the endogenous rule for discerning percepts as change. Habitual change is the only memory to return from eternal flux. If the principle of difference is a rule that repeats in a present memory of past lived experience of eternal change, then it is an endogenous and genealogical, onto-ethical principle, because, it is a rule that selects itself ("ethic") for existence ("onto-") by returning positive difference. If the world is will-to-power and the will-to-power is difference, and if difference is the conceptual structure of the return of positive difference, then difference is both the will-to-power and its endogenous, genealogical rule of the return of hierarchical forces and powers. This rule, the principle of difference, allows for the meaningful perception of change, that is, for the perception of percepts qua percepts, if, percepts are living evaluations that command interpretation by their variegated strengths of becoming-active being (i.e. by existing). Thus, percepts are living evaluations that in a sense command interpretation because a percept's power is precisely the power to be interpreted. For all three readings covered, Deleuze, Heidegger, and Leiter, the thought and doctrine of the eternal return is a mere repetition of the necessarily primary "lived experience" sense of the eternal return, because, the lived experience of the eternal return is the pure perceptual experience of mutable patterns (i.e. sensible flux). Nietzsche calls flux the will-to-power when it is made the object of the highest thought: the eternal return of positive difference. If I'm correct, the two weaker readings, Heidegger's metaphysical reading and Leiter's ethical reading, are both secondary to Deleuze's onto-ethical reading.

INTRODUCTION

0.0–Thesis on the Lived Experience of Onto-Ethical Difference

“Nobody” had an experience of *hobe Stimmung*¹ in August of 1881 on a stroll high in the Swiss Alps. The experience: pure becoming.² Who had this experience of the eternal return? A historian’s answer: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. A psychological answer: the negative breakdown of Nietzsche’s ego. Gilles Deleuze’s answer, my answer, and the necessary answer: the endogenous and genealogical³ will-to-power⁴, i.e., the affirmation of a lived experience which repeats its sub-representational “self” throughout each and every eternal and mutable form of thought and being. The will-to-power is affirmed by the thinker of eternal return. Thus, the concept of the eternal return of difference is what Nietzsche calls the highest thought of the *hobe Stimmung*. In this thesis I trace the onto-ethical⁵ sense of the eternal return. I show that to affirm the eternal return is both the elective activity of a personal will as well as an autonomous selective will. I show that the eternal return is necessarily an election and selection of the world as will-to-power, one that matches content and form in each moment (or event) of our lived experience. When the will-to-power is affirmed of its autonomous selective power, the affirmation has been redoubled by the elective thought of the thinker of the eternal return.

Will to power thus operates at the genealogical and not the ontological level, at the level of the qualitative and quantitative differences between forces and the

¹ “As a lived experience, Nietzsche initially experienced the eternal return, not as a thought, but as an impulse, a *Stimmung*, a ‘high tonality of the soul’” (Smith, 2012, p.337). A second sense of the eternal return is Nietzsche’s “highest thought” of the *hobe Stimmung*; (cf. Klossowski, 1997, p. 60-63).

² Thus, the *hobe Stimmung*, becoming, and the eternal return, are each aspects of lived experience.

³ “Nietzsche, through this typology, develops a philosophy which must, in his view, replace the old metaphysics and transcendental critique and give a new foundation to the sciences of man: genealogical philosophy, that is to say the philosophy of the will to power. The will to power must not be interpreted psychologically, as if the will to power wanted power because of a motive; just as genealogy must not be interpreted as a merely philosophical genesis” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 145).

⁴ The “will-to-power” is the world as a sensibility, i.e., it is the “*hobe Stimmung*” which exists anterior to any representation of it.

⁵ “Onto-ethical” means the endogenous, genealogical selection of quality and form, of life or being.

different values bestowed upon those forces rather than at the level of Being and beings (Schrift, 1995, pp. 66-7).

In this thesis, I defend the necessity of Deleuze's strong ethical or what I call the "onto-ethical" interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return against two other readings, Brian Leiter's weak ethical interpretation, and Martin Heidegger's "fundamental metaphysical position" reading. On the one hand Heidegger accuses Nietzsche making of the doctrine of eternal return a metaphysical concept. Nietzsche supposedly acts as the last practitioner of an inferior brand of Platonic metaphysics. Heidegger ungenerously reads Nietzsche into the position of the "last metaphysical thinker" of western intellectual history (Heidegger, 1968, p. 46). Since Heidegger thinks a fundamental metaphysical position concerns being as a whole (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169) this is akin to calling Nietzsche a negative theologian⁶ which in my opinion undersells the necessity of Nietzsche's philosophy. On the other hand, Leiter thinks the eternal return is a psychological attitude for overcoming nihilism that is brought about by the incessant and seemingly meaningless lived experience of flux (cf. Leiter, 2002, p.288).

Deleuze, for his part says that if you match content and form by affirming fate as a choice then, from the moment of willing the eternal return of difference, there is a de-subjectifying, rebound effect, which reveals both the subject and the object (e.g., the world) as a will-to-power (Deleuze, 1962, 27-29). Hence, the doctrine of the eternal return is neither a metaphysical position nor a psychological attitude; it destroys all substances and replaces them with becoming-active being (genealogical will-to-power) which is understood to select itself, once the eternal return of flux is elected or affirmed by the thinker of eternal return, that is, once

⁶ Heidegger thinks Nietzsche overturns Plato but at the same time must be entrenched in the Platonic tradition in order to confront and overcome it. (Heidegger, 1984, p. 205) Thus as I show, Heidegger's position Nietzsche is somewhat ambivalent because he positions Nietzsche as both succeeding and failing to escape the tradition of Western metaphysics.

the eternal return is understood as the “empty” form of content called the will-to-power. By affirming Deleuze’s reading in this thesis, I show that the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return is the necessary reading because it bypasses the question begging problems that Heidegger and Leiter run into, that is, Deleuze successfully negotiates the (problematic) necessary and eternal interpretation that the eternal return mandates.⁷ Maudemarie Clark astutely summarizes the question-begging problem when she states that “the problem with this influential view of truth is that it seems to lead Nietzsche into hopeless self-contradiction. There is, first of all, the problem of self-reference” (Clark, 1990, p. 3). I show that Deleuze’s reading sidesteps this problem.

In order to defend Deleuze’s reading, I first examine the weak ethical and the weak metaphysical readings in Chapter 1, then in Chapter 2, I trace Deleuze's strong ethical reading of the doctrine of eternal return as the selective principle of difference as initially developed in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Deleuze, 1962).

But how should the term "principle" be understood? Nietzsche always attacks principles for being too general in relation to what they condition, for always having too broad a mesh in relation to what they claim to capture or regulate. He likes to oppose the will to power to the Schopenhauerian will to live, if only because of the extreme generality of the latter. If, on the contrary, the will to power is a good principle, if it reconciles empiricism with principles, if it constitutes a superior empiricism, this is because it is an essentially plastic principle that is no wider than what it conditions, that changes itself with the conditioned and determines itself in each case along with what it determines (Deleuze, 1962, p. 50).

Deleuze’s interpretation is the strongest reading if it delivers on its promise to be good for constituting a superior empiricism, that is, if it clearly expresses the truth of our lived experience

⁷ In brief, Deleuze is able to answer the question of how chance can be made necessary by the doctrine of the eternal return (cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 36).

of eternal flux without being too general (without being weak and contingent, i.e., moral and metaphysical).

I ultimately conclude that the onto-ethical interpretation is the most profound, that is, that Deleuze's onto-ethical interpretation is the necessary reading of the doctrine of recurrence and thus the "strong" reading because, as is with Leiter and Heidegger's readings (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9; Leiter, 2002, p. 288), Deleuze's doctrine of the eternal return of difference does concern the lived experience of change; however, Deleuze is the only one to fully explicate that, since the elective affirmation of the doctrine of recurrence concerns the endogenous and selective eternal return of the lived experience of flux, flux is therefore the starting-point of thinking (i.e., the elective affirmation of eternal return is the thought that makes an object of flux) and thus serves as the differential principle of identity that, as I will show, avoids any question begging of reason and any vicious circles of nihilism. Real experience is flux, i.e., it is the perception of becoming. Our real experience (the lived experience of flux) is the artificial perception (illusion) of the will-to-power as a series of self-identical, substantive objects when really, according to Deleuze, the will-to-power expresses the existence of objects as series of temporarily stable force relations (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 40-42).

In Deleuze's process philosophy⁸ subjects and objects are becoming active-beings⁹ with no subjectivity or objectivity per se because each object that appears as a substance is in reality, a living evaluation that commands interpretation such that "evaluation is defined as the differential element of corresponding values, an element which is both critical and creative" (Deleuze, 1962,

⁸ "Deleuze...can be said to have a 'process ontology', which means [he] emphasizes 'becoming' rather than 'being' (when the latter is thought of as enduring presence)" (Bonta & Protevi, 2004, p. 119).

⁹ Actual, existing matter (or becoming-objects) express becoming active-being because they are actions with no subjects attached "for good" (actions or wills have neither moral nor infinite power of representation attached to them).

p. 1). Deleuze calls the living evaluation of mutable patterns that each object really “is”: Difference.¹⁰ Difference is the starting point of all sense and sensibility (it is the genesis of sense and value) of lived experience, because, a world Difference enacts a forgetting of all known values and a creative remembering (or “revaluation” of all values). For Deleuze (who follows Klossowski on this point; cf. Klossowski, 1997, p. 99), Difference acts as a decision-making principle (a principle of valorization) to interpret Difference (to interpret its-self; to interpret the world of Difference from a vantage of Difference). Finally, the first two readings (Leiter and Heidegger) are not wrong, however they are secondary to Deleuze’s onto-ethical reading, because the onto-ethical reading is necessary, by which I mean that it is inclusive of the other two readings while avoiding the resultant pitfalls of emphasizing either the ethical or the metaphysical reading.

0.1–Three Readings of the Eternal Return

All three readings agree that the doctrine of eternal return states that the world is at base flux or becoming,¹¹ so things are temporarily stable force relations rather than self-identical substances whose properties change. “It is not some one thing which returns but rather returning itself is the one thing which is affirmed of diversity or multiplicity” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 1). In other words, identity in the eternal return does not describe the nature of a being that returns, but on the contrary describes the fact of returning of that which differs. The trick will be

¹⁰ Note on Difference: when “Difference” is capitalized it means Difference in the Deleuzian sense of “Difference in itself”, that is, a positive, productive concept of Difference instead of a contradiction “between” conceptual differences. For Deleuze, self-identical substances are a fiction, thus, there are no absolute, identical points with which to ground differences. For Deleuze, only Difference has being and its being is becoming (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 23-29). I call the being of Difference a nameless “nobody” because it is the positive, existential power that exists and yet at the same time, Difference is sub-representational; because Difference is that which is beyond representation.

¹¹ For Leiter eternal flux is understood under a narrative of “suffering” (Leiter, 2002, pp. 254-263); for Heidegger eternal flux demands the eternal return of interpretation (cf. Heidegger, 1956, p.217).

to show how a doctrine, namely the doctrine of eternal return, can select itself as universal principle without begging the question of its own plastic form of change.

Thus “return” in the context of my thesis refers to the recurrence of change. To elaborate on a “self-identical” substance (or philosophy of substance) I mean a moral-metaphysical method of designating being whereby an object or idea corresponds in a 1:1 relationship with the principle of a first or final cause.¹²

The weak ethical interpretation, typified by Brian Leiter, holds that the doctrine of the eternal return is a psychological attitude that wills eternal flux instead of substance-based changes of properties. The metaphysical interpretation, typified by Martin Heidegger, holds that the doctrine concerns “being as a whole” or concerns the so-called set of all entities, and furthermore, that what returns is the same, a “way of being”, of those entities. In other words, as I explain below, for Heidegger the will-to-power is a self-identical way of being for all entities (even if this “way” is eternal change). It follows that for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s eternal return is an assertion of a fundamental metaphysical position, that is, a metaphysical worldview that Nietzsche (the historical subject) imposes on the world with his philosophy that concerns being as a whole.

Deleuze’s onto-ethical position is that the metaphysical and weak ethical doctrines wrongly reverse the priority of becoming and being. For Deleuze, what returns under Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return is Difference: “Difference in itself” or “Difference in

¹² A first or final cause is a penal code or rule of moral reason that anchors truth in principles that are transcendent to empirical life, or that are otherwise arbitrary and presumptuous. For example: Christianity, utilitarianism, Kant’s transcendental idealism, and Hegel’s dialectic logic.

D.W. Smith also supports Deleuze’s and my critical reading of traditional metaphysics: “What one finds in any given socio-political assemblage is not a universal “Reason,” but variable processes of rationalization; not universalizable “subjects,” but variable processes of subjectivation; not the “whole,” the “one,” or “objects,” but rather knots of totalization, foci of unification, and processes of objectification. Such processes operate within concrete multiplicities, and are relative to them, and thus need to be analyzed on their own account” (Smith, 2012, p. 246).

kind" or "becoming in- and for-itself" or "flux". His is an "onto-ethical" interpretation because Difference is an ethical selection of a form of being. For instance, in the case of a psychological state what returns is not the content of the state, but its differential structure, that is, any singular thought forms as a result of the establishment of a power relation among multiple sub-representational drives. For example, when "I" have the conflicting drives to diet and to cheat on my diet, Deleuze would read Nietzsche as saying that I identify with the dominating drive; with whichever drive acts by adhering to the diet or by cheating. The "I" is not a final state or identity; it is not a constant but rather a new differential structure capable of entering into relations with other drives.

Generalizing this example, Deleuze's strong onto-ethical interpretation of the doctrine of eternal return says that what returns are those things or "forms of life" which arise from a battle of the "will-to-power" of multiple sub-thing components; but these new "things" are not stable objects but are "becoming-objects" (temporarily stable force relations). Thus what returns are ongoing yet mutable patterns with only the sort of changeable identity that a variation on a musical theme might have. Objects that are selected via the eternal return are "simulacra." In the Deleuzian context, a simulacrum is not a degraded copy of self-identical being as it would be for Plato

but rather the act by which the very idea of a model or privileged position is challenged and overturned. The simulacrum is the instance which includes a difference within itself, such as (at least) two divergent series on which it plays, all resemblance abolished so that one can no longer point to the existence of an original and a copy (Deleuze, 1994, p. 69).¹³

This means that for Deleuze a simulacrum is a set of variations on a theme that defeats the identification of a primary theme. The being of a simulacrum is becoming; however becoming,

¹³ I cite Deleuze (1994) here because although Deleuze does not use the term simulacrum in (1962), he is clearly already developing its sense as the becoming-idea of change (cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 28).

at each moment, is the new performance of Difference. Every idea or body for Deleuze is a performance of that idea or body. Another example of a performance of the simulacrum (or Difference) is to think of it as the reproduction of an empty form (of change), as is dramatized in the "hero myth" which ethnographers analyze; the original "being" is lost and all we have are dramatic variations of its becoming-self: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Moses, Jesus, Zarathustra, etc. The will-to-power is accordingly defined by Deleuze as the immanent flux of sub-representational drives, forces, and wills, that return as simulacra; he argues that only relatively stable objects ("variations") return; these variations are prior to imperfect generalizations and representations, e.g., musical, mythological, taxonomical (or to representations of any kind). I argue that for both Nietzsche and Deleuze, and most profoundly according to "nobody's" necessary and endogenous principle of Difference¹⁴, the world is a will-to-power; it is Difference "as such"; it is univocal¹⁵ becoming.

As noted above, in this thesis I argue that Deleuze's development of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as onto-ethical, is the most profound reading of eternal recurrence because it is the necessary reading. If the principle of Difference is the sole rule drawn from the lived experience of flux, then it must be the endogenous and genealogical, onto-ethical principle; because it is a rule that selects itself ("ethic") for existence ("onto-"). If the world is will-to-power and the will-to-power is Difference, and if Difference is the conceptual structure of the return of Difference (if its form is the "return of Difference";

¹⁴ The exact term "the principle of Difference" is not employed until (Deleuze, 1994; cf. pp. 11-ff.), but in (Deleuze, 1962) the profound sense of a necessary and differential rule of identity is already clearly in development, for example when he writes that "this principle is that of the reproduction of diversity as such, of the repetition of difference" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 46; cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 35; 44; 49-53).

¹⁵ "Univocal" is a term used when being is said of all entities in the same way, namely, as becoming (thus objects are becoming-objects; ideas are simulacrum; concepts are Difference in a univocal world of becoming). Univocal becoming denotes a unity of multiplicity as the universal and differential form of all being and beings. Thus for Deleuze (1962), all being is becoming because a world of will-to-power eternally returns Difference.

“plastic”; “empty”), then the eternal return of difference is the form of will-to-power (but this form is non-self-identical). This rule, the principle of Difference, allows for the meaningful perception of change.

The lived experience of eternal return of will-to-power (“the lived experience of flux”) is the de-subjectified experience of flux and the heart of Nietzsche’s philosophy, or rather, the digestive tract because this seemingly simple truth (“being becomes”) requires rumination to discover its truth. My ultimate conclusion is that all three interpretations (Leiter, Heidegger, Deleuze) at least tacitly support the onto-ethical “lived experience” interpretation of the doctrine, however ultimately, Leiter and Heidegger’s are secondary to Deleuze’s necessary reading of the doctrine of recurrence such that under Deleuze’s reading (1) what they laud Nietzsche for still stands, and (2) that for which they criticize him he is exonerated of.

0.2–Chapter 1-3 Synopses

In Chapter 1, in order to set the stage for Deleuze's critical reading of the eternal return in Chapter 2, I turn to Brian Leiter and Martin Heidegger’s interpretations of the doctrine. Leiter’s interpretation is selected to represent the ethical reading of the doctrine (Leiter, 2002). I could have easily chosen A. Danto, M. Clark, P. Poellner, J. Richardson, B. Magnus, K. Higgins, R. Solomon, or several others for this task. Leiter’s interpretation (Leiter, 2002) is selected because his research on Nietzsche is representative of many predominant 20th century analytic interpretations (Leiter, 2002, p. xiii). Heidegger’s lectures on Nietzsche, published in German in 1961 (Heidegger, 1984), are selected to represent the metaphysical reading of the eternal return since his was the reading in vogue at the time that Deleuze in 1962 published his own landmark monograph, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. I show that both Leiter and Heidegger support the reading of the eternal return as lived experience, even if filtered through ethical or metaphysical lenses.

In the second chapter, I argue that Deleuze develops the onto-ethical interpretation of the eternal return in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* because it is the necessary reading and thus the “strong” reading (even if it is a fundamental metaphysical position) because it is the one fundamental metaphysical position that can be shown to select itself from the truth of naked existence. For Deleuze, the strongest reading of the eternal return is onto-ethical because it destroys all known values while at the same time re-producing an endogenous decision-making principle capable of rebuilding a world that “matters”. In this context “to matter” means to be selected for existence in thought and being (as an object or concern) by a power that commands its own interpretation, by its very existence as Difference “as such”. The onto-ethical reading is necessary because the principle of Difference is the only principle that returns if and when the idea of substance is destroyed, such as Deleuze argues occurs, in our moment-to-moment lived experience of flux. Chapter 2 is my reading of Deleuze’s (1962) initial discovery of the endogenous, onto-ethical deployment of the eternal return (from a univocal world of will-to-power). My conclusion in Chapter 3 is that Nietzsche and Deleuze succeed where Heidegger and Leiter do not because the eternal return is not a metaphysical or moral law legislated by man or God, but rather, the eternal return is the onto-ethical and endogenous law that selects itself for existence (even and especially in the absence of all philosophy, including those philosophies of Nietzsche and Deleuze).

0.3–“Nietzsche’s” Actual First Lived Experience of the Eternal Return

I return briefly to the note on “nobody’s” first encounter with the *hobe Stimmung*. When Nietzsche regaled his best friends of his transmutational mountain hike high above the Swiss town of Sils-Maria in August of 1881, he captivated them with a tale of ecstatic experience “the *hobe Stimmung*” which birthed the highest thought of recurrence. They immediately sensed the intense fervor and madness in his narrative structuring of this concept. “Only with a quiet voice

and with all the signs of deepest horror did he speak about this secret.”¹⁶ Nietzsche’s affected state might have been written off as certified lunacy if he had not found, in madness, a principle capable of a decision. Nietzsche had discovered the genesis or starting-point for the becoming-active, genealogical being “in- and for-itself” which left a “residue” (Klossowski, 1997, p. 99) on thought (i.e. he discovers the principle of Difference), a thought capable of rewriting the post-Kantian tradition (of understanding the transcendently ideal synthesis of thought and being) along fully genetic and differential lines (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 51-52).

Nietzsche by 1881 had experienced horrible periods of sickness in his life. The intensive experience of pain in those moments was utterly devastating. The effect on Nietzsche in those moments was to destroy all meaning, all possibility of logical thought and representation, replacing it with only the intense feeling of suffering. Suddenly, high on the Swiss mountain, these nadir moments stood in stark contrast to the ecstatic joy he felt as he experienced his own being as the living affirmation whose foremost sensibility is the sensual awareness of the stark disparity that exists between moments of intense suffering and moments of intense joy. “Greatness and great heights subsist together with the depths and with what is terrifying; the more originally the one is willed, the more surely the other will be attained” (Heidegger, 1984, p.29). So understood, the self and all objects in the world become living evaluations whose very existence are each interpretations to be interpreted.

¹⁶ Klossowski quotes a 1914 letter by Lou Salome (Klossowski, 1997, p. 95).

CHAPTER 1–TWO READINGS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL RETURN

Part 0–Forecast

In Chapter 1, I examine two standard readings of the eternal return: the weak ethical and the weak metaphysical. In part 1, I present a preliminary statement of the eternal return and provide a map of where the doctrine crops up in Nietzsche's corpus. I also briefly sketch the debate among scholars as to the relative emphasis one might place on Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks versus the public iterations of the doctrine when interpreting the eternal return. Next in part 2, I show how Leiter's ethical reading of the doctrine is a new "aim for the will" (Leiter, 2002, p. 288), i.e., I show in what sense it is a new principle for a post-Christian, religious-psychological attitude. In part 3, I argue that Heidegger interprets Nietzsche as taking a fundamental metaphysical position with the eternal return and the will-to-power. Finally, in part 4, I compare Heidegger and Leiter's interpretations of the doctrine of recurrence. My conclusion is that Heidegger and Leiter's interpretations overlap with Deleuze's on two fronts. All three interpretations de-emphasize a scientific understanding of the doctrine. Secondly, and more importantly, each in his own way reads the doctrine as ultimately concerning a lived experience. However, I prove that Heidegger and Leiter reify the lived experience of flux and thus erroneously reverse the priority of being and becoming. This ratifies the eternal return as a metaphysical, transcendent, or moral, law.

Another way to say this is that on the one hand, Heidegger and Leiter beg the question of the lived experience of flux (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9; Leiter, 2002, p. 288), that is, they are willing to operate philosophically according to a principle that is based on the lived experience of flux (on the teaching of the eternal return) without resolving the tension in Nietzsche between theory and practice (cf. Clark, 1990, p.4). On the other hand, Deleuze is able

to reap the same benefits from Nietzsche's doctrine of recurrence for which Heidegger and Leiter laud Nietzsche while at the same time sidestepping the pitfalls that they mention in the same breath. For Deleuze, if the eternal return is to be onto-ethical, then it must constitute and be constituted by the eternal return of Difference: by our lived experience of flux. Leiter and Heidegger are unable to discover this move without also asserting some kind of pejorative contradiction on Nietzsche's part. In Chapter 2, after outlining Leiter and Heidegger's secondary readings in this chapter, I am able to support my claim about Deleuze's necessary reading.

Part 1—Introduction

1.1.0—Nietzsche's Aphoristic Presentations of the Doctrine

Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return in its simplest formulation states that, at base, everything returns as flux or becoming so that things are temporarily stable force relations, rather than things being self-identical substances whose properties change. The eternal return is in principle *null* without the living, repeating materiality of the will-to-power (without the lived experience of flux, because a return with no object is just an empty return). So too, the will-to-power would be absurd without the eternal return because it is the rule hewed to the immanent shape of the will-to-power.

There are three main schools of thought about the eternal return: the ethical, the metaphysical, and the scientific. The weak ethical interpretation, popularized by Bernd Magnus (Magnus, 1978) and typified in Brian Leiter (Leiter, 2002), holds that the doctrine of the eternal return is a psychological attitude that wills eternal flux instead of substance-based changes of properties. The metaphysical interpretation, typified by Martin Heidegger (Heidegger, 1984), holds that the doctrine concerns "being as a whole"; that it concerns the set of all entities and ideas and thus that what returns is the will-to-power as the same "way of being" of those entities or ideas. The scientific or cosmological interpretation is that the physical world literally repeats

in exactly the same way such that any one change in history, no matter how minute, would alter the entirety of history. The scientific interpretation, typified by Walter Kaufman (Kaufmann, 1974), is analogous to the ancient, Heraclitean or Stoic, cosmological hypothesis of an infinitely repeating wheel of time. I do not treat the scientific interpretation separately in this chapter since it is summarily dismissed by Heidegger, Leiter, and Deleuze. However, it does come up in my thesis from time to time. Nietzsche had dabbled with scientific explications however only in unpublished notebooks. Thus, I concur with Leiter's explicit (Leiter, 2002, p.xvii) and Deleuze's implicit argument (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 73-110) that Nietzsche's failure to produce plausible scientific "proofs" of the eternal return is the reason that they remained relegated to unpublished notes.¹⁷

1.1.1–Public Iterations

There are three "public" appearances of the doctrine of the eternal return that Nietzsche approved for publication in his lifetime. The first iteration is in aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 273; Book IV, "The Greatest Burden"). In this aphorism the eternal return is presented as an ethical choice, which amounts to the ethical choice to will or not to will a hypothetical, cyclic-cosmology. It asks the reader to consider "what if" it were true that the world repeated itself in exactly the same way and further asks if the reader would greet this cosmology as "the greatest burden" or as divine respite from life's incessant suffering. The second appearance is the entirety of the legend, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 2006), in which Nietzsche tells the tale of Zarathustra, the teacher of the eternal return. Here the eternal return is revealed as a fable. The third public appearance of the doctrine of eternal recurrence is

¹⁷ Clark notes that Kaufmann held a similar view, however she also notes (following Magnus) that Kaufmann unknowingly "relied heavily" on the *Nachlass* (Clark, 1990, p. 25). This is the case because the book he based his interpretation of the eternal return on is now, thanks to Magnus, commonly known to have been the vision of Nietzsche's sister who survived him and managed his posthumous estate.

in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche, 2002, pp. 43-57; part 3, “The Religious Character”). This final public iteration of the doctrine explores the picture of how a world might operate after the death of God, which has been announced already by Zarathustra and Nietzsche, the teachers of the eternal return. Thus, in the final public iteration, the eternal return is a new *Weltanschauung* (or “worldview”) that reveals the employment of beyond good and evil morality in action. In part 3 of this chapter I show Heidegger to argue that the changing sense of the eternal return in each iteration is a way for Nietzsche to show how the conceptual structure of the eternal return and thus all being is aphoristic change whose form is plastic and yet, not relative.

Nietzsche is famous for his philosophical and stylistic use of the “aphorism”, which I define as a pithy statement or parable that reveals a truth that must be digested (or interpreted). Thus, by saying change (or becoming) is aphoristic I mean that change is difficult to immediately ascertain in- and for-itself, because, change is not any particular substance but rather is becoming-active being whose form is a simulacrum that must be interpreted. This means that change is not content but the expression of content that must be carefully digested by a thinker. This is the case because at first glance, what is really becoming-active being, appears to be the illusion of a substantial being.

An aphorism, properly stamped and moulded, has not been ‘deciphered’ just because it has been read out; on the contrary, this is just the beginning of its proper interpretation, and for this, an art of interpretation is needed... I admit that you need one thing above all in order to practise the requisite art of reading, a thing which today people have been so good at forgetting – and so it will be some time before my writings are ‘readable’ –, you almost need to be a cow for this one thing and certainly not a ‘modern man’: it is rumination . . . (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 9).

Thus, since Nietzsche’s worldview of a world as will-to-power is an eternal interpretation of flux, bereft of substance, the truth of an object or idea is never final, but rather always an interpretation that can be interpreted further. Hence, the image of the cow or the process of rumination (digestion) are heuristics for understanding objects in a world of will-to-power that

express the illusion of substance. Nietzsche's use of the aphorism is not just a stylistic choice, but a philosophical one as well, since the aphorism itself is a simulacrum of the conceptual structure of the world as will-to-power. The aphorism is a simulacrum of Difference.

1.1.2–Fragments and Unpublished Iterations

Nietzsche scholars¹⁸ also debate the emphasis one might place on the problematic and fragmented iterations of the doctrine of the eternal return in Nietzsche's unpublished works, which are gathered in the *Nachlass*, "Volumes IX-XVI" in the *Grossoktavausgabe* (Magnus, 1978, p. xxi-xxii). A brief examination of the politics related to these unpublished iterations of the eternal return is vital for understanding my affirmation in this thesis of the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return. If it is the case that the onto-ethical reading is the necessary reading, then first and foremost it does not matter what Nietzsche the historical subject said about the return, whether it was said in publicly or privately. According to the strong interpretation (which I support based on my "at base" experience of flux) only Difference returns and therefore the principle of Difference derived therein also enacts the destruction of all philosophical systems, including those of Nietzsche and Deleuze.

The *Nachlass* is the subject of contention in particular because it is in these notes where scholars find evidence for the ostensible scientific "proofs" of the doctrine. Parts of the *Nachlass* were drawn together by Nietzsche's sister, who was the executor of Nietzsche's estate and who assembled the posthumously published volume we know in the English-speaking world as the *Will to Power*. This volume gives the impression that Nietzsche was serious about the scientific and metaphysical interpretation of the eternal return.¹⁹ This however is discounted by the fact

¹⁸ For example: Kaufmann, Magnus, Alderman, Clark, Leiter, Heidegger, Derrida (Clark, 1990, pp. 12-25).

¹⁹ Klossowski shows in personal correspondences how indeed Nietzsche was quite serious about the scientific angle on the eternal return, as evidences by Lou Salomé's 1914 account of his plan to attend a university. "It was he who

that Nietzsche himself asked that his notebooks be destroyed upon his death (Leiter, 2002, p. xvii).

Some thinkers, such as Leiter and Heidegger, hold that the *Nachlass* should only be used as a comparison to Nietzsche's "public" statements about the doctrine. Heidegger notes that the editors of the *Grossoktavausgabe* arbitrarily organize the *Nachlass* into themes (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics) that in effect interprets Nietzsche before scholars get a chance to do so. Heidegger's analysis rigorously identifies which notes correspond to each of the "public" iterations (*The Gay Science*; *Zarathustra*; *Beyond Good and Evil*) and then weighs the *Nachlass* notes from each corresponding period against each of these. Regarding the use of the *Nachlass*, Heidegger notes that "we dare not judge the matter pejoratively, as though what Nietzsche communicated [publicly] were less significant than what he suppressed" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 15). That is to say, Heidegger does not teach that the *Nachlass* is more important than "approved" publications. Others, such as Maudemarie Clark (following Kaufmann, Alderman and Magnus) deemphasize the use of the *Nachlass* because for instance, as Clark argues: she can provide a defensible reading of eternal return without their use, or with limited use (Clark, 1990, p. 25).

Finally, there is the French poststructuralist position: that the world, in order to "make" sense, must be read like a text or as a will-to-power in need of interpretation, and as such, equal weight should be given to both the *Nachlass* and those volumes published in Nietzsche's lifetime.²⁰ Deleuze does not mention the *Nachlass* by name in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, but he does still employ numerous passages from the *Will to Power* throughout the book, which I think

decided at that time to devote ten years of exclusive study to the natural sciences at the University of Vienna or Paris" (Klossowski, 1997, pp. 96-ff.). Klossowski surmises that if he had found a link to the eternal return in the hard sciences it would have eased the reception of his planned magnum opus on the eternal return.

²⁰ Clark uses Derrida as an example but the same applies to Deleuze. (cf. Clark, 1990, p. 18). Note for clarity: Clark does not discuss Deleuze.

evidences that, even though the *Will to Power* was culled from the *Nachlass*, there are still many excerpts which are in accord with the onto-ethical reading of eternal return.²¹

Part 2—Leiter’s Ethical Reading

1.2.0—The “Analytic” Reading of the Eternal Return: A New Aim for the Will

Contemporary Nietzschean scholar Brian Leiter interprets the eternal return in what I call a “weak ethical” sense, because

the “meaning” embodied in affirmation of the eternal return is precisely that there is no meaning or justification for suffering...[t]he doctrine of eternal return is to recognize that there is no such meaning – as it provides an aim for the will...namely, to will the repetition of everything through eternity (Leiter, 2002, p.288).

Thus, Leiter’s weak ethical position is the interpretation of the eternal return that mollifies the endless suffering that can no longer be ameliorated by God because “God is dead”. Leiter’s position is “weak” because it assumes the truth of the return to be simply elective and not as Deleuze does, as selective and elective.²² It is weak because it is not wrong; it is just secondary to a more profound and necessary reading.

For Leiter, the eternal return provides a new “aim for the will” in light of the Western metaphysical tradition of nihilism, as identified by Nietzsche in *Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1997). I select Leiter as representative of the “analytic” approach to the eternal return because of his rigorous (precise and clear) reading of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* (the volume in which Nietzsche presents a genealogical²³ argument for the world being the “at base” a flux of active and reactive forces called the will-to-power).

²¹ At least according to *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 44-ff.).

²² Deleuze’s selective and elective, onto-ethical interpretation of the eternal return is covered in detail in Chapter 2.

²³ For Leiter, to think genealogically means to ascertain the material and social conditions for morality or customs by historically and philosophically researching the origins of power relations of life and being (cf. Leiter, 2002, pp. 165-192).

Leiter is straightforward about the reasoning for his analytical approach to Nietzsche's philosophy. "The Nietzsche presented here does indeed, aspire to speak clear, precise, 'analytical' philosophical English" (Leiter, 2002, p. xiii). The brand of clarity and precision of the analytic approach is no doubt useful to students of Nietzsche to help sort through the labyrinth of philosophy, psychology, poetry, history, and sarcasm. Leiter's apt analogy: since Yeats is not critiqued poetically neither should we attempt to mimic Nietzsche's style in our commentary (Leiter, 2002, p. xv).

Leiter's attempt to sift through (what ostensibly appears to be) Nietzsche's imprecision is successful inasmuch as it achieves its stated goal of "analytic" rigor. In Heideggerian vocabulary, he even acknowledges the so-called "thoughtful-poetic"²⁴ structure of Nietzsche's philosophy by taking into account "both what [Nietzsche] says and how he says it" (Leiter, 2002, p. xv). And yet, Leiter almost wryly admits, by emphasizing his goal of "good" (Leiter, 2002, p. xiii) philosophy, that his approach aims to moralize Nietzsche, a position at odds with the *ethos* of Nietzsche's perspectivist philosophy. Leiter's method is to find evidence that produces "good analytic philosophy" (Leiter, 2002, p. xiii). Indeed, he finds textual evidence for this position by quoting *The Gay Science* 173: "Those who know that they are profound strive for clarity. Those who would like to seem profound strive for obscurity" (Leiter, 2002, p. xiv; cf. Nietzsche, 1974, pp.201-2). I agree, however, the question remains: is Nietzsche's ostensible imprecision something which needs to be, or can be, ultimately sanitized?

The answer is yes and no. As far as the "expression" of Nietzsche's doctrine goes, Leiter is right on the mark with demanding perspicacious rigor because, if clarity and precision is added to scholarly commentary on Nietzsche, then his body of work is only strengthened. However, as

²⁴ "Because all actual, that is, all great philosophy is inherently thoughtful-poetic, the distinction between "theoretical" and "poetical" cannot be applied to philosophical texts" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 73).

I argue in Chapter 2, it is not the content of the system that returns: the only return is of the necessary *ethos* of change, which is expressive Difference. In other words, any attempt to put Nietzsche's philosophy into "*good*" analytic form assumes that the imprecise content of Nietzsche's maddening thought is in need, or is capable of, sanitization (beyond its precision of expression whose benefits have been noted). Ultimately, it is as if Leiter copies a self-writing script and attempts to apply its *ethos* as moral program (and Nietzsche would have been vehemently against such applied ethics). While Leiter does draw out useful applications of Nietzsche's philosophy, he does so at the expense of its *ethos* in a way that ends up begging the question of that practical application. In short, how can one found a hubris-free applied ethics on the lived experience of eternal flux? This question is to remain pejoratively problematic in Leiter (and Heidegger) but positively so in Deleuze.²⁵

Leiter's "weak" ethical argument, setting aside for the moment the eternal return as a "lived experience", is that the eternal return is a choice to will the eternal flux of being, the aim of which is to combat the "suicidal nihilism" that comes to pass once the realization sets in that "there is no meaning or justification for suffering"; that all is flux (that God is dead) (Leiter, 2002, p. 288). However, inasmuch as the lived experience of flux for Leiter constitutes a "manifested" (Leiter, 2002, p. 141) category of being, his interpretation is secondary because manifested being necessarily refers to the lived experience of flux (whose "plastic" form, the return, is repeated in but never fully captured by Leiter's ethical reading).

Zarathustra has announced that Christ has been ripped from his throne. Leiter effectively argues that He must be replaced on the throne. The conclusion of my reading of

²⁵ Heidegger would agree with the question begging assessment of Leiter's ethical reading: "yet a 'practical' application of the thought is impossible also, inasmuch as it has always already become superfluous the moment the thought has actually been thought" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 120)

Leiter is that his argument is the result of a weak and thus secondary interpretation of the return even if there is in fact corroborative textual evidence for his reading of the eternal return. In order to assess these claims, I turn the discussion now to Leiter's analysis of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (Leiter, 2002, pp. 77-ff.). By outlining Leiter's interpretation of Nietzsche's "lower men" and "higher men" I am able to demonstrate the basis for Leiter's ethical reading of the doctrine of eternal return and to show in what sense it is secondary to a more profound reading.

1.2.1–Leiter and the Genealogy of Morals: Lower Men

Following Nietzsche, Leiter argues that lower men cannot will the eternal return. Leiter's version of the doctrine of eternal recurrence is an eternal return of a regulative principle, one for overcoming "suicidal nihilism" in the face of what appears to be an absurd world of eternal and immutable chaos. Suicidal nihilism is the "consequence of meaningless suffering" brought to light by the so-called death of God (Leiter, 2002, p. 285). The lower man finds comfort in an ascetic ideal that justifies the existential guilt of lower men. Leiter's synopsis of Nietzsche's argument from *Genealogy of Morals*, indicative of a "weak" ethical position, is as follows:

- 1 Suffering is a central fact of the human condition.
- 2 Meaningless suffering is unbearable and leads to "suicidal nihilism" (GM III: 28).
- 3 The ascetic ideal gives meaning to suffering, thereby seducing the majority of humans back to life, i.e., it maximizes their feeling of power within the constraints of their existential situation (Leiter, 2002, p. 256).

Nietzsche calls the ascetic ideal a "slave value". Slave values are representative of a morality that favors the weak and encourages the gregarious²⁶ nature of the herd to pity its

²⁶ "Gregarious" in this context refers to the strength-in-numbers, us-against-them attitude of those who hold on to reactive slave values.

fellow (lower) man and thus to remain in the *circulus vitiosus deus*.²⁷ Slave morality is a nihilism because it bases what is good on what it is not. For example, this world or my body is sin while heaven or the body of Christ is holy. Slave morality is a denial instead of an affirmation of the lived experience of flux. Slave morality may serve to carry the herd along in society but its real deleterious effect is that it infects those with the capacity to be higher men and women, obfuscating the overman.²⁸

1.2.2–Leiter and the Genealogy of Morals: Higher Men

Leiter observes several characteristics of higher men (cf. Leiter, 2002, pp. 124-155). The higher man is driven by great projects that require him to remain solitary even when amidst lower men. His strength commands him to use other people instrumentally in the service of his great projects. Those without projects of their own, lower men, are swept up in the projects of great men and resent them for it. Leiter argues that as a “regulative principle” the doctrine has limited application. As he reads it, Nietzsche’s argument is that only higher men are able to affirm the value of nihilism because they are the ones who command power expressive of their strength over other, weaker powers. The higher men are revered by Nietzsche as artists and visionaries who express strength of character such that who they are is defined not with respect to others, or by their name, but by their deeds. Nietzsche puts Beethoven, Goethe and himself in this category of higher men (Leiter, 2002, p. 115).

The higher man is the one on the path to become who one is, that is, to become an overman: an expressive activity that commands its own return to existence (Leiter, 2002, p. 287). The overman is “the one who is able to affirm the eternal return” (Leiter, 2002, p.287). As roughly

²⁷ “*Circulus vitiosus deus*” is Nietzsche’s term for the vicious circle of nihilism.

²⁸ For Leiter, The overman is a heuristic character invented by Nietzsche who demonstrates the new attitude of the thinker of the eternal return. Whoever elects to will the return of suffering is the overman; (cf. Leiter, 2002, p. 123).

understood by all three readers of Nietzsche in this thesis, the overman is the slice of the world as will-to-power that affirms its existence as a becoming-active being not only in thought (by affirming the doctrine of eternal return of lived experience) but ultimately and most importantly in-deed (by existing as a slice of becoming) such that everybody is always already becoming (overman) even if he or she does not know it.

However, for Leiter, whose goal is to extract the most practical application of Nietzsche's philosophy, the character of the overman is most importantly suggestive of a certain psychological attitude assumed and manifested by higher men. For him, the effect of the doctrine of the return is that it functions as a regulative ethical principle for determining precisely the attitude of "living" (acting "in-deed") as a higher man, that is, as a man or woman demonstratively capable of willing the fate of eternal becoming (and hence their own return). The overman takes ownership of fate and transmutes the threat of the endless suffering (the threat of nihilism) into eternal, (tragic) joyfulness, by laughing in the face of fate's necessity.

In short, we all have the power to suicide at any passing moment. The fact that we have not, shows that we choose to be here; to live; to exist. Affirmation of this line of reasoning is self-evident of any will-to-power because the sufficient reason of each and every will-to-power is a living affirmation of "to exist". For the overman, the sufficient reason to exist is not a pessimistic (Schopenhauerian)²⁹ fatalism, but rather a fate that is affirmed by the will such that what is necessary is not cause for suffering (Leiter, 2002, pp. 59-60). According to Leiter, the doctrine of the eternal return is to be understood as a new tacking-point for the a-theistic will. The doctrine of the eternal return is the power to grant a new name to the morning star, i.e., it suggests the power to transmute necessity (the sense of being) into a form of freedom (value in

²⁹ Summarizing a Schopenhauerian position, Leiter notes that for Schopenhauer, "action[s] we perform [have] to be performed, as though fated" (Leiter, 2002, pp. 59-60).

thought). The power of the doctrine of eternal return is the “formula for greatness of a human being” (Nietzsche, 2007, p. 35; cf. Leiter, 2002, p. 288) of which the spokesperson is the overman, and whose attitudinal campaign slogan is what Nietzsche calls the *amor fati* (the love of fate) (cf. Leiter, 2002, p. 120; Nietzsche, 1974, p. 276).

Leiter’s interpretation of the eternal return holds that Zarathustra (and thus Nietzsche) comes to teach the herd a way to both overcome the ascetic ideal, as well as how to overcome suicidal nihilism, by teaching a new aim for the will: the eternal return (Leiter, 2002, pp. 287-288). For Leiter, Zarathustra’s lesson is accessible only to those few higher men capable of acting in a manner as if the doctrine were true. Thus, the teacher of the eternal return teaches a new revelation to the same existential problem that the ascetic ideal and slave morality ostensibly solves, but instead of teaching a mollifying and reactive value as does Christianity, it instead teaches the affirmation of suffering.

1.2.3–Analysis of Leiter’s Argument

Leiter’s “analytic” reading of the eternal return so presented typifies the weak ethical doctrine whose aim is to teach the psychological attitude requisite for great men to overcome nihilism, that is, to overcome not with a spirit of revenge, but in “deed”; in those actions which would characterize a “new” *Human, All Too Human* (cf. Nietzsche, 2009). So understood, this elective goal of the overman created by the thinker of the eternal return serves as an alternative to the ascetic ideal because it affirms the eternal return of lived experience (of suffering) through the destruction of all reactive values while at the same time providing a new tacking-point for the will. The attitude of the overman affirms the absurdity of life: the overman either acknowledges itself as the action no wider than this attitude, or, the attitude of the overman directs those capable but who have stumbled on the path, for instance, those who have forgotten how to experiment anew with transhumanism, i.e., with becoming the overman.

The doctrine of the eternal return, so interpreted, ensures recurrence in- and for-itself and yet as Leiter observes there is still one important problem. In a sense, it does not matter if the regulative principle is true or not, because, either one is already acting in accord with the doctrine or one is not, but either way the lived experience of recurrence is always already occurring. In other words, the ethical doctrine of the eternal return, so understood, begs the question of the eternal return of flux, and Leiter knows it. He seems content to bypass this fallacy by selecting and favoring a “good” analysis, one that yields a clear and precise ethical program of Nietzsche. For Leiter, if the eternal return is a psychological goal for higher men, then the goal is “becoming overman”.³⁰ However, the overman is always already becoming overman. Therefore, Leiter’s psychological-attitude reading is secondary to the lived experience of the eternal return. Technically, Leiter escapes the charge of relativism in his own philosophy by achieving his stated goals, however, with regard to reading Nietzsche qua Nietzsche, the question-begging problem of mandating a doctrine of eternal interpretation, persists.

The emphasis on the ethical description is necessarily a secondary and thus a “weak” reading as compared to an interpretation that would explicitly favor the lived experience, because, one might ask: how does adopting a psychological attitude help to change that which is always already the case? This concern is even acknowledged by Leiter when he asks: how useful is the doctrine if only the brightest and most creative people have the capacity to act as if it were true? He reasons that those who have the capacity would gladly will its repetition, because it would mean the return of their strength and of their greatness (Leiter, 2002, p. 185-6). Thus for

³⁰ I agree with Alan Schrift, that “[f]ollowing Deleuze... we [should] construe becoming-[overman] with a hyphen as a compound verb marking a compound assemblage” (Schrift, 1995). For Deleuze, becoming-overman thus indicates the understanding that the overman is not just a principle elected by those who act as such. Instead, becoming-overman first selects itself for existence and then this selection is redoubled by the secondary, elective principle (Deleuze thinks the overman is an onto-ethical being, i.e., a becoming-other).

Leiter, in case it were possible for higher men to be negatively affected by the deleterious effects (states) of herd morality, if for instance, a Goethe or Beethoven stumbled on his path to producing great work, then the doctrine may indeed have a psychological-ethical impact by pointing to a new way (“aim of the will”) of how to shake-off the slave morality and thus to free oneself for great work (Leiter, 2002, p. 122). Is it inconceivable to think that great men are created through such a thought? I think it is possible, but that it is also possible to do so without begging the question, as shown by the end of this thesis. Thus, in my opinion, Leiter’s major mistake boils down to the declaration of his project to sanitize Nietzsche. By reversing the priority of (1) the productive site of the doctrine (the lived experience of flux), and (2) the doctrine; Leiter achieves his goal of making Nietzsche’s imprecise and overzealous style practical and capable of valorization. However, Leiter has selected this valorizing principle by reading too much of the Anglo-American philosophical tradition into Nietzsche and this obfuscates the necessary and differential *ethos* of his philosophy.

Part 3—Heidegger’s Metaphysical Reading

1.3.0—The Metaphysical Interpretation of Eternal Return

I now lay the groundwork for my conclusion that Heidegger’s reading of the eternal return is “weak”. However, I show it to be weak in a different sense from the way Leiter’s reading is weak. As shown, Leiter’s reading is weak because it admits of being secondary to the will-to-power (but ignores this imprecise truth in favor of practical moral applications of Nietzsche’s philosophy). Heidegger’s reading (“the eternal return of the same”) (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 5-19) is weak because it claims Nietzsche asserts the doctrine too strongly. In other words, Heidegger teaches that Nietzsche asserts the doctrine as truth, rather than (my affirmation in this thesis of) the truth of the world as will-to-power that selects itself in the form

of a doctrine, one which is necessarily secondary to the lived experience of the world as flux (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 176-208).

In the following, I show a certain ambiguity demonstrated by Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche and metaphysics. On the one hand, he thinks that metaphysics is the interpretation of the being of beings. On the other hand, Heidegger aims to overcome it, that is, he wants to give a metaphysical scope to his interpretation of Nietzsche (Heidegger, 1956, pp. 208; 215; 221; Heidegger, 1984, pp. 222-ff.). To this end, in order to overcome the tradition of Western metaphysics with his own philosophy, Heidegger ambivalently pushes Nietzsche back into the history of philosophy as the last Western thinker (Heidegger, 1984, p. 205).³¹ And yet as I will show, Heidegger winds up doing exactly what he accuses Nietzsche of, namely, begging the question of eternal interpretation.

The ambiguity of his reading comes about along two axes (1) Heidegger understands being as becoming, and (2) Heidegger also understands the world as "being" somehow the same while also being "at base" flux (or becoming). My Deleuze-influenced question for Heidegger is: what exactly is the same if it is acknowledged that the world is "at base" flux? In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger interprets his own magnum opus, *Being and Time*, noting that its conclusion is that "Being is not something other than Time" (Heidegger, 1956, p. 215). Being as time is Heidegger's interpretation of the world being "at base" flux. Heidegger says that the "first name" of time is the truth of being but the "last name" of time is the eternal return of the same (Heidegger, 1956, pp. 215-6). First and last refer to Heidegger's understanding of the ontological priority of interpretation of being over statements that concern being as a whole. Thus, Heidegger (1984) essentially argues that Nietzsche merely reverses the first and last names

³¹ It is in *What is Metaphysics* that Heidegger explicitly states that "[T]he West's last thinker [is] Nietzsche" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 46).

of being by asserting the doctrine of the eternal return of the same. If Heidegger understands Nietzsche as simply reversing metaphysics then I think that he has an ungenerous interpretation of Nietzsche. I merely speculate on Heidegger's motivation for this, but prove by the end of this thesis that his reading is ungenerous, in the sense that Nietzsche accomplishes with his philosophy that which Heidegger thinks *Being and Time* is original for (describing a world of becoming). This makes Heidegger's claim at best ambiguous (cf. Heidegger, 1956, pp. 213-ff.).

Heidegger's complaint against Nietzsche is that his doctrine merely repeats the phenomenon and truth of time as being. Heidegger's metaphysical reading of the eternal return of the same interprets the doctrine of recurrence as an assertion by Nietzsche that concerns "being as a whole" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169). This ostensible assertion is that the world is "at base" flux.³² For Heidegger, this truth is phenomenal. By phenomenal I mean primarily discerned of lived experience and not guaranteed by doctrinal thought. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's doctrine merely and pejoratively repeats the truth of the lived experience of flux, as a fundamental metaphysical position (Heidegger, 1984, p. 200).

1.3.1–The Fundamental Metaphysical Position

According to Heidegger, a fundamental metaphysical position is not one position among many but "the domain that is opened up as metaphysical only by virtue of the articulation of a fundamental position" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 184). However, this still leaves open the question concerning the meaning of the phrase "fundamental metaphysical position".

Heidegger understands Nietzsche as asserting a fundamental "fact" about the world (a fundamental metaphysical position), to wit: the world is a will-to-power that eternally reproduces

³² "What we are seeking is the inner structure of a thought's truth, the thought of eternal return of the same, the fundamental thought of Nietzsche's philosophy. The truth of this thought concerns being as a whole" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169).

mutable patterns that appear as objects. For Heidegger, everything that is not nothing has being. For example, thought, illusions, gods, trees, becoming, etc., all express aspects of “being” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 214). However ultimately for Heidegger, since each particular entity has a different way of being, being is always already the interpretation of being. Thus “philosophy becomes a questioning which not merely holds fast to what-is, but can admit no outside authority” (Heidegger, 1949, pp. 348-9). What then grounds metaphysics? For Heidegger the being who asks metaphysical questions is the site that illuminates the unfolding of metaphysics.³³ The question that my thesis raises to Heidegger in light of his interpretation of the eternal return is what exactly is the “same” about being that returns, if each being is an interpretation that must be interpreted? This part 3 attempts an initial answer to this question. The first step is to understand more clearly what Heidegger means when he says Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return of the same is a fundamental metaphysical position (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 184-208).

While I agree that the eternal return is a metaphysical principle, and that metaphysical principles concern being as whole, I argue that Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche is ungenerous because it claims that Nietzsche the historical subject asserts the doctrine of recurrence as a fundamental metaphysical position. If Nietzsche the historical subject is asserting that the world is eternal change or at base flux that must be interpreted, then according to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s assertion would obtain the decisiveness and scope of a fundamental metaphysical position while at the same time overturning every fundamental metaphysical position

³³ “When we talk in an ontically figurative way of the *lumen naturale* in man, we have in mind nothing other than the existential-ontological structure of this entity, that it is in such a way as to be its “there”. To say that it is ‘illuminated’...means that as Being-in-the-world it is cleared...in itself, not through any other entity, but in such a way that it is itself the clearing” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 133). The human being, or rather, what Heidegger calls “*Dasein*” (being-there) is what is the “same” in each moment of being. However, the self-sameness of *Dasein* is not to be understood as a substance because then it would be a self-identical subject and not the site of interpretation of being. For Heidegger, being has no self or subject but rather it is out in the open; a “clearing” for thinking about being of its ways to be (cf. Heidegger, 1984, p. 119).

(Heidegger, 1984, p. 198). In other words, Heidegger reads the truth of Nietzsche's doctrine (of the lived experience of flux) to be "merely provisional" to a fundamental metaphysical position (Heidegger, 1984, p. 198); one that gathers the whole of being into a principle. "Now, we know that Nietzsche offers two answers with regard to being as a whole: being as a whole is will to power, and being as a whole is eternal recurrence of the same" (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 198-9). Heidegger's reasoning is basically that the assertion by Nietzsche of eternal interpretation, in a sense, undermines the fundamental and decisive truth of that assertion by begging the question of the necessity of eternal interpretation. However, Heidegger does acknowledge a certain historical necessity of Nietzsche as "the last metaphysician"³⁴ of Western history precisely because Nietzsche's philosophy expressed the capacity to transform the traditional and Western substance-based metaphysics into the more modern philosophical mode of philosophy; into hermeneutics.

There is an ambiguity that exists in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's metaphysics if on the one hand metaphysics is hermeneutics and on the other it concerns a fundamental metaphysical position ("being as a whole"). For Heidegger, a fundamental metaphysical position "pertains to" and "determines" the history of Western thought because a fundamental metaphysical position applies to everything that "is". Heidegger (1984) suggests a provisional (illusory and common) understanding of the term "metaphysics" to concern "reasons lying behind something else, or perhaps going out beyond that thing in some inscrutable way" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 185). He notes how "metaphysics" sometimes is a pejorative, as in

³⁴ In the Nietzsche lectures Heidegger states that it is "precisely because it seems to eliminate the Platonic position [that] Nietzsche's inversion represents the entrenchment of that position" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 205). Heidegger's point is that Nietzsche is successful in transforming the guiding question of metaphysics from asking "what" is being (the paragon of Platonic inquiry) to asking of the "how" of being, that is, the way of being in each case of its being in the world. However, since historically speaking Plato has not yet been overtaken by Nietzsche's era, his philosophy will always have one foot in the tradition even if his other foot is in the future of philosophy. More on this shortly.

something vague and beyond reason. Other times metaphysics is understood as the decisive last word. However in either case, more than anything, the traditional, Western understanding of metaphysics is to think of the “end and limits of our thinking and inquiring” and this at the expense of understanding “their proper beginning and unfolding” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 186). In short, “[m]etaphysics thinks about beings as beings” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 207) but for Heidegger there are two senses of metaphysics. I refer to them as “good” and “bad” metaphysics.

1.3.2–Good versus Bad Metaphysics

“Because metaphysics represents beings as beings, it is, two-in-one, the truth of beings in their universality [bad] and in the highest being [good]” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 218). Bad metaphysics gives the illusion of substance or universality to objects in the world via representation. In the introduction to *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger draws the analogy of the tree of metaphysics: “The tree of philosophy grows out of the soil in which metaphysics is rooted.” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 208). Fundamental metaphysical positions are the “branches” of the tree of metaphysics. They constitute the ultimate assumption of any philosophy; they dictate the “sundry ‘aspects’” of a philosophical position (Heidegger, 1984, p. 191); for example, such as an ethical standpoint or a proof of a god’s existence. Thus, a fundamental metaphysical position is a “bad” albeit unavoidable aspect of metaphysics. Heidegger’s point is that there exists a “good” side of metaphysics, which acts like the soil or the ground of philosophy (and science’s) many branches. This ground is a riddle because it aphoristically requires endless interpretation, rumination, and digestion.

The “good” ground of metaphysics is the return of both interpretation and interpreter (who is immanent yet non-identical to its being, since its being is the activity of interpretation) (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 119-20). On the one hand the “good” soil of metaphysics is the eternal existence of a grounding question (the problematic, myriad ways that being can “be”). On the

other hand, on the branches of the metaphysical tree, are the answers to “bad” guiding question(s) (“sundry ‘aspects’” such as applied ethics). I understand “bad” metaphysics to indicate how the guiding question (“what is...being”) has an illusory power to render substantial being in a way that conceals the naked uncanniness of being, that being is “at base” flux (becoming) that must be interpreted for each “way” of being in each moment (Heidegger, 1962, p. 192). “For that reason we call the question ‘What is being?’ the guiding question, in contrast to the more original question which sustains and directs the guiding question. The more original question we call the grounding question” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 193). For Heidegger, the thinker is the clearing of the grounding question and this clearing (which is not a “person” or substance but rather a being-there) allows the space for philosophical guiding questions. Thus for Heidegger, the thinker is only a subject or consciousness in a secondary way with respect to the lived experience of life, which is “at base” flux of being, i.e., for Heidegger, being commands interpretation.

1.3.3–Heidegger’s Question of “How” Versus Nietzsche’s Question of “How”

As shown, for Heidegger, metaphysics broadly construed concerns the being of beings and thus “always represents beings as such in their totality” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 217). Moreover, metaphysics always conceals the same “way” that being clears the space for its own interpretation. Thus, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return is metaphysical in the pejorative sense because ultimately, it ostensibly propounds a representation that concerns the whole of the world (its scope is the eternal return of the same being, i.e., of the will-to-power). However, this position is an ambivalent one for Heidegger to take given the concessions that he makes to the power of Nietzsche’s philosophy to overturn the (bad) traditional guiding question of metaphysics (“what is...being”) with a doctrine that brings to the fore the (good) interpretation of metaphysics, one that illuminates the “way” of being (different) of each entity

(or event) (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 198-ff.). Thus, I argue that Heidegger's claim (wrapped up in his reading of the eternal return) that Nietzsche is the last metaphysician is ungenerous and at best ambivalent because it at the same time concedes (1) that Nietzsche is in fact somewhat successful inasmuch as he acknowledges the "first name" of being: time,³⁵ even if (2) he gives time a last name: "eternal return of the same". Heidegger's claim is that Nietzsche's doctrine, qua doctrinal representation of the lived experience of flux, opposes being and becoming.³⁶

The supreme will to power, that is, what is most vital in all life, comes to pass when transiency is represented as perpetual Becoming in the eternal recurrence of the same, in this way being made stable and permanent. Such representing is a thinking which, as Nietzsche emphatically notes, stamps the character of Being on beings. Such thinking takes Becoming, to which perpetual collision and suffering belong, into its protection and custody (Heidegger, 1984, p. 228).³⁷

In order for becoming to be "protected" by being, becoming and being must not "be" the same "way" of being; otherwise, it would always already "be" the being it acts upon, that is, there would only be a single being, and no becoming. Thus Heidegger concludes (echoed in Leiter's reading) that, as fundamental metaphysical position, "the doctrine of return is stamped in advance as a "theory," which in addition is said to have "practical effects" (Heidegger, 1986, p 82). He thinks Nietzsche is guilty of precisely what Leiter lauds Nietzsche for, namely, for asserting a doctrine that sanitizes the "at base" flux of the world by the elective function of a new valorizing principle. As I explore more closely in the conclusion, Heidegger discounts the

³⁵ Time is the first name of being in the sense that time is the passage of time and thus the mode of change and being, namely, becoming. Time is the first name of being because temporality is becoming and becoming is the being of the will-to-power.

³⁶ Worth noting is that this is precisely Deleuze's claim that I examine in the next chapter. However, as I show, Deleuze is able to see where Heidegger does not, that the doctrine of the eternal return necessitates the primacy of the eternal return as lived experience of flux over all other readings, including Nietzsche own reading of the eternal return.

³⁷ Heidegger notably draws this "emphatic" claim by Nietzsche (that becoming is stamped with being) from the *Nachlass*. The weigh he places on this claim in his lectures (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 82; 201-3; 228) seems disproportionate to his cautionary advice I noted above: not the place more emphasis on the unpublished iterations than those published in Nietzsche's lifetime.

ethical-psychological reading as merely one “way” of being amidst a sea of “ways to be”. As already noted, Nietzsche is famous for his “thoughtful-poetic” style and philosophical employment of the aphorism. Even Heidegger acknowledges as much, namely, for Nietzsche, “truth” is not an essence but rather a play of relations immanent to a system, i.e., truth is the “how” of a system (cf. Nietzsche, 1974, “Origin of Knowledge (aphorism 110)”, pp. 169-171) and thus dogmatic truth (or morality) is, for Heidegger’s Nietzsche, an error (Clark, 1990, cf. pp. 10-ff.). How is it then that truth (being) is wed to falsity (becoming) by the doctrine of eternal return, and what does this teach that is can be called “true”?

For Heidegger, following Nietzsche, any system is an aphorism because it commands interpretation of its “how” of being. Heidegger seizes on Nietzsche’s doctrine (and its teacher, Zarathustra) (cf. Heidegger, 1984, p.221) as a heuristic for clarifying his own question of the meaning of being since for him, as for Nietzsche, the meaning of being is created in the “way” a being appears with respect to its care-ful involvement in space and time. For Heidegger the being that “cares” about the meaning of being through active being-there in the world is a *Dasein*³⁸ (there-being) (cf. Heidegger, 1962, p. 193). Zarathustra, the teacher of the eternal return, can be understood as the teacher of how to care about a world that is “at base” flux (one that commands interpretation). But this understanding only comes to light via rumination; after several iterations of being are digested, thought, experienced, etc.

Heidegger picks up on the fact that Nietzsche forms the question of “what” to include the question “how”, but still criticizes him for making a theory out of the lived experience of eternal flux that applies to all being and beings (Heidegger, 1984, p. 213). According to

³⁸ *Dasein* is Heidegger’s term for the existence of a being that questions the meaning of being and whose “self” is wrapped up in the activity of interpretation. From the first mention of “*Dasein*” in *Being and Time* we are told that “Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in *Dasein*; in the 'there is' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 7).

Heidegger (1984; 1968), Nietzsche's theory is the "last" theory of western metaphysics because it constitutes the last answer to the guiding question of metaphysics. To wit, Nietzsche has answered the question "what is being?" with the answer "being is the interpretation of being". Since this answer must itself be interpreted, Heidegger understands Nietzsche on the one hand to be begging the question of the world as the interpretation of being.³⁹ However on the other hand, Heidegger understands well the transmutational power of the thinker of eternal return (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9). "Whenever we think the thought of eternal recurrence of the same, what is to be thought recoils on the one who is thinking, and the thinker is drawn into the thought" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 184). In other words, Heidegger acknowledges that Nietzsche's doctrine, albeit secondary to the lived experience of flux, has the transformational power to see being as: becoming that commands interpretation by its very becoming "as such". This is the power of the aphorism at play in Nietzsche's philosophy and it is clear reading Heidegger (1984; 1956; 1968) that he admires Nietzsche for placing the last metaphysical nail in the proverbial coffin, nailing open the door to God's mausoleum. This nail (the symbol or slogan "God is dead") is the final metaphysical point of Western thought; it nails "open" the door of metaphysics (open to the other; open to the noumenon; to the past) to the future and to philosophy. Another way to think of where, philosophically, God's death leaves us, is to think of the last metaphysical "point" whose location is in the "good" ground of metaphysics.

For Heidegger, what Nietzsche's doctrine means for metaphysics is that "the truth of Being may...be called the ground in which metaphysics, as the root of the tree of philosophy, is kept and from which it is nourished" (Heidegger, 1956, p. 208). In other words, what returns is

³⁹ Ironically, I think this is precisely what Heidegger does to Nietzsche by his reading of the eternal return of the same.

good metaphysics, which is the ground of all thought and representation because from its soils sprouts the metaphysical branches of fundamental metaphysical positions.

Heidegger argues that the question of the “how” of being plays out in Nietzsche’s multiple presentations of the doctrine because “how” the doctrine is presented, variously as an aphorism; as an ethical doctrine; a fable; a new morality, or as scientific doctrine, in each case its meaning is altered. Generalizing this argument, for Heidegger, all being is an interpretation governed by the doctrine of the eternal return and summarized under the slogan of *amor fati* (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 206-8). According to Heidegger, to understand the *amor fati* we must understand both the “good” and “bad” aspects of metaphysics, namely, that fate is a necessary selection of the will-to-power, however the choice to will is still a real election (by the will-to-power whose “way” to be is being-there, thoughtfully engaged in the world).⁴⁰

The reason this interpretation of being (as flux; as becoming “as such”) does not constitute a stark relativism is because there exists an internal quality to each expression of being that constitutes the character of each particular being. For instance, a cactus cannot be understood as an object to cuddle with unless to cuddle no longer means to softly caress, because, the internal quality of a cactus’ being commands a prickly interpretation (to a creature with soft skin). Granted, I can imagine an alien (or masochist) who could put a cactus to use in a joyful cuddle; however this does not alter the being of the cactus, except inasmuch as it shows a new interpretation of its prickly way of being.⁴¹ The “good” metaphysical sense of the eternal

⁴⁰ “*Amor fati* is the transfiguring will to belong to what is most in being among beings. A *fatum* is unpropitious, disruptive, and devastating to the one who merely stands there and lets it overwhelm him. That *fatum* is sublime and is supreme desire, however, to one who appreciates and grasps the fact that he belongs to his fate insofar as he is a creator, that is, one who is ever resolute. His knowing this is nothing else than the knowledge which of necessity resonates in his love” (Heidegger, 1984, p.207).

⁴¹ Not to mention that cactus is a will-to-power in and of itself that struggles to remain “as such” a prickly-being that insists on being classified as a cactus. Obviously, being “prickly” is good for the cactus when it acts as an offensive mechanism, etc.

return means just this: the eternal return of flux commands interpretation for its way of being. Inasmuch as interpretation is the command of naked existence to exist and to be interpreted as flux “as such”, a representation can always be made of this or that “way” of being of the “at base” world of flux. Representations are always “bad” in the sense of representing something that has no absolute form or value, e.g., the will-to-power of the being-prickly that we call “cactus”. Moreover, “bad” representations themselves can be acute (an affirmation) or truth-poor (a negation). For instance, if I define cuddle as a soft caress and still classify a cactus as cuddly then I have made a poor representation (according to contemporary vernacular).

Heidegger teaches that the doctrine of the eternal return teaches that the “what” of being is only possible because of its “way” of being (a living interpretation no wider than the “how” of its activity). The way the doctrine proceeds to teach as much in Nietzsche’s oeuvre is by the many different forms of expression that the eternal return therein takes. For instance, not only are there different forms of “how” the doctrine might be read in each iteration (published and unpublished) but it also takes many forms of “how” it might be read depending on who it is that re-produces a particular sense of its “how”. Whether the doctrine of eternal return is pronounced by this or that mouthpiece, or by the employment of this or that symbol, who performs each iteration, each has a power which “makes” or generates the sense of that particular passage.⁴² For example, the doctrine of eternal return varies whether:

- (1) it is said by Nietzsche himself, such as in the *Nachlass* or in *Beyond Good and Evil*, or
- (2) if it is said by a demon, such as in *The Gay Science*, where the latter creature proposes it as a hypothetical ethical-choice, or
- (3) such as by the character of the dwarf in *Zarathustra*, who is representative of “lower” men (those who have not yet understood *Zarathustra*’s teaching), who think of the doctrine as the ancient, cosmological wheel of time, or

⁴² In other words: which character, which color, which setting, which time, etc. “makes” the sense of the forms of life and being at play in those perceptual relations which arrive by the eternal return of lived experience.

- (4) if by Zarathustra himself, the teacher of the return who thinks of it as an eccentric and profound prophesy, or finally
(5) if by Zarathustra's animals, who like the dwarf also turn the doctrine into a clichéd repetition of the ancient cosmological wheel of time, who repeat the error of the lower men by turning the doctrine into the refrain of a popular tune.⁴³

The doctrine of eternal return is an aphorism because it concerns being as a whole, and the “whole” world is an aphorism. Heidegger's lectures teach us that “how” the thought of eternal return is presented, in each iteration, reveals something about the meaning of the doctrine, and thus the world. First and foremost, it reveals that the conceptual structure of the eternal return is a “way” of interpreting being for the “at base” flux that it is. This “way” is necessarily a rumination on the meaning of being, in each moment, precisely because the eternal return, at each moment, returns a new experience. Thus, as noted already, rumination is the “good being” of the grounding question of the meaning of “being”.

1.3.4—Lessons from the Metaphysical Reading

So how is Heidegger not a full-blown Nietzschean? The answer is that Heidegger thinks Nietzsche is asserting a truth about “being as a whole” (Heidegger, 1984, 168-9) and thus each new event has the same being (i.e., the truth of each new being is the return of the question of the meaning of being). In other words, it is as if that for Heidegger, Nietzsche has asserted by his doctrine of recurrence that being as a whole is in each case, from now until forever, interpretation.⁴⁴ Therefore, Heidegger attacks Nietzsche for ostensibly failing to allow the grounding question to clear its own ground and instead accuses Nietzsche of attempting to till the metaphysical ground by edict in what would in fact, as already described, amount to begging the question. I disagree that Nietzsche does this. This is the point on which Heidegger is

⁴³ For instance, the Heraclitean slogan “being becomes” which, like Heidegger's eternal return of the same, erroneously reverses the priority of becoming and being.

⁴⁴ Heidegger of course agrees with this assessment but leaves such claims to “thought” and “silence”.

ungenerous in his reading of Nietzsche. In other words, according to Heidegger (1) Nietzsche has presupposed the eternal return as concerning being as a whole, even though it is the case (2) for Heidegger the eternal return, qua activity of interpretation, effectively amounts to the grounding question of the meaning of being (to the eternal return of “good” metaphysics) (cf. Heidegger, 1984, p. 151). Heidegger’s seems like a questionable conclusion in light of his own reading of the being of the will-to-power, qua becoming. In a way, Heidegger teaches that Nietzsche begs the question of the world as being “at base” flux (Heidegger, 1984, p. 168-9). But is it not Heidegger instead of Nietzsche that begs the question with his emphasis on the eternal return of the same instead of difference? Nietzsche clearly understands that the only rule to return comes from the lived experience of flux, as does Heidegger, although ambivalently and seemingly ungenerously.

Once again, I disagree with Heidegger’s reading that Nietzsche asserted the doctrine concerning “being as a whole” because his position is ambivalent and ungenerous. Notice I did not claim that the eternal return does not concern being as a whole (it does), only that Nietzsche’s assertion is not what necessarily makes it so. Thus Heidegger’s criticism fails because it attacks a secondary understanding of the eternal return. Shortly, with the help of Deleuze, I argue that the eternal return necessarily selects itself in Nietzsche’s philosophy from the “lived experience” of the world as will-to-power. This position is strikingly in line with Heidegger’s demands of Nietzsche but would require him affirming Nietzsche as the first post-modern thinker, even if he is still in a sense the last metaphysical thinker. It requires the understanding that the eternal return is first self-deployed in our lived experience before it is employed by philosophers, and that this truth, this assertion (this endogenous affirmative) is infinitive, not personal (just like the will-to-power). Heidegger, as I have shown, prioritizes the inclusion of Nietzsche under the shadow of Platonic, Western thought. However, I have also shown that

(even for Heidegger) Nietzsche philosophy necessarily affirms “good” metaphysics (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9).

In a revealing admission, Heidegger admits that Nietzsche does not use the exact phrase “being as a whole” at any time when communicating the doctrine of the eternal return (Heidegger, 1984, p. 25). As noted, Heidegger uses the phrase “being as a whole” to refer to everything that is something (and not a *nullity*), e.g., nature, history, gods, morality. This admission reveals Heidegger’s appropriation of the doctrine of eternal return for the goals of his own philosophy (to draw out the grounding question of the meaning of being). In my opinion, his position is ungenerous because he wants to use all its insights but to take the credit as the first post-modern thinker, and ambivalent because he both (1) credits Nietzsche with overturning Western thought while (2) being a part of it himself (in a pejorative metaphysical sense). In other words, since Nietzsche himself does not use the phrase “being as a whole” the interpretation of eternal return as concerning “being as a whole” is a testament to Heidegger’s own philosophical mission to ground the question of the meaning of being in the lived experience of flux and its command to be interpretive, but Nietzsche has already done this.⁴⁵ Heidegger’s point is that if the eternal return concerns “being as a whole” then it is still an answer to the guiding question “what is being” (even if he readily acknowledges that the thinker is the ecstatic, living site of the development of being who stands “outside” and open to the future and its interpretation) (Heidegger, 1984, p. 13; cf. Heidegger, 1962, p.329). For Heidegger, Nietzsche’s answer to the guiding question is: the doctrine of the eternal return of the same

⁴⁵ “What does ‘existence’ mean in B.&T.? The word designates a mode of Being; specifically, the Being of those beings who stand open for the openness of Being in which they stand, by standing it. This ‘standing it,’ this enduring, is experienced under the name of “care.” The ecstatic essence of being there is approached by way of care, and, conversely, care is experienced adequately only in its ecstatic essence” (Heidegger, 1956, p. 214).

(even if that answer is a riddle).⁴⁶ For Heidegger, the riddle of the “good” grounding question of metaphysics suggests “being” as the object of involvement of the thinker. He teaches that “being is” the return of the return (of the “same” being; or the “same” “good” metaphysical ground; or the “same” will-to-power) for each *Dasein* (there-being).

Granted, Heidegger does not think of being as a predicate (being is not simply the answer to the question “what is...”), but Deleuze’s critical point, which I show below, is that assigning a being to becoming (or to eternal, active interpretation) is a reification of the differential structure of the world whose conceptual structure is necessarily not a being (unless that being is understood as an aphoristic riddle that requires eternal interpretation. However then, in what sense is being even the “same” being). Also granted, Nietzsche did, in his unpublished notebooks, write about “the eternal return of the same”.

A better understanding of the doctrine of eternal return of the same, the position I argue in favor of in this thesis, is that the new a-theism heralded by the eternal return is a not a negative theism or contingent law posited by a certain 19th century German philosopher named Nietzsche, but rather, is that which whose “truth” is asserted by the plastic conceptual structure of a world (asserted by the world of will-to-power) that is “at base” flux. As already noted, essentially, this is already the claim of *Being and Time*: that being is time if time is resolved to be the return of the new event of interpretation (cf. Heidegger, 1982, p. 326). Therefore, Heidegger is indeed ungenerous in his reading of Nietzsche’s doctrine of recurrence since they both refer to the “good” metaphysical ground; to the lived experience of eternally new interpretations of being.

⁴⁶ The riddle is that the answer to the guiding question is not a being but an interpretation of becoming (i.e., the being of the riddle is aphoristic).

The ironical essence of the eternal return constitutes a “good” fundamental metaphysical position because it necessarily commands the reality of the world as will-to-power (as a living evaluation) without an individual having to assert its valorizing principle by name (“God”; “the doctrine of the eternal return of the same”; “spirit” etc.). If the eternal return were “in fact” a bad fundamental metaphysical position as Heidegger in practice teaches (cf. Heidegger, 1984, p. 205), it would “in fact”, despite his protestations otherwise, constitute a negative theism. This would be the case because the eternal return of the “same” would constitute a transcendent ordering principle (not unlike Leiter’s new aim for the will), unless of course, the priority of the same and Difference is reversed. The new first and last name of being under such a *Weltanschauung* would both be Dionysus.⁴⁷ So why is it that up until at least the 1950s (Heidegger, 1968; 1956) Heidegger has labored to label Nietzsche’s philosophy as “the doctrine eternal return of the same” (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 6-11)? Why has Heidegger maintained ambivalence with respect to Nietzsche’s key insight (that asserts itself): that the world creates the space for it to be interpreted as will-to-power? Heidegger’s reading is tantamount to saying that Nietzsche asserts a negative Platonism and theism (again, despite his protestations otherwise) (cf. Heidegger, *Volume I*, 1984, pp. 200-10); however such a conclusion does not add up with the rest of Heidegger’s insights into the “good” metaphysics that Nietzsche’s philosophy engenders. I think that if Nietzsche’s philosophy is able to overturn Western thought and allow it to think from the “good” metaphysical ground then it is a simulacrum of its power to overturn and thus is not primarily a “bad” fundamental metaphysical position.

⁴⁷ “The mythic name *Dionysos* will become an epithet that has been thought through in the sense intended by Nietzsche the thinker only when we try to think the *coherence* of ‘will to power’ and ‘eternal return of the same’ (Heidegger, 1984, p. 204).

Part 4—For the Lived Experience and against the Return of the Same

1.4.0—Results

Leiter psychologizes the doctrine of eternal return as new tacking-point for the will in a world of incessant suffering. Heidegger reifies the “at base” flux, the lived experience of the world as eternally returning will-to-power, into a fundamental metaphysical position. Thus, my conclusion to Chapter 1 is that both Leiter and Heidegger’s readings of the eternal return are weak because they are secondary to the lived experience of the world as being “at base” flux. Leiter admits of the “at base” lived experience of flux as a reading of the eternal return however he denies its primacy over the psychological-attitude. I have shown that he does so in order to satisfy his goal of sanitizing Nietzsche’s philosophy into a practical, precise and clear, moral philosophy. Thus, Leiter’s reading is weak because it admits of a concealed, stronger reading of the world (as necessarily flux and will-to-power). Heidegger’s reading, that Nietzsche asserted the eternal return too strongly, too is weak because he claims that Nietzsche (the historical subject) asserts the truth of the return like a “bad” fundamental metaphysical position. His weakness is that he accuses Nietzsche of asserting too strongly that the world is will-to-power. The irony is that Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Leiter, all ultimately read the eternal return to state that the world that is “as base” flux so really each of their readings of the eternal return constitutes different aspects of the “same” (differential) interpretive conceptual structure (the “empty” “plastic” form of Difference). Leiter and Heidegger both try to save Nietzsche’s doctrine from imprecision and question-begging, but themselves end up with less precise readings that still beg the question (of the lived experience of flux and its eternal re-interpretation). In other words, the lived experience of flux ultimately defies representation because its truth is its existence as Difference “as such”. Thus Heidegger and Leiter’s criticisms

have no actual object because Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return refers to that which defies representation; it refers to our lived experience of flux.

1.4.1–A Heideggerian Response to Leiter

A Heideggerian response to Leiter: yours is a fundamental metaphysical position (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 121-38); the doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same is not the most profound⁴⁸ moment of the doctrine; actually living as if the thought were true is the profound being of this, the highest thought. Examining the ethical thought of return in light of its ethical application, although ultimately to be dismissed, is thus still for Heidegger a heuristic for understanding one of the many “how’s” of the eternal return. In this case, Leiter’s “how” to understand the doctrine (as an ethical-psychology) is to live as if it were true while understanding that the truth of each “way of being” requires interpretation (but unfortunately for Heidegger’s own indictment of metaphysics, along with his correct emphasis on interpretation, Heidegger tacks on one extra piece of metaphysical baggage: that interpretation for Nietzsche is a fundamental metaphysical position that asserts the “same” way for all being) (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 182-208). Heidegger therefore moralizes the return, not unlike Leiter ends up doing, albeit in a different way.

As all three interpretations of the doctrine of eternal return presented in my thesis agree a psychological, ethical-regulative principle is a derivative representation of the more originary lived experience and that lived experience necessarily produces “it” (the will-to-power) as a doctrine; as a repetition of its own power to exist and command interpretation. Yet, as has been shown in my examination of Heidegger, once the eternal return has been interpreted as a regulative principle, one has reified the lived experience of each and every “how” of being

⁴⁸ Once again, the profundity here is the necessity of the lived experience of flux “being” (becoming) the living object imprecisely represented in the doctrine of the eternal return (in thought).

“proximally and for the most part” (cf. Heidegger, 1962, p. 16), into a fundamental position. Therefore, Heidegger is hoisted on his own metaphysical petard since his reading of the eternal return of will-to-power as the “same” being constitutes a necessarily artificial law anterior to the lived experience of flux.⁴⁹ Heidegger is right on the proverbial money that the interpretation most consonant with Nietzsche’s philosophy is the profundity of the lived experience (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9), however, he is wrong for non-ironically asserting that Nietzsche-the-author somehow asserts the lived experience of flux as a “fact” prior to the profundity of (the onto-ethical) lived experience of thoughtful-poetic Difference.⁵⁰

1.4.2–Leiter’s Response to Heidegger

Leiter’s reading of Heidegger’s “famous misreading” (Leiter, 2002, p. 291) of the eternal return is that Heidegger fails because the latter’s metaphysical reading is created outside of ethics and thus without a moral compass with which to valorize the incessant flux. However, if the reading of my thesis is correct, Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche also constitutes a moralization of metaphysics that constitutes yet another ethicality, coded-over the raw idea of lived experience qua active interpretation.⁵¹ As noted, both the Leiter and Heideggerian accounts indicate a point at which the thought of eternal return refers to a “lived experience”, even if they are filtered through metaphysical and ethical lenses. As shown, the active “at base” flux interpretation of the lived experience of the eternal return (of will-to-power) is reified by Heidegger as a fundamental metaphysical position and psychologized by Leiter as “aim for the

⁴⁹ For Heidegger (1956), it is necessarily artificial because, by his own admission, any doctrine so asserted would unground the “good” metaphysical ground of metaphysics.

⁵⁰ I think that both Heidegger and Deleuze would thus agree that thoughtful-poetic truth is precisely the imprecise lived experience whose essence is in excess to any representation of “it” (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9; cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 94-97).

⁵¹ The problem with Heidegger’s argument, a problem he and Leiter (and Clark) share, is that they all think Nietzsche is “propound[ing] [a fundamental metaphysical position i.e.] theories of the essence of reality that are just projections of [his] own evaluative commitments (Clark 1990: 212–27)” (Leiter, 2002, p. 140). This statement is ironic in light of Leiter’s unabashed attempt to sanitize Nietzsche’s philosophy into a precise and clear program.

will” (for overcoming nihilism by higher men). So once again, the same question for Heidegger I ask of Leiter: is *Dasein* (the “being-there” of interpretation), like the overman, a “manifested” self-identical being? If so Heidegger and Leiter both beg the question of the world as being “at base” flux with their readings of the doctrine of the eternal return.

In a way, Leiter seems to agree with Heidegger’s reading of the eternal return, because in both cases the analytic-ethical interpretation is a representation or moralization of a “way of being” and therefore Leiter, like Heidegger, can be understood as reading into the doctrine of recurrence a fundamental metaphysical position in his own “way”. This does not stop Leiter, nor should it stop him, from presenting the thought of recurrence as an ethical doctrine (cf. Leiter, 2002, 287-288), especially if one agrees with Heidegger, as I do, that the doctrine of eternal return teaches necessary reevaluation (continual reinterpretation of the aphoristic conceptual structure) of being. The problem arises when the doctrine is understood as an assertion by anybody except “nobody” (the will-to-power); which/who, is simply the onto-ethical and selective activity endogenous of (1) lived experience and (2) its existential qualities. The “weak” ethical and unequally “weak” metaphysical interpretations of the eternal return are not wrong, they are merely secondary to Deleuze’s necessary and thus stronger, onto-ethical reading (as remains to be seen).

1.4.3–The Lived Experience of the World as Will-to-Power can neither Prioritize the Return of the Same Being nor the Same Psychological Attitude

The eternal return cannot primarily concern an “aim for the will” because then that aim would have to exist anterior to the interpretation of the flux of mutable patterns (of the will-to-power) and would thus constitute (to use Heidegger’s term) a “bad” metaphysics because it would merely reflect whichever worldview has been selected by the individual (cf. Heidegger, 1984, p. 191). If the eternal return is a lived experience it can neither primarily be the eternal return of the same being, nor moral imperative (i.e., nor a new aim for the will). The eternal

return as lived experience renders truth a fiction but does so without destroying a discernible, internal quality to which fiction adheres (Nehemas, 1985; cf. pp. 166-169). Philosophy after Nietzsche becomes interpretation but not absurd. This perspectivist, process-philosophy of interpretation operates by a genealogical method ascertained through the existential and genetic ground of inquiry itself. This “good” metaphysical ground, for Heidegger, Leiter, and Deleuze alike, is an affirmation, that is, the originary and positive quality of existential entities. However, as shown, it is Heidegger and Leiter who then also add artificial substance to the empty vision of eternal return by ultimately insisting on the manifested being of the doctrine of eternal return, over its essential becoming.

If Heidegger’s reading of the doctrine as “the eternal return of the same” were the last word, Nietzsche would be guilty of equivocating the distinction between good and bad metaphysics and of begging the question. However, this cannot be the case since Heidegger himself has painstakingly showed (cf. Heidegger, 1984; Heidegger, 1954, p. 216) that Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal return does not flatten the circle of time (it does not collapse the will-to-power into the eternal return of the “same” being because that would constitute the return of the vicious circle of Western thought from which Nietzsche “the last metaphysician” has extricated philosophy). By Heidegger’s own admission, neither of the two moments of the will-to-power (the will-to-power and the return; *fatum* and *amor*) nor the two senses of metaphysics (bad and good) get flattened into self-identical being by the doctrine of recurrence, because, the eternal return constitutes a being (of becoming) distinct from, albeit always already wrapped up in, the question of the meaning of being. In other words, Heidegger doesn’t have a problem with Nietzsche’s doctrine of recurrence in practice (as the being of our lived experience of flux), he merely attacks it for begging the question, which is ironic in light of my own case against

Heidegger (and in his own way, Leiter) for doing just that, namely, asserting that Nietzsche asserts the doctrine as a fundamental metaphysical position (or moral program).

CHAPTER 2–DELEUZE’S ONTO-ETHICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ETERNAL RETURN

Part 0–Forecast

Deleuze (1962) succeeds where Leiter and Heidegger have failed because he is able to give an account of the lived experience of the eternal return of flux without psychologizing or having to personally assert the doctrine of recurrence. In short, his reading is the necessary reading because it can be shown to select itself in thought and being of the lived experience of flux without begging the question of the principle of Difference (the principle for eternal interpretation). In this chapter, I show that in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze develops an onto-ethical interpretation of the eternal return and that this reading is necessary and thus the “strong” reading. According to Heidegger’s definition of fundamental metaphysical position established in the last chapter, a philosophical position that concerns being as a whole, Deleuze’s onto-ethical position is in fact a fundamental metaphysical position. However, I argue that Deleuze’s reading sidesteps the aforementioned pitfalls of both Heidegger and Leiter’s readings, which turn out to be secondary to Deleuze’s reading, because Deleuze’s is the necessary reading for understanding the lived experience of flux in- and for-itself. It is necessitated by the endogenous and selective principle of Difference, which comes to light of our lived experience of flux (and its logic of Difference). Deleuze (1962) does not use the exact term “principle of Difference” until 1968s *Difference and Repetition* (cf. Deleuze, 1994, pp. 11-2); however, I show that its necessary, differential, selective-elective essence, is already clearly in development in his onto-ethical reading of the eternal return in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.⁵²

⁵² Deleuze does come very close by mentioning “a principle of eternal difference or determination” and “a principle of internal difference or determination” (Deleuze, 1962, p.52).

This chapter plays out as follows. Firstly, a brief introduction to the necessity of the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return by way of defining “onto-ethical”, “eternal return” and “will-to-power”, in Deleuzian terms. I show that the world of will-to-power expresses itself as the “at base” experience of flux and how it does so according to the selective power of its being: Difference. Secondly, I define forces and powers in Nietzsche’s philosophy based on Deleuze’s (1962) reading of the eternal return. I prove that for Deleuze’s Nietzsche, the world is necessarily a struggle of temporarily stable, sub-representational force relations called the will-to-power (that together constitute a living evaluation and an immanent critique of representation). This leads me to the third section, where I situate Deleuze’s philosophy and reading of the eternal return (1962) in the substance-process debate in philosophy. After defending process philosophy I present an extended discussion on the will-to-power and eternal return in order to show how ruminating on the onto-ethical reading reveals a fundamental metaphysical position that constitutes two types of interpretation (1) natural (selection by the will-to-power), and (2) artificial (election in social contexts). To this end, I provide several everyday examples of how substantive objects constitute an illusion of stability while also discussing why it is the case that, if the world is necessarily a univocal Difference called the will-to-power, how developmental conditions may have been such that we evolved to perceive temporarily stable force relations as the illusion (of self-identical, substantive bodies). By the end of the chapter, the necessity of Deleuze’s onto-ethical interpretation will have been sufficiently outlined because I am able to show that onto-ethical truth of our lived experience of flux primarily accords, in each moment, to the endogenous principle of Difference.

Part 1—The Eternal Return of Will-to-Power

Deleuze (1962) reads Nietzsche as saying that the world is a will-to-power, i.e., that the world is Difference that constitutes a living evaluation.

The world is neither true nor real but living. And the living world is will to power, *will to falsehood*, which is actualised in many different powers. To actualise the will to falsehood under any power whatever, to actualise the will to power under any quality whatever, is always to evaluate. To live is to evaluate. There is no truth of the world as it is thought, no reality of the sensible world, all is evaluation, even and above all the sensible and the real (Deleuze, 1962, p. 184).

This bears striking resemblance to Heidegger's interpretation of our lived experience. Deleuze's argument is that the will-to-power would be meaningless if it were not combined with the thought of the eternal return. But how is the will-to-power to be thought as the genetic principle of selection for sense and existence that matters? What is the eternal return, and what is its ultimate relationship to the will-to-power?

This is what the will to power is; the genealogical element of force, both differential and genetic. The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation. The will to power here reveals its nature as the principle of the synthesis of forces (Deleuze, 1962, p. 50).

The will-to-power is genealogical because it selects from a world of sub-representational forces and "powers" (internal qualia) that are to return to existence (it selects quanta of qualia to exist). Powers are qualia (quanta of forces) that are capable of representation, albeit imprecisely. For instance, the existence of fire indicates the power to burn (to represent that "it burns") but the magnitude of a burn is an intensity beyond any representation. The existence of a tear can indicate the power (or sign) to emote because tears can symbolize emotion. The will-to-power at any given moment is the expression of powers that can be interpreted for their value. But more importantly, the will-to-power is always already a living evaluation. Thus the will-to-power can be an "artificial" interpretation (a representation in thought) or a "natural" interpretation (the living evaluation of the will-to-power that is expressive of quality and extensity).⁵³

⁵³ Once again, Deleuze (1962) is already developing the notion of the world as artificial and natural interpretation of the principle of Difference. However, it is not until Deleuze (1994) that Deleuze turns the discussion to artificial

Deleuze uses Kant to read Nietzsche since Kant was the first modern thinker of “critique”, or what can be called the selective synthesis of sensible forces into the forms of knowledge (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 51-2). For Kant of the *Critiques*, the synthesis of sensible forces into meaningful representation is only possible due to the transcendental synthesis of the ego’s manifold that operates as the model of stability and of self-identical being.

Kantianism centres on the concept of synthesis which it discovered. Now, we know that the post-Kantians reproached Kant, from two points of view, for having endangered this discovery [the critique]: from the point of view of the principle which governs the synthesis and from the point of view of the reproduction of objects in the synthesis itself. They demanded a principle which was not merely conditioning in relation to objects but which was also truly genetic and productive (a principle of eternal difference or determination). They also condemned the survival, in Kant, of miraculous harmonies between terms that remain external to one another. With regard to such a principle of internal difference or determination they demanded grounds not only for the synthesis but for the reproduction of diversity in the synthesis as such (Deleuze, 1962, p. 52).

As noted in footnote 12 (Deleuze, 1962, p. 205) and more extensively by Danielle Voss and Daniel W. Smith (Voss, 2011, pp. 62-74; cf. Smith, 2012, pp.65-69), the post-Kantian influence on the top of Deleuze’s mind is Salomon Maimon. To answer Maimon’s call to rewrite the post-Kantian tradition with a fully differential and genetic philosophy Deleuze successfully mines Nietzsche’s philosophy discovering in it the doctrine of eternal return, which is able to replace the stilted Kantian synthesis with a fully synthetic, selective principle of Difference. However, Difference has no origin especially not in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Nietzsche’s philosophy merely echoes the truth of the return of the principle of Difference (Deleuze, 1962, p. 46).

In order to prove the necessity of Deleuze’s reading of eternal return, I introduce Deleuze’s interpretation of the eternal return that states “the will to power is both the genetic

and natural interpretations of the will-to-power (cf. Deleuze, 1994, pp. 11-ff.). Part 3 discusses this development in greater detail.

element of force and the principle of synthesis of forces” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 51). As it was for Nietzsche (on that mountain amble above Sils-Maria) if what is revealed to the thinker of eternal return is that the will-to-power is the genetic element of sub-representational forces (ones that appear as self-identical objects) then he or she also understands that the world is essentially “at base” flux.

For Deleuze, the will-to-power selects itself in elective thought as a living evaluation whose principle is Difference. The conceptual structure of the world as will-to-power is a synthesis of Difference; the synthesis of Difference is the conceptual structure of the world (Deleuze, 1962, p. 51). So, when the thinker of the eternal return attempts to think the world of Difference (or flux) what he or she does is make an object out of Difference. Nietzsche gathers such “objective” thinking under the doctrine of the eternal return (which, so understood, is merely the memory of the habitual and mutable patterns of our lived experience of flux). But what does the object of Difference in- and for-itself refer to? It refers to its “self”. And the self of the world, that is, the being of the world, is Difference (Difference is its-“self” because content matches form of expression by the eternal return). The doctrine of the eternal return, so understood, is the thought of Difference. However, the thought of Difference requires the lived experience of Difference in order to make sense and for it not to beg the question, because, the conceptual structure of the lived experience of Difference is what is repeated in the thought of the eternal return.⁵⁴

The logic of Difference is that everything different has an internal will to express (that Difference). This is also the logic of universal becoming. The process-philosophical, critical image of the world of Difference is a struggle of forces that vie for the power to continue to

⁵⁴ Its logic is the simulacrum; an echo with no source that valorizing its own being by “being” a living evaluation; by being (becoming).

express whichever internal Difference (or qualia) they are capable to express, e.g., the will of a tiger or a gazelle. A tiger fights to stay a tiger; a gazelle fights to stay a gazelle. In other words, in order to understand the difference between a tiger and a gazelle it is necessary first and foremost that the world be understood as univocal Difference (and not just because Nietzsche, Deleuze, or I say so). The conclusion of Deleuze's differential line of reasoning is a return to its inception: the thinker of the eternal return, like all beings in a world of univocal Difference, is just another slice of Difference (as is each object in a world of will-to-power). Nietzsche is just a slice of Difference who repeats in his philosophy the fundamental metaphysical position asserted by the conceptual structure of the world (by the will-to-power; by Difference in- and for-itself). Think of it this way: if the world is will-to-power and Nietzsche is just a part of the world who/which states that world is will-to-power, then the will-to-power is asserting itself through a Difference called Nietzsche. In a lived experience of flux, all known values are destroyed by incessant change leaving only Difference (cf. Deleuze, 1962, 19-27). Difference is only discernible for its internal quality because Difference is a positive unity of unequal Difference(s), that is, because Difference, univocally, is what exists and commands interpretation, qua interpretation.⁵⁵

The doctrine of the eternal return (the thought and simulacrum of Difference in- and for-itself) is necessarily constituted by the will-to-power as a repetition of its conceptual structure (its-self) in thought. The will-to-power in turn is constituted as and by the principle of Difference. The principle of Difference is the sole necessity of the lived experience of flux, because, it is the only principle that selects itself as the universal and genetic blueprint for selection to return if and when the thought of the eternal return (the affirmation of the lived

⁵⁵ Difference is “not a probability distributed over several throws but all chance at once; not a final, desired, willed combination, but the fatal combination, fatal and loved, *amor fati*; not the return of a combination by the number of throws, but the repetition of a dicethrow by the nature of the fatally obtained number” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 27). I think of Difference as this obtained number.

experience of flux) is affirmed by an elective will. In other words, in a world where “nobody” is the experience of the forgetting all principles at each moment, the sense and value of the lived experience of flux returns because “the will to power as genealogical element is that from which senses derive their significance and values their value” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 54). In what constitutes a double-selection by the will-to-power, the thinker can (1) elect to affirm the eternal return of flux or becoming, however, (2) in order for this to be possible, the principle of Difference must have always already selected itself as the first truth being (that mutable patterns are discernible of the lived experience of flux). If 1-2 hold, then the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return sidesteps charges of question begging.

The first truth of being is that the world is Difference. Moreover, the eternal return of Difference is the univocal and primary principle of being (and thus, so too of thought);

because it is neither felt nor known, a becoming-active [a being of will-to-power] can only be thought as the product of a *selection*. A simultaneous double-selection by the activity of force as the affirmation of the will. But what can perform the selection? What serves as the selective principle? Nietzsche replies: the eternal return (Deleuze, 1962, p. 68)

In light of Deleuze (1962; 1994), I take the eternal return to mean the eternal return of the selective principle of Difference (Deleuze, 1994, p. 42). The eternal return is the selective principle affirmed or elected in thought. This principle repeats the conceptual structure of the will-to-power because the will-to-power is the living affirmation of Difference (a living principle whose simulacrum is expressed by the internal Difference of each and every entity). Thus, for Deleuze, the affirmation of Difference is another way of describing the necessary existence of Difference in- and for-itself. In other words, the selective-elective affirmation of Difference is to live without attempting to deny the uncanniness of each object and experience; it is the lived experience of becoming-overman.

But how does a world, endogenously built according to a principle of Difference differ from a Kantian (or for that matter any) world of substance? To answer this question in part 2, I first play the devil's advocate for substance philosophy in order to draw out its "sundry aspects" (its fundamental metaphysical position) and subsequently I provide some more concrete examples of what a univocal world of will-to-power may look like in light of Deleuze's process ontology. Ultimately, this proves the necessity of Deleuze's reading of the eternal return.

Part 2—A World of Substance versus a World of Will-to-Power

I define a substance philosopher as one who thinks according to a fundamental metaphysical position (as defined in Chapter 1). Speaking broadly, each philosopher of substance thinks that for each thing there is an idea that corresponds to that thing, such that the thing and the idea of the thing are in a 1:1 relationship of correspondence and such that each object or idea is mediated through a third-party (transcendent) principle of identity. Just to name a few, this broad generalization applies to Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Christianity. Each of these philosophies understands the world of objects "like walnuts in a sack" (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169); each object is next to another and each corresponds to a different form of the idea of self-identical substance, but everything is in the same "sack", i.e., is of the same substance: "being". In other words, I understand substance philosophers to understand the world as being (rooted in a transcendent principle) whereas Nietzsche (and Deleuze) understand the world as "at base" flux (or becoming).

A substance philosopher might attack a process philosopher such as Deleuze on the following grounds: if it is the case that Deleuze wants to get rid of the metaphysical notion of substance and replace it with a variety of forces affirmed by some contingent entity, then, how is one to conceptualize this entity without some substance that accords to a principle of identity? In other words: what anchors a frame of reference in a process philosophy? In response to this

question, I offer the following thought experiment that has been chosen because it is a thoughtful-poetic allegory for the genesis thought and being in both Deleuze and Nietzsche's philosophy, and it goes something like this: what if all the faculties of knowledge were lost?

Basically, I am asking the reader to put themselves in a world that is "at base" flux and to forget all theories and forms of knowledge (and representation), including language and mathematics, transcendental idealism, etc., because "when knowledge becomes a legislator, the most important thing to be subjected is thought" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 100). When we set aside every fundamental metaphysical position, what remains? Deleuze's answer is an experience of incessant flux that at first appears like a tragedy because it seems, but only seems, patently absurd (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 1-37).

Let me back up a moment to the world of substance. On the one hand, according to a Kantian frame of mind (Kant, 1998, pp. B129-B168), experience without a bounded manifold of diversity (without the faculties of knowledge) would be an absurd and vertiginous excess of information bereft of meaning. Basically, without the faculties of knowledge (reason, understanding, sensibility, etc.) backed by a transcendental manifold (empirical intuition of space and time) a philosopher of substance often struggles to understand how exactly it is the case that experience does not drown in what amounts to stark relativism (or render the world a *nullity*). Kant's philosophy limits us to what can be known; Deleuze (1962) shows Nietzsche pushing the critique all the way beyond knowledge, to the lived experience that produces knowledge.

Kant merely pushed a very old conception of critique to the limit, a conception which saw critique as a force which should be brought to bear on all claims to knowledge and truth, but not on knowledge and truth themselves (Deleuze, 1962, p. 89)

Each substance philosophy has a similar mediating effect on the world of Difference (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp.147-194; Deleuze, 1994, "The Image of Thought", pp. 129-ff.); each limits expression before that expression even exists by bottle-necking it through a fundamental

metaphysical position; through what Heidegger calls the “bad” metaphysical branches of the tree of philosophy. For other substance philosophies besides Kant’s, the threat of relativity takes different forms: for Christianity the threat of relativity is the threat of “evil” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 101); in Plato relativity is “mad” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 28); in Hegel the “antithesis” is saved by the “synthesis” of opposites (Deleuze, 1994, 195-6).⁵⁶ According to Deleuze (and Heidegger), for each philosopher of substance, that which is morally good has being and vice versa because of the arbitrary adoption of this or that fundamental metaphysical position.

On the other, non-substantive, process-philosophical, and onto-ethical hand: in a world that is “at base” flux, the world is exactly like the place that my thought experiment asks the reader to go, namely, to thinking a lived experience of flux with seemingly no frame of reference.⁵⁷ Despite the devil’s advocate who screams “chicken little” at the first sign of non-absolute (differential) thinking, process philosophy, based on the endogenous principle of Difference (even so-based on the ironical “at base” flux), can in-deed return order to a world that presents itself as nothing more than Difference. This is the case because Difference is genetic and differential; because the world exists in- and for-itself according to an endogenous principle of valorization that one must affirm in order to explain (without nihilistic principles) the lived experience of flux (diversity; becoming). Deleuze’s Nietzschean philosophy, which goes even beyond phenomenology with its necessary principle of Difference (in that it valorizes itself by the plastic form of a living evaluation) starts at this radical moment of doubt and chaos, because, such is the world that is our lived experience of flux. Deleuze’s key insight is that the

⁵⁶ Each of these examples share one thing in common: the image of thought and being constitutes a generalization that mediates similarities and contradictions according to an arbitrarily selected fundamental metaphysical position (cf. Nietzsche, 1997, pp. 52-54; Deleuze, 1994, “The Image of Thought”, pp. 129-ff.).

⁵⁷ The principle of Difference is in a sense, the Rosetta Stone that translates Kant’s famous left and right hand into one another because it is the principle of modality/topology that allows unequal powers to be unified, in their multiplicity, under a single principle that is co-created by such combinations.

lived experience of flux does not require a theory of substance or even the manifold of an ego to proceed, but rather, all it necessitates is the existence of the principle of Difference.

Deleuze incidentally augments the Heideggerian understanding discussed in Chapter 1, that being must “be” time.⁵⁸ Deleuze argues that past the limits of observable experience (past the limits of phenomenology) is the endogenous truth of lived experience, namely, that being is univocal Difference (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 195-8). He argues that what appears as tragic and absurd chaos actually returns a single quality with two axes: Difference (force and power).

The elective affirmation of Difference at first appears to concern the affirmation of “chance”; the phenomenological experience of change. However ultimately, if we follow Deleuze’s logic (1962), the truth and necessity of chance is understood as onto-ethical (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 186-9; cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 193-4). This means that the phenomenological experience of the “at base” world of flux is always already selected for its capacity to mean something to the thinker of Difference, because, Difference acts as a decision-making principle (of valorization). The experience of Difference is precisely how the world expresses itself at first glance, namely, as meaningless flux (an absurd and vertiginous, sub-representational “plastic” “knot” of forces, generally perceived as illusions of self-identical substances). The will-to-power is the principle of Difference because it is constitutive of this plastic knot of sub-representational forces (and of a principle of discernment, and thus of decision). Moreover, a world of sub-representational forces have exactly one principle that runs through the lot of them: each knot of force relations (each “will” or “qualia”) expresses a different capacity or power to affect or to be affected. Thus forces and powers are the “two great axes” along which Nietzsche’s philosophy is organized

⁵⁸ Deleuze (1962) does not mention Heidegger by name, but it seems safe to assume, based on his state-mandated curriculum, that Heidegger was at least in the back of his mind.

(Deleuze, 1962, p. x). Once again, according to Deleuze, what appears as tragic and absurd chaos actually returns a single quality with two axes: Difference (force and power)

It is therefore essential to insist on the terms used by Nietzsche; active and reactive designate the original qualities of force but affirmative and negative designate the primordial qualities of the will to power. Affirming and denying, appreciating and depreciating, express the will to power just as acting and reacting express force. (And just as reactive forces are still forces, the will to deny, nihilism, is still will to power: “. . . a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life [the “good” metaphysical ground]; but it is and remains a will!” [Nietzsche, 1997, p. 120] (Deleuze, 1962, 53-54).

One way to think about the divergent qualia of lived experience is by sense and value. Sense and value are two types of qualia that correspond respectively to forces and powers. Sense is a relation of forces and value is a hierarchy of forces (Deleuze, 1962, p. 8). Thus, in Deleuze’s process philosophy, nature is an interpretation of forces which must itself be interpreted from a third perspective, mine (or thou; or “it”).⁵⁹ For a substance philosophy of identity, the third term is God or Reason, but for this process philosophy, the valorizing principle is in each case a new interpretation of the will-to-power (whose bodies are series of temporarily stable force relations).

Before giving an account of the image of the world as will-to-power, in order to contrast the substantive world of self-identical being, I pause to further delineates Nietzsche’s two great axes: force and power to show how “they form a kind of primitive consciousness, which falls outside the order of representation” (Voss, 2011, 68) because forces and power are essential to understanding Deleuze’s onto-ethical reading of the eternal of will-to-power.

According to Deleuze, in a world of will-to-power, the world is a nexus of temporarily stable, sub-representational forces. This means that each force is an action or a reaction and all

⁵⁹ By 1968 (Deleuze, 1994), Deleuze understands quality as two levels of interpretation: natural and artificial blockage. A “block” is an interpretation, whether it is on the level of accidental forces (natural interpretation) or the level of representation (artificial interpretation).

together the world is a struggle to realize which forces continue to insist to exist. “We can ask, for any given thing, what state of exterior and interior forces it presupposes. Nietzsche was responsible for creating a whole typology to distinguish active, acted and reactive forces and to analyse their varying combinations” (Deleuze, 1962, p. x). Nietzsche understands the chance encounter of forces as fragments that act as signs of their existence. Thus, for Deleuze, Nietzsche’s analysis of forces constitutes also a semiology of active and reactive forces.

This kind of general semeiology includes linguistics, or rather philology, as one of its parts. For any proposition is itself a set of symptoms expressing a way of being⁶⁰ or a mode of existence of the speaker, that is to say the state of forces that he maintains or tries to maintain with himself and others (Deleuze, 1962, p. x).

For Deleuze and Nietzsche, the forces of an ego are its temporality stable relations, they are the drives with which a person identifies (Deleuze, 1962, p. 7). Each personality is “the expression of a mode of existence of the person who utters any given proposition” (Deleuze, 1962, p. x). The mode of existence expresses the state-of-affairs of forces at play that are expressed as signs that we name, e.g., Peter and Paul. A variety of conflicting drives (e.g. to smoke or not to smoke) may be part of a given personality of existence. However, in order to identify with or elect a particular mode of existence, we must turn to the second axis of Nietzsche’s philosophy: power.

Although Deleuze never uses the phrase “onto-ethical”, I draw the name for this type of thought and being from “the second axis [that] is concerned with power and [that] forms an ethics and ontology” (Deleuze, 1962, pp. pp. x-xi). For Deleuze, power is a term that describes the reciprocal relationship of forces. Without the axis of power, forces would indeed constitute a stark absurdity. At best, without the reciprocal axes of force and power, the conception of the world is a platitudinous (Heraclitean or Stoic) circle.

⁶⁰ This bears striking resemblance to Heidegger’s reading.

If it is true that all things reflect a state of forces then power designates the element, or rather the differential relationship, of forces which directly confront one another. This relationship expresses itself in the dynamic qualities of types such as "affirmation" and "negation". Power is therefore not what the will wants, but on the contrary, the one that wants in the will (Deleuze, 1962, x)

Forces are active and reactive, but power is the affirmation or negation of objects as temporality stable force relations. The will is not a personal will, but rather constitutes an event of affirmation. An event is the impersonal affirmation of a will that refers to the genetic relationship of power that is expressive of the local chance determination of forces. Thus, the will-to-power is a selection of forces "in their various relationships in a proposition or a phenomenon" (Deleuze, 1962, xi). In other words, the world of will-to-power is the univocal Difference such that each object that appears as a self-identical substance is just another mask of Dionysus (cf. Deleuze, 1962, pp. 30-55). The affirmation of the will-to-power by the thinker of the eternal return affirms the necessity of an eternity of chance encounters of sub-representational forces.

The will to power as a principle does not suppress chance but, on the contrary, implies it, because without chance it would be neither plastic nor changing. Chance is the bringing of forces into relation, the will to power is the determining principle of this relation (Deleuze, 1962, p. 53).

The thinker of the eternal return affirms the original selective affirmation of the will-to-power as the genetic ground of temporality stable force relations. But remember, in a world of univocal Difference, the thinker is just one slice of the will-to-power. Thus, when a thinker affirms the original affirmation, this double affirmation transforms what at first seems like a tragically absurd chaos of relative being, into the necessary expression of onto-ethical selection. By contrast, a negation of the world as Difference is a negative reaction to the differential relation of forces and the denial of the selective-elective being of the will-to-power.

In another Heideggerian moment, Deleuze shows that Nietzsche's philosophy transforms the traditional question of substance metaphysics "what is..." into "which one...";

“for any given proposition he asks ‘which one is capable of uttering it?’ (Deleuze, 1962, p. xi; cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 53). As shown, this “one”, this “object”, is not a substance but a knot of temporality stable force relations. The question “which one” asks which forces are at play in a given object and it also asks which one is the will of which drives. Thus Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal return, as a critique of substance philosophy, constitutes the repetition of the endogenous “total critique” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 1) of representation that is internal to our lived experience of the world as a living evaluation (Deleuze, 1962, “Critique” 73-110). Contra Heidegger and Leiter, if Nietzsche does argue for a strong interpretation of not only the eternal return, but the will-to-power as well, then Voss’ paper supports Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, to wit: the lived experience of flux constitutes a living evaluation or “total critique” of any and all “mediating representation[s]” because such is requisite of a fully differential and genetic process ontology (Voss, 2011, p. 65).

Part 3–The World of Will-to-Power

2.3.0–The New Nature; the Strong Interpretation of the Will-to-Power

Just because the eternal return is best not read as a scientific principle, the same does not apply to the will-to-power. The world of will-to-power and its being, the principle of Difference, do not follow the laws of nature. Sense and value of the will-to-power is reproduced internal to each new “matter” (object or concern) because every object and every idea is a living evaluation that commands interpretation based on its sheer existence.⁶¹ There are two axes of interpretation that correspond to the axes of force and power. Interpretation on the level of will-to-power is a natural interpretation of the will-to-power because the will-to-power reproduces the chance

⁶¹ “On the one hand, values appear or are given as principles: and evaluation presupposes values on the basis of which phenomena are appraised. But, on the other hand and more profoundly, it is values which presuppose evaluation” (Deleuze, 1962, 1).

material conditions that Deleuze calls sense (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 3-6). Interpretation in thought is also the will-to-power (or “the thinker”) that interprets objects (e.g., other wills), however, in this case a value (which is a representation; a new evaluation; artificial interpretation) is added to sense (which is a living evaluation; natural interpretation). In the following examples, I show how sense and value reproduce meaning in thought and being according to Deleuze’s selective and elective, onto-ethical reading of the eternal return.

I have shown that Deleuze’s process philosophy reading of Nietzsche’s eternal return operates by a single mandate: the highest thought of the highest sensibility (Difference). This means that the world is understood as being “at base” flux that selects itself once as the “natural” interpretation of sense (as the active-selective qualia of the will-to-power whose uncanny excess of information is vertiginous) and then interpreted again in a second “artificial” interpretation, in thought as representation of the being of becoming (as the affirmative-election of the will-to-power). Thus the will-to-power is “at base” temporarily stable force relations whose reciprocal relations present an excess of information that command their inevitably imperfect representation of those quanta of qualia, which are internal to this or that event or entity. Deleuze calls the eternal return of each and every new entity, that so commands interpretation as a living evaluation, the “being of becoming” (cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 23-4).⁶² Why then the persistent illusion of self-identical substances? And does not science get thrown out with the proverbial bathwater if we lose the self-identical model of substance? Nothing could be further from the truth. As John Protevi and Mark Bonta remark in *Deleuze and Geophilosophy*, “in

⁶² “Return is the being of becoming itself, the being which is affirmed in becoming (Deleuze, 1961, p.24). Thus the being of becoming is another term for the eternal return because each entity in a univocal world of Difference is a simulacrum of the form of the new: Difference.

his solo works, Deleuze strives to present a basic ontology or metaphysics adequate to contemporary physics and mathematics” (Bonta & Protevi, 2004).

A scientific model holds up well when nature is understood as a will-to-power that reproduces laws from a series of temporarily stable forces relations (and not from a set of rules somehow already, transcendently, in place) (cf. Deleuze, 1962, p. 44-51). It seems easier for most people to understand a cloud formation as an event of temporarily stable force relations, rather than say, a rock. On the one hand, in the event of the cloud, the forces at play are temperature, pressure, and H₂O. The movement of the cloud as it condenses and dispenses is easily comprehended as a struggle between these naturally-interpreted forces. The sense of the cloud is ultimately generated by the reciprocal force relations (or “sense”) of (1) (the intensity or magnitude of) temperature (2) (the intensity or magnitude of) pressure (3) (the intensity or magnitude of) H₂O. The representative value of “cloud” is the artificial interpretation (of the natural interpretation of the cloud). The natural interpretation is based on the intensity of each respective force; its representation of power (cumulus, lenticular) is married to the arrangement of forces in any given phenomenon. “A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 3). Meaning is the artificially interpreted “value” (thought or representation, e.g., lenticular) of the naturally interpreted “sense” of material forces (e.g., “pressure”, “temperature”, “H₂O”). And yet, the rock on the other hand, seems to be a tougher sell as an event (or sign) of temporarily stable force relations because it expresses such a strong illusion of self-identical and substantive being.

To understand the rock as an infinitive body of temporarily stable forces, it is perhaps helpful to take a step back to think about temporality from an anthropological standpoint. This brings about an anthropological question: why would it be helpful for our ancestors to see the

rock as an immovable, self-identical substance? The obvious answer is that it behooved us to be able to determine an innocuous rock, from say, a tiger or bear. Once again, the tiger and the bear can easily be seen as actors of temporarily stable force relations because, they struggle to subjugate prey by transforming its flesh into a stronger, nourished body whose genetic code (will-to-power) remains (around the range of temporarily stable force relations we call) a tiger or a bear. It stands to reason that we evolved to be able to recognize speeds of will-to-power up to about the speed of a tiger, or a bear, or a spider, because these are the things that would kill us. By contrast, for most of us, in order for a rock to be understood as a phenomenon whose illusion conceals sub-representational forces relations, it is helpful to think on geological time.

If our experience spanned trillions of earth years, if perhaps there were some alien that could remember all those years as if they were only yesterday, then it would be easier to see from that vantage the rock as a will-to-power. We could then readily see the coagulation of gasses that at one point, billions of years ago, were subjected to such high pressure that they turned into hot, liquid matter whose outer core cooled to form a hard outer crust. After billions of more years the intensive pressure, temperature, and matter, folds and refolds in a series of chance encounters, undulating layers upon layers of sedimentation and gas that forms and disperses into what appears to be the substantive, self-identical rock (that surrounds itself with an atmosphere and engenders life) that we call “Earth”. Through careful analysis based on nothing more than our lived experience of flux and the principle of Difference (that returns with each new fold of flux and in each moment) we can discern the rock as a will-to-power as much as we can the cloud, the tiger, and the bear. The advantage of this is that it allows us to think without preconceptions of the form of being; without unnecessary bias, namely, according to the principle of Difference.

The affirmation of the world as will-to-power creates space for endogenous valuation where before value was limited by a particular method (by fundamental metaphysical positions such as utilitarianism or Christianity). “Method in general is a means by which we avoid going to a particular place, or by which we maintain the option of escaping from it...” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 110). A method qua fundamental metaphysical position is artifice because it applies the same interpretation to every being.⁶³ Every interpretation is artifice inasmuch as it is a representation of sub-representational forces in temporarily stable relations. In other words, representations such as “cloud”, “tiger”, “rock”, “utility”, “evil”, etc., all artificially restrict the will-to-power by placing interpretive limits on the scope of these individuals and ideas (A cloud is...a tiger is...a rock is...evil is...). However, by now the reader and participant in my thought experiment (to forget, and in doing so to remember the “good” metaphysical principle that eternally returns amidst eternal flux) has glimpsed the de-subjectifying experience of flux such that the subject or object of “lived experience” is constituted as an impersonal will consisting of a variety of competing drives such that the only “tiger”, strictly speaking, is the ferocious and striped, living argument that prowls the jungle. The sub-representational world of flux is the struggle of active and reactive forces that reproduce the “will” which itself is nothing more than a living evaluation (a natural interpretation) and as such it commands further interpretation (an artificial interpretation, i.e., representation in thought, e.g. this tiger).

Now that the contrast between geological time and socially constructed time is on the table, I present one more example of natural (onto-ethical) and artificial (onto-ethical) interpretation because to think these terms reveals the necessary (endogenous), onto-ethical

⁶³ Deleuze’s complaint echoes Heidegger’s: how can the same interpretation apply to every being, if every being is a living evaluation? However, Deleuze understands something Heidegger does not, namely, that the only thing that’s the “same” that returns in the eternal return is Difference (Deleuze, 1962, p. 48).

reading of the eternal return. Natural interpretation is the genealogical selection of the chance sense, of a series of temporarily stable forces (of an event of flux); artificial interpretation is the elective affirmation of the value of this or that event of flux, as a thought and representation that corresponds to its chance set of material and social conditions. For example, under geological temporality (as a natural interpretation) we can understand petroleum as a will-to-power that is a series of temporarily stable force relations (of pressure, of hydrocarbons, of temperature) whose struggle produces the natural interpretation artificially labeled “petroleum”. Petroleum is just an artificial name for a type of will-to-power (natural interpretation; Difference) and “typology begins with topology” (Deleuze, 1962, p. 110). In other words, the lived experience of flux (as a natural interpretation; as the *hobe Stimmung*) begets categorial thinking (starting with the highest thought: the eternal return).

Petroleum is just one (natural-artificial; onto-ethical) interpretation of the will-to-power, one “liquid” fold, in a long struggle of differential states of the temporarily stable forces of the “earth”. Petroleum could just as easily be called “liquid” or “earth”. In a social context, pressurized hydrocarbon is “petroleum” when it is welcomed as the obtained, differential sum of chance force relation that looks like Texas tea (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 27-8). The point is that Deleuze understands the internal quality of the onto-ethical return of the object “petroleum” as the differential sum of sub-representational forces artificially and naturally interpreted as Difference “as such”. The natural interpretation of petroleum can be reinterpreted again and again in various other social contexts; other will-to-powers: people; technology; materials; institutions; each are new powers when their sub-representational forces combine with the natural interpretation of the will-to-power (“petroleum”) and these new encounters, both selected and elected (*fatum* and *amor*) produce yet new bodies: castor oil, plastic, etc. Thus, a plastic water-bottle at first may appear as quite a stable and self-identical substance, not unlike

the rock appears as such an illusion of substantive stability. However, it is now clear that the plastic bottle is the result of a differential struggle of forces that reproduce in thought and being the natural and artificial, twice selected, onto-ethical return of a new living evaluation, one for each moment of experience. In other words, onto-ethical return is not just the preferred reading of Nietzsche's doctrine, it is the necessary reading that selects itself of each new body and event of being.

Echoing Spinoza, Deleuze notes that each new body, thanks to the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return, is to be understood as an experiment with what a body can do (Deleuze, 1962, p, 39), that is, with how it can be twice-interpreted as the internal Difference that it "is". This Spinozan characterization is apropos since "apart from the Pre-Socratics of long ago [Nietzsche] recognised only one predecessor – Spinoza" (Deleuze, 1962, p. ix).

One more anthropological question remains of the "natural" interpretation of the will-to-power to be ruminated upon before fleshing out the strong (necessary) sense of the eternal return. The question is: why has the habit of substance philosophy become so ingrained in Western thought? In other words, why have we become accustomed to telling "substantive" narrative biographies for objects and autobiographies of our "self" if objects and subjects are indeed "at base" flux (i.e., if phenomena are multiplicities of Difference imprecisely unified as a temporal space why do we see them as stable objects)? The answer Nietzsche gives is in *Genealogy of Morals*. In brief, we have become accustomed to the illusion of substantive identity because the masters and priests of society can use this illusion as a power to control weak individuals (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 111-146; cf. p. 145-6). Nietzsche, in *Genealogy of Morals*, shows how the masters and priests of society capitalize on the hasty and tragic platitude (all changes; nothing matters) that seduces the herd into remaining ignorant to the fact that "we must not take the word *tragedy at face value*" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 36). The lived experience of flux at first

appears tragic because there is seemingly no meaning in a world of chaos. The Christian priests capitalize on this fear of relativism and encourage the herd to deny life, to deny the experiment with what its body can do by limiting the will-to-power before it even exists as new. The priests offer a method for the good life, grounded by the transcendental idea of God (Deleuze, 1962, 131-3). Thus, the evolutionary habit of recognizing temporality stable force relations as self-identical substances (the habit of the innocuous rock) is capitalized upon by the masters of society with the aim to perpetuate a state of fear; to perpetuate a fear of the unknown (the unknown capacities of our wills; our desires, our sexualities, of flux, etc.) and to attempt to control a population whose discontent and power in numbers could spell bloody revolution if not pacified by a gregarious and self-loathing, nihilistic and contingent, form of moral law. The advantage of process philosophy over substance is that the former does not yet know what this body can to, but expresses the will to try; to experiment. A substance philosopher in the Aristotelian-Darwinian tradition merely expresses similarities in the past; it cannot handle the new powers (yet to be) that destroy those inevitably weak and contingent species.

This is why Nietzsche is opposed to Darwin: Darwin confused struggle and selection. He failed to see that the result of struggle was the opposite of what he thought; that it does select, but it selects only the weak and assures their triumph (Deleuze, 1962, p. 82).

The masters co-opt the sub-representational struggle of powers and in a Darwinian fashion, apply these struggles in classifying the social conditions, which ultimately “by nature” (by the natural interpretation of the will-to-power) elude all such categorial representation. In other words, we live in a society where the struggle of the temporarily stable forces relations are erroneously applied to political science via the imposition of weak (“bad”) fundamental metaphysical positions.

2.3.1–Onto-Ethical Selection of Eternal Return in a Strong World of Will-to-Power

So how does Deleuze's onto-ethical eternal return fit into the scientific view of will-to-power, and why is Deleuze's the most profound reading of Nietzsche's famous doctrine? The answer is because the eternal return is necessarily the return of differential relations whose twice-selected, onto-ethical forces and power, in (1) natural and (2) artificial interpretation may appear as this or that stable object, but which are really underwritten by temporarily stable force relations.

Thus, the eternal return must be the return of Difference because in each case, before any rules are accorded to the form of thought and being, each body is the idea formed of whichever forces are at play in that event. As noted, even the subject is destroyed by the lived experience of will-to-power and this leaves "nobody" (flux) to "be" the becoming-active being to select sense (natural interpretation) as well as "nobody" (the thinker) to elect value (artificial interpretation) to return to existence. The eternal return cannot be a subjectified will as Leiter would have it because it begs the question of "who..." returns (my answer: nobody) and "which one..." returns (Deleuze's answer: the new lived experience). Nor can the strong eternal return and will-to-power be "bad" fundamental metaphysical positions as Heidegger would have it, because that would mean an assertion attributed to Nietzsche the historical subject that again begs the question (which it clearly does not, once one affirms the lived experience of flux and experiences its recoil effect in all thought and being).

CHAPTER 3–CONCLUSION

According to my thesis, one way to think the necessity of the onto-ethical reading of the eternal return is by understanding how the *hobe Stimmung* is necessarily the highest feeling of the lived experience of the flux, that the *hobe Stimmung* is the lived experience of the eternal return of the new (Difference). Moreover, the highest thought of the eternal return is the doctrinal representation of this lived experience which, although heuristic, is nevertheless a mere simulacrum of the highest feeling of joy (the joy of incessant suffering). The form of the *hobe Stimmung* is not nothing (because it exists) and its form, change; its form, empty; its form, plastic; its form, simulacrum; its form, Difference. The *hobe Stimmung* is a sensible echo with no origin; an ambling vibration such that any representation of its form is just that: a mere representation of a power whose imprecise being appears as an illusion of substance. Eternal flux is “empty”, “plastic”, in “knots of totalization” of temporarily stable force relations; each becoming-active being of the will-to-power is an imprecise slice of the will-to-power and each is necessarily a simulacrum of the lived experience of flux “as such”. This is the case because the principle of Difference selects itself onto-ethically in the eternal return of difference. What does this look like? As I have shown, a better question is “which one” does it look like. In each case each object still looks like itself. The illusion of substance is that it conceals the fact that the “self” of any will-to-power has the plastic and empty form of Difference.

Deleuze’s reading is most profound because it is the necessary reading that avoids the problems of Heidegger and Leiter’s readings by selecting its own truth (the principle of Difference) as a repetition of the conceptual structure of the world, in thought. It is necessary inasmuch as it is not contingent; it is the only principle to return amidst the lived experience of flux. There is precisely one such principle: the principle of Difference. Even Kant, the father of modern critique fails his stated goal of a positive and total critique because “the only object of

Kant's critique is justification, it begins by believing in what it criticizes" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 89-90). In other words, Kant begs the question of the knowable. Kant starts with what can be known, instead of questioning the givenness of the knowable from the perspective of lived experience, which would truly constitute a total critique.

Heidegger and Leiter each in their own way make a similar mistake as Kant by failing to solve the question-begging problem of eternal interpretation. Both Heidegger and Leiter are successful inasmuch as they achieve their stated goals. Heidegger aims to show Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position: "what we are seeking is the inner structure of a thought's truth, the thought of eternal return of the same, the fundamental thought of Nietzsche's philosophy" (Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9). Leiter aims to make clear and precise Nietzsche's imprecise "truth" (Leiter, 2002, p. xiii). However, both of them in practice agree that the most profound understanding of the doctrine of recurrence is the lived experience of flux (cf. Heidegger, 1984, pp. 168-9; Leiter, 2002, p. 288). Thus both of them fault Nietzsche for begging the question of eternal interpretation while still lauding him for "good" metaphysical (Heidegger) and "good" moral (Leiter) applications of Nietzsche's aphoristic "way" of thinking. By contrast, Deleuze's interpretation, the necessary selection in thought and being of the eternal return and its principle of Difference, boasts both the "good" metaphysical and "good" moral readings of the eternal return, while avoiding (positively problematizing) their question-begging problems, since for him, "we can only understand the eternal return as the expression of a principle which serves as an explanation of diversity and its reproduction, of difference and its repetition. Nietzsche presents this principle as one of his most important philosophical discoveries. He calls it *will to power*" (Deleuze, 1962, p. 49). As stated, Heidegger and Leiter's interpretations are secondary to Deleuze's profound reading, because, Deleuze's avoids the pitfalls of their readings while preserving their respective strengths with its principle of

Difference. The principle of Difference is the eternal return of the plastic form of the will-to-power that selects itself as the being of the highest thought and whose form is repeated in all beings. Since the being of the will-to-power is becoming, the eternal return is the being of becoming. Taken together, the eternal return and the will-to-power are the onto-ethical truth of existence and constitute part and parcel of the strong reading of the eternal return, which I endorse.

Maudemarie Clark astutely observes that “Nietzsche’s own practice is apparently at odds with his theory” (Clark, 1990, p.4). However, in light of Deleuze’s reading of the eternal return, this is a feature and not a bug. While Clark is correct that “Nietzsche’s mature philosophy seems to make claims to metaphysical truth while at the same time rejecting all such claims”, she yet fails to take into consideration Deleuze’s key insight: that the principle of Difference, culled from the lived experience of flux, is the “good” metaphysical principle that grounds Nietzsche’s entire sense of truth. Thus Clark, like Leiter and Heidegger, thinks that Nietzsche begs the question by wanting to have it both ways: on the one hand, he wants to say all being is interpretation, yet on the other this claim undermines its own status as “truth”. The aphoristic answer to this problematic is that the *ethos* of Nietzsche’s philosophy is precisely neither (primarily) a “bad” fundamental metaphysical position nor a program that can, without pejorative contradiction, be used as an applied ethics. Instead, the truth of the eternal return of difference is repeated in each new becoming-active being as a simulacrum of the truth of the eternal return of difference. In my opinion, the main problematic at hand in readings of the eternal return is not primarily that Nietzsche’s philosophy is “at odds” in practice and theory; the problem is how to think, that which defies representation, such that the necessary and profound understanding (of the world being “at base” flux) is necessarily repeated in our lived experience and such that we can act in accord, as if the eternal return were true.

In the 1950s Heidegger enacts a “sympathetic *return* to Nietzsche-not primarily as the metaphysician of will to power and technician of artistic frenzy but as the *thinker* of eternal recurrence” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 254, ed.). A careful reading of Heidegger on Nietzsche has revealed that Heidegger does indeed attempt to think about the profound lived experience of flux such as when he says, “the truth of this thought is such only when it is *our* truth” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169). Heidegger even agrees that the eternal return is in a sense a necessary thought: “the thinking of this thought has its most proper historical necessity; the thinking itself determines a historical moment” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 169). This to me means that Heidegger understands that the highest thought is the return of the “good” metaphysical ground, which is why I have argued that he is ungenerous with his reading of Nietzsche. His quest to articulate Nietzsche’s fundamental metaphysical position strikes me as a similar project as that of Leiter. In other words, inasmuch as they achieve their stated goals, they succeed in their readings. However, their readings must be secondary to the onto-ethical reading, that is, to the necessary return of the “good” metaphysical ground whose soil sprouts all secondary and “sundry” methods of thinking.

Perhaps Deleuze can be faulted for generalizing all readings of the eternal return of same as being equally fallible. Look at it this way: Heidegger’s reading teaches the aphoristic lesson of the doctrine (the necessary and eternal re-interpretation of being) by his thoughtful-poetic reading of recurrence. “All actual, that is, all great philosophy is inherently thoughtful-poetic” (Heidegger, 1984, p. 73). Heidegger’s thoughtful-poetic reading foregrounds the eternal return of the same. Is this perhaps his own aphoristic method for teaching the truth of recurrence? A careful reading shows he understands the “good” side of metaphysics as well as (as Clark has noted) the tension between theory and practice in Nietzsche. Thus I am able to read Heidegger as perhaps teaching, performatively (through thoughtful-poetic expression of “actual”

philosophy) how the eternal return must, necessarily, be first misinterpreted as a platitude, in order to be understood, after careful rumination, of its onto-ethical truth. Perhaps I am giving Heidegger too much credit here for his method. Ultimately, it seems that if this were his intention (to thoughtfully-poetically argue for the truth of the return) then he should state it flat-out. Then again, stating it flat-out would contradict his performative argument by moralizing its lesson before the performance of its truth is given in lived experience (thus violating the differential *ethos* of Nietzsche's philosophy). Thus, I suppose I will have to leave the question open to interpretation while casting considerable doubt in the direction of Heidegger's reading. I hasten to add that Heidegger's flat out dismissal of Nietzsche's doctrine of recurrence as a fundamental metaphysical position seems to dismiss any assertion that Heidegger was giving a performative argument of the thoughtful-poetic truth of Nietzsche's doctrine (Heidegger, 1984, p. 5). However, Heidegger's return to Nietzsche in the 1950s as a "thinker" (and not a prophet of a fundamental metaphysical position) shows promise that Heidegger ultimately does embrace the necessity of the return of "good" metaphysical thinking expressed by our very lived experience of flux and the doctrine of eternal return.

What Leiter and Heidegger mostly miss the mark on is that for Nietzsche, truth is existence; that truth exists indeed yet in-deed alone. Clark is right inasmuch as "Nietzsche does not demand that we abstain from judgment altogether" but of the three thinkers discussed in my thesis, only Deleuze shows sufficiently how judgment in Nietzsche's philosophy (Deleuze, 1962, p. 94), and thus the truth of the eternal return, necessarily comes from the lived experience of flux if it is not to be contingent and if it is not to beg the question of its own positive and differential truth.

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