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**§1. Aspects of Nietzsche's Nihilism.**

The Will To Power §2: "What does Nihilism mean? *That the highest values devalue themselves.* The aim is lacking; 'Why?' finds no answer."<sup>1</sup>

Where are we left when all values devalue themselves? Everything seems meaningless, but in the Nietzschean framework, this is only one aspect of nihilism, and furthermore it is a transitional stage (§7).

If the devaluing of all values is the transitional stage, then what are we transitioning to? In one sense we are recognizing "a long waste of strength" (§12a). From this realization there are two ways we can turn.

First is the way of the passive nihilist. The passive nihilist lives in this vacuous state. There is no meaning left in the world. Passive nihilism takes the form of the ultimate pessimism. What was thought to be universal only shows us that the only possible universal is that there are no universals, man loses faith in his own value (*ibid.*).

"Becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*" (*ibid.*). Underneath our becoming there is no grand unity, becoming itself is the only reality (*ibid.*). In passive nihilism, this goallessness as such is a decline and recession of the spirit (§22).

The way of the passive nihilist becomes that of self-narcotization, inversion of the old values (§29); one turns against life. Within passive nihilism the mediocre flourish and suppress the truly noble. The nobles are seen as degenerate. No one can answer the "for what?" question any longer. One loses courage and submits to "civilization" (§33). The Christian "God is truth" is inverted to "all is false" (§1).

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will To Power (Kaufmann, Vintage Giant edition). All reference given by sections and will be from this edition of The Will To Power unless otherwise noted.

Second is the way of the Active Nihilist. The active nihilist is “a sign of increased power of the spirit” (§22). With the active nihilist, the idea of transition comes back. The active nihilist gives an affirmative “yes!” to life. All values are still devalued but the devaluation is seen as only the transitional stage. In active nihilism, the goallessness as such becomes the affirmation of life.

The old values are not simply replaced or inverted. The active nihilist smashes and sweeps away the old values until only the rubble of the old values are left on the floor. The wanting of new values is not the driving force for the active nihilist. She looks for something completely different. The active nihilist uses the devaluation as a clearing away of the old values to make room for the revaluation. She uses a hammer to smash the hollow values that bound her previously and then uses the same hammer to affirm life, to rebuild.

The revaluation of all values is the rebuilding, an affirmation of life, a “yes!” saying to life. The active nihilist sees the devaluation of all values as possibility. At this point there can be two different paths that the active nihilist can take.

One direction the active nihilist can take is the path of incomplete nihilism. Incomplete nihilism happens when one attempts to escape nihilism without revaluating the values so far (§28). If the revaluation is not completed, old values are turned over and inverted.

Complete nihilism does not need the old values, and ultimately values altogether are devalued and left aside. The complete active nihilist movement would throw out even the concept of values altogether. This form of nihilism is the creation of a new dawn.

## **§2. The eternal recurrence and Nihilism as the devaluation of all values.**

The eternal return of the same is the Nietzschean metaphysical concept that we will live again and again, and we will live again and again in the same ways unchangingly. Values arise, are devalued, new values are constructed only to be devalued again. Nihilism's place in the eternal recurrence is the devaluation of all values, a precipice before the revaluation of all values hitherto. Nihilism is a component of the eternal recurrence of the same

The hammer that smashes before the revaluation of all values uses the hammer to rebuild. The devaluation of all values is a necessary condition that occurs again and again in time. The old values must be destroyed to make the revaluation of all values up to now possible.

There are two forms that can come of this aspect of Nietzsche's nihilism (second attempt).

Incomplete nihilism: "we live in it today" (§28). Christianity as constructed from the devaluation of old values is an incomplete nihilistic construct. Christianity, the inversion of the Roman values, the devaluation of all values is an incomplete nihilistic movement. The hammer smashed the old values but the revaluation of all values until then did not occur. The hammer did not rebuild but instead the old values were overturned. The old values were only inverted. Incomplete nihilism is the attempt to fill the old values' place without the proper revaluation of all values up to the point of the devaluation of all values. When God is dead, Christian morality survives nonetheless; this ultimately leads to incomplete nihilism.

Complete nihilism overcomes the old system (God); it overcomes the old values altogether. Complete nihilism overcomes all values up to the devaluation of all values. Complete nihilism leaves the old values behind altogether. After the revaluation there is no need to rebuild from the old model. Complete nihilism is the result of ecstatic nihilism, one uses the

hammer to smash the values up until now to make way for the new dawn (§1055). After the revaluation there will be a new dawn.

Nihilism, as the devaluation of all values within the progression of the eternal recurrence, is the point before the revaluation. The old values are devalued and the revaluation occurs making the new dawn possible. With the proclamation, “God is dead” Nietzsche is not asserting a simple disbelief in God’s existence but a destruction of the value system of the Christian God. The goals of the Christian God are smashed and the horizon is laid bare. Within the eternal recurrence, this nihilistic movement will occur again and again.

In the eternal recurrence, nihilism is a devaluing of the highest values up until now. The revaluation is preceded by the devaluation of all values, but the devaluation is also following the revaluation. The new dawn of the revaluation is already standing on the edge of a devaluation of all values. The devaluation still pushes us towards a positing of new values. The destruction of the old values brings forth a building of new values again and again. For this to be a complete movement the old values must be completely done away with. Even the idea of values as such may be thrown out.

### **§3. The eternal recurrence in structure.**

The structure of the eternal recurrence up to now is as follows:

the eternal recurrence [(nihilism)→(the revaluation of all values)→(a new dawn)].

The progression recurs over and over throughout time. Values are created, devalued, revaluated, and a new dawn, or essentially, the creating of new values progresses throughout time, and in a sense is already waiting to be devalued again.

There are two different possibilities I can see working within the eternal recurrence. The first is the above picture of the eternal recurrence. The structure repeats over and over again, and the events themselves repeat over and over again. This is the ultimate nihilism.

In this sense nihilism becomes the eternal recurrence itself. Once we realize that we have to live the same existence over and over again, what can the noble do but accept their fate? The eternal recurrence becomes a nihilistic movement in itself. The devaluation of all values is still an aspect within the eternal recurrence, but the nihilism of the whole structure dominates the nihilism of devaluation of all values, the revaluation of all values, and the illusionary new dawn. The eternal recurrence of the same creates the most complete goallessness as such, and it destroys the notion of values by creating a valueless existence (§25).

The second possibility working within the eternal recurrence is the structure itself: [(nihilism)→(the revaluation of all values)→(a new dawn)]. When looked at as a structure or a function, possibilities resurface. The return of the same has a different outlook. Instead of being trapped in the same existence unfolding over and over again in time, the eternal recurrence becomes open again. The nihilism devalues all the highest values, the revaluation occurs and a truly new dawn is created. Nihilism is only an aspect of the structure instead of being the structure itself.

#### **§4. The Scope of Nihilism and the eternal recurrence.**

Nihilism in the eternal recurrence is the point where all values are devalued. There is another aspect of nihilism at work within this structure. The thought that we will have to live this existence over again and again throughout eternity is nihilistic in itself. In this sense another nihilism holds scope over the whole of the eternal recurrence.

The eternal becoming and the eternal passing away, one becomes only to die and then become again, there are no more values because there are no more goals. The “yes!” to life, is the understanding of the eternal recurrence and the attempt to live as one who overcomes the values of her time, overcomes herself, stylizes her character, and in doing so with the understanding of the eternal recurrence “one realizes that becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing” (§12a). Through the acceptance of the eternal recurrence, she can become the *overman*?

### **§5. Thoughts on Nihilism and the Eternal Recurrence.**

The eternal recurrence is a goal for the world. The goal is that everything will return again. Goallessness as such in its truest form would be the idea that there is no eternal God, and there is no eternal recurrence of the same. There is just nothingness besides existence as perceived. Things come to be and then pass away again. This is an inversion of §55, the “in vain” for me would be the nothingness after existence. The lack of aim stays the same but the end is too fearful for the ego to conceive. If things are to come again and come again, the aim is no longer lacking.

Existence as it is, recurring without the finale of nothingness is something more, something known, something that is not mysterious. The idea of nothingness gives us the anxiety of the truly unknown. We cannot conceive of nothingness and we do not know what this nothingness could hold for us. The mind attempts to put boundaries on nothingness. It tries to chain nothingness down with the useful lies that falsely calm the anxiety but it is still there, the anxiety keeps us from self overcoming. I feel that Nietzsche was almost saying this: “this is the most extreme form of nihilism: nothingness (the ‘meaningless’), eternally!” (§55).

The thinker cannot escape from the anxiety of this truth. Where is the value in the world now? When everything comes to be and perishes without transcendence or return? One gropes for a way to posit oneself as the “meaning and measure of the value of things” (§12b).

This is the true nihilism of existence. This is the true goallessness as such. This is the real inference that there is no meaning in existence. The idea that our insignificance in the world is the only thing infinite. Our being has no relevance in the grand scale of all being in the universe.

Can any mere human really comprehend this? Man’s ego will not let it. One has to create some significance, some possibility for life after death because death as a finality is too nihilistic, too incomprehensible. The ego struggles with the idea that we are the smallest speck on the face of something so inconceivably large in scale.

The eternal recurrence was Nietzsche’s useful lie (§5). The concept of the eternal return is needed for one to posit oneself in the world as significant in the world. Nietzsche still considered the necessity of life to assert itself for man (§1065) whereas life does not. If we are born into a world where we live in infinitesimal meaningless existence within the scope of the universe, isn’t this the most extreme nihilism?

Can man ever come to terms with such a concept? If one were to take the hammer to the eternal recurrence would it sound hollow? Is the goal lacking? Or is there a new value system put into place and a new goal as such striving towards the eternal return of the same? The need for goals still remains (§20). Would the perfect nihilist see through the eternal recurrence and posit the world as such, as an infinitesimal meaningless existence and still have the amour fati of the overman?

What I derive from the eternal recurrence of the same is not its possibility as a metaphysical reality but its truth in structure. I cannot conceive of my living this life again or the holocaust happening again but instead many people similar to me living in times similar to mine, and many holocausts happening again and again. The only way to get out of this wheel of existence, the pattern of the eternal recurrence, is to overcome life as such, to see through the structure of things coming to be. The Romans → The Christians → The Corporations (materialism, love of technology)... the devaluing of one system to make way for the next.

In this sense I can conceive of the eternal recurrence as not just a useful lie but as a real recurrence of the structure [(nihilism)→(the revaluation of all values)→(a new dawn)]. The nihilism will be the realization that everything is wrong in everything, that the world as it is exists as all wrong and the existing systems must be brought down. The revaluation of all values will be the building of a new dawn; a construction of a new way of being which does not consider the values and ways of the old system.

### **Towards a conclusion.**

It is hard to put a direct finger on the exact direction Nietzsche is headed in. The end result is a glimpse. There is something wrong with modern man. Somewhere in the decadence of the modern man the “powerfulness of the soul”, the “yes!” to life can be found (§109). In the decline there is also a great strength.

The traditional values will not guide us. Nor will the inversion of the traditional values. Even values in themselves will lead us away from affirming life. They are the remnants of the old value systems. To create values is to concrete a time that will have already passed by the time the values are set into place (§110).

Nihilism gives us hope. That all the values up to now are devaluing themselves. The possibilities are open again. We are smashing the old values and cleaning up for a new day (§111).

Could a “beautiful illusionary lie” (§120) like the eternal recurrence guide us through the devaluation of all values towards a revaluation of all values? If we do not have the eternal recurrence can we still affirm life? If life is a prelude to eternal nothingness or the unknown nothingness, can we still give an affirmative “yes!” to life?

Or is Nietzsche’s revaluation of all values art itself and devoid of the need for illusion? This is merely a first attempt at an interpretation of Nietzsche. Are there any facts to Nietzsche, absolute statements? “I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact “in itself”: perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing” (§481). This is not to say there are not bad interpretations. This interpretation is an attempt to work towards a good interpretation and is by no means complete.