

Say “Yes!” to the Demon: Amor Fati in the Eternal Hourglass

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“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, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!”

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” 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 innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?”¹- F. Nietzsche

§. Introductory Exegesis

What Nietzsche believes, but does not express, is that man does not yet know how to say “Yes!”² The challenge is presented as though there might exist clearly defined, dichotomous camps, some naturally disposed to praise the demon and some predisposed to the attitude of resentment. This is not the case. The antithetic pair is a false pretense intended to impact the reader—a hallmark of Nietzschean style: hyperbole and perlocutionary-focused prose. There is merely one kind of listener the demon can find, who is invariably lacking whatever it is that constitutes yes-saying character: “even the greatest all-to-

¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 273. Aphorism: 341: *The Greatest Weight*.

² Disclaimer: for the sake of maintaining the Nietzschean vernacular, I will retain the use of the masculine third-person pronoun.

human.”³ The challenge, then, is also a *call* intended to destabilize, what Nietzsche perceives to be, our natural timidity, i.e., were we to confront the proclamation of the *eternal recurrence*. Just as man does not yet know how to re-absorb the theogonic responsibility of the *death of God*, and all the consequences necessarily entailed in such a meta-cosmic event, so too, he is equally unaware of the meaning and weight pertinent to a hypothetical affirmation of the demon’s revelation.⁴ This knowledge underlies the purpose of the aphorism, and, as though it were a tactical secret, Nietzsche remains silent on this point: he knows he is too early, and should not say too much if he is to affect the reader, like the early-ears of the villagers visited by Zarathustra. What we will soon realize is that the end of *amor fati* (as venerate praise of the demon) is not, itself, its fulfillment. We are not expected to literally become an *Übermensch*, as though saying “Yes!” to the demon were an easy feat; the moral of the parable is for *amor fati* to become the highest value in the eternal struggle of our own finitude. *It is in creating and implementing ever new possibilities of self-creation; a striving for aesthetic-autonomy and imagining how one might live in such a way as to become someone who might be predisposed to exclaim a hypothetical “Yes!”*

§I. Situated in Controversy

It is uniquely unavoidable with this (or any other) reading that we enter an ongoing controversy. Since the publication of Elizabeth-Forrester Nietzsche and Peter Gast’s *The Will to Power*, the sense of the eternal recurrence has been re-framed to denote a metaphysical theory of cosmology. As a result, inconsistencies arise with the material published during Nietzsche’s actual lifetime. The question of the eternal recurrence now becomes: does its sense reside in the hyperbolic parable or the propositional cosmology? (This is part of a larger problem that inhabits Nietzsche’s work: how do we make sense of his early perspectivism in conjunction with his later metaphysics?) The propositional view confirms the criticism of Heidegger and others, who claim that Nietzsche was the *last metaphysician* and an *inverted Platonist*. Nearly every critic considers the significance of the parable to be a consequence of the eternal recurrence as a theoretical proposition; a transcendental ground of Becoming, or *the being of becoming*, as Deleuze postulates. A common interpretation we come across accounts for both senses in a one-way relation: *The Greatest Weight* aphorism expresses the moral component of a larger metaphysics outlined in

³ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus spoke Zarathustra: a book for all and none*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 219.

⁴ See *GS: The Madman*, aphorism 125. *Ibid.* 181.

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The Will to Power. But, in every case, the non-literal sense is made to cohere with its literal sense, and not vice versa. Might there be a means of expressing the metaphysical sense in terms of the moral-perlocutionary sense?

Such an argument would stand in contradistinction to Heidegger's view, that the first appearance is an underdeveloped "eccentricity," arbitrarily "tacked on"; a mere "playing with thoughts."⁵ The eternal recurrence has a "shattering impact on all Being," he claims, but only in reference to its later, systematic formulation; anything shy of an articulation relevant to a *fundamental ontology* is superfluous (Ibid. 13). For Heidegger, this aphorism is a premature event. After all, Nietzsche did fail to follow through with his ten-year vow of silence (declared in a letter to Peter Gast), which only further supports Heidegger's derisive position—that Nietzsche's hastiness merely produced "cryptic passwords and parables" (14). The epiphany which brought about the *thought* (*Gedanke*)⁶ of the eternal recurrence (August of 1881), and its first appearance less than a year later in the *Gay Science* (1882), both represent the infancy of the idea and a sterile incompleteness. I disagree in favor of the complete inverse; namely, that the *Grand Inspiration* in Sils Maria, and its first illustration (a poetic utterance), fully comprehends the scope of its meaning; these sites are not lacking in any way but, on the contrary, are totally encompassing of even the posthumous works.

The reading I propose emerges from an inextricable link between *amor fati*, as the greatest expression of the kind of *affirmation* the demon is attempting to spur in his listener, and the notion of *redemption*, introduced by Zarathustra, as the necessary condition of the former. To affirm a *now* is to affirm, as necessary, everything that preceded, and ultimately, gave birth to *this* moment in time. Rather than our past remaining a static regret or some contingent series of eventualities, we declare it to be a matter of our own will, retrospectively, from the point of view of a personal aesthetic-transformation: "to redeem [...] the past and to recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it'—that alone should I call redemption" (Z 139). The taunting demon and his dusty, antiquarian hourglass, intimating the eternal return of the *Same*, finally releases its last morsel of dust; the creature's inquisitive grin curls ear to ear; the brass contraption flips anew—

⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*. Vols. I&II. Trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 14.

⁶ Nietzsche consistently uses the word "thought" when referring to the eternal recurrence. Cf., Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche, life as literature*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 150.

what will you say?⁷ Nietzsche brings us here to consider something profound about ourselves. One's response, either denial or affirmation, is never grounded in a qualitative assessment of the world, as distinct from the person. What matters is *who* and not *what*. The individual will be the only barometer. *Prima facie*, the redemptive perspective is uniquely aesthetic. One who has achieved a yes-saying disposition toward affirmation has attained *aesthetic autonomy*—what Nietzsche refers to as a “singular taste,” where one measures and assess the value of the past, in terms of the present, for himself, under his own Proustian-like rubric (*GS* 232; *A290*). By “giving style to one's character,” through self-creation, *amor fati* is made possible (*Ibid*). This explanation is shared with Nehamas, but we part ways on just how far it can reach.

The propositional interpretation, as I understand it, is already a concern of the parable, as something to avoid, but which nonetheless, is easily overlooked on the journey toward a yes-saying affirmation. Here, the later metaphysical relapse, of which Heidegger speaks, can be clarified by appealing to certain relations inherent to the earlier works; specifically, in what is problematic to Nietzsche's notion of *self-creation* itself: i.e., the constant threat of *self-coronation*, as a critical trapping in any potential pursuit of aesthetic autonomy. The individual is compelled to conceive of himself apart from conventional tradition, yet cease from crowning himself *last*; of claiming to have found a *final vocabulary* (the mark of Western metaphysics), or supposing to have uncovered the *ultimate ground of reality* (Being). The celebration of the subluminal over the subliminal can plunge into self-defeat; an appraisal that pulls us back to Platonism. Somehow, personal asceticism must become anti-Sartrean, anti-Kantian, and refrain from fashioning an image for *all* of mankind; from proclaiming that the singular taste one creates for himself is best for all. The autonomous-self cannot become a static plateau

⁷ Descartes' “evil genius” (*malin génie*) tempted philosophers to abandon their material bodies, and with the successive amputation of each limb came the inevitable dismemberment of human passion and finitude in general: a necessary sacrifice for the privileging of *res cogitans* over *res extensa*. Once the empirical world and the material body are obliterated, the remaining mental surplus (*cogito*) becomes the ultimate vehicle of genuine Knowledge. Nietzsche's “demon” performs the opposite function. It re-animates the importance of the body and our human situation, via abandoning the *modus operandi* of Western metaphysics, and opting for a perspectivist position that disregards the pursuit of absolute, Enlightenment-brand, capital-T Truth. Aesthetic self-creation changes the traditional narrative, rather than further engaging it, shifting the reigning philosophical focus away from the epistemology of the Platonic-Kantian canon. Cf., Gadberry, Andrea. *The Cupid and the Cogito: Cartesian Poetics*. (Chicago: Critical Inquiry, Spring 2017), Vol. 43.

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without falling victim to the metaphysical urgency to surpass human finitude and contingency. Self-creation needs to remain laterally imminent (e.g., as opposed to the vertical apex of a parabola), one mode amongst a variety of potential modes, each devoid of hierarchy, but forever disclosing of infinite possibilities.

Aesthetic tastes and self-definitions are non-stable (mirrored in the shifting stylistic patterns of Nietzsche's own works) and should always remain amenable to revision. Just as we said earlier, the goal of affirmation is not its total fulfillment, as an *end*, but the perlocutionary effect that is its *means* (self-creation), is its *end* (as *striving toward* the yes-saying character of affirmation). Rorty attempts to overcome this trapping of self-coronation by way of a resolve between self-creation and liberal solidarity; a merging of both private autonomy and public morality.⁸ Whether or not he does so adequately rests outside the scope of this paper. The point here is that Nietzsche fell into the very temptation his philosophy addressed. And there is ample evidence that he became aware of this fact while writing the later notebooks that comprise the *Nachlass*: for one, the decision in 1888 to not publish the text, *The Will to Power*, and two, in defacing his manuscripts with shopping lists—re-titling one: “zahnbürste.”⁹ And yet, Heidegger insists: “only an investigation of the posthumously published notes in Nietzsche's own hand will provide a clear picture” (Heidegger 15). Regardless (of the issue of authorial intent, which is not our concern), the exegesis I am arguing for rests on a specific mapping, whose inter-relations cannot be overlooked or negated without omitting some pertinent or necessary element constitutive of the overall sense of the eternal recurrence to begin with. Ultimately, I answer the belated controversy (parable or proposition?) by regarding the latter as an entailment of the former.¹⁰ The

⁸ See Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

⁹ The word “toothbrush” is written over the text in blue ink. Viewable at the *Nietzsche Archiv*.

¹⁰ The editor of the Cambridge text, Rüdiger Bittner, in *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (2003), makes explicit the controversy surrounding current and past interpretations of the unpublished manuscripts left to Nietzsche's literary estate: “Firstly, and most importantly, the evidence shows that Nietzsche abandoned the project “The Will to Power” early in September 1888, so that publishing a book of this title under his name falsifies his intentions,” and furthermore, even if we waive his objections, “it is in any case arbitrary to arrange this material, as the editors of *The Will to Power* did” (xii). The table of contents Nietzsche had envisaged for the book, which were outlined and detailed in the fragments, is also ignored by Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche and Peter Gast in their initial assemblage. Over a quarter of the material was excluded even before the

eternal recurrence, as a literal rotary cosmology, is nothing more than what Zarathustra would disregard as—another “hurdy-gurdy song.”

§II. The Moment of *Grand Inspiration*

The stage of our scrutiny, beset by the revelation of the demon, began with a winsome and seemingly incidental stroll through a forest in the Swiss Alps, paralleling Lake Silvaplana. It was here, on an August afternoon in 1881, that Nietzsche recalls the precise moment of *Grand Inspiration*; the eternal recurrence was conceived in an abrupt and ecstatic revelation “6,000 feet above man and time.”¹¹ A universe of endless, non-linear, cyclical temporality is by no means a new concept. Critics are quick to cite myriad world historical examples from western philosophy to eastern religion: Indic myths, pre-Socratic philosophy, Pythagoreanism, Dionysianism, etc. Nietzsche’s earliest publications confirm that he was not only familiar with these religions and philosophies, but that he possessed a profoundly rich and detailed insight into each of them. As early as 1862, for example, Nietzsche produced an essay titled *Fate and History*, which describes a cosmic clock and “perpetual circles of time” (Safranski 223). Avid readers will recall *The Birth of Tragedy* and other works, where tremendous praise is given to Dionysus; a god who dies and is perpetually reborn. With this in mind, Rüdiger Safranski (in 2002) formulates, what I will soon argue is, the most fundamental question regarding the interpretation of the eternal recurrence: “Why would a long-familiar idea be so rousing, and why now?” (225).

In a letter to Peter Gast dated “August 14th, 1881,” following the Grand Inspiration, Nietzsche reports of lamenting “tears of joy” (229). Safranski answers, without hesitation—“Astonishing as it may seem to us, it was the allegedly arithmetic and physical evidence of this doctrine that overwhelmed him” (228). I disagree with both Heidegger and Safranski regarding the event that took place in Sils Maria. The correspondence to Peter Gast in 1881, that describes the “tears of joy,” more than likely, does not pertain to an emotive response arising from a bout of scientific insight, as Safranski reports. I am confident in insisting that Nietzsche did not weep in jubilation over having discovered new proofs, in contrast to his reading of Julius Robert Meyer’s

editors implemented their own changes and innumerable omissions. Therefore, all of the concise evidence we have regarding his struggle to develop cosmological proofs for the eternal recurrence and the will to power could just as well have been published under the title—“Discarded Ideas.”

¹¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Ecce Homo*. Trans Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 295.

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conservation of energy, or Schopenhauer's tangent point of contact on the endless clock of time; Nietzsche wept because of the psycho-existential impact he envisioned for himself and his readers in imagining the sheer transformative power of the *thought* he experienced: e.g., a pragmatism of the highest yield; an idea so densely provocative that its disclosure would be commensurate to nothing less than total destruction or personal metamorphosis; he feels himself on the precipice of something unprecedented—no reader, hitherto, will close the book without being marked.

The cosmological view, Nehamas similarly maintains, obscures the psychological consequences of the *thought* and detracts from the larger emphasis placed on the relationship it has to the development of the self; to which I would add, also undermines the inaugural revelation itself. It is obvious, at least from the *Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, that the eternal recurrence has infinitely more to do with the individual, which consists in striving for the circumstances that might give birth to an eternal “yes!” in all things, while having significantly less to do with the notion of an infinite, celestial relay of all phenomena. This literary foundation is not a naïve and underdeveloped stage in the evolution of the *thought*, but the expression of its most consistent and coherent meaning. Consider the genealogy of the idea, as stated in *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche reports that the character of Zarathustra occurred in tandem with the eternal recurrence, as “the highest formula of affirmation” (EH 295). From its inception, then, what Heidegger calls its *poetic utterance*, should not be considered a deficiency on the path to some more highly esteemed formulae; its non-literalism is inherent to the jubilating, lightning-strike epiphany, of which Nietzsche laments. Nehamas finds the most ostensibly theoretical sections of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to be, on closer examination, mere literary methodologies for psychological application. He focuses on two sections almost exclusively devoted to explaining the eternal recurrence. In *On the Vision of the Riddle*, he asks whether the *thought* is elaborated merely to frighten the dwarf into fleeing Zarathustra's presence (Nehamas 149); this is, undoubtedly, not an allegorical stage used to convey the outline of a proof-scheme deduction; Nietzsche is, as I contend, making a larger suggestion regarding the natural *timidity of humankind*—an exposition of the claim I made earlier relating to his supposition that the demon is speaking exclusively to one kind of listener. Man's first instinct, when faced with the challenge of the *thought*, will be *flight*; if challenged further, as in the case of a demon stealing after you, inquisitively, “into your loneliest loneliness,”—*resentment!* Mankind is happy to piggy-back up the mountain, so long as the preacher offers a doctrine that appeases their inherent desires and immemorial appetites. The eternal recurrence is not an immediately appealing or

easy prospect to digest. It does not *appeal* to man's self-interest outside of his will to overcome himself. The dwarf is frightened off! It is a reading of this kind that is crucial to Nietzsche's concerns, and should not be overlooked. We should be careful, e.g., when Nehamas (although he offers the most terrific assessments of the early period) accounts for the later propositions in the early work: "It is therefore the will to power that explains why the demon offers us only the very same life" (Nehamas 156). We do not want to augment the connection of the *thought* (whose sense resides in the parable) by way of a questionable metaphysics, at all, if it can be avoided.

§III. Nietzschean *Redemption* Abolishes Deleuzschan *Chance*

Nietzsche often discusses power and the feeling of power, but *the will to power*, as a metaphysics of *force* and *becoming* (i.e., the popular notion to which we've become familiar), "is only [found] in the late writings, particularly his [unpublished] notes" (Safranski 75). In utilizing the will to power as a vehicle of elucidation an inconsistency opens (which any interpretation of the early works will fall through if examined through the lens of the *Nachlass*). As a proposition, the eternal recurrence must be defended against a reduction to Platonic *Being*. Deleuze's arguments, like Heidegger, are working from the top-down, assessing the earlier thoughts with the later notes: "In the eternal return being ought to belong to becoming, but the being of becoming ought to belong to a single becoming-active" (Deleuze 179). We know, from the early writings, that *becoming*, as an expression of contingency and human value over *Truth*, is itself, coherent with his early perspectivism: "We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by positing bodies, lines, planes causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life, But this does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error" (*GS* 177; *A121*). Just as dead metaphors diachronically evolve to assimilate themselves into a seamless, literal grammar, so too, our truths are a matter of social contingency.¹² But once we take the physics of the eternal recurrence to be a literal expression, we find ourselves constrained to solving how these perpetual cycles, as *a return of the Same*, avoid the obvious contradiction of *being* against Nietzsche's affirmation of *becoming*: "The eternal return is itself the Identical, the similar and the equal, but it presupposes nothing of itself in that of which it is said. It is said of that which

¹² See. Nietzsche's *Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense*.

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has no identity, no resemblance and no equality.”¹³ And the only way out of this problem is to posit some crafty metaphysical extension, as in the case of Deleuze, e.g., whom identifies the “return [as] the being of becoming, itself.”¹⁴ Philosophers and critics thus feel the need to complete a coherent picture and connect the will to power, and its enigmatic “play of forces [...] as a becoming that knows no satiety,” to the eternal recurrence.¹⁵ What is ultimately more misleading is the *dice-throw explanation* as a means of illustrating Nietzsche’s picture of affirmation and *amor fati*. Two distinct moments arise: “when the dice are thrown” and “when they land and form a specific combination”¹⁶. Affirmation, on this account, means both that one affirm all possible combinations in the throw, and the same with all possible results. Man is said to be a “bad player,” whom counts on a large number of throws to attain what he wants (NP 25); a “good player,” by contrast, affirms the “chance” of the throw and the “necessity” of its outcome: “the affirmation of chance makes possible an *amor fati*” (Bogue 29). In sum, we are charged with accepting the unknown possibility of chance while in turn affirming and accepting any variable outcome as a necessity. There’s several problems with this picture. For the sake of brevity I’ll name a few. Firstly, the identity issue of the return’s Sameness that Deleuze attempts to ward off, because of the being-becoming dichotomy, is at the same time what is central to the moral of the parable. A *return of the Same* is necessary to the demon’s challenge and even more important to Nietzsche’s intended psycho-existential effect of giving the greatest weight to each moment. Without the virtual-literary enormity of this eternally repetitive hourglass of self-same cyclical identity, the psychological consequence on the reader is lost. The emphasis on “chance” undermines the perlocutionary-effect of the eternal recurrence, which is neither an addition, nor an arbitrary appendage to a greater whole, but is necessarily constitutive of its sense. Deleuze cannot successfully assimilate Mallarme’s poetic scheme, because it fails to properly explain, and therefore nullifies, fundamental elements regarding *amor fati* and the eternal recurrence. Ironically, he seems to be offering a clearer treatment of Mallarme, *qua* Nietzsche, rather than Nietzsche *qua* Mallarme.¹⁷ Zarathustrain redemption

¹³ Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference & Repetition*. Trans Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press), 241.

¹⁴ Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze and Guattari*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 29.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Arnold Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 550.

¹⁶ Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans Hugh Thomlinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 24.

¹⁷ See NP: section 14. *Nietzsche and Mallarme*. 30.

is a seizing of the game, opposite pedestrianism, of fortuitous unpredictability—and transforming it into a “thus I willed it so” (Z 139). This can be achieved through an individual creativity that alters the perspective of the past: “In this new way of life the past itself becomes new: “The will is a creator”” (Nehamas 160). By extension, “chance,” for Nietzsche, is to be owned by the self-affirming individual, to such an extent that arbitrary eventualities, outside of our affective deliberation, are no longer discernable from our willful autonomy. To approach *amor fati* is to feel that chance no longer exists, because we have not “accepted any possible outcome,” but willed the specific combination that is the *present*.

By analogy, the Übermensch is presented as that hypothetical *Over-man* whom has, despite life’s indifferent chaos, positively affirmed all of its negative aspects. The patent literary constitution of this character is noteworthy, insofar as Nietzsche does not intend its fictional evolution to be an attainable object for mankind; it has the effect of an ideal that remains perpetually ahead of us; it leaves an impression behind in its absence; that is all. The notion of accepting any and all random combinations of outcomes, i.e., via *chance*, is simply all-too-human. Framing the affirmation of the eternal recurrence in a dice-scheme humanizes and devolves its abstruse mystery, which should, on the contrary, exist at a distance from our average conceptuality; instead, Deleuze’s picture levels-down the imaginary difficulty inherent to the perlocutionary significance of the *thought*. The difficulty of Nietzsche’s redemption, which is constitutive of *amor fati*, is meaningful insofar as it relates to the reader’s reactions—to such imposing and magnanimous notions—as *the return of the Same*. But the crux is *redemption*, not *chance*; its virtuality and not its reality. We are never meant to become the Übermensch as an actual end, as though *amor fati* could ever become an easy feat (e.g., a plateau man might arrive at in the Darwinian sense). The Over-man is always ahead of us and is never an attainable object. The pursuit of something beyond ourselves constitutes an endless struggle—to strive for ever greater fathoms of creativity, style, and character, in such a way as to make a hypothetical rendering of *amor fati* less of a distant imagining and more of a living intensity nearly in our grasp. Though this hourglass is doomed to constant inversion, the active pursuit of “giving style to one’s character” unveils the whole of one’s temporal world, in its bliss, banality, tedium, and horror, as infinitely redeemable through the prospect of achieving aesthetic autonomy through self-creation (GS 232; A290).

In *The Convalescent Zarathustra* awakes to find his animals gathered in suspense; after *seven days* he has finally returned from his redemptive slumber. The reader is quick to catch on to the religious connotation and so are the

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animals, which now seem to symbolize mankind and discipleship: “How well you know what had to be fulfilled in seven days [...] have you already made a hurdy-gurdy song of this?” (Zarathustra 218). He questions their desire for cruelty and correlates it to their desire for transcendent knowledge and martyrdom; attending tragedies and “crucifixions [they have] so far felt best on earth,” to which he further adds, “[man] invented hell for himself, behold, that was his heaven on earth” (Ibid). Zarathustra does not want to be man’s accuser, nor the reason for man’s masochistic delight. He sheds tears of despair, but not of Christian pleasure from pity, self-punishment, or the discovery of man as evil, but in the realization of how small dogmatic insights are—and that he must accept them—redeem them, if he is to affirm the eternal recurrence; accept that they are necessary in his surpassing them. *The Convalescent* is the ultimate chapter, in the narrative I am offering, to the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra’s seven-day slumber, not only relates to the Christian notion of the creation of the earth, but as Carl Jung reminds us in his opus on archetypes and the collective unconscious, there are several Eastern, Indian aphorisms that claim it “takes seven reincarnations to reach perfection.”¹⁸ Upon Zarathustra’s return to consciousness, he has completed the final constitutive element of his *amor fati*—the notion of *redemption*: his great affirmation demands that we must also *own*, as though we ourselves had willed, all that is past, undesirable, and lowly. He now becomes something of a *bodhisattva*, capable of perforating the unknown cycle under which we dance in eternally forgetful revolutions; whom uniquely possesses, as psychopomp of the *love of fate*, its path and hidden secrets; i.e., self-affirmation. He knows the way and can direct his disciples. But what he must share is something his animals had not anticipated; the path is not toward Truth; there will be no monuments or immemorial saints of worship erected in his name. He guards against the typical trappings of sublime revelation and torture ceremonies; there will be no official church built upon Zarathustra’s epigrams, verses, or ideals. The animals now beg for him to leave his cave and sing outside, aware of his affinity for inventing songs. But Zarathustra calls them “buffoons and barrel organs” for taking something that was “invented for [himself]” and turning it into a “hurdy-gurdy song” (Z 220).

So too, the eternal recurrence, as a metaphysical-cosmological Truth— is just another “hurdy-gurdy” song. No matter how sound the argument or cunning the deduction—a metaphysical sense will seal its fate as one more Sunday ritual in a helix-chain of rituals (i.e., one more proposition in the history

¹⁸ Jung, C. G., and R. F. C. Hull. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), 36.

of metaphysics). Therefore, we should not conceive of Nietzsche's call to overcome man (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, published in 1883) through affirmation by way of the Demon's challenge (*The Gay Science*, published in 1882), via some literal explanation of forces parasitic to the will to power (*Late Notebooks*, written in 1985-88; unpublished)—but rather, that we keep the notion of *affirmation* within the potential metamorphosis of the individual character in *self-creation*. We can then refocus our efforts on potential problematics of individuality and autonomy, such as the problem of *self-coronation*, that I've found most threatening to the pursuit of self-creation.

The formal analyses we have encountered over the last century yield flaws in Nietzsche's logic for a simple reason. If Nietzsche had intended, even partly, a systematic disquisition of the kind Heidegger holds him to, he would have elaborated, in greater detail, the most plausible reactions to the eternal recurrence—to begin with. But, as we have already stated, the literature details only two psychological consequences. Why would Nietzsche ignore, or fail to consider, the numerous possibilities of *indifference*, and, affirmations formed through the guise of that *indifference*? Nehamas acutely recognizes this ambiguity and summarizes the most popular arguments from indifference in response to the challenge. The first view he considers is Arthur Danto's, whom acknowledges only the cosmological theory, and therefore, responds solely to the "actual fact of recurrence" (Nehamas 152). Essentially, anything we might choose or decide upon is bound to return and leads to what it has always lead to unraveling. Since this temporal knowledge is hidden from view, Nikos Kazantakis also agrees, we need not concern ourselves with ends or consequences: "Where are we going? [...] Don't ask!" (Ibid). Ivan Soll's, on the other hand, responds not to the actuality of the eternal recurrence, but to its potentiality in affecting the way one might live. As is the case with Kazantakis and Danto, Soll's takes the suprahistorical aspect—or rather, our inability to understand it—to be of the utmost importance: "I cannot possibly anticipate now my experiences in future recurrences or remember then what I am going through now" (Ibid). Since we are fundamentally agnostic in relation to other recurrent modalities, he further argues that, "some psychological continuity of this sort is at least a necessary condition for my being concerned with my self's future, the possibility that I may live again in exactly the same way I have lived already should actually be a matter of complete indifference" (Ibid). This is an extremely persuasive insight that demands some consideration. To paraphrase Nehamas, either this is an oversight of Nietzsche's, or the fact that he failed to even touch on a *third alternative*—presumes something much more fundamental; namely, "that he does not consider the recurrence a cosmological theory in any

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way” (153). If we assimilate this conclusion in conjunction with our earlier deductions, i.e., that the reaction, as exclusively two-fold is motivated by hyperbole, a full-picture begins to emerge that suggests nothing but the complete identification of the eternal recurrence as articulated in the parable.

It was the *psycho-existential impact* that made such a resounding and inspiring impression on Nietzsche; that which brought about a chorus of jubilating tears. In response to Safranski, this moment is *new* insofar as the notion of the eternal recurrence, from Eastern Indic myth to Schopenhauer, has now become fully internalized as parable: “For me—how should there be any outside-myself?” (Z 217).

§IV. The Moment of *Grand Temptation*

What would such a life of eternal affirmation look like? Whom might we have to become, such that we might praise the image of the eternal hourglass of time? *Redemption* is a necessary condition for *amor fati*, but it is by no means a bi-conditional element in this formulation. Nietzschean redemption pivots on the ultimate personal achievement of self-creation, which precedes the redemptive judgement of self-affirmation, by “giving style to one’s character” (GS Ibid). It is not merely a valuation to be made from anywhere, but from a specific plateau of creative autonomy, that confers a unique meaning and perceptual capacity upon the observer. It is with new eyes that one looks back and decides that all things, no matter how infinitesimally small or horrible, are necessary. Therefore, *amor fati*, as the apex of *self-affirmation*, first demands individual *self-creation*. Ironically, this must arise from “becoming who one is,” as paraphrased by the subtitle of *Ecce Homo* and asserted by Zarathustra. However, the expression does not mean “‘who one actually was all the time’ but ‘whom one turned oneself into in the course of creating the taste by which one ended up judging oneself’” (Rorty 99). In this sense, Nietzsche’s notion of the self is similar to his regard for truth, i.e., that it is created rather than discovered. It seems apparent that to *become who we are* is to actualize a certain potential. Undoubtedly, this must emanate, somehow or somehow, from our own momentum and not from traditional clichés or common moral platitudes.

This is the meaning of “giving style to one’s character,” and why Nietzsche tells us that it is “a great and rare art!” (GS Ibid). An aesthetic of self-hood is here achieved through an active gauging of one’s “strengths and weaknesses” for the purpose of “fit[ting] them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art” (Ibid). At which point, even our weaknesses become a “delight of the eye” (Ibid). It now becomes clear that an inward revolution must take place in which all the personal elements of one’s self integrate coalesce into

something greater than the sum of its parts. The ugly or incidental past is bearable by means of its being a necessary component in a self-proclaimed immaculate whole. The “artistic plan” overrides whatever parts may be undesirable through their assemblage in a greater, unified purpose. But, again, what might this self-evolution look like? The question itself is nearly defeating of the overall moral theme that is being established. Only the individual, alone, can answer such questions through his endeavors and redescrptions. Although, theoretically, we might wish to demand some exposition of these claims, we cannot escape the arch of the message that rests in perspectival, individual interpretation. Throughout *Zarathustra* we are only given a negative theology—a list of condemning threats that amount to the assertion: “do not follow me!” Strong and domineering natures will find a new “taste” under a “law of their own” by which they judge their predecessors as well as their own histories (Ibid). The pitfall that concerns us, which conceives of the eternal recurrence as a proposition and renders Nietzsche a mere metaphysician amongst a history of metaphysicians, occurs specifically when *self-creation* becomes *self-coronation*: when, in the words of Richard Rorty, one forges a final vocabulary or lays claim to the most primordial description—or, the *last* description; i.e., the *Truth* of the cosmos, a transcendental signified, or ultimate ground of being. But Nietzsche’s motivation for the sublime, unlike Kant or Sartre, is not epistemic but aesthetic. The purpose of his metaphysics is redemption.

In becoming who Nietzsche is, then, having reintroduced the eternal recurrence as the *greatest weight* in man’s moral struggle with himself and his finitude, he also finds himself as the inheritor of a *greater weight*: the visionary carries the pain of proximity to his own imaginings. This fact leads *me* to the following thought: did there not come a moment, when Nietzsche’s demon—not the one he created for his readership of *free-spirits*, but the conjuring itself—would be reclaimed from its shadowy moment of inception...to ask, and, what of you—speck of dust!?¹⁹ Might it not be here, in this *second moment*, when Nietzsche must have asked himself the same question he had asked of us, that his temptation toward the sublime became actualized in assessing his own redemption? To pursue the will to power as a proposition is at the same time an attempt to surmount his philosophy in a singular autonomy; a towering universal schema. Is this not the ultimate justification to ground Nietzsche’s *amor fati* and *yes-saying character*? That all roads, past, present, lead to this prophecy; his pain, suffering, depression, mania and ceaseless pursuit of

¹⁹ I’m not the first to consider the possible self-referentiality of the demonic challenge. Cf., Lukacher, Ned. *Time Fetishes*. (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 140.

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knowledge, ending in a sublime aesthetic totality. In one sense Heidegger is correct to assume that we need the posthumously published notes to comprehend a coherent meaning—surely, I agree. The notes, as material evidence of a lengthy personal struggle (*self-affirmation fallen to self-coronation*) that plagued Nietzsche during the latter portion of his life, emanating from the original site of the *thought* in Sils Maria. The temptation, then, would be to posit an underlying substratum of becoming: a will to power, to serve as the metaphysical underpinning of the master-slave morality, the rotary cosmology of the recurrence, the force affirmed by the *Übermensch*, etc. Does the *Nachlass* not reveal a struggle to complete, what he held in the highest regard, as a singular taste and in a definite “artistic plan” (*GS* Ibid)? We might consider a new reading of *The Will to Power* as a Proustian-philosophical project. Only, *Remembrance of Things Past* is a work of literary fiction, and thus does not risk (at least in the same sense) lapsing back into the history of Western metaphysics via self-coronation. Contingency, in the case of the novel, is affirmed through idiosyncratic eventualities and not philosophical sentiments. This may seem to be reaching; however, the influence that led Nietzsche back to metaphysics is not of the typical sort. He is not searching for the sublime in a Kantian or Platonic sense—for the sake of discovering or uncovering “reality.” It is extremely unlikely that Plato had returned to haunt him, in the intellectual sense, especially after having spent his career surmounting the most provocative philosophy of perspectivism. Nietzsche’s attempt at *self-coronation* does not arise from a desire to uncover the *actual* behind the *apparent* (a distinction he consistently held in disdain throughout his life), but to attain a singular position of aesthetic-autonomy that he would perceive as eternally redeemable. Thus, *The Will to Power* can be read as: *Assemblage of Ideas Past*.

“Mankind,” for Nietzsche, is a means to greatness, a cultural “peak of rapture,” in which all the horror and absurdities of the world become vindicated with the birth of genius: “there is no higher cultural proclivity” (Safranski 287). He outlines these thoughts in a later preface for *The Birth of Tragedy*, directly precluding the late idea of the will to power. Based on these dispositions it is hardly a matter of inference to assume that Nietzsche felt himself colossally constrained in his own redemptive assessment. Surely, the one whom pronounces, “I think I am too malicious to believe in myself” understands that there is only solace in perspectivism; his *becoming*, the never-ending flow that knows no end, is obviously not anchored in the belief of uncovering a final vocabulary or ultimate description of the *real* as opposed to the *apparent*. In 1888 Nietzsche declares: “I am no man—I am dynamite!” Forever critical of the dogmatism of philosophy and religion, he remains explicit: “there is nothing in

me of a founder of a religion [...] religions are the affairs of a rabble. I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people” (*EH* 326). It’s possible that there is more to the matter of the will to power than the possible *Truth* it might portray as a systematic metaphysics. In recognizing the infinite play of unhindered forces, are we not ourselves prompted by an existential maxim to live in avoidance of immutable monuments, philosophies, ideas, and moral values? To be weary of all “otherworldly hopes” and “despisers of life” (*Z* 13); to always cleanse the intellectual pallet as one wipes away the beautiful lines and immaculate contours of a Chinese garden? The will to power, in its non-literal significance, summons the creative energies of humanity; it is the organic embodiment of the affirmative character that admits of no contentment or placidity, but forward striving, incessant aestheticism through re-description and re-creation. There is ever more to gain from a literary reading of the will to power: i.e., leaving its sense in its early Demonic-Zarathustrian poeticism.

§V. *The Will to Power—Creative Reading*

If there should be any appeal whatsoever to the notion of the will to power in discerning the sense of the eternal recurrence, it should be to further illuminate, ever more vivaciously and vividly, the rhetorical-allegorical stratagem of both concepts that were already existent in *Thus Spoke*. The reintroduction of the later (propositional) sense of the will to power can further solidify, through its own referential semiology, the world of the former doctrines. The elaborate structural play of the will to power can offer an underlying autonomy to the *Übermensch* and the eternal recurrence. The doctrines, themselves, yield profound significance even in the event that we detach any constraining notion of correspondence (de-metaphysis), i.e., truth, and conceive of each of them as non-literal figurations. On this view, any inquiry into the actual “reality” of these concepts seems to be beside the point. We should think of the Nietzschean doctrines just as we conceive of Deleuze’s *rhizomes* or Sloterdijk’s *sphereology*, where the meaning of their schemas is most evidently a matter of reshaping, creating, and extending frames of understanding through redescription, than an attempt to locate hidden, pre-existent structures.

What we have in-hand, regarding *The Will to Power*, as well as the later notes, published posthumously, is evidence of some flirtation with a pseudo-scientific metaphysics that contradicts an enormous body of prior work. We do not know the end he had in mind, except that he became dissatisfied with what he had found or created. In the absence of such qualification, we should opt for an exegesis that supplies us with a most *useful* and *logically consistent* narrative. I take

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Nietzsche's pursuit of pseudo-scientism, or meta-pseudo-scientism, as a redemptive-aesthetic strategy to attain his *amor fati*. It is less likely that Nietzsche, in his later years, decided, after all, to join the transcendental search for knowledge, and more likely, that this event signified a moment of *Grand Temptation* (for self-coronation); to lay the foundational physics that would be the uniting principle of his major ideas; to become the Zarathustrian mouthpiece of a metaphysical ideal beyond all metaphysical ideals, which fundamentally, as we should insist, had more to do with a regard for himself, his own redemption (and, in turn, self-coronation); organizing his former philosophy by subsuming his ideas under a singular taste; gauging how he will view himself becomes a sublime pursuit (which has its own philosophical difficulties). If there is any metaphysical relapse it resides in the reductivism that is opened by the notion of aestheticism and autonomy. He is not looking for the absolute ground of anything, nor is he fighting the threat of falsity; his later work is a "prevention of the reduction to mediocrity" (*WP* 544; *A1053*). Regardless, most of the secondary literature we find ceaselessly pleads the contrary. What I suggest is entirely distinct from what is typical of Nietzschean commentaries: that we regard the triadic doctrine of the *Eternal Recurrence*, the *Übermensch*, and the *Will to Power*, as a unified allegorical stratagem, whose meaning must be discerned within the referential totality of its own elements and not validated or invalidated as an attempt for Truth that would seek to establish a correspondence outside itself. It is through the guise of this rhetorical medium that Nietzsche chooses to effectively communicate his most impassioned values and ideas. An alternate reading of *The Will to Power* and its relation to the eternal recurrence is not only possible, but textually consistent and historically coherent; only this time, the early sense will not be reconfigured, reframed, or swallowed into a belated or posthumous sense, but the exact opposite: one that recognizes its later metaphysical emergence as symptomatic of a possible blunder (the inverse of its own moral) introduced by the parable—the first utterance of the *thought* itself. The self-coronating, vertical point, must be stretched back to the horizontal plane of self-creation that affirms contingency, in its ever-emerging potentialities and possibilities for re-description and plural definition. Once we open this alternative reading to *The Will to Power*, as a Proustian-philosophical attempt, that, as an event, exploded from Sils Maria in a trajectory of self-creation—only to collapse under the antithesis of self-affirmation—we can focus on those issues inherent to self-creation that tacitly tempt us back to metaphysics from the outset. How we can achieve autonomy, *in the practice of philosophy in general*, without (self-coronating)

esteeming a final vocabulary, or fashioning ourselves as the shahmans of the *episteme*, of the *really* real beyond the apparent veil of Maya?²⁰

§VI. Concluding Remarks

Amor fati—knows no limit—as the exclamatory response to the demonic challenge that forever alludes us, but ceaselessly tempts us to overcome ourselves. We encounter this Latin phrase, subtly and sporadically, always at random, in various nooks and corners: the fourth book of *The Gay Science*, in *Thus Spoke*, and *Ecce Homo*. Yet, it is the apotheosis of the hypothetical “Yes!” that parallels, in subtext, all of Nietzsche’s writing since the afternoon of that winsome stroll. The yes-saying character of all things, as a romantic potential, remains a fervid presence. In “the fairest month of January,” in homage to St. Januarius, Nietzsche grants himself a new year’s wish: “I wish from myself today [...] I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*, let that be my love henceforth” (*GS* 223; *A276*). Man does not yet know how to sincerely and genuinely own this exclamation, and the demon, no matter how many sleepy homes he has crept in to, has yet to hear this utterance; but we are beginning to learn how a non-resenter might live. Zarathustra’s teachings, parables, epigrams, etc., are exemplary of the beginning of that road, and to that end. Only, we will have to journey alone and discover for ourselves “how one becomes what one is,” devoid of otherworldly comfort, proverbs inscribed in gold tablets, reassuring omni-daddys, or the warm guidance of a psychopomp: “Now, I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you” (*EH* 220). We are on our own, armed with the memory and blunders of our predecessors, and the haunting challenge of the demon that ameliorates each and every one of our decisions, inflating the durational value of

²⁰ The twice-removed, meta-philosophical perspective of Derrida’s *Postcard* might be exemplary: the first removal, a POV outside of metaphysics, and the second, outside the POV of the discipline in general...offering answers that combat the Plato-Kant tradition via continually shifting the narrative; if negation redirects us anew to the helix of history, then the best we can hope to achieve, as Rorty argues, is a Wittgensteinian therapy of those problems by perpetually replacing them with greater and more valuable redescriptions (e.g., as I responded to Deleuze on “chance” with an appeal to Nietzsche’s “redemption”). On this Rortyan view, that fuses Nietzsche, Derrida, and Wittgenstein, a nominalist-bend is able to incorporate the praise of contingency without relapse or *self-coronation*. But too much seems lost; we feel left to Proust without the foresight of a genuine philosophical future. With this in mind, there is still much to be elaborated and explored in Rorty’s *ironism* and the further potential for integrating our private autonomy with the realm of philosophical discourse.

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our moments into fleeting intervals of eternity. The greater weight now becomes the decisiveness with which we respond to our creative spontaneity, when we're left to wonder, what ever-expanding and immeasurably vast universes might we give birth to in this grand, inward implosion, once *self-creation* presides over otherworldly temptation and man becomes resolutely untethered.

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Creative Works
