ON AFFIRMATION AND BECOMING:
A DELEUZIAN READING OF NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF NIHILISM

by

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or other means, without permission of the author.
The main thrust of this thesis is the re-exploration of Friedrich Nietzsche’s “critique of nihilism” through the lenses of Gilles Deleuze. A Deleuzian reading of Nietzsche is motivated by a post-deconstructive style of interpretation, inasmuch as Deleuze goes beyond, or in between, hermeneutics and deconstruction. Deleuze’s post-deconstructive reading of Nietzsche is, however, only secondary to the main aim of this thesis. The primary thrust of this study is the critique of a way of thinking characterized by Nietzsche as nihilistic. Therefore, it should be noted that this study is not about Deleuze’s reading per se; rather, it is an appraisal of Nietzsche’s “critique of nihilism” using Deleuze’s experimental reading. We will accrue Nietzsche’s critique and Deleuze’s post-deconstructive reading in order to appraise Nietzsche’s critique itself. Insofar as we have underscored Deleuze’s purported experimentation of Nietzschean themes, this study is also an experiment in itself. Through this experimentation, we will find out whether it is possible to partly gloss Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through Deleuzian phraseology. Far from presenting a mere exposition of Nietzsche’s text, we are, rather, re-reading, that is, re-evaluating Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through Deleuze’s experimentation. This is our way of thinking with Nietzsche. Nihilism is the central problem upon which Nietzsche’s philosophical musings are directed; he deems nihilism as a cultural experience and, as such, a phenomenon to be reckoned with. In our reconstruction of Nietzsche’s critique
of nihilism, we locate two related elements which constitute the structure of the prescription of a cure, i.e., the ethics of affirmation and the ontology of becoming.

Appraising Nietzsche’s ethics and ontology amounts to clarifying what Deleuze thinks as the movement from the “dogmatic image of thought” to the “new image of thought.” Through this new image of thought, Deleuze makes sense of a Nietzschean counterculture which is a perspective that resists traditional or representational metaphysics. Deleuze takes the reversal of Platonism or the transmutation of values to be the point of departure. We have to, according to Deleuze, abandon our old image of the world in order to free ourselves from the obscurantism of foundationalist or essentialist thinking. It is only through the transmutation of values that we can make sense of Nietzsche’s ethics of affirmation and ontology of becoming. We have to think of Nietzsche’s ethics as an “ethics” and not a moral philosophy, and we have to think of his ontology as “ontology” and not as metaphysics. Through Deleuze, we are able to avoid reading Nietzsche as a moral philosopher and metaphysician. Rather, we are able to read Nietzsche as one espousing an ethical imperative through the thought of the eternal return and one advocating a theory of existence based on an immanent, as opposed to transcendent, image of the world.
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Paolo A. Bolaños
21 October 2005
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
For
Kristoffer and Kristen Paula . . .

. . . may you learn how to live your lives actively,

and not reactively.
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INTRODUCTION

"My ideal, when I write about an author, would be to write nothing that could cause him sadness, or if he is dead, that might make him weep in his grave."

- Gilles Deleuze

The peculiar character of Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) philosophy is its resistance to any definitive reading. Jacques Derrida speaks of the impouvoir (powerlessness) that one experiences in reading Nietzsche's text. "Much as a trace which has been marked in what remains of this nonfragment, such an account would withdraw it from any assured horizon of a hermeneutic question."^{2} It is this very impouvoir that opens Nietzsche's text to various, and oftentimes contrasting, readings. It is precisely this peculiar aspect of Nietzsche's writings that captures the interest of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). "Nietzsche," according to Deleuze, "is the only philosopher who makes no attempt at recodification."^{3} Both Derrida and Deleuze stress Nietzsche's style of writing over logical clarity; they take advantage of the fact that Nietzsche confounds previous works of philosophy and, as such, the reader is made powerless over his texts. Ironically, it is this very powerlessness which makes Nietzsche worthwhile to read; with Nietzsche philosophy turns against itself.

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According to Hugh Tomlinson, Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*\(^4\) "directs us to the central problem for philosophers reading Nietzsche: his relationship to philosophy."\(^5\) With Nietzsche, philosophy becomes its own mirror; Nietzsche "calls radically into question the whole idea of philosophy as the sovereign discourse of truth."\(^6\) We are powerless over his texts because they are meant to confuse us by way of disorganizing our predominant frames of mind, ultimately emancipating us from our old image of thought. Our powerlessness is "a period of drifting, of 'deterritorialization.'"\(^7\) With Nietzsche our well established tables of values are being undermined; through the death of God, we are snatched of our divine security. Are we ready to be left alone? As readers of Nietzsche, are we ready to embrace the consequences of God's death? Perhaps, Nietzsche requires a new breed of readers; but who are these new readers? Even of the highest of men Nietzsche says, "these are not my companions."\(^8\) Ironically, Nietzsche's writings are more at home with the *homeless*, the *nomads* as Deleuze puts it. The nomad is sensitive to the affective aspect of Nietzsche's aphorisms,\(^9\) for Nietzsche did not write to inform us; rather, he wrote to destroy us, to make

\[^{4}\text{Gilles Deleuze,} \ \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy,} \ \text{trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).}\]

\[^{5}\text{Hugh Tomlinson,} \ \textit{"Nietzsche on the Edge of Town: Deleuze and Reflexivity,"} \ \text{in Exceedingly Nietzsche: Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche-Interpretation (London: Routledge, 1988), 150.}\]

\[^{6}\text{Ibid.}\]

\[^{7}\text{Deleuze,} \ \textit{"Nomad Thought,"} \ \text{in The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, 144.}\]

\[^{8}\text{Friedrich Nietzsche,} \ \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra,} \ \text{trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), IV, 20.}\]

\[^{9}\text{Deleuze remarks,} \ \textit{"An aphorism is an amalgam of forces that are always held apart from one another."} \ \text{"Nomad Thought,"} \ \text{in The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, 145.}\]
us powerless, to make us think, that is, to make us feel again. Like Derrida, Deleuze takes this deconstructive force as Nietzsche's point of departure. But, unlike Derrida, Deleuze goes further and does not stop at the question of method alone. Deleuze is willing to test Nietzsche, he is eager to experiment with Nietzsche; for, after all, this is what Nietzsche, himself, implies in his writings.

Alan Schrift stresses Deleuze's experimental reading of Nietzsche; Schrift comments that "Deleuze moves from an interpretation of Nietzsche to an experimentation with Nietzsche." Such experimentation entails a radical change in language, that is, a change in the way Nietzsche's texts are being read and, in Deleuze's case, used. Deleuze moves away from sheer interpretation of texts because interpretation, for him, presupposes a reading based on representation—the view that there is some inherent meaning behind what we read; this is a type of reading grounded on the "signified-signifier" opposition. Deleuze's reading moves away from this opposition; moreover, it is neither hermeneutic nor deconstructive, but is a type of reading which commences at the margins of hermeneutics and deconstruction. As such, Deleuze reads Nietzsche constructively. In this constructive approach to the text, Deleuze focuses on the

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potentialities of the text and the creativity of the reader. He writes, along with Felix Guattari:

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements.¹¹

Deleuze’s approach is an attempt to emancipate Nietzsche from the image of thought which Nietzsche himself sought to criticize—the metaphysics of transcendence. As such, one should devise an approach which does not allow Nietzsche to fall into the same trap he sought to avoid. Strictly speaking, Deleuze’s creative experimentation of Nietzsche is an affirmative gesture at the wake of the dead God. It is a gesture that announces that reading is still possible sans the presence of a divine telos. On the one hand, a hermeneutic reading presupposes the presence of an a priori meaning or a guiding principle which gives sense to the text; often it is supposed that meaning itself ensues from the book’s author. A deconstructive reading, on the other hand, exposes the limits of the hermeneutic approach—Hermes has lost his purpose, and we wonder whether Hermes and Sisyphus are one and the same! Deconstruction does not seek meaning but, rather, it divests meaning of its divine or authoritarian stature. As such, the deconstructive approach opens up the possibility of celebrating the secularity of meaning. Oftentimes, however, what we are left after the

destruction of meaning are mere traces; most of us recoil from the sight of mere traces—of fragments. We turn away from the secular, the illogical, the irrational, the fragmentary. Meanwhile, Deleuze delights at the sight of textual imperfectability; for him, it is a spectacle worthy of celebration. At this juncture, we may interchange "textual celebration" and "textual experimentation." Deleuze’s experimental approach celebrates the expediency of the fragmentary, that is, the aphoristic structure of Nietzsche’s texts. For Deleuze,

An aphorism means nothing, signifies nothing, and is no more a signifier than a signified . . .. An aphorism is a play of forces, the most recent of which—the latest, the newest, and provisionally the final force—is always the most exterior. Nietzsche puts this very clearly: if you want to know what I mean, then find the force that gives a new sense to what I say, and hang the text upon it. Following this approach, there is no problem of interpreting Nietzsche; there are only mechanical problems of plotting out his text, of trying to establish which exterior force actually enables the text to transmit, say a current of energy.12

Deleuze justifies his "legitimate misunderstanding" of Nietzsche by claiming that an aphorism is a "phenomenon, one that waits for new forces to come and 'subdue' it, or make it work, or even to make it explode."13 This image of Nietzsche’s texts serves both as an invitation and a warning. It is an invitation to celebrate, to create; nonetheless, it is also a warning that the buoyant nature of texts makes it parasitic to various and, oftentimes, dangerous ways of reading. In this sense, anybody can be Nietzschean, whether one is a "fascist,"

13 Ibid., 146.
"bourgeois," or "revolutionary."\textsuperscript{14} However, Deleuze pays heed to this warning and makes sense of Nietzsche's philosophy by not caging Nietzsche's text; instead, Deleuze plays with Nietzsche, and inasmuch as Nietzsche underscores risk and play in his new ontology, Deleuze, for his part, makes his reading a venue wherein the dynamism of risk and play is exemplified.

Deleuze's "textual experimentation" of Nietzsche manages to go in between hermeneutics and deconstruction. Deleuze's is a reading of Nietzsche, but it is a reading which does not presuppose any definite "signified," thus also suspending the presence of a "signifier." Deleuze gets around the nostalgia of hermeneutics. Moreover, he does not anymore seek to deconstruct, for his reading begins at the end of deconstruction—its point of departure is the fragmentary nature of texts; it is, in a sense, a post-deconstructive act. Thus, as a moderate alternative, Deleuze's reading does not dispense of hermeneutics and deconstruction, but rather attempts to overcome them through his emphasis on the "function" of the text, instead of focusing on the inherent a priori meaning or lack of it. With regard to reading a book, Deleuze tells us, "We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed."\textsuperscript{15} With Deleuze, Nietzsche's ideas become alive; they are neither confined within the boundaries of traditional academic philosophy nor

\textsuperscript{14} See \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{15} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia}, 4.
are they compromised by the lack of scholarship on the part of Deleuze. On the contrary, Deleuze places Nietzsche at the forefront of academic philosophy by making Nietzsche’s ideas work. Nietzsche’s ideas become alive because they are put to use, thus restoring their very own philosophic dignity. There is, in other words, a symbiotic relationship between Deleuze and Nietzsche. There is no single Nietzsche in the eyes of Deleuze; through Deleuze’s experiment, Nietzsche’s philosophy grows more in scope, that is, it gathers more sense.

From a second-order point of view, however, Deleuze’s post-deconstructive reading of Nietzsche is only secondary to the main aim of this thesis. The primary thrust of this study is the critique of a way of thinking characterized by Nietzsche as nihilistic. Therefore, it should be noted that this study is not about Deleuze’s reading per se; rather, it is an appraisal of Nietzsche’s “critique of nihilism” using Deleuze’s style of reading. We will accrue Nietzsche’s critique and Deleuze’s post-deconstructive reading in order to appraise Nietzsche’s critique itself. Insofar as we have underscored Deleuze’s purported experimentation of Nietzschean themes, this study is also an experiment in itself. Here we will take the risk of reading Nietzsche through the lenses of Deleuze; and to find out whether it is possible to partly gloss Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through Deleuzian phraseology. Far from presenting a mere exposition of Nietzsche’s text, we are, rather, re-reading, that is, re-evaluating Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through Deleuze’s experimentation. This is our way of thinking with Nietzsche. Nihilism is the central problem upon which Nietzsche’s philosophical
musings are directed; he deems nihilism as a cultural experience and, as such, a phenomenon to be reckoned with. In our reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism, we locate two related elements which constitute the structure of the thesis: 1) the contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism and 2) the prescription of a cure, i.e., the ethics of affirmation and the ontology of becoming.

Through Nietzsche and Philosophy, we discover a very strong connection between the thoughts of Nietzsche and Deleuze: the critique and reversal of Platonism. This grievance, moreover, is the seed of their mature thought, and has been the touchtone from which all their writings are anchored. Indeed, Platonism is at the heart of every philosophy of transcendence; and this is where we locate the archenemy of Nietzsche and Deleuze. Nietzsche's account of what is nihilistic requires special attention and contextualization. Often, he is construed to be espousing a kind of nihilistic or negative philosophy. This could not be far more removed from the case. One of the aims of this study is to argue that such characterization of Nietzschean thought is a mistaken view. This grave misconception is due to the careless use of the term "nihilism" that results from a failure of taking into consideration the context from which Nietzsche draws

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17 Of course it is well known that Martin Heidegger, whose exegesis of Nietzsche's texts is among the pioneering Nietzsche appropriations, antedates Deleuze in highlighting Nietzsche's critique and reversal of Platonism. See, for example, "Truth in Platonism and Positivism. Nietzsche's Attempt to Overturn Platonism on the Basis of the Fundamental Experience of Nihilism," in Nietzsche, vol. 1, trans. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 151-161.
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sense of it. The proper understanding of nihilism requires one to delve into its very Nietzschean context. This amounts to letting Nietzsche speak for himself; which means approaching his texts immanently rather than from the outside. Thus, following the first level of the critique, the description of nihilism that this study picks up is a Nietzschean description. Far removed from a haphazard use of the term nihilism, the paper will show that such critique will only make sense within the purview of a careful assessment of Nietzsche’s diagnosis of nihilism. It is for this reason that I would like to emphasize the significance of Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Ultimately, the aim is to present Nietzsche as an affirmative and not a negative philosopher. Through Deleuze’s reading, a typological reading of nihilism comes to the fore, emphasizing the difference between “active” and “reactive” modes of being, the latter being an expression of nihilism itself. Through Deleuze, we are able to contextualize Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism through the dynamism of force and power. Through this it will become clear that the active expression of power is itself the expression of an

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18 An example of a careless use of the term nihilism is, according to Richard Schacht, Arthur Danto’s use of it. Danto maintains that nihilism is the event when “Values have no more application to the world than weights do to numbers . . .” *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), 33. On the other hand, Schacht maintains that Nietzsche “neither considered himself to be a nihilist, nor deserves to be considered one, either metaphysically or axiologically.” “Nietzsche and Nihilism,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol. xv no. 1 (1973), 89. Schacht rightly points out that Nietzsche’s program was to initiate a “revaluation of values” and not a sweeping destruction of all values. Hence, Nietzsche is neither a metaphysical nihilist, for he does not deny “reality” altogether, nor an axiological nihilist, for he does not aim to destroy all values. I would, however, be wary of Schacht’s use of the term “metaphysical.” I would rather say that Nietzsche was not an ontological nihilist. My reason for this is elaborated in the next footnote. Martin Heidegger himself commits the same mistake with regard to the hasty use of the term nihilism: “Nietzsche’s thinking sees itself as belonging under the heading ‘nihilism.’” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1977), 57.
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affirmative mode of being which is to be contrasted to the negative mode which Nietzsche sought to criticize.

The second level of the critique of nihilism entails a cure. The critique itself is a critique of a peculiar way of thinking: an image of thought which Nietzsche characterizes as reactive, resentful, or descending. It is this way of thinking that Nietzsche regards as nihilistic. The Nietzschean cure to the problem of nihilism pertains to an alternative Weltanschauung or, as Deleuze puts it, a new image of thought; a way of thinking that counters nihilism. Roughly, Nietzsche views the old image of thought as a tradition which has its origin in Socratic-Platonic metaphysics, and by metaphysics Nietzsche takes it in its literal sense: "beyond the physical." The metaphysical image of the world results in a bifurcation between the world of Forms and the physical world of flux; the universe becomes two dimensional. The problem lies in the priority given to the formal dimension while the physical dimension is considered inferior, even dispensable. Nietzsche aims to deconstruct this classical metaphysical worldview by bracketing any formal dimension of the world. While this, I should say, requires a deliberate abandonment of metaphysics, it does not however mean that Nietzsche does not provide us with an alternative. Indeed, it will be shown below how Deleuze would highlight Nietzsche’s "perspectivism" in order to explain Nietzsche’s ontology of becoming based on a new image of
thought. It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche's theory of being is no longer a metaphysics but rather an ontology.\(^{19}\)

The two levels of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will set the basic structure of the study. Since this whole endeavour is premised on an immanent interpretation of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism, the success of explicating a Nietzschean critique of nihilism depends on a peculiar way of reading. It is here that Deleuze's Nietzsche experiment enters the picture. I think that, despite his experiment, Deleuze offers a reading of Nietzsche's philosophy which is closest to the proper context or sense of Nietzsche's critique. For one, Deleuze is courageous enough to declare that Nietzsche does not offer a metaphysics, because it is precisely metaphysics that he attempts to overcome. Thus, as opposed to a metaphysics of transcendence, Deleuze provides a compelling re-telling of Nietzsche's ontology of becoming. Despite his claim that he does a

\(^{19}\) The privilege I give to the word "ontology" is strategic inasmuch as it is crucial in understanding Nietzsche's account of reality. The term ontology is used in its most general connotation as a theory of being as opposed to "metaphysics," which I deem to be a type of ontology. Following Deleuze, what this study seeks to argue is that Nietzsche offers his own theory of being which is no longer metaphysical, but is presented as a critique of metaphysical ontology. It is also important to mention that in his book Nietzsche's System, John Richardson seeks to show that Nietzsche has a metaphysics. Although I may agree with most of Richardson's claims, I refrain from ascribing any metaphysical characteristics to Nietzsche's ontology. I strongly agree with Richardson that his "project might seem perverse," precisely because he does not distinguish between ontology and metaphysics or he disregards the context from which Nietzsche understands metaphysics, but rather treats them as equivalent. See Nietzsche's System (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3. Another case at hand, and probably a more important one, is Heidegger's repeated reference to "Nietzsche's metaphysics." Like Richardson, Heidegger also does not distinguish between metaphysics and ontology; and albeit he seems to be aware of the more universal connotation of ontology by saying that any "metaphysical thinking is onto-logy or it is nothing at all," he does not make the distinction explicit. In fact metaphysics and ontology become one for Heidegger: "metaphysics is thought as the truth of what is as such in its entirety ..." Heidegger, op cit., 54-ff This somewhat obfuscates Heidegger's claim of Nietzsche's overturning of metaphysics.
"legitimate misunderstanding" of Nietzsche's works, Deleuze apparently is the most loyal and honest reader of Nietzsche, because he approaches the texts immanently and his experimental use of his own idiosyncratic phraseology does not do any injustice to the sense of Nietzsche's themes; in fact, they become more dynamic, more alive. Deleuze's honest reading and use of idiosyncratic neologisms result in one of the most original exegeses of Nietzsche. What Deleuze does is to think with Nietzsche and not against Nietzsche; Deleuze does not endeavour to find fault in Nietzsche's use of language, for, like Nietzsche, he knows too well that depending too much on language would result in an impasse in thinking. It is in the context of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that one could make ample sense of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. It should be noted, however, that even if the study draws considerably from Deleuze's book, I have opted to be selective of the themes to be discussed. One reason is for brevity; the paper is, after all, not a study of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* per se, but rather of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. A study solely devoted to Deleuze's book would require a separate undertaking altogether. Another reason is that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is further loaded with more Nietzschean themes other than the ones treated in this paper. Nonetheless, in the attempt to reconstruct the general picture of Deleuze's reading it was inevitable to draw from his other writings, and the most often quoted are *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, *Difference & Repetition*, and *The Logic of Sense*. In quoting Nietzsche, I tried as much as

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20 See the following by Gilles Deleuze, "Nietzsche," in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life,*
possible not to privilege one book over the others. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that in a particular chapter, depending on the theme being discussed, one work may stand out over the others. Overall, however, I have relied on the following: Twilight of the Idols, On the Genealogy of Morals, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil, The Gay Science, Ecce Homo, The Antichrist, Daybreak, Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Untimely Meditations and passages from the Nachlass material.21

With regard to the foregoing, the Deleuzian explication of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will be presented in three major parts. Chapter One will set a framework from which a discussion of Nietzsche's ethics and ontology can follow through. The focus of this chapter is to contextualize Nietzsche's understanding of "nihilism." The contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will revolve around three main concepts: nihilism, force, and power.

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Chapter Two explicates the first half of Nietzsche's cure: the ethics of affirmation. Using the descriptive context of nihilism laid out in the first chapter, an attempt to present an ethics which counters the nihilistic tendencies of classical forms of morality will commence. Chapter Three deals with the second half of the cure: the ontology of becoming. This chapter will also contextualize Deleuze's use of the term "difference"; for most criticisms of the idea of the eternal return of difference ensue from a lack of a clear sense of what is meant by "difference" and how it is related to Nietzsche's use of "the same" and Deleuze's use of "the Same."

Apart from the three main chapters, I have decided to add a fourth and last chapter; it is written as a corollary to the last part of Chapter Three, the contextualization of Deleuze's use of "difference" in his account of the thought of the eternal return. The beginning of Chapter Four offers a summary of the five peculiar features of Deleuze's treatment of Nietzsche. I argue that interpretations of the eternal return which ignore these five features miss the mark in not taking into account the bigger context within which the thought of the eternal return is situated. As such, in the last chapter I decided to do the following: 1) critique some interpretations of the eternal return which choose to treat the thought primarily as a cosmological doctrine and 2) briefly discuss some interpretations which are not inimical to Deleuze's reading.
CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITIQUE OF NIHILISM

"With Nietzsche, nihilism seems to become prophetic. . . . With him nihilism becomes conscious for the first time."
- Albert Camus

The chief purpose of the present chapter is to set a framework from which a discussion of Nietzsche's ethics and ontology can follow through. The focus of this chapter is to contextualize Nietzsche's understanding of "nihilism." The succeeding bulk of the study will depend on a working description of nihilism. The contextualization of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism will revolve around three main concepts: nihilism, force, and power. It is of the utmost importance that these three concepts be clarified at the very outset. Nihilism has special signification in Nietzsche which Deleuze will help us clarify. Force and power are essentially differentiated by Deleuze, and it is important to investigate on the dynamics between the two. Thus, this chapter will be presented as preliminary, for the latter aim of discussing Nietzsche's ethics and ontology will be theoretically informed by this contextualization.

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche's notion of nihilism "is undoubtedly expressed biologically, psychologically, historically, and metaphysically." In the

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context of these moments, Nietzsche’s conception of nihilism is seen as a symptom of decay or sickness of what has hitherto been called culture—and by culture, we understand it to be a collective way of thinking—a mode of being or a typology. Nietzsche’s prognosis of the nihilistic culture ensues from a genealogical approach, an evaluation of the origin of forces; the forces revealed, active and reactive, are based on a typological distinction between two modes of being:

Every individual may be scrutinized to see whether he represents the ascending or the descending line of life. Having made that decision, one has a canon for the worth of his self-interest. If he represents the ascending line, then his worth is indeed extraordinary—and for the sake of life as a whole, which takes the step farther through him, the care for his preservation and for the creation of the best conditions for him may even be extreme. . . . If he represents the descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, and sickness . . . then he has small worth, and the minimum of decay requires that he take away as little as possible from those who have turned out well. He is merely their parasite (emphasis mine).  

The above passage is probably the best summary of Nietzsche’ s typology between two modes of being: the ascending and the descending. In fact this whole chapter is premised on the characterization of this typology. It will become clear as the discussion progresses that the ascending and descending

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3 Deleuze makes it clear that nihilism is not a historical event that occurs and is immortalized in history books; rather, “the instinct of revenge is the force which constitutes the essence of what we call psychology, history, metaphysics, and morality.” Ibid., 35. This goes to say that nihilism is the very fuel that animates these moments (collectively taken as culture), and that a historiography or an appropriation of a historical event can be animated by such instinct.

lines of life will be interchangeable with the following: noble and base, master and slave, active and reactive (in relation to force), affirmative and negative (in relation to power). Ultimately, whenever Nietzsche uses these terms, what he has in mind is a contextual reference to health and sickness. One could also refer to this as the typology of health and sickness—that there are two modes of being, the healthy (ascending) and sick (descending). It is, however, more important to note that Deleuze’s interpretation of these two essentially contrasting lines of life or modes of being are themselves rooted in two poles of power, affirmative and negative, making power a conditio sine qua non of valuations in general. Thus, by situating nihilism in the context of force and power, it follows that nihilism is a mode of being which Nietzsche associates with the reactive force resulting from a negative form power. The framework set out in this chapter will bring sense to the enemy of nihilism, which is an alternative mode of being, accounted for in an ethics of affirmation and ontology of becoming.

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1) Nihilism, Genealogy, and Typology

Nietzsche advances a provocative hypothesis in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: through a genealogical investigation of the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we are able to reconstruct the advancement of the "ascetic ideal," which to Nietzsche is the very symptomatic expression of nihilism.6 His obsession with this tradition is the touchtone of his critique of morality and culture in general (European culture in particular). He views the tradition as a symptom of a decaying culture, especially the Christian one. He declares: "Nihilism stands at the door,"7—what might have caused it?—he adds, "the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted."8 The decadent characteristic of the Judeo-Christian tradition is understood by Nietzsche as a mode of being typical of the spirit of *ressentiment*. Moreover, in the *Twilight of the Idols*, with regard to Christian morality, he declares: "The church fights passion with excision in every sense: its practice, its 'cure,' is castratism."9 The practice of this kind of morality, this purported panacea for the ills of humanity, is nihilistic in the sense that it

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8 Ibid.
9 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols or, How to Philosophize with the Hammer*, V, 1. Jacques Derrida has a very interesting insight regarding castration, which we could relate with Nietzsche’s critique of traditional morality (akin to that of the Church) which, in the former’s view, manifests a purely “masculine” characteristic, as opposed to the common view which pertains to such institution as a *she*. The practice of the Church “is the masculine *concern*, the *concern* of the male who has never come of age, who is never sufficiently skeptical or dissimulating. In such an affair the male, in his credulousness and naivety (which is always sexual, pretending even at times to masterful expertise), castrates himself and from the secretion of his act fashions the snare of truth-castration.” *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, trans. by Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 59.
rips "out life by the root," and thus becomes "an enemy of life."\textsuperscript{10} Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is a consequence of a larger project, viz., the critique of "morality," which deems values as absolute and eternal. He argues that nihilism is rooted in Christian morality, because he views Christianity to be the very epitome of a negative stance towards life—it has proven itself to be the best vehicle of ressentiment and bad conscience. Nietzsche envisions the "end of Christianity—at the hands of its own morality."\textsuperscript{11} Thus, "Skepticism regarding morality is what is decisive."\textsuperscript{12} However, this critique of morality is not limited to the Christian religion alone, but, significantly, also a critique of the more general contexts of religion, psychology, history, and metaphysics; this is the reason why Nietzsche views nihilism as a cultural experience—it is, in a sense, an all-inclusive reality that has the tendency to creep into every nook and cranny of life. Nietzsche's use of the term "Christian" has special signification, especially towards the end of his career:

What are we fighting against in Christianity? That it wants to shatter the strong, that it wants to discourage their courage, exploit their bad moments and weariness, transform their proud assurance into unease and qualms of conscience; that it knows how to make the noble instincts poisonous and sick, until their force, their will to power turns back, turns against itself—until the strong are destroyed by orgies of despising and maltreating themselves . . .\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, V, 1.
\textsuperscript{11} Nietzsche, \textit{The Will to Power}, I, 1.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Writings from the Late Notebooks}, trans. by Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Notebook 11, November 1887-March 1888, 55.
Hence, when Nietzsche uses the term Christian to refer to a decadent morality, he is using the term in a more symbolic or metaphorical manner, making it representative of decadent religion, psychology, history, and metaphysics. It is in this sense that both ascetic ideal and Christian ideal refer to the base, slave, reactive, negative, or sick form of evaluation. Indeed, what Nietzsche offers as the genius of his work is his relentless criticism of a decadent or nihilistic mode of being: the ascetic ideal, out of the spirit of ressentiment and bad conscience.

According to Deleuze, nihilism and the "spirit of revenge" are synonymous. He writes: "Nietzsche calls the enterprise of denying life and depreciating existence nihilism," and, moreover, "the whole of nihilism and its forms he calls the spirit of revenge." The Christian or the ascetic ideal emanate from the spirit of revenge: "this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal . . . an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life . . . ." As mentioned, what is Christian or ascetic is loaded in signification and is not exclusive to religion alone, but also to other symptoms (psychology, history, and metaphysics). Christianity as a mode of

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14 Aaron Ridley asserts that Nietzsche's target is Christian morality; but writes that, "also in the firing line are the various crypto-Christian moralities that have been invented to take its place—self-allegedly post-Christian, but in reality, if unwittingly, trading in Christian presuppositions for whatever force they have . . . ." "Guilt Before God, or God Before Guilt?," in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 29 (Spring 2005), 42. Obviously, the crypto-Christian moralities that Ridley is pertaining to here are ideals of Modernity. For example, in philosophy we have the Modern ideas of Kant and Hegel which purport themselves to be post-Christian but, in essence, remain Christian in the eyes of Nietzsche.

15 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 34.

being, therefore, underlies wide-ranging plateaus of our lives; to Nietzsche it is the "uncanniest of all guests," and its corollary is our very incapacity to realize (and thus critique) our very own condition. As a mode of being that has informed our ways of living, the "spirit of revenge is the genealogical element of our thought, the transcendental principle of our way of thinking." We have, therefore, been trespassed by this uncanniest of all guests; it knocked but did not wait for the door to be opened—it had no respect for privacy!

For Nietzsche, as for Deleuze, there is only one ontological fact: the fact of life. Hence, any analysis of nihilism must take into account this ontological fact, because nihilism is an enemy of life. Life, therefore, could be construed as either nihilistic or not. But if the question is whether life is either nihilistic or not, how do we know? In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche writes:

\[\ldots\] do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.

"Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God has died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth."  

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17 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, I, 1.
18 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 35.
19 In one of his last essays, Deleuze proclaims: "We will say of pure immanence that it is a LIFE, and nothing else . . . A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss." "Immanence: A Life," in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 27.
Here Zarathustra warns the crowd against the poison mixers, the despisers of life—people who have lived decadent lives, whether they are conscious of it or not, and have as their vow the recruitment of more of their kind. Deleuze illuminates this point:

> Life takes on the value of nil insofar as it is denied and depreciated. Depreciation always presupposed a fiction: it is by means of fiction that something is opposed to life. The whole of life then becomes unreal, it is represented as appearance, it takes on a value of nil in its entirety. The idea of another world, of a supersensible world in all its forms (God, essence, the good, truth), the idea of values superior to life, is not one example among many but the constitutive element of all fiction.\(^2\)

In the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche distinguishes between fiction and dream, and how the former becomes opposed to life:

> This *world of pure fiction* is vastly inferior to the world of dreams insofar as the latter *mirrors* reality, whereas the former falsifies, devalues, and negates reality. Once the concept of "nature" had been invented as the opposite of "God," "natural" had to become a synonym of "reprehensible": this whole world of fiction is rooted in *hatred* of the natural (of reality!); it is the expression of a profound vexation at the sight of reality.\(^2\)

Thus, the poison (fiction) that these despisers of life feed us are the very transcendent values that we have hitherto accorded the value of truth—the very

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\(^{2}\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147.

\(^{2}\) Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 15. Nietzsche’s account of dream in *The Birth of Tragedy* should also be taken into consideration: “The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and . . . of an important part of poetry.” *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 1, 1. It is also important to differentiate between illusion (as Nietzsche uses it) and fiction: the basic difference is that the latter aims to falsify while the former mirrors or is a truthful (perhaps “honest” is a better word in this context) appropriation of reality.
foundation of our lives. Little did we know that these values, which we have
highly esteemed, are themselves the very values which could poison and kill us.
Life is devalued when it is projected in this lowly way; this is Nietzsche’s
definition of nihilism: “That the highest values devaluate themselves,”23 that life is
itself devalued. Nihilism, therefore, operates whenever one’s sensitivity to life is
disparaging, and that life itself is rendered dispensable. In this sense, it is not
surprising that Nietzsche considers Socrates to be the ancient precursor of this
base mode of being.

The point to be reckoned with here is that Nietzsche’s understanding of
nihilism is typological. As pointed out earlier, Nietzsche distinguishes between
two types or modes of being, the ascending and descending, which will be
referred to as affirmative and negative modes respectively. The affirmative and
negative are basically evaluative modes, Deleuze writes: “Evaluations, in
essence, are not values but are ways of being, modes of existence of those who
judge.”24 In other words, there are two modes or attitudes of evaluating life; our
way of looking at life depends on whether, in the first place, we are ascending or
descending. The value accorded to life depends on the “image of thought”25 or

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23 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, I, 2.
24 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 1.
25 Deleuze and Felix Guattari write, “The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or
can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to
think, to make use of thought, to find one’s bearings in thought.” What is Philosophy?, trans. by
Further, Deleuze writes, “We are never referred to the real forces that form thought, thought itself is
never related to the real forces that it presupposes as thought.” Nietzsche and Philosophy, 103-104.
The ultimate aim of philosophy, for Deleuze, is not to cognitively assimilate reality; rather,
philosophy is the joyful opening up of trajectories, planes of immanence, or images of thought.
perspective which initiates the person into evaluation. This is the meaning of genealogy, according to Deleuze. Genealogy entails origin/beginning (in this sense the "differential element" between noble and base) and also the origin of valuations. Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* presents a prognosis of "the origin of our moral prejudices...",26 that is, of our moral valuations: the values we accord to life and, thus, to ourselves. Therefore, the sense of genealogy in this context is a form or "critique," an attitude which is sensitive and not blind to the differential element of moral valuations. To quote Deleuze:

Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values. Genealogy is opposed to absolute values as it is to

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26 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, preface, 2. It is important, however, to distinguish between Nietzsche's sense of origin as genealogy and origin as Ursprung. Genealogy is itself a critique of Ursprung. A genealogist is someone who attends to details—even perhaps the minutest and idiosyncratic details. In his search for details, however, the genealogist must not expect an underlying organizing principle. For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, genealogy is not concerned with formal originary models. Rather, what they are after is not Ursprung but "origins"—a plurality of factors involved in the birthing of a concept. I would say that genealogy is anti-metaphysical in the sense that it prioritizes history over the concept. This means that there is no metaphysical origin to things, history is the mosh pit of discursive practices which are the very basis of concepts—and thus discourses. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139-156.
relative or utilitarian ones. Genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin. Genealogy means nobility and baseness, nobility and vulgarity, nobility and decadence in the origin.27

Through a genealogical analysis, we are able to discover the two ways of making differences: the affirmative mode of the master and the negative mode of the slave. "This distinction," according to Deleuze, "is not only quantitative but also qualitative and typological."28 This means that the ascending and descending modes of being are not only expressions of quanta of forces or symptoms but, more importantly for Deleuze, they are qualities or distinguishing characteristics. The master originates by affirming himself and accords goodness to his nature. The “noble man lives in trust and openness with himself”;29 he differentiates himself from the slave by affirming himself and not by negating the slave. The self-affirmation (as opposed to the Hegelian external recognition)30 of the master is what makes him "good," while he labels the slave "bad" (schlecht)31 upon recognition of the slave’s baseness. When the master labels the slave "bad," it is not a gesture of negation, rather of "differentiation."

27 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 2.
29 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 12.
30 G.W.F. Hegel writes: “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.” Therefore, “Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.” Phenomenology of the Spirit, trans. by A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§178, 175.
Nietzsche refers to the master’s gesture as the “pathos of distance”—the ability to differentiate or set oneself apart. Meanwhile, by contrast, although the slave recognizes the difference of the master, he reacts to this difference negatively and resents the master because he could not be equal to the master. The “man of rencentiment is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself.”

When the slave labels the master bad, it is a gesture of negation; the slave does not begin from himself but rather from a reaction to the master. Deleuze refers to the slave’s reaction as a paralogism that runs unnoticed: “birds of prey are evil (that is, the birds of prey are all the evil ones, the evil ones are birds of prey); but I am the opposite of a bird of prey; therefore I am good.” In Nietzsche’s formulation: “these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?”

Hence, depending on whether the evaluator is ascending or descending (both regard themselves “good”), their appropriations split into two contrasting senses of “bad”: bad as base and bad as evil (Böse). Nietzsche writes:

This, then, is quite the contrary of what the noble man does, who conceives the basic concept “good” in advance and spontaneous out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of “bad”! This “bad” of noble origin and “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred—the former an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade, the latter on the contrary the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive deed in the conception of a slave morality—how different

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32 Ibid., I, 2. Also see Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), IX, 257.
33 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 12.
34 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 122.
these two words "bad" and "evil" are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept "good." But is not the same concept "good": one should ask rather precisely who is "evil" in the sense of the morality of ressentiment. The answer, in all strictness, is: precisely the "good man" of the other morality, precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, but dyed in another color, interpreted in another fashion, seen in another way by the venomous eye of ressentiment.36

This typological distinction between the affirming master and the resentful slave sets the foundation for Nietzsche's ethics of affirmation. I will delay a deeper analysis of this theme until the next chapter. At this juncture, however, it is important to maintain that the origin of values is revealed through a genealogical critique of the two typological modes of being. Our life, our mode of being is itself a typology of either good or base. We live our lives according to how we view it. "This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings, and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or style of life."37 This also means that the value we accord life is informed by these immanent forces within us. Nihilism, in this context, simply reflects the negative attitude towards life—the slave's mode of being—for it is the depreciation of the value of life emanating from a decadent way of evaluating.

2) Force: Active and Reactive

With the typological reading of nihilism, Nietzsche leads us to a critique of the origin of values: genealogy. Values result from two evaluative modes,

36 Ibid., I, 11.
37 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 1.
affirmative and negative, and it is with the latter that nihilism is symptomatic. This goes to say that the nihilistic attitude towards life ensues from a negative image of thought or perspective, wherein the slave negates what is immanently affirmative. In other words, nihilism is an evaluative or interpretative mode of existence which is hostile to life.

Nietzsche's proposal in On the Genealogy of Morals is to study the development of morality through linguistics, and this is taken by Deleuze to be the first axis of Nietzsche's philosophy which is referred to as a "general semioectology," that is a study of "forces." Signs, in this instance, are considered forces, and by forces we pertain to "Phenomena, things, organisms, societies, consciousness and spirits," or in other words "symptoms." It is in the study of the symptomatic nature of forces where Deleuze finds Nietzsche's distinction between two modes of existence, the affirmative and the negative, which respectively are manifested in active and reactive forces. These modes of being, as has been pointed out earlier, are evaluative modes, for they represent two different ways of seeing life; this ensues from the typological nature of evaluation. Later, it will be explained why "evaluation finds the principles of values in the will to power." Suffice it to say, for the moment, that active and reactive forces are informed by the typology or quality of evaluation. This being said, we could trace the origin of nihilism back to a type or a mode of being.

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38 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 17.
39 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, x.
40 Ibid.
41 Deleuze, Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, 74.
which Nietzsche deems, as has been pointed out, as a negative way of looking at life. Thus, nihilism is what follows after a reactive way of looking at life. The negative mode of being is itself the very quasi-principle of movement of being reactive.

The important question which arises after positing the two evaluative forces, active and reactive, is: "where do they begin?" In dealing with this question, Nietzsche is careful enough not to put forward an answer which appeals to any form of transcendence; he attempts to provide an explanation of the origin of forces without having to posit an Ursprung or transcendent origin. Henceforth, he answers the question of origin from the point of view of "immanence" as opposed to "transcendence." This is precisely where Nietzsche breaks away from metaphysical methods of dealing with the question of origin. It is this very immanence of reality that allows Nietzsche to put forward an ontology of affirmation. Deleuze takes note of Nietzsche's point of departure: "What is the body? . . . Being composed of a plurality of irreducible forces the body is a multiple phenomenon, its unity is that of a multiple phenomenon, a 'unity of domination'."^2 The internal dynamism of the body is, therefore, Nietzsche's point of departure; furthermore: "In a body the superior or dominant forces are known as active and the inferior or dominated forces are known as reactive."^3

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^2 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 40.
^3 Ibid.
From a Spinozistic point of view, Deleuze attempts to show how Nietzsche puts to the fore a philosophy of immanence by seeing the body as the originary stratum of forces. By giving the body this status, Nietzsche is able to move beyond the metaphysical interpretation of forces. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche conceives of "Subtle relations of power and of evaluation between different 'selves' that conceal but also express other kinds of forces—forces of life, forces of thought . . ." Forces emanate from bodies which are assemblages of forces; the body is a unified multiplicity, an assemblage. By declaring the body as an assemblage of forces, the value given to a "transcendent subject" becomes nil. This is Nietzsche's way of criticizing and overcoming the Modern adherence to a "subject."

The human body, in which the most distant and most recent past of all organic development again becomes living and corporeal, through which and over and beyond which a tremendous inaudible stream seems to flow: the body is a more astonishing idea than the old "soul."

This implies that there is no soul or subject which acts as the substratum of the body. "There are nothing but quantities of force in mutual 'relations of

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44 Deleuze discusses his conception of immanence in Spinoza in the following: *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 155-186; *What is Philosophy?*, 35-60. Deleuze also relates immanence to the "plane of consistency": "consistency concretely ties together heterogeneous, disparate, elements as such: it assures the consolidation of fuzzy aggregates, in other words, multiplicities of the rhizome type. In effect, consistency, proceeding by consolidation, acts necessarily in the middle, by the middle, and stands opposed to all planes of principle or finality. Spinoza, Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche are the surveyors of such a plane of consistency. Never unifications, never totalizations, but rather consistencies or consolidations." *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 507. This also explains Nietzsche's take on the body.


tension.'"\(^{47}\) These relations of tension refer to the interaction between active and reactive forces within a body. Deleuze further writes: "What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body—whether it is chemical, biological, social or political."\(^{48}\)

Ultimately, with this reversal of the Platonic dualism what is emphasized is the dynamism inherent in the material relations in the body; the soul as consciousness is merely an epiphenomenal consequence of this dynamism. This dynamism is realized immanently and not transcendentally. When two forces enter into a relationship, they at once constitute a body. For Nietzsche, however, there is no default configuration of these forces; thus, the constituted body is always a product of chance.\(^{49}\) This is the reason why the body is more astonishing than the soul, the latter is so exacting while the body as a unity of multiplicity of forces could still surprise us. Deleuze notes:

The originality of Nietzsche's pluralism is found here. In his conception of the organism he does not limit himself to a plurality of constituent forces. What interests him is the

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\(^{47}\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 40.

\(^{48}\) *Ibid.* Nietzsche also talks of "'The Body as a Political Structure" : "The aristocracy of the body, the majority of the rulers (struggle between cells and tissues)." *The Will to Power*, III, 660. Also see Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990) for similar discussions, especially Part II "The Politics of the Soul."

\(^{49}\) In an attempt to declare the affinities between Nietzsche's and Aristotle's views on nature, Jeff Mitscherling writes: "'It is nature regarded and investigated as organic, and comprehended as organic unity, not as a set of mechanistic 'causal' relations. We humans 'subjects' are parts of this organic whole. What we have so long regarded as 'subjective nature' operates as an essential part of this organic unity.' Nietzsche on Natural Necessity and 'the Organic': Aristotelian Reflections on David B. Allison's *Reading the New Nietzsche*," in *Symposium*, vol. 8 (Spring 2004), 64.
diversity of active and reactive forces and the investigation of active forces themselves.\textsuperscript{50}

The body, therefore, is in itself defined by this struggle of active and reactive forces. "Active and reactive are precisely the original qualities which express the relation of force with force."\textsuperscript{51} This means that the immanent dynamism of forces lie in the differential element between active and reactive forces. It is in this difference where the tension of forces lies and where a body is constituted—the body is not a dualism but a tension of forces. Therefore, there is neither an "originary priority" nor a primordial succession given to any force: both active and reactive are immanently at hand.

After establishing that the body, as a constitution of active and reactive forces, is Nietzsche's point of reference, we have to ask: "how are these forces related?" Nietzsche associates this question of forces to "life" itself:

"Life" would be defined as an enduring form of processes of the establishment of force, in which the different contenders grow unequally. To what extent resistance is present even in obedience; individual power is by no means surrendered. \ldots "Obedience" and "commanding" are forms of struggle.\textsuperscript{52}

To repeat, it is in this difference where the tension of forces lies and where a body is constituted. Nietzsche distinguishes between the gestures of "command" and "obedience"; this is the basic difference between active and reactive—the master and the slave. Active forces are forces of command, while

\textsuperscript{50} Deleuze, "Active and Reactive," footnote 2, in Nietzsche and Philosophy, 204.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{52} Nietzsche, The Will to Power, III, 642.
reactive forces are forces of obedience. If we recall the distinction between the master and the slave, the master is the one who utters "I am good, you are bad," while the slave merely reacts to the previous assertion and cries in despairing resentment "Since you are evil, I am good." It has been shown above that the syllogism of the slave ensues from a paralogism, a careless way of argumentation. We observe that the master's gesture is not directed towards the slave, but to himself—"I am good" is a self-command. Meanwhile, the slave's gesture does not originate immanently, but depends on the master's assertion—"you are evil" is a gesture of obedience because it cannot stand on its own. This is why Nietzsche thinks that the slave's gesture is "an after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade . . ." The goodness of the slave is not a self-command; it is one of obedience or, to put it another way, compliance. Succinctly put, the master's command is active (a vigorous assertion not directed to the slave), the "noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval . . .,"53 while the slave's obedience is reactive (an imprudent and resentful denial of the master). These are the two forces in dynamic struggle within each person, or "singularity" in the Deleuzian sense, the person is itself a constitution (assemblage) of these forces.

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53 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, IX, 260.
3) Power: Affirmative and Negative

The explication of the nature of forces above leads us further to a more elemental Nietzschean concept: the will to power. It is, according to Nietzsche, "the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it." This very crucial aspect of Nietzsche's work merits special attention for it has proven itself to be prone to misunderstanding; thus, resulting to faulty interpretations or dangerous misappropriations which has tainted Nietzsche's name: one could not over emphasize the way the National Socialists abused this concept. Apart from extricating Nietzsche from grave misappropriations, we also have to pay heed to the value he accorded the conception of the will to power itself: "But what is life? Here we need a new, more definite formulation of the concept 'life.' My formula for it is: Life is will to power." We can also read in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'—it would be 'will to power' and nothing else." It should be noted that the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer on Nietzsche's notion of the will is apparent, especially in the latter's accordance of primacy in the will. Nevertheless, although both regard the will as having to do with a general conception of the world or of life, they

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57 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, II, 36.
split as soon as they meet. On the one hand, Schopenhauer views the will as a sort of hunger, willing presupposes deficiency. On the other hand, Nietzsche renders the will in the context of abundance, especially when he marries it with his concept of power. For Nietzsche, the passive or reactive exercise of the will results in deficiency. Moreover, Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer for having embraced the ascetic ideal in the end. Schopenhauer is reproached for denying the will instead of construing it as the principle of affirmation.

The value of the will to power is itself the value accorded to life—the only undeniable ontological fact. Deleuze, for his part, does not only reproach the Nazis directly but, more importantly, offers us an alternative, yet more convincing, interpretation of the will to power. He attempts to clarify, once and for all, the sense of this often misappropriated Nietzschean concept. The crucial point here is the sense of "power" and how it is explained as the principle of affirmative and negative evaluations. Since it is the most primitive form of affect, and thus unnoticed, other more conspicuous affects (forces) are merely


59 Maudemarie Clark also mentions this in her article "Nietzsche's Doctrines of the Will to Power," in Nietzsche-Studien, band 12 (1983), 463-464. Robert Morrison, in his attempt to compare Nietzschean and Buddhist concepts, commits the mistake of equating the will to power with "thirst." See Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 132-154. Again, thirst apparently is closer to Schopenhauer's notion of will as hunger and obviously far from the Nietzschean will to power as abundance of power.
developments or manifestations of it. For Deleuze the will to power has two characteristics in relation to forces:

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 is, indeed, never separable from particular determined forces, from their quantities, qualities and directions.\(^60\)

Power is seen here as the very quintessential element of general semiotics and, for Nietzsche, the very basis of a genealogy of moral valuations: "moral evaluation is an exegesis, a way of interpreting."\(^61\) He, moreover, writes that "The will to power interprets ..."\(^62\) This being said, we should say that there is a direct relation between forces and the two types of power. Forces, whether active or reactive, are informed by, nothing else but, power. Thus, forces are the very objects of general semiotics as the study of symptoms; they are themselves the affects which mirror the will to power.

But, what is power? As mentioned, Deleuze offers us a more convincing interpretation of Nietzsche's ontology of power.\(^63\) Deleuze is clear and emphatic:

\(^60\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 50.
\(^61\) Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II, 254. Jaspers comments: "Nietzsche's exegesis, which acknowledges that all knowledge is exegesis, will assimilate *this* knowledge to his own exegesis by holding that the will to power itself is ever operative and infinitely various urge to interpret." *Op cit.*, 294-295.
\(^63\) I am in agreement with Clark in her use of the term "ontology" to refer to Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power. Clark, *Op cit.*, 458-468. The shift from metaphysics to ontology is decisive for this study, and a more detailed explication of why Nietzsche's philosophy, as a whole, is more persuasive when interpreted as an ontology than a metaphysics will eventually transpire. Meanwhile, John Wilcox, in his commentary to Clark's article, seems to have no problem in Clark's use of the term ontology. See "Comment on Paper by Maudemarie Clark 'Nietzsche's Doctrines of the Will to Power'," in *Nietzsche-Studien*, band 12 (1983), 469-472. There are so many things happening in Clarks' paper, but she seems to neglect the typological character
"This principle doesn’t mean (or at least doesn’t primarily mean) that the will wants power or wishes to dominate." In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, he lists three misunderstandings of the notion of power: 1) power as representation/recognition; 2) power as the attribution of accepted values; and 3) power as struggle. In the first instance, power is understood as self-recognition through other consciousness. Here, again, we are reminded of Hegel’s account of the development of self-consciousness. One has the illusion of power by being recognized by other people, whether by an equal or not: “a comparison of consciousnesses.” It is an instance where one seeks others’ opinion on himself, he seeks acceptance. The second instance presupposes the acceptance of established values or moral norms. In order to gain power or the illusion of power, one has to attribute upon himself, or hide behind, established values or status symbols like power, money, honors, reputation, etc. We are familiar with instances where a person thinks he has power just because he is affiliated with an institution like the government, media, or university. Our present society is defined by the success of capitalistic ideals which has a very profound effect on one’s decision making. Nowadays, we often identify success with \[\text{of the will to power. Since this typology of power, as Deleuze would explicate, is not apparent in Clarks’ paper, she fails to clarify the dynamics of affirmative and negative powers, thus rendering Nietzsche’s ontology incomplete. Wilcox, on the other hand, rightly points out that the will to power as the ‘‘exercise of power’ comes closest to expressing’’ Nietzsche’s ‘‘deepest intuitions.’’ Op cit., 472. Although Wilcox does not mention the typology of power, the idea that willing is the exercise of power, that power is something to expend, is the main point of this part of the present study.}\]
"marketability." In other words, what academic degrees do you have, where you got them (which means which school and country), and who are the people you know. This is one of society's ways of "legitimizing," to borrow Lyotard's term, a person—whether he is sellable, or marketable or acceptable, according to external standards or values. What ensues, according to Deleuze, is the third instance, where power becomes "the result of a combat, a struggle, whatever form this takes—whether secret or open, honest or underhand."67 In other words, the desire for recognition entails unhealthy competition: the game of recognition becomes a struggle, often violent, between competitors clamoring for acceptance or legitimacy. This is not the kind of "struggle" that Nietzsche is trying to describe as the struggle or interplay of forces. The struggle between forces ensues from their very capacity to be affected in a relation of forces.

Power, in the three instances described above, is appropriated by the slave, the ideal of the base and not the noble:

Among the things that may be hardest to understand for a noble human being is vanity: he will be tempted to deny it, where another type of human being could not find it more palpable. The problem for him is to imagine people who seek to create a good opinion of themselves which they do not have of themselves—and thus also do not "deserve"—and who nevertheless end up believing this good opinion of themselves.68

Such is the fiction of the slave. For the slave, power is external to the will and, thus, behaves as if the will desires power. Deleuze maintains that what "the

67 Ibid., 82.
68 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, IX, 261.
will wants is not an object, an objective or an end. Ends and objects, even motives, are still symptoms.”⁶⁹ Therefore, the objects of our desires (money, power, honor, etc.) are symptoms of the quality of our will. An important distinction should be made between power as object of desire and power as the quality of the will.⁷⁰ The will to power is considered by Nietzsche to be the differential element of forces. Moreover, by saying that power is the very quintessential element of semeiology, Deleuze understands power not as the object of the will, as it were outside it. According to Deleuze, power is the “motor” of the will and not that which is desired by the will. As the very principle that animates the will, power thus is never separated from willing. Every willing entails a manifestation of power. This means that there is no willing without power, for in the first place it is power which determines whether the moment of willing itself is either affirmative or negative. “What the will wants, depending on its quality, is to affirm its difference or to deny what

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⁶⁹ Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 78.
⁷⁰ There is a significant nuance between the two senses of power in German, Kraft and Macht. Kraft pertains to strength or force while Macht refers to power as in “one’s own might.” Jacob Golomb talks of the relation between these two senses: “Nietzsche’s notion of Kraft refers to a primitive energy, to a latent and indefinite state that functions only when activated within a concrete situation. The transition from Kraft to Macht is thus a transition from the potentiality of force to its actualization.” “How to De-Nazify Nietzsche’s Philosophical Anthropology?,” in Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy, 20-21. Meanwhile, Walter Kaufmann locates Nietzsche’s understanding of worldly power (“strong consideration for the opinions of men”) in the latter’s caricature of Richard Wagner’s excessive ambition to fame. According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche distinguishes between two senses of the will to power: “First, he thought of it as a craving for worldly success, which he repudiated as harmful to man’s interest in perfecting himself. Secondly, he thought of the will to power as a psychological drive in terms of which many diverse phenomena could be explained . . .” Op cit., 178-185. It is clear how the typological nature of the will to power proceeds from the latter consideration.
differs.”\textsuperscript{71} Hence, for Nietzsche what is important to ask is who is willing in the first place? Again, we go back to Nietzsche’s typological distinction between the ascending and the descending. Here we must pay heed to Nietzsche’s genealogical question: “which one?” which means “Is it the master or the slave”?

Deleuze provides a formula which explains the relation of will to power and its symptoms (forces): “Force is what can, will to power is what wills.”\textsuperscript{72} Forces are the external manifestations of the will to power; all symptoms proceed from this genealogical element. Taking into account the typology which proceeds from the differential and genetic conception of the will to power, one could argue that the erroneous appropriation of power ensues from the slave’s willing. The genealogical conception of power makes power the differential element of willing which determines the quality of willing and, thus, determines the quality of forces which are nothing but wills which are brought to the surface. While the master wills the affirmation of difference, the slave on the other hand denies difference. The master refrains from seeking the opinion of others; his haecceity is of himself and is never a result of external recognition. By contrast, the slave denies difference by seeking the legitimation of outside forces; he cannot conceive of individuality without external representations.

\textsuperscript{71} Deleuze, Nietzsche \textit{and Philosophy}, 78. In the \textit{Will to Power}, Nietzsche writes: “Virtue as pleasure in resistance, will to power. Honor as recognition of the similar and equal-in-power.” II, 255. Kaufmann also remarks: “the will to power exists both among the powerful—whose high esteem of gratitude Nietzsche would explain thus—and among the impotent, whose desire for pity Nietzsche construes as prompted by a will to power.” \textit{Op cit.}, 185.

\textsuperscript{72} Deleuze, Nietzsche \textit{and Philosophy}, 50.
Every phenomenon, for Nietzsche, should be interpreted bearing in mind the will to power as the genealogical element. "All 'purposes,' 'aims,' 'meaning' are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power."\(^73\) All phenomena or expressions are to be treated as if treating symptoms of health or sickness. Nietzsche discriminates between active and reactive forces as symptoms of health and sickness—more precisely, between healthy and sick ways of appraising life—between healthy and unhealthy lifestyles. This genealogical difference calls for the prognosis of who, in the first place, is interpreting life: "One may ask: 'who then interprets?' for the interpretation itself is a form of the will to power . . . ."\(^74\) The moment of interpretation is the moment of valuation, of according value to life, thus "valuation itself is only this will to power."\(^75\) Therefore, there are two lifestyles or modes of being: affirmative and negative.

What Nietzsche calls noble, high and master is sometimes active force, sometimes affirmative will. What he calls base, vile and slave is sometimes reactive force and sometimes negative will.\(^76\)

And thus,

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.\(^77\)

\(^73\) Nietzsche, The Will to Power, III, 675.
\(^74\) Ibid., III, 556.
\(^75\) Ibid., III, 675.
\(^76\) Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 55.
\(^77\) Ibid., 53-54.
What gives value to a thing is the will to power. The value accorded to life is, therefore, a willing either to affirm or to deny life; also either the will to command or to obey. All our expressions, as Nietzsche points out, are discharges of our will to power, but this will to power is either affirmative or negative. Power is something to expend, but expending it comes in two forms. Both master and slave already have power, i.e., each has his own quality of power. Thus, the point of departure for Nietzsche is the function of the will to power as an evaluative principle, which determines the quality of will one possesses. This amounts to saying that the quality of power that one possesses is itself the evaluative principle that determines the type of person who possesses the power; this is the root of moral valuations. According to Nietzsche, the meaning of the act of evaluation is itself related to a conception of life. Nietzsche writes: “I understand by ‘morality’ a system of evaluations that partially coincides with the conditions of a creature’s life.”

Zarathustra proclaims, “That is your whole will, you who are wisest: a will to power—when you speak of good and evil too, and of valuations.” It becomes even clearer that evaluation begins in a typology. Nietzsche further writes: “I say of every morality: ‘It is a fruit by which I recognize the soil from which it sprang.’” From which soil? From the negative soil—the infertile soil out of which even weed will have difficulty of growing. This is the negative will to power which should be

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78 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II, 256.
79 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 12.
differentiated from the affirmative will to power: "Only where there is life is there also will: not will to life—thus I teach you—will to power."\(^{81}\)

The above discussion, in sum, lays down the point of departure from which the succeeding chapters will proceed: the critique of nihilism. It is hoped that the above elucidation of the concept of "nihilism" will provide a framework for Nietzsche's counter-claim—the ethics of affirmation and the ontology of becoming. It has been shown that through a genealogical, that is concerning its origin, analysis of nihilism, its typological context is revealed. Nihilism has been defined as a mode of being which manifests itself as an "enemy of life" which ensues from a negative form of interpreting life. Nihilism, therefore, is a form of exegesis or evaluation which is anti-life, inasmuch as it denies life by according negative values to it. It was also mentioned that it is from this negative valuation of life that ressentiment arises. The next chapter will feature a more detailed discussion of the origin of ressentiment.

As we saw, Nietzsche traces the typological origin of nihilism when he analyses two types of forces: active and reactive. Active forces are expressions of the noble or the master, while reactive forces are expressions of the base or the slave. The next chapter will further discuss the relation between these two forms of forces: the becoming active and reactive of forces. Finally, the last part of the present chapter delved into Deleuze's clarification of the meaning of the will to power. It was established that the will to power is both the differential and

\(^{81}\) Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 12.
null
genetic element from which forces proceed. The will to power is the most basic affect which thrives behind forces which, to Nietzsche, are the very symptoms of either affirmative or negative forms of the will to power. Deleuze maintains that the will to power is not desire for power but that power is what wants in the will. Hence, power functions as the motor behind willing, and that the will to power is construed as a drive to "expend" and not desire power. Expending power could either be affirmative or negative in relation to life; and thus expending power finds its paths of expression in active and reactive forces.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ETHICS OF AFFIRMATION

"Concerning life, the wisest men of all ages have judged alike: it is no good. Always and everywhere one has heard the same sound from their mouths—a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of weariness to life."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

The above passage from the *Twilight of the Idols*, again, expresses Nietzsche's admonition of nihilists who erected systems that defeat and devalue life; as a result, they cast doubt, melancholy, and weariness on life. A case in point here is Socrates, whom Nietzsche considers to represent the resentful type of philosopher; Socrates represents "the great sages" who are "*types of decline.*" In the previous chapter, I showed how nihilism, for Nietzsche, is basically an image of thought which expresses itself as an adversary of life. Nietzsche is quick to warn us that this disparaging attitude creeps into every nook and cranny of life. As a way of valuing (or devaluing) life, nihilism has even penetrated philosophy itself: "*The spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man's best reflection.*" It is in this instance that nihilism becomes a systematic denial of the value of life. With Nietzsche's distinction between two modes of being, viz., ascending and descending, the nihilistic attitude ensuing

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from a typology makes more sense. This means that this negative stance is a mode of evaluation of a certain type, the reactive type. Through Deleuze, it has become clear that reactive forces are expressions of the descending type (or the slave, or the base). It is through Nietzsche’s genealogical eye that Deleuze could see these expressions as semeiological codes; it is through these codes that we are able to gauge the genesis of values. This also entails that the negative value or non-value accorded to life is also a value, inasmuch as it results from a negative mode of evaluation or exegesis. Nonetheless, even if these forces or codes are readily available to the genealogist’s eye, they are, themselves, mere expressions of something more elemental: will to power. Again, Deleuze provides us with a clear explication of how forces are expressions of power; that power, in this context, is also understood typologically. There are two types of power for Nietzsche: affirmative and negative. It is through this differential element of power where forces or expressions of power gain their quality. The formula can be summarized as such: affirmative power-active force and negative power-reactive force. Nihilism must be understood within the context of this typology of power and force. Nihilism, as has been pointed out, is the triumph of reactive forces ensuing from a negative evaluation of life—thus, nihilism is the enemy of life.

The task of this chapter is to explicate on the first half of Nietzsche’s cure: the ethics of affirmation. Using the descriptive context of nihilism laid out in the first chapter, an attempt to present an ethics which counters the nihilistic
tendencies of classical forms of morality will commence. However, it is important to draw the distinction between "morality" and "ethics." While the terms "morality" and "ethics" in general are interchangeable, their difference is considered crucial for the present study. The difference between the two terms is emphasized not only to avoid confusion but, more importantly, because the nuance is critical for interpreting Nietzsche's texts. I am one with Deleuze in insisting on this difference. There are two senses from which we understand the difference between "morality" and "ethics," both apply for the study's purposes. First is Deleuze's distinction between the "good life" (ethics) and the "moral law" (morality). Second, which follows from the first, ethics has a more universal connotation than morality. We also find Nietzsche using the term "morality" in the sense in which I want to use the term "ethics" in this study when he distinguishes between "master morality" and "slave morality."\(^4\) Nevertheless, Nietzsche also writes in *The Gay Science* that "Morality is herd

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\(^4\) Daniel W. Smith notes that Deleuze sees in both Spinoza and Nietzsche an immanent form of ethics. "Deleuze attempted to characterize this immanent conception of ethics by offering his own version of the distinction between 'ethics' and 'morality,' which has often been drawn to distinguish modes of reflection that place greater emphasis, respectively, on the good life (such as Stoicism) or on the moral law (such as Kantianism)." "The Place of Ethics in Deleuze's Philosophy: Three Questions of Immanence," in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 251-252.

Deleuze actually takes the lead of Foucault on "subjectification": "The key thing, for Foucault, is that subjectification isn't to do with morality, with any moral code: it's ethical and aesthetic, as opposed to morality, which partakes of knowledge and power." For this reason, Deleuze says, "Foucault's a Nietzschean, discovering an artistic will out on the final line." *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 114. The following also provide similar accounts on the difference between morality and ethics: Robert C. Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" Has to Teach Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 116-136 and Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue," in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 26 (2003), 64-78.

instinct in the individual."\(^6\) Furthermore, his proclamation in *Ecce Homo*, "I am the first immoralist,"\(^7\) lends strong support to the claim that his philosophy is essentially a counter-morality. Hence, I wish to use the term "morality" in a very specific sense which is decisively associated with nihilism. Similarly, I would like to use the term "ethics" to connote a more universal sense: it could very well refer to any type of ethics (or any type of morality) whether affirmative or negative. "Morality," on the other hand, refers specifically to a negative ethics. An ethics is, therefore, appropriated in the context that can refer to both the ascending and descending lines of life. It will be argued that Nietzsche’s ethics, bearing his immoralism in mind, is an expression of a counter-morality, that of the ascending line of life; in other words, it is an "ethics of affirmation."

With the discussion presented in the first chapter, a working image or sense of what nihilism is has emerged. I will, therefore, devise this image of nihilism, in relation to force and power, as a point of departure from which we could make sense of Nietzsche’s ethics. There are three decisive moments in the present chapter. First, a reconstruction of the dynamics between *ressentiment* and bad conscience and how they are expressions of the negative ascetic will. It will be shown that this is no other than the "drama" of the triumph of nihilism;

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\(^7\) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), IV, 2. He further writes: "Fundamentally, my term *immoralist* involves two negations. For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent. And then I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself—the morality of decadence or, more concretely, *Christian* morality. *Ibid.*, IV, 4.
revisiting *On the Genealogy of Morals* is decisive for this part. Second, a contextualization of the meaning of the death of God and how it dramatically develops into the usurpation of man and eventually into the post-human condition will ensue; this is dubbed as the triumph of Zarathustra. Third, taking into consideration the "opening" that the post-human condition creates, Nietzsche's ethics of affirmation will be disclosed using Deleuze's interpretation of the eternal return.

1) The Triumph of Nihilism: From Ressentiment to the Ascetic Ideal

It has been mentioned that the critique of morality is the touchtone of Nietzsche's philosophy. He also emphatically declares, numerous times, that Christian morality is the most concrete form of nihilism. It was also mentioned that this critique is, nonetheless, not restricted to Christian morality alone; but Nietzsche rightly deems it to be the most concrete manifestation of nihilism because he was speaking from his own point of view. He was, after all, European, and the rise and fall of Europe can be sometimes equated with the rise and fall of Christianity, and it is difficult to determine if Europe knows any other type of morality. Nietzsche's critique of morality has evolved through his career; and, according to him, it is in *Daybreak* where he begun his campaign against morality. This campaign has gone all throughout his middle works and beyond, but it is in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, his most systematic book as Deleuze

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himself suggests,⁹ where we find Nietzsche’s most systematic account of morality. Our task for this part of the study is to offer a comprehensive reconstruction of Nietzsche’s history of the “ascetic ideal,” which to him represents the triumph of nihilism. Right from the very outset, we have already identified the enemy of Nietzsche’s ethical cure: the negative mode of being, nihilism; and that this mode of being is only one side of a typological coin. Nevertheless, it would also be helpful to provide a more detailed account of how exactly this mode of being manifests itself as an image of thought which, to Nietzsche, betrays the affirmative nature of the world or of life.

*On the Genealogy of Morals*, Deleuze points out, unlike most of Nietzsche’s books, does not present itself to be a collection of aphorisms; instead, it provides “a key for the interpretation of aphorisms and the evaluation of poems.”¹⁰ A second, and more important element of the book, is Nietzsche’s “detailed analysis of the reactive type, of the mode and principle of the triumph of reactive forces.”¹¹ According to Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* is a psychological study preliminary to the revaluation of all values; the “book contains the first psychology of the priest.”¹² The triumph of the reactive type is achieved through

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¹⁰ *Ibid.* Indeed, Nietzsche writes: “An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been ‘deciphered’ when it has simply been read; rather, one has then to begin its exegesis, for which is required an art of exegesis. I have offered in the third essay of the present book an example of what I regard as ‘exegesis’ in such a case—an aphorism is prefixed to this essay, the essay itself is a commentary on it.” *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), preface, 8.

¹¹ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 87.

the cunning and skill of the "priest." To Nietzsche, it is through the sneakiness of the priest that the nihilistic spirit has been able to control our lives across millennia. Deleuze refers to the drama of nihilism as the story of the triumph of the figures of reactive forces: *ressentiment*, bad conscience, and the ascetic ideal. These three instances of the nihilistic spirit are discussed dramatically in the three essays of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche is sensitive to the dramatic movement of these three reactive moments; this is the reason why the book is presented as a history of the development of a peculiar ideal or mode of being.

The question which we will have to ask is: "how do reactive forces triumph?" In the previous chapter, there was a mention of Zarathustra’s warning against the "poison mixers," people who live decadent lives and who vow to recruit more of their kind. They do this by mixing poisons, that is, by persuading others of otherworldly ideals. Nietzsche further calls these poison mixers "despisers of life," and we have seen that they persuade us through fictitious accounts of reality. These are their poisons, their fictions; we have been led to believe in these fictions—they have become collectively our negative image of thought which we impose upon reality. For Nietzsche, as for Deleuze, *ressentiment* is a fictitious or "imaginary revenge" which commences the slave’s revolt:

The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment*
...
of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge.¹³

Again, Nietzsche analyzes this slave revolt from the purview of the typology of the ascending and descending. The slave’s resentful stance towards life ensues from his negative image of life: he “says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’; and this No is its creative deed.”¹⁴ By contrast, the master or the noble “develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself . . . .”¹⁵ This joyous attitude of the master is what the slave could not handle, and thus becomes the basis of his resentful outlook on the master. It has been demonstrated above how the slave “reacts” to the self-assertiveness of the master, “I am good, you are bad,” wherein this self-declaration of the master is taken by the slave as his point of reference and departure. The slave, as has been shown, merely reacts parasitically to the master, “Since you are evil, I am good.” The slave’s goodness, however, does not ensue from his very own haecceity—the slave cannot live independently of the master, he is only good because he lives on the illusion that the master is evil.

This inversion of the value-positing-eye—this need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself—is of the essence of ressentiment: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction.¹⁶

¹³ Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 10.
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
The reactionary attitude of the slave only implies that "goodness" is derived, in every instance, from the master's self-assertiveness, while the master is by and in himself good. The reactionary character of the slave also implies that he cannot create values by himself, while the active character of the master "knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things: it is value-creating." It is from the master's pathos of distance where Nietzsche locates a special kind of value-creating ethics, as opposed to the servile morality of the reactive type. This is also where we distinguish between two types of ethics: between the morality of the slave and the ethics of affirmation of the master—that is, between the ethics of the descending and the ethics of the ascending. Deleuze observes the slave's peculiar reaction to the master: "Reactive force, even when it obeys, limits active force, imposes limitations and partial restrictions on it and is already controlled by the spirit of the negative." Deleuze goes on to say that the slave sees himself from an "inverted self-image," and thus the "differential and genealogical element appears upside down, difference has become negation, affirmation has become contradiction." This means that, from the purview of the slave, the affirmative character of the master becomes negative—that is, the master becomes evil in the negative eyes of the slave. In other words, what the master sees as affirmative, the slave's lenses see as negative. Hence, what we have here are two images of reality, of life. On the part of the slave,

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17 Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, IX, 260.
18 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 56.
19 Ibid.
... the essence of life, its will to power, is ignored; one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions, although "adaptation" follows only after this; the dominant role of the highest functionaries within the organism itself in which the will to life appears active and form-giving is denied.\(^{20}\)

This is the moment when the slave inverts his value-positing eye. It is also in this moment when active forces, since they are inverted, become reactive themselves. To Nietzsche, this is the cunning artistry of the priest: his ability to make active forces reactive. In this moment of inversion, the slave denies his difference from the master. Through the fiction of the slave, the differential element which distinguishes him from the master is denied, the image of the master as a self-perpetuating creator of value is deformed. This is the paralogism of the slave, as Deleuze puts it. Deleuze further observes that through this paralogism, this inverted image of the noble, the reactive type is able to "separate active force from what it can do," that is, reactive forces "take away a part or almost all of its power."\(^{21}\) This is a case of repressing active forces from their affirmative will to power. Thus, instead of expending power, reactive forces restrain power of its possibilities. This is where the attitude of the slave becomes analogous to sickness: "Illness, for example, separates me from what I can do, as reactive force makes me reactive, it narrows my possibilities ..."\(^{22}\) According to Nietzsche, this is the charisma of traditional morality: "so popular morality also separates
strength from expressions of strength . . ."\(^{23}\) This is the spirit of \textit{resentment}: it "falsifies the image of that which it despises"\(^{24}\) it is a negative reaction to affirmation, an inversion of images, a suppression of expressions of power; all these ensue from a profound contempt for life.

The triumph of nihilism, in the form of \textit{resentment}, occurs when reactive forces prevail over active forces. According to Deleuze, the triumph of reactive forces is only possible when they cease to be acted (sic), that is, when forces become passive. Thus, forces of \textit{resentment} prevail over active forces not because of strength, but precisely because they cease to be strong. The man of \textit{resentment}, writes Deleuze, is a man who "does not re-act."\(^{25}\) This means that the man of \textit{resentment} avoids being acted upon, that is, being stimulated, and thus stops responding to other forces. It has to be explained, however, that the slave's avoidance of stimulation is merely an illusion, for his identity, that is, his goodness, is one which is derived from his paralogism: "Since you are evil, I am good." It is in this instance that the slave does not re-act, that is, he does not express his will affirmatively or immanently. Even worse, he does not know how to re-act, that is, he does not know how to express himself openly; thus, he

\(^{24}\) Ibid., I, 10.
\(^{25}\) Deleuze, \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, 111. Nietzsche reminds us, "To have all doors standing open, to lie servilely on one's stomach before every little fact, always to be prepared for the leap of putting oneself into the place of, or of plunging into, others and other things—in short, the famous modern 'objectivity' is bad taste, is ignoble par excellence." \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, VIII, 6.
forces his emotions back into himself.\(^{26}\) "Reactive forces prevail over active forces because they escape their action."\(^{27}\) The meaning of being reactive is thus passivity. Deleuze lists three characteristics of reßentiment: 1) inability to admire, respect or love; 2) passivity; and 3) the imputation of wrongs, the distribution of responsibilities, perpetual accusation.\(^{28}\) Let us briefly account for each.

The first characteristic of reßentiment has to do with "memory," as opposed to the "ability to forget." Nietzsche writes that the man of reßentiment knows "how not to forget."\(^{29}\) Nietzsche, moreover, speaks of how the noble man, as opposed to the base, would take on reßentiment, it "consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not poison"; the base, meanwhile, fails to respond to reßentiment in this manner.\(^{30}\) This is the difference between one who is able to forget and one who is not able to forget; in this sense memory, for Nietzsche, is the very basis of hatred. "Hatred or revenge," Deleuze writes, "is hidden even in the most tender and most loving

\(^{26}\) Max Scheler detects two elements in the French word reßentiment: "First of all, reßentiment is the repeated experiencing and relieving of a particular emotional response against someone else. The continual reliving of the emotion sinks it more deeply into the center of the personality, but concomitantly removes it from the person's zone of action and expression. It is not a mere intellectual recollection of the emotion and of the events to which it 'responded'—it is a re-experiencing of the emotion itself, a renewal of the original feeling. Secondly, the word implies that the quality of this emotion is negative, i.e., that it contains a movement of hostility. Perhaps the German word 'Groll' (rancor) comes closest to the essential meaning of the term. 'Rancor' is just such a suppressed wrath, independent of the ego's activity, which moves obscurely through the mind. It finally takes shape through the repeated reliving of intentionalities of hatred or other hostile emotions." Ressentiment, trans. by William W. Holdheim (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 39-40.

\(^{27}\) Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 111.

\(^{28}\) Cf. Ibid., 116-119.

\(^{29}\) Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, I, 10.

\(^{30}\) Ibid. See also Ibid., II, 16.
memories." In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche notes, "Men and things obtrude too closely; experiences strike one too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound." Memory is the hardening of consciousness, it fossilizes painful experiences; for Nietzsche, the danger comes with the inability to escape or transcend painful memories. Forgetfulness, on the other hand, is "an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression . . . like a doorkeeper, a preserver of psychic order, repose, and etiquette . . ." It is important to take note that, unlike ressentiment, what forgetfulness represses are not expressions of power, but rather represses or resists forces which hamper the open expression of active forces. Deleuze comments: "The man of ressentiment experiences every being and object as an offence in exact proportion to its effect on him." Thus, the memory of traces is the genesis of the spirit of revenge. The man of ressentiment, because he sees himself as a misfortune, is not capable of admiring or respecting the strength of other men. So, instead of acting on his misfortunes, in other words instead of actively forgetting, he blames. Christ teaches to love one's enemy as one loves oneself, but it seems that this simplest of all teachings is the hardest for most Christians to pursue. According to Nietzsche, it is only in active forgetting that one is able to truly love, "here alone genuine 'love of one's enemy' is possible—supposing it to be possible at all on earth."

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31 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 117.
Deleuze refers, again, to section 10 of the first essay of On the Genealogy of Morals: ressentiment "appears as essentially narcotic, drug, rest, peace, 'sabbath,' slackening of tension and relaxing of limbs, in short passively."36 The second characteristic of ressentiment is passivity. Deleuze, however, reminds us that passivity for Nietzsche does not mean "non-active," but instead means "non-acted."37 When it comes to loving, according to Deleuze, the slave "does not know how to love, but wants to be loved."38 Again, this reminds us of the lack of initiative on the part of the slave; the slave is not able to give or express love, love for him is always something that comes externally. The reactive type awaits the love or recognition of someone external, for he cannot, by himself, express his love—in other words, he cannot "act on" his feeling without being recognized first. "He wants to be loved, fed, watered, caressed and put to sleep. He is the impotent, the dyspeptic, the frigid, the insomniac, the slave."39 The man of ressentiment is one who does not get tired of waiting.40 The man of ressentiment is the man who patiently awaits the second coming of Christ; he awaits Christ because his whole faith relies on this belief in the Messiah. This also means that the spirituality of the slave totally depends on the legitimation of religion, that is, his spirituality is informed by a narrow conception of faith. This is the reason why the slave lives in a fictitious world. Since the slave cannot love without

36 Ibid.
37 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 118.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 We are reminded here of Beckett's two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, in their absurd wait for Godot. See Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (New York: Grove Press, 1954).
being recognized first, he awaits the love of the other; his fiction (his morality) conceals the utilitarian nature of his mindset—this is how the reactive type would measure happiness, viz., passively. He believes he is happy because he is given the “promise” of ultimate happiness, which he is brainwashed to believe does not exist here and now. This is the slave’s “wretched contentment,” as Zarathustra would put it.41

The spirit of ressentiment manages to impute wrongs, distribute responsibilities, and perpetuate a profound accusation. The aggressive or assertive attitude of the master is replaced by these resentful demands. Collectively taken, these are the gestures following the slave’s paralogism, “Since you are evil, I am good.” And if these demands are not reached, “the man of ressentiment breaks out in bitter reproaches as soon as his expectations are disappointed.”42 These demands are at the very core of a decadent morality, a morality of frustration and revenge. Reactive forces seek to emasculate active forces by castigating them, making them chaste.

After describing what ressentiment is, Deleuze leads us to another question: “how is ressentiment elaborated?” The question might as well be: “which one?” or, more precisely, “which one between the ascending and descending?” According to Nietzsche, in order for ressentiment to triumph, an instigator should be able to give form to it, and so Deleuze writes that, “the one

41 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, I, prologue, 3.
42 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 118-119.
who conducts the prosecution and pursues the enterprise of revenge even further, the one who dares to reverse values, is the priest." Further, "What concerns me," Nietzsche proclaims, "is the psychological type of the Redeemer." It is the priest who forges the slave’s fiction. It is through this fiction that ressentiment manifests itself like a contagious disease. It is here that we locate Nietzsche’s criticism of the Judeo-Christian tradition, because the prolongation of this tradition in history has been the craft of the priest. He views Christianity not as antithetical to Judaism, but its "very consequence, one inference more in its awe-inspiring logic." The Jews are responsible for giving form to the slave’s fiction: "the radical falsification of nature, all naturalness, all reality, of the whole inner world as well as the outer." The Judaic priest is the priest of ressentiment, points out Deleuze, inasmuch as this "artist of genius" brings to the fore "the negative premises." It is from the Judaic priest’s logic that the Christian priest (especially St. Paul) picks up his motive; it is in this

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43 Ibid., 126.
46 Ibid.
47 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 126.
48 Of St. Paul, Nietzsche comments: “Christianity promises everything but fulfills nothing. On the heels of the ‘glad tidings’ came the very worst: those of Paul. In Paul was embodied the opposite type to that of the ‘bringer of glad tidings’: the genius in hatred, in the vision of hatred, in the inexorable logic of hatred. How much this dysangelist sacrificed to hatred! Above all, the Redeemer: he nailed him to his own cross.” Moreover, “Paul comprehended that the lie—that ‘faith’—was needed; later the church in turn comprehended Paul. The ‘God’ whom Paul invented, a god who ‘ruins the wisdom of the world’ . . . is in truth merely Paul’s own resolute determination to do this: to give the name of ‘God’ to one’s own will”; and following the logic of Paul, “The concept of guilt and punishment, the whole ‘moral world order,’ was invented against science, against the emancipation of man from the priest . . . he shall suffer.” The Antichrist, 42-49.
continuance of the Judaic logic that *ressentiment* could turn into something worse. "Christianity," Nietzsche reminds us, "can be understood only in terms of the soil out of which it grew . . ." This means that Christianity's cradle was in the arms of Judaism, that is, within the arms of *ressentiment*. The Christian priest continues the legacy of the Judaic priest by subjecting *ressentiment* to a metamorphosis: it becomes "bad conscience." Nietzsche offers his hypothesis:

I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and of peace.

Society and peace are the presuppositions of a community. A community is what the priest has hoped for. And it is precisely in a community where the Judeo-Christian fiction could be preached, a community of slaves, of needy people. Like a virus, bad conscience needs a carrier for it to transfer from one individual to another. The community, with all its institutions (Church, State, University, etc.), perfectly acts as a carrier, or better yet a conditioning system.

The becoming reactive of forces is the beginning of bad conscience; this brings us to its two moments: 1) the introjection of forces and 2) guilt. What happens to people living in a community such as the one described above? Nietzsche argues, "suddenly all their instincts were disvalued and 'suspended.'" This is

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the first moment of bad conscience, "the introjection of forces" — the becoming reactive of active forces. Deleuze notes, "active force is falsified, deprived of its conditions of operation and separated from what it can do, it is turned back inside, turned back against itself."^52

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward — this is what I call the internalization of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul."^53

A further repercussion of this introjection or internalization of force is the production and multiplication of pain. This is the reason why Nietzsche writes:

Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom—punishments belong among these bulwarks — brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward against man himself. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction — all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: that is the origin of the "bad conscience."^54

The development of the soul or conscience from the internalization of the forces, from their repressed discharge, gives us a sense of how bad conscience can become abstract. This brings us to the second moment of bad conscience, "guilt" — "the reinterpretation of suffering as feelings of guilt, fear, and punishment."^55 Following Nietzsche's analysis, the introjection of forces creates a new form of sense, an internal one: guilt. "A new sense is invented for pain, an

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52 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 128.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., III, 20. Also in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 20: "and where there was suffering, one always wanted punishment too."
internal sense, an inward sense," wherein "pain is made the consequence of a sin, a fault."\textsuperscript{56} The movement from ressentiment to bad conscience is the transfer of blame from the world to the self, and in this development the priest has been very instrumental.

The dynamics between ressentiment and bad conscience, again, lends support to the typological interpretation of nihilism. Nietzsche believes that there is a will, a type of will, behind these two nihilistic expressions. Typologically speaking, both the Judaic and Christian priests are expressions of a single type: the "ascetic priest." This brings us again to the typology of affirmative and negative powers. "The ascetic ideal expresses a will: where is the opposing will that might express an opposing ideal?"\textsuperscript{57} The ascetic ideal, for Nietzsche, is the very will that animated ressentiment and bad conscience: it is a complex of these two. It is quite superfluous to debate as to whether Nietzsche's criticism is directed towards Judaism or Christianity, for, to him, both emanate from one single source, that is, the ascetic ideal.\textsuperscript{58} What is more important is Nietzsche's account of the drama of ressentiment and bad conscience animated and, thus, culminated in the ascetic ideal.

\textsuperscript{56} Deleuze, \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, 129.
\textsuperscript{57} Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, III, 23.
\textsuperscript{58} Nietzsche makes it clear that he "offered the first psychological analysis of the counter-concepts of noble morality and a morality of ressentiment — the latter born of the No to the former: but this is the Judeo-Christian morality pure and simple." \textit{The Antichrist}, 24.
...
2) The Triumph of Zarathustra: God, Man, and the Post-Human

An appraisal of Nietzsche's ethics of affirmation is no easy task. The proper understanding of this ethics requires us to appraise it within the very context of its enemy: nihilism. For Nietzsche, it is in culture where nihilism subtlety manifests itself. It is a reality which we are not readily cognizant of because it is deeply embedded in every nook and cranny of culture. It would take a genealogist, an untimely philosopher, to be able to probe society's semeiological symptoms. For Nietzsche, the genealogist is someone who has lived through and still is living his culture, but with a radically different perspective or "eye" on things. Because we lack the genealogist's eye, we are not even aware that nihilism expresses itself as the very substratum of our existence. It takes control of our moral valuations and, thus, every aspect of our lives. The ascetic priest is also understood by Nietzsche typologically, when the ascetic priest juxtaposes life "with a quite different mode of existence," wherein "life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence." Our insensibility to nihilism, to our very own decadence, is itself part of the triumph of the ascetic ideal; for it dampens all sensibility. Indeed, the genius of the ascetic priest is precisely his ability to destroy sensibility; this entails the destruction of our faculty of criticism. This is how the ascetic ideal protects itself. It has been shown that reactive forces take over active forces by separating them from what they can do, that is, by suppressing active sensibilities or affects. We have seen

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59 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, III, 11.
that through *ressentiment*, the Judaic priest is able to persuade us that life is worthless, that it is replete with pain and suffering, and hence should be loathed. It is in this sense that "willing" is redirected from the affirmation of life to the "will to nothingness." The man of *ressentiment* would rather live in a fiction; the fiction itself is this will to a supra-mundane world.

*That* the ascetic ideal has meant so many things to man, however, is an expression of the basic fact of human will, its *horror vacui.* It needs a goal—and it will rather will *nothingness* than not will.*

For Nietzsche, willing the supra-mundane is in itself this clamor for nothingness, the embrace of the negative, as opposed to the affirmative which truly exists. While *ressentiment* makes us hate life, bad conscience internalizes this hate and turns it into guilt. Bad conscience is the introjection of forces, the becoming reactive of forces. For Nietzsche, this means taking on the weight of the whole world; man "kneels down like a camel wanting to be loaded." In other words, guilt. At this moment, man becomes indebted to an abstraction, a divine transcendent: God. Such is the fiction of the priest. It is also at this

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60 In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes the following: "It was suffering and incapacity that created all afterworlds"; "It was the sick and decaying who despised body and earth and invented the heavenly realm and the redemptive drops of blood." I, 3. Also, "your self wants to die and turns away from life." I, 4. Then, "There are preachers of death; and the earth is full of those to whom one must preach renunciation of life"; "'Life is only suffering,' others say, and do not lie: see to it, then, that you cease! See to it, then, that the life which is only suffering ceases!" I, 9. Nietzsche also writes in *The Will to Power*, I, 55: "Nihilism appears at that point, not that the displeasure at existence has become greater than before but because one has come to mistrust any 'meaning' in suffering, indeed in existence." Further, "the instinctive need for actions that turn the powerful into mortal enemies (as it were, one breeds one's own hangmen); the will to destruction as the will of a deeper instinct, the instinct of self-destruction, the will for nothingness."


juncture when the blame has been transferred from the world to man himself; he has been conditioned to blame himself.\textsuperscript{63} Man’s lot becomes the psychological internalization of guilt—man has to think perpetually of himself as the sinner, the perpetual sinner. Man perpetually suffers because his debt to God has been made perpetual: “Saint Paul already founded Christianity on the principle that Christ dies for our sins.”\textsuperscript{64} This is how the priest, in general, has taken over culture; this is how culture is predominantly nihilistic. Our hatred towards the world, the burden of profound guilt, and our debt to an unknown God are expressions of a single ideal: the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche remarks, “The three great slogans of the ascetic ideal are familiar: poverty, humility, chastity.”\textsuperscript{65} Asceticism is the moment when we close our eyes from the world and submit ourselves to a transcendent other.

Revisiting the triumph of nihilism was necessary because Nietzsche observes that the continuation of the history of nihilism is its very devaluation: “\textit{That the highest values devaluate themselves.}” Nietzsche, as mentioned, envisions the end of Christianity at the hands of its own morality. Nihilism, for Nietzsche, follows a path to its demise, that its overcoming is itself part of its history. We have to guard ourselves from being hasty, however. Even if Nietzsche foresees the overcoming of nihilism, this overcoming is only foreseen as the completion of nihilism itself. It is in this sense that nihilism becomes a \textit{conditio sine qua non} of

\textsuperscript{63} See Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, III, 14-17.


\textsuperscript{65} Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, III, 8.
its overcoming. For, after all, bad conscience is "an illness as pregnancy is an illness."66 This perhaps means that nihilism still is a natural tendency for humans, and the only way to overcome it is to go through it. The first sign of this overcoming is the phenomenon of God's death. Deleuze refers to this stage as the "moment of recuperation."67 But how does this moment of recuperation occur? To quote a famous passage from The Gay Science:

"Whither is God?" he cried: "I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth form its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up and down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.68

Deleuze notes that the key to understanding the death of God is to construe the existence of God as dependent "on a synthesis, it synthesizes the

66 Ibid., II, 19.
68 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 125. Although this is probably the most often quoted reference to the death of God, Deleuze reminds us that there are several other allusions to the death of God. "Nietzsche," in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, 72. Even before the publication of The Gay Science, Nietzsche has already written: "'And if he did know something he knows it no longer', said the last of the prisoners, who has only just come into the yard; 'the prison warden has just suddenly died'.—'Holla!' cried several together; 'holla! Son! Son! What does the will say? Are we perhaps now your prisoners?'—'I have told you', he whom they addressed responded quietly, 'I will set free everyone who believes in me, as surely as my father still lives'.—The prisoners did not laugh, but shrugged their shoulders and left him standing." Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vol. 2, II, 84.
idea of God with time, becoming, history and man."\(^6^9\) This means that Nietzsche’s idea of God is complex compared to traditional ways of proving or disproving the existence of God. Deleuze notes further: "The phrase 'God is dead' is not a speculative proposition but a dramatic proposition, the dramatic proposition par excellence."\(^7^0\) Therefore, it is not a matter of speculating on God’s existence or non-existence; we have seen that the priest is more concerned with the pragmatic character of the idea of God. The divine is part and parcel of the priest’s fiction. As a part of a fiction, God can die a thousand deaths, but He can also be resurrected. Nietzsche’s point, however, is that the idea of God is itself conditioned by man—"God is a conjecture."\(^7^1\) Man created God, as a fiction, as a source of solace and, ironically also, as his ultimate nemesis. The idea of God, therefore, is culturally conditioned, resulting from the becoming reactive of forces. Men invent gods because they have repressed their very own active expressions; they have been brainwashed by the priest, teaching them of their worthlessness, and thus seek their worth elsewhere. But what happens if suddenly men are to discover the true nature of their fiction? What if God can be killed, that is, can be dispensed with by a wave of a hand? Like nihilism, God has been embedded in our culture, and has acted as the very substratum of all aspects of culture: religion, science, philosophy, society, law. Indeed, God has become the unconditioned foundation of all things. This is the reason why

\(^6^9\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.
\(^7^0\) Ibid.
\(^7^1\) Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 2.
Nietzsche’s madman asks so many questions about human destiny after the death of God. Is there such a thing as human destiny given the absence of God?

Nietzsche thinks that humans are cunning and can create fiction after fiction. But what is it in the death of God that Nietzsche celebrates? He writes:

... there is no small probability that with the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God there is now also a considerable decline in mankind’s feeling of guilt; indeed, the prospect cannot be dismissed that the complete and definitive victory of atheism might free mankind of his whole feeling of guilty indebtedness toward its origin, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind *second innocence* belong together.\(^72\)

Nietzsche senses the coming of a second innocence through the death of God. This means emancipation from our psychological bondage, our guilt, our indebtedness—in other words, our morality. Nietzsche remarks, “Christianity as *morality* must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of *this* event.”\(^73\) But what does this event entail? It entails the overcoming of God, of Christian morality. But how does man overcome God? Simply put, by superimposing another fiction: man himself becomes God—a case of usurpation. But does this usurpation really mean emancipation from nihilism? Deleuze observes:

... Christianity has a strange result. It teaches us that we put God to death. In this way it secretes its own atheism, an atheism of bad conscience and *ressentiment*. The reactive life instead of the divine will, the reactive Man instead of God, the Man-God replacing the God-Man—the *European Man*. Man killed God, but which man killed God?\(^74\)


\(^73\) Ibid., III, 27.

\(^74\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 154.
Again, Deleuze's question "which man killed God?" can only be answered through the typology of the ascending and descending. The man who killed God is the reactive descending man. This is another stage in the history of nihilism. For Nietzsche, this is the stage of the Modernization of culture, wherein man usurps the status of God—the European Man, the emancipated, enlightened man of the Modern period. Modernity is the moment when man takes over the responsibilities of God. This is no more than the substitution of "reason" and "science" for God in order to account for the foundation of reality. Nonetheless, this is just the superimposition of yet another fiction over the old fiction—the Modern fiction this time. Nietzsche reports that *Beyond Good and Evil* is his critique of Modern culture.\(^{75}\) In this book, he writes:

> Why atheism today?—"The father" in God has been thoroughly refuted; ditto, "the judge," "the rewarde." Also his "free will": he does not hear—and if he heard he still would not know how to help. Worst of all: he seems incapable of clear communication: is he unclear?

> This is what I found to be the causes for the decline of European theism, on the basis of a great many conversations, asking and listening. It seems to me that the religious instinct is indeed in the process of growing powerfully—but the theistic satisfaction it refuses with deep suspicion.\(^{76}\)

\(^{75}\) See Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, III, 7.2.
\(^{76}\) Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, III, 53.
There is a certain ambivalence in Nietzsche's portrayal of man's usurpation of God. On the one hand, this usurpation is still a manifestation of nihilism, inasmuch as God is murdered by the resentful man. This means that the same negative values or ressentiment and bad conscience are still in place. Modern atheism is the triumph of human values over higher or theological values: "morals replace religion; utility, progress, even history replace divine values." It is here that Nietzsche invokes the "shadows of a dead God." Nietzsche remarks, "God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown." These shadows are no other than the anthropomorphized divine values; they form but a slightly different version of the same theological fiction. On the other hand, Nietzsche also views the death of God as a transitional stage which renders a positive effect. Indeed, through this event, we have emancipated ourselves from a divine transcendent. We only got rid of the persona but the same principles remain—"we claim to embrace all of reality, but we embrace only what the higher values have left of it, the residue of reactive forces and the will to nothingness." For Deleuze, this is the meaning of Book IV of Thus Spoke

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79 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 108. Similarly Nietzsche writes, "Before God! But now this god has died. You higher men, this god was your greatest danger. It is only since he lies in his tomb that you have been resurrected. Only now the great noon comes; only now the higher man becomes—lord." Thus Spoke Zarathustra, IV, 13.2.

Zarathustra, wherein Nietzsche talks about the "higher men." \(^{81}\) In God's death, man is resurrected, but he has been tarnished with a disparaging view of life, he has been made reactive. This means that man still carries a burden, the shadows of a dead God; man, according to Zarathustra, is the camel. Nietzsche's admonition: "we still have to vanquish his shadow too." \(^{82}\) In this sense, man becomes a transitional creature, "Oh my brothers, what I can love in man is that he is an overture and a going under." \(^{83}\) Therefore, what Nietzsche envisages as the proper consequence of the death of God is not the triumph of man, but the triumph of Zarathustra's teaching. "God died: now we want the overman to live," and the question which we will have to reckon with is: "How is man to be overcome?" \(^{84}\)

The rise of Modern culture entails, for Nietzsche, the idea that man has to rule over the world based on the same negative moral valuations: "what derives from the servile, and especially the mob hodgepodge: that would now become master of all human destiny." \(^{85}\) This is the meaning of "man" for Nietzsche—a decadent atheist. \(^{86}\) Nietzsche is aware, however, that the rise of Modernism has also produced "higher men" who are aware of the true nature of the idea of God and his shadows but, nevertheless, are still men. In other words, these men are still bound to the same servility as the lower men. It is in these higher men that

\(^{81}\) See Ibid and Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 164-166.
\(^{82}\) Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 108.
\(^{83}\) Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, IV, 13.3.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., IV, 13.2-3.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., IV, 13.3.
\(^{86}\) See Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 156-158.
Nietzsche finds hope; it is in them that a new innocence towards life is possible. Among the higher men, the "ugliest of men" represents the turning of ressentiment to God, "he has put himself in the place of God that he but he has not stop being reactive, full of bad conscience and ressentiment." Zarathustra recognizes the ugliest of men as the one who took "revenge against the witness." The ugliest of men has killed God because he cannot deal with the latter's lack of shame, and he is not ugly because he desecrated God but precisely because God witnesses and "pities" his ugliness. "The god who saw everything, even man—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live." It is God's overwhelming pity for man that caused Him His life. This is where the ugliest of men distinguishes between the dead God and Zarathustra: between pity and shame. Zarathustra feels pity for the ugliest

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87 Ibid., 165. The "ugliest of men" is only one of the eight versions of the higher men that Deleuze lists. The "prophet" or the "soothsayer" is the one who foresees the coming of the last man. "He wills death but as a passive extinction." The "sorcerer" represents bad conscience; he is the counterfeiter who concocts the elixir that spreads the contagion of small virtues. The "two kings" symbolize "the morality of customs and the two ends of this morality, the two extremities of culture." The "man with leeches" wants "certainty and to appropriate science and culture." The "last pope," despite his being witness to the whole history of the rise and demise of God, wishes to serve God to the end and loses his affirmative eye. The "voluntary beggar" seeks the "kingdom of heaven" and "happiness on earth." He finds "the kingdom of heaven to be the only recompense... but only among cows, only in the species activity of cows." The "shadow" is culture or "species activity." "The shadow is the activity of man, but it needs light as a higher instance..." Cf. Ibid., 164-166, 170. Stanley Rosen maintains that "Nietzsche encompasses all of his dramatic characters..." The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 218. Rosen, however, is too quick to say this and does not delineate his reasons. As opposed to Rosen, Weaver Santaniello associates the eight higher men to individuals or figures other than Nietzsche. She would, for example, associate the "man with leeches" (the "bleeding man") with Nietzsche's friend, Erwin Rohde, and the "soothsayer" with Eugen Dühring. See Zarathustra's Last Supper: Nietzsche's Eight Higher Men (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005).

88 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, IV, 7.


90 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, IV, 7.
of men but he is quick to rise above pity, to overcome it: "But that you passed me
by, silent; that you blushed, I saw it well: that is how I recognized you as
Zarathustra."91 Zarathustra honors the ugly man not by pitying him, but by
feeling shame. Shame, the unwillingness to help, is opposed to pity, the
willingness to help.

This very important scene in Book IV of Thus Spoke Zarathustra should be
compared to an earlier encounter with the dying tightrope walker in Book I. The
image of the ugliest of men and the dying tightrope walker exemplifies what is
pitiable and shameful in man. Both represent man as an interlude—"a rope, tied
between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss."92 This is, to Nietzsche, what
is lovable and redemptive in man that he is an intermediary, a passing over. This
is also the difference between pity and shame: pity preserves man, while shame
loathes man and thus seeks to abandon him. This is the paradoxical character of
Zarathustra’s shame for man, it is both contempt and a gesture of respect. It is
precisely in this contempt and Zarathustra’s struggle against pity that we can
make sense of the overcoming of man and, thus, the coming of the Übermensch.
Zarathustra’s teaching: man is a frail (ressentiment and bad conscience) rope over
an abyss (nihilism), but it is only in crossing this rope, regardless of its frailty and
the danger of falling, that one can overcome man and, thus, nihilism. It is only in
being keen to Zarathustra’s teaching that he could triumph. One has to muster

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., I, prologue, 4.
an ample amount of courage to be able to cross the dangerous rope; this is what the image of the tightrope walker and the ugliest of men (by murdering God) convey. Moreover, these two figures represent the willingness to perish for the future—for Zarathustra loves him who “wants to perish of the present.”\textsuperscript{93} The tightrope walker’s gesture of abandoning man is his attempt to cross the frail rope, while the ugliest of men’s murder of God is no other than the gesture of killing what is “man” in him.\textsuperscript{94} Deleuze comments: “Following the higher men there arises the last man, the one who says: all is vain, better fade away passively!”\textsuperscript{95} The tightrope walker eventually falls and dies because of the imbalance caused by the jester. Zarathustra’s attempt to carry and bury the dead tightrope walker represent his pity for the corpse, that is, the last man. In the dark woods, after long hours of sleep, Zarathustra eventually realizes his folly: pity for the last man. Zarathustra realizes that he should leave behind the dead man, he has to overcome his pity for the last man if the goal is the \textit{Übermensch}. Thus speaks Zarathustra:

\textit{... companions I need, living ones—not dead companions and corpses whom I carry with myself wherever I want to. Living companions I need, who follow me because they want to follow themselves—wherever I want.}\textsuperscript{96}

The murder of God is also the death of what is “man” in us. Zarathustra’s encounter with the tightrope walker is a spectacle for the breaking of old tablets

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} The “murder is in other words a self-desecration.” The “ugliest man will die in one sense, namely, as the spirit of the present epoch of mankind.” Rosen, \textit{op cit.}, 217, 220.
\textsuperscript{95} Deleuze, “Nietzsche,” in \textit{Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life}, 82.
\textsuperscript{96} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, I, prologue, 9.
of values, an attempt at progress towards what is truly higher; at the same time, it is also a coming to grips with the consequence of the death of God—the simultaneous resurrection and death of the human. "This is why conquering nihilism, liberating thought from bad conscience and ressentiment means the overcoming and destruction of even the best men."^ For this, the only way that Zarathustra could ever express his love for man is to loathe the ugliest of men and to abandon the last man in the woods.

It is here where we make sense of the "post-human." God is dead, and man exalts and thereby kills himself. Deleuze argues that there is a fundamental difference between the last man and the man who wants to die. Zarathustra carries the last man, the dead man, along with him up until he recognizes his folly. The soothsayer's words even intensify this realization: "Verily, we have become too weary even to die. We are still waking and living on—in tombs."^ This is Zarathustra's folly, his reluctance to accept the death of man. It is only when we accept, and will, the death of man—the final abandonment of the last man—where we could finally overcome nihilism. The man who wants to die is

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^ Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 166.
^ Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, II, 19. Rosen remarks, "We must remember that the production of a new race of higher men does nothing to mitigate the ugliness and suffering of the present race, except in the sense that destruction is salvation from that ugliness and suffering." Hence, the "murder of God, like any destruction of a table of values, is a desecration of the human spirit, however necessary an act of destruction as the precondition for the creation of new values." Rosen, op cit., 220, 219.
the image of the man who wants to overcome everything that is reactive in him, for man lives on earth like a skin disease.\textsuperscript{100} Nietzsche writes:

\begin{quote}
I have the overman at heart, \textit{that} is my first and only concern—and \textit{not} man: not the neighbor, not the poorest, not the most ailing, not the best. \ldots That you despise, you higher men, that lets me hope. \ldots Overcome these masters of today, O my brothers—these small people, \textit{they} are the overman's greatest danger.\textsuperscript{101}
\end{quote}

The triumph of Zarathustra is, therefore, the triumph of the post-human. The Übermensch, as the new meaning of the earth, is the overcoming of humanity, which is seen in the drama of the last man and the man who wills his own death. Man still is one of God's shadows, and, according to Nietzsche, we still have to vanquish it. Vanquishing this shadow entails leaving the valley of Snake's Death;\textsuperscript{102} vanquishing the shadow entails leaving behind the weight of the last man.

3) Affirmation and the Eternal Return: The Dionysian YES

Alongside the will to power, another important contribution of Deleuze to Nietzsche scholarship is his particular, and to some level idiosyncratic, interpretation of the "eternal return." Deleuze deliberately moves away from the common way of interpreting the eternal return: as the return of the same, that is, the identical return of what is. Instead, Deleuze argues that the eternal return is not the return of what is \textit{identical}, but rather the return of \textit{difference}. He writes:

\textsuperscript{100} Cf. Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, II, 18.
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Ibid.}, IV, 13.3.
\textsuperscript{102} See \textit{Ibid.}, IV, 7.
...
The eternal return means that being is selection. Only that which affirms or is affirmed returns. The eternal return is the reproduction of becoming but the reproduction of becoming is also the production of becoming active: Dionysus and Ariadne.¹⁰³

Deleuze reminds us of two aspects of Nietzsche’s eternal return: as *cosmological and physical doctrine* and as *ethical and selective thought*. We are, for the moment, only interested in the second aspect. Deleuze, himself, gives more emphasis to the ethical aspect of the eternal return. It is here where he situates Nietzsche’s ethics of affirmation as Dionysus’ game of chance. Inasmuch as chance connotes “possibility” or “opening,” it also implies “fate” and “risk.” As the world opens itself to possibilities, it is also open to two ways of evaluation, that is, to two types of will to power: affirmative and negative. In Deleuze’s quasi-Kantian formulation of the new ethical imperative, “whatever you will, will in such a way that you also will its eternal return,”¹⁰⁴ the eternal return is magnified as a selective thought. Hence, the fate of the active agent or what is given is the imperative to will, to be bound to willing. The risk involved in willing is the absence of calculation (regimented and common thinking); the risk further involves the affirmation of multiplicity. And in the affirmation of multiplicity—that is the willing/selection of difference—the active agent acknowledges not “presence” but “presences” of multifarious realities (even the

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¹⁰³ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 189-190.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68.
"virtual" becomes a reality).\textsuperscript{105} This is the essence of play; it involves stress, strain, unpredictability—risk. This is the game of Dionysus.

The last task of this chapter is an attempt to shed light on the dramatic emergence of the sense of affirmation after the destruction of old values through God's death, the overcoming of the last man, and the opening that the post-human condition creates. Nietzsche makes it clear that the main theme of Thus Spoke Zarathustra is the doctrine of the eternal return, "the highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable."\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, the death of the last man can be construed as the initial gesture of affirmation. It is only after we have overcome what is "man" in us (self-overcoming) that we are able to reevaluate values. We have seen how, from the point of view of a negative will to power, active forces are repressed by taking them away from what they can do. The becoming reactive of forces is seen in Nietzsche's analysis of the drama of reSENTIMENT and bad conscience. Moving on, we have also seen that through the death of God, man is emancipated from the shackles of divine values but, nevertheless, is still hostage to human values. Accordingly, the feasibility of reevaluating values can only be conceived at the periphery of human self-overcoming. This is the


\textsuperscript{106} Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, III, 6.1.
dramatic moment of Zarathustra's emergence—his triumph.\(^{107}\) Zarathustra's decisive moment, according to Nietzsche, is the moment of the collapse of Plato's dualistic world, i.e., the "true world" (the permanent world of universals) and the "apparent world" (the accidental world of particulars). Nietzsche writes: "The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one."\(^{108}\) We have already abolished the world of universals through the death of God and the death of the last man; but what does abolishing the apparent world mean? It simply means abandoning altogether the dualistic worldview: universal-apparent (Plato) or heaven-earth (Christianity).

There is, however, a more meaningful question which requires not a simple answer: why do we need to abolish the apparent world when it is where we truly are and where the phenomenon of life is experienced? The sense of the Platonic-Christian dualism is loaded for Nietzsche—it is based on opposition and hierarchy. On the one hand, the "true world" signifies precisely the metaphysical prejudice of a supra-mundane world; this has been the prejudice not only of religion but, more importantly, of philosophy as well.\(^{109}\)

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\(^{107}\) According to Bernd Magnus, inasmuch as Nietzsche declared Zarathustra as the teacher of the eternal return, it is important to ask: "At what point in history does Zarathustra emerge; against whom and what does he proclaim his teaching?" *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 117.

\(^{108}\) Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, IV.

\(^{109}\) Nietzsche begins his *Beyond Good and Evil* with "On the prejudices of Philosophers": "This way of judging constitutes the typical prejudgment and prejudice which give away the metaphysicians of all ages; this kind of valuation looms in the background of all their logical procedures; it is on this account of this 'faith' that they trouble themselves about 'knowledge,' about something that is finally baptized solemnly as 'the truth.'" *Beyond Good and Evil*, I, 2.
hand, the "apparent" world is drawn from the idea that a "truer" world (the
world of forms) exists over and above the mundane world of particulars. The
poison of this metaphysical prejudice, and Nietzsche is very keen on this, is the
priority conferred to the supra-mundane. The supra-mundane is revered while
the mundane is devalued; and for Nietzsche, this "error" or "fable"\textsuperscript{110} is due to a
linguistic expression—language shaping the whole psychology of humankind,
and for the worse. Accordingly, this is the nihilistic character of metaphysics. It
follows from this that what Nietzsche wishes to abandon is not the world per se,
but only the apparent world of the metaphysicians. This is another dramatic
turn in Zarathustra's triumph. Inasmuch as we have to abandon ourselves, we
also have to abandon the apparent world. For Nietzsche, this is the only way by
which we redeem ourselves from our old decadent humanity and deliver the
world from the error of the metaphysicians. In other words, we are restoring
something to ourselves and to the world, viz., the long lost dignity, ours and the
world's immanent value.

Accounting for the value of life demands us to ask: "what is the meaning
of the eternal return?" In answering this question, there are two things that we
have to avoid. First, we have to make clear that the only way the thought of the
eternal return could become compatible with Nietzsche's ethics is to divest it of
any truth-value. The thought is not something that could be proven empirically

\textsuperscript{110} Refer to "How the 'true world' finally became a fable." Twilight of the Idols, IV. Nietzsche also writes, "How could anything originate out of its opposite? for example, truth out of error?" Beyond Good and Evil, 1, 2.
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or logically, as if trying to prove the existence of gravity. Second, despite the fact that the thought of the eternal return is being interpreted as an ethics, it is not normative in the Kantian sense; it could, to the least, be normative in the sense that it suggests a standard of living but with the absence of universal values. Deleuze, however, maintains that the ethical dimension of the eternal return can best be understood if formulated in the manner of Kant's categorical imperative: "whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return." It does not follow, however, that Nietzsche's ethics is based on universal principles à la Kant. What it, at least, means is that Nietzsche is providing us with an ethical criterion as rigorous as Kant's, maybe even more rigorous: "The greatest struggles: for this new weapon is needed." The rigor is not philosophical nor scientific, but "practical"; what "practical" means in this context is that it is a psychological test. This psychological test is the greatest weight that one has to endure:

_The greatest weight._—What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you . . . . The

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111 I agree with Magnus on these two points and his argument that Nietzsche is espousing an "existential imperative" rather than a "categorical imperative." See Nietzsche's _Existential Imperative_, 139-141. Further, Magnus' view is not at all incommensurate to the sense of the ethics of affirmation which this chapter is trying to clarify.

112 Deleuze, _Nietzsche and Philosophy_, 68.

113 Nietzsche, _The Will to Power_, IV, 1054.
The natural text content of the document is not legible due to the quality of the image.
eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!”

Notice the hypothetical “if” of Nietzsche’s question. The passage shows that the eternal return is not a literal philosophical or scientific postulate. Rather, Nietzsche wants to create a metaphorical effect out of his doctrine. The weight, which is not the weight that the camel carries, is the rigor of the eternal return. How is this an ethics? We have to go back to Nietzsche’s typology of the ascending and descending, for the passage itself is addressed to these two types, inasmuch as there are two opposing ways of reacting to the eternal return: “Would you throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus,” or would you rather respond, “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” How is this an ethics of affirmation? Nietzsche continues,

If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and

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115 Deleuze maintains that the “camel” is the beast of the desert representing nihilism not yet overcome. “The camel is the animal who carries: he carries the weight of established values, the burdens of education, morality, and culture.” “Nietzsche,” in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, 53, 93. Nietzsche uses the symbolism of the “camel” to illustrate the first stage of history, the “past.” In this stage nihilism appears as something “religious” in character. The stage of “religious nihilism” is where the human spirit is weighed down under the burden of laws and commandments begotten from an external source. In this sense, religion is nihilistic because of its tendency to value a world of Being or beyond (God, Good, Truth) over the earth. In effect, humanity negates and devalues the concrete world: it denounces life, the body, and the passions. As such, in this stage, humanity blindly believes that the meaning of the earth depends solely on a transcendent power. Thus, the earth is meaningless in the absence of God. Religious nihilism is both life-denying and meaning-denying. See Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, I, 1. For further discussions on Nietzsche’s symbolism of the “camel” and Zarathustra’s “Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit”: Erich Heller, The Importance of Nietzsche: Ten Essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 70-86; Lampert, op cit., 33-34; Rosen, op cit., 78-84.
innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?\textsuperscript{117}

Nietzsche thinks that desiring (affirming) or denying the return of a life would depend on whether one is “well disposed” or the opposite of affirming such a return. Again, this means that such an affirmation or negation depends on whether one is ascending or descending. Thus, it follows that the ascending type affirms life, replete with joy and pain and even its return, while the descending type condemns life, makes it his enemy. Nietzsche’s criterion: “Do whatever you will, but first be such as are able to will.”\textsuperscript{118} This is the weight that should lie upon one’s actions. Everyone is permitted to act as one wishes, for after all this ethics is not based on universal codes, but one should be able to will the return of his actions. Willing the return of one’s actions means the conflation of “moment” and “eternity.” The affirmation of the moment is the affirmation of eternity. One has to be able to endure this thought, for the procrastination of the moment means negation of all eternity, all of life. It is important to note that there is another side to the eternal return: it is a “selection.” Deleuze notes, “It is the thought of the eternal return that selects. It makes willing something whole.”\textsuperscript{119} Hence, in this context, willing, affirming, creating, accepting, desiring, and embracing have the same sense as selecting—for it is the selection of the

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{118} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, II, 5.3.

\textsuperscript{119} Deleuze, \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, 69.
whole and not merely of the parts that constitutes the eternal return. It follows from this that the affirmation of the eternal return is the genuine activity of active forces; selection is resistance to reactive forces. But this is just the first sense of selection according to Deleuze. There is a second sense of selection which completes the circle of the eternal return. This time selection is tantamount to destruction. We have already seen how the last man's will to nothingness leads to the redemption of man. Man, an overture and a going under, dies with God's death; this is the crossing of the tightrope. Deleuze observes that this is key to the eternal return as a second selection. Again, we have to avoid the literal meaning of the death of man; it "is said to be an active operation an 'active destruction.'"\(^{120}\) The destruction of the last man simply means our emancipation from servility, that is, we are again becoming active. Through the "negation" of reactive forces we are able to free ourselves from our repression, our bondage in morality; we would be, according to Nietzsche, beyond good and evil.

Active negation or active destruction is the state of strong spirits which destroy the reactive themselves, submitting it to the test of the eternal return and submitting themselves to this test even if it entails willing their own decline.\(^{121}\)

This is the transmutation of values, forces becoming active once more. This is the affirmative NO that paves the way to the relentless YES. Of Dionysus, Nietzsche writes: "Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of

\(^{120}\) Ibid., 70.

\(^{121}\) Ibid.
its highest types—that is what I called Dionysian . ..”\textsuperscript{122} Moreover, it is “The affirmation of passing away and destroying, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war . ..”\textsuperscript{123} We have to affirm the passing away of man in order to complete the circle of the eternal return, the fulfillment of the relentless YES of Dionysus. From this, we could make sense of the second selection: it is the selection of the active life, leaving behind the reactive life. In the “thought” (psychological) of the eternal return, the one who is “able to will” wills or “selects” life; furthermore, he transmutes the negative through an expression of the affirmative will to power. These are the two senses of the eternal return: affirming the eternal return itself as an ethic and appropriating one’s mode of being as active.

\textsuperscript{122} Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, X, 5.

\textsuperscript{123} Nietzsche, \textit{Ecce Homo}, III, 1.3.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ONTOLOGY OF BECOMING

“There is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time—our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves.”

– Henri Bergson

The preceding chapter has featured Nietzsche’s ethics of affirmation; this was accomplished through an explication of the “drama” of the triumph of nihilism and its eventual overcoming through the triumph of Zarathustra and the dawning of the post-human condition. It was argued above that an affirmative stance towards life is only possible through the thought of the eternal return. There was, however, a modest amount of explication as to how this Deleuzian “interpretation” of the eternal return, as the return of “difference,” could fit in Nietzsche’s ethics. One of the aims of this present chapter, therefore, is to contextualize Deleuze’s use of the term “difference,” for most criticisms of his idea of the eternal return of difference ensue from a lack of a clear sense of precisely what Deleuze means by “difference.” This contextualization would require a discussion of Nietzsche’s ontology insofar as “difference,” itself, is to be understood only within the context of Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics. This is to say that Deleuze does not use the term fortuitously but, rather, with good

reason; and, I should add, for whatever Deleuze’s “interpretation” worth, it certainly makes the thought of the eternal return work in the larger context of Nietzsche’s ethics and ontology.

Inasmuch as I differentiated between ethics and morality above, I would also like to argue that Nietzsche’s philosophy makes more sense if we differentiate it from “metaphysics.” His theory of becoming is, to say the least, an ontology—that is a theory of being or existence—and not a metaphysics or any discourse which centers around the search for first principles beyond the physical realm. This strategy, therefore, will avoid any confusion between a pure discourse on reality and a discourse on reality yoked to a transcendent substratum (God, Absolute, soul). 2 My aim is also to situate Nietzsche away from the traditional abstract dualisms of traditional metaphysics; and, as will be shown, this is key in contextualizing “difference.” However, a critique of traditional metaphysics does not entail a total negation of reality; for Deleuze writes: “Nietzsche does not do away with the concept of being. He proposes a new conception of being.” 3 As opposed to an ontology based on a negative, or reactive, initiation of the world, or to use Jacques Derrida’s notion of the

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2 “Metaphysics,” writes Nietzsche, “elucidates the handwriting of nature as it were pneumatologically, as the church and its scholars formerly did the Bible.” Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vol. 1, 1, 8.

“metaphysics of presence,”4 Nietzsche’s affirmative ontology goes beyond the Platonic separation of being and phenomena. The traditional demarcation between a world of Forms and a world of phenomena does not fit the Nietzschean paradigm. It is also important to note that such ontology is itself an ethics because it requires a peculiar attitude towards life. This means that any conceptual separation between Nietzsche’s ethics and ontology is merely strategic, that is, arbitrary for the sake of clarification. Ultimately, Nietzsche’s affirmative stance towards life, through the ingestion and digestion of the thought of the eternal return, requires from the individual a total affirmation of this thought. The overcoming of the “greatest weight” requires one’s ethical disposition: whether one is well disposed, or not, to embrace the highest formula of affirmation.

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4 According to Derrida, the whole history of philosophy (specifically the whole project of metaphysics and epistemology) is grounded on the assumption that immediate access to the substratum of reality is available. This suspicion of which Derrida throws over philosophy is actually a sign of the supposed “end of metaphysics.” Here, Martin Heidegger is taken as point of departure. *Being and Time* initiates a “destruction” (later on Derrida’s deconstruction) of the history of metaphysics and such “destruction of the history of ontology is essentially bound up with the way the question of Being is formulated, and it is possible only within such a formulation.” *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962), § 23. Heidegger points us to the “metaphysics of presence” which has something to do with the overly transcendent conception of metaphysics; for him there is no meaning in this. The question of Being deals with how the question is formulated, and for Heidegger it is a question which should be drawn out of ontology and not transcendent metaphysics, which is nothing else than onto-theology. Onto-theology has been regarded as the spirit of the Western ethos since Plato, and for Heidegger, this ethos is based on a misconception of the nature of Being. Derrida, for his part, follows Heidegger’s criticism of Western metaphysics; although he radicalizes his position and maintains that even Heidegger himself could not escape the metaphysics of presence. In his Exergue to *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes: “the history of (the only) metaphysics, which has, in spite of all difference, not only from Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger, always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos . . .” *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 3.
As has been mentioned, Nietzsche’s ontology is the second side of his twofold cure for nihilism. Our guiding question in this present chapter is: “what is it that we affirm when we affirm the eternal return?” Deleuze answers, “difference.” Thus, what ensues is a more fundamental question: “what is difference?” Answering this question would require us to delve into how Nietzsche views reality. Moreover, answering this question amounts to sealing the circle of Nietzsche’s twofold cure; for we are, after all, just talking of one and the same thing: “life” (in its two dimensions, ethics and ontology). With regard to the ontology of becoming, our task is to respond to the following issues. First, why does Nietzsche deem traditional metaphysics problematic and how does his ontology differ from the type of ontology which he criticizes? Deleuze amplifies Nietzsche’s conviction that the task of philosophy after Modernism is the reversal of the old metaphysical dualism initiated by Plato. The contrast between traditional metaphysics and Nietzsche’s ontology of becoming will give sense to Deleuze’s notion of “difference.” Secondly, how does Nietzsche characterize his own fresh conception of the world? This requires an explication of “becoming” which Nietzsche inherited from Heraclitus. It will be shown how Nietzsche conceives of an immanent world of becoming, an affirmative world of contradictions. By turning to Deleuze’s notion of “chaosmos,” a neologism found in Difference and Repetition and the Logic of Sense, we get a sense of what Nietzsche describes as the “rerum concordia discors . . . this whole marvelous
uncertainty and rich ambiguity of existence . . .”5 Finally, in the last part of this chapter, we will return to the problem of “difference” in Deleuze’s “interpretation” of the eternal return. It will become clear that Deleuze’s sense of “difference” actually ensues from Nietzsche’s critique and reversal of Platonism. Along with Pierre Klossowski, Deleuze emphasizes the role of “forgetting” in Nietzsche’s philosophy.6 “Forgetting,” in this context, will clarify why the eternal return, as a “selective thought” based on one’s courageous disposition of affirming life, entails the return of “difference” and not the “the Same.” We, however, have to remember that throughout Nietzsche’s corpus he always referred to the thought of the eternal return as the return of the same. It is very important to note that Deleuze does not argue against Nietzsche’s use of the same, but would rather make sense of what the eternal return of the same entails at the backdrop of Nietzsche’s ethics of affirmation. In other words, and it will be discussed in detail below, Deleuze attempts to rid the eternal return of its transcendent overtones by arguing that “the Same” (and not the same) is opposed to the real sense of Nietzsche’s conception of a new image of thought which is, itself, already a post-metaphysical hypothesis.

6 Keith Ansell Pearson makes the same comparison in his Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition (London: Routledge, 1997), 45-46.
1) Ontology contra Metaphysics: The Nietzschean Counterculture

The "metaphysical" worldview, as Nietzsche criticizes it, requires special attention. Nietzsche's philosophical project is a continuing deconstruction of traditional paradigms, and in particular philosophy, that are yoked to formal principles (metaphysical) which are considered to be "permanent" in addition to being "beyond," "under," or "allover," thus opposed to, the physical world of flux. While the leitmotiv of Nietzsche's critique seems to be clear to us, and we find in him the most blatant admonitions of metaphysical thinking, it does not however mean that Nietzsche does not leave us with anything after his deconstruction of traditional ways of thinking. It was established in the previous chapters that he is criticizing only those modes of being which are nihilistic. As such, Nietzsche's deconstructive style clears the plane of any established paradigms in order for us to create (and not re-erect) new plateaus of thought, new modes of existing.

The guiding argument of this chapter is that Nietzsche's theory of being is no longer metaphysical but rather, and still is, an ontology. Thus, we lend support to this precursor of "post-metaphysical" philosophy. Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God hints at a movement away from metaphysics or "foundationalist" philosophy. This, however, is just a step and does not instantiate post-metaphysical thinking. Indeed, Modernity brings about the death of God; but in lieu of the Christian God, Modernity has substituted equivalent concepts such as "order," "soul," "noumenon," or "Geist" acting as
foundations for philosophy and history. Moreover, binary oppositions of "good and evil," "reason and irrational," and "civilization and madness" are still the bases of moral and cultural codes. As such, Modernity is still thoroughly metaphysical, for "The fundamental faith of metaphysicians," Nietzsche argues, "is the faith in opposite values." These formal concepts, according to Nietzsche, are anthropomorphized versions of the Christian God—the "last man" is still a remnant of the dead God; the last man's values are the shadows or visages of the old tables. But, according to Nietzsche, we still have to overcome the shadows of the dead God. What is truly "post-metaphysical" requires a radical movement away from any foundationalist thinking. Thus, the only earnest gesture of affirmation is the overcoming of the last man.

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7 In *Madness and Civilization*, in his attempt to illustrate the age of Enlightenment, Michel Foucault offers us a very peculiar history of insanity in the age of reason. The book basically shows how society (seeing itself as "civilized," therefore, "reasonable") demarcates between civility (reason) and folly (unreason). What is interesting in Foucault's investigation is that, this demarcation complicated the connotation of folly, and thus resulted to the inclusion of the insane into what is generally understood as criminal. The policing of criminals also meant the capture of innocent insane people. Foucault describes how language manifests itself as the arbiter of good and evil, in this case between "reasonable" and "non-reasonable." Significantly, there is a privilege given to "reason," only that this reason is understood purely in secular terms, and is presented in, what Foucault calls, "institutions." In this sense, in an obviously political manner, reason is institutionalized. The binary opposition between reason and unreason led to the establishment of the asylum, which is actually based on the policing practices of the prison. The asylum started out as a policing and punishing institution before it evolved into a medical institution. See *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965).


Nietzsche, according to Deleuze, represents a “counterculture”—that is, a culture which runs counter to the Platonic-Christian frame of thought. It should be noted, however, that this counterculture is not an abortion or a passing over, but rather an exhaustion, of the old culture. In a Nietzschean sense, such exhaustion of the old culture is counterculture in the sense of a transmutation of values—Plato turned upside down,^11 Descartes turned inside out! In other words, when the highest values devalue themselves. It has been shown above how the triumph of nihilism is, nevertheless, essential to its very overcoming. The death of God presupposes the idea of God, as well as the death of the last man presupposes the emergence of the last man. Further, this drama from nihilism to the death of the last man brings about the post-human condition which paves the way for the Übermensch. The Nietzschean counterculture entails a manifestation of the death of God; in other words, the reversal of active and reactive forces, which would suggest abandoning old forms of knowledge (or essences) and creating new forms of thinking (or “senses” for Deleuze). The emergence of this counterculture is the “end” of (traditional) philosophy. According to Deleuze, to “reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place, as jets of singularities.”^12 This


^11 Significantly, Deleuze finds an ancient counterpart of this reversal of Platonism: “the Stoics are the first to reverse Platonism and to bring about a radical inversion.” The Logic of Sense, trans. by Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 7.

^12 Ibid., 53. We also gather from Michel Foucault: “… what will enter, submerging appearance and breaking its engagement to essence, will be the event; the incorporeal will
means that, for Deleuze, Nietzsche’s critique of traditional metaphysics is premised on the idea that essences do not exist; they are only phantoms. For Deleuze, what is of more primordial status are “singularities,” that is, forces in constant interaction. We have already seen in the first chapter how the expressions of forces ensue from Nietzsche’s typology of the will to power.

Singularities, in the context of power and forces, refer to the material conditions of a body, inasmuch as a body is an assemblage of these singularities. In lieu of essences, the dynamism of singularities emanate from within themselves, rather than from outside or transcendent forces. This being said, what Deleuze is trying to say is that Nietzsche’s ontology differentiates itself from traditional ontology by following a, more or less, Spinozistic bent—that is, “immanence” as opposed to “transcendence.” The plane of immanence is no other than the plane of dissipate the density of matter; a timeless insistence will destroy the circle which imitates eternity; an inpenetrable singularity will divest itself of its contamination by purity; the actual semblance of the simulacrum will support the falseness of false appearances.” “Theatrum Philosophicum,” in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews (Ithaca: Cornell University), 168.

13 In one of his commendable essays, Yirmiyahu Yovel writes about the affinities between Spinoza and Nietzsche. According to Yovel, “If Spinoza has started the modern philosophy of immanence and underlies it throughout, then Nietzsche brings it to its most radical conclusion.” Further, “Both declare the ‘death’ of the transcendent God, and see life within immanence as all there is.” Then, Yovel argues that Nietzsche’s conception of the eternal return (referring to The Gay Science 341) “is the utmost affirmation of immanence,” that the “eternal recurrence dramatizes the inescapability of immanence . . .” “Nietzsche and Spinoza: amor fati and amor dei,” in Nietzsche as Affirmative Thinker (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 183-203. Also see Richard Schacht, “The Nietzsche-Spinoza Problem: Spinoza as Precursor?,” in Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 167-186.

On several occasions, such as Human, All too Human, Nietzsche mentions Spinoza, along with Goethe, as one of his predecessors. Cf. Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, vol. 2, II, 408. Also, in an 1881 postcard he sent to his friend Franz Overbeck, Nietzsche writes: “I am utterly amazed, utterly enchanted. I have a precursor, and what a precursor! I hardly knew Spinoza: that I should have turned to him just now, was inspired by ‘instinct.’ Not only is his over-all tendency like mine—making knowledge the most powerful affect—but in five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself; this most unusual and loneliest thinker is closest to me
existence for Deleuze. Further, the privileging is reversed: "Transcendence is always a product of immanence." ¹⁴ This means that transcendence is a phantom; what Plato and the rest of the Western philosophical tradition before Nietzsche (and possibly Spinoza) have been obsessed with was transcendence at the expense of life.

Nietzsche’s transmutation of this old culture, this old tablet, is therefore the reversal of privileging. Now what is privileged is life, that is, immanence over transcendence. Against Kant, Nietzsche maintains that an apparent world does not presuppose the existence of a "world-in-itself" or a noumenal substratum beneath or beyond what appears. "What is 'appearance' for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what can I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance!" ¹⁵ Nietzsche, moreover, argues that the world is not "knowable" in the traditional sense, but is only accounted for through "perspectives." He writes in The Gay Science:

Our new "infinite."—How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without "sense," does not become "nonsense"; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially actively engaged in interpretation—that cannot be

precisely in these matters: he denies the freedom of the will, teleology, the moral world order, the unegoistic, and evil. Even though the divergences are admittedly tremendous, they are due more to the difference in time, culture and science." "Postcard to Overbeck," trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 92.


decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and only these.\textsuperscript{16}

The above passage begins with "Our new infinite," which could be taken in two senses. First, it may refer to a new conception of the world—a world of immanence rather than transcendence. As such, it would imply a new conception of what is infinite or eternal. It would also make sense of Nietzsche's conceiving of the "eternal return" as key to his ontology. Second, existence, for Nietzsche, is only accounted for through a radical perspectivism. This entails, according to Nietzsche, that there could be "\textit{infinite interpretations}\textsuperscript{17} of the world. Every knowing, which includes any attempt to ground knowing itself, is necessarily bound to a perspective.\textsuperscript{18} Nietzsche maintains that appraising existence means giving sense to a "chaotic" world. Metaphysics, therefore, is nothing but an exegesis, an interpretation. We have already seen in the first chapter that moral valuations are nothing but interpretations, but so are metaphysical valuations. And since "the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives," Kant's "tribunal of pure reason\textsuperscript{19} is nothing but a

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, 374.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{18} Nietzsche: "The consciousness of appearance.—How wonderful and new and yet how gruesome and ironic I find my position vis-à-vis the whole of existence in the light of my insight!" \textit{Ibid.}, 54.
sham for Nietzsche. Hence, the metaphysical obsession with binary oppositions should, first and foremost, be subjected to scrutiny:

For one may doubt, first, whether there are opposites at all, and secondly whether these popular valuations and opposite values on which the metaphysicians put their seal, and are not perhaps merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives, perhaps even from some nook, perhaps from below, frog perspectives, as it were, to borrow an expression painters use.20

If any opinion about the world is based on a particular perspective, then the age old belief in transcendence has been unduly given credit. In Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze gives us three essential theses of traditional philosophy which he deems "dogmatic."21 First, "We are told that the thinker as thinker loves truth."22 Since Socrates, philosophy has been thought to be the search for "absolute truth"; this has been incorporated in a global connotation of philosophy. Truth has been interpreted in various, and often opposing, ways, the most popular of which is the "correspondence theory" (adequatio rei et intellectus), the view that truth is the correspondence between the mind and the

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20 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, I, 2.
21 In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze develops these three dogmatic theses into eight postulates: 1) good will; 2) common sense; 3) recognition; 4) representation; 5) error or the negative; 6) truth in logic or in the proposition; 7) solutions; and 8) knowledge or culture. Taken inextricably, these eight postulates characterize what Deleuze calls the "dogmatic image of thought," and image which "betrays what it means to think." According to Deleuze, the alternative to this dogmatic image is a "thought without image," that is, not a binding image in the traditional sense, but, rather, an image which does not restrict thinking to the above postulates by being aware that thinking has the tendency to be bound to dogmatism. See Difference & Repetition, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129-167. A detailed explanation of Deleuze's eight postulates is found in James Williams, Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 111-137.
22 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 103.
object of knowledge. This view of truth is dogmatic because it presupposes that the human intellect has the natural capacity to gain access to the world. Secondly, Deleuze further writes, "We are also told that we are 'diverted' from the truth but by forces which are foreign to it (body, passions, sensuous interests)." Since the dogmatic view of truth demands that humans should be "rational beings," its logic is to differentiate between the rational and the irrational; and man's greatest folly, so we are led to believe, would be to follow the latter. Plato has already posited the priority of the world of Forms, that, strictly speaking, the only possible knowledge is knowledge of universal Forms. We locate here the bias of metaphysical, that is, dogmatic, philosophy, viz., "permanence" over "transience"—Plato has successfully planted in the Western psyche Parmenides' "Being" and has marked Heraclitus' "becoming" as something to be loathed. Thirdly, Deleuze remarks that "We are told, finally, that all we need to think well, to think truthfully, is a method." Unfortunately, the method that philosophy has adapted, thanks to Plato, is metaphysics—thinking of what is other than this world. This dogmatism gives us the illusion that we are thinking of what is, whereas, in all honesty, we have deviated from what is, the world. Philosophy, since the inception of the metaphysical image of thought, has been diverting our attention from the "perspectival" world of chaotic flux to an alien world of the unreachable beyond. To make things worse,

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
the old image of thought had imposed upon us the categorical imperative of ascending towards the unreachable. Thus, only those who are endowed with "reason" can know, or, in a more Christian sense, only those who are "moral" can enter the kingdom of God.

For Deleuze, what Nietzsche is trying to introduce is a "new image of thought," viz., a new way of looking at the world, a "fresh sensibility towards the world" after the death of God and the deconstruction of His shadows. However, one may also argue that, instead of being new, this Nietzschean image of thought is really as old as the dogmatic image of the world, that it has been suppressed, that is, made "reactive" by the triumph of the nihilistic spirit, and thus has not developed. It is in this sense that we could talk about Nietzsche's attempt to revive this "active" or "affirmative" image of thought—his counterculture. It is also in this sense that we could talk about two cultures, vis-à-vis, the typology of the ascending and descending lines of life. An image of thought,25 that is, a Weltanschauung (worldview) is always informed by the "who" (ascending/descending) and not the "what" (world) of interpretation. We always have to bear in mind that an image of thought reflects the "value" bestowed upon it by its "who." To quote Deleuze at length:

Everything depends on the value and sense of what we think. We always have the truths we deserve as a function of the sense of what we conceive, of the value of what we believe. Any thinkable or thought sense is only brought into effect insofar as the forces that correspond to it in thought.

25 Refer to footnote 25 of Chapter One.
also take hold of something, appropriate something, outside thought. Clearly thought cannot think by itself, any more than it can find truth by itself. The truth of a thought must be interpreted and evaluated according to the forces or power that determine it to think and to think this rather than that. When we speak of "plain truth", of truth "in itself", "for itself" or even "for us", we must ask what forces are hiding themselves in the truth of this truth, and therefore what its sense and value is.26

In a, more or less, Kantian manner, Deleuze tries to explain how we "appropriate" the world, how we come to formulate our idiosyncratic Weltanschauungen. A "thought" is an "appropriation," as opposed to "representation," of what is outside it; we could also go as far as saying that it is actually a "mis-representation" of the world. Here, we speak not of a one to one correspondence between the in-itself and the knower, but of a more complex dynamism between thought and what is being thought. Thought is not an independently isolated human faculty apart from the material conditions or forces that trigger it. Moreover, truth is also not a floating ether, abstracted from thought which thought attempts to grasp: "thought cannot think by itself, any more than it can find truth by itself."27 What is more crucial for both Nietzsche and Deleuze is the genealogy of thought and truth. Hence, typologically speaking, truth must be perspectival. The truth of a thought is, therefore, only true according to its "who." There can be numerous truths—hence, there is no such thing as Absolute truth. "There are many different eyes," argues Nietzsche,

26 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 104.
27 Ibid.
the "sphinx too has eyes: and consequently there are many different 'truths', and consequently there is no truth."28 Nevertheless, even if Absolute truth does not exist, there are interpretations of the world that are either "honest" or "dishonest"; we may be more precise if we say that a perspective could either be "more honest" or "less honest."29 This is because "the truth of a thought must be interpreted and evaluated according to the forces or power that determine it to think and to think this rather than that." According to Deleuze, we must consider the forces and type of power trying to express themselves in a thought, for the sense and value of that which is being thought (the world, for instance) lie in this. Deleuze further remarks:

A new image of thought means primarily that truth is not the element of thought. The element of thought is sense and value. The categories of thought are not truth and falsity but the noble and the base, the high and the low, depending on the nature of the forces that take hold of thought itself.30

Simply put, with regards the "who" of that which is being thought, the ascending person thinks/wills actively (affirmation of the world) and the descending person thinks/wills reactively (resentful negation of the world). The Nietzschean image of thought reveals the typological structure of thinking and the world described above. We can, therefore, pinpoint two characteristics of the

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28 Friedrich Nietzsche, Writings from the Late Notebooks, trans. by Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Notebook 34, April-June 1885, 230.
29 Nietzsche writes: "Many sick people have always been among the poetizers and God-cravers; furiously they hate the lover of knowledge and that youngest among the virtues, which is called 'honesty.' Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, in The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 1, 3.
30 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 104.
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ewn image of thought: 1) it encompasses both the critique of the dogmatic-nihilistic image of thought and 2) it reveals the role of force and power in thinking itself. Nietzsche’s counterculture speaks on behalf of his ontology, and his ontology ensues from this new image of thought. It is important to note, however, that Nietzsche’s ontology does not claim that the new image of thought is the “true” exegesis of the world; rather, Nietzsche blurs the notion of truth and, as such, defers any possibility of claiming it an Absolute testimony. Hence, our articulations about the world should not be gauged on whether they are ultimately true or false but, rather, whether they are affirmative (more or less honest) or negative (dishonest) testimonies. According to Deleuze, “It is a matter of knowing what region such errors and such truths belong to, what their type is, which one formulates and conceives them.”\(^{31}\) It is through our “intuition,” according to Bergson, that we take, along with our conception of reality, our “personality”—“We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves.”\(^{32}\)

We are in an epoch wherein the reign of nihilism is still in place. If we follow Nietzsche correctly, his report of God’s demise and his prediction (or expectation) of the overcoming of God’s shadow through the death of the last man, then the new image of thought is, whether we like it or not, at the margins of the history of Western metaphysics. It is a counterculture in the sense that it is


\(^{32}\) Bergson, *op cit.*
a revaluation of the old values of metaphysics; such revaluation comes in the form of a destructive hammer, Zarathustra’s weapon for he is a “lawbreaker,” and he admonishes, “O my brothers, break, break the old tablets!” Below, we will see how the radical destruction of old tablets, the shift from the old to the new image of thought also entails the “de-deification of nature” and the “naturalization of man.”

2) Becoming and Nietzsche’s Immanent Naturalism

Nietzsche’s ontology rests on an immanent, as opposed to a transcendent, initiation towards the world. Immanent ontology presupposes the radical reversal of Platonism hitherto described. The reversal entails a perspectival shift from the dogmatic image of thought to a new image of thought. In other words, it is a movement away from a reactive-nihilistic worldview to an active-affirmative worldview, which includes both a critique of nihilism and the initiation of a theory of force and power. It was also stressed that the movement from nihilism to the new image of thought only ensues from the death of God and the decisive abandonment of His shadow. The overcoming of God’s shadow entails the death of the last man and also, Nietzsche argues in The Gay Science 109, the “de-deification of nature” and the “naturalization of man.” Thus, the overcoming of God’s shadows has two dimensions: the post-human condition and a radical immanent naturalism. Our immediate task, after the event of God’s

33 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, III, 12.10.
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death, is to defeat the remnants of our "onto-theological" prejudices. Nietzsche maintains,

... one has to proceed like a wanderer who wants to know how high towers in a town are: he leaves the town. "Thoughts about moral prejudices," if they are not meant to be prejudices about prejudices, presuppose a position outside morality, some point beyond good and evil to which one has to rise, climb, or fly—and in a present case at least a point beyond our good and evil, a freedom from everything "European," by which I mean the sum of the imperious value judgments that have become part of our flesh and blood.\(^{34}\)

The tremendous effect of God's death has made it possible to move beyond the "good and evil" of Christianity. Nevertheless, as pointed out, nihilism is a phenomenon which permeates not only religion, but all aspects of our lives. Nihilism, as an image of thought or way of existence, does not presuppose the existence of a godhead—it simply is the basis of foundationalist thinking. We still have to live, Nietzsche suggests, the life of a "wanderer," of the "nomad," without clamoring for a safe home beyond the immanent world of becoming.\(^{35}\) Symbolically, however, the wanderer makes the whole world his home. Living in the Modern epoch means, for Nietzsche, overcoming Modernity itself—a point beyond, not only God's good and evil, but, more importantly, "our good and evil." The total abandonment of "the imperious value judgments that have become part of our flesh and blood" is the post-human condition. But the

\(^{34}\) Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 380.

\(^{35}\) Cf. Nietzsche, Human, All too Human, vol. 1, IX, 638. Also see Deleuze's use of the term "nomad" in his essay "Nomad Thought," in The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation, 142-149.
battle does not end here; let us be wary. We still have to re-evaluate the world we live in. In The Gay Science 109, Nietzsche offers us a paragraph loaded with his view of the world:

The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms . . . Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness and unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man . . . Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses . . . But when will we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to "naturalize" humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature (emphasis mine)?

Our old image of thought which maintains "God as some alleged spider of purpose and morality behind the great captious web of causality" is, for Nietzsche, "hubris." We have long been holding the view, our safety net, that the world is governed by some divine purpose or universal law; for Nietzsche, this is not only hubris but, more significantly, cowardice. Nietzsche invites us to welcome a test of courage: the death of God. He proclaims, in Twilight of the Idols, "We deny God, we deny the responsibility in God: only thereby do we redeem the world." With the absence of a watchful God, not only do our moral

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38 Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, VI, 8.
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valuations get challenged, but our view that God exists because the world is regimentally ordered and beautiful is also challenged. For Nietzsche, all our valuations ensuing from the old image of thought are sheer "aesthetic anthropomorphisms." The world "appears" to our eyes from one perspective or another. The world is "anthropomorphized"; as such, we do not see the world from any perspective than our own. Nietzsche asks, "Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things."\textsuperscript{39} Nietzsche is, however, not suggesting that there is such a thing as an objective perspective; as shown above this is impossible. Further, the world is neither true nor false, for it is beyond these epistemological valuations. Nietzsche even goes so far as to argue that our perspectives on the world are neither true nor false—they are all essentially \textit{false} interpretations, for "All lies are necessary lies."\textsuperscript{40} What is of utmost importance for Nietzsche is whether an interpretation is affirmative or nihilistic. Thus, the gauge, ensuing from the new image of thought, for our hierarchical valuations is neither epistemological (true or false) nor moral (good or evil) but, rather decisively, typological (ascending or descending). This is the distinctive structure of Nietzsche's brand of ontology: the semiological reading of force and power. Such brand of ontology argues for a "de-deification of nature" and the "naturalization of man." This means accepting a Godless


universe—a universe of becoming which manifests its natural conditions within a circle of immanence. To "naturalize" the world means to think of the world immanently. This new way of viewing the world sees the world from the point of view of the ascending type—the one who attempts, and is courageous enough, to "naturalize" the world.

The next important question is: "how does Nietzsche view the naturalized world?" Here, it is also decisive to refer to the world as "naturalized" instead of "natural" for, as we have seen, all attempts to talk about it are inevitably perspectival. The passage from The Gay Science 109 gives us the answer: "The total character of the world . . . is in all eternity chaos." How do we make sense of Nietzsche's notion of chaos? For the time being, let us equate Nietzsche's world of chaos with the idea of "becoming." The naturalized world is a world of "becoming," of change, and not of Being or permanence. Heraclitus' influence on Nietzsche is right away noticeable. This is the decisive consequence of the reversal of Platonism, wherein privilege is given to the immanent world of becoming over the transcendent world of permanence. As oppose to Kant, however, Nietzsche does not argue that the chaos of the world is the in-itself of

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the world. There is no noumenal world for the mature Nietzsche; we only have a perspectival image of the world. Depending on where we are coming from, we may interpret the world as “deified” (descending) or “naturalized” (ascending). And, as opposed to the deified view which sees an ordered, well organized universe, Nietzsche’s naturalism sees the world as basically chaotic. From a Nietzschean perspective, the chaotic world, based on the testimony of our senses, appears chaotic. If we divest our image of thought of the classical Platonic dualistic image, then we may only conceive of a single immanent world of flux, similar to the image provided by Heraclitus. In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche speaks of his affinity with Heraclitus:

_Heraclitus_, in whose proximity I feel altogether warmer and better than anywhere else. The affirmation of passing away _and destroying_, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; _becoming_, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of _being_—all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date.43

Nietzsche stresses the “affirmation of passing away” (becoming) and the acceptance of “opposition and war” (chaos). The passing away of moments and the active destruction of memory entail, for Nietzsche, a perspectival world of “creativity.” Zarathustra proclaims, “... one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in

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42 In _The Birth of Tragedy_, however, Nietzsche sounds very Kantian in his account of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. In this early work, he seems to argue that the Dionysian world is the “in-itself” of the universe. In his more mature works, he still maintains that the world is basically Dionysian, but he does it without the Kantian gloss.

yourselves.” In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche, alongside Heraclitus, further reproaches philosophers who neglect the testimony of the senses, their hatred of mere appearance:

With the highest respect, I except the name of *Heraclitus*. When the rest of the philosophic folk rejected the testimony of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their testimony because they showed things as if they had permanence and unity.

Both Nietzsche and Heraclitus (also along with Spinoza) share an immanent view of the world. For these philosophers, there is only one world, as opposed to Plato’s dualism. Heraclitus, Nietzsche comments, “denied the duality of two quite diverse worlds” and that “he no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical,” as such, “this one world . . . was left to him . . .”

Positing a “one world” view is, however, not a monism in the traditional sense; for the term “monism” traditionally is replete with metaphysical, that is, transcendent undertone. Nevertheless, we may also argue that inasmuch as Nietzsche views the world as essentially “will to power,” then he is espousing a sort of *immanent monism*. The Nietzschean-Heraclitean world is a world of chaos and change and, accordingly, a world of “multiplicities.” Deleuze describes this Nietzschean naturalized world using the “rhizome” metaphor: “in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification,

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rather than a dichotomous one.\textsuperscript{47} The reversal of Platonism results in the abandonment of the binary oppositions of "permanence and change," "world of forms and apparent world," and "metaphysical and physical"; as such, what is left, Nietzsche exclaims, is a world that "changes," is "apparent," and "physical." The apparently physical world has no static moment; everything is \textit{eternally} shifting and fluctuating without purpose. Following Deleuze, the world of becoming behaves like a rhizome: everywhere it grows horizontally, creating new roots and shoots that develop into new plants. Nietzsche explicates on Heraclitus' view that

\begin{quote}
\ldots the world itself an amphora whose contents constantly need stirring up. Out of the war of opposites all Becoming originates; the definite and to us seemingly persistent qualities express only the momentary predominance of the one fighter, but with that the war is not at an end; the wrestling continues to all eternity.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

Heraclitus' notion of "eternal justice"\textsuperscript{49} ties in perfectly with a world of immanence—a "self-supporting" world divested of any transcendent dependencies. The "war of opposites" describes the world of chaos; this is, to Nietzsche, the world of the struggles between forces and between wills to power. Nietzsche further writes, "The arena and the object of this struggle is Matter,—which some natural forces alternately endeavour to disintegrate and build up

\textsuperscript{48} Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, 5.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
again at the expense of other natural forces . . .”\textsuperscript{50} Thus, as opposed to an abstract world of permanent Forms and mathematical accuracy, Nietzsche and Heraclitus espouse a “material world” in constant flux which includes “plurality, diversity and variety of the empirically known world, the change of its qualities, the order of its ups and downs . . .”\textsuperscript{51} With this, the object of philosophy turns away from the abstract world of Forms and begins to pay heed to the concrete world of matter, for “there is nothing besides the whole.”\textsuperscript{52} It is in this sense, therefore, that we speak about a Nietzschean ontology and not metaphysics. Such ontology is not concerned with the mathematical, or objective, perusal of an ordered world; instead, such ontology stresses the perspectival nature of philosophical discourse. The world is always a perspectival world—a world of appearance—one “looks into himself as into a vast space and carries galaxies in himself, also knows how irregular galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence.”\textsuperscript{53} Hence, one has to deal with the meaning of the consequence of the death of God, the “de-deification of nature,” that is, the “goalless world.”

If the world had a goal, it could not fail to have been reached by now. . . . The fact of ‘mind’ \textit{as a becoming} proves that the world has no goal and no final state and is incapable of being.—But the old habit of thinking about all events in terms of goals, and about the world in terms of a guiding, creating God, is so powerful that the thinker is hard-pressed

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, 10.

\textsuperscript{52} Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, VI, 8.

\textsuperscript{53} Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, 322.
not to think of the goallessness of the world as, again, an intention.54

Goallessness is not opposed to "necessity." Here we may imagine an immanent world of becoming which has no other realm but itself; this is the "whole" and there is nothing besides the whole. Nietzsche is, however, concerned with what happens within the whole, viz., its very own immanent dynamism. The within of the whole is the realm of "chance accidents,"55 as opposed to a rationally designed cosmos. The world's "eternal justice," of which Heraclitus speaks, does not imply a world with beginning and end, but simply, "a world"—a whole which has its character the game of "chance" and "play." We read in Daybreak: "Those iron hands of necessity which shake the dice-box of chance play their game for an infinite length of time . . . ."56 For Nietzsche, this is a new perspective on the notion of "infinity." Nietzsche wishes to maintain the paradoxical nature of the world, viz., as an infinite world which does not allow any permanence; change, struggle, and multiplicity are all parts of the dynamics of this world of eternal justice. "Goallessness" here simply means the absence of God or any principle of transcendence or "unity" which substitutes for God. The chaotic world, as an image of thought for Nietzsche, should be construed as a "test," of how one could sustain the thought of a goalless universe. For "we ourselves shake the dice-box with irons hands, that we ourselves in our most

55 Nietzsche, Daybreak, 130.
56 Ibid.
intentional actions do more than play the game of necessity." This chaotic world of becoming is an ontological apparatus for Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return; this will be clarified below.

3) Chaosmos and the Return of Difference

The "rerum concordia discors" that Nietzsche mentions in The Gay Science could very well speak of this chaotic world thus described. The world of chaos has its own concord, viz., discord; the world is "complicated" rather than simple. With the absence of a regulative principle, such as God, the world appears goalless and, thus, is not reducible to any teleology. Moreover, as mentioned, goallessness does not mean lack of necessity, but rather means lack of order. The world is "necessarily" chaotic, a-teleological, in character and, thus, escapes any form of a "unified" cosmological theory. Nevertheless, we are still dealing here with only one world, the realm of appearance. It is in the chaotic play of forces, of multifarious combinations, where we find the "necessary" character of the whole. Deleuze comments, "the Whole...is said of that which remains unequal; it is Necessity, which is said of the fortuitous

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57 Ibid. Nietzsche also writes in Thus Spoke Zarathustra: "'By Chance'—that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose...that they would rather dance on the feet of Chance...that there is no eternal spider or spider web of reason." III, 4.

58 Deleuze exclaims, "'Complication' is what we called the state of chaos which retains and comprises all the actual intensive series which correspond to these ideal series, incarnating them and affirming their divergence." Difference & Repetition, 280.
alone."^{59} The world, for Nietzsche, is "a dance floor for divine accidents," that is, "a divine table for divine dice and dice players."^{60} Nietzsche is describing an immanent world which encloses the coexistence of divergent forces and contrasting images of thought, wherein we, ourselves, are dice players inasmuch as we ourselves are just manifestations of forces and power. "The dice which are thrown once," clarifies Deleuze, "are the affirmation of chance, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of necessity."^{61} Thus, we can trace two dimensions of necessity: 1) the within of the whole (world) and the whole itself and 2) the play of combinations which transpire within the whole as products of the game of chance. Inasmuch as the latter dimension of necessity implies the play of combinations, the combinations themselves are governed by "contradictions." It is only in Nietzsche where we "affirm" the coexistence and non-reconciliation of "contradictions," that is, of "difference." Further, as opposed to traditional philosophy, Nietzsche allows the contradiction between the world and the images of thought. In other words, in Nietzsche contradiction, chaos, is not inimical to the world, cosmos. Deleuze, again, uses a neologism to describe this world of contradictions: "chaosmos." And Deleuze associates this with the thought of the eternal return. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes:

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59 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 300. Deleuze and Guattari also write, "Chaos is not an inert or stationary state, nor is it a chance mixture. Chaos makes chaotic and undergoes every consistency in the infinite." *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 42.

60 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, III, 4.

The secret of the eternal return is that it does not express an order opposed to the chaos engulfing it. On the contrary, it is nothing other than chaos itself, or the power of affirming chaos. There is a point where Joyce is Nietzschean when he shows that the *vicus of recirculation* can not affect and cause a "chaosmos" to revolve. To the coherence of representation, the eternal return substitutes something else entirely—its own chaodyssey (*chao-errance*).62

We notice Deleuze’s idiosyncratic neology in describing Nietzsche’s chaotic world (*chaosmos*) and the image of thought which makes *sense* of, but does not capture, the world (*chao-errance*, as opposed to *coherence*). Thus, our perspectival images of the world, inasmuch as they are “lies” (more or less honest or dishonest), are not “coherent” but “chao-errant” appropriations of the world which escapes any form of reducibility. We have to notice Deleuze’s pun between “chaos” and “errant”: while, on the one hand, we are appropriating a chaosmos, on the other hand, our appropriation is a gesture of play (errant), of adventure—that is, of “innocence.” Zarathustra exclaims, “Over all things stand the heaven Accident, the heaven Innocence, the heaven Chance, the heaven Prankishness.”63 In this innocent affirmation of the chaosmos,

\[\ldots\ \text{divergence is affirmed in such a way that the } \text{either } \ldots \text{ or itself becomes a pure affirmation. } \ldots\ ]

Thus, the ideational center of convergence is by nature perpetually decentered, it serves only to affirm divergence.64

*Chaosmos* and *chao-errance* seek to defy forms of positivistic representations, for representation “fails to capture the affirmed world of

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62 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 264.
64 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 174.
difference. Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth.” Deleuze, representations seek to freeze or immobilize the world of becoming by positing a center (often in the form of transcendent principles such as God or Geist), while an ontology of becoming (chaosmos) and a perspectival epistemology (chao-errance) imply “a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation,” such as in the case of art for instance. The anti-dualist nature of Nietzsche’s chaosmos defies Plato’s world of Forms without sacrificing the necessity of the natural world. This natural world is what Deleuze calls the “plane of immanence” wherein previous ideational centers (God, Geist, I, Soul, Good, Form, etc.) are decentered and where a multiplicity of centers, governed by chance and necessity, is allowed (thus, the rhizome metaphor). There is no certainty, no finality of structure, in the world of Nietzsche, for “the properties that constitute its reality” are “change, becoming, multiplicity, opposition, contradiction, war.” The world is our fate, our necessity.

The image of the world which Nietzsche illustrates for us is the basis of his ontology and the ethical imperative described in chapter two. The present chapter is an exploration of the aspect of the “eternal return” as a cosmological

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65 Deleuze, Difference & Repetition, 55.
66 Ibid., 56.
67 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, III, 584.
and "physical" doctrine.\textsuperscript{68} The separation between the ethical and the ontological aspects of the eternal return is merely arbitrary, for we are analyzing them as two sides of the same coin. We have already seen how Deleuze presents Nietzsche's new image of the world, as "chaosmos," to be a "critique of the terminal or equilibrium state."\textsuperscript{69} We are now ready to tie our image of the chaosmos back to its ethical dimension. If we revisit the question we posited at the beginning of this chapter, "what is it that we affirm when we affirm the eternal return?", we are now, perhaps, in a better position to shed light on Deleuze's answer: "difference." This is possible if we take Nietzsche's suggestion of a new image of thought seriously.

Deleuze's interpretation of the eternal return of difference is often criticized; this happens due to a lack of clarification of the context within which the term "difference" is used. Deleuze acknowledges this problem in The Logic of Sense, wherein he takes issue on the interpretation of Nietzsche's phrase "eternal return of the same."\textsuperscript{70} In an attempt to make sense of the eternal return of difference, we take Nietzsche's critique of the predominant tradition in Western philosophy into consideration: the metaphysics of transcendence of the Platonic-Christian sort. It is in this context where we can locate Deleuze's peculiar contrast between "the Same" and "difference." We have seen that this tradition, representative of the old image of thought, prioritizes Being over becoming.

\textsuperscript{68} Cf. Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 47-49.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibib., 47.
\textsuperscript{70} Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 299.
permanence over change, determinism over chance, good over evil; in other words, *transcendence* over *immanence*. As a response to this predominant philosophic culture, Deleuze, through Nietzsche, forwards a counterculture. Through a re-evaluation of the old values of the Platonic-Christian culture, this counterculture reverses, and eventually destroys, the old binary oppositions. However, we have seen how Nietzsche would pursue an ontology of immanence by prioritizing becoming over Being, change over permanence, and chance over teleology. To clarify the sense of Deleuze’s use of “difference,” we have to take into consideration how he understands the sense of the basic tenet of Platonism. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes the idea of “transcendence” in Plato:

> The primary distinction which Plato rigorously establishes is the one between the model and the copy. The copy, however, is far from a simple appearance, since it stands in an internal, spiritual, noological and ontological relation with the idea or model.\(^7\)

Thus, the basis of Platonic transcendence, for Deleuze, is the relation between the model and the copy, for instance, between the Form of “human essence” and a particular “man.” The ontological relation between model and copy is that, on the one hand, the model is “outside” (*meta*) the copy (*physika*) and, on the other hand, the copy contains the model by means of a “resemblance.” The *meta* is the Idea or the ideal Form of the *physika*. Deleuze further observes that “Plato inaugurates and initiates because he evolves within a

\(^7\) Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, 264-265.
theory of Ideas which will allow the deployment of representation." The whole of Western metaphysics and epistemology after Plato has been patterned after this basic conception of transcendence. According to Deleuze, it is this tradition of representational metaphysics which paved the way to several transcendent illusions. First, he writes: "The 'sameness' of the Platonic Idea which serves as model and is guaranteed by the Good gives way to the identity of an originary concept grounded in a thinking subject." What follows from this is the notion of the "I" in the subject. Second, transcendentalism has the illusion of "the subordination of difference to resemblance." And the third transcendental illusion is the negative "manner in which it subordinates difference to itself, in the form of both limitation and opposition." These are precisely the reasons why Nietzsche is critical of metaphysics, and why he advances a counterculture that will combat these illusions. We can observe that Deleuze uses "difference" in the context of its opposition to "representation" or "Identity" or "resemblance," in other words, "the Same." Deleuze proclaims,

The eternal return is not the effect of the Identical upon a world become similar, it is not an external order imposed upon the chaos of the world; on the contrary, the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos.
The eternal return is Nietzsche’s alternative to a world of transcendence. As opposed to an external or a transcendent Identity, the eternal return is construed as the internal character of the world. However, we have to guard ourselves from treating the eternal return as a mere cosmological or physical principle like the law of gravity. Far from this, the cosmological dimension of the eternal return can only make sense if it is married to its ethical dimension. Thus, it is misleading to interpret the eternal return in a purely literal sense. The thought of the eternal return is, to the least, a metaphor which seeks to advance a fresh perspective that counters the old image of thought. We always have to remember Nietzsche’s perspectival outlook on all forms of theorizing, even his own.77 Earlier we saw how Nietzsche reconciles chance and necessity, and thus, chaos and cosmos; the eternal return refers to the very dynamism of the within of the world which has the dicethrow as its game. The only way we can make becoming the ground of the eternal return, according to Deleuze, “is to stop believing in being as distinct from and opposed to becoming,”78 that is, to stop

77 Alexander Nehamas writes, “The connection between Nietzsche’s stylistic pluralism and his perspectivism is more subtle and oblique. His many styles are part of his effort to present views without presenting them as more than views of his own and are therefore part of his effort to distinguish his practice from what he considers the practice of philosophers so far.” Nietzsche: Life as Literature (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 20-21. Sarah Kofman, for her part, underscores the role of “metaphor” and “aphorism” in Nietzsche’s writing. Both styles suspend any possibility of a definitive interpretation of things. See Nietzsche and Metaphor, trans. by Duncan Large (London: The Athlone Press, 1993).

78 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 48. According to Deleuze, the opposition between Being and becoming is a nihilistic category, that is, of metaphysical transcendentalism. Nietzsche’s ontology of immanence blurs this old distinction; and when Deleuze tells us that chaos is no longer incompatible with cosmos, what he is insinuating is that “Becoming is no longer opposed to Being, nor is the multiple opposed to the One.” “Nietzsche,” in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, trans. by Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 86.
thinking that chaos and cosmos are incompatible. "The dicethrow," says Deleuze, "affirms becoming and it affirms the being of becoming." The initial throw of the dice is the affirmation of chance (risk); as a result, we open the world and ourselves to the multiplicity of possibilities. The falling of the dice is the affirmation of necessity, of fate. Thus, the problematic construal of the eternal return of difference is resolved by aligning "difference" to the context of what it is not, "the Same," wherein the sense of "the Same" is interpreted in the context of Platonic representational thinking—wherein "the Same" means either of the following: "Being," "Permanence," "Identity," "resemblance."

We have outlined above that "chaosmos" is the affirmation of chance and necessity; this implies the horizontal play of forces. While this interpretation seems to contradict Nietzsche's warning in The Gay Science, "Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things," this apparent contradiction can be avoided if we read this passage as one which refers to transcendentalism, wherein the "eternal" here specifically entails a transcendent eternal. The whole context of The Gay Science 109 is a warning against interpretations which hold the world as "a living being" or as "a machine." For Nietzsche, it is hubris to construe the world as such, since such interpretation is replete with teleological undertones. Nietzsche warns us against the view of

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79 Ibid., 25.
81 Ibid.
"the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars," as if the world is designed to progress towards a definite purpose. Moreover, we could also understand Nietzsche to be warning us against hasty reductionisms. We have to remember that "chaosmos" entails "chance" and "necessity." Thus, even if Nietzsche argues for the chaotic nature of the universe, he qualifies this view by adding that chaos is not opposed to necessity. In Deleuze's interpretation of the dice throw, we find the playful coexistence of chance (the throw of the dice) and necessity (the possible combinations after the throw); we also have to remember that this dynamism between chance and necessity is not guided by any definite teleology, that, indeed, the world does not eternally create new things; what create new things are the multifarious irrational combinations of forces within the world. In this sense, therefore, what eternally returns is the infinite and random symphysis of forces.

To complete the picture of the return of difference, Deleuze attempts to qualify his interpretation further. Deleuze argues that the true subject of the eternal return is "the relation between the eternal return as actualized intentionality and the will to power as open intensity." This means that the eternal return, as an ethical imperative, is a "selective thought"; here, we should highlight the role of the affirmative gesture of the will (intentionality). What is it that one intends is the same thing as what is it that one wills. The crucial

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82 Ibid.
83 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 300.
problem, thus, is what is it that one wills? What is it that we will in the eternal return? To answer this, we just have to recall the ethical imperative, "whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return." Since the integrity of the eternal return is not the return of "identities" or of "resemblance" or "the Same," what we will to return ensues from our selectivity. Nietzsche teaches us to affirm the new meaning of the earth, the Übermensch. The image of the Übermensch is the metaphorical expression of active affirmation. The new meaning of the earth, as an ethical thought, challenges us to affirm the world, not the same reactive nihilistic world, but as an active and affirmative world. This implies conceiving our affirmative gesture as the affirmation of "fragments, the elements of chance . . .."84 This is the world de-deified! Thus, it makes sense to call the thought of the eternal return a selective, that is, active and not reactive or passive, affirmation of the world of chance and necessity. We always have to remember that Nietzsche poses the thought of the eternal return as a "test" of one's will to power—whether one is well-disposed or healthy enough to bear its weight. Nietzsche's gauge is the differential element between the healthy and the sick: the typology of the ascending and descending lines of life. It follows from this that if one is healthy enough to affirm the world and face the eternal return without flinching, then one is living up to the pathos of distance—one is able to express his very own will to power and affirm his own difference without recourse to being identified with the other.

As a "selective thought," the eternal return becomes a foundation of a post-metaphysical—anti-moral—ethics and ontology. With this thought, or "demon" as Nietzsche puts it, whatever one wills is willed in such a way that its eternal return is also willed. In other words, the act of willing should become an active expression of the will to power—freed from the shackles of the reactive forces of nihilism. Ironically, Nietzsche's "demon" replaces the Socratic daimon. Moreover, Nietzsche's "demon" is the new weight which the healthy will have to bear; as he points out in the Nachlass, "Duration 'in vain,' without end or aim, is the most paralyzing idea."85 Since this new weight (of chance and necessity) is devoid of any metaphysical presuppositions, bad conscience, and ressentiment, it is not the weight that the camel carries; it is, rather, the weight that comes with the tragic sense of life, life replete with joy and pain. We have seen that apprehending this tragic sense of life amounts to welcoming a new image of thought—a fresh sensibility towards life—an active mode of being.

Deleuze further illustrates the "selective" character of the eternal return by underscoring the dramatic crisis of Zarathustra. In "The Convalescent,"86 Nietzsche shows how Zarathustra is disgusted by the thought of the eternal return of the same and, as a result, collapses for seven days. When he wakes up, he is greeted by his animals who begin to talk about the eternal rolling of the wheel of being, that "all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their

85 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, I, 55.
86 See Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, III, 13.
hands and laugh and flee—and come back." But then, Zarathustra confesses that what choked him and made him sick were the thought of the return of the small man (the base) and the thought of the return of the "same," for the "same" implies the return of the ideals of the small man. "Alas, man recurs eternally! The small man recurs eternally!" The animals kept on speaking and convincing Zarathustra of the eternal return, but, all the while Zarathustra kept silent. According to Deleuze, this silence is not merely a passive acceptance of the thought, but "a change in the understanding and the meaning of the eternal return itself." We may deem Zarathustra's convalescence as the interval between the old image of thought and the new image of thought. As such, we may deem the interval in two senses. On the one hand, the affirmation of the eternal return is a sign of one's emancipation from nihilistic forms of valuation. On the other hand, given the first sense, one opens oneself to the gesture of pure affirmation.

In "On the Vision and the Riddle," a vision appears to Zarathustra wherein he sees a shepherd "gagging in spasms" because "a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth." And in the vision Zarathustra cries to the shepherd, "Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!" The shepherd bites the snakes head off and, after

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87 Ibid., III, 13.2. Nehamas suggests that the animals' description of the cycle of being (becoming) refers to the Dionysian view of the world, wherein the infinite repetition of the cycles of nature, as opposed to the repetition of the details of history, is affirmed. See Nehamas, op cit., 146-147.

88 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, III, 13.2.

89 Deleuze, "Nietzsche," in Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life, 90. See also Deleuze, Difference & Repetition, 289-299.

90 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, III, 2.2.
which, the shepherd has "changed, radiant, laughing!"\(^91\) We should perhaps compare this vision to Zarathustra's ordeal in "The Convalescent," wherein he is choked by his disgust with man. Zarathustra turns convalescent after biting off the head of the black snake. This could very well relate to the overcoming of the last man, of what is contemptible in man. Biting off the head of the snake is, therefore, the overcoming of pity for the last man. Thus, if we follow Deleuze's suggestion, the thought of the eternal return is far from a passive acceptance of the cycles of life. On the contrary, the thought calls upon the healthy, and only the healthy hears the call, to become "active," that is, not merely to accept life but to "affirm" life in its entirety. This active affirmation does not anymore recourse a "beyond," not anymore nihilistic but rather resonates as a total embrace of immanence. Selection, therefore, entails this "active" affirmation, wherein even the return of the small man does not matter anymore. What only matters is the exuberant acceptance of the chaosmos. What we will when we will the eternal return is simply this exuberance.

Thus, in this active affirmation of life, what we will is the whole as affirmative, wherein the small man becomes a tiny, but still necessary, speck of the whole. It is only with this fresh sensibility to life where an active affirmation is possible; "change" in our image of thought is required. With this new attitude at work, when we give back to the will to power its long lost dignity, we can make sense of Nietzsche's words in his Untimely Meditations:

\(^{91}\) Ibid.
The man who does not wish to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which call to him: 'Be your self! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not yourself.'

Every youthful soul hears this call day and night and trembles when he hears it; for the idea of its liberation gives a presentiment of the measure of happiness allotted it from all eternity—a happiness to which it can by no means attain so long as it lies fettered by the chains of fear and convention. And how dismal and senseless life can be without liberation!92

It is not difficult to understand that liberation from convention presupposes a shift in attitude. Such shift of attitude ensues from the pathos of distance, the understanding that willing ensues from the typology of ascending and descending. It has been pointed out that "memory" is a manifestation of ressentiment, and that it is in "active forgetting" that we, if we are indeed healthy enough, "liberate" ourselves from the crippling chains of a disparaging outlook on life. Overcoming the resentful outlook on life would require a "selection," coming from one's very activity of thinking, which will open one's being to the weight of the eternal return. "The Eternal Return is a necessity that must be willed: only he who I am now can will the necessity of my return . . .."93 The eternal return as "selective ontology," Deleuze writes, "affirms this being of becoming as the 'self-affirming' of becoming-active."94 Hence, it should now be clear that the act of active affirmation, of active willing, of the free expression of

94 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, 72.
the will to power, is only possible in the first place from the purview of an affirmative disposition. It is in this sense that the "thought of the eternal return eliminates from willing everything which falls outside the eternal return, it makes willing a creation, it brings about the equation 'willing = creating'." Thus, "active forgetting" makes more sense for us if we deem it from the purview of "willing = creating." Forgetting (anamnesis), according to Klossowski, "coincides with the revelation of the Return," in that "I learn that I was other than I am now for having forgotten this truth, and thus that I have become another by learning it." In other words, by learning the eternal return, by making it our ethical imperative, we are brought back to a world of immanence, as opposed to a world belittled by transcendence; we learn, and re-learn, that "life" is this plane of immanence which has "chaosmos," that is, "unlimited One-All," as its chief character.

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95 Ibid., 69.
96 Klossowski, op cit.
97 Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 35.
CHAPTER FOUR

DELEUZE AND SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ETERNAL RETURN

"The idea of the eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify?"

- Milan Kundera

If we revisit the three preceding chapters, we may highlight at least five distinctive features of Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche’s philosophy, or perhaps, better put, five features of Nietzsche’s thought that Deleuze wants to emphasize. First, Deleuze takes as his point of departure the typology of power between the ascending and descending lines of life. Second, given the first, the view that forces are semiological instances of the typology of power is established. Third, Deleuze construes Nietzsche’s ontology as an ontology of immanence, as opposed to transcendence, which is similar in part to Spinoza’s conception of the world. Fourth, Nietzsche’s ontology does not seek to escape his radical perspectivism; as such, his immanent ontology is deemed as a new image of thought which prioritizes the dynamism of becoming instead of Being. And lastly, Deleuze interprets Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return in its two dimensions: cosmological and ethical. In order to make sense of Nietzsche as a holistic philosopher, we have to take into consideration all five features that Deleuze offers. Making sense, therefore, of Nietzsche requires us to read him.

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immanently, that is, by being sensitive to the *drama* of his thought. Deleuze, I think, does just this.

Despite Deleuze’s proclamation that he writes nothing that would cause “sadness” or would cause the author to “weep in his grave,” his interpretation of Nietzsche’s central idea, the “thought of the eternal return,” has caused some commotion among Nietzsche scholars who are also grappling with the concept. The commotion concerning the eternal return is caused by several factors, even if we exclude Deleuze’s interpretation from the list. First, there is confusion as to whether or not Nietzsche is advancing a “cosmology” or an “ethics.” Second, whether we should read his purported proofs of the eternal return “logically” or “metaphorically.” Third, whether Nietzsche considered his allusions to the eternal return, which we find in the *Nachlass*, as actual logical proofs for this thought or merely notes he never intended to publish. There may be more factors, but these three are the ones that concern us for the moment. The apparent contradiction in Deleuze’s interpretation of the eternal return is only evident if we ignore the five features of his reading of Nietzsche outlined above; moreover, these five features should be taken collectively. The difficulty which scholars encounter in making sense of Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return is due to the fact that they treat the thought of eternal return in isolation; as a result, they miss the mark when they ignore the context in which the thought itself is

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situated. There is a danger involved in treating the cosmological and ethical imports of the eternal return as mutually exclusive. One of the features which speaks in favor of Deleuze's interpretation is the reconciliation between the cosmological and ethical dimensions of the eternal return. We should always stress, however, that Deleuze's reconciliation is grounded on the bigger picture he has of Nietzsche's thought; in other words, the other four features should not be excluded. However, as will be shown, Deleuze is not alone in being sensitive to the larger context of Nietzsche's thought.

In this short chapter, we shall endeavor to do two things: 1) critique some interpretations of the eternal return which choose to treat the thought primarily as a cosmological doctrine and 2) to discuss briefly some interpretations which are not inimical to Deleuze's reading. It is necessary to be selective in order to simplify things; a more comprehensive treatment of these interpretations would require a whole separate project. Hence, for our purposes, I will refrain from doing a detailed examination of these interpretations and will only highlight the points that are related directly to Deleuze's reading.

As mentioned, some interpretations of the eternal return exclude the context where it is situated. As a result, scholars tend to criticize Nietzsche for lack of clarity and logical integrity of the presentation of the eternal return. As such, the interpretations, for example, of Arthur Danto, Ivan Soll, and Arnold
Zuboff,³ are each presented as if Nietzsche's texts were testing grounds for logical analysis. They have, undoubtedly, managed to disprove the logical preciseness of the thought, but because these authors reduce the thought of the eternal return into a purely cosmological doctrine, and deliberately confine it within the limits of analytic philosophy, they tend to miss the more important import of Nietzsche's thought. It seems that these scholars are oblivious of the fact that Nietzsche, himself, warns us of treating his notion as a mechanistic and metaphysical doctrine. Nevertheless, it is still fortunate that Nietzsche is redeemed from reductionistic interpretations of his notion of the eternal return by the more viable and interesting readings of people, apart from Deleuze, such as Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Pierre Klossowski, Bernd Magnus, Harold Alderman, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, Joan Stambaugh, Alexander Nehamas, and Laurence Lampert.⁴ There may be differences between these interpretations, but what they have in common is that they maintain the essential connection


between the cosmological significance and ethical import of the eternal return.
For this part, I will focus on the views of Klossowski and Magnus—more specifically, how they intersect the Deleuzian reading.

1) Thinking against Nietzsche: Danto, Soll, Zuboff

Perhaps the main reason why cosmological interpreters fail to see the bigger picture of Nietzsche’s philosophy is because they tend to situate the eternal return mainly within Nietzsche’s Nachlass. The passages from Nietzsche’s unpublished notes are taken as unequivocal proofs for the theory of the eternal return. The notes of 1881-1888 are usually considered as the sources of Nietzsche’s logical proofs. Some of these notes were written prior to the conception and publication of the more critical works of Nietzsche like Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883-1892), Beyond Good and Evil (1886), and On the Genealogy of Morals (1887). I have also significantly relied, especially in Chapter One, on the Nachlass; but in order to avoid the mistake of reducing the eternal return to a mere cosmological argument, I used passages from the Nachlass to reinforce insights from Nietzsche’s published works. It is not unreasonable to surmise that Nietzsche was not ready to publish what he had in his notes; the convoluted appearance of the notes also speaks of this. What we, instead, find in Nietzsche’s published writings from Thus Spoke Zarathustra to Ecce Homo is a conception of

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the eternal return yoked to an image presented in its initial conception in The Gay Science 341 as the "greatest weight" that befalls man. How do we make sense of this "greatest weight"? Some scholars choose to interpret this as a purely cosmological doctrine; and since they do not find the cosmological import in The Gay Science 341 passage, they turn to the unpublished notes instead.

One of the first treatments of Nietzsche's philosophy by an analytic philosopher is Arthur Danto's Nietzsche as Philosopher.6 Despite the fact that Danto's book is written in a lucid and comprehensive manner, his treatment of the eternal return is geared toward presenting it primarily as a cosmological theory of the universe.7 Referring to The Gay Science 341, Danto writes,

The doctrine is by and large presented in just such fanciful terms in Nietzsche's published writings, or hinted at, or stated obliquely with no particular effort at argument or proof.8

But was proving the eternal return Nietzsche's motive in the published works? If proving his notion was not Nietzsche's concern, then, one may ask, what is the sense of the eternal return that he wants to translate through his so-called "fanciful" terms? Danto seems to snigger at Nietzsche and comments that Nietzsche's approach is "programmatic," that his repeated mention of the thought of the eternal return creates the illusion of proof; in other words, he

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8 Ibid., 317.
claims that Nietzsche begs the question. Due to his dissatisfaction with the "fanciful" phraseology of the published works, Danto turns to the Nachlass to find the purported proofs of Nietzsche's doctrine. Nevertheless, what we find in the notes, according to Danto, are words that are "exceedingly garbled." So Danto painstakingly reconstructs Nietzsche's supposed proof and analyzes its logical validity. Most cosmological reconstructions of the eternal return, especially that of Danto's, appear as if Nietzsche were offering us an image of a regimented universe. Nietzsche already warns us in The Gay Science 109 of any mechanistic interpretation of the universe. However, Danto, and the other cosmological interpreters, seems to neglect Nietzsche's admonition.

Meanwhile, Ivan Soll, in his "Reflections on Recurrence," offers us a rather odd interpretation of the same passage that Danto examined, The Will to Power 1066. Soll considers Nietzsche to be a strict determinist:

Subscribing to determinism as he does, it seems that Nietzsche cannot with consistency maintain that literally

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9 Ibid.
11 Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher, 205.
12 Danto summarizes Nietzsche's note into three propositions: 1) The sum-total of energy in the universe is finite; 2) The number of states [Lagen] of energy if finite; and 3) Energy is conserved. Cf. Ibid., 206.
13 In the very same passage from 1888, Nietzsche cautions us that a mechanistic conception of the universe would presuppose "a final state," and that his hypothesis, which Danto quotes, should not be appropriated as such. The Will to Power, IV, 1066.
“every possible combination would at some time or another be realized.”

Once more, Soil falls into the trap of interpreting the import of the eternal return within the context of logic and metaphysics. Nonetheless, he goes beyond Danto in acknowledging the fact that Nietzsche considered the eternal return of the utmost importance not because of its logical truth or cosmological import, but in its psychological consequences. Soil’s main aim, however, is to argue that Nietzsche is lacking in metaphysical support for his claim, that the psychological import of the eternal return is mainly based on its metaphysical validity. Since, like Danto, Soil is convinced that Nietzsche’s proof for the eternal return is logically flawed, he argues that the thought’s psychological consequences, vis-à-vis, joy or suffering, are of a matter of complete indifference. In other words, Soil believes that the eternal return is lacking in “existential” import. He writes:

Contrary to Nietzsche . . . I believe the prospect of the infinite repetition of the pleasure or pain of one’s present life entailed by the doctrine of the eternal recurrence should actually be a matter of complete indifference.

Soil surmises that since the present cycle of one’s life is essentially different to the next cycle, by virtue of the “disconnection of memory” between these two cycles, there is no sense in bothering about future cycles. Soil thinks this because he maintains that “In order for a state of affairs to be an identical

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15 Ibid., 329-330.
16 Cf. Ibid., 322.
17 Ibid., 339.
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recurrence of an earlier one, it cannot contain any memory of or reference to the earlier one.”\textsuperscript{18} While this seems to be a very convincing statement, nevertheless, we should not be too hasty in concluding that a “different” cycle, entailed by the disconnection of memory, is the same as Deleuze’s claim that the return is the return of “difference.” What Soll wants to claim is that, since in the next cycle I will not have any memory of my present experiences at this very moment, it would be superfluous to worry about the future; since I will be repeating the same life, in all its aspects, that I am living now, then I will be living the same life again in the future. We could already point out that Soll’s concept of “memory” contrasts with that of Deleuze and Klossowski. While it appears that Soll seems to consider the “disconnection of memory” as a natural occurrence between two cycles, Deleuze and Klossowski refer to “active forgetting” as a psychological consequence of the acceptance of the thought of the eternal return. Thus, far from being a matter of complete indifference, because “I will forget anyway,” the future is determined by what I do in the present, that is, through “active forgetting” I may be able to change the course of my life. The attainment of joy or suffering, therefore, ensues from whether it is indolent (reactive) or active enough to will \textit{eternity} in the \textit{now}.

Soll, moreover, picks on what he calls the “supra-historical character” of Nietzsche’s eternal return.\textsuperscript{19} This, however, strikes me as an odd description of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 335.
\textsuperscript{19} See Ibid., 341-342.
the eternal return. According to Soll, the supra-historical character of the eternal return defeats it psychological import.\(^{20}\) Again, an argument like this is based on the assumption that Nietzsche's concept is a metaphysical or purely cosmological postulate. Soll interprets the eternal return from the point of view of the metaphysics of transcendence—the very subject of Nietzsche's critique. Despite the fact the Soll draws some quotations from *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which refer to the thought of the eternal return, he neglects the fact that Nietzsche thought of this concept as, first and foremost, an ethical test.

In his article, "*Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence,*"\(^{21}\) Arnold Zuboff concerns himself with what he calls "*Nietzschean Metaphysics.*" Like Soll, Zuboff characterizes Nietzsche as a determinist, but he, unlike Soll, acknowledges Nietzsche's reproach for determinism.\(^{22}\) Again, in this metaphysical reading of the eternal return, Zuboff makes several mistakes. First, it is not clear whether Zuboff is weighing the relevance of the revaluation of values within the larger picture of the eternal return, or whether he is arguing that Nietzsche's analysis is so scientifically flawed that we have to turn instead to the natural sciences which bring us precise and complex calculations. At the end of his essay, Zuboff seems to be arguing the latter.\(^{23}\) What is most curious in Zuboff's analysis is that he uses the Christian belief in the "afterlife" as an


\(^{23}\) See *Ibid.*, 356-357.
analogy to the eternal return. He writes, "The recurrence is a positive doctrine of
an afterlife . . . . As in the Christian, in the Nietzschean afterlife a person shall be
eternally rewarded or punished according to the values by which he had
lived." I think that statements like this would make Nietzsche turn in his
grate. Zuboff's careless choice of analogy goes against the whole context of
Nietzsche's entire critique of nihilism, let alone religion, Christianity,
metaphysics, etc. In maintaining that Nietzsche espouses an "afterlife," Zuboff
misses the "immanent" character of the eternal return. Zuboff further neglects
the context of Nietzsche's critique of religion and morality when he calls
Nietzsche "a Christian writer of casuistry . . . ." Unlike Soll, however, Zuboff
agrees in the profound psychological effect of accepting the eternal return; but
since he is not convinced with Nietzsche's very own formulation, Zuboff sets out
to correct Nietzsche by suggesting that there are other, more convincing, ways of
formulating the eternal return: the "insulating" treatment and the Leibnizian
version.

Zuboff's critique of what he calls Nietzsche's deterministic metaphysics is
based on the questionable assumption that Nietzsche has a metaphysics. In
Chapter Three, I have already argued that Nietzsche's project is precisely a
radical critique of metaphysical thinking, that is, Platonism. Zuboff seems to be
oblivious to the context of Nietzsche's critique; as such, he does not take into

24 Ibid., 344.
25 Ibid., 345.
26 See ibid., 345-348.
consideration the real meaning of the "revaluation of values." In both Soll and Zuboff, Nietzsche becomes a determinist in the sense of metaphysical determinism; while Nietzsche, himself, sought to abandon this way of thinking.

Above we have seen the five features of Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche. The basic thrust of Deleuze’s interpretation is precisely in his holistic approach to Nietzsche’s texts; he manages to accommodate both published and unpublished texts and, as such, avoids a reductionistic interpretation of Nietzschean themes.

We have seen how, through Deleuze, we are able to read Nietzsche’s critique of nihilism by weaving together his notions of "the will to power" and "the eternal return." We have also seen how Deleuze contextualizes the revaluation or transmutation of values by pointing at the very object of Nietzsche’s critique: Platonism. The transmutation of values, thus, is presented as the deconstruction of Platonic ideals through their reversal. It is impossible to make sense of Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return if it is isolated from the context or the premises where it is supposed to be situated.

The interpretations of Danto, Soll, and Zuboff (which we may also respectively refer to as the logical, existential, and metaphysical interpretations) reduce Nietzsche’s thought by isolating the eternal return from its supposed context. What these interpretations ignore is precisely the five features which Deleuze delineates: 1) the typology of power; 2) the semeiological reading of forces; 3) the ontology of immanent becoming; 4) the perspectival approach to the world; and 5) the two dimensions of the eternal return: cosmological and
ethical. If we only focus on the cosmological aspect of the theory and ignore the other premises which it is supposed to be contextualized, we will miss the whole point of Nietzsche.

2) Thinking with Nietzsche: Klossowski, Magnus, Deleuze

Our last task is to discuss briefly some interpretations of the eternal return which are not in opposition to Deleuze. In fact, these interpretations, more or less, compliment that of Deleuze. We will look first at Pierre Klossowski’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s theory; then we will turn to Bernd Magnus’ version.

Klossowski’s *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* is regarded, along with Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as one of the most influential interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy from the French tradition. Klossowski’s book antedates Deleuze’s Nietzsche monograph; Klossowski’s influence is evident in Deleuze’s own musings on Nietzsche. The initial conception of *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* was based on a paper entitled “Forgetting and anamnesis in the lived experience of the eternal return of the same,” which would be incorporated later in the book. The main thrust of the book is a reading of the eternal return as Nietzsche, himself, experienced it and expressed it through language. In particular, it addresses how Nietzsche experienced the “greatest weight” at the backdrop of his sick body.

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[27] Klossowski, *op cit.*

[28] In a July 1969 letter to Klossowski, Michel Foucault writes: “It is the greatest book of philosophy I have read with Nietzsche himself.” Quoted by Daniel W. Smith in his preface to *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, vii.

With the "body" as point of departure, we find the first affinity between Deleuze and Klossowski. Nietzsche, according to Klossowski, is "no longer concerned with the body as a property of the self, but with the body as the locus of impulses, the body becomes fortuitous . . ."\(^{30}\) For Klossowski, the body is the seat of semiotic or semeiological impulses. This is the second affinity between Deleuze and Klossowski, the emphasis on semeiology. It appears that both interpret semeiology as an apparatus in understanding the nature of force and power. While Deleuze maintains that force is a sign or expression of power, Klossowski observes that the body is an assemblage of conflicting impulses; as such, we understand the body primarily through linguistic expressions.

Klossowski's examines the eternal return against the backdrop of Nietzsche's body, but maintains that, for Nietzsche, sickness is not opposed to health. In Chapter One, we observed how health and unhealthy relate to the ascending and descending. Klossowski remarks, "For Nietzsche, the moral question of knowing what is true or false, just or unjust could be posed in the following terms: What is sick or healthy?"\(^{31}\) Hence, both Deleuze and Klossowski highlight the typology of the ascending and descending lines of life. The role of "forgetting" and the character of the eternal return as a "selective thought" are both present in Deleuze and Klossowski. The latter observes that through the eternal return, Nietzsche was able to "transform" how he viewed his sick body.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 30.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 6.
The transformation is only revealed to the healthy, to "experimenters": "... the selection will take place in secret (the Vicious Circle), that is, it will be undertaken in the name of this secret by certain experimenters (the Masters of the Earth)." To indicate the confounding character of the eternal return, Klossowski names it the "vicious circle," referring to the difficulty to ground it in rational or scientific terms (Danto, Soll, and Zuboff already showed us this difficulty). It is, however, the same vicious circle which befalls us as an ethical imperative; it forces us to rethink how we are currently living. In effect, the vicious circle, as a selective thought, affords us the opportunity to transform the way we live based on a new conception of the world (Deleuze calls this the new image of thought).

The feeling of eternity and the externalization of desire merge in a single moment: the representation of a prior life and an after-life no longer concerns a beyond, or an individual self that would reach this beyond, but rather the same life lived and experienced through its individual differences.

The above quotation reveals the character of the same (not "the Same" of Deleuze’s, however) which is willed innumerable times as a gesture of eternalizing the moment. The "vicious circle" no longer concerns a beyond—Plato’s other world or Christianity’s heaven. With this, Klossowski underscores the “immanent world of becoming.” Like Deleuze, Klossowski views the acceptance of the eternal return of the same (of the same immanent world) as the

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32 Ibid., 125.
33 Ibid., 72.
DELEUZE AND SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ETERNAL RETURN

Dionysian affirmation of this world, of the same world, which has “difference” (becoming, chance, chaos, struggle) as its nature.

Bernd Magnus offers us one of the most balanced treatments of the thought of the eternal return, in that he spends ample time to discuss its cosmological dimension vis-à-vis its ethical dimension. Magnus criticizes the purely cosmological interpretation of the eternal return, and levels his critique to, no other than, Danto, among others. Magnus observes correctly, I believe, that “Nietzsche’s cosmological argument is a consequence or corollary of, not the cause of, some more basic insight (axiological and existential).” It is through the axiological and existential import of the eternal return that Magnus conceives of Nietzsche’s “existential imperative.” For his part, Deleuze formulates this existential imperative à la Kant, “whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return.” Although Magnus acknowledges the influence of Deleuze in his understanding of the eternal return, he does not explicitly point out where he draws out from Deleuze. There are, however, striking similarities between the “existential imperative” and Deleuze’s Kantian formulation.

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36 Ibid., 26.

37 In addition to Deleuze, Magnus also admits that he has gained much from French Nietzscheans such as Pautrat, Granier, and Klossowski. See Nietzsche’s Existential Imperative, xx.
Magnus lists two directions of the eternal return, which are not at all different to that of Deleuze:38 the "normative" (ethical) and "ontological." Magnus writes:

Within the normative context, eternal recurrence may perhaps be said to function as a postulate eternalizing life, with the corresponding exultation or despair which such a realization would bring to an individual. Ontologically, the doctrine of eternal recurrence may be said to function as a revaluation of values, challenging traditional metaphysics, Christianity, and nihilism through the transformation of a "beyond" into an eternal "now" . . .39

Magnus makes it clear that his version of the eternal return "is utterly indifferent to the truth-value of the doctrine."40 The eternal return signifies a particular attitude towards life; Deleuze refers to this as a mode of being ensuing from the typology of the healthy. For Magnus, this mode of being illustrates "the attitude of Übermenschheit."41 This imperative that falls on man's lap, and only an Übermensch could respond to it properly, "expresses the extreme antithesis of worldweariness,"42 an attitude which we inherited from the Platonic-Christian tradition. The overcoming of nihilism, Magnus remarks, "resides neither in a 'beyond' nor in a partial and glib affirmation of a fleeting world. The circularity of all that exists is redeemed in the total and unconditioned love of becoming, love of life, which is my creation and my fate."43 Like Deleuze and Klossowski, Magnus also interprets the eternal return as a principle of selection: whether or

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39 Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative, 117.
40 Ibid., 142.
41 Ibid., 140.
42 Ibid., 145.
43 Ibid., 146.
not one is worthy of affirming life. Moreover, like Deleuze and Klossowski, Magnus also emphasizes the role of "memory": "In the absence of memory of previous states I am free to choose my own destiny. I do not know what I shall become except in so far as I actually choose." For Deleuze and Klossowski, however, one's loss of memory is part of active selection, the active willing of one's destiny within an immanent world of becoming, of "difference" — the same (the world) returns only as difference (chaosmos).

Deleuze’s use of "difference" over "the Same" is his very own attempt to emancipate our image of thought of the world from its bondage to the Platonic-Christian frame of mind and, thus, mode of being. The truth of the matter is Deleuze is not inimical to the same, that is, the same world, but only to "the Same," that is, to the metaphysics of Identity. We do not know for sure if Nietzsche was ever aware of the Platonic-Christian undertone of the term "Same"; we could only surmise that he did not, for unfortunately the history of the metaphysics of Identity continues after Nietzsche. We could, however, argue that Deleuze is doing Nietzsche a favor in his attempt to divest the eternal return of the very Platonic sense of "the Same" which it seeks to overcome. Thus, we have to distinguish between same (in Nietzsche's sense) and the pejorative "Same" (in Deleuze's sense) in order to avoid the confusion that leads us to think that Deleuze is doing Nietzsche a disservice.

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45 Ibid., 612.
We are ready to surmise that the "greatest weight" that befalls us, if we are healthy enough, should be actively entertained. It is our active selection of a world beyond good and evil, without purpose, without God. Facing up to this challenge requires one to also think and behave like the Übermensch—beyond good and evil, Godless—and like Dionysus—purposeless, free, joyous! This is the only way by which one could think joyously sans the shackles of transcendent universals.
CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters I have presented an assessment of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism using Deleuze's style of reading. This task was made possible through what Schrift calls Deleuze's experimentation with Nietzsche. Indeed, the study itself was presented as a sort of Nietzsche experiment; following Deleuze, the only way to think with Nietzsche is to make his ideas work, in other words, to use them; at the outset we referred to this as a post-deconstructive reading. In this thesis, we have witnessed how our post-deconstructive reading of Nietzsche was premised on two objectives: 1) an appraisal of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism and 2) the exegesis of Nietzsche's texts via Deleuze's gloss.

The key to understanding Nietzsche's view of nihilism, and why he vehemently criticized it, is the typology of the "ascending" and "descending" lines of life. Through Deleuze's emphasis on Nietzsche's genealogical diagnosis of the origins of moral valuations, we have seen how nihilism itself is a mode of being based on a negative valuation of life. This semiological reading, according to Deleuze, reveals how forces could be either "active" (ascending) or "reactive" (descending). Deleuze further interprets these two poles of valuation as ensuing from either affirmative or negative will to power. Through this typology of power, it becomes clear that nihilism is an expression of a negative will to power, a type of valuation which devalues life. As such, for Nietzsche,
nihilism, strictly speaking, is a manner of thinking, or an image of thought, which is inimical to life, to the here and now. We have seen that the Platonic-Christian worldview represents this disparaging view of life.

The Nietzschean counterculture is an attempt to emancipate us from this negative disposition towards the world by introducing, what Deleuze calls, a new image of thought. In explicating on this new image of thought, Deleuze takes the reversal of Platonism or the transmutation of values to be the point of departure. We have to, according to Deleuze, abandon our old image of the world in order to free ourselves from the obscurantism of foundationalist or essentialist thinking. This is where we find the affinity between Nietzsche and Deleuze strongest. It is only through the transmutation of values can we make sense of Nietzsche’s ethics of affirmation and ontology of becoming. We have to think of Nietzsche’s ethics as an “ethics” and not a moral philosophy, and we have to think of his ontology as “ontology” and not as metaphysics. Through Deleuze, we are able to avoid reading Nietzsche as a moral philosopher and metaphysician. Rather, we are able to read Nietzsche as one espousing an ethical imperative through the thought of the eternal return and one advocating a theory of existence based on an immanent, as opposed to transcendent, image of the world.

Deleuze thinks with Nietzsche by underscoring the drama of his thought. It is this dramatic character of Nietzsche’s style of writing which makes his philosophy work. For Deleuze, it is in this drama where Nietzsche becomes
systematic. Thus, the dramatic movement from the typology of power, to the triumph of nihilism (negation and Being), to the death of God and the last man, to the new image of thought (affirmation and becoming) we could make good sense of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism. At the margin of Nietzsche's critique, we are offered a fresh sensibility to life—a de-deified world, a world translated back to nature, a vast plane of immanence which has within it a multiplicity of forces; it has a within, but it has no beyond.

To conclude, let us revisit the five features of Deleuze's post-deconstructive reading of Nietzsche: 1) the typology of power; 2) the semeiological reading of forces; 3) the ontology of immanent becoming; 4) the perspectival approach to the world; and 5) the two dimensions of the eternal return: cosmological and ethical. These five elements of our post-deconstructive reading should be taken collectively, for it is through these five features (apart from the fact that they constitute the framework of our appraisal of Nietzsche's critique of nihilism) that we may argue that Nietzsche was a holistic thinker, that he took his ethics and ontology seriously. This amounts to saying that he took life seriously, that he, Nietzsche, even prescribes an image of thought which seeks to appreciate even the tragic sense of life.
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