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THE REBEL
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PART TWO
METAPHYSICAL REBELLION

Metaphysical rebellion is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation. The slave protests against the condition in which he finds himself within his state of slavery; the metaphysical rebel protests against the condition in which he finds himself as a man. The rebel slave affirms that there is something in him that will not tolerate the manner in which his master treats him; the metaphysical rebel declares that he is frustrated by the universe. For both of them, it is not only a question of pure and simple negation. In both cases, in fact, we find a value judgment in the name of which the rebel refuses to approve the condition in which he finds himself.

The slave who opposes his master is not concerned, let us note, with repudiating his master as a human being. He repudiates him as a master. He denies that he has the right to deny him, a slave, on grounds of necessity. The master is discredited to the exact extent that he fails to respond to a demand which he ignores. If men cannot refer to a common value, recognized by all as existing in each one, then man is incomprehensible to man. The rebel demands that this value should be clearly recognized in himself because he knows or suspects that, without this principle, crime and disorder would reign throughout the world. An act of rebellion on his part seems like a demand for clarity and unity. The most elementary form of rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order.

This description can be applied, word for word, to the metaphysical rebel. He attacks a shattered world in order to demand unity from it. He opposes the principle of justice which he finds in himself to the principle of injustice which he sees being applied in the world. Thus all he wants, originally, is to resolve this contradiction and establish the unitarian reign of justice, if he can, or of injustice, if he is driven to extremes. Meanwhile, he denounces the contradiction. Metaphysical rebellion is a claim, motivated by the concept of a complete unity, against the suffering of life and death and a protest against the human condition both for its incompleteness, thanks to death, and its wastefulness, thanks to evil. If a mass death sentence defines the human condition, then rebellion, in one sense, is its contemporary. At the same time that he rejects his mortality, the rebel refuses to recognize the power that compels him to live in this condition. The metaphysical rebel is therefore not definitely an atheist, as one might think him, but he is inevitably a

blasphemer. Quite simply, he blasphemes primarily in the name of order, denouncing God as the father of death and as the supreme outrage.

The rebel slave will help us to throw light on this point. He established, by his protest, the existence of the master against whom he rebelled. But at the same time he demonstrated that his master's power was dependent on his own subordination and he affirmed his own power: the power of continually questioning the superiority of his master. In this respect master and slave are really in the same boat: the temporary sway of the former is as relative as the submission of the latter. The two forces assert themselves alternately at the moment of rebellion until they confront each other for a fight to the death, and one or the other temporarily disappears.

In the same way, if the metaphysical rebel ranges himself against a power whose existence he simultaneously affirms, he only admits the existence of this power at the very instant that he calls it into question. Then he involves this superior being in the same humiliating adventure as mankind's, its ineffectual power being the equivalent of our ineffectual condition. He subjects it to our power of refusal, bends it to the unbending part of human nature, forcibly integrates it into an existence that we render absurd, and finally drags it from its refuge outside time and involves it in history, very far from the eternal stability that it can find only in the unanimous submission of all men. Thus rebellion affirms that, on its own level, any concept of superior existence is contradictory, to say the least.

And so the history of metaphysical rebellion cannot be confused with that of atheism. From a certain point of view it is even confused with the contemporary history of religious sentiment. The rebel defies more than he denies. Originally, at least, he does not suppress God; he merely talks to Him as an equal. But it is not a polite dialogue. It is a polemic animated by the desire to conquer. The slave begins by demanding justice and ends by wanting to wear a crown. He must dominate in his turn. His insurrection against his condition becomes an unlimited campaign against the heavens for the purpose of bringing back a captive king who will first be dethroned and finally condemned to death. Human rebellion ends in metaphysical revolution. It progresses from appearances to acts, from the dandy to the revolutionary. When the throne of God is overturned, the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create the justice, order, and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition, and in this way to justify the fall of God. Then begins the desperate effort to create, at the price of crime and murder if necessary, the dominion of man. This will not come about without terrible consequences, of which we are so far only aware of a few. But these consequences are in no way due to rebellion itself, or at least they only occur to the extent that the rebel forgets his original purpose, tires of the tremendous tension created by refusing to give a positive or negative answer, and finally abandons himself to complete negation or total submission. Metaphysical insurrection, in its first stages, offers us the same positive content as the slave's rebellion. Our task will be to examine what becomes of this positive content of rebellion in the actions that claim to originate from it and to explain where the fidelity or infidelity of the rebel to the origins of his revolt finally leads him.

ABSOLUTE AFFIRMATION

From the moment that man submits God to moral judgment, he kills Him in his own heart. And then what is the basis of morality? God is denied in the name of justice, but can the idea of justice be understood without the idea of God? At this point are we not in the realm of absurdity? Absurdity is the concept that Nietzsche meets face to face. In order to be able to dismiss it, he pushes it to extremes: morality is the ultimate aspect of God, which must be destroyed before reconstruction can begin. Then God no longer exists and is no longer responsible for our existence; man must resolve to act, in order to exist.

The Unique

Even before Nietzsche, Stirner wanted to eradicate the very idea of God from man's mind, after he had destroyed God Himself. But, unlike Nietzsche, his nihilism was gratified. Stirner laughs in his blind alley; Nietzsche beats his head against the wall. In 1845, the year when *Der Einziger und sein Eigentum* [*The Unique and Its Characteristics*] appeared, Stirner begins to define his position. Stirner, who frequented the "Society of Free Men" with the young Hegelians of the left (of whom Marx was one), had an account to settle not only with God, but also with Feuerbach's Man, Hegel's Spirit, and its historical incarnation, the State. All these idols, to his mind, were offsprings of the same "mongolism"—the belief in the eternity of ideas. Thus he was able to write: "I have constructed my case on nothing." Sin is, of course, a "mongol scourge," but it is also the law of which we are prisoners. God is the enemy; Stirner goes as far as he can in blasphemy ("digest the Host and you are rid of it"). But God is only one of the aberrations of the I, or more precisely of what I am. Socrates, Jesus, Descartes, Hegel, all the prophets and philosophers, have done nothing but invent new methods of deranging what I am, the I that Stirner is so intent on distinguishing from the absolute I of Fichte by reducing it to its most specific and transitory aspect. "It has no name," it is the Unique.

For Stirner the history of the universe up to the time of Jesus is nothing but a sustained effort to idealize reality. This effort is incarnated in the ideas and rites of purification which the ancients employed. From the time of Jesus, the goal is reached, and another effort is embarked upon which consists, on the contrary, in attempting to realize the ideal. The passion of the incarnation takes the place of purification and devastates the world, to a greater and greater degree, as socialism, the heir of Christ, extends its sway. But the history of the universe is nothing but a continual offense to the unique principle that "I am"—a living, concrete principle, a triumphant principle that the world has always wanted to subject to the yoke of successive abstractions—God, the State, society, humanity. For Stirner, philanthropy is a hoax. Atheistic philosophies, which culminate in the cult of the State and of Man, are only "theological insurrections." "Our

atheists,” says Stirner, “are really pious folk.” There is only one religion that exists throughout all history, the belief in eternity. This belief is a deception. The only truth is the Unique, the enemy of eternity and of everything, in fact, which does not further its desire for domination.

With Stirner, the concept of negation which inspires his rebellion irresistibly submerges every aspect of affirmation. It also sweeps away the substitutes for divinity with which the moral conscience is encumbered. “External eternity is swept away,” he says, “but internal eternity has become a new heaven.” Even revolution, revolution in particular, is repugnant to this rebel. To be a revolutionary, one must continue to believe in something, even where there is nothing in which to believe. “The [French] Revolution ended in reaction and that demonstrates what the Revolution was in *reality*.” To dedicate oneself to humanity is no more worth while than serving God. Moreover, fraternity is only “Communism in its Sunday best.” During the week, the members of the fraternity become slaves. Therefore there is only one form of freedom for Stirner, “my power,” and only one truth, “the magnificent egotism of the stars.”

In this desert everything begins to flower again. “The terrifying significance of an unpremeditated cry of joy cannot be understood while the long night of faith and reason endures.” This night is drawing to a close, and a dawn will break which is not the dawn of revolution but of insurrection. Insurrection is, in itself, an asceticism which rejects all forms of consolation. The insurgent will not be in agreement with other men except in so far as, and as long as, their egotism coincides with his. His real life is led in solitude where he will assuage, without restraint, his appetite for existing, which is his only reason for existence.

In this respect individualism reaches a climax. It is the negation of everything that denies the individual and the glorification of everything that exalts and ministers to the individual. What, according to Stirner, is good? “Everything of which I can make use.” What am I, legitimately, authorized to do? “Everything of which I am capable.” Once again, rebellion leads to the justification of crime. Stirner not only has attempted to justify crime (in this respect the terrorist forms of anarchy are directly descended from him), but is visibly intoxicated by the perspectives that he thus reveals. “To break with what is sacred, or rather to destroy the sacred, could become universal. It is not a new revolution that is approaching—but is not a powerful, proud, disrespectful, shameless, conscienceless crime swelling like a thundercloud on the horizon, and can you not see that the sky, heavy with foreboding, is growing dark and silent?” Here we can feel the somber joy of those who create an apocalypse in a garret. This bitter and imperious logic can no longer be held in check, except by an I which is determined to defeat every form of abstraction and which has itself become abstract and nameless through being isolated and cut off from its roots. There are no more crimes and no more imperfections, and therefore no more sinners. We are all perfect. Since every I is, in itself, fundamentally criminal in its attitude toward the State and the people, we must recognize that to live is to transgress. Unless we accept death, we must be willing to kill in order to be unique. “You are not as noble as a criminal, you who do not desecrate anything.” Moreover Stirner, still without the courage of his convictions, specifies: “Kill them, do not martyr them.”

But to decree that murder is legitimate is to decree mobilization and war for all the Unique. Thus murder will coincide with a kind of collective suicide. Stirner, who either does not admit or does not see this, nevertheless does not recoil at the idea of any form of destruction. The spirit of rebellion finally discovers one of its bitterest satisfactions in chaos. “You [the German nation] will be struck down. Soon your sister nations will follow you; when all of them have gone your way, humanity will be buried, and on its tomb I, sole master of myself at last, I, heir to all the human race, will shout with laughter.” And so, among the ruins of the world, the desolate laughter of the individual-king illustrates the last victory of the spirit of rebellion. But at this extremity nothing else is possible but death or resurrection. Stirner, and with him all the nihilist rebels, rush to the utmost limits, drunk with destruction. After which, when the desert has been disclosed, the next step is to learn how to live there. Nietzsche’s exhaustive search then begins.

Nietzsche and Nihilism

“We deny God, we deny the responsibility of God, it is only thus that we will deliver the world.” With Nietzsche, nihilism seems to become prophetic. But we can draw no conclusions from Nietzsche except the base and mediocre cruelty that he hated with all his strength, unless we give first place in his work—well ahead of the prophet—to the diagnostician. The provisional, methodical—in a word, strategic—character of his thought cannot be doubted for a moment. With him nihilism becomes conscious for the first time. Surgeons have this in common with prophets: they think and operate in terms of the future. Nietzsche never thought except in terms of an apocalypse to come, not in order to extol it, for he guessed the sordid and calculating aspect that this apocalypse would finally assume, but in order to avoid it and to transform it into a renaissance. He recognized nihilism for what it was and examined it like a clinical fact.

He said of himself that he was the first complete nihilist of Europe. Not by choice, but by condition, and because he was too great to refuse the heritage of his time. He diagnosed in himself, and in others, the inability to believe and the disappearance of the primitive foundation of all faith—namely, the belief in life. The “can one live as a rebel?” became with him “can one live believing in nothing?” His reply is affirmative. Yes, if one creates a system out of absence of faith, if one accepts the final consequences of nihilism, and if, on emerging into the desert and putting one’s confidence in what is going to come, one feels, with the same primitive instinct, both pain and joy.

Instead of methodical doubt, he practiced methodical negation, the determined destruction of everything that still hides nihilism from itself, of the idols that camouflage God’s death. “To raise a new sanctuary, a sanctuary must be destroyed, that is the law.” According to Nietzsche, he who wants to be a creator of good or of evil must first of all destroy all values. “Thus the supreme evil becomes part of the supreme good, but the supreme good is creative.” He wrote, in his own manner, the *Discours de la Méthode* of his period, without the freedom and exactitude of the seventeenth-century French he admired so much,

but with the mad lucidity that characterizes the twentieth century, which, according to him, is the century of genius. We must return to the examination of this system of rebellion.¹

Nietzsche's first step is to accept what he knows. Atheism for him goes without saying and is "constructive and radical." Nietzsche's supreme vocation, so he says, is to provoke a kind of crisis and a final decision about the problem of atheism. The world continues on its course at random and there is nothing final about it. Thus God is useless, since He wants nothing in particular. If He wanted something—and here we recognize the traditional formulation of the problem of evil—He would have to assume the responsibility for "a sum total of pain and inconsistency which would debase the entire value of being born." We know that Nietzsche was publicly envious of Stendahl's epigram: "The only excuse for God is that he does not exist." Deprived of the divine will, the world is equally deprived of unity and finality. That is why it is impossible to pass judgment on the world. Any attempt to apply a standard of values to the world leads finally to a slander on life. Judgments are based on what is, with reference to what should be—the kingdom of heaven, eternal concepts, or moral imperatives. But what should be does not exist; and this world cannot be judged in the name of nothing. "The advantages of our times: nothing is true, everything is permitted." These magnificent or ironic formulas which are echoed by thousands of others, at least suffice to demonstrate that Nietzsche accepts the entire burden of nihilism and rebellion. In his somewhat puerile reflections on "training and selection" he even formulated the extreme logic of nihilistic reasoning: "Problem: by what means could we obtain a strict form of complete and contagious nihilism which would teach and practice, with complete scientific awareness, voluntary death?"

But Nietzsche enlists values in the cause of nihilism which, traditionally, have been considered as restraints on nihilism—principally morality. Moral conduct, as explained by Socrates, or as recommended by Christianity, is in itself a sign of decadence. It wants to substitute the mere shadow of a man for a man of flesh and blood. It condemns the universe of passion and emotion in the name of an entirely imaginary world of harmony. If nihilism is the inability to believe, then its most serious symptom is not found in atheism, but in the inability to believe in what is, to see what is happening, and to live life as it is offered. This infirmity is at the root of all idealism. Morality has no faith in the world. For Nietzsche, real morality cannot be separated from lucidity. He is severe on the "calumniators of the world" because he discerns in the calumny a shameful taste for evasion. Traditional morality, for him, is only a special type of immorality. "It is virtue," he says, "which has need of justification." And again: "It is for moral reasons that good, one day, will cease to be done."

Nietzsche's philosophy, undoubtedly, revolves around the problem of rebellion. More precisely, it begins by being a rebellion. But we sense the change of position that Nietzsche makes. With him, rebellion begins with "God is dead," which is assumed as an established fact; then it turns against everything that aims at falsely replacing the vanished deity and reflects dishonor on a world which doubtless has no direction but which remains nevertheless the only proving-ground of the gods. Contrary to the opinion of certain of his

¹ We are obviously concerned here with Nietzsche's final philosophic position, between 1880 and his collapse. This chapter can be considered as a commentary on *Der Wille zur Macht* [The Will to Power].

Christian critics, Nietzsche did not form a project to kill God. He found Him dead in the soul of his contemporaries. He was the first to understand the immense importance of the event and to decide that this rebellion on the part of men could not lead to a renaissance unless it was controlled and directed. Any other attitude toward it, whether regret or complacency, must lead to the apocalypse. Thus Nietzsche did not formulate a philosophy of rebellion, but constructed a philosophy on rebellion.

If he attacks Christianity in particular, it is only in so far as it represents morality. He always leaves intact the person of Jesus on the one hand, and on the other the cynical aspects of the Church. We know that, from the point of view of the connoisseur, he admired the Jesuits. "Basically," he writes, "only the God of morality is rejected." Christ, for Nietzsche as for Tolstoy, is not a rebel. The essence of His doctrine is summed up in total consent and in nonresistance to evil. Thou shalt not kill, even to prevent killing. The world must be accepted as it is, nothing must be added to its unhappiness, but you must consent to suffer personally from the evil it contains. The kingdom of heaven is within our immediate reach. It is only an inner inclination which allows us to make our actions coincide with these principles and which can give us immediate salvation. Not faith but deeds—that, according to Nietzsche, is Christ's message. From then on, the history of Christianity is nothing but a long betrayal of this message. The New Testament is already corrupted, and from the time of Paul to the Councils, subservience to faith leads to the neglect of deeds.

What is the profoundly corrupt addition made by Christianity to the message of its Master? The idea of judgment, completely foreign to the teachings of Christ, and the correlative notions of punishment and reward. From that moment nature becomes history, and significant history expressed by the idea of human totality is born. From the Annunciation until the Last Judgment, humanity has no other task but to conform to the strictly moral ends of a narrative that has already been written. The only difference is that the characters, in the epilogue, separate themselves into the good and the bad. While Christ's sole judgment consists in saying that the sins of nature are unimportant, historical Christianity makes nature the source of sin. "What does Christ deny? Everything that at present bears the name Christian." Christianity believes that it is fighting against nihilism because it gives the world a sense of direction, while it is really nihilist itself in so far as, by imposing an imaginary meaning on life, it prevents the discovery of its real meaning: "Every Church is a stone rolled onto the tomb of the man-god; it tries to prevent the resurrection, by force." Nietzsche's paradoxical but significant conclusion is that God has been killed by Christianity, in that Christianity has secularized the sacred. Here we must understand historical Christianity and "its profound and contemptible duplicity."

The same process of reasoning leads to Nietzsche's attitude toward socialism and all forms of humanitarianism. Socialism is only a degenerate form of Christianity. In fact, it preserves a belief in the finality of history which betrays life and nature, which substitutes ideal ends for real ends, and contributes to enervating both the will and the imagination. Socialism is nihilistic, in the henceforth precise sense that Nietzsche confers on the word. A nihilist is not one who believes in nothing, but one who does not believe in what exists. In this sense, all forms of socialism are manifestations, degraded once again, of Christian

decadence. For Christianity, reward and punishment implied the existence of history. But, by inescapable logic, all history ends by implying punishment and reward; and, from this day on, collectivist Messianism is born. Similarly, the equality of souls before God leads, now that God is dead, to equality pure and simple. There again, Nietzsche wages war against socialist doctrines in so far as they are moral doctrines. Nihilism, whether manifested in religion or in socialist preachings, is the logical conclusion of our so-called superior values. The free mind will destroy these values and denounce the illusions on which they are built, the bargaining that they imply, and the crime they commit in preventing the lucid intelligence from accomplishing its mission: to transform passive nihilism into active nihilism.

In this world rid of God and of moral idols, man is now alone and without a master. No one has been less inclined than Nietzsche (and in this way he distinguishes himself from the romantics) to let it be believed that such freedom would be easy. This complete liberation put him among the ranks of those of whom he himself said that they suffered a new form of anguish and a new form of happiness. But, at the beginning, it is only anguish that makes him cry out: "Alas, grant me madness.... Unless I am above the law, I am the most outcast of all outcasts." He who cannot maintain his position above the law must in fact find another law or take refuge in madness. From the moment that man believes neither in God nor in immortal life, he becomes "responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life." It is he, and he alone, who must discover law and order. Then the time of exile begins, the endless search for justification, the aimless nostalgia, "the most painful, the most heartbreaking question, that of the heart which asks itself: where can I feel at home?"

Because his mind was free, Nietzsche knew that freedom of the mind is not a comfort, but an achievement to which one aspires and at long last obtains after an exhausting struggle. He knew that in wanting to consider oneself above the law, there is a great risk of finding oneself beneath the law. That is why he understood that only the mind found its real emancipation in the acceptance of new obligations. The essence of his discovery consists in saying that if the eternal law is not freedom, the absence of law is still less so. If nothing is true, if the world is without order, then nothing is forbidden; to prohibit an action, there must, in fact, be a standard of values and an aim. But, at the same time, nothing is authorized; there must also be values and aims in order to choose another course of action. Absolute domination by the law does not represent liberty, but no more does absolute anarchy. The sum total of every possibility does not amount to liberty, but to attempt the impossible amounts to slavery. Chaos is also a form of servitude. Freedom exists only in a world where what is possible is defined at the same time as what is not possible. Without law there is no freedom. If fate is not guided by superior values, if chance is king, then there is nothing but the step in the dark and the appalling freedom of the blind. On the point of achieving the most complete liberation, Nietzsche therefore chooses the most complete subordination. "If we do not make of God's death a great renunciation and a perpetual victory over ourselves, we shall have to pay for that omission." In other words, with Nietzsche, rebellion ends in asceticism. A profounder logic replaces the "if nothing is true, everything is

permitted” of Karamazov by “if nothing is true, nothing is permitted.” To deny that one single thing is forbidden in this world amounts to renouncing everything that is permitted. At the point where it is no longer possible to say what is black and what is white, the light is extinguished and freedom becomes a voluntary prison.

It can be said that Nietzsche, with a kind of frightful joy, rushes toward the impasse into which he methodically drives his nihilism. His avowed aim is to render the situation untenable to his contemporaries. His only hope seems to be to arrive at the extremity of contradiction. Then if man does not wish to perish in the coils that strangle him, he will have to cut them at a single blow and create his own values. The death of God accomplishes nothing and can only be endured in terms of preparing a resurrection. “If we fail to find grandeur in God,” says Nietzsche, “we find it nowhere; it must be denied or created.” To deny it was the task of the world around him, which he saw rushing toward suicide. To create was the superhuman task for which he was willing to die. He knew in fact that creation is only possible in the extremity of solitude and that man would only commit himself to this staggering task if, in the most extreme distress of mind, he was compelled to undertake it or perish. Nietzsche cries out to man that the only truth is the world, to which he must be faithful and in which he must live and find his salvation. But at the same time he teaches him that to live in a lawless world is impossible because to live explicitly implies a law. How can one live freely and without law? To this enigma man must find an answer, on pain of death.

Nietzsche at least does not flinch. He answers and his answer is bold: Damocles never danced better than beneath the sword. One must accept the unacceptable and hold to the untenable. From the moment that it is admitted that the world pursues no end, Nietzsche proposes to concede its innocence, to affirm that it accepts no judgment since it cannot be judged on any intention, and consequently to replace all judgments based on values by absolute assent, and by a complete and exalted allegiance to this world. Thus from absolute despair will spring infinite joy, from blind servitude, unbounded freedom. To be free is, precisely, to abolish ends. The innocence of the ceaseless change of things, as soon as one consents to it, represents the maximum liberty. The free mind willingly accepts what is necessary. Nietzsche’s most profound concept is that the necessity of phenomena, if it is absolute, without rifts, does not imply any kind of restraint. Total acceptance of total necessity is his paradoxical definition of freedom. The question “free of what?” is thus replaced by “free for what?” Liberty coincides with heroism. It is the asceticism of the great man, “the bow bent to the breaking-point.”

This magnificent consent, born of abundance and fullness of spirit, is the unreserved affirmation of human imperfection and suffering, of evil and murder, of all that is problematic and strange in our existence. It is born of an arrested wish to be what one is in a world that is what it is. “To consider oneself a fatality, not to wish to be other than one is ...” Nietzschean asceticism, which begins with the recognition of fatality, ends in a deification of fate. The more implacable destiny is, the more it becomes worthy of adoration. A moral God, pity, and love are enemies of fate to the extent that they try to counterbalance it. Nietzsche wants no redemption. The joy of self-realization is the joy of annihilation. But only the individual is annihilated. The

movement of rebellion, by which man demanded his own existence, disappears in the individual's absolute submission to the inevitable. *Amor fati* replaces what was an *odium fati*. "Every individual collaborates with the entire cosmos, whether we know it or not, whether we want it or not." The individual is lost in the destiny of the species and the eternal movement of the spheres. "Everything that has existed is eternal, the sea throws it back on the shore."

Nietzsche then turns to the origins of thought—to the pre-Socratics. These philosophers suppressed ultimate causes so as to leave intact the eternal values of the principles they upheld. Only power without purpose, only Heraclitus' "chance," is eternal. Nietzsche's whole effort is directed toward demonstrating the existence of the law that governs the eternal flux and of the element of chance in the inevitable: "A child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a gamble, a wheel that spins automatically, a first step, the divine gift of being able to consent." The world is divine because the world is inconsequential. That is why art alone, by being equally inconsequential, is capable of grasping it. It is impossible to give a clear account of the world, but art can teach us to reproduce it—just as the world reproduces itself in the course of its eternal gyrations. The primordial sea indefatigably repeats the same words and casts up the same astonished beings on the same seashore. But at least he who consents to his own return and to the return of all things, who becomes an echo and an exalted echo, participates in the divinity of the world.

By this subterfuge, the divinity of man is finally introduced. The rebel, who at first denies God, finally aspires to replace Him. But Nietzsche's message is that the rebel can only become God by renouncing every form of rebellion, even the type of rebellion that produces gods to chastise humanity. "If there is a God, how can one tolerate not being God oneself?" There is, in fact, a god—namely, the world. To participate in its divinity, all that is necessary is to consent. "No longer to pray, but to give one's blessing," and the earth will abound in men-gods. To say yes to the world, to reproduce it, is simultaneously to re-create the world and oneself, to become the great artist, the creator. Nietzsche's message is summed up in the word *creation*, with the ambiguous meaning it has assumed. Nietzsche's sole admiration was for the egotism and severity proper to all creators. The transmutation of values consists only in replacing critical values by creative values; by respect and admiration for what exists. Divinity without immortality defines the extent of the creator's freedom. Dionysos, the earth-god, shrieks eternally as he is torn limb from limb. But at the same time he represents the agonized beauty that coincides with suffering. Nietzsche thought that to accept this earth and Dionysos was to accept his own sufferings. And to accept everything, both suffering and the supreme contradiction simultaneously, was to be king of all creation. Nietzsche agreed to pay the price for his kingdom. Only the "sad and suffering" world is true—the world is the only divinity. Like Empedocles, who threw himself into the crater of Mount Etna to find truth in the only place where it exists—namely, in the bowels of the earth—Nietzsche proposed that man should allow himself to be engulfed in the cosmos in order to rediscover his eternal divinity and to become Dionysos. *The Will to Power* ends, like Pascal's *Pensées*, of which it so often reminds us, with a wager. Man does not yet obtain assurance but only the wish for assurance, which is not at all the same thing. Nietzsche, too, hesitated on this brink: "That is what is unforgivable in you. You have the

authority and you refuse to sign.” Yet finally he had to sign. But the name of Dionysos immortalized only the notes to Ariadne, which he wrote when he was mad.

In a certain sense, rebellion, with Nietzsche, ends again in the exaltation of evil. The difference is that evil is no longer a revenge. It is accepted as one of the possible aspects of good and, with rather more conviction, as part of destiny. Thus he considers it as something to be avoided and also as a sort of remedy. In Nietzsche’s mind, the only problem was to see that the human spirit bowed proudly to the inevitable. We know, however, his posterity and what kind of politics were to claim the authorization of the man who claimed to be the last antipolitical German. He dreamed of tyrants who were artists. But tyranny comes more naturally than art to mediocre men. “Rather Cesare Borgia than Parsifal,” he exclaimed. He begat both Cæsar and Borgia, but devoid of the distinction of feeling which he attributed to the great men of the Renaissance. As a result of his insistence that the individual should bow before the eternity of the species and should submerge himself in the great cycle of time, race has been turned into a special aspect of the species, and the individual has been made to bow before this sordid god. The life of which he spoke with fear and trembling has been degraded to a sort of biology for domestic use. Finally, a race of vulgar overlords, with a blundering desire for power, adopted, in his name, the “anti-Semitic deformity” on which he never ceased to pour scorn.

He believed in courage combined with intelligence, and that was what he called strength. Courage has been turned in his name against intelligence, and the virtues that were really his have thus been transformed into their opposite: blind violence. He confused freedom and solitude, as do all proud spirits. His “profound solitude at midday and at midnight” was nevertheless lost in the mechanized hordes that finally inundated Europe. Advocate of classic taste, of irony, of frugal defiance, aristocrat who had the courage to say that aristocracy consisted in practicing virtue without asking for a reason and that a man who had to have reasons for being honest was not to be trusted, addict of integrity (“integrity that has become an instinct, a passion”), stubborn supporter of the “supreme equity of the supreme intelligence that is the mortal enemy of fanaticism,” he was set up, thirty-three years after his death, by his own countrymen as the master of lies and violence, and his ideas and virtues, made admirable by his sacrifice, have been rendered detestable. In the history of the intelligence, with the exception of Marx, Nietzsche’s adventure has no equivalent; we shall never finish making reparation for the injustice done to him. Of course history records other philosophies that have been misconstrued and betrayed. But up to the time of Nietzsche and National Socialism, it was quite without parallel that a process of thought—brilliantly illuminated by the nobility and by the sufferings of an exceptional mind—should have been demonstrated to the eyes of the world by a parade of lies and by the hideous accumulation of corpses in concentration camps. The doctrine of the superman led to the methodical creation of sub-men—a fact that doubtless should be denounced, but which also demands interpretation. If the final result of the great movement of rebellion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be this ruthless bondage, then surely rebellion should be rejected and Nietzsche’s desperate cry to his contemporaries taken up: “My conscience and yours are no longer the same conscience.”

We must first of all realize that we can never confuse Nietzsche with Rosenberg. We must be the advocates of Nietzsche. He himself has said so, denouncing in advance his bastard progeny: “he who has liberated his mind still has to purify himself.” But the question is to find out if the liberation of the mind, as he conceived it, does not preclude purification. The very movement that comes to a head with Nietzsche, and that sustains him, has its laws and its logic, which, perhaps, explain the bloody travesty of his philosophy. Is there nothing in his work that can be used in support of definitive murder? Cannot the killers, provided they deny the spirit in favor of the letter (and even all that remains of the spirit in the letter), find their pretext in Nietzsche? The answer must be yes. From the moment that the methodical aspect of Nietzschean thought is neglected (and it is not certain that he himself always observed it), his rebellious logic knows no bounds.

We also remark that it is not in the Nietzschean refusal to worship idols that murder finds its justification, but in the passionate approbation that distinguishes Nietzsche’s work. To say yes to everything supposes that one says yes to murder. Moreover, it expresses two ways of consenting to murder. If the slave says yes to everything, he consents to the existence of a master and to his own sufferings: Jesus teaches nonresistance. If the master says yes to everything, he consents to slavery and to the suffering of others; and the result is the tyrant and the glorification of murder. “Is it not laughable that we believe in a sacred, infrangible law—thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not kill—in an existence characterized by perpetual lying and perpetual murder?” Actually metaphysical rebellion, in its initial stages, was only a protest against the lie and the crime of existence. The Nietzschean affirmative, forgetful of the original negative, disavows rebellion at the same time that it disavows the ethic that refuses to accept the world as it is. Nietzsche clamored for a Roman Cæsar with the soul of Christ. To his mind, this was to say yes to both slave and master. But, in the last analysis, to say yes to both was to give one’s blessing to the stronger of the two—namely, the master. Cæsar must inevitably renounce the domination of the mind and choose to rule in the realm of fact. “How can one make the best of crime?” asks Nietzsche, as a good professor faithful to his system. Cæsar must answer: by multiplying it. “When the ends are great,” Nietzsche wrote to his own detriment, “humanity employs other standards and no longer judges crime as such even if it resorts to the most frightful means.” He died in 1900, at the beginning of the century in which that pretension was to become fatal. It was in vain that he exclaimed in his hour of lucidity, “It is easy to talk about all sorts of immoral acts; but would one have the courage to carry them through? For example, I could not bear to break my word or to kill; I should languish, and eventually I should die as a result—that would be my fate.” From the moment that assent was given to the totality of human experience, the way was open to others who, far from languishing, would gather strength from lies and murder. Nietzsche’s responsibility lies in having legitimized, for reasons of method—and even if only for an instant—the opportunity for dishonesty of which Dostoievsky had already said that if one offered it to people, one could always be sure of seeing them rushing to seize it. But his involuntary responsibility goes still farther.

Nietzsche is exactly what he recognized himself as being: the most acute manifestation of nihilism’s conscience. The decisive step that he compelled rebellion to take consists in making it jump from the negation

of the ideal to the secularization of the ideal. Since the salvation of man is not achieved in God, it must be achieved on earth. Since the world has no direction, man, from the moment he accepts this, must give it one that will eventually lead to a superior type of humanity. Nietzsche laid claim to the direction of the future of the human race. “The task of governing the world is going to fall to our lot.” And elsewhere: “The time is approaching when we shall have to struggle for the domination of the world, and this struggle will be fought in the name of philosophical principles.” In these words he announced the twentieth century. But he was able to announce it because he was warned by the interior logic of nihilism and knew that one of its aims was ascendancy; and thus he prepared the way for this ascendancy.

There is freedom for man without God, as Nietzsche imagined him; in other words, for the solitary man. There is freedom at midday when the wheel of the world stops spinning and man consents to things as they are. But *what is* becomes *what will be*, and the ceaseless change of things must be accepted. The light finally grows dim, the axis of the day declines. Then history begins again and freedom must be sought in history; history must be accepted. Nietzscheism—the theory of the individual’s will to power—was condemned to support the universal will to power. Nietzscheism was nothing without world domination. Nietzsche undoubtedly hated freethinkers and humanitarians. He took the words *freedom of thought* in their most extreme sense: the divinity of the individual mind. But he could not stop the freethinkers from partaking of the same historical fact as himself—the death of God—nor could he prevent the consequences being the same. Nietzsche saw clearly that humanitarianism was only a form of Christianity deprived of superior justification, which preserved final causes while rejecting the first cause. But he failed to perceive that the doctrines of socialist emancipation must, by an inevitable logic of nihilism, lead to what he himself had dreamed of: superhumanity.

Philosophy secularizes the ideal. But tyrants appear who soon secularize the philosophies that give them the right to do so. Nietzsche had already predicted this development in discussing Hegel, whose originality, according to him, consisted in inventing a pantheism in which evil, error, and suffering could no longer serve as arguments against the divinity. “But the State, the powers that be, immediately made use of this grandiose initiative.” He himself, however, had conceived of a system in which crime could no longer serve as an argument and in which the only value resided in the divinity of man. This grandiose initiative also had to be put to use. National Socialism in this respect was only a transitory heir, only the speculative and rabid outcome of nihilism. In all other respects those who, in correcting Nietzsche with the help of Marx, will choose to assent only to history, and no longer to all of creation, will be perfectly logical. The rebel whom Nietzsche set on his knees before the cosmos will, from now on, kneel before history. What is surprising about that? Nietzsche, at least in his theory of super-humanity, and Marx before him, with his classless society, both replace the Beyond by the Later On. In that way Nietzsche betrayed the Greeks and the teachings of Jesus, who, according to him, replaced the Beyond by the Immediate. Marx, like Nietzsche, thought in strategic terms, and like Nietzsche hated formal virtue. Their two rebellions, both of which finish similarly in adhesion to a certain aspect of reality, end by merging into Marxism-Leninism and being incarnated in that caste,

already mentioned by Nietzsche, which would “replace the priest, the teacher, the doctor.” The fundamental difference is that Nietzsche, in awaiting the superman, proposed to assent to what exists and Marx to what is to come. For Marx, nature is to be subjugated in order to obey history; for Nietzsche, nature is to be obeyed in order to subjugate history. It is the difference between the Christian and the Greek. Nietzsche, at least, foresaw what was going to happen: “Modern socialism tends to create a form of secular Jesuitism, to make instruments of all men”; and again: “What we desire is well-being... As a result we march toward a spiritual slavery such as has never been seen... Intellectual Cæsarism hovers over every activity of the businessman and the philosopher.” Placed in the crucible of Nietzschean philosophy, rebellion, in the intoxication of freedom, ends in biological or historical Cæsarism. The absolute negative had driven Stirner to deify crime simultaneously with the individual. But the absolute affirmative leads to universalizing murder and mankind simultaneously. Marxism-Leninism has really accepted the burden of Nietzsche’s freewill by means of ignoring several Nietzschean virtues. The great rebel thus creates with his own hands, and for his own imprisonment, the implacable reign of necessity. Once he had escaped from God’s prison, his first care was to construct the prison of history and of reason, thus putting the finishing touch to the camouflage and consecration of the nihilism whose conquest he claimed.

Excerpt from
NIETZSCHE
GILLES DELEUZE
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Nietzsche introduced two forms of expression into philosophy: aphorism and poetry. They imply a new conception of philosophy, a new image of the thinker and of thought. Nietzsche replaced the ideal of knowledge, the discovery of the truth, with *interpretation* and *evaluation*. Interpretation establishes the “meaning” of a phenomenon, which is always fragmentary and incomplete; evaluation determines the hierarchical “value” of the meanings and totalizes the fragments without diminishing or eliminating their plurality. Indeed, aphorism is both the art of interpreting and what must be interpreted; poetry, both the art of evaluating and what must be evaluated. The interpreter is the physiologist or doctor, the one who sees phenomena as symptoms and speaks through aphorisms. The evaluator is the artist who considers and creates

“perspectives” and speaks through poetry. The philosopher of the future is both artist and doctor—in one word, legislator.

This image of the philosopher is also the oldest, the most ancient one. It is that of the pre-Socratic thinker, “physiologist” and artist, interpreter and evaluator of the world. How are we to understand this closeness between the future and the past? The philosopher of the future is the explorer of ancient worlds, of peaks and caves, who creates only inasmuch as he recalls something that has been essentially forgotten. That something, according to Nietzsche, is the unity of life and thought. It is a complex unity: one step for life, one step for thought. Modes of life inspire ways of thinking; modes of thinking create ways of living. Life *activates* thought, and thought in turn *affirms* life. Of this pre-Socratic unity we no longer have even the slightest idea. We now have only instances where thought bridles and mutilates life, making it sensible, and where life takes revenge and drives thought mad, losing itself along the way. Now we only have the choice between mediocre lives and mad thinkers. Lives that are too docile for thinkers, and thoughts too mad for the living: Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Holderlin. But the fine unity in which madness would cease to be such is yet to be rediscovered—a unity that turns an anecdote of life into an aphorism of thought, and an evaluation of thought into a new perspective on life.

In a way, this secret of the pre-Socratics was already lost at the start. We must think of philosophy as a force. But the law of forces is such that they can only appear when concealed by the mask of preexisting forces. Life must first imitate matter. It was for this reason that to survive at the time of its birth in Greece, philosophical force had to disguise itself. The philosopher had to assume the air of the preceding forces; he had to take on the mask of the *priest*. The young Greek philosopher has something of the old Oriental priest. We still confuse them today: Zoroaster and Heraclitus, the Hindus and the Eleatics, the Egyptians and Empedocles, Pythagoras and the Chinese. We speak of the virtue of the ideal philosopher, of his asceticism, of his love of wisdom. We cannot guess the peculiar solitude and the sensuality, the very unwise ends of the perilous existence that lie beneath this mask. The secret of philosophy, because it was lost at the start, remains to be discovered in the future.

It was therefore fated that philosophy degenerate as it developed through history, that it turn against itself and be taken in by its own mask. Instead of linking an active life and an affirmative thinking, thought gives itself the task of judging life, opposing to it supposedly higher values, measuring it against these values, restricting and condemning it. And at the same time that thought thus becomes negative, life depreciates, ceases to be active, is reduced to its weakest forms, to sickly forms that are alone compatible with the so-called higher values. *It is the triumph “reaction” over active life and of negation over affirmative thought.* The consequences for philosophy are dire, for the virtues of the philosopher as legislator were first the critique of all established values—that is, of values superior to life and of the principles on which they depend—and then the creation of new values, of values of life that call for another principle. Hammer and transmutation. While philosophy thus degenerates, the philosopher as legislator is replaced by the submissive philosopher. Instead of the critic of established values, instead of the creator of new values and new evaluations, there

emerges the preserver of accepted values. The philosopher ceases to be a physiologist or doctor and becomes a metaphysician. He ceases to be a poet and becomes a “public professor.” He claims to be beholden to the requirements of truth and reason; but beneath these requirements of reason are forces that aren’t so reasonable at all: the state, religion, all the current values. Philosophy becomes nothing more than taking the census of all the reasons man gives himself to obey. The philosopher invokes love of the truth, but it is a truth that harms no one (“it appears as a self-contented and happy creature which is continually assuring all the powers that be that no one needs to be the least concerned on its account; for it is, after all, only ‘pure science’”).² The philosopher evaluates life in accordance with his ability to uphold weights and carry burdens. These burdens, these weights, are precisely the higher values. Such is the spirit of heaviness that brings together, in the same desert, the carrier with the carried, the reactive and depreciated life with negative and depreciating thinking. All that remains then is an illusion of critique and a phantom of creation, for nothing is more opposed to the creator than the carrier. To create is to lighten, to unburden life, to invent new possibilities of life. The creator is legislator—dancer.

The degeneration of philosophy appears clearly with Socrates. If we define metaphysics by the distinction between two worlds, by the opposition between essence and appearance, between the true and the false, the intelligible and the sensible, we have to say that it is Socrates who invented metaphysics. He made of life something that must be judged, measured, restricted, and of thought, a measure, a limit, that is exercised in the name of higher values: the Divine, the True, the Beautiful, the Good... With Socrates emerges the figure of a philosopher who is voluntarily and subtly submissive. But let’s move on and skip through the centuries. Who can really think that Kant reinstated critique or rediscovered the idea of the philosopher as legislator? Kant denounces false claims to knowledge, but he doesn’t question the ideal of knowing; he denounces false morality, but he doesn’t question the claims of morality or the nature and the origin of its value. He blames us for having confused domains and interests; but the domains remain intact, and the interests of reason, sacred (true knowledge, true morals, true religion).

Dialectics itself perpetrates this prestidigitation. Dialectics is the art that invites us to recuperate alienated properties. Everything returns to the Spirit as the motor and product of the dialectic, or to self-consciousness, or even to man, as generic being. But if our properties in themselves express a diminished life and a mutilating thought, what is the use of recuperating them or becoming their true subject? Did we do away with religion when we interiorized the priest, placing him into the faithful, in the style of the Reformation? Did we kill God when we put man in his place and kept the most important thing, which is the place? The only change is this: instead of being burdened from the outside, man takes the weights and places them on his own back. The philosopher of the future, the doctor-philosopher, will diagnose the perpetuation of the same ailment beneath different symptoms; values can change, man can put himself in the place of God, progress, happiness; utility can replace the truth, the good, or the divine—what is essential hasn’t changed: the perspectives or the evaluations on which these values, whether old or new, depend. We are always asked to

² “Schopenhauer as Educator,” vol. 3 of *Untimely Meditations*.

submit ourselves, to burden ourselves, to recognize only the reactive forms of life, the accusatory forms of thought. When we no longer want, when we can no longer bear higher values, we are still asked to accept “the real as it is”—but *this “real as it is” is precisely what the higher values have made of reality!* (Even existentialism retained a frightening taste for carrying, for bearing, a properly dialectical taste that separates it from Nietzsche.)

Nietzsche is the first to tell us that killing God is not enough to bring about the transmutation of values. In his work, there are at least fifteen versions of the death of God, all of them very beautiful.³ But indeed, in one of the most beautiful, the murderer of God is “the ugliest of men.” What Nietzsche means is that man makes himself even more ugly when, no longer in need of an external authority, he denies himself what was denied him and spontaneously takes on the policing and the burdens that he no longer thinks come from the outside. Thus the history of philosophy, from the Socratics to the Hegelians, remains the long history of man’s submissions and the reasons he gives himself for legitimizing them. This process of degeneration concerns not only philosophy but also becoming in general, or the most basic category of history—not a fact in history, but the very principle from which derive most of the events that have determined our thinking and our life, the symptoms of a decomposition. And so true philosophy, as philosophy of the future, is no more historical than it is eternal: it must be untimely, always untimely.

All interpretations determine the meaning of a phenomenon. Meaning consists of a relation of forces in which some *act* and others *react* in a complex and hierarchized whole. Whatever the complexity of a phenomenon, we can distinguish primary forces, of conquest and subjugation, from reactive, secondary forces, of adaptation and regulation. This distinction is not only quantitative but also qualitative and typological, for it is in the nature of forces to be in relation to other forces and it is in this relation that they acquire their essence or quality. The relation of force to force is called “will.” That is why we must avoid at all costs the misinterpretations of the Nietzschean principle of the will to power. This principle doesn’t mean (or at least doesn’t primarily mean) that the will *wants* power or *wishes* to dominate. As long as the will to power is interpreted in terms of a “desire to dominate,” we inevitably make it depend on established values, the only ones able to determine, in any given case or conflict, who must be “recognized” as the most powerful. We then cannot recognize the nature of the will to power as an elastic principle of all of our evaluations, as a hidden principle for the creation of new values not yet recognized. The will to power, says Nietzsche, consists not in coveting or even in *taking* but in *creating* and *giving*. Power, as a will to power, is not that which the will wants, but *that which* wants in the will (Dionysus himself). The will to power is the differential element from which derive the forces at work, as well as their respective quality in a complex whole. Thus it is always given as a mobile, aerial, pluralist element. It is by the will to power that a force commands, but it is also by the will to power that a force obeys. To these two types or qualities of forces there correspond two faces, two qualia, of the will to power, which are ultimate and fluent, deeper than the forces that derive from them, for the will to

³ “The Madman,” *Gay Science*, book III, 125, is sometimes quoted as the first major version of the death of God. This is not the case: in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, there is a wonderful tale called “The Prisoners.” This text resonates mysteriously with Franz Kafka.

power makes it that active forces *affirm*, and affirm their difference: in them affirmation is first, and negation is never but a consequence, a sort of surplus of pleasure. What characterizes reactive forces, on the other hand, is their opposition to what they are not, their tendency to limit the other: in them, *negation* comes first; through negation, they arrive at a semblance of affirmation. Affirmation and negation are thus the qualia of the will to power, just as action and reaction are the qualities of forces. And just as interpretation finds the principles of meaning in forces, evaluation finds the principles of values in the will to power. Given the preceding terminological precisions, we can avoid reducing Nietzsche's thought to a simple dualism, for, as we shall see, affirmation is itself essentially multiple and pluralist, whereas negation is always one, or heavily monist.

Yet history presents us with a most peculiar phenomenon: the reactive forces triumph; negation wins in the will to power! This is the case not only in the history of man, but in the history of life and the earth, at least on the face of it inhabited by man. Everywhere we see the victory of No over Yes, of reaction over action. Life becomes adaptive and regulative, reduced to its secondary forms; we no longer understand what it means to act. Even the forces of the earth become exhausted on this desolate face. Nietzsche calls this joint victory of reactive forces and the will to negate "nihilism"—or the triumph of the slaves. According to him, the analysis of nihilism is the object of *psychology*, understood also as a psychology of the cosmos.

It seems difficult for a philosophy of force or of the will to explain how the reactive forces, how the slaves, or the weak, can win. If all that happens is that together they form a force greater than that of the strong, it is hard to see what has changed and what a qualitative evaluation is based on. But in fact, the weak, the slaves, triumph not by adding up their forces but by subtracting those of the other: they separate the strong from what they can do. They triumph not because of the composition of their power but because of the power of their contagion. They bring about a becoming-reactive of all forces. That is what "degeneration" means. Nietzsche shows early on that the criteria of the struggle for life, of natural selection, necessarily favor the weak and the sick, the "secondary ones" (by sick is meant a life reduced to its reactive processes). This is all the more true in the case of man, where the criteria of history favor the slaves as such. It is a becoming-sick of all life, a becoming-slave of all men, that constitutes the victory of nihilism. We must again avoid misconceptions about the Nietzschean terms "strong" and "weak," "master" and "slave": it is clear that the slave doesn't stop being a slave when he gets power, nor do the weak cease to be weak. Even when they win, reactive forces are still reactive. In everything, according to Nietzsche, what is at stake is a qualitative typology: a question of baseness and nobility. Our masters are slaves that have triumphed in a universal becoming-slave: European man, domesticated man, the buffoon. Nietzsche describes modern states as ant colonies, where the leaders and the powerful win through their baseness, through the contagion of this baseness and this buffoonery. Whatever the complexity of Nietzsche's work, the reader can easily guess in which category (that is, in which type) he would have placed the race of "masters" conceived by the Nazis. When nihilism triumphs, then and only then does the will to power stop meaning "to create" and start to signify instead "to want power," "to want to dominate" (thus to attribute to oneself or have others attribute to one established values: money, honors, power, and so on). Yet that kind of will to power is precisely that of the slave; it is the

way in which the slave or the impotent conceives of power, the idea he has of it and that *he applies when he triumphs*. It can happen that a sick person says, Oh! If I were well, I would do this or that—and maybe he will, but his plans and his thoughts are still those of a sick person, only a sick person. The same goes for the slave and for his conception of mastery or power. The same also goes for the reactive man and his conception of action. Values and evaluations are always being reversed, things are always seen from a petty angle, images are reversed as in a bull's-eye. One of Nietzsche's greatest sayings is: "We must always protect the strong from the weak."

Let us now specify, for the case of man, the stages of the triumph of nihilism. These stages constitute the great discoveries of Nietzschean psychology, the categories of a typology of depths.

1. *Resentment*: It's your fault... It's your fault... Projective accusation and recrimination. It's your fault if I'm weak and unhappy. Reactive life gets away from active forces; reaction stops being "acted." It becomes something sensed, a "resentment" that is exerted against everything that is active. Action becomes shameful: life itself is accused, separated from its power, separated from what it can do. The lamb says: I could do everything that the eagle does; I'm admirable for not doing so. Let the eagle do as I do...

2. *Bad conscience*: It's my fault... The moment of introjection. Having captured life like a fish on a hook, the reactive forces can turn in on themselves. They interiorize the fault, say they are guilty, turn against themselves. But in this way they set an example, they invite all of life to come and join them, they acquire a maximum of contagious power—they form reactive communities.

3. *The ascetic ideal*: The moment of sublimation. What the weak or reactive life ultimately wants is the negation of life. *Its* will to power is a will to nothingness, as a condition of its triumph. Conversely, the will to nothingness can only tolerate a life that is weak, mutilated, reactive—states close to nothing. Then is formed the disturbing alliance. Life is judged according to values that are said to be superior to life: these pious values are opposed to life, condemn it, lead it to nothingness; they promise salvation only to the most reactive, the weakest, the sickest forms of life. Such is the alliance between God-Nothingness and Reactive-Man. Everything is reversed: slaves are called masters; the weak are called strong; baseness is called nobility. We say that someone is noble and strong because he carries; he carries the weight of higher values; he feels responsible. Even life, especially life, seems hard for him to carry. Evaluations are so distorted that we can no longer see that the carrier is a slave, that what he carries is a slavery, that the carrier is a carrier of the weak—the opposite of a creator or a dancer. In fact, one only carries out of weakness; one only wishes to be carried out of a will to nothingness (see the buffoon of *Zarathustra* and the figure of the donkey).

These stages of nihilism correspond, according to Nietzsche, to Judaic religion, then to Christianity, but the latter was certainly well prepared by Greek philosophy, that is, by the degeneration of philosophy in Greece. More generally, Nietzsche shows how these stages are also the genesis of the great categories of our thought: the Self, the World, God, causality, finality, and so on. But nihilism doesn't stop there and follows a path that makes up our entire history.

4. *The death of God*: The moment of recuperation. For a long time, the death of God was thought to be an inter-religious drama, a problem between the Jewish God and the Christian God, to the point where we are no longer quite sure whether it is the Son who dies out of resentment against the Father or the Father who dies so that the Son can be independent (and become “cosmopolitan”). But Saint Paul already founded Christianity on the principle that Christ dies for *our* sins. With the Reformation, the death of God becomes increasingly a problem between God and man, until the day man discovers himself to be the murderer of God, wishes to see himself as such and to carry this new weight. He wants the logical outcome of this death: to become God himself, to replace God. Nietzsche’s idea is that the death of God is a grand event, glamorous yet insufficient, for nihilism continues, barely changing its form. Earlier, nihilism had meant depreciation, the negation of life in the name of higher values. But now the negation of these higher values is replaced by human values—all too human values (morals replace religion; utility, progress, even history replace divine values). Nothing has changed, for the same reactive life, the same slavery that had triumphed in the shadow of divine values now triumphs through human ones. The same carrier, the same donkey, who used to bear the weight of divine relics, for which he answered before God, now burdens himself on his own, as an auto-responsibility. We have even taken a further step in the desert of nihilism: we claim to embrace all of reality, but we embrace only what the higher values have left of it, the residue of reactive forces and the will to nothingness. That is why Nietzsche, in book IV of *Zarathustra*, traces the great misery of those he calls “the higher men.” These men want to replace God; they carry human values; they even believe they are rediscovering reality, recuperating the meaning of affirmation. But the only affirmation of which they are capable is the Yes of the donkey, Y-A, the reactive force that burdens itself with the products of nihilism and that thinks it says Yes each time it *carries* a no. (Two modern works are profound meditations on the Yes and the No, on their authenticity or their mystification: those of Nietzsche and James Joyce.)

5. *The last man and the man who wants to die*: The moment of the end. The death of God is thus an event that still awaits its meaning and its value. As long as our principle of evaluation remains unchanged, as long as we replace old values with new ones that only amount to new combinations between reactive forces and the will to nothingness, nothing has changed; we are still under the aegis of *established* values. We know full well that some values are born old and from the time of their birth exhibit their conformity, their conformism, their inability to upset any established order. And yet with each step, nihilism advances further, inanity further reveals itself. What appears in the death of God is that the alliance between reactive forces and the will to nothingness, between reactive man and nihilist God, is in the process of dissolving: man claimed he could do without God, be the same as God. Nietzsche’s concepts are categories of the unconscious. What counts is how this drama is played out in the unconscious: when reactive forces claim to do without a “will,” they fall further and further into the abyss of nothingness, into a world more and more devoid of values, divine or even human. Following the higher men there arises *the last man*, the one who says: all is vain, better to fade away passively! Better a nothingness of the will than a will of nothingness! But thanks to this rupture, the will to nothingness turns against the reactive forces, becomes the will to deny reactive life itself, and

inspires in man the wish to actively destroy himself. Beyond the last man, then, there is still *the man who wants to die*. And at this moment of the completion of nihilism (midnight), everything is ready—ready for a transmutation.⁴

The transmutation of all values is defined in the following way: an active becoming of forces, *a triumph of affirmation in the will to power*. Under the rule of nihilism, negation is the form and the content of the will to power; affirmation is only secondary, subordinated to negation, gathering and carrying its fruit. Hence the Yes of the donkey, Y-A, becomes a false yes, a sort of caricature of affirmation. Now everything changes: affirmation becomes the essence or the will to power itself; as for the negative, it subsists, but as the mode of being of one who affirms, as the aggressivity that belongs to affirmation, like the lightning that announces and the thunder that follows, what is affirmed—like the total critique that accompanies creation. Thus Zarathustra is pure affirmation but also he who carries negation to its highest point, making of it an action, an agency that services he who affirms and creates. The Yes of Zarathustra is opposed to the Yes of the donkey, as creating is opposed to carrying. The No of Zarathustra is opposed to the No of nihilism, as aggressivity is opposed to resentment. Transmutation signifies this reversal in the relation of affirmation-negation. But we can see that a transmutation is possible only at the close of nihilism. We had to get to the last man, then to the man who wants to die, for negation *finally to turn against the reactive forces* and become an action that serves a higher affirmation (hence Nietzsche's saying: nihilism conquered, but conquered by itself...).

Affirmation is the highest power of the will. But what is affirmed? The earth, life... But what form do the earth and life assume when they are the objects of affirmation? A form unbeknownst to we who inhabit only the desolate surface of the earth and who live in states close to zero. What nihilism condemns and tries to deny is not so much Being, for we have known for some time that Being resembles Nothingness like a brother. It is, rather, multiplicity; it is, rather, becoming. Nihilism considers becoming as something that *must* atone and must be reabsorbed into Being, and the multiple as something unjust that must be judged and reabsorbed into the One. Becoming and multiplicity are guilty—such is the first and the last word of nihilism. That is why under its aegis, philosophy is motivated by dark sentiments: a “discontent,” a certain anguish, an uneasiness about living, an obscure sense of guilt. By contrast, the first figure of the transmutation elevates multiplicity and becoming to their highest power and makes of them objects of an affirmation. In the affirmation of the multiple lies the practical joy of the diverse. Joy emerges as the sole motive for philosophizing. To valorize negative sentiments or sad passions—that is the mystification on which nihilism bases its power. (Lucretius, then Spinoza, already wrote decisive passages on this subject. Before Nietzsche, they conceived philosophy as the power to affirm, as the practical struggle against mystifications, as the expulsion of the negative.)

⁴ This distinction between the last man and the man who wants to die is fundamental in Nietzsche's philosophy: in *Zarathustra*, for example, compare the prediction of the soothsayer (“The Soothsayer,” book II) with the call of Zarathustra (Prologue, 4 and 5).

Multiplicity is affirmed as multiplicity; becoming is affirmed as becoming. That is to say at once that affirmation is itself multiple, that it becomes itself, and that becoming and multiplicity are themselves affirmations. There is something like a play of mirrors in affirmation properly understood: “Eternal affirmation... eternally I am your affirmation!” The second figure of the transmutation is the affirmation of the affirmation, the doubling, the divine couple Dionysus and Ariadne.

Dionysus can be recognized in all the preceding characteristics. We are far from the first Dionysus, the one that Nietzsche had conceived under the influence of Schopenhauer, who had reabsorbed life into a primal ground and, forming an alliance with Apollo, had created tragedy. It is true that starting with *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysus was defined through his opposition to Socrates even more than through his alliance with Apollo; Socrates judged and condemned life in the name of higher values, but Dionysus had the sense that life is not to be judged, that it is just enough, holy enough, in itself. And as Nietzsche progresses further in his work, the real opposition appears to him: no longer Dionysus versus Socrates, but Dionysus versus the Crucified. Their martyrdom seems the same, but the interpretation, the evaluation of it are different: on one side, a testimony against life, a vengeance that consists in denying life; on the other, the affirmation of life, the affirmation of becoming and multiplicity that extends even in the very laceration and scattered limbs of Dionysus. Dance, lightness, laughter are the properties of Dionysus. As power of affirmation, Dionysus evokes a mirror within his mirror, a ring within his ring: a second affirmation is needed for affirmation to be itself affirmed. Dionysus has a fiancée, Ariadne (“You have small ears, you have my ears: put a clever word in them”). The only clever word is Yes. Ariadne completes the set of relations that define Dionysus and the Dionysian philosopher.

Multiplicity is no longer answerable to the One, nor is becoming answerable to Being. But Being and the One do more than lose their meaning: they take on a new meaning. Now the One is said of the multiple as the multiple (splinters or fragments); Being is said of becoming as becoming. That is the Nietzschean reversal, or the third figure of the transmutation. Becoming is no longer opposed to Being, nor is the multiple opposed to the One (these oppositions being the categories of nihilism). On the contrary, what is affirmed is the One of multiplicity, the Being of becoming. Or, as Nietzsche puts it, one affirms the necessity of chance. Dionysus is a player. The real player makes of chance an object of affirmation: he affirms the fragments, the elements of chance; from this affirmation is born the necessary number, which brings back the throw of the dice. We now see what this third figure is: the play of the eternal return. This return is precisely the Being of becoming, the one of multiplicity, the necessity of chance. Thus we must not make of the eternal return a *return of the same*. To do this would be to misunderstand the form of the transmutation and the change in the fundamental relationship, for the same does not preexist the diverse (except in the category of nihilism). *It is not the same that comes back*, since the coming back is the original form of the same, which is said only of the diverse, the multiple, becoming. The same doesn't come back; only coming back is the same in what becomes.

The very essence of the eternal return is at issue. We must get rid of all sorts of useless themes in this question of the eternal return. It is sometimes asked how Nietzsche could have believed this thought to be

new or extraordinary, because it was quite common among the ancients. But, precisely, Nietzsche knew full well that *it was not to be found* in ancient philosophy, either in Greece or in the Orient, except in a piecemeal or hesitant manner and in a very different sense from his own. Nietzsche already had the most explicit reservations about Heraclitus. And in putting the eternal return in the mouth of Zarathustra, like a serpent in the gullet, Nietzsche meant only to impute to the ancient figure of Zoroaster what Zoroaster himself was the least able to conceive. Nietzsche explains that he takes Zarathustra as a euphemism, or rather as an antithesis and a metonymy, purposely giving him new concepts that he himself could not create.⁵

It is also asked why the eternal return is so surprising if it consists of a cycle, that is, of a return of the whole, a return of the same, a return to the same. But in fact it is not that at all. Nietzsche's secret is that *the eternal return is selective*. And doubly so. First as a thought, for it gives us a law for the autonomy of the will freed from any morality: whatever I want (my laziness, my gluttony, my cowardice, my vice as well as my virtue), I "must" want it in such a way that I also want its eternal return. The world of "semi-wants" is thus eliminated: everything we want when we say "once, only once." Even a cowardice, a laziness, that would wish for its eternal return would become something other than a laziness, a cowardice; it would become an active power of affirmation.

The eternal return is not only selective thinking but also selective Being. Only affirmation comes back, only what can be affirmed comes back, only joy returns. All that can be negated, all that is negation, is expelled by the very movement of the eternal return. We may fear that the combination of nihilism and reaction will eternally come back. The eternal return should be compared to a wheel whose movement is endowed with a centrifugal force that drives out everything negative. Because Being is affirmed of becoming, it expels all that contradicts affirmation, all the forms of nihilism and of reaction: bad conscience, resentment... we will see them only once.

Yet in many texts, Nietzsche conceives of the eternal return as a cycle where everything comes back, or the same comes back, which amounts to the same. But what do these texts mean? Nietzsche is a thinker who "dramatizes" ideas, that is, who presents them as successive events, with different levels of tension. We have already seen this with the death of God. Similarly, the eternal return is the object of two accounts (and there would have been more had his work not been interrupted by madness, which prevented a progression that Nietzsche had explicitly planned). Of the two accounts, one concerns a *sick* Zarathustra, the other, a Zarathustra who is *convalescent and nearly cured*. What makes Zarathustra sick is precisely the idea of the cycle: the idea that everything comes back, that the same returns, that everything comes back to the same. In this case, the eternal return is only a hypothesis, a hypothesis that is both banal and terrifying: banal because it corresponds to a natural, animal, immediate, certitude (that is why, when the eagle and the serpent try to

⁵ See "Why I Am a Fatality," 3, in *Ecce Homo*. In fact, it is unlikely that the idea of the eternal return had ever been entertained in the ancient world. Greek thought as a whole was reticent on this theme: see Charles Mugler, *Deux Thèmes de la cosmologie grecque: Devenir cyclique et pluralité des mondes* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1953). Specialists admit that the same is true of Chinese, Indian, Iranian, and Babylonian thought. The opposition between a circular time of the ancients and a linear time of the moderns is facile and incorrect. In all respects, we can, with Nietzsche, consider the eternal return a Nietzschean discovery, though with ancient premises.

console him, Zarathustra answers: you have made of the eternal return a tired refrain, you have reduced the eternal return to a formula that is common, all too common); terrifying because, if it is true that everything comes back, and comes back to the same, then small and petty man, nihilism and reaction, will come back as well (that is why Zarathustra cries out his great disgust, his great contempt and declares that he can not, will not, dares not say the eternal return).

What happened when Zarathustra was convalescent? Did he simply decide to bear what he couldn't bear before? He accepts the eternal return; he grasps its joy. Is this simply a psychological change? Of course not. It is a change in the understanding and the meaning of the eternal return itself. Zarathustra recognizes that while he was sick, he had understood nothing of the eternal: that it is not a cycle, that it is not the return of the same nor a return to the same; that it is not a simple, natural assumption for the use of animals or a sad moral punishment for the use of men. Zarathustra understands the equation "eternal return = selective Being." How can reaction and nihilism, how can negation come back, since the eternal return is the Being that is only said of affirmation, and becoming in action? A centrifugal wheel, "supreme constellation of Being, that no wish can attain, that no negation can soil." The eternal return is repetition; but it is the repetition that selects, the repetition that saves. The prodigious secret of a repetition that is liberating and selecting.

The transmutation thus has a fourth, and final, dimension: it implies and produces the Overman. In his human essence, man is a reactive being who combines his forces with nihilism. The eternal return repels and expels him. The transmutation involves an essential, radical conversion that is produced in man but that produces the Overman. The Overman refers specifically to the gathering of all that can be affirmed, the superior form of what is, the figure that represents selective Being, its offspring and subjectivity. He is thus at the intersection of two genealogies. On the one hand, he is produced in man, through the intermediary of the last man and the man who wants to die, but beyond them, through a sort of wrenching apart and transformation of human essence. Yet on the other hand, although he is produced in man, he is not produced by man: he is the fruit of Dionysus and Ariadne. Zarathustra himself follows the first genealogical line; he remains thus inferior to Dionysus, whose prophet or herald he becomes. Zarathustra calls the Overman his child, but he has been surpassed by his child, whose real father is Dionysus. Thus the figures of the transmutation are complete: Dionysus or affirmation; Dionysus-Ariadne, or affirmation doubled; the eternal return, or affirmation redoubled; the Overman, or the figure and the product of the affirmation.

We readers of Nietzsche must avoid four potential misinterpretations: (1) about the will to power (believing that the will to power means "wanting to dominate" or "wanting power"); (2) about the strong and the weak (believing that the most powerful in a social regime are thereby the strong); (3) about the eternal return (believing that it is an old idea, borrowed from the Greeks, the Hindus, the Babylonians...; believing that it is a cycle, or a return of the same, a return to the same); (4) about the last works (believing that they are excessive or disqualified by madness).