

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Nietzsche

Volume II:

The Eternal Recurrence of the Same

Translated from the German, with Notes and an Analysis, by

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8. "The Convalescent"

The reference to Zarathustra's animals has left us not totally unprepared to grasp the episode that, along with "On the Vision and the Riddle," considered earlier, treats the eternal return in a more direct fashion. This episode, the fourth-to-last of Part III, entitled "The Convalescent," remains in mysterious correspondence to that earlier one. In "The Convalescent" Zarathustra's animals speak to him about what they themselves symbolize: they speak of eternal return. They speak to Zarathustra, hovering about him, and remain present to his solitude until a particular moment when they leave him alone, cautiously stealing away. Their standing by him suggests that they are curious about him and are ever on the search for him; they want to know whether he is becoming the one he is, whether in his Becoming he finds his Being. But Zarathustra's Becoming commences with his downgoing. The downgoing itself comes to its end in Zarathustra's convalescence. Everything here is indicative of the most profound strife. Only when we grasp the various facets of the strife will we near the thought that is hardest to bear.

We shall place special emphasis on the characterization of the doctrine of eternal return, as befits the preliminary elucidations we are now engaged in. Yet we must continue to keep to the style of the present work; we must grasp everything that happens, in the way that it happens, in terms of that work itself. We must also understand the teaching, as taught, in connection with the questions as to *who* Zarathustra is, *how* the teacher of that teaching is, and *in what way* the teaching defines the teacher. That is to say, precisely where the teaching is most purely expressed in doctrines, the teacher, the one who teaches and speaks, dare not be forgotten.

How do matters stand with Zarathustra at the beginning of the section entitled "The Convalescent"? What is happening here? Zarathustra has returned once again to his cave, home from his sea voyage. One morning soon after his arrival he leaps from his bed and cries out like a madman, gesturing frantically, "as though someone were still lying in his bed and refused to get up." Zarathustra rages in a frightful voice in order to wake this other and to make sure that he will remain awake in the future. This other is his most abysmal thought, which, although it lies with him, still remains a stranger to Zarathustra; the other is his own ultimate recess, which Zarathustra has not yet conducted to his supreme height and to the most fully wakeful of lives. The thought lies *beside* him in bed, has not yet become one with him, is not yet incorporated in him and hence is not yet something truly thought. So saying, we indicate what is now to happen: the full import and the whole might of the thought that is hardest to bear must now rise and reveal itself. Zarathustra roars at it, calls it a "sluggish worm." We easily discern the meaning of the image: the sluggish worm, lying as a stranger on the floor, is the counterimage to the ringed serpent who "wrings" his way to the heights, soaring there in vast circles, vigilant in friendship. When the invocation of the most abysmal thought begins, Zarathustra's animals grow fearful; they do not flee in consternation, however, but come nearer, while all the other animals about them scatter. Eagle and serpent alone remain. It is a matter of bringing to the light of wakeful day, in purest solitude, what the animals symbolize.

Zarathustra invokes his ultimate recesses and so conducts himself to himself. He becomes what he is and confesses himself to be the one who he is: "the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle." Living, suffering, and circling are not three distinct matters. They belong together and form one: being as a whole, to which suffering, the abyss, belongs and which *is* inasmuch as, circling, it recurs. These three manifest their mutual affinity when they are gathered in the light of day, that is, when they are thought in their unity by Zarathustra's supreme "Yes." In that supreme moment, when the thought is comprehended and is truly thought, Zarathustra cries, "Hail me!" Yet his "Hail me!" is at the same time a "Woe is me!"—for

his is the victory that overcomes even itself as its greatest danger, the victory that grasps itself as downgoing.

Scarcely is it accomplished, when Zarathustra collapses. After he regains his senses he takes to his bed for seven days and seven nights. "But his animals did not abandon him, neither by day nor by night." Even so, Zarathustra remains in his solitude. The eagle, the proudest animal, flies off alone to fetch all sorts of nourishment. That means to say that Zarathustra does not lose himself, that he continues to nourish his pride and to secure the certainty of his rank, even though he must lie prostrate, even though his discernment does not bother about him now, so that he cannot even tell himself what he knows. Among other things, the eagle brings him "yellow and red berries," and we recall the earlier reference to "deep yellow and fiery red" (cf. Part III, "On the Spirit of Gravity"). *Taken together*, these two colors conform to what Zarathustra wants to have in sight: the color of deepest falsehood, error, and semblance, and the color of supreme passion, of incandescent creation.

When interpreting the two colors we have to keep in mind the fact that for will to power "error" constitutes the necessary essence of *truth* and that it is therefore not at all to be valued negatively. "Deep yellow" may also be interpreted as the gold of the "golden flash of the serpent *vita*" (WM, 577), which is "the serpent of eternity" (XII, 426). For the second interpretation "deep yellow" is the color of the eternal recurrence of the same, "fiery red" the color of will to power. For the first interpretation the two colors display the essential structure of will to power itself, inasmuch as truth as that which fixates and art as creation constitute the conditions of the possibility of will to power. In both cases the mutual affinity of the two colors points toward the essential unity of the Being of beings as thought by Nietzsche.

But after seven days "the animals felt that the time had come to talk with him." Zarathustra is now strong enough actually to think and to express himself about his most difficult thought, his ultimate recess. For what the eagle and serpent (the loneliest loneliness) wish to talk about—the only thing they *can* talk about—is the thought of eternal return. In the dialogue between Zarathustra and his animals the thought of thoughts is now brought to language. It is not presented as

a "theory"; only in conversation does it prove itself. For here the speakers themselves must venture forth into what is spoken: conversation alone brings to light the extent to which the speakers can or cannot advance, and the extent to which their conversation is only empty talk.

The two animals open the conversation. They inform Zarathustra that the world outside is like a garden that awaits him. They sense somehow that a new insight has come to him, an insight concerning the world as a whole. It must therefore be a pleasure to proceed to this newly constituted world, since all things are bathed in the light of the new insight and want to be integrated into the new dispensation. Insofar as they are so illuminated and integrated, things corroborate the insight in a profound way; they heal the one who up to now has been a seeker, they cure him of the disease of inquiry. That is what the animals mean when they say to Zarathustra, "All things yearn for you. . . . All things want to be doctors to you!" And Zarathustra? He listens to the animals' talk, indeed gladly, although he knows that they are only jabbering. But after such solitude the world *is* like a garden, even when it is invoked by mere empty talk, in the sheer play of words and phrases. He knows that a cheerful loveliness and gentle humor settle over the terrifying thing that being genuinely *is*; that being can conceal itself behind semblances in what is talked about. In truth, of course, the world is no garden, and for Zarathustra it dare not be one, especially if by "garden" we mean an enchanting haven for the flight from being. Nietzsche's conception of the world does not provide the thinker with a sedate residence in which he can putter about unperurbed, like the philosopher of old, Epicurus, in his "garden." The world is not a cosmos present at hand in itself. The animals' allusion to the garden has the sense of rejecting any sedate residence; at the same time, indirectly, it has the task of referring us to the concept of world in the tragic insight. Here we must ponder an important note by Nietzsche (XII, 368, from 1882-84):

Solitude *for a time* necessary, in order that the creature be totally permeated—cured and hard. New form of community, asserting itself in a warlike manner. Otherwise the spirit grows soft. No "gardens" and no sheer "evasion in the face of the masses." War (but without gunpowder!) between different thoughts! and their armies!

The animals talk to Zarathustra about his new insight in seductive words that tempt him to sheer intoxication. Yet Zarathustra knows that in truth these words and tones are "rainbows and sham bridges connecting what is eternally distinct." Where things most reminiscent of other things are named in the conversation, when it sounds as though the *same* is being said, then and there comes the loveliest lie: "For the smallest gap is the hardest to bridge."

What is Zarathustra thinking about? Nothing else than the sole matter under discussion, the world, being as a whole. But what response did the dwarf give to this riddle? The dwarf said that the avenues of the gateway, running counter to one another, meet in the infinite; everything turns in a circle and is a circle. And what did Zarathustra call himself when he thought his most difficult thought out of his ultimate recess, a thought he did not take lightly, as the dwarf did? He called himself the "advocate of the circle." Hence the two of them, the dwarf and Zarathustra, say the same thing. Between them lies only "the smallest gap": in each case it is an other who speaks the same words. Otherwise that same word, "circle," is but a sham bridge between things that are eternally distinct. Thus one man's circle is not another man's circle. What now comes to light is that whenever the Being of beings as a whole is to be uttered the semblance of unanimity is greatest and correct understanding—which is decisive and determinative of rank—most difficult.

It is easy for anyone and everyone to say, "A being is," and "A being becomes." Everyone thinks that anybody can understand that. Meanwhile, talking this way, "man dances above and beyond all things." Man, drifting along as he usually does, oblivious to the true dimensions and proper stages of genuine thinking, needs that kind of dance, that kind of jabbering, and Zarathustra takes joy in it. Yet he also knows that it is an illusion, that this garden is not the world, that "the world is deep, and deeper than the day has thought" (Part III, "Before Sunrise").

Thus Zarathustra does not allow the animals' talk to seduce him away from what he has known now for seven days and nights. He can find nothing reassuring in the fact that everyone confidently asserts—as though it were evident—that "everything turns in a circle," thereby to

all appearances agreeing with him in their empty talk. But the animals reply, "To those who think as we do, all things themselves dance." We do not dance above and beyond the things, they seem to say, but see the things' own dance and sway: you can trust us. And now they tell how the world looks under the new sun of eternal recurrence:

Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of Being. Everything dies, everything blooms again; eternally runs the year of Being.

Everything sunders, everything is joined anew; eternally the identical House of Being is built. Everything departs, everything greets again; eternally true to itself is the Ring of Being.

In every instant Being begins; around every Here the sphere of There rolls. The center is everywhere. Curved is the path of eternity.

Thus talk Zarathustra's animals. And why shouldn't they, they who are only insofar as they soar in vast circles and form rings? Could eternal return of the same be portrayed in more elegant words and more striking images than those employed here? How different this speech seems from the contemptuous grumblings of the dwarf! Nevertheless, the speeches of the dwarf and the animals betray a fatal resemblance. The dwarf says "All truth," that is to say, what is truly in being, in its passage and passing, "is curved." The animals say, "Curved is the path of eternity." Perhaps the animals' talk is only more effervescent, more buoyant and playful than—yet at bottom identical with—the talk of the dwarf, to whom Zarathustra objects that he makes things too easy for himself. Indeed, even the speech of his very own animals, who present his teaching to him in the fairest formulas, cannot deceive Zarathustra: "Oh, you rascally jesters and barrel organs," answered Zarathustra, smiling again, 'how well you know what had to be fulfilled in seven days—'." Yet their knowing is not knowledge. If Zarathustra calls it that he is only being ironic and is really suggesting that they know nothing. They are barrel organs: they turn his words concerning the eternal return of the same, words obtained only after the hardest struggle, into a mere ditty; they crank it out, knowing what is essential about it as little as the dwarf does. For the dwarf vanishes

when things take a serious turn and all becomes foreboding, when the shepherd has to bite off the head of the black snake. The dwarf experiences nothing of the fact that really to know the ring of rings means precisely this: to overcome from the outset and perpetually what is dark and horrid in the teaching as it is expressed, namely, the fact that if everything recurs all decision and every effort and will to make things better is a matter of indifference; that if everything turns in a circle nothing is worth the trouble; so that the result of the teaching is disgust and ultimately the negation of life. In spite of their marvelous talk about the Ring of Being, Zarathustra's animals too seem to dance over and beyond what is essential. His animals too seem to want to treat the matter as men do. Like the dwarf they run away. Or they too act as mere spectators, telling what results if everything revolves. They perch before beings and "have a look at" their eternal displacement, then describe it in the most resplendent images. They are not aware of what is going on there, not aware of what must be thought in the true thinking of being as a whole, namely, that such thinking is a cry of distress, arising from a calamity.

And even if the anguished cry is heard, what is it that usually happens? When the great man cries the little man hastens to the scene and takes pity. But everything that smacks of pity keeps to the periphery, stands on the sidelines. The little man's gregariousness accomplishes only one thing: his petty consolations diminish and falsify the suffering, delay and obstruct the true insight. Pity has not an inkling of the extent to which suffering and outrage crawl down the throat and choke a man until he has to cry out, nor does it know the extent to which this is "necessary to attain the best" in man. Precisely the knowledge that chokes us is what must be known if being as a whole is to be thought.

This marks the essential and altogether unbridgeable difference between the usual kinds of spectation and cognition, on the one hand, and proper knowing, on the other. And it suggests what the dwarf failed to see when he misinterpreted eternal recurrence and turned it into a mere ditty, into empty talk. It should be apparent by now that nothing is said here about the content of the doctrine beyond what is said in the animals' ditty, that Zarathustra does not contrapose any

other presentation to theirs, and that in the course of the conversation we are told *always and only by indirection* how the teaching is—or is not—to be understood. Nevertheless, the “how” does provide an essential directive for our understanding of the “what.”

It is our job to pursue that directive more keenly and to ask: What is it that turns the doctrine into a ditty? The latter concedes that things do depart, die, and disintegrate; it also accepts everything destructive, negative, adverse, and outrageous. Yet at bottom these things are conceived of as eventually passing away in the world’s circuitry, so that other things will come and everything shall take a turn for the better. Hence all is bound for perpetual compensation. Such compensation in fact makes everything indifferent: striving is flattened out into mere alternation. One now possesses a handy formula for the whole and abstains from all decision.

Looking back to the earlier episode, we may now ask: In what way does the dwarf make the interpretation of the imagery, that is, of the gateway and the two avenues, too easy for himself? Zarathustra indicates the answer when he goes on to command, “Look at the gateway itself—the Moment!” What does that directive mean? The dwarf merely looks at the two paths extending to infinity, and he thinks about them merely in the following way: If both paths run on to infinity (“eternity”), then that is where they meet; and since the circle closes by itself in infinity—far removed from me—all that recurs, in sheer alternation within this system of compensations, does so as a sequence, as a sort of parade passing through the gateway. The dwarf understands nothing of what Zarathustra means when he says—bewilderingly enough—that the two paths “affront one another” in the gateway. But how is that possible, when each thing moves along behind its predecessor, as is manifest with time itself? For in time the not-yet-now becomes the now, and forthwith becomes a no-longer-now, this as a perpetual and-so-on. The two avenues, future and past, do not collide at all, but pursue one another.

And yet a collision does occur here. To be sure, it occurs only to one who does not remain a spectator but who *is himself* the Moment, performing actions directed toward the future and at the same time accepting and affirming the past, by no means letting it drop. Whoever

stands in the Moment is turned in two ways: for him past and future *run up against* one another. Whoever stands in the Moment lets what runs counter to itself come to collision, though not to a standstill, by cultivating and sustaining the strife between what is assigned him as a task and what has been given him as his endowment.* To see the Moment means to stand in it. But the dwarf keeps to the outside, perches on the periphery.

What does all this say about the right way to think the thought of eternal recurrence? It says something essential: That which is to come is precisely a matter for decision, since the ring is not closed in some remote infinity but possesses its unbroken closure in the Moment, as the center of the striving; what recurs—if it is to recur—is decided by the Moment and by the force with which the Moment can cope with whatever in it is repelled by such striving. That is what is peculiar to, and hardest to bear in, the doctrine of eternal return—to wit, that eternity *is* in the Moment, that the Moment is not the fleeting “now,” not an instant of time whizzing by a spectator, but the collision of future and past. Here the Moment comes to itself. It determines how everything recurs. Now, the most difficult matter is the most tremendous matter to be grasped, and the tremendous remains a sealed door to little men. Yet the little men too *are*; as beings they too recur forever. They cannot be put out of action; they pertain to that side of things that is dark and repulsive. If being as a whole is to be thought, the little men too wait upon their “Yes.” That realization makes Zarathustra shudder.

And now that his most abysmal thought has been thought in the direction of that abyss, Zarathustra’s animals “do not let him talk anymore.” For when Zarathustra recognizes that the recurrence of the little man too is necessary; when he grapples with that “Yes” spoken to

* *Indem er den Widerstreit des Aufgegebenen und Mitgegebenen entfaltet und erhält.* Aufgegebenen could of course also have to do with surrender, but I am conjecturing that Heidegger here wants to juxtapose the task (cf. *Aufgabe*) that we project into and as the future to the endowment (cf. *Mitgabe*, *Mitgift*) of skills we bring to the task from our past. For here there often seems to be a disparity, a striving, and strife. Cf. the similar phrasing in Heidegger’s *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1960), p. 89 (top), ably rendered by Albert Hofstadter in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 77 (middle). And see sections 24 and 26, below.

everything that over the years wearied and sickened him, to everything he wanted to repulse; when he conquers his illness with that "Yes" and so becomes a convalescent; then his animals begin to speak again. Once more they repeat their message: the world is a garden. Again they call for Zarathustra to come out. But now they say more. They do not simply tell him to come out so that he can see and experience how all things are yearning for him. They call to him that he should learn from the songbirds how to sing: "For singing does a convalescent good." The temptation to take the thought of return merely as something obvious, to take it therefore at bottom as either contemptible mumbling or fascinating chatter, is overcome.

By now the dialogue between the animals and Zarathustra is moving upon a ground that has been transformed by the conversation itself. The animals are now speaking to a Zarathustra who has come to grips with his illness and overcome his disgust with the little man by achieving the insight that such adversity is necessary.

Now Zarathustra agrees with his animals. With their injunction to sing, the animals are telling him of that consolation he invented for himself during those seven days. Once again, however, he warns against turning the injunction to sing into a call for tunes on the same old lyre. What is being thought here? This, that the thought most difficult to bear, as the convalescent's conquering thought, must first of all be *sung*; that such singing, which is to say, the poetizing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, must itself become the convalescence; but also that such singing must be *singular*, that it dare not become a popular tune. Zarathustra therefore calls himself a poet as well as one who guesses riddles. Poet and riddler, but not in the sense that he is a poet and something else in addition, namely, one who solves riddles. Both these roles are thought in an original unity, thought therefore ultimately as some third thing. Hence poetry, if it is to fulfill its task, can never be a matter for barrel organs and ready-made lyres. The lyre, viewed now as an instrument for the new singing and saying, has still to be created. The animals know that—after all, they are *his* animals. In the words they utter they gradually come closer to Zarathustra, the more so as Zarathustra comes closer to himself and to his task: "First fashion for yourself a proper lyre, a new lyre!" "For your animals know well, O

Zarathustra, who you are and must become: behold, *you are the teacher of the eternal return*—that is now *your* destiny!"

Yet if Zarathustra is the first to have to teach that teaching, must he not, as the teacher, know it ahead of time, prior to anyone else; and must he not know it differently than those who are merely learning it? Indeed, he must know that by virtue of the teaching itself, and in conformity with it, "the great destiny" is also to be his greatest danger and disease. Only when the teacher comprehends himself *in terms of the teaching* as inevitably a victim, as one who must go down because he goes over in transition, only when the one going under gives himself his blessing as such a one, does he reach his end and goal. "Thus [that is, in this way] *ends* Zarathustra's downgoing," say the animals.

"Downgoing" here means two things: first, transition as departure; second, descent as acknowledgment of the abyss. This dual characterization of downgoing must at the same time be grasped in its temporality, in terms of "eternity," correctly understood. The downgoing itself, thought with a view to eternity, is the Moment; yet not as the fleeting "now," not as mere passing. Downgoing is indeed the briefest thing, hence the most transient, but is at the same time what is most accomplished: in it the most luminous brightness of being as a whole scintillates, as the Moment in which the whole of recurrence becomes comprehensible. The apposite imagery here is the coiling serpent, the living ring. In the image of the serpent the connection between eternity and the Moment is established for Nietzsche in its unity: the living ring of the serpent, that is to say, eternal recurrence, and—the Moment. In one of his late sketches (WM, 577; from the year 1887) Nietzsche contrasts his concept of eternity with the extrinsic sense of that notion as the "eternally unchanging": "As opposed to the *value* of the eternally unchanging (note Spinoza's naiveté, and Descartes' as well), the value of the briefest and most transient, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent *vita*." In the end, Zarathustra hears which eternity it is that his animals are proclaiming to him, the eternity of the Moment that embraces everything in itself at once: the downgoing.

When Zarathustra heard these words of his animals' "he lay still" and

communed with his soul. But the serpent and the eagle, finding him thus, so silent, honored the vast stillness about him and cautiously stole away.

In what way is Zarathustra now silent? He is silent inasmuch as he is communing with his soul alone, because he has found what defines him, has become the one who he is. He has also overcome outrage and repugnance by learning that the abyss belongs to the heights. To overcome outrage is not to put it out of action but to acknowledge its necessity. As long as outrage is merely repudiated in disgust, as long as our contempt is determined merely by nausea, that contempt remains dependent upon the contemptible. Only when contempt stems from love of the task, being transformed in such a way that, undergirded by an affirmation of the necessity of outrage, suffering, and destruction, it can pass by in silence; only when the silence of such loving passing-by prevails; only then does the vast stillness extend and the sphere expand about the one who in this way has become himself. Only now that the vast stillness pervades Zarathustra's spirit has he found his loneliest loneliness, a solitude that has nothing more to do with a merely peripheral existence. And the animals of his solitude honor the stillness, that is to say, they perfect the solitude in its proper essence in that now they too "cautiously steal away." The eagle's pride and serpent's discernment are now essential qualities of Zarathustra.

Zarathustra himself has become a hero, inasmuch as he has incorporated the thought of eternal return in its full import as the weightiest of thoughts. Now he is a knower. He knows that the greatest and smallest cohere and recur, so that even the greatest teaching, the ring of rings, itself must become a ditty for barrel organs, the latter always accompanying its true proclamation. Now he is one who goes out to meet at the same time his supreme suffering and supreme hope. We have already heard Nietzsche's answer to the question, "*What makes someone heroic?*" (V, 204), that is, what is it that makes a hero a hero? The response: "Going out to meet one's supreme suffering and supreme hope alike." But thanks to the motto of our own lecture course we also know that "everything in the hero's sphere turns to tragedy."

"Once I had created the overman, I draped the great veil of Becoming about him and let the midday sun stand over him" (XII, 362). The

veil of Becoming is recurrence, as the truth concerning being as a whole, and the midday sun is the Moment of the shortest shadow and the most luminous brightness, the image of eternity. When "*the greatest burden*" is assimilated to Dasein, "*Incipit tragoedia*." The two final sections of *The Gay Science*, which communicate the doctrine of return for the first time, employ the two italicized phrases as their titles. The intrinsic connection between these two concluding sections becomes clear on the basis of *that* work which is designed to create poetically the figure who is to think the eternal return of the same.

With Zarathustra "*the tragic age*" commences (WM, 37). Tragic knowing realizes that "life itself," being as a whole, conditions "pain," "destruction," and all agony; and that none of these things constitutes an "objection to this life" (WM, 1052). The customary notion of "the tragic," even when it is more exalted than usual, sees in this realization nothing more than guilt and decline, cessation and despair. Nietzsche's conception of the tragic and of tragedy is different; it is essentially more profound. The tragic in Nietzsche's sense *counteracts* "resignation" (WM, 1029), if we may say that the tragic still finds it necessary to be "counter" to anything. The tragic in Nietzsche's sense has nothing to do with sheer self-destructive pessimism, which casts a pall over all things; it has just as little to do with blind optimism, which is lost in the vertigo of its vacuous desires. The tragic in Nietzsche's sense falls outside this opposition, inasmuch as in its willing and in its knowing it adopts a stance toward being as a whole, and inasmuch as the basic law of being as a whole consists in struggle.

By means of our renewed reference to the connection between these two passages, passages that constitute the first communication of the thought of eternal return of the same, we have also clarified the inner relationship between the first communication (in *The Gay Science*) and the second (in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). We arrive at a juncture where we will have to reflect awhile on our procedure up to now. Such considerations will quite likely remain fruitless—unless several steps in the procedure have actually been executed by now.

We have presented two of Nietzsche's communications concerning his fundamental thought. Our interpretation of that thought has been

animated by several different points of view. In the first communication it was a matter of referring to the tragic insight and the fundamentally tragic character of beings in general. In the second communication it was above all the reference to the "Moment" that prevailed, that is to say, the kind of posture in which and on the basis of which the eternal recurrence of the same is to be thought, the way in which this thinking itself is to be. By means of both references the following has become clear: the matter into which we are here inquiring, being as a whole, can never be represented as some thing at hand concerning which someone might make this or that observation. To be transposed to being as a whole is to submit to certain inalienable conditions.

To elaborate such issues until they converge in the essential contexts—we will of necessity do more and more of this as our presentation of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return proceeds. And we will do so in such a way that the sundry issues converge on a particular center. This is what we must ponder if we are to prevent the presentation from being misunderstood as a pointless exhibition of Nietzsche's views and opinions. If we think forward unabatedly to further contexts, then we will begin to perceive the basic traits of what will later be recognized as Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position.

At first there seems to be not a trace of truth in the claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is the *consummation* of Western metaphysics.* For by abolishing the "suprasensuous world" that has served heretofore as the "true" world his philosophy appears rather to reject all metaphysics and to take steps toward its ultimate abnegation. To be sure, Nietzsche's fundamental thought, "the will to power," still refers in some way to an interpretation of the beingness of beings as a whole, namely, as will. Willing goes together with knowing. In the context of Schelling's and Hegel's projects, knowing and willing constitute the essence of reason. In the context of the Leibnizian projection of the substantiality of substance, knowing and willing are thought as *vis primitiva activa et passiva* [the originary active and passive force]. However, the thought of will to power, especially in its biologicistic configuration, appears to abandon the realm of this project; rather than consummating the tradition of metaphysics, it seems to truncate that tradition by disfiguring and trivializing it.

What the word *consummation* means; what precisely may *not* be used as a standard for taking its measure; to what extent we can fasten onto a "doctrine" in it; in what way the consummation keeps to the guiding projection (beings' coming to light in Being†) that articulates and grounds metaphysics as such; whether the consummation fulfills the guiding projection in its ultimate possibilities, thereby allowing it to stand outside all inquiry—none of these things can be discussed here.

The belief that Nietzsche's philosophy merely distorts, trivializes, and dogmatically abjures prior metaphysics is simply an illusion, albeit

* In a note, Heidegger reminds us that the present text pertains to the lecture course "The Will to Power as Knowledge," which came to an abrupt close in the summer of 1939. See the Editor's Preface to this volume.

† *Sciendes gelichtet im Sein*. Whether *gelichtet* should be translated with some form of the word "clearing," *Lichtung*, is an important and difficult question. Because Heidegger here stresses the traditional metaphysical "guiding projection" (*Leitentwurf*), and not his own further thinking of it, I have preserved the problematic reference to *lumen*.

a very stubborn one, one that persists as long as we represent his fundamental thought superficially. The superficiality arises from our postponement of a historical meditation on Western metaphysics, as well as from our practice of reflecting on the various projections that evolved from particular fundamental positions solely within the limits of what is asserted in those projections. In doing the latter, we forget that these utterances inevitably speak out of a background, a background from which they emerge; such utterances do not explicitly interrogate that background but return to it unwittingly in their very speech. The various fundamental positions understand the beingness of beings in a projection that was cast long before they themselves emerged, as far back as our Greek beginnings. These positions take the Being of beings as having been determined in the sense of permanence of presence. If we think these fundamental metaphysical positions within the scope of this guiding projection, we can preserve ourselves from the temptation to grasp Nietzsche's philosophy superficially and to pigeonhole it with the help of the usual historiological labels—as "Heraclitean," as a "metaphysics of the will," or as a "philosophy of life."

If we think in terms of the guiding projection of the beingness of beings, the projection that sustains the entire history of metaphysics even as it surpasses that history at its very commencement, then we will recognize what is metaphysically necessary and ultimate in the doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same. When we define the interconnection of this doctrine with the fundamental thought of will to power, we bring Nietzsche's philosophy to the fore as the final distinctive position in the history of Western metaphysics. Given such an insight, Nietzsche's philosophy impels us toward the necessity of that confrontation in and for which Western metaphysics, as the totality of a history that has been accomplished, is consigned to what has been, that is to say, is consigned to an ultimate futurity. What has been liberates what apparently is merely past into its essence; specifically, it translates the commencement, which apparently has foundered once and for all, into its character as a commencement. Because of this character, the commencement surpasses everything that follows it, and hence is futural. The past as *essentially unfolding*, that is,

beingness projected in sundry ways as the veiled truth of Being, holds sway over everything that is taken to be current and actual, the latter by virtue of its actuating power.

In order to define the interconnection of eternal recurrence of the same and will to power, our reflections must execute the following six steps:

1. In terms of the history of metaphysics, the thought of eternal recurrence of the same anticipates in thought the fundamental thought of will to power; that is to say, it thinks that thought to the point of consummation.
2. In terms of metaphysics, in its modern phase and in the history of its end, both thoughts think the selfsame.
3. In the essential unity of the two thoughts, the metaphysics that is approaching consummation utters its final word.
4. The fact that their essential unity remains unspoken founds the age of consummate meaninglessness.
5. This age fulfills the essence of modernity; now, for the first time, modernity comes into its own.
6. Viewed historically, such fulfillment—cloaked in concealment and running counter to bemused popular opinion—is the need characteristic of the transition that embraces all that has been and prepares what is to come. It is transition to guardianship over the truth of Being.

— I —

Will to power is the essence of power itself. It consists in power's overpowering, that is, its self-enhancement to the highest possible degree. Will does not hover beyond power; it is rather the empowering command within the essence of power to exercise power. The metaphysical determination of Being as will to power remains unthought in its decisive import, and falls prey to misinterpretation, as long as Being is posited solely as power or merely as will, and as long as will to power is explained in the sense of will as power or power as will.

To think Being, the beingness of beings, as will to power means to conceive of Being as the unleashing of power to its essence; the unleashing transpires in such a way that unconditionally empowering power posits the exclusive preeminence of beings over Being. Whereas beings possess objective actuality, Being collapses into oblivion.

What this unleashing of power to its essence is, Nietzsche is unable to think. Nor can any metaphysics think it, inasmuch as metaphysics cannot put the matter into question. On the contrary, Nietzsche thinks his interpretation of the Being of beings as will to power in an essential unity with that determination of Being which arose in the rubric "the eternal recurrence of the same."

Reckoned chronologically, Nietzsche pursued the thought of eternal return of the same before he conceived of will to power, even though intimations of the latter may be found every bit as early. Yet the thought of return is above all earlier *in terms of the matter*; that is to say, it is more forward-reaching, although Nietzsche himself was never able explicitly to think through its essential *unity* with will to power as such, nor to elevate it into a metaphysical conception. Just as little did Nietzsche recognize the truth of the thought of return in terms of the history of metaphysics. The reason for this is not that the thought remained in any way obscure to him, but that like all metaphysicians prior to him Nietzsche was unable to find his way back to the fundamental traits of the guiding metaphysical projection. For the general traits of the metaphysical projection of beings upon beingness, and thereby the representation of beings as such in the domain of presence and permanence, can be known only when we come to experience that projection as historically cast. An experience of this kind has nothing in common with the explanatory theories that metaphysics every now and again proposes concerning itself. Nietzsche too elaborates only these kinds of explanations—which, however, we dare not level off by calling them a "psychology of metaphysics."

"Recurrence" thinks the permanentizing of what becomes, thinks it to the point where the *becoming* of what becomes is secured in the *duration of its becoming*.* The "eternal" thinks the permanentizing

* "Wiederkehr" denkt die Beständigkeit des Werdenden zur Sicherung des Werdens

of such constancy in the direction of its circling back into itself and forward toward itself. Yet what becomes is not the unceasing otherness of an endlessly changing manifold. What becomes is the same itself, and that means the one and selfsame (the identical) that in each case is within the difference of the other. The presence of the one identical element, a presence that comes to be, is thought in the same. Nietzsche's thought thinks the constant permanentizing of the becoming of whatever becomes into the only kind of presence there is—the self-recapitulation of the identical.

This "selfsame" is separated as by an abyss from the singularity of the unrepeatable enjoining of all that coheres. Out of *that* enjoining alone does the difference commence.

The thought of return is not Heraclitean in the sense usually expounded by our historians of philosophy. But it thinks—in a way that has meanwhile become foreign to anything Greek—the formerly projected essence of beingness (permanence of presence), thinks it in its exitless and involuted consummation. Thus the beginning is brought to the fulfillment of its end. Thought concerning truth, in the sense of the essence of *alētheia*, whose essential advent sustains Being and allows it to be sheltered in its belonging to the commencement, is more remote than ever in this last projection of beingness. In Nietzsche's thinking, "truth" has petrified and become a hollow essence: it has the sense of a univocal accord with beings as a whole, in such a way that within this univocity the unstrained voice of Being can never be heard.

The history of the truth of Being ends when its primordial essence is utterly lost. That loss was prepared by the sudden collapse of ungrounded *alētheia*. Yet at the same time the historical illusion necessarily arises that the primordial unity of *physis* in its original configuration has been recovered once again. For in the very early period of metaphysics it was sundered into "Being" and "Becoming." What was sundered in this way was distributed between the two definitive realms, to wit, the true and the apparent worlds.

des Werdenden in seiner Werdedauer. For a similar constructon, see Volume II of this series, *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, pp. 200–1.

But, people say, what else can the cancellation of the distinction between the two, the crossing out of these two distinct worlds, mean than the fact that we are finding our way back to the commencement and thereby overcoming metaphysics? Nevertheless, Nietzsche's doctrine does not overcome metaphysics: it is the uttermost unseeing adoption of the very guiding projection of metaphysics. Yet precisely for that reason it is also something essentially other than a flaccid historiological reminiscence of ancient doctrines concerning the cyclical course of cosmic processes.

As long as we designate the thought of return as an unproven and unprovable eccentricity, and as long as we account it one of Nietzsche's poetic and religious caprices, we drag the thinker down to the flatlands of current opinion. If that were the end of the matter, then we might have to resign ourselves to this demotion as the result of those always inevitable misinterpretations by contemporary know-it-alls. Yet something else is at stake here. Inadequate interrogation of the meaning of Nietzsche's doctrine of return, when viewed in terms of the history of metaphysics, shunts aside the most intrinsic need that is exhibited in the course of the history of Western thought. It thus confirms, by assisting those machinations that are oblivious to Being, the utter abandonment of Being.

When that happens we forfeit the very first precondition that anyone would have to satisfy in order to grasp as Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical thought the ostensibly more accessible thought of will to power. For if will to power constitutes the essential character of the beingness of beings, it must think whatever it is that the eternal recurrence of the same is thinking.

— II —

When in our meditations we bring the guiding projection of all metaphysics to closer inspection, we see that both thoughts think the same thing—will to power in terms of modernity, eternal recurrence of the same in terms of the history of the end. That guiding projection places

beings as such in the open region of permanence and presence, representing them in their universal character with a view to their beingness. Which realm it is that yields our representations of permanence and presencing, indeed, the permanentizing of presence itself, never troubles the guiding projection of metaphysics. Metaphysics keeps strictly to the open region of its projection and interprets the permanentizing of presencing variously in accord with the fundamental experience of the already predetermined beingness of beings. Yet if a meditation stirs that gradually gets into its purview that which lightens, that which propriates all the openness of what is open, permanentizing and presencing will themselves be interrogated with a view to their essence. Both will show themselves as essentially bound up with time. Simultaneously, they will demand of us that we rid ourselves of whatever it is we usually designate in the word *time*.*

Will to power may now be conceived of as the permanentizing of surpassment, that is, of Becoming; hence as a transformed determination of the guiding metaphysical projection. The eternal recurrence of the same unfurls and displays its essence, so to speak, as the most constant permanentizing of the becoming of what is constant. Yet, to be sure, all this emerges solely within the scope of that interrogation that has put beingness into question with a view to its projective realm and the grounding of that realm. For such interrogation, the guiding projection of metaphysics and thus metaphysics itself have already been thoroughly overcome; they are no longer admitted as constituting the primary and solely definitive realm.

And yet we may initially try to be guided toward the identity of

* These lines reveal something of that way "from 1930 to the 'Letter on Humanism'" that Heidegger cites as the trajectory of his *Nietzsche* volumes "considered as a whole." (See Volume I of this series, *The Will to Power as Art*, p. xvi.) Note that "lightens" here translates *das Lichtende*, a nominalization of the present participle, hence a more active, forceful form of the word *Lichtung*. The phrase *das Lichtende . . .*, *das jede Offenheit des Offenen ereignet* encapsulates the central theme of a large manuscript on which Heidegger had been working between 1936 and 1938: *Contributions to Philosophy: "Of Ereignis."* The limitations of the translation of *ereignen* as "to appropriate" are nowhere so apparent as here: far from being an act of aggrandizement, *Ereignis* is the granting or dispensing of Time and Being, never thought within the guiding projection of metaphysics as such. See now *Contributions*, MHG 65.

“eternal recurrence of the same” and “will to power” within the perspectives of metaphysics and with the help of its distinctions. The lecture courses “*The Will to Power as Art*” and “*The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*” pursue a path by which we may see the *inner unity* of these two. From the outset, the eternal recurrence of the same and will to power are grasped as fundamental determinations of beings as such and as a whole—will to power as the peculiar coinage of “what-being” at the historic end, and eternal recurrence of the same as the coinage of “that-being.” The *necessity* of grounding this distinction is surely recognized in an unpublished lecture course I taught during the year 1927; nevertheless, the essential origin of the distinction remains concealed there.*

This distinction—and the prepotence of the elements thereby distinguished—rules unchallenged throughout the entire history of metaphysics and grows ever more self-evident. In what does it have its ground? What-being (*to ti estin*) and that-being (*to estin*) are coextensive in their differentiation with the distinction that everywhere sustains metaphysics, the distinction that is firmly established in the Platonic differentiation of *ontōs on* [being in its Being] and *mē on* [nonbeing]. Although first established in Platonism, established there once and for all, the distinction proves capable of transformation—to the point of unrecognizability. (See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z 4, 1030a 17.†) The *ontōs on*, that which has the character of being—and that

* The lectures Heidegger refers to here (delivered in the months following the publication of *Being and Time* in April of 1927) have now been published as *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1975); translated into English by Albert Hofstadter as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982). See chapter two, sections 10–12. Here Heidegger discusses the distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* in Aquinas, Scotus, and Suarez, a distinction that goes back to the Aristotelian *to ti estin* (or *to ti ēn einai*) and *to estin* (or *hoti estin*). Heidegger here provides a careful historical account of the prevailing view of *existentia* as *Vorhandensein*, being-at-hand. Note that Nietzsche’s doctrines of eternal recurrence and will to power are *not* mentioned here, even though Kant and Hegel are cited (e.g., at the end of section 11) as inheritors of the Scholastic distinction.

† Here Aristotle discusses the *to ti ēn einai* of *ousia*, usually rendered as the “essence” of “substance,” in terms of a thing’s “definition” (*horismos*). At lines 17 ff. he asks

means “true” being, “true” in the sense of *alētheia*—is a “vision,” a profile that comes to presence. In such presence there occurs essentially at one and the same time *what* a being is and *that* it—in the presentness of its profile—is. The “true world” is the world decided in advance with regard to its *that*. Yet insofar as it is true, and thus distinguished from the semblant; and insofar as the merely apparent world *manifests* what-being only in a hazy sort of way, hence “truly” “is” not, even if at the same time it is not merely nothing but a being; insofar as all this is the case, the “that it is” comes to obtrude precisely in the *mē on*. It comes to appear as a stripping away of the pure “visage” in which the “what” shows itself. The *to ti estin* and the *to estin* (the *ti* [what] and the *hoti* [that]) go their separate ways with and in the distinction of the *ontōs on* and the *mē on*. That-being becomes the distinguishing characteristic of each “this” (*tode ti*) and of the *hekaston* [each] as such; at the same time, these cause the relevant what-being (*eidos*) to appear, in this way alone determining a *that* for Being, and thus determining a being as a particular given. The *idea* now explicitly becomes an *eidos* in the sense of the *morphē* [form] of *hyle* [matter], in such a way that beingness is transposed to a *synolon* [gathered whole] that does not cancel the distinction. (With regard to the original Greek sense of *morphē*, which is quite different from the later distinction between *forma* and *materia*, see Aristotle, *Physics* B 1*). Under many guises, “form” assumes center stage in subsequent times, in particular because of the biblical notion of creation, as *existentia*, *essentia*, and the *principium individuationis*. What-being and that-being evanesce to vacuous “concepts of reflection” as the unquestioned acceptance of beingness waxes. They persevere with a power that be-

whether definitions, like the “what-being” of things, are not multiple in meaning, sometimes referring to “substance” or a “this,” other times indicating every sort of “predication” of quantity, quality, and “whatever such there may be.”

* Heidegger defines that “original Greek sense” of *morphē* in “On the Essence and Concept of *Physis*,” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1967), pp. 309–71, esp. pp. 343–53. In the context of *eidos* and *logos*, *morphē* is there taken to be a mode of presencing, that is, of Being. See also *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1960), pp. 20–25; in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), see pp. 26–30.

comes all the more tenacious as metaphysics is increasingly accepted as something self-evident.

Is it any wonder that the distinction between what-being and that-being once again comes to the fore most conspicuously at the consummation of Western metaphysics? Yet the *distinction as such* is forgotten, so that the two fundamental determinations of beings as a whole—will to power and eternal recurrence of the same—are uttered in such a way that although they are metaphysically homeless, as it were, they are posited unconditionally.

Will to power says *what* the being “is.” The being is that which (as power) it empowers.

Eternal recurrence of the same designates the *how* in which the being that possesses such a “what” character is. It designates its “factuality” as a whole, its “that it is.” Because Being as eternal recurrence of the same constitutes the permanentizing of presence, it is most permanent; it is the unconditioned *that*.

We must at the same time recall something else: the fulfillment of metaphysics tries on the very basis of that metaphysics to overcome the distinction between the “true” and the “merely apparent” worlds. At first it tries to do this simply by inverting those two worlds. Of course, the inversion is not merely a mechanical overturning, whereby the lower, the sensuous realm, assumes the place of the higher, the suprasensuous—an overturning in which these two realms and their locales would remain unchanged. The inversion transforms the lower, the sensuous realm, into “life” in the sense of will to power. In the essential articulation of will to power the suprasensuous is transformed into a securing of permanence.

In accordance with this overcoming of metaphysics, that is, this transformation of metaphysics into its final possible configuration, the very distinction between what-being and that-being is inevitably shunted aside. It thus *remains unthought*. What-being (will to power) is nothing “in itself” to which that-being, by some happy circumstance, is allotted. What-being, as essence, conditions the very animation of life (value). In such conditioning, what-being is at the same time the sole proper *that* of animate beings—and here that means beings as a whole.

On the basis of this cohesion of that-being and what-being (a cohesion that is now quite the opposite of the primordial encompassment of the *estin* by the *einai* of the *ontōs on as idea*), will to power and eternal recurrence of the same may no longer merely cohere as determinations of Being: they must say the *selfsame* thing. At the end of the history of metaphysics, the thought of eternal recurrence of the same expresses precisely what will to power, as the fundamental trait of the beingness of beings, says at the consummation of modernity. Will to power is self-surpassment into the possibilities of becoming that pertain to a commandeering which now begins to install itself. Such self-surpassment remains in its innermost core a permanentizing of Becoming as such. Self-surpassment stands opposed to all mere continuation into the endless, which is foreign and inimical to it.

As soon as we are in a position to think through the pure self-sameness of will to power and eternal recurrence of the same in every direction and in every one of its adopted guises, we shall find the basis for first measuring both of these fundamental thoughts in their particularity and in accord with their metaphysical scope. These thoughts provide an occasion for thinking back to the first commencement. For they constitute the fulfillment of that commencement, empowering unconditionally the nonessence that already emerges on the scene with the *idea*. From that fulfillment unfolds a meditation on the perennially undefined and ungrounded truth of Being. Thus begins the transition toward an interrogation of this truth.

— III —

The selfsame utterance in the essential unity of will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same is the final word of metaphysics. “Final,” in the sense of exhaustive consummation, must also in a certain sense mean “first.” The latter, *physis*, commences by rending itself straightaway into the ostensible opposition of Being and Becoming. Upsurgent presencing, unexamined, and not projected upon its character as “time,” is always and everywhere apprehended with a view

to one thing alone: coming to be and passing away, becoming and change, remaining and enduring. In this last-mentioned respect the Greeks view Being proper; indeed, for them every change is at first called *ouk on* [not-being], later *mē on* [nonbeing], but still defined as *on*. Being and Becoming are divided into two realms that are separated by a *khōrismos* [gap]. Thus they belong to a locale that is defined by these realms; here they take up their residence. To what extent does Aristotle overcome the *khōrismos* in the *ousia* of the *tode ti* [the "this"] and the *hekaston* [the "each"]? To the extent that Being becomes *ousia* solely as *entelekheia* and *energeia*.*

Being ultimately steps into the arena with its opponent, Becoming, inasmuch as the latter claims Being's place. The opposition of the two unfolds on the plain of the "actual," a terrain that is never expressly perceived as such. Being's own actuality makes a claim on it, since it stands opposed to the nonactual, the null; yet such actuality also demands for itself the character of Becoming, since it does not wish to be a petrified, "life"-less thing at hand. Hegel executes the first step in the surpassment of this opposition on behalf of "Becoming," although he grasps the latter in terms of the suprasensuous and the absolute Idea, as its self-presentation. Nietzsche, inverting Platonism, transposes Becoming to the "vital" sphere, as the chaos that "bodies forth." That inversion, extinguishing as it does the opposition of Being and Becoming, constitutes the fulfillment proper. For now there is no way out, either in such rending or in a more appropriate fusion. This becomes manifest in the fact that "Becoming" claims to have usurped the prerogative of Being, whereas the prepotence of Becoming puts a final seal on the ultimate confirmation of Being's unshaken power. Being is the permanentizing (securing) of presencing, inasmuch as the interpretation of beings and their beingness as Becoming permanentizes Becoming as unconditioned presence. In order to shore up its prepotence, Becoming heeds the beck and call of permanentizing pres-

* For a fuller account, see "The Essence and the Concept of *Physis*," *Wegmarken*, esp. pp. 351-57; this entire essay expands the horizon projected in Part IV of *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, cited with publisher's information on p. 51, above).

encing. The primordial truth of Being holds sway in this particular permanentizing, albeit unrecognized and ungrounded, deviant in its utterly oblivious nonessence. Such empowering of Becoming to the status of Being deprives the former of its ultimate possibility for pre-eminence and restores to the latter its primordial essence (as bound up with *physis*); an essence, to be sure, that is consummate nonessence. Now beingness is all there is, and beingness sees to it all: alteration and permanence. It satisfies unconditionally the claims of being (as "life"). Providing such satisfaction, beingness appears to be beyond all question. It offers the most spacious quarters.

The essential sequence in this final phase of metaphysics, that is, the final phase of the projection of beingness upon permanentizing of presencing, is announced in the corresponding definition of the essence of "truth." Now the last reverberations of any intimation of *alētheia* fade. Truth becomes rightness, in the sense of a commanding absorption by the one who commands into the compulsion to self-surpassment. All correctness is merely a rehearsal of and an opportunity for such surpassing; every fixation merely a foothold for dissolving all things in Becoming, hence a purchase for willing the permanentizing of "chaos." Now the sole appeal is to the vitality of life. The primordial essence of truth is transformed in such a way that its metamorphosis amounts to a shunting aside (though not an annihilation) of essence. Verity dissolves in the presence of an empowering of power, a presence caught up at some point of its recurrence. Truth is once again the very same as Being, except that the latter has in the meantime been overtaken by the fulfillment of its nonessence. Yet when truth as correctness and as unconcealment has been leveled to "life-size"; when it is shunted aside in this way; then the essence of truth has surrendered its jurisdiction altogether. It no longer rises to the challenge of inquiry. It wanders without prospect in the region of "perspectives" and "horizons" that are bereft of every clearing. But what *then*? Then the bestowal of meaning gets under way as a "re-valuation of all values." "Meaninglessness" is the only thing that makes "sense." Truth is "rightness," that is to say, supreme will to power. Only an unconditioned dominion over the earth by human beings

will be right for such "rightness." Instituting planetary dominion, however, will itself be but the consequence of an unconditioned *anthropomorphism*.

— IV —

Precisely here the age of *consummate meaninglessness* begins. In such a designation the word *meaninglessness* is to be taken as a concept of thought that thinks the history of Being. Such thinking leaves metaphysics as a whole (with all its inversions and deviations in the direction of revaluations) behind. According to *Being and Time*, "meaning" designates the realm of projection, designates it in accord with its own proper intent (that is, in accord with its unique question concerning the "meaning of Being"), as the clearing of Being, the clearing that is opened and grounded in projection. Such projection is that in the thrown project which propriates as the essential unfolding of truth.*

Meaninglessness is lack of the truth (clearing) of Being. Every possibility of such a projection founders because metaphysics has shunted aside the essence of truth. When the very question concerning the essence of the truth of *beings* and of our comportment toward beings is decided, meditation on the truth of Being, as the more original question concerning the essence of truth, can only remain in default. Advancing through a metamorphosis from *adaequatio* to certitude, truth has established itself as the *securing* of beings in their *perfectly accessible disposability*. That transformation ordains the prepotence of beingness, thus defined, as *malleability*. Beingness as malleability re-

* *Dieses Entwerfen aber ist jenes, das im geworfenen Entwurf als Wesendes der Wahrheit sich ereignet.* Heidegger is here referring to pp. 151–52 of *Sein und Zeit*, 12th ed. (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1972), a crucial juncture in his fundamental ontology. In these pages of section 32, "Understanding and Interpretation," the understanding of Being that characterizes Dasein is interpreted explicitly in terms of meaning, *Sinn*. The analysis looks back to that "lightedness" of Dasein (p. 147) and forward to that "clearing of Dasein" that is disclosure, unconcealment, "truth." It takes up explicitly the question of the meaning of Being—the sole purpose of existential analysis as such. See also the "Letter on Humanism" in *Wegmarken*, esp. pp. 156–60; in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 205–8.

mains at the beck and call of that Being which has released itself into sheer accessibility through calculation, into the disposability of the beings appropriate to it by way of unconditioned planning and arranging.

The prepotence of Being in *this* essential configuration is called *machination*.* It prevents any kind of grounding of the "projections" that are under its power and yet are themselves none the less powerful. For machination is the prepotence of all unquestioning self-assurance and certitude in securing. Machination alone can hold the stance it adopts toward itself under its unconditioned self-command. Machination makes itself permanent. When meaninglessness comes to power by dint of machination, the suppression of meaning and thus of all inquiry into the truth of Being must be replaced by machination's erection of "goals" (values). One quite reasonably expects new values to be propagated by "life," even though the latter has already been totally mobilized, as though total mobilization were something in itself and not the organization of unconditioned meaninglessness by and for will to power.† Such positings and empowerings of power no longer conform to "standards of measure" and "ideals" that could be grounded in themselves; they are "in service" to sheer expansion of power and are valued purely according to their estimated use-value. The age of consummate meaninglessness is therefore the era in which "worldviews" are invented and promulgated with a view to their power. Such worldviews drive all calculability of representation and production to the extreme, originating as they do essentially in mankind's self-imposed instauration of self in the midst of beings—in the midst of mankind's unconditioned hegemony over all sources of power on the face of the earth, and indeed its dominion over the globe as such.

* *Machenschaft*, all that has the quality of doing or making, prevails in the realm of purely accessible (*ausmachbaren*) beings, beings characterized by sheer disposability (*Machbarkeit*) and malleability (*Machsamkeit*), where everything is "do-able" (*machbar*) by way of securement and calculation. See the note on p. 196 of Volume IV, *Nihilism*.

† These words are in reply to Ernst Jünger's books, *Total Mobilization* (1930) and *The Worker: Domination and Configuration* (1932), in which the experience of total mobilization in World War I was taken as a prototype of the technology that is about to enmesh mankind entirely. See Section II of the Analysis at the end of this volume.

Whatever beings in their individual domains may be, whatever used to be defined as their *quiddity* in the sense of the "Ideas," now becomes something that the self-inauguration can reckon with in advance, as with that which gauges the *value* of every productive and representative being as such (every work of art, technical contrivance, institution of government, the entire personal and collective order of human beings). Calculation on behalf of this self-inauguration invents "values" (for our culture and for the nation). Value translates the essentiality of essence (that is, of beingness) into an object of calculation, something that can even be estimated in terms of quantity and spatial extension. Magnitude now attains to the very essence of grandeur—in the gigantic. The gigantic does *not* first of all *result from* the enhancement of the miniscule; it is not something that grows by accretion. It is the essential ground, the motor, and the goal of enhancement, which in turn consists in something other than quantitative relations.

The fulfillment of metaphysics, that is, the erection and entrenchment of consummate meaninglessness, thus remains nothing else than ultimate submission to the end of metaphysics—in the guise of "revaluation of all values." For Nietzsche's completion of metaphysics is *from the first* an inversion of Platonism (the sensuous becomes the true, the suprasensuous the semblant, world). But insofar as the Platonic "Idea" in its modern dress has become a "principle of reason" and hence a "value," the inversion of Platonism becomes a "revaluation of all values." Here inverted Platonism becomes blindly inflexible and superficial. *All that is left is the solitary superficialities of a "life" that empowers itself to itself for its own sake.* If metaphysics begins as an explicit interpretation of beingness as *idea*, it achieves its uttermost end in the "revaluation of all values." The solitary superficialities is what *remains after* the abolition of the "true" and the "semblant" worlds. It appears as the selfsame of eternal recurrence of the same and will to power.

As a revaluator of all values, Nietzsche testifies to the fact that he belongs ineluctably to metaphysics and thereby to its abyssal separation from *every possibility* of another commencement. Nietzsche himself does not know the distance that is measured out in this final step.

And yet—did not Nietzsche succeed in positing a new "meaning" beyond all the teetering goals and ideals of earlier times, and thus beyond their annihilation? Did he not in his thinking anticipate "overman" as the "meaning" of the "earth"?

However, "meaning" is once again for him "goal" and "ideal." "Earth" is the name for the life that *bodies forth*, the rights of the sensuous. "Overman" is for him the consummation of what was the last man, making fast what was long *not yet* firmly defined, namely, that animal which still craved and lunged after ideals somewhere at hand and "true in themselves."* Overman is extreme *rationalitas* in the empowering of *animalitas*; he is the *animal rationale* that is fulfilled in *brutalitas*. Meaninglessness now becomes the "meaning" of beings as a whole. The unquestionability of Being decides what beings are. Beingness is left to its own devices as liberated machination. Not only must humanity now "make do" without "a truth" but the *essence* of truth itself is dispatched to oblivion. For that reason, it is all a matter of "making do," and of some sort—any sort—of "values."

And yet the age of consummate meaninglessness possesses greater powers of invention, more forms of activity, more triumphs, and more avenues for getting all these things into the public eye than any age hitherto. It is therefore destined to fall prey to the presumption that it is the first age to discover "meaning," the first age to "bestow" meaning on everything that is "worth serving." Of course, the kind of wage it demands for its services has become exorbitant. The age of consummate meaninglessness insists on paving the way for its own essence, insists on it quite boisterously, and even violently. It seeks unthinking refuge in its own peculiar "superworld." It proceeds to the final confirmation of the prepotence of metaphysics in the form of

* In both *Beyond Good and Evil* (number 62) and *Toward a Genealogy of Morals* (III, 13; in CM, 5, 81 and 367) Nietzsche defines man as the "not yet firmly defined animal." Cf. p. 86, above, and p. 229, below. Heidegger refers to this repeatedly in his later work: see *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1954), pp. 24 ff.; in the English translation by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), section VI of Part One; see also the *Traktat* in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1959), pp. 45–46. On the theme of *animalitas* as *brutalitas*, broached in the next lines, see Volume IV, section 22.

Being's abandonment of beings. Thus the age of consummate meaninglessness does not stand on its own. It fulfills the essence of a concealed history—no matter how gratuitously and high-handedly our age seems to treat that subject on the highways and byways of its "histories."

— V —

The essence of modernity is fulfilled in the age of consummate meaninglessness. No matter how our histories may tabulate the concept and course of modernity, no matter which phenomena in the fields of politics, poetry, the natural sciences, and the social order they may appeal to in order to explain modernity, no historical meditation can afford to bypass two mutually related essential determinations within the history of modernity: first, that man installs and secures himself as *subiectum*, as the nodal point for beings as a whole; and secondly, that the beingness of beings as a whole is grasped as the representedness of whatever can be produced and explained. If it is Descartes and Leibniz who give essential shape to the first explicit metaphysical founding of modern history—Descartes by defining the *ens* as *verum* in the sense of *certum*, that is, as the *indubitatum* of *mathesis universalis*; Leibniz by interpreting the *substantialitas* of *substantia* as *vis primitiva* with the fundamental character of a "two-pronged" representing or *repraesentatio**—then the fact that in a history of Being we designate these names and give some thought to them suggests something quite different from the usual observations that have been made

* Heidegger refers to Leibniz's *doppel-"stelliger" Vorstellung*, that is, his "two-digit" mode of representation. That may simply refer to the ambiguity by which "representation" designates both the *faculty* and the *content* of representation. More technically, the two prongs in question could be the expansive and even *ecstatic* character of appetitive "primal force" in the monad, which is compelled outward and thus "puts itself forward" (*Vor-stellen*), and the circumspective or *encompassing* character of primal force as *perceptio*. See section 5c of *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1978); English translation by Michael Heim, *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984).

in the history of philosophy or in intellectual history concerning these figures.

Those fundamental metaphysical positions are not some supplementary, tangential, or even transcendent conceptual formulation of a history that has its origins elsewhere; nor are they pre-established doctrines that modern history somehow obeys or actualizes on its way to be. In either case the truth of metaphysics, a truth that grounds history, is being thought too extrinsically and too superficially in terms of its immediate impact. Whether we play down or exaggerate its value, we underestimate the matter in question by essentially misunderstanding it. For the determination of man as *subiectum* and of beings as a whole as "world picture" can only have sprung from the history of Being itself—here meaning the history of the transformation and the devastation of its ungrounded truth. (On the concept of "world picture," see the 1938 lecture "The Grounding of the Modern Picture of the World in Metaphysics," published in *Holzwege* in 1950 under the title "The Age of the World Picture."*) Whatever the degree and the direction of any given scientific insight into the transformation of fundamental metaphysical positions; whatever the manner and the extent of any active reordering of beings in the light of this transformation of human beings and of beings as a whole; none of these things ever enters into the orbit of the history of Being itself. They always serve as mere foregrounds that, when understood in terms of the task of the meditation, always merely give themselves out to be the real thing.

The meaninglessness in which the metaphysical articulation of modernity is consummated becomes something we can know as the essential fulfillment of this age only when it is apprehended together with the transformation of man to *subiectum* and the determination of beings as the represented and produced character of the objective. Then it becomes clear that meaninglessness is the prefigured consequence of the finality of modern metaphysics in its very beginnings.

* The parenthetical note was added in 1961. See *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1950), pp. 69–104. An English translation appears in *The Question of Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

Truth as certitude becomes the monotony that is injected into beings as a whole when they are served up for man's securing of permanence, man now having been left to his own devices. This monotony is neither imitation nor empathy with regard to a being that would be true "in itself." Rather, it is a (mis)calculating overpowering of beings through the liberation of beingness into machination. Machination itself means the essence of beingness that is disposed toward the malleability in which everything is made out ahead of time to be "do-able" and altogether at our disposal. Corresponding to this process, representation is the (mis)calculating, securing pacing-off of the horizons that demarcate everything we can perceive along with its explicability and its use.

Beings are released to their possibilities to become; in these possibilities they are made permanent—in accord with machination. Truth as securing univocity grants machination exclusive pre-eminence. When certitude becomes the one and only, beings alone remain essential; never again beingness itself, to say nothing of its clearing. *When Being lacks the clearing, beings as a whole lack meaning.*

The subjectivity of the *subiectum*, which has nothing to do with an individuation that is bound up with the ego, is fulfilled in the calculability and manipulability of everything that lives, in the *rationalitas* of *animalitas*, in which the "overman" finds his essence. The extremity of subjectivity is reached when a particular illusion becomes entrenched—the illusion that all the "subjects" have disappeared for the sake of some transcendent cause that they now all serve. With the completion of modernity history capitulates to historiology, which is of the same essential stamp as technology. The unity of these powers of machination founds a position of power for man. That position is essentially violent. Only within a horizon of meaninglessness can it guarantee its subsistence and, ceaselessly on the hunt, devote itself entirely to one-upmanship.

— VI —

The essential, historic culmination of the final metaphysical interpretation of beingness as will to power is captured in the eternal recur-

rence of the same, captured in such a way that every possibility for the essence of truth to emerge as what is most worthy of question founders. Meaninglessness now attains power, defining in unconditional terms the horizon of modernity and enacting its fulfillment. The latter does not by any means become perspicuous to itself—that is, to the consciousness that essentially impels and secures historically and technologically—as a petrification and demise of something that was once achieved. It announces itself rather as an emancipation that step-by-step leaves its former self behind and enhances every thing in every way. The measureless has now disguised itself as self-overpowering power, as that which alone has permanence. Under such a cloak, the measureless can itself become the standard. When the standard of measure is shaped in such a way (as the measurelessness of one-upmanship), measuring rods and pegs can be cut to size, so that everyone now can measure up as painlessly as possible, demonstrating to everyone else all the impressive things he can do and proving to himself that he really must be all right. Such proofs are simultaneously taken to be a verification of goals, avenues, and realms of established efficacy. Everything we can do confirms all that we have already done, and all that we have done cries out for our doing it; every action and thought has committed itself totally to making out what it is that can be done. Everywhere and always machination, cloaking itself in the semblance of a measured ordering and controlling, confronts us with beings as the sole hierarchy and causes us to forget Being. What actually happens is that Being abandons beings: Being lets beings be on their own *and thereby refuses itself.*

Insofar as this *refusal* is experienced, a clearing of Being *has already occurred.* For such refusal is not nothing, is not even negative; it is not some lack, is not something truncated. It is the primordial and initial revelation of Being as worthy of question—of Being as Being.

Everything depends on our inhering in this clearing that is appropriated by Being itself—never made or conjured by ourselves. We must overcome the compulsion to lay our hands on everything. We must learn that unusual and singular things will be demanded of those who are to come.

Truth announces the dominion of *its* essence: the clearing of self-

concealing. History is the history of *Being*. Those who are struck by the clearing of refusal, those who do not know which way to turn in the face of it, are those who flee meditation: duped too long by beings, they are so alienated from Being that they cannot even come up with a reason to be suspicious of it. Still trapped in utter servitude to a metaphysics they think they have long since suppressed, they seek escape routes to some arcane realm, some world beyond the sensuous. They flee into mysticism (which is the mere counterimage of metaphysics) or, frozen in the posture of calculation, they appeal to "values." "Values," utterly transformed into calculable items, are the only ideals that still function for machination: culture and cultural values as grist for the mill of propaganda, art products as serviceable objects—at exhibitions of our achievements and as decorations for parade floats.

We neither know nor risk something other, something that in times to come will be the *one and only: the truth of Being*. For, however ungrounded it may be, it haunts the first commencement of our history. We neither know nor risk inherence in that truth from which alone world and earth strive to acquire their essence for man. Man experiences in such strife the response of his essence to the god of Being. Prior gods are the gods that have been.

The consummation of metaphysics as the essential fulfillment of modernity is an end only because its historical ground is itself a transition to the other commencement. The latter does not leap outside the history of the first, does not renounce what has been, but goes back into the grounds of the first commencement. With this return it takes on another sort of permanence. Such permanence is not defined in terms of the preservation of any given present thing. It bends to the task of preserving what is to come. What has been in the first commencement is thereby compelled to rest in the abyss of its heretofore ungrounded ground. It thus for the first time becomes history.

Such transition is not progress, nor is it a dreamy voyage from the prior to the new. The transition is seamless, inasmuch as it pertains to the decision of primordial commencement. The latter cannot be grasped by historical retrogressions or by historical maintenance of what has come down to us. Commencement only *is* in commencing. Commencement is the handing-over that is tradition. Preparation of

such a commencement takes up that questioning by which the questioner is handed over to that which answers. Primordial questioning itself never replies. For primordial questioning, the sole kind of thinking is one that attunes man to hear the voice of Being. It is a thinking that enables man to bend to the task of guardianship over the truth of Being.