

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME: NIETZSCHE'S 'VALUE-FREE' REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES

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There are many, often conflicting, interpretations of Nietzsche's aims and intentions. I think this sometimes has to do with the emphasis philosophers put on different aspects of his philosophy. For example, one who emphasizes Nietzsche's call for creativity may find oneself in conflict with those who emphasize his determinism. Then there are those who attempt to broach the issue in a way that 'accommodates' both sides by, perhaps, appealing to some underlying thesis or (as is often done) pointing to Nietzschean rhetoric or hyperbole as the problem.

In this paper I am going to say something that I hope will have repercussions for those who attribute a certain value system to Nietzsche, whether it be virtue ethics, subjective realism, or whatever. I will not be conversing directly with these particular interpreters of Nietzsche, however, as my aim lies in highlighting the extent to which we should interpret Nietzsche's work as being nihilistic. I will argue that one should interpret Nietzsche as a nihilist and in light of this one must withhold attributing any particular value system to him. This is not to say that he didn't have a value system—because he did. It is to say that insofar as attributing a value system to Nietzsche implies that he was expounding particular values for us to *follow*, e.g. the community as a whole, or even parts of the community, we must withhold the attribution of a value system to him.

I will show that Nietzsche's interpretation of nihilism is bound up with his cyclical view of time, or what he calls the eternal recurrence of the same. Intuitively, nihilism and the eternal recurrence seem to go hand in hand: the former denies any meaningful values and the latter, being the thesis that all recurs, seems to *preclude* there being any absolute values. The entwining of the eternal recurrence and nihilism appears throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*¹ and plays a vital role in both the internal logic and overcoming of nihilism—something which was present within Nietzsche since August 1881, where he 'experienced' the eternal recurrence near Surlei, beside

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

a huge pyramidal boulder²—an event that was first incorporated into his philosophy in the second-to-last section of the fourth book in *The Gay Science*³.

My presentation of this will take the following form. Firstly, I will say some remarks about Nietzsche's attitude toward (and acceptance of) nihilism. I then give a reading of a long fragment, which appears in Nietzsche's later notebooks, that provides great insight into Nietzsche's conception of nihilism and the role the doctrine of the eternal recurrence plays within this conception. I compare this reading of the eternal recurrence with Löwith and Klossowski's reading of the same, before attempting to place Nietzsche as a 'thorough-going nihilist'.⁴

Nietzsche's thoughts on nihilism receive only sporadic mention in writings published during his lifetime. His most vivid ideas relating to this topic are found in *The Will to Power*⁵, compiled by Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche and Peter Gast after Nietzsche's death. But there is evidence that Nietzsche had, at least at some point, plans to publish some of these ideas.⁶⁷ I present four fragments from his later writings (between the years 1887 and 1888) to provide some sort of understanding of Nietzsche's relation to nihilism.

Here is Nietzsche:

Nihilism as a normal condition

Nihilism: the goal is lacking; an answer to the 'Why?' is lacking. What does nihilism mean?—*That the highest values are devaluated*⁸

This means, first, nihilism is a *normal* condition for us to be in at this particular time in history (at least in 1887 when Nietzsche wrote this, but, plausibly, also now). Second, it says that our so-called *highest values* have been devaluated: whereas they once held value *for us*, they no longer hold this value. Accordingly, there is now no purpose, no meaning, no goal, no "ideal of happiness", "ideal of morality" or "ideal of man": in reality, these things are *lacking*.⁹ It is this loss of meaning that has become the normal condition for us.

My claim is that everything Nietzsche says must be understood under the veil of nihilism. This may appear unusual to some, for the position the nihilist is traditionally seen to take is that there are *no* meaningful values.¹⁰ But Nietzsche is usually thought of as espousing *at least* the values of the *ubermensch*, the will to power and the eternal recurrence.¹¹ Moreover, Nietzsche appears to distance himself from the meaninglessness associated with the nihilist, claiming that he has left it behind, that it is 'outside himself':

[I am] a soothsayer-bird spirit who *looks back* when relating what will come; as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself¹²

But these sorts of remarks need to be tempered by those such as the following:

It is only late that one musters the courage for what one really knows. That I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist, I have admitted to myself only recently... When one moves toward a goal it seems impossible that 'goal-lessness as such' is the principle of our faith¹³

Here, plausibly, he is saying that he *is* a nihilist: a 'thorough-going' one. But we can reconcile these two passages if we concentrate on the apparent contradictoriness of the above quote: that "goal-lessness as such" is "our" goal. The goal, I will claim, is a revaluation of all values. But this should not be understood as aiming at a particular goal—of humanity or whatever. It is to aim at "goal-lessness as such". So his 'perfection' of nihilism only aims at "goal-lessness as such"—it is *not* a creation of new values. I will elaborate by making sense of the following quote:

Nihilism... [is not] merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy—This is, if you will, illogical;—It is the condition of strong spirits and wills, and these do not find it possible to stop with the No of ‘judgment’: their nature demands the No of the deed¹⁴

Nietzsche is often thought of as encompassing two projects: a destruction of current values and a construction of new ones.¹⁵ But here he is saying that *everything* must be destroyed. The contradiction becomes apparent if we think about the subject matter: values. To destroy one set of values seems to presuppose another set from which one does the destroying. But Nietzsche is denying even this. I will attempt to make this sound more plausible.

There is a three-part answer to this objection from implausibility.¹⁶ The first part of the resolution comes by acknowledging that he is ‘moving up a level’, so to speak. I think Nietzsche is concerned with what the values presuppose. In another note he claims: “the categories ‘aim,’ ‘unity,’ ‘being’ [or truth] which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless*.”¹⁷ So the values we are destroying are the ones that occupy one of these three categories: aim, unity, being. But this is only part of the solution. The other two parts go hand in hand. One of them is Nietzsche’s so-called Perspectivism. Metaphorically, Nietzsche jumps between perspectives, from which he attacks existent values, but then withdraws from these perspectives before a value-system can be attributed to him. The second part is to realize that a *doing* no, does not imply a doing, or saying, *yes even to something else*. I will return to this point, specifically, in the final section of this paper.

Deleuze notes two senses of nihilism in Nietzsche. The first sense is “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.”¹⁸ The second sense is nihilism in its “colloquial sense”, which signifies a reaction against the supersensible world and higher values.¹⁹ In short, these different forms of nihilism have different starting points. The first starts from a particular view about the aims and goals of life, the second starts from some pre-established values. I will argue that Nietzsche starts from this second sense of nihilism and, with the help of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence, justifies nihilism in the first sense.

It may be helpful to give a typology of nihilism, as it appears in Nietzsche. There seem to be three: Negative, Reactive and Radical, the latter of which divides into two types: passive and active. This understanding of Nietzsche’s view on nihilism is perhaps closest to Deleuze’s,²⁰ but differs from other readings in two ways: by incorporating the reactive stage and excluding the notion of complete nihilism.²¹ This is not without precedent: first, reactive nihilism is needed to understand the transition from a world of higher values to radical nihilism; second, complete nihilism, rather than being a *type* of nihilism, is the *end* of nihilism. What it does show, however, is that Nietzsche thinks there is an end to the process—one that will come about as a “necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto.”^{22,23}

I will now present the manner in which Nietzsche sees this internal logic at work. It is worth comparing what I say with the schematic diagram in Figure A.

The fragment under discussion appears in his later notebooks. It *starts* by considering the “Christian moral hypothesis.”²⁴ It is important to note that this is a form of nihilism, namely negative nihilism, or what Deleuze has called nihilism in “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.” But the nihilistic nature of these values is not of concern to Nietzsche at present. Rather, he is concerned with nihilism in its ‘colloquial’, not ‘primary’ sense.

He firstly considers the Christian moral hypothesis’ advantages: to save man from nature; “it endowed man with an absolute *value*”; it provided a sense of freedom and supplied evil with meaning; it provided man with “*adequate knowledge* precisely of what is most important.”²⁵ For Nietzsche, the postulation of these higher values is “the great *antidote* to practical and theoretical *nihilism*.”²⁶ Basically, it was a “*means of preservation*” and insulated man from total despair of “his smallness and contingency in the flux of becoming and passing

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

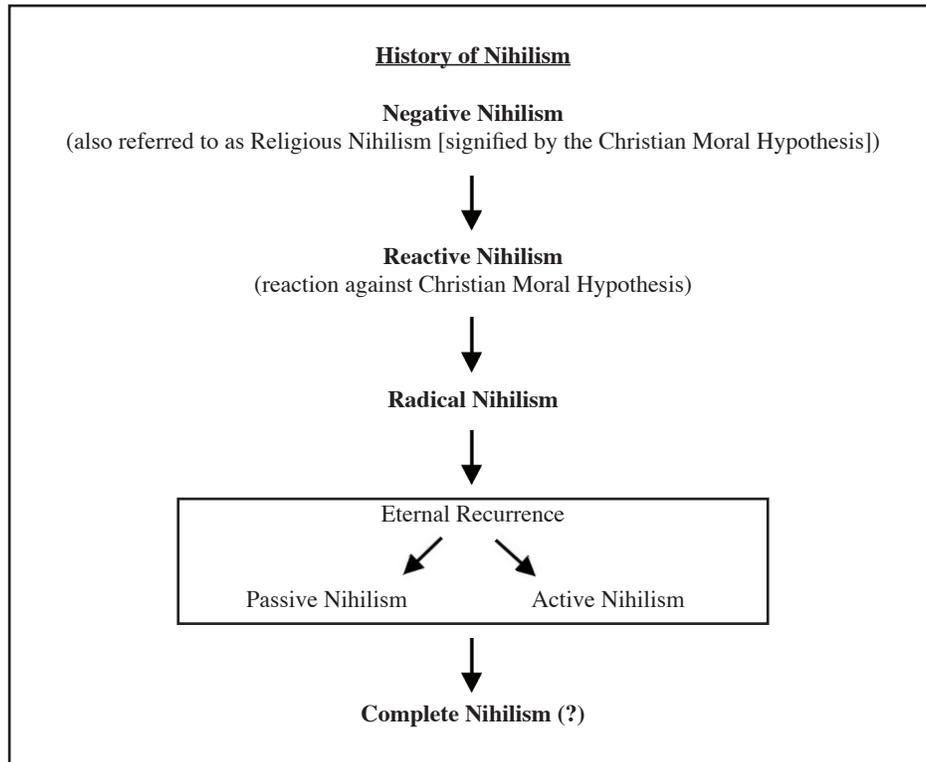


Figure A

away.”²⁷ Another way to say this is that it provided a rift between an ‘apparent’ world, where man was basically insignificant, and a ‘true’ one, which was a world of our higher values.²⁸

Nietzsche claims that one of the forces that this Christian morality cultivated was truthfulness. Truth, however, according to Nietzsche, turns *against* morality: it “discovers its *teleology*, the *partiality* of its viewpoint.”²⁹ This idea is confirmed in the later chapters of *Ecce Homo*, where he says:

Have I been understood? ... The self-overcoming of morality from out of truthfulness, the self-overcoming of moralists into their opposite—*into me* [*viz.* the immoralist *par excellence*]³⁰

It’s a sticky question over what Nietzsche’s view about truth is, or whether he even had a single (or consistent) view about it. But we can make some headway if we divide the question ‘what is truth for Nietzsche?’ into two parts. One way to think about this question is to ask what Nietzsche thinks is the correct view about truth. The other way to think about this question is to ask what general conditions Nietzsche thinks something must meet for us (meaning a society or the whole of humanity) to classify it as true. It is in this second way that we can consider Nietzsche’s use of ‘truthfulness’ and how it was cultivated by Christian morality.

At the most general level Nietzsche thought that what we classify as true is what is suitable to our conditions of life.³¹ He says “[t]he criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power,”³² but that it is also a kind of “contentment”, requiring the “smallest expenditure of spiritual force.”³³ So it is only that which we are

able to endure that we classify as true. In this way, Nietzsche considers the conditions of truth as some sort of non-perspectival part of reality as false, and that what is counted as true is dependent on (1) the conditions of our survival and (2) only that in which we have the power to endure.

This helps considerably in discerning the transition to the second type of nihilism: Reactive nihilism. The Christian moral hypothesis provided us with the resources for discerning true and false, but at this stage we were not strong enough to challenge what the Christian moral hypothesis *determined* was true and false. Nietzsche is thinking about ‘needs’, implanted in us, on which depend the value we attribute to life; in particular: unity, purpose and being (truth).³⁴ It was only at a later stage, when we progressed in our strength, that we no longer needed the protection of the Christian moral hypothesis. It is at this stage that the conditions of our survival outstrip what the Christian moral hypothesis discerns as true. In other words, we no longer need the ‘safety’ of unity, purpose and being (truth). But this, according to Nietzsche, results in a turbid antagonism: “*not esteeming what we know and no longer being permitted to esteem what we would like to pretend to ourselves.*”³⁵

If the Christian moral hypothesis was the antidote for a kind of nihilism in respect to the meaninglessness of life, the undermining of this morality through our strength in overcoming its falsities should at once absolve the Christian moral hypothesis *and* its foundation (for we are now strong enough to encounter the meaninglessness of life ‘head on’). However, such is not the case, for as the Christian interpretation was “regarded as *the* interpretation, there now seems to be no meaning at all in existence, everything seems to be *in vain.*”³⁶ It is this ‘in vain’ that encompasses man in virtue of the loss of all meaning in life. There is now no goal, no purpose, no meaning in evil, no intrinsic value in man. The old interpretation—the Christian moral interpretation—has been shown to be false, but there is nothing to replace it. This results in a kind of nihilism that throws its hands up and confesses that all is ‘in vain’. This is Reactive nihilism.

But this is only a transitory stage to a much more severe form of nihilism: Radical nihilism.³⁷ This comes about, according to Nietzsche, through “the *most paralyzing* thought,” which is to come to the *realization* that our values aim only at a pseudo purpose—for there is no aim or purpose—yet one has no power to prevent oneself from being lured into this false sense of security.³⁸ So it is not *only* the ‘in vain’ that is prevalent here (although this plays a big part); it is the reflexivity that is important: our coming to realize the pointlessness or meaninglessness of our situation and not being able to do anything about it.

The doctrine of the eternal recurrence is instrumental in the move from Reactive nihilism to Radical nihilism. Nietzsche introduces us to the eternal recurrence in Section 6 of the fragment under discussion:³⁹

Let us think this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is, without meaning or goal, but inevitably recurring, without any finale into nothingness: eternal recurrence⁴⁰

The eternal recurrence was most famously introduced by Nietzsche in the second-to-last section of book four in *Gay Science*. Here, he tells (or, actually, recounts his experience in Sils Maria in 1881) of a demon who says:

This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every great pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence⁴¹

What I take this to be saying is that our life, and all the lives before us in history, have occurred many times before, and will recur many times more. But we will have no knowledge of this recurrence: everything we do will have a feeling of uniqueness, yet this apparent feeling is false—we have done everything before and we will do everything once again *in exactly the same way* and *in exactly the same sequence*. Nietzsche takes the demon to provide a challenge, where one of two options are available:

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

[either] throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus... [or] answer him 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine'⁴²

It is the requirement to choose one of these two options that splits radical nihilism into two forms. For Nietzsche, (radical) nihilism requires disambiguation:

Nihilism. It is ambiguous:

A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as active nihilism.

B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as passive nihilism⁴³

It is one's answer to the demon that determines which disambiguation one gives to nihilism. Throwing oneself down and gnashing one's teeth is a rejection of the demon's 'truth' and an instantiation of passive nihilism. Accepting the demon's tale is an instantiation of active nihilism. This active nihilism, however, *remains* nihilistic:

Nihilism [*viz.* active or passive nihilism] represents a pathological *intermediate state* (what is pathological is the tremendous generalization, the inference *that there is no meaning at all*): whether because the productive forces are not yet strong enough or because decadence is still hesitating and has not yet invented the resources it needs⁴⁴

The intermediate state is the state of withholding assent from any particular goal, while denying all meaning. So this disambiguation of radical nihilism, *viz.* into active nihilism, remains nihilistic: new values, new goals and new meanings are not yet created, which can only be done at the final stage of nihilism (which I will not be discussing): complete nihilism. I will argue that Nietzsche inhabited the active stage of nihilism.

I introduced the eternal recurrence as a cyclical view of time, but it is evident from what Nietzsche says, and many interpreters after him, that there are (at least) two meanings of the eternal recurrence.⁴⁵ Under one disambiguation it is a cosmological thesis, which is intended to make sense of the idea that time is infinite and matter is finite by claiming that every possible combination of matter will recur infinite times. This has also been called the scientific or metaphysical thesis. Under the other disambiguation it is a kind of thought experiment. This has been called the anthropological or psychological thesis. It is thought to be equivalent to an ethical imperative, analogous to Kant's categorical imperative. It provides a burden upon one in that it requires one's (psychological) acceptance of the following condition for every action: "live in every moment so that you *could* will that moment back again over and over" for, according to the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine, you *will* live that moment over and over regardless.⁴⁶

Consider, first, the eternal recurrence as a scientific thesis. Paolo D'Iorio has argued, quite convincingly, that Nietzsche intended the eternal recurrence to be a scientific doctrine.⁴⁷ D'Iorio cites 19th-century philosophers who influenced Nietzsche: Otto Caspari and Johann Carl Friedrich Zöllner, who argued for an organicist and pan-psychical conception of the universe.⁴⁸ It was in this way that these philosophers proposed that the universe can avoid a state of rest, or end-state, and thus recur eternally.

There are some clues that Nietzsche is considering the same problem. He claims that the eternal recurrence is "the *most scientific* of all possible hypothesis."⁴⁹ And in the next line he highlights that he is reacting to the very same problem his predecessors were: "[w]e deny final goals: if existence had one, it could not fail to have been reached."⁵⁰⁵¹ In cashing this out, Nietzsche's predecessors appealed to a pantheistic (e.g. an organicist or pan-psychical) conception of the universe. But this is awkward for Nietzsche, because he has disavowed the existence of such an hypothesis by rebuking the Christian moral hypothesis.⁵²

So it is of no surprise that Nietzsche seeks an opposite, or contrast, to pantheism [*ein Gegensatz zum Pantheismus angestrebt wird*] in the next section. Nietzsche finds this contrast in the will to power. He claims that we may

affirm the process “if something within that process were *achieved* at every moment of it—and always the same thing.”⁵³ According to Nietzsche, what this ‘fundamental trait’ is is the will to power.⁵⁴ For Nietzsche, it is this will that is attempting to achieve power at every moment.

Nietzsche then considers the psychological effects of the eternal recurrence as scientific doctrine. This is to consider the eternal recurrence as a psychological or anthropological thesis. We start with Nietzsche’s claim that one’s “welcom[ing] triumphantly every moment of general existence” depends on one’s fundamental trait being aligned with the fundamental trait of life.⁵⁵ Considering morality in respect to the fundamental trait of life, he contends that morality was used as a *protection against* the rulers’ fundamental trait: their will to power. But if “the oppressed man’s” faith in morality was a protection against his oppressor’s will to power, then the man of morality would realize that he has no higher rank than his oppressors. This, according to Nietzsche, would mean that man would enter “the phase of hopeless desperation.”⁵⁷

This helps explain why loss of faith in the Christian religion did not mean an acceptance of what the Christian values were supposed to be an antidote for. The reason is that after the Christian religious point of view overcame itself, there was still a need for the ‘comfort’ of certain moral values, to provide an order of rank that *is* based on moral evaluations. But, at the same time, there is a certain mistrust in these values. It is only when this mistrust becomes a crisis that we move from the reactive stage of nihilism to a form of radical nihilism.

It is Nietzsche’s contention that Buddhism and Christianity are nihilistic religions, but that Buddhism is a more completed nihilism.⁵⁸ In particular, Buddhism has reached the passive stage of nihilism, whereas the Christian religion stands at the verge of reactive and passive nihilism.⁵⁹ This passive nihilism is what Nietzsche calls the will to nothingness. It is to will one’s own ruination. So, by definition, it is *against* life. In the words of Deleuze, it is nihilism in “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.”⁶⁰ Nietzsche says:

they... themselves *want* to have *power* by *forcing* the powerful to become their executioners. This is the European form of Buddhism, *doing No* after all existence has lost its ‘meaning’⁶¹

It is worth considering this in some detail; for it is in this that we can see Nietzsche’s justification of negative nihilism—which was a nihilism of *life*—from a nihilism that takes values as its starting point. This is important. In the fragment under discussion, Nietzsche *started* from a world of higher values. It turned out—and, according to Nietzsche, this is based on empirical fact—that these values were a falsification of the world. This resulted in the reactive stage of nihilism, which culminates into radical nihilism. If Nietzsche is right in translating man back into nature and that everything is essentially the will to power, then man will attempt to gain power in any way he can. It will turn out, according to Nietzsche, that those who believe in (or hide behind) (pseudo) Christian values are of a lower rank *outside all existing social orders*. But in this case the believer in (pseudo) Christian values will be overpowered by their non-believing contemporaries, i.e. those of a higher rank *outside all existing social orders*. Thus, the (pseudo) Christian’s struggle will turn inwards and he will “prefer to will *nothingness* rather than *not* will.”⁶² This is what Nietzsche has dubbed the will to nothingness. But, as I have said, this is a devaluation of life itself, or nihilism in its primary sense. Thus, from a supersensible world of higher values we have eventuated in a devaluation of life *from these higher values themselves*. We might say, along with Brian Leiter, that it is the *causal power* of these values themselves that is called into question.⁶³ Thus, the claim that whatever is the source of these higher values is nihilistic (in its primary sense) appears to be empirically justified.

This, *viz.* passive nihilism, is to take the first option Nietzsche’s demon provoked: throwing oneself down and gnashing one’s teeth. The second option of embracing the demon’s ‘truth’ and praising him as a god is much more optimistic. In light of this, Nietzsche sees this passive stage of nihilism as holding “relative prosperity”; for he thinks these conditions are ripe for a more healthy nihilism: *active* nihilism.⁶⁴ On the eternal recurrence as a psychological doctrine he says this:

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

The *value of such a crisis* is that it *cleanses*... it crowds related elements together and has them bring about each other's destruction... bringing to light the weaker... and thus initiating *an order of rank among forces*... outside all existing social orders⁶⁵

The idea here is that the acknowledgement of the eternal recurrence will have a dramatic effect on individuals. It will work in such a way, Nietzsche thinks, that the strong will accept it and the weak will falter in its midst. This is his (positive) evaluation of the situation:

In this process, who will prove to be the *strongest*? The most moderate, those who have no *need* of extreme articles of faith, who not only concede but even love a good deal of contingency and nonsense, who can think of man with a considerable moderation of his value and not therefore become small and weak: the richest in health, who are equal to the most misfortunes and therefore less afraid of misfortunes—men who *are sure of their power* and who represent with conscious pride the strength man has achieved⁶⁶

But how this is supposed to work is really not very clear. The problem here is best brought out with respect to Löwith⁶⁷, for we can see Klossowski⁶⁸ responding to the apparent contradictions Löwith brings to the fore.

In his *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (originally published in German in 1935 (the second edition in 1956)), Löwith provides an excellent attempt to understand Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, and its place within nihilism. In his deep study into Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence, Löwith reveals a contradiction between the cosmological reading and the anthropological reading. He argues that Nietzsche could only free himself from this contradiction if he were to succeed in "flying beyond all going, going over, and going under, into the innocence of heaven"⁶⁹—the biblical reference is not accidental, here. The only resolution, Löwith thinks, was for Nietzsche to become God: Dionysus *and* the Crucified.⁷⁰

The tension between the cosmological and the anthropological reading of the eternal recurrence is deep. The cosmological reading holds (rightly or wrongly) that time and all the events of the world repeat in exactly the same way and exactly the same sequence.⁷¹ Man, being a part of nature, enjoins this recurrence. Hence, it makes no difference what one decides to do because one has already so decided, or will so decide. Whatever one man has done he will do again and again. Moreover, his actions, being one of nature, play back into nature and help determine the trajectory of the world, but at the same time are *determined by* the trajectory of the world. Löwith spells out this contradiction: "I myself have for eternities conditioned the fatality of *all* existence and its eternal recurrence, and I myself am only *one* conditioned fatality in the whole of the cycle of the natural world"; and again in moral terms: "I am responsible for everything's being there and being as it is, and there is no being that would be responsible for its being as it is and its being there."⁷²

Löwith's insistence to go 'outside' or 'go over' the contradiction to 'solve' it is mistaken, however. This becomes evident when considering the following example. Consider these two sentences, as being told to a child:

Mother: You can go to school *only if* you do *not* use red paint

Teacher: You can go to school *only if* you use red paint

And what constitutes the child's freedom:

Freedom: You have the freedom to choose whether or not you go to school

Assuming, for the sake of the example, that there is only one possible school to which the child can go, it would seem that while Mother provides the child with freedom to choose it is only a false freedom, for Teacher says the negation of this. What is interesting here, however, is that while neither Teacher nor Mother negate Freedom (the child still has the freedom to *choose*)—and neither is self-contradictory—the triad—Freedom, Teacher,

Mother—is inconsistent: the child can do as Mother says if and only if she *cannot* do what Teacher says, and vice-versa. Thus, insofar as Freedom consists solely in being given the *choice* of whether to go to school or not there is a contradiction between Teacher and Mother: Teacher and Mother only contradict each other on the assumption of Freedom. So while there is a contradiction between the triad, any two of the three are compatible with each other.

One might push the point further, however. One might say, for instance, that Mother and Teacher provide a *logical* contradiction for the child, as they say that she can and cannot go to school; for the child can only go to school if she doesn't use red paint, yet she can go to school only if she *does* use red paint. There is one prevailing option, however, which prevents the contradiction from being logical, and that is for the child to 'opt out' by not going to school. This might be understood as a "flying beyond all going, going over, and going under, into the innocence of heaven." This is what I understand to be constitutive of Löwith's contradiction.

But there is a way to deflate the situation that does not bring in the heavenly bodies. Following David Lewis, we can exploit the equivocal nature of 'can'.⁷³ In one sense of 'can' I can speak Finnish—I have the correct vocal chords, larynx, etc. to pronounce the words, I have the mental capacity to understand the logic of the language, and so on—but in another sense of 'can' it is *not* correct to say I can speak Finnish: in the sense that I do not know one word of this foreign language. So, according to one set of background conditions, it is perfectly true that I can speak Finnish, but according to another, more inclusive, set of conditions I *cannot*.

If this is right, a similar story can be told of the child. According to one set of background conditions she *can* go to school; namely, according to Mother and Freedom, but according to the more inclusive set of background conditions, which includes Teacher, she *cannot*. So while the child's freedom is curtailed, the 'illusion' of freedom is not (when relativized to a certain set of background conditions). Moreover, this has been done *without* going beyond the constraints of our finitude.

The analogy with the Nietzschean point is that in both instances (the child's and the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine) freedom is curtailed, yet the apparent contradiction can be overcome by *not* going outside the constraints of our finitude, but by exploiting the equivocal nature of 'can'. The point here is that one must *act* to bring about the actual present from its mere possibility. It is not as if the present actualizes itself; it must be *brought about* from what has gone on before it: the natural-historic world, including human actions. Thus, in the only sense that acting is possible for us, we must be able to act.

But our ability to act does nought in respect to ascertaining that there are any values. Moreover, it now appears that Nietzsche's ambition for a reevaluation of all values becomes redundant, due to the conflict between the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine and the eternal recurrence as anthropological doctrine. The problem is that the eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative is superfluous, for it is true that one must act in such a way that their actions are repeated inevitably, *but also that* one will do *and has done* these particular actions many times before. So if Nietzsche is right about particular values rising and falling in value in history, they will rise and fall innumerable times more. Thus, all is superfluous; all is 'in vain!'

We might turn to Klossowski here, who encounters this problem. Klossowski does not downplay the tension, calling the anthropological doctrine of the eternal recurrence an "experimental instrument", which constitutes a "conspiracy" against life (as we know it) by those strong enough to wield it.⁷⁴ The idea here is that the strong use the anthropological doctrine of the eternal recurrence to elucidate the meaninglessness of life, and it is through this meaninglessness that they are able to set goals for humankind.

But using the doctrine of the eternal recurrence as an experimental doctrine appears to undermine its very authenticity. This is because it is through the very meaninglessness of life, according to the truth of the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine, that the strong are able to give mankind a goal by creating values of the *ubermensch*. But for the strong to imbue values back into the world would require exactly the repudiation of

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

the *truth* of the eternal recurrence (as cosmological doctrine). For it is only through the falsity of the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine that values could be re-embedded in the world. Suppose that the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine is false: it is a simulacra. But as the existence of the *ubermensch* depends on the truth of the cosmological doctrine, the *ubermensch*, too, must be a *simulacra*.

I read Klossowski as resolving this tension in the following way.⁷⁵ First, we uphold that the (cosmological doctrine of the) eternal recurrence *is* true. But second, we deny that there are any stable (immutable, categorical) identities or values. What is the case is that the world and its inhabitants are constantly in flux, embroiled in a vicious circle without beginning or end.⁷⁶ The values we obtain and lose are due to experiments undertaken by the strong. It is with these values that the masses may navigate the world and create meaning. But the world is only one of chaotic flux.⁷⁷ So it is essentially meaningless in its fluidity.⁷⁸

I think this is an initial step in the right direction. It seems to aim at “goal-lessness as such”, for all the values that are created are transitory and essentially meaningless. If Nietzsche is to see himself as one of these legislators of value, then this will be an acceptable position to place him in and still make “goal-lessness as such” the principle of his faith. But I think we can go further. I claim that Nietzsche is no such legislator of values, but is an active nihilist.

One of the problems with the Christian moral hypothesis is that it claims absoluteness: “I am morality, and nothing is morality besides me!”⁷⁹ Moreover, it purports to be *above* actuality in the sense that it postulates a world of higher values above the world of appearances. It was insofar as the Christian moral hypothesis appealed to this extra-sensory realm that, upon its downfall, we find ourselves in the nihilism of today. On this idea of a supreme morality, Nietzsche says:

[T]hat what is right for one *cannot* by any means therefore be right for another, that the demand for one morality for all is detrimental to precisely the higher men, in short that there exists an *order of rank* between man and man, consequently also between morality and morality⁸⁰

He thinks that there should be a different ‘morality’, depending on one’s rank order:

My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not at an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the “beasts of prey,” etc.⁸¹

The thought then goes that Nietzsche provides one such valuation with his notions of, e.g., the will to power, the eternal recurrence and the *ubermensch*. But what he says here cannot be understood in isolation. In particular, and by Nietzsche’s own lights, what he says must be understood as a particular *perspective*. When Nietzsche says “[e]very naturalism in morality—which is to say: every *healthy* morality—is governed by an instinct of life,”⁸² he is not, on pain of begging the question, saying that his particular naturalism is *the* scales on which ‘morality’ must be measured. He is only saying that his view is one view of many. Nietzsche is most clear on this perspectival view of truth in the following passage:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be⁸³

What I am saying, then, is that we can build on Klossowski’s claim that the world is essentially meaningless, with Nietzsche’s claim that there is no absolute perspective, to reveal a Nietzsche who is not a *legislator* of values—not one who has a *completed nihilism*—but one who is a radical nihilist, in particular an *active* nihilist. This is one who *destroys* current values, but it does not mean that any particular values are resurrected in their place. To do so would be to assume *the* perspective on life.

But neither does a doing no imply a doing, or saying, yes *even to something else*. The trap we fall into is a natural one to fall into. By seeing Nietzsche taking on a particular perspective to criticize current values we assume that he inhabits this perspective insofar as he is a proponent for some (opposing) value. But this is to assume a duality that is not there. This is, for Nietzsche, a mistaken view of agency, where the doer is separated from the deed.⁸⁴ For Nietzsche, there are *only* deeds. So doing no *exhausts* what it is Nietzsche is doing in his critical moments. As he says:

It is only as creators that we can annihilate!—But let us not forget this: it suffices to create new names and valuations and probabilities, in order in the long run to create new ‘things’⁸⁵

Thus, he is only a *precursor* to the creation of new ‘things’. He, himself—as a nihilist—is in no position to propound a certain set of values. As Ansell-Pearson puts it:

What Nietzsche seeks to do as a thinker, I believe, is to *prepare* us for change. He shows that humanity has a history, that it has been (de-) formed in a particular way, and that the end of the Christian moral interpretation of the world offers the possibility of another beginning. It becomes possible to navigate new seas since the *horizon* is now ‘free’ again⁸⁶

But we still have this niggling feeling that this *cannot* be right. *Surely* Nietzsche *is* propounding a set of values for us to follow; *surely* he sees himself as a *legislator* of value. But there is a response to this in Nietzsche, himself. The problem here is with our *belief* that a doing no implies a doing or saying yes to something else. The source of this belief is our belief in antithetical values.⁸⁷ According to Nietzsche, this is a prejudice of metaphysicians, of which the first chapter in *Beyond Good and Evil* is dedicated.

I have not the room to adequately defend such a claim. What I want to suggest is that it is this continuing belief in antithetical values that may underlie our prejudice that a doing no does, in some way, imply a saying yes to something else. Let me provide a simple example. Suppose I were to disagree with a sign on a beach that said ‘no swimming’. Actually, I don’t care about swimming (I prefer to stay dry), but my grist is with the politics behind the erection of this sign. My active protest consists in my swimming. In this situation, I say, the *deed* of my doing no was swimming, but this does not imply that I think there should be swimming allowed at this beach, nor that I think others should follow me (perhaps I think swimming is extremely treacherous at this beach). As I have said, this was not my intention: I could not care less about swimming; I just don’t like the political stance. Hence, I seem to have been doing no without saying yes to anything else; for it is my *deed* that *exhausts* what it is that I am doing.

Sure enough, I have my own set of values, here. But I am not asking others to follow me in accepting my values; I am attempting to get others to *question* the value of the values that they intuitively accept. This is what I am doing in my deed. The same, I claim, is true of Nietzsche. While he makes different evaluative claims, it is not disciples that he wants—people to take up his particular valuations—but he wants to provide a ‘perspectival revolution’.

What I am saying here is nothing new; Nietzsche said it before me. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra says to his disciples that “[o]ne repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels?”⁸⁸ Earlier, in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche warns of not questioning the wisdom of great men.⁸⁹ And in a revealing passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*, regarding his doctrine of the will to power, he says “[g]ranted this too is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to raise this objection?—well, so much the better.”⁹⁰ So it is not Nietzsche’s aim to introduce a new value system as such, but to provide different perspectives. It is a *challenging* of current values, but not a construction of new ones. It is only Nietzsche as active nihilist that can play this role, or so I have claimed.

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

I have claimed that Nietzsche is best seen as a thorough-going nihilist. While he mentions ‘complete nihilism’ once in an unpublished note, he did not (at least on my reading) assume that the task was fully done. Instead, he is best seen as attempting to adjure a complete destruction of current values. To do this he necessarily takes a particular perspective, but, importantly, this perspective has no privileged place in respect to the values he advances. I have argued that it is through radical nihilism, and Nietzsche’s particular disambiguation of this type of nihilism, that he is able to complete such a destruction.

I cannot say much more about what Nietzsche’s project was, but for an attempt consider the following conditional claim. If the world has no intrinsic values, yet we are essentially valuing beings, then it is a very real question as to what our values should be. But this is only to inhabit the reactive stage of nihilism, albeit in an idealistic sense, i.e. where the intrinsicness of *all* our values has been put into question. It is when this void becomes perceptible that this lack of value becomes a problem and starts to feed back on itself. This is the passive stage of nihilism. But it is only when this stage is reached that a more positive form of nihilism can grow: active nihilism. Under the guise of active nihilism, values are destroyed, rather than being allowed to fester and become internalized. In this sense it cleanses. It is not a creation of new values, but a destruction of old. It provides a new perspective and opens up new horizons.⁹¹ If Nietzsche is, as he claims to be, a thorough-going nihilist, it is *this* position that we must see him in. This is the true ‘goal-lessness as such’ that is the principle of his faith.⁹²

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NOTES

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1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 1969.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo" *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, §1, 295.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Thomas Common. 2nd ed. New York: Dover Publications, 2006.
4. As was pointed out to me by an anonymous referee for this journal, an interesting comparison with this articulation of Nietzsche's nihilism may be found in recent scholarship by Stanley Rosen and Lawrence Lampert. Unfortunately, constraints of space disallow me to discuss these authors in any depth. I provide the following as a short (less than satisfactory) exposition on the general trajectory of their position. See, e.g., Lawrence Lampert, "Nietzsche, the History of Philosophy, and Esotericism," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 9/10(1995); Lawrence Lampert, "Nietzsche's Challenge to Philosophy in the Thought of Leo Strauss," *The Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 3 (2005); Lawrence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes and Nietzsche*. London: Yale University Press, 1993; Stanley Rosen, "Nietzsche's Double Rhetoric: Which Nihilism?" *Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Philosophy of the Future*. Ed. Jeffrey Metzger. London: Continuum, 2009; Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Yale University Press, 1969; Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. These authors acknowledge a distinction between the *esoteric* and *exoteric* in Nietzsche. Esotericism is widely denounced because of its deceitfulness: it communicates especially to only the select few, using language which conforms to current usage to hide its intended message. Exotericism, on the other hand, attempts to communicate concepts that are widely accepted by the mass population. The latter's message is on its face, so to speak, whereas the former is done 'behind closed doors.' Lampert has convincingly shown that Nietzsche was only too aware of this distinction (See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 2003, §30, 61–62, for an explicit reference to this distinction.) But, according to these writers, Nietzsche collapses the distinction within his own writings, revealing both an esoteric and exoteric teaching. The exoteric teaching, or the teaching for the masses, is orchestrated through 'noble lies', which are designed by the strong (Nietzsche) to provide mankind with certain goals and values in life. The esoteric teaching, on the other hand, holds that life is essentially chaos and lacks any meaning. Thus, Nietzsche's esoteric teaching is directed to the few (the philosophers), who are then forced to inhabit different perspectives on life to provide meaning to the many (the masses) through 'noble lies'. But all these perspectives are essentially meaningless and are only different expressions of the will to power. The remaining issue is whether Nietzsche is able to escape this nihilism, or whether his philosophy is essentially nihilistic. (See Rosen, "Nietzsche's Double Rhetoric: Which Nihilism?" for the claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is essentially nihilistic.)
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*. Ed. Rudiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. §2 [131], 84–87; Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals." *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. §III, 27, 159–160.
7. Montinari (Mazzino Montinari, *Reading Nietzsche*. Trans. Greg Whitlock. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. Ch. 8) has shown that Nietzsche later abandoned plans to write the book where this material was originally destined: *The Will to Power*. Instead, Nietzsche put all material intended for inclusion in this book into *Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*. This does not nullify the importance of this *Nachlass* material, however, insofar as it *elaborates* on the parts which were included for publication. While I have not shown how this *Nachlass* material relates to his published work at every point, I think it will not be seen to stray too far from Nietzsche's (authorised) teachings (a fruitful comparison can be found in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (esp. §27) and *Antichrist* (esp. first part of the book).
8. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §9[35], 146; See also, Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §2, 9 and the notes added by Kaufmann.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Twilight of the Idols." *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. London: Penguin Books, 1990, "The Four Great Errors" §8, 65.
10. I applaud those who embrace Nietzsche as a nihilist, such as Ansell-Pearson who claims that Nietzsche is a 'perfect nihilist.' Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. It is exactly this emphasis on Nietzsche as a nihilist that I want to stress in this paper.
11. Ashley Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*. Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, Publishers, 2009, 40.
12. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §3, 3.
13. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §25, 18.
14. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §24, 18.
15. Sometimes this is said explicitly: "the task of revaluation has two distinct components, destruction on the one hand, and construction on the other" (E. E. Sleinis, *Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values: A Study in Strategies*. Urbana and Chicago:

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

- University of Illinois Press, 1994, 151). Other times it is mentioned in different terminology, e.g. “critical and constructive program” (Christine Daigle, “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics... Virtue Politics?” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32 (2006, 4–6)), which is sometimes associated with virtue ethics (see Daigle, “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics... Virtue Politics?”, 4). But this dualistic nature of Nietzsche’s excursion on values is generally acknowledged, if only implicitly. Some examples, which are by no means exhaustive, are: Thomas H Brobjer, “Nietzsche’s Affirmative Morality: And Ethics of Virtue.” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26 (2003); Frank Cameron, *Nietzsche and the ‘Problem’ of Morality*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002, esp. Ch. 5; Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*. London: Routledge, 2002, 136–55; Charles R. Pigden, “Nihilism, Nietzsche and the Doppelgänger Problem.” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 10:5 (2007).
16. The ‘objection from implausibility’ relates to Nietzsche’s destroying of values. His seemingly contradictory use of ‘nihilism’, in the quoted passages, can be accounted for by noting that he is using the term in slightly different ways. A part of the intention of this paper is to disambiguate Nietzsche’s use of this term.
17. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §12(A), 12–13.
18. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, 147.
19. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147–48.
20. Deleuze claims there are three types of nihilism that can be found in Nietzsche “[u]p until the last man”: negative, reactive and passive. (Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.) Deleuze’s, and my, use of ‘negative nihilism’ and ‘reactive nihilism’ signify the same thing. But Deleuze has only signified one half of what I have, following White, called ‘radical nihilism.’ (Alan White, “Nietzschean Nihilism: A Typology.” *International Studies in Philosophy* XIX, 2 (1987).) It may be the case that Deleuze considers active nihilism, but he doesn’t specifically put it under this name, and it is not clear that he would consider it nihilistic *per se* (see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 171–75.)
21. The term ‘complete nihilism’ appears to be used only once in Nietzsche’s entire work (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §28, 19.) (cf. Byron Williston, “‘Complete Nihilism’ In Nietzsche.” *Philosophy Today* 45:4 (2001), n. 43), but he does seem to refer to this idea in at least one other place (Nietzsche, “On the Genealogy of Morals “, II, §24, 95–96.), where he uses the term ‘antinihilist’ (cf. White, “Nietzschean Nihilism: A Typology”, 34.).
22. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §28, 19, and Preface §2, 3.
23. It is this idea that seems to illicit the following comment from Deleuze: “[Nietzsche thinks] nihilism is not an event in history but the motor of the history of man as universal history.” (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.)
24. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
25. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
26. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
27. See, also, Nietzsche, “On the Genealogy of Morals “, §I, 13, 44–46.
28. Cf. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “How the ‘Real World’ at Last Became a Myth”.
29. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 5[71], 2, 116–17.
30. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am a Destiny”, §3, 327–28.
31. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §533, 289–90.
32. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §534, 290.
33. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §537, 291.
34. Cf. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §12(A), 12–13.
35. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 2, 117.
36. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 4, 117.
37. See, also, Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §3, 9.
38. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 5, 117.
39. However, introducing the eternal recurrence here is not an accidental or chance occurrence: the eternal recurrence and nihilism appear together in many other places in the Nietzschean corpus. (For a good example of this see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “Of the Vision and The Riddle”. There is also a good discussion of this passage in D’Iorio (Paolo D’Iorio, “The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation.” *The Agonist: A Nietzsche Circle Journal* IV, I, Spring (2011, 8–11)).
40. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 6, 118.
41. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §341, 152.
42. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §341, 152.
43. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §22, 17; see also Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §9[35], 146.
44. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §9[35], 146; see also Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §13, 14.
45. A third interpretation is offered by Deleuze, who claims that the eternal recurrence is the return of *difference*. (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.) However, I think we should dismiss Deleuze’s reading, as D’Iorio has convincingly shown: Deleuze’s reading is based on a vast array of mistakes (including translation errors and deliberate manipulation of the text) (see D’Iorio, “The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation”, 1–5, esp. n7).
46. Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Trans. J. Harvey Lomas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 85; see also Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 68.

47. Among other evidence D'Iorio cites for the claim that Nietzsche intended this doctrine to be a scientific one, D'Iorio includes a part of a letter Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast on August 14th, 1882: "I've kept about a quarter of the original material [relating to the eternal recurrence] (for a scientific treatise)." (D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", n. 26). See also, Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 94.
48. D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", 21.
49. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], §6, 118, italics in the original.
50. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], §6, 118.
51. This sentiment rehashes a pivotal step in 19th-century philosophers who used Schopenhauer's argument of infinity *a parte ante* to argue for the eternal recurrence as a cosmological theory (cf. D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", 21).
52. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §108–9, 81–82.
53. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 7, 118.
54. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §36, 66–67.
55. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 8, 118.
56. This is a generalisation from an observation about Spinoza: "Spinoza attained an affirmative stance... insofar as every moment has a logical necessity: and with this fundamental instinct for logic he felt a sense of triumph about the world's being constituted thus." (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 7, 118.)
57. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 9, 119.
58. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Anti-Christ." *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, §20–23, 141–45.
59. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152, n. 4.
60. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147.
61. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 12, 120.
62. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", III, §1, 97.
63. Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 177–79.
64. In fact, he claims that it would have "scholarly presuppositions" (comparable with Buddha's conception of causality (karma). Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 13, 120.
65. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 14, 120–21.
66. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 15, 121.
67. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*.
68. Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. London: Athlone Press, 1997.
69. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 192.
70. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 10.
71. Deleuze seems to be an exception, see n. 44 in this paper.
72. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 191–92.
73. David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13(1976).
74. Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 164–71.
75. See Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 170.
76. Cf. "This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us—that is another eternity." (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the Vision and the Riddle", §2, 178.)
77. See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 109, 81: "The general character of the world is... in all eternity chaos; not by the absence of necessity, but in the sense of the absence of order, structure, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic humanities are called."
78. Note that this goes beyond saying that it is due to the transitory nature of values that they are essentially meaningless. (This would be to assume that these values must be essential or eternal to be meaningful, which is nihilistic.) Rather, it states the *impossibility* of any values.
79. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §202, 125.
80. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §228, 158.
81. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §287, 162.
82. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Morality as Anti-Nature", §4, 55.
83. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", III, §12, 119.
84. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", I, §13, 44–46; Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Four Great Errors", §3, 59–61.

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

85. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §58, 52.

86. Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*, 205.

87. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §2, 33–34.

88. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §3, 103.

89. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, §542, 214.

90. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §22, 53.

91. This reference—as was Ansell-Pearson’s, in the quote above—to Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §124, 90.

92. An earlier version of this paper was first presented at the 2011 Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy conference, “The Time of Our Lives.” I would like to thank the convenors of this conference for the opportunity to present this paper, and for all those who attended the presentation. I would also like to thank Jack Reynolds for many helpful comments and discussions relating to this paper. Finally, I thank an anonymous referee from this journal for alerting me to the insightful contributions Rosen and Lampert have made to this subject.