

Nietzsche's Law: The Eternal Recurrence Of Opposition

Michael G. Pierce
Ohio State University
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Introduction:

Eternal Recurrence is the idea that everything in this existence ultimately repeats in a cyclical fashion over and over again, with *nothing* absolutely new in it, ad infinitum. This concept has been around for millennia and has undergone numerous interpretations. In Western philosophy the earliest conception of eternal recurrence is found in the teachings of Pythagoras – which date back roughly 2,500 years. Though the idea has undergone numerous changes and re-interpretations, the idea of eternal recurrence, in one form or another, has been considered since those early times. With the rise of Platonism and Christianity, however, the idea of eternal recurrence fell to the wayside. Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the first (and only) prominent thinkers of modernity to explicitly bring this idea to the forefront of his writing. This makes Nietzsche’s conception of eternal recurrence an interesting and worthwhile topic for examination.

Although the first conceptions of eternal recurrence were developed in ancient times, and Nietzsche takes influence from some of these thinkers, his view is presented in a different fashion from that of his predecessors. It enters his writing as “The greatest weight” in his work entitled *The Gay Science*. The idea presented here is an ethical thought experiment, as well as, I will argue, a plausible metaphysical claim. The emphasis of eternal recurrence as an ethical postulate represents Nietzsche’s innovation over his predecessors. The novelty of this thought experiment resides in its intention to lead one to the highest affirmation of *this* life. The question posited here is: “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” (GS, 341). Essentially, the question of eternal recurrence is intended to elicit a reaction; if one is able to bear the thought of living out every single moment of his/her individual life – including the most mundane

and embarrassing details, then he/she, on this view, is said to have affirmed this life. In this case, what originally was perceived as *the greatest weight* becomes for that person the greatest joy; he/she needs nothing other than *this* life.

On the other hand, those who respond to the question of eternal recurrence negatively will continue to perceive this life as a heavy burden. Rather than being in love with this existence, this individual comes to resent the necessary elements of life; he/she in turn negates this existence by wishing for things to be different in an otherworldly afterlife. In this sense, the ethical thought experiment exposes to the individual his/her outlook on this life; it also acts as a formula for one to re-value his/her highest values. In the instance of one reacting negatively to the question of eternal recurrence, one is prompted to make changes in his/her life in order to overcome perceiving this life as a heavy burden. Such changes involve an individualized sense of “Yes” saying to, and an affirmation of *this* existence.

There is, however, an important distinction between positing the idea of eternal recurrence as an ethical thought experiment and arguing for eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality. In other words, claiming that the thought of eternal recurrence is a catalyst intended to lead one to the highest affirmation of this life is one thing, and arguing for the actual existence of eternal recurrence is another. Nietzsche’s great innovation and emphasis is on this ethical take of eternal recurrence. Because of this, the metaphysical view of eternal recurrence is often discounted or taken as implausible. This thesis will examine Rex Welshon’s recent interpretation of Nietzsche’s eternal

recurrence¹. Welshon denies that eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality is possible. Martin Heidegger claims that eternal recurrence is “The fundamental doctrine in Nietzsche’s philosophy” (Heidegger, 6). In light of this claim, I will attempt to construct a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence that accords with Nietzsche’s view and that is compatible with the ethical thought experiment.

This thesis is broken up into three sections. The first section deals with eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality. This section confronts Rex Welshon’s claim that the metaphysical doctrine of eternal recurrence is not possible. Here, I will demonstrate how Nietzsche’s view, although distinct from many of the ancients, is ultimately tied closely to the thoughts of Heraclitus. This section will show how Nietzsche’s ontological commitment to the will to power is related in a significant way to the Heraclitian concept of *flux*. This section also includes Nietzsche’s so-called proof for eternal recurrence that appears in his unpublished notes². This proof, as I will argue, is what leads those like Welshon to dismiss the plausibility of eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality (it is considered by Welshon to be a false cosmology³). Many, like Welshon, construct their arguments from these fragmentary notes. I will argue that, although Nietzsche’s ‘proof

¹ The work by Rex Welshon that I will examine is his book, *The Philosophy Of Nietzsche*.

² Nietzsche’s notes that I will be calling upon in this writing are part of a collection of his notes that were published posthumously in a book titled *The Will To Power*.

³ The Oxford Dictionary Of Philosophy defines *cosmology* as: “The study of the origin and structure of the universe” and *metaphysics* as: “[...] Any enquiry that raises questions about reality that lie beyond or behind those capable of being tackled by the methods of science [...]” (Blackburn, 85, 240). Although the two are highly distinct, there is a definite overlap in the definition of these two terms in the sense that they both attempt to define and uncover that which ultimately exists. For this thesis, I will, as Welshon does, use these terms in this interchangeable sense.

for eternal recurrence, taken as such, is a bit lackluster, other elements of Nietzsche's writing suggest a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence.

Furthermore, this section will include a discussion of Nietzsche's disdain for the distinction between the 'real world' and the 'apparent world'. According to Nietzsche "People used to consider change, alteration, and becoming in general as proof that appearances were illusory, as a sign that something must be misleading us" (TI, 169). Nietzsche is opposed to any type of metaphysics that claims what we perceive from our senses is *merely* an appearance, and that what lies beyond our empirical observations exists in an unknowable realm. He instead advocates using the senses in order to derive any claims to reality. All of these elements will show to be important for constructing a plausible view of eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality.

The second section will address eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative. Here I will call to attention Nietzsche's well-known master/slave morality. This is important because, for Nietzsche, what determines if someone exemplifies the mentality of a master or a slave is a matter of perspective. On the one hand, the master is a life-affirming agent who stands in relation to those who react positively to the thought of eternal recurrence. On the other hand, the slave is a pessimistic, life-denying individual who is characterized by one who reacts negatively to the thought of eternal recurrence. This section will also show how the idea of perspectivism fits into Nietzsche's view. This will be important for showing how the ethical hypothesis is connected to a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence.

The third section will address how Nietzsche's conception of fatalism (as it is implied by eternal recurrence) is tied to one's individual freedom implied by self-

overcoming. The underlying motif of Nietzsche's view is a type of fatalism, and it will be important to address this element because it is intimately tied to the idea of eternal recurrence. The version of fatalism that Nietzsche endorses, however, does not include the hands of an otherworldly creator; as Robert Solomon claims, it is "a note of resignation, acceptance of what will happen or what has happened" (Solomon, 66). This acceptance of one's fate is best expressed, according to Nietzsche, by the notion of *amor fati*⁴. The love of one's fate comes from self-cultivation and self-overcoming. This, as Garry Brodsky claims, "requires us to come to grips with life and ourselves by engaging in the interlocking activities of self-discovery, self-fashioning, and self-love" (Brodsky, 35-36). Clearly, this view is opposed to the idea of free will – in the sense that we are not able to change our inherent drives or nature. However, there must be a sense of freedom in this view if one is capable of undergoing a process of re-valuation.

What will ultimately come about from this writing is a coherent picture of eternal recurrence that is plausible both as metaphysical doctrine as well as an ethical imperative – one that accords with Nietzsche's writing. If this is done successfully, it will show how the idea of eternal recurrence is acceptable together on both metaphysical and ethical grounds. In doing this, one will also get a sense of how eternal recurrence fits into Nietzsche's versions of fatalism and free will.

⁴ *Amor fati* is a Latin term that translates to "love of fate" or "love of one's fate".

Section One: The Metaphysical Doctrine:

a.) The history and origins of eternal recurrence:

Philosophers like Rex Welshon find impossible the metaphysical doctrine of eternal recurrence. Welshon bases his dismissal of the doctrine on claims that make the metaphysical version seem logically incomprehensible – claiming that all Nietzsche really meant by eternal recurrence was an ethical hypothesis. However, after examining the Western origins of eternal recurrence and the influence that these philosophers had on Nietzsche’s thought, it will become evident that there is more to his overall view of eternal recurrence than merely an ethical imperative. In this section, after tracing the origins of eternal recurrence in Western philosophy, I will argue that Welshon’s interpretation is misguided, and that it is possible to accept the metaphysical doctrine without being incoherent. As it will be shown, the plausible metaphysical view that I will demonstrate does not rely on the coherence of Nietzsche’s alleged ‘proof’ of eternal recurrence.

One finds the earliest conceptions of eternal recurrence, in Western philosophy, in the pre-Socratic works of Pythagoras along with many of his followers, as well as the Ionian philosopher Heraclitus. For the sake of accuracy, I should mention that the Stoics also developed a concept of eternal recurrence. Zeno of Citium (334 BCE) was the founder of the Stoic school. Zeno and his early followers conceived a pantheistic view of the universe similar in conception to that of Heraclitus. The Stoics, as well, were dedicated to the unity and cohesion of the cosmos. Nietzsche, for reasons that will become evident later in this writing, is rather unsympathetic to the Stoics: “In your pride you want to dictate your morality, your ideals to nature, incorporate them into nature, of

all things; you demand that nature be ‘according to Stoics’” (BGE, 10). For the intentions of this writing, of all the pre-Socratic conceptions of eternal recurrence, I will focus on the views expressed by Heraclitus – due to his significant impact on Nietzsche’s work. In order to do this, however, it is important to start with a description of Pythagoras’s work since he is one of Heraclitus’s main influences.

Born in 570 BCE, Pythagoras spent his life developing number theories and numerical relationships between music and cosmology. He wrote nothing down, but profoundly impacted the thoughts of both Plato and Aristotle; he also conceived ideas of an immortal soul and reincarnation⁵. This work prompted him to claim that “after certain periods of time the things that have happened once happen again and nothing is absolutely new”⁶. The idea presented here – that the same events happen again and nothing is absolutely new – represents the first Western formulation of eternal recurrence. There are a number of ways to interpret this claim. One can view this assertion as an implication of the eternal repetition of all things, in the sense that everything, including minute details, repeats in an identical fashion. This view is perhaps what prompted one of his followers, Eudemus of Rhodes, to claim:

“Everything will eventually return in the self-same numerical order, and I shall converse with you staff in hand, and you will sit as you are sitting now, and so it will be in everything else, and it is reasonable to assume that time too will be the same”⁷.

This conception of eternal recurrence is clearly a product of the cyclical theory of time as set forth by Pythagoras. However, one can preserve a metaphysical view of eternal

⁵ These teachings impacted Plato and his view of the transmigration of the soul, which in some sense, hint towards a view much like eternal recurrence. However, in order to avoid digression, I will not go further here.

⁶ Porphyry, VP 19 - <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pythagoras/>

⁷ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pythagoras/>

recurrence without claiming what Eudemus of Rhodes claims. To claim that all things repeat and that nothing is absolutely new, all one needs to claim is that there is an essential component present in all things that exists for all times. This more restricted view, as it will be demonstrated, is what allows for a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence.

Furthermore, Pythagoras had a strong emphasis of the *unity* within all things: “Through consciousness, the universe is but one single thing; all is interdependent with all” (Guthrie, 72). This conception further demonstrates how it is that one can accept eternal recurrence. The idea of *unity* is inseparable from a cyclical theory of time or any metaphysical conception of eternal recurrence. This should be evident given that, if one is to accept the eternal repetition of all things, they must also accept that, in a significant way, there is *one* existence. Eternal recurrence, even in the restricted sense, as it will be shown also involves a sense of unity.

Influenced by Pythagoras, Heraclitus developed a *Logos*⁸ that consisted of *fire* – “For all things come to be (or happen) in accordance with this *logos* [...]” (Mckirahan, 116). Furthermore he viewed everything in the universe as existing in *flux*. It is clear how his view relates to eternal recurrence if one understands this notion of *flux* as an overall and *eternal* tension and release of all things – or rather, the way in which all things come together and are subsequently destroyed – this is the notion of flux that Heraclitus had conceived. Heraclitus also claimed that “The beginning and the end are common to the circumference of a circle” (Mckirahan, 122). This idea, along with the notion of flux, suggests the circularity and subsequently, the *unity* of all things: “Out of

⁸ A logos is a main discourse.

all things there comes a unity (one) and out of a unity all things” (Mckirahan, 134). As I have already claimed, it is important to understand the notion of unity as inseparable from a cyclical theory of time and eternal recurrence. This is because, if all things are said to eternally return to the same state, then, on the whole of things, there is *one* existence – namely, *this one*. Moreover, on this view, everything that exists does so in a state of flux – that is to say, a state of tension and release – of creation and destruction. The work of these pre-Socratic philosophers offers a foreshadowing of Nietzsche’s conception of eternal recurrence – one that would come nearly 2,500 years later.

At first tack, the notion of flux may seem to preclude a sense of unity. If all things exist in flux – in the way that Heraclitus presents, it seems as though there is little, if any room for a unified view of the world. This is because one might initially view the notion of flux as a continual process of change without any conceivable repetition. However, it must be understood that claiming that everything exists in a state of flux, in this sense, means that everything is destroyed, and out of this destruction everything is re-created. For this view, *flux* does represent a confluence of forces that involve a sense of change and overcoming. The idea of unity comes in light of the necessary forces mentioned above – these forces are not conceptually independent from one another. The existence of all things, on this view, therefore requires both destruction and re-creation – and hence, all things are unified in the sense that the existence of an entity (that is, any entity) involves the coming together of these seemingly opposing forces. The force of creation can only exist by standing in relation to some form of destruction; this is where the sense of unity comes from. One should avoid taking unity to mean something like a universal vantage point. On this view, existence consists of an ever-changing confluence

of becoming and passing away – one that consists of an indefinite amount of observable vantage points rather than a single, universal perspective⁹.

It is precisely this view that Nietzsche picks up on; Heraclitus is, without question, one of his biggest influences. On Heraclitus, he writes:

“I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his company than anywhere else. The affirmation of passing away and destruction that is crucial for a Dionysian philosophy; saying yes to opposition and war, becoming along with a radical rejection of being – all these are more closely related to me than anything thought so far. Eternal recurrence, which is to say the unconditional and infinitely repeated cycle of all things [...] ultimately is nothing Heraclitus couldn't have said too” (EH, 110).

From this quotation it is evident that Nietzsche holds the Heraclitian view in high regard. The notion of passing away and destruction that he speaks of here is related in a significant way to the Heraclitian conception of flux. Both views represent an awareness and acceptance of the continual coming into and passing away of existence, or, in other words, the eternal becoming and passing away of all things. This notion of becoming is crucial for understanding how Nietzsche's conception of eternal recurrence is to be taken as a coherent and plausible metaphysical view. In this sense, *becoming* represents the continual unfolding of existence; where one entity passes away in order for a new entity to come about.

b.) Nietzsche's ontological commitment:

The best way to come to grips with how his thought is tied closely to Heraclitus is to understand Nietzsche's own universal claim – the will to power. Nietzsche's

⁹ This of course represents a foreshadowing of Nietzsche's perspectivism. This will be brought to life in greater detail later in this writing. I mention it here mainly as a tie in to the Heraclitian view.

ontological commitment is comprised entirely of the will to power. According to this view, everything in the universe, from the smallest string to the largest quanta of energy, consists of the inherent drive towards an assertion of power. This is evident in his writings:

“And do you know what “the world” is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; [...] As force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back [...] Do you want a name for this world? A solution for all its riddles? A light for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? – This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!” (WTP 1067).

This is the famous exposition of Nietzsche’s ontological commitment to the will to power. From this poetic description, one gets a sense of the eternal “Play of forces” or rather, the becoming and passing away of everything, as well as the circularity of all things. This concept of circularity comes into play because, for this view, along with Heraclitus, there is no beginning and no end to this existence. Once again, one should avoid attributing the circularity of all things, in this sense, to a type of static existence. As it was shown, eternal recurrence is related to the concepts of becoming and passing away – which represents a type of fluid existence rather than one that is static. Overall, from this passage, it is important for one to obtain the sense of the continual unfolding of existence that is inherent in Nietzsche’s view.

Nietzsche’s ontological commitment to the will to power is therefore what relates his thought to that of Heraclitian flux. If everything in the universe is said consist of a drive for power, then everything that exists does so according to the forces of becoming and passing away. It is the drive towards the creation of entities that is seen here as the

will to power. What results from this position ultimately makes a dice game out of existence. In this sense, what actually exists is a random set of collections of power (one that is in flux). While it may be perceived that this randomness precludes eternal recurrence, one must remember that what is eternally recurring is the flux, or variations of power – which require both elements of becoming and passing away. According to Gilles Deleuze, “The eternal return is the second moment, the result of the dicethrow, the affirmation of necessity, the number which brings together all the parts of chance” (Deleuze, 27-28). In this sense, the second moment that Deleuze speaks of here is the becoming of an entity – the result or outcome of both destruction and re-creation – in this sense, not separable from either notion.

This view is distinct from the so-called proof that Nietzsche offers. The following paragraphs will elaborate on what this proof consists of. Once this is laid out, I will then be in a position set out Welshon’s counterargument to this proof. As we will see, Welshon bases his argument against the plausibility of the metaphysical doctrine of eternal recurrence on the incoherence of this proof. What I intend to show is that the plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence doesn’t not rely on this proof in the first place.

c.) The infamous ‘proof’ and Rex Welshon’s argument:

Aside from his roots in Heraclitian thought, there is evidence in his notes that he conceived (or at least attempted to conceive) of a metaphysical ‘proof’ of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche, in his notes from 1888, claims:

“If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force [...] it follows that, in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In

infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times” (WTP, 1066).

This represents the so-called ‘proof’ of eternal recurrence. The idea is that the amount of force in the universe is limited. In other words, there exists a finite amount of matter and energy in the universe, and this definite quantity of energy exists along an infinite timeline. Essentially, this quotation amounts to two premises that, if they were true, would yield the eternal recurrence of the same. Milic Capek lays them out as:

- 1.) That the universe is made up of distinct atomic entities which persist through time without any intrinsic change, so that they can be identified in different successive moments.
- 2.) That the universe is finite or, more specifically, that the number of its constituent parts is finite. (Capek, 3)

This is essentially what Nietzsche claimed – that a finite amount of matter over an infinite amount of time would make eternal recurrence true. In light of these premises, Capek describes the universe as a pack of playing cards; if the universe is like a pack of playing cards, in that, it consists of a finite amount of particles (or, cards) then given a long enough timeline (or, infinite time) continually shuffling the deck of cards, one will eventually repeat the exact same configuration.

The point in mentioning this here is to expose what many (like Welshon) take to be Nietzsche’s attempt to demonstrate a metaphysical ‘proof’ for eternal recurrence. These notes are rather fragmentary and largely incomplete. This is perhaps why they were never published by Nietzsche himself¹⁰. Moreover, this particular aspect of eternal recurrence, taken as a proof, is in a sense rather bleak. While it does describe a world in

¹⁰ The work entitled *The Will To Power* is comprised of these notes, and was published by his sister Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche after Nietzsche himself suffered mental collapse.

which every particular event of this life would reoccur in an identical fashion, it remains that, metaphysically speaking, there is little else to say about it – that is, there really is no proof in this ‘proof’.

Further, the idea that we are to repeat our lives exactly as they are over and over again ad infinitum, without *any* change whatsoever seems, in a sense, to offer a view of the universe as a static entity. This is because living out our same lives over and over again in exactly the same way precludes the notion of flux presented above. A static universe that is unchanging precludes the elements of change and overcoming that are imperative for this view. These elements are necessary in order for one to create meaning for him/herself. Moreover the concept of Heraclitian flux denoted above suggests fluidity and change throughout existence. Given the significant connection between Nietzsche’s thought and that of Heraclitus, one is precluded from attributing a static view of the universe to either viewpoint. In order to pull together a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence, one must recognize the necessity of change, becoming, and passing away as the elements of eternal recurrence – and not the static repetition of every single minute detail of one’s life.

Rex Welshon dispels the plausibility of the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence by claiming that it is logically incoherent. Drawing from Nietzsche’s ‘proof’ illustrated by his notes, Welshon’s argument looks something like this: If eternal recurrence were true, it seems that it would be meaningless to speak of distinct repetitions of one’s existence. In order for one existence (E1) to be the same as the next existence (E2), nothing in E1 can be different from E2. If it were the case that E1 was somehow altered from E2, then, by Leibniz’s law, $E1 \neq E2$. Furthermore, to speak merely of the

distinctness of repetitions seems to preclude the notion of *identical* repetitions. By simply defining one existence as E1 and the next existence as E2, it seems that we've already broken Leibniz's law if we choose to call them the *same* existence.

In his book *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, Welshon objects to the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence, claiming that "The cosmological version of eternal recurrence is, to put it bluntly, bunk" (Welshon, 184)¹¹. His argument rests on the claim that eternal recurrence is not entailed by the ontological version of the will to power. He argues that, if we suppose that the universe is nothing more than quanta of power and collections of such, then given a finite amount of energy and time (T) in the universe, it must be possible for a specific quanta of power at T1 to occur at T2. This premise is necessary, according to this argument, in order for eternal recurrence to be true. According to Welshon "If this premise is false, then the eternal recurrence cannot be true" (Welshon, 184).

The claim he makes is that, in order for eternal recurrence to be true, it is necessary for the same quanta of power at T1 to occur at T2. And, according to this line of reasoning such an event is not possible. This is because "For all time pairs, (Tn, Tn+1), whenever $T_n < T_{n+1}$, then $T_n \neq T_{n+1}$ " (Welshon, 184). This argument holds, Welshon thinks, regardless of whether power and time are infinite or not. Essentially, Welshon's argument represents a denial of eternal recurrence by appeal to Leibniz law. That is, since a particular quanta of power at T1 has a different property at T2, namely being a different repetition, they are not the same since they do not have all of the same properties in common. Although both instantiations of power may be identical in every

¹¹ Welshon uses the word "cosmology" here, but as mentioned earlier, due to an overlap in terminology, I take him to still be referring to a type of metaphysics.

other way, claiming that two distinct repetitions are exactly identical represents a violation of Leibniz law. Thus, according to this view, it is impossible for eternal recurrence to be true.

We can remedy this argument, however, by returning to the notion of flux (as I have laid out above). Taken in this way, one can see that there is a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence is not ruled out by Leibniz's law. The details of each specific account – of one's individual life etc – may be overlooked here, since, as stated above, they represent what considered to be the randomness of a dice game. In this sense, the details of one's existence are overlooked in order to observe what actually is said to reoccur eternally – that of the continual state of flux.

Welshon's argument against the plausibility of eternal recurrence as a metaphysical reality is comprised of a counter argument against Nietzsche's 'proof' for eternal recurrence, and not against eternal recurrence as it is espoused by this thesis. As it has been demonstrated, the 'proof' that Nietzsche gives in his notes is an empty claim. Welshon takes the infamous 'proof' for eternal recurrence and argues that showing its implausibility shows that eternal recurrence as a metaphysical view, in any form, is implausible. My criticism of Welshon comes in light of this; one cannot, as he attempts to, dispel the entire metaphysical view eternal recurrence based on a counter argument to Nietzsche's 'proof'. Welshon does just this, and it is where his view of eternal recurrence is misguided. As I have shown, eternal recurrence is best interpreted, not as the static repetition of identical entities, but rather, the continuation of the essential elements of this existence – that of becoming and passing away.

d.) 'Real' and 'Apparent' worlds:

Recognizing *this* existence as the *only* existence, as Nietzsche does, is tied significantly to this view of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche's view represents an attack on Kantian metaphysics because Kant's view urges for a world that is distinctly beyond this one. In Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, he claims that "There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, that is, with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses" (Kant, 40). The unknowable *things in themselves* that Kant argues for represent a world that is *beyond* humans in a different sense than Nietzsche's use of *beyond*. In the Nietzschean sense, human beings are able to get beyond themselves by coming to grips with the necessary components of this existence. On Kant's view the "world *beyond*" so to speak, is closed off from us.

In this way, one can come to understand Nietzsche, not as rejecting the practice of metaphysics, but rather, as rejecting the commonly accepted metaphysics of his time – and arguing in the opposite direction. What adds plausibility to Nietzsche's view over those who posit the *beyond* in an unknowable realm is that it is forged out of observable elements of this existence and develops abstractions from there rather than positing bare abstractions devoid of observable phenomena. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's famous quote is called to attention:

"I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak of otherworldly hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away!" (TSZ, 6).

The call to remain faithful to the earth calls for a metaphysical view that accords with what are taken to be necessary components of *this* existence, and not a metaphysics that argues for any type of *beyond* that is exempt from these necessary components.

Nietzsche is therefore opposed to any differentiation between ‘real’ and ‘apparent’ worlds. In other words, he disagrees with the notion that what we perceive is a deception and that what is truly real is outside of our reach as humans. He writes, “The senses are not lying when they show becoming, passing away, and change [...] The ‘apparent’ world is the only world: the ‘true world’ is just a lie added on to it . . .” (TI, 168). From this, one can say that the observable phenomenon of the ‘unfolding’ of existence, or in other words, the sense of *becoming* denoted above are real elements that will continue unfolding for all of time. Taking the appearance of things as truth, in this sense, allows for this view because in taking what we perceive through our sense as truth, rather than bare abstractions, one must conclude that there is no conceivable beginning or end – and that the necessary elements that we perceive must exist for all times. In other words, on this view, *this* existence is the only existence.

e.) Conclusion of section one:

What has been shown here is a coherent argument for a metaphysical hypothesis that supports the theory of eternal recurrence. I have demonstrated how the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence can be conceived in a way that is not, as put by Welshon, “bunk”. At this point, however, an astute reader of Nietzsche may charge this section of my thesis with a misapplication of Nietzsche’s view: of the metaphysical world Nietzsche writes, “[...] knowledge of it would be the most useless of all knowledge: more useless

even than knowledge of the chemical analysis of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck” (HH, 16). This astute reader might therefore claim that attributing a metaphysical argument to Nietzsche is inappropriate. However, I am not claiming that Nietzsche focuses his writing on making any kind of metaphysical argument; rather, I am claiming that the plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence that I have espoused in this thesis is inherent in Nietzsche’s view.

The next section will expound on Nietzsche’s great innovation. As I have shown above, the earliest ideas of eternal recurrence date back over 2,500 years. What Nietzsche accomplished that Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and the Stoics did not, was a demonstration of how positing eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative will lead to what he considered the highest type of life affirmation. Although the following section may appear to be a completely different take on the idea of eternal recurrence, what has been laid out in this section is vital for understanding how positing eternal recurrence is supposed to lead to the highest form of life affirmation.

Section Two: The Ethical Hypothesis:

a.) The weight of existence:

Eternal recurrence debuts in Book four of *The Gay Science*, in parable 341, where Nietzsche writes:

“The heaviest weight – What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest of 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 turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained 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! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?” (GS, 341).

This piece of writing demonstrates Nietzsche’s exposition of eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative. The undeniable influence of Heraclitus is often glossed over by philosophers who claim that *all* Nietzsche meant by eternal recurrence is a useful tool of ethical analysis. Moreover, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche refers to eternal recurrence as “The highest possible formula of affirmation” (EH, 123). The use of the word “formula” here may also prompt philosophers to take Nietzsche’s conception of eternal recurrence as *merely* a thought hypothesis and not as a metaphysical reality.

b.) The Master/Slave morality:

Discussing Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative is intended to expose, to the life of an individual, how his or her life was spent. In this sense, one can view eternal recurrence as a type of litmus test that one applies at various points in his or her life. One can pose the question of eternal recurrence at any given moment, or pose the question at the end of a series of events; either way, the question is focused on an *outcome*. The intent is to prompt one undergo a process of reevaluation in order for that individual affirm *this* life rather than depending on an afterlife that is devoid of the necessary elements of *this* existence. The question is: would you live every moment of this life over again ad infinitum? After hearing this question, one may react positively, but often the response is negative. The negative response ultimately exposes feelings of resentment towards the things of this life¹². On the other hand, those who react positively fall into a different category – one that involves saying “Yes” (i.e. affirming) this life. In this section, I intend to show how this version of eternal recurrence is compatible with the coherent metaphysical version that was elaborated on in section one.

In order to do this, it is first important to understand how those who are resentful of this existence come to be that way. On one hand, those who ponder the question of eternal recurrence and react negatively, on this view, are overcome by the necessary elements of existence and ultimately become resentful towards this life. On the other hand, those who hear this question and react positively, are said to have affirmed this life.

¹² Ultimately, most individuals are somewhere in between a positive and negative response to this question. The extremes, on both ends, are harder to discover. The point, however, is that all individuals experience various amounts of these opposing viewpoints.

That is, they live well by saying “Yes” to even the pitfalls of their lives – as they recognize them as a necessary component of the truly rewarding things that have happened to them. Thus living well, according to Nietzsche, involves affirming this life by overcoming the necessary elements that have been laid out in section one (Heraclitian flux and the will to power), as well as an overcoming of one’s relation to those elements (i.e. self-overcoming).

In *On The Genealogy Of Morality* Nietzsche expounds on what he calls the Master/Slave morality. This is the notion that there are essentially two classes of humans – those who are *masters* and those who are *slaves*. Masters, on one hand, are those types who declare their actions as *good* independently of anything or anyone else. What they are opposed to they simply view as *bad*, but they pay no mind to such things. Because his genealogical assessment involves examining the origins of the master/slave morality in regards to old-world Europe, Nietzsche often refers to the master class simply as ‘nobles’. This is because the noble class of old-world Europe exemplifies the characteristic traits that Nietzsche attributes to the master. These individuals exemplify qualities such as *strong, powerful, noble, and secure*.

On the other hand, slaves are the class of individuals who concern themselves with the actions taken by the master. From doing this, they begin to experience feelings of what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment* – a sense of hostility and the reassignment of pain and anguish towards the master in order to block feelings of inferiority; Nietzsche writes, “The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values [...] its action is, from the ground up, reaction” (GM, 19). The morality of the slave arises purely as a negative reaction to the actions taken by the master. The slave

views the master's actions as *evil* and derives a notion of *good* by merely contrasting to the doings of the master; in this sense, the slave's concept of good is an inverted sense of good from that of the master. Some characteristics of the slave include: *weakness*, *resentment*, *pettiness*, and *cowardliness*.

Essentially, this entire exposition on the master/slave morality is important for understanding the ethical version of eternal recurrence; it exposes how these two classes of individuals perceive of what they find *good*. On this view, there is a major distinction between the terms 'bad' and 'evil', and how these terms relate to the term 'good' – as Nietzsche explains:

“How different these words 'bad' and 'evil' are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept 'good'. But it is not the same concept 'good': one should ask rather who is 'evil' in the sense of the morality of resentment” (GM, 40).

From this quotation, one can see that the notion of *good* held by slaves is merely a reactionary derivation of good – one that leads them to feelings of *ressentiment*; this is unlike the master, whose notion of *good* comes from being unrestrained by the on-goings of others. What the slave does is worry pessimistically about what others do and dwell upon the bad things that have happened to them – counting those things as *evils*. In the eyes of the master, on the other hand, the term *bad* is not a form of *evil*; instead, what the master views as *bad* is not something that he/she counts as worth dwelling upon. Of course, everyone (even masters) has had things happen to them which they would not count as good things (i.e. loss of family members, disease, mal-treatment from others, among worse examples), and will continue to have such things happen to them in the future; but the idea here is that dwelling or otherwise reflecting negatively upon those

things does nothing short of promote weakness, resentment, and pessimism – the characteristics of Nietzsche’s slave.

It is important to understand that *ressentiment* is not something held exclusively to the mentality of slaves. This type of reaction towards other individuals and the world is also found in masters. The difference is in the way each class deals with these feelings. As Nietzsche claims, “When resentment does occur in the noble man himself, it is consumed and exhausted in an immediate reaction, and therefore it does not *poison*, on the other hand, it does not occur at all in countless cases where it is unavoidable for all who are weak and powerless” (GM, 10). From this, it is clear that both masters and slaves experience the same things¹³. The difference, as stated above, is the way in which each class deals with such things.

When the master feels resentful towards someone or something, he/she is not afraid to take immediate action. A schoolyard fight between two young individuals inevitably results in one punishing the other for one reason or another. The *master* in one who is dominated seeks immediate retaliation by returning the punishment to the other individual. This is how the master is able to express his/her feelings outwardly in order to gain control, and overcome them. The *slave* in this individual is the pessimistic voice that wishes to retaliate, but instead holds back his/her feelings and becomes resentful – allowing such ill feelings to build towards a greater *ressentiment* that is only capable of

¹³ Of course, one would not immediately assume that the nobility of old world Europe experienced the same things as the plebian class of this time; in this sense, the idea is that although one is born into the plebian class, that person has the ability to ‘master’ themselves – making the real difference between a master and a slave is a matter of viewpoint.

being expressed as a negative outlook towards others. This example illustrates exactly how the master/slave morality is at work in individuals.

c. The master and the slave in connection to the will to power:

It is important to recognize that although Nietzsche separates humans into the classes of master and slave, as it is hinted at above, he ultimately attributes the same internal drive to all living beings; this becomes evident if one recalls his ontological commitment to the will to power, as elaborated in section one. The difference between a master and a slave is a matter of *perspective*. This is brought to life in *On The Genealogy Of Morality* in the second treatise, where Nietzsche claims that “The active force that is at work on a grander scale in those violence-artists [...] is basically the same force here – inwardly, on a smaller, pettier scale, in a backwards direction” (GM, 18). The *violence-artists* in this passage represent the master class¹⁴. The force that he is referring to is the will to power. This shows that both masters and slaves exert a will to power; and hence, that internal drives of the slave ultimately match up to that of the master.

This is further exposed in Nietzsche’s work by his examination of the “compensation [...] in a directive right to cruelty” (GM, 5) that slaves ultimately seek when they feel that punishment is deserved in a particular situation. In other words, the slave feels the need to get permission to act in a way that allows for an outwardly exertion or expression of power. When the slave feels that such actions are justified, they begin to engage in the same actions that they condemn the master for taking. The

¹⁴ Nietzsche attributes ‘artist’ to this class because masters are capable of making an art out of the necessary violent forces that are inherent in the conception of flux and the will to power – as a way of overcoming them. This is evident, Nietzsche thinks, in the way that the ancient Greeks made a festival and celebration out of tragedy.

difference is that the master does not need this false sense of ‘permission’ in order to take action; the master gives him/herself permission to act on this internal drive and instinct for power. In this instance, since the slave engages in the same activities that he/she condemns the master for, it exposes the false sense of morality held by the slave. And, since the slave initially despises the actions they seek permission to take, it also exposes how one in this category is resentful of the components of this existence – that of flux, chance, and the destruction that is necessary in order to allow for creation.

Another way to expose the weakness of the slave morality, and Nietzsche is sure to capitalize on this viewpoint, is to examine the deleterious effects of nineteenth century European Christian morality¹⁵. Those who very strongly exemplify the slave morality may claim to have no such desire – that is, the desire to express their inner drives. Meanwhile they may wish for god to torture those who commit heinous crimes by casting them to an eternity in hell. The view expressed here represents the epitome of weakness expressed by the slave. Rather than admit that it is actually themselves that wish to punish others, they assign the responsibility of administering punishment to god. The point here is that even the weakest of slaves maintain, in the most abstract and defunct of ways, a will to power.

The slave morality is ultimately, and even at its finest, a weakened reflection of the master morality. What both the master and the slave have, as stated previously, is the will to power. The difference with being cast into the slave morality, and what relates all of this to eternal recurrence, is that slaves, in instances of acting out towards others, choose to ignore this internal drive and instead hide behind a guise of false moral

¹⁵ It is worth mentioning here, however, that theists and atheists alike can (and do) exemplify Nietzsche’s slave morality.

principles; in doing this, slaves become resentful towards others. This resentment, at its best, will lead the slave towards becoming resentful of life and the world. In other words, the slave is resentful of the necessary components of existence, whereas the master recognizes these components as necessary and is in turn able to accord with them in creative ways that allow this type of individual to overcome this drive rather than be overcome by it.

At the end of the day, and in regards to the necessary suffering of life, the slave pessimistically asks “What did I do to deserve all of this?” while secretly hoping for some type of reward or compensation in what is beyond his/her particular life. While, the master, on the other hand, is able to ask for more – that is, more of what this existence has to offer. It is the slave class that wishes for an afterlife – one that represents an escape route intended to lead one out of the necessary components of this life. This type of individual wishes for things to be different rather than making do with what, for this view, necessarily exists. In positing this type of afterlife, what is overlooked is what has been laid out in section one – that the creation or becoming of an entity involves the passing away of other entities. In this sense, wishing for a world that is devoid of the destructive qualities of this existence would also be wishing for a world that is devoid of positive qualities as well – since both creation and destruction are unified forces that, as both Heraclitus and Nietzsche claim, require each other.

Positing an afterlife devoid of this flux, on this view, represents a false abstraction since both destruction and creation require each other and complete the overall circularity of all things. One can therefore come to understand exactly how this conception of the master/slave morality relates to eternal recurrence. The master is able to say “Yes!” to

this life and only needs the forces of this life, whereas the slave has developed a strong sense of negativity and inward hostility towards this existence, and, in turn, reacts to this internal pain by hoping that the destructive forces of this existence will be remedied after he or she is dead.

What is described above represents the litmus test, or ethical hypothesis version of eternal recurrence. The positive or negative affirmation of an individual life is dependent on his/her reaction to the question posited by eternal recurrence. As I have shown, this version of eternal recurrence is compatible with the metaphysical hypothesis laid out in section one. This is because both reactions – the joyous response on one hand, or the feeling of complete despair on the other – elicited by posing the question of eternal recurrence depends on the mentality of the individual. The affirmed life is attained by how one lives in accordance with the necessary bounds of this existence: that of destruction and re-creation – the Heraclitian flux that is inherent in Nietzsche's will to power.

Though the plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence that was laid out in section one is compatible with the ethical hypothesis that I've elaborated on in this section, it remains to be seen how this metaphysical version of eternal recurrence is intimately related to the ethical hypothesis. Recall, from parable 341 of *The Gay Science* that the demon that we are approached with says, "[...] everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence" (GS, 341). This sentence is closely related to the infamous 'proof' from section one that Rex Welshon argues is implausible, and that I claim is irrelevant to a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence. The apparent conundrum is that the specifics of one's life are

said to be important for the ethical hypothesis, but not for the plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence. The following section will address this issue by appealing to Nietzsche's perspectivism.

d.) Perspectivism in connection with the will to power:

Referring to existence as analogous to a dice game, as done in section one, represents the randomness of any one given perspective that is instantiated at a specific time. On this view, there is no universal perspective; Nietzsche claims "Let us guard ourselves [...] against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited a 'pure reason' [...] There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival 'knowing'" (GM, 85). What is posited here is once again a blatant attack on the metaphysics of Kant¹⁶. Nietzsche finds Kant to have an ill-conceived notion of universality. Whether or not he has interpreted him correctly is the topic for another thesis. The point here is that Nietzsche argues for a universality based on many perspectives. At first, this idea seems to preclude the concept of universality – if all of what exists is a multitude of perspectives, one might wonder how there is any sense of a universal view. The universality, however, for Nietzsche, comes in light of perspectivism itself. Maintaining the ontological version of the will to power, one can see that, for this view, existence consists of the will to power, encompassed by a multitude of perspectives of such a will. Thus, one is able to maintain a sense of universality. Without this implied universality of perspectivism, the view would simply dissolve into a weak form of relativism – if this

¹⁶ Recall from section one that Nietzsche is at odds with Kantian metaphysics.

were the case, one could easily assert that the claim to perspectivism is merely Nietzsche's opinion and not something that he takes as a type of universality.

On Nietzsche's view, a multitude of perspectives exist, and for each one of these perspectives, life affirmation involves being in accordance with the bounds of necessity (the will to power) – in an individualized sense. In other words, the individual perspective of a given entity, therefore, can be reshaped in an indefinite amount of ways; as long as the ontological version of the will to power is maintained, for all times, then eternal recurrence as a metaphysical doctrine is also maintained. What is the same in each and every case is both the formula for affirmation – the ethical version of eternal recurrence, as well as the necessary elements contained in the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence.

From this, one can understand eternal recurrence as the eternal repetition and recycling of a plethora of perspectives that instantiate the will to power from many different vantage points. On this view, what eternally reoccurs is the flux of power and the perspectives that represent this power. Therefore, in the case of the demon telling us that we will have to live out this exact same life over and over again, one can recognize that this element of the ethical thought experiment is also tailored to the individual's perspective. At the end of the day, if one reacts positively to the ethical hypothesis (thus affirming her existence), it is because of her individual perspective. This person, after being confronted by the demon, will recognize and say "Yes" to all of the events of her individual life; however, she may experience some other vantage point or some other

series of events after this life, but this *new* vantage point¹⁷ would be maintained around the same will to power – encompassed by the same multitude of perspectives. The idea that the will to power remains the same across all of time and that the multitude of possible perspectives exist regardless of their instantiation is what makes this a plausible view of eternal recurrence. It is in this sense that the ethical hypothesis is connected to the metaphysical view espoused in section one.

e.) Conclusion of section two:

Positing eternal recurrence as the “dice game” of existence entails that the countless possible instantiations of the specific events of one’s life do not necessarily repeat in any set order, or, for that matter, do not necessarily repeat at all. It simply claims that the instantiations presented by the creation and destruction of any entity are perceived as random. In other words, the so-called “dice” that get rolled in the game of existence can have either a finite or an infinite amount of sides – either way, the metaphysical doctrine of eternal recurrence is not ruled out¹⁸. As I have shown, the plausible metaphysical doctrine is not reliant upon the static repetition of the specific events of one’s life; it relies upon the continuation of the elements of becoming and passing away. As this section has shown, the metaphysical and ethical versions of eternal

¹⁷ I draw attention to ‘new’ here because it would not really be new since the multitude of perspectives that envelope the will to power already exist.

¹⁸ This issue leads to the distinction between the finiteness vs. infiniteness of matter. Nietzsche offers his ‘proof’ based on the finiteness of matter. However, in what has been brought out here, a universe consisting of infinite matter can also be said to maintain the metaphysical doctrine of eternal recurrence. The specific combinations of matter and the specific instantiations of particular events, even if they are limitless, on this view, can only be brought about by the essential elements espoused in section one.

recurrence are intimately connected via perspectivism. The two versions initially seemed at odds because the metaphysical doctrine implies a strong sense of determinism whereas the ethical hypothesis implies a sense of freedom. The third and final section of this writing will address and resolve this remaining tension.

Section Three: Fatalism and free will in connection to eternal

recurrence:

In a similar fashion of employing the metaphor of a dice game to this existence, Nietzsche also compares this existence to that of a waterfall – essentially claiming that everything that has happened or will happen is wholly determined:

“At the sight of a waterfall we think we see in the countless curvings, twistings and breakings of the waves capriciousness and freedom of will; but everything here is necessary, every motion mathematically calculable. So it is too in the case of human actions; if one were all knowing, one would be able to calculate every error, every pieces of wickedness. The actor himself, to be sure, is fixed in the illusion of free will; if for one moment the wheel of the world were to stand still, and there were an all-knowing, calculating intelligence there to make use of this pause, it could narrate the future of every creature to the remotest ages and describe every track along which this wheel had yet to roll. The actor’s deception regarding himself, the assumption of free-will, is itself part of the mechanism it would have to compute” (HH, 57).

This quote, from *Human, All Too Human*, represents a blunt form of hard determinism and hence exposes Nietzsche’s strong fatalistic tendencies. This conception is related significantly to that of eternal recurrence. Considering this existence to be like that of a dice game might allow one to contend that humans are free in their actions, despite the necessary components of becoming and passing away (i.e. eternal recurrence as it is espoused by this writing), but the above quote significantly reduces any real sense of freedom – human or otherwise. It remains though that the notion of self-overcoming, as it is advocated by Nietzsche, requires some sense of freedom. Without this sense of freedom, overcoming and re-valuing of one’s values would not be possible. This final section will address this issue.

Ultimately, endorsing fatalism means accepting and affirming what has happened or what will inevitably happen in one’s life. Nietzsche’s emphasis is not on a series of

events, but rather, is on the outcome of said events. In order for one to affirm his/her life to the fullest, he/she must will and be in love with the outcome of events in his/her life. Nietzsche asks “What does your conscious say? – You should become who you are” (GS, 270). On this view, one must be deeply in love with his/her fate.

Moreover, being committed to the ontological version of the will to power also commits one to a sense of fatalism. This is because no matter what one’s perspective consists of, everyone and everything, on this view, is striving for one thing – power. On this view, existence consists entirely of this internal drive, and there is no escaping it, not even upon death. The only way for one to truly affirm life, then, is to be in love with one’s fate. Nietzsche writes: “I want to learn more and more how to see as beautiful 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!” (GS, 276). The concept of amor fati is crucial for this view¹⁹. Essentially, one must be in love with his or her fate in order to reach the point of reacting joyously to the thought of eternal recurrence. It is at this point, Nietzsche thinks, that one has truly *overcome* the necessary components of existence. By reacting joyously to the thought of eternal recurrence and likewise being in love with one’s fate, he or she wants nothing other than *this* life; there is no need for abstract notions of an afterlife that are devoid of the elements of *this* existence.

One who reaches this point, according to Nietzsche, is said to be over-human because he or she is beyond the frivolousness of human beings – i.e. this person is said to be beyond the master/slave morality. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, This idea comes to life as Zarathustra teaches of the Übermensch: “I teach you the Overman. Human being is

¹⁹ Recall from earlier that amor fati means “love of fate” or “love of one’s fate”.

something that must be overcome.” (TSZ, 5). In this sense, the overman is *beyond* human. This notion of beyond, however, should not be equated to the type of “beyond” posited by other metaphysicians. When saying that other metaphysicians posit a world that exists “beyond” this world, it means that they are detached in a significant way from *this* world. Nietzsche of course urges that we should get “beyond good and evil” as well as positing the *Urbemensch* – a character that is, in a significant way, “beyond” human; however, as it illuminated in section one, these types of beyond, are distinct from the “beyond” one refers to when thinking Kantian metaphysics. Recall that this type of metaphysics advocates a “beyond” that is significantly detached from the elements of this world. “Beyond” in the Nietzschean sense, on the other hand, represents a beyond that is intimately related to this world.

Given that, on this view, the world as it appears to us is the only world, and further that it is a determinate world, the sense of freedom must come in light of perspectivism. Despite the ultimate determinateness of one’s fate, one is able to adopt different perspectives on his/her fate. In other words, while we, as individuals, may not be able to change our fate, we can overcome ourselves by changing our perspective on things. This involves being in accordance with becoming and passing away – the necessary elements of existence. On this view, once one recognizes these elements as eternal and necessary, he/she is able to overcome perceiving them as a burden, and will begin to see them as a great joy. Nietzsche writes, “This man who is now free and who is now permitted to make a promise, this master of the free will, this sovereign – how could he remain ignorant of his superiority over everybody who is not permitted to make a

promise or answer for himself, how much trust, fear and respect he arouses [...]" (GM, 2).

As this demonstrates, the one who reaches the level of perceiving this existence as a great joy has attained a level of freedom that is not available to one who perceives this existence as a heavy burden (or for that matter, anyone who mettles in between these perspectives (or, to be blunt, everyday people)). The *Urbmensch* represents the one who has attained this level of freedom. Since this individual wishes for nothing other than this life, he/she is said to be freely willing nothing other than the return of what is necessary in this existence. In other words, it is only when we truly come to be in love with our fate that we can be said to have freely willed this fate. Nietzsche writes, "A spirit like this who has become free stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the belief that only the individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole – he does not negate any more...But a belief like this is the highest of all possible beliefs" (TI, 223). Thus having faith in the elements of this existence – that of becoming and passing away, and likewise having faith that this existence is the only existence, for Nietzsche, is the only acceptable faith that one can have.

Conclusion:

What has been laid out in this thesis is a plausible metaphysical view of eternal recurrence that is accords with the ethical hypothesis, or litmus test version of eternal recurrence. Both views are attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche, my intention with this writing was to dispel the common notion that the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence is implausible. Here I have argued that the eternal “unfolding” of this existence represented by the will to power and individual perspectives, as well as the elements of becoming and passing away, all serve as a metaphysical description of eternal recurrence. On this view, the finitude or infinitude of matter and energy in the universe is irrelevant to this description. Moreover, what is typically taken as the metaphysical version of eternal recurrence (i.e. the alleged ‘proof’) may be dismissed; as I have shown, the version I have laid out above adheres to the Nietzschean view and is compatible with the ethical version of eternal recurrence.

On Nietzsche’s view, the one who reacts joyously to the thought of eternal recurrence comes to view what was a demon to the one perceiving eternal recurrence as ‘the greatest weight’ as a god. However, this ‘god’ is none other that the perceiver him/herself because what changed was within him/her (his/her perspective). Therefore, the perspective of eternal recurrence as the ‘greatest joy’ is something that one comes to perceive as the best possible world. It therefore makes little sense to claim that willing this existence to be the only existence creates for one the ‘greatest joy’ and then construct a metaphysical view that is completely separate from this. This is reason enough for locating and advocating the compatibility between the metaphysical and the ethical versions of eternal recurrence. Since it has been demonstrated how the two are

compatible with each other, to claim that Nietzsche meant something other than this (Such as, an ethical litmus test that serves a purpose alongside a metaphysical view that is bunk) is to overlook certain aspects of Nietzsche's writing.

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Key to Nietzsche's works:

GS – *The Gay Science*

TI – *Twilight Of The Idols; Or How To Philosophize With A Hammer*

BGE – *Beyond Good And Evil*

EC – *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*

WP – *The Will To Power*

TSZ – *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book For Everyone And No One*

HH – *Human, All Too Human: A Book For Free Spirits*

GM – *On The Genealogy Of Morality*