

The Rhythm of Thought and Becoming in Nietzsche's Eternal Return

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Emily Harding, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

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Abstract

This thesis develops the concept of a rhythmic ontology that emerges from Nietzsche's thought, and argues that eternal return functions as a rhythmic disruption to our current understanding of the relationship between thought and becoming. By exploring the role of rhythm in Nietzsche's work, both in his early unpublished notes and in *The Gay Science* leading up to the introduction of eternal return, I argue that we need to understand eternal return as a rhythmic theory of time if it is to offer a convincing challenge to nihilistic thought, and that we find the most effective mobilisation of this approach in the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the breakdown in the relationship between thought and becoming through the motif of love that Nietzsche draws on in *The Gay Science*. I introduce the thought of eternal return as Nietzsche's attempt to address this problem and usher in *amor fati* as a new way of thinking, but show that we must affirm the rhythmic process of thought if we are to achieve this.

The following two chapters examine the role of rhythm within Nietzsche's work, arguing that he develops an understanding of rhythm as the structure through which becoming appears to us. This allows us to understand the creative and nihilistic tendencies of thought as different aspects of our relationship with time.

In the final two chapters of the thesis I reconsider eternal return as a rhythmical theory of the relationship between thought and becoming in a manner that goes beyond Nietzsche's published work, arguing that its development within the thought of Deleuze and Guattari is ultimately the most successful at countering the nihilistic problem that Nietzsche wishes to address.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
1. Exposition: Eternal return as an intervention into thought as love.....	15
The creativity of thought as love.....	18
The selective aspect of thought.....	26
<i>Amor fati</i> : the love of what is necessary.....	34
The anthropological reading of eternal return as a test of affirmation.....	52
2. Development: Rhythm as the form of time.....	60
Nietzsche's early rhythmical theory of time.....	61
The metaphysical division of appearance and reality.....	73
Time and force in rhythm.....	81
3. Modulation: Rhythm as the seduction of the future.....	94
The rhythmic wavebeat of becoming.....	94
Rhythm as a creative force.....	99
Rhythm as seduction.....	105
De-deifying the universe.....	110
Rhythm as binding the future.....	117
Eternal return as a new disruptive rhythm.....	124
4. Recapitulation: Eternal return as the confrontation of time in the moment.....	130
Zarathustra and the gateway Moment.....	131
The cosmological reading of eternal return as cyclical time.....	142
Time as the discontinuous moment.....	152
Time flies away: a criticism of Nietzsche's presentation of eternal return.....	159
5. Coda: the fabrication of time in the refrain.....	167
The eternal return of the dice in Nietzsche and Philosophy.....	168
Univocal being and the three syntheses of time in Difference and Repetition.....	181
One or several rhythms: the refrain in A Thousand Plateaus.....	195
Conclusion.....	209
Bibliography.....	213

Introduction

This thesis develops the concept of a rhythmic ontology that emerges from Nietzsche's thought, and argues that eternal return functions as a rhythmic disruption to our current understanding of the relationship between thought and becoming. By exploring the role of rhythm in Nietzsche's work, both in his early unpublished notes and in *The Gay Science* leading up to the introduction of eternal return, I argue that we need to understand eternal return as a rhythmic theory of time if it is to offer a convincing challenge to nihilistic thought, and that we find the most effective mobilisation of this approach in the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

This thesis takes up the problem of how we think our relationship to becoming, in particular how we can understand thought as the creation of something new, that nonetheless emerges from what has gone before. This problem unites two predominant themes within Nietzsche's work. On the one hand, Nietzsche understands our thought as suffused with the values of the past. "I" am not a separate soul or subject who performs certain actions or thinks certain thoughts. Instead "I" am no more than this activity. The actions and thoughts that I think of as mine are not the result of the decision of a subject, but are that which emerges from all the past activity of the world. Were I to wish for myself to be different, I would therefore need to rewrite the past – while to wish for the past to be different would equally be to unwittingly seek my own annihilation.¹ My identity, and the past that makes it up, are inextricably entwined.

But Nietzsche also demands that we learn to think in a new way. In the post-Enlightenment modern period, our understanding of who and what we as thinking beings are has been fundamentally called into question. Bound up with this doubt is a sense of our uncomfortably uncertain relationship with the future. Previously we lived with a sense of travelling towards a "better" state, whether this futural heaven be founded on a knowledge of God or an earthly confidence in the progress of human reason. Now both of

1 "The individual is a piece of fate from top to bottom, one more law, one more necessity for all that is to come and will be. Telling him to change means demanding that everything should change, even backwards..." (*TI* 'Morality as Anti-Nature' §6)

these former certainties are lost to us, and we are caught in a situation in which we do not know how to construct the new relationship with the future that we so desperately need. The critical effort Nietzsche directs towards uncovering the origins of our thought is intended to give us the tools with which to question the way we think, learning to view it as something changeable rather than eternal fact, and in so doing offering the possibility that we may actively guide this change.

The problem Nietzsche raises is therefore how there can be difference (a "new" kind of thought) that is at the same time identifiably connected to the past. The problem of how an identity can be said to change in time is one that has a long history within Western philosophy.² But Nietzsche approaches this problem from the opposite direction. Rather than beginning with static being, and asking how we are able to perceive change within it, he instead argues that there is no such static being. Instead, everything is in a continual state of change, flux, or becoming. The question then becomes not how things change, but how we are able to perceive static beings or "things" at all.

This change from the primacy of being to that of becoming does not merely reverse the terms of the relationship. We may traditionally have berated our thought for being too transient to understand the perfection of static being, but we cannot now simply replace this concern with the fear that our thought is too *stolid* to keep up with the fluidity of becoming.³ The whole basis on which we have traditionally judged the value of our thought is on how closely it is able to match the reality it aims to represent. The world of Being (as we formerly understood it) is One - it is completely self-identical, the "Same." "Better" thought is therefore that which draws closest to this identity, by minimising the difference

2 A tradition that dates back to Aristotle, who struggled with the question of at which point in time change could be said to happen. Presumably, if an object is in the process of changing, that change is happening "now." Yet this would mean that at one and the same time (now), the object is apparently, and impossibly, occupying two different states - its old state, and its new state. We are thus left with the problem that there must be change, specifically the change from the past to the future, and yet there seems to be nowhere within the now to put this change. For an account of Aristotle's theory of change and time, see Widder (2008:13ff), Coope (2001), and Roark (2011). We shall turn to Nietzsche and Deleuze's accounts of the passage of time in the moment in the final chapters of this thesis.

3 As we shall see in chapter two, this is an issue with Nietzsche's early work in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he at times presents thought as an imperfect representation of the world of becoming, which only ancient tragedy comes close to adequately conveying.

between thought and reality. But becoming is not the "same" - on the contrary, it is precisely that which changes, which never remains the the same. If that which we are trying to think is not being, but becoming, why should we privilege a thought which tries to replicate it? Becoming is transformation, so a thought which aims to remain faithful to this must in some sense transform that which it thinks.

This is the dual nature of the problem of thinking our relationship with the continual becoming from which we build our world. Not only must we undo the longstanding habit of thinking being as primary, which is the task of Nietzsche's critical project, we must also learn how to evaluate the creative transformational nature of our thought. The nature of thought is that which captures some of becoming, and holds it still for us. Nietzsche is clear that we could not survive in a world of becoming that we did not transform in some fashion. The privileging of stable identities has grown up for a reason – it is not only easier to get up and go to work in the morning if I do not have to reconstruct the world anew each time I wake, the restriction of form imposed upon becoming is how the creativity of thought functions, as a necessary departure from and transformation of becoming. The problem then becomes how we are to judge what constitutes a sympathetic transformation of becoming. The question of what is a good way to think is the question of how best to introduce form within the continuum of becoming.

This is the problem many commentators⁴ suggest that Nietzsche is addressing with the thought of eternal return – the problem of how to reconcile the thinking self with the world of becoming that it attempts to comprehend. Nietzsche's presentation of the thought of eternal return however appears oblique, contradictory, and on the face of it runs discouragingly counter to the project of how to think becoming in a new way. A central problem for those engaging with Nietzsche's thought is therefore not only how to understand the relationship between thought and becoming that emerges from his work, but also to see how that which Nietzsche describes as his most fundamental thought is supposed to address his most fundamental concern, by helping us understand thought as an expression of becoming. How does eternal return help us to capture the forces of becoming in thought, in a way that does not nullify the movement of becoming?

4 See for example Löwith (1997) and Stambaugh (1988).

As I was struggling to find a satisfactory way to understand the nature of thought as an interruption to the flow of becoming, my son was learning to play the trumpet. Listening to him practice, I realised that he was facing a similar problem. Take, for example, this piece of music (Mozart's 'Theme from a musical joke,' adapted for beginners):



The three consecutive notes in the opening have the rhythm of a question: "Do you see?" When my son played the piece, however, it would emerge in one of two ways. Either:



or:



The alternatives my son produced either ran all the notes together ("doyousee?") or separated them to the point that their connection was lost altogether ("Do? You? See?"). He was struggling with the problem of how the notes could be distinct, but at the same time joined together. His attempt to understand the rhythm of the music, I realised, expressed the problem that we face in thinking becoming. How can thought create something distinct within the ceaseless flow of becoming, without completely breaking it apart, to the point that it becomes nonsensical? How can we produce a future that is distinct from the past, while at the same time retaining a connection to it?

These two apparently contradictory attributes, of smooth undivided flow and discrete identifiable point, together constitute the phenomenon of rhythm. If one or the other is absent, the rhythm disintegrates. This tension "between rhythm as continuously 'flowing' and rhythm as periodically punctuated movement"⁵ is prevalent throughout etymological attempts to define rhythm, and as Benveniste identifies is captured in the ancient Greek word *rhythmos* that indicates form as a particular instantiation of flow, which is inherently

"improvised, momentary, changeable."⁶ As I will argue, it is this understanding of form as a temporary arrangement of the flow of becoming that Nietzsche is striving to convey throughout his work, and that points towards a healthier way in which thought can momentarily capture or interrupt becoming. As a philologist who devoted considerable attention to the study of rhythm early in his career, this rhythmical understanding of the problematic tension between thought and becoming is the beat that drives Nietzsche's work, and that we can use to bring clarity to the thought of eternal return that he hopes will allow us to think becoming in a new and more productive manner.

Nietzsche's work on rhythm has only been taken up by commentators within the past couple of decades. The chapter that Porter devotes to Nietzsche's early rhythm notes in his study of Nietzsche's early philological notebooks remains the most in-depth engagement with Nietzsche's work on rhythm, but while Porter indicates the possible connections between Nietzsche's early thoughts on rhythm and his later work, his focus here remains on Nietzsche's early thought rather than developing these connections.⁷ Miller's paper on Nietzsche's understanding of rhythm does more to develop the links between Nietzsche's earlier understanding of rhythmic temporality and his later theory of time, while Cohen provides a reading of Nietzschean rhythmic temporality based primarily on the works from *The Gay Science* onwards, without however making reference to the key aphorism of *The Gay Science* which most directly addresses rhythm.⁸ None of these commentators apply the insights that we gain into Nietzschean temporality from the notes on rhythm to the thought of eternal return, which is Nietzsche's most explicit engagement with time in the published works. Sauvanet does suggest that we should approach eternal return as a rhythmic thought, but does not explore the rhythmic theory of time that would support this reading.⁹

6 Benveniste 1971:286. In contrast to *skhema* which is a fixed form, *rhythmos* "designates the form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which does not have organic consistency; it fits the pattern of a fluid element, of a letter arbitrarily shaped, of a robe which one arranges at one's will, of a particular state of character or mood." (Benveniste 1971:285-6) Plato's work signals a move away from the earlier understanding of rhythm that Benveniste describes, as for Plato *rhythmos* is not the *characteristic* form of a movement, but instead a *regular* feature. In this way, the earlier understanding of rhythm as moving form shifts to the sense of a continuous movement punctuated by regular meter (Benveniste 1971:286ff).

7 Porter 2000:127ff

8 Miller (1999) and Cohen (2008)

9 Sauvanet 2001

This thesis therefore brings together rhythm and eternal return as Nietzsche's most explicit engagements with temporality. I focus on *The Gay Science*, in which Nietzsche prepares us for the introduction of eternal return in GS §341 by highlighting the nature of our thought as a loving, artistic, and above all *rhythmical* process. Taking my cue from Nietzsche's emphasis here on the role of rhythmic repetition in shaping our thought, I examine the links that emerge between rhythm and temporal identity in Nietzsche's unpublished notes from the period 1869-71. The inherently fragmentary nature of these notes prompts a further turn to *The Birth of Tragedy*, published shortly afterwards. Here we find a clearer discussion of the metaphysical structure that frames Nietzsche's thought during this period, allowing us to see how Nietzsche's early understanding of rhythm as the *form* of time is transformed in his writings on rhythm and eternal return in *The Gay Science* ten years later. The figure of Zarathustra who follows GS §341 provides Nietzsche's most sustained expression of eternal return, and so I then go on to draw on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the light of the account of temporalising rhythm that we find in *The Gay Science* and the early notes, to see whether the presentation of eternal return in Nietzsche's published work provides a convincing solution to the problem laid out in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche's attempt to convey the complex nature of individuating rhythmical time through the mouthpiece of Zarathustra is not ultimately entirely successful, as the multitude of contradictory interpretations of eternal return indicate. I therefore also turn to Nietzsche's later unpublished notes to elucidate the thought of eternal return that he struggles to express in *Zarathustra*.

My decision to focus on certain texts of Nietzsche's, both published and unpublished, is driven throughout by the task of using Nietzsche's understanding of rhythm to find a reading of eternal return that feels consistent with the problematics and concerns of *The Gay Science*. I argue that we find the necessary theoretical underpinnings for a rhythmical reading of eternal return in the theory of "moment time" developed from the unpublished notes.¹⁰ There is a wealth of secondary literature on Nietzsche's thought of eternal return, and a thorough examination of this lies beyond the scope of this thesis. I concentrate instead firstly on the traditional "anthropological" and "cosmological" readings, in order to show how these interpretations of eternal return fail to engage with its rhythmical character

10 Principally by Stambaugh (1987, 1988)

as temporal individuation. I then contrast these to the more successful ontological readings of Stambaugh and Deleuze, showing how their attention to the rhythmical nature of eternal return is what produces interpretations that are not only more consistent with the rest of Nietzsche's thought, but also more convincing as theories of time and subjectivity.

I noted earlier the problem of how to evaluate the validity of thought as in some sense "faithful" to becoming, when becoming is continual transformation. This issue is echoed by that of interpreting Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche's thought demands transformation - like Zarathustra, he bids his readers to "lose me and find yourselves."¹¹ The question therefore is how to perform a sympathetic transformation or interpretation of Nietzsche, for one cannot remain faithful to Nietzsche by remaining with him alone. The theory of moment time that Stambaugh reconstructs from Nietzsche's unpublished notes leaves us with the task of not only fleshing out the rhythmic temporality of eternal return, but also of attempting a new way of thinking becoming, once eternal return has freed us from our overdependence on the rhythms of the past. This is what necessitates the turn to Deleuze and Guattari. The reading of eternal return that Deleuze develops in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* takes up and advances Nietzsche's critical project to challenge the existing relationship between thought and becoming. I argue that in doing so Deleuze resolves the tensions, without collapsing the differences, that we find in both Nietzsche's account of rhythm and in the phenomenon of rhythm itself. However it is only in *A Thousand Plateaus*, co-authored with Guattari, that the ontological role of rhythm is made explicit. Deleuze's engagement with rhythm is by no means restricted to *A Thousand Plateaus*, and it would be impossible to do justice to either his theory of time or his writings on rhythm within a single chapter.¹² I draw on Deleuze as a reader of Nietzsche who realises some of the rhythmical possibilities of eternal return in his own work, and I therefore concentrate on the account of eternal return we find in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, before indicating how Deleuze and Guattari's

11 TSZ IV 'On the bestowing virtue' §3

12 Deleuze's other most in-depth engagement with rhythm is in the context of painting in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. For philosophical engagements with Deleuze's work on music see Bogue (2003) and Buchanan and Swiboda (2004), while Hulse and Nesbitt (2010) provides responses to Deleuze from the perspective of music scholars. Deleuze's account of the three syntheses of time has received extensive attention in for example Widder (2008), Williams (2011), and Somers-Hall (2013).

concept of the refrain undertakes the creative task of trying to think becoming in a new way.

Eternal return therefore functions within this thesis as a repeating musical theme, in my own (highly imprecise) approximation of sonata form. We begin with the first exposition of eternal return, but require the second theme of rhythm to provide its context. The rhythmic concerns of Nietzsche's work are then developed and modulated, before the recapitulation of eternal return is followed by a Deleuzo-Guattarian coda which completes the piece. My son's struggle to encompass the sense of both continuum and differentiation within rhythm has been resolved by the time-honoured process of rhythmical repetition that, as we are about to see, is how "we have *learned to love* everything we now love."¹³ It seems only fair to try the same approach with the thought of eternal return.

I will start by exploring Nietzsche's understanding of thought as a creative act through the metaphor of love that features in *The Gay Science*, by examining the repetitive process of learning to love that he describes there as one which involves an initial act of separating thought from becoming, before tracing the way in which our misunderstanding of this process has led to nihilism. I will then turn to the alternative model of love that Nietzsche names *amor fati*, and introduce the thought of eternal return as Nietzsche's prospective way of achieving this new relationship with becoming. I shall consider the anthropological reading of eternal return as a test of affirmation, and show that it does not adequately address the task of affirming the rhythmical process of creative thought.

In the second chapter I shall explore Nietzsche's early unpublished work on rhythm, which forms the background to the rhythmical process of thought that he describes in *The Gay Science* as learning to love. I will trace the way in which a theory of rhythm as the form of time emerges from Nietzsche's work on Aristoxenus, and use *The Birth of Tragedy* to provide the metaphysical context for the rhythm notes, showing the ambiguity in Nietzsche's early understanding of rhythm as a phenomenon that is inherently transformative but at the same time complicit in a process of nihilistic degeneration.

13 GS §334

Then in chapter three I will revisit the account of the existing relationship between thought and becoming that emerged from *The Gay Science* in the light of Nietzsche's earlier understanding of the rhythmic nature of thought, showing how his earlier ambiguous attitude to rhythm emerges as both the creative and nihilistic aspects of rhythmic thought. This is brought out most clearly in aphorisms GS §84 and GS §109, in which I identify the specific issues with our current thought as the manner of its comportment to the future. This will then allow us to understand eternal return as Nietzsche's attempt to disrupt our existing rhythmic relationship with time.

In chapter four I shall turn to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, this time examining eternal return as a theory of time specifically designed to interrupt the negative aspects of rhythm that we have encountered. I shall first examine cosmological interpretations of eternal return before exploring a more successful theory of time based on the moment, but show that Nietzsche's own presentation of this in his published work does not successfully address the needs of rhythmic time.

In the final chapter I shall turn to the thought of Deleuze and Guattari to find the account of rhythmic temporality that is implied by Nietzsche's unpublished notes but remains unrealised in his published work. I shall show the way in which Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche emphasises the plural aspects of becoming and how the account of eternal return in the three syntheses of time draws on the aspects of rhythm as both discontinuous and continual flow. Finally, I shall indicate the way in which Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the refrain makes explicit the rhythmic nature of becoming and temporal individuation that we have traced throughout this thesis.

1. Exposition: Eternal return as an intervention into thought as love

This chapter will set up the problem we shall be exploring throughout this thesis: if we accept Nietzsche's insight that the world is composed of becoming, then what is the status of our thought, as something that performs a creative interruption into this becoming? The way we have misunderstood the relationship between thought and becoming has led to the state of modernity which Nietzsche calls "nihilism," in which this relationship has completely broken down. Nietzsche introduces the thought of eternal return as an attempt to disrupt our unhealthy relationship with becoming and to usher in a new way of thinking in its place. However, how he intends eternal return to achieve this is anything but clear. Throughout the rest of this thesis I will be drawing on Nietzsche's early work on rhythm and existing readings of the temporality of eternal return to argue that we must think the relationship between thought and becoming as a rhythm. First however we need to understand the extent of the problem of nihilism that Nietzsche is trying to address, and how it has arisen through tendencies that are inherent within the activity of thinking. This is what we shall explore in this chapter.

Nihilism is a concept that appears in several different forms within Nietzsche's thought, reflecting its perpetually recurring nature within our history. The first form of nihilism is the dangerous spectre of meaninglessness, in which the realisation of our "smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away"¹ proves an obstacle to life. As we shall go on to explore throughout this thesis, Nietzsche's understanding of humanity is that of an animal whose consciousness is fundamentally goal-directed. We have survived through learning to tie the present to a perceived future² - we build fires so we can keep warm, we get up and go to work so we can pay our mortgage. Ultimately, however, there is no happily ever after - none of the goals we aim at will have any lasting effect, and so in the final instance, "the aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer."³ The Platonic-Christian conception of an ideal good or purpose existing beyond the world acted for a long time as "the great *antidote*" against this nihilistic realisation of the absence of

1 *WTP* §4 (June 10, 1887)

2 Although a future that, as we shall see in the account of rhythm in chapter three, is constructed as a reflection of the past.

3 *WTP* §2 (Spring-Fall 1887)

purpose in the world, a "*means of preservation*" which "prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking sides against life; from despairing of knowledge."⁴ But this preservative sense of a single eternal good, which allowed us to partake in its value, is itself another form of nihilism which involves gifting any sense of our own individual self-worth over to this unity. As we shall go on to explore, the means of avoiding one kind of nihilism set us up for another, as we are forced to look outside the transient world entirely to find something which does not ultimately disappoint us, and as Nietzsche concludes "the categories 'aim,' 'unity,' 'being' which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless*."⁵ Nihilism in all these forms has two aspects or sides - the fiction that attracts and redirects our values beyond becoming, and the realisation that this faith is misplaced. The belief in teleology and the recognition of ultimate meaninglessness, the entrenchment of values within a divine or logical unity and the loss of all values - both the belief and its loss are nihilistic. The extent to which all these forms of nihilism are entwined within our thought becomes apparent in modernity,⁶ leading to a final "most extreme form of nihilism"⁷ in which we react to the poor track record of all our previous nihilistic beliefs and conclude that we can no longer believe in anything, but instead must believe in nothing itself.

Given the many different ways in which it is expressed, it is perhaps unsurprising that commentators emphasise different aspects of what nihilism means for Nietzsche. Löwith stresses that this crisis in which "the highest values devalue themselves"⁸ results in a state in which "nothing is true any more, but everything is permitted,"⁹ whereas Conway in contrast argues that Nietzsche does not wish to imply that "humankind now believes in nothing," but rather that "Nietzsche understands nihilism as delivering a single, grand (though generally unappealing) truth - namely, that the world admits of no antecedent moral order or pre-ordained *telos*. The world simply *is*, in its brute, undifferentiated

4 *WTP* §4 (June 10, 1887)

5 *WTP* §12 (Nov 1887-March 1888)

6 As Deleuze puts it, "the sensational news spreads: there is nothing to be seen behind the curtain." (*NP* 140)

7 *WTP* §15 (Spring-Fall 1887)

8 *WTP* §2 (Spring-Fall 1887)

9 Löwith 1997:24

immanence."¹⁰ Rosen interprets Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism as a state in which we have nothing on which to base our value, so that everything becomes arbitrary, and proceeds *ex nihilo* (from nothing), and argues that Nietzsche attempts to overcome nihilism through "a doctrine of human creativity," but fears that "without a standard for distinguishing between noble and base creations, the advocacy of creativity is itself debased."¹¹ This issue of how to evaluate the forms that we create, given a necessary separation from becoming that occurs in thought, is what I shall go on to explore as the role of rhythm in thought. But in order to do this, we must understand more about how we currently think, in order to see how this gives rise to the many symptoms of nihilism that Nietzsche detects.

Nietzsche identifies Plato as the figure whose misunderstanding of the relationship between thought and becoming is at the root of the nihilism that we find in modern thought. We shall first examine the different ways in which both Plato and Nietzsche characterise thought as a type of love. Plato understands both love and thought as motivated by the lover's recognition that they lack a state or quality that exists in the object of their desire. For Nietzsche however that which the lover desires does not exist outside them, but is created through the activity of loving. As the creation of something new, rather than an attempt at re-creation, love and thought transform both the world and the self that relates to it. We shall begin to explore the way the act of thinking occurs through a process of selection, in which we form something from the flow of becoming, and then mould and strengthen this selection through repetition. In doing so, however, we exclude the movement of becoming from our thought. We shall see how this exclusion leads to the occlusion of our creative role in this process, and the misunderstanding of the relationship between thought and becoming that develops into nihilism, and that we find in Plato's model of love. Having diagnosed this problem, Nietzsche indicates a different model of love that he calls *amor fati*, which resists the unhealthy tendencies of nihilism. We shall consider the thought of eternal return as a test of affirmation, and ask whether this can achieve *amor fati*, but conclude that we cannot substantially alter the way our thought operates on becoming without understanding more about the initial moment of selection that thought performs. It is the tension inherent in this movement, in which thought must

10 Conway 2000:118

11 Rosen 1969:199

shape the flow of becoming, that we shall go on to explore throughout the rest of this thesis through the problem of rhythm.

The creativity of thought as love

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche recounts the "History of an error"¹² in which the transient world we perceive around us becomes devalued in favour of an eternal backworld.¹³ Nietzsche identifies Plato's thought as the "most ancient form" of this idea that the eternal world is the "real" one, in contrast to the continual change we live with every day. It is Plato's formative role in this error which drives one of Nietzsche's earliest aims that his philosophy should be a "reversed Platonism,"¹⁴ in which the world of artifice and semblance would regain the prestige it had lost in Plato's search for a supersensuous world of truth.¹⁵ The Platonic beginnings of the error appear relatively positive, as "the real

12 *TI* 'How the "real world" finally became a fable'

13 The "*Hinterwelt*" - "hinterworld" or "backworld", literally meaning a "world behind" the sensuous world, with the negative connotations of "backwards", "backside" etc. (see Löwith 1997:261 and 265)

14 "*Meine Philosophie umgedrehter Platonismus: je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so reiner schöner besser ist es. Das Leben im Schein als Ziel.*"

([http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1870,7\[156\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1870,7[156]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente Ende 1870 — April 1871)

15 For Heidegger, this presents a problem - by merely reversing Platonism, rather than challenging the dichotomy between truth and imitation, between being and becoming, Nietzsche fails to escape it. It is this interpretation that leads Heidegger to place Nietzsche firmly within (although at the dissolution of) the Western metaphysical tradition, as although "Nietzsche wants Becoming and what becomes, as the fundamental character of beings as a whole ... he wants what becomes precisely and before all else as what remains, as 'being' proper" and in this way is guilty of the "permanentizing of Becoming into presence" - in other words, Nietzsche turns seeming or becoming into a new metaphysical "ground." (Heidegger 1991: Vol III 156) Löwith argues that Nietzsche's attempt to reverse Platonism involved an attempt to return to a pre-Platonic relationship with being (Löwith 1997:174ff) that Nietzsche himself recognised was impossible. As I shall argue throughout this following chapters, we need to understand the rhythmic nature of Nietzsche's project in order to see how eternal return can function as neither a return to a pre-existing state, nor an inversion of the hierarchy between being and becoming, but rather as Nietzsche's attempt to create a new relationship between past and future, being and becoming. Deleuze takes up Nietzsche's desire to reverse the Platonic distinction between becoming and reality, challenging Plato's understanding of becoming as that which lacks the differentiation of reality. Deleuze writes that "the task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism," while nonetheless noting that Plato's thought at the inception of the history of the error of nihilism captures the traces of an alternative image of thought, "like an animal in the process of being tamed, whose final resistant movements bear witness better than they would in a state of freedom to a nature soon to be lost: the Heraclitan world

world" is "attainable for the wise man, the pious man, the virtuous man—he lives in it, *he is it*."¹⁶ But this initially promising situation decays, as the "real" eternal world gradually becomes first unattainable, then unthinkable, and finally disproven altogether, with the unfortunate result that its enemy, the "apparent" world of the senses, is caught up in the downfall of the "real" world and discredited along with it. We shall return to this unfortunate history later in the chapter, but first we shall examine its beginning, showing how even at this early stage the supposedly "attainable" eternal world is already suffused with a sense of lack through the connection Plato draws between thought and love.

Plato's develops this understanding of thought as love, with truth as its object, through the figure of Socrates as both thinker and lover. Plato makes the connection between love and thought in one of his earliest dialogues, the *Lysis*, in which we first find Socrates discussing the nature of love and friendship and describing himself as one who, though he may know nothing else, is an expert in identifying the lover and the beloved.¹⁷ As this self-confessed expert in love, the defining characteristic Socrates recognises in this relationship is a need or absence, that "what desires, desires whatever it's lacking."¹⁸ Plato develops this theme in the *Symposium*, in which various speakers present their thoughts on the nature of love, including the comic poet Aristophanes who presents a mythical account of a time in which hermaphroditic and perfectly spherical humans rolled across the earth. However, their ambitions reached towards the control of heaven as well. In order to distract as well as to punish them, Zeus had these fleshy balls of hybris divided in half, allowing them to be reunited only via the temporary respite of sexual union.

Although the drunk and hiccougging Aristophanes' account of love as the continual search for our missing or "other half" is presented as a comedy, Socrates own account shows that

still growls in Platonism." (*DR* 71) It is for this reason that Deleuze notes that Nietzsche's own characterisation of his relationship with Plato in terms of a reversal "has the disadvantage of being abstract; it leaves the motivation of Platonism in the shadows," whereas Deleuze specifies that his own task is to perform this reversal by bringing "this motivation out into the light of day." (*PS* 253) In the final chapter of this thesis we will explore the ways in which Deleuze's interpretation of eternal return performs a similar task of making explicit and bringing into the light of day the motivations of this thought that are only implicit within Nietzsche's published work.

16 *TI* 'How the "real world" finally became a fable'

17 Plato, *Lysis*, 204c1

18 Plato, *Lysis*, 221e1

it is correct in one respect at least - that love is caused by lack.¹⁹ Socrates argues that even in the case of someone who apparently wants nothing more than to keep having what they already have (for example, a healthy man, who wishes to remain healthy), this is still the love of something that they lack. Someone who is healthy in 2018 does not yet, *cannot* yet have the health in 2021 that they desire, because the future is not here yet - it is fundamentally absent, as opposed to the (present) present. "This and any other case of desire," stresses Socrates, "is desire for something which is inaccessible and absent. If there's something you need, miss, or lack, then that's the kind of thing you can desire and love."²⁰ However, Aristophanes mischaracterises the nature of that which we lack, as Socrates argues that it is not our physical other half who we are searching for, or indeed any earthly state that will necessarily pass in time. Rather than good things, beautiful people, or virtuous acts, it is the idea of the unchanging good, beauty, or virtue that we ultimately seek. Philosophy, as that which is explicitly bound up with these goals, is therefore the purest instantiation of love.

For Plato, the similarity between thought and love lies in their movement of reaching out towards something that we desire, because we measure ourselves against it and find ourselves lacking. The thinker is identified with the lover, Socrates becomes the personification of love,²¹ while Love similarly is portrayed as "bound ... to love knowledge," "because knowledge is one of the most attractive things there is, and attractive things are Love's province."²² In this way, the philosopher or lover of wisdom is one who has learned enough to realise how much knowledge they are missing, knowledge which lies extant and perfect beyond them, and who has become driven to try and repair this ultimately irreparable gap. Truth as the object of thought is something that thought lacks, and that it therefore strives towards. But both physical and philosophical love are motivated by an

19 As Bloom puts it, "for both Aristophanes and Socrates, Eros, in its overwhelming and immoderate demands, is the clearest and most powerful inclination toward lost wholeness" but whereas "Aristophanes' loves are pointed toward each other horizontally, with no upwardness or transcendence implied in them... Socrates' loves, as we shall see, are vertical, pointing upward and beyond." (Bloom 1993:480).

20 Plato, *Symposium*, 200e

21 In the *Symposium* both Socrates (174a) and Love (203d) are described as typically wandering the streets unshod, while Socrates takes the place of Love in Alcibiades' eulogy (214b)

22 Plato, *Symposium*, 204b

impossible drive to completion through the attainment of a goal that stands beyond us, and that we can never achieve.

Nietzsche draws on this Platonic motif of thought as love in the Preface to *The Gay Science*, where he describes the desire for truth above all else that drives modern science and philosophy as the “love of truth.”²³ Nietzsche however uses the parallel between the thinker and the lover to undercut Plato's model, by suggesting that what we actually fall in love with is never “reality” (whether this be the reality of a person, or an idea), but that the object of our love is instead a product of our own creativity.²⁴ In this way he introduces the idea that thought is a creative process, rather than an attempt to achieve correspondence or adequation with an underlying reality. In the poems that open *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche introduces the connection between creativity and love in the context of the divine:

The Pious One Speaks
God loves us because he created us!
'Man created God!' - respond the jaded.
And yet should not love what he created?
Should even deny it because he made it?
Such cloven logic is limping and baited.²⁵

The atheist asserts the illusory status of God as a creation of man, and thinks that by so doing he has rendered God worthless. However as Nietzsche suggests here, it is precisely the act of creation that grants worth or value. According to “the pious one,” divine love is motivated by the act of creativity that brought about its object - God loves the world

23 GS Preface to the second edition §4 [my emphasis]. The metaphor of truth as a woman, with the philosopher as the inadequate, abusive, or buffoonish lover crops up throughout *The Gay Science*, as we shall go on to explore. See also *Beyond Good and Evil* which Nietzsche opens by musing “Suppose that truth is a woman – and why not? Aren’t there reasons for suspecting that all philosophers, to the extent that they have been dogmatists, have not really understood women?” (BGE Preface)

24 Han-Pile defines the contrast between these two types of love based on “the type of valuation they involve” as that between *eros* and *agape*, in which “in the first case, the object is loved because we value it; in the second, we value the object because we love it” (Han-Pile 2011). Stern (2013) however argues convincingly that this division ignores the “learned” aspect of love that changes the lover as well as the beloved, for with agapic love, only the beloved is transformed. We shall go on to explore Nietzsche's account of learning to love in GS §334 in a moment.

25 GS ‘Joke, Cunning, and Revenge’ Prelude in German Rhymes §38

because he created it. Should man, therefore, not love God as his own creation?²⁶ This first, all-encompassing, supposedly originary love, loves precisely because it produced the beloved - it is the love of the craftsman for his "workmanship,"²⁷ of the Father for his "offspring."²⁸ Nietzsche points out that animal and human mothers, too, love their children not because of their intrinsic worth but because they are their creations, a love that "is to be compared to the love of an artist for his work."²⁹ In the case of parental love, we do not expect the child to have any special characteristics that distinguish them from any other child in order to justify the parent's love, beyond the fact that they are *theirs*, that they made them. The act of creativity, of making something new that is not me and yet reveals and extends my influence, is thrown into relief in both these cases as the driving force of love, as of thought.

But although this may be true of parental or divine love, what of other types of love, such as romantic love? Nietzsche stresses that here too we exercise our creative talents. As we fall in love, we create our own version of the beloved as we go along, so that the person that we love always differs to some extent from the person that others see, or that they experience themselves to be. We "idealise" the beloved, as we emphasise some aspects of them and are proverbially blind to others, in order to make them into someone we are capable of loving, a love that changes the beloved, as "man makes for himself the image (*Bild*) of woman, and woman shapes herself (*bildet sich*) according to this image (*Bild*)."³⁰ To love and to think is this process of transforming the world into something lovable, into something thinkable. This, however, is not something that we are aware of when we love. We are often only aware of the extent to which we have manufactured the object of our love when something happens to interrupt this process - perhaps the lover commits an act that we cannot see as lovable, that we can neither ignore nor encompass into our picture of the beloved, and we are forced to admit that they are "not the person we thought they were."

26 And as Nietzsche will go on to argue, he does - or rather, man loves "Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken ever more rigorously" (GS §357) and which "finally forbids itself the *lie entailed in the belief in God*" (GM III §27) and makes the illusory nature of God seem an unanswerable objection to his value.

27 Ephesians 2:10 KJV

28 Acts 17:28 KJV

29 GS §72

30 GS §68

Or perhaps we grow tired of the effort involved in sustaining our creation, and while the beloved does not ostensibly change, we become less and less able (or willing) to perform the creative act that had previously transmuted them to gold in our eyes, and so we fall out of love. As we shall go on to see, Nietzsche thinks that both of these problems have occurred in our relationship with the world that we try to think. We have become aware that the "real" world of eternal truths is a fiction, but respond to this either with anger that the world has deceived us, or with a resigned acceptance that there was never anything in the world worth loving. These responses either occlude or devalue the creative aspect of our thought. This is what Nietzsche wants to examine and reevaluate, in the hope that we might develop a healthier relationship between thought and becoming in the future.

There is then an element of Pygmalion in all of us - we are all creators who fall in love with our creations, by turning someone or something into the kind of being that we are able to love. In his unpublished notes from the 1880s³¹ Nietzsche writes of this transformative quality of love as "the genesis of art," this "making perfect, seeing as perfect, which characterizes the cerebral system bursting with sexual energy"³² and which "lavishes upon the object that inspires it a magic ... quite alien to the nature of that object."³³ Love is inherently creative. It is not that creativity causes love, or grows out of love, rather that the feeling of love is precisely this awareness of our own creativity - the sense that we have extended ourselves out into the world beyond us, that we have changed it and increased the ways in which we can act within and influence it. Love imbues the most ordinary things with significance for the lover, "the smallest chance occurrences transfigured, life a succession of sublime things," and it is my creative activity that achieves this incredible transmutation of a grey provincial town into a city of gold, a name into a magical incantation, part of "the world become perfect, through 'love'—" ³⁴

It is this understanding of love as creative that distinguishes Nietzsche from the Platonist, for whom both love and thought are attempts to repair an omission and move us closer to an ideal that stands apart from and pre-exists us, rather than the creation of something

31 Many from 1887, around the time Nietzsche was working on *On the Genealogy of Morality* and the final book of *The Gay Science*

32 *WTP* §805 (1883-1888)

33 *WTP* §806 (1883-1888)

34 *WTP* §806 (1883-1888)

new. By taking up Plato's identification of the lover and the thinker, but then showing how the lover is also an artist, Nietzsche is able to suggest that thinking, too, must involve this process of creation. The link between thought, love, and art is developed throughout *The Gay Science* as Nietzsche describes the "realists" who, "all too similar to an artist in love" ...

still carry around the valuations of things that originate in the passions and loves of former centuries! Your sobriety still contains a secret and inextirpable drunkenness! Your love of 'reality', for example - oh, that is an old, ancient 'love'! In every experience, in every sense impression there is a piece of this old love;³⁵

The "realists" who believe "that the world really is the way it appears"³⁶ to them are mistakenly devaluing their own creative talents. They are in fact artists in their love - they are the creators of the reality that has seduced them, their apparently sober thought driven by the drunken creative desire that sends Alcibiades stumbling into the symposium. There is no reality without the operation of love, the "human *contribution*" that shapes the world we know into something we can understand. Along with this idea of love or desiring thought as a constitutive force that shapes our concepts, Nietzsche also develops the motif of woman-as-truth-as-beloved-object, that which needs to conceal its base origins, dangerous and subtle, and whose fictional glamour we should respect and appreciate,³⁷ until by the end of book four³⁸ we find that the object of desire that the gay scientist has started to love is changeable life, rather than eternal truth. This revelation is followed by the death of Socrates, the "mocking, love-sick monster and piper of Athens,"³⁹ who on Plato's account was unable in the end to resist the seduction of the supersensuous and maintain the open, cheerful love of life that characterises the dialogues which "chatter" before falling into aporetic silence.

We need to "overcome even the Greeks"⁴⁰ and move beyond the Platonic conception of the world that views the world around us as an illusion, and life as a "disease."⁴¹ For

35 GS §57

36 *ibid.*

37 GS §59-71

38 GS §339

39 GS §340

40 *ibid.*

41 *ibid.*

Nietzsche the first stage is developing a different understanding of the activity of thought. We need to recognise this as a creative engagement with the world, rather than a futile exercise in adequation. But along with this comes the need to reevaluate our sense of the beloved. Platonic thought was driven by the sense of our inability to ever match up to that which truly exists. Nietzsche's new understanding of thought faces the different problem that it *must* transform that which it thinks in order for it to be thought at all. For Nietzsche, we must abandon the illusory safety of an eternal truth that holds out the promise of a "right" answer, however impossible this might be to attain. Instead we are forced to create our thought. And as we shall see, our track record in this artistic endeavor has not been overwhelmingly successful. First however we shall examine why Nietzsche thinks that the creative aspect of thought as love must be viewed as a necessary survival strategy, rather than a mark of our imperfection.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the creative aspects of thought are based on his conception of the world that we try to comprehend, which is radically different to the eternal truths or Forms that motivate the Platonic thinker's search. Nietzsche's world, in contrast, is one of continual becoming that emerges from the will to power. The will to power is Nietzsche's term for the impulse which animates everything and drives it to become something different - a constitutional restlessness which makes movement more comfortable than stasis, which means that we cannot remain still, but instead strive towards "everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself," experiencing joy at "the feeling that power is growing, that some resistance has been overcome."⁴² It is the will to power that animates the transformations that we enact upon it through the creativity of love in thought. The desire of the Platonic lover is driven by a comparison with the beloved from which the lover emerges aware of their own inadequacy. Nietzsche's understanding of love as will to power, however, "always presupposes a comparison (but not necessarily with others, but with oneself in the midst of a state of growth and without one's first *knowing* in how far one is making comparisons)."⁴³ The impulse towards change and growth is something that comes from within the lover, and is an internal difference rather than an external goal that the lover pursues. This movement of reaching out towards the world that creates the beings we think, the objects we love, is what allows us to survive -

42 AC §2

43 WTP §917 (Nov. 1887-March 1888)

the will to power as love, whether of truth or of beauty, is our “shaping will,” and the joy that this produces is the most basic and “primeval” because “we can comprehend only a world that we ourselves have made.”⁴⁴ Thought is, as Plato indicated, a relationship to the world driven by an intense need. But this need is not to match our thought to an eternal world beyond. Instead thought is the generative need to transform this world. The creative force of will to power is what constitutes our ability to exist in a world that we are continually creating.

The selective aspect of thought

The way in which thought conceptually transforms the world for us is, as Nietzsche stresses, an activity that creates for us “a world in which we are able to live — by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living!”⁴⁵ The systems and concepts that shape my experience are something that I am responsible for creating, the product of the evolution of human thought in the interests of human survival, just as much as our physical surroundings reflect our impulse to transform the world in our favour. The thinker is not a disinterested being indifferently contemplating a logical puzzle, but deeply self-interested. But just as with love, this self-interest must be driven by the desire to add to something already strong, rather than any plaintive Platonic lack, if it is to be productive:

The lack of personality always takes its revenge: a weakened, thin, extinguished personality, one that denies itself and its own existence, is no longer good for anything good - least of all for philosophy. 'Selflessness' has no value in heaven or on earth; all great problems demand *great love*, and only strong, round, secure minds who have a firm grip on themselves are capable of that.⁴⁶

We cannot think selflessly or indifferently, as thought involves binding ourselves into the world. “The things people call love” are for Nietzsche essentially greed, the need to take more and more into ourselves. What we are trying to add to ourselves is not, however,

44 *WTP* §495. It is for this reason that, as Heidegger stresses, “every willing is a willing to be more. Power itself only *is* inasmuch as, and so long as, it remains a willing to be more power. ... For only by means of a perpetual heightening can what is elevated be held aloft. Only a more powerful heightening can counter the tendency to sink back; simply holding onto the position already attained will not do, because the inevitable consequence is ultimate exhaustion.” (Heidegger 1991: Vol I 60)

45 GS §121

46 GS §345

something that had formerly been part of us that we have lost, a missing piece of ourselves that we are trying to reinstate, but something new, created through this movement of love:

Our love of our neighbours - is it not a craving for new *property*? And likewise our love of knowledge, of truth, and altogether any craving for what is new? . . . The pleasure we take in ourselves tries to preserve itself by time and again changing something new *into ourselves* - that is simply what possession means. To grow tired of a possession is to grow tired of ourselves.⁴⁷

As these two passages suggest, although thought may be an expression of the will to power, which requires some kind of creative transformation if we are to successfully inhabit it, this does not mean that the way this thought manifests itself always promotes a healthy relationship with the world around us. As we shall see later in this chapter, the very "articles of faith"⁴⁸ such as causality, which may have originally promoted survival, now threaten the extinction of creative thought in modern nihilism. But it is hard to identify the point that a particular way of characterising the world becomes harmful, and even harder to change, because it is not just the beloved that is shaped by the creative act of the lover, but equally the lover who is changed:

And in any case, one lies well when one loves, about oneself and to oneself: one seems to oneself transfigured, stronger, richer, more perfect, one is more perfect— Here we discover art as an organic function: we discover it in the most angelic instinct, 'love'; we discover it as the greatest stimulus of life—art thus sublimely expedient even when it lies—

But we should do wrong if we stopped with its power to lie: it does more than merely imagine; it even transposes values. And it is not only that it transposes the feeling of values: the lover is more valuable, is stronger. In animals this condition produces new weapons, pigments, colors, and forms; above all, new movements, new rhythms, new love calls and seductions.⁴⁹

The creative activity of loving changes not only the beloved, but also the lover. As I shape the beloved into someone I am able to love, I am also refashioned into someone who finds them loveable. The person I am a few years into a love affair is very different from the person who began it - in the intervening time, I have become someone who feels a sense

47 GS §14

48 GS §121

49 WTP §808 (March-June 1888)

of warmth and comfort when I think of Swindon, who (begrudgingly) admits that not all country and western music is an abomination, or who feels a tingle of adrenaline at the movement of someone's wrist as they stir their tea. These things were meaningless to the I who had not loved, unrecognisable as thoughts that I could think, before the adaptive process of love gradually transformed me into this magician who can conjure fireworks from the everyday. As we shall see however, this transformative aspect of love also carries with it an inherent risk. Just as it imbues the everyday with magic, it also allows us to learn to find enjoyment in that which was previously unendurable. The transformative aspect of thought, as of love, can be oppressive or abusive as well as joyous.

We can see, therefore, that both the lover and the beloved are caught up in a dynamic relationship, in which the beloved plays a role that goes far beyond that of a passive object, challenging the agency of its apparent creator as the act of being in love transforms them both. Nietzsche uses music to explore the nature of this mutual transformation, assigning the role of lover not to the artist but to the listener:

One must learn to love. — This happens to us in music: first one must *learn to hear* a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate and delimit it as a life in itself; then one needs effort and good will to *stand* it despite its strangeness . . . Finally comes a moment when we are *used* to it; when we expect it; when we sense that we'd miss it if it were missing; and now it continues relentlessly to compel and enchant us until we have become its humble and enraptured lovers, who no longer want anything better from the world than it and it again. But this happens to us not only in music: it is in just this way that we have *learned to love* everything we now love . . . Love, too, must be learned.⁵⁰

The process of falling in love is something that we learn, an education that we take ourselves through and that rebuilds us as we create our own image (*Bild*) of the beloved. A person who I grow to love is like a melody that I only gradually learn to hear through its repetition. But this creative endeavor has come about not through the efforts of any divine composer, but the listener - they who do not think they are creating anything, and yet who simultaneously create both the music and themselves.

The will to power, as it expresses itself as both love and thought, is the need to make ourselves and the world into something new. But this development of new relations

50 GS §334

happens through sundering others. The first moment of the transformation that occurs as we learn to love is the simultaneous detection and creation of the prospective beloved as an identity - we “detect and distinguish” it when we “isolate and delimit it as a life in itself”. This is what we have to do with *anything* which draws our attention - we cannot think about any aspect of the world without first demarcating it and drawing out the boundaries which will allow us to scope our thought.⁵¹ The remaining stages of the process of learning to love described in GS §334 encompass a whole range of attitudes towards the potential beloved, from confusion and revulsion, through a more comfortable familiarity, all the way to obsessive desire. In order to focus upon and think anything as a self-contained identity, we first separate it from ourselves and from the other forces that surround it. In this act of separation, we destroy the differential network of relations that shape it - the creative movement of love rests on the initial destructive moment of isolation.

This moment of exclusion operates at all levels of how we constitute our relationship to the world. Even before we get a chance to consciously think about something, our brain is already prioritising areas on which to lavish attention, at the expense of other areas that are ignored. To effectively construct a piece of writing, it is necessary at some point to draw a line across the otherwise interminable chain of factors that impact upon it, and to decide that certain information does not fit within the remit of the discussion. A wealth of sensory data, of memories and hopes, form and tug at any phenomenon, extending unstoppably out beyond it, and we must cut all this away if we are to think of the particularity of “the cat” to the exclusion of everything else - we set apart the things we perceive in the surrounding environment (the bench, the bricks, the ivy), but we also separate the cat from our thoughts of next door’s cat, of other cats we have owned, from the habits of the cat, and the whole historical process of domestication. Whether at a preliminary unconscious stage of perception, or in the most consciously considered and constructed argument, we are forced to exclude everything else if we are to shape and contain that towards which we are directing our attention. This is how we attempt to “possess” the new, beloved thought - by reducing an infinitely open system of relations to

51 Stern (2013) draws attention to this selective aspect of love outlined in GS §334, as too in GS §14 and GS §59 where not only the rest of the world, but aspects of the beloved themselves, must be ignored as part of the process of love.

something closed and contained,⁵² so that we can concentrate on one small element of this system, and shape it into something solid and identifiable:

The entire apparatus of knowledge is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification—directed not at knowledge but at taking possession of things: "end" and "means" are as remote from its essential nature as are "concepts." With "end" and "means" one takes possession of the process (one invents a process that can be grasped); with "concepts," however, of the "things" that constitute the process.⁵³

We separate identities from the world as we might tease fibres from the surrounding mass of wool, isolating and twisting them together into separate threads, so that all things are "entwined" and woven into the fabric of our world.⁵⁴ The continual turning that spins the exterior shell or boundary of the thread is the repetitive act of listening that allows us to "learn to hear a figure and melody ... as a life in itself,"⁵⁵ which we then weave into a structured world of discrete identities that touch upon and regulate each other as strangers, as means and ends, causes and effects. As we shall go on to explore, our attempt to reconnect these discrete identities through causality intensifies rather than corrects the sense of distance between thought and becoming that manifests in nihilism.

Nietzsche recognises the positive nature of this continual process of selection, of the rejection of certain possible strands of enquiry in order to concentrate on others. We can never possess a complete and total picture or comprehension of the world. Such a thing is not only unattainable like Plato's beloved object of the ideal Forms - it cannot exist. Instead, our knowledge of the world is inherently perspectival, always from our own particular point of view. The necessity of selecting and excluding in order to create is a theme that appears throughout Nietzsche's work - from the active forgetting of *Untimely Meditations*, without which any action would be impossible, to the hammer of *Twilight of*

52 See Cilliers, de Villiers and Roodt 2002 for a discussion of the Nietzschean conception of self as an open system of relations.

53 *WTP* §503 (1884)

54 Deleuze and Guattari mobilise the concept of striated space to describe this way of conceiving the world, in which "the striated is that which intertwines fixed and variable elements, produces an order and succession of distinct forms, and organizes horizontal melodic lines and vertical harmonic planes." In chapter five we shall touch on the alternative conception of "smooth" space which contrasts with this entwined model, and is instead "continuous variation, continuous development of form; ... the fusion of harmony and melody in favor of the production of properly rhythmic values, the pure act of the drawing of a diagonal across the vertical and the horizontal." (*ATP* 528)

55 GS §334

the Idols, that not only tests, but which in order to create must “flash and cut and tear things apart.”⁵⁶ Like the sculptor who chips away the surrounding stone to make a form emerge, the thoughts that we create require the destruction of their links with the world that surrounds them.

The operation of human thought thus carries with it an inherent risk. We are driven to love, to create meaning. But we do this by excluding the rich continual process of becoming from which we drew this meaning in the first place. We are creators who forget that we create. Any philosophical system that challenges our everyday experience of our relationship with the world must account for how we can fail to understand something that we do all the time, for why the simplest, most “obvious” explanation is not the correct one. The formative role of selection in thought provides an answer - the act of thinking cuts away its own ground, prioritising only what we need in order to act. We do not need to understand the inner workings of a car in order to drive - even if we do, we do not have the time to consciously call on this information when making the split-second decision to hit the brakes. Thought operates by paring away anything that does not seem immediately relevant, and with this it excludes any understanding of its own operation, and the pre-conceptual sphere of becoming that it works upon.

On the face of it, it might not be clear why the way in which selection operates in our thought is a problem. As a constitutive part of the “useful and species-preserving” error that allows us to pretend that there are “things”⁵⁷ in the world, why is it a matter for concern that we exclude the importance of change and our role in it from our understanding of identity? The answer lies in the style of love or thought that this produces - a relationship with the world that has become poisonous and embittered, rather than productive. As we have seen, when we “isolate and delimit” an identity in thought, we separate it from its surroundings. But what we cut away when we think something as an identity is not just an excess of data that we cannot process, but the shifting relations that have shaped and are still shaping it. This complex network of relations and dynamics is what Nietzsche calls will to power, the forces that are both exterior, pressing into the thing from the outside, while at the same time bubbling from within it. In this movement of exclusion, we forget the

⁵⁶ Nietzsche, *TI* ‘The Hammer Speaks’

⁵⁷ GS §110

precarity of the thing's existence and our own role in bringing it into being. In separating it from the rest of the world, from its future, and from its past, to consider it solely in its present existence, we do not just exclude a contingent selection of phenomena, but the richly generative force of becoming itself.

Crucial as it is, this process of selection therefore involves an irretrievable loss. When we separate a particular thing from the world around it, we exclude all of the movement and tensions that give rise to it. Like a fish that we have plucked from the sea, or a cowslip from the roadside, the act of taking something up for our consideration conceptually cuts it away from the context that has shaped it. We are unable to share our thoughts with the world of becoming from which they emerged, as “the lover wants unconditional and sole possession of the longed-for person; he wants a power over her soul as unconditional as his power over her body; he wants to be the only beloved, to live and to rule in the other soul as that which is supreme and most desirable.”⁵⁸ The lover’s greed manifests as jealousy, which aims at “*excluding* the whole world from a precious good, from joy and enjoyment; ... at the impoverishment and deprivation of all the competitors and would like to become the dragon guarding his golden hoard as the most inconsiderate and selfish of all 'conquerors' and exploiters.”⁵⁹ Nietzsche’s characterisation in *The Gay Science* of truth as a woman speaks to this poignancy, if we consider the genteel new bride of the nineteenth century, torn from her family, shocked by a sexual ordeal for which she has been deliberately left unprepared, at the hands of a loving-violent, too-close but unfamiliar stranger.⁶⁰ But he also describes the way this possessive act of love results in a beloved who will ultimately oppress us - a terrifying zombie bride produced by our “attempt somehow to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate it into signs (so to speak, to *translate* and mummify it into a kind of illusory being),”⁶¹ to the extent that philosophers “think they are doing a thing an honour when they dehistoricize it, *sub specie aeterni*—when they make a mummy out of it. All that philosophers have been handling for

58 GS §14

59 *ibid.*

60 See BGE §114

61 “*als Versuch das Heraklitische Werden irgendwie zu beschreiben und in Zeichen abzukürzen (in eine Art von scheinbarem Sein gleichsam zu übersetzen und zu mumisiren)*”

[http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.36\[27\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.36[27]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente Juni–Juli 1885 (trans. Manuel Dries)

thousands of years is conceptual mummies; nothing real has ever left their hands alive.”⁶² This is the tragedy that human thought enacts, the act of rape against that which it desires, which attempts to protect the beloved by isolating it from everything that would nourish and motivate it.

But it is only against and in the context of the relationships that surround it that the existence of the thing makes any sense. When we cut it from these entanglements in order to form our own particular conceptual relationship, we effectively starve it, kicking away the supports that shore it up, the forces that fill and replenish it.⁶³ Its brittle existence now depends upon us, upon our thought. But the more we focus on something, the harder we think about it, the odder and less contextual it becomes, like a word we have written too many times that starts to look misspelled, meaningless, and hysterical. Like the premise of a riddle, the world we create comes with the eerie sense that there is something we are missing, that something has escaped us, an excess that we cannot encompass. This excess is the process of becoming that is the raw material from which we draw, a process, moreover, that is unrepresentable and unidentifiable, and which shapes the thought that we develop through love and that we tear away from it. This selection, which cuts out the continual change that fuels the meanings we develop, is an integral condition of our thought - but one which itself occludes or covers over the preconceptual creative impulse of which it is a part. Thought as selection undoes its own ground, its own operation as creative love.

This awareness of an uncaptured excess and the accompanying sense of loss nags at our relationship with the world. Despite our efforts, we can never completely possess it,⁶⁴ and our attempts to deal with this perceived failure and to salve the jealousy that arises from it fail, progressively transforming our love into hate and simultaneously rendering us powerless in the face of the beloved. This manifests as nihilism, the failure of our ability to

62 *TI III* 'Reason in Philosophy' §1

63 Newspapers used to run 'spot the ball' competitions, in which you could see a photo showing a group of footballers whose comedically inexplicable contortions, grimaces, and obsessive stares could only be given sense by the insertion of the missing football. Our way of thinking identity through a process of selection leaves the ball, but subtracts everything else. No wonder it feels odd.

64 *Lost Highway*'s Alice whispers to Pete: "You'll never have me." Albertine eludes Proust's narrator.

find any sense of value or meaning in the world. We are unable to perform the act of transvaluation that simultaneously creates the world as meaningful, and myself as one capable of bestowing or seeing this meaning - we are no longer able to love the world or to fully realise our own capacity as its lover.

***Amor fati*: the love of what is necessary**

Nietzsche believes that pushing things to their most extreme conclusion is what may potentially allow us to move beyond them. God must die and our love for the transcendent must fail, and fail catastrophically, if we are ever to switch tracks to a new way of thinking the world. Nietzsche's task in *The Gay Science* is to stage an intervention which will reconfigure our relationship with the future and offer an alternative way of loving or affirming the world. The first three books of *The Gay Science* set out Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism, in which we in modernity have become embittered through our love for a shrunken world that cannot return it. We have been trapped in this tortuous relationship for so long that we can no longer conceive of any other way of existence than as the jealous and resentful lovers we have become. Book four offers the prospect of a divorce, that is at the same time a reconciliation. It is dedicated to St Januarius or Janus, the double-faced Roman god of simultaneous endings and beginnings, and signals the need to break with our old ways of thinking our relationship with the world. Only through this will we ever be able to comport ourselves towards the world in a more loving manner. Nietzsche opens with a suggestion of what this new kind of love might look like, a reconfigured relationship that is his "dearest wish" for the new year:

I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them - thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!⁶⁵

Fate ("*fati*"), "what is necessary in things," is the othered agent of change that we resented, who implacably controlled the world which escaped us. It is Fate that Nietzsche thinks we must learn to love if we are to escape nihilism.

65 GS §276

If we misunderstand the creative incursion of thought into becoming, then the call to love our fate sounds like a quasi-Stoic enterprise in which we reach acceptance of that which we cannot change, to become an indiscriminate yes-man who looks away and refuses to see anything but good in this best of all possible worlds. Understood in this manner, *amor fati* sounds like a vastly ambitious kind of Stockholm syndrome in which, powerless against the force of a world which threatens to crush us, our only means of survival is to deceive ourselves into welcoming its blows instead.⁶⁶ The idea of the impotent transforming their own minds when they cannot change those of their oppressors is not an unusual theme for Nietzsche; he goes on to explore this idea in *On the Genealogy of Morality* as the transmutation of weakness into good, the desire to cause pain into guilt, and the will to self-preservation into the life-annulling ascetic ideal.⁶⁷ This Stoic interpretation of *amor fati*, however, is one that Nietzsche expressly forbids in *The Gay Science*, where “things are *not bad enough* for us that they have to be bad for us in the Stoic style!”⁶⁸ The subservient and unrequited love of a Stoic *amor fati* embodies a fatalism that Nietzsche finds deeply troubling, where “man will stand before the future feeble, resigned and with hands clasped because he is incapable of effecting any change in it.”⁶⁹

The love of Fate that Nietzsche wants is quite different from this - not a passive love, in which we come to endure the blows along with the caresses of an implacable fate, but a transformative love in which both the self and the world are changed, for it is in this fashion that “thus *will* I be one of those who *make* things beautiful.”⁷⁰ The key to this is

66 See Stern (2013) for a more in-depth exploration of this reading of *amor fati* as a manifestation of Stockholm syndrome, dangerously close to the “love of stone walls and barred windows [that] is the last resort of someone who sees and has nothing else to love” (Adorno 2005:61), in which by “making things beautiful” we are engaging in no more than wishful thinking, effectively polishing, and learning to love, a turd. Stern recognises the relevance of GS §334 for the issue of how we might learn to love fate and identifies the question of by what right we falsify or make things beautiful as Nietzsche’s predominant concern throughout *The Gay Science*. We shall return to this question in chapter three, following my argument that the musical references in GS §334 (which Stern does not address) indicate the specifically rhythmical aspects of *The Gay Science* which are crucial for understanding Nietzsche’s problem with the way we currently love.

67 *GM* I §7, II §16 and III §13 respectively. Salome reads Nietzsche’s philosophy in precisely this manner, as the desperate attempt of a sick will to cure itself along the lines outlined in *GM* III with the new religion of eternal return (see Salome 2001: 28)

68 GS §326

69 *HATH* II ‘The Wanderer and his Shadow’ §61

70 GS §276 (my emphasis)

understanding Nietzsche's statement that we need to learn "to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them." As we saw in GS §334, learning to love is a process which involves several stages ranging from confusion and revulsion, through a more comfortable familiarity, all the way to obsessive desire. The fatalistic or Stoic acceptance of fate outlined above seems to be (were it ever achieved) very clearly located at the stage where we can *stand* fate despite its strangeness, rather than affirm it. This Stoic indifference to the world in fact fundamentally mischaracterises it as nothing more than a "huge eternal glorification and universalization of Stoicism,"⁷¹ a world of apathy, rather than the "new and indescribable beauty"⁷² that rewards love. As such, it must be considered merely a precursor to the love of fate that Nietzsche demands. But despite the millennia that have passed since the Stoics first advocated this approach, even the ability to patiently endure our fate remains elusive, and there are few signs of its transformation into any kind of enchantment. In order to see what has stalled the process, to see why it is that we have not yet learned to love fate after all these years, we need to return to the first stage in which we initially delimit and shape the beloved. We must examine more closely the nature of that we are trying to love - that which "is necessary in things."

The issue here is the concept of necessity, which arises posterior to and as a result of the initial selection or caesura that we perform upon the world. The delineation of phenomena into separate stable entities involves a process of cutting them away from their surroundings so that we may say "this: this is the cat," an idea from which everything else - the bench, the bricks, the ivy - is excluded. This act of unification through isolation is not only spatial, but also temporal - we perceive the cat as something with a separate and persistent existence apart from any actions, both her own and those of others (such as myself) which led to her presence in my garden (from purring and feeding to the whole historical process of domestication). With the grammatical separation of the doer (cat) from the deed (purring), the focus is on the individual cat while the purring is incidental, and the world of ceaseless flux becomes instead a series of distinct billiard balls or binary switches which can be viewed independently of any movement or action they undertake.

71 BGE §9

72 GS §334

This division of the flow of becoming into discrete points or forms leaves us with a sense of disconnection, and we introduce the idea of causality in an attempt to reconnect these individual entities. The movement of isolation within creative love leaves us with the need to account for the sense that there is more to the forms we perceive than we are able to think. Becoming hints at a secret world to which we are not privy, the source of a richness and beauty in the world that we are alas unable to perceive. We have cut away the changing world of becoming and effaced any awareness of this exclusion, including the ways in which this feeds and drives the act of creation. We forget our own role as the co-creator who draws and shapes the forms we perceive (both our own and that of the beloved) from becoming, and in this fashion, we replace the complex feedback loop of the process of learning to love with a stripped-down and restricted model of creativity based on actors and causes, a world of doers who are also done-tos, rather than co-creators. The forms we separate from the world of ceaseless flow are viewed independently of any movement within them, each one an essential core or substratum which remains unchanged and untarnished by its interaction with others. But, as Nietzsche reminds us,

there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought, – the doing is everything. Basically, the common people double a deed; when they see lightning, they make a doing-a-deed out of it: they posit the same event, first as cause and then as its effect.⁷³

Given their absolute separation into discrete identities, we must now attempt to explain how these things within the world are connected at all. The mysterious force of causality is called upon to explain how the individual threads are woven together, how they can affect one another, and how there can be any change in the world at all. But change in a causal world is not something that happens because of what a thing *is*, that constitutes and creates it, but instead something that is *done* or happens *to* it, independently of anything inherent to the thing itself. Any change that the thing itself does or perpetrates leaves it unmoved, a lover unmoved by their beloved, a doer unphased by their deed. Nietzsche makes this explicit in a long unpublished passage “Against determinism and teleology,” in which he shows how the idea of causality is a function of the structure that arose with the split into discrete forms:

73 *GM I* §13. See also *WTP* §548 (1885-1886)

Only because we have introduced subjects, "doers," into things does it appear that all events are the consequences of compulsion exerted upon subjects—exerted by whom? again by a "doer." Cause and effect—a dangerous concept so long as one thinks of something that causes and something upon which an effect is produced.⁷⁴

The notion of causality bridges the gaps that come with understanding the world as discrete and solid things, divided equally firmly from both their actions and from the other things upon which they impact. But smuggled along with the separation of a thing from its actions we also get the notion of agency, for implicit in the self-contained nature of a thing that is separated from the world is the belief that whatever is acting could act differently and yet somehow remain the same, as if "there were an indifferent substratum behind the strong person which had the freedom to manifest strength or not."⁷⁵ This substratum becomes a neutral, impersonal switch, equally capable of standing at 1 or 0, of causing or not causing a particular effect. And if, when the switch hits 1, we receive a shock, we may understandably question whether our fate was avoidable, whether the switch had to flick, or be flicked, in that direction.

Once the flow of becoming has been partitioned into a series of distinct points or relays by "the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it), which construes and misconstrues all actions as conditional upon an agency, a 'subject,'"⁷⁶ we can start to turn a judicial eye upon the world. We ask whether events had to play out this way, and whose fault it was. By introducing these questions of necessity and responsibility, the separation of doer from deed appears to raise the possibility of free will - that Adam might not have sinned. But the causal conception of the world, which twists and separates everything into individual threads, occludes the complex process of co-creation that informs everything, in which nothing is the effect or the responsibility of one agent alone. Rather than asking about the world that informs the silversmith, that he draws upon and is part of as the chalice is forged, we look for what made the silversmith do it - a subtle difference, but one that looks behind, rather than around, the nominal author of the event, for a shadowy *éminence grise* rather than an uncountable number of co-creators. In discounting the possibility that the creative process can and always does travel in more than one direction, and insisting that a godlike creator gifts life upon his creations and is

74 *WTP* §552 (Spring-Fall 1887)

75 *GM I* §13

76 *ibid.*

changed not one iota in return, we set an impossible standard for creativity that debars anything in the world from achieving it. Our awareness of the incomprehensible excess that generates the beings we perceive means that there is always something else responsible for their creation, for all our acts, while the occlusion of our own role in this process forbids that this be us.

The causal separation into doer and deed raises the issue of blame, of an agent who has chosen and is responsible for the change they have caused. But this agent, ultimately, is not us. By separating ourselves so completely from becoming, we make any sign of change into an other, a feared monster, personified as Fate.⁷⁷ The concept of Fate, the goddess or goddesses who implacably control the direction of our lives, is the ultimate agent or substratum that absorbs the responsibility for the decisions that have passed beyond our reach, the external force that weaves together the threads of our life, who wields the cue that send the balls skittering around the table. The sense of becoming that we cannot encompass within the world that we have subdivided becomes a terrifying and unlovable presence, responsible for the changes that afflict us, as that which happens to us and cannot be denied.

For Plato at the end of the *Republic*, the three Fates as the daughters of Necessity are responsible for overseeing a grand tombola that allows souls to pick the token that will determine the material conditions of their next life. Once chosen, there is no going back - if we find we have failed to adequately examine the small print and that our fate in our next life is to devour our own children, then there is nothing that will change this future and allow us to avoid that large and suspiciously delicious-looking pie. The Platonic image of the tokens presents us with a double bind of a fate that is somehow our fault, even though there is nothing that the “I” of my living memory could ever have done about it. All I can do within this life is devote my attention to the study of the Good, in the hope that this will help me to make a better choice next time. It is up to me to choose well, as “the fault lies not with God, but with the soul that makes the choice”⁷⁸ if I set myself on a course of depravity – but the “I” that chooses is not of this world, but instead a small personal Adam visiting original sin upon me from a lost garden of Eden. Within the confines of the physical world

⁷⁷ *Fatum* - “that which has been spoken”

⁷⁸ Plato, *Republic* X 317d

and my own life, there is nothing I can do to affect this same life – it is only once I have died that I can take my next turn.⁷⁹ While I am alive, there are no choices that I can make that will affect what happens to me in this life, only in the next. The events of the life I am currently living are therefore determined entirely outside it, in the threads that make up a universe spun by Necessity, duly stamped, ratified and made irreversible by the Fates.⁸⁰ We spun our threads as the revolutions and repetitions of love bound and shaped them into forms. Now we hand these threads over to the Fates to weave together - past, present and future,⁸¹ everything that was entwined is also enchained - so firmly twisted and knotted together that we cannot extract a single link, cannot take one moment in isolation without all others rubbing and jostling upon it.

The Fates show us the unlovable world of necessity - a world which seems to offer us not the smallest crack into which we can insert some control and effect any change, in which we have apparently lost the power to create, and therefore also to love. But Plato goes further than this, and mounts a defensive manoeuvre that further distances us from the world that seems to slip continually from our grasp. We decided that what we could not have was not worth having anyway. The traces of transience and change that resisted us, the excess that baffled our attempts to exclude it, were the signs that the beloved was not, after all, all she should be. The constitutional act of forgetting has separated the world from its power to create itself, separated us from our role in this. So instead we posit the existence of a rival - another lover-creator, like us, but better, richer, more powerful - it is to him that she whispers all her secrets, to him that she gives up everything that she withholds from us.

79 Thayer notes that "in the myth the operation of choice is portrayed not as related to specific actions, but as directed to a 'life' (*bios*), a network or pattern of contained and ensuing actions" and that "the life-pattern, once it is chosen, becomes the mortal career and destiny of the soul" (Thayer 1988). As Annas points out, "the result of placing the afterlife judgement within a cycle of reincarnations has been to reveal them as part of a fated cycle of happenings within which it is hard for the individual to retain much sense of responsibility for his or her own life. Correspondingly, the moral role of the rewards and punishments changes. They loom not as something deserved, and thus with the power to make one rethink one's life now, but rather as an implacably allotted bonus or calamity that cannot be avoided" (Annas 1982).

80 Plato, *Republic* X 620d-621a

81 Plato, *Republic* X 616b-621d on "the three Fates, daughters of Necessity," who weave, measure and cut the thread of life as it spins on the spindle-whorl of Necessity that is the universe.

Plato signals an attempt to wrest back control of the world, by thinking (and in so doing transferring our love to) an alternative to the runaway train that the Fates appeared to control. For in the space outside the world, at a point where the Fates leave us to our own devices, we are offered the freedom to choose our fate, to exert our control over the malignant controllers, by appealing to our knowledge of a higher authority - the eternal, unchangeable, Good. With Plato we find the notion of a stable source for the changeable world we perceived - the everlasting Forms that never dissolved, never lost their taste, but could continue to sustain and nourish us indefinitely. It is this which develops into the second stage of the error which manifests as Christianity, the "Platonism for the 'people,'"⁸² and it offers a "new possibility of willing" via the extreme certainty of faith, which was needed to counter a "sickening of the will" that "had increased to an absurd level and bordered on desperation."⁸³ Having divorced ourselves from the possibility of participating in the process of love that allowed us to generate a meaningful, beloved, and therefore inhabitable, world, we stave off the threat of nihilism by outsourcing this creativity to the figure of God in the eternal world beyond.

Within the rigid division of the world into a chain of doers and deeds, any phenomenon must be viewed not on its own terms, but in the light of a temporally prior cause. When we look back and fail to perceive the source of the imperceptible excess that gives value to the world, we conclude that it lies not in the world at all, but beyond it.⁸⁴ Our misunderstanding of the relationship between thought and becoming manifests as the redirection of our love towards the transcendent, in response to the perceived betrayal of the physical world that resists our advances. God is the Oedipal father figure we create, and like all our creations, we love him too - more, in fact, than the world which has failed us, denied us, cheated us of a meaning that we now see was only ever derived from her other lover. We have separated ourselves from an awareness of the numerous factors that

82 *BGE* Preface

83 *GS* §347

84 Irigaray characterises this as a fluid excess that cannot be contained within the solid structural identities that we have created, that leaks through the gaps of our strict divisions and cannot be understood on these terms. This "uninterpreted" sense of a world that we cannot completely capture "leads to giving the real back to God." (Irigaray 1985:109) See Marsden (2002:130ff) on the parallels between Nietzsche's depiction of Dionysian lyricism and Irigaray's remarks on the liquification of frozen matter, raising the possibility of an artistic and affirmative reactivation of this sense of fluid excess.

develop into a phenomenon, as we isolated it from them, and can think of the cause solely in terms of the *causa efficiens*, he whose labour brings about the world that we perceive.⁸⁵ It is this kind of cause for which we are continually searching, and this search leads to an infinite chain in which each thing is nothing more than the effect of another prior cause, until we are forced to posit the otherworldly existence of God, the ultimate craftsman, putting a full stop to this endless regress. We create God in our supposed image, deriving “the entire concept from the subjective conviction that we are causes”⁸⁶ and in doing so deepen our sense of disengagement with our role when we engage with the world around us.

Plato and the Christian worldview that developed afterwards supplied an eternal heaven to eclipse the transient world that no longer satisfied us, an eternal God who could nullify the ephemeral nature of the creative act itself, and an eternal soul to distinguish us from the rest of mortal existence. Christianity “granted man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away” and, together with the system of morality which accompanied it, was “a *means of preservation*” which acted as “the great and theoretical *antidote* against practical *nihilism*.”⁸⁷ The movement of becoming is that which gives the sense that the world is getting away from us, slipping from our conceptual grasp. The superiority of God, whom we create from our awareness of this unconceptualisable generative excess, lies in his ability to ruthlessly and efficiently encompass and negate it by triumphing over change, over death, and by rendering it nugatory and meaningless within his larger comprehension.

God, in our estimation, appeared both bigger than and prior to the continual becoming of the world. It did not matter that we were unable to perceive the whole richness of becoming as a totality, because it did not ultimately matter - it did not change anything essential. The shifting transience of the world around us could therefore be understood as a surface effect, a trifling rearrangement that did nothing to challenge the unshakeable

85 As Heidegger writes, in a worldview that has occluded the co-creative aspect of love, “where everything that presences exhibits itself in the light of a cause–effect coherence, even God, for representational thinking, can ... sink to the level of a cause, of *causa efficiens*.” (Heidegger 1993:331)

86 *WTP* §551 (March–June 1888)

87 *WTP* §4 (June 10, 1887)

core of a God who contained within him all the possible combinations and permutations that were merely being replayed in the world. God's response to the changeable and beloved world was the condescension of a master, amused by threats of a lover they recognise as powerless, the growls of a lapdog, the tantrums of a small child. This was our fantasy, a refuge from our own inability to control the world in which we found ourselves and our failure to find our love returned. As one rejected by the beloved, we spurn her. Like good little Freudians, we attempt to free ourselves from her apron strings by imitating the Father, aloof from the transient world he so effortlessly overmasters. We who made God in our image now try to remake ourselves as his shadows. We may appear weak, made of the sickly flesh of the world we despise, but secretly we are just like him - we too, are eternal, and one day we will come into our own, into our kingdom, with the death that signals our majority and our independence from the world we could not possess. But attempting to place ourselves beyond the reach of the world does not regain our stake in it. We disguise, rather than engage with, the nihilistic impotence that comes with the separation of thought from the world of becoming from which it emerges. We are aware of an excess to the world that we cannot encompass. And because we cannot create *all* as meaningful or comprehensible within our idea of the beloved, we despair of our ability to create *any* meaning from the world. We conclude that the problem was not us, but the world - we convince ourselves that the world that defies us is valueless, and redirect all our creative powers of love outside the world, to the transcendent.

The notion of the transcendent upon which we fixate absorbs the creative powers that were our own, that we partake in even as we create the concepts (God, Fate, eternity) that appear to gainsay them. At the same time, it reflects our own sense of betrayal and alienation from the world, in which the excess we cannot encompass becomes viewed as a disruptive and malignant force. The beloved that emerges from this jealous love is a notion of the transcendent that stands beyond and in opposition to the world we perceive.⁸⁸ If we return to the model of love that Plato develops in the *Symposium*, we find the priestess Diotima explaining our love of the unchanging otherworldly. She too develops the ties between love and creativity, explaining that the ways we traditionally think of these

⁸⁸ Thomson cites modern-day examples of the nihilism of transcendence, such as body dissatisfaction caused by comparison with images in the media, or the phenomenon of 'Avatar-blues' in which the world seems worthless in comparison to the fictional world depicted in the film *Avatar* (Thomson 2011)

(love is generally understood as sexual love, creativity as the artistic endeavors of poetry and composition) are just one specific expression of a wider phenomenon⁸⁹ that motivates the human and animal world alike.⁹⁰ All instances of love, whether sexual or not, are ultimately striving towards goodness - that which will make us happy. But as in the case of the healthy man who wishes to remain healthy, we do not just want happiness in the present - for Diotima, as for Socrates, any love is also implicitly the desire for the beloved object in the future so that ultimately "the object of love is the *permanent* possession of goodness for oneself."⁹¹

We, however, are also mortal and changeable, lacking the stable perfection of the gods,⁹² and it is this lack that drives our creativity, just as it motivates our love. In and of ourselves, we cannot possess the beloved forever, because we do not last forever. But creativity offers us a chance to extend ourselves into the future - whether this be via physical children, our reputation or (preferably) the creation of thoughts and ideas that will be discussed a thousand years from now. It allows us to bridge the gap between our current presence and the absent future. Like Nietzsche, Diotima thinks that "everything instinctively values its own offspring," but unlike Nietzsche she holds that "it is immortality which makes this devotion, which is love, a universal feature."⁹³ Rather than the idea we find in Nietzsche of a love that is inherently creative, that transforms lover and beloved as it loves, for Plato our love and our creativity are driven by the desire ultimately to achieve stasis. We are "in love with immortality"⁹⁴ in an attempt to become what we are not, and our love for the transcendent beloved that we have created from our sense of the uncaptured, changeable excess of becoming is similarly a love for precisely what this is not. It is a love that is designed to kill the beloved, that once again loves by separating itself from everything from which this love is drawn. The beloved reconceived as changeless immortality is attempting to address the irretrievable absence of the past and the future, a desire that is ultimately fulfilled in the concept of eternity - that which exists

89 Plato, *Symposium*, 205b-d

90 Plato, *Symposium*, 207a-b

91 Plato, *Symposium*, 206a [my emphasis]

92 Plato, *Symposium*, 207d

93 Plato, *Symposium*, 208b

94 Plato, *Symposium*, 208e

outside time, containing only what is with no “was” or “will be.”⁹⁵ The ultimate good, that towards which our love strives, is eternity.

Eternity counters the meaninglessness of nihilism by allowing us to make something lovable or meaningful for ourselves, but only at the cost of any residual trace of worth in the changeable world around us. Viewed in the reflected light of eternity, the physical world becomes ever more shadowy and inadequate in comparison, as we throw “drab, cold, gray nets of concepts over the brightly colored whirlwind of the senses”⁹⁶ and the “Platonic slander of the senses”⁹⁷ begins. We are able to create “a world in which we are able to live”⁹⁸ only by situating it outside or beyond the transient world that resists our efforts to encompass it, as the otherworldly afterlife or “backworld.” The self, on the other hand, attempts to transcend the transience of the world by positing the presence of the soul, which seems to gain the immortality it craves by participating in the eternity of God, precisely by excluding everything that drew upon the sensual. The initial act of separation of thought from the flow of becoming manifests as the divide between self and world which, isolated from the process of co-creation that we see with love, instead requires the beneficent figure of a common creator to provide any consistency between them. We rely on the divine trace of God and a process of paternal association to reflect any shadow of value back onto the world of the senses that he had created, and to guarantee any certain knowledge of this impoverished world, from which we dissociate ourselves and yet which continues to surround us. The eternal backworld of heaven and the web of Christian morality which promised this become our new “real” world, to the detriment of the “apparent” world of continually changing sensuous appearances.

The powerful focus of love and meaning that humanity finds in the notion of eternity conceals the wound that had opened between thought and becoming, deflecting the nihilism that threatened to overcome us. But as we pass through the early stages of this history of an error, the divide between what we see as the self and the world that surrounds it nonetheless remains a hidden irritation that we cannot leave in peace. The

95 Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e-38a

96 *BGE* §14

97 *WTP* §427 (Nov. 1887-March 1888)

98 *GS* §121

early modern period, with its onslaught of scientific discoveries, seems to offer a way in which the natural world could pull focus back from the transcendent, as the Enlightenment project of grounding knowledge in the “rule of reason” finds its first guarantee of certainty in the “sovereignty of the will”⁹⁹ of the subject, Descartes’ thinking “I,” rather than God. But although the turn away from God appears to redirect our attention to the physical world, this world for us is now hopelessly partitioned into causally linked points. The subject becomes the ultimate (and, for Nietzsche, most pernicious¹⁰⁰) agent in this causal chain, with the world as its object, modelled on the perceived unity and self-sufficiency of the subject:

The subject: this is the term for our belief in a unity underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality: we understand this belief as the *effect* of one cause—we believe so firmly in our belief that for its sake we imagine “truth,” “reality,” “substantiality” in general. — “The subject” is the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the “similarity” of these states; our adjusting them and making them similar is the fact, not their similarity (—which ought rather to be denied—).¹⁰¹

The rationality of the subject offers a nominal challenge to a faith based on God, despite being a more extreme manifestation of the desire for eternity that had produced God in the first place.¹⁰² But the structural separation of the subject from the world around it gives any knowledge based on human reason a precarious status. Descartes’ momentary doubt about God in the foundational stages of the *Meditations* opens up the possibility of a meaning and existence that is independent of God, but which only applies to the “I” of the *cogito*. The attempt to extend this to anything beyond the realm of our own thoughts reveals the gulf that has opened up between “I” and everything else, a divide which our autonomy from God makes deeply problematic. In questioning the necessity of the God we

99 *WTP* §95 (Spring-Fall 1887)

100 Although as McNeill (2004) points out, it is not so much the unity of the subject that troubles Nietzsche as the concept of “a permanent, enduring subject that would maintain itself as such, as self-identical, across or throughout many different states of being.” It is this ossified conception of the self that Nietzsche views as the “accomplice” (as Deleuze puts it in *DI* 130) of the oppressive structures of nihilism.

101 *WTP* §485 (Spring-Fall 1887). In chapter three we shall return to the problem of causality as an anthropomorphism which sees the world as a reflection of how we perceive ourselves.

102 Just as later in the case of Schopenhauer, in the final stages of the error that Nietzsche is trying to redress, we “can see what it was that actually triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken ever more rigorously” until it “in the end forbids itself the lie of faith in God.” (GS §357)

had previously invested with so much meaning, the status of the world he guaranteed becomes similarly dubious.¹⁰³

Even after Descartes' restoration of God later in the *Meditations*, the gap between the disembodied thinking subject and the world has been brought to the surface as we begin to question what sort of meaning this dubiously eternal God can provide. The shift from a God who secures the existence of the self to a subject whose constitution indicates the existence of God does nothing to repair the relationship between thought and the excess of becoming that it is unable to encompass, nor to challenge the prioritisation of stable eternity over transience and change. Our subsequent philosophical attempts to resolve the estrangement between self and world all fail adequately to address this hierarchical distinction between the eternal and the ephemeral. They retain the "*metaphysical faith*" in the absolute value of truth, "the Christian faith which was also Plato's faith,"¹⁰⁴ that locates the immortal soul of the subject with God on one side, and the transient world on the other. The more philosophers attempt to bridge this divide without the aid of an increasingly absent divine intervention, the wider it becomes. As we reach the final stages of the process by which our misunderstanding of the relationship between thought and becoming descends into nihilism, Nietzsche describes how the existence of the eternal or "real" world becomes more and more compromised and can no longer provide the physical world with any meaning, until finally we lose both:

The real world—we have done away with it: what world was left? the apparent one, perhaps?... But no! *with the real world we have also done away with the apparent one!*¹⁰⁵

The ultimate effect of the death of God is not the re-emergence of a transient and yet meaningful world of appearances, previously eclipsed by the now discredited heavenly world of eternity, nor the dissolution of the gap between self and world. Instead, it seems that all sense of meaning whatsoever has disappeared, and that this gulf has deepened to the extent that the world can no longer in any meaningful sense be perceived at all.

103 As Löwith puts it, "the peculiar result of Descartes's skeptical meditation is the basic ontological distinction between man and world, according to the respective degree of certainty. Man is certain of himself as '*res cogitans*;' everything else, the whole world outside of man, is in itself as '*res extensa*' uncertain." (Löwith 1997: 139)

104 GS §344

105 TI 'How the "real world" finally became a fable'

The supreme values in whose service man *should* live . . . were erected over man to strengthen their voice, as if they were commands of God, as "reality," as the "true" world, as a hope and *future* world. Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems "meaningless."¹⁰⁶

This is the "pessimistic coloring" which "comes necessarily in the wake of the Enlightenment"¹⁰⁷ that Nietzsche diagnoses at the heart of nineteenth century thinking: the absolute exhaustion of our ability to make sense of anything, in which

we see that we cannot reach the sphere in which we have placed our values; but this does not by any means confer any value on that other sphere in which we live: on the contrary, we are *weary* because we have lost the main stimulus.¹⁰⁸

This stimulus is the phantom of eternity and the possibility of changeless perfection. With the dissolution of this fantasy, there is now no truth or meaning to be found anywhere, be it in the "supreme values" of God and Christian morality, the "apparent" world of the senses or the rudderless figure of man trapped between them. The creative effort that had produced the beloved in the shape of God was a massive one, and our despair at the failure of this relationship is correspondingly devastating.

Although we have been forced to abandon the illusion of eternity, we still do not recognise the uncalculable nature of becoming. As subjects, we see the world as an object *for us*, but an inherently disappointing one. We do not view our creative efforts to transform becoming into something we can think as a positive and necessary approach, but as an act of misguided stupidity. The causal world we now inhabit seems to leave no space for such creative transformations. Instead, we can only understand it as an ordered series in which energy is merely shifted from one place to another, from one billiard ball to the next.¹⁰⁹ For Nietzsche, the arc of this creatively destructive love story spans the history of

106 *WTP* §7 (Nov. 1887-March 1888). As Nietzsche goes on to say, however, this "is only a *transitional stage*" which heralds the thought of eternal return that we shall go on to explore in the final section of this chapter.

107 *WTP* §91 (1885)

108 *WTP* §8 (1883-1888)

109 Heidegger describes this view of the world that informs our thinking in modernity as one enframed by an all-encompassing relationship with the world understood as technology - as that which is entirely present for us, ordered and calculable. With his notion of enframing, Heidegger recognises the difficulty of undoing or deconstructing the co-creative movement of the loving-thinking relationship, even at the point where it seems to be working against itself, for "the challenging-enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing (bringing-forth) but also conceals

Western metaphysics, from Plato's misunderstanding of the beloved as the eternity that we lack, to the resurgence of nihilism in modernity as the failure of this love.¹¹⁰ The result of the breakdown of the relationship between thought and becoming is to destroy any faith in the creativity of our thought. Becoming has been neutered, subdivided into a causal chain, in which the future is no more than the completion of a process set in motion in the past.¹¹¹ A great deal of Nietzsche's efforts go towards showing how this has come about, and attempting to get us to understand that the subdivision of becoming into cause and effect is the result of the creative activity of thought.

The segregation of doer and deed, subject and object, is of our own making, and once "one has grasped that the 'subject' is not something that creates effects, but only a fiction, much follows" as "belief also disappears in effective things, in reciprocation, cause and effect between those phenomena that we call things"¹¹² and we are left with the conclusion that "necessity is not a fact but an interpretation."¹¹³ It is only in the space that we insert between the subject and its actions that we find any room for the distinction between

revealing itself and with it that wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, propriates" (Heidegger 1993:331). The act of selection cuts away its own ground, allowing us to forget the act of co-creation, revealing or bringing-forth.

110 Heidegger agrees that it is only at the culmination of this process that we can begin to see it for what it is and therefore have the chance to redirect it. However, he identifies several trajectories within the larger overarching epoch of metaphysics in which we can see the same pattern of enframing at work, in which the way we shape meaning is and can only ever be in terms of a particular path or worldview (be it post-Socratic, Medieval scholastic, or modern – see Schürmann 1987: 95ff). For Heidegger, Nietzsche's reversal of the Platonic hierarchy represents the last gasp of metaphysics, with the will to power as the ultimate subject that imposes its own meaning on the world. Understood subjectively in this fashion, the will to power is that which drives the technological understanding of being, that sees the world as something entirely for us, to be stored, regulated, and eventually used up. However understanding will to power as love, as the capacity not just to affect but more importantly to be affected and be open to respond to the surrounding world, brings the will to power much closer than Heidegger admits to that which he describes as presencing or *physis*, the framework of openness that makes any relationships within it possible. Schürmann's approach of reading Heidegger "backward," from the later works to the earlier, emphasises a more plural Heideggerian ontology in which "presencing then appears more Nietzschean, deprived of metaphysical principles." (Schürmann 1987: 14)

111 Tillich describes this confusing sense of societal despair that comes with nihilism at the end of eras as a state in which time stops, we "cannot see anything new" (Tillich 2000: 11) and "no way out into the future appears." (Tillich 2000: 54)

112 *WTP* §552 (Spring-Fall 1887)

113 *ibid.*

chance and necessity. The highly efficient manner in which we create identity is born of long years of practice, which blind us to the artificial nature of its operation. But if once we grasp that our habitual unthinking manner of seeing the world as discrete entities is in fact an act of extreme temerity that we impose on the fluid world “poured all around”¹¹⁴ us, it is impossible to conceive of these gaps remaining, and becoming flows back into the space that causality had been required to bridge. For Nietzsche, necessity is a fiction, because there is simply no room in the seamless web of being in which any relationship, including the fallacious relationship between the cause and its necessary effect, can survive.

So what, as aspiring lovers of that which is necessary in things, are we supposed to love, when both necessity and the things in which it inheres have no reality beyond that we create? When the space for necessity is withdrawn, we are equally left with no room for contingency - it is the distinction between chance and necessity which collapses, all things following with equal certainty because there is no concrete place where we may say that the “cause” ends and the effect begins. Necessity may be a fiction, but it is one that embraces all things equally, and so if there is anything necessary in things, anything that can be the object our love, it is: everything. This is the fate that we must learn to love, to see, and by doing so make beautiful - the inextricable totality of becoming in all its movement, within which we as lovers are also engulfed.

Our submersion within and utter entanglement with becoming, the world that is our fate, must be recognised if we are not to fall into the abusive pattern of purely passive or Stoic love described above. The distinction between self and world may be the most primary of the identities we learned to form, but cannot be excluded from the all-embracing network of becoming on this account - we are equally “a piece of fate,”¹¹⁵ that which is necessary, and the movement of learning to love fate in its entirety therefore requires that “one has to learn to love oneself”¹¹⁶ too. It is our inclusion and confusion with the beloved, our own nascent ability to say “I am fate”¹¹⁷ that envelops us within the sphere of that which is

114 *PTAG* §7

115 *HATH* II “The Wanderer and his Shadow” §61

116 *TSZ* III “On the Spirit of Gravity” §2

117 *EH* IV “Why I am a Destiny” [“*Schicksal*”]

transformed and made beautiful by the act of love. Rather than a crushing adversary, fate and the changes within it become a process in which we are actively complicit.

But this presents us with a problem. When we turn back to GS §334, which outlines the stages by which all “love, too, must be learned,” we recall that the first movement of the process of learning to love is to “isolate and delimit” the beloved. How are we to do this with fate? How can we isolate absolutely everything when there can be nothing cut away and excluded from it, even ourselves, when there can be no line drawn between the necessary and the contingent - when it is precisely this tendency to delimit and fix substances within being that eventually led to our present nihilistic alienation? In order to love fate or necessity without diminishing it and ourselves in the process, it seems that the reverse is needed, that we must infinitely broaden what is included within our conception of fate, rather than reducing it. What is “necessary” cannot be understood as the chain of cause and effect, that is no more necessary than any of the other fictions we create. Nor can the necessary be opposed to the accidental, a notion which is meaningless in a universe devoid of any divine plan.¹¹⁸ Instead, the love of what is necessary in *amor fati* expresses the need to affirm the generative force of becoming, and the role of thought in transforming this.¹¹⁹

This entails a radically different mode of thought, one that abandons our lingering privileging of an impossible sense of eternity over the transience of becoming. Rather than permanently excluding and hardening the barriers of what is and is not considered part of the beloved identity, instead our selection should be a “looking away” that leaves space for future revision, for the beloved to grow. With *amor fati*, we would cease to oppose our idea of the beloved identity (especially that of our own identity¹²⁰) to the rest of the world, “waging war” on all that we exclude from it. Instead, with *amor fati*, Nietzsche calls upon us to perform a temporary selection. We must abandon our addictive way of loving the world,

118 As Stern points out, “we can’t separate the world into what is necessary and what is accidental, because ‘accidental’ only really makes sense in an anthropomorphized world—a world which intends certain things, gives certain commands, is an organism or a machine with a purpose” (Stern 2013). In chapter three we shall go on to explore GS §109 where Nietzsche brings out this idea.

119 As Groff states, this “inner necessity” is the “creation of the blind, purposeless play of forces that [Nietzsche] calls the will to power” (Groff 2003).

120 For as Nietzsche writes of the process of learning to love through selection and repetition, “even he who loves himself will have learned it this way – there is no other way.” (GS §334)

and instead shape our beloved identities as the “brief habits” that Nietzsche loves with all the “faith of passion, this faith in eternity”¹²¹ but that are yet *not* eternal, are not the enduring habits that have sucked us into nihilism. *Amor fati* is the creation of these briefly shining identities which incorporate and love the transience within them, through which the world will be made beautiful. As one who understands the relationship of thought and becoming in this manner, one who loves fate will simultaneously have become something different, one who is capable of effecting this change. But as the patronage of Janus suggests, there must be an ending if we are to have this new kind of love. Nietzsche has diagnosed the problem, and shown us an alternative way of being – but now he must work out how to get there. We need to pervert our customary method of devotion as eternalisation so that everything, including transience, can be affirmed. This is what Nietzsche introduces in GS §341 as the thought of eternal return.

The anthropological reading of eternal return as a test of affirmation

Amor fati is Nietzsche’s alternative to the model of love that Socrates speaks of in the *Symposium*, which occludes the creative relationship between thought and becoming, and led to the problem of nihilism that we suffer in modernity. The question is how we are to alter this relationship, given the initial act of selection that is a necessary part of the creativity of thought. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche asks this “most delicate question of all ... whether science is able to furnish goals of action after having proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them.”¹²² We saw this annihilation in the account of how the nihilistic aspects of our love of gradually destroyed that which it adored. The task for Nietzsche’s new “gay” or joyous science is now to find a way for us to affirm this creativity. The “experimenting” that this task involves begins here in *The Gay Science*, and is no easy task, for Nietzsche warns us that it “might last for centuries.”¹²³ The death of the “love-sick” Socrates comes after Nietzsche’s exploration of love and nihilism throughout *The Gay Science*, and his cry that we must “overcome even the Greeks!”¹²⁴ is followed by his attempt to do this, with the thought of eternal return.

121 GS §295

122 GS §7

123 *ibid.*

124 GS §340

Nietzsche introduces this fundamental thought as “the heaviest weight”:

The heaviest weight. - What if some day or night a demon were to steal 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 again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must 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 over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'¹²⁵

How, asks Nietzsche, would you respond to the demon's announcement, that we will be forced to relive our lives over and over again exactly as we have already lived them? The most likely response, Nietzsche thinks, is that “if this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight!”¹²⁶ He does, however, suggest another possibility - that you might have “once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’”¹²⁷ On the strength of such a moment, we might greet the demon's pronouncement not as a threat, but as a wonderful promise, having become so “well disposed ... to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal.”¹²⁸ How do you feel about yourself, and about your life, asks Nietzsche? Do you like it enough to want to live it all over again - not in the fashion of *Groundhog Day*, in which you can tweak past mistakes and choices, but precisely “this life as you now live it?” Do you affirm not only your own existence, but also the whole past history of the world that has led to it, to the extent that there could be nothing better, that you could want nothing more, than its eternal repetition?

This is Nietzsche's first published introduction of the thought of eternal return, which leads onto the figure of Zarathustra who is introduced in the next aphorism (GS §342).¹²⁹

125 GS §341

126 *ibid.*

127 *ibid.*

128 *ibid.*

129 This is almost word for word the same as the opening aphorism of Nietzsche's next published text, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and the implication seems clear that Nietzsche is leading us from *The Gay Science* into his next book with this teaser of what is coming next. Indeed some cosmological readers of eternal return such as Loeb view GS §341 as no more than a preview for

Nietzsche calls the thought of eternal return the "highest attainable formula of affirmation"¹³⁰ and writes that "the '*gaya scienza*' ... gives a hundred indications that something incomparable is near; latterly it gives the opening of *Zarathustra* itself, and in the penultimate section of the fourth book it gives Zarathustra's fundamental thought."¹³¹ This "fundamental thought" of eternal return is Nietzsche's prescription for how we are to achieve the new type of love that he describes in *amor fati*.¹³² Perhaps of all Nietzsche's work, the thought of eternal return is that which most stridently demands interpretation,¹³³ and the initial force that Nietzsche expects this thought to have is one that emerges from the preoccupations of the preceding books of *The Gay Science*. We need to understand the concerns that motivate Nietzsche's introduction of eternal return before we can make sense of its later development in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I will therefore first concentrate on a reading that emerges from *The Gay Science* of eternal return as a test of affirmation.¹³⁴ As we shall see, this reading does not ultimately address the problematic

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, containing only a cut-down version of Nietzsche's full theory (Loeb 2013). However as I am arguing throughout this work, GS §341 is much more than a preview – not only this aphorism, but the entire surrounding context of *The Gay Science* is essential for understanding what Nietzsche is trying to do with eternal return.

130 EH III '*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: A Book for Everyone and Nobody' §1

131 *ibid.*

132 A dissenting view is that of Domino who argues that the demon's challenge in GS §341 "does not suggest love as a possible response" (Domino 2012), or at least not that which we currently recognise as love, and that on this basis we should not read *amor fati* as something Nietzsche intended to emerge from eternal return. This criticism ignores the strange and futural kind of love that Nietzsche intends with *amor fati* (the whole point is that a new way of thinking will not follow our current patterns of love). Domino also dismisses the cry of "*da capo*" that we find in BGE §56 as "without emotional inflection, as might be found in a score," suggesting that this would be a "retrogressive movement" concerned with the repetition of the past and present rather than a transformation into the future, trivialising the difference engendered by musical repetition that is, as I will go on to argue, a major concern of *The Gay Science*.

133 As Bernd Magnus writes, "it is almost unique in the history of philosophy that so much confusion would prevail concerning a philosopher's self-confessed principal idea. Consider how odd it would be if, for example, we did not have the foggiest notion of what Plato meant by forms (*eidōs*, *idea*) or why he was so enthusiastic. Or consider how peculiar it would be if we did not fathom what Kant meant by "a priori synthetic judgments" or his second Copernican revolution, and if we were in the dark about Aristotle's 'substance,' Descartes' *cogito* or Hegel's *Geist*. The point, of course, is that Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is in a quite peculiar position." (Magnus 1978:xiii)

134 In the later chapters of the thesis I shall turn to other interpretations of eternal return – the cosmological reading, Stambaugh's account of eternal return as a theory of time as "momentary," and Deleuze's mobilisation of eternal return as a selection ensuring the return of difference. There are however many other notable readings of eternal return that there is not sufficient space to

relationship between thought and becoming that we have explored in this chapter. It is the failure of this reading that shall prompt us to reexamine the nature of the relationship between thought and becoming along the rhythmical lines that Nietzsche suggests in *The Gay Science*. Only once we have more fully understood the problem that Nietzsche is addressing with eternal return shall we then return in chapter four to explore the account of eternal return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

We have seen how in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche explores the problem of nihilism as one in which we are unable to affirm the identities we have formed in the world around us. The process by which our thought creates the idea of discrete things from the flow of becoming involves an initial act of separation that cuts these forms off from their creative source. We are unable to affirm the value of either the creativity of thought or the ideas that it shapes. One common interpretation argues that Nietzsche intends eternal return to address this problem by forcing upon us an extreme test of affirmation - that we should imbue all our actions with the repetitive meaning they would acquire *if* they were to return eternally, and ask, on this basis if we can affirm them. Nietzsche calls it "the heaviest thought" and the

engage with, such as that of Löwith. Löwith reads eternal return as that which operates, and can only operate, at the limits of "the most fundamental nihilism," in which the death of God brings about a crisis by removing all meaning from humanity, but in so doing opens up a space for a different relationship to the world. In this crisis, one is forced to finally "sacrifice God himself and all faith and out of cruelty against oneself 'worship gravity, fate, the nothing'... the fate of the meaningless eternal recurrence." (Löwith 1997:52) For Löwith, the thought of eternal return is the self-overcoming of nihilism at these very limits, at once the "'crisis' of nihilism" in which "it is decided whether man still wants to be there at all" and at the same time the "unity of this schism between the human will to a goal and the goalless revolving of the world." (Löwith 1997:63) Eternal return is itself nihilistic because it makes no efforts to disguise the meaningless nature of an existence that eternally repeats, that is not just meaningless but *eternally* meaningless. By affirming precisely this meaningless character to existence, humanity is in effect moving itself back into line with the world and can ground and align itself once again, but this time in nature rather than a non-existent otherworld. Löwith argues that Nietzsche believes it would be possible in this way to reintegrate the subject with its lost world and to "'translate' man 'back' into the nature of all things" by "putting the isolated human being back into the whole, just as accidental as it is necessary, of the creative life of the world." (Löwith 1997:117-9) However Löwith is alert to the tensions raised by this interpretation of eternal return as a nostalgic attempt to recover a lost state of alignment with being, when we consider the futural impulse that also runs throughout Nietzsche's philosophy. On Löwith's reading, eternal return is rather "the 'most terrible' idea and the greatest gravity" for Nietzsche, not because it heralds the end of humanity in the prospect of the overman, but "because it contradicts his will to a future redemption." (Löwith 1997:121) By making eternal return into a turn *back* Löwith not only robs eternal return of any radically transformative potential, but in doing so dooms Nietzsche's wider project to failure.

anthropological reading suggests that it is precisely *as a thought* that Nietzsche intends it to have an effect.¹³⁵ It should not be taken as a theory of how the world is, but rather as a thought that challenges and rewires our existing ways of thinking, irrespective of how it corresponds to reality. We should therefore prioritise the psychological consequences of properly addressing this thought - not whether eternal return is true, but whether we *wish* it were. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche asks the reader: what would you do, if a demon were to come and tell you that time operates in the way that the cosmological reading describes? This, for the psychological or "anthropological" reading of eternal return, is the key point. Do we want the demon to be telling the truth - do we say that yes, if there were a god, this is precisely how we would wish a god to act? Whether there ever is any god, or any demon, to tell us this, and whether their message were true, is immaterial. The reaction we have to the idea of eternal return is more important than whether it has any basis in reality. It is the affirmative quality present in this reaction that would signal the overturning of nihilistic patterns of thought.

Those who affirm a state of eternal bliss or eternal damnation rather than the events of our own lives are embracing the idea that the meaning of our earthly existence is ultimately to be found outside it - that our actions in this life matter only insofar as they impact upon our fate beyond it. Even shorn of these divine trappings, however, anything that views our actions as part of an ongoing goal is affirming not the action itself, but its role as a step towards something else. In Plato's account of love, we found that he viewed all earthly desire for good things or people ultimately as a step towards a greater eternal good. The idea of eternal return however precludes any possibility of progress or goals - everything will eventually repeat, over and over again. One who affirms the idea of eternal return is affirming this world over any such eternal backworld, by saying that they are happy with the meaning that each event has in and of itself, in the knowledge that it cannot lead to anything else¹³⁶. Using eternal return as a test of our ability to affirm our lives takes on the

135 See for example Soll, who states that its importance for Nietzsche is "to be located in what he took to be the psychological consequences" and "the human import of this world hypothesis" rather than its putative truth (Soll 1980).

136 Danto thinks that this is the most important "compensation" of the test of eternal return, "that the world must give the lie to any proposal that it had a goal, or purpose, or meaning, or end-state of any kind" (Danto 2005:193)

flavour of a Kantian ethical imperative¹³⁷ - do you act in such a way that you could will the eternal repetition of this act? Eternal return in this way offers a way of adding meaning and depth to our lives in the wake of the loss of God,¹³⁸ but one that is based not on any value outside the world, but on no more than the eternal repetition of our lives themselves.¹³⁹

As a test of affirmation eternal return could indeed change us, not in the way we might expect a "scientific" truth to change us, but more in the way that reading a work of fiction may change us. It does not matter whether the *Vinteuil Sonata* is modelled on that by Brahms, Franck, or Saint-Saëns, or if it has ever existed in any form outside the novel at all. We can still read *Swann's Way* and wish to hear the piece of music that Proust describes. It is this reaction upon which the anthropological reading focuses, asking us to consider whether we would want to live in a universe of eternal return. As Nietzsche writes of eternal return in his unpublished notes, "the thought and belief is a heavy weight" because although "you say that food, location, air, and society change and determine you ... your opinions do so even more." If, as Nietzsche writes "you incorporate this thought of thoughts," the question in all things "is this such, that I will it countless times?" would, he believes, transform us.¹⁴⁰ Eternal damnation did not need to be real in order for

137 See for example Magnus (Magnus 1978:140ff) and Danto, who frames it in this fashion as "an imperative: So act (or so be) that you would be willing to act exactly the same way (or be exactly the same thing an infinite number of times over... In existentialist terms, it is a plea for authenticity" (Danto 2005:194). Kaufmann however argues that those who affirm eternal return do so "out of the fullness of their delight in the moment. They do not deliberate how they should act to avoid unpleasant consequences— knowing all the while that whatever they are about to do has already been done by them an infinite number of times in the past" (Kaufmann 2013:322-3) and that as such eternal return should not be taken as any kind of method for weighing individual acts.

138 Löwith refers to this aspect of eternal return as "a 'counterweight' against the will to the nothing" (Löwith 1997:56)

139 Magnus detects in this Nietzsche's attempt to appease the "kronophobia" of humanity, suggesting that "Nietzsche remained convinced that human beings could only rededicate themselves to the earth if traditional eternalistic predicates are attached to it" and that "the triumph of *eros* over *logos* could only be realized, Nietzsche thought, by an eternalistic countermyth" (Magnus 1978:190ff). We shall go on in chapter four to argue that the eternity Nietzsche is drawing upon with eternal return is neither a myth, nor to be conceived of in the traditional manner of eternity as opposed to time.

140 *"Der Gedanke und Glaube ist ein Schwergewicht, welches neben allen anderen Gewichten auf dich drückt und mehr als sie. Du sagst, daß Nahrung Ort Luft Gesellschaft dich wandeln und bestimmen? Nun, deine Meinungen thun es noch mehr, denn diese bestimmen dich zu dieser Nahrung Ort Luft Gesellschaft. — Wenn du dir den Gedanken der Gedanken einverleibst, so wird er dich verwandeln. Die Frage bei allem, was du thun willst: 'ist es so, daß ich es unzählige Male*

the thought of it to change us, so why must the thought of eternal return be any different? As with eternal damnation, the important question is what sort of person would want it to be true.

According to GS §341, the person who can affirm eternal return is more “well-disposed” to themselves than we can be said to be as we are now. They would seem to have replaced the Platonic model of love for the eternal as the eternally-lacking with that of the eternally-returning. Nihilism came about because we selectively narrowed the identities that we created to the point that becoming was completely excluded. So instead, Nietzsche asks us to affirm *everything* – to see “what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them,”¹⁴¹ and to “no longer want anything better from the world than it and it again.”¹⁴² With the anthropological reading, eternal return becomes a test or a status check for ourselves. The anthropological reading places us and our creative powers at the centre of this universe, to the extent that it does not really matter what the universe does, or indeed how often. However this does not strengthen, but rather undercuts the impact of the thought of eternal return. Irrespective of how many times an event may repeat, I will experience it in this life only once.¹⁴³ More crucially, however, it does not address the root cause of nihilism. It tries to replace eternal significance which has been devalued with the depth of repetition. But it does not promote any ability to affirm the particular forms that we have created. The problem of nihilism is that we lost faith in the world we perceived, because we realised it was the product of our own creativity. As a test of affirmation, eternal return does nothing to validate this – rather it asks us to affirm that which we either do not believe to be true (at any rate in the form that the demon presents it), or that which if it is, renders our affirmation meaningless.

We need to refine our understanding of the process by which we create identities from becoming, before we can affirm them. That “which is necessary,” and that we must learn to affirm in *amor fati*, is not all the other things or events that we must understand as

thun will?’ ist das größte Schwergewicht.” [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881.11\[143\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881.11[143]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr–Herbst 1881

141 GS §276

142 GS §334

143 Soll argues for this reason that the only possible response to eternal return is indifference (Soll 1980)

necessarily connected to everything else in the world. It is also the process by which we extract these from becoming. It is this which we must learn to understand as necessary, rather than contingent, if we are to move beyond nihilistic thought. The problem that we have not yet successfully addressed is the question of how we "isolate and delimit" these forms in the first place. What is it in becoming that allows us to pick out a melody, in a world that we now realise is devoid of any composer? We must therefore return once again to examine the musical process of learning to love that Nietzsche describes in GS §334. As with eternal return, repetition is key to the way we develop these identities. But unlike the anthropological reading of eternal return, in which we must affirm the repetition of precisely the same event, the process of learning to love is a very clearly transformative kind of repetition. Eternal return seems to imply that we (or some version of ourselves) experience the same thoughts and events again and again, but without any difference in reaction to the events themselves. The repetition that we find in the process of learning to love, however, is shown to gradually and incrementally transform our understanding of that which we hear, drawing on the process of repetition and variation that is a driving force within music itself, to produce "new movements, new rhythms, new love calls and seductions."¹⁴⁴ Rhythm is the term we use to describe the force of repetition and development within music, not just of individual beats, but of the repetition of a particular melody or theme precisely as Nietzsche describes in GS §334. In the next chapter we shall therefore turn to Nietzsche's early work on rhythm, in order to understand more about the rhythmic structure of the forms that are detected or created via this process of learning to love, and their relationship to the flow of becoming from which they emerge.

144 *WTP* §808 (March-June 1888)

2. Development: Rhythm as the form of time

In the previous chapter I argued that we can understand the creative process by which we think in terms of what Nietzsche describes as “learning to love,” a process in which we first isolate the beloved from everything else, and then continually repeat this process of separation. We saw that the ways in which we have traditionally tried to conceptualise our thought and the identities that it forms suffer from a tendency to canonise or eternalise this initial moment of isolation. This leaves thought separated from the creative process that gives rise to it, so that we then understand it as the independent “product” or object of this process. Cut off from the movement of becoming, the thoughts or identities that we form can only repeat what is already inside them, claustrophobically replaying their “contents” within the wall of a pre-existing identity, rather than repeating the active moment of selection that shaped them. This is what Nietzsche calls nihilism, a state in which our thought becomes separated from its own action within impermeable pockets of identity. The failure of this attempt in the modern crisis of nihilism indicates the need for a different way of thinking, one which reconceives the relationship between thought and becoming. Eternal return is the intervention that Nietzsche introduces to try and provoke a new way of thinking. However, when considered simply as a test of affirmation it does not function in the manner that Nietzsche intends. We need to change not only *what* the process of learning to love can encompass, broadened out in *amor fati* to include all that is necessary, but *how* we love, or think, the world. We therefore will pick up on the musical and rhythmic cues of *The Gay Science* and examine the specifically rhythmical nature of our thought, so that we may understand how it is that we currently learn to hear the world as beloved through the process described in GS §334.

In this chapter we shall explore Nietzsche’s early unpublished work on rhythm, which forms the background to the rhythmical process of thought that Nietzsche describes in GS §334. Nietzsche’s early work on rhythm seeks firstly to challenge the view that there is one eternal kind of rhythm. His engagement with the rhythmic theory of Aristoxenus reveals an ancient sense of rhythm based on temporal proportions rather than on alternations of stress or accented beats. We shall explore the insights that emerge from Nietzsche’s early work on rhythm that lead him to conclude that rhythm is the form of time. We shall then situate Nietzsche’s evaluation of the relationship between rhythm and time in the context of his understanding of the relationship between appearance and reality. We shall explore

the tensions that appear in both the early rhythm notes and *The Birth of Tragedy*, and how in both cases Nietzsche's attempt to show the effects of time on the privileged phenomena of rhythm and tragedy leads to an account of their gradual degeneration. But we shall also see how the phenomenon of rhythm resists Nietzsche's attempts to understand this process in terms of a widening of a metaphysical divide between time as it is in itself, and our rhythmic perception of it. In Nietzsche's early engagement with rhythm, we find an attempt to explore the relationship between thought and that which it thinks, which provides us with competing ancient and modern approaches to how we go about the process of selection and repetition that we explored in chapter one. In our attempts to evaluate these alternative approaches to rhythm, we find that it is a capacity for fluidity, multiplicity, and variation that marks the more promising way of thinking, rather than any attempt to reproduce or represent that from which it emerges.

Nietzsche's early rhythmical theory of time

Nietzsche's early notes on rhythm may not at first glance seem particularly connected with his later work on transformation and affirmation, falling instead within the realm of his more philological than philosophical efforts.¹ The attempt to marry even the more overtly philosophical early work with his later thought is problematic in any case, as Nietzsche's thought during this period is marked (by his own admission) by an undercurrent of dialectical thinking and Schopenhauerian metaphysics that he later explicitly rejects.² But despite its philological focus, the early work on rhythm broadens into an attempt to work

1 Most of these early notes on rhythm were made in 1869-71 and can be found in the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* Section 2 Volume 3 (KGW 2.3). They include passages of Latin and ancient Greek, and (as Porter (2000: 130) plausibly suggests, probably because of this "formidable aspect,") the majority of these notes have not been translated into English (with the exception of one paper 'On the Theory of Quantitative Rhythm' cited below as *TQR*). Translations of many key passages from the notes can however be found in Porter (2000), and I have drawn extensively on his detailed study of these notes. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

2 Nietzsche later writes that his first major philosophical undertaking, *The Birth of Tragedy*, published shortly after the rhythm notes in 1872, "smells offensively Hegelian," and despite his claim that "only a few formulas are tainted with the cadaverous fragrance of Schopenhauer," they are still an enduring presence throughout the work (*Ecce Homo* 'The Birth of Tragedy' §1). See Nabais (2006:41ff) for an account of Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche's early work and Nietzsche's subsequent break with Schopenhauer with the publication of *Human all too Human* in 1878.

out “the entire metrical function of time,”³ introducing currents of thought which recur throughout Nietzsche’s working life⁴ and which will go on to inform his understanding of the nihilistic process of identity-formation that we find in *The Gay Science*. Our first task therefore is to engage with Nietzsche’s tentative early conclusions about rhythm and time, before we can then bring this to bear on the problem of nihilism that emerges in his later work, and use his early work on rhythm to refine our understanding of the relationship of thought and becoming.

Nietzsche’s work on rhythm⁵ emerges from his efforts to understand how an audience of classical antiquity might have heard and experienced the texts that he, as both a philologist and a philosopher, was attempting to engage with so many centuries later. Throughout his life, Nietzsche was deeply critical of what he saw as a prevailing trend within philology, which assumed that what we understand and experience as rhythmic has not fundamentally changed since the time of ancient Greece.⁶ This ahistorical approach, in which “our [modern] kind of rhythmic sense is set down as the only and ‘eternal’ kind, as rhythm in itself,”⁷ unconsciously reads the texts of the past through the lens of the present, understanding and judging them on its terms. Nietzsche’s insight, which he develops

3 “Wichtig, daß in der Einleitung die ganze metrische Aufgabe der Zeit bezeichnet wird” (KGW 2:3:308).

4 Porter’s (2000) thorough engagement with Nietzsche’s early notes on rhythm argues for their “indisputable” though unrecognised significance for his later work on the will to power as it manifests in man as a creative species, while drawing out the internal tensions within Nietzsche’s account that point to the later substantial revisions which his thoughts on time will undergo. Miller’s (1999) reconstruction of Nietzsche’s rhythmic theory of time sees an essential continuity between his earlier and later work that persists beneath the metaphysical preoccupations of the late 1860s-early 1870s, while Michon agrees that “Nietzsche’s late *rhuthmology* based on ‘will to power and ‘eternal return’ cannot be correctly assessed if we do not reconnect it to his former studies.” (Michon 2016)

5 Nietzsche delivered two lecture courses on the subject of rhythm in antiquity during the period 1869-71, and intended to develop these notes into a study elaborating both a “Philosophy” and a “Physiology” of rhythm (see Porter 2000:143 for a brief summary of Nietzsche’s plans to publish a theory of rhythm).

6 Nietzsche did not think that this lack of “historical sense” was unique to modernity. See GS §83 on the transformative power of Roman “translations” which saw the poetry of different cultures as fair game for an imperialistic rewriting to reflect suitably Roman values.

7 “unsere Art rhythmischer Sinn als einzige und ‘ewige’ Art, als Rhythmik an sich, angesetzt worden” <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/BVN-1886.688> eKGWB Letter to Carl Fuchs 1886.

throughout these notes, is that the ancient sense of rhythm differs dramatically from the modern, and that to read ancient texts on the basis of the present is to *misread* and hence misjudge them, effacing the past as we award our current values the status of eternity. Nietzsche recognises that his main ambition, which is "to make obvious to us the gap between the Greeks and ourselves in their rhythmical enjoyment," erodes any faith in the success of the philological enterprise without offering anything in its place except "less enjoyment and apparently less understanding" which, as he admits, "are hardly enticing promises!"⁸ His main polemic throughout the early notes is against misunderstanding ancient rhythm along modern lines, but the accompanying conclusion that our thought is unavoidably shaped by our contemporary sense of rhythm questions whether any understanding may be possible of rhythms other than our own. As I will go on to argue in the following chapters, throughout *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is alert to the difficulty involved in thinking beyond the human - of hearing a rhythm other than our own. It is this self-closing aspect of the rhythm of thought that is disrupted by eternal return.

Nietzsche therefore turns from modern to classical texts on rhythmic theory, particularly the surviving fragments of Aristoxenus' *Elementa Rhythmica*. By doing so he hopes to see what understanding of rhythm emerges from these if we lay aside (insofar as possible) our modern preconceptions about the nature of rhythm. Aristoxenus was a pupil of Aristotle, who was writing after the Socratic turn away from the classical Greek sense of tragedy that Nietzsche recounts in *The Birth of Tragedy*⁹ and at a point where the ancient Greek sense of rhythm had already given way to a more modern conception.¹⁰ Despite this, Nietzsche finds Aristoxenus' theories stimulating not only as an (if at times, critical) distillation of what had come before, but also as an attempt by someone with both philosophical and practical musical training to provide an explanation for rhythm and harmony as we experience these phenomena, rather than as ciphers for a mathematically ordered universe.¹¹ What emerges from Nietzsche's engagement with Aristoxenus is a description of rhythm as a

8 TQR 235

9 See BT §12 onwards for Nietzsche's account of how Euripides and Socrates mark a turning point in which tragedy became subservient to knowledge in Greek thought.

10 Porter (2000:156) points out that, as such, Aristoxenus may be guilty of precisely the kind of retrospective misreading of ancient rhythm that Nietzsche found in the philologists of his day. Despite this, I would argue that his account of rhythm and Nietzsche's engagement with it provides us with a productive working model of the operation, as well as the effects, of rhythm, that we can draw upon in the following.

phenomenon that is inherently multiple, but that we come to perceive as a unified phenomenon via a rhythmical process, in which the difference of individual beats is heard as repetitions of the same. This rhythmical process of identity formation is crucial for understanding Nietzsche's later account of the descent of thought into nihilism, while at the same time suggesting an alternative model of difference in becoming that we shall only find more fully developed in the later work of Deleuze and Guattari.

Aristoxenus is concerned with the details of how we come to hear something as rhythmical, going into the minutiae of how rhythm as a phenomenon works. The surviving fragments of his account begin by trying to pin down the nature of rhythm, before going on to detail a range of combinations in which particular rhythms are created. The first of Aristoxenus' observations that particularly interests Nietzsche is

that there are these two natures [*physeis*], that of rhythm and that of the *rhythmizomenon* [lit. 'that which is made rhythmic'], these being related to one another in the same way as are shape [*schíma*] and what is shaped [*schimatizómenon*].¹²

Aristoxenus' account begins by stressing this difference between rhythm per se, and a thing or phenomenon that is rhythmic (the "*rhythmizomenon*"). Rhythm and *rhythmizomenon* have different natures or ways of being, that at first appear similar to the Aristotelian distinction between form (shape) and matter (what is shaped).¹³ A rhythm, Aristoxenus explains, is not the same as the rhythmic phenomenon that conveys it, whether this be a dance, a piece of music, or a verse, all of which are comprised of something in addition to the rhythm (the "matter" of movement, sound, and language

11 See Rowell (1979) and Barker (1989) for overviews of Aristoxenus' life and thought, including his determined rejection of Pythagoras' account of music, and translations of the surviving fragments of his *Elementa Rhythmica Book II*. See Marchetti (2009) for a more in depth biography of Aristoxenus, in particular his development of and deviations from Aristotelian doctrine in the *Elementa Rhythmica*. Gibson (2005) describes how Aristoxenus' rhythmical theory was the first to concentrate on music, as opposed to viewing rhythm as an offshoot of language and rhetoric.

12 All quotations from Aristoxenus are taken from Barker (1989:185ff). Right at the start of his notes on Greek rhythm Nietzsche highlights the philosophical importance of Aristoxenus' "distinction between rhythm and *rhythmizomenon*" ("*Im philosoph. Sinne spricht Aristox. im ersten Buche der στοιχεῖα über den ῥ. Unterscheidung zwischen ῥυθμός und ρυθμιζόμενου*" KGW 2.3:103).

13 See Marchetti (2009:86) for a discussion of Aristotle's use of the phrase "*tó rhythmizomenon kaí schimatizómenon*" at *Physics* 245b9 in which *rhythmizomenon* and *schimatizómenon* are used synonymously to mean "a thing formed and shaped."

respectively). And we cannot perceive a rhythm unless one of these *rhythmizomena* is present for it to act upon - for there to be rhythm, there must be a sensible, audible or tactile phenomenon that is made rhythmic. Rhythm here appears to occupy the role of *causa formalis*, the shape or form into which material may be poured just as the form of a statue can only manifest itself via the material of bronze or silver from which it is made.¹⁴ The same sequence of notes can appear as a waltz, a polka, or a death metal chorus, just as we can fashion a lump of metal into a chalice, a ring, or a dagger. In each case, rhythm is a way in which the music appears to us in its particularity.

But on closer examination, the classification of the relationship between rhythm and *rhythmizomenon* differs from that of form and matter, as becomes apparent as Aristoxenus' account continues. Material such as silver must always take on some kind of form, but for a *rhythmizomenon* such as sound, as he explains, rhythm is more of an optional extra.¹⁵ Rhythm requires the presence of a *rhythmizomenon*, but this dependency does not extend the other way - it is quite possible to experience sound, language, and movement without any sense of rhythm emerging from our engagement with them. These *rhythmizomena* have the potential to be made rhythmic, but equally can appear arrhythmically, or at least in such a way that we do not perceive any rhythm. Rhythm, then, is not the universal form of the appearance of a *rhythmizomenon* such as sound, but instead a particular way in which it appears to us. This particular feature of rhythm, which Aristoxenus introduces as the "first principle of knowledge concerned with rhythms," is that it "is to do with durations [*chronoi*, lit. 'times'] and the perception of them."¹⁶ Aristoxenus is claiming that rhythm's unique and distinguishing feature is an ability to bring time to our attention. This, for Nietzsche, is the important insight that the separation of rhythm from thing-made-rhythmic makes possible, and why the Aristotelian classification into rhythm and *rhythmizomenon* is of such interest to him. Once these two aspects of the

14 See Benveniste (1971:282ff) on the use of *rhythmos* to mean form from Democritus, through to Aristotle. Marchetti (2009:76ff) lists the various ways in which this connection developed in ancient Greek.

15 As Marchetti puts it "The nature of rhythm . . . considered as a form, is not entirely parallel to shape [*schíma*] because it applies to a sequence of activities or events all of which have some form themselves." (Marchetti 2009:87) As we shall go on to see, Nietzsche's account complicates the Aristoxenian distinction, as for Nietzsche any form can more accurately be understood as a rhythm, even if we do not perceive it as such.

16 Barker 1989:185

phenomenon of rhythm are untangled, we are in a place to see what else emerges through our perception of rhythm, and this key element is time. “Rhythm,” Aristoxenus writes, “is not identical with any of the *rhythmizomena*: it is rather one of the things that dispose the *rhythmizomenon* in a particular way, and make it like this or like that in respect of durations.”¹⁷ Rhythm is one way in which sound can appear to us in the form of music, or speech as poetry. But as “an ordering of time,”¹⁸ rhythm is also *the* way in which time appears to us, and in which we become aware of different durations of time and their relationship to each other.

Aristoxenus now goes on to explore precisely how this awareness of time emerges from rhythm, and what it is that makes rhythm uniquely capable of producing it, arguing that it comes about through the way that rhythm sets up a repeated pattern out of the different durations that constitute it. We are exposed to different durations all the time, lengths of time layering across each other in an infinite Gantt chart as disordered movements and sounds take place both around and within us. “Rhythm,” however, as Aristoxenus specifies, “arises when the division of the durations takes on an organisation of some determinate sort,”¹⁹ and this organised division determines or forms its identity as a rhythm. The key point is the kind of perception of time that this produces in us. In an everyday sense, the awareness of time usually has a negative connotation, the intense awareness of time dragging or hanging upon us when we are bored, or of it rushing by too quickly when we are enjoying ourselves. Psychological investigations into the perception of time, on the other hand, often focus on how well our subjective personal idea of how much time has passed matches the objective and impersonal measurement of clock time.²⁰ Neither of these are what Aristoxenus means. A rhythmical awareness of time is quite the reverse of boredom - the drudgery of housework undergoes a minor transformation as the random movements of the vacuum cleaner align with the musical beat. Neither does rhythm provide a heightened awareness of clock time, as we shall see from Aristoxenus’ discussion of the nature of the durations that we are able to identify through rhythm.

17 *ibid.*

18 “ὁ ῥυθμός ἐστι χρόνων τάξις” (*KGW* 2.3: 104)

19 Barker 1989:186

20 See for example Eagleman (2008).

When playing or listening to a piece of music,²¹ we can identify what Aristoxenus calls the *chronos protos* or “primary duration” - the smallest distinguishable length of time found in the piece, within which only one note occurs.²² The length of the *chronos protos* is determined not only by the piece but also by the specificity of each particular performance. If you play a musical instrument, you may be familiar with what Aristoxenus calls the *chronos protos* in the context of practice technique. A musician attempting to learn a new piece of music will often find the shortest possible duration within a piece, or even a section of a piece of music, and then break a complicated rhythm up into multiples of this duration, playing it slowly until the relation of the various notes (in other words, the rhythm) has been satisfactorily established in the player’s mind and can be practiced at increasingly faster speeds to achieve the desired effect. The *chronos protos* therefore bears no relation to any other piece of music, nor to the tempo of the piece which refers out to a regulated clock time of beats per minute. The *chronos protos* is a purely internally derived division of time that we imply from the rhythmic structure of the piece, whether consciously while working out a new and unfamiliar rhythm, or unconsciously when performing or listening to it. This unusually acute perception of duration is what we experience as rhythmic, allowing us to tell the difference between (for example) poetry and prose. Aristoxenus thus identifies the essential feature of rhythm as this heightened awareness of time, which does not defer to any objective standard beyond that of the specific rhythm itself. An important point that we can draw from this is the affirmative relationship to time that rhythm therefore makes possible. In chapter one we saw how Nietzschean affirmation differs from the Platonic model of love based on lack. Rhythm is how time becomes perceptible for us in a way that is not derived from lack, from its failure to match either our desires or our regulative expectations of clock time. Our everyday experience of time is, I would argue, primarily negative, in which we become aware of time as either moving too slowly or rushing precipitously away from us. Rhythm, in contrast, awakens a unique ability to affirm and take pleasure in the passage of time.

21 In the surviving fragments of the *Elementa Rhythmica* Aristoxenus is writing “specifically of the rhythm that is located in music,” but this is equally true of the other *rhythmizomena* as we can see from §11 where he is “speaking of things moved in the way that the voice is moved in speaking and singing, and the body in making a gesture and dancing, and in being moved in the other movements of that sort.” (Barker 1989:185-6)

22 “We shall then give the name 'primary duration' to the duration in which there can in no way be placed either two notes or two syllables or two gestures.” (Barker 1989:187)

This awareness of time as pleasurable rather than oppressive or impassive is built upon a multiple rather than unitary identity. While rhythm makes us aware of the *chronos protos* as this single indivisible unit of time,²³ it requires multiple *chronoi* (units of time) in order to bring us to this awareness. One note or syllable does not allow us to establish a rhythm, and nor therefore can it establish a sense of time, because the *chronos protos* only emerges from the relation and contrast between two or more distinct durations. For Aristoxenus what produces this rhythmic awareness of time, “that by which we indicate the rhythm, and make it known to perception,” is “a foot, either one foot or more than one.”²⁴ The foot, as Aristoxenus defines it, is a collection of two or more syllables or beats, operating very much like a bar in modern music.²⁵ The key feature of the foot, for Aristoxenus, is the way in which it “cannot be constituted from just one duration . . . since a single unit [*semeion*] does not make a division of time: for without a division of time a foot is not thought to arise.”²⁶ The building block of ancient rhythm is therefore not the indivisible *chronos protos* but the foot, an inherently multiple unit that must always contain difference within it. For Aristoxenus it is the foot, the principle feature of which is the division of time, that creates the different durations and the relationship between them that forms the structure of time.

Marchetti’s extrapolation of Aristoxenus’ theory of rhythm from the surviving fragments of the *Elementa Rhythmica* suggests that the foot operates in Aristoxenus’ account as a “musical function, analogous to the theory of melodic functions that Aristoxenus had presented in his *Elements of Harmony*.”²⁷ Marchetti refers here to Aristoxenus’ primary concern with our perception of music, the psychological “function”²⁸ or role of the foot which is achieved when we recognise a rhythm as such.²⁹ In addition to this, I suggest that

23 Porter (2000:131-2) draws out the parallels between Aristoxenus’ *chronos protos* and the atomism of Democritus, which Nietzsche was also working on around this time.

24 Barker 1989:187

25 The foot is now considered more properly part of the meter than the rhythm, but Aristoxenus follows Aristotle here in considering meter a “species” of rhythm (Marchetti 2009:80).

26 Barker 1989:187

27 Marchetti 2009:iii

28 *Dynamis*, which Barker translates as “character.”

29 Marchetti 2009:150. This is in contrast to the Pythagorean system of ratios, which allowed for rhythms and harmonies that were mathematically deduced rather than perceptible by the ear.

we can also understand Aristoxenus' rhythmical foot as something akin to a programming function, a contained block of code that is repeated to produce different results. The foot, like the bar in music, repeats not notes, but the act of division. It is the contrast between the different durations within a foot, and then the repetition of this act of division into different patterns and relationships in subsequent feet, that creates rhythm and allows us to perceive time. This ability to divide time and to set two or more different durations of time into a relationship with each other, a relationship that makes us aware of time, is the defining feature of rhythm in Aristoxenus' account. It is the difference between a *rhythmizomenon* made rhythmic or arrhythmic. We can therefore clarify the effect of rhythm as follows: to divide time, to repeat this division, and by doing so make us able to perceive and affirm time.

Nietzsche takes this insight into the effect of rhythm on our perception of time and, in the light of this, reformulates Aristoxenus' assessment that the relationship between rhythm and *rhythmizomenon* is akin to that of form and content. Rhythm, as we saw, may be a way that sound, speech, or movement can appear to us, an optional form that the *rhythmizomenon* can take, but what it *always* does in addition to shaping the *rhythmizomenon* is to make time appear to us - this is how we detect the presence of rhythm and know to categorise something as rhythmic. This additional capability to make time appear to us suggests to Nietzsche that rhythm has an important and unique role. The effect of the division of time that takes place in rhythm is to focus our attention not upon the *rhythmizomenon* (the language, sound, or movement) but upon time itself, leading Nietzsche to claim that "rhythm is to be understood as something utterly fundamental, ie, as the most primary sensation of time, as *the form of time itself*."³⁰ Language can appear to us as rhythmic or arrhythmic, as poetry or prose, but rhythm is the most fundamental way that we become aware of the form of time, the way in which time takes on an identity for us. Aristoxenus' fragments therefore not only give Nietzsche a contemporary account of the ancient Greek experience of rhythm as a phenomenon. They also provide him with an in-depth investigation into how rhythm creates time as a

30 "Dann wäre der Takt als etwas Fundamentales zu verstehen: d.h. die ursprünglichste Zeitempfindung, die Form der Zeit selbst." [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871.9\[116\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871.9[116]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1871 (my emphasis).

perceptible identity for us, of how rhythm works with time and in so doing generates the form of time.

This is the theme of rhythmical appearance that Nietzsche starts to explore in the early notes, which will re-emerge later in *The Gay Science*. Drawing on Aristoxenus' technical exploration, Nietzsche's early thoughts on the phenomenon of rhythm can provide us with a much more detailed and functional model of the process of separation and repetition that he describes in *The Gay Science* as learning to love, or thinking something as an identity. One concern, which I shall return to later in this chapter, is that on the Aristoxenian model the important effects of the rhythmic process are specific to time - nothing else requires rhythm to be present, including the *rhythmizomena*, which are just as happy to make themselves known to us arrhythmically as rhythmically. I am arguing that Nietzsche takes Aristoxenus' account of the mechanics of the process through which time takes on a rhythmical identity, and extends this to apply to *all* identities that we form, in the process imbuing identity with a fundamentally temporal character. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche insists that the process of repetition by which our initial isolation of a melody is consolidated into love "happens to us not only in music: it is in just this way that we have learned to love *everything* we now love,"³¹ but before we can use rhythm as a way to understand this we need to see whether it is legitimate to extend this specifically rhythmic process to cover all identities (in effect, whether Nietzsche thinks it is possible to separate our perception of time from identity per se).

We also need to be alert to the tensions we have already indicated between the different metaphysical positions held by Nietzsche in the periods 1869-71 when he made the early notes on rhythm and 1882, when the first edition of *The Gay Science* was published. The parallels between Nietzsche's early notes on the rhythmical process of separation and repetition which engenders the form of time, and his later description of the loving process of separation and repetition that develops into identity, suggest that he is describing the same process. He even chooses melody, a *rhythmizomenon* that has been made rhythmic, to illustrate this process, highlighting the connection between the earlier and later thoughts. But when Nietzsche in 1871 writes that rhythm is "the form of time itself," how does he understand the relationship between *x* and form-or-appearance-of-*x*, and

31 GS §334, my emphasis.

therefore the relationship between time and rhythm, as its form? This is the more fundamental problem to which I shall turn first, before returning to see if this also addresses the question of whether we can use rhythm to understand identity per se, rather than purely as the form of time. Understanding the nature of this relationship between rhythm and the temporal identities that it makes appear then opens up the question of evaluation. We shall examine the conflicted nature of Nietzsche's assessment of this relationship in his early work, before going on in the next chapter to see how this ambiguous attitude towards rhythm persists in *The Gay Science*, to ask whether the relationship with time that rhythm provides is capable of generating the sort of thought that Nietzsche ultimately wants to promote in order to overcome nihilism.

In the passages Nietzsche focuses on from Aristoxenus we can find some indication of how Nietzsche at this point understood the relationship between reality and form as it manifests as time and rhythm. Nietzsche cites a phrase from Aristoxenus which deals with the nature of time and how this relates to the rhythmical activity that reveals it, in which he notes that “*chronoi* are the sections of abstract time. When there need to be sections, it must be divided or cut” because [quoting Aristoxenus almost directly] “time does not divide itself, there must be something else which divides it.”³² A tension emerges here between time itself, abstract and undifferentiated, and the *chronoi* or sections of time that we are able to perceive. Although we only become aware of time when it takes rhythmic form as a series of different durations, Aristoxenus implies that this is not an action that time itself performs, but a process of division that is visited upon it by something else other than time. This “something else” is of course the *rhythmizomenon*, the other interested party that appears via the phenomenon of rhythm:

32 “*χρονοί sind die Abschnitte der abstrakten Zeit. Wo Abschnitte vorhanden sein sollen, bedarf es eines διαιρών oder τέμνων: ὁ χρόνος αὐτὸς αὐτὸν οὐ τέμνει, ἕτερον δὲ τινος δεῖ τοῦ διαιρήσοντος αὐτόν.*” (KGW 2.3:104)

that which will be made rhythmic [*to rhythmisthēsomenon*] . . . cuts up time [*chronos*], since time does not cut itself up. . . but needs something else that will divide it. The *rhythmizomenon* must therefore be capable of being broken up into recognisable parts, by which it will divide time.³³

The *rhythmizomenon*, the phenomenon that is made rhythmic, must by virtue of its physical nature always be divisible, a restriction that would have been particularly apparent to a musician working with the plucked, blown, or beaten instruments of Aristoxenus' day, on which no sound could be sustained for long. The *rhythmizomenon* is broken up as a syllable ends, a moving limb reaches its maximum point of extension, or the vibrations of a string die away. But time, Aristoxenus suggests, behaves differently and, if left to its own devices, would continue unbroken in perpetuity. Time needs the intervention of rhythm via the physical and therefore inherently limited ministrations of the *rhythmizomena* for its form to appear to us. But it must do so as something broken up, as something that is other than its true nature. It seems from Aristoxenus' account that the very process of separation and repetition that shapes time for us does so in a manner that hides something essential about time.

There is therefore a tension latent in Aristoxenus' account of rhythm, as we learn of a time that does not divide itself, but that relies upon something else to wield the knife and carve it into a perceptible form. As the appearance or form of time, rhythm for Aristoxenus is in some sense opposed to time, acting in a manner contrary to time as it effects an uneasy marriage between physical *rhythmizomenon* and immaterial time. Is this a distinction that early Nietzsche maintains? Aristoxenus himself is unconcerned with whether rhythm is in any sense "true" to time, or about casting moral judgement on any violence that rhythm might inflict upon the nature of time. These are questions which quite reasonably lie outside the province of musical theory, as well as being given an entirely different significance by the subsequent trajectory of western philosophy, and its struggles to address the perceived gap between appearance and reality. For Nietzsche on the other hand this issue is of pressing concern, particularly during the period 1869-71 in which he carries out the work on rhythm. During this time Nietzsche is struggling to formulate a

33 Barker 1989:186. The tantalising full quote is that "since time does not cut itself up, as we said earlier, but needs something else that will divide it." Perhaps his earlier explanation, now lost, explains more about why time does not cut itself up. On the other hand, the purpose of the *Elementa Rhythmica* is to examine the nature of rhythm, rather than the nature of time, so perhaps not.

response to the metaphysical division of appearance and reality that he finds in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*.³⁴ This is the context that shapes Nietzsche's thoughts on the relationship between appearance and reality during the early rhythm notes, and so we need to look briefly at Nietzsche's varying sympathies with Schopenhauer in order to judge not only how closely Nietzsche maintains the Aristoxenian opposition of time and rhythm, but also to see whether this relationship is something we can affirm.

The metaphysical division of appearance and reality

Schopenhauer's view of the relationship between appearance and reality draws upon the Kantian distinction between the noumenal or thing in itself, which is being as it actually is independent of our gaze, and the phenomenal world, which is structured in such a manner that we are able to perceive it. But unlike Kant, who thinks that the noumenal realm is necessarily closed off to human knowledge, Schopenhauer argues that there is *something* we can say about the thing in itself or, as he calls it, the will. Seeing as "the will as thing-in-itself is quite different from its phenomenon, and is entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenon into which it first passes when it appears" then the will in itself must also exist without time and space, and "consequently [without] plurality as well, which exists and has become possible only through them."³⁵ Unlike the world of representation, the will in itself is undifferentiated either spatially or temporally, and so can include neither difference, nor the spatio-temporal structures that populate the phenomenal world with distinct identities. This means that for Schopenhauer the thing-in-itself, the reality that grounds all appearance, differs from this multifaceted appearance in being fundamentally indivisible and one:

34 See Swift (2005:43ff) for an account of Nietzsche's engagement with Schopenhauer during the formative period of the 1860s.

35 Schopenhauer *WWR* / §23

The thing-in-itself, as such, is free from all forms of knowledge, even the most universal, namely that of being object for the subject; in other words, it is something entirely different from the representation. Now if this thing-in-itself, as I believe I have sufficiently proved and made clear, is the *will*, then, considered as such and apart from its phenomenon, it lies outside time and space, and accordingly knows no plurality, and consequently is *one*. Yet, as has been said already, it is not one as an individual or a concept is, but as something to which the condition of the possibility of plurality, that is, the *principium individuationis*, is foreign. Therefore, the plurality of things in space and time that together are the *objectivity* of the will, does not concern the will, which, in spite of such plurality, remains indivisible.³⁶

Space and time together are the conditions of plurality or *principium individuationis* (principles of individuation). By tying space and time to the structure of the phenomenal world, Schopenhauer concludes that we must also exclude any features of this world that rely upon them, such as causality, objectivity, and our own deep-seated experience of subjectivity. The thing in itself is not, *cannot* be divided - it is one. But this means that all we experience of ourselves as subjects is essentially untrue. The process of individuation and separation into unique identities that makes us and the world who and what we are - this is the one thing Schopenhauer thinks we can definitely establish is not true of the real world or thing-in-itself that lies beneath it. For Kant, establishing the divide between the phenomenal and noumenal is a positive move, allowing us a degree of certainty about the phenomenal world that appeared to us, while putting an end to fruitless speculation about the noumenal realm in itself that we can never know. But for Schopenhauer, the realisation not just that existence *may not* be as it appears, but that it *cannot* be as it shows itself to us, is proof of its essential duplicity, and the *principium individuationis* wherein this deception lies is the root of the suffering that we experience in the world. The “veil of Maya” that makes us perceive the world as separate forms is an illusion, producing only pain in the phenomenal world that is continually attempting but hopelessly unable to adequately represent the “true” world of the will.

For Schopenhauer, time is a constitutional part of the *principium individuationis*, that which brings about the divisions we find in the deceptive world of appearance. But for Aristoxenus, it is not time that performs this division, but rather time itself that is divided by rhythm. We find parallels between Schopenhauer’s conception of the will and Aristoxenus’ intimations about time that Nietzsche would surely have had in mind as he examined the

36 Schopenhauer *WWR* / §25

problem of rhythm. As something that in itself is undivided, but that we can only register once it has been broken up by the physical plurality of the world, the relationship between time and rhythm in Aristoxenus' account mirrors that of Schopenhauer's conception of the split between will and representation. Understood on these lines, rhythm takes on the divisive role of the *principium individuationis*, bringing about the dissolution of time into multiple perceptible durations just as time, in Schopenhauer's account, is a means by which the will is forced into plurality in the world of appearance. If we examine the relationship between rhythm and time with a Schopenhauerian suspicion of the metaphysical divide between appearance and reality, rhythm takes on the role of the assailant that cuts up and destroys the true nature of time. This negative interpretation of the relationship between time and rhythm will prejudice our attitude towards rhythm as long as we understand rhythm or form as opposed to that which appears through it. Nietzsche at this point is struggling to work out his own attitude to the nature of the Schopenhauerian split between the world as representation and the will in itself. We therefore find an ambivalence in Nietzsche's attitude to rhythm. Within his early Schopenhauerian metaphysical framework, rhythm is a form that hides something about the nature of that which it is supposed to reveal. As I shall argue in the next chapter, this initial suspicion of rhythm is something that colours Nietzsche's later thoughts on rhythm. As we shall later see, this suspicion can only be overcome when the rhythmic relationship between thought and becoming is affirmed via the revised theory of time that we find with eternal return.

Although Nietzsche's work on Aristoxenus develops into the insight that rhythm is the form of time, the nature of this temporal-rhythmic relationship is neither his nor Aristoxenus' primary concern. For Aristoxenus it is simply a matter of trying to pin down what is specific to rhythm before undertaking a more detailed examination of particular rhythmic patterns, while for Nietzsche the need to explore "the whole metrical function of time"³⁷ is a byproduct of his attempt to understand the ancient Greek sense of rhythm. We must look elsewhere to find a more systematic account of the nature of form and reality, and specifically what the implications are of his assertion that rhythm is the *form* of time. *The Birth of Tragedy* contains Nietzsche's most explicit engagement during this period with the

37 "Wichtig, daß in der Einleitung die ganze metrische Aufgabe der Zeit bezeichnet wird." (KGW 2:3:308)

perceived discrepancy between form or appearance and reality, so I will turn to *The Birth of Tragedy* next in order to see whether we can bring this to bear upon the relationship between time and rhythm that we find in Nietzsche's work on Aristoxenus.

The Birth of Tragedy was published shortly after the notes on Aristoxenus and Greek rhythm, and the mentions of Dionysus, Apollo, and Socrates indicate that the notes may originally have been intended to form part of its argument.³⁸ In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche once again takes up the theme of historical sense that he argues is lacking in modern approaches to ancient rhythm, and explores the implications of the differences between ancient and modern sensibilities. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he argues that there is an important difference between ancient and modern tragedy, and that we cannot hope to understand ancient Greek culture from a modern perspective while this difference remains unacknowledged, "for as long as we have no answer to the question, 'What is Dionysiac?', the Greeks will remain as utterly unknown and unimaginable as they have always been."³⁹ The Dionysian impulse that Nietzsche thinks we have lost in modernity was a striving towards de-individuation that ran throughout ancient tragedy, which allowed the spectator to temporarily exceed the boundaries of their own identity - to experience their own annihilation in the death of the tragic hero, a mixture of horror and "blissful ecstasy which arises from the innermost ground of man, indeed of nature itself, whenever this breakdown of the *principium individuationis* occurs", providing "a glimpse of the essence of the *Dionysiac*."⁴⁰ The pleasure afforded by ancient tragedy was its unique capacity to harness the *principium individuationis* in order to temporarily still its own effects, creating a tragic form that paradoxically allowed us a glimpse of the formlessness of the will. Nietzsche's argument is that in feeling this temporary dissolution of the self, the ancient tragic audience came as close as is possible to experiencing the undifferentiated "oneness" that underlies the world of beings, as "under the mystical, jubilant shout of Dionysos the spell of individuation is broken, and the path to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost core of things, is laid open."⁴¹ Nietzsche cites Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* as a rare instance in which we in modernity can experience this Dionysian force:

38 See Porter (2000:334)

39 *BT* 'An attempt at self-criticism' §3

40 *BT* §1

41 *BT* §16

Now, hearing this gospel of universal harmony, each person feels himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbour, but quite literally one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn apart, so that mere shreds of it flutter before the mysterious primordial unity (*das Ur-Eine*).⁴²

For Nietzsche, this is the ancient Dionysian power of tragedy, to temporarily break down the individual forms of identity that bind and separate self from world, and to put us in touch with the originary, undifferentiated world instead as “in the Dionysiac dithyramb man is stimulated to the highest intensification of his symbolic powers; something that he has never felt before urgently demands to be expressed: the destruction of the veil of maya, one-ness as the genius of humankind, indeed of nature itself.”⁴³

This conception of an undivided but inaccessible reality is where Nietzsche comes closest to Schopenhauer’s will in itself. The argument of *The Birth of Tragedy* is built upon “the metaphysical assumption that that which truly exists, the eternally suffering and contradictory, primordial unity”⁴⁴ lies beyond the world of appearance. But even here in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the apportioning of responsibility for this process of individuation differs from Schopenhauer’s pessimistic description of a unified will torn apart into suffering plurality. Instead Nietzsche suggests that the real world “simultaneously needs, for its constant release and redemption, the ecstatic vision, intensely pleasurable semblance” and that “our empirical existence, and indeed that of the world in general,” is “a representation (*Vorstellung*) generated at each moment by the primordial unity.”⁴⁵ Despite the Schopenhauerian language and metaphysical divide between appearance and reality that runs throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*, the tone and character of this division is

42 BT §1

43 BT §2. Miller (1999), in contrast, emphasises Nietzsche’s criticism of Schopenhauer, noting that “the Dionysian cannot be understood as a ‘reality’ that lies ‘behind’ the dream as appearance” but rather as implying “a radicalization of individuation.” (Miller 1999:26) However I am arguing that we cannot ignore Nietzsche’s repeated references to an “innermost ground” of “primordial unity” that the Dionysian power of tragedy reduplicates. The question of how to think multiplicity in becoming (as that which rhythm operates on or, perhaps better, modulates through) is one to which we shall return throughout the rest of this thesis. It is therefore important to recognise (as Nietzsche himself did) the extent to which Nietzsche at this point in his career is still prone to being sucked back into the “One” of an originary primacy of ancient over modern, a tendency we shall see in his account of the degeneration of the ancient sense of rhythm, even as the phenomenon of rhythm itself acts to disrupt this narrative.

44 BT §4

45 *ibid.*

therefore very different to the way in which Schopenhauer presents it.⁴⁶ For Schopenhauer the way in which the will divides itself is a painful movement, denying its own nature, a continual tearing apart that we, as the tattered products of this process, cannot help but feel as an irreconcilable loss. But for Nietzsche, the true world may not originally be divided, but it craves the appearance of division and individuation, and generates this itself.

Nietzsche thought that ancient tragedy briefly tore aside the veil of Maya. Schopenhauer too accords tragedy a privileged role, but (as Nietzsche later, and rather ruefully, points out⁴⁷) for very different reasons. Schopenhauer thinks that tragedy gives us “a significant hint as to the nature of the world and of existence” because “it is the antagonism of the will with itself which is here most completely unfolded at the highest grade of its objectivity, and which comes into fearful prominence.”⁴⁸ The character of the phenomenal world that tragedy reveals is “the unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind, the triumph of wickedness, the scornful mastery of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent,”⁴⁹ all of which are the results of the will turning against itself in its divided form. It is this fundamental antagonism of the will that lies at the heart of being that

becomes visible in the suffering of mankind which is produced partly by chance and error; and these stand forth as the rulers of the world, personified as fate through their insidiousness which appears almost like purpose and intention. In part it proceeds from mankind itself through the self-mortifying efforts of will on the part of individuals, through the wickedness and perversity of most. It is one and the same will, living and appearing in them all, whose phenomena fight with one another and tear one another to pieces.⁵⁰

For Schopenhauer the best we can hope for is resignation - that, having realised that the phenomenal world is an illusion, we draw back from it insofar as possible, abandoning the struggles of our own subjectivity. Life, or the impulse towards individuation and

46 Nietzsche writes of the *Birth of Tragedy* in 1886 that “I now regret very much that I did not yet have the courage (or immodesty?) at that time to permit myself a *language of my very own* for such personal views and acts of daring, labouring instead to express strange and new evaluations in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulations, things which fundamentally ran counter to both the spirit and taste of Kant and Schopenhauer.” (BT ‘An Attempt at Self-Criticism’ §6)

47 BT ‘An Attempt at Self-Criticism’ §6

48 Schopenhauer *WWR* I §51

49 *ibid.*

50 *ibid.*

appearance, brings nothing but pain. But for Nietzsche, the impulse to individuation can also have a joyful character, redeeming the eternal suffering of the will when it is presented through ancient tragedy. By its very nature, the unindividuated will would be impossible to feel in its raw state, lacking both the formed identities that structure our experience and the self who is able to experience them. The ancient power of tragedy was to harness the artistic impulse towards individuation that Nietzsche calls the "Apolline," in order to create forms that allowed a paradoxical experience of formlessness. This took place via a dialectical process in which the audience's identification with the multiplicity of the chorus interrupted the sense of their own subjectivity, and their individuality is "surrendered by entering into another nature."⁵¹ This loss of individuality was then given form via the action of the drama, before the final death of the tragic hero completed the dissolution of self that the audience experienced. The forms enacted on stage do not deny the single nature of the will, but affirm it, for "as the objectification of a Dionysiac state, the vision represents not Apolline release and redemption in semblance, but rather the breaking-asunder of the individual and its becoming one with the primal being itself. Thus drama is the Apolline embodiment of Dionysiac insights and effects."⁵² The success of ancient tragedy rested on this complex tension between the Dionysian striving towards primal oneness, and the Apolline impulse towards form that allowed the audience temporarily to partake of this. In contrast, then, to the Schopenhauerian story of primal unity befouled by the deceitful individuation of the veil of Maya, in *The Birth of Tragedy* there emerges the idea that what we might consider as reality is the struggle *between* these two movements, rather than to be found on one side or the other. The strength of ancient tragedy lay not in providing a rare glimpse into a Dionysian truth, but in playing out for us the tension between Dionysian unity, and Apolline multiplicity, that is the true nature of being.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* we therefore find a tension in how Nietzsche understands the relationship between appearance and reality. At times, his yearning for a lost and possibly irrecoverable Dionysian unity seems to clearly privilege this as "better." At others, it is the tension *between* the Dionysian and the Apolline that is the fundamental state of being, and the truth that tragedy attempts to represent. This uneasy vacillation between two objects of

51 *BT* §8

52 *ibid.*

adequation, in which tragedy is judged on how well it expresses either the Dionysian itself or a process of which the Dionysian is just a part, is also a feature of the rhythm notes, as we shall see when Nietzsche grapples with the role of time and force in the change from ancient to modern rhythm. In *The Birth of Tragedy* itself, Nietzsche clearly identifies the Apolline side of tragedy with rhythm,⁵³ as he describes the birth of Greek tragedy as a confrontation between an older, more ordered kind of music with the new and disruptive barbarian force of the Dionysian that revolutionised the ancient Greek sense of what music could be:

Although it seems that music was already familiar to the Greeks as an Apolline art, they only knew it, strictly speaking, in the form of a wave-like rhythm with an image-making power which they developed to represent Apolline states.⁵⁴

Rhythm is here accorded the power of producing images or forms, not just of time, but in general. It is the rhythmic element of music which represents the Apolline striving towards and creation of individual identities, and which

keeps at a distance, as something un-Apolline, the very element which defines the character of Dionysiac music (and thus of music generally): the power of its sound to shake us to our very foundations, the unified stream of melody and the quite incomparable world of harmony.⁵⁵

Nietzsche is struggling here to choose his line on the status of rhythm, as indeed he is throughout *The Birth of Tragedy* on the question of the divide between reality and appearance. Rhythm, and the Apolline, are on the one hand presented as a necessary part of the reality which tragedy represents, which is conceived as a struggle in which the impulse towards individuation is just as necessary as the unitary oneness of the Dionysian. But at the same time Apolline rhythm is also subordinated to the Dionysian which is held to be the essence “of music generally” - the unified Dionysian “stream of melody” and “incomparable” harmony appears to make the struggle with the Apolline an unequal contest.

53 See Porter (2000:162) who also goes on to contrast the historical struggle of the Dionysian described in *The Birth of Tragedy* with the changing sense of Greek rhythm. As we shall find in chapter three, this identification continues into *The Gay Science* where Apollo in GS §84 is identified as the “god of rhythm.”

54 BT §2

55 ibid.

Nietzsche ostensibly presents the individuating power of rhythm in *The Birth of Tragedy* as something that opens up new possibilities of tragic affirmation rather than an unequivocal fall from undifferentiated grace. Yet all the force of Nietzsche's prose goes towards promoting not Apolline rhythm, but the Dionysian as the lost but possibly soon-to-be-regained force of true tragedy. The idea that the world is in need of the redemption that tragedy offers⁵⁶ is part of the metaphysical Schopenhauerian hangover in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which time is an inescapable factor which weighs against any worldly phenomenon and makes it less capable of adequately representing the true world of the will beneath. As long as we conceive the temporal and rhythmic process that gives rise to forms as something different to reality, we are still faced with the problem of judging its outcome based on how close it comes to the reality it is trying to represent. As we shall see in both *The Birth of Tragedy*, but also in the rhythm notes, the effects of time are traumatic for any identity conceived on the basis of this dualistic model. Both of these projects seek to establish the effects of millennia of time on identity by exploring the differences between the sense of tragedy and of rhythm respectively that operated in ancient Greece and in 19th century Germany. So we shall now return to Nietzsche's notes on rhythm, where his exploration of the contrast between ancient and modern senses of rhythm becomes a case study in the deleterious effects of time on identity where rhythm itself appears responsible for its descent into the impoverished sense of rhythm Nietzsche thinks we find in modernity.

Time and force in rhythm

When he examines the Aristoxenus fragments and compares the rhythms they describe to those of his day, the main difference Nietzsche uncovers is between the perception of time involved in ancient and modern rhythm. Aristoxenus' account talks solely of temporal differences, of rhythm created by contrasts between the different durations within a foot,

56 The trope of redemption remains in Nietzsche's later work, as does the issue of whether redemption can be squared with affirmation. This comes to a head in the thought of eternal return, which tries to redeem our attitude to time and the past. Nietzsche does, however, firmly reject Schopenhauer's idea of redemption as one in which "the will were to finally redeem itself and willing became not-willing," which Zarathustra calls "this fable song of madness! Away from these fable songs I steered you when I taught you: 'The will is a creator.'" (TSZ II 'On Redemption'). See Siemens (2001) on the tension between Zarathustra's call for redemption, and Nietzsche's characterisation in the later 1880s (such as *GM* I §10 and §15, *GS* §370) of redemptive impulses as symptomatic of lack.

and patterns of long and short notes or syllables.⁵⁷ This, however, is not what we find with modern rhythm. What we consider to be “rhythmic” in modern English and German poetry is the pattern in which the *stress* or *accent* falls on various syllables within a line, as the sounds are produced with varying degrees of force. The rhythm is therefore primarily driven by the contrast between stressed or unstressed syllables,⁵⁸ rather than the temporal difference of long and short syllables. This is the fundamental difference that Nietzsche posits between the ancient and modern sense of rhythm - it is not just that ancient verse employed different rhythms and different patterns of contrast, it is that *what* is contrasted and what the rhythm is therefore constructed from differs.⁵⁹ Modern rhythm is built on contrasts of force, whereas ancient rhythm emerges from different amounts of time.⁶⁰

It is hard to appreciate the vast difference between these two senses of rhythm when one of them must be speculatively reconstructed rather than heard. We can, however, grasp the difference to some extent if we consider the difficulty modern readers have when trying to read Greek verse without inadvertently imposing a modern accented rhythm upon it.⁶¹ Another way to appreciate the contrast is the near-impossibility of wrangling modern English or German into an ancient unstressed rhythmic form such as dactylic hexameter.

57 See for example the first line of Homer's *Iliad* for the “tuuuum-tum-tum tuuum-tum-tum tuum-tuum tuuum-tum-tum tuuum-tum-tum tuum-tum” of dactylic hexameter: “*Mēnīn ā|ēīdē thē|ā Pē|lēā|deō Āchī|lēos*”. Professor Stephen Daitz’ reading of the start of the *Iliad* with a reconstructed ancient sense of rhythm can be heard here: <https://www.rhapsodes.frl.vt.edu/audiofiles/Ilias1.mp3>. Nietzsche, together with commentators focusing on classical metrics, refer to this temporal rhythm as “quantitative,” because it rests on different quantities of time within the “purely quantitative beat of the measure” (*TQR* 235). I have chosen to refer to it as “temporal rhythm” to avoid confusion with quantitative *theories* of rhythm and harmony, such as those of the Pythagoreans, which were rejected by Aristoxenus (see Barker 1989:124ff).

58 e.g. the “ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum” of iambic pentameter, “Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?”

59 Porter (2000:143ff) gives an account of the “strangely personified” and “increasingly melodramatic” quasi-genealogy we find in the rhythm notes of the descent from temporal rhythm, through “Latin vocalism” into the “anemically modern” sense of accented rhythm we have today.

60 *Stärkewechselwelle* rather than *Zeitwechselwelle*, which Porter translates as the “rhythmic alternation of strengths” rather than of times. (*KGW* 2:3:308)

61 See Scott (1994:143-4) who writes that “most native-English speakers read Homer in something closer to 3/4 than 4/4 time, in effect transforming Homer's quantitative meter into a stress-based one” and goes on to note that “even if someone were to master all known aspects of Homer's verse, he would be highly unlikely to reproduce orally those verses exactly the way they were read in ancient Greece. And if he did get it right, who could tell?”

The rhythms of speech in most modern romance languages are built on variations in stress and intonation, and attempts to restructure poetry in these languages along ancient lines sounds forced, clunky, and distinctly *unrhythmical*.⁶² For Nietzsche, our inability to feel a sense of temporal rhythm goes beyond the question of how a poetic work should be read aloud or translated. A persistent preoccupation of Nietzsche's work is not just the recognition of multiple versions or perspectives on ideas that had previously been considered universal (that there is more than one Good, one Truth, or indeed one sense of Rhythm). Having discerned this plurality, the task then becomes to evaluate the different perspectives, to ask what must have been the case in order for a particular view to take hold.⁶³ It is not just that we cannot accurately reproduce the rhythms of ancient Greece, it is that our inability to experience them as properly rhythmical reveals a fundamental difference between the way that classical and modern thought are structured.

We could think about the effects of these different senses of rhythm as akin to the way that a particular language informs not just the vocal cords of a native speaker and their ability to produce certain sounds, but also their ability to hear these sounds and detect subtle differences in intonation, attuned as they are to these from birth. Similarly, the language we speak and think in affects the kind of thoughts we are most likely to think. The difference between accented and temporal rhythm, for Nietzsche, operates at an even more fundamental level, as it articulates not just which particular sounds can be heard or which particular thoughts can be conceived, but the criteria for the divisions and repetitions which constitute the rhythmical process of appearance. Nietzsche's examination of the ancient sense of rhythm leads him not just to the conclusion that it was very different to the modern sense of rhythm we have today, but that in order for the ancient Greeks to experience these works as rhythmic, they must have had a very different relationship with time.

62 Such attempts to use dactylic hexameter in English have been notoriously unsuccessful, described by one anonymous reviewer as "a lumbering rhythm, not inaptly compared, by some author, to the noise of pumpkins rolling on a barn-floor." (anonymous review of Derby's translation of the *Iliad*, cited by Scott 1994:139)

63 As Deleuze writes, "any given concept, feeling or belief will be treated as symptoms of a will that wills something. What does *the one that* says this, that thinks or feels that, will? It is a matter of showing that he could not say, think or feel this particular thing if he did not have a particular will, particular forces, a particular way of being." (NP 72-3)

Nietzsche's reading of Aristoxenus leads him to the conclusion that the Greeks were able to hear rhythms constructed through temporal differences alone, to perceive time as a determinate form through nothing more than time itself, divided and repeated. For modern accented rhythm, however, he thinks that this intense relationship with time is muddled by the increased prominence of the apparently atemporal aspect of force, as temporal differences fade into the background. In Nietzsche's early notes, the effect of the centuries that passed between Aristoxenus and Nietzsche, and the way that each heard rhythm, reflects the nihilistic exclusion of change from identity. As we shall see with the rise of accented rhythm, time for Nietzsche has gradually effaced itself from the phenomenon that was most properly its own. Modern rhythm is therefore emblematic of the degeneration of our understanding of identity, of the subtle musical forms that we no longer have the skill to hear, and the fluid identities that we no longer have the capacity to think.

The critical philological argument that Nietzsche is preparing in these early notes is that the modern sense of accented rhythm is poorly qualified to understand the ancient temporal rhythms that are so different from it. However what also emerges from the notes is the sense that modern rhythm is not just different to, but also inherently *worse* than the older sense of rhythm. Nietzsche is saying that in modernity our former "strong feeling for time" does not just change, but "*zerfällt*" - disintegrates or decays.⁶⁴ Rhythm, as the form of time, seems to differ in nature to time itself, and modern rhythm intensifies this difference, separating itself even further from its true nature. If rhythm per se already performs some kind of transformative act (whether violent or consensual) upon time, then modern rhythm is even more guilty of this as it divides time without reference to time itself. Modern rhythm is still a temporal phenomenon, in that it requires time to perform the divisions and repetitions that are a part of the rhythmical process. But it bases these divisions on something other than time, and has therefore become a form imposed by something other than that which is formed. The simplicity and elegance that Nietzsche perceived in ancient temporal rhythm has been lost. Rather than the form of time being generated from the superposition of times alone, this is replaced by a different dynamic in which the identity-forming process is driven by the need for another element - force.

64 "es zerfällt allmählich das starke Zeitgefühl" (KGW 2:3:307)

This pessimistic assessment of the contrast between ancient and modern values follows the same trajectory as the polemic of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which describes the shift away from the ancient sense of tragedy in terms of a definite degeneration. Nietzsche's account of ancient tragedy includes a positive role for the rhythmical individuating tendencies of the world of appearance, in which the Apolline form that rhythm provides works in a complex tension with the Dionysian drive that reconnects us with the oneness of reality. But as Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy*, later tragedy abandons this balance in favour of a solely Apolline art, which excises the irrational and mysterious Dionysian elements in favour of pure knowledge and form. No longer sustained by the Dionysian power that transcends boundaries, *The Birth of Tragedy* diagnoses modern tragedy as suffering the same fate as all nihilistic identity. The artistic forms modern tragedy creates are no longer animated by the transformative force of the Dionysian. Lacking the Dionysian impetus which pushes them beyond the boundaries of the self, the audience can only watch, rather than feel, the dissolution of the hero played out before them. Modern tragedy provides only counterfeit effects, rather than the intimate and unique connection to a primal truth that early Nietzsche views as the purpose of ancient tragedy.

Both the early rhythm notes and *The Birth of Tragedy* become a diagnosis of degeneration, which arises through the uneasy mix of Schopenhauerian metaphysics and genealogical critique that they contain. These early projects are driven by Nietzsche's determination to stress the temporal nature of phenomena such as tragedy and rhythm, to consider them as ever-changing and evolving. But as long as these phenomena are viewed as historical instantiations of an underlying undivided sense of becoming as a continuum, their individuation is taken to imply imperfection, in which various iterations draw closer to or move further from the ground or base state that they represent. Nietzsche is arguing that we should not judge the past in terms of the present, but in both cases the result of establishing this difference seems to be that we must judge the present as *worse than* the past. In both instances the effect of time is negative, as the passing years make tragedy and rhythm less adequate representations of that which is supposed to appear through them. Nietzsche concludes that the form of time that we experience as accented rhythm today is an impoverished, bastardised form, rather than the "truer" purely temporal rhythm of the ancient Greeks. As we will see in the story that emerges from the rhythm notes, our rhythmic understanding of time is not just a victim of the degeneration of thought into nihilism. The rhythmic process by which we come to perceive different beats as repetitions

of the same drives not only the creativity of thought, but also the nihilistic process that closes off this same creativity.

The main thrust of Nietzsche's criticism is that modern rhythm effaces that which it is supposed to make manifest, so that we lose the privileged awareness of time that ancient rhythm provided with its combination of long and short durations. Modern rhythm is constructed instead of strong and weak beats, ruled by the *ictus*, the single beat of every foot or musical bar that receives the most emphasis. The way in which the *ictus* gradually takes over rhythm is the process that drives and corrupts identity-formation throughout the history of modern thought. The key to ancient rhythm, as we saw with Aristoxenus, lies in the multiplicity of durations within each foot⁶⁵ - a foot cannot be comprised of the *chronos protos* alone, whether this smaller sub-division is found within the foot itself or elsewhere within the rhythm.⁶⁶ But although modern rhythm is still built on this multiplicity, the increasing prominence of the *ictus* changes the way in which we hear and experience it. The emphasis shifts from a complex structure of different durations, to a hierarchy in which the *ictus* contains all the force of the foot, and the other beats are subordinate to it. Pick a piece of music with a strong beat - perhaps Elvis' *Love me Tender* - and try counting along. The four beats to the bar sound not as "one - two - three - four", but as "ONE (two, three, four)" as they resolve themselves into the *ictus* and its subsidiaries ("LOVE (me tender), LOVE (me true)."). The key element or meaning of the foot is all in the *ictus*, while the rest of the foot is relegated to a subservient role modifying the primary sense provided by the *ictus*. The force of the *ictus* drives across that Elvis wants us, first and foremost, to love him, while the details of how we do this are absorbed into secondary properties of what this love might entail.⁶⁷ Multiplicity has become subsumed within a singular identity. This is what Nietzsche describes as taking place when rhythm weakens its connection to time and our temporal sense becomes correspondingly impoverished - identity per se becomes less temporal, and becomes divorced from the multiplicity that animates it.

65 My use of 'foot' also includes the musical bar throughout the rest of this section.

66 A musical bar for example may contain nothing but a semi-breve (a single note held for four beats), but will be heard in conjunction with shorter notes elsewhere in the piece, and the *chronos protos* of the rhythm is identified from these.

67 The way in which the *ictus* makes rhythm subservient to linguistic meaning is another of the accusations Nietzsche levels against modern accented rhythm in these notes. I have chosen not to concentrate on this linguistic aspect of the *ictus* because I wish to retain the broader sense of rhythm that we find in music and movement as well as poetry. See Porter (2000:144ff).

As Nietzsche presents it, the shift from temporal to accented rhythm is symptomatic of the shift towards an increasingly nihilistic way of thought, in which the walls thrown up around identity prevent the flow of multiple nuances across these borders, and instead draw everything within them. The *ictus* exerts a gravitational pull over the multiplicity of rhythm just as it draws the foot to the ground in the steps of a dance. Nietzsche traces the effects of this gravitational pull as it occurred in ancient Greek speech, which is one of the *rhythmizomena*, the physical phenomena that rhythm needs in order to give form to time. Ancient Greek was a melodic language, conveying meaning through a complex balance of three musical aspects - duration (time), volume (force or stress), and pitch (higher or lower tones). Physically, however, you need more breath or force in order to produce a higher pitch,⁶⁸ so pitch and stress over time became conflated, each pitch accent becoming also a stress accent by default. Alone and outnumbered in this struggle, temporality is overmatched and squeezed aside by the combined strength of pitch and force. But just as differences in duration fade into the background in comparison to pitch and force, so too do the nuances of pitch itself - it is the higher pitches that are stressed, while lower pitches drop out altogether, and “a variation of stressed and unstressed syllables takes the place of high- and low-pitched syllables.”⁶⁹ This is how the complex network of temporal relations in ancient rhythm shifts into the binary simplicity of modern accented rhythm. Rather than a whole range of possible durations supported by subtle differences in pitch, rhythm becomes a binary alternation between two states - stressed/unstressed, on/off, yes/no, as “the feeling pulsates in the rhythmic alternation between strong and weak” and temporal rhythmic variations are relegated to “secondary” status.⁷⁰ The *ictus* or stress accent appears here as a jealous thief of meaning that prefigures the divine heaven or backworld of the later Nietzsche’s work,⁷¹ “a violent afterlife” in which “the spiritual life of the word is

68 A phenomenon familiar to anyone who has learned to play a woodwind or brass instrument - as a beginner, it is very difficult to separate out volume from pitch, and the greater force needed to produce a higher note makes it easier to play it loudly. Developing the control required to play a high note quietly is much more difficult.

69 “*ein Wechsel von betonten und nicht betonten Silben tritt an Stelle von hoch und tiefbetonten Silben.*” (KGW 2:3:308)

70 “*das Gefühl pulsirt im rhythmischen Wechsel von stark und schwach . . . Hieran schließt sich der Zeithrhythmus: der aber jetzt sekundär ist u. nirgends mehr scharf ist.*” (KGW 2:3:338)

71 TI ‘How the “true world” finally became a fable’

now concentrated in the accented syllable."⁷² Just as all meaning will later be sucked from the living, temporal earth by the dead but eternal backworld, the rhythm or "spiritual life" of language becomes focussed on the presence or absence of the *ictus* alone, rather than emerging from multiple quantities of time.

Nietzsche's account broadens the application of rhythm as form beyond that of time alone, even as it confirms the nihilistic patterns of identity-creation that we identified in the first chapter. The criticism Nietzsche levels at modern accented rhythm is that it is based on differences in force, rather than time, and that time is therefore unable to appear to us with its former clarity, leaving us with a temporal sense that is so impoverished that ancient rhythms are completely lost to us. But when Nietzsche attempts to explain how this transformation occurred, we find that he cannot maintain the strict division between force and time that this hierarchy rests upon.⁷³ As we have seen, the *ictus* symbolises all that is wrong for Nietzsche about modern rhythm, and modern thought. The prominence of the *ictus* seems to sideline the other beats and tensions both between and within the foot, occluding the inherent multiplicity of rhythm as a phenomenon. As such, it expresses the eternalising tendency that he detects within the trajectory of nihilistic thought, which attempts to exclude difference from identity. But despite his attempts to envisage an older sense of rhythm without an *ictus*, Nietzsche is unable to consistently exclude the *ictus* from his discussions of temporal rhythm. When discussing the pauses and subtle shifts that occur within temporal rhythm, he indicates that the *ictus*, although "not as necessary" as it is in accented rhythm, may still occur within temporal rhythm nonetheless.⁷⁴ The force of the *ictus*, however problematic, is not alien to rhythm and nor, therefore, to the temporal identity that emerges through the rhythmic process.

72 "*Jetzt tritt der Accent und der Ictus ein, gleichsam ein gewaltsames Fortleben des Wortes. Das seelische Leben des Wortes concentrirt sich jetzt in der Accentsilbe.*" (KGW 2:3:307)

73 As Porter concludes, what is needed instead of the strict division of rhythmic senses into those of time and force is instead "something like a concept of 'time-strength'" because "the division of time into quantities is itself an instance of force." (Porter 2000:151-2) We will go on to explore the interpenetration of force and time in the concept of "momentary" time in chapter four.

74 "*Die Zeitrhythmik muß nach kurzen Strecken einmal aufathmen. Es scheint daß wenn, wie in unserer Musik der Ictus hinzugenommen wird, dies nicht so nöthig ist*" (KGW 2:3:337). See Porter (2000:159) for other suggestions of the presence of a temporal *ictus* within Nietzsche's notes.

The reviled *ictus* that comes to prominence in accented rhythm grows out of and is produced by temporal rhythm - when listening to a piece of music, however much force the *ictus* is given, we only become aware of and are able to identify it as the *ictus* once we have heard it repeat. We find this blurring of the division between time and force when Nietzsche asks in his notes whether “*Zeitleben*,”⁷⁵ the purely temporal identity established by ancient rhythm, is the more originary, prior to the *Tonleben* or force-based identity that emerges through modern accented rhythm, and concludes that “at the oldest point,” rhythm is the “struggle between *Zeit-* and *Tonleben* (side by side).”⁷⁶ However much he may have been tempted to read the relationship between time and rhythm in terms of reality and appearance, the nature of rhythm as a phenomenon speaks against this metaphysical evaluation, which attempts to judge the “better” rhythm in terms of how closely or purely it represents time. Force cannot be viewed as a recent usurper, a physical interloper that intrudes upon the hallowed province of time, but as an integral part of rhythm. As Nietzsche realises, the rhythmic division and repetition of durations always involves “the formative force of temporal proportions.”⁷⁷ Rhythm is this “formative force” just as much as it is the “temporal proportions” - more, with the phenomenon of rhythm we have to understand that the temporal proportions *are* the formative force. Understood as the activity of time and force combined, rhythm is the form not just of time, but of phenomena per se.

The function of rhythm as a shaping force can be seen in the irrational rhythms that Aristoxenus includes within his list of the building blocks or functions of Greek rhythm.⁷⁸

75 Literally “life of time”

76 “*ist nun das Zeitleben das ursprüngliche? Einmal war das Tonleben freier, dann wird es durch das Zeitleben eingeengt und fast überwunden, schließlich siegt es wieder. Zuältest Kampf zwischen Zeit- und Tonleben (nebeneinander).*” (KGW 2:3:308)

77 “*der gestaltenden Kraft der Zeitproportionen*” (KGW 2:3:330)

78 “Each of the feet is defined either by some ratio [*logos*], or by an irrationality [*alogia*] of a kind that will be intermediate between two ratios familiar to perception. What we are saying can be made clear in the following way, if two feet are taken, one of which has its up-beat equal to its down-beat, each of these being of two units, while the other has a down-beat of two units and an up-beat half that size, and if a third foot is taken beside these, having a *basis* [i.e., ‘down-beat’] equal, once again, to both the others, but an *arsis* [i.e., ‘up-beat’] with a magnitude intermediate between those of the other *arseis*. For such a foot will have an up-beat that is irrational [*alogos*] with respect to the down-beat. The irrationality will be between two ratios that are familiar to perception, the equal and the duple. This foot is called the irrational *choreios*.” (Barker 1989:188)

Some feet are composed of durations which translate neatly into ratios - a *dactyl*, for example, has one long syllable followed by two short syllables, dividing into a neat ratio of 1:2 (one long syllable = two short). Other feet, however, create “irrational” rhythms, containing durations which we cannot encompass as a neat subdivision of the rest. Nonetheless, we still hear these as part of the rhythm. Nietzsche declares that the irrationality of rhythm goes even deeper than this - no spoken instance of a *dactyl* actually has the strict 1:2 ratio that we hear, as the short syllables are never the exact length of either half of the long syllable, or each other.⁷⁹ As Porter points out, “the only equivalence that can exist between a long syllable and two short syllables is accordingly rhythmic—which is to say, thanks to a rhythmic convention”⁸⁰ i.e. a rhythmic sense, whether it be temporal or accented.

For Nietzsche, then, rather than Aristoxenus' distinction between rhythms that are inherently rational or irrational, we find a distinction between those which we do or do not *perceive* as rational. Every rhythm is irrational, for no beat can precisely reproduce a previous beat, or an exact fraction of it. With some rhythms, however, the process by which we smooth out the differences between one beat and another that seems to repeat it leaves a trace within the rhythm itself. With the temporal rhythms of ancient Greece Nietzsche suggests that the vacillation of these subtle differences often remains perceptible, in such a way that the listener could equally interpret a phrase as a variation in tempo, as part of a wider emergent rhythmic pattern, or as a modulation to another rhythm entirely. All of these could be derived from the irrationality upon which rhythmic perception is built, all co-present as possibilities within the same rhythm.⁸¹ The virtue of ancient rhythm for Nietzsche is this subtle manifestation of different rhythms or senses of time within it. It is this pluriferation of temporalities, and the tendency to promote rather than discourage the ability to shift between them, that we can take forward as the desirable feature of ancient rhythm, after any attempt at metaphysical adequation to a purer sense

79 “The facts of feeling, which grasp a dactyl (-^^) as a *logos isos* [as ‘rational’], have nothing to do with the mathematical description of the way the dactyl comes out when spoken” (“*Mit jener mathematischen Bezeichnung, wie man den Daktylus spricht, hat die Gefühlsthatsache nichts zu thun, die ihn als λόγος ἴσος begreift.*” KGW 2:3:278-9 - Porter’s translation - Porter 2000:153)

80 Porter 2000:153

81 Nietzsche writes that “every irrational length is evidence of a rhythmic change!” (“*Jede irrationale Länge ist ein Beweis für eine rhythm. Metabole!*” KGW 2:3:252)

of time has been discounted by the continual co-presence of force and time throughout both the temporal and the accented senses of rhythm.

Rhythm, then, is what allows us to see repetition as the repetition of the same - to perceive subtly different durations as repetitions of the "same" duration.⁸² As we saw in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's conception of the relationship between form or appearance and reality attempts to disrupt the hierarchical divide between them, reframing the rhythmic Apolline impulse towards appearance as something that could be affirmed when expressed as ancient tragedy, which uses it to give form to the precarious vulnerability of identity. But the nature of tragedy as a representation of reality, even if this be conceived as the continual tension between Dionysian and Apolline rather than an undivided Dionysian Will, always leaves appearance in second place. In Nietzsche's account of the transition from temporal to accented rhythm we can also trace the ascendancy of a more singular, less "faithful" rhythmical perception of multiplicity, but the phenomenon of rhythm resists any attempts to interpret this as a fall from a metaphysical state of originary grace. The temporal rhythm that Aristoxenus describes is older than our modern accented sense of rhythm, but it in its turn developed from a sense of rhythm in which force and time were both at play. Nietzsche's attempt to divide ancient and modern rhythm into two irreconcilable camps, focused on time and force respectively, disintegrates when he tries to explain how one became the other, and has to acknowledge the co-presence of time and force in both types of rhythm. This bleed between time and force means that, whatever the faults of modern accented rhythm, it can no longer be charged with failing to adequately represent the "true" nature of time. Rather, the problem is that it conceals the irrationality on which rhythm is built, seducing us with an easy, regular beat instead of revealing the transformational process of shaping and forming that is at work in all rhythm.

The notebooks on rhythm end with a note that expresses this broadening of Nietzsche's understanding of rhythm, from a purely temporal phenomenon to a process which inextricably involves both force and time as the generation of the sensory world around us:

82 *How* this takes place is not something Nietzsche explores, beyond determining the role of the *ictus* within rhythm as the locus of this process. We shall return to the question of how rhythm engenders repetition in chapter five, with Deleuze's account of the three syntheses of time.

Rhythm is an *attempt* at *individuation*. In order for there to be rhythm, there must be multiplicity and becoming. Here we find the addiction to beauty as the motive for individuation. Rhythm is the form of becoming, at any rate the *form of the world of appearances*.⁸³

Rhythm is explicitly presented here as the process of individuation or identity-formation, the form of not just time, but of the temporal "world of appearance" in its entirety. The "image-making power" that Nietzsche attributes to rhythm in *The Birth of Tragedy* is not here merely something "developed to *represent* Apolline states,"⁸⁴ namely the Apolline impulse towards individuation. Rhythm *is* this identity-forming force, multiple and temporal, "the form of the world of appearance" - it is how appearance appears. Rhythm is not something that divides up the undivided, whether this be the undivided time of Aristoxenus, or the Schopenhauerian will in itself. Instead, it emerges from "multiplicity and becoming." As the art of Apollo it is (as we saw in *The Birth of Tragedy*) that which gives form to this becoming and allows us to experience it, but not as something alien to becoming - rather, as something that expresses the multiplicity inherent in becoming itself.

Abandoning any pretence to a pure reality, however, does not restore the status of modern rhythm in Nietzsche's eyes. The disdain for modern German culture that runs throughout *The Birth of Tragedy* only deepens in the later works once Wagner has been firmly rejected as its potential saviour, but the reasons behind Nietzsche's valuation shift. *The Birth of Tragedy* operates within a metaphysical model of an otherworldly, unbroken will that takes form for us through the Apolline impulse towards individuation, and which modern tragedy cannot adequately represent. The rhythm notes similarly paint ancient temporal sense of rhythm as a better, purer form of time. But Nietzsche's later thought abandons the vestiges of this dichotomy between an unknowable true world and a world of appearance that must attempt the impossible task of matching it. Here, the criticism of modernity is not that it fails to match up to a hidden reality, but that the creative and transformational possibilities of thought have been narrowed into a predictable and regular

83 "Der Rhythmus ist ein Versuch zur Individuation. Damit Rhythmus da sein könne, muß Vielheit und Werden da sein. Hier Zeigt sich die Sucht zum Schönen als Motiv der Individuation. Rhythmus ist die Form des Verdens, überhaupt die Form der Erscheinungswelt." (KGW 2:3:338) Porter draws out the links between this passage and Nietzsche's later work, suggests that it may even be a later annotation. (Porter 2000:341)

84 BT §2 (my emphasis)

“tick-tock.”⁸⁵ It is this aspect of thought that Nietzsche is working against in his later work, as he attempts to develop a kind of thought that retains a sense of difference and multiplicity in the rhythmic forms that we create.

Nietzsche's early work on rhythm thus reveals an ambiguity at the heart of the process by which we think the identities we perceive in the world around us. As a process, rhythm has at its root a fundamental difference, yet is also the means by which this difference is subsumed into the identity of a regular, repeating beat. The transformation of ancient temporal rhythm into modern accented rhythm expresses this solidification of identity, as the nihilistic force of the *ictus* draws the multiplicity of beats into its orbit. But even this ability to move from one sense of rhythm to another is itself a demonstration of the temporal fluidity of rhythm and the ability of our thought to reframe itself. In the next chapter we shall see how this ambiguity of rhythmic thought in Nietzsche's early work is at play in *The Gay Science*, as he struggles to develop a new kind of thought that can escape the nihilistic pull of the *ictus*.

85 “*das Tiktak unsrer Reim-Poeten ist auf die Dauer fürchterlich*”
<http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/BVN-1886.688> eKGWB Letter to Carl Fuchs 1886

3. Modulation: Rhythm as the seduction of the future

As we saw in chapter one, eternal return is the solution that Nietzsche proposes to the problem of modern nihilism, intended to let us break our current pattern of nihilistic thought, and develop a new kind of thought in its place. Following the exploration of how we rhythmically form identities in Nietzsche's early notes, we can now see that it is specifically a *rhythmic* problem that Nietzsche is trying to address and a *rhythmic* pattern that he is trying to disrupt with eternal return. We will revisit the account of the existing relationship between thought and becoming that emerged from *The Gay Science* in the light of Nietzsche's earlier understanding of the rhythmic nature of thought. We will look at how Nietzsche's conception of becoming has changed by the time of *The Gay Science*. We will then once again explore both the positive-artistic and negative-nihilistic aspects of our current way of thinking that we encountered in chapter one, but this time noting how rhythm is the driving force behind both of them. Nietzsche suggests that the potentially transformative aspects of rhythm are in tension with a powerful capacity to elide difference, in particular with respect to the future. These undesirable rhythmic attributes are the principal difficulties that Nietzsche thinks must be overcome if we are to reconceive the relationship between becoming and thought. Identifying these problems with rhythm, which as we have seen Nietzsche understands as "the form of time,"¹ will then allow us to situate eternal return in context as Nietzsche's attempt to disrupt our existing rhythmic relationship with time by introducing eternal return as a new rhythm. We can then move on in the next chapter to explore how Nietzsche intends eternal return to prompt a new relationship with time that will resist the effects of nihilism, and gauge the extent to which this solves the rhythmic tensions that we have identified within Nietzsche's work.

The rhythmic wavebeat of becoming

We saw in the previous chapter how in the 1870s Nietzsche struggles to articulate the relationship between the world of forms or appearances, and what he at this point understands as the separate "reality" from which this world of appearances emerges. At

¹ [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871.9\[116\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1871.9[116]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1871

times he seems particularly drawn to a Schopenhauerian metaphysics that conceives of a reality or will that underlies appearance as a primordial unity that precedes not only individuation, but also multiplicity. However Nietzsche also stresses the "contradictory"² nature of this supposed unity, coming to understand reality as the continual tension between Dionysian and Apolline forces rather than an undivided Dionysian Will. Yet even when working with a conception of reality that craves and is complicit in the individuation that emerges from it, during the period when the rhythm notebooks and *The Birth of Tragedy* were composed, Nietzsche still retains the sense that these individuated forms are a deviation from the formless ground of becoming, however necessary this deviation might be for life. This hierarchy becomes apparent in his evaluation of the shifting nature of tragedy, in which the "better" kind of tragic presentation or appearance is that which represents the pre-individuated formless state of reality as closely as possible.

When he writes at the end of the early rhythm notebooks that rhythm "is the form of becoming, at any rate the *form of the world of appearances*,"³ we can read Nietzsche's uncertainty in this formulation. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the world of appearances *is* the realm of becoming - the "continual Becoming in time, space, and causality"⁴ that is the false reality we inhabit everyday. Here in the rhythm notes, however, the phrase "at any rate" suggests that Nietzsche means something different by "the form of becoming" to the way in which we perceive beings within "the world of appearances." Becoming is not conceived here as restricted to the world of appearance alone, but as a process that extends beyond it into the imperceptible realm beneath.⁵ But does rhythm also bridge this

2 BT §4

3 KGW 2:3:338

4 BT §4

5 Swift uses a thorough account of Nietzsche's early writings, especially the 1867 *Fragment of a Critique of the Schopenhauerian Philosophy*, to argue that the Schopenhauerian belief in the will in itself that Nietzsche displays in *The Birth of Tragedy* was an anomaly, at odds with his earlier, as well as his later, philosophy which privileged the primacy of becoming. Swift identifies this impulse as far back as Nietzsche's dissertation draft on Kant, where Nietzsche agrees with Heraclitus that "there is no thing of which we may say, 'it is.' He rejects Being. He knows only Becoming, the flowing. He considers belief in something persistent as error and foolishness." (Swift 2005:12)

Miller (1999) also highlights the continuity in Nietzsche's earlier and later understanding of reality as "absolute becoming," citing a note from the same period as the early rhythm notes in which Nietzsche develops this thought of "life as a constant convulsion that projects appearances and takes pleasure in doing so. The atom as a contentless point, pure appearance, becoming in every

divide? Rhythm, Nietzsche seems clear, is *definitely* the form of "the world of appearances," but only *possibly* the "form of becoming" - he is unsure how far to extend this individuating power of rhythm. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche understands reality as a totally different realm to the "world of appearances," forever separated by the Schopenhauerian veil of Maia. As we saw in the previous chapter, Schopenhauer believes that multiplicity places us at odds with the nature of the will and is the cause of our misery in the world, but Nietzsche's tentative injection of rhythm into the concept of becoming signals his move away from this divide between appearance and reality. By considering the possibility that rhythm is in some way common to both the perceptible world of individuated beings, and becoming as a process that is not entirely contained within this world, Nietzsche starts to dissolve this division. As Nietzsche's study of Aristoxenus makes clear, rhythm is an inherently plural phenomenon, always constructed of multiple beats. If rhythm is to be found within becoming, we must ascribe multiplicity to becoming just as to being.

Throughout the 1870s Nietzsche develops the more Heraclitean conception of becoming that we encountered in chapter one, in which becoming is conceived as the reality of the world, rather than opposed to it. In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*,⁶ Nietzsche stages an encounter between Anaximander and Heraclitus, characters which play out for us the change in Nietzsche's own thinking from the metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy*.⁷ In Nietzsche's text, Anaximander struggles with the problem of how multiplicity can emerge from "the eternal one."⁸ Anaximander's response is that of Schopenhauer, as he concludes from "the self-contradictory, self-consuming and negating character of the many"⁹ that becoming is evidently at fault, and the process of individuation is a terrible accident.

smallest moment, never being." (Miller's translation) "*Das Leben als ein fortwährender, Erscheinungen projicirender und dies mit Lust thuender Krampf. Das Atom als Punkt, inhaltslos, rein Erscheinung, in jedem kleinsten Momente werdend, nie seiend.*"
[http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1870,7\[204\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1870,7[204]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1870-April 1871

6 An incomplete manuscript that Nietzsche was working on in 1873.

7 Small notes that "Nietzsche sees Anaximander as the key figure for all subsequent philosophy, in that he introduces the dichotomy between two realms, of being and becoming, and poses the problem of the relation between them," (Small 2010:18) and provides an account of the conception of "absolute becoming" that emerges in Nietzsche's thought from *PTAG* onwards (Small 2010:17ff).

8 *PTAG* §4

9 *ibid.*

Nietzsche sees that the outcome of this separation of becoming and being is that becoming is turned into a culpable and "moral phenomenon. It is not justified, but expiates itself forever through its passing."¹⁰ But here, instead of the attempt to redeem becoming through tragedy that we find in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche gives us the response of Heraclitus. In contrast to Anaximander, Heraclitus "denied the duality of totally diverse worlds"¹¹ that we found in both Anaximander, Schopenhauer, and in Nietzsche's own metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy*, and instead Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus "no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one."¹² For Heraclitus there is no division between a metaphysically true or real world of being, and the physical but false world of becoming.

By abandoning the division between being and becoming, Heraclitus does away with the transcendent concept of being altogether, leaving us with a world in which only becoming remains. There is no eternal one, no primordial unity. In these sections of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, the contrasting metaphysical positions on becoming as either *opposed to* reality, or *as* this reality in its entirety, make their competing claims on Nietzsche's thought. The winner who emerges is Heraclitus:

Louder than Anaximander, Heraclitus proclaimed: "I see nothing other than becoming. Be not deceived. It is the fault of your myopia, not of the nature of things, if you believe you see land somewhere in the ocean of coming-to-be and passing away."¹³

It is beings, the islands of identity that we perceive around us, that are illusory, a product of the way we see things rather than any inherent property of reality. Rhythm is a primary feature of the world as becoming that we find in Nietzsche's account of Heraclitus, in which he describes becoming as "this everlasting wavebeat and rhythm of things."¹⁴ Rhythm is now confirmed as the "form of becoming," as well as the form of the world appearances.

10 *ibid.*

11 *PTAG* §5

12 *ibid.*

13 *ibid.*

14 *Ibid.* The image of the wavebeat recalls the "wave-like" rhythm of the ancient Greeks in *The Birth of Tragedy*, associated with the representation of "Apolline states" (*BT* §2). In *PTAG* we see that the Dionysian realm of becoming, which Nietzsche had previously contrasted with the Apolline realm of forms, is also suffused with this wavelike rhythm. Nietzsche now considers it a feature of becoming and the world of appearances alike.

But the extension of rhythm as a common feature of both becoming and appearance does not thereby save the world of appearance with its rhythmic forms from Heraclitus' disapprobation. Heraclitus reverses Anaximander's moral assessment - it is now we, as those who impose the appearance of being upon the world of becoming, who are at fault. The continually flowing rhythm that is the province of the ocean of becoming is concealed and disguised by the land that we erroneously perceive within it:

For this one world which he retained—supported by eternal unwritten laws, flowing upward and downward in brazen rhythmic beat—nowhere shows a tarrying, an indestructibility, a bulwark in the stream.¹⁵

The rhythm of becoming, in the Heraclitean account, does not tarry - it is not responsible for the accretion of land which forms the blockages or identities that we think we see in the flow of becoming. These are the creation of our myopic thought alone.

Heraclitus' solution to the problem of how the eternal one becomes many, in fact raises another problem of what causes our myopia. How is the continuous flow of becoming initially broken up and held by our thought as discrete identities? As we saw in chapter one, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche develops the idea of thought as love to describe the way we create perceptible identities from the Heraclitean stream of becoming, in which "first one must *learn to hear* a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate and delimit it as a life in itself."¹⁶ But our account of thought as love did nothing to answer the question of how we delimit these identities in the first place. Following our examination of rhythm in Nietzsche's early notes, we identified a fundamentally rhythmic structure to the way we form identities. It now seems that becoming, too, has a rhythmic structure, in Heraclitus' image of becoming as the ocean continually shifting with the movement of the waves. These two manifestations of rhythm seem utterly opposed, as the accented rhythm which repetitively drives home the identity of a beat, and the temporal rhythm whose continual flow makes it impossible to pin down to any concrete position. And yet, as we found in Nietzsche's account of the rise of the *ictus* within ancient Greek rhythm, the two senses of rhythm as divided identity and rhythm as flow both arise from the same source - the irrationality at the heart of rhythm. Nietzsche's exploration of rhythm in the early notes was unable to resolve this tension. We will now turn to his later

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ GS §334

mobilisation of rhythm in *The Gay Science*, to see how this constitutive ambiguity at the heart of rhythm is expressed in the tensions between creative and nihilistic thought.¹⁷

Rhythm as a creative force

Nietzsche's engagement with the positive aspects of rhythm in *The Gay Science* is through the crucial role it plays within artistic or creative thinking, that we explored in chapter one as the creative aspects of the artist-lover. The "gay science" of Nietzsche's title refers not only to the joyful, affirmative body of knowledge that Nietzsche wants to counter nihilistic thought, but more specifically to the "*gai saber*" of the troubadours of medieval southern Europe who invented "love as passion" in "the knightly poetry of Provence."¹⁸ Art from the outset is clearly positioned as something that holds the key to the positive kind of knowledge that Nietzsche is aiming towards. As we explored in chapter one, *The Gay Science* begins by focusing on thought understood via different manifestations of love. Throughout this, Nietzsche draws out the links between love and art, stressing that the deception and self-deception involved in love, whether of a woman, of science, or "the truth," is a work of artistic production, in which the lover becomes the artist. In book two of *The Gay Science* the emphasis shifts from GS §62 on "Love" to GS §63 on "The woman in music," where the warm, rainy winds produce the impulse towards both love (whether the religious love of piety or a more secular female love) and music. This musical thread becomes more prominent throughout the following aphorisms, from the different tempos of thought invoked in GS §76, through the celebration of the gaities of Southern music,¹⁹ and

17 Eldridge (2018) highlights the continual conflict over the role of rhythm at play throughout Nietzsche's career, noting that "for Nietzsche, then, the phenomenon of rhythm itself is complex enough that questions about it cannot be resolved into single positions" and that the "tensions in his work are shaped by the quandaries inherent to rhythm" in its dual "qualities as form or flow." Eldridge perceives this conflict as lying between rhythm's power as either culturally or physiologically situated, whereas I am arguing that these tensions extend to the relation Nietzsche perceived between rhythm, specifically rhythmic thought, and becoming.

18 BGE §260 (although the appellation "*gai saber*" or the Occitan form "*gaya scienza*" that Nietzsche uses on the title page of *The Gay Science* primarily derives from a society formed to revive and promote the troubadour poetry that had been popular a hundred years earlier. As with Aristoxenus who was writing at a point when the decline of temporal rhythm had already begun to take effect, Nietzsche seems drawn to the untimely proponents of prior artforms).

19 GS §77

the un-Wagnerian privileging of sound over the lyrics in opera,²⁰ leading up to §84, 'On the origin of poetry,' which we shall focus on in the next section.

As we saw in the previous chapters, what we think of as identities are formed via a rhythmic process that allows us to perceive flashes of difference as repetitive instantiations of the same thing, and that develops through the process of learning to love that Nietzsche describes in GS §334. This is the case with *all* identities – but we do not experience all identities as rhythmic. The nihilistic problem that Nietzsche is trying to solve is that we are not sufficiently skilled to be able to perceive the world in this rhythmic fashion. If we are to reconfigure our relationship with becoming and learn how to think all identities as temporal – as rhythms - we should first examine those phenomena which already allow us to do this. I do not look at a brick, and see a rhythm. I might, possibly, perceive the life of a person or the passage of seasons as a rhythm. However the phenomena that we experience most concretely as rhythm are found in art - in music, poetry, or dance, the three *rhythmizomena* that Aristoxenus identified as phenomena made rhythmic ie as those that work not only with sound, language, or movement, but which are also built from different durations of time. The identities that we experience most strongly as rhythms, then, are those that highlight the rhythmic process that allows us to perceive time as multiple, working via repetition to produce difference. By holding blocks of time up before us, rhythms allow us to affirm the passage of time as something divided, retaining this generative difference as part of their identity.

Nietzsche makes the connection between rhythm and perception of time in his account of the degeneration of the ancient Greeks' privileged temporal sense of rhythm, which he attributes to the melodic nature of the ancient Greek language, which conveyed meaning through differences in the duration and pitch of syllables, rather than differences in stress. This sense of rhythm meant that the ancient Greeks had a heightened awareness of time. Towards the end of the notebooks however Nietzsche broadens this connection with temporal awareness to the sphere of art, rather than rhythm alone, noting that "every word becomes artistic when pronounced. On hearing we perceive it as a group of times."²¹ The

20 GS §80

21 "Jedes Wort wird zugleich künstlerisch beim Aussprechen und Hören als Gruppe von Zeiten percipirt" (KGW 2:3:338)

suggestion here seems to be that this perception of groups of times is a defining characteristic not only of rhythm, but of art per se. Nietzsche establishes rhythmic temporal perception as a driving force of art, especially sonorous temporal perception,²² suggesting that "the need for language is simultaneously the first manifestation of art."²³

Art, as the "cult of the untrue," is the "counterforce"²⁴ to our obsession with truth. This "good will to appearance"²⁵ is what allows us to affirm meaning as transient and created, rather than immutable and eternal. It is this playful and artistic celebration of illusion that allows us to transform the world into something we can love:

We do not always keep our eyes from rounding off, from finishing off the poem; and then it is no longer eternal imperfection that we carry across the river of becoming - we then feel that we are carrying a goddess, and are proud and childish in performing this service. As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still bearable to us, and art furnishes us with the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to be able to make such a phenomenon of ourselves.²⁶

The artistic ability to make the world beautiful is the positive role rhythm plays within our current capacities to think. "Rounding off" or "finishing off the poem" is a key aspect of the

22 Here it is specifically language "when pronounced" that becomes artistic, sonorous rather than linguistic. Blondel insists on the importance of sonority for Nietzsche, and how throughout his work: "he listens, to the point that it almost is or becomes imperceptible, provokes and almost creates this sound, resonance or even sonority; one immediately sees the contrast with a visual conception of philosophy, which must first be imposed before we then observe and inspect it, in which ontology compels epistemology. To interpret is to create. Moreover, while the visible is necessarily present, sound is perceptible at a distance, signifying its source or origin *in absentia*. I will go a little further: is it not that, for Nietzsche, contrary to the theories and banal facts that hold true for the plebian which is nearby and next, listening is one of the forms of the love of distance?" ("*il écoute, au point qu'il fait presque être, fait advenir l'imperceptible, provoque et crée presque le son ou la résonnance ou même la sonorité: on saisit immédiatement le contraste avec une conception visuelle du philosophe où faut d'abord que l'être s'impose avant qu'on le regarde et l'inspecte, où l'ontologique force le gnoséologique. Interpréter, c'est créer. Il s'y ajoute que, tandis que le visible est nécessairement présence, le son est perceptible au lointain, il signifie sa source ou son émetteur in absentia. J'irai un peu plus loin: ne serait-ce pas que, pour Nietzsche, au contraire de la théorie et de l'évidence qui valent pour le proche et le prochain, le plébéien, l'écoute est une des formes de l'amour du lointain?*" Blondel 1985). Blondel here highlights the creative role of the listener (over the observer), a listener who partakes of the "love of distance," forced to interpret a sound whose origin is always unclear.

23 "So ist die Noth der Sprache zugleich die erste künstlerische Manifestation." (KGW 2:3:338)

24 GS §107

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.*

rhythmic process of identity-formation that we explored in chapter two. This ability to round off and fill in the gaps allows us to build on the preceding rhythm by smoothing out the irregularities and differences between beats, incorporating any minor dissonances so that on an everyday level we become one of those who "knows how to improvise life" and is "ready at any moment to incorporate into the thematic order the most accidental note to which the stroke of a finger or a mood drives them, breathing a beautiful meaning and a soul into an accident."²⁷

The ability to create beauty via a rhythmic process of "rounding off" is something we are already capable of, but Nietzsche's suggestion here is that it is this specific aspect of thought that should be encouraged and developed in order to counter nihilism. Nihilism occurred because we lost faith in the identities in the world around us, because their status as a product of our own creation became apparent. We need instead to understand identities the same way we understand works of art - as something that does not hide its own rhythmically created nature, but rather highlights it. When Nietzsche praises the "masklike elements in the melodies and cadenzas, in the leaps and gaities of the rhythm of these [Southern] operas,"²⁸ it is this celebration of their created status that is favourably contrasted with the German composers who are ashamed of and seek to hide the essence of their art. When appreciating a work of art, we are held in the tension of the rhythmic process of learning to love, but in a way that allows us to recognise the artifice within art as something to celebrate, rather than decry. This recognition of the created nature of art does not mean that we are not absorbed in it, or that we do not find it meaningful. Nihilistic thought conceives of appearance as a "dead mask"²⁹ that covers the true nature of reality, but with art we are able to "delight in the mask," revelling in an affirmative "good conscience in everything mask-like!"³⁰ The work of art takes us up and absorbs us, but in a way that can encompass its created nature, going "so far in its self-mockery that it makes me feel that here there is appearance and a will-o'-the-wisp and a dance of spirits and nothing else."³¹ We absorb and ignore the irregularities that would seem to disrupt this

27 GS §303

28 GS §77

29 GS §50

30 GS §77

31 GS §50

experience - the words on the page, the greasepaint, the pressure of the headphones in our ears - just as we smooth the irregularity of repetition into identity. But unlike with nihilistic thought, with art we do this willingly - for "that is the difference, that is the beautiful *unnaturalness* for the sake of which one goes to the opera."³² Art shows us a way to recognise and celebrate the extent to which the things we perceive in the world are a deviation from the formless world of becoming, to enjoy all the advantages of identity precisely because we retain the knowledge of its artifice, accepting that x is true while at the same time knowing it to be a fiction.

The rhythmic binding of identities that allows us to round off the differences within them is one of the "species-preserving... articles of faith"³³ that means that "existence is still bearable to us" - it is only "as an aesthetic phenomenon"³⁴ that we can create a world that resists nihilism. "We need all exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art"³⁵ to create a world in which we are able to survive, utilising the rhythmic propensity to reshape reality, to see the irregular as regular and beautiful, as a necessary and coherent rhythm. For Nietzsche our relationship with the work of art in which we "float and play above it"³⁶ is a way of thinking that retains or re-engages the child's sense of seriousness in play. The key elements to playful and artistic thinking for Nietzsche are mobility and lightness, the ability to switch in a second from an absorbing and epic fight in which the dinosaurs storm the medieval castle to the question of what is for tea tonight. For Nietzsche we do not extend this playful approach to knowledge far enough - as adults we take on the concrete skills we have learned, running our play shops and opposing our thumbs like little pros, but we lose the sense that posting blocks through a hole or mapping the human genome is a gay science - a game, at once joyful and serious.³⁷ We must

32 GS §80

33 GS §110

34 GS §107

35 *ibid.*

36 *ibid.*

37 As we shall go on to see in the next chapter, the overman is the figure whose transformation of thought taps into this lost skill. Stambaugh notes that Nietzsche's "insight is that if God is dead, what we are 'left with' is *not* just the inevitable, unchangeable 'givenness' of what we think of as daily living. In other words, the *real* is not the given," but precisely what is not given, but transformed and created by human activity. "For this reason, for Nietzsche it is the artist who most closely approaches the overman, for precisely he can never regard what is given as what is real."

develop these inherently artistic talents if we are able to hold onto this kind of transformative thinking as adults. We need to understand the world “as a work of art that gives birth to itself,”³⁸ embracing the sense of the artwork, and hence the world, as engaging and meaningful in a way that we are able to “float” or hover above. This is the awareness of the world that we need to have if we are to think non-nihilistically, in a way that allows us to find identities meaningful without any recourse to eternity, and can in this way avoid being drawn into a jealous spiral which excludes everything else, including most importantly their created nature. The unique capability of art is to continually strive against our tendency to fall into solid and secure identities, by instead holding their created nature before us as something we can affirm and take delight in.

Nietzsche knows what he wants the new type of artistic love or affirmation to achieve. He wants brief habits, rather than an obsessive millenia-long spiral of addiction, he wants a type of thought that recognises our creative role in the creation of its “objects” but that does not in so doing lay entire claim to them, that recognises their difference as well as our entanglement within them. But although Nietzsche recognises the constitutive role of rhythm within art as the process of making-perfect by rounding off, he also identifies a darker side to rhythm. Here the problem is not that the creativity of rhythm deviates from the continuum of becoming, as we find at points within *The Birth of Tragedy*, but is instead due to the self-reinforcing tendency of the *ictus* that led to the degeneration into modern accented rhythm. This negative aspect of rhythm seems to work directly against Nietzsche's goal of a thought that can create playful rather than addictive identities, that is aware of their created nature and can take them up or discard them at will. In this nihilistic aspect of rhythm, the tensions we find within Nietzsche's earlier work on rhythm rise to the surface. Having explored the way in which rhythm provides the motor that drives the positive artistic aspects of our thought, we must now turn to the other side of the coin, and see how Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* implicates rhythm in the development of nihilism.

(Stambaugh 1994:72-3)

38 *WTP* §796 (1885-1886)

Rhythm as seduction

In GS §84 Nietzsche undertakes an investigation into "the origin of poetry." Up until this point of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche's engagement with art has generally emphasised its positive and creative aspect. But in GS §84 a more worrisome side of rhythm emerges as he performs a genealogical critique of where this artistic desire comes from, attempting to explain why rhythm holds such force for us. In the previous section, we identified the crucial role that rhythm performs in making-perfect or rounding off the identities we create. Nietzsche here takes a rather different tone. He is very clear, however, that the origin of art was a useful one. As the driving force of identity formation, rhythmic thought is instrumental in creating a world in which we are able to live. Nietzsche's issue is with how rhythmic thought achieves this, and with the specific relationship with the future that fuels this enterprise. His investigation into the original "purpose" of rhythm starts by addressing the argument that art has no purpose, and that we should view it as an irrational excess that, like morality, elevates humanity from its base preoccupation with survival. These "lovers of what is fantastic in humans" offer art, and poetry in particular, as evidence that we are not solely motivated by utility, but that instead we are capable of something higher than merely scratching out an existence. Art, according to the anti-utilitarian view that opens this aphorism, makes everything more complicated and elaborate than it needs to be, and its impracticality is precisely what elevates it above other activities.

But Nietzsche the genealogical diagnostician has no truck with this position. Just because we cannot immediately see the point of something now, does not mean that it was forever thus. Just as morality in its various incarnations has at points in our history been absolutely necessary for our survival,³⁹ so too, argues Nietzsche, was art. Poetry is not "wildly beautiful irrationality"⁴⁰ as the anti-utilitarian argument that Nietzsche presents here claims. As we have seen, while rhythm is built from difference, from the irrational and irregular beat, rhythm is the process by which we shape irregularity as a unified regular whole, rounding it off as a coherent work. During the first part of *The Gay Science* art is offered as

39 See *GM* II §16 for how bad conscience turned man into "a spectacle too subtle, too wonderful, too paradoxical to be allowed to be played senselessly unobserved on some ridiculous planet... as though man were not an end but just a path, an episode, a bridge, a great promise..." and *GM* III §13 on how "this ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *negating one*, – he actually belongs to the really great *conserving* and *yes-creating* forces of life..."

40 GS §84

a corrective to reason not because it is antithetical to the rational obsession with truth that led to nihilism, but because it is a more self-aware manifestation of the same fictive impulse that motivates reason. But here Nietzsche suggests that this rhythmic process of rounding-off is not just artistic, but *superstitious*:

In those ancient times that called poetry into being, one really did aim at utility, and a very great utility at that; back then, when one let rhythm penetrate speech - that rhythmic force that reorganizes all the atoms of a sentence, bids one to select one's words and gives thoughts a new colour and makes them darker, stranger, more distant: a *superstitious utility*, of course!⁴¹

Nietzsche identifies this sense of rhythm that penetrates speech, as we saw earlier in the chapter, as the first impulse towards art as a way of perceiving groups of times. This is how rhythm “reorganizes all the atoms of a sentence” - it does so in such a way as to make us aware of the temporal blocks from which speech is built. But why does Nietzsche call this specifically temporal activity that rhythm performs a *superstitious* utility? He goes on to explain:

Rhythm was supposed to make a human request impress the gods more deeply after it was noticed that humans remember a verse better than ordinary speech; one also thought one could make oneself audible over greater distances with the rhythmic tick-tock; the rhythmic prayer seemed to get closer to the ears of the gods.⁴²

Rhythm, as the anti-utilitarians suggested, may not be the most straightforward way to convey meaning. It does, however, repay the extra trouble we expend on it by fixing this meaning more firmly in our minds. The meanings rhythm sets up for us have an enlarged existence, extending further over not just space as the sound carries further, but also time, as the rhymed mnemonic stays in our heads for longer.

Rhythm is a powerful tool of creation that allows us to give our thoughts greater perdurance, reaching further, lasting longer. But as such rhythm is also an instrument of persuasion and seduction. And the persuasive nature of the fiction it promotes is no guarantee that it is good for us. Nietzsche's reference to the “rhythmic tick-tock” in GS §84 should alert us to this, as elsewhere he writes pejoratively of the unimaginative regularity

41 *ibid.*

42 *ibid.*

of modern rhythm as a “dreadful tick-tock.”⁴³ Listening to and recognising a rhythm is a learned behaviour, that we become more proficient in the more we do it, that reshapes our ways of thinking and hearing to better attune to it. We noted in the first two chapters that the force of both identity-formation and of how we perceive rhythm is cumulative, building over many repetitions or beats. It intensifies and becomes more effective the more we think it, just as a piece of music gains strength the more we listen to it. This is what happens in the process of learning to love, as we fall deeper and deeper in love with the identity we create, until we “no longer want anything better from the world than it and it again.”⁴⁴ But this, as we saw, leads to nihilism - to endless repetition that starves the identity, rendering it meaningless.⁴⁵ While rhythm is inherently multiple, requiring the persistence of different blocks of time or beats, the repetitive way this multiplicity individuates as rhythm is what gives rise to the *ictus*. As Nietzsche diagnosed in the case of modern German music, this *ictus*-identity threatens to overwhelm the multiple rhythmic identity that it emerges from. And the gravitational power of the *ictus*, as it draws the rest of the bar or foot into its orbit, takes effect at an inter- as well as an intra-rhythmic level. Rhythms exert this power over one another, as Nietzsche suspects when he examines the effects of one rhythm on another, when “two interacting rhythms determine each other in such a way that the more extensive rhythm divides the narrower one,” such as in the case of military music, when “the rhythmic movements of the pulse, etc. (of the gait,) are reorganised by marching music, just as the pulse matches itself to the step.” Nietzsche

43 In a letter from 1886 Nietzsche compares the “dreadful tick-tock” of modern rhythm (“*das Tiktak unsrer Reim-Poeten ist auf die Dauer fürchterlich*” <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/BVN-1886,688> eKGWB Letter to Carl Fuchs 1886) to the richer rhythm of antique meter. This negative characterisation of rhythm as a “tick-tock” occurs several times in Nietzsche’s thought throughout the 1880s. In the opening poems of *The Gay Science* he stresses how the nature within him “balks at ticking laws and ticking clocks,” while in *TSZ II ‘On the Virtuous’* Zarathustra mocks those who “are like run of the mill clocks that have been wound up: they go tick-tock and want to have their tic called virtue,” prizing as virtuous the observation of the customs that, as Nietzsche shows in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, are indeed no more than the nervous tics and anxious flinches that have been beaten into humanity over time. These smaller human beings do not provide the kind of praise that Zarathustra values or the kind of music to which his foot responds, “to such a beat and tick-tock it wants neither to dance nor to stand still.” (*TSZ III ‘On Virtue that Makes Small’*). “Rhythmic tick-tock” is Nietzsche’s way of describing our tendency to unthinkingly fall in with a beat and, as we shall go on to see, he thinks this internal “ticking clock” is a mark of human thinking that we need to overcome.

44 GS §334

45 We find this in the phenomenon of “semantic satiation” that occurs when we hear a repeated word or phrase so often that it becomes meaningless.

describes the effect of one rhythm on another, such as the multiple rhythms of our bodies as a "direct attack," in which "everything suddenly moves according to a new law" as the old rhythms are determined or bound by the new.⁴⁶ When running to music, the tendency is to gradually fall in step with the beat, to attune the rhythm of our footsteps to the rhythm of the music we hear. We perceive an initial resonance between the different repetitions (our steps, and the beat of the music), and the effect of the rhythmic impulse to round off or make perfect is to *smooth over* the difference between them, and encompass the irregularity into a regular single beat, to "yield" and "join in" with a dominant force of rhythmical identity:

46 "Ich vermuthe, daß die sinnliche Kraft des Rhythmus darin liegt, daß zwei aufeinander wirkende Rhythmen sich in der Weise bestimmen, daß der umfassende den engeren eintheilt. Die rhythmischen Bewegungen des Pulses etc. (des Ganges,) werden durch eine Marschmusik ahrscheinlich neu gegliedert, wie dem Schritt sich der Pulsschlag akkommodirt... Und da der ganze Leib eine Unzahl von Rhythmen enthält, so wird durch jeden Rhythmus wirklich ein direkter Angriff auf den Leib gemacht. Alles bewegt sich plötzlich nach einem neuen Gesetz: nicht zwar so, daß die alten nicht mehr herrschen, sondern daß sie bestimmt werden. Die physiologische Begründung und Erklärung des Rhythmus (und seiner Macht.)" (KGW 2:3:322). Miller (1999) highlights the importance of the notion of binding in Nietzsche's conception of the force of rhythm in his early notes, where the word *Bändigung* (rather than *bestimmen*) signifies a "momentary capture" of becoming, rather than "a conclusive tying down or irreversible domestication." Miller does not however cite GS §84, in which, as I argue, Nietzsche deploys the notion of rhythm as binding with the more sinister connotation of entrapment and control.

See also GS §99 "What happens when people of a higher culture and barbarians come into contact: the lower culture usually takes on the vices, weaknesses, and excesses of the higher culture, on which basis it feels a certain attraction to that culture."

Above all, one wanted to take advantage of that elemental overpowering force that humans experience in themselves when listening to music: rhythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable desire to yield, to join in; not only the stride of the feet but also the soul itself gives in to the beat - probably also, one inferred, the souls of the gods! By means of rhythm one thus tried to *compel* them and to exercise a power over them: one cast poetry around them like a magical snare.⁴⁷

This is the potentially dark side of rhythm, the unifying or homogenizing effect of the *ictus* that is necessary to produce any semblance of form or identity in the world for us, but which also threatens to occlude the difference of anything that is out of step with the prevailing beat. This seductive, imperialising power is the first warning note of a dangerous aspect of rhythm that Nietzsche highlights in this aphorism.⁴⁸ In his quest for brief habits, the seductive power of rhythm alone is reason to be suspicious of it.

But there is another warning note that emerges from this aphorism, which is the reason we have faith in its seductive power as something that does not only affect us. We thought that rhythm could also seduce the world beyond us, because the world was composed of gods - of beings like ourselves. Recognising the powerful effect that rhythm has on our own human behaviour, Nietzsche claims that we assumed in ancient times that the anthropomorphic gods who ran the world were equally susceptible to it. The utility of rhythm, which brought it into speech as the first instantiation of art, was the illusion it provided of *control* over the world outside us. The bounding power of the *ictus* was something we felt so powerfully that we heard in it a common pulse that ran beyond humanity and into the wider universe. Speaking in verse was then not just an exercise in artistically shaping our own words, but a way of extending our influence to the world around us - with a lullaby we thought that we could calm not just our children, but the ears of the gods and the sea that they controlled. Rhythm was a "magical snare" that we cast

47 GS §84 Eldridge cites this passage, and writes that here Nietzsche "firmly locates rhythmic efficacy in the body" (Eldridge 2008). While Nietzsche does highlight the physiological power of rhythm (in addition to its cultural and historical dimensions, as Eldridge recognises), I am arguing that the physiological power of our organic perspective is something Nietzsche cautions us to question, as we shall go on to see in GS §109. As Marsden puts it, "the body 'as such' is not to be regarded as a given. If the body is as much a constellation of the rhythm of things as the items in its perceptual horizon, then its status as a *form of the same* is as illusory as the things it surveys." (Marsden 2002:25)

48 A point raised by Rossdale (2015) who notes Nietzsche's caution against the rhythmic appeal of herd mentality when considering the transformative possibilities of the figure of the dancer in Nietzsche's work.

around the world to induce it to fall into step with our desires, a force which seemed to extend through every action, for in something as simple as “bailing water, for instance, or rowing, the song is a bewitchment of the demons believed to be at work here; it makes them compliant, unfree, and a tool of humans.”⁴⁹ The artistic and creative force of art that we explored earlier in this chapter seems to be corrupted at its source, originally mobilised as a tool of oppression rather than transformation.

De-deifying the universe

Nietzsche's glimpse into the dark workshop where the ancient power of rhythm first drew strength shows us a world of sympathetic magic, based on a misunderstanding of the world filled with spirits, gods, and demons. But in the wake of the death of God, we have surely been freed of such superstition. Book three of *The Gay Science*, however, opens by warning us that the shadow of God may continue to appear for millennia, long after God himself is dead and our belief in him destroyed.⁵⁰ In GS §109 Nietzsche shows how far this nihilistic shadow extends, revealing areas of our thought that are coloured by the memory of God and the illusion of a universe just as sentient as that which we saw in GS §84. These are ways in which Nietzsche thinks we misconstrue the Heraclitean cosmos, highlighting how our myopic human thought introduces those bulwarks and “things in whose definiteness and endurance narrow human minds, like animal minds, believe,” but which “have no real existence.”⁵¹ These errors of thought arise because we anthropomorphise the cosmos, attributing to it the same kind of motivations that we perceive in our own actions. These are the shadows of God that we must defeat before we can develop a kind of thought that retains difference in becoming, rather than collapsing it into a mirror of ourselves.

Throughout GS §109, Nietzsche enumerates a long list of the ways our tendency to see the universe on our own terms is expressed in thought. Perhaps the most obvious of these are the remnants of the feeling that the universe is against us, and that the events which

49 GS §84

50 GS §108. Nietzsche was continually at pains to search out these pervasive aspects of the shadow of the Christian God, from the English moralists who think they can hold onto Christian morality without God (*TI* ‘Skirmishes of an Untimely Man’ §6) to *GM* III §§23-4 on science and the will to truth as the latest manifestations of the ascetic ideal.

51 *PTAG* §5

beset us are due to the whims of the cruel gods, in which “thinking that the world is a living being,” leads to “attributing to it heartlessness or unreason or their opposites.”⁵² We give the universe human motivations, but the “dead” inorganic world, as Nietzsche points out, is neither at war with life, nor opposed to it - the organic is merely an extremely rare variant of the inorganic. The cosmos is neither cruel nor irrational in its intent, it is not out to get us. Instead, Nietzsche stresses, the cosmos is utterly unlike us, in that it has no intent at all. This superstition persists, even though we no longer attribute a divine motivation to natural events. We may have realised that the lightning does not flash because we angered Zeus, but we have yet to grasp that the lightning does not “flash” at all. As we saw in chapter one, the lightning is nothing more than the flash - there is no separate agent who thinks the world would be improved with a bit more energy released into the atmosphere, and in the ardent hope of realising this future, decides to flash. This is what Nietzsche means when he calls upon us to “beware even of believing that the universe is a machine; it is certainly not constructed to one end, and the word ‘machine’ pays it far too high an honour.”⁵³ The universe does not have any goal in mind, it does not *try* to produce anything, be this the pain when I stub my toe on a coffee table, a flash of lightning, or the final heat death of the universe - we, as human thinkers, are the ones who see everything in terms of success or failure, a mindset that ultimately results in the nihilistic failure of the world to live up to our impossible expectations. And, as Nietzsche writes, in cosmological terms we are very much in the minority here:

Judged from the vantage point of our reason, the unsuccessful attempts are by far the rule; the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical mechanism repeats eternally its tune, which must never be called a melody - and ultimately even the phrase ‘unsuccessful attempt’ is already an anthropomorphism bearing a reproach.⁵⁴

If we are to move beyond all-too-human, nihilistic thought, we must stop reproaching the universe for no longer hinting at a divine plan for humanity. The universe is not a machine, which Nietzsche understands to mean that it was not constructed with a definite end in mind. Whatever its future may be, this future is not a purpose conceived on the basis of a

52 GS §109

53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.* The unsuccessful “attempts” that Nietzsche speaks of here are *Würfe*, throws of the dice (*Würfel*), in contrast to the *versuch* or experiment that he uses to describe the rhythmic “attempt at individuation” in the early notes.

present or past intention. Instead Nietzsche describes the universe as a musical mechanism, eternally repeating its tune, “which must never be called a melody.”⁵⁵ The difference that Nietzsche is trying to convey between a melody and a tune isn’t immediately obvious, but I would argue mirrors that which he draws between a machine (goal-oriented activity) and a mechanism (non-goal-oriented activity). A melody travels towards a resolution, just as a machine in Nietzschean terms is designed to do or produce something. In his discussion of the origins of rhythm in GS §84 Nietzsche suggests that “etymologically, *melos* means a tranquillizer, not because it is itself tranquil, but because its effect makes one tranquil.”⁵⁶ Melody, according to Nietzsche, is a machine designed with a specific goal in mind - to sate and calm us, to bring us to a state of restful contentment, resolving to the tonic and releasing the tension that it has set up. The musical box in contrast eternally repeats its tune, and will play and play for as long as the clockwork takes to wind down. The process of thinking, of learning to love, involves delimiting a melody from the chaotic noise of becoming. But the initial moment in which we “recognise” this melody is not the recognition of any pre-existing coherent identity with intentions and goals. It is the creation of this from the endless, purposeless tune that is the rhythm of becoming. The cosmos provides no resolution, no ending (whether happy or sad), whatever we might project onto it. If we are to move beyond nihilistic thought, we must not only find a way to abandon our resentment at its perceived malevolence, but also reconcile ourselves to its very real indifference.

But even after we have supposedly discarded this view with the death of the creator-god, we are still alarmingly parochial in our understanding of the universe, extrapolating its overall nature from the tiny portion of existence that we can perceive. The seasons go in cycles? The moon revolves around the rock we inhabit, which in turn revolves around the sun? Well of course, this must by how everything behaves! No, says Nietzsche. We must also rid ourselves of the habit “of assuming in general and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighbouring stars,” and “of saying that there are laws in

55 *ibid.* “und das ganze Spielwerk wiederholt ewig seine Weise, die nie eine Melodie heissen darf” <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/FW-109>

56 GS §84. It is worth noting that no other source (either contemporary or modern) supports Nietzsche’s theory about the origin of *melos*, which remains uncertain. Irrespective of the etymology of *melos*, the point here is that Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* views melody as teleological phenomenon in which, as we shall see, our current rhythmical thinking is complicit.

nature."⁵⁷ The order of eternal cycles is a rare anomaly, the "exception of exceptions"⁵⁸ just like the life that observes it, while "the total character of the world, by contrast, is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called."⁵⁹ Rhythm, which as we explored in chapter two is according to Nietzsche an "ordering of time,"⁶⁰ and which provides the rounding-off mechanism that gives form and beauty to imperfection, must be located here as an aesthetic anthropomorphism *par excellence* - and not one that we have outgrown with the death of God, but one of which we must still beware. The rhythmic wavebeat may be what seethes within the Heraclitean becoming of the universe, but the rhythmic ordering that creates form within it covers it over, and makes it appear not as the fluid difference of becoming, but as something fundamentally the same as the thinking subjects that we perceive ourselves to be.

Nietzsche describes these anthropomorphisms as explicitly aesthetic in nature. It is not only the lover who is blind, but also the artist who suffers from myopia in Nietzsche's account, seeing form and beauty where there is none. In GS §109 then, it seems that not only our moral, but also our *aesthetic* judgments are anthropomorphic impositions on the universe. Art may be a healthier, more creative way of thought than our old love of truth, but they are both ultimately *human* ways of misunderstanding the universe in *human* terms. The problem is that we do not recognise our implicit judgments of the universe for the creations of human perspective that they are. We see ourselves reflected in the universe, but fail to realise that this is because it is a universe that we have created. And so rather than treating them as fictions, we instead believe the universe to operate along human lines, anthropomorphising and collapsing the world into our own point of view.

Nietzsche has warned us to beware of understanding the cosmos as having the sense of agency or purpose that we attribute to ourselves, and of being composed of the laws and regular, rhythmic cycles that we perceive in our own organic lives as well as our immediate

57 GS §109. Our assumptions about this kind of logical order to the universe is evidence of the "*hyperbolic naiveté* of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things." (WTP §12 (Nov. 1887-March 1888))

58 *ibid.*

59 *ibid.*

60 KGW 2.3: 104

cosmological surroundings. These are the “shadows of God” that currently “darken us,”⁶¹ and which keep us bound in nihilistic thought. This absence of any goal or recognisable pattern inherent in the cosmos requires that we rethink our understanding of concepts such as creativity and novelty, if we are to achieve a better relationship of thought with becoming:

Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the god of the Eleatics. But when will we be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?⁶²

The “naturalisation” of humanity that Nietzsche will go on to term *amor fati* involves an understanding of the difference of becoming, shorn of the “deification” that sees it as the mirror of ourselves. Adequately grasping this de-deified universe means understanding the process by which becoming becomes in a manner that does not view this as the product of any kind of intention. This is what leads Nietzsche to warn us of the dangers of “thinking that the world eternally creates new things.”⁶³ As he makes clear in an unpublished note from 1885, our current understanding of the way things change involves agency:

The world, even if it is no longer a god, is still supposed to be capable of the divine power of creation, the power of infinite transformations; it is supposed to consciously prevent itself from returning to any of its old forms;⁶⁴

The de-deified universe possesses no such divine power of infinite creativity. The wavebeat of becoming is not an artist, but a “work of art” that does not intentionally create but rather “gives birth to itself.” The continual change of becoming does not arise through

61 GS §109

62 *ibid.*

63 Which seems on the face of it a confusing statement, as Hatab points out that “given Nietzsche’s promotion of creativity, one would think that a repetition scheme would not be his preference. Why not a model of eternal novelty, where time neither begins nor ends and issues forth ever new conditions, never to be transcended, transformed, reformed, completed, or annihilated? Would not eternal novelty be the more Nietzschean choice over the seeming constriction of eternal repetition?” (Hatab 2008:156) As we shall go on to see in the following chapter, the “eternal novelty” that Nietzsche warns us of here should be contrasted with that which is “eternally the same” - the repeating moment of the generative force of becoming (*eKGWB* Nachgelassene Fragmente 1881 see ch 4 note 64)

64 *WTP* §1062 (1885)

an act of conscious creation in which "the world intentionally avoids a goal and even knows artifices for keeping itself from entering into a circular course,"⁶⁵ but from another source. As we shall go on to see in the following chapter, this source is the nature of force in the will to power, which emerges as the moment.

Nietzsche traces the ripples of the shadow of God over the aphorisms that follow GS §109, clarifying that we should not understand this lack of a divine eternal agent of novelty in becoming as determinism. As we saw in chapter one with Nietzsche's unpublished note "Against determinism and teleology,"⁶⁶ determinism is an equally human way of understanding the world. Determinism requires cause and effect, a mechanism that is one of the unproven "articles of faith"⁶⁷ that shore up the everyday worldview. In our everyday behaviour,

We are operating only with things that do not exist - with lines, surfaces, bodies, atoms, divisible times, divisible spaces. How is explanation to be at all possible when we first turn everything into a *picture* - our picture! It is enough to view science as an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible; we learn to describe ourselves more and more precisely as we describe things and their succession.⁶⁸

All of our so-called objective knowledge, argues Nietzsche, is describing the universe as a copy of ourselves that we have created, a relationship with becoming that has "humanised" it and turned it into a self-portrait. This is how our belief in cause and effect operates, as an externalisation of my consciousness of myself, as a separate entity with the desire to affect another:

65 *ibid.*

66 *WTP* §552 (Spring-Fall 1887)

67 *GS* §121

68 *GS* §112

...originally man believed, wherever he saw something happen, that a will had to be the cause and that beings with a personal will had to be operating in the background - the concept of mechanics was quite foreign to him. But since man believed for immense periods of time only in persons (and not in substances, forces, things, etc.), the faith in cause and effect has become for him the fundamental faith that he uses everywhere something happens - still today instinctively and as an atavism of the oldest origin.⁶⁹

Cause and effect is the fiction of a world comprised of discrete entities, locked together in a chain in which of one thing inevitably causes another. Nietzsche describes instead what becoming is like "in truth," without our life-preserving fictions: a *continuum*:

Cause and effect: there is probably never such a duality; in truth a continuum faces us, from which we isolate a few pieces, just as we always perceive a movement only as isolated points, i.e. do not really see, but infer ... An intellect that saw cause and effect as a continuum, not, as we do, as arbitrary division and dismemberment - that saw the stream of the event - would reject the concept of cause and effect and deny all determinedness.⁷⁰

Nietzsche understands becoming as a continuum, as a fluid stream of movement. Nietzsche's goal is to find a way to conceive this continuum of becoming in a manner that is less anthropomorphic, and that does not read into it the ghostly presence of subject and object in cause and effect. This, as we saw in the first chapter, is one of the deep-seated symptoms of nihilism that Nietzsche diagnoses.

"We have forsaken the land," writes Nietzsche, "and gone to sea!"⁷¹ In our quest for truth, we have undone the foundations of the identities we had erected within this fluid continuum of becoming, and left ourselves homesick for the land that we have destroyed. We need to learn to navigate the world that remains to us, to naturalise ourselves in this de-deified nature. The question is how we are able to perform this process of naturalisation, not with organic, physical nature, but with becoming. It was the separation of our thought from the generative difference within becoming that led to nihilism, and it is becoming that we need to incorporate or reintegrate within our thought, in an attempt to give it new life. But the role that rhythm might take within this new kind of thought is ambiguous. Rhythm seems to be at play in both thought and becoming, but in an opposing

69 GS §127

70 GS §112

71 GS §124

sense in each. The continuum of becoming expresses one aspect of rhythm, flowing and unstoppable, which seems entirely at odds with the compulsive rhythm of human thought that thinks to impose form upon it. In the last chapter we explored Nietzsche's early understanding of rhythm as the form of time, but a form that was conceived as different to that which it represented, and in a manner that left Nietzsche decidedly ambiguous about the status of rhythm. We shall now return to GS §84, where Nietzsche's goes on to suggest the temporal and specifically futural relationship he thinks is at play in the origin of rhythm.

Rhythm as binding the future

As Nietzsche's account of the origin of rhythm continues, we learn more about how he thinks the seductive power of rhythm operates. In the early notes, Nietzsche vacillates over the status of rhythm and the nature of its relationship with the time that it forms and makes appear before us. Here in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche identifies more precisely which aspects of rhythmic thought he finds troubling. In GS §84 he suggests that the rhythmic identities we construct are an attempt to exert compulsion not just over the world, but over the future. Instrumental in this process is the figure of Apollo, the god of rhythm:

To ask for a prophecy - that meant originally (according to the derivation of the Greek word that seems most probable to me) to have something determined: one thought one could force the future by gaining Apollo's favour - he who according to the oldest views is much more than a god of foresight. The way the formula is pronounced, with literal and rhythmic precision, is how it binds the future; the formula, however, is the invention of Apollo, who as god of rhythm can also bind the goddesses of fate.

The Birth of Tragedy features a dialectical relationship between the two gods, Dionysus and Apollo, who express the impulse towards undifferentiated becoming and differentiated form respectively. Throughout *The Birth of Tragedy* Apollo is predominantly associated with rhythm as the "image-making power which they [the Greeks] developed to represent Apolline states,"⁷² although there is also a point at which Dionysus takes over in the Dionysian dithyramb, in which "'excess' unveiled itself as the truth" and "rhythm, which had

72 BT §2

previously moved only in the simplest zig-zag pattern, now loosened its limbs for a Bacchanalian dance."⁷³

Here in *The Gay Science*, however, Apollo alone is named as the god of not only rhythm, but also of foresight and prophecy. Rhythm, the way we perceive an irregular noise as part of a regular beat, is not only what allows us to "predict" the future. In the ancient world populated by gods, rhythm seemed to offer us a way to control the future. We perceived the influence rhythm exerted over our own thought, and believed that rhythm would have the same effect on a natural world that was the domain of the gods. The demon or spirit who makes the water rise is in the same position as the jogger going for their morning run. When it hears our bailing song, the demon will regulate its pace just as the runner moderates their steps to the music in their headphones, and we shall in this way control the waves that threaten to overwhelm us, and temper them to our own ends.

And if, instead of the spirit of a particular stream, we are singing to the goddesses who control the strings of the world and the course it will take, the effect we expect is, according to Nietzsche, just the same. The regular movements of spinning and weaving, the rising-and-falling of the spindle and the back-and-forth of the loom as the Fates entwine the future - if we are able to pronounce the formula correctly, then these rhythms too will be drawn into ours. The pattern of the future woven by the Fates will succumb to our rhythm, just as irresistibly as the steps of the runner as they beat their path along the side of the canal. Rhythm is what promises us this prophetic power over the Fates as we attempt to make our thoughts "darker, stranger," and "more distant"⁷⁴ by stretching them into the future. In Nietzsche's account of the ancient origin of rhythm, we love its seductive, addictive power because it seems to have the power to "mould the future according to one's own will,"⁷⁵ to force the Fates to favour us and dance to our tune.

Nietzsche's account of the origin of poetry reveals an ancient understanding of rhythm as an oppressive force which attempted to tame not only a world, but also a future, that was

73 *The Dionysiac World View* §2, written in 1870, unpublished during Nietzsche's lifetime (cited below as *DWV*). We shall return to the question of an alternative Dionysian rhythm which expresses "excess" rather than boundaries in a moment.

74 *GS* §84

75 *ibid.*

the remit of anthropomorphised gods. How this world behaved, how the future played out, was understood to be the result of a choice made by these humanised figures and so we mobilised rhythm as a weapon that could allow us to control them, and direct their choices. This is the ancient power of our human, rhythmic thought, which is predicated on the belief that the world we inhabit is the mirror of ourselves. When broken down in this fashion, any faith in the superstitious power of rhythm appears ridiculous, but it also raises questions about the efficacy of our rhythmically creative thought. We can say that a rhythmic pronouncement is more *persuasive* - and the rhythmically perfected forms that we have created for ourselves were certainly capable (for a time) of persuading *us*. But to say that rhythm has for this reason any more relevance to the world around us is based on the fundamental misapprehension that this world is open to being *persuaded*. Why should we believe that the rhythmic nature of our thought can fare any better with its relationship to becoming, when the origin of rhythm is based on an attempt to crush any difference from a world that it fundamentally misunderstands?⁷⁶

Nietzsche classes the ancient faith in rhythm as a “superstition” to which even the wisest of us occasionally falls prey, becoming “a fool for rhythm,”⁷⁷ just as we have ever been fools for love. Although this ancient superstition now seems ridiculous, it “cannot be completely eradicated,”⁷⁸ and as we saw in GS §109 Nietzsche believes that this mischaracterisation of the world as a reflection of ourselves is still at play in the way that we think today. We may believe that we have moved on from the time when we saw the universe as a collection of anthropomorphised spirits, but we still need to beware “of thinking that the world is a living being,”⁷⁹ because our thought is still scarred by the shadows of these anthropomorphisms. We are still woefully prone to understanding the universe on our own terms, as a reflection of our own organic and rhythmic life, whereas, as Nietzsche argues, it is anything but. Nietzsche's point is not that we still believe that

76 It is important to note that Nietzsche is not attempting to debunk the power of rhythm and art merely by revealing its base origins, for as he writes in the second edition of *The Gay Science*, “a morality could even have grown *out of* an error, and the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value.” (GS §345) By examining the presuppositions at work in the ancient belief in the power of rhythm, Nietzsche is instead questioning precisely what *kind of* values we find at work in rhythm, whether they are creative or repressive.

77 *ibid.*

78 *ibid.*

79 GS §109

rhythm has the prophetic effect he describes in GS §84. It is that the rhythmic structure of our thought still retains the anthropomorphic character he describes in GS §109, and as such must change if we are to create anything that can configure the differential and fluid force of becoming in a new, non-nihilistic way.

The problem with altering the rhythm of our thought comes from the force of the *ictus* that Nietzsche held responsible for the degeneration of the ancient sense of rhythm. A characteristic of rhythm that we saw when we explored the difference between ancient and modern senses of rhythm is its enframing quality - it not only gives us the ability to create what we think we “recognise” as patterns within becoming by hearing repetitions where there are none. It also creates and reinforces the structure by which we select these patterns. Our proficiency in hearing a particular rhythm, or sense of rhythm, encourages us to filter everything through this sense, and makes it difficult to hear or to think in other ways. Our human perspective is one such enframing rhythm, which makes us judge the universe in human terms - we unconsciously give it goals and expect it to be working towards some kind of purpose, seeing meaning where there is none. The problem, then, is not that the future remains unpersuaded by our rhythmic imprecations. It is that we ourselves are all too susceptible to them. Nietzsche fears that it is precisely this rhythmically binding characteristic of thought that he describes in GS §84 that holds our thought back.

Nietzsche's suspicion of this enframing, addictive aspect of rhythm emerges elsewhere in *The Gay Science*. He presents the rhythmic prayers of GS §128 as a repetition that produces stasis, encouraging the feet to keep still, not to dance.

...the formulas of prayer as a long mechanical work of the lips, combined with exertion of the memory and a same fixed posture of hands and feet and eyes! So they may, like the Tibetans, go ahead regurgitating their 'om mane padme hum' countless times or, as in Benares, count the name of the god off their fingers, Ram-Ram-Ram ... - the main point is that this work keeps them still for a time...

...From such people religion wants only that they *keep still* with their eyes, hands, legs, and other organs; thus they are made beautiful for a time and - more like human beings!⁸⁰

Repetition here functions in its controlling, binding aspect to produce a static form, to make people "beautiful for a time," but not for the time that is to come. It does not allow them to transform, or to dance,⁸¹ but instead keeps them still and makes them "more like human beings."⁸² This is what Nietzsche diagnoses within the current rhythm of our thought - a relationship with the future founded on the illusion of control, but which has the effect of closing off any meaningful relationship with this future, and instead holds us back. Logic, causality, our belief in eternal substances and eternal truths - all of these are fictions produced by the rhythmic operation of rounding off, of being able to see different beats as a repetition of the same. The realisation of our own role in the production of the ideals that oppress us should free us for the creation of new, more mobile fictions. But the seductive aspect of rhythm makes it hard to discard the old shadows of God.

80 GS §128

81 In the final book of *The Gay Science*, published several years later, the ability to dance to the rhythm of a thought is brought out as a means of evaluating its worth - see GS §366 ("Our first question about the value of a book, a person, or a piece of music is: 'Can they walk?' Even more, 'Can they dance?'") and GS §368 where Nietzsche's foot "revolts" at the music of Wagner, which does not satisfy its need for "tempo, dance, march". Nietzsche concludes: "I wouldn't know what the spirit of a philosopher might more want to be than a good dancer" (GS §381). Cohen (2008) argues that Nietzsche's concern is that we find the rhythms that are personally right for us, judging a rhythm to be "either beneficial or harmful depending on its complementarity or conflict with the music of our lives" (Cohen 2008:307). This sense of rhythm using dance as a means of resetting or restoring "the proper tension and harmony of the soul" is certainly what we find in GS §84. I however argue that we should be wary of Cohen's interpretation, which implies an essentialist view in which each person or soul has a proper tension, or its "own inner tempo" (Cohen 2008:307). The body, as Nietzsche stresses, is composed of a "host" of rhythms ("*der ganze Leib eine Unzahl von Rhythmen enthält*" KGW 2:3:322), and I argue that it is this inherently multiple nature of rhythm that attracts Nietzsche, and that we should therefore not seek to collapse into a unity. The sense of dancing that Nietzsche uses in book five is similarly transformative, and should be contrasted with the retrogressive sense we find in GS §84.

82 GS §128

We pointed out before that the weaponised rhythm that we find attempting to control the future via its construction of static identities that reproduce our current goals seems at odds with the ceaselessly flowing rhythm of becoming, that Nietzsche earlier used to explain his Heraclitean conception of becoming. This, perhaps, is where we will find the Dionysian rhythm that continually exceeds the boundaries set in place by the Apolline, in which case we could rescue this Dionysian rhythm from the accusations of anthropomorphism and repression that are levelled at rhythm in GS §84. But while Nietzsche does draw a distinction between "good" and "bad" aspects of rhythm in the works following *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is not upon Dionysian/Apolline lines. Apolline rhythm is described as a "wave-like rhythm"⁸³ just as is the "wavebeat and rhythm"⁸⁴ of Heraclitean becoming - there is no sense of a metaphysical divide here, in which Dionysian rhythm could be framed as the "good" rhythm of becoming, with Apolline rhythm relegated to the "bad" rhythm of thought. *The Birth of Tragedy* considered the "unified stream of melody and the quite incomparable world of harmony" to be "un-Apolline,"⁸⁵ the province of Dionysus alone - yet in *The Gay Science* melody and harmony are no longer privileged phenomena in which "the 'Will' reveals itself directly."⁸⁶ Melody is instead a tranquiliser, the very human expression of the desire to appease the gods, and harmony the narcotic state of the tranquilised - both driven and controlled by the seductive force of rhythm. Finally, we can recall the account of the role of the *ictus* in the degeneration of ancient rhythm that we saw in chapter two, in which we found that the *ictus* was not opposed to, but rather emerged from the transformative and excessive nature of rhythm itself. In *The Gay Science* we find that we need to evaluate the rhythm of thought not as Dionysian or Apolline, but based upon its relationship to time. It is impossible to entirely separate the sense of rhythm as artistic creation from rhythm as control, because both are expressions of the will to power - the rounding off that makes perfect and transforms via art is also the rounding off that closes down, that cuts off a future that we cannot as yet recognise.

83 BT §2

84 PTAG §5

85 BT §2

86 DWV §1

This revelation of the shortcomings of rhythm is reflected in a more cautious stance towards art towards the end of book two following GS §84. Nietzsche's previous glorification of the artist-lover is now more tempered - the artist is not necessarily the creator of the most beautiful truth, but often a mere follower of fashion, reflecting the judgments of "the rich and idle,"⁸⁷ producing a feeling that, while powerful, is an "intoxication."⁸⁸ The force of art can be that of a habit-forming narcotic that draws weaker rhythms into itself, as "now one uses artworks to lure poor, exhausted, and sick human beings to the side of humanity's road of suffering for a short lascivious moment; one offers them a little intoxication and madness."⁸⁹

Nietzsche's theories about the way our thought comports itself towards the future indicate the precise aspects of the rhythmic and artistic anthropomorphisms of which we should beware. The seductive, addictive tendencies of rhythm close down the openness to the future that the creation of brief habits requires. In the early notes on rhythm Nietzsche highlights its potentially homogenising effect, in which minor rhythms are drawn into the orbit of and eventually subsumed into the wavelength of a major rhythm. We now discover in the *The Gay Science* that it is a specific relationship with time that seeks to control the future that produces this dangerous side of rhythm, turning the identities produced by rhythmical thought into greedy, imperial black holes that consume all meaning. It is this aspect of our rhythmic thought that is complicit in our descent into nihilism, that stifles our attempt to think becoming, and if we wish to overcome nihilism, we must leave it behind.

We are faced here with a question of the legitimacy of creation and style. Nietzsche on the one hand claims that our thought should revel in its creativity rather than the adequacy of its representational skills. But equally, there must be something that grounds or legitimates

87 GS §85

88 GS §86

89 GS §89. Elsewhere in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche will identify Wagner as one such artist whose Schopenhauerian brand of romanticism offers the "intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness" that appeals to "those who suffer from an *impoverishment of life*" (GS §370). Cohen (2008) argues that Nietzsche's criticisms of Wagner's music are concerned with the way Wagner's use of rhythm disturbs the listener, claiming that "In the case of endless melody, Nietzsche does not explore it harmonically ... but rather turns the conversation to rhythm. In other words, even if the musicologists and Wagner himself disagree, Nietzsche makes endless melody be about rhythm, and thus by the same token about time."

our creations within becoming. We cannot sustain thoughts that we consider to be actively *opposed* to becoming, if we are to have the faith in our creations that we need if we are to avoid nihilism. Nietzsche's genealogy of anthropomorphic rhythmic thought in GS §84 taken with GS §109 precludes any such faith in the way we currently think becoming. The anthropomorphised cosmos that Nietzsche describes has become less useful and more dangerous to us, not because we have made it up, but because we have made it up *badly*, as nothing more than a pale copy of ourselves. As such, the hollow universe it creates is in no way equal to the task of supporting the meaning we need to invest in it. We know that it is a fiction, but also sense that it is *bad* fiction, and therefore cannot perform the artistic, playful suspension of disbelief that is necessary to function with fictional identities. Listening to and recognising a rhythm is a learned behaviour, that we become more proficient in the more we do it as it reshapes our ways of thinking and hearing to better attune to it. It is this addictive, pattern-forming aspect of rhythm that seems to bind the future and turn it into a repetition of the past. Nietzsche's main concern is to break this cycle. This is why he introduces the thought of eternal return - to disrupt the moribund tick-tock of the modern rhythm of thought, and make it possible to draw new rhythms from the subrhythmic rumbling of becoming instead.

Eternal return as a new disruptive rhythm

Nietzsche is trying to make possible a new way of thinking, one that avoids the nihilistic elements into which our current thought has fallen. This needs in some sense to emerge from our existing way of thinking, otherwise we would not be able to think it - we would not be able to recognise it as a thought (or in rhythmical terms, hear it as a rhythm). But at the same time Nietzsche also needs to break the cycle of our current nihilistic way of thinking. The problem he is struggling with is therefore how to emerge from, while also disrupting, our existing patterns of thought. In his early notes, Nietzsche noted the transformative and modulating character intrinsic to all rhythm, deriving from the irrational beat at the heart of

even the most apparently regular rhythmic repetition.⁹⁰ It is this rhythmic capacity for transformation that he draws upon with eternal return.

In book four of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche focuses on the nature of repetition and our relationship with the past. In GS §335 he stresses that we can only ever have the appearance of sameness, and that every act is unique:

...there neither are nor can be actions that are all the same; that every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable way, and that this will be equally true of every future act; that all prescriptions of action (even the most inward and subtle rules of all moralities so far) relate only to their rough exterior; that these prescriptions may yield an appearance of sameness, *but only just an appearance*;⁹¹

As we have seen, it is the rhythmic practice of rounding off that produces this "appearance of sameness." But it is just an appearance. Rhythm is built of difference, it must be multiple if it is to be rhythmic. If we fail to recognise the fictional nature of our rhythmically created identities, by failing to recognise that it is the rhythmic process of our thought that smooths the difference out of becoming, then we shall "drag the past a few steps further through time," exhibiting the controlling relationship with the future that we find described in GS §84. Nietzsche wants instead to encourage a transformational move into the future:

We, however, want to become who we are - human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves! To that end we must become the best students and discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world...⁹²

To become who we are we need first to discover "everything that is lawful and necessary." We discussed in chapter one how *amor fati*, learning to love that which is necessary, is the

90 As Sauvanet notes, while rhythm is an ordering of time, this ordering is repeatedly characterised in terms of a re-ordering, "reorganisation, new determination (*einteilt, neu gegliedert, einem neuen Gesetz, bestimmt werden* ...). There is an order, but this order can change, from one sphere to another, from the biological to the aesthetic, from the outside to the inside. There is an order, but it is a modifiable order." ("*C'est pourquoi le texte insiste autant sur les notions d'ordonnancement, de réorganisation, de nouvelle détermination (einteilt, neu gegliedert, einem neuen Gesetz, bestimmt werden...).* Il y a un ordre, mais cet ordre peut changer, d'une sphère à l'autre, du biologique à l'esthétique, de l'extérieur vers l'intérieur. Il y a un ordre, mais c'est un ordre modifiable..." (Sauvanet 2001)

91 GS §335

92 *ibid.*

key to how we make things beautiful. It would seem to make sense that before we can love what is necessary, we must first learn to recognise or discover it.⁹³ What is necessary, in thought as in becoming, is the constitutional moment of difference that makes possible the rhythmic operation of making perfect. Only once we have recognised the necessity of this difference can we turn ourselves to the task of willfully giving ourselves laws and creating ourselves, as an artistic practice.

GS §339 seems to offer the chance of escaping the patterns of the past. The task of seeing the beautiful, which will let us create ourselves and become who we are, is not as Nietzsche recognises here purely driven by past knowledge, by a “good will”⁹⁴ that is so often a corrupted form of something much more sinister. It also “requires the rarest of lucky accidents.”⁹⁵ To make things beautiful, to become who we are, we must learn to recognise and to love that which is necessary. This is the lucky accident, the alignment of all the aspects that come into play. And the beauty, the form or identity we create by so doing, is anything but persistent:

But what does unveil itself for us *unveils itself for us only once!* The Greeks, to be sure, prayed: ‘Everything beautiful twice and thrice!’ Indeed, they had good reason to summon the gods, for ungodly reality gives us the beautiful either never or only once! I mean to say that the world is brimming with beautiful things but nevertheless poor, very poor in beautiful moments and in the unveilings of those things.⁹⁶

There must be a break in the pattern - a moment in which chaos and chance, in which becoming, enters the world and breaks through our pre-existing causal forms. The ancient power of rhythm attempted to secure the return of particular events - but as Nietzsche points out, the illusion of this possibility is dispelled in an ungodly reality, upon which the seduction of rhythm has no effect, “for ungodly reality gives us the beautiful either never or

93 Domino (2012) writes that “to apply *amor fati* requires a means of differentiating the necessary from the accidental. If we cannot figure this out, either *amor fati* is ultimately incoherent or [as Domino will indeed go on to argue] it can’t be rendered from eternal recurrence.” Domino interprets this as a call to love our actual, necessary life, rather than any idealised version of it. If however we take GS §109 into account, I argue that we must cease to think of necessity and accident as opposed in the manner that Domino suggests, and that instead Nietzsche is attempting to invoke a love of *becoming* as necessary.

94 GS §339

95 *ibid.*

96 *ibid.*

only once.” Rhythm cannot affect the results of chance. What rhythm can do, however, is help us understand *what* repeats. Rather than events, rather than the particular beat, it is the division or separation that is repeated. In GS §277 Nietzsche writes that “no matter how much we have confronted the beautiful chaos of existence and denied it all providential reason and goodness, we still have to pass our hardest test” of resisting the urge to interpret serendipitous events as evidence of divine guidance, and instead “be content with the assumption that our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events has now reached its apex.”⁹⁷ Rather than an eternal divine agent of becoming, becoming itself produces the accidents that are necessary to give us the beautiful, when “occasionally chance guides our hand, and the wisest providence could not invent music more beautiful than what our foolish hand then produces.”⁹⁸

It is at this point Nietzsche places a hypothetical situation before us. A demon appears, who flatly contradicts Nietzsche's assertion in GS §339 and says that there is repetition. The Greeks desired every beauty return to us two or three times, but Nietzsche told us this was impossible in the wake of the death of God, when we have realised on some level our own role in the production of the forms around us. But now the demon says that it *is* possible to have repetition - that repetition is more than possible, it is mandatory. What, then, are we repeating, if it is not the beautiful product of chance? When we thought we could importune the gods of the future, when we thought that we could rhythmically entreat and persuade them to fall into step with us and repeat the rhythm of the present into the future, we were persuading them to repeat an optimal action of our choosing - we were selecting the beautiful form or moment, the future that should return. The reality presented by the demon is not like this. *Everything* will repeat, he says, and not just once or twice, but forever - again and again, eternally.

How, asks Nietzsche, do we feel about this prospect? The answers he suggests are dependent on which temporal state grounds our thought. The first state is as we are *now* - in the “loneliest loneliness” of the nihilism of late modernity, where we stand alone, without the omnipresent companionship of eternal God or truth. In this first state, that of our

97 GS §277

98 *ibid.* We shall go on to explore the importance of chance in Deleuze's reading of eternal return in the final chapter.

present, Nietzsche says that this thought “would transform and possibly crush you.” On the face of it, the second possibility is predicated not upon the present, but upon the past - that we may have experienced moments that we loved, moments that made it all worthwhile, those rare moments that produced the beautiful forms for which the Greeks prayed, rhythmically desired, to be repeated - moments which were so good, that the return of everything else would be worth it, just to have these again. Nietzsche has said that this kind of return is impossible without a god. If the second response to eternal return is affirming the return of events in time, then this is what the demon becomes. The affirmative response to eternal return that we explored in the first chapter therefore requires not only an affirmation of the re-inscription of gods within the world, but that on the basis of their presence, we affirm the whole of time, past, present, and future, *on the basis of a single moment in the past*.

To create from the demon a new god, and to tie our affirmation of time to one single point in the past - this seems to go against everything Nietzsche has so far argued in *The Gay Science* about the need to reopen ourselves to a de-deified universe, and to resist the nihilistic practice of treating a single moment as representative of an entire process. If we truly desire to be transformed, then when the demon comes to us and asks for our response to eternal return, we should presumably choose not the path of affirmation based on the past, but the first option, allowing this thought to transform us, even if this also results in it crushing out the vestiges of human thinking. But this is not the answer that Nietzsche seems to be encourage. There must, therefore, be something other to this affirmation of the moment than the desire for the return of beautiful events.

At this point, the original edition of *The Gay Science* performs its own transformation into the very different rhythm of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche has set up the rhythmic problem of thought over the course of *The Gay Science*, showing how we are still too beholden to the rhythmic thought patterns that work against transformation, in which our “creation” of the world is no more than a recreation on the basis of ourselves, and the future on the basis of the past. In order to break this pattern, Nietzsche has to find a new way for us to shape the continuum of becoming into new, and more temporary, beautiful forms. This is precisely what Nietzsche attempts to do when he develops the second option, in which we affirm the thought of eternal return on the basis of the moment. This is the second response to the demon that Nietzsche presents: the greatest weight,

the thought of eternal return, that summons Zarathustra. We shall go on to see in chapter four how Zarathustra's experience of the moment in eternal return stages an interruption into our existing rhythm of thought by reconfiguring our relationship to temporality.

4. Recapitulation: Eternal return as the confrontation of time in the moment

We first examined the thought of eternal return in chapter one, where we explored it as the culmination of Nietzsche's investigation into thought as love, in which Nietzsche presents us with the descent of our thought into nihilism, and names *amor fati* as the new kind of loving relationship with the world that he would like to put in its place. The thought of eternal return is how he proposes to produce this new relationship with the world, by reconfiguring our current nihilistic patterns of thinking. Using eternal return as a test of affirmation, however, will not produce this change if we have not understood the initial creative process that thought enacts upon becoming, as we saw when we explored the criticisms of the anthropological reading of eternal return. Our exploration of the rhythmic nature of thought over the subsequent two chapters helped us to understand in more detail the task that faces Nietzsche, and which aspects of thought he wants to adjust with eternal return. The problem with our current way of thinking is not just our inability to affirm the identities we create, but how we understand our relationship with becoming, specifically the rhythmic temporal framework that structures our thought.

We see the problems within this relationship with becoming in Nietzsche's account of the rhythmic nature of thought in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche recognises that the rhythmic structure of our thought has artistic and transformative possibilities, but also that it is prone to mobilising these in a retrogressive way, which prevents us from thinking the future as anything other than a repetition of the past. This aspect of rhythm, which binds us to the past, seems at odds with the other sense of rhythm as flow or continuity, which we find in Nietzsche's characterisation of becoming. But these apparently contradictory aspects of rhythm, as both flow and the binding of this flow into discrete points, do not correlate with the positive and negative features that Nietzsche identifies. The impulse to flow beyond any bounds motivates both the rhythm of becoming and the creative process of transformation in art. But at the same time, the impenetrability of the flow of becoming seems to offer no prospect of interruption in which the creative transformation of thought can take place, and the artistic process of shaping or rounding off becomes a process of gatekeeping or closing down. In both these aspects of rhythm as flow and form, therefore, there is the problem of how to navigate our relationship with becoming in a way that

provides a space for the creativity of thought, an act of creation that nihilism understands as separate from becoming.

In order to address this we need a new relationship with time, one which offers the prospect of transforming our way of thinking out of its current nihilistic thought patterns. We shall turn to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche uses eternal return to provoke a different relationship with time. We shall examine interpretations of eternal return that attempt to read it "literally" as a cosmology that seeks to realign us with the workings of time and the universe. On the failure of this cosmological approach, we shall instead explore eternal return as a thought that develops a more radical reconfiguration of time as "momentary," which aims to disrupt the nihilistic aspects of rhythmic thought that Nietzsche indicated in *The Gay Science*, before highlighting the tensions that I argue emerge through Nietzsche's presentation of Zarathustra's relationship with time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Zarathustra and the gateway Moment

Immediately after Nietzsche introduces the thought of eternal return in GS §341, the "tragedy begins"¹ and we meet the figure of Zarathustra, as he decides to descend from the mountains where he has spent the past ten years in solitude, in order to reconnect with humanity once again and communicate his ideas to the people below. This dramatic entrance, as Nietzsche later tells us, comes at the highest point of nihilism at which the distinction between the "real" world of eternity and the "apparent" world of forms disintegrates, and both are destroyed:

(Noon; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; pinnacle of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)²

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we find out what happens at the end of the longest error, as Zarathustra strides around a biblical landscape of dancing kings, talking animals, and other strange characters, to whom he presents his (often opaque) insights. One of these, indeed "Zarathustra's fundamental thought"³ if we are to believe Nietzsche himself, is the

1 "Incipit tragoedia" (GS §342)

2 TI 'How the "true world" finally became a fable'

3 EH III 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody' §1

thought of eternal return. In the figure of Zarathustra, we might therefore expect Nietzsche to answer the question raised by the demon in GS §341 and indicate what he thinks our response to eternal return should be.

For the first two books, however, Zarathustra makes no mention of eternal return. In 'Zarathustra's Prologue,' Zarathustra emerges from his solitary mountain to speak in a village square, and his first words are "*I teach you the overman*"⁴ - a figure who has, in a shadowy and as yet undefined fashion, become something other than human. Zarathustra does not directly say who or what the overman is, but instead uses this new idea to encourage his audience to reconsider what it is to be human. The "pinnacle of humanity"⁵ that we find in modernity should not be viewed as the goal of all previous history, and Zarathustra instead asks the people in the square to consider that, just as "all creatures so far created something beyond themselves,"⁶ the human can (and should) in its turn develop into something else. Humanity is not the end point, but instead "something that must be overcome,"⁷ a transitional stage that acts as "a rope fastened between animal and overman,"⁸ and we should value humanity precisely for these transformative qualities rather than as something that will eternally endure.

The overman is the one who has managed to move beyond the "longest error"⁹ of nihilistic thought that characterises human thinking. But as such, the overman is a problematic figure to understand from within our still all-too-human thought, one who seems on the face of it to check many of the boxes of nihilism - defined by that which they are not (*inhuman*), teleological (a goal to which the human must progress), and transcendent (providing a meaning to humanity from beyond the human). Zarathustra however is at pains to stress that the overman should *not* be understood as anything transcendent in the traditional nihilistic sense of a world beyond.¹⁰ The meaning that the overman provides is

4 TSZ I 'Zarathustra's Prologue' §3

5 TI 'How the "true world" finally became a fable'

6 TSZ I 'Zarathustra's Prologue' §3

7 *ibid.*

8 TSZ I 'Zarathustra's Prologue' §4

9 TI 'How the "true world" finally became a fable'

10 Stambaugh defines this potentially transcendent aspect of the overman as follows: "...there is nothing beyond man in the sense that there is no God of substance or world beyond him.

Accordingly, for Nietzsche, the word *transcendence* cannot have its traditional meaning of naming

not a godly ascent into something that transcends the earth, but instead “the meaning of the earth,” and Zarathustra implores his listeners to “*remain faithful to the earth* and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes!”¹¹ The audience in the marketplace, unfortunately, do not appreciate or understand his message. They do not want to be transformed beyond the human, but instead crave the unimaginative and self-satisfied mediocrity of the last human, a figure whom Nietzsche despises as one who has lost even the ability to see beyond himself. Disappointed, Zarathustra retreats from this initial skirmish, carrying the body of a literal “over-man,” a fallen tightrope walker, who lost his struggle with gravity in a graphically catastrophic fashion. It seems that those in the market place are not ready to hear about the overman, and Zarathustra sets off in search of more sympathetic listeners, intending to show them “all the steps to the overman.”¹² The thought of eternal return is the most crucial of these steps.

Zarathustra's first attempt to convey the thought of eternal return comes in book three, and takes the form of what Zarathustra describes as a “riddle” which is “the vision of the loneliest one,” that Zarathustra tells to the fellow travellers on a ship, addressing it beyond them to the “bold searchers, researchers, and whoever put to terrible seas with cunning sails.”¹³ The presentation of eternal return in *The Gay Science* was posed in the form of a hypothetical question. Here, on the other hand, it is (as Zarathustra promises) a riddle - a Lynchian (or, possibly better, Jodorowskian) dream-sequence in which mountains morph into childhood nightmares. In his vision, Zarathustra is struggling up a mountain, carrying the paralysing “Spirit of Gravity” - a dwarf, who jumps down from his bearer’s back when

some kind of being but, rather, acquires the meaning of *what man does*; or, rather, has never yet done but *could do*. Nietzsche states repeatedly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: ‘Man is something that has to be surpassed.’ I believe Nietzsche is striving for a new meaning of transcendence. This new meaning is the shift from thinking transcendence as something beyond man to thinking it as man’s activity in transcending his human, all too human condition.” (Stambaugh 1994:4-5) Stambaugh understands this kind of transcendence as self-overcoming, which does not go *beyond* the human, but is rather the most proper human activity.

11 TSZ I ‘Zarathustra’s Prologue’ §3

12 TSZ I ‘Zarathustra’s Prologue’ §10

13 TSZ III ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’ §1. The “loneliest one” is Zarathustra, who had been struggling in the preceeding aphorism with the issue of love and selection, and the “bold searchers, researchers” who have “put to terrible seas” are the readers of *The Gay Science* who have “forsaken the land and gone to sea” (GS §124), attempting to navigate the Heraclitean sea of becoming without the nihilistic charts and identities that formerly (mis)guided us.

Zarathustra threatens to tell him an “abysmal thought” which he thinks that the dwarf “could not bear!”¹⁴ Here it is Zarathustra who takes the role of the demon who presents the thought of eternal return in GS §341, and the dwarf (rather than the reader, or indeed Zarathustra’s audience) who is challenged to listen and respond. Zarathustra’s attempt to explain eternal return involves a vision of a gateway:

“See this gateway, dwarf!” I continued. “It has two faces. Two paths come together here; no one has yet walked them to the end.
This long lane back: it lasts an eternity. And that long lane outward – that is another eternity.
They contradict each other, these paths; they blatantly offend each other – and here at this gateway is where they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed at the top: ‘Moment.’
But whoever were to walk one of them further – and ever further and ever on: do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?” –¹⁵

The idea of eternal return is not as yet mentioned, but only suggested, with Zarathustra’s question as to how these two contradictory eternities of the past and the future can co-exist. It is the dwarf’s response that first raises (an) idea of eternal return, when he treats Zarathustra’s “abysmal thought” as old news, contemptuously responding, as if it were so obvious as to be mundane, that “all truth is crooked, time itself is a circle.”¹⁶

The dwarf’s dismissive attitude enrages Zarathustra - either this interpretation of the riddle is not what Zarathustra meant, or the dwarf has failed to appreciate what it is about this thought that should be so cataclysmic. Where *The Gay Science* provides two alternatives of what might happen if we think eternal return properly (despair or rapture), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* offers us a counter-example of a character thinking it inadequately. The response of the dwarf is clearly not the effect that Zarathustra (or, presumably, Nietzsche) is after, but it is not immediately obvious why this is the case, only that the dwarf has apparently made it “too easy” on himself, merely going through the motions rather than registering the “heaviest weight” of the thought. If we think it properly, if we put our backs into it, the implication is that eternal return will change us, rather than leaving us

14 TSZ III On the Vision and the Riddle §2. Zarathustra refers again to his “abysmal thought” in TSZ III ‘On Unwilling Bliss’ and TSZ III ‘The Convalescent’ §2.

15 ibid.

16 ibid.

complacently indifferent. So Zarathustra tries again to clarify the significance of the moment, and the eternal character of the paths that spring from it:

From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane stretches *backward*: behind us lies an eternity.
Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?
And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already – have been here?
And are not all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come? Therefore – itself as well?
For, whatever *can* run, even in this long lane *outward* – *must* run it once more!”¹⁷

The key aspect that Zarathustra wishes to stress is not, as the dwarf suggested, that “time is a circle.” The nature of time in the abstract is not what horrifies Zarathustra. What shocks him are the *consequences* of what he suggests about the nature of time, which he thinks necessitates the repetition of everything. In particular, it is the repetition of the present moment that is the horrific part - it is this that he continually points out to the dwarf, forcing him to confront it again and again in the hope that he might come to understand it in the same way as Zarathustra himself:

And this slow spider that creeps in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things – must not all of us have been here before?
– And return and run in that other lane, outward, before us, in this long, eerie lane – must we not return eternally? –¹⁸

The talk of the spider, and the moonlight, and the moment, links Zarathustra’s vision with the demon’s presentation of eternal return in *The Gay Science*, with Zarathustra taking on the demon’s role as the teacher of eternal return. Zarathustra however goes further than the demon, as his image of the gateway which separates the two eternities of past and future suggests a possible rationale for why we should believe that everything eternally returns. The demon, in his role as mythical being, was quite in character to just pronounce the sentence of eternal return without offering any proof. But Zarathustra offers some thoughts to support this idea, suggesting that if the past is truly an eternity, then everything that can happen, must already have happened - and yet, things *keep on* happening, so it must be the case that they are happening *again*. Zarathustra also seems more personally

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

affected by the idea of eternal return than his demonic counterpart. The demon of GS §341 asserted that he himself was one of the things caught up in eternal return, and would return eternally, but didn't seem in any way concerned by this - making a cameo appearance within a single aphorism, the demon's role was primarily that of a messenger, and one whose own fate within eternal return was offered merely as an afterthought. Zarathustra, on the other hand, is the central character of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, whose many struggles and disappointments we have followed through the preceding hundred-odd pages. Zarathustra tells us his vision of eternal return from the point of view of a fellow sufferer - if the dwarf is a speck of dust who will eternally return, then so too is Zarathustra himself. As such, Zarathustra bears the weight of both delivering the news of eternal return, but also of acting as the vicarious expression of our own likely reaction.

It seems at first as if the thought of eternal return might indeed crush Zarathustra - his voice gradually trails off in fear at the point where eternal return is named. But then the scene changes - the gateway disappears, and Zarathustra is mysteriously transported by the sound of a howling dog to another time, possibly a memory from his childhood, in a manner that Zarathustra himself does not understand. The dog is distressed by the sight of a man, a shepherd, who is choking on a snake that has apparently crawled into his mouth while he slept. Zarathustra, realising that the snake has latched its teeth onto the inside of the man's throat, shouts at the man, telling him to bite the snake's head off - that the counterintuitive act of shutting the snake's head, the pain, within him, is the only thing that will kill it and loosen its hold on his throat.

The scene is frenetic, panicked, nightmarish - we, and Zarathustra, are whisked from the desolate windswept mountain, in which men, dwarves, and spiders, may contemplate and argue about the nature of time, to a chaotic noisy confusion in which Zarathustra and the shepherd must act in the moment and make an instantaneous life-or-death decision. And at this point, Zarathustra as the narrator of the vision steps outside it and addresses his audience, asking them to "now guess me this riddle that I saw back then, now interpret me this vision of the loneliest one ... *what* did I see then as a parable? And *who* is it that must some day come?"¹⁹ We are about to find out, as we return from this brief aside, to find the mood of the vision changed once again:

¹⁹ *ibid.*

– Meanwhile the shepherd bit down as my shout advised him; he bit with a good bite! Far away he spat the head of the snake – and he leaped to his feet. – No longer shepherd, no longer human – a transformed, illuminated, *laughing* being!²⁰

At this point, the vision, and the aphorism, ends. Zarathustra has been plunged into the depths of despair by the insight that every moment, including the present, has happened before and will happen again, before being confronted with a cataclysmic scene in which a man is transformed into something “no longer human,” which leaves Zarathustra in a state of longing to once again hear this laughter that is beyond our current human capability. The vision of eternal return has been a painful experience, leaving him full of “riddles and bitterness,”²¹ but whether this bitterness is caused by the thought of the return of every moment, or the loss of the inhuman figure who followed this revelation, we do not know.

The connection of eternal return and the overman becomes explicit at the end of ‘The Vision and the Riddle,’ when the Spirit of Gravity and the gateway with its two eternal paths fade away to reveal the shepherd struggling with the snake. Once the shepherd bites the head off the snake, he becomes a “transformed, illuminated, *laughing* being” who is “no longer human” - he becomes the overman. Zarathustra clearly considers that the “bold searchers” that form his audience may be ready to grasp the possibility of the overman in a way that the listeners in the prologue were not. However, they only attain this level of readiness after they have heard his account of the vision of eternal return. The thought of eternal return leads to, or makes possible, the overman. More than this - if the manner in which we think eternal return is to be considered successful, it must allow us to understand the overman in a manner that is *not* the reactive, teleological, transcendent idea that it seems. This is the effect that eternal return must achieve: to change our thought in such a manner that it is possible for us *to understand our future other than nihilistically*. We said that eternal return is supposed to do something - this is what it is supposed to do, and this is the criteria upon which we can judge its success.

The nervous tension generated by the vision of eternal return fills the remainder of book three of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as Zarathustra struggles to come to terms with his

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.*

"abysmal thought,"²² until finally he addresses it head on, is overcome, and collapses.²³ When he finally recovers, he discusses the confrontation with his animal companions, the eagle and the snake. Zarathustra describes how he despaired at the thought that, in the vision described by eternal return, all human beings will return. What crushed him was not that extreme moments of evil from human history would return along with the good, but the "eternal recurrence of even the smallest,"²⁴ the most mediocre and banal of humanity. This nihilistic thought, that the return of everything means that "all is the same, nothing is worth it," was the monster that Zarathustra says "crawled into my throat and choked me! But I bit off its head and spat it away from me,"²⁵ just like the shepherd in his vision. Unlike the shepherd, though, Zarathustra has not sprung up laughing from this experience. He is happier, but he is also tired, weak, and still shuddering at the memory of the nausea brought on by the eternal return of the smallest man. Zarathustra's animals try to cheer him up with a more joyous version of eternal return, in which "all things themselves approach dancing; they come and reach out their hands and laugh and retreat – and come back. Everything goes, everything comes back; the wheel of being rolls eternally."²⁶ When this fails to work, they remind Zarathustra of his destiny as "*the teacher of the eternal recurrence*"²⁷ and even present him with a script for what they think he should say, that:

22 TSZ III 'On Unwilling Bliss'

23 TSZ III 'The Convalescent'

24 TSZ III 'The Convalescent' §2

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.* This has a similar cast to the Spirit of Gravity's claim that "time is a circle" (TSZ III 'On the Vision and the Riddle' §2), and some commentators take Zarathustra's silence as a kinder, but equally discouraging response as his angry retort to the Spirit of Gravity - see e.g. Nehamas (1980), Lampert (2017). Deleuze concludes that in the formulations of both the dwarf and the animals, eternal return "appears as a truth not yet reached and not yet expressed" (DR 370) because the song they make of eternal return is the "old" song of "the cycle and the whole, universal being. But the complete formula of affirmation is the whole, yes, universal being, yes, but universal being ought to belong to a single becoming, the whole ought to belong to a single moment." (NP 72)

27 Nehamas also thinks he detects Zarathustra's disagreement with his animals, and stresses that "it is *they*, not Zarathustra, that declare that they 'know what you teach'," while Zarathustra "remains silent and does not once acknowledge the view which they attribute to him." (Nehamas 1980). Marsden, on the other hand, implies that the animals speak with Nietzsche's own voice at least sometimes during this passage, at any rate in their insistence to Zarathustra that convalescents should sing or play, rather than speaking (Marsden 2002:119). It is at this point that Zarathustra calls them "foolish rascals and barrel-organs" (TSZ III 'On the Vision and the Riddle' §2), not following the presentation of their version of eternal return. Zarathustra is not ignoring the animals, rather he "did not hear that they were silent" and is "conversing with his soul" (TSZ III 'On the Vision and the Riddle' §2), presumably as a result of at least parts of what they have been saying.

the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs – it will create me again! I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence.

I will return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this snake – *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life:

– I will return to this same and selfsame life, in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest, to once again teach the eternal recurrence of all things –²⁸

Zarathustra, however, does not respond. It is not until many years have passed, at the end of the final book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, that he is able to teach that “joy wants itself, wants eternity, wants recurrence, wants everything eternally the same.”²⁹ Zarathustra now asks the question that Nietzsche posed in *The Gay Science*, whether we have ever “experienced a tremendous moment”³⁰ that we would affirm, and in so doing welcome the return of everything else along with it:

Have you ever said Yes to one joy? Oh my friends, then you also said Yes to *all* pain. All things are enchained, entwined, enamored –

– if you ever wanted one time two times, if you ever said “I like you, happiness!

Whoosh! Moment!” then you wanted *everything* back! ³¹

Zarathustra’s presentation of the relationship between affirmation and eternal return shifts from a riddle to a statement of logical consequences. In *The Gay Science*, the demon told us that everything would return, and Nietzsche asked whether we would affirm one thing *if* this also meant affirming everything else. For Zarathustra, in contrast, it seems that there is no “if” about it - affirming one thing *necessarily* entails affirming everything else.

In *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche discusses the development of this thought with varying degrees of hyperbole, he describes it as the “doctrine of the ‘eternal return,’ ” clarifying that by this he means “the unconditional and infinitely repeated cycle of all things - this is Zarathustra's doctrine.”³² But if it is a “doctrine,” in the sense of a unified set of teachings that we are supposed to accept, it is not presented as such in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche’s use of different voices and styles throughout all of his work confronts the reader with a very different experience to a more traditional philosophical argument or essay. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in particular provides an experience that is more akin to

28 TSZ III ‘The Convalescent’ §2

29 TSZ IV ‘The Sleepwalker Song’ §9

30 GS §341

31 TSZ IV ‘The Sleepwalker Song’ §10

32 EH III ‘The Birth of Tragedy’ §3

reading a novel, in which what the different characters say may not be what the author thinks, but nonetheless combines to present us with the author's view of a possible world. Even after having read what Nietzsche has to say about eternal return, we are therefore still left with the task of working out what precisely the thought of eternal return is.

Nietzsche is explicit about this need for us as readers to do some work, presenting the thought of eternal return as something that specifically demands a response - whether this be from the reader of *The Gay Science* ("What if this happened? What would you do?") or Zarathustra's audience, the "bold ones" on the ship, and any other "searchers" and "researchers" who may be listening ("Now guess me this riddle that I saw back then, now interpret me this vision of the loneliest one!")³³ Whether it is as a hypothetical question, or a riddle, eternal return is presented in a way that does not tell us what it is, but instead asks us to work this out. In chapter one, we explored the attempts to interpret the demon's question in GS §341 as a test of affirmation, but concluded that the anthropological readings of eternal return did not do enough to call into question the existing structure of our thought. As I have argued, Nietzsche understands the structure of thought as rhythmical in nature. Nietzsche's insight that rhythm is both an attempt at individuation, and the form of time, indicates it is the nature of this rhythmical and temporal structure that must be challenged if we are to overcome nihilism. We shall therefore now examine interpretations of eternal return which argue that the affirmation involved in eternal return involves a disruption of our everyday theory of time.

Zarathustra's exploration of the way the gateway "moment" interacts with the competing eternities of past and future explicitly identifies eternal return as an engagement with time. However Nietzsche never develops a formal theory of time,³⁴ so our first task is to uncover Nietzsche's understanding of time and the role it plays in the relationship between thought and becoming. Nietzsche's conception of the role of time is broadly based on that of Kant, via Schopenhauer,³⁵ in the sense that he thinks that time is not something "in itself," but

33 TSZ III On the Vision and the Riddle §2

34 As several commentators who have set themselves the task of constructing such a theory recognise (see for example Stambaugh 1987:10, Moles 1990:223 and Richardson 2009)

35 As Stambaugh argues, Schopenhauer's own understanding of time is modulated from Kant via Hegel. Kant introduces the idea of time as the form that structures sensibility, which Hegel incorporates within his account of the dialectical unfolding of Absolute Spirit *in time*, in which time

something that structures our thought.³⁶ However, Kant takes pains to ensure some objectivity to time as a structure, drawing on causality, which he views as a category of the understanding, in order to "make the empirical cognition of temporal relations (universally) valid for all time, thus objectively valid."³⁷ Nietzsche, as we have seen, shows that causality is a product of the separation of doer from deed that inheres within our own thought. Causality, for Nietzsche, has no place in the undivided flow of becoming, and as such it cannot provide any guarantee of objective and universal validity.³⁸ The fictional, rather than categorical, nature of causality opens up the possibility that not only is there no time "in itself," but that the way time structures our thought may also vary. This, as we saw in chapter two, is what Nietzsche detects when he examines the differences between the ancient and modern senses of rhythm, and the correspondingly different senses of time that these rhythmic senses promote. Earlier in his career, Nietzsche conceived this change as a degredation, in which our sense of time becomes less "pure" with the increased prominence of the *ictus*. But as we saw in chapter three, when Nietzsche takes up the question of rhythm again in *The Gay Science*, it is brought to bear on a conception of becoming that is very different to his earlier Schopenhauerian metaphysics. The difference between ancient and modern temporal structures can no longer be judged in terms of adequation to a "pure" sense of time, but must instead be evaluated on the basis of its transformative potential for thought, and the quality of the structure it provides. The relationship to the future that Nietzsche examines in GS 84 was revealed as fundamentally unsuited to this task, seeking to reproduce rather than to create. At the end of book four of

structures the dialectical process of sublation of *Aufhebung* via "the negation of the negation" (Stambaugh 1987:13). It is this that suggests to Schopenhauer "the temporal character of the abstraction of consumption" (Stambaugh 1987:13) in which he conceives time as that which continually destroys (see also Stambaugh 1988:64ff).

36 As Small puts it, "for Nietzsche, becoming is a fact but time is an interpretation" in which "the conceptual structures of temporality - that is, the categories of earlier and later, and of past, present and future" are not "to be taken simply as descriptions of reality, or as generalizations from perception and observation. Rather, they have the properties of what Nietzsche calls 'perspectives.'" (Small 2010:2)

37 Kant 1998:A211

38 Nietzsche does provide an account of how our sense of objective time arises, which as Moles shows comes about through a pragmatic effect of the herd mentality in which "arbitrary stipulations" such as our sense of time are gradually shaped into a common sense of time through "a constant and deliberate effort on the part of the dominant members of the group to eliminate those individuals whose perception of the world was different," thereby accomplishing a "uniform mode of perception, on which the vast majority could agree" (Moles 1990:230)

The Gay Science Nietzsche introduces the thought of eternal return as that which may be able to change our temporal structure, and in so doing change our thought as well. This is what we shall go on to explore in the remainder of this chapter.

The cosmological reading of eternal return as cyclical time

Having realised that we must understand eternal return as a revised theory of time, we can now return to the question of interpretation. The "cosmological" reading has in some ways the most apparently straightforward way of reading eternal return, which is to take what the various characters say about the structure of time at face value. On this reading, Nietzsche's goal is to realign humanity with a de-deified world by presenting us with a cosmology that shows us how time "really" works, as something that forbids any lingering nihilistic tendencies towards the teleology or persistent identities which, as we have seen, have no place in becoming. When the demon in *The Gay Science* tells us that everything will take place again just as it already has - not once, but "innumerable times again"³⁹ - it is, on this reading, also Nietzsche who tells us this. When Zarathustra asks "must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened?"⁴⁰ it is Nietzsche, too, who suggests this idea to us. Nietzsche after all refers to not just Zarathustra, but also himself as "I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence,"⁴¹ and if he is teaching the idea of eternal return anywhere, presumably it is here.

If we understand eternal return as a cosmology, rather than as a thought experiment, it does indeed disrupt our everyday experience of time as a unidirectional line in which one moment follows another. In this everyday understanding, time is thought as a type of container, full of the events or things that happen "in" time. This impression of time as a unidirectional line brings with it two assumptions. Firstly, the line or flow of time cannot be broken - one moment will always succeed the previous one. Our inability to stop or pause time is so ingrained that such a thing is unimaginable - the way that time structures our experience and thought means that without time, that experience disappears. Science fiction tropes that involve the stoppage of time only ever stop time for other people - the protagonists and the viewer or reader continue to experience their own time, in which they

39 GS §341

40 TSZ III On the Vision and the Riddle §2

41 TI 'What I Owe the Ancients' §5

can wander through an interrupted world of birds frozen mid-flight and men arrested mid-fall (gravity also takes a rest with time). We may be able to imagine (and, when approaching a deadline, fervently desire) the temporary cessation of time, but only for other people, while we are left to finish our essay or loot the mall in (literally) our own time. The halt of time as it applies to *us*, on the other hand, means a halt in our own thinking, after which we blink back on again like a clock after a power cut, and must use the cues from our surroundings and our own body to determine the passage of the intervening hours. Everything we experience, we do so in time, and to imagine it stopping in such a way that we are present to experience it is inconceivable.

Secondly, each distinct point in time is unrepeatable - once a moment has flowed passed, it stays in the past. This notion of the uniqueness of each moment is not as immediately obvious because, viewed retrospectively, events that we experience or are told about within time seem to have a certain similarity - the alarm clock goes off every morning, the start of term comes round again, fashions and political trends recur every few years or even centuries. But the place these repetitions hold in time guarantees their individuality. The 10,000th bowl of cornflakes we pour ourselves in the morning is different to the 10,001st, the flared trousers worn in 1975 are different to the same trousers worn in 1995, or even 2015, because the moments in which they appear are different moments in time, which carry the history of the preceding moments along with them. We can perceive this uniqueness in our experience of the present, which has an entirely different character to the past, irrespective of what happens in it. The action of breathing in and out feels in one sense the same as the breath I took a moment ago - and if I look back in five minutes time and try to distinguish one breath from another, they will indeed all blur into repetitions of the same action. But in the moment in which I experience it, there is no confusion. I do not mistake that which I am doing now, for that which I did a moment before. Even as an old argument starts up, and I think "here we go again," I am not experiencing the same moment as before, but a new instance of the argument, with the weight of all the previous remarks bundled into it.

Our everyday experience of time therefore has these two characteristics: that time is an unintermittable continuum and that each moment is unique and unrepeatable. Zarathustra's description of the past and the future as "two eternities" joined by the gateway of the present moment, strange as it may be, functions as a visual representation

of this everyday understanding of time as an unstoppable linear progression. We cannot imagine anything outside time (we cannot wander off the paths, onto the surrounding rocky terrain of the mountain), and we cannot imagine a state before time began, nor what or how anything might continue to exist if time comes to an end. One moment has always been and always will be followed by another, and so the past and the future do indeed therefore seem to stretch on, eternally leading away from each other in opposite directions.

The everyday experience of time unravels as Zarathustra examines the gateway and tries to communicate its significance to the Spirit of Gravity:

...behind us lies an eternity.

Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever

can happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?

And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment,

dwarf? Must this gateway too not already – have been here?⁴²

If the past is an eternity, an infinite amount of time without limit, then how can there be anything that happens that it does not already contain? There is time for *everything* to happen in eternity, and so, everything that could ever happen must have *already* happened, in the past. We would seem to find ourselves standing at the end of history, at a point in which everything, meaningful or otherwise, has already taken place, if it were not for the future. The future is *also* an eternity, and so is subject to the same logic, stretching on forever, with time for every conceivable event to take place. Everything *has already* happened, but everything is also still *about to* happen.

Everything happens in the past, and everything happens in the future - in other words, everything must repeat. This point is brought out by the contradiction of the “two eternities,” an oddness that Zarathustra stresses to the dwarf. Eternity is a time without limits, a time without end. How, then, can there be two of them? As eternity, each could be supposed to be unchallenged in the domain of time - but instead they “come together” and “blatantly offend each other”⁴³ in the present. The two paths meet in the gateway as rivals, each blocked by the other in their attempt to encroach on the other’s territory and claim it

42 TSZ III On the Vision and the Riddle §2

43 *ibid.*

as their natural right. But although the separation of the gateway makes the paths of the past and future appear completely distinct and to “contradict” each other, Zarathustra seems to suggest that this is ultimately an illusion - that if you were to set off walking along the path of the future (as we, living our lives in time, are indeed doing) you would, eventually, find yourself walking along the path of the past and approaching the present moment again. If the past must always contain everything, and the future must always contain everything, the only way to reconcile this is if they are, in fact, the same thing, the same path.

According to the cosmological reading of eternal return, this is Nietzsche’s philosophy of time, his response to the problem of the two eternities, and the solution to the “contradiction” of the moment. The only way the past and future can *both* be an eternity, can *both* contain every moment, is if they loop back on themselves, becoming part of the same eternal cycle. The unstoppable nature of time, which seems to be leading the future ever further from the past, ultimately makes this distance impossible. Nietzsche therefore seems to be making the point that the two aspects of our everyday understanding of time contradict each other. If time is an eternity without end, then there must be repetition within this. We cannot have it both ways - time cannot be both unstoppable and unrepeatable. In this understanding of eternal return as a cosmology, we can only have eternity if we abandon the fiction that each moment is unique.

This is, admittedly, a lot to extract from Zarathustra’s poetic vision of the gateway on the mountain, and in any case only indicates the apparent impossibility of the everyday view of time as a linear progression. It may (if we go along with Zarathustra’s argument) be logically incoherent to say that time is both unstoppable and unrepeatable, but all this does is tell us that our everyday understanding of time is inconsistent, which (given the problems with our everyday understanding of pretty much everything else) doesn’t come as a massive shock. Why should we assume that eternity and the unstoppable nature of time are worth holding onto, if the unique nature of every moment is not? Generally the cosmological reading claims to find support for this interpretation of Zarathustra’s argument from a number of “proofs” of eternal return in the unpublished notes.⁴⁴ In these,

44 With the exception of Loeb, who attempts to draw the cosmological reading primarily from the published material, arguing that Zarathustra’s dialogue with the Spirit of Gravity forms a “dialectical

Nietzsche sets out the consequences of a mechanistic understanding of the universe. These focus on the contradiction between infinite time, and the finite amount of force that there is to produce events within this time, echoing Zarathustra's suggestion that, given an eternal stretch of time, we would run out of things to happen. In these notes, Nietzsche sets out two initial presuppositions: that time is infinite, but that the possible combinations of states of energy is finite.⁴⁵ Therefore - these combinations must repeat. There is no way for time to continue on its unstoppable progress, with its insatiable demand for moments to fill it, unless these moments are recycled, repackaged, and the old replayed as new.

Taken as a viable model of time in this cosmological form, however, eternal return has not been very convincing.⁴⁶ Most cosmological readings do not attempt to defend it as such. They try instead to show how this understanding of eternal return functions within the rest of Nietzsche's thought as a counter to nihilism, focusing on the implications a cosmological eternal return would have for our thought if it were true. If we accept that time truly does behave in the cyclical manner described by eternal return as a cosmology, then this would indeed have radical consequences for the way we understand our identity, because it would dispel the notion that we can find any meaning outside ourselves, in either an origin or an end goal. We could no longer privilege a conservative approach because it more closely reflects the "proper" way of doing things, or a progressive approach that sees us

and deductive proof of eternal recurrence that assumes relational time and causal entanglement and that closely resembles the proofs Nietzsche sketched in his notes" (Loeb, 2013). Given the force with which Nietzsche warns us against attributing either causality or cyclical patterns to the nature of becoming, however, this is hard to accept, as we shall go on to explore in a moment.

45 See Krueger (1978) for a summary of the unpublished passages that constitute Nietzsche's "proof" of eternal return as a cosmological doctrine. Both Krueger (1978) and Oger (1997) point out that often within the same fragment, Nietzsche questions the cosmological interpretation that the note has been taken to support.

46 See Simmel (1986) and Danto (2005) for refutations of Nietzsche's "proof" of eternal return, which show that the proofs make certain unsustainable presuppositions. Even with commentators such as Loeb (2013) who attempt to defend eternal return as a cosmology, the bulk of their efforts are directed towards showing whether *Nietzsche* could have taken it seriously given the scientific knowledge of his day, rather than attempting to convince a modern-day reader that they should do so. Widder however argues that the failure of the unpublished proofs does not signal the failure of eternal return within a mechanistic worldview, but rather Nietzsche's demonstration of the failure of mechanism itself (Widder 2008:7), and that mechanism alone is unable to explain the action of force without the presence of the differential principle of the will to power (*WTP* §619 (1885)). In the next section we will explore a different theory of time that incorporates the emergence of forces from the will to power.

moving ever-closer to a future ideal. Neither future nor past exist in this sense, if we accept the cosmological account of time continually circling back on itself - sure, there are events that are still to come, but they are the same as the events that have already happened. Time in this cyclical eternal return is not a straight line that has been joined together, so there is no initial link that we can mark as it goes past - there is no start to it, and no end, for each link is, and has always been, determined by the link before, just as much as it determines the link that follows.⁴⁷

Equally bound up with accepting this cosmological version of eternal return is the need to reassess the value we place on the perdurance of identity. Not only would I no longer have the crutch of valuing something for the wealth of history behind it, or for the promise of something else to which it might lead - I would also have to accept the ephemeral nature of anything I might value. If I, or indeed anyone else, were to become capable of affirming life for itself, this transformation would come with the knowledge that it is a fleeting transformation. Part and parcel of affirming things for themselves, as Nietzsche insists, is affirming "the values of the briefest and most transient, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent *vita*,"⁴⁸ and the nature of a cosmological eternal return would seem to prevent any other kind of affirmation, through the knowledge that any transformation into a new way of thinking would be succeeded, in its turn, by a chain of events leading us back to where we are now. Zarathustra indicates the difficulty of an affirmation of transience drawn from this cyclical cosmology. He is particularly horrified by the idea that the last man will also recur eternally, not just because the nature of eternal return is that *everything* will return, every miserable life and wretched torturous death (horrific enough as this is). It is also more particularly that the last man is the height of nihilism that we are currently struggling to overcome. With the cosmological reading, for all the transformative effort that we put in to wresting our thought out of its current self-destructive grind and moving

47 Loeb (2013) makes this point when defending Nietzsche, examining the claim that we can have no memory of previous iterations of eternal return. The argument is that, if we were to have a memory of a previous repetition, this would make the repetition containing the memory different to the one that is remembered. This however assumes an 'original' version of the event, which is then repeated with a memory of the original, which then is in turn possibly repeated with a memory of the memory of the original. Instead, as Loeb says, there is no original point in eternal return. All iterations of the event contain a memory of a previous event - these memories are themselves events, and loop back in a circle just as the events themselves do.

48 *WTP* §577 (Spring-Fall 1887)

beyond this, we would nevertheless at some point be back exactly where we are now. Again. And again. Without any hope of altering this pattern. This is what we must affirm, if we accept the cosmological version of eternal return as an accurate description of time. By accepting the finitude of all that we currently perceive as enduring, we would finally destroy the nihilistic opposition of enduring being to the transience of becoming, thereby bringing our thought into line with the continual flux that is all that is ever, really, eternal.⁴⁹

The cosmological version of eternal return therefore does indeed appear to disrupt two main attributes of nihilistic thought that Nietzsche identified in *The Gay Science*, namely the attribution of meaning due to a cause or goal outside the world, and our bias towards persistent identities, which grow bloated and immobile over time. With a cosmological eternal return, there would be no way to prioritise one moment over another, because there would be no precedence within time. We would be forced to realise the goallessness or meaninglessness of becoming, and finally accept that we are the ones who create this meaning ourselves.⁵⁰ But while it would remove any element of teleology from becoming and (on one level) seem to deny the possibility of any perduring forms, the cosmological reading does not achieve Nietzsche's other important requirements of a new theory of time. It does not allow us to affirm time in its movement of passing from one moment into the next, instead requiring us to stand outside the process. And despite its disruption of the enduring status of identities and dissolution of goals, the theory of time we find in the cosmological reading of eternal return is still guilty of an anthropomorphic mischaracterisation of the nature of becoming and the creation of a new impermeable identity in the inescapable cycle of time.

49 This is why Simmel reads eternal return as "a synthesis of the need for finitude and the need for infinity on the highest metaphysical level" that resolves the ancient dispute between Heraclitus and the Eleatics. With eternal return, being becomes more transient, but at the same time becoming gains a sense of continuity through its infinite return, so that eternal return "has the function of mediating between being and becoming, and in this concept the two poles move toward each other simultaneously." (Simmel 1986:176-7)

50 As Danto puts it, "without a goal, there is no meaning to life. And, by parity, there is no meaning to the universe if it has no end. So man must give it one. The doctrine of Eternal Recurrence entails the meaninglessness of things, and the doctrine of the *Übermensch* is a response to that significance which man is obliged to will." (Danto 2005:193-4)

This is why Nietzsche expressly states that a literal interpretation of time as a cycle of eternally returning events is not the interruption into time that he is seeking. We have seen that Zarathustra berates the dwarf for his suggestion that “all truth is crooked, time itself is a circle,”⁵¹ indicating that even the apparently harsh test of the affirmation of meaninglessness demanded by the cosmological reading would be to “make it too easy on yourself!”⁵² If we return to GS §109⁵³ we see why the literal interpretation of time as cyclical that the cosmological reading offers is underplaying the radical nature of this heaviest thought. In GS §109 we find that among the anthropomorphisms that Nietzsche lists, we should “beware of assuming in general and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighbouring stars.”⁵⁴ The purported benefits of the cosmological reworking of time is that it is supposed to overcome nihilism by prompting the realignment of our thought with becoming. But, as Nietzsche tells us in GS §109, to reimagine time as an eternally repeating cycle is merely to inscribe our anthropomorphic forms more deeply upon this time, even as it seems to distance us ever further from our role in their creation.

To gain the benefits of the disruption of identity and teleology that the cosmological reading claims to offer involves adopting precisely the kind of godlike perspective on the world that we are trying to eradicate from our thought. The cosmological reading asks us to affirm the passage of time from the outside, rather than as one who is caught up within the cycle. If we consider the effects of such an affirmation from within the cycle, then it is hard to see what status this affirmation could have, imagining for a moment that I were to achieve it. My affirmation of eternal return would at that point become, apparently, inevitable. Countless previous and future iterations of “I” would already have thought this about eternal return.⁵⁵ And yet I must choose to think it anyway - to fight to the point of exhaustion, in the face overwhelming odds and almost certain defeat, to drag from my brain an impossible and futural thought which is at the same time a foregone conclusion. From within the cycle of time suggested by the cosmological account, there is no

51 TSZ III 'On the Vision and the Riddle' §2

52 *ibid.*

53 Which Loeb's cosmological reading privileges as not only “one of the most important passages in Nietzsche's corpus” but “his very first published reference to eternal recurrence.” (Loeb 2013)

54 GS §109

55 “...and I and you in the gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things – must not all of us have been here before?” (TSZ III 'On the Vision and the Riddle' §2)

difference between this and how we currently think of our actions - I do not know what has happened in previous repetitions of the cycle,⁵⁶ I do not know whether or not I will be able to transform my thought in such a manner, so I must always strive into the unknown, just as I currently do with any uncertain outcome. But after the event, the knowledge that other me's had already been there, done that... that this was always going to happen... to know this, and not feel cheated of the effort I had put towards this, of the love I had lavished on a project that was in actuality a duplication of eternally already-existing work - in order to affirm this, I would have to adopt the perspective of eternity, stepping outside the cycle to reach across the repetitions and collapse them into an eternal identity.

The cosmological reading therefore does not challenge, but rather reinforces, the negative aspects of our existing relationship with time - its sense of inevitability, in which one point flows unstoppably onto another.⁵⁷ As a cosmology, eternal return renders such start or end points meaningless, and stresses the transience of everything we experience - but this transience is contained within, and ultimately part of, the same cycle. Persistent identities *within* time may be outlawed, but time itself becomes just such an identity - it is the unbroken circle that the Spirit of Gravity suggested, and that Zarathustra so vigorously rejected. This is the element of traditional conceptions of time that the dwarf's cyclical version of eternal return does not challenge, in which time is conceived as a container or framework, within which different events occur. Everything is ultimately subsumed into

56 Loeb argues on the contrary that Zarathustra does indeed "remember" future events from his own life and death, citing the incident of the howling dog of which Loeb writes that "Nietzsche's clear implication is that the reason Zarathustra comes to believe that he will now be reliving his qualitatively identical life is that he *remembers* having already lived the qualitatively identical childhood moment that he is experiencing now just after having died" (Loeb 2013). This is, I would argue, anything but clear - as Small points out, Zarathustra never at any point tells us "that the gateway *has* been there before," or in other words that he remembers it, "but rather that it *must have* been there" (Small 2010:137). Stambaugh also points out that in 'The Convalescent,' when Zarathustra undergoes what (on Loeb's interpretation) would seem to be the "same" experience, prefigured in Zarathustra's vision of the shepherd biting off the head of the snake, "What is most astonishing here is that the experience is totally new. No reference is made to the shepherd or to what happened to him. It is as if Zarathustra knew nothing about him at all... Evidently there is no cushioning through past experience here. The experience is starkly immediate." (Stambaugh 1988:42)

57 As Stambaugh points out, this sensation of being "caught" in time "applies equally well to the basically Christian concept of historical, 'directed' time, which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and to the Greek and to most of the Eastern ... concepts of cycles of time repeating themselves." (Stambaugh 1988:105)

one, a part of the same cycle. We therefore find that with the theory of time offered by the cosmological reading, the gateway 'Moment' is revealed to be nothing but a mirror. When we think we see the path of the future stretching onwards, we are in fact witnessing nothing more than the reflection of the past. Within this closed circle, all that we have is the eternal circulation of the same - the same meanings, the same thoughts, the same identities. If we attempt to translate this into rhythmical terms, we are not left with a musical fugue, in which the repetition of a theme causes it to fly away from itself, multiplied and transformed. Instead we find a fugue state of repetition as trauma, in which we do not affirm but are rather forced to repeat. Any attempt to break out into something new has been tried innumerable times before, will be tried again, and will always end up in the same place. Eternal return as a cosmology therefore does not overcome, but rather plays out the claustrophobia of nihilistic identity on a universal scale. I described in chapter one how the issue with our current way of thinking identity is our tendency to exclude all difference to the point of sterility. Thought collapses in on itself, an entropic black hole with which we can no longer produce the meanings that allow us to thrive and grow. In the cosmology of eternal return, this fate applies to the entire universe - nothing new, but instead one endless repetitive action, as hopeless and futile as the rocking of an abused child or the convulsive shudders of a snake devouring its own tail.

The cosmological reading seeks to align our thought more accurately with what it claims to be the operation of time and becoming, and as such recalls the more metaphysical slant⁵⁸ that we find at points within Nietzsche's early writing on rhythm, when he suggests that the ancient Greek sense of rhythm gave the Greeks access to a better, purer sense of time. But this was disrupted by Nietzsche's investigations into the driving force behind the supposed degradation into modern rhythm, in which he concluded that time and force were intermingled within rhythm from the start. This ambiguity persisted throughout *The*

58 This is how Löwith interprets eternal return, as Nietzsche's return "to the place from which he had started. As the teacher of the eternal recurrence, he remembered the problem of the birth of tragedy, and the end of his attempt combines systematically with its beginning in the highest kind of Dionysian Being" (Löwith 1997:16). Löwith argues that eternal return expresses the same contradictions as *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Nietzsche urges a return to a more originary past state, while simultaneously recognising its impossibility. In chapter two I argued that Nietzsche's preoccupation with rhythm holds the key to understanding this apparent contradiction, and as we shall go on to see rhythm is similarly crucial for successfully navigating the tensions within eternal return.

Gay Science, where we saw that the same qualities of rhythm proved creative and nihilistic in equal measure. The rhythmic impulse towards form emerges as the transformative identities of art, but also as the nihilistic suppression of difference. The sense of rhythmic flow expresses the generative nature of becoming, but also seems to preclude any intervention of thought into this flow. In order to provide a genuine challenge to the nihilistic disjunct between thought and becoming, it is necessary to find a conception of time in which we can understand the connection between these two aspects of rhythm. As we have seen, while the cosmological reading challenges our everyday understanding of time as unrepeatable, it fails to disrupt the sense of time as an unstoppable succession or continuum, which creates the sense of inalienable division between the continuum of becoming and the unwarranted interventions of our thought. Neither did the cosmological reading offer us a way of affirming the passage of time, replacing this with an overarching view of the entire cycle of time in which all moments collapsed into one. We shall therefore turn to an alternative theory of time as eternal return that emerges from Nietzsche's work. This theory addresses the sense of time as a continuum by engaging with the apparent rhythmical disjunct between flow and the points within it. This will then allow us to see whether this understanding of temporality is one that we can affirm.

Time as the discontinuous moment

Rather than a cosmology in which events recur within cycles of time, Nietzsche is working with a conception of time as momentariness (*Augenblicklichkeit*).⁵⁹ This functions as a disruption not only to the everyday understanding of time as an infinite linear progression, but more importantly to the idea that time is continuous - that there is no sense of difference within the passage of time. The dwarf's sweeping statement encompassing everything within the single circle of time reinforces the nihilistic view of time as an impenetrable flow that brings everything to dust, rendering everything ultimately the same. But in doing so, he ignores the aspect of the gateway moment in which the two paths of the past and future are encompassed, but in such a way that they "contradict" each other, rather than collapsing into one.⁶⁰ It is this crucial nature of the moment that Zarathustra is

59 This theory of time as momentary or instantaneous is principally developed by Stambaugh (1988:107ff) and is also taken up by Moles (1990:295ff) and Miller (1999).

60 The notion of contradiction in the moment, as Stambaugh points out, precludes the possibility of time as a continuum, pointing out that "the flux of time, no matter what its 'direction,' cannot produce

so keen for us to think, a focus which emerges in an unpublished note in which Nietzsche once again attempts to understand the nature of becoming shorn of the anthropomorphic trappings of thought, stating that "the lawfulness of nature is a false humanitarian interpretation" which we impose upon "the absolute momentariness of the will to power."⁶¹ As the rhythmic creatures of GS §84, our thought is entirely goal-oriented, preoccupied with survival and "the anticipation of the future" that constitutes our attempt to impose our desires upon the world. But as we shall see with the idea of time as momentary, Nietzsche is trying to elaborate a different, but no less rhythmic, understanding of time - one that reconciles the apparently contradictory aspects of rhythm in the way the moment emerges from the relationship of forces as the will to power.

Each moment, for Nietzsche, is a meeting or combination of forces. But the nature of force is that it does not remain the same - we cannot separate an eternal force from the effects that it perpetrates, but instead must conceive of force as activity. In each moment, therefore, we find that the forces at play have changed. There is no single identity that persists through these moments, for as the activity acts (here we get into the problems of expressing becoming in the language of subject and verb, ending up with seemingly tautological formulations - as the force forces? As the flow flows?) it ceases to be the same state as it was a moment previously. There is no gap in becoming, but instead the activity of the will to power itself is what ensures this non-continuous change from one moment to the next.⁶² Nietzsche's attempt to develop a new conception of time as momentary reflects how he conceives the activity of forces in the will to power, as discrete,

a contradiction. A 'contradiction' can occur only in the moment." (Stambaugh 1988:40)

61 *"Die Gesetzmäßigkeit der Natur ist eine falsche humanitäre Auslegung. Es handelt sich um eine absolute Feststellung der Machtverhältnisse, um die ganze Brutalität, ohne die Milderung, welche im organischen Leben das Vorausnehmen der Zukunft, die Vorsicht und List und Klugheit, kurz der Geist mit sich bringt. Die absolute Augenblicklichkeit des Willens zur Macht regiert"*
[http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.40\[55\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.40[55]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente August–September 1885.

62 Nietzsche writes that "At any precise moment of a force, the absolute conditionality of a new distribution of all its forces is given: it cannot stand still. "Change" belongs to the essence, therefore also temporality: with this, however, the necessity of change has only been posited once more conceptually." (WTP §1064 (1885)). As Stambaugh stresses, "The most important thing about the moment is to think its arising and perishing. Moments of time are not strung out like a series of atomistic points which may be continuous or discontinuous. Each moment arises and perishes, and it is precisely its perishing or passing away which allows the next moment to arise, to come into being." (Stambaugh 1988: 114)

but not separate and isolated. On this understanding, time is something that does not exist independently of the forces that inhabit it, and we can therefore understand momentary time as that which emerges from, rather than against, becoming.⁶³

It is the moment, understood as this discontinuous transformative activity, that eternally returns. Not a particular combination of forces or events, because the nature of force as transformation forbids that there could ever be such a return. "*Force*," Nietzsche writes, "is eternally the same and eternally active,"⁶⁴ but as such, forces can never be the same. If a force were to persist in a single state, without increase or decrease, then it would no longer be active or, in other words, it would no longer be a force. This is the understanding of eternity that Nietzsche is able to retain, after all the other eternal substances, laws, or identities have been discarded as anthropomorphic creations. The eternal activity and changeability of force, expressed in the multiple nature of the will to power, is the only thing which is "eternally the same" and which repeats in every moment.

Stambaugh's reading of eternal return incorporates this understanding of eternity into the theory of momentary or what she refers to as "vertical time,"⁶⁵ in which eternity is viewed not as the opposite of transient linear or "horizontal" time, but as that which linear time "breaks out into."⁶⁶ Eternity conceived as the eternal activity of force operates like a third dimension of time,⁶⁷ the way that depth transforms our understanding of a flat, two-dimensional plane. And it is this third dimension of the vertical time of eternity that allows everyday horizontal time to pass in the manner that we experience in the everyday understanding of time. This happens on a moment-by-moment basis, with what Stambaugh refers to as the "spikes" or "*Spitze*" of time.⁶⁸ Rather than flowing smoothly, becoming 'spikes' or intensifies, as the activity of the will to power forces the ending of one

63 Moles highlights this connection between time and force, emphasising that "a moment and its force are not separate; when a force recurs, its moment recurs with it" (Moles 1990:295) so that "every new moment is the moment of a newly-maximised power" (Moles 1990:236).

64 "*die Kraft ist ewig gleich und ewig thätig*" [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881.11\[202\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1881.11[202]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1881.

65 Stambaugh 1988:107

66 Stambaugh: 1988:126

67 Stambaugh stresses the problems and limitations of trying to describe temporality using spatial concepts such as "horizontal," and "vertical," but that we are nonetheless forced to use to try and challenge traditional theories of time (Stambaugh 1988:117)

state and the beginning of another, in a manner that cannot be conceived as a smooth flow. Stambaugh elaborates this characteristic of time as 'instantaneity,' which "in contrast to the image of time as a continuous flux, instantaneity emphasizes the 'occurrence' of time, the arising, immediate perishing, and arising anew of the instant."⁶⁹

Nietzsche's focus on the moment aims to provide a conception of time without continuous inevitable succession, that does not fall into the timeless trap of eternalisation.⁷⁰ Equally, however, we should not understand time as divisible, placing artificial bulwarks which have no place in becoming. To understand time as split by discrete points would again be to place something timeless within it, to make an immovable instant that stands against, rather than with, the time that it divides. Understanding time as continuous is just as much a product of the rhythmic smoothing of difference in thought as is perceiving the fundamental *discontinuity* of causality as something inherent to becoming. We have seen how Nietzsche continually struggled with the simultaneously continuous and divided nature of rhythm in thought. We now find that both elements of this tension are contained within the moment. It is not just past and future, but also difference and identity, that are gathered together in the momentary activity of time.

Stambaugh recognises the rhythmical nature of the eternal activity of time as that which flows precisely as these spiking moments, noting that the eternal activity of changing force that comes to the fore in the moment:

68 This develops an idea that Stambaugh first finds expressed by the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, who writes that the "Now of eternity," the moment, "is neither a piece of time nor is it a portion of time, but rather it is a taste of time, the sharp point of time and an end of time." (Eckhart 1994:114)

69 Stambaugh 1988:117

70 As Moles expresses it, Nietzsche's account of time as momentary is intended to generate "a perspective of understanding which allows the novelty and uniqueness of each momentary event to stand out more clearly, within a new conception of time." (Moles 1990:231)

"could perhaps be most approximately compared with what is called rhythm, whether this rhythm is thought as the rhythm of a life or of a statue or a piece of music. In the last case rhythm is the temporally forming principle, the constant measure that itself knows no change, but makes a change possible."⁷¹

As I have argued, Nietzsche understands rhythm as the "temporally forming principle" in not just the last, but in all of these cases - it is the temporally forming principle of thought, the way in which time appears to us as thought. But it is only through understanding the activity of force in the will to power that we can perceive the linking of the two apparently contradictory aspects of rhythm that we have noted throughout Nietzsche's work, in which its flowing tendency to exceed can be understood as that which also instantiates the moments or beats within it.

It is will to power, with its continual changes in combinations of force, that gives rise to the fluctuations in tempo that are the wave-like rhythm of becoming, and it is these different tempos that we then perceive in thought as individuated beats or identities.⁷² At this point, we move from the contrast between the rhythm of the waves and the rhythm of the world to a more complex soundscape. For the rhythms that emerge from the will to power are not single rhythms, but multiple. It is these different tempos that we shape into the rhythmic forms we create in the world around us. This is the raw material that is subject to the process of selection, which allows us to pick out differences that we then transform through our rhythmic process of thought into patterns, as repetitions of the same. It is this development of forms of the present as part of a rhythmic process that produces the impression of continuity between the present moment and the past.⁷³ But the plurality of

71 Stambaugh 1987:189. Small more explicitly highlights the connection between Nietzsche's earlier thoughts on rhythm and the different tempos of the will to power that we find in his later work, writing that "it is the will's fluctuations and intermittences that provide the basis for succession and rhythm, the forms of appearance that turn becoming into time." (Small 2010:74)

72 Small likens the activity of thought upon these variations in the tempo of becoming to the process that takes place when we listen to orchestral music, in which "our hearing performs a complex piece of data analysis: we can tell one instrument from another, and hear them as playing together, each one being located in a different place. The analysis that Nietzsche is proposing here is similar, except that the intended outcome is the empirical world, with all its objects in their relations to one another." (Small 2010:68)

73 Moles notes a tension within Nietzsche's account of how we construct our experience of time as duration: "A strange paradox underlies Nietzsche's account. According to it, we would have no experience of duration (or of succession either) without the intellectual function of memory. Yet this account seems to presuppose the view of time that he is criticizing. After all, present experience is

the rhythms that are now shown to make up the seemingly singular wave-like rhythm of becoming show that we have not one, but many temporalities.⁷⁴ Not only is there no time in-itself, but there is no objective time, or single sense of the present. As with the *chronos protos* identified by Aristoxenus, the moment can be determined only in relation its own temporality or rhythm, and does not extend beyond this into any kind of universal time.⁷⁵

The new conception of time that Nietzsche seeks to develop is one that allows of multiple times - as there are multiple perspectives⁷⁶ - one that reveals the "universal" herd time that

interpreted on the basis of a comparison with remembered past experiences; but memory itself already presupposes the endurance of past experience. Nietzsche makes no attempt to answer this objection; he appears to be unaware of it." (Moles 1990:226) This is the problem that Deleuze takes up in the three syntheses of time, which we shall go on to explore in the next chapter.

74 Nietzsche's early work on rhythm is admittedly more suggestive of a shifting sense of temporality, than multiple concurrent senses. Small traces Nietzsche's theory of multiple temporalities to his interest in the biologist Karl Ernst von Baer, who "illustrates the relative character of our experience of time by posing a sequence of thought experiments, involving different rates of the life process," (Small 2010:86) in which the different lifespans and pulse tempos of organic life are imagined to produce correspondingly different temporalities. Baer concludes that a "greater measure" would provide a more overarching perspective coming "closer to the truth" (Small 2010:87) of an ideal time. In contrast, "Nietzsche's conclusion is that the best measure of time is a much smaller one than ours, corresponding to the countless brief processes that we usually overlook." (Small 2010:90) These can be combined, and "it is likely that Nietzsche's real preference is for this multiplicity of perspectives, rather than taking one or another as having a privileged status." (Small 2010:91)

75 Moles makes this point, arguing that for Nietzsche "there is no universal moment, no universal 'present' or simultaneity. Time in Nietzsche's philosophy of nature is perspectival—it is determined within local forces, each with their own moments, their own 'presents.' Accordingly, Nietzsche denies that there is any such entity as absolute (or self-existing) time. There is no independent unity of measure for all the different events in the universe. By making time perspectival, Nietzsche is proposing its relativity. Every measurement of time is made relative to some perspective or other." (Moles 1990:233-4)

76 Moles highlights a difficulty here in understanding the relationship between multiple temporalities and, specifically, the non-universalised moments that they contain: "it is also difficult to conceive in any detail the relationship between moments. As has been shown, it can be reconstructed from Nietzsche's account that moments are bound together in a strict order by the necessity with which forces occasion other forces. But forces form hierarchies; one system of force contains many sub-systems, themselves hierarchical. These inner force-systems are subject to quantum change, and by Nietzsche's conception of temporality each new state has its own moment. Are moments then nested within hierarchies, like forces themselves? If so, it seems that moments are divisible in a sense, despite the fact that Nietzsche's conception implies the contrary... One moment would then replace another at the sub-system level, all within the moment of the dominant force... It is hard to think of answers to these objections; certainly Nietzsche does not offer any." (Moles 1990:237) I argue that understanding the different temporalities as different rhythms solves this problem of the

we have gradually internalised as a seductive rhythm that has closed down others, and opens up the possibility that we can learn to detect, and to develop, other senses of temporality.⁷⁷ This is not by any means an easy task. Merely to be aware of the presence of other temporalities is not to be able to understand or "hear" them, as we saw in the experience of attempting to listen to ancient rhythm today, and our inability to hear it as rhythmic. But although the ancient sense of rhythm is incommensurate with the modern, that is not to say it cannot impact upon it - that it cannot work its rhythmic effect. Although we can never return to or recover the ancient sense of rhythm, this is not to say that it, and other rhythms, cannot affect our own. Rather than a poor imitation of ancient rhythms, which entirely misses the different temporality that gives rise to them, the goal of Nietzsche's engagement with the past is to allow it to speak within the temporality of the modern age. The persistence of his attempts to invoke different temporalities, particularly that of ancient thinkers, suggests a more positive outcome than the image of a dominant rhythm mastering another. It seems that even a gentler, subtler rhythm such as that of ancient Greece can affect the forceful rhythm of modernity. If we are able to conceive of multiple rhythms, of multiple temporalities, then this opens up the possibility of a correspondingly richer way of thinking within time, one that does not fall prey to the

relationship between moments, coming closer to Small's description of the multiplicity of Nietzschean time as more entwined than hierarchical, as "temporally extended processes ... which not only overlap in time but are held together like the intertwining of strands in a rope." (Small 2010:75) Rhythms behave in precisely this manner - one rhythm can indeed be seen as nested within another, but for all this is not dominated by it. The Aristoxenian *chronos protos* is indivisible *as it is heard within the context of its own rhythm*, rather than with reference to other rhythms or subrhythms at play even within the same piece. If we understand time as made up of a multiplicity of such rhythms or temporalities, driven by the different tempos of becoming, then we can see how this overlapping is possible. In the next chapter we shall see how the notion of multiple interweaving rhythms functions within Deleuze and Guattari's account of the refrain.

77 Nietzsche offers examples of where our sense of temporality shifts, for instance "as a hashish smoker or at the moment of mortal danger ... we humans get a notion that in one second of our pocket watch, a thousand thoughts can be thought, and a thousand experiences experienced." He takes such experiences to show that we should be "suspicious of all apparent 'simultaneity'" of times, and that rather than any universal measure or beat, time is made up of these "time-fragments" which follow a different tempo. (*"Seien wir mißtrauisch gegen alle anscheinende 'Gleichzeitigkeit!' Es schieben sich da Zeit-Bruchstücke ein, welche nur nach einem groben Maaße, z.B. unserem menschlichen Zeitmaaße klein heißen dürfen; in abnormen Zuständen, z.B. als Haschischraucher oder im Augenblick der Lebensgefahr bekommen aber auch wir Menschen einen Begriff davon, daß in einer Sekunde unserer Taschenuhr tausend Gedanken gedacht, tausend Erlebnisse erlebt werden können."* [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.40\[49\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1885.40[49]) eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885)

nihilistic sense of closing down that happens when there is one and only one overarching beat.

This is the revised relationship with time that Nietzsche is attempting to convey by understanding eternal return as the moment. The cosmological reading failed because it took a position outside time, from which it imagined observing events going round and round in an eternal washing cycle of time. But with the understanding of time as momentary, we find that eternal return does not take place *in* time, but rather, eternal return *is* time, understood as this rhythmic process of returning. Time is the rhythmic activity of the moment as the varying tempos of the will to power take form within our thought. Nietzsche indicated this rhythmic conception of time in his early notes, where he realised that rhythm is the ordering, or the form of time. But rather than the earlier understanding of form or appearance as something whose multiplicity renders it a poor copy of an original reality, we find in Nietzsche's later work a concordance between the multiplicity of rhythmic thought and rhythmic becoming that suggests that, if we can think it in this multiplicity, an overcoming of nihilism may yet be possible.

Time flies away: a criticism of Nietzsche's presentation of eternal return

In its rhythmic connection with becoming, an understanding of time as momentary resolves the tensions in the understanding of rhythm that we found throughout Nietzsche's work, from the early notes through to *The Gay Science*. It is this sense of the moment emerging from the eternal confrontation of forces in the will to power that Nietzsche is trying to express with the thought of eternal return, and the understanding of time that Nietzsche is operating with as we follow Zarathustra through his adventures. But as we have seen, the connection between momentary time, the will to power, and eternal return, emerges principally from the unpublished notes, which we must then deploy to elucidate the mysteries of Zarathustra's vision of the gateway 'Moment,' and how this might lead to the figure of the overman as one who lives with a fundamentally different relationship to time. We saw in Nietzsche's exploration of the incommensurable nature of ancient and modern rhythm that it is impossible to think across the leap of one to the other. As a radically new thought, Nietzsche's presentation of eternal return is faced with the similar challenge of making it thinkable for us, in which eternal return must disrupt our current relationship with time, but not to the extent that we cannot think this at all. We must still be able to

recognise it as a rhythm, as a thought - but as a new rhythm that is not prone to the problems of the old. Nietzsche uses his troubled spokesperson Zarathustra to convey some of these difficulties, as we see Zarathustra struggle both to understand and accept the thought himself, as well as to adequately convey it to others. Nietzsche's presentation of the temporal experiences within *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* attempts to convey the disruptive nature of the moment as an interruption to our nihilistic understanding of the ceaseless continuum of time. But although the intensely rhythmic theory of momentary time that commentators such as Stambaugh have constructed from Nietzsche's notes offers a way to move beyond the temporality of nihilistic thought, Nietzsche's attempts to convey the nature of the moment via the figure of Zarathustra are not nearly so effective, precisely because they lose the rhythmic sense of the passage of time.⁷⁸

Zarathustra's engagement with time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* comes not just through the vision of the gateway "moment," but at various points throughout the narrative when he experiences a cessation of time in the hour of noon or midnight⁷⁹ - these apparently opposing times collapse into one, as Zarathustra realises the eternal nature of ever-changing force at work in his conception of momentary time.⁸⁰ Zarathustra's reflections on time both at noon and at midnight⁸¹ are clearly connected with his vision of eternal return and his understanding of the moment.⁸² At noon he highlights the need to affirm the

78 Stambaugh admits that Nietzsche is not ultimately effective in conveying the theory of momentary time, noting that it occurs to him "only in fragmentary, momentary insights, the implications of which he was unable to think through in connection with the whole," (Stambaugh 1988:105) and that the sense of eternity in momentary time is "an experience so radical that Nietzsche himself was unable to maintain the purity of the dimension we have described here as the 'vertical,'" (Stambaugh 1988:107) concluding that "part of Nietzsche's emphasis on eternal return as a *thought* was born of his realization that he had not completely penetrated his own experience. He somehow seemed to know that eternal return was yet to be really *thought out*. Thus he presented it as a doctrine still to be fathomed." (Stambaugh 1988:115)

79 Other references to a similar sensation occur in *TSZ* II 'The Soothsayer' ("Thus the time passed and crept by me, if time existed anymore – what do I know!") and *TSZ* II 'The stillest hour' in which Zarathustra feels time as the "ground" or structure of human consciousness fade away as he falls asleep.

80 "Just now my world became perfect, midnight is also noon." (*TSZ* IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' §10)

81 *TSZ* IV 'At Noon' and *TSZ* IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' respectively.

82 For Stambaugh, the experience of "timelessness" (Stambaugh 1988:106) in the hours of noon or midnight is Nietzsche's attempt to convey "the significance of the Moment." (Stambaugh 1988:107) Small, in contrast, argues that the hour is a different conception of becoming for Nietzsche, and that

transience of the moment [*Augenblick*], arguing that "precisely the least, the softest, the lightest, a lizard's rustling, a breath, a wink, a blink of an eye [*Augen-Blick*] – a little is the stuff of the best happiness,"⁸³ while at midnight he seems to be painfully transported once again to his earlier vision:

Alas! Alas! The dog howls, the moon shines. I would sooner die, die, than tell you
what my midnight heart is thinking right now.
Now I've died already. It's gone. Spider, why do you spin around me? Do you want
blood? Oh! Oh! The dew falls, the hour comes –⁸⁴

The moment of eternal return is presented once again, but the affirmation that Zarathustra advocates matches neither his tone, nor the experience of time that he conveys in these passages. The hour of noon is suffused with stillness of sleep, that of midnight with an apocalyptic tenor of death as Zarathustra strains to affirm everything in the unreasoning cruelty of becoming, with joy and pain united as noon and midnight. And in both of these passages, precisely at the point where Nietzsche is trying to convey the transience of the moment for us to affirm, time - has gone.

Against the endless succession of time, Zarathustra continually cries "Still!" as Nietzsche tries to indicate a radically different and discontinuous experience of time. But he achieves this impression by stopping, and hence removing, time for us altogether. Even as Zarathustra talks of the happiness to be found in the laughter of a sleeping god, it is time, "Old noon" who is sleeping, while Zarathustra himself sleeps, "like a ship that sailed into its stillest bay," that now "leans against the earth, weary of the long journeys and the uncertain seas."⁸⁵ This is not the voyage into becoming undertaken by the bold searchers

"a great deal of confusion is caused by running it together with the 'moment.' " (Small 2010:161) However this distinction rests on Small's opposition of the moment as "constituted by an exclusion of past and future, while the hour is supposed to incorporate them," (Small 2010:162) whereas, as Stambaugh argues, it is precisely this incorporation (rather than exclusion) of past and future within the moment that Zarathustra's vision of the gateway is trying to convey. Small admits that in the case of some commentators, "what is meant [by the moment] may be what I am calling the 'hour,'" (Small 2010:162) and I suggest that this is indeed the case with Stambaugh's reading, and that Small's separation of these two temporal relationships within *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is unnecessary.

83 *TSZ* IV 'At Noon,' cf. "the values of the briefest and most transient, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent *vita*" (*WTP* §577 (Spring-Fall 1887))

84 *TSZ* IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' §4

85 *TSZ* IV 'At Noon'

and researchers whom Zarathustra tasked with the riddle of eternal return. Instead of the rhythmic passage of time, we find that there is no longer any beat at all:

– as secretly, as terribly, as cordially as that midnight bell, which has experienced more than any human, says it to me:
– which long ago tallied the heartbeat beatings of your fathers – oh! oh! how it sighs! How it laughs in dream delight, the old, the deep deep midnight!
Still! Still! Then things are heard that by day may not be said; but now, in the cool air, where the noise of your hearts has fled –
– now it speaks, now it listens, now it creeps into nocturnal, over-awake souls – oh! oh! how it sighs! How it laughs in dream delight!⁸⁶

The midnight bell that speaks to Zarathustra is the inhuman time of becoming, from which the rhythm of our organic lives emerged, and the experience of it here signals the death of the human - but with it, both rhythm and time as we live them are silenced. "Do not sing! Still! The world is perfect,"⁸⁷ whispers Zarathustra to his heart, and time departs:

Didn't time just fly away? Am I not falling? Did I not fall – listen! – into the well of eternity?⁸⁸

and again at midnight, when he cries:

Woe to me! Where has time gone? Did I not sink into deep wells? The world sleeps
_⁸⁹

Nietzsche wants to present an experience of time that is uninfected by the anthropomorphic thoughts and rhythms of GS §84. But to do so, he must still our heartbeats as well. The interruption of time that occurs in the moment is not something that can be experienced - it is that which constitutes our experience, that forms the self we experience it with. Nietzsche's presentation of this in the hour of noon and midnight is intended to open up a radically different sense of time. But instead, both Zarathustra and time are caught still while they simultaneously fly away. The experience of time here interrupts the sense of being continuously dragged along in time, but rather than freeing either Zarathustra or time, it holds them back, as Zarathustra continually urges himself, but also time as the other sleeper, to "Get up!" and get moving - and yet he falls asleep again,

86 TSZ IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' §3

87 TSZ IV 'At Noon'

88 *ibid.*

89 TSZ IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' §4

unable to move. In what is intended to be a transformative scene at the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which sparks Zarathustra's return and emergence from his cave once again, the affirmation we find is that of the desperate final efforts of the bloodied hero calling up the last reserves of his strength. And the effect is that of transformation into death.

The implication Nietzsche is trying to convey is that the moment signals the end of humanity, and the beginning of a new relationship with time. But coming, as it does, at the cost of the exclusion of time from the moment, this is not something that we as readers can either live, or affirm, cutting the bridge between man and overman. In the final section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that follows the hour of midnight, when Zarathustra's heart is transformed at the futural sign of the overman, we are told that "this lasted a long time, or a short time: for, properly speaking, there is *no* time on earth for such things."⁹⁰ This absence of time, specifically of time *on earth*, is why Zarathustra's experience of the moment cannot be affirmed in the manner that Nietzsche himself requires. At the start of this chapter, we stressed that the overman is no transcendent figure, but rather a new relationship to time that emerges from the human, and that "*shall be* the meaning of the earth!"⁹¹ Later, he reiterates the importance of this to his disciples:

Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! Let your bestowing love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and beseech you.

Do not let it fly away from earthly things and beat against eternal walls with its wings! Oh, there has always been so much virtue that flew away!

Like me, guide the virtue that has flown away back to the earth – yes, back to the body and life: so that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning!⁹²

In the hours of noon and of midnight, time flies away from earthly things. Zarathustra's own transformation involves the motif of dance and flight that recurs throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The deep midnight of time without the living rhythm of the heartbeat "carries me away, my soul dances"⁹³ and he asks any who would achieve the new relationship to time of the overman:

90 TSZ IV 'The Sign'

91 TSZ I 'Zarathustra's Prologue' §3

92 TSZ I 'On the Bestowing Virtue' §2

93 TSZ IV 'The Sleepwalker Song' §5

Have you flown high enough? You dance: but a leg is not a wing.
You good dancers, now all joy is gone, wine became resin, every cup became
brittle, the graves stammer.
You did not fly high enough; now the graves stammer: "Redeem the dead!..."

To dance with the feet is not enough - a leg is not a wing - and what dance could we in any case perform in the unearthly time of these passages where the rhythmic beat has been stilled? The only dance that is possible is that of Zarathustra's soul, carried away, beyond the earth. But as such, the experience of temporality that Nietzsche describes in the hours of noon and midnight does not allow us to affirm the rhythm of time in its passage, nor prompt the discovery of a new relationship with time from out of our existing rhythms. It does not provide the nuanced affirmation of the existing creative and artistic elements of our thought that we explored in Nietzsche's account of rhythm in *The Gay Science*. This is the kind of rhythmic and temporal affirmation we need, if we are to follow Zarathustra's earlier advice to his disciples, and finally move beyond nihilism:

Let your spirit and your virtue serve the meaning of the earth, my brothers: and the
value of all things will be posited newly by you! Therefore you shall be fighters!
Therefore you shall be creators!⁹⁴

The hour, like the gateway moment, functions as an interruption to continuous time. But as it opens up this space within the relentless rhythm of our everyday experience of time, we find that time misfires, grinds to a halt. It is important to note that this is not the effect that Nietzsche intends to convey, as we saw from the theory that we find in the unpublished notes of the moment as the necessary emergence of change in the will to power. The moment is supposed to be a temporary pause - Zarathustra's experience of 'The stillest hour' begins as "the hand advanced, the clock of my life drew a breath."⁹⁵ As Small notes, this brief pause is what occurs in the poetic caesura or cut, a breath taken within a line of poetry that drives the rhythm on.⁹⁶ If Zarathustra were to go on to sing, or to dance, then

94 TSZ I 'On the Bestowing Virtue' §2

95 TSZ II 'The stillest hour'

96 As Small says, "these brief pauses are everyday occurrences. When a clock's hand moves, it commonly stays where it is before moving again. Similarly, drawing breath is a familiar action in speech, as well as in singing or playing a wind instrument." These examples are indeed, as Small notes, "apt metaphors for what he [Nietzsche] is trying to indicate: a suspension of time which is not, however, the *negation* of change that gives rise to a belief in enduring things and the 'I' that corresponds to them." (Small 2010:37) The problem is that what immediately follows in Zarathustra's account does not take up these rhythmic metaphors, instead leaving him suspended,

we could indeed perceive this as a temporary cut that is *constitutive* of our rhythmic experience of time. Instead, Zarathustra sleeps - the rhythmic ground of time falls away. The experiences of interrupted time that Zarathustra describes do not allow us to affirm time in its passage - and it is precisely this which eternal return must do, if it is to be successful in setting up a non-nihilistic relationship with time. Instead, Zarathustra offers us an experience of time as interrupted, ephiphanic, revelatory - but also as dead, and unearthly. We saw earlier that the cosmological reading of eternal return fails not only because it did not disrupt the notion of time as succession, but also because it required that we step out of time in order to affirm it. The interpretation of eternal return as momentary seems capable of succeeding on both these counts. But Nietzsche's presentation of the interruption of time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* does not. In order to explore the time of the moment in a manner that we can affirm, we must move away from Nietzsche's own presentation of the experience of discontinuous time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and indeed from Nietzsche's own words altogether.

Nietzsche's work indicates a theory of time based on the moment, as that which emerges from the flow of becoming through the multiple nature of the will to power. The understanding of becoming that emerges from Nietzsche's work is that of a rhythm which, while it does not tarry, does "spike." By understanding the only constant as the nature of force as that which eternally changes, we are able to address some of the tensions that we found in Nietzsche's account of rhythmic thought. The impulse of rhythm to round off, and the impulse of rhythm to flow on and exceed its bounds, cannot be separated. In just this manner, the self-closing nature of the moment is that which emerges from the flow of becoming, as the self-dividing nature of rhythmic becoming. The operation of rhythm as that which divides up time, and attempts individuation, can now be clarified - the rhythm of becoming *creates* time, precisely as these individuating moments. The different tempos of force indicate the way in which we come to conceive the flow of becoming as the rhythmic forms we perceive in the world around us. While we have traditionally misinterpreted these temporary and mobile forms as static identities, by understanding the rhythmic nature common to both form and becoming we find that the process by which we isolate and delimit our thoughts is not the arbitrary act that in the depths of nihilism we had come to

out of time. We will return to the role of the caesura within rhythm in the next chapter, when we look at Deleuze's third synthesis of time.

fear. The challenge is to learn to hold open the creative and transformative potential of rhythm, rather than closing this down into a single beat. We indicated that the multiplicity of rhythmic temporalities holds the key to this openness for Nietzsche. We must find a new way to not only understand the moment, but to create and affirm its rhythmical connection with other moments, and the other rhythms that we must learn to hear.

We shall now turn to the thought of Deleuze and Guattari to find the account of rhythmic multiplicity that we find suggested in the Nietzschean idea of time as the moment. It is here that we find the seeds of momentary time developed into Deleuze's account of becoming and the role of eternal return as discontinuity or caesura, before the plurality of rhythm as individuation finds its most thorough expression in Deleuze and Guattari's account of the refrain.

5. Coda: the fabrication of time in the refrain

We have seen how an understanding of a rhythmic relationship with time emerges from Nietzsche's unpublished notes, which he attempts to convey through the notion of eternal return in *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. By understanding becoming as a rhythmic process that gives rise to moments of time, Nietzsche indicates a way in which the rhythmically individuating activity of thought emerges from becoming, rather than being opposed to it. In so doing, he aims to open up a space for the new kind of thought he calls *amor fati*, in which he hopes we might affirm both the creative process of thought and the temporal and transient nature of the forms that it creates. But as we have seen, Nietzsche does not explicitly develop this theory of time as momentary in his published works. Nietzsche's presentation of the experience of the moment in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* does not allow us to affirm the *passage* of time, and it is this that is key to addressing the problems of nihilistic thought. Instead we shall turn to the work of Deleuze, who develops an ontological reading of eternal return that draws out the multiple nature of the will to power that was intimated in Nietzsche's unpublished notes. It is as an ontology, rather than as either a psychological or cosmological theory, or even the revelatory experience described by Zarathustra, that we can understand eternal return as a rhythmic theory of time.

Deleuze identifies himself as a "pluralist" whose aim "is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (*creativity*)."¹ His deployment of eternal return within his own work is precisely concerned with the plural nature of becoming, and discovering the conditions under which a future that is genuinely new can emerge from the past, rather than merely repeating it, as the problem of the passage of time. We shall see that Deleuze's understanding of time as the three syntheses of present, past, and future provides us with the most rhythmic, and the most successful, reading of eternal return that we have yet encountered. Integral to this reading is Deleuze's attempt to think the univocity of being, in which becoming shares the plural character of the world we perceive, rather than standing opposed as a single continuum which is then painfully translated into individual beings. The rhythmical nature

1 *Dialogues II* vii

of becoming and the way in which the different tempos of the will to power emerge as discontinuous and temporal forms is developed in Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the refrain, in which we find a more thorough account of how the multiplicity of becoming takes on form through an explicitly rhythmical process. By recognising the ontological role of rhythm, Deleuze and Guattari are able to develop the rhythmical strain within Nietzsche's thought in a more productive way, and we find in their work a more fully developed conception of rhythmic becoming that builds on the discontinuous possibilities of eternal return, and provides a more successful answer to the problem of rhythmic individuation.

The eternal return of the dice in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*

Deleuze's earliest and most dedicated reading of eternal return takes place in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Deleuze's interest here lies in uncovering the role eternal return plays in how becoming *becomes*, in how it effects the passage of becoming into what we perceive as beings. Nietzsche's importance for Deleuze lies principally in the account he is able to derive from Nietzsche's work of becoming as plural. As we have seen in chapter four, Nietzsche indicates in his unpublished notes that becoming is not a smooth continuum, but that it expresses the multiple nature of the different tempos of the will to power. This was not made explicit in *The Gay Science* surrounding the introduction of eternal return. There, when he does talk about becoming, it is in the ambiguous sense of a continuum or flux, rather than becoming conceived as something explicitly plural.² For his own reading of eternal return, Deleuze draws his account of Nietzsche's conception of the multiplicity of becoming mostly from *On the Genealogy of Morality*, which was published shortly after the second edition of *The Gay Science*.³ He then combines this with a reading of eternal return

2 See GS §111-2 where Nietzsche discusses "the origin of the logical" as the creative predisposition to "treat the the similar as identical," giving them "a head start over those who saw everything 'in a flux'," (GS §111) for "in truth a continuum faces us, from which we isolate a few pieces, just as we always perceive a movement only as isolated points." (GS §112)

3 Ward (2010) raises concerns about the legitimacy of Deleuze's interpretation of eternal return on the grounds that Deleuze takes Nietzsche's account of the genealogical struggle of forces which give sense to phenomena in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and applies this to the earlier thought of eternal return, whereas Ward describes these as "two different stories" with which Nietzsche is trying to address different problems. As I have shown in chapter four, there is evidence in the unpublished notes that the plural character of the will to power and the way this expresses itself through the moment are precisely what Nietzsche is attempting to convey with the thought of eternal return, even though, as I have argued, this is not something that emerges strongly enough from the account of the moment in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

that relies primarily upon passages from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the unpublished notes of the 1880s, with the result that the introduction of eternal return in GS §341 is notably absent from Deleuze's account.⁴ As such, Deleuze does not at this point explicitly address the rhythmical concerns that emerge from *The Gay Science*. It is only later in *A Thousand Plateaus* that we find the rhythmical nature of becoming brought to the fore. Even in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* which is ostensibly a presentation of Nietzsche's, rather than Deleuze's, version of eternal return, we find something that appears very different to the traditional anthropological or cosmological readings that we saw in earlier chapters. As I have argued, Nietzsche's own attempt to express this through his account of Zarathustra's experience of the moment is ultimately unsuccessful, because it presents the moment as a break, but without allowing us to affirm this as part of the rhythmical passage of time. We shall see that in going beyond Nietzsche's own presentation of eternal return, Deleuze offers us a version of eternal return that comes much closer to addressing Nietzsche's original rhythmical concerns, and which develops the rhythmical account of time that Stambaugh suggested with her reading of the moment.

Deleuze writes that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* "sets out, primarily, to analyse what Nietzsche calls becoming,"⁵ to explore why becoming is such an important concept for Nietzsche, and what it is that Nietzsche's work introduces or reveals about becoming for the first time. While Deleuze identifies in the opening of the work that "Nietzsche's most general project is the introduction of the concepts of sense and value into philosophy,"⁶ it is key that this does not devolve into a reintroduction of established values,⁷ which as

4 Deleuze does draw on Nietzsche's introduction of the overman in GS §335 to indicate the transformation that eternal return is supposed to achieve. But for the nature of eternal return itself he relies on other material, using notes from 1881-2 to indicate how eternal return should not be interpreted (as a cyclical cosmology), and then later notes from 1884 onwards to develop his own interpretation of eternal return as that which filters out reactive forces. I am grateful to Keith Ansell Pearson for sharing an unpublished piece which explores the use Deleuze made of the unpublished notes collected as *La Volonté de Puissance*, and where possible details the corresponding section of *The Will to Power*.

5 NP xi

6 NP 1

7 A tendency that Deleuze detected in the period following the second world war, in which "everyone was all for using a concept of value, but they had completely neutralized it; they had subtracted all critical or creative sense from it. What they made of it was an instrument of established values. It was pure anti-Nietzsche—even worse, it was Nietzsche hijacked, annihilated, suppressed, it was Nietzsche brought back to Sunday mass." (*DI* 136)

Nietzsche makes clear in *On the Genealogy of Morality* are notoriously skillful in rebranding and smuggling themselves back into prominence. Nietzsche's project is rather a critical approach to evaluation that allows for the creation of new values. But as I have argued throughout this thesis, in order to see how such a critical and creative operation is even possible, we must first understand how the creative futural nature of thought can emerge from becoming – how thought is able to “split the continuum,” in a manner that does not destroy its connection to it. I therefore argue that for Deleuze, it is the idea of the multiplicity of becoming that is Nietzsche's revolutionary thought. Nietzsche is the historical figure who goes furthest to recoup becoming from its Platonic understanding as something completely at odds with the world of being, which could only conceive it as “an unlimited becoming, a becoming insane, a becoming hubric and guilty.”⁸ This chaos without borders or limits would be utterly incapable of producing the world of things we perceive around us were it not for “the act of a demiurge who forcibly bends it, who imposes the model of the idea on it.”⁹ Platonic becoming, as intrinsically unformed, requires the external hand of God in order to form it into beings. God, however, is dead, and Nietzsche as we saw in GS §109 must unpick the effects of his shadow from the way we conceive becoming. If there is no god, nothing that stands outside the world, how do we get beings from becoming? Deleuze makes explicit that which was suggested in the previous chapter, that the answer to this problem lies in Nietzsche's conception of becoming itself, as that which “does not receive its law from elsewhere,” but instead “possesses its own law in itself.”¹⁰ The “law” that becoming contains in itself is the “lucky accident”¹¹ that allows us to see things as beautiful. Once we move away from viewing becoming purely in terms of lack, as an empty indeterminacy waiting for God to come and give it purpose and form, we start to see how

8 NP 26-7

9 NP 26-7

10 *ibid.* See PTAG §5 on the “one world” of Heraclitus, “supported by eternal unwritten laws, flowing upward and downward in brazen rhythmic beat.” In chapter three we noted the tension between the untarrying rhythm of Heraclitean becoming and the “myopic” rhythm of thought that produced land within it, but suggested in chapter four that the key to resolving this tension lies in rethinking the nature of becoming as a continuum – that rather than a smooth flux, the “spikes” of this “brazen rhythmic beat” emerge from the differential nature of the will to power. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari go on to develop the idea that the roots of this “myopic” vision lie within the rhythms of becoming itself, as the geological process of stratification and the rhythmical process of territorialisation (the emergence of different kinds of land, physical or named) emerge as a part of univocal being.

11 GS §339

becoming is capable of generating its own order rather than requiring this to be imposed from outside. Instead of an opposition between being and becoming, the idea that “being and law are present in becoming”¹² begins to show us how the passage from one to the other can occur without external intervention.

Once the Platonic legislator is out of the picture, becoming is free to entertain itself as it sees fit, and the rules it invents are those of a game – the notion of play that we find not only in the sense of music in *The Gay Science*, of the improviser who “constantly plays the riskiest game,”¹³ but continually throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as the “better players” for whom Zarathustra is a “prelude,”¹⁴ the “playful monsters” concealed at the bottom of Zarathustra’s sea.¹⁵ Deleuze finds in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the idea that we are all players, but that we can learn to play *better*, to think the game of becoming better. The optimism about our prospects comes from the sense that in playing the game of becoming, we are expressing becoming – we are supported in our endeavors by a sense of a becoming that wants to play – that is at one with us in our attempts to individuate it in thought. Becoming itself creates this multiplicity, dividing itself, for “in this game of becoming, the being of becoming also plays the game with itself; the *aeon* (time), says Heraclitus, is a child who plays, plays at draughts.”¹⁶ Becoming (which as we see here is also *aeon*, the time of becoming¹⁷) may appear unitary, but like the child who can play draughts with itself by taking on the roles of both opponents, it encompasses different impulses within itself. This playfulness of becoming signals its commonality with the world around us. Becoming is not a Schopenhauerian ground, but instead an “objectified deception,”¹⁸ with its own urge towards fiction. As such it not only “counts as more profound, primeval, 'metaphysical', than the will to truth, to reality, to mere appearance,”¹⁹

12 *NP* 28

13 *GS* §303

14 *TSZ* III ‘On Old and New Tablets’ 20

15 *TSZ* II ‘On the Sublime Ones’

16 *NP* 23

17 On Deleuze’s account of the two temporalities of *chronos* and *aeon* in *Logic of Sense*, see Sellars (2007) and Williams (2011:134ff).

18 *NP* 174

19 Deleuze (*NP* 174) quotes *WTP* §853 in which Nietzsche writes that even in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “the will to appearance, to illusion, to deception, to becoming and change (to objectified deception) .. counts as more profound, primeval, 'metaphysical', than the will to truth, to reality, to

but also cannot be said to stand opposed to them. Becoming differs from being not because it is unindividuated, but because it is individuation. It does not passively await the divine creation of the world, but instead invents and creates difference itself.

As with the child's game of draughts, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* the game of becoming is split into two sides or tendencies, qualities of force that are either active and reactive. Deleuze draws this distinction primarily from *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and we find the best example of it in Nietzsche's reworking of the Hegelian encounter between the master and the slave.²⁰ In Hegel's master-slave dialectic, each side of consciousness craves recognition from the other, and the distinction between them collapses when each realises that their identity depends on that which they are not.²¹ In the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche argues that this is indeed how *one* half of the pairing view this dynamic. The slave absolutely bases their existence, and their idea of what is good, on that which they are not, because "slave morality says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other', 'non-self'²² - according to this view, the master is evil, I am not the master, therefore I am good. To be "good," for the slave, is not a positive attribute, but a lack, which is given specification negatively (to be good is to be unlike the master). This need to negate the master precedes and defines their being, to the extent that their existence is a reaction against their other. But this is not true of the master, who as Nietzsche writes "conceives of the basic idea 'good' by himself, in advance and spontaneously, and only then creates a notion of 'bad'!"²³ The master's evaluation of the slave as that which differs from and therefore is worse than themselves is no more than "an afterthought, an aside, a complementary colour, whilst the other is the original, the beginning, the actual deed in the conception of slave morality."²⁴ This type of value-formation is active, expressing itself as an entirely new, immanently conceived creation,

mere appearance: - the last is itself merely a form of the will to illusion"

20 If the plurality of becoming is Nietzsche's most important insight for Deleuze, then Hegel (who "wanted to ridicule pluralism" *NP* 4) is concomitantly his most important enemy, and "anti-Hegelianism runs through Nietzsche's work as its cutting edge" (*NP* 8)

21 *NP* 8-10

22 *GM* I §10

23 *GM* I §11

24 *Ibid.*

acting to “impose forms, to create forms,”²⁵ rather than reacting to something that already exists.²⁶

The distinction Deleuze emphasises between active and reactive forces elucidates the seemingly contradictory characteristics that Nietzsche identifies within rhythm. In chapter three, we explored the way in which two opposing aspects of rhythm emerge from Nietzsche's work in *The Gay Science* - not of flow and point, or the Dionysian and Apolline, but between rhythm's creative and retrogressive properties. Nietzsche had previously located these conflicting aspects in the distinction between temporal ancient rhythm and the accented rhythm of modernity, but is forced to conclude that both are co-present as force and time within rhythm. Deleuze now identifies these tendencies as the becoming-active and becoming-reactive of forces in the will to power.²⁷ The rhythmic difference between the two lies in their relation to the time which constitutes them, and whether their drive is to release this time or to suppress and control it. Both are aspects of rhythm. However Deleuze states that we only have the ability to recognise the reactive forces of becoming.²⁸ In chapter two we noted the difficulty of hearing our way out of our own familiar sense of rhythm, in which ancient rhythms sound so different to our own that we do not even recognise them as rhythms. This, for Deleuze, is why we understand becoming as a reaction to or lack of static being. As creatures, we are primarily reactive. Memory, habit, nutrition, reproduction, adaptation - and therefore also the consciousness that emerges as the combination of all these forces - all are reactive. We are thinking with

25 NP 39

26 The relationship of active and reactive forces should nonetheless not be viewed in terms of temporal precedence – the time of *aeon* or becoming is not linear chronological time, but as we shall see a different kind of time which functions at an ontological level, in which “action and reaction are not in a relation of succession but in one of coexistence in the origin itself.” (NP 51)

27 These two qualities of force are intimately bound together for Nietzsche, as I have argued his engagement with the phenomenon of rhythm makes clear. Understanding the relationship between active and reactive as non-oppositional is essential if we are to avoid the problems of nihilistic thought that we explored in the first chapter. Norman (2000) stresses that it is the affirmative character of difference that prevents a nihilistic understanding of Nietzsche's thought as a negation of negation, and highlights Deleuze's interpretation as one that succeeds in advancing this aspect of Nietzsche's work.

28 This for Nietzsche is the “administrative nihilism” which has led to the becoming-reactive of modern science by “spiriting away their basic concept, that of actual *activity*” by forcing “‘adaptation’ into the foreground, which is a second-rate activity, just a reactivity, indeed life itself has been defined as an increasingly efficient inner adaptation to external circumstances.” (GM II §12)

reactive brains, and it is therefore very hard to think outside our accustomed reactive perspective and “to characterise these active forces for, by nature, they escape consciousness.”²⁹ The active forces within becoming are a rhythm that we cannot hear, like the subtle temporal differences that we have lost the ability to perceive. Consciousness is motivated by reactive forces, and so our attempts to think becoming can only pick up on its reactive side. When we try to conceive what becoming might be reacting to, we imagine for it an other – Being, Identity, Eternity, all reactively defined as that which becoming is not. Our thought is shaped, enframed by nihilism to the extent that we cannot recognise anything else, and that is why “we have the hierarchy that we deserve, we who are essentially reactive, we who take the triumphs of reaction for a transformation of action and slaves for new masters – we who only recognise hierarchy back to front.”³⁰

We are right, as far as it goes - the becoming that we are aware of *is* reactive. But what the reactive forces in becoming are reacting to is not being, but becoming itself – becoming-active. As we have seen, becoming is able to be its own opponent, to counter its own moves in its game of draughts. If we are able to think the multiplicity of becoming, we will then be able to see that becoming is more than purely reactive. This is Nietzsche’s principal importance for Deleuze. By understanding becoming as something that involves more than one force, driven by more than one kind of quality, Deleuze says that Nietzsche opens the way to a philosophy that can think difference as primary, because we can now see that becoming can react to *itself*, rather than requiring something other than it – being, identity – to which it must react.

Deleuze’s examination of the nature of becoming has defined the task for eternal return. As the transformative counter to nihilism, eternal return needs to allow us to think active, rather than only reactive, forces. But how is it to achieve this, when “*ressentiment*, bad conscience and nihilism are not psychological traits but the foundation of the humanity in man. They are the principle of human being as such?”³¹ Reactive forces appear to have the upper hand, not only because consciousness is reactive, but also because active forces do not remain active – they fall prey to the depredations of reactive forces,

29 NP 38

30 NP 56

31 NP 60

becoming reactive in their turn. This “distressing conclusion,” that not only are reactive forces part of becoming but that “everywhere they are triumphant” explains why “we do not feel, experience, or know any becoming but becoming-reactive.”³² As Deleuze explains, the triumph of reactive forces comes about not because they are stronger than active forces, but because the reactive force performs “a subtraction which separates active force from what it can do and denies its difference in order to make it a reactive force.”³³ As difference, what the active force can do is generate something new within being. The separation from its activity is the nihilistic process we described in chapter one, in which we excluded our creative role from the identities we created, excluding difference and novelty and instead externalising these as the actions of a malevolent Fate. This apparently inevitable decline of active forces into the reactive is what we need to arrest.

This all-encompassing sense of existence as reactive finds its temporal manifestation in our understanding of causality, in which nothing is conceived as an immanent action but instead as an effect of that which precedes it. An ever-non-existent past is located as the ultimate site of all activity and ultimately agency, as we saw in chapter one when we explored our relationship with Fate. Deleuze names causality as the first moment of the process by which forces become reactive – in which force, before being separated from what it can do, is first split into doer and deed, and “an imaginary relation of causality is substituted for a real relation of significance.”³⁴ Our inability to think in any but reactive terms is what leads to the concept of the world and ourselves as determined - everything is an effect, a reaction to a prior cause. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the way that we understand time is crucial in shaping the way we conceive identities, which was why Nietzsche sought to disrupt our habitual rhythmic time which succumbs to the deadening power of the *ictus* with the more subtle rhythmic differentials of the time of eternal return. Now we find here in Deleuze’s account that viewing time as the inevitable playing out of a linear causal progress is fundamental to reactive thinking. As with the reading of eternal return that we developed from moment time in the previous chapter, the construction of a new relationship with time is the key to developing a new, non-nihilistic

32 NP 59

33 NP 53

34 NP 115

mode of thought. But by recognising the active and reactive forces within the will to power, Deleuze is able to explain more clearly how eternal return can achieve this.

For Deleuze, eternal return functions as an interruption of determinism and the oppressive relationship with the past that we saw at work in Nietzsche's presentation of rhythmic time. Specifically, Deleuze's eternal return achieves this through encouraging us to reconfigure our relationship with chance, which as we have seen is what we must affirm as necessary if we are to make things beautiful, in the kind of love Nietzsche names *amor fati*. Chance is that which lies outside reaction, and therefore that which we struggle to understand as part of the becoming-reactive that is available to consciousness in thought. The nature of becoming as multiple presents the multiplicity of beings in the world in a new light. The role of chance in eternal return, and how this operates within a non-causal time, is what will allow us to hear the forces that actively emerge from becoming rather than operating as a predetermined effect of the past.

The nature of becoming as a plurality of forces, either active or reactive in character, is crucial for Deleuze's reading which distinguishes Nietzsche's own position from the scientific "proofs" in which he thinks through the implications of a mechanistic view of the universe, and which as we have seen are taken up by the cosmological reading as Nietzsche's own understanding of eternal return. We need to differentiate Nietzschean becoming from the mechanistic view of becoming which results in the idea of "the great dice game of existence,"³⁵ in which a finite number of forces necessarily produce repetition across infinite time.³⁶ In this great game of becoming we, the player, must imagine the different forces as dice. We have a handful of these dice, which we throw again and again. But there is no goal that would offer a resolution or winning condition for this game - the game stretches on into infinity, and "in infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times."³⁷ Eventually, we would throw the same combinations of dice, in the same order, again.. and again.. an infinite number of times. Nietzsche concludes that according to the mechanistic

35 *WTP* §1066 (March-June 1888)

36 Widder traces Nietzsche's rejection of this mechanistic conception, which rules out an understanding of eternal return as a recurrence of the same (Widder 2008:7).

37 *WTP* §1066 (March-June 1888)

view, a multiplicity of forces of becoming would result in “the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum.”³⁸ There would be constant change, but nothing new. The mechanistic conception of the universe, which imagines that these finite forces must eventually reach a final state, therefore undoes itself. We must find a new way to understand the relationship of force and time.

We saw in chapter four that the ever-changing nature of force as it emerges in moment time severs any possibility of the mechanistic causal connections that are entailed in this unbroken circular movement. Deleuze now explicitly reconfigures the nature of the game by changing the perspective of the player, and their relationship with chance. The mechanistic “proof” of eternal return operates as a totality built not from the throws, but from their results, in which we are not playing the game, but processing it as a table of numbers after the event. The mechanistic understanding places us outside the game, outside even the infinity of time that the experiment encompasses, taking up the position of the eternal divine agent of novelty that Nietzsche has eradicated from the de-deified universe of GS §109. Deleuze concentrates instead on the moment of each individual dicethrow, from the perspective of becoming itself – from the perspective of the player.³⁹ And we find that what is missing from the mechanistic account is another moment which comes before the combination of results is determined, in which the dice are thrown. Considered individually then, rather than as part of a series recorded than after the event, each throw of the dice contains *two* moments. In the first, secret moment, the dice are thrown into the air - all combinations are possible, we know that anything can happen. This is the moment of chance. But we also know that the dice must fall to earth again. This, the second moment, is necessity. This is the return of eternal return that Deleuze is talking about in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* - not the return of a moment, a thing, or of some kind of cycle of the whole of time, but the return of the forces of the past in a particular combination. The moment theory of time that we explored in the previous chapter identifies difference in the return of the moment. Now Deleuze further specifies this difference as the double moments of the dice thrown and then returning as they fall.

38 Ibid. Deleuze explains the mechanistic “proof” as an “apologetic” defense of eternal return, mobilised when it is a question of “defeating the *bad player* on his own ground” (NP 190 note 23).

39 See Conway (1998) who emphasises that Nietzsche too “is concerned not with a repetition of dicethrows, dutifully choreographed by the sterile statistician, but with the repetition contained within a single, fatal throw of the Dionysian cubes.”

This is how Deleuze refines the “cosmological and physical doctrine”⁴⁰ of eternal return, by reading it as an ontological account of becoming, which helps us to understand how something new can emerge into being, rather than as the product of reactive forces, determined by the past. By interrogating the idea of the dicethrow found in the mechanistic account, Deleuze separates necessity from determinism - it is necessary that *something* will happen, that the dice will fall, but *what* this is is not determined. This is how time passes rather than being caught up or enchained in causality, and this is how the creativity of thought takes place. But in order for this creative thought to happen, our attitude to the game of becoming and time is of crucial importance. We must not only understand, but affirm, both moments. We previously stated that the test of affirmation in the traditional anthropological reading of eternal return was insufficient, because it did not encompass the moment of selection. Deleuze's reading incorporates this successfully with the second aspect of eternal return, in which the anthropological reading is reborn as an “ethical and selective thought,”⁴¹ as which we affirm not only the role of chance, but also the movement into being. In the first moment, when the dice are thrown, we affirm becoming as multiplicity. But the dice, once thrown, must fall to earth. Chance must lead to necessity. And it is this second affirmation, as one particular combination of forces emerges and takes hold of the phenomenon, that affirms becoming as being, affirming the unity of this multiplicity in the dice that fall.⁴² When we live the passage of time, rather than placing ourselves outside it, we find that the chain of determinism is broken, because the second moment of necessity must always be preceded by this first moment of chance.

The world in which the mechanistic account of the dicethrow takes place is one in which we are all too painfully aware of our lack of any goal. We are attempting to play a game

40 NP 43

41 NP 63

42 Woodward, while he recognises that Deleuze's understanding of eternal return is not a dialectical negation of negation, does however accuse him of replacing our devalued former values with a new ontological “guarantee” of difference, in which “multiplicity, becoming, and chance might provide just as much existential security as unity, being, and necessity,” but in a manner that devalues life, as “the affirmation of the abstract conception of life, as pure process of creation, implies the negation and destruction of all the actual life of this world.” (Woodward 2013) This, I argue, is to miss the aspect of double affirmation that Deleuze calls for with eternal return, in which not just chance, but also the necessity and *actuality* of particular combinations of forces must be affirmed.

with rules, but the last page of the rulebook has been torn away with the death of God, and so we throw on and on with no winning condition in sight. Deleuze draws instead on the image of the playing child that we touched upon in chapter three, and which also runs throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to ask us to reimagine this endless game as the creative play of the child, or the artist. In the first moment, we pick up the identities we have created, and consider them as all the possible forces which could take them up - we think them not in the set pattern they have been, but free of these ties (dinosaur in chess set, in medieval castle, in cutlery drawer). In the second moment, we actualise them as one of these possible combinations. The key to this creative process is the affirmation of eternal return itself, which differs in kind from all the options - unlike the bad player, we are not looking for a particular combination. We are not Veruca Salt's father, setting his workers to shelling a million chocolate bars in the hope of finding one golden ticket, relying on the sheer weight of probability to produce this in the end. In order to be good players, in order to be good thinkers, we must embrace free play. We must affirm chance, by affirming the possibility that any of the numbers may come up. We must affirm the selective operation of the moment that produces the beautiful moments of GS §339, rather than the return of particular events or contents within any individual moment.

Thinking the future via an affirmation of this moment of chance allows us to break the causality of habit and interrupt the deadening nihilistic rhythm of thought in which we form identities along set lines and relations because that is the way we formed them before. Instead, we have to throw them up, into the air, affirming all of the outcomes. And there has to be the moment of chance in order to produce the moment of destiny - if the dice are to land, if there are to be any forces emerging into the world as being, then they must be thrown first. The dicethrow of eternal return, as the simultaneous affirmation of chance and necessity, indicates not only that "necessity does not suppress or abolish chance," but that "unity does not suppress or deny multiplicity."⁴³ The unity of being is not opposed to the multiplicity of becoming, the fallen dice to the thrown dice, but instead the second moment is a completion, an affirmation, of the first. What we are affirming in these two moments therefore is difference – the multiplicity of the possible combinations, but affirmed within the unity of the selection that emerges from the throw. The way in which forces become does

43 NP 24

not reactively deny the force of becoming, but affirms it as the transformation into existence that is what an active force can do.

This is why Deleuze insists that only active forces return in the dicethrow of eternal return, because the necessity of the second moment is built on the first moment of chance, rather than determinism. Chance does not react - there is no wind that skews the dice, there are no weighted sides which force a particular combination. On an ontological level, the affirmation of chance, of the plurality and becoming of forces, must take place before there can be the return of this becoming as being. The role of chance, which as Deleuze stresses is "the opposite of a *continuum*."⁴⁴ creates not only the space for novelty but, when conceived as the first moment of the dicethrow, indicates how a future can emerge from this break. Deleuze therefore suggests that the task of thinking eternal return, in which there is no static being but rather the return of the moment of difference that produces this effect, "must be formulated in yet another way," as the problem of the passage of time:

how can the past be constituted in time? How can the present pass? The passing moment could never pass if it were not already past and yet to come - at the same time as being present. If the present did not pass of its own accord, if it had to wait for a new present in order to become past, the past in general would never be constituted in time, and this particular present would not pass. We cannot wait, the moment must be simultaneously present and past, present and yet to come, in order for it to pass (and to pass for the sake of other moments). The present must coexist with itself as past and yet to come.⁴⁵

We saw in the previous chapter that Nietzsche's attempt to convey the discontinuity of time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* fails because it does not allow us to affirm the passage of time. The cessation of time that Zarathustra experiences in the hours of midnight and noon takes place beyond the earth, without the rhythmic beat that allows us to think and to affirm time as *both* flow and point, as the discontinuous moment in its essential relationship to the passage of time. If we are to be able to affirm time in the rhythmic mode in which it appears to us, then we need to understand not only how the moment is always different to the past, but also how it emerges from the past. Only by recognising the interdependence of present, past, and future in this manner will we learn to hear and to

44 NP 41

45 NP 44-5

think the rhythms of the future and to affirm the temporal individuations, including our own, that are constructed as this passage of time.

Nietzsche and Philosophy therefore brings out the idea that eternal return functions as not just a break in time, but as the motor of its passage, as "the synthetic relation of the moment to itself as present, past and future [which] grounds it[s] relation to other moments."⁴⁶ The development of this idea however is not found in Nietzsche's own work (either published or unpublished), or in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, but in Deleuze's account of time in *Difference and Repetition*. We must turn here to understand why Deleuze insists that "eternal return must be thought of as a synthesis; a synthesis of time and its dimensions,"⁴⁷ and the way in which its role within this synthesis shows how "the eternal return is thus an answer to the problem of *passage*."⁴⁸

Univocal being and the three syntheses of time in *Difference and Repetition*

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze argues that eternal return is the way in which forces become, via a selection in which only active forces return. In *Difference and Repetition*, published six years later, he encompasses and revises this reading of eternal return within his own ontology of difference. Eternal return is part of a temporal process that involves different levels of repetition and synthesis, and Deleuze argues here that these different syntheses are together what make up time. The three syntheses that Deleuze describes are, I argue, fundamentally rhythmic in nature. Specifically, they reveal the role of the caesura in generating the two supposedly contradictory aspects of rhythm as point and flow. We understand rhythm on the one hand as something inherently multiple, which necessarily contains many beats. But we also talk about the rhythm of a piece in the sense of overarching flow, such as the rhythm of a life, in which disparate events are linked into a cohesive whole. Deleuze's account of time in *Difference and Repetition* expresses both of these aspects of rhythm, drawn together via eternal return in the third synthesis, the empty form of time that synthesises the first two. Deleuze's account of time as the three syntheses thus functions as a development of Nietzsche's intimation that "rhythm is... the

46 NP 45

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

form of time"⁴⁹ almost one hundred years previously. We shall therefore turn now to *Difference and Repetition*, to see how eternal return functions within Deleuze's ontology to transform the multiplicity of becoming into thinkable and individuated beings in the world around us.

We saw that in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze developed an account of becoming as plural, with eternal return as the filter that selects the active forces which will become, returning as being. Deleuze identifies this idea of the plural nature of becoming as "the great discovery of Nietzsche's philosophy, which marks his break with Schopenhauer and goes under the name of the will to power or the Dionysian world."⁵⁰ As we saw in chapter two, Nietzsche's earliest work was influenced by the Schopenhauerian insight that identities, such as the self we feel ourselves to be, have no existence in the abyss of becoming. Schopenhauer believed that this wrenching of a single undivided Will into life as the plurality of being was the cause of our suffering in the world. But as Deleuze continues to argue in *Difference and Repetition*, Nietzsche did not equate the lack of identity with the absence of individuation in this becoming, which:

is neither an impersonal nor an abstract Universal beyond individuation. On the contrary, it is the I and the self which are the abstract universals. They must be replaced, but in and by individuation, in the direction of the individuating factors which consume them and which constitute the fluid world of Dionysus. What cannot be replaced is individuation itself. Beyond the self and the I we find not the impersonal but the individual and its factors, individuation and its fields, individuality and its pre-individual singularities."⁵¹

This, for Deleuze, is the key point. In order to think pre-individual becoming, we should not be pushing towards that which is more abstract, towards an uninterrupted singular whole. If we do so, ending up with an abstract Universal such as Schopenhauer's will as Idea, we do not escape identity, but instead produce a giant super-identity that has subsumed the whole world within it, which has excluded plurality and difference along with the individual. Nietzsche's main insight for Deleuze is that we need to move in the other direction, if we are to think becoming - toward *more* difference, not less. He argues that prior to

49 eKGWB Nachgelassene Fragmente 1871 (see ch 2 note 30)

50 DR 321-2

51 Ibid. As in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, it is this plural nature of becoming that is the most important aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy for Deleuze, with eternal return as the temporal process that reveals the plurality to us as becoming becomes.

individuated beings, we find not a flat continuum, waiting to be divided into beings, but instead the process of individuation itself. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze described how becoming was populated by two kinds of forces, active and reactive. In *Difference and Repetition* he develops the nature of this pre-individuated becoming as “difference in itself.” As in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, becoming does not have the status of a flat indeterminate morass, passively waiting to be carved into beings by the hand of an external ground (whether this be God or the power of the negative). Instead it is an active, roiling surge of “formless *ungrounded* chaos which has no law other than its own repetition, its own reproduction in the development of that which diverges and decentres.”⁵²

Now however the distinction of active and reactive is absent from Deleuze’s account of becoming, as he emphasizes the multiple nature of being as one. Instead we find the idea of primary difference as the self-differentiation of being, of being and the individuation of being as one. This is what Deleuze calls the “univocity of being.” The idea that being is univocal, that it speaks with one voice, seems on the face of it a strange way to invoke difference and individuation. How can speaking with one voice be difference? For Deleuze, univocity expresses the idea that being as becoming is not opposed to the way it manifests in the world as beings. There is no division between becoming and being, they do not speak different languages, which require an untranslatable conversion as a smooth continuum or unitary Will of becoming unaccountably dissolves into individuated beings. Instead the “voice” we hear in the world around us is also the voice of becoming, a voice that produces itself.⁵³ In *Difference and Repetition* we find that the difference between becoming and being lies not in the nature of the song, but in its repetition. It is through repetition, through the play of eternal return, that we are able to “isolate and delimit” that

52 DR 82

53 The “univocity” of Deleuze’s account of becoming in *Difference and Repetition* has been challenged by some commentators on the grounds that he gives priority to the “virtual” intensive realm of problems or ideas, over the realm of extension in which these become actualised as the forms we perceive around us in the world (see Clisby 2015 for an account of this debate). While I disagree that the Deleuzian distinction between the virtual and the actual constitutes a hierarchical distinction, instead operating more along the co-creative lines we identified as the Nietzschean model of love in chapter one, I do feel that the move towards the more explicitly plural account of becomings that we find in *A Thousand Plateaus* avoids the mistake of viewing the virtual as providing the sole creative drive of the actual.

which is individuated in being "as a life in itself,"⁵⁴ but as a repetition that develops *within* the melody itself, without an identity that precedes this repetition.

Deleuze reiterates in *Difference and Repetition* that Nietzsche's "eternal return is in no way the return of a same, a similar, or an equal,"⁵⁵ but of difference, and must be understood as a filter that operates on the forces in becoming, in which only those that go to the limit of what they can do emerge to find expression as being. The forces which pass through eternal return, and the others that remain unexpressed in being, are all trying to transform into something new, to pass to their limit and then beyond, and become something else. The only thing that separates them, the successful from the unsuccessful attempts, is that the filter of "eternal return alone effects the true selection, because it eliminates the average forms,"⁵⁶ and so the forces that pass the test of eternal return are more what they can be, because they transform and become something different. Deleuze therefore argues that "eternal return is the univocity of being, the effective realisation of that univocity,"⁵⁷ because the movement of eternal return will not permit us to privilege identity over difference - it is "at once both production of repetition on the basis of difference and selection of difference on the basis of repetition."⁵⁸ The three syntheses of time are an account of how this production and selection that we first explored in the first chapter take place.

In the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze describes becoming as a process in which eternal return filters forces to allow through only those which go to their limit. In chapter two he approaches this from the opposite direction, to understand the process that constitutes us as subjects that can experience these beings. Beginning with our experience of time, Deleuze works progressively deeper to explore the different repetitions that constitute the foundation of our experience, the ground, and finally uncovers eternal return as that which "ungrounds," opening up the space to make possible our experience of time, and of ourselves as temporal beings. We shall see that for Deleuze, time does not just

54 GS §334

55 DR 303

56 DR 66

57 DR 51

58 DR 52

structure our experience, but also constitutes the self that has, or better, *is* these experiences. Rather than the Kantian search for the conditions of possible experience, Deleuze is concerned with discovering the “conditions of real experience” - not what *can* happen, but what *does* happen, and these conditions “are indistinguishable from intensity” understood as non-oppositional, non-representative, primary difference.⁵⁹ His account of the different kinds of difference present in three distinct, but interdependent, syntheses of time is an attempt to explain not how the multiple forces of becoming *are able* to transform into the individuated beings that we perceive, but the conditions under which they actually *do*, what it is that makes this take place, working backwards to find eternal return at the root of this experience.

In order to understand how the theory of time Deleuze develops here extends the rhythmic theory of time that we traced throughout Nietzsche's work, I will look at each of the three syntheses in turn, and show how we need to understand time as involving all these aspects: the linkages of habit in the first synthesis, the sense of flow in the second synthesis, and how this is “ungrounded” in the caesura as the self-dividing nature of time in the third synthesis. I argued in chapter three that rhythm and the rhythmical nature of thought is the problem that Nietzsche takes up in *The Gay Science*, and that he uses eternal return to disrupt our current overly-accented and nihilistic rhythm. We then saw how a theory of moment time emerges from Nietzsche's unpublished notes. Here in Deleuze's account of the three syntheses we find a theory of time that I argue is rhythmic in nature (even though Deleuze does not name it as such).

Nietzsche argues that the repetition we find with eternal return is one in which “*everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being.*”⁶⁰ Nothing persists or perdures, but some things or phenomena appear to return or repeat, and this repetition is what creates the impression of static being. The underlying question then is how do we come to perceive this repetition that produces the impression of static being as its effect? What is it that allows us to link one instance or occurrence of a beat to another, in the rhythmic process that we described in chapter two that allows us to smooth these irregular differences into something that we perceive as the repetition of the same?

59 *DR* 291

60 *WTP* §617 (1883-1885)

Deleuze now takes up this question, examining what happens when we perceive individual phenomena (A) as repeating occurrences within a series: A A A.. Let us translate this into the rhythmical language that Nietzsche used in his early investigations - "A A A.." becomes ♪ ♪ ♪.. . As a rhythmical rather than logical series, $A \neq A$. No note is the same, and the repetition is always of the irregular, the different. What is it, Deleuze asks, that allows us to connect these disparate events, and on the basis of this expect a fourth beat? We do not consciously analyse our surroundings to draw such series from them - and even in the cases where we do (waiting for the other shoe to fall, expecting a particular coworker to be late on a Monday) any conscious attempt to discern and predict the pattern is based on an ability to firstly retain, but then also to link, the preceding occurrences, to forge a connection between one beat and another.

This ability to connect beats or instants must exist, and yet it is not *our* ability, it is not something we consciously do. Deleuze describes it as a habit - and yet it is not our habit, either. It is what Deleuze describes as a passive synthesis, the habit of contracting habits. A passive synthesis is not a synthesis that we perform, but one that we are. Deleuze explains this by saying that the retention and the connection of these impressions or beats are not two separate moments, two separate things that consciousness does, but rather one movement of contraction that forms consciousness - indeed, that *is* consciousness. Nietzsche insists that the distinction we draw between doer and deed, between the lightning and the action of flashing, is a false separation. Similarly, Deleuze says that to make a divide between consciousness, the reception of impressions, their retention, and connection, is to misunderstand what consciousness is. Consciousness is the flash of lightning. Consciousness is a habit, which develops through the repetitive reception of stimuli as contracted or wrapped together. The ability to contract several beats into a pattern or rhythm is something that develops into us, as consciousness. This is why it is not our habit, not a habit that belongs to us - we are the habit. The stimuli of the world slate down like rain upon the ground, and we are the hollow that forms underneath their pressure and collects them like a puddle. This is what consciousness is.

And it is not just our consciousness, but our whole being that is made up of these different abilities to retain and link - to contract - stimuli such as air, food, light. All beings are made up of these habits, organisms as souls, which "must be attributed to the heart, to the

muscles, nerves and cells ... whose entire function is to contract a habit.”⁶¹ These contracting souls are rhythms, collections of discrete points that are linked together. And their temporality is a crucial feature of the nature of a rhythm. The beats of a rhythm are not points in space, but moments in time. Aristoxenus wrote that we must be able to hear a rhythm in order to consider it as such, and Deleuze now stresses that this ability is what we are. The ability to hear or perceive a rhythm, to contract disparate beats into one single sense of identity, is what our consciousness is. We find here the layered sense of division and repetition that we found when we explored rhythm through Aristoxenus, as he described the repetitions of time split into beats, but then collected, split, and repeated again as the bar or meter. For Deleuze however it is not a case of time being split apart by this rhythmical perception. Being is univocal - already multiple, whether it has been gathered as consciousness or not. Rather than splitting becoming apart, it is time that is gathered together, as this contraction of that which is inherently different into rhythms.

The habit of rhythmical perception is the consciousness with which we think. As I look around the room, I am the habits that are producing me even as I type, I am the rhythmical activity of contracting all of my past habits and future expectations into this one moment, this one beat - and then of doing it again, and again. We do not form such a habit – instead, we are its rhythmical performance. This is the passive synthesis of the present, in which our awareness of our desires and needs and our simultaneous inheritance of that which has made us are combined into a lived experience that is produced from both past and future.

This is the first synthesis of time that Deleuze outlines, in which the living present that we experience comes about through a contraction of instants, the same process of contraction that is at work in rhythmical perception. It is this passive synthesis that produces consciousness, and that therefore makes any active synthesis possible, in which we are consciously aware of something as repetition. But in order for the passive synthesis of habit to take place, something else is required. “The claim of the present is precisely that it passes,”⁶² so there must be something for it to pass into, that will allow it to pass away. In order for rhythm as a series of beats to be perceptible, there must also be another sense

61 *DR* 95

62 *DR* 101

of rhythm at work - that of a continuous flow. The sense of rhythm as something inherently divided seems to be at odds with the other sense in which it is used - as something smooth and coherent. But we not only contract the beats we hear, the sense of the previous beats leading up to the current one, and the imminent sense of which beats we expect to follow. We also embed these individual beats into our sense of the rhythm overall. This is what takes place in Deleuze's second passive synthesis of time, that which "causes the present to pass, that to which the present and habit belong, which must be considered the ground of time."⁶³

Whilst in the first synthesis the past and future were contracted into and resonated within each single beat or moment, in order for this to happen we must also be able to hear these beats as coexistent within an overall pattern or flow. Deleuze calls this sense of time as a continuum the pure past, which can be assessed only as an absent event, rather than while we are living it as present. We noted in the first chapter the problem of how we initially delimit phenomena as part of a melody, as a life in itself. This is the operation indicated by the pure past, in which a decision already made scopes the extent of what we consider to be part of the melody. This selection or decision is once again not made *by* us as the experiencing subject, but is once again a passive synthesis. Whereas the past and potential future beats of the series of the first synthesis emerged from the contracted present, in the second synthesis the present is now implicated within the pure past, just as the beat that we hear is a part of the overall rhythm of a piece, but as the most lightly embedded moment within our overall sense of the piece. Whereas in the first synthesis repetition draws off a difference, in the second synthesis the difference lies between different levels of repetition, as the entirety of the past is contracted into a point as the present, a present which "designates the most contracted degree of an entire past, which is itself like a coexisting totality."⁶⁴ It is this synthesis that gives us the sense of a past that embraces within it absolutely everything in one long continuum, which we call "destiny."⁶⁵ It is this aspect of the past that characterises the oppressive character of time, that we focus upon as the inescapable "it was" that has moved beyond our control. The "rhythm of a life," a phrase conveying a sense of unity and coherence through movement, is this aspect of

63 Ibid.

64 *DR* 104

65 *DR* 105

the pure past - something that is said of that which has passed, with the sense of a eulogy. The pure past must be there, grounding the present and giving it somewhere into which it can pass. As with the first synthesis of the present, the second synthesis which layers moments into the pure past is not something that we do - it is another passive synthesis which makes possible the first passive synthesis of time, from which our consciousness emerges. It is not the rhythm as we hear and experience it in the present, and yet it grounds this present experience, providing the sense of rhythm as unified whole into which we can embed the present, and hear the layering of rhythms as part of an overall rhythm, delimited as a life in itself.

In his account of the three syntheses of time Deleuze is proceeding backwards, starting with the repetition in the first synthesis that, while still not something that we are consciously aware of or that we actively do, is closest to the rhythms that we hear, to the repetitions we are aware of in our everyday life. From here he explores another kind of repetition in the second synthesis as the sense of rhythmic continuity that must be present, if the first synthesis with its rhythmic contraction is to take place. This sense of continuity is that which we had previously characterised as the flowing, in contrast to the divided, aspect of rhythm. But this synthesis of the pure past is immobile, founded on the unrepresentable and irrecoverable moment of delimitation. It is what provides the sense of coherence to the contracted moments of the first synthesis, but not what makes them pass. We discover then that this second kind of repetition too requires yet a deeper, different kind of time in order to happen - the third synthesis, the time of eternal return. By this point, we are very far from anything that we would usually understand as time. But by working backwards in this fashion Deleuze hopes to show the lines connecting the alien movement of eternal return as the movement of becoming with thought as the third synthesis of time.

Finally, then, there is the third synthesis of the future. As in the case of the first two syntheses, the third synthesis is contrasted to Kant's model of an active synthesis performed by the subject, which creates the time that structures experience. For the Kantian subject, it is the relationship between present and past that forms a Venn diagram that provides the bounds for our identity. But for Deleuze the third, and most important, synthesis of time is neither active nor passive. For the third synthesis is eternal return, which "ceaselessly rumbles" within becoming, "the theatre of all metamorphosis or difference in itself."⁶⁶ Eternal return does not ensure the return of identities, but their

66 *DR* 301-2

destruction – they are forbidden to return, even in the next moment.⁶⁷ Eternal return is the event of becoming itself, in which there are no subjects to perform syntheses or even to be passively affected or constituted by them (as with the present and the past). The synthesis of eternal return, as that which selects difference into being, is what makes it possible for the other two subject-constituting syntheses to occur. It achieves this through a destruction of the old, the existent, Deleuze's reconfiguration of the active destruction that is highlighted in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* when reactive forces are turned against themselves and transformed into a becoming-active in the filter of eternal return. But in *Difference and Repetition* eternal return as futural becoming is explicitly identified as not just the end of reactive forces, but the end of time. It excludes anything that has a persisting identity (for nothing that remains, that has not gone, can return) but in so doing also creates the identity of "the same and the similar" which "are fictions engendered by the eternal return."⁶⁸ It guarantees the possibility of a future, in which these fictional identities come to be, while at the same time ensuring that this future will be different, these identities necessarily non-identical to what has come before:

...what would eternal return be, if we forgot that it is a vertiginous movement endowed with a force: not one which causes the return of the Same in general, but one which selects, one which expels as well as creates, destroys as well as produces?
Nietzsche's leading idea is to ground the repetition in eternal return on both the death of God and the dissolution of the self.⁶⁹

Eternal return is a repetition that destroys the agent or self who emerged through the contraction of the discrete beats or moments of the living present. It destroys the pure past, the smooth impenetrable sense of time as an undivided whole, decentring the divine circle of changeless eternity. Prefiguring both the self and God, it is that which expels both the present moment and the "it was" of the past, and makes something new come in its place. By filtering out the Same, eternal return destroys the carefully constructed identities of both the subject and time that were created in the first two syntheses. But by destroying them it makes it possible for them to happen again, for time to continue. It is this

67 DR 372 "...the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos. How could the reader believe that Nietzsche, who was the greatest critic of these categories, implicated Everything, the Same, the Identical, the Similar, the Equal, the I and the Self in the eternal return?"

68 DR 154

69 DR 12

destruction of the subject that we saw in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in which Zarathustra's experience of the moment signals his death.

Deleuze suggests that "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is unfinished, and that it was supposed to have a further section concerning the death of Zarathustra."⁷⁰ As a living subject, Zarathustra cannot convey the experience of eternal return, because it cannot be experienced – it is that which constitutes the experiencing subject, emerging as the individuation of a becoming that contains nothing individual and that permits nothing to remain. Deleuze cites circular texts such as Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* as works which indicate the repetitive production of difference which we find in eternal return, texts in which identity is revealed as "simulacra" as the identity of both the object (text) and subject (reader) is dissolved by the impossibility of stating a first or original point. The repetition of eternal return is the motor that produces this decentring, in which anything we might try to grasp as an identity is already different from itself from the outset - there is no start or end, "all resemblance abolished so that one can no longer point to the existence of an original and a copy."⁷¹ The "objectified deception"⁷² that we find in the game of becoming produces these simulacra in which we cannot distinguish between source and its object-child. Eternal return, which (as in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*) is responsible for the emergence of these repetitions as individuated beings, is not a mechanism that stands outside becoming,⁷³ but instead the individuating factor of self-differentiating being, the differential force of this chaos in which "everywhere, the depth of difference is primary."⁷⁴ Eternal return is therefore something that returns "at the cost of the resemblance and identity of Zarathustra himself: Zarathustra must lose these, the resemblance of the Self and the

70 DR 370 At a conference on Nietzsche organised by Deleuze in 1964, he notes the difficult task of reconstructing Nietzsche's ideas: "We must not forget that the Eternal Return and the Will to Power, the two most fundamental concepts in the Nietzschean corpus, are hardly introduced at all. They never did receive the extended treatment Nietzsche intended. In particular, you will recall that Zarathustra cannot be said to have articulated or formulated the eternal return, which is on the contrary hidden in the four books of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*... And Nietzsche's notes, in this case, do not permit us to anticipate how he would have organized any future essays concerning it." (DI 117-8)

71 DR 82

72 NP 174

73 DR 81 "as Nietzsche said, chaos and eternal return are not two different things."

74 DR 62

identity of the I must perish, and Zarathustra must die.”⁷⁵ However, as we saw in chapter four, the death of Zarathustra and the sleep of time indicates only the breakdown of the continuum of the past. It does not allow us to affirm the passage of time as that which allows continual creation from this destruction. Eternal return cannot be affirmed as something experienced by the subject, and instead must be understood and affirmed as an ontology. The only possible “final part” to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* would therefore be something like Deleuze’s own reading of eternal return, as that which both disrupts and generates narrative and therefore cannot be encompassed within any trajectory of the subject, whether living or dead.

In the third synthesis of time the grounding effect of the pure past is in its turn *ungrounded* by the discontinuous time of the future. As such, it is what drives time, by generating the movement of passage and provides us with a future into which to move. The subject, as we have seen, is constructed from the contractions of habit in the first synthesis, and the layered contractions of memory in the second synthesis. These must be related to each other, the present must be allowed to pass into the past of memory, in order for us to experience the passage of time. The third synthesis of time is what allows the first and second syntheses to produce the subject, through a generative inequality that separates our sense of what is past from the present. As Somers-Hall puts it, “the empty and pure form of time is therefore that which bifurcates itself into the past of memory and the present of habit.”⁷⁶ This sense of bifurcation or separation that we found in Nietzsche’s work on Aristoxenus, in which time appeared to us through a process of division, can now be identified as the individuating rhythm of the future. The future is the dimension of time which makes use of the repetitions of the past and the present, but which in doing so moves beyond and destroys them, so that “in all three syntheses, present, past and future are revealed as Repetition, but in very different modes. The present is the repeater, the past is repetition itself, but the future is that which is repeated.”⁷⁷ The importance of

75 DR 372

76 Somers-Hall 2011. As Somers-Hall notes, this past and present need not be empirical events - there is no sense of succession such as we find bound up in the first synthesis - but it is rather “the formal relations that present the metaphysical structure of temporality” that are generated within the third synthesis of time.

77 DR 117

chance and the dicethrow that we found in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is now given context as this third repetition, which is the source of difference, which has

...no origin except these rules which are formally distinct for this ontologically unique throw. This is the point at which the ultimate origin is overturned into an absence of origin (in the always displaced circle of the eternal return).⁷⁸

As part of the three syntheses, eternal return performs a selective function as the gatekeeper of a living, shifting reality through its role as the form of time which “is itself the new, complete novelty .. the future as such.”⁷⁹ In the account of time in *Difference and Repetition* the dicethrow that shows necessity emerging from chance is more explicitly read as a break or caesura within the moment.⁸⁰ Rather than a causal chain in which each moment is pulled inevitably after another, we have the disruption of eternal return, which breaks these links.

Deleuze thinks that this is how eternal return forces us to perform “a Copernican revolution which opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept,” as a result of which identity would lose the primacy we have come to accord it and instead exist “as a second principle, as a principle *become*” in such a way “that it revolve around the Different.”⁸¹ This final synthesis of time is what Deleuze calls the empty form of time - the time of the future, in which eternal return functions as the movement of forces to their limit, so that they transform into something else. The rhythms of the first and second syntheses of time are apparently disrupted, in this “pure *order* of time”⁸² which, according to Holderlin:

78 DR 354

79 DR 113

80 Nietzsche in contrast notes in his reading of Aristoxenus that “rhythm has no caesura, but only the *rhythmizomena*” or thing made rhythmic (“*Der Rhythmus hat keine Cäsuren, sondern nur die ῥυθμιζόμενα*” KGW 2:3:166). This I suggest is more characteristic of the less nuanced understanding of the rhythm of continuous becoming that we find operating in *The Birth of Tragedy*. As I have argued, eternal return is intended to function as precisely this kind of disruption or caesura within Nietzsche's thought, and it is this aspect that we find brought out within Deleuze's reading of eternal return.

81 DR 50

82 DR 111

...no longer 'rhymed', because it was distributed unequally on both sides of a 'caesura', as a result of which beginning and end no longer coincided. We may define the order of time as this purely formal distribution of the unequal in the function of a caesura.⁸³

In this third, "static synthesis"⁸⁴ of time, its ground in the rhythmic flow of the second synthesis is overturned. The time of eternal return therefore marks a fundamental inequality, a caesura or cut in which the force before is not equal to the force after the event of eternal return. The caesura – a term from Greek or Latin verse - is a cut within a line of poetry, an interruption to the rhythm that further divides the (as we saw in chapter two) already inherently divided metric foot. The caesura is the pause that breaks the flow, in order to breathe and to speak on. It is this asymmetrical relationship that causes time to tip over, causes one moment to extend beyond its bounds and become the next, that in the process destroys both the moment of the present that passes and the smooth continuum of the past that it passes into. Rhythm as the series of beats is grounded by the sense of rhythm as continuous flow, but this in its turn is broken up again by the caesura of eternal return.

Deleuze's three syntheses are therefore the culmination of Nietzsche's project in *The Gay Science*, which introduces the irregular rhythm of eternal return to disrupt the overly-accented rhythm of nihilistic thought. The double sense of rhythm as beat and continuum is now expressed as the first and second syntheses of time, which are ungrounded by the third synthesis of the pure, empty form of time with the caesura of eternal return. By exploring all three syntheses as different aspects of rhythmical time, Deleuze opens up the rhythmic possibilities of eternal return as an active destruction, generating the rhythmic time that it also destroys. Rhythm, as difference, seeks to emerge at several key points throughout *Difference and Repetition*, but as yet Deleuze does not make its individuating role explicit.⁸⁵ We need to move onto *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which Deleuze and Guattari continue to develop new ways of thinking the multiplicity of becoming. Here we find that rhythm as difference provides the motor that constitutes *all* elements of this becoming. As

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Although when Deleuze writes of eternal return as an ontological repetition, whose role is not to "suppress the other two [repetitions] but ... to distribute difference to them," we find that the differences that are to be distributed are "differences in kind and rhythm." (*DR* 365)

Deleuze and Guattari more fully explore the univocity of being as multiple, rhythm plays a crucial role in their account.

One or several rhythms: the refrain in *A Thousand Plateaus*

In *Difference and Repetition*, eternal return plays a crucial role in the process of individuation in which only difference returns. By inscribing difference and multiplicity as much within the chaos of becoming as to the beings that emerge from it, Deleuze moves away from the problematic distinction between being and becoming that we find in Nietzsche's early work on rhythm from the era of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop Deleuze's earlier understanding of the univocity of being into a richer conception of the plane of immanence or consistency.⁸⁶ When laying out their methodology, Deleuze and Guattari stress that "it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, 'multiplicity,' that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world."⁸⁷ In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze attempted to express the idea of this multiplicity, but the single term "difference," so often placed in opposition to another ("identity," "the Same," or even "repetition"), has a tendency to assume an identity of its own. The shift from the usage of the term "difference" to "multiplicity" signals Deleuze and Guattari's deepened engagement with multiplicity as multiple. I argue that rhythm is key to this new conception of becoming as not a single continuum, but continuums (plural).⁸⁸ As we will see in this final section,

86 Beistegui suggests that the idea of becoming, which is "taken to its full conclusion" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, represents a further overcoming of some of the tendencies or "instances of transcendence" that he detects within the concept of the virtual within *Difference and Repetition* (Beistegui 2010:193) but that these still remain apparent within the dual planes of immanence (or consistency) and organisation that we hover between. I argue in contrast that we should not view the planes of organisation and consistency as poles that we hover between, just as we should not imagine there to be two "states" of "territory" and "deterritorialized." By instead stressing the polyrhythmical processes of de- and re-territorialisation, with no primacy of an existing "territory," Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to move away from the idea of becoming as an oscillation between two poles towards an idea of plural and multiple becomings that are always taking place on multiple levels (rather than back and forth between two states, along one "line" only, even if traversing it in two directions).

87 ATP 8

88 They write that "Inscribed on the plane of consistency are *haecceities*, events, incorporeal transformations that are apprehended in themselves; *nomadic essences*, vague yet rigorous; *continuums of intensities* or continuous variations, which go beyond constants and variables; *becomings*, which have neither culmination nor subject, but draw one another into zones of

Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the rhythmic structure of becoming in order to explain the differences within becoming, and how things emerge from this multiplicity.

We have explored the way in which the account of univocity in *Difference and Repetition* firmly embeds eternal return within becoming itself. In *A Thousand Plateaus* any remaining distinction between becoming, and the process by which it emerges as being, is completely abandoned. The univocity of being is now captured in the idea of “the plane of consistency,” which Deleuze and Guattari also term the “plane of immanence or univocity.”⁸⁹ This plane of consistency is the development and refinement of immanent Nietzschean becoming,⁹⁰ which knows no trace of the external Platonic legislator-god. As we saw in chapter three, the key to a non-nihilistic relationship with becoming is that we are able to construct the rhythmic consistency of the world as something new, rather than as an attempt to reproduce ourselves within the world, or the past within the future. With the revised rhythmic relationship with time that Deleuze’s eternal return makes possible, we are finally in a position to attempt this kind of de-deified construction. The plane of consistency that Deleuze and Guattari creates has a univocity or consistency, but one which “has nothing to do with a form or a figure, nor with a design or a function” and whose “unity has nothing to do with a ground buried deep within things, nor with an end or a project in the mind of God.”⁹¹ It produces its own consistency. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze wrote that “‘multiplicity,’ which replaces the one no less than the multiple, is the true substantive, substance itself” but at the same time noted the possible tensions in his

proximity or undecidability; *smooth spaces*, composed from within striated space.” (ATP 558) The emphasis throughout is on the multiplication or plurification of these fluid terms which are traditionally taken as one and placed against a static opponent (being, point etc). We touched on the concept of striated space in chapter one (note 54) when we discussed the way in which the discrete identities separated from becoming are entwined together within our causal view of the world. As we can see from Deleuze and Guattari’s description of smooth spaces “composed *from within* striated space,” we should not understand smooth space, or the plane of consistency which it inhabits, as the ground of the striated world we perceive. The passages between the two are always multiple and multi-directional.

89 ATP 280

90 As O’Sullivan points out, it is Nietzsche (along with Kleist) “who best constructs this plane (for it is never a question of discovering a ready-made plane of consistency, but of making one)” (O’Sullivan 2018: 186). Our role in the construction, rather than discovery, of the plane of consistency is the crucial expression of its immanence.

91 ATP 280

attempt to convey this idea.⁹² In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari take a different approach. If we are to understand becoming as truly multiple we need to explore the “differential elements, differential relations between those elements, and singularities corresponding to those relations”⁹³ that constitute this multiplicity rather than simply noting that it contains them and then moving on. Rather than trying to explain univocity via its conceptual history as Deleuze attempted in the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition*,⁹⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus* is an attempt to explore the manifestations of the multiplicity within it, through the many ways in which assemblages form upon this plane.

The term “assemblage” seeks to describe the inherently multiple nature of the seemingly stable identities that compose our world. A book is an assemblage, but so too is literature (as discipline, or genre), and so too are the “worlds” in which the book is written (provincial France, or the 18th century). All are constantly in the process of becoming, of assembling themselves from that which lies “outside” them and which the assemblage therefore also links and assembles. An assemblage should therefore not be thought as a collection of atoms or physical properties, but instead as something that forms through “comparative rates of flow” which “produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture.”⁹⁵ Assemblages are composed of changes in speed, direction, and texture, emerging from that which becomes their outside but an outside which is not walled off from them - each must be implicated within the other, and there must continue to be movement from one to the other if the speed or flow (and therefore,

92 “It is, perhaps, ironic to say that everything is a multiplicity, even the one, even the many.” (*DR* 230) Although he goes on to note that “irony itself is a multiplicity,” in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari clearly feel the need for a different approach that does not entrust multiplicity to the reader’s irony detector alone.

93 *DR* 348

94 They talk of *biunivocality* (duality), more frequently than univocity itself, as that which *A Thousand Plateaus* is working to escape, such as the “binary logic and biunivocal relationships” that “still dominate psychoanalysis ... linguistics, structuralism, and even information science” (*ATP* 6). Badiou reads an unwilling Platonism in Deleuze’s invocation of univocality, emerging as the attempt “not to liberate the multiple but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One.” (Badiou 2000: 10.1) While I agree with Widder that Badiou’s criticism misunderstands Deleuze’s univocity as unity rather than as “disjoined multiplicity” (Widder 2001), I think it is telling that Deleuze and Guattari move away from this term towards a discussion of different expressions of multiplicity in *A Thousand Plateaus*. I am arguing that the increased use of rhythm within this text provides a better way of addressing the problem of how to affirm both continuity and difference.

95 *ATP* 4

the assemblage) is to be maintained. Once we start to think “things” as assemblages, we must therefore begin to think them as not only multiple and temporal, but also transformative, as continual processes of becoming from and with their surrounding world.

The question, as it has been throughout, is how these assemblages emerge from the plane of consistency - what we have previously been attempting to understand as the relationship between becoming and the individuated beings we think and perceive. Here we can see already in the description of a plane “upon which things are distinguished from one another only by speed and slowness”⁹⁶ that we are in the realm of temporality that is made and makes itself manifest as difference. Nietzsche’s earliest insights into the role of rhythm were to conceive it as that which divides up time, and which makes time perceptible as this difference. In *A Thousand Plateaus* we are now within the realm of rhythm no longer conceived as the form of time, but now as assemblages, as the assembling function of times or “haecceities.”

Here, there are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects ... There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages ... We call this plane, which knows only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities, the plane of consistency or composition (as opposed to the plane of organization or development). It is necessarily a plane of immanence and univocity.⁹⁷

“Haecceity” is Deleuze and Guattari’s term for an individuation, a term which “suggests a mode of individuation that is distinct from that of a thing or a subject,”⁹⁸ emphasising its specifically temporal nature, just as assemblage emphasised its plurality. Indeed, assemblage and haecceity cannot be neatly separated, for a haecceity may be the “set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles”⁹⁹ that make up an assemblage such as a body, or the speeds that lie *between* such assemblages – the two types of

96 ATP 280

97 ATP 293-4

98 ATP 599 (note 33 to plateau 10 “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible”)

99 ATP 289

assemblage are “strictly inseparable.”¹⁰⁰ As a dynamic rhythmical construction, a “thisness” that makes something emerge as a temporal identity, Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the term haecceity further disrupts any idea of a hard limit between becoming and being, between the presubjective realm of the plane of consistency and the world of forms and subjects that we construct on the plane of organisation, for “we must avoid an oversimplified conciliation, as though there were on the one hand formed subjects, of the thing or person type, and on the other hand spatiotemporal coordinates of the haecceity type.”¹⁰¹ I am a haecceity, just as much as I am subject, and the thisness of my speeds and slownesses are not checked or reversed when they become that which I understand as “me.”

As temporal individuation, a haecceity is not restricted to the plane of consistency, it is not “a decor or backdrop that situates subjects”¹⁰² on the plane of organisation. The plane of consistency is not a ground, but that which, through these speeds and slownesses, bleeds into the world of subjects and forms that we construct upon it. Within it, the plane of consistency forms its own layers of organisation (strata, formed through a filtering and compacting of the matter of the plane itself) – not one limit, as we found with the gateway of eternal return, but now many limits creating assemblages (beings), limits that contain limits, “epistrata and parastrata [which] must themselves be thought of as strata,”¹⁰³ limits folded in upon themselves, in which “each stratum serves as the substratum for another stratum.”¹⁰⁴ The rhythms, the speeds and slownesses that resonate between and within strata, between and within assemblage, are what drive Deleuze and Guattari’s attempt to understand univocity via the plane of consistency.

In both *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that eternal return is what makes the multiple forces of becoming emerge as individuated beings. As a thought, eternal return is taken to reveal the generative force of becoming as the primacy of difference. As we noted in chapter one, in *Difference and Repetition*

100 ATP 290

101 ATP 289

102 Ibid.

103 ATP 81

104 Ibid.

Deleuze aligns himself with Nietzsche's aim to reverse Platonism, but cautions in 'Plato and the Simulacrum' that any such reversal requires a greater attention to what motivates Plato's thought if it is to be effective.¹⁰⁵ In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari suggest that they share a different aim with Nietzsche, in that they are all engaged in what they call "Cosmos philosophy."¹⁰⁶ Here, they turn not to Plato, but to the motivations of Nietzsche himself, and bring these out into the light of day, to show that Nietzsche is attempting to capture or render visible the invisible forces of the Cosmos. This is what motivates Nietzsche's attempts to trace the play of active and reactive forces in a genealogical narrative, to bring before us the operation of time as the halting, lyrical torments of Zarathustra, or to "*render duration sonorous*" with the "idea of the eternal return as a little ditty, a refrain, but which captures the mute and unthinkable forces of the Cosmos."¹⁰⁷ The shift between the characterisation of these two shared tasks reveals an important difference between *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze's earlier work is concerned to undo an existing image of thought¹⁰⁸ – the nihilistic history of an error that began with Plato. Eternal return plays a central role, with its insistence on a fundamental discontinuity with what has gone before. But now in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari's focus is less on disrupting and dismantling our current way of thinking, as attempting to think becoming in a new way. This is why the thought of eternal return features far less prominently in the later work, and we instead find the concept of the refrain as a way to make not visible, but sonorous, the inaudible rhythms of the Cosmos.

We always come back to this "moment": the becoming-expressive of rhythm, the emergence of expressive proper qualities, the formation of matters of expression that develop into motifs and counterpoints. We therefore need a notion, even an apparently negative one, that can grasp this fictional or raw moment.¹⁰⁹

It is necessary to try several terms on for size when attempting to convey a new, non-nihilistic way of thought which can grasp the moment of passage from becoming into being. In *Difference and Repetition*, eternal return is the notion that attempts to grasp the

105 See ch 1 note 15

106 ATP 378

107 *ibid.*

108 See Lambert (2012) for an account of Deleuze's changing approach to the image of thought throughout his work.

109 ATP 355

moment when difference returns, when something appears to repeat and create the illusion of static, persistent being. But here instead, the notion they use is “the passage of the Refrain.”¹¹⁰

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari move away from the notion of eternal return as one privileged ontological limit, and instead describe this difference as relative speeds - a difference that has itself become plural. Rather than a single limit, the plane of consistency has many limits - rather than one force contesting another, master against slave, the forces push in different directions. The binary limit has ceded its place to the many limits of the strata, constructed of para- and epistrata, which are themselves strata. Rather than the limit-test of eternal return which forces must pass or fail, the movement of intensities between strata is continuous, travelling in all directions. The interruption to thought that we find with eternal return is necessary for ushering in the rhythmic relationship with time that releases the creativity of thought from its perceived dependence on the past, as a form of representation or repetition of the same. But when it comes to thinking becoming in its multiplicity, rather than disrupting our existing patterns of thought, eternal return cedes its central place. Rhythm is explicitly brought to the fore instead, and it is this which then allows the more multiple reading of the plane of consistency that we find in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The danger of eternal return, that we found played out in the psychological and cosmological readings, is that it replaces the nihilistic identity of the forms we perceive around us, and that our thought is unable to match, with a reversed hierarchy in which our thought is the only arbiter of taste. This, as we saw, does nothing to address the most virulent form of nihilism that Nietzsche identifies, in which we understand that we create the world for ourselves, but do not understand becoming as something that supports this creativity. This is why Deleuze and Guattari shift to a more explicitly rhythmical account of individuation and becoming in their multiplicity. We cannot hear the rhythm of multiplicity strongly enough in Nietzsche’s published account of eternal return. In order to counter nihilism, it is not just necessary to make us realise our creative role in the production of identities, but to make us think them in a different way – as inherently multiple, no longer as a unified work, but as temporal assemblage, as haecceity.

110 ATP 356

Eternal return, even with the esoteric reading of Deleuze's earlier work, is not sufficient on its own – it requires the nuance of a rhythmical account of becoming if it is to encourage us to think difference in a way that avoids the pitfalls of nihilism. Deleuze and Guattari must suggest an additional way to think difference, which will allow the multiple forces of becoming to emerge in thought. In the accounts we have seen up to now, an important effect of the transition from becoming into thought is that difference is covered over in the moment of selection. This rhythmic elision of the difference between instances of repetition is how we create for ourselves a world in which we are able to live, but also raises the danger of nihilism, of a world in which ultimately life is no longer possible. In the plateau on the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari provide an account of how the individuation of becoming takes place. This expands on Deleuze's earlier ontology by bringing rhythm to the fore, and through this making explicit the idea of becoming as a multi-directional passage, in which multiplicity is retained throughout.

In chapter three, we saw how Nietzsche uncovers a fundamentally rhythmic aspect to thought. He recognises the transformative role of rhythm in creative thought as that which offers us an alternative to nihilism. However, he also highlights the risks involved in rhythmic thought, and how the repetitive process by which it creates can also manifest as a tendency to walk in place, expecting and therefore only recognising a future that resembles the past. This retrogressive aspect of rhythm effects a disjunction between the transformational possibilities of becoming and the nihilistic future that is all we are capable of imagining. Nietzsche introduces eternal return to disrupt this nihilistic rhythm, attempting to convey a more rhythmical understanding of moment time as the individuation of becoming, but in a manner that does not clearly emerge from his published work. Deleuze's account of the three syntheses introduces his own reading of eternal return to undo the knot that takes us from rhythm as a habitualisation of the future to rhythm as discontinuous. But if we are to understand the relationship between thought and becoming then we need to understand not only the moment of change, but the rhythm of becoming from which it emerges. We need to hear the rhythm, as well as the caesura of eternal return that interrupts and drives it on. This is what Deleuze and Guattari present in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

In the plateau “1837: Of the refrain,”¹¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari’s account of individuating becoming is expressly read as rhythm. This rhythmic structure allows Deleuze and Guattari to work with an account of difference that retains its multiplicity as the single limit-test of eternal return falls away to reveal multiple limits, layered within one another, permeable boundaries traversed by haecceities. In the plateau “1837: Of the refrain,” Deleuze and Guattari examine the movements that take place from the plane of consistency (which we have previously examined as becoming, or difference in itself) into assemblages. They are dealing here with the formation of a particular kind of assemblage, the milieu, which occurs through the repetitive drawing of a line around and around it. This rhythmical action selects and prioritises beats from the chaos, excluding the rest as background noise:

... The forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do. This involves an activity of selection, elimination and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged, to enable them to resist, or even to take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn.¹¹²

If we compare this to Nietzsche’s account of how we learn to love in GS §334, we find once again the process of selection through repetition that allows us to “isolate and delimit” the nascent identity “as a life in itself.”¹¹³ But in Deleuze and Guattari’s account of the refrain, this selection does not shut out the rest of the world, incrementally narrowing down until we want nothing more than the eternal repetition of this one beautiful thing. The boundaries of this “limited space”¹¹⁴ are not an impenetrable wall, but rather the rhythmic repetitions of a patrol, an officer’s “beat.” Each iteration is a selection, that allows new

111 In the original, the “refrain” is the “*ritournelle*,” and the translators’ preface to *Dialogues II* indicates that Deleuze preferred “ritornello” as the English translation (*Dialogues II*:xiii.) As Ingala points out, “the rhythmic condition of the ritornello is already patent in its etymology: from the Italian ritorno, it is something that returns, a little return.” (Ingala 2018) A “ritornello” is a section of a musical piece that contains a repetition of a phrase - but a “little” return, not the major return of the cosmological reading of eternal return that posits the return of all events within an overarching cycle, but instead a minor return, one of many. This concept of the minor return is already indicated in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where Deleuze writes that “Nietzsche does not believe in resounding ‘great events,’ but in the silent plurality of senses of each event... There is no event, no phenomenon, word or thought that does not have a multiple sense.” (NP 4)

112 ATP 343

113 GS §334

114 ATP 343

elements to be incorporated into the identity. But it also opens in another temporal direction:

Finally, one opens the circle a crack ... not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. As though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters. This time, it is in order to join with the forces of the future, cosmic forces.¹¹⁵

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that eternal return concerns only the future because that which repeats is difference. In *A Thousand Plateaus* this task now falls to the rhythmic repetition from which emerges the milieu, which “does in fact exist by virtue of a periodic repetition, but one whose only effect is to produce a difference ... it is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition, which nevertheless produces it ...”¹¹⁶ Rhythm, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is what effects the passage from milieu to milieu, and from milieu to assemblage, giving them consistency while also keeping them open, so that they can continually emerge from their surroundings, just as much as they draw from their interior. Aristoxenus’ separation of rhythm from the *rhythmezenomena*, from that which is made rhythmic, here finds expression as this holding-open of the assemblage, preventing it from descending into enclosed identity, in which “rhythm is never on the same plane as that which has rhythm. Action occurs in a milieu, whereas rhythm is located between two milieus.”¹¹⁷

115 Ibid.

116 *ATP* 346

117 Ibid. Deleuze and Guattari draw here upon Bachelard’s *Dialectic of Duration* (Bachelard 2016). Rhythm is the site of Bachelard’s engagement with Bergson, in which he challenges Bergson’s understanding of the past as continuum (which Deleuze’s draws upon for his account of the second synthesis of time). For Bachelard, the phenomenon of rhythm is the key to understanding why Bergson’s pure duration of time is not in fact the “true” form of time running beneath our rational construct of the instant, but is itself based on a dialectical process of smoothing out time, which is fundamentally rhythmic and discontinuous. But despite his emphasis on movement and rhythm, Bachelard’s dialectic is driven by the negative which he conceives as the aporia within rhythm, and remains a search for “pure essence” (Bachelard 2016: 128) rather than engendering multiplicity. He views the multiple rhythms that inform each other as a development towards essence, arguing that when “all life’s endeavours are dialectised,” we see “that all mental activity is a passage from one level to a higher one.” (Bachelard 2016:134). Widder’s account (Widder 2008) brings out the points of both sympathy and disagreement between Bachelard and Deleuze’s respective attempts to overcome Bergsonian continuity.

But not all assemblages retain this fluid character to the same extent. In order for assemblages to become what we might think of as identities, there needs to be a change in the status of the signs they emit. They must gain a certain perdurance, a “temporal constancy,”¹¹⁸ and become what Deleuze and Guattari term “expressive” - rhythms do not now only, or primarily, produce the assemblage through interchange with their surroundings, but now become qualities of the thing, become *its* rhythms. Rather than the ever-shifting dappling of shadows in the garden, the speeds and slowness of one particular patch of darkness is different, and rather than a group of shadows we see a black cat. This patch of black has become expressive – black has become a quality of the cat. This is the process of territorialisation, which is “an act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitative,”¹¹⁹ in which a rhythm no longer passes-between, but instead encircles, surrounds the assemblage, forming a temporal skin.¹²⁰ The territory that emerges through this act of rhythm becoming-expressive is the refrain, a rhythm that no longer changes direction, as instead “the refrain moves in the direction of the territorial assemblage and lodges itself there or leaves.”¹²¹ The rhythmical process of circling and repetition effects this transformation from a collection of meat and electrical impulses into the self, transforming the patch of field into the campsite, the forest floor into a territory.

In the refrain, rhythm becomes expressive. And as this becoming-expressive, we finally discover a becoming-time as plural, as “the refrain fabricates time.”¹²² With the refrain we find rhythm not as the form of time, as something imposed upon the heedless continuum beneath, but as the making of time as plural. Everything that emerges from the plane of consistency does so via rhythm, as an assemblage of different rhythms, a plurification of rhythms that yet retain their ties to the chaos that speaks with the same voice. Each territory produces a different time. “Here,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “Time is not an a

118 ATP 347

119 ATP 348

120 It is important to note here that even when territorialising, rhythm always functions to provide temporal, rather than spatial, consistency (See Adkins 2015: 174)

121 ATP 356

122 ATP 384

priori form: rather, the refrain is the a priori form of time, which in each case fabricates different times.”¹²³

Nietzsche recognises that it is the rhythmic operation of thought, the repetitive delimiting and isolation of learning to love, that allows us to shape perduring identities. But he fears the effects of the overly-accented rhythm which achieves this effect by binding the future, eventually leading to the concept of eternity, and to nihilism. Deleuze and Guattari however expand on the transformative possibilities of rhythmic individuation. It has dangers, as Deleuze and Guattari recognise, emerging most strongly in music, which, “since its force of deterritorialization is the strongest, ... also effects the most massive of reterritorializations, the most numbing, the most redundant.”¹²⁴ The seductive strength of rhythm is a real danger. But this arises not from an anthropomorphic denial of the forces of the cosmos and the future, but because rhythm emerges from them, drawing them into the identities it creates.

Rhythm is of the plane of consistency, as much as of the assemblages that emerge from it, and leads back towards this chaos as much as it excludes it. The rhythmic action that shapes a territory at the same time also offers the possibility of it opening out again - in other directions. It must do this, must push the territory in both directions, if it is to sustain it. Rhythm is not a dialectic, it does not combine forces like flour and eggs baked into an irreversibly homogenous cake from which difference has been expelled. Rhythm affects the bindings of the forces, not the difference of the forces themselves. Deleuze and Guattari call the territorialising rhythm the refrain. In the territorialising rhythm of the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari highlight all the risks of which Nietzsche was aware, the power of rhythm to subdue us, or sweep us up, to bind us - but the binding is always also unravelling. Rhythm may appear to tie us into a particular future, but even as it does so it offers numerous opportunities for this to shift and develop, to spring off in what Deleuze and Guattari call lines of flight. It is this propulsive motion that animates the territory from within, without which it would collapse. The territorial refrain is just one kind of refrain, amongst a list that comprises milieu refrains, an “immense refrain of the earth,” “folk and

123 *ATP* 385

124 *ATP* 383

popular refrains," all the way to the "Cosmos refrain."¹²⁵ The rhythm of the refrain is the univocity of being that Deleuze strives to convey in *Difference and Repetition*. The caesura of eternal return is the inequality of the beat that ensures that difference returns. But with the rhythmical account of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we find this plurification of futures as the action of rhythm itself, always opening onto other rhythms, always pushing out of the circle.

It is rhythm in Deleuze and Guattari's account that is the passage and the difference between the strata within the plane of consistency, between milieus, between assemblages, and it is rhythm becoming-expressive that territorialises but also deterritorialises. Deleuze and Guattari here draw upon the inherent multiplicity of rhythm as that which does not, can never, elide or sublate this difference into a single whole. In the passage from one note to the next, from one harmonic to the next, rhythm is the creation of something new which retains that which it is moving between. Rhythm is built upon the particularity of the intervals between which it moves, rather than closing them into an unimportant triviality. Rhythm is difference.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze gives an account of how eternal return (understood as an ontological, rather than anthropological or cosmological doctrine) is the structure of becoming, which is self-differentiating rather than undifferentiated chaos. As such, he argues that eternal return is the way that becoming becomes - the way in which it emerges as the individuated beings of the world. This is what Deleuze terms the univocity of being, in which the movement from becoming to being is an expression of the nature of becoming rather than something opposed to it, even if this movement is then open to misconstrual as representation. I have argued that the three syntheses of time together form a rhythmical structure, driven by the third synthesis of eternal return. But in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze himself does not develop these rhythmical tendencies. We have therefore turned to his later work with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* to see how they develop a more explicitly rhythmical ontology in the concept of the refrain, and how this deeper engagement with rhythm expands on the account in *Difference and Repetition* by opening up a more genuinely plural conception of becoming.

125 ATP 382-3

Rhythm is part of the chaos of becoming, rather than standing opposed to it. For early Nietzsche, becoming is a formless continuum. Its fundamental feature is that it is undivided. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche understands reality as becoming via the notion of the musical mechanism that eternally repeats its tune, opposed to the teleological slant of human thought. Deleuze and Guattari however describe the "Mechanosphere" as a "cosmic rhythm."¹²⁶ The chaos of becoming is not a formless chaos - within it there are "electrons in person, veritable black holes, actual organites, authentic sign sequences. It's just that they have been uprooted from their strata, destratified, decoded, deterritorialized, and that is what makes their proximity and interpenetration in the plane of consistency possible. A silent dance."¹²⁷ The cosmos and the plane of consistency are not opposed - they are separated by nothing but the repetitions that organise rhythmical strata, from a chaos that is itself rhythm. This deepened understanding of the chaos of becoming as a "cosmic rhythm" allows Deleuze and Guattari to say more about the nature of the forces that inhabit becoming than was possible for Deleuze in either *Nietzsche and Philosophy* or *Difference and Repetition*, where these forces remained somewhat nebulous, described in terms of their future but also by what they had *not* (yet) done - they were those forces who had not yet reached their limit, had not yet passed the test of eternal return. Now, with the concept of the refrain in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we find rhythm as the univocal movement of becoming.

126 "There is no biosphere or noosphere, but everywhere the same Mechanosphere." which is described as "cosmic rhythm" (ATP 82)

127 ATP 77

Conclusion

This thesis argues that rhythm functions as an ontological concept within Nietzsche's work. I argue that we must understand eternal return as the introduction of a new rhythmic temporality if it is to provide an effective challenge to nihilism, and that the concerns Nietzsche raises about the transformative capabilities of thought are ultimately only addressed by the more rhythmic understanding of eternal return and becoming that emerges from the work of Deleuze and Guattari. To support this argument, this thesis contributes a new reading of key aspects of *The Gay Science*, in particular drawing out the importance of aphorisms such as GS §84 and GS §334 which suggest that Nietzsche's understanding of rhythm provides new route into eternal return. I draw this reading of *The Gay Science* together with Nietzsche's writings on rhythm from his early unpublished notes, allowing us to trace the concept of rhythmic temporality from Nietzsche's early work to the introduction of eternal return in *The Gay Science*. In this manner, this thesis draws out new points of convergence between Nietzsche's understanding of the temporality of becoming and Deleuze's mobilisation of eternal return as a rhythmic individuation of time, which finds its most successful expression in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the multiplicity of the refrain.

At the start of this thesis, we explored the way in which *The Gay Science* weaves together an understanding of thought, love, and art. In the current crisis of nihilism, the manner in which we think the world manifests as a relationship - specifically, as a failed relationship, in which we have lost faith in both our power to love the world and in the world as something that can or should be loved. *The Gay Science* presents a call to action, in which Nietzsche insists that we must learn to love - and hence to think - the world differently. The process of learning to love that Nietzsche describes in GS §334 is therefore key to understanding how we should interpret eternal return, a thought which is intended to produce this new kind of love. In GS §334, Nietzsche describes the way in which we shape identities as a repetitive and above all *rhythmical* process. By turning to Nietzsche's unpublished notes on rhythm we can understand more about this process, for we find in these early notes the insight that rhythm is temporal individuation.

Nietzsche's early philological work uncovers the existence of different senses of rhythm that indicate correspondingly different senses of time, opening up the prospect that there are different ways of thinking or loving the world, and hence different temporalities of which we may be capable. Unlike the Platonic understanding of love and thought which is based on lack, the rhythmic thought that Nietzsche describes is not driven by the unattainable otherness of changeless eternity. Rather, rhythmic thought is co-creative with, and emerges as an expression of, rhythmic becoming. Nietzsche's early work on rhythm provides the context for how our love of the world descended into nihilism, as he describes the degradation of our temporal rhythmic identities into a leaden "tick-tock" that shuts down further transformation. By applying the insights of the early notes on rhythm to Nietzsche's later thought we see that his concerns about the nature of human thought and love in *The Gay Science* emerge from the sense of time that our nihilistic rhythm produces, and the way in which this nihilistic time frames our connection to the past and the future.

We can therefore see not only that eternal return needs to challenge and rework this nihilistic understanding of time, but also that our current issues with temporality stem from the nature of rhythm itself, and the tension that Nietzsche identifies in *The Gay Science* between its transformative and seductive properties. Rhythm is built of difference, its individual beats giving it an infinite capacity for modulation, but it is via the ellision of this difference that these beats are encompassed into a coherent rhythmic flow. The danger is that this flattening of difference closes down the possibility for variation, such that we fixate on the beloved as *it was* and "no longer want anything better from the world than it and it again."¹ What is required instead is a thought that desires the repetition not of the same, but of the moment of rhythmical selection that opens out onto the future. It is this continually interruptive aspect of the time of eternal return that we find first indicated in Stambaugh's theory of moment time, and then more fully fleshed out within Deleuze's mobilisation of eternal return. Deleuze's reading of eternal return in which only *difference* returns seems on the face of it to run expressly counter to Nietzsche's description of eternal return as the return of the *same*. However as we see in *The Gay Science*, the "return of the same" is precisely the kind of anthropomorphic seduction of which Nietzsche warns us to beware, in which the world is nothing more than a reflection of ourselves, the future nothing more than a repetition of the past.

1 GS §334

By examining the themes developed in *The Gay Science*, we can therefore understand that the task of overcoming nihilism is the problem of how to love the world as difference, a problem whose nuances and difficulties come from the nature of thought as a rhythmical process of temporal individuation. Framing the task in this fashion allows us not only to evaluate Deleuze's interpretation of eternal return as that which comes closest to reworking our understanding of time in the manner that Nietzsche indicates, but also to situate Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the refrain as a transformed version of eternal return, which shows how this rhythmical process of individuation takes place as the activity of becoming. Nihilistic thought believes that to love becoming is necessarily to rape it, framing our current way of thinking as an act of violence that splits apart the continuum of becoming. But the different tempos of the will to power that Nietzsche describes indicate that this individuating difference is the action of becoming itself, an idea Deleuze takes up and expresses as the univocity of being.

This thesis has concentrated on the phenomenon of rhythm as it operates on an ontological level, in order to show that rhythm is the temporal structure through which becoming appears to us, and to situate the thought of eternal return as a disruption to our previous nihilistic sense of rhythm. However, the disruption of eternal return is not an end in itself, but rather something that Nietzsche intends to open up a space for new ways of thinking. *Amor fati* is Nietzsche's attempt to name a new affirmative rhythm of thought that he hopes will become possible once we have learned to move beyond our current Platonically-inspired image of thought as a love based on lack. By tracing the way in which problems with our current way of thinking have arisen, we can infer that what would distinguish *amor fati* as a new way of thought would be its ability to celebrate rather than exclude the creative process that constructs thought, and that such a celebration can only take place if we understand the creativity of thought as something that emerges from, rather than against, becoming. Nietzsche indicates that rhythm is how thought emerges from becoming, but it is not until Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the refrain that we find a way of locating the rhythmic tendencies of thought within becoming and are able to understand rhythm as the "formative force of temporal proportions"² that Nietzsche first suggested in his early notes.

Deleuze and Guattari note that "it is odd how music does not eliminate the bad or mediocre refrain, or the bad usage of the refrain, but on the contrary carries it along, or uses it as a springboard."³ The seductive territorialising aspects of rhythm are always present, the force of the *ictus* is always there as the accretion of land from the spikes of becoming, and we have seen that over time our thought has succumbed to this "bad," overly-accented manifestation of the refrain. The problem of thought is how to open up our current understanding of identity, to perform a rhythmic transformation of the forms of the past, carrying these along and using them as a "springboard" to other ways of thinking:

beginning from popular and territorial *melodies* that are autonomous, self-sufficient, and closed in upon themselves, how can one construct a new chromaticism that places them in communication, thereby creating "*themes*" bringing about a development of Form, or rather a becoming of Forces?⁴

If a rhythm is overly-accented or *ictus*-driven, it becomes moribund, leaden – it keeps us still, staid, in place, as we see with the rhythmic prayers of GS §128.⁵ But the other extreme is just as dangerous, as a "complete degeneration of the feeling for rhythm, *chaos* in place of rhythm," robs us of the ability to form any coherent thoughts at all.⁶ Nietzsche's work on rhythm indicates that we must draw upon the modulating and creative aspects within thought if we are to transform it, in order to create new rhythms that, while initially strange, we may gradually learn to hear.

3 ATP 385

4 *ibid.*

5 See the discussion of rhythm as binding the future in chapter three.

6 Nietzsche highlights this problem in his criticisms of Wagner's music, which with its "endless melody" releases us into the sea of becoming in such a manner that we lose our footing completely, and instead can only "swim" (NW 'Wagner as a danger' §1). See Cohen (2008) for an account of Nietzsche's criticisms of rhythm in Wagner's music, with examples of the pieces in question.

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- GS* *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge University Press, 2001)
- TSZ* *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge University Press, 2006)
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