Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence: Methods, Archives, History, and Genesis

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Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence: Methods, Archives, History, and Genesis

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the
Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Carol Hyatt Parkhurst (RIP), who always believed in my education even when I did not.

I am also deeply grateful for the support of my father, Peter Parkhurst, whose support in varying avenues of life was unwavering.

I am also deeply grateful to April Dawn Smith. It was only with her help wandering around library basements that I first found genetic forms of diplomatic transcription. Additionally, without her incredible patience in editing this and other publications, I would not be able to defend this dissertation.
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Table of Contents

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................. i

List of Tables ..................................................................................................................................... iii

List of Figures ...................................................................................................................................... iv

Abbreviations of Nietzsche Works Translated in English ................................................................. vi

Abbreviations of German Editions ................................................................................................... ix

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................... x

Chapter 1: Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2: Does Nietzsche have a "Nachlass"? ................................................................................ 12
  1. Introduction: What is a Method? ................................................................................................. 15
  2. A Dangerous Supplement: The Priority Principle and the Demarcation Problem ............. 18
     2.1 The Debate in Broad Strokes ............................................................................................... 23
  3. What does the "Nachlass" Contain? ............................................................................................ 25
  4. Implicit Demarcation Criterion .................................................................................................. 32
     4.1 Publication ............................................................................................................................. 33
     4.2 Authorization ......................................................................................................................... 33
     4.3 Public Presentation of "Publicness" ....................................................................................... 35
     4.4 Audience ............................................................................................................................... 36
  5. On the Demarcation Problem ..................................................................................................... 37
     5.1 Publication ............................................................................................................................. 38
     5.2 Authorization ......................................................................................................................... 42
     5.3 Public Presentation ................................................................................................................ 47
     5.4 Audience ............................................................................................................................... 50
     5.5 Unintuitive Couther Examples to All Four Criteria ............................................................. 53
  6. The Nachlass Debate in German Scholarship ......................................................................... 56
     6.1 Genetic and Intertextual Interpretations ............................................................................... 60
     6.2 Research Without False Dichotomies .................................................................................. 63
  7. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 70

Chapter 3: Nietzsche Reading of Plato .............................................................................................. 72
  1. Nietzsche's Engagement with Plato: A Problem of Methodology ........................................... 77
  2. Orienting and Approach Without Annotations ......................................................................... 78
  3. Nietzsche's Reading of Plato: Identity and Recurrence of the Great Year ............................... 84
List of Tables

1. Table 4.1 – Annotations in Nietzsche's Persona Copy of *Aristoteles Werke*...............................162
| Figure 2.1: From the first edition of HAH I 431 | 55 |
| Figure 2.2: Nachlass 1885, 36[54 and 36[55], KGW VI 3.296-297 compared with KGW IX 4, W I 4.13 | 62 |
| Figure 2.3: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*, Leipzig 1886, 175 [NPB 417, 419; HAAB C 4619] | 65 |
| Figure 2.4: *Ferdinando Galiani, Lettres de l'Abbé Galiani à Madame d'Épinay*, vol 1, Paris 1882, 217 [NPB 236; HAAB C 728[-1]] | 65 |
| Figure 3.1: Basel State Archive – StABS, Erziehung X 34 | 116 |
| Figure 3.2: GSA 71/94. Mette-sign: P III 1. P. 92-93 | 117 |
| Figure 3.3: GSA 71/94. Mette-sign: P III 1. P. 34 | 117 |
| Figure 3.4: Nietzsche quoting Ueberweg. (KGW II 4, P. 71) | 118 |
| Figure 3.5: Ueberweg's Original. (Ueberweg, Friedrich. "Uber die Platoische Weltseele" in *Reinisches Museum für Philologie. Vol 9* (Frankfurt am Main: Johan David Sauerländer, 1854), 41 | 119 |
| Figure 4.1: Ueberweg, Friedrich. "Uber die Platoische Weltseele" in *Reinisches Museum für Philologie. Vol 9* (Frankfurt am Main: Johan David Sauerländer, 1854), 47 | 161 |
| Figure 4.2: KGW II 4, P. 148-149 | 161 |
| Figure 5.1: GSA 71/128. Mette-Sign: M III 1, P. 53 | 175 |
| Figure 5.2: GSA 71/128. Mette-Sign: M III 1, P. 53 | 175 |
| Figure 5.3: GSA 71/28. Mette-Sign: M III 1, P. 53 | 176 |
| Figure 5.4: HAAB C 4608. P. 255 | 179 |
| Figure 5.5: GSA 71/209. Mette-Sign: N VII 1, P. 47-50 | 184 |
Figure 5.6: GSA 71/159. Mette-sign: W I 3, P. 48-49.................................................................187

Figure 5.7: GSA 71/26. Mette-Sign: D 18. P. 31...........................................................................189

Figure 5.8: GSA 71/203. Mette-sign: N VI 4, PP. 28-29.................................................................243
Abbreviations of Nietzsche's Works Translated in English


[GS] *The Gay Science*. Edited by Bernard Williams. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff with


[TI] Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings. Edited by Aaron Ridley and Judith


¹ My choice to use this translation over the Cambridge edition is somewhat idiosyncratic. The Cambridge edition attempts to reflect the musicality of the text. While this makes the text more beautiful and easier to read, it often changes the punctuation which distort the text in places. The Clancy Martin's translation, while not particularly beautiful or easy to read, follows that punctuation much more closely.
Abbreviations of German Editions


Abstract

I argue that Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence is merely a kind of thought experiment that has two forms of engagement. The first form of engagement is destructive and results in the principles of classical logic being reduced to epistemic nihilism. In this first form, Nietzsche is thinking eternal recurrence, as it is presented in previous philosophers, to its end. The second form of engagement does not require the presuppositions of classical logic and is made through the affect of disgust. This second mode of engagement can result in two outcomes; suicidal pessimism or life affirmation.

The work on eternal recurrence that scholars typically think of as published has very little positive commitment to the ontological or metaphysical status of eternal recurrence. However, if eternal recurrence does represent the physical nature of the universe, as Nietzsche sometimes speculates about in his notebooks, this would not hurt either his destructive or his affective argument. The affective form of engagement allows us to think about the emergence of this affirmative ideal without strong positive commitment to any particular metaphysics or epistemology. The appearance of such an ideal may be multiply realizable over various physical organizations of the universe.

The new life affirming ideal which emerges is not a form of humanism. Rather, Nietzsche thinks that the thought of eternal recurrence will produce "the 'humanity' of the future." The thought of eternal recurrence selects out, via suicidal pessimism, those who cannot affirm life. This fosters the development of a new humanity that can affirm life and create a new kind of happiness unknown to humans previously. This new ideal, *amor fati* [love of fate], is not simply a reconciliation with suffering and hardship of the past. Rather, one must want and hope that such a thing is the case. This ideal, held by the most powerful
people of the future, is an expression of will to power. This ideal understands hardship and challenges on
the sea of life as part of what makes us truly great and our lives intrinsically valuable.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The thought of eternal recurrence is one of the most controversial and hotly debated topics in Nietzsche’s philosophy. In the time since Nietzsche’s mental collapse in 1889, scholars have disagreed, even in broad terms, about the meaning of eternal recurrence. In this dissertation, I argue that the contradiction at the heart of eternal recurrence was foreseen and that if such a thing is coherently conceivable, it leads to epistemological nihilism. The generation of a coherent contradiction causes an epistemic collapse, via the principle of explosion, paralleling the death of God. However, the thought of eternal recurrence also offers a path beyond nihilism and towards life affirmation.

By focusing on the affect of disgust, magnified by the thought of eternal recurrence, we can confront our own pessimistic attitudes and the foundational disgust we have with everything finite and human. This tendency to see life as something disgusting, something diseased in need of a cure, is what enticed the Western tradition to posit and flee to heavenly afterworlds and Platonic backworlds. However, eternal recurrence provides us the opportunity to think our disgust with all things worldly down to their depths. Once thought through, such a life denying attitude seems not only odd, but unnecessary and misguided.

Thinking our disgust to its depths allows another ideal to emerge. This opposing ideal of life affirmation, amor fati, sees life not as a disgusting disease that needs a cure, but rather a daring adventure in which we affirm the courage to confront hardship as the centerpiece of what
makes humankind truly great. To love life in this way is to have overcome one’s disgust at being human, all-too-human and to see life as inherently valuable.

One aspect of eternal recurrence that most scholars agree upon is that eternal recurrence comes into tension with the basic principles of classical logic. More specifically, eternal recurrence runs afoul of one of the presumed consequences of the principle of identity: the principle of the identity of indiscernibles.

The thought of eternal recurrence postulates that the whole universe, down to the smallest movements, actions, and choices, will return again identically, not only once, but eternally. That is, it posits that we can imagine the universe will repeat itself in a qualitatively identical way. However, it also holds that such recurrences will be numerically or countably distinct. It is this claim that is contradicted by the principle of the identity of indiscernibles.

The identity of indiscernibles is a principle often associated with Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz, but it has origins at least as far back as the pre-Socratics. The principle of the identity of indiscernibles suggests that any two things that are qualitatively identical cannot be conceived of as numerically distinct. That is, if two objects have all their qualities in common, including spatial and temporal indexicals, then those two objects are, in actuality, one object and cannot be numerically distinct.

When applied to eternal recurrence, it is claimed, the principle of the identity of indiscernibles would make eternal recurrence logically incoherent. That is, according to classical logic, the thought of eternal recurrence contains within it a contradiction. Either these recurrences are different in some way, and are therefore countably different, or they are identical. If they are truly identical, then we are making a kind of category error when we claim there is
more than one recurrence. One can either have an infinite number of cycles of the universe that are very similar yet distinct, or there is only one cycle of the universe that is not numerically distinct from itself and is therefore not a “recurrence” or “return” but a unitary thing without distinct cycles.

The above has become known as the “standard objection” from which scholars have concluded that eternal recurrence is internally incoherent. Apologists for Nietzsche’s philosophy sometimes claim that while such contradictions exist in Nietzsche’s philosophy, we can make use of the principle of charity and suppose that Nietzsche may not have been aware of the internal contradiction at the heart of one of his most cherished philosophical ideas.

This use of the principle of charity regarding eternal recurrence is often used to suggest that Nietzsche chose not to publish certain formulations of eternal recurrence because he was aware of the problems. For example, Bernd Magnus writes about eternal recurrence, “Either Nietzsche has introduced an inconsistency in the formulation of which he is unaware, or he is aware of some difficulty, I prefer to suggest that Nietzsche was probably aware of some inadequacy in the argument (even if it is not the one advanced here) and, in consequence, chose not to publish it in any shape or form.”¹ Such reflections are also suggested by Richard Schacht among others.²

The principle of charity would hold that if one of Nietzsche's published thought experiments generates a contradiction, we ought to make an attempt to interpret it in the best possible light in order to make it, as Arthur Danto suggests, "a respectable philosophical

teaching." To the extent that Nietzsche's philosophy, and eternal recurrence, cannot be made into respectable philosophy, they must be discarded. As Jeffrie G. Murphy summarizes, "[if] the doctrine of eternal recurrence is logically and metaphysically incoherent and may thus be consigned to the bin that contains crackpot theories of the occult [then] the degree that [Nietzsche] presupposes the doctrine of eternal recurrence, then so much the worse for [Nietzsche's philosophy]." There is, then, a final step in this "charitable" argument. It attempts to explain why Nietzsche would have made claims that do not look like respectable philosophy.

The typical explanation is that Nietzsche’s ‘slipshod arguments’ are the result of his lack of education, reading, and understanding of the history of philosophy. Typically, apologists such as Julian Young suggest that Nietzsche did not have a thorough understanding of the principle of identity or the identity of indiscernibles due to his lack of familiarity with the history of philosophy, in particular, Plato and Aristotle. When it comes to the tension between eternal recurrence and the identity of indiscernibles, Nietzsche's supposed lack of training could explain why, as Lawrence Hatab claims, "Nietzsche did not exhibit a concern with such problems (he certainly could have)." If this is correct, the principle of charity would hold; we should not blame Nietzsche personally if his writings don't look like respectable philosophy. Rather, Nietzsche simply did not have the training to see that his philosophy contradicted the dictates of

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5 "Nietzsche, though a professor, was literary rather than academic philosopher" (Bertrand Russel, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005) 687)
6 Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148, 159.
7 Lawrence Hatab, *Nietzsche's Life Sentences: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 73.
classical logic. In a sense, this apologetic or charitable argument saves Nietzsche the man but destroys Nietzsche's philosophy. Such a position suggests that Nietzsche only published the work on eternal recurrence because Nietzsche, "introduced an inconsistency in the formulation of which he is unaware." 8

However, I think the principle of charity here does more damage than good because it presupposes that Nietzsche is offering a 'respectable philosophy' that conforms to the universality of classical logic. In order to counter such an argument, I will demonstrate Nietzsche's awareness and critique of the principle of identity, particularly in Plato and Aristotle. I will also demonstrate his awareness of the tension between eternal recurrence and the law of the identity of indiscernibles. I then argue that Nietzsche is best understood as using eternal recurrence to challenge the Western tradition of philosophy and particularly the assumptions of classical logic. Nietzsche then offers a second mode of engagement with the thought of eternal recurrence. This second form of engagement allows for a new life affirming ideal to emerge. This new ideal, amor fati [love of fate], can only be affirmed and longed for by those who are not weak and degenerating. The ability to affirm amor fati is, therefore, an expression of the will to power.

In chapter two, I preemptively respond to a methodological critique of my analysis. Notably, my method uses unpublished texts such as drafts and annotations in Nietzsche's personal library as evidence for certain claims I make about the development of Nietzsche's thought. One of the most universally accepted principles in Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship, the priority principle, would find this evidence inadmissible. As a necessary

condition for the possibility of my argument being cogent, I must demonstrate that the priority principle is a flawed methodological principle and offer a new approach. I then articulate a historically contextual genetic methodology. This methodology uses archival and historical evidence to position Nietzsche’s texts within a hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility with a focus on the material remains of Nietzsche’s estate. Simply put, this methodology allows me to trace the influences and developments of Nietzsche’s thought with less recourse to abstractions than previous interpretations.

Chapter three and four explicate the historical records and archival evidence of Nietzsche’s thorough reading, teaching, and critiques of the principle of identity in Plato and Aristotle. These chapters conclude that Nietzsche did not propose eternal recurrence in ignorance of the principle of identity. In fact, Nietzsche critiqued the principle of identity in both authors.

In chapter five, I go on to articulate the contextual development of eternal recurrence through a genetic analysis. In particular, I look at the development of two sections starting from notebooks sketches, to the fair copies, to proof sheets, and finally to publication. This reveals several illuminating drafts of Beyond Good and Evil 56 and a version of The Gay Science 341 that scholars have not cited previously. This alternate ending to The Gay Science 341 made it all the way to the page proofs but was pulled before publication. This means it was a considered position and not simply a note.

Chapter five’s genetic analysis specifically traces Nietzsche’s supposed discovery of eternal recurrence in 1881. These drafts and page proofs demonstrate that Nietzsche understood eternal recurrence not to be his own idea, but an idea he was bringing to its logical conclusion: nihilism. Nietzsche sees himself as bringing to an end the ideas he found in a variety of philosophical positions such as Platonism, Heracliteanism, Christianity, Stoicism, and the
mechanist world view, among others. Nietzsche’s long history of considering and then rejecting cosmological theories of eternal recurrence before 1881, combined with his clear understanding in 1881 that it violates the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, might lead one to ask how this idea leads to nihilism.

I offer one mechanism by which eternal recurrence could lead to the nihilism he claims it does. Nietzsche read about the principle of identity, the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, the principle of explosion, and eternal recurrence in many different texts. All four of these points come together in the texts of Cicero that Nietzsche read. In Cicero these four moving pieces are all set forth but are not brought to their logical conclusion. Cicero holds, first, that eternal recurrence is coherently thinkable. Second, he claims that a consequence of the principle of identity is the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Finally, he holds that if the principle of identity of indiscernibles is violated, the principle of explosion leads to epistemological nihilism. Putting these together, if eternal recurrence is a genuine and coherent thought experiment, the consequence of that is epistemological nihilism in which the difference between truth and falsity is erased.

Such an explosion and the resultant epistemic nihilism cripple any attempt to ontologically privilege the principles of classical logic. While today such a conclusion is not disastrous, in the time Nietzsche was writing, classical logic was seen as the only kind of logic in the western tradition. It’s important to remember that Nietzsche is working before the invention of paraconsistent logics. While more recent paraconsistent logics have been created to take into account challenges to the principle of identity, it would be anachronistic to think Nietzsche had these available to him. In classical logic, once the principle of explosion is activated, as Cicero
states, “the mark of truth and falsehood is abolished!”⁹ For Cicero, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsity is a condition of sense. If such a situation were to come about, this would be epistemological nihilism. This means, if Nietzsche’s only path to life affirmation is epistemological, he is trapped in his own snare.

However, eternal recurrence also offers a second mode of engagement through the affect of disgust. Eternal recurrence reflects back to us our own presuppositions about the value of life, most notably, our tendency to think pessimistically and consider life to be a kind of disgusting disease in need of a cure. Nietzsche traces this pessimistic life denying tradition back to Socrates with implications going back to the origins of Buddhism. However, according to Nietzsche, this tradition has not actually thought pessimism to its depth.

If one thinks pessimism and the most abysmal thought to their depths, one reveals a basic disposition of metaphysics that is not necessary. It is this foundational disgust with humankind, that sparks the need for metaphysical backworlds and theological afterworlds, that must be thought through to its end. When we use eternal recurrence as a thought experiment, we confront this foundational disgust at the heart of our philosophical tradition and encounter it, as if for the first time, with clear eyes. Upon thinking eternal recurrence to its depths, it is revealed not only that self-hatred and disgust are an unnecessary presupposition of life, but that they are actually a very odd and alien way to approach life. Eternal recurrence then allows us to uncover the misanthropic heart of the philosophical enterprise hitherto, and then seriously consider whether this is a healthy perspective to have on life.

One could consider life quite differently from the start. Instead of life as a torturous and disgusting disease in need of a cure, we can instead see life as a daring, dangerous, and exciting voyage for born adventurers! Life presents us with challenges that offer a rare and precious opportunity to grow, flourish, and bloom into what we are. From this life affirming perspective, struggle and difficulty in life are not something that we ought to get rid of or cure. Rather, those struggles are what make us truly great and give our lives value. To be presented with a challenging situation is not necessarily a bad thing, but an invitation to rise to that challenge. Trying times can be an opportunity to let our courage and power truly come forward. We can see the difficulties in life as a way to test ourselves and exert the strength of our inner determination upon the world. It is only when we are pushed to our limits that we truly express our full potential. Perhaps we should welcome a challenging life because it will forge us, like a piece of iron between hammer and anvil, into something truly great. Hardship might allow us to become our full selves, to become who we truly are.

In distinction to perspectives that seek an anesthetic life of snug coziness without pain (such as the last man), a life-affirming perspective would embrace the hardships and challenges in life and affirm what is difficult. Thinking through the thought of eternal recurrence to its depths shows us our own nihilistic values. Not only that, but it also challenges us to confront our values and consider whether they are healthy. If such nihilism is rejected as unhealthy, then a new life affirming perspective is allowed to emerge.

Within such a life affirming perspective, one would love one’s fate, *amor fati*, because hardships are the necessary conditions that forge a human being into who they truly are. The affirmation of eternal recurrence can therefore be seen as one expression of the will to power because such a thing cannot be willed by the weak and degeneration. This world affirming
perspective would want nothing to be different and love every moment of life because life is intrinsically valuable. Such a view embraces hardship as one’s highest hope! Rather than feeling compassion and disgust, which result in despair, one ought to see the emerging potential for courage. In “On the Vision and the Riddle,” Zarathustra states,

Courage is the best slayer: courage also slays pity. But pity is the deepest abyss: as deeply as man looks into life, so deeply does he also look into suffering.

But courage is the best slayer, courage that attacks: it slays even death itself; for it says: “Was that life? Well then! Once more!”

If one thinks pessimistic disgust to its depths, one reveals a basic disposition of Western metaphysics that is not necessary. By seeing the depths of life denial and nihilism, the opposite ideal emerges,

the most exuberant, lively and world-affirming human being who has learned to reconcile and come to terms with not only what was and is, but also wants to have it again as it was and is, for all eternity, insatiably shouting da capo [from the top (play it again)].

To love life this way is to have overcome one’s disgust with being human qua human. Life is no longer seen as a disgusting disease in need of justification. The value of life needs no exterior or transcendent meaning bestowed on it by God, Platonic forms, or any transcendent other-worldly hopes. To fully embrace being human, all-too-human, is to overcome our foundational disgust with everything this-worldly. Nietzsche is very clear, however, that confronting our disgust is not without its casualties. Confronting this disgust might lead to suicidal nihilism, or at least

10 All citations of Nietzsche texts cite the abbreviation of the book title, book number, and then chapter or section number. Where appropriate, page numbers are indicated ([Z] Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, trans. Clancy Martin (NY: Barns and Noble Classics, 2005), Z III 2.1).
impotence, in those who cannot justify their life without such other-worldly hopes.\textsuperscript{12} With this in mind, the affirmation of the most world affirming human being is not simply an affirmation of humanism, but rather, affirms a the ideal of a new kind of humanity; \textit{amor fati}.

\textsuperscript{12} Nietzsche's unpublished works make this seem like a more active violent process which I personally find difficult to accept. In the published work, however, he often talks about honest pessimists and nihilists simply not having the creative energy to continue and they thus disappear either via suicide or over a long period of culture change. In \textit{Zarathustra}, for example, he suggests that those who truly believed in a pessimistic world view might not create beyond themselves (not have children). If one agrees with the wisdom of Silenus, that the best thing of all for a human being is to never exist at all, then the best thing one could possibly do for one's children is to not bring them into existence at all (Z Prologue 5, Z I 2, Z I 20; cf. BT 3). This suggests Nietzsche is not offering a humanism that is satisfied with how humans are currently.
Chapter 2: Does Nietzsche have a “Nachlass”?

I regard your essay as “published and yet not published,”
as Aristotle said of his esoteric writings.
– Nietzsche to Wagner

There are many problems connected with Nietzsche’s Nachlass.
Why does it present such problems for Nietzsche scholarship?
– Linda Williams

In this dissertation I make use of the interlocking methodologies of contextualization and genetic analysis to offer an historically founded interpretation of eternal recurrence. My approach utilizes some texts in which Nietzsche's imprimatur is unquestioned, such as The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra I-III, and Beyond Good and Evil. However, I also make use of a variety of materials that are typically avoided or ignored. Several of these are important contextually, such

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as Nietzsche's annotations and library lending records, but were clearly never intended to bear his *imprimatur*. Other texts, such as drafts and page proofs, are invaluable to a genetic analysis that focuses on the development of a text before publication. However, the status of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on these documents is, at best, complicated.

My analysis of eternal recurrence makes use of material that violates a core tenet of Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship: the priority principle. Those holding the priority principle would reject my analysis because I make use of material that they consider *Nachlass* (and therefore invalid evidence). My arguments in this chapter are therefore the necessary conditions for my arguments in later chapters. This is because the elements of Nietzsche's work I rely on in later chapters must first be credited as usable and important to understand Nietzsche's thought if my argument is to go through. Therefore, to defend my conclusions about eternal recurrence in later chapters, I must first address why I think the priority principle is an unacceptable methodological principle. I then put forward my own genetic and contextual methodology that focuses on texts as materially unique objects within a complex set of relations.

In this chapter, I argue that based on a review of the literature and historical evidence, that the use of the methodological principle known as the priority principle in Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship is inconsistent and irreconcilable with historical evidence. The priority principle attempts to demarcate between the published works and the *Nachlass*. However, there are no agreed upon necessary and sufficient conditions of a particular textual object being considered “*Nachlass.*” This absence leads to implicit and often tacit value demarcation criteria that can be broadly grouped into four types of consideration: publication, authorization, publicness, and audience. Each of these criteria pick out a different set of texts as “*Nachlass.*” Not only do the demarcation criteria pick out non-coextensive sets but they pick out sets that are mutually
exclusive. Thus, despite the veneer of agreement, the most broadly accepted methodological approach in the Anglo-American tradition of Nietzsche scholarship is applied inconsistently. I argue, we must either offer necessary and sufficient conditions for a piece of text being Nachlass, or we ought to abandon such abstract criteria altogether and embrace a contextual and historical approach. I then argue that the first option is impossible given historical evidence. I end this chapter by explicating several recent German approaches to the Nachlass, offer a critique of those approaches, then suggest one possible new path forward. This new path emphasizes the material particularity and historically complex nature of individual textual objects regardless of whether they are published or not. This is the methodology I use in the following chapters, particularly chapter 5, to support my analysis of eternal recurrence.

There is a tendency for philosophers to deal with texts as abstract objects and treat the individual material objects that contain the print as participating in an abstraction "the text." Thus, we talk about Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy in abstract rather than discussing, for example, the individual material and historically unique objects that make up the various editions. I argue that we must understand texts in their material and historical particularity. Our focus, then, should not be on whether an abstract object "the text", which covers a heterogeneous set of individual material objects, is published or unpublished. Rather we should focus on Nietzsche's Imprimatur on the material objects themselves.

There are many different projects which can still be valuable under my methodological model. That is because this method, unlike the priority principle, is meta-reflective regarding methodology choice. Projects, motivated by values different from my own, demand different methodological approaches and this is to be expected. For example, one might write a history of sociology and in that discuss The Will to Power as a central text. Projects such as this might
understandably utilize texts differently than I do here. However, such methodological choice ought only to be allowed standing if, and only if, the values that motivate those projects are not interested in the philosophy to which Nietzsche publicly attached his *Imprimatur*.

If a scholarly project is interested in the final form of Nietzsche’s philosophy then it should start with the individual material text to which Nietzsche publicly attached his *Imprimatur* and not neglect the complex historical and contextual evidence surrounding the status of Nietzsche’s *Imprimatur* on those material objects.

1. Introduction: What is a Method?

Over the years there has been an engaging and illuminating scholarly discourse on Nietzsche’s methodology. Yet, on a deeper level, Nietzsche scholarship has struggled to arrive at any consensus regarding even very basic questions about how to approach Nietzsche’s corpus itself. There has been an extremely narrow and heated scholarly debate about the demarcation between published and *Nachlass* works and the place of each in scholarship. This has led to a

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methodological principle, the priority principle, which often takes on overtones of moral responsibility. Before jumping into this debate, it is important to summarize and clarify some general points of consensus regarding method and the study of methodology more generally.

A method is a set of criteria, rules, procedures, techniques, principles, or practices which are applied to some domain. Methods can be applied to domains of inquiry such as the natural sciences or the human sciences. Individual methodologies function under paradigms of intelligibility. Paradigms are constructive frameworks within which the applications of methodologies are couched. Paradigms function to give the large-scale context for the application of individual methods. Paradigms thus allow for, and make intelligible, the idea of progress since they articulate what might count as an intelligible goal or project. Metaphorically, the paradigm sets up the game (chess, hockey, peekaboo, logic), and the methods are the rules for playing such a game.

Paradigms constrain what is an intelligible project and what evidence is intelligible within that project. Those projects partially determine what method can be applied. What counts as intelligible evidence constrains the set of appropriate tools. A method can be seen as composed of a set of evidence and applicable tools. A method, through evidence and tools, constrains which conclusions/goals are possible. Of course, different goals or conclusions are possible using the same method. It is nevertheless clear that some conclusions are not possible given certain methods.

Methods can be differentiated by differences in the types of accepted evidence (e.g. texts, reports, natural objects etc.) and the sorts of tools used to assess (e.g. argumentation, surveys,  

16 “Method” also functions in vast numbers of applied domains not usually associated with inquiry. For example: acting or mining.
experiments etc.). A method is then the combination of a set of, or criteria of, evidence and the set of, or application of, tools of analysis. Certainly, different inquiries use different tools but more central is the determination of what is intelligible as evidence. Ignoring possible evidence simply because it does not conform to one’s tools of analysis is generally seen as objectionable.17 The problem then becomes how to take account of evidence that falls outside one’s technical equipmental framework.

The determination of what is intelligible as, or could count as, evidence is a central determination of a project within philosophy. Even before method begins to dictate the procedures of analysis and interpretation, we already see how different sets of evidence, determined by a project, would produce different pictures of the author. Thus, one's projects, by determining which material can count as possible sources of evidence, influence one's conclusions and their justification.18 Of course, how this evidence is to be handled (by use of tools) also varies widely. Nevertheless, by determining which objects are appropriate to investigate we determine which sets of objects are intelligible as evidence. Given a set of evidence, some tools of analysis are appropriate, and some are not.

17 It is of course possible for one to only have a single or a limited number of tools of analysis. This constrains what evidence shows up as possible evidence. This is typically seen as a weaker way of determining what might count as evidence; to simply ignore everything that cannot be analyzed with a single tool (e.g. scientism or radical behaviorism). Nevertheless, a form of interdependence certainly exists. A variant of this methodological problem, called the law of the instrument, is captured by Abraham Maslow in his work The Psychology of Science, “I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail” (Abraham H. Maslow, The Psychology of Science (NY: Harper & Row, 1966), 15).

18 It is, of course, possible for different methods to agree upon many things (e.g. the date of Nietzsche’s death). It also seems possible in principle that two different methodologies might come to similar conclusions using different texts (drafts of published work vs published) or different conclusions using the same text. Nevertheless, in general, when given to different sets of texts as possible evidence, the differences in the text themselves will influence the justifications of the conclusions.
Imagine, if you will, before you are a set of Nietzsche’s book receipts and the circulation records from a library Nietzsche used. Given this evidence, some tools are appropriate, and some are not. It would be inappropriate to attempt to translate such receipts and records into symbolic logic to determine whether Nietzsche’s ‘argument’ in this set of evidence was deductively valid. Since the evidence contains no argument, attempting to translate it into symbolic logic is inappropriate. These tools of analysis would be inappropriate to the type of evidence under investigation.

To reiterate, the paradigm under which one is working influences and governs which projects can show up as intelligible. One’s project (and motivating questions) determines what is to count as admissible evidence. This, in turn, constrains which tools of analysis are appropriate to implement. The individual tools of analysis employed, then, constrain one’s interpretation and one’s possible conclusions.

2. A Dangerous Supplement: The Priority Principle and the Demarcation Problem

My argument applies some insight from the history of philosophy of science and other areas of philosophy to the priority principle in Nietzsche scholarship. A methodological analogy can be drawn between the history of philosophy of science and the history of Nietzsche scholarship. Philosophers of science at one point held that we could clearly and transparently demarcate between science and pseudoscience in a similar fashion to how Nietzsche scholars today suggest we can clearly demarcate the published work from the Nachlass. In both cases, history proves to be more complex than expected.
The influential philosopher of science Karl Popper believed there are clear cases of good science and cases of pseudoscience and that we ought to have demarcation criteria to distinguish the two. After the work of Paul Feyerabend, it became clear that any single demarcation criteria would cut out some historical cases of what Popper would unambiguously call good science. As Feyerabend states,

Given any rule, or any general statement about the sciences, there always exist developments which are praised by those who support the rule but which show that the rule does more damage than good.  

Feyerabend’s ‘epistemic anarchism’ is much more conservative than its labeling implies. It is simply the thesis that no single abstract, universal, and invariantly applied demarcation criteria can clearly and distinctly demarcate all cases of historically good science from pseudoscience. No universal application of a single method is supported by the historical research. This does not mean we are reduced to relativism but simply that the modest claim that “all methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have their limits.” Similar to the demarcation problem in philosophy of science, the priority principle assumes a strict demarcation between two sets that, when viewed historically, are not easily distinguished. Different demarcation criteria are often proposed based upon tacit value laden assumptions that underlie scholarly projects. These different demarcation criteria are applied with such variance that even scholars that agree about the priority principle will populate the sets 'published' and 'Nachlass' with wildly different texts.

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20 Feyerabend, Against Method, 1, 7.
21 Feyerabend, Against Method, 16.
In Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship a central and crucial point of contention is which texts are admissible as evidence. Addressing this in the preface of every new book on Nietzsche has become an unstated requirement in Nietzsche scholarship. Paul Daniels captures this tendency in his own preface to a work on Nietzsche: “A preface on a book about Nietzsche’s philosophy would not be complete without outlining its regard for the Nachlass.” A summary of positions taken historically in various interpretive traditions has been provided in the end notes. However,

23 Some scholars believe that the best methodology is logical and conceptual analysis of his published works (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25; Harold Alderman, “Nietzsche’s Nachlass: A Reply to Henry Walter Brann,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1973): 551-552). This view is often conjoined with “the priority principle” which suggests we should prioritize the published works and only supplement with the Nachlass (Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 18; Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients: An Analysis of Becoming, Perspectivism, and the Principle of Non-contradiction* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 17; Paul Kirkland, *Nietzsche’s Noble Aim: Affirming Life, Contesting Modernity* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 12). Others hold we should explicitly privilege the works Nietzsche did not publish because Nietzsche held back his “true” insights from publication (Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II: *Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 10, 15; *Nietzsche*, vol. III: *The Will to Power as Knowledge* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 11-13; cf. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, *Metaphysics without Truth: On the Importance of Consistency within Nietzsche’s Philosophy* (Munich: Herber Utz Verlag, 1999), 13). Heidegger’s view here is much too complex to explicate in detail but the reasons he gives are often straw manned by commentators. However, he is prone to making claims that are too strong. For example, his claims that all of Nietzsche’s letters are meditations and should therefore “Never be read as though they were someone’s diary entries” (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II, 10). A brief glance at his letters, including plans for trips and paid bills etc.... prove this to be too strong. Nietzsche does often theorize philosophically in his letters, and Heidegger is correct about this. Klossowski simply enacts this stating that all quotes are from unpublished work (Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, xiv-xx, 262). Wolfgang Müller-Lauter expresses his general agreement with Heidegger that his real philosophy is contained in his Nachlass (Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, trans. David J. Parent (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 125, 128). In the mid-fifties this debate blossomed in Germany with the three-volume publication of Nietzsche *Werke* by Karl Schlechta who rejects the Nachlass as simply a “Machwerk” of its editors (cf. also Karl Schlechta, *Der Fall Nietzsche: Aufsätze und Vorträge* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959). This triggered a historically important discourse that included Karl Löwith, Erich F. Podach, Alfred Baeumler and others in the German tradition of interpretation. Some in the French tradition...
even after more than a hundred years of commentary, what set of texts constitutes the “proper” Nietzsche canon is still very much an open question. The methodological choice here is very important philosophically because one can extract very different philosophies depending on which texts are seen as valid.

One of the methodologies that has been firmly established since at least Walter Kaufmann is a position Bernard Reginster later coined “the priority principle.” This view is currently the dominant methodology of Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship and has come under very little scrutiny. This methodology holds:

1. There is a sharp and transparent demarcation between the published and Nachlass work.
2. The published works should be prioritized over the Nachlass as evidence.
   2a. The Nachlass is never admissible as valid evidence.
3. The Nachlass, if used at all, only functions as a “supplement” for the complete evidence found in the published work.

1, 2, and 3 are nearly universal among commentators who endorse the priority principle while 2a is an extreme position often advanced and applied, if not completely consistently. This view has been put forward in varying degrees by a very broad range of interpreters from renowned historical philologists such as Mazzino Montinari, who co-edited the critical edition of Nietzsche’s Werke (KGW), to Anglo-American interpreters such as Maudemarie Clark, who is sometimes referred to as a ‘purist’ regarding the priority principle.

I argue that despite the veneer of agreement, the demarcation criteria, and therefore the set of texts comprising the “Nachlass”, change from commentator to commentator. Further, no

24 Reginster and Schacht push back on the priority principle’s unqualified application using a ‘Nietzsche as anomaly’ argument (Reginster, The Affirmation of Life, 18; cf. Richard Schacht, Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflection Timely and Untimely (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 119). This argument holds that while the priority principle is a good general principle it should not apply to Nietzsche’s work. The most detailed scrutiny in the Anglo-American tradition is presented in Philip Pothen's research (Philip Pothen, Nietzsche and the Fate of Art (New York: Ashgate, 2002), 6).

necessary and sufficient conditions have been agreed upon that can clearly demarcate all historical cases.

The problem is not simply that we need better and more consistently applied demarcation criteria. The historical details demonstrate the published/Nachlass demarcation is itself a false dichotomy and it should be abandoned in any universal sense. Rather, Anglo-American scholars would benefit from approaching each text historically, contextually, and genetically as German scholarship has begun to do.

2.1 The Debate in Broad Strokes

The debate about the status and use of Nietzsche’s Nachlass has historical importance for Nietzsche scholarship because of the use and abuse of Nietzsche’s work. The creation and publication by Nietzsche’s sister of Der Wille zur Macht (The Will to Power), now usually considered a falsified text, had a tremendous effect on Nietzsche scholarship.26 Under Elisabeth’s editorship Nietzsche was painted as anti-Semitic whose work supported Nazi ideology. This has caused a focused debate about the proper use of Nietzsche’s Nachlass.

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As Bernd Magnus put it, this debate separates scholars into two philological methods; lumpers who find the use of the Nachlass unproblematic and splitters who tend to demarcate sharply between published and Nachlass texts. This of course is an oversimplification. For example, Alan Schrift points out, Heidegger might be more accurately considered an “Inverse splitter” since he separates sharply between published and unpublished to then prioritize the unpublished. Nevertheless, Magnus’s demarcation, however oversimplified, has framed this debate. Lumpers come from many different traditions and include such commentators as Heidegger, Klossowski, Jaspers, Deleuze, Derrida, Müller-Lauter, Danto and Schacht. Paradigm cases of splitters include Hollingdale, Alderman, Montinari, Higgins, Magnus, Williams, Clark and Strong. Many in the currently dominant splitters camp rely upon “the priority principle” either explicitly or implicitly. There are also those such as Nehamas and Kaufmann who are usually treated as special cases. Magnus suggests lumpers tend to view eternal recurrence and the will to power as metaphysical or ontological theories while splitters tend to suggest these are simply psychological or ethical theses. This is supportive evidence for my previous claims that the choice and exclusion of textual objects ends up influencing interpretations.

Given this, one might expect that the set of objects determined as “Nachlass” and “Published” would be invariant. Rather than agreed upon necessary and sufficient conditions of

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28 (Alan Schrift, Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (New York: Routledge, 1990), 16). Magnus’ classification of Schacht as a lumper seems to depend on which work of Schacht’s one reads. In his 1983 work he seems to be a lumper (at least in practice) but became much more careful by 1995. In Making Sense of Nietzsche he merely admits the Nachlass may be useful if similar claims are made in the published works (Schacht, Making Sense of Nietzsche, 204n3).
29 Kaufmann claims to be a splitter but relies heavily on the Nachlass and Nehamas tends towards the splitters but thinks we should take each text case by case.
some text falling within the set “Nachlass”, scholars have typically relied on their intuitive value laden and pre-theoretical assumptions about why this demarcation is important. In what follows, I distinguish the four most common of these, often-tacit, criteria: publication, authorization, publicness, audience. I argue that these four criteria cannot offer universally applicable demarcation criteria. This is because their invariant and universal application fails to capture the historical complexity of the sets they endeavor to demarcate.

3. What does the “Nachlass” Contain?

There exist no agreed upon necessary and sufficient conditions for an individual textual object (element) to be contained in the set designated “Nachlass.” This means scholars disagree about which texts are part of the “Nachlass.”

A quick glance at what various commentators suggest is included in the Nachlass exemplifies this quite clearly. Historically speaking, Nietzsche’s Nachlass has been assigned a heterogeneous and ever changing list of contents including: “personal and professional correspondences,”31 “unpublished writings,”32 “unpublished papers,”33 “unpublished notations,”34

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30 Müller-Lauter accuses Alfred Baeumler of something like this but does not explicate any further (Müller-Lauter, Nietzsche, 2).
“unpublished notes,”

texts and notes [...] left unpublished,”

“lectures,”

“posthumously

published writings” or

“writings published posthumously,”

“posthumous writings,”

“posthumously published materials,”

“posthumously published notebooks,”

“notebooks,”

“manuscripts,”

“manuscript remains,”

“suppressed manuscripts,”

“fragments and jottings,”

and even, “handwritten manuscripts, published and unpublished.”


43 Rüdiger Bittner, “Editor’s Introduction,” in Writings from the Late Notebooks, trans. Kate Sturge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xii.


Different definitions of the *Nachlass* mean that the set of texts contained in the *Nachlass* changes depending on which scholar one is reading. For example, Nietzsche’s “unpublished writings” would include his unpublished juvenilia, lectures and letters while Nietzsche’s “notebooks” (Notizbücher) would not. Nietzsche’s “notebooks” or “notepads” (Notizbücher) in a technical sense would also exclude much of his unpublished work that was pulled from exercise books (Hefte), and loose-leaf portfolio pages (Mappen loser Blätter) left after Nietzsche’s collapse. Further, Nietzsche’s “unpublished notations”, or “fragments and jottings” would extend over notations he made in books he owned as well as note cards he often wrote on, while “unpublished essays” would not. Specific attention to the “notebooks” or “unpublished essays” would also exclude those books that were mostly complete but unpublished after Nietzsche’s collapse. Clearly there are substantial and unacknowledged disagreements about what the “Nachlass” contains. Scholars also disagree on a more descriptive level of the contents of the *Nachlass*, in that some include all of Nietzsche’s literary estate while others do not.

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48. Nietzsche’s notebooks do contain drafts of letters as well as quotes from his juvenilia and lectures. Nonetheless, it is clear that Nietzsche's “notebooks” are not equivalent to Nietzsche’s “unpublished writings.”

Two generally accepted indexes of the textual objects (elements) making up the set of the “Nachlass” are put forward by Williams and Schrift. Linda Williams has suggested a fairly small and restrictive inventory of the Nachlass. She writes:

The Nachlass can be divided roughly into three different kinds of works. The first kind comprises the works Nietzsche was editing right before his collapse. These works are Ecce Homo, Nietzsche Contra Wagner, and The Antichrist [...]. The second kind are Nietzsche’s early, finished pieces that were never published, the so-called Schriften – primarily his lectures and writings while he was employed at Basel […]. The third kind of work consists of Nietzsche's notes [from his notebooks].

Schrift suggests a similar but much larger index of Nietzsche’s Nachlass by including his “literary remains” albeit with some caveats.

Technically speaking, Nietzsche’s Nachlass or literary remains is comprised of all of his work, excluding his letters that remained unpublished when his mental collapse ended his productive life in January 1889. This would include: (1) texts that he had prepared for publication but which he was unable to see through to publication, namely The Anti-Christ (Der Antichrist), Nietzsche Contra Wagner, Dithyrambs of Dionysos (Dionysos-Dithyramben), and Ecce Homo; (2) his early, unpublished essays and lectures, many of which could be considered complete, albeit never published, works; and (3) his notes, as well as drafts and variants of his published works.

Even these very precise indexes are not coextensive concerning Nietzsche’s Dithyrambs of Dionysus or the technical classification of the Schriften. More importantly, Schrift’s reference to Nietzsche’s literary remains, excluding his letters, drastically increases the contents of the Nachlass. It is worth noting that Nietzsche’s estate and literary remains, stored in the Goethe and Schiller Archive in Weimar Germany, are truly stunning in both scope and breadth of contents.

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50 Williams, Nietzsche’s Mirror, 63.
51 Schrift, “Nietzsche’s Nachlass,” 405.
Magnus writes: “The truly mind-boggling thing for me is the sheer enormity of the *Nachlass* compared to the pages Nietzsche sent to the publisher.”

Nietzsche’s estate, including his literary estate, which was left after his collapse and later death, is truly immense. The material contained in the *Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv* totals 28,917 pages in 967 archival units and that does not even include the non-text/paper items. The archivist Gerhard Schmid estimated in the 1990’s that there were 40,000 pages not including blank pages since which time more material has been added. Much of this material does not appear in any scholarly critical edition categorized as “Nachlass.”

A list of only a small portion of this material shows just how diverse Nietzsche’s archival estate is: unpublished essays, printers’ manuscripts and correction pages of his own work, notebooks, map sketches of Europe, South America, the Swedish coast and others, a name badge with the inscription “Friedrich”, a single page from an unknown book with Nietzsche’s notations, copies of records in the lunatic asylum, investment information, notices of sale, notices of award, transcribed weather reports, exemption certificates, army discharge papers, newspaper clippings about Nietzsche’s dismissal, an invitation to donate to Ritschl’s funeral monument, loan receipts from libraries, a participant card for the XXV assembly of German philologists in Halle with agenda and menu, tickets and programs for concerts, newspaper clippings he sent to friends, an invoice for a piano, hotel brochures and guides for churches, room cards or IDs for unknown hotels, a doctor’s prescription to eat oranges, five photos of paintings with inscriptions and notations, sheet music, notes on the back of business cards, a meal plan and other household notes written by Nietzsche, handwritten recipes, guest book entries with Nietzsche’s signature,

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52 Magnus, “How the True Text Finally Became a Fable,” 10.
Nietzsche’s notes from early coursework, travel notes and routes, snippets of conversations real or imagined, complete and incomplete requests for subscriptions to magazines written by Nietzsche’s hand, a card with the inscription “Instructor Nietzsche” by Nietzsche’s own hand, note cards with book and magazine titles and Greek quotations, notices of Nietzsche’s public lectures, an envelope containing hair (possibly Nietzsche’s) with the inscription by Elisabeth “All I have left of my happiness in life”, unpublished poems in Nietzsche’s hand written on the back of various materials, and, perhaps the oddest, a handwritten list of deceased former gatekeepers at his school in Pforta. The above list only scratches the surface of Nietzsche's estate.

Nietzsche’s estate includes a truly diverse, and somewhat baffling, amount of material, much of which contains notes and remarks by Nietzsche’s own hand. Some of this material was made public by Nietzsche in one form or another such as the announcements for Nietzsche’s public lectures. Much of this material has neither been included in Nietzsche’s “Nachlass” nor available in any scholarly editions.

Greg Whitlock’s account is helpful in seeing why there is such a disagreement regarding the distinction between Nietzsche’s estate and the use of the term “Nachlass.” Scholarly use of the term “Nachlass” is inconsistent with a more widespread use of the German term. He also argues that in scholarly practice Nietzsche’s ‘literary estate’ and ‘Nachlass’ are not coextensive.

A literary figure’s various unpublished works, correspondences, notes, and even loose sheets of paper with penned words constitute that author’s literary estate, or Nachlaß. Nietzsche’s particular Nachlaß comprises the extant juvenilia, correspondence, published works (from Birth of Tragedy to Twilight of the Idols), finished manuscripts intended for publication (including “Antichrist,” “Ecce Homo,” and “Dionysian Dithyrambs”), and a set of 106 notebooks containing partial essays, aphoristic notes, jottings and even diagrams and other sorts of material. Scholars refer more specifically to these 106 notebooks, from 1870 to 1888, as the Nachlaß.54

54 Greg Whitlock, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Montinari, Reading Nietzsche, xvii.
Whitlock’s account is very helpful, but nonetheless, like Schrift and Williams, he fails to explicitly draw an important distinction.

What scholars normally refer to, in a literal sense, is not the material notebooks themselves, the textual artifacts stored in the archives, but their transcription in the critical scholarly editions of Nietzsche’s complete works (KGW or the smaller KSA). Perhaps their intended object is the notebooks, but, as will be shown in detail later, the scholarly critical editions are not identical to the notebooks.  

Magnus argues that the “Nachlass,” as transcribed in the KGW critical edition, is not equivalent to Nietzsche’s literary estate. Magnus details the construction of the late Nachlass (1885–1888) and is careful to disambiguate the Nachlass in the KGW from Nietzsche’s “literary estate.” The Nachlass is a selection of material by editors from Nietzsche’s larger literary estate. Further, his description of the “Nachlass” in the critical editions is radically historical. Magnus writes, “The Colli-Montinari editions [KGW] supersede, expand and correct all prior Nietzsche editions. The Nachlass, for example is expanded from roughly 3,500 pages […] to more than 5,000 pages.”

55 Magnus writes, “there is perhaps as much as 25 % more material – excluding Nietzsche letters, letters to him and personal effects – than exists in the very best edition of Nietzsche’s works, the monumental Colli-Montinari edition” (Magnus, “How the True Text Finally Became a Fable,” 14).

56 “It might be useful at this point to recall that Nietzsche’s literary estate from roughly 1885 to January 1889 (The Will to Power period) was culled by Colli and Montinari from twenty-two handwritten sources which consists of fifteen very large exercise books, three large notebooks, and four substantial looseleaf portfolios. These add up to thousands of pages and items, including material taken up in previous critical editions as well as materials not included. Over the years some commentators have taken inventory from accounts of the material from which different critical editions have been culled an inventory with consists of more than twenty-five distinguishable categories” (Bernd Magnus, Stanley Stewart, and Jean-Pierre Mileur, Nietzsche’s Case: Philosophy as/and Literature (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38).
It should be noted here that the set of textual objects contained in the set “Nachlass” is not a fixed object for it has expanded historically in the critical editions.

To reiterate my argument, even Anglo-American scholars who explicitly try to answer the question of what the Nachlass contains articulate different inventories. Further, the “Nachlass” in the critical editions is not equivalent to Nietzsche's literary estate. In addition, the “Nachlass” to which scholars usually refer in critical editions historically has contained radically different sets of textual objects (elements). From this we can draw the conclusion that the set of textual objects (elements) comprising the set “unpublished” is larger than, and not identical to, the set of textual objects (elements) contained in the set “Nachlass.”

4. Implicit Demarcation Criterion

In general, the methodology debate is framed in terms of the published versus the Nachlass. Much of this debate has ignored the implicit values motivating the priority principle. When scholars in this debate find something of value for their project but is not itself unambiguously published, they then clarify or redefine why it should be considered “published” in some sense and thus of equal or comparable value to the published work. These demarcation criteria differ leading the debate into a quagmire of unarticulated, pre-theoretical value assumptions. I have grouped the most common of these, sometimes-tacit, demarcation criteria into four broad categories: publication, authorization, publicness, and audience. In what follows I quote a single scholar advocating such positions and footnote this criteria in other secondary sources.

57 Magnus, Nietzsche’s Case, 37-38.
4.1 Publication

The first category of publication is without doubt the most discussed. Official publication is the most obvious demarcation criteria. If something is not published, then it is Nachlass and thus should not be prioritized. Hollingdale puts this point in a very strong statement: “The basic consideration to be kept in mind all the time is that anything in the Nachlass which cannot be paralleled in the published work is not valid.”58 This exaggerated, but fairly generic, version of the priority principle can be seen in Breazeale, Meyer, Reginster, Kirkland, Pothen, and others.59

4.2 Authorization

The second, and most widely made, modification to the first criterion concerns the late works of 1888. Nietzsche was editing and in the process of publishing EH, NCW, A and DD when he collapsed. As discussed previously, Williams, Schrift and Whitlock include some of these works in the Nachlass.60 The immense value of these works has caused many commentators to include them in the “published” canon because they are in some sense finished and authorized for publication. A clear example of this can be found in Roger Hollinrake’s Nietzsche, Wagner, and the Philosophy of Pessimism. He writes: “The authentic canon consists of the books Nietzsche prepared for publication including the unpublished manuscripts discovered at the time of his

58 Hollingdale, Nietzsche, 223.
60 Williams, Nietzsche’s Mirror, 63; Schrift, “Nietzsche’s Nachlass,” 405.
collapse […] rather than the unpublished Nachlaß.”⁶¹ Despite the fact that these works are part of the Nachlass they are typically given equal weight to Nietzsche’s published work. This view can be seen in works by Williams, Kaufmann, Hollingdale, Schacht, Kirkland and Clark.⁶²

This leads some scholars, including Daniels, Evans, Magnus, Golomb, and Williams, to simply equate the authorized and published work.⁶³ This equation, or sliding, between “published” and “authorized” as categorically distinct from “Nachlass” can easily go unnoticed. Consider the quote below, which may require more than one reading to accurately parse, in which Williams comments on a quote by Schacht. First, Schacht explicitly distinguishes between what Nietzsche “actually published” and Nachlass. Second, Williams then equates what Nietzsche “actually published” with works authorized for publication. Finally, she assimilates unpublished authorized work under the category of published and distinguishes it from the Nachlass.⁶⁴

As Richard Schacht states, “interpretive priority should be given to what [Nietzsche] actually published over the Nachlass.” Under this sensible position, positions ascribed to Nietzsche ought to have textual support from the works Nietzsche had authorized for

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⁶² Kaufmann began this tradition by suggesting that the late works hold their own and any attempt to discredit them was “altogether inappropriate” (Kaufmann, Nietzsche, 448-449; cf. Williams, Nietzsche’s Mirror, 63; Williams, “Will to Power,” 457; Hollingdale, Nietzsche, ix; Schacht, Making Sense of Nietzsche, 117; Kirkland, Nietzsche’s Noble Aim, 12; Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, 25).
⁶⁴ While Williams is not radically misrepresenting Schacht here, Schacht’s view regarding what Nietzsche “readied for publication” is subtler than a simple equivalence (Schacht, Making Sense of Nietzsche, 117).
publication. Additional support could be garnered from the *Nachlass* and this source should be duly noted as more questionable than the published sources.\(^{65}\)

4.3 Public Presentation or “Publicness”

One way scholars think about the distinction between published and *Nachlass* is Nietzsche’s attempt to make something public. Richard Schacht summarizes this concern well: “There are certain scholarly interest and related standards that understandably accord decisive importance to publication or other evidence of an author’s preparedness to say something publicly.”\(^{66}\) There is a strong scholarly tendency to privilege the published or authorized works *because* they are made for the public. This can be seen explicitly stated in the works of Smith, Johnson, and Hollingdale.\(^{67}\)

One consequence of the publicness criteria is that private publications become deprioritized.\(^{68}\) The publicness criteria can be seen in the often cited “proof”, given by Montinari, that Nietzsche abandoned *The Will to Power* because he abandoned “going public” with the project.\(^{69}\) Because of the implicit publicness criteria, this has been considered by many scholars to

\(^{65}\) Williams, “Will to Power,” 456.


\(^{68}\) These are generally thought to include SGT, Z IV and possibly NCW. Gary Shapiro comments on Z IV: “In Nietzsche’s letters that speak of Part IV, his correspondents are enjoined to the strictest secrecy concerning its existence. To von Gersdorff he says that the words publicity and the public (Öffentlichkeit and Publikum) sound to him ‘in relation to my whole Zarathustra, approximately like ‘whorehouse’ and ‘public girl’” (Gary Shapiro, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 55). Even though these texts were published, it is also clear that they may not have been meant for public consumption. This suggests, on the publicness criteria, that they should not be prioritized as “published” in the same way as other public texts.

\(^{69}\) Montinari, *Reading Nietzsche*, 93.
be the last nail in the coffin of the authority of *The Will to Power*. Thus, the publicness criterion has been used to both include and exclude texts from the *Nachlass*.

4.4 Audience

The last criterion relates to texts that were not published privately or publicly. Nevertheless, these texts clearly were supposed to have an audience. Schacht characterizes Nietzsche’s letters differently than the *Nachlass* because they were supposed to be read by someone other than Nietzsche. That is, they have an intended audience. Schacht writes:

> The letters were at least intended to be read by those to whom they were sent; but the *Nachlaß* is a different story – and therein lies our problem. What are we to make of this *Nachlaß*, in relation to the rest of what he wrote – and in particular, in relation to what he published or had readied for publication?\(^\text{70}\)

We could add to the letters a laundry list of texts which had an intended audience but were not public in the sense outlined in the above section. For example, lectures given to classes as small as two students,\(^\text{71}\) printing proofs only intended to be read by editors and publishers but changed or discarded before publication, statements to his lawyers,\(^\text{72}\) or signed authorizations for printing or notations in signed copies of books he gave a way. A good example of this might be his inscribed copy of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that he gave to Carl von Gersdorff, which read: “To my Friend Gersdorff with Heartfelt Greetings – A ‘forbidden’ book! Beware! It Bites!”\(^\text{73}\) Notes and essays

\(^\text{72}\) Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 401.
that were dictated but never published are also a good example. "Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense", for example, was dictated to his school friend Gersdorff in June 1873. We might also add a few possible documents from his time teaching such as comments on student’s papers or letters of recommendation. In this sense, having an audience allows some materials to be prioritized over the *Nachlass* that had no audience whatsoever.

5. On the Demarcation Problem

While the above four criteria are very useful and intuitively plausible, I claim that they cannot function as universal demarcation criteria between published and *Nachlass* text. The trouble comes when we demand that all material between extremes fall neatly into either published or *Nachlass*. Using these criteria universally to demarcate between the published and *Nachlass* is problematized by scholarly inconsistency discussed above. Further, even if they could put forward necessary and sufficient conditions of something being published or *Nachlass* the historical evidence suggests such a strict demarcation would be impossible. These criteria encounter extremely difficult, if not impossible, challenges when applied in a universal and invariant manner as demanded by the priority principle. Below I give several examples of historical anomalies that complicate these implicitly assumed demarcation criteria.

5.1 Publication

Despite the strong intuition that publication is equivalent to authorization, history complicates and escapes even this obvious priority criterion. The publication industry in 19th century Germany was different than we might imagine it today. The industry was divided into
different practices, such as printing, binding, publishing, and advertising. These practices were
strictly defined and rigidly enforced. Leipzig was home to the Börsenverein der Deutschen
Buchhändler and the hub of the national book business. Books under this heavily regulated system
were nationally advertised in an idiosyncratic way. William Schaberg writes:

Leipzig was so prominent and successful in the business of books that it supported a
newspaper, the Exchange Paper for German Bookdealers (Börsenblatt für den Deutschen
Buchhandel), which listed all the books, pamphlets, sheet music, and maps that were
currently available. It was in this paper that announcements of future publications and
advertisements for Nietzsche’s works first appeared.  

In 1878, Nietzsche was justifiably nervous about the publication of Human, All-Too-Human
because it was a very strong and public break with Wagner. Nietzsche was very clear with his
publisher that he refused to advertise Human, All-Too-Human and Schmeitzner wrote Nietzsche
March 16, 1878 that he would wait on an advertisement. Despite this, Schmeitzner went ahead
and published two advertisements. The first advertisement for Human, All-Too-Human appeared
in the Exchange Papers for German Booksellers. When Nietzsche discovered this, he sent a letter
on April 19, 1878 chiding his publisher for going against his wishes. He writes: “But what did I
see in the Bookdealers Exchange Paper! Oh, My Publisher!”

In an even more egregious departure from Nietzsche’s wishes, Schmeitzner published a
full three-page advertisement for Human, All-Too-Human in the Bayreuther Blätter (for which he
was also the publisher). Several full sections of Human, All-Too-Human were published without

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74 Schaberg, The Nietzsche Canon, 3.
75 Nr. 1046, KGB II 6/2.816.
Buchhandel 87 (1878), 1493; cf. Hauke Reich, Rezensionen und Reaktionen zu Nietzsches Werken:
1872-1889 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 536.
77 Nietzsche to Ernst Schmeitzner, April 19, 1878, Nr. 713, KSB 5.322, trans. Schaberg, The
Nietzsche Canon, 61, 240n27 [Schaberg cites this incorrectly as the KGB].
Nietzsche’s authorization including: the table of contents, Sections 219, 231, 289, and 320.78 Perhaps to assuage Nietzsche’s irritation, on May 9 Schmeitzner sent a letter to Nietzsche claiming he had no more copies in his office as a result of the advertisement in the *Bayreuther Blätter*.79

Schmeitzner knew that Wagner didn’t like the book and hoped the advertisement would cause a fight which would sell more books.80 The advertisement so upset Wagner that he published a harsh critique of *Human, All-Too-Human* in the September edition of the *Bayreuther Blätter* entitled “The Public and Popularity” (*Publikum und Popularität*). He never refers to Nietzsche’s book directly but ridicules a fictitious work “The Human and Inhuman” (*Menschliches und Unmenschliches*), clearly aimed at Nietzsche. The dispute became so heated, Schmeitzner sent a letter to Nietzsche May 30 saying: “I have in truth become a tiny grain that has landed between the two millstones of Wagner and your book. But I will not let myself be crushed.”81 On August 25, Nietzsche sent a postcard, of which only a fragment still exists, to Schmeitzner about a conflict within the *Bayreuther Blätter*. Later, in a letter to Schmeitzner on September 3, 1878, Nietzsche reports reading Wagner’s bitter and vindictive polemic against him.82

In addition to publishing the advertisement without Nietzsche’s authorization, Schmeitzner also changed Nietzsche’s text before it was published. It is telling that not even the table of contents included in the advertisement is identical to the first edition. Despite the third aphorism being...

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78 Ernst Schmeitzner, “Soeben erschienen! Eine neues Werk von Friedrich Nietzsche,” *Bayreuther Blätter: Monatschrift des Bayreuther Patronatvereines* 1 (1878) [the advertisement was loose and without page numbers; it can be found on pages 8-10 of the scans from University of Michigan: https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015023339768].
79 Nr. 1065, KGB II 6/2.850.
81 Nr. 1078, KGB II 6/2.876.
82 Nietzsche to Ernst Schmeitzner, August 25, 1878, Nr. 745, KSB 5.347; September 3, 1878, Nr. 751, KSB 5.350.
identical to the first edition, all other sections in the advertisement are not identical. While most of Schmeitzner’s changes were minor or stylistic, changes to the content of the second aphorism were quite dramatic.\textsuperscript{83} It is clear Nietzsche did not authorize the publication of these aphorisms either at this time or in this form.

Here we have a clear example of why something being published does not automatically mean that the text was authorized by Nietzsche or intended for public consumption in that form. History demonstrates that publication, as a criterion for demarcation, fails to capture authorization despite its intuitive plausibility.

Beyond Nietzsche’s publication history, we also find that scholars regularly depart from strict adherence to publication as the sole priority criterion in their commentary. For example, even Maudemarie Clark, who strictly prescribes to the priority principle, prioritizes the unpublished work "Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense", despite it being Nachlass because it is a polished essay rather than a note.\textsuperscript{84}

She goes on to explicate a few other reasons for this deviation. She claims it should be prioritized because Nietzsche alludes to it with approval in the published work; because it is an important bridge between The Birth of Tragedy and Human, All-Too-Human, because it is lengthy and finally because it has become a standard text in the canon of Nietzsche interpretation. Others,

\textsuperscript{83} The first aphorism is abbreviated considerably at the end and the third aphorism’s title is not identical with the first edition. The second aphorism not only has punctuation changed but is also abbreviated. This abbreviation drastically changes the meaning of the genius from praise of originality to an accusation of a crippling defect or mutation as the origin of genius.

\textsuperscript{84} Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, 63-64.
such as Gregory Smith, suggest something similar to this last point with texts that have had a “concrete historical impact.”

This last consideration is odd for a purist to take up since, to some extent, it aligns her with the likes of Barthes, Foucault, Nehamas, and Derrida who speak of “authorship” as a technical term referring to the complex interaction of text and audience/critic. Magnus pushes back on such claims, suggesting that if we take up this consideration consistently, we would have to prioritize *The Will to Power* since it has historically dominated much of Nietzsche scholarship.

Scholars tend to focus on Nietzsche’s published books and simply ignore other authorized materials such as letters and essays Nietzsche published. Clark distinguishes between “notebooks” and published works but explicitly assumes that “what he says elsewhere” is only contained in his books.

When Nietzsche asked us to “learn to read [him] well,” he was not referring to his notebooks. As we said in the Introduction, he was talking about learning to read his books and asking us especially to become open to having our interpretation of one claim or passage be modified by our understanding of what he says elsewhere (“in his books” should go without saying here).

The assumed priority of the late works is itself an odd presupposition not universally shared by scholarship on other philosophers. This focus on the books, particularly of the later period, tends also to exclude, explicitly or implicitly, Nietzsche’s “juvenilia” consisting of published essays, a published letter, published reviews, a published 24 volume index of *Rheinisches Museum*, and a

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85 Smith, *Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Transition to Postmodernity*, 93n3.
88 Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, for example, is thought by many scholars to be his most important work despite being written when he was quite young.
published short autobiographical presentation.\textsuperscript{89} At one point in 1870, notes indicate he was already considering the republication of many of these publications in a bound set or complete works for which he created an index with pagination.\textsuperscript{90} This indicates that the publication criterion does not function in isolation. The standard reason given to deprioritize these works, even though they were published, is that the mature Nietzsche would not have authorized their publication later in his life.\textsuperscript{91} We thus see the published work deprioritized based on retroactive de-authorization, leading us into our next demarcation criteria.

5.2 Authorization

Another concern is the authorized publication status of the late works. The late works, including TI, EH, NCW and A, which scholars tend to think of as authoritative, present a large set of problems. Some, such as Williams, Whitlock, and Schrift, consider some late works to be part of the Nachlass. However, they are usually given the same status as the published works.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{89} “Nietzsche’s early work is often regarded as unsophisticated juvenilia, written when Nietzsche was under the spell of the Romantic metaphysics of Wagner and Schopenhauer. This work is, according to many scholars, decisively repudiated by Nietzsche himself as he enters his middle period phase with Human, All Too Human” (Jeffrey Church, Nietzsche’s Culture of Humanity: Beyond Aristocracy and Democracy in the Early Period, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3; cf. Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, 23.

\textsuperscript{90} KGW III 3.141, 6[17]

\textsuperscript{91} There is a tendency to dismiss all early publications because of a letter he writes to George Brandes, April 10, 1888, in which he writes a short Curriculum vitae including a short biography. He ends the letter by saying: “Of course there are philologica by me too. But that does not concern either of us anymore.” It may be worth noting that in this Curriculum vitae Nietzsche felt the need to justify his sanity. He wrote: “I have never had a symptom of mental disorder” (Nr. 1014, KSB 8.286). Nietzsche’s published letters are sometimes dismissed because, it is suggested, the mature Nietzsche would not have authorized them (Robin Small, “What Nietzsche did During the Science Wars,” in Nietzsche and Science, eds. Gregory Moore and Thomas Brobjer (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 158).

\textsuperscript{92} Williams, Nietzsche’s Mirror, 63.
Nietzsche was editing EH, NCW and A when he collapsed on January 3, 1889. At that time, a few copies of TI had been printed but it had not yet been released to the public.

Nearing Nietzsche’s collapse the publication of these works became, at best, a complicated matter. Nietzsche’s instructions to his publisher at this time were numerous and daily. Compounding the difficulty is the question of Nietzsche’s psychological stability regarding publishing decisions made in the weeks before his collapse. During and after Nietzsche’s mental collapse it is safe to say he could not make the sort of decisions he could before. The question then becomes, are these texts really ‘Nietzsche’ and would the sane Nietzsche have authorized them?

The authority of NCW presents us with a historically difficult case. Originally, Nietzsche intended someone else to write the work. This fell through and Nietzsche ended up taking up the project himself. Additionally, Nietzsche expresses in a letter to Peter Gast December 22, 1888 that he does not want to print NCW since the whole relationship is explained in EH. By January 2, 1889 Nietzsche had decided not to publish NCW as he states in a letter to Naumann asking for the material back. He writes: “Events have made the small writing *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* completely obsolete.”

Considering Nietzsche started showing signs of psychological collapse by January 2, it is unclear what we should make of this. Further, on January 8, 1889 Overbeck arrived

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93 For example, on December 20, 1888 alone Naumann (Nietzsche’s publisher) received two letters and one telegram. In one of these letters Nietzsche asks that the poem entitled “Intermezzo” be taken out of NW and placed into EH. Letters often crossed in the mail and miscommunications were common.

94 It’s first mentioned in a letter December 11, 1888 in which he approached Carl Spitteler to write a preface, compile the quotations, and publish the work for him. Nietzsche included the citations and page numbers (Nr. 1189, KSB 8.523).

95 Nr. 1207, KSB 8.545.

96 Nr. 1237, KSB 8.571.
in Turin to find Nietzsche still furiously editing NCW after his psychotic break.\textsuperscript{97} Should we consider this work unpublished and unauthorized since Nietzsche expressed serious doubts about publishing it more than a week before his collapse? Perhaps, but the answer to this question is unattainable.

NCW also offers a variety of problems because this work mostly consists of quotations from previous works which Nietzsche then altered. Nietzsche claims these alterations are merely clarifications, but it is clear he is changing the content to support his argument in the work. This forces us to ask, which version of the quotation should have ultimate authority; the original or the later altered version? The version the sane Nietzsche authorized or the one on the brink of collapse? This brings into tension the tendency to privilege the late works over the early works and the open question of Nietzsche’s mental stability. Again, historical detail is often more complicated than abstract principles and demarcation criteria can capture.

A more troubling historical point regarding authorization relates to TI. Schacht lists this work under “works completed by Nietzsche but published after his collapse.”\textsuperscript{98} The first copies of TI were printed November 13, 1888, well before Nietzsche’s collapse, but it was not published and available in bookstores until weeks after his collapse, January 24, 1889.

There is a generally accepted argument that TI should be considered a publicly published work since Nietzsche stated in a letter it was completed.\textsuperscript{99} Despite this seemingly straightforward


\textsuperscript{98} Schacht, \textit{Nietzsche}, XXII.

\textsuperscript{99} The preface to the work, which Nietzsche likely wrote last, is dated September 30, 1888 (TI, Preface). Additionally, in a letter to Overbeck dated November 13th, the same day the first copies were printed, Nietzsche states that the work is finished (Nr. 1143, KSB 8.468). Initial skepticism might be raised that this text only became available in bookstores on January 24, 1889 notably after Nietzsche's mental collapse (Cf. Schaberg, \textit{The Nietzsche Canon}, 168; Paul Bishop, “Link to
argument, even this work itself has quite a complex history. While the book itself had been printed in small quantities, it had not been released to the public.\textsuperscript{100} What complicates our demarcation is a letter Nietzsche sent to his publisher December 27, 1888. In this letter it seems that Nietzsche had changed his mind about the work. He suggests that they should delay printing and not rush into publication. The following passage from that letter indicates that Nietzsche may have decided to print the book only for a \textit{private} audience as he had done with previous writings such as part IV of Z. He writes: “we should give away as few copies as possible and keep in mind that the book is meant only for those who are closest to me and who understand my intentions and my mission.”\textsuperscript{101} Against Nietzsche’s explicit wishes, stated almost a week before his collapse, Nietzsche’s publisher and Overbeck decided to move forward with the public publication after Nietzsche’s collapse. They did not honor Nietzsche’s request regarding publication. They did, however, honor the instructions in a letter written one day later. On December 28, 1888 Nietzsche sent a letter to his publisher with two edits to the text. This is evident by comparing Nietzsche’s references in that letter to the proof sheets Nietzsche edited which are stored in the archives.\textsuperscript{102}

By looking at the first edition, which appeared in bookstores January 24, 1889, one can see Naumann and Overbeck added Nietzsche’s changes.\textsuperscript{103} The question here remains, if Nietzsche

\textsuperscript{100} The first copies were printed on November 13, 1888 and on November 24, 1888 Nietzsche received 4 copies himself. He gave away his copies for friends so quickly that on December 15, 1888 he had to request more.

\textsuperscript{101} (Nr. 1213, KSB 8.552). We might here question Nietzsche’s stability. Nonetheless, that same day Nietzsche wrote a coherent letter to Carl Fuchs and even gives some publication advice about a collaboration between Fuchs and Gast (Nr. 1214, KSB 8.553).


was of sound enough mind to make coherent edits for his publisher to enact, was he of sound
enough mind to decide the work should not be presented to the public? Should this work be
considered a publicly published work or a privately published work that was forced into public
publication by his editor and publisher? Should this be considered authorized only for private
publication? This question is perhaps unanswerable.

The difficulties of demarcating publication and authorization in the two cases above can
be filled out with two further challenges to these demarcation criteria. First, there are texts which
Nietzsche submitted (and thus authorized) for publication but were rejected. One of these is
“Appeal to the German People”.104 Here we have clear intent and authorization to publish
something which was rejected. Although it is possible the text would have gone through further
edits before publication the bulk of the text would likely have stayed the same. Should this work
be prioritized over work that was not submitted for publication?

Regarding authorization, there is some evidence that Nietzsche planned to publish some of
his early unpublished writing in a complete works (“Friedrich Nietzsche, gesammelte Schriften”

104 Through 1872/73, the Wagners were trying to set up a permanent home for Wagner’s operas.
They were having little success funding their efforts with “Certificates of Patronage,” so Wagner
asked Nietzsche to write an appeal to the German people. Nietzsche composed the piece Appeal
to the German People (Mahnruf an die Deutschen) between October 18 and 20. It was typeset,
and many proofs were printed. The work was intended to be distributed in bookstores and music
shops. Nietzsche carefully went over the piece with Cosima Wagner. It was presented to delegates
of the Wagnerian Society on October 31 and was rejected for being too strident (Schaberg, The
Nietzsche Canon, 36). Cosima’s personal journal dated October 31 reads: “Went through Prof.
Nietzsche’s very fine ‘Appeal’ with him.” She goes on to say that in the evening they met with the
delegate committee and they “resolved not to proceed with the ‘Appeal’; the Societies feel they
have no right to use such bold language” (Cosima Wagner, Diaries, vol. I, 1869-1877, ed. Martin
Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Geoffrey Skelton and
[sic]) that did not come to fruition before his collapse.\textsuperscript{105} How should this evidence weigh in the priority of these texts? Clearly Nietzsche did not see the work through to publication in his few years left but, then again, neither did he see the late works through to publication. If letters suggesting his intention to not publish work before his collapse count as evidence for deprioritizing texts, should plans to publish already publicly presented material count toward prioritization? The answer to this question is not easily decidable.

5.3 Public Presentation

Nietzsche clearly thought about what he was presenting to the public eye and considered the notion of audience important, particularly later in life. In a letter on July 2, 1885 he writes to Overbeck: “I often feel ashamed that I have said so much in public already that should never have been put in front of an ‘audience’.”\textsuperscript{106} Nietzsche was very careful which of his works became public.

As mentioned before, book IV of Z was privately published and distributed only to a few close friends. Only nine people actually received copies of the book.\textsuperscript{107} Nietzsche and Gast were extremely protective of the book itself. Nietzsche sent out a few copies which he later regretted and tried to reacquire.\textsuperscript{108} By December 9, 1888, Nietzsche tells Gast in a letter that he wants to

\textsuperscript{105} Notably this contains his inaugural lecture (“Rede über Homer”, Nachlass 1884/85, 41[1], KGW VII 3.403).
\textsuperscript{107} Schaberg, \textit{Nietzsche Canon}, 105-106.
\textsuperscript{108} Cf. Nietzsche to Peter Gast, July 23, 1885, Nr. 613, KSB 7.68; December 22, 1888, Nr. 1207, KSB 8.545; Schaberg, \textit{The Nietzsche Canon}, 106.
recover all copies he sent out. Thus, we might count the text of Z IV as unproblematically private and not meant for the public eye or, in the end, any audience at all. This, however, is not the case.

In EH, Nietzsche explicitly describes the section “the Cry of Distress” in Z IV in some detail (Warum ich so weise bin 4). Further, and this is important, Nietzsche publicly published part of a section, “On Higher Men,” from part IV. In 1886, Nietzsche published a new preface to the BT: “Attempt at a Self Criticism.” At the very end of this preface, he publishes a long quote from part IV. So, the question remains, is Z IV published or unpublished? Is it public or private? Is this text authorized or not? The answer to this question seems to be an indeterminate yes and no, depending on the context of the question. This undermines the universal application of publicness criteria of the demarcation between published and Nachlass.

There is a tendency to simply equate Nietzsche’s public presentation with his published writing. Yet, if we are to take the publicness criteria seriously, then we ought to prioritize works that were presented to the public. Notably, this would include his public lectures, some of which were privately printed. For example, his 1869 inaugural lecture on Homer was printed with alterations and sent to friends and family. One copy was sent to Sophie Ritschl that included a letter suggesting that the printed version was “in a form not quite public [einer durchaus nichtöffentlichen Form]” and those who received the altered printed version were a more select and “finest public [allerschönsten Publikum].” Nietzsche also planned to publish some of his

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109 Nr. 1181, KSB 8.513.
110 This yet unnoticed publication of sections of book IV seems to support Shapiro’s view that this is a difficult case. He writes: “This fourth part of Zarathustra, as we’ve already seen, occupies an undecidable space in relation to the public and the private” (Shapiro, Alcyone, 95).
111 Johnson, Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism, 12.
112 Of course, the audience of a public lecture is different from that of a publication. Nevertheless, they are both ways of making one’s views public (cf. Hollingdale, Nietzsche, 47-48).
113 Nietzsche to Sophie Ritschl, December 25, 1869, Nr. 52, KSB 3.88.
public lectures at one time, even writing two prefaces, though he never ended up following through.\footnote{Cf. Breazeale, “Introduction”, xliv-xiv; Brobjør, “Nietzsche’s Early Writing”, 40.} This immediately brings up problems for authorization since some lectures were planned, written, and authorized but for some unknown reason never given.

Even if the publicness criteria were to prioritize the lectures themselves (as spoken) a further seemingly irreconcilable problem appears. Nietzsche saw a difference between oral delivery, oral notes, text meant to be read out loud, and text meant to be read silently.\footnote{Cf. Gilman, Blair, and Parent, “Introduction,” 21; “History of Greek Eloquence,” in \textit{Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language}, 216–217, 225.} It is also clear that Nietzsche’s lecture notes were not meant to be read by others.\footnote{Some of Nietzsche’s citation coding is so complex editors and scholars have never been able to decode them. According to Greg Whitlock, who translated these lectures, this gives compelling evidence that “Nietzsche never intended this manuscript to be read by others in this form” (Whitlock, “Translator’s Preface,” [PPP] xx).} Nietzsche was remarkably consistent on this point, refusing to let others read his lecture notes but sometimes agreeing to read them to others himself.\footnote{For example, he refused to let the Wagners read some of his lecture notes on \textit{The Pre-Platonic Philosophers} but instead he read parts of it to them as a lecture. Cosima’s diary entry for April 7, 1873 reads: “In the evening Prof. Nietzsche reads us a new and interesting paper about the philosophers before Plato” (Wagner, \textit{Diaries}, 620).} The question, then, is to what extent do Nietzsche’s notes on his public lectures express what he communicated in the spoken rendition? If Nietzsche gave the lecture to the public but certainly did not intend for his lecture notes to be read, ought we to consider the lecture notes themselves public? Again, we find ourselves unable to make a clear demarcation between public and private and are held in limbo regarding whether to give priority to these lecture notes.
5.4 Audience

The next criterion we can look at is whether a piece of writing had an audience in mind. Some of Nietzsche’s writing likely has no audience other than himself.\textsuperscript{118} On the other hand, there is work that Nietzsche published publicly that clearly has a public audience. Other works Nietzsche only printed privately and only distributed to friends. In contrast to the above examples, some of Nietzsche's writings were never printed but clearly had an audience. Of the smaller audiences, we can include works such as \emph{Prefaces to Unwritten Works} (PUW). This work consists of five essays handwritten by Nietzsche and bound in leather with metal fittings which he gave to Cosima Wagner as a Christmas present in 1872.\textsuperscript{119} There exist sixteen drafts of this work, so it is clear this work was extremely polished. According to Cosima’s diary, the Wagners read it out loud New Year’s Day 1873.\textsuperscript{120} This work then clearly had the Wagners in mind as an audience even though it did not go to press.

Perhaps the smallest audience aside from letters are the individual inscribed presentation copies of his works sent to friends. Although there are rare copies with inscriptions from Nietzsche’s own hand, it is much more common for them to be written and sent out individually by someone else in the publishing office.\textsuperscript{121} Thus, these inscriptions would have an audience of at least three people, the publisher (to whom Nietzsche sent the order), the inscriber, and the receiver.

\textsuperscript{118} For example: KGW IX 3, NVII 3.1–8, 28. It seems \textit{prima facie} that some of these do not have an audience, though perhaps some of them did.
\textsuperscript{119} \emph{Prefaces to Unwritten Works}, trans. and ed. Michael W. Grenke (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), 3.
\textsuperscript{120} Wagner, \emph{Diaries}, 579.
\textsuperscript{121} It was a common publishing practice in the 1800’s for the author to tell the publisher what to inscribe on the copies to be sent out. The inscription and author’s signature would then be individually written into the presentation copies by the publisher (Nietzsche to Ernst Schmeitzner, June 25, 1876, Nr. 533, KSB 5.166; cf. Schaberg, \emph{The Nietzsche Canon}, 49).
Another problem is that scholars disagree about whether the letters are part of the Nachlass or part of the published canon. One of the implicit criteria used to classify a text as “Nachlass” is that it was not intended to have an audience. This becomes complicated if one considers the letters part of the Nachlass as some scholars do. Whether or not the letters are Nachlass, they certainly have an audience. We can say with Schacht that: “The letters were at least intended to be read by those to whom they were sent.” The larger intended audience of the letters is more complicated.

If the letters are Nachlass, some of what is considered the Nachlass was actually published by Nietzsche. A first example comes from January 1873 when Nietzsche wrote an open letter to the editor of Musikalisches Wochenblatt (Musical Weekly), which was then published. This angry letter to the editor came to the defense of both Wagner and Zöllner. Previously two psychologists, Theodor Puschmann and Alfred Dove, had accused Wagner of being mad. Other letters of more interest were later published. Nietzsche sent two letters to the magazine Kunstwart which Nietzsche demanded be published “word for word.”

The first of these letters was written after Nietzsche wrote The Case of Wagner (1888). Gast wrote an article titled “Nietzsche-Wagner” which appeared in the Kunstwart along with the editor’s afterword which was quite critical of Gast. Coming to his own and his friend’s defense, Nietzsche wrote two letters defending them from the editor. The editor, Ferdinand Avenarius, ran

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122 Safranski, Nietzsche, 11; Whitlock, “Translator’s Introduction,” xvii; Stewart, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and Political Thought, 28; Magnus, Nietzsche’s Case, 39; Magnus, “Nietzsche’s Philosophy in 1888,” 81-83; Richardson, Nietzsche’s System, 297; Schrift, “Nietzsche’s Nachlass,” 405; Hollinrake, Nietzsche, Wagner, and the Philosophy of Pessimism, 225.
123 Schacht, Making Sense of Nietzsche, 117.
124 Cf. Schaberg, The Nietzsche Canon, 30; Small, “What Nietzsche did During the Science Wars,” 158.
125 Schaberg, The Nietzsche Canon, 164-66.
both letters and they were published in Mid-December of 1888. Of interest here is that these published letters contain commentary on his own work. The several letters to Avenarius contain commentary on the fourth UM, HAH I and II, D, and BGE. Two of these letters, while considered Nachlass by some scholars, are in fact published. Simply because something is considered Nachlass does not mean it was not published. The publication of the letters problematizes the dichotomous classification of the letters as a whole as Nachlass or published.

Aside from these few examples a larger problem also arises regarding his letters. There is evidence that Nietzsche intended to publish some of his letters and to burn the rest. We already saw that Nietzsche demanded that some of his letters be published but there are also examples from the letters themselves where Nietzsche asked the receivers to burn them. Nietzsche writes in a letter to Erwin Rohde October 18, 1873: “it is earnestly requested by the dictator and writer of this letter that you burn it at once.”\textsuperscript{126} While this might certainly be a tongue and cheek comment of a young Nietzsche, auxiliary evidence suggests that later in life Nietzsche wanted his letters burned. He is recorded as telling Josef Paneth in 1884 that he wanted some of the letters that he chose to be published but after his death he wanted his friend to burn all his letters from him because, "when one has striven one's whole life to present the public only with what has been worked out and is a whole, one does not want to appear in one's dressing-gown."\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{126} Trans. Middleton, \textit{Selected Letters}, 121.
We again find ourselves at an impasse. It is clear that Nietzsche actually did publicly publish some of his letters and specifically asked recipients to burn others. It is also likely that Nietzsche intended to authorize the publication of more of his letters. The unpublished letters are then left as a whole undetermined. Whether Nietzsche would have publicly published a particular letter, had he not had his mental collapse, is therefore underdetermined.

5.5 Unintuitive Counterexamples to All Four Criteria

Two problems seem to function as historical exceptions or counter examples to the very intuitive four categories presented above. First, the problem arises that Nietzsche intentionally published work he knew to be erroneous or had decided to change. Nietzsche’s intention and public distribution of ‘errors’ complicates the connection between publication, authorization, publicness, and a work’s intentional nature.

Nietzsche’s dissemination of errata was done not for any malicious or deceptive reason but as a cost saving measure. When Nietzsche released a new introduction the leftover copies, owned by the publisher, would be rebound with a new title page and sold alongside updated versions as a “new” edition.\(^{128}\) There were, in fact, three different versions of GT that were authorized in the 1886 third edition. Therefore, Nietzsche intentionally published and distributed to the public work he had decided to change or found erroneous. This clearly shows how the situated material conditions of Nietzsche’s publication history can escape abstract categorization despite how intuitive they may be. Even if the above example complicates matters, surely Nietzsche intended (or foresaw) those copies, including the errors, would be read. This challenges the notion that

\(^{128}\) Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon*, 131-132. Since Nietzsche re-published the first edition, this means he knowingly published work he considered erroneous or had decided to change.
publication is equivalent to authorization. It also challenges the notion that public distribution is equivalent to ideal intentional authorization. Economics and timing dictated that he could not change the texts, but does this mean the errata were left in deliberately? Given the resources, would he have published all new versions? This example undermines both publication and public presentation as standalone criterion in principle.

A final historically idiosyncratic example challenges the universal application of all four-demarcation criteria. The last example challenged the idea that simply because something is published and presented to the public to be read this does not automatically give it ideal intentional authorization. In this second more radical example, it cannot be assumed that simply because something is printed and knowingly distributed to the public it is intended to be read. An error in the first edition of HAH I was ‘corrected’ by individually printing, cutting out, and gluing by hand one thousand rectangles of paper into the first edition. When we look to the first edition we can actually see where the “eere” was itself pasted in on top of the incorrect “enon.” The word “Menon” is thus, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggested, both published and unpublished.

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129 Nietzsche first alerted Schmeitzner of this error in a postcard dated April 2, 1878 (Nr. 705, KSB 5.315). Nietzsche agreed to this in a letter dated April 14, 1878: “Meere must be glued in the way you suggested [Meere muß in der von Ihnen vorgeschlagenen Weise eingeklebt werden]” (Nr. 709, KSB 5.317; cf. Schaberg, The Nietzsche Canon, 63).
While Schaberg takes the position that the covered word is a non-word, “Menon” is the word Nietzsche used to refer to Plato’s *Meno* in his courses on the platonic dialogues. Such a misprint, in a section on “Natural inclination of women”, if not corrected, might certainly cause trouble to any interpreter trying to understand how the accomplishments of women are “spreading a soothing sheen upon the Meno of life.” Here we might jovially misquote Nietzsche all too literally, “the [published] text finally disappeared under the interpretation.”

So, the mistake was printed, published, and distributed to the public intentionally but was not intended to have an audience read it. The very abstract and very intuitively plausible assumption that all work knowingly printed and distributed to the public is intended to be read is simply historically false. This is not to say that a single typo seriously problematizes the authority of a text. What it does show, is that our modern presuppositions about publication practices today

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131 KGW II 4.91.
132 BGE 38.
133 Although it has no intended audience, surely the possibility of having an audience could be foreseen. One might see here a hermeneutic and textual application of doctrine of double effect.
bias and tend to overgeneralize a complicated publication history. Our abstract demarcations are value laden by our modern biases, which then blemish our historical lenses. History is always full of surprises and if one is not careful one can too easily force historical texts into a procrustean bed that ignores, or does violence to, the richness of their particular material details. The Anglo-American universal and abstract false dichotomy between the published and the Nachlass is no longer feasible.

6. The Nachlass Debate in German Scholarship

As I have argued above, the tendency to rely on abstract demarcation criteria in Anglo-American Nietzsche scholarship cannot account for the complexities of history. German scholarship on Nietzsche has historically faced similar problems and has developed a much more context sensitive approach. German scholarship, until very recently, has displayed a similar split as Anglo-American scholarship. On one side there are those, such as Alfred Baeumler, Martin Heidegger, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, Günter Abel, and Volker Gerhardt, who follow a tradition that prioritizes the Nachlass over the published work.¹³⁴ On the other side of the debate we find

¹³⁴ An important early use of the Nachlass in Germany was Alfred Baeumler who prioritized the Nachlass. For Baeumler, it is only in the Nachlass that we find the “fundamental results of his thought” (Alfred Baeumler, “Nachwort”, in Der Wille Zur Macht: Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte (Leipzig: Kröner, 1930), 609; cf. Alfred Baeumler, Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker (Leipzig: P. Reclam, 1931)). Following Baeumler, Heidegger would also prioritize the Nachlass over the published work (Nietzsche, vol. II, 10, 15; Nietzsche, vol. III, 11-13). Following Heidegger, the Nachlass has been used extensively by a number of recent German scholars. For example, Müller-Lauter agrees with Heidegger’s analysis. He concludes that: “The Nachlaß-text […] deserves interpretive priority over the published version” (Müller-Lauter, Nietzsche, 128, cf. 125; Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, Über Werden und Wille zur Macht: Nietzsche-Interpretationen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 36). Other recent scholars have taken up this approach. Günter Abel explicitly states that Heidegger was right that Nietzsche’s true philosophy is in the Nachlass and cites Müller-Lauter (Günter Abel, Nietzsche: Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 194-195). His work makes extensive use of the Nachlass
scholars such as Karl Schlechta, Werner Stegmaier, Claus Zittel, and Andreas Urs Sommer arguing that the texts Nietzsche published should be prioritized over the Nachlass for a variety of reasons and the Nachlass should only function as a kind of philological supplement.  

135 Karl Schlechta writes: “The Will to Power contains nothing new – nothing that could surprise those who know everything Nietzsche published or made ready for publication” (Werke in drei Bänden, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: 1954-1956), 1403, trans. Walter Kaufmann, The Philosophical Review 67, no. 2 (1958): 274). Schlechta also states that Nietzsche had “expressed himself with complete clarity, beyond any misunderstanding, in the works he published himself or clearly intended for publication. As far as a genuine possibility of understanding, nothing remains to be desired” (Schlechta, Der Fall Nietzsche, trans. in Müller-Lauter, Nietzsche, 124, cf. 216n9).

More recently, Werner Stegmaier has rejected the view that prioritizes the Nachlass (Werner Stegmaier, “After Montinari: On Nietzsche Philology,” Journal of Nietzsche Studies 38 (2009): 5-19). Stegmaier expressed similar views in his 2011 text Friderich Nietzsche zur Einführung (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2011). Stegmaier makes clear that the Nachlass is not superfluous. In particular, he claims that the Nachlass can be helpful in charting the development of Nietzsche’s thought in conjunction with Nietzsche’s sources (“After Montinari”, 12). Stegmaier makes use of this approach in his 2012 work which analyzes the fifth book of FW and makes use of letters and the Nachlass to track the genesis of this text (Werner Stegmaier, Nietzsche’s Befreiung der Philosophie: Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). Claus Zittel restarted this debate again in 2010: “Therefore the published writings possess, qua form, a higher degree of reflectivity than the posthumous sketches” (Claus Zittel, “Nachlaß 1880-1885,” in Nietzsche-Handbuch: Leben - Werk – Wirkung, ed. Henning Ottmann (Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 138-142: 138, trans. Endres / Pichler, “warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf”, 91). As Zittel points out, when this aesthetic difference is not taken seriously there is a tendency for scholars to construct final doctrines (letzte Lehren) that lack the subtlety, complexity, and reflexivity of the published text. However, Zittel, like Stegmaier, is quick to point out that the Nachlass is important for establishing the genesis of Nietzsche’s terms. Along similar lines, Andreas Urs Sommer draws a similar analogy to many Anglo-American scholars and sees the Nachlass as something like Nietzsche’s workshop. Although we ought to be cautious, using it can help in explaining Nietzsche’s decisions (Andreas Urs Sommer, “Nietzsche: An Immanentist?” Performance Philosophy Journal 3, no. 3 (2017), 563-575). Sommer is very clear
An important difference between German and Anglo-American scholarship is how they approach the “aesthetic” subtlety of the published work. That is, both Anglo-American and German scholars have noticed that Nietzsche uses more complex literary devices in his published work such as rhetorical questions, allegory, narrative, and complex reflexive statements that reflect a more complex “aesthetic” quality. Anglo-Americans often use the Nachlass to clarify Nietzsche’s final “doctrines” because it is clearer and looks more like classic philosophy. However, German scholars, following Zittel, suggest that this aesthetic quality of his published work demonstrates the complexity and subtlety of his ideas, which are often expressed hypothetically, ironically, and ambiguously. For this very reason, they prioritize the published work. Zittel has never claimed that the aesthetic form of Nietzsche’s writing represents a demarcation criterion. German scholarship has been rapidly developing under new editorial

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136 The present study will make extensive use of the Nachlass, while attempting to avoid the inadequacies of that [Heidegger’s] kind of approach. One very noticeable fact about the many notebook entries relating to epistemological and metaphysical questions in particular is that, despite their fragmentary character, they are generally more argumentative in the traditional sense and less ‘rhetorical’ than the corresponding passages in the published works” (Peter Poellner, 
138 Claus Zittel, E-mail message to author December 24, 2019.
standards that handle the relationship between published and unpublished work in a much more context sensitive way.

Mazzino Montinari declared in 1982 that the “the unpublished handwritten writings [Nachlass] should be made known in their authentic form.” However, it became increasingly clear that the editorial norms that governed Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari in the KGW, and by extension the KSA, have been shown inadequate in light of recent developments in editorial sciences [Editionswissenschaft] and editorial theory. These critiques, too detailed to be summarized here, can be found in the excellent work of Davide Giuriato, Sandro Zanetti, Wolfram Groddeck, Michael Kohlenbach, Beat Röllin, René Stockmar, Gunter Martens, Roland Reuß, Claus Zittel, and Mike Rottmann. The general conclusion is that this kind of editorship is itself

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139 Montinari, Reading Nietzsche, 101.
140 I do not wish to undermine the enormous contribution the KGW made to Nietzsche scholarship. The KGW was a monumental achievement. However, the editorial decisions were still made within a developing field of editorial theory which has progressed considerably over the last half a century. Even the harshest critics still consider the edition a monumental philological achievement (cf. Endres and Pichler, “warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf,” 107; Beat Röllin, Marie-Luise Haase, René Stockmar and Franziska Trenkle, “Der späte Nietzsche”: Schreibprozeß und Heftedition,” in Schreibprozesse, eds. Thomas Fries and Peter Hughes (Munich: Willhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 103–115).
a kind of interpretation and leads readers to certain kinds of distorted conclusions. This criticism came to such a high pitch over several decades that a new kind of edition was put forward that would follow new developments in editorial theory. This new edition, the KGW IX, allows for a third approach that was almost impossible before: genetic interpretation.

6.1 Genetic and Intertextual Interpretation

As Martin Endres and Alex Pichler argue, the newly published “diplomatic transcription”\(^{142}\) in KGW IX, covering unpublished material from 1885–1889, offers substantial material and easily usable scholarly apparatus for genetic interpretations. Endres and Pichler give a good introduction to genetic interpretation and its relation to the KGW IX as follows:

The new edition’s importance for addressing the question of whether the Nachlass or the published writings are of greater value for an understanding of Nietzsche’s thought lies in the fact that this edition offers a third approach that takes the status of the published writings just as seriously as it takes the late Nachlass with its highly specific characteristics. [...] This [genetic] approach makes it possible to retrace the formation of the published writings by following the textual witnesses (Textzeugen) and thereby also to exploit the meanings layered into the evolutionary history of texts.\(^{143}\)

Rather than simply picking notes that seem to supplement or explain a view expressed by Nietzsche, genetic readings focus on the unpublished writings that eventually transformed into the published work including drafts, fair copies, correction copies etc. Genetic forms of reading are

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\(^{142}\) Diplomatic transcriptions have long been used in other fields. For example: Charles Dickens, *Dickens’ Working Notes for his Novels*, ed. Harry Stone (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). I am thankful to April Smith for helping me find that example. Peter L. Shilingsburg gives the following definition: “A rendering machine-produced form (typing or typeset) of the entire content of a manuscript, marked proof, or annotated text, including cancellations and additions” (Peter L. Shilingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 174).

\(^{143}\) Endres / Pichler, “‘warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf,’” 91.
not themselves new. Montinari himself even mentions that the KGW allows for a genetic [genetisch ausgerichtete] orientation.\textsuperscript{144} However, until recently research that tracked the geneses of Nietzsche’s published works were rare because the structure and organization of the KGW made such work cumbersome.\textsuperscript{145} Additionally, due to some of the classification issues discussed above some content which is now important to scholars was left out. A glance at how the older editions represented one page of Nietzsche’s notebook in comparison to how the KGW IX represents it makes it immediately obvious how much is left out in the older editions.

\textbf{Fig. 2.2: Nachlass 1885, 36[54] and 36[55], KGW VII 3.296-297 compared with KGW IX 4, W I 4.13.}\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} KGW VIII 1.VI, “Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber.”
\textsuperscript{146} These are the only two sections of the KGW cited for corresponding material in the KGW IX. The editors state that this includes the locations in the KGW (KGW IX 4 p. VII). A quick search of \textit{Nietzsche Source} confirms that much of this material is not part of the eKGW either.
This comparison would shock anyone who thought the older KGW was complete. The KGW IX’s diplomatic transcription makes using the facsimile reproductions of Nietzsche’s notebooks (included on a CD-ROM) truly usable in a manageable way for the first time. Another useful aspect of this edition is that it specifies when writing in the notebooks is from Nietzsche’s hand, the hand of someone else, or if it cannot be determined.\textsuperscript{147} Additionally, the scholarly apparatus of these volumes make a genetic interpretation feasible because it points not only to where passages can be found in the KGW but also from drafts to their corresponding finished section in the published work.

The new KGW IX has enabled a resurgence in genetic reading in German Nietzsche scholarship. These genetic readings, such as Endres and Pichler’s, take both published and Nachlass seriously but treat them differently. Endres and Pichler conclude their paper stating: “This article should clearly show that treating Nietzsche’s sketches as the equivalent of published […] has to be considered—at least from a philological point of view—as unscientific.”\textsuperscript{148} They use genetic and intertextual reading that makes use of the unpublished text to historically trace the genesis of the final authorized text and, therefore, while they treat both seriously they treat them differently.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} Just as editorial norms change so do archival norms. It is very common in Nietzsche’s notebooks to find archivists writing notes to themselves, categorizing work, transcribing Nietzsche’s writing, and even occasionally writing commentary in Nietzsche’s notebooks. Thankfully, there are historical records and other resources that allow us to differentiate Nietzsche’s notes from archivists most of the time.

\textsuperscript{148} Endres and Pichler, “warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf,” 105.

\textsuperscript{149} Endres and Pichler, “warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf,” 102.
6.2 Research without False Dichotomies

Pichler and Endres end their article with the following statement which I could not endorse more: “An adequate understanding of the interplay of published and unpublished material is only possible if one sticks as closely as possible to the actual manuscripts.”\(^{150}\) In this principle we see that rather than rely on editors, we should engage as closely as possible with the individual primary documents themselves in the unedited material form in which they were left by Nietzsche. However, Pichler and Endres nevertheless slip into abstract demarcation language about Nietzsche’s “published texts” as a definite set.\(^{151}\) I hold we should discard such language and focus on individual texts and their history. I argue that in using this approach we ought to focus on the individual texts themselves as material objects. This is because, first, in some cases multiple “final” texts were authorized and, second, different copies of the ‘same’ texts have different degrees of intertextuality. We should, in short, follow the principle of sticking as closely to the manuscript as possible in all cases and treat the texts considered published with as much philological rigor as those considered unpublished.

Genetic readings tend to assume that there is one final authorized published work and we ought to start from there.\(^{152}\) However, the texts scholars often consider published are, as I have argued, often tied up in complex historical relations that fly in the face of our contemporary intuitions. For example, as noted previously, because of the way earlier editions of BT were re-bound for the third edition, there are in fact three separate texts that were authorized for distribution.


\(^{151}\) Endres and Pichler, “warum ich diesen mißrathenen Satz schuf,” 105. This is not an attack on their excellent work. It does show, however, that even very diligent scholars can easily fall back on abstract conceptual language. The very nature of the discourse makes avoiding such slippages difficult.

to the public by Nietzsche in 1886. Three commentators could, literally, be holding three different
texts that purport to be the third edition, cite them exactly the same, and no one would be the wiser
based on the cover page. This is because the leftover first and second editions, which are not
identical with the third, were simply re-bound with new cover pages and introductions. The
differences between these simultaneously authorized texts are significant. Deciding which of
these is the ‘authorized final work’ would require more than simply a reference to a ‘final’
publishation date.

Second, I think there is good reason to focus on the individual texts as material objects. To
be clear, when I reject the abstract demarcation between published and Nachlass, I am not saying
there is no factual distinction between individual texts. For example, the 1886 edition of BGE,
section 2, page 4, stored in the Nietzsche Collection at Princeton, has a different history and
material composition than the drafts of BGE 2 in KGW IX 4, W I 5.2, lines 42-44 and 50-52. Those are different material objects with different histories that are connected in complex ways.
Further, the 1886 edition stored in Princeton’s Nietzsche Collection is not identical to the 1886
edition stored in HAAB that contains annotations by Nietzsche's hand and the archivist Seidel
[HAAB C 4619]. One of Nietzsche’s annotations, in particular, makes this text more intertextual

154 For example, Nietzsche completely replaces evidence from an epigram by Friedrich Hebbels
with a quote from Wagner in the second edition of The Birth of Tragedy (Friedrich Hebbels,
Sämtliche Werke, vol. 7 (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1891), 248; Cf. GT 1).
155 Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft (Leipzig: C. G. Naumann,
1886) [vi p., [1] leaf, 271 p., 24 cm, location: Princeton University Library, Department of Rare
Books and Special Collections; PT2440.N72 A6 2002, vol.14.; permanent link:
http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/z890rv55m].
156 Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft (Leipzig: C. G. Naumann,
1886) [vi p., [1] leaf, 271 p., 8°, shelfmark: C 4619, persistent identifier: 1216143412, URN:
urn:nbn:de:gbv:32-1-10013792115, https://haab-digital.klassik-
stiftung.de/viewer/image/1216143412/1/LOG_0000/; cf. NPB 417.
than the one stored at Princeton. In BGE 228 Nietzsche makes the following annotation following a discussion of Helvétius: “ce sénateur Pococurante [this apathetic senator], to use Galiani’s words —) [ce sénateur Pococurante, mit Galiani zu reden —)].”

Fig. 2.3: Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft, Leipzig 1886, 175 [NPB 417, 419; HAAB C 4619].

This annotation, in Nietzsche’s hand according to NPB, connects this text to another in Nietzsche’s personal library, Galiani’s Letters in which Nietzsche underlines the following sentence:

Fig. 2.4: Ferdinando Galiani, Lettres de l’Abbé Galiani à Madame d’Épinay, vol 1, Paris 1882, 217 [NPB 236; HAAB C 728[-1]].
Nietzsche’s annotation in HAAB C 4619 was not included in the first edition (1886) and neither does it occur in the 1894 Naumann edition. However, the phrase “ce sénateur Pococurante, mit Galiani zu reden —”) does occur in subsequent volumes of BGE including the 1899, 1901, 1906 and 1910 editions which has interesting implications for Kaufmann’s claim that his translation follows the first edition. The inclusion of this annotation also means that this text is materially different from another copy stored in the archive [HAAB C 4411] since that copy does not display this particular intertextual element. These different material objects have different histories that are connected in different, subtle, and complex ways. Those historical facts, connections, and differences are important.

By extension, this view holds that it is an important historical fact that Nietzsche did not publish a text entitled Der Wille zur Macht during his lifetime. It is important that Nietzsche did publish a part of Z IV for public consumption in “An Attempt at Self-Criticism.” These are important historical facts about the history of the production of certain texts. What is not important, in my view, is the demand, often containing moral overtones, that we must strictly demarcate between two categories that I have shown to be neither mutually exclusive nor easily fixed. The demand that a particular material object with a complex history fall neatly into an abstract and artificial false dichotomy of either Nachlass or published is simply an artifact of scholarly jargon which is neither helpful nor historically justifiable. Any of the four criteria operating in isolation cannot capture the complexity of the history of Nietzsche’s texts and the application of all of them

157 It is interesting to note that Walter Kaufmann harshly condemns Karl Schlechta for not following the first edition. Kaufman then claims: “This edition follows the first edition” (Walter Kaufmann, “Translator’s Preface”, in Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xii). However, Kaufmann’s inclusion of this line from Galiani in his translation of JGB 228 without comment demonstrates that he himself is not following the first edition.
158 NPB 417.
at once produces non-coextensive sets of texts that simultaneously demand privilege. In short, we ought to focus on history of the actual material objects involved in the history of publication themselves and do away with abstract demarcation debates that are not grounded in the complex historical details.

Overall, I think genetic, contextual, and historically informed interpretations recently offered by German scholars offer one very important way forward for Anglo-American scholars because these interpretations stress the historical particularity and subtle development of Nietzsche’s texts. My central criticism of these readings is that this type of interpretation need not rely on some abstract and universally agreed upon set labeled “published.” Rather, I would extend Pichler and Endres’ principle, sticking as closely to the original manuscripts as possible, to all individual texts under consideration. It is philologically prudent to pay close attention to the historical material objects that are Nietzsche’s texts. By focusing on the actual history of the work as a material object we can then forgo the problems associated with finding demarcation criteria that applies universally for a definite set of text considered “published.” Instead we can focus on the individual texts of interest as material objects with a definite history related to Nietzsche in complex ways that are important to different projects for different reasons.

Further, when projects diverge from the kind of historically contextual genetic reading, we ought to take a meta-reflexive position on methodology choice. We should be explicit about how the individual scholarly projects we engage within inform our values and make certain facts about certain manuscripts important and other facts about other manuscripts unimportant. If one’s project concerns Nietzsche’s writing before 1867, the year of Nietzsche’s first publication, there would be no reason to not consider his unpublished juvenilia. If one is writing a biography of Nietzsche, there is no reason why one could not prioritize his letters or Cosima’s diaries. If one is researching
which texts Nietzsche read, there is no reason why scholars should not prioritize order forms, binding bills, library circulation records, and quotes Nietzsche wrote down in his notebooks. If one is writing a history of pedagogy in 19th century Germany, there is no reason why one should not prioritize Nietzsche’s lecture notes. If one is writing about Nietzsche’s early reception in sociology one would be justified in making use of his published work at the time and even WP.\textsuperscript{159} From a meta-reflexive methodological standpoint, these are legitimate projects that are informed by particular values. In all these projects the value of prioritizing a piece of text is dictated by the values and aims motivating that project and this should be expected.

However, and this cannot be emphasized enough, projects such as the above ought to only privilege those individual texts if, \textit{and only if}, the values that motivate those projects are not interested in the philosophy to which Nietzsche publicly attached his \textit{Imprimatur}.\textsuperscript{160} In this way one can, at the same time, maintain a philologically rigorous analysis of the history of a particular text without recourse to abstract false dichotomies, while also barring philologically questionable approaches and values that lead away from the works to which Nietzsche publicly attached his \textit{Imprimatur}.

\textsuperscript{159} This is precisely the method taken up by Solms-Laubach because that work influenced sociology, not because it represents Nietzsche’s intentions (Franz zu Solms-Laubach, \textit{Nietzsche and Early German and Austrian Sociology} (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), XXII–XXIV).

\textsuperscript{160} The set of work to which Nietzsche publicly attached his \textit{Imprimatur} is not a coextensive with the set of work Nietzsche chose to publish. Nietzsche’s often forgotten book \textit{The Rheinisches Museum Index} was a massive undertaking by Nietzsche and was published. However, Nietzsche’s name occurs nowhere to signify his \textit{Imprimatur}. His name only occurs where it would turn up anyway, indexing his own contributions to the journal. The text itself is not included in the KGW (cf. Schaberg, \textit{The Nietzsche Canon}, 28; Sommer, “What Nietzsche did and did not Read,” 41; Thomas Brobjer, “Nietzsche’s Forgotten Book: The Index to the Rheinisches Museum für Philologie,” \textit{New Nietzsche Studies} 4, no. 1/2 (2000): 157-161).
If a scholarly project is interested in the final form of Nietzsche’s philosophy then it should start with the individual material text to which Nietzsche publicly attached his *Imprimatur* and, extending Endres and Pichler’s principle, not neglect the complex historical and contextual evidence surrounding the status of Nietzsche’s *Imprimatur* on those material objects that constitute individual texts.

*Imprimatur* means etymologically "let it be printed." I am using it here as a necessarily vague concept to allow for discussions surrounding multiple values related to prioritization of textual objects to enter scholarly discourse. My method attempts to open up an area of discourse in which some claims about Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* are intelligible and others are not. Through rigorous debate and historical evidence scholars can come to some degree agreement about the possible range of Nietzsche’s *imprimatur*, a horizon, that is intelligible. It is through the triangulation of multiple kinds of evidence that we find an agreed upon hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility. By focusing on the particular material objects and the historical evidence that pertains to Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on those objects, it is possible to generate some general agreement about the range of interpretive possibilities.

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161 Some claims are clearly intelligible, such as Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on particular material object, *The Gay Science*, stored at Princeton. Other claims, such as the status of Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on, as limit case, the two VHS cassette of *Braveheart* (1995) stored at A H Meadows Library, is unintelligible. Such a hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility inherently allows for disagreement and multiple possibilities but also provides the tools for agreement or eliminating a range of interpretations as unintelligible. After some agreement about the status of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on a text, we can then trace the development of those sections of interest back into materials surrounding its genesis. That is, by starting with works in which Nietzsche's *imprimatur* is strong, we can trace back, by means of positive historical, philological, material, or archival evidence, which pieces of text are connected to other pieces of text.
Each text is materially unique and carries the burden of a deep and complex history to which we ought to bear witness. A difficult task certainly, but here Zarathustra’s words to the spirit of gravity ring true: “Do not make it too easy on yourself!”

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I hold that we ought to abandon the universal application of the priority principle as a false dichotomy and instead focus on the historical details themselves and their relevance to individual texts and individual projects. This opens a hermeneutical arena for collaborative deliberation about the historical complexity of individual texts without the need for universally agreed upon demarcation criteria. These deliberations should, of course, include Nietzsche’s own assessment of those individual texts.

Nietzsche’s own views ought to spark debate themselves since they are much bolder and more complicated than our contemporary perspective might assume. As the quote from a letter to Wagner affixed to the beginning of the chapter attests, Nietzsche rejects the dichotomy between published and unpublished. Further, he applies this to his own work. He seems to suggest that he wishes his own work to be both published and unpublished. The interpretation of this passage is beyond the scope of this essay, but it certainly is ripe for a methodological analysis. In one of several prefaces written in the notebook containing drafts of BT, Nietzsche wrote the following: “Now, as it has been brought onto the market and, to the annoyance of the writer, everyone can

162 Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126, [Z III 2.2].
take it in their hands, look at it and assess it, now I wish I could say of this writing, using the words of Aristotle: She has been published and yet again not been published.”

In this light, I will pursue my investigation of eternal recurrence without recourse to the priority principle but by focusing on the development on Nietzsche's thought back through a series of documents. The status of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on these documents is varied. These documents demonstrate Nietzsche's awareness of certain concerns scholars have about eternal recurrence. Additionally, I will also be dealing with several drafts of BGE 56, GS 341 and Z II 20. However, in conformity with what I outlined above, I will be working with individual primary documents with the aim of better explaining several of Nietzsche's texts on eternal recurrence that clearly contain his *imprimatur*.

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163 Nachlass 1870–71/72, 8[83], KGW III 3.263, cf. 8[84], KGW III 3.264.
Chapter 3: Nietzsche’s Reading of Plato

In what has become known as the “standard objection,” scholars hold that eternal recurrence is essentially incoherent.\(^\text{164}\) The standard objection is that it either contradicts, or is inconsistent with, the principle of identity or, by extension, the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. The contradiction is that, the identity of indiscernibles holds that any two things that are qualitatively identical cannot be numerically distinct. Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence holds that the whole universe repeats itself identically. However, this violates the identity of indiscernibles because it claims that two recurrences of the universe are qualitatively identical (including temporal and spatial indexicals) and are numerically distinct. This has led commentators to implicitly presuppose the following modus tollens argument \[p \rightarrow q. \sim q. \therefore \sim p.\]\(^\text{165}\)


\(^{165}\) This implicit argument can often be seen in an inverted explicit argument about the unpublished work. They note, charitably, that the reason Nietzsche did not publish some of his proofs of eternal recurrence was because he likely saw contradictions in them. For example, Magnus writes about a unpublished proof of eternal recurrence, “Either Nietzsche has introduced an inconsistency in the formulation of which he is unaware, or he is aware of some difficulty, I prefer to suggest that Nietzsche was probably aware of some inadequacy in the argument (even if it is not the one advanced here) and, in consequence, chose not to publish it in any shape or form” (Bernd Magnus, “Cosmological and Logical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence” in *Heidegger’s Metahistory of Philosophy: Amor Fati, Being and Truth* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 18.
1. \((p \rightarrow q)\) If Nietzsche was aware of the contradiction then he would not have published it.

2. \((\sim q)\) Nietzsche published it.

3. \((\sim p)\) Nietzsche was unaware of the contradiction [and this explains why he published it].

This inconsistency has led scholars to suggest that the idea of eternal recurrence is a complete failure.\(^{166}\) However, premise 1 can be challenged. It may be the case that Nietzsche was aware of the contradiction and published it intentionally as he explicitly did with other contradictory or self-undermining ideas.\(^{167}\) In the secondary literature, these are referred to as self-consuming concepts.\(^{168}\) After all, Nietzsche admits that Heraclitus is one of the many historical sources of

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\(^{166}\) For example, (Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 265). It has occasionally been suggested that Nietzsche may have been aware of a contradiction and rejected or transcended the idea of eternal recurrence. However, such suggestions are not arguments but are perhaps better characterized as suspicions with little or no evidentiary support (Cf. Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 261-265; Harvey Lomax, *The Paradox of Philosophical Education: Nietzsche's New Nobility and the Eternal Recurrence in Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), 88; Robert John Ackermann, *Nietzsche: A Frenzied Look* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 165; Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Continuum Books, 2004), 372). Magnus is a special case in that he thinks that eternal return is a concept that consumes itself and is not about our fated destiny but, “the realization that our highest aspirations and yearnings turn against themselves in spite of themselves in the endless carnival of the ascetic ideal” (Bernd Magnus, Stanley Stewart & Jean-Pierre Mileur, *Nietzsche’s Case: Philosophy as/and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 34).

\(^{167}\) Cf. BGE 15, 22.

the idea of eternal recurrence.\textsuperscript{169} It is Heraclitus in whom Nietzsche sees a joy in contradiction itself.\textsuperscript{170}

I will argue for Nietzsche’s awareness of the principle of identity, the identity of indiscernibles, and the principle of explosion in this and coming chapters. This raises the central question of this dissertation, if Nietzsche was well aware of the contradiction, what then could he be doing with eternal recurrence?

The assumption of Nietzsche’s ignorance in scholarly debates has led to a narrow scholarly focus on the psychological impact of eternal recurrence. A selection of scholars offering the standard objection can be found in Simmel, Kaufmann, Danto, Soll, Nehamas, Clark, Magnus, Seung, Shapiro and Loeb.\textsuperscript{171} Paul Loeb summarizes the conclusion of the standard objection; “Ever since Georg Simmel’s summary dismissal in 1907, even Nietzsche's admirers have conceded that his emphasis on the complete qualitative identity of eternal recurrence renders his idea insupportable, insignificant, and incoherent.”\textsuperscript{172} First, if the repetition


\textsuperscript{169} EH BT 2.

\textsuperscript{170} Nietzsche writes in \textit{Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, “Heraclitus' regal possession is his extraordinary power to think intuitively. Toward the other type of thinking, the type that is accomplished in concepts and logical combinations, in other words toward reason, he shows himself cool, insensitive, in fact hostile, and seems to feel pleasure whenever he can contradict it with an intuitively arrived-at truth. He does this in dicta [sic] like "Everything forever has its opposite along with it," and in such unabashed fashion that Aristotle accused him of the highest crime before the tribunal of reason: to have sinned against the law of contradiction” (PTAG 5, p.52).


\textsuperscript{172} Paul Loeb, \textit{The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.
of events is to be identical, they must not only be spatially identical but also temporally identical.

Bernd Magnus writes,

> if this state of the universe can occur at some other time [...] then it is not a recurrence of the same but a recurrence of the exactly similar - an argument already anticipated by Isaac Newton, when he remarked that even if all particles in the universe were one day to achieve the identical configuration they exhibit today these would not be identical states, since the time of their occurrence would differ.\(^\text{173}\)

If recurrences are to be truly identical, the “Same”, they cannot simply be exactly similar. They must be identical. However, as I point out in chapter five, Nietzsche does not presuppose that recurrence happen on an absolute Newtonian timeline. Rather, time and space only exist within recurrences. A problem nevertheless still persists.

Arthur Danto explicates why recurrences being qualitatively identical seems to produce a problem. He writes, “When two things are so exactly alike that they cannot in principle be told apart, nothing is to count as evidence that there are two things to be told apart.”\(^\text{174}\) This is a much more abstract objection than Magnus because it refers to the inability to tell two things apart that are absolutely identical. Such an objection need not reference a linear timeline. This objection can also be seen in Magnus, “if we take seriously the suggestion that ‘recurrences’ are literally identical with ‘their’ occurrences” then “we can say simply that ‘recurrence’ misleadingly identifies a numerically identical ‘occurrence’.”\(^\text{175}\) As T. K Seung historically orients the problem, “it [eternal recurrence] violates Leibniz's principle of identity [the identity of indiscernibles]. If the repetition of an object or event is truly identical with its previous


incarnations, it cannot be a repetition because the two cannot be distinguished from each other.”

Gary Shapiro also puts this criticism forward as follows:

The problem is in the conception of an event or series of events being exactly the same as and yet distinct from another event or series. There is no discernible way in which any event can be distinguished from its repetition; but then, by the identity of indiscernibles, those two events (or two series) are the same event (or series). Yet if they are precisely the same thing, how can we differentiate them, as talk of recurrences seems to presuppose?\textsuperscript{177}

Paul Loeb summarizes a selection of commentary,

Nietzsche needs to postulate the numerical identity of eternal recurrence. And indeed, as several commentators have since elaborated, if the repetitions of my experience are to be \textit{qualitatively} identical in every respect, then they must also be \textit{temporally} identical. But since time was our only means of differentiating these repetitions (as "first" and "second," or "earlier" and "later"), this means that they are in fact numerically identical. So what were supposed to be infinitely many recurrences or repetitions turn out to be only a single occurrence. Nietzsche's doctrine thus proves to be conceptually incoherent.\textsuperscript{178}

This and other problems supposedly showing the idea of eternal recurrence is blatantly incoherent have stumped scholars. As Maudemarie Clark writes, “Many interpreters have found it troubling that Nietzsche’s central doctrine should be so easily defeated[...].”\textsuperscript{179} In this chapter, I use multiple kinds of evidence to argue for Nietzsche’s reading and awareness of the classic canon of the principle of identity in Plato. This will demonstrate that as early as 1872 Nietzsche rejected the principle of identity as presented in Plato’s \textit{Parmenides}.

\textsuperscript{177} Gary Shapiro, \textit{Nietzschean Narratives} (USA: Indiana University Press, 1989), 84.
\textsuperscript{178} Loeb, \textit{The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra}, 13.
\textsuperscript{179} Clark, \textit{Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy}, 246.
1. Nietzsche’s Engagement with Plato: A Problem of Methodology

Historically speaking, commentators have given little attention to Nietzsche’s reading of the *Timaeus* and the *Theaetetus*. This is, perhaps, due to the fact that Nietzsche never explicitly cites the *Timaeus* or the *Theaetetus* in his mature published writings where scholars often focus their attention. Nietzsche’s work on the *Parmenides* has attracted more attention since *Parmenides* is mentioned in at least one published work from the middle period. If commentators do explicitly link Nietzsche with these texts of Plato, they often deliberately avoid the question of whether Nietzsche was influenced by them or even read them at all. For example, Matthew Meyer suggests that we can trace Nietzsche’s rejection of metaphysics to Plato’s *Theaetetus*. However, he writes, “I do want to note that the primary point of this exercise is not to identify the historical influences on Nietzsche’s thought or to argue that Nietzsche is consciously reviving views he finds in Plato’s work.” Such arguments ought, in my view, to be founded on historical evidence rather than evidentially vacuous speculation.

A historical approach, however, also faces significant challenges. The largest challenge is that in Nietzsche’s personal copies, neither the *Theaetetus* nor the *Timaeus* contain any annotations and the *Parmenides* only contains underlining on a single page, which is dog-eared. Although this type of evidence is most often used to prove reading, it is not the only source of evidence for reading. In this chapter, I use a variety of different kinds of evidence to

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180 Translators often add citations or suggest them. Nietzsche’s common references to the *Theaetetus* in his notes take the form of “Theaet” or “Theaet.” (KGW II 4 p. 131-2). Nietzsche’s common references to the *Timaeus* are “Timaeus”, “Timäus” (KGW II 4 p. 58-69). None of these are present in the published work.
181 HAH I 261. Cf. PTAG 1, 6, 9-15, 17.
183 Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche Through the Ancients*, 158.
184 NPB 458
argue for Nietzsche’s reading of Plato generally and, in particular, the *Timaeus* and the *Theaetetus*. These texts contain the principle of identity and Plato’s theory of the great year. I then explicate Nietzsche’s rejection of the principle of identity as presented in Plato’s *Parmenides*.

2. Orienting an Approach Without Annotations

In the methodology section, I claimed we can evaluate the plethora of historical texts, artifacts, and influences that can help triangulate a hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility. Different types of evidence lend their support from different angles and in different lights. These different strains of evidence allow us to triangulate a space within which to situate an understanding of Nietzsche’s writing.

The variety of forms of evidence I use are contingent in the historical sense. For example, Nietzsche’s quotation of a work is positive evidence that he read that work. Sometimes there also exists additional positive evidence suggesting that Nietzsche did not obtain the quote from the source text but, instead, a secondary text. Occasionally there is also positive evidence that Nietzsche only read a section but did not finish a chapter or work, for example, when Nietzsche explicitly states he did not read or finish a text.\textsuperscript{185} There is occasionally physical evidence Nietzsche did not read a particular page from a

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{185} For example, in a letter dated November 14, 1881 to Overbeck. In that letter he writes about his inability to read based on his bad eyesight. He also claims in that letter, “I have not read Romundt’s book” (KSB06:139uu. 167. An Franz Overbeck in Basel). The book he refers to can still be found in his personal library without any annotations (NPB 505-506). The text he refers to is: Romundt, Heinrich, *Antäus. Neuer Aufbau der Lehre Kants über Seele, Freiheit und Gott von Dr. Heinrich Romundt* (Leipzig: Veit & Comp., 1882).
\end{footnote}
particular copy because pages were not cut open as was often necessary due to binding practices at the time.\textsuperscript{186} Research in the now quickly developing area of marginalia studies, for example Heather Jackson’s \textit{Marginalia}, often jumps to the conclusion that in annotated works, sections that are unmarked were skipped over.\textsuperscript{187} The use of this appeal to ignorance risks becoming fallacious. As the saying goes, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. It is important to note that a lack of positive evidence of reading is not equivalent to negative evidence and must therefore be handled carefully.

Nietzsche’s annotations in his personal library are invaluable positive evidence for determining his reading. Yet, Nietzsche’s reading and annotations often do not coincide. Of the extent books and essays in his library, many bear no annotation despite other evidence he read them.\textsuperscript{188} This can be determined from letters in which he says he is reading them, notebooks from the same time in which he copies down quotes, and quotations which can also be found in his published work. This can also be corroborated through auxiliary evidence such as library

\textsuperscript{186} These are sometimes called “Opened edges” when they have been cut. (J.J. Little and Ives Company. \textit{The J. J. Little book of Types, Specimen Pages and Book Pages: With Suggestions on Book Making and a Glossary of Printing and Binding Terms}. (New York: J. J, Little & Ives Company, 1923), 423; Brobjer, \textit{Nietzsche's Philosophical Context}, 17.
\textsuperscript{188} For example, Nietzsche’s reading of Emerson's essay “Quotation and Originality” bears no annotations. However, in 1876 we find Nietzsche copied down a quotation in his notebooks he attributes to Bacon, “Consilia juventutis plus divinitatis habent. Bacon” (KGW IV 2. 16[19]; N II 1, p. 157). However, this misquotation does not come close to matching the quote in the original text (Bacon, \textit{De Augmentis Scientiarum}, in \textit{Works of Francis Bacon} Vol. 2, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), Bk. VI Ch. 3, Antithesis II, p. 466). Nietzsche’s misquotation does exactly reproduce a misquotation present in Emerson's essay (Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Quotation and Originality” in \textit{Letters and Social Aims}. Volume VIII. Emerson's Complete Works (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1892), 177). Given other evidence of Nietzsche’s reading of the essays in that text at that time, we can conclude he read the essay “Quotation and Originality.”
records, binding bills, and purchase receipts. There are a variety of reasons the books Nietzsche read bear no annotations.

To begin with, to my knowledge no scholars have presented evidence about annotations in the texts Nietzsche checked out from various libraries. This is likely because annotations in library loans present a difficult set of scholarly obstacles. As historical marginalia studies show, the practice of annotation is rare before the 1700’s. The practice developed rapidly from 1750 to 1820. Some of the library books Nietzsche checked out bear no annotations. However, this is unremarkable since the same social taboos against writing in library books today were also held during the 1800’s. This suggests that a lack of annotations in the texts Nietzsche borrowed from libraries does not indicate a lack of reading. Additionally, there is also evidence he read works that are not directly traceable to him (e.g. his roommate's library loans, books borrowed from friends, etc...) which have similar, but unique, sets of complications.

189 Nietzsche used academic and specialized libraries in Pforta, Leipzig and likely Bonn. He also borrowed books and musical scores from the Leihbibliothek which was part of the Naumburger bookstore Domrich (Brobjr, Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context, 13). Circulation records often contain the title of a text. However, figuring out which particular book of the sometimes-multiple copies available is difficult, if not impossible. While some of Nietzsche's handwriting is distinctive, identifying which non-semantic markings (underlines etc.) are Nietzsche's would be nearly impossible.  

190 Jackson, Marginalia, 15.  

Many books we know Nietzsche read bear no annotations.\textsuperscript{192} When Nietzsche was young, he did not tend to annotate books he was reading.\textsuperscript{193} Further, many of the books which he owned and read do not contain annotations because Nietzsche had many books read to him throughout his life due to his bad health and eyesight. Nietzsche was often read to by Gersdorff, Romundt, Meta von Salis, Resa von Schirnhofer, his sister and others.\textsuperscript{194} In 1877 alone, he had over twenty titles read to him due to poor health. That year Rée, Meysenbug, Brenner, Gast, Seydlitz and possibly his sister all read to him.\textsuperscript{195} Nietzsche was invited to Meysenbug’s house in Sorrento for the winter where there were communal readings.\textsuperscript{196} After 1880, Nietzsche would employ several women to read to him. In 1883-1884 he hired a pastor's widow and in 1885 “a German lady from Meiningen” to read to him.\textsuperscript{197} In a letter to his mother dated August 10, 1885, he suggests that people frequently offer to read aloud to him.\textsuperscript{198} Many of the texts that were read

\textsuperscript{192} Brobj\textsuperscript{er}, \textit{Nietzsche's Philosophical Context}, 234n25.
\textsuperscript{193} Brobj\textsuperscript{er}, \textit{Nietzsche's Philosophical Context}, 17.
\textsuperscript{197} Nietzsche writes to Overbeck July 2, 1885 (KSB07:61u. 609. An Franz Overbeck in Basel). Brobj\textsuperscript{er} miscites this as a letter to his sister May 20, 1885 (Brobj\textsuperscript{er}, \textit{Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context}, 12n32).
\textsuperscript{198} KSB07:78u. 620. An Franziska Nietzsche in Naumburg.
to him, such as Walter Scott’s works, bear no annotations.\textsuperscript{199} While some of the texts Nietzsche had read to him do have minor annotations, many do not. We cannot, therefore, presume that an absence of annotations indicates an absence of reading.

Additionally, many of the annotations in Nietzsche’s library we know to have existed have been lost. At least one work that has been lost, Jean-Marie Guyau’s \textit{Esquisse d’une moral sans obligation ni sanction}, was heavily annotated and some of those annotations have been recorded in detail.\textsuperscript{200} However, in most cases when a text is lost there were no known copies of the annotations it contained until very recently. Several works that likely had annotations are also missing from Nietzsche's personal library because they were stolen or given away before

\textsuperscript{199} Nietzsche owned two works by Walter Scott; \textit{Die Verlobten, Roman übersetzt von Aug. Schäfer}, and \textit{Die Verlobten, Roman übersetzt von Aug. Schäfer}. Neither of these works bear annotations (NPB 546). This lack of annotations may have caused scholars, such as Thomas Brobjer, to not include Walter Scott among Nietzsche’s reading. Despite this, his sister read Walter Scott to Nietzsche as evidence from his letters indicate. On both November 16, 1875 and January 18, 1876 Nietzsche wrote a letter to Carl Gersdorff to tell him that his sister is reading Walter Scott to him (KSB05:123u.493. An Carl von Gersdorff in Hohenheim; KSB05:131u. 498. An Carl von Gersdorff in Hohenheim). In a letter December 8, 1875 Nietzsche mentions to his friend Erwin Rohde that his sister is again reading him Walter Scott (KSB05:125. 494. An Erwin Rohde in Kiel). Nietzsche even mentions which of the texts his sister is reading to him in a letter dated November 16, 1875 by mentioning his admiration for “Robin den Rothen” which can be found in the twelfth volume of Walter Scott’s Werke (KSB05:123u. 493. An Carl von Gersdorff in Hohenheim; \textit{Walter Scott’s Werke}. 12 theil. (Grätz: Joh. Andr. Rienreich, 1829)). Elizabeth recalls this in her work on her brother. She writes, “After Fritz's health had begun to decline, I used to read to him aloud, of an evening, after the moil and toil of the day; and for this purpose we chose Walter Scott's novels, of which I believe I must have read sixteen, one after the other; for we liked him, we liked his heroes, and we liked even his long-winded descriptions” (Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, \textit{The Life of Nietzsche, Volume 1}, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1912), 345).

\textsuperscript{200} Nietzsche’s copy was in the library in 1942 but was lost some time after that. However, Nietzsche’s annotations were copied by Gast. They have been published in an appendix in the German translation by Elisabeth Schwatz, \textit{Sittlichkeit ohne “pflicht”: Anhang: Randhermerkungen Friedrich Nietzsche’s zu Guyaus “Esquisse d’une Morale”} (Leipzig: 1912), 279-303 (cf. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Michael Ure. “\textit{Contra Kant}” in Nietzsche’s Engagement with Kant and the Kantian Legacy. \textit{Volume I: Nietzsche, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics}, eds. Marco Brusotti and Merman Siemens (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017). 285n6; Brobjer, \textit{Nietzsche Philosophical Context}, 234n22).
1875.\textsuperscript{201} Some original annotations were probably lost in the 2004 fire at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek where Nietzsche’s personal library is stored.\textsuperscript{202}

Further, under the direction of Nietzsche’s sister, approximately a third of the annotated books in Nietzsche’s personal library were re-bound at the Nietzsche-Archiv. In this process the pages were trimmed and annotations and marginalia were partially or completely lost.\textsuperscript{203} As William Sherman notes in his work on the history of marginalia, Used Books, the practice of cutting marginalia completely out while rebinding was common in eighteenth and nineteenth century archival restorations.\textsuperscript{204} The reason for this, as Roger Stoddard writes in his work Marks in Books, is that “[u]ntil modern times binders have reassembled books with the motives of low cost, beauty, or uniformity.”\textsuperscript{205} He goes on to argue that binding practices historically have led to the entire history of a text being sacrificed or actively bleached away. This suggests, as Heidi Hackel argues in her historical work on marginalia, “As marginalia fail to chronicle all aspects of the reading process, they also do not preserve traces of all readers.”\textsuperscript{206} As obvious as this claim may be, its absence from scholarly debates on Nietzsche has hampered research. What this all

\textsuperscript{201} “Unfortunately, Nietzsche first copy of Emerson’s Versuche, Schopenhauer’s Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, and Lange’s Geschichte des Materialismus have been missing from the library since before 1875. Emerson was stolen, Lange was given away, and Schopenhauer was probably also given away after Nietzsche acquired the complete works. The annotated copies of these works in the library today are thus not Nietzsche’s first copies but instead are ones he acquired later” (Brobjer, Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context, 16).

\textsuperscript{202} Records of these annotations exist, perhaps some in the New York Public Library’s scans from the 1990’s, but often the scans are not of the highest quality and can be difficult to demarcate between Nietzsche’s annotations and blemishes.


\textsuperscript{206} Heidi Brayman Hackel, Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 140.
means is that while Nietzsche’s annotations can offer positive evidence of reading, an absence of annotations does not offer immediate evidence he did not read a work. In many cases, such as with Plato and Aristotle, we can reconstruct Nietzsche’s reading even without annotations. We can do this through a triangulation of his citations, summaries, extensive quotations and other historical evidence.

In order to avoid the specter of relativism, I have assumed Nietzsche’s quotations come from the works he claims unless positive counterfactual evidence exists. I note when more than one source is possible. When I address Nietzsche’s quotations from others I have searched through databases of Nietzsche’s known library and readings that are currently searchable through optical character recognition (OCR) under public domain. Most of Nietzsche's library and known readings are searchable today. It should be noted here that the process for making documents searchable in the old German script Fraktur is still developing and the identification algorithms used in public domain searches occasionally make errors. I have endeavored to use multi-variable search algorithms to mitigate some of these problems.

While this methodology is stricter than most with its claims, it should be noted that with every passing year, and in this very dissertation, new texts are discovered which Nietzsche read. Nevertheless, the simple possibility that new evidence will arise should not undermine our efforts. Bearing the above arguments in mind, my method relies almost exclusively on positive evidence.

3. Nietzsche’s Reading of Plato: Identity and Recurrence of the Great Year
In the penultimate section of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, we find that Eternal Recurrence is explicitly related to the idea of a great year (grosses Jahr).

“Behold, we know what you teach: that all things eternally return and we ourselves with them, and that we have already existed in infinite number of times, and all things with us

“You teach that there is a great year [grosses Jahr] of becoming, a monster of a great year [grossem Jahr]: it must, like an hourglass, turn itself over again and again, so that it may run down and run out again:—

- “so that all these years are alike in what is greatest and also in what is smallest, so that we ourselves are alike in every great year [grossen Jahre], in what is greatest and also in what is smallest.”207

In this section, it is Zarathustra's animals that speak, not Zarathustra. Zarathustra chides his animals for making a hurdy-gurdy song out of his thought and then falls silent. However, this does make it clear that Nietzsche was aware that eternal recurrence is associated with the expression "great year."

The expression ‘Great Year’ comes from the stoics, whom Nietzsche claims show traces of eternal recurrence in their writings.208 While various traditions have claimed the number of years between cycles are different, it remains consistent that there is a repetition. While the stoics coined the term, the origin of the great year has roots stretching long before Plato into Hindu in Indic traditions. Nietzsche would have read about this in various texts such as Friedrich Creuzer's Symbolism and Mythology and another work on ancient symbolism by Johan Jakob Bachofen.209 Nietzsche was also familiar with various pre-platonic philosophers, such as Heraclitus and the

207 Z III 13.2 [Italics added].
Pythagoreans, who held versions of eternal recurrence. However, it is only with Plato that the idea first gained philosophical centrality within the western tradition of philosophy. The great year is the idea that the planets and fixed stars complete a cycle and return to a configuration identical to the ones they held before. Some, including Nietzsche, have taken this to mark the return of the same events. Given Nietzsche’s association of eternal recurrence with the Platonic great year, one would expect that many scholars have examined Nietzsche’s reading of Plato. This, however, is not the case.

Before presenting evidence of Nietzsche’s reading of Plato, it is important to explicate how my approach distinguishes itself from previous scholarship. There exists a very large secondary literature discussing and comparing the ideas and philosophical positions of both Plato and Nietzsche. These approaches offer conclusions about the abstract conceptual agreements or disagreements without reference to what Nietzsche himself read or even wrote about this or that position. Sometimes these approaches even anachronistically slide into pseudo-intentional talk of how “Plato agrees with Nietzsche.” More informed accounts using a conceptual approach avoid such anachronisms and cite Nietzsche’s own words on Plato to demonstrate a disagreement. Ahistorical approaches go so far as to analyze “Nietzsche’s Rereading of Plato,” “Nietzsche’s skeptical reading of Plato,” or even simply “Nietzsche’s reading of Plato” without having first established that Nietzsche read any Plato, not to mention which texts of

210 Anderson argues this is nowhere explicitly stated in Plato (Mark Anderson, *Plato and Nietzsche, Their Philosophical Art* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 77).
Plato’s Nietzsche actually read. These ahistorical approaches, while important, do not demonstrate, or even find important, whether or not Nietzsche had read the texts upon which he is commenting. This is a particularly important point for Nietzsche scholarship because much of his knowledge of some philosophers, for example, Kant and Spinoza, came from secondary sources. The distortions in these secondary sources sometimes explain Nietzsche’s distorted interpretations. It is, therefore, important to ask which primary texts Nietzsche actually read. The lack of scholarly focus on Nietzsche’s reading of primary sources often leads commentators to suggest that Nietzsche had a “particular lack of academic training” in Plato. This, however, proves to be wildly misleading.

With other philosophers a focus on reading might seem an idiosyncratic research project. Nietzsche, however, is a special case since much of his understanding of source texts came exclusively from secondary sources. Therefore, it is important to not only show Nietzsche’s awareness of a concept’s centrality, but also whether he read it in a source text, secondary text, or elsewhere.

Even though there is extensive evidence of reading, teaching experience, and courses taken on Plato, scholars such as Thomas Brobjer still suggest that, “Nietzsche did not have a

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214 There is no evidence Nietzsche read the *Critique of Pure Reason*. All of Nietzsche’s quotations can be tracked to secondary sources. Nietzsche did read Kant’s work on Aesthetics.

personal engagement with Plato.” Despite claims like these, I will demonstrate Nietzsche’s long and thorough engagement with Plato’s source texts. These texts include the *Theaetetus*, containing the principle of identity, the *Timaeus*, containing the Platonic theory of eternal recurrence or the “Great Year”, and the *Parmenides* from which Nietzsche began his critique of the principle of identity.

3.1 Nietzsche’s Reading of Plato

Nietzsche’s first encounter with Plato likely occurred at the school Nietzsche attended from ages 14-19 (1858-1864): Pforta. According to an archived syllabus from Pforta, students were expected to read at least one dialogue of Plato’s during their final year, likely the *Phaedo*. Nietzsche's exit thesis (Valediktionsarbeit) for the Landesschule Pforta in Schulpforta (Saxony-Anhalt), presented on September 7, 1864 was entitled “De Theognide Megarensi.” In this text Nietzsche already shows familiarity with Plato’s work and explicitly cites the *Laws* and the *Meno*.

Evidence can be found for Nietzsche’s reading of Plato in a request form located at the *Goethe-Schiller Archiv* from September 26, 1863 submitted to Hermann Kletschke. This form details a request to buy two volumes of Plato's dialogues edited by Hermann, in Greek, and have

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218 TM 20, 28, 36, 38.
them bound. 219 Another form in the archive dated mid-June 1864 requests volume I again, this time citing the publisher “Teubner” rather than the editor. 220 In Nietzsche’s personal library we find the first two volumes bound together and, thus, we can assume he did end up acquiring them from these requests. We can establish that Nietzsche acquired volume I by 1865 since the cover is inscribed with, “Fr. Nietzsche 1865.” We can tell from the records of Nietzsche’s library loans that Nietzsche checked out the third volume of this set of texts on April 13, 1870. 221 In addition, at some point Nietzsche acquired the rest of the volumes and completed the 6 volume set that is recorded in his personal library. 222 Volume I contains the Theaetetus, Volume 2 contains the Parmenides, and Volume 4 contains the Timaeus. Every volume contains annotation and/or dog-eared pages indicating Nietzsche’s reading. 223

Aside from a likely first reading of volumes I & II sometime between 1863 and 1865 we can also establish Nietzsche’s re-reading of these volumes. Nietzsche read volume two as late as 1884. In a note from the spring of 1884 Nietzsche translates quotes from Theages 125e-126a. 224 Evidence suggests Nietzsche probably was reading this edition of the dialogue since page 378 is dog eared. 225 Page 378 in the edition Nietzsche owned contains Theages 127e-128D in Greek. 226 Nietzsche’s other editions do not have comparable indications of reading. The page in this

223 NPB 440-442.
224 KGW VII 2 25[137].
225 NPB 441.
volume is a likely source of this translated quote from 1884. This demonstrates not only Nietzsche’s engagement with these volumes of Plato but also his continued involvement during his later life.

Nietzsche taught a course on the Platonic dialogues in the winter semester of 1871-72, which led him to begin borrowing volumes of *Platon’s Stämmliche Werke* from Basel University a total of seven times. The third volume of *Platon’s Stämmliche Werke* that Nietzsche checked out contains the *Theaetetus* while the sixth contains the *Timaeus*. Nietzsche checked both of these volumes out of the library on four separate occasions on the same dates. Nietzsche also checked out Arnold Agustus’ *Platon’s Werke* from the Basil University library on January 23 and April 26, 1872.

Aside from Nietzsche’s library records, Nietzsche also owned at least two copies of the *Theaetetus*. One copy of the *Theaetetus* can be found in volume 1 of *Plato’s Dialogues* (discussed above). In addition, Nietzsche owned *Platons Werke*, in which the *Theaetetus* appears in part 3 vol 2, the *Parmenides* appears in part 3, vol. 5, and the *Timaeus* appears in part 4, vol. 6.

Nietzsche’s reading of the *Timaeus* has received some attention notably because his reading is, as John Sallis puts it, “remarkably astute, even by the standards of the best recent

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Nietzsche reaches philological conclusions regarding the *Timaeus* later established by A. E. Taylor in 1928 and Serge Margel in 1995.\(^{231}\)

While Nietzsche’s analysis of the *Timaeus* has gained some philosophical clout, Nietzsche’s textual engagement with the *Theaetetus* has gained only marginal attention. The few scholars who have taken up the topic at all have not addressed whether Nietzsche even read the text.\(^{232}\) For example, Matthew Meyer holds that Nietzsche puts forward the same robust relational ontology explicated in the *Theaetetus*. However, as he states explicitly, he avoids the topic of Nietzsche’s own reading of the dialogue.\(^{233}\) Mark Anderson suspects and finally rejects that Nietzsche derived his account of Heraclitus and the will to power directly from the *Theaetetus*. Anderson does not consider Nietzsche’s reading of this text at all in his analysis.\(^{234}\)

The most thorough work on Nietzsche’s reading knowledge of Plato has been produced by Thomas Brobjer. In his 2008 book he devotes four pages to discussion of Nietzsche’s reading and teaching of Plato, though he does not write about specific dialogues.\(^{235}\) In his 2004 essay, “Nietzsche’s Wrestling with Plato and Platonism,” he devotes three pages to a description of

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Nietzsche’s lecture series, “Introduction to the Study of Plato” and three sentences on Nietzsche’s lecture course, “Plato: Apology.”²³⁶ In neither his book nor his essay does Brobjer address Nietzsche's reading of the *Theaetetus* or the *Timaeus.*²³⁷ A more detailed engagement with the courses Nietzsche attended and taught demonstrates a broad view of Nietzsche’s engagement with Plato, specifically looking at which texts were covered.

3.2 Nietzsche’s Coursework and Teaching of Plato

Nietzsche attended Otto Jahn’s course “Plato’s Symposium” in summer 1865 and Karl Schaarschmidt’s “Plato’s Life and Teaching” as well as “Outline of the History of Philosophy.” Nietzsche’s class notes are located in the *Goethe-Schiller Archiv* in Weimar Germany.²³⁸ Nietzsche’s hand-written notes for these courses indicate Plato was covered in Schaarschmidt’s History of Philosophy course.²³⁹ The course “Outline of the History of Philosophy” consisted of five hour long meetings at the University of Bonn in 1865. Nietzsche’s extensive class notes for the document “Outline of the History of Philosophy” alone cover more than 50 extant pages and are numbered up to 61, suggesting more pages may have existed.²⁴⁰ His notes include a

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²³⁷ KGW II 5 p. 197.

²³⁸ The archived documents consulted for this chapter were located in the New York Public Library Archives and Manuscript Division. I am thankful for the New York Public Library for allowing me access to this material. As requested by the *Goethe-Schiller Archiv,* all future citation will cite the original archival records rather than the copies (*Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Goethe and Schiller Archive.* Hereafter GSA).

²³⁹ GSA 71/40-41.


92
considerable amount of original Greek including on Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle. His notes also include Berkeley, Hume and others. The history seems to end with several more contemporary philosophers in a list that Nietzsche titles, “Neueste Philosophie” with titles dating as late as 1799.\textsuperscript{241}

Nietzsche also took a course with Georg Curtius entitled, “History of Greek Literature” (\textit{Geschichte der Griechische Litteratur}) winter semester of 1865/66. Curtius introduced Nietzsche to a large variety of topics including comparative philology, linguistics, and language theory.\textsuperscript{242} Nietzsche took approximately 180 pages of notes in two notebooks.

Nietzsche’s first notebook for the course contains copious mixed notes that fill over 130 pages. Nietzsche’s notes for this course contain many references to Aristotle and Plato. Some of these notes Nietzsche revisited at a later time and annotated in the margins, for example, a quotation and citations from the \textit{Republic} (book I 335e) made at some later date.\textsuperscript{243} A second notebook of course notes, continuous with the first, from Georg Curtius’ course encompasses almost an additional 50 pages. This text also carries many notes on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.\textsuperscript{244}

Nietzsche’s general awareness of Plato’s texts was also acknowledged by his Greek teacher, Karl Steinhart, who, in a letter of recommendation, states that Nietzsche, “[h]as a

\textsuperscript{241} GSA 71/41. P. 56.
\textsuperscript{244} GSA 71/45 (C III 1b): “Kollegnachschriften. Georg Curtius: Geschichte der Griechische Litteratur”.

93
profound and capable nature, enthusiastic for philosophy, in particular the Platonic, in which he already is quite initiated.”

Nietzsche’s interest in Plato and Aristotle is evident throughout his student notebooks and this evidently continued as he began to move away from taking courses and began teaching them himself. For example, in a notebook that probably dates from 1870, we find research notes on both Plato and Aristotle sandwiched between notes for his lectures on Latin grammar and a plan for a course on Hesiod. We also see Nietzsche continuing to think and write about the Platonic Dialogues in his notebooks in between his notes for his lecture course "Encyclopedia of Classical Philology" which he taught at University of Basel in the summer semester of 1871. In this notebook he takes notes on the *Phaedo, Republic, Symposium, Sophist, Gorgias, Protagoras,* and *Parmenides,* among others.

Beyond the content of his student notebooks and his early research on Plato, Nietzsche also taught many courses explicitly on Plato. At Basel University in winter semester of 1871-1872 Nietzsche taught “Introduction to the Study of the Platonic Dialogues” (*Einführung in das Studium der platonischen Dialoge*). This teaching and reading explains Nietzsche’s clear discussion of Plato’s texts in *The Birth of Tragedy,* published in 1872. In that work Nietzsche mentions or refers to the *Republic, Symposium, Ion, Apology, Phaedrus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Phaedo, Protagoras, Theaetetus,* and the *Timaeus* among others. Nietzsche taught the course

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248 BT p. 46n68, 68n116 [*Republic*], 57n89, 67n11, 68n115 [*Symposium*] 61n93,64n100 [*Ion*], 64n100, 65n106, 66n108 [*Apology*], 64n100 [*Phaedrus*], 66n108 [*Euthyphro*], 68n112 [*Gorgias*], 68n113, 71n122 [*Phaedo*], 70n120 [*Protagoras*], 75n127 [*Theaetetus*], 83n130 [*Timaeus*].
on the Platonic dialogues with minor changes and under different names on four separate occasions. He taught variants of the same course in winter semester 1873-74, summer semester 1876, and winter semester 1878-79. His extant lecture notes for the course are over 180 pages long in the KGW and cover the Platonic dialogues individually. His course notes in the KGW include four pages on the *Theaetetus*, seven pages on the *Timaeus*, and five pages on the *Parmenides* in which he quotes both German and Greek.

Nietzsche also writes about twenty pages of extant lecture notes on Plato in Section II on “The Philosophical Literature” (*Die philosophische Litteratur*) in the course he taught under the title “History of Greek Literature I and II” (*Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur <I und II>*) . He taught this course twice; once in the winter semester 1874-1875 and once in summer semester 1875. In the section on the Socratic Dialogues, Nietzsche discusses a large variety of issues in many dialogues including: *Gorgias, Hippias Minor, Phaedo, Symposium, Protagoras, Republic, Sophist, Politics, Philebos, Theages, Meno, Laws, Lysis, Laches, Charmides*,

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249 Winter semester 1871-1872 - Introduction to the Study of the Platonic Dialogues (Einführung in das Studium der platonischen Dialoge). 
Winter Semester 1873-1874 - On Plato's Life and Writings. (Über Platons Leben und Schriften.)
Summer Semester 1876 - On Plato's Life and Teachings. (Über Platons Leben und Lehre)
Winter Semester 1878-1879 - Introduction to the Study of Plato (Einleitung in das Studium Platons).
(KGW II.4. p.5). It should be noted that Nietzsche’s courses labeled “SS” in the KGW are sometimes referred to in the secondary literature as “spring semester” and other times as “summer semester”. These are used interchangeably and refer to the same semesters. I will be using “summer semester” as this is how the university reported semesters to the state.

250 KGW II 4 p. 5.
251 KGW II 2 p. 71-188.
252 KGW II 4 p. 68-76, 131-134, 123-127.
253 KGW II 5 p. 180.
Nietzsche explicitly comments on the proposition that the *Theaetetus* is a late work while the *Timaeus* is held to be early.\textsuperscript{255}

Much of what we know about Nietzsche’s reading of the ancients, including Plato, comes from his early lecture notes for his course *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (*Vorplatonische Philosophen*)\textsuperscript{256}. There is a 70 year old scholarly debate concerning this text. The debate concerns whether this course was first taught in 1869 or 1872. The problem is that it was offered in 1869 at Basel University, but it was unknown whether it was actually taught. This is important because it is potentially the first lecture course that deals with Plato’s writing in the *Theaetetus* and the *Timaeus*. These notes later were drawn on for Nietzsche’s work *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, which contains his first explicit attack on the principle of identity put in logical form \([A=A]\). Dating this text is therefore a way to date Nietzsche’s first thoughts rejecting the principle of identity.

Fritz Bornmann and Mario Carpitella suggest that this course may have been taught in 1869-1870. Thomas Brobjer, Greg Whitlock and Karl Schlechta also date this lecture more specifically to the winter semester 1869-1870.\textsuperscript{257} Kaufmann, on the other hand, dates its first teaching to 1872.\textsuperscript{258} Whitlock, who edited and translated the work into English, holds the somewhat unintuitive position that the lecture was first given in 1869-70 but the existent lecture notes were not written until the summer of 1872. Paolo D’Iorio and Curt Paul Jans both date the

\textsuperscript{254} Beginning KGW II 5 p. 193.


\textsuperscript{258} Whitlock, PPP, xxiii.
announcement to the winter semester 1869/70 but list the course as first being taught summer semester 1872.\textsuperscript{259} The difficulty here is that we have evidence the course was offered for the 1869 winter semester, but the evidence it was taught is not conclusive. There are several separate pieces of historical evidence that it was offered.

First, the course appears in the archived copies of \textit{Philosophische Monatshefte}, which published the titles of lectures of philosophy offered at the beginning of each term, much like a course catalog but for all philosophy courses in German. On page 77 we find that the course is being offered winter semester 1869/1870, beginning November 1.\textsuperscript{260} The second piece of evidence is Nietzsche’s hand-written announcement (\textit{Ankündigung}). This offering likely was an advertisement for the course attempting to get students' interest. Like course offerings today, this may have been attached to an office door at some point. However, it is stated in commentary on the facsimile reproduction of this advertisement in the KGW that it is not known whether \textit{The Pre-Platonic Philosophers} was actually taught this year.\textsuperscript{261} A third piece of evidence that might also suggest Nietzsche taught this course in 1869/70 was a letter Nietzsche wrote to the President of Basel University, Wilhelm Vischer-Bilfinger, in January 1871 in which he stated, “I recall that I have already announced [angekündigt] two lecture courses of a philosophical nature in this sense, ‘\textit{The Pre-platonic Philosophers with Interpretation of Selected Fragments}’ and ‘\textit{On the Platonic Question}’.”\textsuperscript{262} This, however, is not definitive evidence that the course was actually

\textsuperscript{260} \textit{Philosophische Monatshefte. Vol IV. Wintersemester 1869/70} (Berlin: Otto Loewenstein, 1869), 77.
\textsuperscript{261} KGW II 4 p. 207-208.
\textsuperscript{262} PPP xxiii; KSB03:174u. 118. An Wilhelm Vischer(-Bilfinger) in Basel.
taught since “angekündigt” simply means to offer or advertise a course. In the 1800’s, like today, if courses did not gain enough student interest they were canceled.²⁶³ So, simply offering a course does not mean the course was actually taught.

Nietzsche's offering, but not teaching, The Pre-Platonic Philosophers in 1869 is corroborated by his letters. In Nietzsche's June 16, 1869 letter to Erwin Rohde, his July 1869 letter to Paul Deussenn and his September 28, 1869 letter to Carl Gersdorff, he writes in excitement about the announcement of the course.²⁶⁴ However, in his November 23, 1869 letter to Friedrich Ritschl, his December 19, 1869 letter to Deussen and November 23, 1870 letter to Rohde, which all discuss the courses he is teaching, the course The Pre-Platonic Philosophers is not discussed.²⁶⁵ The genuine excitement that can be seen in his letters about his 1869 offering and the complete absence of discussion after the semester began suggest it was not taught.

Another piece of evidence, undiscussed in this debate until now, casts doubt on the whether the lecture was taught at the University of Basel in 1869. This is the list of courses taught by Nietzsche as recorded by his sister. In her work Der einsame Nietzsche, she does list the 1869 rendition of the course, but gives it a special status. In a footnote she suggests this course had only three students and may have been taught from home. Nietzsche did teach a few courses from home, so it is possible, but Elizabeth’s accounts are notoriously unreliable. What to make of Elizabeth's claim that it was taught from home is unclear. I have found no corroborating

²⁶⁵ KSB03:77u. 43. An Friedrich Ritschl in Leipzig; KSB03:81. 46. An Paul Deussen in Minden; KSB03:158u. 110. An Erwin Rohde in Hamburg. (I am thankful to Joshua Rayman for pointing me to these letters).
evidence to support Elizabeth’s claim.\textsuperscript{266} Nevertheless, she indicates it was not taught at the University.

There is a wealth of evidence to be gained from historical documents in the *Nietzsche Archiv*, *Goethe-Schiller Archiv*, and *Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek*, where scholars have been researching. However, important evidence can also come from other archival sources that have been ignored. Just as every professor today knows, bureaucracy is a tragically essential part of university systems. However, scholars often forget that bureaucracy was also an essential part of academia when Nietzsche was teaching. Evidence that has yet to be taken into account in this debate comes from the state archive of Basel. Basel University was required to report certain information to the state. For example, the state archive contains data on appointments submitted by Vischer-Bilfinger listing Nietzsche 1868-69.\textsuperscript{267} The education files at the Basel state archive also contain mandatory end of semester reports about which courses were actually taught each semester.\textsuperscript{268} According to those state archives the course was not taught during the winter semester of 1869-70. This is also corroborated by several lists Nietzsche made of courses he taught in which the course only appears later.\textsuperscript{269} These records I discovered in the state archive prove conclusively that this course was first taught at the university in the summer of 1872 (Fig. 3.1).\textsuperscript{270} Ten students attended this course for three hours per week.\textsuperscript{271}

\textsuperscript{266} Elizabeth Foster-Nietzsche, *Der einsame Nietzsche* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1914), 85n*.
\textsuperscript{267} StABS, Erziehung X 14a.
\textsuperscript{269} KGW III 3 8[24-26],8[40], 8[43], 8[75], 8[77], 8[79].
\textsuperscript{270} StABS, Erziehung X 34.
\textsuperscript{271} These include Jules Cornu, Wilhelm Matzinger, Achil Burekhardt, Friedrich Speiser, Ernst Jaecklin, Enoch Müller, Albert Ackermann, Hans Siegrist and two other persons (Marty and Barth) (StABS, Erziehung X 34).
Only one note from 1869 has been identified as relevant to this course and it is a plan for organization.\textsuperscript{272} It is only in 1872 that we begin to see drafts of the lectures cropping up in his notebooks.\textsuperscript{273} Nietzsche wrote to Rohde on May 12, 1872 to say that he wanted to bring his winter lecture manuscripts to him.\textsuperscript{274}

Although Whitlock claims Nietzsche's citation of Heine's 1872 work guarantees the text was written in 1872, this citation alone in the KGW does not provide the support he believes. The document cited by the KGW, P III 1, contains some citations that were added later. For example, Nietzsche’s citation of Hippolytus was clearly added later in a different pen on a blank facing page (Fig. 3.2).\textsuperscript{275} That citation may have been added as late as 1873 or perhaps even 1876 when Nietzsche taught the course again. However, this is not indicated in either the KGW or the PPP translation. While Whitlock's evidence alone does not substantiate his claim, since it is possible the citation was added later, when we look at the archived document itself, the citation of Heine's 1872 work is an intext citation in the original manuscript and therefore was not added later (Fig. 3.3).\textsuperscript{276} Whitlock is therefore correct, but, perhaps by chance. Therefore, even if Elizabeth is correct in reporting that the course may have been taught from home in 1869, the text of these lectures was not written until 1872. From this, we can conclude both that the course was not taught at the University until 1872 and that the bulk of the existing text was not written until 1872.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[272] KGW III 3 3[82].
\item[273] PPP xxiv-xxv (notebooks: P I 16b, P I 20b, Mp CII4, UII 7a).
\item[274] KSB03:322u. 220. An Erwin Rohde in Kiel.
\item[275] GSA 71/94. Mette-sign: P III 1. P 92-93; PPP 94n3.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In Nietzsche’s course, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, his citations or quotations of Plato include: *The Apology, Cratylus, Crito, Laws, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Philebus, Protagoras, Republic, Sophist, Symposium, Parmenides, Theaetetus and Timaeus*. We can thus date Nietzsche’s thorough reading of Plato's texts to 1872 at the latest. In the text of this lecture Nietzsche first begins to think about the law of identity put forward by Plato in an inexact form through the *Parmenides*. These lecture notes were worked into the unpublished work *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. In *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, completed in 1873, he begins his critique of the principle of identity in an explicit logical form [A=A]. I will come back to the content of his critique at the end of this chapter.

Nietzsche also taught several other Basel University courses which were completely dedicated to individual Platonic dialogues. These courses include the *Apology, Phaedo, and Protagoras*. Further, his courses on other topics refer to and quote many of Plato’s dialogues extensively and often in the original Greek. In his course on *Aristotle’s Rhetoric* he brings up Plato’s *Gorgias* and his course on *The History of Greek Eloquence* brings up *The Republic, Phaedo* and *Protagoras*.

Nietzsche attempted to return to teaching after his approved medical leave in 1876-1877. He taught courses on Greek Religion and Aeschylus in the winter semester and on Hesiod, Plato

\[277\] PPP 285-286.
\[278\] Nietzsche may have read these earlier but he certainly had read them by 1872.
\[279\] PPP 90, cf. *Parmenides* 127e.
\[280\] PTA 10.
\[281\] KGW II.4 p. 533 [1354a]; KGW II 2 p. 34-35.
and Aeschylus in the summer semester in 1877-1878. In 1878-1879 he taught courses on the Greek lyric poets, Plato, and Thucydides in the winter semester. However, by February 1879 his health declined to such a degree that he was unable to continue his teaching and canceled the classes he had announced for the summer semester before beginning to teach them.  

In addition to university level courses, Nietzsche also taught at Basel University’s Pädagogium. The Pädagogium was a unique program for senior Gymnasium students from 15-18 years old to prepare them for the University. The faculty at Basel were required to teach there. Nietzsche’s courses included 11 that contain a reference to Plato in the title of the course between 1869 and 1876. In their titles alone these covered *Phaedo, Apology, Protagoras, Gorgias, Symposium, Phaedrus, and The Republic*. Like Nietzsche’s University level courses, these likely covered other dialogues in the content of the course text. Further, Nietzsche’s many other courses not explicitly on the Platonic dialogues likely included citations and references to Plato as his University level courses did.

From all this it should be very clear Nietzsche knew Plato very well, having taken courses on Plato, taught at least 15 courses explicitly on Plato, and taught many more containing discussions of his work. The claim that Nietzsche had a “particular lack of academic training” in Plato is not historically supportable. I now turn explicitly to his lectures on the *Theaetetus*.

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283 KGW II 5/1. “Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches von April 1869 bis Ende 1874: Cronik” (p. 3-97).

containing the principle of identity, and the *Timaeus*, containing the Platonic theory of recurrence or the “Great Year,” and finally to Nietzsche’s engagement with Plato’s *Parmenides*.

3.3 *Theaetetus*: The Law of Identity

Evidence of Nietzsche’s reading of the *Theaetetus* comes from his lectures on *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. I will present evidence in order of weakest to strongest. The weakest evidence is that Nietzsche simply cites *Theaetetus* 183e as a source for Socrates meeting Parmenides when he was very young.\(^{285}\) Additionally, Nietzsche briefly quotes, in Greek, from *Theaetetus* 179e, citing Plato’s condemnation of the Heraclitean doctrine of flux. Nietzsche discusses Plato’s emphasis on how you cannot discuss anything or come to any conclusions with Heracliteans because they are “maniacs”; their positions are always on the move just like their doctrine.\(^{286}\) Nietzsche again briefly quotes, in Greek, Socrates’ description of the Parmenidean school from *Theaetetus* 181a. The strongest evidence in these lectures is that he quotes *Theaetetus* 174a at length and in Greek about the story of Thales being made fun of by a servant girl for concerning himself with the stars rather than what was in front of him and under his feet.\(^{287}\) This quote is taken only a few Stephanus Paginations away from the line containing the principle of identity. Nietzsche’s lecture notes for his course, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, extensively quote places before the passage of interest and go on to cite passages later in the dialogue even closer. This is strong evidence of his reading of the passage in question.

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\(^{285}\) PPP 75.

\(^{286}\) PPP 85.

\(^{287}\) PPP 29.
In Nietzsche's lecture notes on the *Theaetetus* from his course, “Introduction to the Study of the Platonic Dialogues,” we find him specifically talking about arguments in 185a where Plato states the laws of [self] identity. We can demonstrate that he discusses the lines right before the passage at the beginning of the argument concerning the sense organs (184c-e). Nietzsche also brings up the conclusion of this sub-argument in which Plato argues that comparison and differentiation of the senses could not be done by the senses themselves. It must be a higher power that determines sameness and difference (185b-c). The important line concerning the law of identity is right between these two passages Nietzsche discusses.

Socrates: Now take a sound and a color. First of all, don’t you think this same thing about both of them, namely, that they both are?

Theaetetus: I do.

Socrates: Also that each of them is different from the other and the same as itself

Theaetetus: of course.

Socrates: and that both together are two, and each of them is one?

Theaetetus: Yes, I think that too.

Nietzsche not only lectures on the *Theaetetus* and quotes it but in his lecture notes he also discusses the lines right before and right after the lines of import for the notion of self-identity. Nietzsche would have taught this at least four times. This is very strong evidence Nietzsche read and was aware of the principle of identity in Plato’s *Theaetetus*.

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288 KGW II 4 p 132-133.
3.4 *Timaeus*: The Platonic Great Year

In addition to the law of identity in Plato, there is also evidence of Nietzsche’s familiarity with Plato’s ideas surrounding the eternal recurrence of the great year and Plato’s theory of reincarnation. Nietzsche was likely familiar with Plato’s ideas surrounding reincarnation from his lectures on the *Phaedo* (81c-82c), *The Republic* (620a-620e), and the *Timaeus* (42b). More specifically, he would have known that the great Platonic year is addressed in the *Timaeus*.

In Nietzsche’s course, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, he cites *Timaeus* 40b. 290 This citation is directly in the middle of the section addressing the theory of the “Great Year.” Plato writes,

As for the periods of the other bodies, all but a scattered few have failed to take any note of them. Nobody has given them names or investigated their numerical measurements relative to each other. And so people are all but ignorant of the fact that time really is the wanderings of these bodies, bewilderingly numerous as they are and astonishingly variegated. It is none the less possible, however, to discern that the perfect number of time brings to completion the perfect year at that moment when relative speeds of all eight periods have been completed together and measured by the circle of the Same [sic] that moves uniformly, have achieved their consummation [...They were made] well rounded, to resemble the universe, and placed them in the wisdom of the dominant circle [i.e., of the Same [sic]], to follow the course of the universe. [...]And he bestowed two movements upon each of them. The first was rotation, an unvarying movement in the same place, by which the god would always think the same thoughts about the same things. The other was a revolution, a forward motion under the dominance of the circular carrying movement of the Same [sic] and uniform. 291

Nietzsche's citation shows his familiarity with this quotation. We also see here that time in this passage simply is the movement of bodies. The same movements would mean that the same time recurs (and also, the same thoughts about the same things). Nietzsche’s citation in his course combined with the reference in Zarathustra, and the emphasis on “the same,” is strong * prima

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290 PPP 11n9.
291 *Timaeus* 39c-40b. (Italics and first brackets added).
facie evidence of Nietzsche’s acquaintance with the great year hypothesis and its likely influence on the idea of eternal return.

The “Great Year”, or the Platonic year, is the traditional name for the period in which the planets and stars complete a cycle and return to their original position. In Nietzsche’s lectures on Plato under the section “Timaeus” Nietzsche discusses the overview of the universe specifically citing the circular model.292 Further, Nietzsche cites several secondary works concerning Plato’s cosmology. Nietzsche also mentions a work by Böckh referencing mathematics. This reference is likely to Böckh’s work on Platonic Geometry, which deals explicitly with the *Timaeus* and the great year.293 Although this work no longer exists in Nietzsche’s personal library, it is evident that Nietzsche owned this work from a archived booksellers receipt dated 1875 during the time when he was giving his courses on the Platonic dialogues.294 This suggests a likely reading in preparation. Another work Nietzsche cites, gone unnoticed until now, is August Böckh’s *Investigation into the Cosmological System of Plato*.295 In this work Böckh denies that Plato ascribed to the diurnal rotation of the earth and more generally addresses the great year hypothesis. It has also gone unnoticed until now that Nietzsche was aware of Thomas Henri

292 KGW II 4 p. 73.

Nietzsche also mentions a Boeckh in a paper he wrote “On the Theory of Quantitive Rhythum” [TQR] for his course of Greek metrics winter semester 1870-71 (TQR 234).
Martin’s work *Studies on the Timaeus of Plato*, which Nietzsche cites.\(^{296}\) Both of these works contain detailed commentary on the cyclical cosmology presented in the *Timaeus*. Nietzsche also mentions another paper by Böckh, “über die Bildung der Weltseele” which is an implied reference to the paper “Üeber die Bildung der Weltseele im Timaeus des Platon.”\(^{297}\)

Nietzsche also cites page 37 of an article by Ueberweg, “Üeber die Platonische Weltseele.”\(^{298}\) Considering the similarity in citation, one might think Nietzsche is simply copying Ueberweg’s own citation of “Üeber die Platonische Weltseele” from Ueberweg’s *History of Philosophy*. Nietzsche bought Ueberweg’s *History of Philosophy* Vol 1 between 1867-1868 and the text contains several indications of reading, such as annotations, so this is a possible source of Nietzsche’s citation.\(^{299}\) If he simply copied the citation, then he may not have read the essay.

There is, however, very strong evidence for his reading of Ueberweg’s essay on Platonic cosmology itself. First, Nietzsche would have read the volume in which Ueberweg’s article appears, since Nietzsche published an index for volumes 1-24 of *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* in 1872 and Ueberweg’s essay appears in volume 9.\(^{300}\) Further, Nietzsche quotes extensively from Ueberweg’s essay in his lecture, even copying the structural layout from page 41. Nietzsche’s notes bear no indication he is quoting; he simply copies it without quotations or citation. However, a comparison immediately demonstrates this is a quotation (Fig 3.4 & Fig

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\(^{297}\) Böckh, Kleine Schriften III, 1866, 158 ff., in a paper “Üeber die Bildung der Weltseele im Timaeos des Platon”, first published in 1807.

\(^{298}\) KGW II 4 p.70.

\(^{299}\) NPB 628.

As I have demonstrated in a recently published article in *Nietzsche-Studien*, Nietzsche continues to pull from this work without citing. This demonstrates not only Nietzsche’s firsthand reading of the *Timaeus*, but also proof he was engaged in the secondary literature on the Platonic Great Year.

3.5 Plato’s *Parmenides*

*The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* was finally published in its entirety in the KGW in 1995. Previous editors of the Musarion edition had omitted essential parts of that text as simply redundant because they were thought to be the leftover notes from *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. This included lecture 11 (Parmenides and Xenophanes), 12 (Zeno), and 13 (Anaxagoras). In these lectures, Nietzsche writes one of his first critiques of the principle of identity in 1872. In his lecture on the *Parmenides*, he concedes that if we are to think of being, we must, by necessity, think of it as unitary and self-identical. However, his caveats for such an agreement prefigure his critiques later in life. As Nietzsche would later conclude, the principle of identity may be a condition of thinking but that itself does not make it *a priori* true.

Nietzsche argues that Parmenides’ doctrine is responding to a form of Heracliteanism. Nietzsche suggests Parmenides is rejecting the following proposition, “Parmenides emphasizes the proposition, ‘Being and not-being are simultaneously the same and not the same.’” However, Parmenides does not reject this based on the principle of non-contradiction, but rather he rejects it based on an early spatial formulation of the principle of the identity of

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301 KGW II 4 p.71.
303 This position is controversial but is the position Nietzsche takes.
304 PPP 85.
indiscernibles. Summarizing Parmenides’ conclusion he writes, “Being is indivisible, because no second thing exists that could divide it [...] it is of one and the same sort through and through.”

That is, spatial distinguishability would be enough to distinguish one thing from another. We can easily tell the difference between two things if they are in different places and separated by some third thing. Being, however, is not spatially distinguishable and therefore must be self-identical.

In the next chapter on Zeno, Nietzsche explicitly comes back to Plato’s *Parmenides* in which Zeno’s argument is put forward.

Plato designates as the first hypothesis, ‘If existent things were a plurality, then they would have to be both like and not like (like as being, unlike as many), [but] that is impossible, since neither the unlike can be called like, nor can the like unlike: thus a plurality is impossible, because then something impossible would have been stated by it.’

Here we find Nietzsche referring to the use of the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction in their proto-formulations in Plato.

Greg Whitlock, who edited and translated the work, states about this quotation: “This seems to be Nietzsche’s Paraphrase of *Parmenides* 127e rather than an exact quotation. It is in German, not Greek; no citation is given; and it follows the text loosely.” However, this does not appear to be a paraphrase translation only from memory. This text likely comes from the second volume of Agustus Arnold’s work on Plato, which includes the full text of the *Parmenides* translated into German with extensive commentary. Nietzsche checked it out of

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305 PPP 85.
306 Nietzsche also cites *Parmenides* 127c at the beginning of the Parmenides chapter (PPP 75).
307 PPP 90.
308 Whitlock, Greg. PPP, 90n8.
the library January 23, and April 26, 1872. This is the same year he writes *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, as demonstrated earlier. The first line is almost an exact replication and Nietzsche repeats the quotation of the first line exactly in his lectures on Greek Literature. Therefore, Nietzsche is likely reading the source text translated into German and not exclusively commentary on *Parmenides*.

Nietzsche suggests, in the Zeno chapter, that Parmenides’ arguments lead us to concede that the senses deceive us. According to Nietzsche, this leads to the dangers of Platonism. Nietzsche writes,

> Here we have an unnatural tearing apart of the intellect. The consequence must finally be [a dichotomy between] spirit (the faculty of abstraction) and bodies (lower sensory apparatus), and we recognize the ethical consequences already in Plato: the philosopher’s task to liberate himself as much as possible from the bodily, meaning from the senses. [This is] the most dangerous of false paths, for no true philosophy can construct itself from this empty hull[...]

In both of these chapters Nietzsche seems to agree with the proposition, “Being is indivisible, because no second things exists that could divide it [...] it is of one and the same sort through and through.” This means that, for Parmenides, everything that exists is one and is not a plurality that contains any sort of differentiation within itself. It is therefore identical to itself and unchanging. However, Nietzsche’s agreement is dependent on an important caveat. He claims that the self-identity of being is based on our physiological constitution or organization rather than corresponding to the world as it is in-itself. He writes, “the abstract claim of the oneness of

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311 KGW II 5 191.
312 PPP 86.
313 PPP 85, 91.
all Being. [This] claim is completely true; we, by dint of our organization, cannot imagine Not-being […]. Qua Being, the entire world is one, of the same sort, undivided, ungenerated, imperishable - assuming that our intellect is the measure of all things." The key caveat is that our intellect is the measure of all things and our intellect (and therefore our imagination) is based upon the necessities of our physiological organization. It is our physiological organization that makes this claim true. However, it is only true (lower case true) for us. This does not necessarily correspond to the world as it is independent of us.

As dangerous as this may be, Nietzsche sees the Parmenidean self-identical oneness, presented in Plato as an “unmovable whole,” as the foundation for Platonism. Further, Nietzsche sees this as the basis of dialectic, and even logic. So, it is the self-identical oneness of being qua being that forms the basis of logic. This claim, somewhat unarticulated in The Pre-Platonic Philosophers, would make its way into Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks where Nietzsche attacks the law of identity explicitly.

In Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Nietzsche writes that Parmenides discovered, “the only form of knowledge which we trust immediately and absolutely and to deny which amounts to insanity is the tautology A=A. […] He has found a principle, the key to the cosmic secret, remote from all human illusion. Now grasping the firm and awful hand of tautological truth about being he can climb down, into the abyss of all things.”

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314 PPP 85.
315 PPP 86.
316 (PTAG 10, p. 77). Nietzsche does put forward an underdeveloped Kantian argument here that I will not address in detail. Namely, that tautologies without content are empty and meaningless. Nietzsche is presumably thinking of the phrase, “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (Kant, Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. and eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press 2017), B 75 [p. 194]). Nietzsche writes, “The logical truth of the pair of opposites being and non being is completely
beginning, Nietzsche suggests such a universal law depends on an assumption about our capacities. The conclusion that being is self-identical (A=A) and exists, rests on an assumption. This assumption is that we have an organ of knowledge which reaches into the essence of things and is independent of experience. The content of our thinking, according to Parmenides, is not present in sense perception but is an additive from somewhere else, from an extra-sensory world to which we have direct access by means of our thinking.\(^{317}\)

This assumption is what Nietzsche objects to. Nietzsche does not believe that the form of human thinking creates the ability to intuit truth from another realm directly. Rather, Nietzsche’s position is that we can explain such regularity in our thinking based on our physiological and cognitive structures.

Nietzsche also cites Hegel and Beneke as philosophers that put forward similar arguments. They set the task of philosophy as “Comprehending the absolute by means of consciousness.”\(^{318}\) Nietzsche quotes the Proto-Neo-Kantian Eduard Beneke (1798-1854) as evidence: “‘Being must be given to us somehow, must be somehow attainable; if it were not we empty, if the object of which it is a reflection can not be given, i.e., the sense perception from which this antithesis was abstracted. Without such derivation from a perception, it is no more than a playing with ideas, which in fact yields no knowledge. For the mere logical criterion of truth, as Kant teaches it, the correspondence of knowledge with the universal and formal laws of understanding and reason, is, to be sure, the \textit{conditio sine qua non}, the negative condition of all truth. But further than this, logic cannot go, and the error as to content rather than form cannot be detected by using any logical touchstone whatever. As soon as we seek the content of the logical truth of the paired propositions "What is, is; what is not, is not," we cannot indeed find any reality whatever which is constructed strictly in accordance with those propositions’ (PTAG 11, p. 82-83). This might bear on explicating Nietzsche’s position in “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense” where he writes, “Only through forgetfulness could human beings ever entertain the illusion that they possess truth to the degree described above. If they will not content themselves with truth in the form of tautology, i.e. with empty husks, they will forever exchange illusions for truth” (TL 1, p. 143-144).

\(^{317}\) PTAG 11, p. 82.
\(^{318}\) PTAG 11, p. 83.
could not have the concept.’ (Beneke).” 319 Nietzsche rejects such a view and then give a genealogical argument explaining the concept of being (esse), arose based on historical etymology. He writes, “The concept of being! As though it did not show its low empirical origin in its very etymology!” 320 Nietzsche’s argument is that we can trace the etymology of the word “being” back to an anthropomorphic metaphor: “to breathe.” To breathe is to exist for man but man then projects this upon all other things. Nietzsche writes,

The original meaning of the word was soon blurred, but enough remains to make it obvious that man imagines the existence of other things by analogy with his own existence, in other words anthropomorphically and in any event, with non-logical projection. But even for man -quite aside from his projection- the proposition "I breathe, therefore being exists" is wholly insufficient. 321

Nietzsche rejects the idea that we have an organ of knowledge that penetrates into the realm of truth. He rejects this through the above genealogical argument that undermines the idea that language gets at the essence of things. Rather, language and our concepts are thoroughly anthropomorphic and historical. Our concepts do not transcend the human condition but are founded in the history of language.

Nietzsche makes this clearer through a philosophy of language argument that he developed in more depth later in his life. He writes in Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks: “Words are but symbols for the relations of things to one another and to us; nowhere do they touch upon absolute truth.[...] Through words and concepts we shall never reach beyond the

319 (PTAG 11, p.84). This quote likely came from a secondary work since there are no records of Nietzsche reading Beneke. The original quote comes from: Friedrich Eduard Beneke, System der Metaphysik und Religionsphilosophie: aus den natürlichen Grundverhältnissen des menschlichen Geistes abgeleitet (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1840), 68.
320 PTAG 11, p.84.
321 PTAG 11, p.84.
wall of relations, to some sort of fabulous primal ground of things.”  The necessity of the principle of identity, as put forward in Plato’s *Parmenides*, can be traced to our constitution and the history of language. It is merely a necessity of our organization and language and does not penetrate into the realm of truth.

Using an analogy to Kant, Nietzsche suggests that a necessity of cognition does not imply the truth of that cognition. Nietzsche writes that the only thing we can conclude about the concept of being and the principle of identity is that, like time and space, they “are empirical realities for us.” However, from that we cannot conclude they contain absolute reality that penetrates into the realm of the thing-in-itself. Nietzsche writes, “if there had been a seed of profundity in Eleatism, it would have had to have foreseen the Kantian problem from here on out.” Putting aside whether or not Nietzsche’s interpretation of Kant is accurate, we see here that between the writing of *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (1872) and writing *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), Nietzsche developed an early position that explicitly rejected the principle of identity in Plato’s *Parmenides*. This was based upon genealogical arguments, philosophy of language arguments, and Kantian arguments.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reports that eternal recurrence was influenced by the stoics and Heraclitus, but he does not mention Plato. There is, as I have argued, strong evidence that Nietzsche would have been aware of the similarity to Plato’s great year and the canonical history of the principle of identity. It’s clear Nietzsche read the *Theaetetus* since he taught it and specifically lectured on the section of interest containing the principle of identity several times.

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322 PPP 83.
323 PPP 93.
324 PPP 93.
325 EH BT 3.
In addition, Nietzsche also lectured multiple times on *Timaeus* and specifically cites sections discussing the Platonic notion of the great year. He also cites several secondary commentaries in both essay and book form in his lecture notes that explicitly deal with the notion of the great year. Further, he copied large sections from secondary commentaries on Plato’s cosmology. Lastly, Nietzsche specifically argued against the principle of identity in Plato’s *Parmenides*. From the above evidence we can safely say that Nietzsche would have been aware of the principle of identity and recurrence of the great year in Plato’s source texts. Given all of this, Nietzsche would have been well aware that eternal recurrence violates the principle of identity as presented in Plato’s work. It was not a lack of academic training that caused Nietzsche to publish a thought experiment that contradicted this foundation of philosophy, but rather an intentional rejection of the principle of identity.326

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4. Figures

Fig. 3.1: Basel State Archive - StABS, Erziehung X 34.
Fig. 3.2: GSA 71/94. Mette-sign: P III 1. P. 92-93.

Fig. 3.3: GSA 71/94. Mette-sign: P III 1. P. 34.
### Erste Mischung

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erstes Element</th>
<th>Zweites Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἤ ἀμέριστος καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ</td>
<td>ἤ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγαντιάνη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τάντα ἔχουσα οὐσίας οδός</td>
<td>μεριστή οὐσίας οδός τὸ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστῶν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ergebnis der Mischung**

τρίτον οὐσίας εἰδῶς ἐν μέσῳ κείμενον.

### Zweite Mischung

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erstes Element</th>
<th>Drittes Element</th>
<th>Zweites Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>τὸ ἀμέριος</td>
<td>τρίτον οὐσίας εἰδῶς</td>
<td>τὸ κ.τ. σώματα μεριστῶν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οἰκίας οδός</td>
<td>ἡ οὐσία („Substanz“)</td>
<td>θάτερον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Untheilbare oder&quot;</td>
<td>Ergebnis der Mischung</td>
<td>„das Andere od.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Selbig&quot;</td>
<td>die Weltseele.</td>
<td>das Theilbare&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Fig. 3.4: Nietzsche Quoting Ueberweg. (KGW II 4, P.71).
Erste Mischung.
Erstes Element:   Zweites Element:
η ἀμερίστου και δει κατὰ ἡ περὶ τὰ σώματα γνωριμένη
ταῦτα ἐκχωρεῖ διά ὑστικὴ σωσία ὑπὲρ τὸ κατὰ
τὸ ἀμεφές.                  τὰ σώματα μεριστὸν.

Ergebnis der Mischung:
τρίτων σωσίας εἶδος ἐν μέσῳ κείμενον.

Zweite Mischung.
Erstes Element: Drittes (mittleres) Element: Zweites Element:
τὸ ἀμεφές.                τρίτων σωσίας εἶδος.     τὸ κ. τ. σώματα
μεριστὸν.

Die Elemente dieser nämlichen Mischung werden genannt):
ταῦτα.

η σωσία.

Ergebnis der Mischung:
_die Substanz der Weltseele._

Fig. 3.5: Uberweg’s Original. (Ueberweg, Friedrick. “Über die Platonische Weltseele” in Rheinisches Museum für Philologie. Vol 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Johann David Sauerländer. 1854), 41).
Chapter 4: Nietzsche’s Reading and Critique of Aristotle

There is a tendency in Nietzsche scholarship to underplay Nietzsche’s reading and engagement with Aristotle in favor of his readings and critiques of Plato and Platonism. Brett Richard states a fairly common scholarly view that Nietzsche’s references to Aristotle are “relatively rare.” Aaron Ridley goes further and states, “It is a constant wonder that Nietzsche had nothing of worth to say about Aristotle.” This view is radicalized by Paul Loeb who writes, “Nietzsche’s complete omission of Aristotle from his discussion of the history of philosophy is a much more telling critique than his frequent tirades against Plato.” Despite the boldness of this claim, Nietzsche did not exclude Aristotle but explicitly addressed Aristotle or Aristotelian philosophy in almost every work he published.

In chapter three, I pointed out that scholars tend to approach Nietzsche’s relationship with Plato conceptually and ahistorically. This is also the case for Nietzsche’s relationship to Aristotle. Scholars have discussed a stunning number of topics connecting Nietzsche and Aristotle. However, it is a very rare to find scholars discussing whether Nietzsche read Aristotle

327 Richard Bett, "Nietzsche, the Greeks, and Happiness (with Special Reference to Aristotle and Epicurus)," Philosophical Topics 33, no. 2 (2005): 54.
330 For example: BT 2 6, 7, 14, 22; UM 1 [SD] 5, 8; HAH I 212, 261, 264: HAH II [WS] 87, D 246, 424, 550; GS 29, 75, 80; BGE 188, 198; A 7; TI - Arrows - 3, Ancients - 5, EH BT 3.
at all. Many scholars make note of Nietzsche’s oppositions to and agreements with Aristotle on topics including: the nature of man as rational animal, priority of concept/syllogism over metaphor, slavery, tragedy, health, virtue ethics and character, excellence, friendship and generosity, justice, honesty/truthfulness, solitude, practical wisdom,


technē, wonder/horror, courage, resentment, psychology, self-love, selfishness, self and will, habit, happiness, the divine, time, fate, the great [souled] man.

344 Pearson, How to Read Nietzsche, 10.
345 Solomon, Living with Nietzsche, 87.
350 Lomax, The Paradox of Philosophical Education, 47.
351 Hatab, Nietzsche’s ‘On the Genealogy of Morality’, 223.
355 Solomon, “Nietzsche’s Fatalism,” 422.
autonomy of genius, history, teleology, fate, religion, actuality and potentiality, accident and coincidence, substance metaphysics, becoming, perfection and the principle of non-contradiction. However, the majority of the discussions do not address evidence of Nietzsche’s reading of Aristotle or secondary sources on Aristotle.

Dismissing the radical and historically unsupportable claims of scholars such as Loeb, a common historical view which is still held by scholars is that Nietzsche was familiar with Aristotle’s work and in particular his Rhetoric. However, many scholars, such as Julian Young and Curt Paul Janz, his major biographers in English and German respectively, have denied his acquaintance with Aristotle’s other works, in particular, Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Janz writes, “Nietzsche as a philosopher was an autodidact. […] For example, by Aristotle, he had not read the fundamental works about metaphysics or ethics, but the rhetoric.” Julian Young writes, “[Nietzsche] lacked not only training in philosophical method but also - a gap never filled - a

360 Lomax, “Nietzsche’s Fatalism,” 422.
361 Lomax, The Paradox of Philosophical Education, 102.
362 Nehamas, Nietzsche: Life as Literature, 174.
363 Small, Time and Becoming in Nietzsche’s Thought, 42-43.
364 Fink, Nietzsche’s Philosophy, 151; Small, Time and Becoming in Nietzsche’s Thought, 93.
365 Small, Time and Becoming in Nietzsche’s Thought, 1, 22, 55.
366 Lomax, The Paradox of Philosophical Education, 40.
basic knowledge of the history of the subject. Apart from the *Rhetoric*, he knew none of Aristotle's major works. “369 Young then blames Nietzsche’s “slipshod arguments” on his lack of acquaintance and education in Aristotle.370

Presumably, one of these slipshod arguments in Nietzsche's work is eternal recurrence since it comes into conflict with the principle of identity and the identity of indiscernibles in conjunction with the principle of noncontradiction. If Nietzsche never read Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* or secondary commentaries that address it, then one could argue that Nietzsche may have been ignorant of the conflict between eternal recurrence and the presuppositions of classical logic. However, I will argue there is evidence Nietzsche read Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Nietzsche's position systematically undermines the principle of identity in Aristotle.

These approaches do initially seem to be supported by Nietzsche’s early claims about his reading of Aristotle. In a letter dated November 9, 1868, sent to Erwin Rohde, Nietzsche claims explicitly to not be actively studying Aristotle. He writes, “[T]he field of my book reviewing is now, among other things, almost the whole of Greek Philosophy, excepting Aristotle.”371 However, only a few years later in 1871 at Basel his confidence regarding his background in Aristotle is striking. He writes,

[I]n the present somewhat difficult state of university philosophical studies, and considering how few applicants are really suitable, that person has a somewhat greater right who can exhibit a solid training in classical philology and can stimulate among the students an interest in the careful interpretations of Aristotle and Plato.[...] As long as I

370 Young. *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, 159.
have been studying philology, I have spared no efforts to keep in close contact with philosophy: indeed, my chief interest always lay in philosophical questions.\footnote{KSB03:174u. 118. An Wilhelm Vischer(-Bilfinger) in Basel (Trans. Middleton, Selected Letters, 76).}

The above claim indicates that Nietzsche was confident about his reading and interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy. Contrary to the claims of Janz and Young, Nietzsche’s reading and teaching of Aristotle's works is quite extensive and certainly contains an acquaintance with the principle of identity and the principle of explosion within the *Metaphysics*.

In what follows, I demonstrate Nietzsche’s general familiarity with Aristotle through teaching and reading. I then go on to argue there is positive evidence Nietzsche read the *Metaphysics*. I conclude with a close reading of Nietzsche’s critique of the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity. This critique of the *Metaphysics* is found in his notebooks from 1887. This demonstrates Nietzsche's continuing interaction with the principle of identity in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

1. Nietzsche’s Teaching and Reading of Aristotle.

   It should not come as shocking that Nietzsche was well versed in Aristotle. In Nietzsche’s exit thesis (*Valediktionsarbeit*) for the Landesschule Pforta in Schulpforta (Saxony-Anhalt), presented on September 7, 1864, he is already citing and quoting Aristotle in Greek.\footnote{TM.} Nietzsche's later philological research only expanded his readings of Aristotle. Nietzsche taught courses on Aristotle’s rhetoric both at Basel’s Pädagogium (summer semester 1874) and at Basel University (winter semester 1874-5 & summer semester 1875). Nietzsche also taught courses that addressed Aristotle including a full section on Aristotle for his course “History of Greek

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Literature I&II” (winter semester 1874-75 & summer semester 1875). Nietzsche also planned to teach several other courses on Aristotle including plans during the 1870’s for courses on *poetics*, a course on Aristotle and the Socratics in 1873, a planned 1875 course on Aristotle's *Ethics*, and a 1876 course on Aristotle’s *Politics*.\(^{374}\) Evidence suggests Nietzsche began preparing research for all of these. Beyond Nietzsche’s teaching we can also look at evidence of Nietzsche’s reading of Aristotle.

*Nietzsches persönliche Bibliothek* lists a full 12 pages of entries of Aristotle's works that Nietzsche owned.\(^{375}\) One of the largest collections of volumes by a single author in his library. This includes the multiple editions of individual works of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*,\(^{376}\) a separate copy of Aristotle's three books on *Rhetoric*,\(^{377}\) and a separate copy of *Poetics*.\(^{378}\) In addition to these works, Nietzsche also owned *Aristoteles’ Werke* in 9 Divisions (except the 4th division).\(^{379}\) Nietzsche’s library contains 33 volumes of *Aristoteles’ Werke*. Ten of these contain indications of reading such as annotations and dog-eared pages (Table 3.1). These annotations and indications of reading directly contradict the claims of Janz and Young. Janz claims he did not read the *Ethics*, a claim contradicted by Nietzsche’s annotations in the volumes contained in


\(^{375}\) NPB 114-126.


\(^{377}\) *Drei Bücher der Redekunst. Übersetzt von Adolf Stahr* (Stuttgart: Krais & Hoffmann, 1862) (NPB 114).

\(^{378}\) *Über die Dichtkunst. Im Deutsche übersetzt und mit erläuternden Anmerkungen und einem die Textkritik betreffenden Anhang versehen von Dr. Friedrich Ueberweg ord. Prof. der Philosophie an der Universität zu Königshberg* (Berlin: L. Heimann, 1869).

his personal library. Young goes so far as to say Nietzsche only read the *Rhetoric*, which is also contradicted not only by Nietzsche’s library loans but also by his annotations in his personal library. Nietzsche’s volumes of *Aristotles’s Werke* contain indications of reading in *Rhetoric, Rhetoric to Alexander, Categories, Parva Naturala, History of animals, Nichomachean Ethics, Politics*, and *Magnia Moralia* (Table 3.1). It should be noted again that there is also strong evidence that Nietzsche read many more of these than bear annotations. For example, before buying the editions, he sometimes checked out copies from the library and cites them in his lectures on Aristotle. This likely indicates a reading before he acquired his personal copies.

In addition to Nietzsche’s existent library, we gain further information about which of Aristotle's works Nietzsche had at some point through bookseller receipts and library loans. From bookseller receipts from 1877 of Nietzsche’s, stored in the *Goethe-Schiller Archiv*, we also know that he bought *Aristotelis rhetorica et poetica* containing *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* in Greek. There also exists a book bill from *Domrich bookstock*, from which Nietzsche borrowed, dated 1868, which lists nine volumes of Aristotle. In addition there is also evidence from his documented library lending from his years at Pforta and Basel that informs us about his familiarity with Aristotle.

There is evidence that Nietzsche checked out, perhaps twice, a book of spurious works of Aristotle, *Aristoteles Pseudepigraphus*, between 1865 and 1869 during his time at Pforta. We can also establish this text’s influence as late as 1879. From his library borrowing we can also

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381 Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 114n42.
382 We can date Nietzsche reading of this particular text to January 16, 1867 and August 1879. This book contains fragments of spurious Aristotle text. Because these texts are not evident in other editions of Aristotle's work, we can link Nietzsche quotations from them to this text. For
determine that Nietzsche checked out several volumes from the Basel library, including,

*Synagoge Technon sive artiumscriptores ab initiis usque ad editos Aristotelis De Rhetorica*, in Latin and Greek, on November 9, 1970.\(^{383}\) Nietzsche also checked out Aristotle's *Politics* in three books with commentary by Bernays November 22, 1873 and April 13, 1874.\(^{384}\) This text contains Aristotle’s discussion of the unity of identity and difference within the state.\(^{385}\) We know Nietzsche read this based on his lectures. Nietzsche quotes Bernays from page 212 in this edition of Aristotle’s *Politics* in his courses on the “History of Greek Literature I and II” taught

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\(^{383}\) *Synagoge Technon sive artiumscriptores ab initiis usque ad editos Aristotelis De Rhetorica.* Libros composuit Leonardus Spengel (Stuttgartiae: 1828); cf. Crescenzi, “Verzeichnis der von Nietzsche aus der Universitätsbibliothek in Basel entliehenen Bücher (1869-1879),” 403.


\(^{385}\) In a book Nietzsche checked out by Bernays there is an interesting discussion of the identity of the state in Aristotle’s *Politics* Book III chapter 3. Specifically, about how the identity of the state is similar to a chorus and embody both identity and difference. Aristotle writes that two states may be differentiated though they have the same constituents, “Just as a tragic differs from a comic chorus, although the members of both may be identical” (*Politics* III 3 1276b1). We know Nietzsche read this text since he quotes from page 212 in one of his courses. The section on the identity of the state in Bernays’ text occurs between pages 236-239 of the text Nietzsche checked out April 13, 1874 from Basel University library (Crescenzi, “Verzeichnis der von Nietzsche aus der Universitätsbibliothek in Basel entliehenen Bücher (1869-1879),” 426). It is likely Nietzsche read this section as well in preparation for his lectures.
1874-1875. Nietzsche also checked out a volume by Bernays May 13, 1875, that devotes a whole chapter to *Metaphysics* Book thirteen.

Jacob Bernays was a Neo-Kantian historical scholar who authored several articles on Aristotle and influenced Nietzsche’s writing of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche speaks with great respect for him in a letter to Deussen June 2, 1868. Nietzsche also mentions him in a letter to Rohde June 6, 1868. In a second letter, October 8, 1868, he suggests to Rohde that he gave an essay of Bernays’ to his friend Wenkel. Further, in a note dating from the winter of 1869–1870 we find an outline (presumably of *The Birth of Tragedy*) where Nietzsche explicitly notes Bernays’ influence on his reading of Aristotelian definitions. He later mentions Bernays in a categorized list of scholars under “the historical” [*die historischen*]. Bernays apparently accused Nietzsche of using his ideas and amplifying them in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche recounts this in a letter to Rohde December 7, 1872. He responds to the accusations stating, “This is an amusing sign that the ‘schlauen im Lande’ [Shrewd but Clever] people are getting

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386 “Tapfer ist, wer erduldet, fürchtet oder wagt, was man soll und weswegen man es soll und wie man es soll und wann man es soll” Arist<oteles>” (KGW II 5. 20[7]). Nietzsche cites Bernays as an authority regarding the fact that we do not have any of Aristototle’s published work. Bernay writes, “dass uns kein von Aristoteles allseitig ausgearbeitetes und veröffentlichtes Werk vorliegt” (Aristoteles, *Politik*, 212).


388 Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche*, 228n66.

389 KSB02:281u. 573. An Paul Deussen in Oberdreis.

390 KSB02:285u. 574. An Erwin Rohde in Kiel.

391 KSB02:321. 591. An Erwin Rohde in Hamburg.

392 eKGWB/NF-1869,3[38] — Nachgelassene Fragmenten Winter 1869–70 — Frühjahr 1870 (http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1869,3[38]).

393 KGW II 4, 19[273].
wind of something.” Bernays continued to influence Nietzsche until at least 1886. In a letter to Cosima Wagner sent December 23, 1882, Nietzsche mentions a new work by him. Bernays is also mentioned in a letter to Richard Wagner September 27, 1886.

Nietzsche also checked out Aristotelis Politicorum librio octo, in Greek and Latin, January 9 and April 13, 1874. Nietzsche checked out Aristotle's Politics January 9 and April 13, 1874. Aristotle's Rhetoric was also checked out by Nietzsche on January 9, March 26, and October 9, 1974. He checked the same work out again May 11, 1875. Nietzsche’s library loans indicate Nietzsche’s close relationship with Aristotle’s source text, not to mention secondary literature, over a decade.

We can also determine that he used other works of Aristotle’s through his uncited quotation and paraphrase of scholarly apparatuses. I have determined that he used a book of Aristotle’s Fragments when teaching his course “History of Greek Literature I and II” (Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur <I und II>) in Section II on “The Philosophical Literature” (Die philosophische Litteratur). He taught this course in the winter semester 1874-1875 and summer semester 1875. In this course he paraphrases several paragraphs and repeats verbatim some scholarly apparatus commentary in a list of works in Aristotle's Fragments.

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395 KSB08:589u. 284a. An Cosima Wagner in Bayreuth (Briefdisposition).
396 KSB05:190u. 556. An Richard Wagner in Bologna.
398 KGW II 5, P. 180.
399 “horum librorum recensioni fidem atque auctoritatem adicit indiculus, quem Ptolemaeus in libro ad Agallim (vel Agalliam) repreaesentat” (KGW II 5, P. 209).
This course included a section on Aristotle containing over 10 pages of notes in the KGW. In this section of Nietzsche’s lectures he cites Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Nietzsche’s quotations here likely come from Bernays’ edition of the text.

We can use this same course to determine that Nietzsche was reading the edited source volume *Aristotle on Poetry* with textual commentary by Ueberweg. We can deduce this from Nietzsche’s lengthy nearly, verbatim paraphrase of Ueberweg’s 109th and 111th endnotes.

In addition to Nietzsche’s primary source reading and editorial commentary within his lectures, Nietzsche also read a large number of works about or containing commentary on Aristotle in both his personal library and library loans. These works are too numerous to analyze here but suffice it to say Nietzsche read many secondary texts on Aristotle by prominent scholars of the time including Jacob Bernays, Friedrich Ueberweg, Gustav Teichmüller, Wilhelm Oncken, Friedrich von Spengle, and Joseph Hubert Reinkens. Brobjer lists more than twenty secondary sources on Aristotle that Nietzsche read, not including the scholarly commentary in source text volumes. Nietzsche also listened to several talks on Aristotle’s relevance for contemporary times including those of Rudolf Eucken.


400 Beginning: KGW II 5, P. 204.
401 KGW II 5, P. 212.
403 Compare KGW II 5, P. 50 starting with “Nun hebt Aristoteles” to Aristotle’s *Liber die Dichtkunst* 88n109, 88n111. For a more detailed account of textual similarities see: *Nietzsche-Studien* 35, no. 1 (1973): 529-530.
404 Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Ethics of Character*, 262-263 [Table 2].
405 Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 51-53. Brobjer cites no evidence for this, however, Nietzsche mentions the talk by Eucken. It was entitled “Aristotle’s Meaning for the
From all of this it should be very clear that Nietzsche had a substantial familiarity with Aristotle's work, having taught several courses on it. Further, many of the volumes of Aristotle that Nietzsche owned include annotations and we can determine through secondary evidence, such as quotations, that Nietzsche read others that are not annotated. In short, Nietzsche was well versed in Aristotle.

2. Aristotle and Eternal Recurrence

Aristotle suggests different types of recurrence, some non-cosmological or practical, about which Nietzsche would have read and been aware. For example, the eternal recurrence of knowledge in *On The Heavens*. Aristotle writes, “The same ideas, one must believe, recur in men’s mind not once or twice but again and again.” Nietzsche cites and discusses the next line. Additionally, Nietzsche quotes book 2 chapter 13 in Greek in the same work by Aristotle. In the *Politics* Aristotle also comments on the eternal recurrence of human crafts and political institutions which Nietzsche likely read. Aristotle writes,

> It is true indeed that these and many other things have been invented several times over the course of ages, or rather times without number; for necessity may be supposed to have taught men the inventions which were absolutely required, and when these were

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406 Nietzsche cites *On The Heavens* three times in PPP. Nietzsche also quotes book II, ch. 13 and book III, ch. 5 in Greek (PPP 28n27, 29, 29n33, 34, 34n16).


408 Nietzsche also discusses Aristotle’s critique of Anaxagoras in *On the Heavens* Book 1 chapter 3 at length with a citation in a fragment from 1872-73 (KGW III 4, 23[32]). The citation itself is vague. Richard Gary finds the citation unclear but suggests it is section 284 in book II because motion is dealt with there (Richard Gray, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 415n127). I think it is more likely that this refers to Book I, ch. 3, 270b20-30 since in that section Aristotle is talking about time, circular motion, and a critique of Anaxagoras. All of these are parts of Nietzsche's discussion in fragment 23[32].

409 PPP 29.
provided, it was natural that other things which would adorn and enrich life should grow up by degrees. And we may infer that in political institutions the same rule holds.\textsuperscript{410}

While these are not cosmological versions of eternal recurrence, they are evidence that Aristotle discussed recurrence of various human experiences and that Nietzsche was likely aware of this.

It goes beyond the scope of this chapter, but Nietzsche had an ongoing and extensive relationship with Aristotle's \textit{Politics}. This includes indications of reading up through book VIII of the \textit{Politics}.\textsuperscript{411}

\textsuperscript{410} Aristotle, \textit{Politics}, Bk VII ch. 10, 1329b25-30.

\textsuperscript{411} These indications of reading are directly after book VII, ch. 10 where the above quote can be found. Nietzsche early exit thesis from Schulpforta, presented on September 7, 1864, already shows a familiarity with Aristotle’s politics. In that thesis he cites \textit{Politics} book IV once and book V three times (TM p.6, 8, 82, 82). Nietzsche planned to teach a course on Aristotle's \textit{Politics} in 1876 but it appears to have never came to fruition. Despite this he looks to have done quite a bit of reading and research to between 1874-1876. Nietzsche did own Aristotle books on politics in his complete works. These can be found in three separate volumes in his personal library (NPB 123-124).

Nietzsche annotated the third of the above texts. He did read at least part of it since it is marked on page 706, which is in the 8th book of the \textit{Politics} (in the third volume listed above), meaning, he likely read the quote about the eternal recurrence of crafts.

The HAAB, which houses Nietzsche's personal library, has not yet uploaded scan of the annotated volume. But the archival data indicates that the third of these volumes, HAAB C 16-e[2], contains markings in pencil on page 706 that contain syntactic meaning (this includes notes or exclamation marks, or question marks). The page also contains marking with no semantic meaning (strokes, cross outs, or underlings). This indicates a close reading.

According to a bill, (itself dated November 24, 1868), Nietzsche bought this volume from Domrich bookshop in Naumberg on September 16, 1868. Nietzsche's library circulation records indicate he also checked out a copy of Aristotle's \textit{Politics} in three books from Basel University.
Further, Nietzsche read Aristotle’s version of the identity of indiscernibles regarding time.

Aristotle refers to this in book IV of the *Physics*. Nietzsche owned a copy of it and refers to,

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Library January 22 and April 13, 1874. Thomas Brobjer also claims Nietzsche read this in 1873 & 1874 (Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 243).

Aristoteles' Politik: erstes, zweites und drittes Buch, mit erklärenden Zusätzen ins Deutsche übertragen von Jacob Bernays (Berlin: 1872).

Nietzsche uses or cites this text in his course "Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur [I-II]" which he taught Winter semester 1874-1875 and Summer Semester 1875 (Francisco Arenas-Dolz, “Nachweis Aus Jacob Bernays, Aristoteles’ Politik (1872),” *Nietzsche-Studien* 39, no. 1 (2010): 533; KGW II 5, P. 213). Nietzsche also cites the *Politics* quotes in Greek earlier in the course (KGW II 5, P. 200).

Nietzsche's library circulation records indicate he also checked out the eight books of Aristotle's *Politics* on January 9 and April 13, 1874 from Basel University Library in both Greek and Latin.


Nietzsche also checked out another one of his Bernays' books on Aristotle from the Basel University Library May 13, 1875:

*Die Dialoge des Aristoteles in ihrem Verhältnisse zu seinen übrigen Werken* (Berlin: Hertz, 1863).

Part III.2 and III.5 deal with the politics.

Nietzsche also owned a secondary commentary on Aristotle *Politics* in two volumes that he had bound together (NPB 427).


Nietzsche bought the first half June 30, 1875 from C. Detloff's books store in Basel (according to a note dated June 30 and a bill dated July 1, 1875). The second half was purchased on June 16, 1875 (according to a note from June 30 and a bill from July 1, 1875). Nietzsche had these texts bound together by M. J. Memmel-Tripet in Basel on July 17, 1875 (according to a note dated December 30, 1875).

Nietzsche's library circulation records indicate he also borrowed this text April 2, 1870, December 14, 1871, and April 26, 1872 from Basel University Library (Crescenzi, “Verzeichnis der von Nietzsche aus der Universitätsbibliothek in Basel entliehenen Bücher (1869-1879),” 298, 412, 415). Pages 97-100 discuss books VII and VIII.
cites, or quotes from the *Physics* seven times in *The Pre Platonic Philosophers* alone.\(^{412}\)

Nietzsche refers to *Physics* book IV in his work *Prefaces to Unwritten Work* and cites book IV chapter 6 in his course on *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*.\(^{413}\) In Book IV Aristotle writes,

> Is time then always different or does the same time recur? Clearly, it is the same with time as with motion. For if one and the same motion sometimes recurs, it will be one and the same time and if not, not.\(^{414}\)

Here we can see, just as with Plato, that the recurrence of motion indicates the recurrence of time. That is, if an exact recurrence of motion occurs, it is not a different recurrence of time, but the exact same. Robin Small has argued that this is one place we can find the identity of indiscernibles in Aristotle.\(^{415}\) According to Small, this passage is essentially a refutation of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche. Presumably, this is because if a repetition of motion occurs, it is not a separate temporal event but the exact same temporal event. Robin Small, however, does not consider the positive evidence that Nietzsche was acquainted with this passage. It is therefore likely Nietzsche may have been aware of such a problem for the cosmological theory of eternal recurrence if he was familiar with this text, as I have demonstrated.

3. The Principle of Identity in the *Metaphysics*

Prominent scholars, such as Janz and Young, hold that Nietzsche never read Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Scholars such as Brobjer, on the other hand, hold that his reading was constrained

\(^{412}\) PPP 282.

\(^{413}\) PPP 101; PUW 90n30.

\(^{414}\) *Physics*, Bk. IV ch. 13 222a30-222b7.

\(^{415}\) Small, *Nietzsche in Context*, 34-35.
to the early parts of the *Metaphysics*.\textsuperscript{416} The lack of annotation in Nietzsche’s personal copy of the *Metaphysics* may have led some scholars to conclude that Nietzsche did not read the *Metaphysics* where the classic exposition of the principle of contradiction and the principle of identity can be found. Positive evidence is also nowhere to be found in book seller receipts in the *Goethe-Schiller Archiv* or in the archived circulation records of Nietzsche’s library loans. Initially, therefore, it looks as if Nietzsche did not read the *Metaphysics* completely.

Yet, there is evidence he read the *Metaphysics* or at the very least was very familiar with it. As mentioned before, my methodology relies not only on annotations but a variety of types of evidence. Nietzsche’s general knowledge of the structure of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was first pointed out by Thomas Brobjer. A letter to Rohde on June 11, 1872, Nietzsche states, “Do you find it reasonable that I approximately after the manner of Aristotle, but otherwise totally against the tradition, deal with the Pythagorean philosophy first after the atomists and before Plato.”\textsuperscript{417} This explicitly refers to Aristotle’s organization in the first book of the *Metaphysics*. Brobjer has also pointed out that Nietzsche’s copy of the *Metaphysics* is spotty (with oil stains) in books one and fourteen but contains less spottiness in between them.\textsuperscript{418} Brobjer implies that this suggests Nietzsche may have read them. However, this evidence is inconclusive.

Oil stains are one way that archivists determine "use". It is important to note that positive evidence of use is not equivalent to positive evidence of Nietzsche’s reading. Archival standards were not what they are today in the early days of the Nietzsche Archive and there are records of archivists taking texts to lunch or dinner and returning with stains. However, sometimes negative

\textsuperscript{416} Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context*, 57.
\textsuperscript{418} Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Ethics of Character*, 231n20.
evidence of use can be quite strong negative evidence of reading. For example, with binding processes in the 1800’s often the reader had to cut apart two pages to be able to read them. This is very strong archival evidence against reading this page in this volume. Nevertheless, Brobjer's claims about stains are positive evidence that the *Metaphysics* was used, but there is no reason to think that use was by Nietzsche's hand. We can therefore conclude very little, if anything, from Brobjer's evidence.

Further evidence for Nietzsche’s reading of the *Metaphysics* comes from quotations in both German and Greek as well as citations and mentions. I have endeavored to link Nietzsche’s citations of the *Metaphysics* with secondary texts he is known to have contact with. If such a link was established, I have excluded them. For example, I recently published a piece in *Nietzsche-Studien* on Nietzsche's citation, “Aristot. Metaph. A6” in his course on the Platonic Dialogues that can be directly linked to his uncited reading of Uberweg’s essay on Plato. There, Nietzsche is literally just copying without citation (Fig 4.1 & 4.2).\(^4\) When a link is only possible, I have noted it in footnotes. However, many of Nietzsche's citations and quotations seem to come from source text. That is, there is positive evidence they came from source text and a lack of negative evidence against such a claim. Of importance is his course *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (1873). In these lecture notes Nietzsche quotes or references the *Metaphysics* more than any other work of Aristotle’s. Nietzsche’s reading of the *Metaphysics* likely encompassed the bulk of the text since he makes use of nine different chapters in five different books of the *Metaphysics*.\(^5\)


\(^5\)Nietzsche cites the following: Bk.1, ch. 3; Bk.1, ch. 4; Bk. 1, ch. 5; Bk. 1, ch. 8; Bk. 4, ch. 3; Bk. 4, ch. 5; Bk.8, ch. 2; Bk 12, ch. 2; Bk 14, ch. 4.
One of the important sections for Nietzsche to have read in the *Metaphysics* is book IV and more specifically chapters 3-5. In a section of *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* Nietzsche refers to *Metaphysics* book 4, chapter 3. Here Aristotle is describing the principle of noncontradiction. Aristotle writes in this section,

> Evidently then such a principle is the most certain of all; which principle this is, we proceed to say. It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect [...]  

In this section, Aristotle suggests that this is the ultimate belief and is the natural starting point for all other axioms. The received view of this is that for Aristotle, the principle of noncontradiction is more foundational than the principle of identity. Rather than prove the priority of the principle, Aristotle simply assumes this and defies others to find a prior principle. Aristotle supports his argument with a negative argument that to deny such a principle is to not have the capacity to reason. He even makes an *ad hominem* argument that anyone who does not accept the principle is no better than a mere plant.

Nietzsche cites book IV chapter 5 of the *Metaphysics* in two other places. In the first of these, Nietzsche mentions book IV chapter 5 of the *Metaphysics* and includes the Greek words used by Aristotle. This citation relates to Parmenides merging knowing with sensation. In the second, Nietzsche quotes from this same chapter again in a fairly lengthy passage in Greek

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421 PPP 69. [Here Nietzsche is actually citing a collection of Aristotle’s passages, in Zeller’s *Die Philosophie Der Griechen* rather than *Aristotles Werke*. The second quotation makes clear that he also had the full text on hand].  
422 *Metaphysics*, 1005a17.  
423 (*Metaphysics* 1006a15). For an interesting connection see Nietzsche’s explication of the relationship between the principle of identity as originating genealogically in the epistemology of plants (HAH I 18; KGW III 4, 19[158]).  
424 PPP 84.  
425 *Metaphysics*, Bk. 4 ch. 5, 109b13-14.
comparing it to passages in *De anima* and *De sensu*. Here Nietzsche explicitly cites the *Metaphysics* and quotes a full line in Greek. This quotation has yet to be identified in any of Nietzsche’s secondary sources.

All of this provides positive evidence Nietzsche read book *Metaphysics* book IV chapters 3-5. In book IV chapter 4, Aristotle puts forward an early version of what has come to be known as the principle of explosion. The principle of explosion is one of the consequences of violating the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity. Today we term the principle of explosion as *ex contradictione quodlibet* or *ex falso quodlibet*. The claim is that from a contradiction (A & ~A) any conclusion can be derived. Aristotle, however, formulated it differently than we do today. Notably, Aristotle puts this forward within his semantic formulation of the principle of non-contradiction. It is based upon the identity of word and thing. Aristotle writes,

> First then this at least is obviously true, that the word ‘be’ or ‘not be’ has a definite meaning, that not everything will be so and not so. - Again, if ‘man’ has one meaning, let this be ‘two-footed animal’; by having one meaning I understand this: if such and such is a man, then if anything is a man, that will be what being a man is. [...] If, however, they were not limited but one were to say that the word has an infinite number of beings, obviously reasoning would be impossible; for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning reasoning with other people, and indeed with oneself has been annihilated; for it is impossible to think of anything if we do not think of one thing[...]

Given the evidence above, it is likely Nietzsche was aware of the principle of explosion in Aristotle and, as will be shown in later chapters, would have also certainly been aware of it in Cicero.

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426 PPP 129.
427 *Metaphysics*, Bk. 4, ch. 4, 1006a30.
Concluding this line of reasoning, Nietzsche cites the Metaphysics more than any other work of Aristotle in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. While the first two references to chapter 3 and 5 may simply be Nietzsche’s reading of secondary works on Aristotle, this last quote of the *Metaphysics* being extensive and in Greek suggests that he read this text in the original. Of the many commentaries Nietzsche either owned or checked out from the library, this quotation is not present in any of them yet identified. This gives both positive evidence and *prima facie* lack of negative evidence that Nietzsche read Aristotle's *Metaphysics* itself.

Another text Nietzsche wrote in 1873, *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, demonstrates Nietzsche’s understanding of the principle of non-contradiction as originating with Aristotle. Nietzsche writes,

> Heraclitus' regal possession is his extraordinary power to think intuitively. Toward the other type of thinking, the type that is accomplished in concepts and logical combinations, in other words toward reason, he shows himself cool, insensitive, in fact hostile, and seems to feel pleasure whenever he can contradict it with an intuitively arrived-at truth. He does this in dicta like "Everything forever has its opposite along with it," and in such unabashed fashion that Aristotle accused him of the highest crime before the tribunal of reason: to have sinned against the law of contradiction.⁴²⁸

This establishes good evidence that Nietzsche read Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. In particular, the chapters that deal with the principle of noncontradiction, the principle of identity, and the principle of explosion. Even if new evidence arises that Nietzsche pulled every single quote and reference to the *Metaphysics* from secondary literature, which is unlikely, it cannot be denied that he read important passages from it. Nietzsche’s late engagement with the *Metaphysics*,

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⁴²⁸ PTAG 52.
however, demonstrates his deep understanding and criticism, be it primary or secondary, of the argumentation in the *Metaphysics*.


While Aristotle crops up in Nietzsche's published texts in his mature years, the importance of Aristotle's work is not immediately obvious. However, it is clear that Nietzsche continued thinking about Aristotle’s principle of noncontradiction throughout his career.

Nietzsche scholars such as Philip Kain often suggest that Nietzsche denies the principle of contradiction and the principle of identity. However, it has yet to be determined whether Nietzsche explicitly has Aristotle in mind. In a note from the autumn of 1887, we find that Nietzsche is still thinking very seriously about Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and the relationship between the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity.

In the 1887 note previously mentioned, Nietzsche challenges the principle of noncontradiction with three arguments like those he previously published which did not mention Aristotle. Nietzsche’s nuanced understanding of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* IV 3 suggests a very close reading. Nietzsche’s exposition broadly follows the standard interpretation today that

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429 For example: GS 29, 75, 89; A 7; TI “Arrows” 3, “Ancients” 5; EH BT 3.
430 It should be noted that Kain cites Nietzsche’s attacks on identical objects but not the principle of identity itself. This lack of differentiation has caused some confusion in the secondary scholarship. Nietzsche discusses the Principle of Identity (“Satz von der Identität” & “Satz der Identität”) in the following places: KGW IV 1, 9[1]; KGW VII 3, 36[23]; KGW VIII 1, 7[4]; Philip J. Kain, "Nietzsche, Skepticism, and Eternal Recurrence," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (1983): 367 [he Cites: BGE, 4. GS, 111. WP, 512-6].
Aristotle gives three different formulations for the principle of noncontradiction: Ontological, Doxic, and Semantic.

The ontological formulation states that, “It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect” (with some qualifications). The Doxic formulation holds that, “It is impossible to hold (suppose) the same thing to be and not to be.” This Doxic formulation can be taken to be either a descriptive account of psychology or a normative statement. The descriptive psychological account seems implausible since people certainly can hold contradictory beliefs, as cognitive dissonance shows. However, Aristotle might respond, as he does to Heraclitus, that although people can state contradictions, they don’t actually believe them. Another standard way of interpreting the second formulation is normative, that is, one can think this way, but one cannot do so rationally. It is thus a criterion of rationality. The third is generally referred to as the semantic formulation. Aristotle writes, “opposite assertions cannot be true at the same time.” This third formulation is to some extent incomplete. It could easily rely on either the first or second formulation. That is, it could have an ontological or doxic justification.

Which of these formulations Aristotle is endeavoring to establish is unsettled in secondary scholarship. He could want to establish the second formulation based on the first or the first formulation based on the second. It could also be the case that he only wants to establish the second.

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433 (Metaphysics, Bk. 4, ch. 3, 1005b23–26). If they did believe them, the principle of explosion would undermine the very possibility of logic and communication.
434 *Metaphysics*, Bk. 4, ch. 6, 1011b13–20.
In Nietzsche’s note, he addresses several formulations of the law of noncontradiction and assumes that it is the second formulation that Aristotle is trying to establish. He then argues that the second formulation relies on three presuppositions. Nietzsche argues [1] that if the second formulation relies on the first formulation then we must justify our immediate ontological access to reality as it is in-itself. Nietzsche dismisses such a claim on Kantian epistemological grounds. A second possibility Nietzsche addresses [2] is that the second formulation relies on, or simply is, a normative imperative. As a normative imperative it correlates to human values rather than the world independent of human values. A final presupposition upon which the second formulation relies is [3] the principle of identity. Nietzsche then gives three separate attacks on the principle of identity. The first is a thought experiment and the second two are genealogical analyses.

Nietzsche clearly thinks that Aristotle is trying to establish the second formulation. Nietzsche moves on to ask what sort of presuppositions the principle of non-contradiction is based upon. If Aristotle is correct, then the principle of non-contradiction should not contain any presuppositions. If it is functioning as the foundation for all of logic then it should not presuppose anything. If there are presuppositions in the principle and those presuppositions can themselves be challenged, then the principle itself can be challenged. He writes,

If, according to Aristotle, the principle of non-contradiction is the most certain of all principles, if it is the final and most fundamental one upon which all proofs are based, if the principle of all other axioms lies within it: then one ought to examine all the more carefully what it actually presupposes in the way of theses.435

435 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
If such presuppositions exist, this means, first, that it is not the most basic principle but relies on other more basic assumptions. If the assumptions can be challenged, then the primacy of the principle of non-contradiction itself can be challenged.

Nietzsche then gives an analysis of three possible presuppositions that are contained in the principle of noncontradiction. He aptly summarizes the first two possibilities [1 & 2]. “In short, the question remains open: [1] are the axioms of logic adequate to the real, or [2] are they measures and means to create for us the real, the concept 'reality'? . . .” The final presupposition [3] is the principle of identity [A=A].

The first possible presupposition is that classical logic is true because it has a direct and undoubttable correspondence to the real world. If the first presupposition turns out to be false, a second presupposition is possible. The principle of non-contradiction is merely a normative imperative that dictates what is to be considered true. The third presupposition is the metaphysical and empirical truth of the law of identity.

Presupposition 1

The first of these three possibilities [1] is that the second formulation relies on the first. However, the first presupposes a type of epistemic access to the world independent of human experience, which Nietzsche denies. The ontological formulation relies on the presupposition that it corresponds to reality. The only evidence for this is the necessity of the principle for our thinking. This, according to Nietzsche, amounts to no evidence at all.

Nietzsche claims that the necessity of cognition does not dictate the ontological status of that way of thinking. The only conclusion we ought to draw from it is that we cannot think otherwise. That is, it may simply be a necessity of our kind of cognition or physiological
constitution and not a reflection of the laws of nature as they are in-themselves. Nietzsche writes, “We do not succeed in both affirming and negating one and the same thing: that is a subjective empirical proposition which expresses not a 'necessity' but only a non-ability.”

Nietzsche’s critique is, therefore, that Aristotle moves from the necessity of human cognition to the necessity of reality. Here Nietzsche explicates Aristotle’s ontological first formulation of the principle of noncontradiction. In order to recognize the correspondence of our ideas with the world in-itself this would rely on a spooky intuition that came from somewhere else, an intuition which Nietzsche denies we can lay claim to. He writes that the principle of non-contradiction, “Either it asserts something about actuality, about the real, as if one already knew this from another source; that is, as if opposite attributes could not be ascribed to it.” The authority of the principle doesn’t come about because Aristotle is handsome or brave but it takes its authority from an external source. Its claim to authority comes from a spooky transcendent intuition for which there can be no demonstration. It gains this authority not from our experience but from “another source.”

Nietzsche then argues, in a dismissive fashion, that we simply do not have access to the actual real world, that is, the world as it is in-itself. Here, we see Nietzsche dismissing the very possibility of verifying any functional correspondence theory of truth that grants us access to things-in-themselves. As Nietzsche states in Beyond Good and Evil, it is "faith" in this access

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436 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
437 I find Surge’s translation in TLN less readable and have here used a slightly modified version of Kaufmann's translation (WP 530). Surge’s translation is, “Either, as if it already knew the real from somewhere else, it asserts something with respect to the real, to what is: namely that opposite predicates cannot be ascribed to the real” (TLN 9[97]).
438 Metaphysics, Bk. 4, ch. 4, 1006a 5-7.
that looms in the background of all logical processes. We simply lack the type of access to the world as it is in-itself to make any comparison between our phenomenal world and the noumenal world. Nietzsche therefore rejects the first ontological formulation on epistemic grounds. He writes, “But to be able to affirm the former [that the axioms of logic adequately describe things-in-themselves] one would, as I have said, already need to be acquainted with what is; and that's simply not the case.”

In a separate note from 1886-1887 Nietzsche explicates the same argument but in a more concise formulation. The argument is against Kant in this note; however, the logical structure is almost identical. He writes.

The legitimacy of belief in knowledge is always presupposed. [...] The conclusion is therefore:

1. There are assertions that we consider universally valid and necessary;
2. Necessity and universal validity cannot be derived from experience
3. Consequently they must be founded not upon experience, but upon something else, and derived from another form of knowledge!

While much tidier, this seems to be the exact argument he is using against Aristotle. Nietzsche, of course, denies that we have any sort of intuition that pierces into some Platonic world of pure reason. Rather, he suggests, these necessities of cognition are simply regulative articles of belief. There is no guarantee that a regulative belief corresponds to truth.

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439 BGE 2.
440 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]). Brackets added.
442 KGW VIII 1, 7[4], P. 273 (Trans. Kaufmann [WP 530]).
Switching back to the argument against Aristotle, Nietzsche explicates further why he thinks we cannot grasp hold of the world as it is in-itself on Kantian grounds. Namely, that the law of noncontradiction, the principle of identity, and indeed all of logic itself relies on an unfounded presupposition; that logic corresponds directly to the thing-in-itself. Nietzsche writes,

\[ \text{The most basic acts of thought - affirming and negating, holding-to-be-true and holding-to-be-not-true - are, inasmuch as they presuppose not only a habit but a right to hold-to-be-true or hold-to-be-not-true in general, themselves ruled by a belief that there is knowledge for us, that judging really can reach the truth. In short, logic does not doubt its ability to state something about the true-in-itself (namely, that this cannot have opposite predicates).} \]

The authority of the law of non-contradiction, therefore, presupposes a sort of epistemic access that Nietzsche denies. We cannot peek behind the curtain of the world and check to see if the principle of non-contradiction corresponds to the world as it is independent of us. Perhaps, in the world independent of human experience, opposite predicates can be ascribed to the real. Like Schrödinger's cat, perhaps things-in-themselves can be both alive and not-alive. For Nietzsche, however, we simply do not have the epistemic access to justify the presupposition that the principle of non-contradiction corresponds to reality universally.

\[ \text{Presupposition 2} \]

The second possibility is that even if there is no metaphysical claim to know the world as it is in-itself, this may simply be an imperative normative claim that we should not ascribe contradictories to reality. Here Nietzsche describes the normative interpretation of the second formulation, “Or [2] does the principle mean that opposite predicates shall not be ascribed to it? Then logic would be an imperative, not to know the true, but to posit and arrange a world that}
This suggests that if the law does not have an indubitable connection to the world as it is, then perhaps it is an imperative. It is not a matter of whether we can but whether we should. If that is the appropriate kind of thing for creatures like us to do, it is a matter of morality.

So, Nietzsche dismisses option [1] for epistemological reasons and then turns to the second possibility [2]; that the principle of contradiction is a normative imperative at the base of epistemology. “The principle thus contains not a criterion of truth, but rather an imperative about what shall count as true.” The principle is therefore not so much a truth litmus test independent of human experience but more like rules set out in a debate club. It tells us what can be called true. Nietzsche concludes that the law of non-contradiction is not a criterion of the True, but a normative imperative about what should be allowed to show up or count as true. Rather than being the Truth (capital T truth), the law of noncontradiction determines what is called true normatively.

Presupposition 3

Nietzsche then moves quickly into another presupposition of the principle of noncontradiction; the principle of identity. For Aristotle, the law of non-contradiction was the most fundamental. Nietzsche challenges this, arguing that the principle of noncontradiction can only function under the presupposition that A=A is itself coherent. Nietzsche then offers three attacks against this presupposition. The first is a thought experiment and the second two are

443 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
444 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
genealogical analyses. These undermine the universal and *a priori* authority of the principle by offering other possible explanations.\textsuperscript{445}

Nietzsche first puts forward a counterfactual thought experiment to make this argument, rather than making a truth functional claim or a refutation. He writes, “Supposing there were no A identical with itself, such as that presupposed by every logical (including mathematical) principle, supposing A were already an *illusion*, then logic would have as its presupposition a merely illusory world.”\textsuperscript{446} Nietzsche's inclusion of mathematics here suggests he is not simply targeting concrete physical objects but abstract concepts as well. It is important to note here that this is a thought experiment or a conditional implication (\textit{If} \(x\) \textit{then} \(y\)). Nietzsche is therefore not making any ontological or metaphysical commitments himself.

Nietzsche claims the foundation of logic according to Aristotle is the principle of noncontradiction, yet, the necessary presupposition of the principle of noncontradiction is the ontological status of the principle of identity. One can then apply the same arguments previously used against the principle of noncontradiction, to the principle of identity. This would result in two possible interpretations of the principle of identity. Either the principle of identity corresponds to the world as it is in-itself, an ontological claim, or it is a normative imperative claim about what we should call true.

Applying Nietzsche's same criterion, he would argue that we simply don't have access to things as they are in-themselves and therefore ontological claims regarding its correspondence to

\textsuperscript{445} In De Man’s paper on this section, he holds that the possibility Nietzsche puts forward (that there may not be anything that is identical to itself) is not a truth functional statement but hypothetical. It thus works to undermine and cast suspicion on the *a priori* nature of the proposition rather than reject on logical grounds (Paul De Man, "Action and Identity in Nietzsche," *Yale French Studies* 52, no. 1 (1975): 22).

\textsuperscript{446} KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
the world as it is in-itself are unfounded. Just like the principle of non-contradiction, Nietzsche
would argue that because we lack access to things as they are in-themselves, justificatory support
for the primacy and validity of the principle of identity cannot rest on that access.\footnote{It's worth noting here that Nietzsche does not consider the possibility that the principle of
identity may be true but unverifiable for creatures that are constituted as we are. However,
Nietzsche's argument is not about the truth of such principles but whether we are justified in
taking them to be true. Without a mechanism for double checking correspondence to the world as
it is in-itself, the principle of identity is as unjustified as other presuppositions.} Nietzsche,
therefore, would dismiss the first option as unjustified; he would then hold that the principle of
identity, just like the principle of noncontradiction, turns out to be an imperative claim. That is, it
functions as an imperative that defines for us what is to be called absolutely and indisputably
true. It constrains what can or should show up as true for us.

Rather than argue that his thought experiment is true itself, which would undermine his
whole presupposition, Nietzsche moves into his, by now well developed, genealogical
analysis.\footnote{As early as \textit{Dawn} 95 Nietzsche had a fairly well worked out genealogical method. He writes,
\textit{"Historical refutation as definitive refutation." - In former times, one sought to prove that there
was no God -today one demonstrates how the belief in the existence of God could \textit{come into}
being and by what means this belief attained its gravity and importance: thus, a counterproof that
there is no God becomes superfluous" (D 95).} Rather than argue that the principle is false, he gives a genealogical explanation of
how it may have arisen historically. By doing so he undermines its claim to ahistorical and
universal validity.

Nietzsche puts forward two genealogical analyses. First, he argues that the unity and
repetition of experience give way to logical consistency and the positing of all sorts of
ontological categories. These categories, established by habit over eons of the species, are then
normatively dictated to the positing of a metaphysical or ‘true world’. This includes grammatical
functions, such as objects and predicates, as well as other common biases of grammatically
directed ontologies. Further, if the original “A” itself is a contingent normative truth, then all of
metaphysics itself, as it is in Nietzsche’s late work *Twilight of the Idols*, is just as much of a fable
as other normative claims in ethics. Nietzsche ends his first genealogical argument with the
following,

> And indeed we believe in that principle [the principle of identity] under the impression of
> endless experience which seems continually to confirm it. The 'thing' - that is the real
> substratum of A: *our belief in things* is the precondition for our belief in logic. The A of
> logic is, like the atom, a re-construction of the 'thing' . . . By not grasping that, and by
> making of logic a criterion of *true being*, we are well on the way to positing all those
> hypostases - substance, predicate, object, subject, action, etc. - as realities: i.e., to
> conceiving a metaphysical world, i.e., a 'true world' (*- but this is the illusory world once
> again . . .*).449

For Nietzsche, the principle of identity leads to, or is the foundation of, all metaphysics.450 This
presupposition itself is not ontologically justified beyond all human experience but is simply
another normative truth like those of morality. This normative truth, however, has been refined
and shaped through eons of history and physiology to seem like it is independent of human
cognition. It has become codified within this history of the species’ survival and now seems
indubitable.

Next, Nietzsche moves on to his second genealogical argument. Nietzsche argues we can
explain our cognitive habit to agree with the law of noncontradiction as a sensualist prejudice.
Nietzsche holds that Aristotle has a sensualist theory of knowledge.451 At least part of
Nietzsche’s knowledge of Aristotle's sensualism comes from his reading of *On Dreams* chapter

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449 TLN 9[97]. Brackets added.
450 Cf. HAH I 11, 18.
451 KGW VIII 2, 9[57].
II in which Aristotle discusses the relationship between perception and our sense-organs.\textsuperscript{452} In BGE 15 Nietzsche strongly attacks dogmatic sensualism as internally incoherent.\textsuperscript{453} Sensualism can be thought of as putting forward two main claims; (1) the senses do not lie and (2) the sense organs are causes.\textsuperscript{454} Here Nietzsche suggests that the real reason we form habits in conformity with the principle of identity and the principle of noncontradiction is because of a sensualist prejudice.

Here the crude, sensualist prejudice reigns that sensations teach us \textit{truths} about things - that I cannot say at the same time of one and the same thing that it is \textit{hard} and it is \textit{soft} (the instinctive proof ‘I cannot have two opposite sensations at the same time’ - \textit{quite crude and false}). The conceptual ban on contradiction proceeds from the belief that we \textit{are able} to form concepts, that a concept doesn't merely name what is essential in a thing but \textit{encompasses} it . . . \textsuperscript{455}

With concepts, derived from sensualist prejudice, we believe that we have knowledge of the world. This knowledge is believed to get at the essence of things as they are in-themselves, exhausting all other possibilities. Here Nietzsche has genealogically traced our insistence on the undeniability of the law of identity and the law of noncontradiction to a sensualist prejudice.

\textsuperscript{452} The text in Nietzsche’s personal Library containing “On Dreams” has indications of reading in chapter II. See Table 4.1 at the end of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{453} Nietzsche does end up taking it on board as a “regulative hypothesis” as will be discussed in later chapters regarding Nietzsche’s disagreement with Lange (BGE 15). I take a regulative hypothesis to be practical rather than theoretical. In book 5 of the Gay Science Nietzsche writes, “Today we are all sensualists, we philosophers of the present and future, not in theory but in praxis, in practice” (GS 372).
\textsuperscript{455} KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]). Here a transcription erratum in the KGW has led to a mistranslation. The KGW originally has \textit{Wahre} (true) but the actual term is \textit{wesen} (essence). I have therefore modified the translation to reflect this.
Broadening his scope, yet reiterating his previous arguments, Nietzsche concludes his argument against Aristotle’s principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity. Both, he claims, are ways in which we have constructed the world for ourselves in alignment with cognition and ability. They do not represent *a priori* truth but at best necessary, or obligatory, ways in which we lie to ourselves about our access to the world as it is in-itself. Nietzsche writes, “In fact logic (like geometry and arithmetic) only applies to *fictitious truths that we have created*. Logic is the attempt to understand the real world according to a scheme of being that we have posited, or, more correctly, the attempt to make it formulatable, calculable for us . . . [sic]”456 As Nietzsche argues in the published works, logic, including the law of identity, may have been a necessary condition for survival of the species. That, however, does not make it a truth about the world as it is in-itself independent of our cognition.

Simply because conceptual schemes allow a species to survive does not make those conceptual schemes true. It simply means that a certain schema was historically situated to allow for the survival of the species. Nietzsche writes, “That the mind has become and is still becoming; that among countless ways of inferring and judging, the one now most familiar to us is somehow the most useful to us and has been passed down to us because the individuals who through that way had better prospects: that this nothing about ‘true’ and ‘untrue,--- [sic]”457 Nietzsche reiterates this in a notebook entry; “Something can be a condition of life and nevertheless be false.”458 Nietzsche would make this point very strongly in *The Gay Science*, “Life no argument. -We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live-by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without

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456 KGW VIII 2, 9[97] (Trans. TLN 9[97]).
457 KGW VII 3, 34[81] (Trans. TLN 34[81]).
458 TLN 35[35].
these articles of faith no one could endure living. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument; the conditions of life might include error.”\textsuperscript{459} The principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction may be just these kinds of errors.

The first reaction an Aristotelian might have to Nietzsche’s undermining of the principle of contradiction would be to demand a more primordial principle and then argue that “these persons cannot say what principle they regard as more indemonstrable than the present one.”\textsuperscript{460} Nietzsche, as demonstrated above, holds that the principle of identity is more primordial and therefore satisfies the first Aristotelian reaction.

The second reaction an Aristotelian might make is to challenge his opponents to say anything without such a principle, the assumption being, that without the principle of non-contradiction communication is impossible. Aristotle writes,

\begin{quote}
The starting-point for all such arguments is not the demand that our opponents shall say that something either is or is not (for this one might perhaps take to be assuming what is at issue), but that he shall say something which is significant both for himself and for another; for this is necessary, if he really is to say anything.\textsuperscript{461}
\end{quote}

In Nietzsche’s own argument I think he has done precisely this by side-stepping strict logical debate with a thought experiment and two genealogical analyses. By doing this Nietzsche can avoid accepting the principle of noncontradiction or the principle of identity and nevertheless communicate a thought to the reader that undermines their universality.\textsuperscript{462} Nietzsche is not

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{460} Metaphysics, Bk. IV, Ch. 4, 1006b10.
\textsuperscript{461} Metaphysics, Bk. IV, Ch. 4, 1006a19-22.
\textsuperscript{462} Standard forms of argument presuppose the author of the argument endorses the premises they put forward that then support their conclusion. Thought experiments and genealogical arguments can avoid such a structure. Thought experiments ask the reader to imagine a situation and consider whether such a thing is coherent and what implications its coherence or lack thereof
\end{footnotes}
making the kind of truth functional arguments the Aristotelian has in mind, but he is certainly communicating ideas. Nietzsche therefore meets the second reaction of the Aristotelian.

There is a tendency to simply dismiss Nietzsche, rather than take his criticism seriously, when he casts doubt on the universality of the claim that A=A. This, however, seems to be one of the long-held prejudices of philosophy that Nietzsche addresses in his published works. It is therefore important to highlight that the idea that A=A and A v ~A are not universals is both internally coherent and empirically demonstrable. Empirical work in physics today challenges our commonsense notion of the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity in classical logic. It would be egregiously anachronistic to suggest that Nietzsche is articulating quantum mechanics, however, it is certainly the case that quantum mechanics challenges classical logic.

The orthodox interpretation of the congruence relation “=” has faced insurmountable challenges. The idea of equality with its semantically “common sense” interpretation carries metaphysical baggage with it. These common sense interpretations have severe problems when

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might have. However, the author of a thought experiment need not be committed to the truth of that thought experiment to use it as an intuition pump. Genealogical arguments are also structured to avoid ontological commitments and attack propositions indirectly. Genealogical arguments undermine the authority of some claim deemed a priori by offering a counter historical explanation of how that thing came to be within history. Genealogical arguments need not commit their author to that alternative explanation. Rather, the very possibility of a historical explanation undermines the status of a claim to a priori truth. Both thought experiments and genealogical arguments, therefore, can lead the reader to doubt certain conclusions without a strong commitment to any particular claim beyond that such a thing is imaginable.

463 BGE 1-15.

brought to the syntactic level of the mathematical models of quantum mechanics.\textsuperscript{465} As originally formulated by Birkhoff and von Neumann in the 1930’s, classical logic simply provides the wrong results when we apply them to quantum mechanics.\textsuperscript{466} The principle of identity simply cannot be taken to be a universal law of nature as Aristotle believed.\textsuperscript{467} I think it is safe to say the researchers working in quantum mechanics are communicating something when they write about their research. To side with Aristotle and against Nietzsche today would mean that the empirically demonstrated work in quantum mechanics is not only nonsense but completely noncommunicable.

It is undeniable that the conclusions of quantum mechanics do present unintuitive results which challenge our common sense understanding of the world as articulated by classical logic. While aspects of classical logic can be applied to the world of everyday medium sized objects in a rough and ready fashion, quantum mechanics makes it clear that classical logic simply is not universal. It is important to be clear that it is difficult to conclude anything positive in a philosophically robust manner from quantum mechanics without considerable caveats. As Peter


Lewis puts this, “So very little can be concluded unconditionally on the basis of quantum mechanics [...] The best we can say is that not *everything* in our received classical worldview can be right.” However, what is clear and almost universally accepted is that the principle of identity, as used in classical logic, is not universal. As E. J. Lowe writes in his article, "Vague Identities and Quantum Indeterminacy," one very live option is, “It is erroneous to assume that, whatever \[A\] may be, there must be an objective fact of the matter as to whether or not \[A\] is self-identical, that is, \[A=A\] cannot be assumed to be true.” That is, as Sunny Auyang argues, entities exist that lack numerical identity. In more recent work, philosophers of science have argued that the results in quantum mechanics indicates that the law of identity, for all \(x (x=x)\), simply does not apply universally.

If we presuppose the principle of identity as universal and understand identity relations as classical logic does, when we apply this to quantum mechanics we run into unresolvable errors. However, under the logical and mathematical systems developed along with quantum mechanics, there is no need to presuppose the principle of identity as universal. While these systems of thought certainly challenge our commonsense intuitions, they certainly are not incoherent as Aristotle would claim.

Quantum mechanics makes it clear that thought itself and communication are not necessarily abandoned, as Aristotle thought, if we reject the universality of the principle of

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470 Sunny Y. Auyang, *How is Quantum Field Theory Possible?* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1995), 159
identity. Aristotle's dogmatic position that speaking with one another coherently is impossible without presupposing the universality of the principle of identity is not only wrong, but to presuppose the universality of such a principle means that such dogma itself becomes incoherent. That is, when it comes to our best quantum mechanical models, if we presuppose the universality of the principle of identity, it produces the wrong results. In short, presupposing this principle as a universal means not only the predictions are wrong but that the mathematics simply does not work out. Put another way, while classical logic might explode into nihilism, classical logic and mathematics are not the only ways in which to describe the world.

The kneejerk philosophical prejudice that rejects any questions about the universality of the principle of identity is simply a philosophical prejudice of classical logic, a classical logic Nietzsche himself often rejected. Put simply, quantum mechanics holds there exists empirically verifiable true contradictions as defined by classical logic. According to a strict application of classical logic's own laws, it itself is reduced to nihilism by the principle of explosion.

The fact that we struggle to intuitively grasp the nature of the quantum world is not evidence against the reality of the quantum world but evidence regarding the structure of our cognition and intuition. It is a structure of our cognition that we think in terms of the principle of noncontradiction and principle of identity. This is, again, not to say that Nietzsche is predicting or positing quantum physics but simply that quantum physics suggests that the “common sense” laws of classical logic face severe and perhaps insurmountable difficulties in capturing the way

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473 Various interpretations of quantum mechanics try to limit the number of formal contradictions within them. However, it is nevertheless the case that the ontology and logic put forward in classical logic simply cannot account for empirical evidence. The standard move is to alter one of the presuppositions in classical logic such as the universality of the principle of identity.
science suggests the world is. This would support Nietzsche’s suspicion that the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity are not laws of nature but may be merely necessities of how the cognition of our species functions. Our difficulty in thinking $A=\neg A$ could be simply a reflection of the cognitive abilities of our species rather than evidence for a particular kind of metaphysics or ontology.

In conclusion, I have argued for the existence of positive evidence that Nietzsche read sections of the *Metaphysics* that contain the principle of identity, the principle of contradiction, and the principle of explosion. Further, even in his mature thought he still saw his epistemology in contention with Aristotle’s presuppositions. This, I argue, makes it beyond dispute that Nietzsche was aware of the traditional canon of the principle of identity in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and that he was also aware that his epistemological positions directly challenged the presuppositions of Aristotle.

In the last two chapters I have presented arguments explicitly against apologetic readings of eternal recurrence. These readings claim that Nietzsche was unaware of the canonical history of the principle of identity and was perhaps unaware he violated it. This lack of awareness, presumably, is one explanation for why Nietzsche made the doctrine central to his philosophy even though it violates the basic principles of classical logic.

I have demonstrated Nietzsche’s in-depth knowledge of both Plato and Aristotle generally. Further, I demonstrated Nietzsche's reading and familiarity with both Plato and Aristotle’s central texts concerning the principle of identity. Additionally, I demonstrated that even in his mature work from 1887 Nietzsche explicitly challenges Aristotle’s notion of the principle of noncontradiction and the principle of identity. I have therefore indisputably
established that Nietzsche’s violation of Aristotle’s principle of identity was not based upon a lack of reading or familiarity with his texts or philosophy.
5. Figures

§ 2.
Möglichkeit des Wissens.

Zur Erklärung Aristot. Metaph. A 6; M 4: Plato habe zuerst die heraklitische Lehre kennen gelernt, wonach alles Sinnliche in beständigem Flusse sei, demnach kein Wissen zulasse, und dieser Ansicht sei er auch in der Folge treu geblieben. Später habe er durch Sokrates, den Vater der Induction und Definition, ein Wissen gefunden, und zwar auf einem nicht sinnlichen, dem ethischen Gebiete: so sei er zur Ansicht

Fig. 4.1: Ueberweg, Friedrich. “Ueber die Platoische Weltseele” in Rheinisches Museum für Philologie. Vol 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Johann David Sauerländer. 1854), 47.

Fig. 4.2: KGW II 4, P. 148-149.
6. Tables

Table 4.1 – Annotations in Nietzsche's Personal Copy of *Aristoteles Werke*

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BP - Blue pencil  
RP - Red Pencil  
BI - Black Ink  
RI - Red Ink  
BI - Blue Ink

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Chapter 5: Eternal Recurrence: Genesis, Nihilism, and Disgust

The argument in this chapter is divided into three parts. First, I argue for a genetic reading of eternal recurrence by tracing the development of the idea through drafts, fair copies, correction pages and other documents. This leads me to an alternate ending of The Gay Science [GS] section 341 in the correction pages and several important drafts of Beyond Good and Evil [BGE] section 56.

I then argue that we can understand eternal recurrence as a thought experiment that provides the occasion for two separate forms of engagement. As Nietzsche discusses in On the Genealogy of Morality [GM] II 24, the creation of new ideals always requires that old ideals be broken down. Eternal recurrence does both. The first mode of engagement breaks down old epistemological ideals; the second mode of engagement makes use of emotive and affective forces to foster the creation of a new ideal.

The first provides the destructive or negative aspect of eternal recurrence that leads to an epistemological nihilism that parallels the death of God. Thinking eternal return to its depths clears away the Platonist foundations of Western epistemology. However, this does not leave Nietzsche trapped because of the second affective escape from nihilism.
The second form of engagement is affective and provides the opportunity for us to reflect on our disgust with the earthly, which drove us to Platonist escapism. This affective form of engagement allows for a new ideal of life affirmation to emerge, namely, *amor fati*.

As a thought experiment, eternal recurrence can offer both epistemological and affective insights. However, because it is a thought experiment, it does not commit Nietzsche to the physical reality of eternal recurrence. However, if such a thing turned out to be the case, as Nietzsche sometimes speculates in his notebooks, this would only further support Nietzsche's arguments. Nevertheless, in BGE 56 and GS 341, Nietzsche does not need eternal recurrence to be a physical reality for this thought experiment to be effective. That is, what is affirmed in the end is the ideal that the world affirming human being themselves want, not what is actually the physical case.474

1. Genetic Analysis

In 1888, Nietzsche wrote an autobiography of sorts, *Ecce Homo*. In this text, he writes about an idea that has become inextricably linked to the history and interpretation of his philosophy: eternal recurrence. The idea of eternal recurrence is perhaps Nietzsche’s most contentious idea because scholars find it difficult to agree, even in broad terms, about what it means. However, Nietzsche himself in *Ecce Homo* describes it as “the unconditional and

474 There is a general consensus among scholars that BGE 56 and GS 341 do not put forward a cosmological or metaphysical version of eternal recurrence. It is my position that Nietzsche is putting eternal recurrence as a thought experiment that has a number of implications. It is only in the notebooks, such as M III 1 that Nietzsche toys with cosmological versions of eternal recurrence. Since my methodology focuses on the development of a text into the published work, I will be primarily focusing on those sections and drafts that track the development into the published work.
infinitely repeated circular course of all things.”\textsuperscript{475} The idea is that every event, every action, and every experience that occurs in the universe will repeat in the same way, not only once, but an infinite number of times. However, the discussion of eternal recurrence in \textit{Ecce Homo} presents us with a \textit{prima facie} paradox.

There, Nietzsche claims that in August 1881 the thought of eternal recurrence came to him and that it was a radically new insight. However, in that very same work, Nietzsche admits that the idea is not new and had existed among previous philosophers. How is it that this supposedly new idea, which came to define Nietzsche’s radical new philosophy, was also not new at all?

Scholars have argued that the idea of eternal recurrence has occurred throughout many historical traditions in philosophy. Rüdiger Safanski argues that the thought is present in Indic myths, the pre-Socratics, the Pythagoreans, and in the heretical undercurrents in the West. Nietzsche would have been aware of these traditions from his reading of scholars such as Friedrich Creuzer and Johann Jakob Bachofen among others.\textsuperscript{476} Thomas Brobjer also concludes that “The idea of eternal recurrence is far from unique to Nietzsche.”\textsuperscript{477}

Nietzsche himself had engaged with the thought of eternal recurrence before 1881. In his unpublished works as early as 1862, such as “On Fate and History” and “Freedom of Will and Fate,” Nietzsche shows acquaintance with the idea of eternal recurrence. “On Fate and History” contains allusions to the universe as a cosmic clock that repeats all events. He asks, “Does the eternal becoming never reach an end? [...] Hour by hour, the hand of the clock moves along, only to begin its passage all over again after twelve; a new cosmic era dawns.” Nietzsche is very clear that any new era that repeats will simply be an identical repetition because “the events are the dial [of the clock].”\(^{478}\) That is, although the hands of the clock, the present, move, the events it points to, the face of the clock, do not change. However, even in this early piece, Nietzsche argues that such a conception of a universal history is “impossible” for mankind to conceive of. Why Nietzsche thinks it is impossible in 1862 is not entirely clear.

Nietzsche again addresses the idea of eternal recurrence in his 1872 lecture course on *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, writing, “It is [held] among the Pythagoreans that [...] Whenever the stars once more attain the same position, not only the same people but also the same behaviors will again occur.”\(^{479}\) Nietzsche again refers to the Pythagorean theory of eternal return in 1874. He writes in *Unfashionable Observations*, essay II, “The Utility and Liability of History” (1874),

> Basically, in fact, what is possible once could only become possible a second time if the Pythagoreans were correct in believing that when an identical constellation of heavenly bodies occurs, identical events - down to individual minute details - must repeat themselves on the earth as well; so that whenever the stars have a particular relation to

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each other, a Stoic will join forces with an Epicurean to murder Caesar, and whenever they are in another configuration Columbus will discover America.\footnote{UM} Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Unfashionable Observations. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Vol 2}. Trans. Richard Gary (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), UM II 2.

Nietzsche goes on to reject eternal recurrence in the following lines, claiming, “the true historical connection of causes and effects [...] would never again produce something wholly identical to what it produced in the past.”\footnote{UM II 2.} That is, such a world picture would “identify nonidentical things.”\footnote{UM II 2.} This demonstrates that, if we take the thought of eternal recurrence to be a propositional claim about the identical repetition of the cosmos, it is, first, not a new idea to him and, second, a claim he had already rejected.\footnote{UM II 2.} If Nietzsche is offering something radically new, as he seems to claim, then a closer look at the development of this idea ought to offer some insight.

A typical methodological strategy scholars take is to analyze the \textit{Nachlass} notes and link these to the published work. Using a visual analogy, this is like assessing a curve from two data points.\footnote{UM II 2.} The more data points one has in between, the better one can map the curve between the origin and final point. Textually speaking, the more textual touchstones in between the origin and

\footnote{481} UM II 2.  
\footnote{482} UM II 2.  
\footnote{483} It should be noted here that Nietzsche seems at this point to see it as events repeating on a linear timeline rather than having the same temporal indexicals.  
\footnote{484} Of course, there are different types of materials contained in what scholars often refer to as Nietzsche's \textit{Nachlass} in the KGW and scholars often cite multiple \textit{Nachlass} notes or drafts. However, from a genetic perspective, the notebooks in the KGW can be considered different from other materials such as handwritten print manuscripts and correction copies. For the purposes of this analogy, I am considering evidence from the \textit{Nachlass} as one kind of evidence that is different from evidence from correction copies, author's examination copies and first editions.
final publication, the better one can understand the genesis, impetus, and development of a particular piece of text.

In the following, I offer a genetic analysis of the two sections of Nietzsche’s writing on eternal recurrence that are most discussed by scholars. I analyze the genesis of GS 341, then the genesis of BGE 56. These texts are found in Nietzsche's personal library, stored in the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek [HAAB], and his broader archived estate, stored in the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv [GSA].

The publication process in 19th century Germany was a complex one and given the rapidly changing standards during that time any statement about it is bound to overgeneralize. However, with regard to the publication of Nietzsche’s texts, we can begin by analyzing a seven-step publishing process from preliminary drafts all the way through late editions. Genetically speaking, I will order textual evidence along the following general categories of development.

1. Preliminary stages / Drafts [Vorstufe]
   a. Usually found in Nietzsche’s notebooks [Notizbücher], jotters [Hefte], or dossiers of loose-leaf sheets [Mappen loser Blätter].
2. Handwritten fair copy [Reinschrift]
   a. Often copied out of Nietzsche's notebooks into a second central location with more attention to legibility. Sometimes there are multiple fair copies made as the order of the text changes and corrections are made.
3. Print manuscript [Druckmanuskript]
   a. The final fair copy that is sent to the printer.
4. Correction pages [Korrekturbogen & Korrekturbogenexemplar]
   a. These printed sheets are provided from the printer for any corrections or changes.
5. Author’s examination copy [Handexemplar]
   a. These texts usually are the author’s last chance to spot any errors before the first edition is released to the public.

Nietzsche does discuss eternal recurrence in Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Ecce Homo. However, a smaller number of manuscripts exist to track the genesis of Z and EH, which makes a genetic analysis extremely cumbersome. While such an analysis would be interesting, I do not attempt that here.
6. First edition [Erstdruck]
7. Later editions [if any]

1.1 Genesis of GS 341

We can reconstruct the genesis of GS 341 through a series of documents that still survive. We can also use Nietzsche's letters to verify the existence of other documents that did not survive. There exists a preliminary draft of GS 341 in his notebooks. The first fair copy does not contain GS 341 but it does contain surrounding sections. There was also a second fair copy, created with the assistance of Nietzsche’s sister and others, but it has been lost. There exists a third short, fragmentary fair copy, which became the print manuscript, but it does not contain book four (and therefore does not contain GS 341). Two sets of correction pages for GS survive, one of which contains significant developments in GS 341. Nietzsche’s author’s examination copy has also survived, alongside public first editions, a second edition print

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487 GSA 71/133; M III 6 p 266-69. (Section 342); M III 6 p. 244 (Section 340). The first fair copy of The Gay Science, which has been mostly excluded from the KGW (KGW IV 2. 16[ 1-23]. P. 557-564) and only is mentioned in the KSA ([KSA] [KSA] Kritische Studienausgabe. 15 vols, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975-84), KSA: 14, pp. 656, 658).
488 We know of this fair copy's existence from letters ([KSB] Sämtlichebriefe: Kritische Studienausgabe. 8 vols. Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 1986), KSB 06: 194u. 230. To Paul Rée in Stibbe; KSB06: 195u. 232. To Ernst Schmeitzner in Chemnitz (postcard) [accessed through Past Masters digital edition]).
490 [NPB] Nietzsche’s persönliche Bibliothek. Edited by Giuliano Campioni, et al. (Germany: De Gruyter, 2003), NPB 413 [HAAB C 4609] (evidence of little editing); HAAB C 4608 (considerable editing).
491 HAAB 4607; NPB 413.
Many of these texts contain significant and important differences that show a considerable development of Nietzsche’s ideas. However, with regard to GS 341, only three of these texts both contain the section and show important developments for our purposes: the preliminary draft in the notebook, the correction pages, and the first edition.

Nietzsche claims the following in *Ecce Homo* about his first preliminary draft of GS 341 concerning eternal recurrence,

Now I will tell the history of Zarathustra. The basic idea of the work, the thought of eternal return, the highest possible formula of affirmation -, belongs to August of the year 1881: it was thrown onto paper with the title ‘6,000 feet beyond human beings [Mensch] and time’. That day I went through the woods to the lake of Silvaplana; I stopped near Surlei by a huge, pyramidal boulder. That is where this thought came to me.

We find evidence for Nietzsche’s claim in notebook M III 1 containing his first draft of GS 341.

Preliminary stages / Drafts [*Vorstufe*]
Notebook M III 1, Page 53-54, contains a detailed discussion of eternal recurrence, entitled “The Recurrence of the Same. Outline.” (Fig 5.1).

This notebook contains work between approximately March 20, 1881 and December 19, 1881. In this outline, Nietzsche puts forward five claims and then explicates one of them further. At the end of this note, dated early August 1881, Nietzsche writes the following, which can be seen in figure 2, “Early August 1881 in Sils-Maria, 6,000 feet above sea level and much higher above all human [Menschlichen] things!”

Although slightly different from the quotation in *Ecce Homo*, "6,000 feet beyond human beings and time," this is clearly the line Nietzsche is referring to.\(^{499}\) This notebook entry is where Nietzsche himself sees the origin of eternal recurrence as it is important to his philosophy. That is, this is where Nietzsche tells us the thought of eternal recurrence came to him.

The first draft of “The Heaviest Weight” from GS 341 can be found in one of the five claims made in the early August 1881 note.

Nietzsche writes,

5. The new *heavy weight*: the eternal recurrence of the same. Infinite importance of our knowing, erring, our habits, ways of living for all that is to come. What shall we do with the rest of our lives – we who have spent the majority of our lives in the most profound ignorance? We shall *teach the doctrine* – it is the most powerful means

\(^{499}\) “6000 Fuss über dem Meere und viel höher über allen Menschlichen Dingen!—” (KGW V 2. 11[141]) vs. “6000 Fuss jenseits von Mensch und Zeit“ (EH Z 1).
of incorporating it in ourselves. Our kind of blessedness, as teachers of the greatest doctrine.\textsuperscript{500}

This demonstrates that eternal recurrence did come to Nietzsche in August of 1881, even if it did not make it into \textit{The Gay Science} immediately. It also shows that his claim about it being “thrown down onto paper” at that time is accurate. This draft would then be published in a different form as \textit{Gay Science} 341.\textsuperscript{501} It also demonstrates that Nietzsche’s early emphasis is on teaching the doctrine and existentially incorporating the doctrine into oneself rather than the truth of the doctrine.

\textit{Correction pages [Korrekturbogen & Korrekturbogenexemplar]}

The HAAB contains two sets of correction pages. One set is largely unedited and only contains a few corrections.\textsuperscript{502} The other, however, offers significant insight into the development of eternal recurrence. The correction pages for \textit{The Gay Science} section 341 contain significant changes since the original preliminary draft in 1881. We see that the section has taken on a much more recognizable shape.

Additionally, we can recognize a considerable difference when we compare the correction pages to Nietzsche’s author’s copy and the first edition. In this section of Nietzsche’s

\textsuperscript{500} KGW V 2. 11[141]. Trans Keith Ansell-Pearson Duncan Large in \textit{The Nietzsche Reader}. Edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large. (MA: Blackwell, 2006), 238.

\textsuperscript{501} Nietzsche then goes on in the same passage to explicate on point 4, which addresses the reaction to eternal recurrence; this then becomes the draft of the section directly following the section on eternal recurrence (56) in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}. This demonstrates that even from the very beginning, section 57, the section following BGE 56, is connected to eternal recurrence. This is important because some scholars hold that section 57 suggests we must overcome eternal recurrence itself but the connection between BGE 57 and eternal recurrence has remained tenuous until now. This however, goes beyond my project here.

\textsuperscript{502} NPB 413 [HAAB C 4609].
the idea of eternal recurrence is presented by a demon and the narrator asks the reader a series of questions that ends with the following.

> If this thought gained power over you as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and everything would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?\(^{504}\)

However, the last sentence above is actually a very late addition in the publication process that replaced the original ending. Nietzsche replaced the original ending after the correction pages were printed. Both the correction pages and the first edition contain the following line, “If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and everything would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight!” However, the correction pages contain the original conclusion, which can be translated as follows:

> Or would you become that athlete and hero who could bear this weight and yet not ascend with it? Imagine the most powerful thought - and at the same time you will see the ideal that will emerge in front of the most powerful human beings of the future!\(^{505}\)

One can see where this original ending was printed in the correction copy that was eventually replaced before publication (next to the blue pencil line).

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503 The author’s examination copy has no annotations or corrections in section 341. However, by the first edition printing one lower case “d” became capitalized.


505 “Oder würdest du jener athlet und Held werden, der dies Gewicht tragen und doch mit ihm nicht emporsteigen könnte? Stelle dir den mächtigsten Gedanken vor Augen - und du wirst zugleich das Ideal erblicken, das vor den mächtigsten Menchen der Zukunft hergeht!”
In the correction copy this section is labeled 342, not 341 as it was in the published version. This is because section 335, which appeared on page 242-243, was also cut from the first edition moving all section back one (HAAB C 4608, page 255).
Although GS 341 is without a doubt the most widely cited section on eternal recurrence, this original ending has yet to be quoted by any Nietzsche scholar.507

We can date this change between July 5, 1882, when Nietzsche reported having received the first few correction pages, and August 20, 1882, when Nietzsche reported receiving his first copy. Based on Nietzsche’s letters, this change likely occurred between July 28, 1882 and August 14, 1882.508 What this means is that this change to the ending of GS 341 happened very late, perhaps less than a week before the first printing arrived at his door. Unlike fragments in his notebooks, this text was intended for publication up to the last minute.

The final section reads in the first edition,

_The heaviest weight._ - What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself: The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life _to long for nothing more fervently_ than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?509

507 However, it is present in KSA 14 p. 271-272.
508 KSB06: 219u. 260. To Elisabeth Nietzsche in Naumburg; KSB06: 233. 274. To Ernst Schmeitzner in Chemnitz (postcard); KSB06: 237u. 281. To Heinrich Köselitz in Venice (postcard); KSB06: 238. 282. To Heinrich Köselitz in Venice.
509 GS 341.
The original ending of this section demonstrates several things. First, it demonstrates a closer connection between discussion of eternal recurrence in GS and Z because Nietzsche discusses “human beings of the future,” a central theme in Z. Furthermore, it also connects GS 341 to BGE 56 because both of them discuss the act of thinking through, or imagining, eternal recurrence and this leads to a new or opposite ideal [Ideal]. As the original ending demonstrates, the thought of eternal recurrence itself is not the ideal, it is the catalyst that provides the occasion to open one’s eyes to the new ideal. The opposite ideal, as is already hinted at in the first fair copy and eventually excluded from publication in GS, is the life affirmative ideal of Amor Fati (love of fate). As we will see, Nietzsche clearly understood himself as pushing the cosmological ideal of eternal recurrence held by others to its logical conclusion, nihilism, and it is only after one comes to grips with this conclusion, that the opposite ideal can emerge. It is important, as we will see later, because it links the ideal that emerges in front of “human beings of the future” [Menschen der Zukunft] in GS 341, to the ideal expressed in section GS 337 entitled “The ‘Humanity’ of the Future” [Die zukünftige „Menschlichkeit“].

1.2 Genesis of BGE 56

There are several documents that trace the genesis of BGE 56 from draft to publication. Two separate drafts can still be found in two of Nietzsche’s notebooks. There is a handwritten fair copy that was also used for the print manuscript. Additionally, we also still have the

510 In this original ending, Nietzsche uses the phrase “Menschen der Zukunft” but in Z it is abbreviated as “Menschen-Zukunft” and other cognates ([Z] Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None. Translated by Clancy Martin with introduction by Kathleen Higgins and Robert Solomon. NY: Barns and Noble Classics, 2005), Z III 5, Z 12.26-28, IV 13.2).
correction pages,\textsuperscript{514} Nietzsche’s author’s examination copy,\textsuperscript{515} and first editions.\textsuperscript{516} These texts show an incredible amount of development from beginning to end. However, regarding BGE 56, only four of these texts both contain the section and show important developments. I will focus on the two drafts, the print manuscript, and the author’s examination copy.

Preliminary stages / Drafts \textit{[Vorstufe]}

Nietzsche’s notebooks contain two drafts of BGE 56. The first draft appears in notebook N VII 1 (April- June 1885)\textsuperscript{517} and a second draft appears in notebook W II 3a (May-July 1885).\textsuperscript{518}

The beginning of the first draft of BGE 56 is very similar to the final published text. However, unlike the published text, Nietzsche does not end with an open ended and cryptic question: “\textit{circulus vitiosus deus?”} Rather, he explicates how eternal recurrence is related to God and philosophy.

In opposition to other traditions, Nietzsche proposes to think pessimism to its depths and, to this end, defends the creation of a “genuinely nihilistic religion.” He compares it to Christianity, Buddhism, the Eleatics (Parmenides), and the mechanistic world view. He explicitly says he is also thinking these worldviews to their end. That is, he is thinking through a nihilistic and world-negating thought to its end in order to give a death blow to certain life negating ways of being.

\textsuperscript{514} HAAB C 4615.  
\textsuperscript{515} HAAB C 4619.  
\textsuperscript{516} Princeton University Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. PT2440.N72 A6 2002 vol.14.  
\textsuperscript{517} KGW VII 3. 34[204].  
\textsuperscript{518} KGW VII 3. 35[82].

182
He is explicitly advocating “teaching annihilating ways of thinking” as a “genuinely nihilistic religion.” It is only after we think such pessimism to its depths that we can confront and overcome nihilism. He advocates the pedagogical use of an active, but temporary, genuinely nihilistic religion of eternal recurrence in order to think nihilism and pessimism through to their depths. Nietzsche himself is not advocating nihilism but bringing a life denying form of thinking to its end. Doing this, he suggests, will make possible a new ideal that is world affirming.

Nietzsche wrote this note in an odd way, which may explain why it is somewhat disjointed. The red numbers below indicate the order in which they were written.

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519 He begins the draft on page 50, then continues on page 49, only to move back to page 50 (writing around his previous note there), and finally finishing the draft on page 47. Note that the red page numbers are not reflected in the archival page numbers.
Fig. 5.5: GSA 71/209. Mette-Sign: N VII 1, P. 47-50.520

One translation of the above draft is as follows. Notice, the second sentence matches the beginning of BGE 56 very closely: 521

My friends, what has occupied me for many years? I have endeavored to think pessimism to the depths, and to free it from the half Christian, half German narrow-mindedness and simplicity in which it first appeared to me in philosophy of Schopenhauer: so that the human being of this way of thinking is also equal to the highest expression of pessimism, I likewise sought an opposite ideal — a way of thinking that is the most exuberant lively and world-affirming of all possible ways of thinking: I found it in thinking the mechanistic world-view to the end; it truly takes the very best humor in the world to tolerate such a world of eternal recurrence as I have taught through my son Z<arathustra> — hence we ourselves included in an eternal da capo. In the end I decided that for me the most world-negating [weltverneinendste] of all possible ways of thinking is the one that denounces becoming, originating and passing away as bad in themselves and that affirms only the unconditional, the one, the certain, being: I found that God is the most annihilating and life-inimical of all thoughts, and that the knowledge of this “truth” has had to wait so long due only to the tremendous obscurity of the good-old pious ones and metaphysicians of all ages.

For me, I myself am in no way willing to forgo one of these two ways of thinking — for I would then have to forgo my task, which requires opposing means. For the delaying and deepening of human kind [Menschen] and peoples, occasionally (in some cases a couple of millennia) a pessimistic way of thinking is of the highest value; and whoever lays major claim to being a creator will also have to claim to be an annihilator and in some cases will have to teach annihilating ways of thinking. In this sense I welcome existing Christianity and Buddhism, the two most comprehensive forms of contemporary world-negation; and, in order to give the death-blow to degenerating and dying-out races e.g., the Indians and the Europeans of today, I myself would defend the invention of an even stricter, genuinely nihilistic religion or philosophy.

After what I said previously I certainly leave no doubt as to which meaning I would ascribe to the idea of “God” in such a religion. The best nihilists among the philosophers so far were the Eleatics. Their god is the best and most thorough portrayal of Buddhistic nirvana; being and nothing are identical there. 522

521 KGW VII 3 34[204]).
Just a few pages later in this notebook, Nietzsche writes, “the two most extreme ways of thinking, the mechanist and the Platonic converge in the eternal recurrence: both as ideals.”\textsuperscript{523}

What Nietzsche means here is not entirely clear\textsuperscript{524} but it demonstrates that Nietzsche understands that eternal recurrence is not a completely new idea and to the extent that he is thinking that idea to its end, it is not uniquely his own.

What we see here is that Nietzsche is very clear that eternal recurrence is not a new idea, but a very old idea which has manifested in a variety of forms in various traditions. Nietzsche, then, sees himself as bringing this thought to its logical conclusion, nihilism, and using that nihilism to eradicate life denying values and perhaps pave the way for a new kind of life. That is, unlike eternal recurrence in Platonism, Christianity, Buddhism, the philosophy of the Eleatics, and the mechanistic worldview, the genuinely nihilistic religion Nietzsche puts forward is an actively nihilistic thought to clear the way for something life affirming.\textsuperscript{525}

This becomes even more clear in the second draft of this section. In the second draft, Nietzsche includes an illustrative preamble before BGE 56.\textsuperscript{526} However, because the KGW

\textsuperscript{523} KGW VII 3 34[260]; UF 16, 76.

\textsuperscript{524} There may be an interesting connection here to his work in the PTAG 8-10 where he attacks Parmenides as a kind of Platonist vs Anaximander's empirical approach. What is clear is that Nietzsche accepts neither in isolation and may be combining them.

\textsuperscript{525} Just because Nietzsche pushes these particular formulations of eternal recurrence to nihilism, that does not mean that all forms of eternal recurrence are nihilistic. To think the mechanistic world view to its end is not to accept the mechanistic world view. Thinking the mechanistic world view to its end destroys the mechanistic world view. That, however, does not mean that there may be other ways of thinking through eternal recurrence that are affirmative. That is, the most world affirming human being could think through the thought experiment of eternal recurrence and affirm it. Zarathustra, for example, teaches this world affirming approach when he overcomes his disgust with the eternal recurrence of the small man.

\textsuperscript{526} It is a telling fact about Elizabeth's low editorial standards that the preamble in this draft of BGE 56 made it into book IV section III on Eternal Recurrence in the \textit{Will to Power} 1055 without any context.
excluded the second draft after the preamble,\textsuperscript{527} it was not completely clear until now that this was a preamble to the draft of BGE 56. Below we find the preamble (1) followed by the draft of BGE 56 (2).

\textbf{Fig. 5.6:} GSA 71/159. Mette-sign: W I 3, P. 48-49.

The preamble importantly contextualizes Nietzsche’s thinking about eternal recurrence as it developed from the first draft. Notably, Nietzsche claims that it is a pessimistic doctrine and a kind of ecstatic nihilism. This doctrine is supposed to work like a powerful pressure to weed out what is degenerating and pave the way for a new order of life. That is, eternal recurrence can be a tool of destruction. Like a hammer or bulldozer, it demolishes and undermines old ideals,

\textsuperscript{527} This was finally pointed out in KGW VII 4/2 p. 402. However, the full draft with preamble was never printed.
providing a clear space for the philosopher, as a creator, to construct a new kind of life. This preamble to the second draft reads,

A pessimistic way of thinking and doctrine an ecstatic nihilism can be indispensable to precisely the philosopher under certain circumstances: as a powerful pressure and hammer [with which he has prepared his task as a creator],528 with which he smashes races that are degenerating and dying out and clears them out of the way, <in order> to pave the way for a new order of life or in order to impart a longing for the end of what is degenerating and wants to die out.

For the delaying and deepening of peoples and races a pessimistic way of thinking, a religion of negation and escape from the world, an ecstatic desensualization and uglification of life can — — —529

Following this preamble, Nietzsche then goes on to write the second draft of BGE 56 which we know from the published work with only minor alterations. One important alteration is that Nietzsche plays with a few titles for BGE 56 but settles on “Circulus vitiosus deus.” In this way Nietzsche has brought back in the discussion of the God of the Eleatics from the first draft.

Handwritten fair copy [Reinschrift] & Print manuscript [Druckmanuskript]

The only known fair copy is the one used for the print manuscript.530

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528 This line was not included in the KGW because it was crossed out and therefore the translator did not include it [mit dem er seiner Aufgabe als Schaffender vorarbeitet sei] (KGW IX 4. W I 3a p. 48).
529 UF 16, 112-113; KGW VII 3, 35[82], p. 269.
530 GSA 71/26. Mette-Sign D 18.
As we see above, the title from the second draft, “Circulus vitiosus deus” is originally included but then crossed out. Additionally, a final sentence is added to the end which re-inserts that title at the very end but as a question. “-- What? And this wouldn’t be - circulus vitiosus deus?” In the final published work, this is the only remaining trace that Nietzsche saw eternal recurrence as a genuinely nihilistic religion which was put forward to clear the way for a new form of life. Here it is not entirely clear how the two phases, critique or destruction and the life affirming alternative, can be separated. What is clear, however, is that there are two phases, or modes of engagement as I call them, and the first destructive one is a kind of active, but temporary, nihilism that thinks the thought to its logical conclusion to clear the way for affirmation.
Correction pages \([\text{Korrekturbogen & Korrekturbogenexemplar}], \text{Author’s examination copy}\) \([\text{Handexemplar}], \text{and First edition \([\text{Erstdruck}]\)}\)

The final text of BGE 56 is basically identical across the correction pages, examination copy, and first edition.\(^{531}\) The first edition text excludes both the longer ending of the first draft and the preamble of the second draft. The impetus of the thought of eternal recurrence is to implement a genuinely nihilistic religion. In BGE Nietzsche again suggests that we must look into the most world negating \([\text{weltverneinendste}]\) of all possible modes of thought. In the draft this was God that was the most world denying of all possible ways of thinking. God, as he makes clear in the drafts, is the God of the Eleatics (Parmenides) where being and nothing are identical. The question of the section, which was originally the title, is one of the only remaining traces that eternal recurrence is related to nihilistic and religious modes of thinking, “And this wouldn’t be - \textit{circulus vitiosus deus}?” The first edition reads,

Whoever, like me, has long exerted himself with some enigmatic desire to think pessimism through to the bottom and free it from the half-Christian, half-German narrowness and naïveté with which it has presented itself to this century, namely in the form of Schopenhauerian philosophy; whoever has actually looked with an Asian and Super-Asian eye into and down at the most world-negating of all possible modes of thought — beyond good and evil, and no longer like Buddha and Schopenhauer under the spell and delusion of morality — by doing so he has possibly opened his eyes to the inverse ideal, without really intending to do so: to the ideal of the most exuberant, lively and world-affirming human being who has learned to reconcile and come to terms with not only what was and is, but also wants to have it again \textit{as it was and is}, for all eternity, insatiably shouting \textit{da capo} not only to himself but to the whole play and performance, and not only to a performance but at bottom to the one who needs this performance —

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\(^{531}\) The only difference between the correction pages and the and the author’s examination copy is that a lower case “d” in “dem” is capitalized. Although it is not listed in the planned corrections to typesetting errors \([\text{Berichtigungen}]\) found in the end of the authors copy, Compare HAAB C 4619. P. 73-74 to HAAB C 4615. P. 73-74.
and makes it necessary: because he needs himself again and again — and makes himself necessary — — What? And this wouldn’t be — *circulus vitiosus deus*?\(^{532}\)

What these drafts suggest is, first, Nietzsche clearly sees the thought of eternal recurrence in previous forms of thought (Platonism, Christianity etc…). Second, he is explicit that he is thinking one of these forms to its end, mechanistic world interpretations.\(^{533}\) Third, Nietzsche says he proposes a "even stricter, genuinely nihilistic religion or philosophy." However, to think such a world interpretation to its end is not to accept it. This proposal that thinks eternal recurrence to its end is pragmatic such that it gives the death blow to world-negating pessimism.

I argue that Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence offers both destructive and creative possibilities. On the destructive side, Nietzsche wants to think other forms of eternal recurrence to their depths and reveal their nihilism. Various traditions, such as Platonism, Buddhism, Christianity, and the mechanistic world view have held versions of eternal recurrence. However, these traditions have not thought eternal recurrence to its depths. All of these traditions also posit auxiliary assumptions that come into tension with eternal recurrence when it is thought to its depths.


\(^{533}\) Nietzsche of course is not a mechanist (GS 109, GS 373, BGE 12). It is possible to think eternal recurrence without the presupposition of the mechanist ontology. That is, one can think eternal recurrence without recourse to universal laws of causality or materialistic atomism. One might take a position such as Boscovich that does not rely on mechanistic atomism but rather centers of force. In any case, Nietzsche clearly thinks the Platonic/Christian/mechanist versions of eternal recurrence are unhealthy and he wants to think them to their end so that certain forms of life negating pessimism are annihilated. To this end, Nietzsche seems to be turning their own thoughts against them. If they really thought through their versions of eternal recurrence it would become nihilistic.
When Nietzsche proposes a genuinely nihilistic religion he is proposing to demonstrate or force certain traditions to see their own nihilism. Plato, for example, put forward a theory of the great year as a form of eternal recurrence. However, Plato also holds to the twin auxiliary hypothesis of metampsychosis and anamnesis. In metampsychosis the soul is immortal but passes through cycles of incarnation in birth and release in death. If one has not purified oneself upon death, one is again imprisoned in a body that reflects the character they had in their life. How one behaves can impact how one is reincarnated. This theory goes along with the doctrine of recollection or anamnesis. Basically, as presented in the *Meno*, one does not learn new things but recollects them from when one's soul was part of the realm of Ideas or past lives. However, in the *Phaedo* it becomes clear that philosophy is a training for dying and that philosophers hate the body and flee from it trying to escape the worldly. That is, the goal for the philosopher is to escape the cycle of reincarnation by escaping everything worldly. Plato writes, “those who have purified themselves sufficiently by philosophy live in the future without a body; they make their way to even more beautiful dwelling places which is hard to describe clearly.” That is, the goal of philosophy is to escape reincarnation of the body.

As Nietzsche reads the famous offer of a cock to Asclepius, the demi-god of doctors, in the final lines of the *Phaedo*, this indicates that life is a disease in need of a cure. The cure is to escape the eternal return of the body through the practice of philosophy. Nietzsche addresses this line in the section directly proceeding his introduction of eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science* 341. Nietzsche’s position is that Socrates was a pessimist that believed ‘life is a disease.’ Plato, 534 Phaedo 81e-82e.
535 Meno 81c-81d.
536 Phaedo 65d, 66c, 67e, 80c-81e.
537 Phaedo 114c.
538 GS 340.
thus, could not think eternal recurrence to its depths because he sought a way out. Seeking such a
way out indicates that he could not affirm life.

Plato’s inability to think eternal recurrence to its depths is paralleled in Buddhism and
Christianity. In Buddhism the goal of Buddhist practice is the dissolution of the ego and the
escape from the cycle of reincarnation. The cycle of reincarnation is, as scholars have pointed
out, similar to and perhaps the source of eternal recurrence in Greek philosophy.

Christianity also holds a variant of eternal recurrence, *apocatastasis*, or the restoration of
all things. However, just like Platonism and Buddhism, it does offer a form of moral
improvement that may allow for universal salvation and escape from the earthly. When
Nietzsche proposes a genuinely nihilistic religion, he is proposing to think these nihilistic
traditions to their end. He does this by thinking their auxiliary nihilistic assumptions in light of
eternal recurrence. It is the auxiliary hypotheses that are nihilistic, not eternal recurrence.

When Nietzsche proposes a genuinely nihilistic philosophy he is proposing to
demonstrate or force these traditions to see their own nihilism. As Joshua Rayman has pointed
out, Nietzsche rejects causal-mechanistic forms of explanation. More specifically, Nietzsche
rejects transcendent, statically universal and unitary forms of explanation.\(^{539}\) Additionally,
Nietzsche also rejects the mechanistic view for a variety of theological reasons. The mechanistic
worldview is often seen in distinction to, and a rejection of, theological prejudices. Nietzsche is
very clear that his version of eternal recurrence is not mechanistic.\(^{540}\) He sees the mechanist need
for unity in cause and telos to be a residual remnant of the soul atomism in Christianity.\(^{541}\)

\(^{539}\) Joshua Rayman, "Will to Power as Alternative to Causality." *The Journal of Speculative

\(^{540}\) Cf. KGW VIII 3, 14 [188].

\(^{541}\) BGE 12.
Further, Nietzsche also sees a teleological structure in mechanistic interpretations of eternal recurrence, notably, that they have one end.\textsuperscript{542} Nietzsche thinks that mechanistic theory necessitates a final state at which the universe aims.\textsuperscript{543} In particular, Nietzsche thinks that the mechanistic worldview that proposes universal laws of cause and effect leads to the idea of God as a watchmaker. He writes that mechanists are “enraptured by the idea of a creative mechanic who has made the most artistic of watches.”\textsuperscript{544} This is why Nietzsche writes that calling the universe a machine gives it too high an honor. Since the mechanist view of the world sees it as constructed (\textit{konstruiert}) to have one goal, it is only natural that they bear theological baggage regarding its construction. Of this mechanistic form of thinking, among others, he asks, “when will all these shadows of god no longer darken us?”\textsuperscript{545} Without the presupposition of God, or some mechanic behind this mechanism, such a system devolves into nihilism. Nietzsche writes that, “an essentially mechanistic world would be an essentially \textit{meaningless} world!”\textsuperscript{546} A mechanist system, thought to its end without a final aim, would become nihilistic.\textsuperscript{547} However, this is only the most extreme form of nihilism if, like the mechanist, one also has auxiliary assumptions that there should be an end and purpose. If one expected that the mechanisms of the world aimed at some teleological goal, then thinking eternal recurrence to its end would lead to nihilism because there is no final goal to reach. In the mechanistic worldview, a mechanistic world without a purpose, a telos, a goal, is like a watch without a watchmaker, meaningless. When the auxiliary assumptions of the mechanistic world view are thought to their end through

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{542} GS 109.
\item \textsuperscript{543} KGW VIII 2, 11[72].
\item \textsuperscript{544} HH II 9.
\item \textsuperscript{545} GS 109.
\item \textsuperscript{546} GS 374.
\item \textsuperscript{547} cf. KGW VIII 1, 5[71].
\end{itemize}
eternal recurrence, mechanistic thought itself is brought to its end; nihilism. In this sense, Nietzsche is proposing a genuinely nihilistic philosophy to bring to an end a way of thinking that does not recognize itself as nihilistic.

Nietzsche sees all of these traditions, Buddhism, Platonism, Christianity, and the mechanist worldview, as deeply nihilistic. However, they do not recognize themselves as nihilistic. That is, they are ungenuine and in denial about their relationship to nihilism. If a tradition is in denial of its nihilistic presuppositions it is passively nihilistic. A passively nihilistic tradition can still limp along carrying along with it the sick and weary. When Nietzsche proposes a genuinely nihilistic religion or philosophy he is proposing to demonstrate or force these traditions to see their own nihilism. If they think their auxiliary nihilistic assumptions alongside Nietzsche’s thought of eternal recurrence, those traditions are shown to be fundamentally nihilistic. The only possibility, once a tradition sees itself as a genuinely nihilistic religion or philosophy, is self-annihilation. If there is no way out of what they see as a purposeless life of suffering, the only response left is to limit that suffering through suicidal pessimism. That is, if these traditions seriously thought through their auxiliary assumptions in light of the thought of eternal recurrence, this would deal the death blow to those traditions.

However, it is important to remember that Nietzsche himself rejects the nihilistic auxiliary assumptions held by these traditions. The thought of eternal recurrence itself is not nihilistic. It only becomes nihilistic when combined with auxiliary assumptions Nietzsche explicitly rejects. Being able to think the thought through and affirm life would mean one has overcome nihilism and, as I will demonstrate later, our nihilistic disgust with everything this-worldly.
Those who are degenerating and life denying cannot withstand the thought of eternal recurrence thought to its end. This clears the way for what Nietzsche claims he seeks; the opposite ideal held by the most world affirming human being who, upon encountering the thought of eternal recurrence, cries out "da capo!"[play it again].

2. Eternal Recurrence Reduces Logic to Epistemological Nihilism

The standard objection to Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence is that it violates Leibniz’s principle of the identity of indiscernibles and therefore dissolves into incoherence.\(^{548}\)

Jeffrie G, Murphy summarizes the argument as follows:

(1) the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (if entities A and B have all properties in common [including spatial and temporal indexicals],\(^{549}\) then A and B are numerically identical) is a test for logical and metaphysical coherence;

(2) the doctrine of eternal recurrence fails to pass that test; therefore

(3) the doctrine of eternal recurrence is logically and metaphysically incoherent and may thus be consigned to the bin that contains crackpot theories of the occult; and therefore

(4) to the degree that a valuational- or trans-valuational-theory presupposes the doctrine of eternal recurrence, then so much the worse for that theory.\(^{550}\)

In order to address this argument, we must first defend the claim that Nietzsche is not arguing for the eternal recurrence of the very similar but rather the eternal recurrence of the same. There are


\(^{549}\) Parenthesis added.

several ways in which one can postulate a form of eternal recurrence that is merely the eternal recurrence of the similar. One might, for example, posit that the organization of all bodies and actions repeat on a linear timeline such that history repeats itself. However, this would only be the repetition of the similar, not the same, because we could differentiate cycles via temporal indexicals. One could also argue that perhaps there exist two identical worlds or galaxies that exemplify the exact same events but are in different spatial locations. Again, however, these would not be identical because their spatial indexicals allow them to be numerically distinct. Neither of these claims violates the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. They both propose two states of affairs that are nearly identical, but those two states of affairs are numerically distinct because their spatial and temporal indexicals are distinct. Neither of these cases is a recurrence of the same. They are merely a recurrence of the very similar.

If recurrences are just a repetition of events on a linear timeline, then they are not identical but only very similar. One could distinguish recurrences by differences in their temporal indexicals. If eternal recurrence is the doctrine that exactly similar events and

551 Newtonian space provides an absolute spatial indexical by which one can numerically distinguish between otherwise identical objects based on their spatial location. However, there has been extensive discussion on how the problem of identity arises again given Einsteinian physics and non-Euclidean geometry. A non-Newtonian example of this is posited by a line of reasoning that proposes there may be exact symmetry in the universe (cf. Max Black, “The Identity of Indiscernibles,” Mind 61, no. 1 (1952): 153–64; A. J. Ayer, Philosophical Essays (London: Macmillan, 1954); Ian Hacking, “The Identity of Indiscernibles,” Journal of Philosophy 72, no. 9 (1975): 249–256). There has been some discussion about how two objects, such as identical spheres, in such a symmetrical universe might be considered a single sphere but with two locations (J. O’Leary-Hawthorne, “The Bundle Theory of Substance and the Identity of Indiscernibles,” Analysis 55, no. 1 (1995): 191–196). This view has been extensively criticized (cf. K. Hawley, “Identity and Indiscernibility,” Mind 118, no. 1 (2009): 101–9). However, this whole discussion functions on presuppositions in non-Newtonian and Einsteinian physics that became established only after Nietzsche's mental collapse and later death. Nietzsche did challenge classical understandings of space and time but it is clear that Nietzsche could not have read the work of Einstein, work that was published after Nietzsche's death.
combination of forces recur an infinite number of times on a linear timeline, then this would not violate the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. It would not violate the principle because they are numerically distinct iterations of those events that take place in a distinguishable sequence on a linear timeline. On such a linear timeline, we could say that Columbus discovered America in recurrence 1 at time A and that this also happened again in recurrence 2 at time B. This, however, is not Nietzsche's claim.

Nietzsche's claim is that recurrences are not only similar but that they are identical. He is very specific, stating that "there will be nothing new in it." Nietzsche is clear in his drafts of Z, particularly "The Convalescent," that it is not a new life, or better life, or similar life but the identical and self-same life. He further claims, what repeats is not another different moment of the timeline that happens to contain the same events, but it is precisely this moment (dieser Augenblick) that returns. If recurrences are truly identical, if it is the eternal return of the same and not the eternal return of the similar, then it is not the case that history is simply repeating itself again and again on a linear timeline. That is, one cannot say Columbus discovered America in recurrence 1 at time A and Columbus discovered America again in recurrence 2 at time B. Neither is it the case that two recurrences could occur in spatially distinct locations and still be identical. If those temporal and spatial indexicals are different, this would mean recurrences are

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552 GS 341.
553 (GSA 71/149. Mette-Sign: W I 1. p. 161; cf. Z III 13.2). It is worth noting that these last words are spoken by Zarathustra's animals telling Zarathustra what he would say if he wanted to die. This is notably after Zarathustra has chided his animals about making a "hurdy gurdy" song out of his experience of confronting his most abysmal thought. That is, Zarathustra has already thought eternal recurrence through to nihilism and has come out the other side affirming life. As I will detail later, eternal recurrence provides the occasion to think our pessimism and nihilism to their depth and confront our deep disgust with everything this-worldly and human. Zarathustra's animal did not think eternal recurrence to its depth.
554 GS 341.
not qualitatively identical according to the identity of indiscernibles. Time and space are internal to recurrences and therefore cannot offer a means of distinguishing between two recurrences.

Nietzsche's claim is that recurrences are not similar but identical and this would necessarily include temporal and spatial indexicals. It is not that history repeats itself but time itself recurs. Nietzsche writes, "The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again."\(^{555}\) That is, time and space are not exterior features to eternal recurrence, but they only exist internal to a particular recurrence. Time only exists within a recurrence. There is not extra-recurrence temporality by which one could say this recurrence occurred before and that recurrence occurred after.

There are no extra-temporal features of the universe outside of time one could use to place recurrences in a temporal order.\(^{556}\) This is similar to recent work on what is sometimes referred to as bouncing cosmology in physics. In this cosmology, a big bang occurs, and the universe expands, however eventually after billions of years the universe begins to contract, sometimes referred to as the Big Crunch. In what is known as bouncing cosmology, the Big Crunch eventually concentrates everything in the universe in such a way as to 'bounce' into another big bang. The universe thus oscillates infinitely between a Big Bang, a Big Crunch, then a bounce leading to another Big Bang. However, one of the interesting and applicable aspects of this theory is that time itself only exists after a Big Bang and becomes unanalyzable at some

\(^{555}\) GS 341.
\(^{556}\) Note that the extra-temporal perspective used in describing eternal recurrence in GS 341 is that of a supernatural entity, a demon. Also, when the Dwarf argues that "time itself is a circle," Zarathustra rejects this claim. Zarathustra then argues for an imminent, rather than transcendent, interpretation of eternal recurrence (Z III 2.2). This suggests that the transcendent extra-temporal perspective needed to order recurrences is lacking.
point in the Big Crunch before the bounce. That is, temporal ordering between the tail end of the Big Crunch and shortly after the Big Bang is not applicable by standard means of classical temporal physics.

While Nietzsche himself is not proposing the kind of sophisticated bouncing cosmology physicists are today, I think there is a similarity that can be illustrative for thinking about eternal recurrence. I think an analogy can be drawn to how we ought to conceptually think about cycles of recurrence. Just like the Big Bang, Big Crunch and subsequent bounce to another Big Bang, we can imagine coherently universes being identical and numerically distinct (even if our common grammar strains when writing about events that are not temporally orderable).

One consequence of this is that one cannot speak of earlier and later cycles of recurrence because that would presuppose an extra-temporal viewpoint which does not exist. If time itself is internal to each recurrence, one cannot say Columbus discovered America in recurrence 1 time A and also happened in recurrence 2 at time B. Rather one might says Columbus discovered America in recurrence 1 at time A and this also happened in recurrence 2 at time A. However, because there is no difference between temporal or spatial indexicals, one could label recurrence 1 as recurrence 2 and vice versa. This is because, while they are numerically distinct, they cannot be put into any extra-spatial or extra-temporal order.

557 The analogy here is meant as an illustration that such a thing is imaginable. While physics has proposed possibilities other than a big crunch and subsequent bounce to another big bang (such as indefinite expansion and big rip) the physical possibility of a big crunch and bounce is still theoretically possible and seems to be gaining ground among cosmologists (Steffen Gielen and Neil Turok, "Perfect Quantum Cosmological Bounce," Phys. Rev. Lett. 117, no. 2 (2016); Anna. Iijas, P. J. Steinhardt. "Bouncing Cosmology made simple, Class," Quantum Grav. 35 (2018)).

558 I stress again, the point here is not to suggest Nietzsche is advocating an identical theory to bounce cosmology but that contemporary cosmologists believe something similar is not impossible. I bring this up simply to point out that our philosophical prejudices against what is coherently thinkable often clashes with the empirical evidence of physics.
Put more precisely, any enumeration of an iteration of the eternal recurrence would be arbitrary because forwards and backward times between recurrences are meaningless. We cannot ask if A in recurrence 1 occurred before A in recurrence 2. Such a question only makes sense if recurrences themselves can be ordered on a linear timeline. To apply any temporal ordering structure to extra-temporal enumeration is a kind of category error.

If my interpretation is correct, however, recurrences are numerically distinct but there can be no temporal or spatial ordering of iterations because space and time are internal to a particular recurrence. In short, I am arguing it is coherently imaginable to have two perfectly qualitatively identical objects or sets of events, in this case the repetition of the whole spatial-temporal universe, which are numerically distinct but non-orderable.\(^ {559} \)

If it is Nietzsche's claim that recurrences are identical, not simply similar, this means it violates Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles. That is, to posit eternal recurrence, one must accept that recurrences are qualitatively identical (including their spatio/temporal indexicals) and numerically distinct. This, however, generates a formal contradiction. The formal contradiction is that each recurrence is self-identical, while also being identical to other recurrences, as well as being numerically distinct from those other recurrences. That is, it violates the principle of the identity of indiscernibles because it claims there are two or more\(^ {560} \) things that exactly resemble each other.

The argument articulated by Murphy above would then claim that if one presupposes that (1) the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is true, and (2) the idea of eternal recurrence

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\(^ {559} \) This implies that numerical distinctness does not necessarily imply that we can place iterations in a temporal order. That is, it claims that just because there are multiple objects does not imply those objects can be enumerated in a non-arbitrary order.

\(^ {560} \) Of course, in this case it is an infinite number, but two or more suffice to violate the principle.
violates the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, which I think it does, then (3) eternal recurrence is internally incoherent and therefore (4) Nietzsche's philosophy too is incoherent. However, this argument moves much too fast.

When we take our time, we find that (1) and (2) only lead to (3) if it is assumed that eternal recurrence cannot offer a counter example to (1). Further, if it turns out that eternal recurrence is an cosmological idea Nietzsche attributes to other philosophers, the inference from (3) to (4) dissolves.

If Nietzsche is bringing an idea held by others to its logical conclusion, nihilism, then the generation of a contradiction does not make Nietzsche's philosophy incoherent. Rather, based on the criteria of classical logic, if a contradiction is generated, so much the worse for those philosophies Nietzsche is critiquing.

Murphy's argument, along with most scholars who bring up this objection, presupposes that Nietzsche understands eternal recurrence, in the cosmological sense, to be his own idea. However, as we saw in the drafts, Nietzsche sees himself as bringing an idea held by others to its logical conclusion: nihilism. The collapse of the idea under its own weight, in conjunction with auxiliary nihilistic assumptions, then, is the very conclusion that Nietzsche intended to draw out. As was signaled previously, the generation of a contradiction is not Nietzsche's end because he also provides a second affective mode of engagement that allows for affirmation.

While my genetic analysis has shown that Nietzsche clearly saw eternal recurrence as an idea he had brought to its logical conclusion, Nietzsche is much less clear about the mechanism by which it generates nihilism. By tracking Nietzsche’s reading and academic history, we find
that Nietzsche is aware of the history of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles and the
trouble it will cause for eternal recurrence.

Nietzsche would have been aware of eternal recurrence from a variety of different
sources such as early philosophers like the Eleatics,561 Heraclitus,562 Pythagoras,563 Seneca,564
Cicero,565 Buddha,566 as well as more contemporary philosophers such as Schopenhauer,567 and
even Kant.568 Nietzsche also would have been aware of the Christian doctrine of eternal
recurrence (Apocatastasis) in Origen.569 Further, Nietzsche’s reading during 1881 indicates a
deep engagement with contemporary mechanists and Leibnizian scholarship on eternal

561 KGW VII 3 34[204].
562 EH BT 3.
563 UM II 2.
564 NPB 548. Cf. L. Annaet Senecae opere quae supersunt. Recognovit et rerum indicem
locupletissimum adiecit Fridericus Haase Prof. Vratislav. Vol. 1-3 (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1852-53),
565 PPP126n28; NPB 603; Tullius Cicero, Marcus, De natura deorum libri tres. Erklaert von G. F.
Schoemann, (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1850), 127-129. Nietzsche annotates page 99 and dog ears
page 144.
566 Brobjer, Thomas H. "Nietzsche's Reading About Eastern Philosophy." Journal of Nietzsche
567 Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, tr. by E.F. Payne (New York: Dover,
568 Cf. Nietzsche’s reading of Strauss’s Der alte und der neue Glaube (1872) section 47, pg. 153-
154 which quotes Kant’s theory of the heavens in his Universal Natural History in which he uses
the phoenix metaphor about eternal recurrence. Pages before and after this are annotated by
Nietzsche (NPB 580; HAAB C 360, p. 143, 209).
569 Conversations with Nietzsche: A Life in the Words of His Contemporaries. Edited by Sander
Miklowitz, Paul. “Same as it ever was: Plagiarism, Forgery, and the Meaning of Eternal Return.”
Metaphysics to Metafictions: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the End of Philosophy. (New York: State
University of New York Press, 1998), 187n58. Brobjer, Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context,
160n120; NPB 628. Ueberweg, Friedrich. Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thaies
bis auf die Gegenwart. Zweiter Theil: Die patristische und scholastische Zeit. Von Dr. Friedrich
Ueberweg, ausserord. Professor der Philosophie ander Universitat zu Koenigsberg. Dritte,
berichtigte und erganzte und mit einem Philosophenund Litteratoren-Register versehene
Auflage, (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn, 1866), 70, 79 (section 83 & 85).
recurrence such as Caspari, Dühring, and Vogt, which Nietzsche outright rejected. ⁵⁷⁰  There can be no doubt based on Nietzsche’s history and published comments in Ecce Homo, that Nietzsche understood that eternal recurrence as a cosmological thesis was not a new idea.

In the genesis of BGE 56 we get a much clearer picture of whose philosophy Nietzsche has in mind when he thinks eternal recurrence to its end. In the first draft he suggests he is pushing these pessimistic and nihilistic philosophies of eternal recurrence even further to create a “genuinely nihilistic religion or philosophy.”

All of these sources he names, Platonism, Christianity, Buddhism, the Eleatics, and the mechanistic world view, have all explicitly endorsed cyclical cosmologies at some point in their history. Nietzsche explicitly states that because we must first teach annihilating ways of thinking, he explicitly welcomes Christianity and Buddhism because they are thus far the most comprehensive forms of world-negation and pessimism. He argues eternal recurrence is also of “the highest value” because it allows one to become an “annihilator” even if it only functions to wipe the slate clean.

However, as Nietzsche explicitly states in the published version of BGE 56, at least with regard to Schopenhauer and Buddha, previous systems of thought were not able to think the pessimistic thought to its depth. I think this also applies to Platonist and mechanist views. If they had thought eternal return to its depth, they would have experienced epistemological nihilism analogous to the death of God. Zarathustra does think such epistemological nihilism to its depth

through eternal recurrence and states, “All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, knowledge chokes” or as he sometimes puts it, “All is false.”

I offer one possible mechanism for how eternal recurrence can generate epistemic nihilism when thought through: the principle of explosion. In notebook M III 1, which contains the August 1881 note on eternal recurrence, Nietzsche is very concerned with identity. As David Krell has pointed out, this notebook contains a large number of sections dealing with the philosophical implications of the principle of identity. While some notes do cast an affirmative tone regarding identity, a larger majority of them see it as an unwarranted metaphysical assumption. Nietzsche had previously criticized the principle of identity and continued to do so afterwards in his published work. In this notebook, Nietzsche engages with the ideas of a number of scholars including African Spir, whose work on the principle of identity is extensive. Nietzsche quotes and then criticizes him, arguing that belief in the very notion of identity is an erroneous belief that was created by beings that represent the world (i.e. it is not an a priori truth). This is a similar argument to those found in chapter three and four where Nietzsche argues against Plato and Aristotle that the principle of identity is beholden to our physiology and cognitive structures.

Further, in that notebook, Nietzsche specifically engages with discussions on the identity of indiscernibles. Nietzsche was explicitly thinking about discussions of the identity of indiscernibles in connection with eternal recurrence. In one section he suggests that even if all

571 Z III 13.2; Z I 17; cf. KSA 12 2[127].
573 HAH I 18; BGE 3-4.
574 KGW V 2 11[329]; Cf. HAH I 18.
the energy in the universe recurs, it would be indemonstrable whether two recurrences were actually identical. However, when it comes to asking whether two things can be identical within a recurrence, he suggests the following, "Whether anything identical can exist within a configuration, for example two leaves? [zwei Blatter?]- I doubt it…"575

Nietzsche’s reference to two leaves [zwei Blatter] here, as well as in his early work *Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense*,576 demonstrates Nietzsche’s familiarity with a classic example about the identity of indiscernibles. This example is used to discuss the identity of indiscernibles in the writings of Seneca577 and Ueberweg,578 both of which Nietzsche read. Nietzsche also likely encountered the identity of indiscernibles, and Kant’s rejection of it, in his reading of Schopenhauer.579 However, Nietzsche’s own writings demonstrate that he understands that the fundamental problem of eternal recurrence is that it violates the identity of indiscernibles.

Nietzsche articulates this principle in the context of thinking about eternal recurrence as follows:

575 KGW V 2, 11[202]. Trans Krell.
“The contiguous existence of two things that are entirely the same [Die Nebeneinanderexistenz von 2 ganz Gleichen] is impossible.” This demonstrates that Nietzsche understands the core issue at the heart of the standard objection and is taking this into consideration in some of his very first thoughts about eternal recurrence. This proves that the apologetic reading that holds Nietzsche was unaware of the contradiction generated by eternal recurrence can no longer be sustained.

Further, after stating that such a thing is impossible, Nietzsche goes on to claim that it is nonetheless possible to think this coherently but only if one thinks of all of history itself recurring identically.

Nietzsche's argument here is that not only would they have to share the same properties, but the exact same temporal history, the same absolute genesis. If there is but one small difference between recurrences, then the two events are not identical because one change effects everything's history. This is similar to his critique in "The Utility and Liability of History," where he claims that we will identify non-identical things, unless the whole of history and time itself recurs. Thus, within a recurrence the identity of indiscernibles holds. If we look at any two things with enough precision, we will find that they are not identical. This is not only because of their differences in internal qualities but also the external relations via time and space. We can always distinguish one thing from another by their non-identical spatio-temporal indexicals and their relationships with other things.

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580 (KGW V 2. 11[231], Trans. Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche*, 170). It's worth noting that a closer analysis of the connection between this note and Nietzsche's 1873 time-atom theory would be worthwhile but is beyond the scope of this analysis.

581 UM II 2.

582 One consequent of this is that objects are not identical over time in any strong sense. I think Nietzsche would accept this (HH I 18).
For Nietzsche, not only the internal qualities (redness, weight, volume etc.) must be the same for two objects to be identical but also the external relations. More specifically the thing's relationship to other things via time and space. It is not only the internal qualities but the whole knot of causal relations must be replicated from the very beginning. As Nietzsche suggested in 1874, the conexus of causes and effects would themselves have to recur identically all the way from the beginning of time.\textsuperscript{583}

If two recurrences are identical, their spatial and temporal indexicals and relations would be the same. That is, the contradiction generated by this thought is that each recurrence would simultaneously be the same thing (in the same time and space) and not the same thing (in the same time and space). If such a contradiction is generated and thought, this has serious consequences for the foundations of classical logic and philosophy generally.

The fact that Nietzsche understands the impossibility of his claim within recurrences given the presuppositions of classical logic, demonstrates that he is well aware of the dangerous contradiction he is proposing, namely, that eternal recurrence represents a thought experiment where two things are qualitatively identical and numerically distinct. Put more plainly, this contradiction is completely imaginable, as Leibniz himself suggests, even though it violates the principle.\textsuperscript{584} The question is, given that Nietzsche saw this contradiction, how might the thought of eternal recurrence lead to epistemological nihilism?

\textsuperscript{583} (UM II 2) It is important to point out that Nietzsche drops causal formulation of this position in favor of a relational one by 1881. In Z III 13.2 the argument about the knot of causes (\textit{der Knoten von Ursachen}) reappears but, importantly, it is not Zarathustra that states this but his animals who Zarathustra had chided for making a hurdy-gurdy song of his experience.

\textsuperscript{584} (Leibniz, Gottfried \textit{Selections}, ed. Philip P. Wiener, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 244-245). Leibniz holds it is possible to think such a thing, but it cannot be realized in concrete terms because of his theistic metaphysics. In any case, he admits it can be thought coherently, even if it cannot be realized under his metaphysics.
The answer to this lies in the principle of explosion. Today we often explicate the principle of explosion in anachronistic Latin terms of *ex falso quodlibet* (from falsehood anything) or *ex contradictione quodlibet* (from contradiction anything [follows]). If a true contradiction is generated, then truth and falsity lose their value altogether because one has generated a true and coherent contradiction.

Nietzsche would have encountered all he needed to put this together (eternal recurrence, the identity of indiscernibles, and the principle of explosion) in two texts he was intimately familiar with: Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum II* and *Academica II*. While Nietzsche read about the principle of identity, the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, the principle of explosion, and eternal recurrence in many different texts, all four of these points come together in Cicero. That is, in Cicero these four moving pieces are all set forth but are not brought to their logical conclusion. Cicero holds, first, that eternal recurrence is coherently thinkable. Second, he claims that a consequence of the principle of identity is the identity of indiscernibles. Finally, he holds that if the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is violated, the principle of explosion leads to epistemological nihilism. Putting these together, if eternal recurrence is a genuine and coherently thinkable thought experiment, the consequent of that is epistemological nihilism.

In Cicero’s *Academica II* we find a discussion about the principle of identity and how it ought to be applied. Cicero discusses whether two things that are claimed to be identical can in fact be identical and yet remain numerically distinct. Examples of possibly identical objects include eggs, twins, and signet ring stamps.

It is worth noting that Cicero claims that if people agree that things are identical for practical reasons this should not trouble us because that only implies, they are socially equivalent. One might easily imagine two merchants agreeing that because two eggs are
“identical” they are worth the same amount of money. This, as Cicero makes clear, is not what he is concerned with. What he is concerned with is whether there is ‘really’ no way to distinguish them. He writes,

Are you aware that the likeness of one egg to another is proverbial? [...] we are content not to be able to know those eggs apart, since to agree that this is the same as that egg, is nevertheless not the same thing as if there really were no distinction between them. ⁵⁸⁵

Cicero's claim is that we can agree practically that one egg is worth the same as another egg because they are socially seen as equivalent. However, this is not the same as saying they are identical in the strong philosophical sense of the identity of indiscernibles.

The conclusion Cicero comes to is that the principle of identity only applies to objects that have all the same properties, making them indiscernible from each other. If two things cannot be distinguished by any property, then they are identical. Against the claim of qualitative identity and numerical distinctness the following accusation is made,

For which of us denies that resemblances exist, since they are manifest in ever so many things? But [...] why are you not content with that [...] and why do you prefer to urge a contention utterly excluded by the nature of things, denying that everything is what it is in a class of its own and that two or more objects never possess a common character differing in nothing at all? [...] For it is granted that two twins are alike, and that might have satisfied you; but you want them to be not alike but downright identical which is absolutely impossible. ⁵⁸⁶

Cicero's position is that two objects can be similar, but it is impossible for two objects to be identical. However, as Charles Brittain and John Palmer point out, this position is not strictly defended but assumed. They write, "But this response, of course, rests upon a substantive and

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potentially controversial metaphysical claim, namely a version of the identity of indiscernibles doctrine according to which no two individuals are qualitatively identical."\(^{587}\)

The interlocutor immediately responds with perhaps an even more controversial theory proposed by Democritus' theory that there is an infinite number of worlds. While some of these are merely similar, others, "completely and absolutely match each other in every detail that there is positively no difference between them."\(^ {588}\)

Cicero then responds by simply rejecting Democritus and again endorsing the identity of indiscernibles.\(^{589}\) He then argues that if his opponent does not assent, then a contradiction is generated. If such a contradiction exists, this results in truth and falsity becoming meaningless. He writes,

> from that standard I may not diverge a finger’s breadth, as the saying is, lest I should cause universal confusion. For not only the knowledge but even the nature of truth and false will be done away with if there is no difference between them, so that even the remark that you have a way of occasionally making will be absurd [...] the mark of truth and falsehood is abolished!\(^{590}\)

Such an application of the principle of explosion would mean, in Aristotle’s words, “reasoning would be impossible; [...] reasoning with other people, and indeed with oneself have been annihilated.”\(^{591}\)

In summary, Cicero holds that one consequent of the principle of identity is the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Cicero argues for the principle of identity by claiming that

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\(^{591}\) Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Bk. 4 ch 4. 1006a30.
particular objects possess particular properties\textsuperscript{592} and that everything is what it is in a class of its own.\textsuperscript{593} From this Cicero derives the principle of the identity of indiscernibles that two or more objects never possess a common character differing in nothing at all.\textsuperscript{594} He then argues that this functions as a standard by which to judge things true and false. We can judge things as true only when they have a character of the sort that false ones could not have (false things being those that don't conform to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles).\textsuperscript{595} Cicero's phrasing here is strained, but basically the principle of the identity of indiscernibles functions as a standard of truth. Anything which contradicts that standard is false.

He readily allows that things can make presentations that seem like two things are identical. However, if we admit that such things themselves are actually identical (including spatial and temporal indexicals) and are also numerically distinct, we cause epistemological disaster. If we allow two things to be both identical and not identical, for example, to allow objects to be simultaneously the same thing (in the same time and space) and not the same thing (in the same time and space), we generate a true contradiction. As Cicero states, "for not only the knowledge but even the nature of true and false will be done away with if there is no difference between them […] the mark of truth and falsehood is abolished!"\textsuperscript{596} Via the principle of explosion, from a true contradiction anything follows which would result in an epistemological nihilism because we can prove any proposition both true and false.\textsuperscript{597}

\textsuperscript{597} Proving any B from a contradiction:
\begin{itemize}
  \item P1. \( A \land \neg A \)
  \item P2. \( A \) [conjunctive elimination from P1]
\end{itemize}
Although Cicero does not draw the parallel himself, it seems clear that if we imagine recurrences as identical (including spatial and temporal indexicals) and yet numerically distinct we would generate epistemological nihilism. This is, therefore, one possible mechanism by which eternal recurrence can generate epistemological nihilism.

Through his reading of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Cicero’s *Academica*, Nietzsche would have been well positioned to see one of the fateful consequences of coherently conceiving numerically distinct things as identical, and hence the fateful consequences of eternal recurrence.

Whether it is physically or cosmologically possible is a question of metaphysics and beside the point. However, if such a thing was not only coherently conceivable, as Nietzsche seems to claim, but also realizable, this would not hurt Nietzsche's position. First, it would not hurt Nietzsche's destructive argument because Nietzsche is undermining the arguments of other philosophers. The physical instantiation of eternal recurrence could only generate epistemic nihilism if one also holds the universality of classical logic. Nietzsche does not hold this position. In various places in his writing, Nietzsche endorses the idea that contradiction may exist in nature.\(^{598}\) While this may seem like a extreme position to philosophers, there is already

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\begin{align*}
P3. & \ A \lor B \ [\text{Disjunction Introduction from P2}] \\
P4. & \ \sim A \ [\text{Conjunctive Elimination from P1}] \\
C. & \ B
\end{align*}
\]

Or the inversion, proving any \(\sim B\) from a contradiction:

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\begin{align*}
P1. & \ A \land \sim A \\
P2. & \ A \ [\text{conjunctive elimination from P1}] \\
P3. & \ A \lor \sim B \ [\text{Disjunction Introduction from P2}] \\
P4. & \ \sim A \ [\text{Conjunctive Elimination from P1}] \\
C. & \ \sim B
\end{align*}
\]


If eternal recurrence was physically instantiated, it would make the contradiction between eternal recurrence and classical logic even more damaging for classical logic. Second, the physical instantiation of eternal recurrence would not hurt his negative affective argument, as I will explicate shortly. If anything, the physical instantiation of eternal recurrence would make the foundational disgust at everything this worldly even more clear. This would, in turn, make the chance of pessimists and nihilists selecting themselves out, via suicidal pessimism, even more likely. Lastly, it would not hurt Nietzsche's positive affective argument regarding the ideal
that appears in front of future humanity. Nietzsche's aim is explicating and bringing about this ideal whether or not we can verify that eternal recurrence is physically realized. However, if it were physically realized, this would, if anything, add empirical weight to such an ideal. In order for Nietzsche's argument to move forward, however, he only needs such a thing to be conceivable.

If such a thing is conceivable, as Leibniz himself admits, the value of truth and falsity is abolished and we find ourselves in epistemological nihilism. If one takes classical logic to be universal, which Nietzsche often does not, then one is forced by the conceivability of eternal recurrence into epistemic nihilism.

It is worth mentioning that there are at least a few counterarguments that can avoid such epistemological nihilism today, but none of them would have been acceptable responses during Nietzsche's lifetime. First, one could simply jettison classical logic and embrace some form of non-bivalent, many-valued, or paraconsistent logic. Second, one could also embrace a form of metaphysical dialetheism that allows for certain claims to be true, false, both true and false, or neither true nor false. Third, there are also recent variations on Buddhist logic, such as the Buddhist Tetralemma, which could give an account of this without explosion. Fourth, one could simply deny the universality of the principle of identity or the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (which is now common in some domains of physics). Today there are several ways out of this puzzle. However, all of them require abandoning at least some presuppositions

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601 Nietzsche often rejects the material reality and even the existence of the laws of classical logic. That is, Nietzsche's position is not hurt by his argument that logic is no longer a priori universal.
of classical logic. During Nietzsche's lifetime huge changes in logic were bubbling under the surface of academia. However, for the most part classical logic was still treated as universal and foundational without exception. At the time, such a devastating counter example to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles and the foundations of logic would have been a major achievement.

The question then is, if eternal recurrence shows us the depths of the epistemological nihilism at the heart of the western tradition, what might make us affirm life? Having thought eternal recurrence to its depth, Nietzsche clearly thought it also provided the occasion for life affirmation. However, we can now ask, how does the ideal of affirmation emerge from what seem to be aporia? I claim it emerges, not out of epistemological considerations, which would trap Nietzsche, but emotive or affective considerations. Those considerations revolve around our confrontation with our disgust with human finitude in light of this epistemological fallout.

3. Eternal Recurrence and the Rejection of Disgust

Throughout Nietzsche’s work, disgust at existence itself forms one of the central problematics of philosophical inquiry. Early in Nietzsche’s career he encountered Schopenhauer’s work, which argued that we can justify the absurdity of existence through aesthetic experiences (particularly of music), an ethics of compassion, and ascetic self-denial and resignation. For Nietzsche, in The Birth of Tragedy and other early writings, nihilism and disgust (Ekel) at existence can be assuaged or justified through music.602 Following some lines of

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thought in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s early work saw the aesthetic justification of existence as a discharge of disgust at existence, which resulted in an ascetic, will-negating mood.\textsuperscript{603}

Nietzsche eventually saw this negation of will through music as participating in, and glorifying, the denial of life at the core of the ascetic ideal.\textsuperscript{604} In his later writing, Nietzsche vehemently rejects these Schopenhauerian solutions to suffering and disgust as simply an escapism that treats the symptoms of disgust but does not make way for affirmation or overcoming.\textsuperscript{605} In Nietzsche’s mature period, it becomes clear that Schopenhauer did not think pessimism to its depth and the Schopenhauerian solutions to nihilism and disgust were untenable.\textsuperscript{606} In his late works, Nietzsche clearly suggests that the philosophy of Schopenhauer is only a formula for resignation, not affirmation.\textsuperscript{607} Instead of simply treating the symptoms of this foundational disgust with human experience, Nietzsche wanted to think this disgust with all

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\textsuperscript{603} BT 7; DW 3.


\textsuperscript{606} BT ASC 6; BGE 56; GM 5-7.

existence and the human condition to its depths and overcome it. This explains why disgust plays a pivotal role in one of his most central ideas: eternal recurrence.

One important place Nietzsche puts the idea forward is his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche goes so far as to say that eternal recurrence is the fundamental conception of the work. In the penultimate section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* book III, “The Convalescent,” Zarathustra encounters his most abysmal thought and eternal recurrence. Both of these involve disgust. Until this point in the text, Zarathustra had been trying, and failing, to think his most abysmal thought. In the first part of the section, Zarathustra finally draws up his courage to think his most abysmal thought. Upon doing so, Zarathustra cries out, “Disgust [Ekel], disgust, disgust - woe is me!” Zarathustra then collapses. In the second part of the section, Zarathustra is wrestling with his most abysmal thought off stage and the reader only hears a report about it from the final part of the section. In the final part, Zarathustra recalls his wrestling with the thought and again claims, “Ah, Disgust! Disgust! Disgust! - Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and sighed and shuddered; for he remembered his sickness.” After Zarathustra has recovered from his sickness, he is finally able to affirm the value of life and existence in the final section of book III and affirms again and again, “*For I love you, O Eternity!*”

Scholars tend to take Zarathustra’s most abysmal thought (*abgründlicher Gedanke*) simply to be eternal recurrence (*ewigen Wiederkunft*). However, as Alexander Nehamas and

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608 EH Z 1.
609 Z III 13.1.
610 Z III 13.2.
611 Which is the final section of the publicly published text.
612 Z III 13.2.
Maudemarie Clark have pointed out, when one pays close attention to the text, these are distinct and not textually coextensive. Nietzsche is very clear to distinguish his most abysmal thought (as it occurs once) and the eternal recurrence of what his most abysmal thought is about.

The first indication that eternal recurrence and the most abysmal thought are distinct occurs in “On the Vision and the Riddle.” In this section, Zarathustra relates a vision to a group of sailors. In that vision, he is conversing with a dwarf who is referred to as the spirit of gravity. The dwarf gives a cosmological interpretation of eternal recurrence, stating, “time itself is a circle.” However, Zarathustra claims, “you do not know my abysmal thought! That - you could not endure!” This implies, first, that the dwarf understands eternal recurrence as a kind of circular temporal phenomenon, second, that the picture Zarathustra offers regarding two eternal paths is perhaps different, and, third, that what the dwarf knows is not the same as knowing Zarathustra’s most abysmal thought. They are, therefore, not coextensive.

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Spoke Zarathustra: Before Sunrise. Ed. James Luchte (New York: Continuum, 2008), 94; Paul S. Loeb, “Finding the Übermench in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality” In Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays. Edited by Christa Davis Acampora (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 169, 175n18; Andrew CUTFELLOW, Continental Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction (New York: Routledge, 2005), 346; Gary Shapiro, Nietzschean Narratives (USA: Indiana University Press, 1889), 39; Michael Allen Gillespie, Nietzsche’s Final Teaching (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 115. (Loeb's position is odd here. Despite the fact that he claims repeatedly that they are identical in the above cited passages, in personal communications he said these were simply "shorthand" (Paul Loeb, academia.edu message to author, October 10, 2020). A closer analysis of his argument demonstrates a much more complex position. Most notably, the most abysmal thought is an entailment of eternal recurrence. That is, the most abysmal thought is the eternal recurrence of even the smallest human being, which itself is all of mankind.

615 Z III 2.2.
616 Z III 2.2.
617 Zarathustra explicitly tells him not to take it too lightly. This is similar to Zarathustra's reproach towards his animals in "The Convalescent" in Book III.
Further, Nietzsche’s own reading of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo* supports reading eternal recurrence and Zarathustra’s most abysmal thought as separate. He writes that the psychological problem of the Zarathustra type is,

> How someone with the hardest, the most terrible insight into reality, who has thought ‘the most abysmal thought’, can nonetheless see it *not* as an objection to existence, not even to its eternal return, but instead finds one more reason in it for *himself to be* the eternal yes to all things, ‘the incredible, boundless yes-saying, amen-saying’...  

The most abysmal thought is considered an understandable objection to existence. Eternal recurrence just amplifies that thought because it must eternally return. This means that the most abysmal thought is not of eternal return itself. It is something that returns within each recurrence. Therefore, the most abysmal thought is something distinct from eternal return itself. This conclusion is textually born out in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In the section “The Vision and the Riddle,” Zarathustra is speaking to a group of sailors. Zarathustra relates a vision he had of a young shepherd who is choking on a snake that crawled into his throat and bit him. Near the end of the section, Zarathustra asks the sailors who the shepherd was in the vision but receives no answer. In the section directly following “The Vision and the Riddle” it becomes clear that Zarathustra was the young shepherd in the vision, and it is his most abysmal thought that will bite him in the future. Zarathustra states,

> At last my abyss stirred and my thought bit me.  
> Ah, abysmal thought, which is *my* thought! When shall I find strength to hear you burrowing and no longer tremble?  
> My heart rises to my throat when I hear you burrowing! Even your silence wants to choke me, you abysmal silent one!

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618 EH Z 6.
As yet I have never dared to summon you up: it has been enough that I - have carried you about with me! Therefore, what bites Zarathustra in the vision and later in the text is specifically his most abysmal thought.

In the penultimate section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III, “The Convalescent,” Zarathustra finally encounters his most abysmal thought firsthand. Zarathustra recalls the encounter stating, “that monster crept into my throat and choked me! But I bit its head and spat it away from me” and Zarathustra continues, “The great disgust with man - *it* choked me and had crept into my throat.” So, Zarathustra’s most abysmal thought is his great disgust with man.

The text gets even more specific about the disgust. The great disgust with man is specifically that even the greatest of men are still small and all-too-human. Further, it is textually demonstrable that this disgust with man is distinct from the eternal return of this disgust. Zarathustra claims,

> Once I saw both of them naked, the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to one another - even the greatest, all-too-human!

> The greatest all-too small! - that was my disgust at man! And the eternal recurrence even of the smallest! - that was my disgust at all existence!

This passage demonstrates that Zarathustra’s most abysmal thought causes his great disgust with man, however, this is distinct from the eternal recurrence of his most abysmal thought which causes his great disgust with all existence. It is this disgust which he must overcome to affirm eternal recurrence.

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619 Z III 3.
620 Z III 13.2.
621 Z III 13.2.
So, not only can we see that the most abysmal thought and eternal recurrence are not identical, but that this also seems to be the way Nietzsche himself interprets it in *Ecce Homo*. It is important to note that the eternal return of “the smallest,” that creates a disgust at all existence, does not mean disgust only about the smallest man, rather, all of humanity has become small. It is not simply the small man that creates disgust but mankind itself including great men. This has been previously pointed out by T. K. Seung and Paul S. Loeb.\(^{622}\) What this means is that great men cannot justify the value of existence. As early as *Human, All-to-Human* Nietzsche rejects the attempt to justify existence through great men, excluding all other human beings, as a type of “impure thinking.”\(^{623}\)

What eternal recurrence does is amplify an opinion already held by Zarathustra and blows it up to monstrous proportions. In so doing, it allows us to really think the most abysmal thought to its depths. The most abysmal thought is a pessimistic thought. That is, the most abysmal thought concludes that there is no value to existence. This value judgment Nietzsche sees at the foundation of Western thought. It has been implicit in our value systems in philosophy since at least Socrates. Nietzsche states in *Twilight of the Idols*, in the section, “The Problem of Socrates,”

The wisest men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life: it’s *no good* [...] Even Socrates said as he died: ‘living that means being sick for a long time: I owe Asclepius the Savior a rooster.’ Even Socrates had had enough.\(^{624}\)

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\(^{623}\) HAH I 33.

\(^{624}\) TI “The Problem of Socrates” 1.
Here Nietzsche’s interpretation is that Socrates owes Asclepius, who is the God of doctors, a rooster because he has been cured of the disease that is life. The idea that this world is a disgusting disease we should flee from is implicit in the Western tradition. This includes various forms of Platonism and Christianity. Until we confront this foundational disgust with earthly existence, we cannot fully affirm life.

According to Nietzsche, one of our fundamental problems is that we do not know how to justify the meaning of our existence. The meaning of suffering is unjustifiable, and this makes life itself repulsive and disgusting. It is not simply that we suffer but that we suffer in vain. Nietzsche writes, “The meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind.” One way we can deal with this is to fit our suffering into a larger metaphysical or religious scheme in which we can redeem our suffering. Nietzsche claims that the “lunacies of Metaphysics” are an attempt to answer the question of the “value of existence.” By redeeming suffering through metaphysics, “the tremendous void seemed to have been filled; the door was closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism.” Our disgust for human existence and the purposelessness of human suffering, if left to its own, would lead to suicide. If we were honest about the conditions of our existence it would be unbearable. Nietzsche writes, “Honesty would lead to nausea [disgust/Ekel] and suicide.” We can either cure this foundational disgust or provide symptomatic treatment.

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625 GS 340.
626 GM III 28.
627 GS Pref. 2.
628 GM III 28.
629 GS 107.
Symptomatic treatment functions as a type of therapy that only treats the symptom not the cause.\textsuperscript{630} We can flee this disgust and treat its symptoms by either metaphysics or universal compassion. Metaphysics provides a reason for our suffering in some larger structural system. Universal compassion, on the other hand, allows us to empathize with and ease the suffering of humanity. When we treat the symptoms of disgust for the human condition in this way, there is a sense in which life is preserved. One is no longer forced to suicidal nihilism. However, and Nietzsche is very clear about this, while not suicidal, such treatments are still unhealthy, life denying, and passively nihilistic.

Nietzsche tightly links Christianity to the tendency to find this earthly world disgusting. In 1874, he claims that the ideals of Christianity make us disgusted by our own naturalness.\textsuperscript{631} In his 1886 new foreword to The Birth of Tragedy, “An Attempt at Self Criticism,” he writes, “From the very outset Christianity was essentially and pervasively the feeling of disgust \textit{[Ekel]} and weariness which life felt for life, a feeling which merely disguised, hid and decked itself out in its belief in ‘another’ or ‘better’ life.”\textsuperscript{632} Christianity like Socrates, therefore, demonstrates a disgust for everything embodied, human, and finite. In positing another world, heaven, Christians are trying to escape the world that they find disgusting and intrinsically valueless.

This critique extends more generally to the metaphysical tradition that posits some transcendent afterworld in distinction to this world. As Nietzsche writes, this “metaphysical need \textit{[Bedürfniss]}” indicates a sickness, passive nihilism, world weariness, and aversion to life.\textsuperscript{633} To

\textsuperscript{630} GM III 16, 17.
\textsuperscript{631} UM SE 2.
\textsuperscript{632} BT “Attempt at Self-Criticism” 5.
\textsuperscript{633} HAH I 26, I 37, I 153; GS 151; cf. HAH I 222; GS 1 [need “Bedürfniss” for metaphysicians], 110 [need “Bedürfniss” for truth]; cf. BGE 59.
have this kind of metaphysical need is a sign of weakness and decay. “Needing” metaphysics is a weakness and “impotence” that comes from deep sickness, deep suffering, deep “distress” with life and this world.\textsuperscript{634} As Nietzsche says in the 1887 preface to \textit{The Gay Science},

\begin{quote}
In some it is their deprivations that philosophize; in others their riches and strengths. The former need [nöthig] their philosophy, whether it be as a prop, a sedative, medicine, redemption, elevation, or self-alienation. For the latter it is merely a beautiful luxury.\textsuperscript{635}
\end{quote}

For Nietzsche, the need for metaphysics can be seen as a form of nihilistic revenge on a life one finds disgusting. To falsify the world by means of conceptual schemes is to take revenge upon it. This world of flux, change, and human embodiment appears degraded when we compare it to a transcendentalized and deified world. Nietzsche writes,

\begin{quote}
Here and there one encounters an impassioned and exaggerated worship of “pure forms,” among both philosophers and artists: let nobody doubt that whoever stands that much in need [nöthig] of the cult of surfaces [metaphysics] must at some time have reached beneath them with disastrous results. Perhaps there even exists an order of rank among these burnt children, these born artists who find enjoyment of life only in the intention of falsifying its image (as it were, in a long winded revenge on life): we can deduce the degree to which life has been spoiled for them might be inferred from the degree to which they wish to see its image falsified, thinned down, transcendentalized, deified.\textsuperscript{636}
\end{quote}

Metaphysical and theological systems that posit some form of backworld [\textit{Hinterwelt}] or afterlife can be seen as a symptom.\textsuperscript{637} That is, they are the result of a predisposition to see everything that is this-worldly as disgusting. This attitude demonstrates an implicit pessimism about the value of existence.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[634] Z I 3; GS Pref. 2; cf. Z I 4, I 8.
\item[635] GS Pref. 2.
\item[636] BGE 59.
\item[637] Z I 3; HAH II 17; cf. KGW VIII 2 11[99].
\end{footnotes}
Metaphysical systems, be they Christian or Platonic, give us comfort. They allow us to fit seemingly meaningless and purposeless suffering into a broader picture where the value of existence can be justified. These systems are intended to save us from suicidal nihilism. Without these systems of comfort, if we really thought pessimism through to its depth, it would be unbearable. The meaninglessness of suffering would hang upon us as the greatest weight.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II section 14, which is to some extent a commentary on “The Convalescent” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche describes what has a calamitous effect: profound disgust and great compassion. In this section he is describing how human weakness and smallness make us resentful and vengeful against life. He writes,

> What is to be feared, what has a disastrous effect like no other disaster, would not be great fear, but *disgust* for humans, likewise great *compassion* for humans. Supposing these were to marry someday, then immediately something uncanny would inevitably come into the world, the “last will” of humanity, its will to nothingness, nihilism.638

Disgust and compassion are central features of diagnosing sick predispositions towards life that result in nihilism.

This raises the question as to why such a combination is so nihilistic. Nietzsche had this fully worked out by 1881 when he published *Dawn*. Disgust at all existence itself in an individual is not necessarily a bad thing for humanity since those individuals will select themselves out of the species via suicide. It confirms the wisdom of the satyr Silenus which Nietzsche quotes in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second-best thing for you is: to die

638 GM III 14.
That is, an unpolluted and clear-sighted pessimism that became conscious of this kind of disgust at all existence would immediately lead to suicide.

However, such pessimism and disgust do not self-extinguish when it is combined with compassion. Nietzsche writes,

If, like the people of India, one establishes knowledge of human misery as the goal of all intellectual activity and remains faithful to such a horrible objective throughout many generations of spirit, then, in the eyes of such people of inherited pessimism, feeling compassion acquires, in the long run, a new value as a life-preserving power that makes existence bearable, even though it seems, for all the disgust and horror it evokes, worth tossing away. As a sensation containing pleasure and meting out superiority in small doses, feeling compassion becomes the antidote to suicide.

While a disgust at all existence might cause one to commit suicide, if one has compassion for others then one will remain in this sick state for a long time to help ease the perceived suffering of others.

However, this compassion only functions as an antidote to suicide if it is not thought through completely. If it is thought through to its depths, as Zarathustra does, it unravels and compassion can no longer justify existence. In fact, universal compassion can function as an argument against the value of existence.

Early in Nietzsche’s career, we can find seeds of the thought that universal compassion and empathy lead to nihilism. In Human, All-Too-Human he argues that an exceptional person able to really think compassion to its depth, would reveal his or her own nihilism. He writes,

Thus, for the ordinary, everyday person, the value of life rests solely upon him taking himself to be more important than the world. The great lack of imagination from which he suffers makes him unable to empathize with other beings, and hence, he participates in

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639 BT 3.
640 D 136.
their fate and suffering as little as possible. By contrast, anyone who really could participate in such things would have to despair of the value of life; if he did manage to conceive and to feel the total consciousness of humanity within himself, he would collapse with a curse against existence - for humanity as a whole has no goal and consequently the individual cannot find anything to comfort and sustain him by considering the whole process, but only despair.\textsuperscript{641}

This section in \textit{Human, All-Too-Human} is illustrative of what it means to think compassion through to its depths without the “delusions of morality,” as suggested in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} 56. Universal compassion seems to initially provide an antidote to suicidal nihilism. However, when we think universal compassion through, it becomes unbearable.

It is difficult to justify and affirm the unjustified suffering in one’s own life. If one expands this to one’s friends and family, it becomes even more difficult to affirm. Expanding this to the untold unjustified suffering of the whole human species throughout its history, forward and backwards, makes affirming the value of life even more difficult. If one goes one step further and applies the eternal recurrence, the unending, unjustified suffering of humanity and universal compassion become completely unbearable.

The above section from \textit{Human, All-Too-Human} is helpful for understanding Zarathustra’s experience in “The Convalescent.” This form of compassion that seeks to do away with all things in life that are painful simply has a misconception of life. This approach to life sees what is difficult and what is challenging as a problem to be solved, eradicated, and cured. The end goal of life would simply be a lack of discomfort.

\textsuperscript{641} HAH I 33.
This approach, however, ignores the fact that what makes us most human is striving against what is difficult and expressing our strength against opposition. Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*,

"The ‘religion of compassion’ (or ‘the heart’) commands them to help, and believe they have helped best when they have helped most quickly! Should you adherents to this religion really have the same attitude towards yourself that you have towards your fellow men; should you refuse to let your suffering lie on you even for an hour and instead constantly prevent all possible misfortune ahead of time; should you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, deserving of annihilation, as a defect of existence, there you have besides your religion of pity also another religion in your hearts; and the latter is perhaps the mother of the former - the religion of snug cosiness."  

The tendency to compassion that eternal recurrence exaggerates shows us something about the anesthetic vision of the good life the Western tradition has created for itself. The best life is the painless life. When this is exaggerated and thought through to its depths it is shown not to be life affirming but actually a kind of life-negating pessimism.

Such a view is compatible with the suicidal nihilism present in the wisdom of Silenus presented earlier, "The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon."  This is precisely the pessimism of Socrates that Nietzsche introduced directly before his first presentation of eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science*. The need to ‘cure’ the problem of life reveals that Socrates and the Western tradition in general see human life itself as a disgusting disease in need of a cure.

Nietzsche does not mean disgust at a particular person but disgust at being a living embodied human in general. This disgust is not only outward but internalized. Most treatments

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642 GS 338.  
643 BT 3.  
644 GS 340.
of disgust involve the object of disgust being something exterior to oneself. However, in the moment of thinking through the eternal return of the most abysmal thought, one is also part of the disgusted category. In this sense, this great disgust involves shame (Scham) at being human. Nietzsche writes,

The darkening of the sky above humanity has always increased in proportion to how humans’ shame at humans has grown. The weary pessimistic gaze, the mistrust of the enigma of life, the icy No of disgust at life [...] On their path to becoming “angels” (not to use a harsher word here) humans have bred themselves that ruined stomach and that coated tongue through which not only the joy and innocence of the animals have become repugnant to them, but even life itself has become distasteful.645

Disgust and universal compassion go hand in hand. They are not separate phenomena but form the basic nihilistic instinct at the foundation of Western metaphysics and Christianity. The combination of these two leads to nihilism.

The most abysmal thought reveals the foundational disgust at the human condition that we consistently find within the Western tradition. Metaphysics, from Plato through Kant, is a kind of escapism founded on a disgust with the this-worldly conditions in which humans live.

The centrality of disgust that Nietzsche diagnoses at the foundation of Western philosophy, however, is not hopeless. Throughout his career, Nietzsche uses the metaphor of disgust as something that must be overcome (überwinden).646 The most abysmal thought provides the opportunity for such an overcoming. As Gooding-Williams writes, “Zarathustra regards his abysmal thought to be a good reason for becoming a sublime and leonine being who rejects his abysmal thought.”647 If we philosophically reflect on the deep role that disgust of

645 GM II 7.
646 UM DS 6.
human finitude plays in Western metaphysics, we may be able to heal ourselves and become convalescent. By thinking the most abysmal thought to its end, we will confront the hidden origin of our systems of thought. Nietzsche tells us that thinking pessimism to its depths may actually point to an opposite ideal, an ideal that affirms life. In *Beyond Good and Evil* 56, addressing eternal recurrence, Nietzsche writes that thinking pessimism to its depths provides the possibility of life affirmation.648 For Nietzsche, it is important that we come to terms with our foundational disgust with the human condition that caused us to flee to Platonic backworlds and Christian afterworlds. Once we see our disgust, we may be able to overcome it and affirm the kind of life we have.

Nietzsche writes, “Anyone who has ever thought this possibility through to the end knows one more nausea [*Ekel*/disgust] than other human beings - but perhaps also a new *task!*...”649 This new task requires that we reevaluate the systems of thought that have led us to this point and seriously consider whether they are a healthy perspective to have on life.

One could consider life quite differently from the start. Struggle and difficulty in life are not something that we ought to get rid of. Rather, they are what make us truly human and our life valuable. To be presented with a challenging situation is not necessarily a bad thing but an invitation to rise to the challenge. Trying times can be an opportunity to let our courage and power truly come forward. We can see the difficulties in life as a way to test ourselves and exert our inner determination upon the world. It is only when we are pushed to our limits that we truly express our full potential. Perhaps we should welcome a challenging life because it will forge us,

648 BGE 56.
649 BGE 203.
like a piece of iron between hammer and anvil, into something truly great. Hardship might allow us to become our full selves, to become who we truly are.

Such a view of life is absolutely antithetical to disgust and universal compassion. Such a view embraces hardship as one’s highest hope! Rather than feeling compassion and disgust that result in despair, one ought to see the potential for courage. In one of the central sections on eternal recurrence, entitled “On the Vision and the Riddle,” Zarathustra suggests,

Courage is the best slayer: courage also slays pity. But pity is the deepest abyss: as deeply as man looks into life, so deeply does he also look into suffering.

But courage is the best slayer, courage that attacks: it slays even death itself; for it says: “Was that life? Well then! Once more!”

If one thinks pessimism and the most abysmal thought to their depths, one reveals a basic disposition of western metaphysics that is not necessary. By seeing the depths of life denial and nihilism, the opposite ideal emerges,

the most exuberant, lively and world-affirming human being who has learned to reconcile and come to terms with not only what was and is, but also wants to have it again as it was and is, for all eternity, insatiably shouting da capo [from the top (play it again)].

Such an individual would not be crushed by the weight of universal compassion and disgust when he hears about the thought of eternal recurrence.

As the draft of GS 341 in the correction pages demonstrates, the opposite ideal of pessimism emerges in front of the “human beings of the future” and asks us if we are the kind of “hero” who can carry the burden of the thought of eternal recurrence. Just a few pages previously

650 Z III 2.1.
651 BGE 56.
in GS 337, Nietzsche discussed the humanity of the future. Just like the exceptional person from HAH I 33, they would be able to “feel the history of man altogether as his own history.” These humans of the future could feel the immense burden of the collective human condition. They could feel, “in a monstrous generalization all the grief of the invalid thinking of health, of the old man thinking of the dreams of his youth, of the lover robbed of his beloved, of the martyr whose ideal is perishing, of the hero on the eve after a battle that decided nothing but brought him wounds and the loss of a friend.” All of this, joy and meaningless suffering, must be felt and set on the scales of the value of existence.

However, unlike HAH I 33, in this case Nietzsche imagines an affirmation of the value of existence. Nietzsche writes,

But to bear and be able to bear this monstrous sum of all kinds of grief and still be the hero who, on the second day of battle, greets dawn and his fortune as a person whose horizon stretches millennia before and behind him [...] To finally take all this in one soul and compress it into one feeling - this would certainly produce a happiness unknown to humanity so far: A divine happiness full of power and love [...] inexhaustible.”

Such a being is not disgusted by life at all. Such a being would affirm eternal recurrence because they bear no disgust in their heart. Rather, hearing that this life would repeat again in exactly the same way would bring them great joy and reason for celebration! A life affirming person of this type would say upon hearing this, “‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’” Such a reaction would indicate that one has thought pessimism through to its depth and found the opposite ideal of life affirmation. Such a predisposition would embrace the hardships and challenges in life and affirm what is difficult. One would love one’s fate, *amor*

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652 GS 337.  
653 GS 337.  
654 GS 341.
fati, because hardship is what is necessary to forge one into what one is. This world affirming perspective would want nothing to be different and love every moment of life because life is inherently valuable.

Nietzsche says about his own attempt to love life this way, "I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who makes things beautiful. Amor Fati: Let that be my love from now on!"\textsuperscript{655} Such a perspective does not begrudgingly accept life's challenges but needs them. As Nietzsche says in BGE 56, such a being,

has learned to reconcile and come to terms with not only what was and is, but also wants to have it again as it was and is, for all eternity, insatiably shouting da capo not only to himself but to the whole play and performance, and not only to a performance, but at bottom to the one who needs this performance – and makes it necessary: because he needs himself again and again – and makes himself necessary --\textsuperscript{656}

This is precisely the reaction of the human beings of the future who have achieved the opposite ideal of pessimism. Nietzsche's original draft of GS 341 makes clear that power is somehow related to eternal recurrence through the most powerful human beings of the future, and therefore, I should address the relationship between affirmation and will to power to the extent my methodology allows.

I think that based on the published works and a genetic analysis of their development, we can conclude that overcoming disgust with everything this-worldly and the affirmation of the most world-affirming human being, or the most powerful human beings of the future, is an expression of the will to power. While the creative will can reconcile itself with what was and is

\textsuperscript{655} GS 276.
\textsuperscript{656} BGE 56.
begrudgingly, it takes a monumental expression of the will to power to affirm eternal recurrence and to want and love what was and is.

The focus on the will to power as a central idea connected to eternal recurrence was historically impacted by the publication of a text by that same title. *The Will to Power* was edited and published by Nietzsche's sister in 1901, about ten years after Nietzsche's mental collapse. The publication of this text as Nietzsche's *magnum opus* made it seem as if Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on that text was more evident than it actually was. Elizabeth's editorial forgeries allowed Nietzsche's work to become Nazi propaganda and has come to represent one of the most prominent examples of editorial distortions in the history of Nietzsche scholarship. Scholars vary in their conclusions of how distorted *The Will to Power* became under Elizabeth's editorship, but, most scholars conclude that *The Will to Power* cannot be considered a *magnum opus* authorized by Nietzsche in the form it was published.657 Put in the terminology of my method, if we want to consider what the final philosophy to which Nietzsche attached his *imprimatur*, we ought to look to individual works and evaluate the status of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on those material objects. When we look to *The Will to Power*, there is significant evidence that the published text represents cobbled together sections from Nietzsche's unpublished material with an organization based on multiple non-coextensive plans. One can see just how arbitrary the organization is by the fact that the 1901 version only had 483 sections while the 1906 edition added an additional

584 sections. Not only were there sections added but different variants were swapped out. *The Will to Power* is not a print manuscript that was forced into public publication but rather an assembly of notes pulled from notebooks and loose pages Nietzsche had not sent to be published. I believe it is *prima facie* philologically imprudent to consider this text as having Nietzsche's *imprimatur* in any strong sense.

The strongest evidence that the manuscript edited by Nietzsche's sister only bears a weak *imprimatur* is that Nietzsche claims to have abandoned the project for public publication. The full title of this work he planned to write at one point was *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*.\(^{658}\) As Mazzino Montinari pointed out in his philological research on *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche writes an important letter to Peter Gast on February 13, 1888. In that letter Nietzsche writes, "I have finished the first draft of my 'Attempt at a Revaluation': it was, all things considered, torture; so far as I totally lack the courage to go back to it. In another ten days I will make corrections to it."\(^{659}\) Only thirteen days later he writes, "You, too, should not think that I have created another work of 'literature' here: this composition was *for me*; from now on, for the duration of the winter, I will make one such composition after another *for myself* – the idea of 'going public with it' is completely out of the question."\(^{660}\) While Nietzsche abandoned going public with the project in its entirety at this point, he did move forward with publicly publishing some of the material elsewhere such as in *The Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*.\(^{661}\) While there is positive evidence that Nietzsche did at one point plan to publish a work with the title *The Will to Power*, even with various organized section titles, there is little positive

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\(^{658}\) GM III 27


evidence that Nietzsche would have changed his mind and decided to publish it publicly, particularly since he chose to publish sections of it in a different form.

This is important because we only find a strong connection between eternal recurrence and the will to power in *The Will to Power* and his notebooks. If, as most philologists and historians of Nietzsche's philosophy agree, Nietzsche abandoned this project, then we cannot take the text *The Will to Power* to represent Nietzsche's final public philosophical position. If Nietzsche had not had his mental collapse, it is certainly possible he could have sought to publish sections of *The Will to Power* privately as he had done previously with Z IV. Such speculative conjectures are possible but there is no positive evidence for this conclusion. He also could have repurposed sections from his notebooks for future publication, as he often did previously, if he had not had his mental collapse. These are open counter factual questions that invite speculation rather than historical and philological evidence. However, we can say with philological certainty that just before his mental collapse Nietzsche had abandoned the project of a text under the title *The Will to Power* for public publication and, therefore, his *imprimatur* on that text is much weaker than other works that he clearly authorized for public publication. Therefore, it is my position, which is fairly uncontroversial, that we should not consider *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche's *magnum opus* since Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on that text is very weak. I cannot, therefore, avail myself of the texts in *The Will to Power*, or early drafts of those sections, to support my conclusions about eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's final and public philosophy.

Anyone who analyzes Nietzsche's notebooks and sections that never came to fruition in publication knows that Nietzsche does write a considerable amount connecting eternal recurrence to the will to power. In particular, the will to power takes on a more causal and physical role in Nietzsche's thought rather than simply being a psychological or social
phenomenon. However, I agree with Mazzino Montinari (the editor of the KGW) that Nietzsche abandoned the project of *The Will to Power* for public publication in 1888 and instead published the sections intended for the public in *The Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*. In any case, no text by that title emerged before Nietzsche's mental collapse.

My methodology suggests that there is no clear generally universalizable demarcation between Nietzsche's Nachlass and his published work. I also do not want to claim we can provide evidence that any particular fragment was not influential on Nietzsche's published work. Making such a claim seems philologically ill founded because it presupposes an absence of evidence indicating an evidence of absence. We cannot rule out a theoretical possibility simply because there is no evidence for it. Additionally, I agree with Wolfram Groddeck that the classification of fragments in distinction to drafts in the KGW and KSA is deeply problematic. In particular, it seems unwise to argue that fragments, as opposed to drafts, had no influence on the published work. That is, I think when there is positive historical, philological, material, or archival evidence for a piece of text being a draft of the published work, there is reason to argue that that piece of text is a draft. However, just because this kind of evidence is absent regarding another piece of text does not mean they are necessarily unrelated. Rather, in the absence of evidence we ought to remain in epistemological and philological equipoise regarding whether that section in the notebooks is a draft.

I have taken a more careful position and only have focused on those sections of Nietzsche's writing that can be directly traced to work upon which Nietzsche's *imprimatur* is

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fairly clear. I know of no scholar who has seriously questioned Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil* or *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* books 1-3. My method attempts to open up an area of discourse in which some claims about Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* are intelligible and others are not. Through rigorous debate and historical evidence scholars can come to some degree agreement about the possible range of Nietzsche’s *imprimatur*, a horizon, that is intelligible. It is through the triangulation of multiple kinds of evidence that we find an agreed upon hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility. Some claims are clearly intelligible, such as Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on particular material object, *The Gay Science*, stored at Princeton.\(^{664}\) Other claims, such as Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on, as limit case, the two VHS cassette of *Braveheart* (1995) stored at A H Meadows Library,\(^{665}\) is unintelligible. Such a hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility inherently allows for disagreement and multiple possibilities but also provides the tools for agreement or coming closer to agreement regarding the range of interpretations that are intelligible. When we focus on the particular material objects and the historical evidence that pertains to Nietzsche’s *imprimatur* on those objects it is possible to generate some general agreement about the range of interpretive possibilities. After some agreement about the status of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on a text, we can then trace the development of those sections of interest back into the *Nachlass* materials. That is, by starting with the published work, we can trace back, by means of positive historical, philological, material, or archival evidence, which pieces of text are connected to other pieces of text.

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This process is different than, for example, the diligent work of Joshua Rayman. As Rayman himself states, "I seek to show how the cosmological doctrines of the will to power and eternal return developed in the Nachlaß and the late published works constitute a distinct, physical-technical alternative to natural causation and metaphysical teleology." Rayman starts with Nietzsche's vast estate and plots a course towards the late published work. He can, therefore, avail himself of the many notes on eternal recurrence and the will to power in Nietzsche's notebooks that are often classified as fragments. Our methods are, in a sense, mirror images. My method begins from the work where Nietzsche's *imprimatur* is fairly clear and I plot a course backwards into Nietzsche's estate. I am only considering those parts of Nietzsche's estate where there is positive evidence it relates to that particular published work or section. Where there is a lack of evidence, I remain in philological equipoise and make no strong claim about the influence of that section on the published work. This means, I cannot make use of the many notes for which there is little if any connection to works that clearly bear Nietzsche's *imprimatur*.

My claim, to be clear, is not that the notes that explicitly relate eternal recurrence and the will to power in the notebooks were not of importance to Nietzsche. Rather, it is simply that I have found no strong evidence that traces those notes to a work that clearly has Nietzsche's *imprimatur*. If it turns out that we discover Nietzsche's *imprimatur* is indeed clearly stamped upon the text known as *The Will to Power*, then many of those notes would become of the utmost importance to my project. However, it is my considered view that Nietzsche abandoned that

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project and therefore his *imprimatur* on it, and the notes associated with it, is, at best, weak in comparison to his other works.

To be clear, I am not saying that the many notes discussing the connection between eternal recurrence and the will to power are inadmissible as evidence because they are categorized as "fragments" by the KGW. Rather, I have simply found no positive evidence that links them to a text with a strong *imprimatur*. If evidence of such a link between a particular fragment and a text with a strong *imprimatur* was put forward, I would, of course consider it. Proving that Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on *The Will to Power* is strong would be a dissertation project itself and is not the project I take up here. Until positive evidence, and not only counterfactual possibilities, is presented that *The Will to Power* is on par with other works such as *Beyond Good and Evil*, I do not consider his unpublished notes that make up that work, and their draft variants, as the secret key to understanding the final form of Nietzsche's philosophy. However, the will to power does play a role in many texts in which Nietzsche's *imprimatur* is very strong.

The will to power as a concept is a complicated aspect of Nietzsche's thought because although it occurs at many places in works that most scholars consider published, the will to power is only mentioned in connection to eternal recurrence in one section of the published work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II 20 ("On Redemption"). While Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on book

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667 What follows is every published section containing the phrase will to power [*wille zur macht, willen zur macht, & willens zur Macht*]. These specific cognates were identified by Joshua Rayman ("Will to Power as Alternative to Causality," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2016): 361–372, 371n8). The published sections on the will to power are: Z I 15; Z II 12, 20; BGE 9, 13, 22, 36, 51, 186, 198, 211, 227, 259; GS 349; GM II 12, 18; GM III 15, 18, 27 [as a reference to his planned project]; A 2, 6, 16, 17; TI 11, 20, 38; TI, Ancients, 3; EH Forward 3; EH BT 4; EH CW 1; EH Destiny 4.
IV of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is questionable, since it was published privately, I know of no scholars that question the strength of Nietzsche's *imprimatur* on books I-III.

In the first edition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II 20 ("On Redemption"), Zarathustra connects eternal recurrence and the will to power. Zarathustra is speaking to a cripple and relates a formulation of eternal recurrence. The section specifically focuses on our ill will against time and how to overcome our need for revenge. The will to power is only mentioned once in connection with doing something more than simply reconciling with time. This, however, is not explained in detail because Zarathustra abruptly breaks off his speech.

Unlike other texts of Nietzsche's where we have the print manuscripts and can track the drafts quite easily, we do not have the print manuscripts for books I-III of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This leaves us with a huge gap, philologically speaking, between his notebooks and the correction pages. However, we can still do a partial genetic analysis.

What appears to be the first draft of this section comes from notebook N VI 4 dated June-July 1883.
This reads,

Der Ärger darob, daß die Nothwendigkeit ehern ist und daß uns der rückwirkende Wille versagt ist:

Ingrimm darob, daß die Zeit in die Zukunft abfließt und nicht zur Mühle des Vergangenen sich zwingen läßt!

Daß Etwas leidet, erquickt uns —: das ist unsere älteste Thorheit.668

Translated, this reads,

Frustration at the fact that necessity is iron and that the retroactive will is denied to us:
Rage at the fact that time flows away into the future and does not allow itself to be forced into the mill of the past!
That something suffers, refreshes us -: this is our most ancient folly.669

668 KSA 10, 11[5], p. 380.
We notice here that there is no explicit mention of eternal recurrence or will to power. The focus of the section in this first draft is our ill will against the procession of time. However, as later drafts indicate, the will to power became an explicit theme in drafts after this point. These drafts and variants don't tell us much at all about the will to power and are not particularly enlightening. For example, Nietzsche changed his mind about a few rhetorical flourishes such as adding "My friend" to Zarathustra's questions. We don't have the print manuscript for this section or any of the sections in books 1-3 because, according to Gast, they were burned. However, the correction pages themselves still exist.

We find a few interesting additions in the correction pages. Zarathustra, in describing the man who lacks everything but one thing, originally included a description of the man as a great intestine but this was deleted. Additionally, "inverse" [umgekehrten] was a late addition to the following sentence, "But I have never believed the people when they spoke of great men – and I maintain my belief that it was an inverse cripple, who had too little of everything and too much of one thing." Further, the description of the inverse cripple as a "genius" is also added in the correction pages. I suspect most of these changes were simply intended to make Wagner a more clear target as the inverse cripple. In any case, there are no important changes to the part about

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670 Cf. KGW VI 4, p. 304.
671 KSA 14, p. 178-282.
672 Z II 20.
673 Zarathustra recalls a story where he crossed a bridge to find a giant ear as big as a man and attached to it was a small envious face and body. The people told Zarathustra this was a great man, a genius. I suspect Nietzsche is taking a jab at Wagner who was thought to be both a great man and a genius. This is further supported by a note where Nietzsche includes Wager as an "inverse cripple" along with Plato and others (KGW VII 2, 25[196]).
will to power. There are a number of other changes, between the correction pages and the first edition, but they are mostly grammatical or for emphasis.674

From all this we can deduce that the will to power was not a central theme of the section as it was originally drafted. However, the will to power was inserted at some point in the drafting process before the correction pages.675 That is, while it was not the original focus of the section, neither was it shoved in at the last minute without due consideration. I now turn to the published work itself.

As many scholars have noted previously, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* parallels and parodies the Bible in many places and "On Redemption" is clearly one of these places. In this section Zarathustra is talking to a cripple with a hunch back. The editors of the KSA point to Matthew 15:30 where cripples came to Jesus and he healed them.676 The hunchback tells Zarathustra, "You can heal the blind, and make the lame run; and from him who has too much behind him you could well take a little away – that, I think, would be the right method to make the cripples believe Zarathustra!"677 The section relies on the ambiguity of "too much behind him" referring to both the cripple's humped back and the past that lays behind the cripple. Zarathustra responds by suggesting that cripples don’t have it that bad because while they might be missing an eye or

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674 Also sprach Zarathustra [Korrekturbogenexemplar], HAABC gr 4614. 85-91
675 The corrections [Nachbericht] of the KGW suggests drafts can be found for this section in notebooks Z I 3. While granted access to that notebook I was unable to find the drafts they indicated (KGW VI 4, p 299). However, the detailed description in the KGW of the changes to the section on the will to power indicate no substantial changes to the sentence about the will to power that are philosophically significant (KGW VI 4, p 303). However, I was able to identify what seems to be the first draft and the correction pages for this section. At some point between those two points the discussion of the will to power was added.
676 It also seems to parody the Christian version of eternal recurrence which is presented to a cripple in Acts 3:21. To my knowledge this has not been pointed out previously.
677 Z II 20
leg, they are not as bad off as "great men." Great men, he suggests, are inverse cripples because they lack everything and have too much of one thing.

Zarathustra then turns to his disciples and tells them that he has never found a complete human being but only fragments. He then admits that his greatest burden is the present and past on earth and that he wouldn't know how to go on living if he did not see the future. Zarathustra recalls that he taught his disciples that the will can liberate, but the one thing the will cannot liberate itself from is the past because it cannot will backwards. In a foolish rage, the will tries to take revenge against time and sees life itself as a form of punishment. Zarathustra then suggests that the will seeks two forms of escape that he considers madness: deliverance from earthly existence (heaven) or that the will itself be abandoned (Schopenhauerian/Buddhist deliverance from the will).

Zarathustra, however, posits another form of redemption. He states, "To redeem what is past, and transform every 'it was' into 'Thus would I have it!' – that alone do I call redemption!" This is done through the "will as creator" that says "but I willed it thus!" It becomes clear, however, that Zarathustra has not yet come to terms with eternal recurrence at this early point in the book. He suggests that the will must not only be a creative will that wills reconciliation with time, but something altogether higher than all reconciliation; the will to power. Zarathustra states,

'But did it [the creative will] ever speak thus? And when does this happen? Has the will been unharnessed from its own folly [its ill will against time]? Has the will become its own deliverer and joy-bringer? Has it unlearned the spirit of revenge and all teeth-gnashing? And who taught it reconciliation with time, and something higher than all reconciliation? The will that is the will to power must will something higher than all reconciliation – but how does that happen? Who has taught it also to will backwards?'

678 Z II 20
But at this point in his speech Zarathustra suddenly paused and looked exactly like one who has received a severe shock.\textsuperscript{679}

What shocks Zarathustra is understanding that he too is disgusted with the past and can only accept it because of the future he sees. This would be a form of reconciliation rather than affirmation. That is, Zarathustra can only accept the past begrudgingly at this point in the text. Zarathustra can only reconcile himself with the past because he sees a bright future. The bright future Zarathustra sees as his end, justifies the disgusting past and present as a necessary means to that future. However, when he is given a severe shock by the thought of eternal return, this justification makes no sense anymore. The past and present recur an infinite number of times and are not simply a hill one must struggle over to find a forever-after bright future.

We are told that the creative will can will reconciliation with time. However, there is something higher than all reconciliation: the will to power. It is then suggested that one's will must learn to will backwards in order to have willed something higher than all reconciliation. Textually speaking, however, this is all the explanation Zarathustra gives because of his severe shock that silences him on the topic. The will to power is never brought up in the text again and we are left without a fully fleshed out explanation of the connection between the will to power and eternal recurrence.

That being said, "On Redemption" is the only section in Nietzsche's published writing that deals with both eternal recurrence and the will to power. This section links us back to a few archival documents that are not particularly enlightening. This being the case, I think any explication of eternal recurrence in terms of the will to power, including mine, are speculative given the scarcity of positive evidence when considered under my methodological approach.

\textsuperscript{679} Z II 20
Nevertheless, my own speculation, given the section "On Redemption" is that will to power is a psychological thesis involved in the affirmation of eternal recurrence. That is, when one affirms amor fati [love of fate], that is an expression of will to power. Only those who were powerful enough to see eternal return and affirm it, not begrudgingly, but as their highest hope. This kind of affirmation is an expression of will to power. We are explicitly told that the human beings of the future, that Nietzsche envisions being able to affirm eternal recurrence, are powerful. In the draft of BGE 56 he writes,

Imagine the most powerful thought - and at the same time you will see the ideal that will emerge in front of the most powerful human beings of the future!\(^{680}\)

Overcoming one's disgust with everything this worldly is a form of will to power. Just as Nietzsche claims that the ascetic's will to overcome and rule their own bodily desires is a will to power, so is overcoming the disgust with everything this-worldly. Explicitly affirming it as one's highest hope could not be accomplished by a weak resentful person. Rather, affirming amor fati is not just putting up with one's fate, reconciling with time, but loving and affirming everything about life. It is clear that if one views the will to power as, at least, a description of psychology, then one relationship it has to eternal recurrence in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is that affirming eternal recurrence is an expression of will to power.

The affirmation of the idea of eternal recurrence produces the ideal that emerges in front of the most powerful human beings of the future. That ideal, amor fati, can be seen as an

\(^{680}\) “Oder würdest du jener athlet und Held werden, der dies Gewicht tragen und doch mit ihm nicht emporsteigen könnte? Stelle dir den mächtigsten Gedanken vor Augen - und du wirst zugleich das Ideal erblicken, das vor den mächtigsten Menchen der Zukunft hergehts!”
overflowing love of fate that has overcome the disgust with man and all existence. Nietzsche writes,

My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity, still less to conceal it [...] but to *love* it..."681

To love life this way is to have overcome one’s disgust with being human qua human. To fully embrace being human, all-too-human, is to overcome our foundational disgust with everything this-worldly. This overcoming and affirmation are an expression of the will to power.

The foundational disgust with mankind that sparks the need for metaphysical backworlds and theological afterworlds must be thought through to its end. Linda Williams holds that the thought of eternal recurrence functions as a mirror that shows us our true selves. It allows us to see our predispositions toward life. However, it is not simply a diagnostic tool or litmus test because thinking the thought of eternal recurrence through does more than just reflect our image back to us. Rather, it magnifies our own predispositions and the predispositions of Western metaphysics to monstrous proportions. By exaggerating our predispositions, it shows us just how strange this disgust with everything this-worldly really is and gives us the opportunity to express the will to power by overcoming that disgust and willing *amor fati*.

681 EH “Clever” 10.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Beyond the rather limited argument made in this dissertation regarding eternal recurrence, this project has also functioned as a kind of case study for a new kind of methodology in scholarship generally. I have argued for my own from of genetic methodology that starts with particular texts and the status of the *imprimatur* on those texts. From there I work my way backwards into the philosopher's estate. When projects diverge from the kind of historically contextual genetic reading I offer, we ought to take a meta-reflexive position on methodology choice. We should be explicit about how the individual scholarly projects we engage within inform our values and make certain facts about certain manuscripts important and other facts about other manuscripts unimportant. From a meta-reflexive methodological standpoint, there are many legitimate projects that are informed by particular values. There is, for example, a great deal of philosophical value, in abstract terms, in unpublished texts. That value may be completely unrelated to questions of history or authorship. There is also a great deal of important historical and biographical material in letters and bureaucratic documents. This value may be completely unrelated to questions of philosophy. In all these projects, the value of prioritizing a piece of text is dictated by the values and aims motivating that project and this should be expected. We should try to be explicit about how the individual scholarly projects we engage within inform our values and make certain facts about certain manuscripts important and other facts about other manuscripts unimportant. However, projects ought to only privilege those individual texts and those related to
their genesis, where the *imprimatur* is weak if, *and only if*, the values that motivate those projects are not interested in the philosophy to which a philosopher publicly attached his *Imprinatur*.

I believe that by focusing on the particular material objects that make up a philosopher's work and life we can better understand the philosophies to which philosophers publicly attached their *imprimatur*. Scholars can do this by integrating textual, contextual, intertextual, and genetic forms of analysis. Nietzsche is not a special case in this regard.

Our tendency in scholarship generally is to address texts as if they were abstract, not tied to the material objects that make up their instantiation. This tendency has distorted our historical lens. This tendency to think of texts in abstract terms also has led us to think of texts as ahistorical. Such a view holds that a text exists and does not change as an abstract referent. Although the material objects may change, the text itself, as an abstract object, does not. This allows scholars to disregard texts as they exist as material objects.

The tendency to think about texts in abstract terms often distorts the complex and intricate nature of historical textual development. I argue that instead of talking about texts in abstract terms, we should talk about them in terms of their individual materiality. That is, for example, we ought to abandon talk of *The Birth of Tragedy* and talk about either a particular material text or a precisely enumerated set of material texts. This is not the same as talking about editions, which is also an abstraction. When we think in terms of the abstraction of edition, we often ignore the differences between the individual material texts that make up that edition.

For example, when we look at the third edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* that was published, we are not actually talking about a set of identical texts. Even if we restrict it to the texts as they were presented to the public, these texts are not identical. That is because the first
and second editions were re-bound with added materials and new title pages. What this means, first, is that the third edition does not designate identical texts. Second, the designation of the third edition is not an isolated identifier. When we refer to the third edition, we are actually including objects that can also be designated as first and second editions as well. These problems are only introduced because we think about texts in abstract ahistorical terms. When we begin to consider texts as individual material objects, the difficulties generated by abstractions multiply and become more apparent. However, we no longer need to rely on abstract intuitions about the history of individual texts. We now have the tools needed to sort through the actual history of the physical documents themselves and come to conclusions supported by the material evidence.

Even further, such abstractions do violence to the historical uniqueness of material objects. Each particular material text moves through history and does not do so unaffected. Texts are rebound, pages cut, annotations marked, ink degrades, libraries mark them, archivists index them, and philosophers read them. Much of the history and journey of each individual text is stored within its materiality. This becomes particularly important in the case of philosophy when the authors themselves are the ones rereading and privately annotating their work. When thought of as particular material objects, documents such as these, in which the author annotates their own published work, must be considered both published and unpublished.

Further, when we think of texts as material objects, we can trace influence in a unique way. By using philosopher’s personal libraries, library lending records, and other sources of physical evidence, we can actually discuss how particular material texts influenced other particular texts. Texts that are read and written about are inherently intertextual. When we look at an author's personal library, we get a glimpse into the works that may have influenced their published material. One does not need spooky intuitions about authorship or ideal authorial
intentionality to talk about intertextual evidence. Once we begin to view texts as particular material objects with a particular history, we can then integrate that history with the history of other textual objects.

The question is, then, what is the sum of textual and material evidence, or lack thereof, and what kinds of interpretations are supported or made practically untenable in light of that evidence. When we view texts as abstract objects, we tend to ignore the divergences between particular material objects that are often the most interesting and important differences. Once we set our feet upon the solid ground of textual materiality, we need not avail ourselves of abstract fairy tales. Rather than appeal to intuitions and abstractions, we ought to first turn to the evidence, the evidence that has laid in archives over the centuries and is often ignored.

The relativist suggestion that a text can have any interpretation whatsoever is only supportable if one ignores the historical evidence that weighs on such questions. I would argue that when we view texts as material objects and dig below the philosophical abstraction of a text, we find that there is a mountain of material evidence related to, but not determining, the claims of almost any interpretation. It is only by doing the hard and diligent work of sifting through the historical records that we can get at questions of interpretative legitimacy. It is only by seeing these historical documents in relation to each other that we can argue that some interpretations are supported by evidence while others are not.

Under my methodological approach, we can bring the evidence offered by particular material objects to questions of interpretation. We do this by highlighting the history of these documents and their relation to each other. By doing so we can triangulate a hermeneutic horizon of intelligibility. In this dissertation, for example, getting a better grasp on two sections of
Nietzsche’s writing required that we bring to bear not only the first editions but also the correction sheets, fair copies, and drafts, not to mention library lending records, receipts from book binders, philosophical libraries, lecture notes, letters, and even bureaucratic documents. It is only through highlighting the interrelations between particular material texts that we can come to conclusions about which interpretations can be supported and which cannot. Certain interpretations are supported by positive evidence, some are only supported by null evidence, and in some cases the negative evidence is so strong that they are rendered practically untenable.

This dissertation has, in a sense, functioned as a case study for how such a methodology could be implemented. Beyond this particular project and author, I would argue that we as scholars must abandon our tendency to think about texts as abstract objects. The first step in moving forward is to dissect and reject the false dichotomy between published and Nachlass texts. This false dichotomy leads to serious methodological problems that support abstract fairytales and move us away from the actual material objects that make up our evidence. I have already implemented this methodology in a recent article published in Nietzsche-Studien as well as my parallel critique of Foucault scholarship, which I have also published. However, this problem goes deep and is limited not only to a handful of philosophers in the continental tradition. It is a problem for scholarship from the early modern period forward. This tendency is not only present in scholarship on Schopenhauer, Hegel, Kant, and Heidegger. It is also present in scholarship on more recent figures in the analytic tradition. This would include scholarship on Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Grice, Austin, and contemporary work on philosophers such as Quine and Rorty.

In short, we as scholars have a responsibility to take this methodological question seriously, beyond the narrow confines of Nietzsche. I hope in the coming years that the
application of this critique can encourage scholars from a diverse range of backgrounds to question their methodological assumptions. Perhaps, if we continue to strip away the abstractions in our methodological practice we may, without really meaning to, reveal a new way of thinking through the history of philosophy.

Regarding the particular claims about Nietzsche in this dissertation, I argue that the thought of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's published work can be understood as a thought experiment that both challenges classical logic and examines our disgust with everything this-worldly. As a thought experiment, eternal recurrence does not need to be a physical reality to allow us to become suspicious of the presuppositions of classical logic or to reflect on our disgust with everything this-worldly. However, if such a thing was a physical reality, as Nietzsche sometimes discusses in his notebooks, this would only strengthen Nietzsche's arguments. However, this is not needed for his published arguments in GS 341 and BGE 56 to be persuasive. In the end, what is affirmed is the new ideal that the world affirming human being themselves want, not what is actually the physical case.

As a thought experiment, eternal recurrence presents us with two forms of engagement. The first form is destructive. Nietzsche acknowledges that eternal recurrence is an idea present in previous philosophers. Nietzsche, however, wants to think this thought present in other philosophers to its end; epistemic nihilism. If these philosophers hold to classical logic and also think eternal recurrence is coherently thinkable, this results in epistemic nihilism. This is generated by the activation of the principle of explosion. The principle of explosion is activated by violating one of the consequences of the principle of identity; the identity of indiscernibles. Eternal recurrence violates this principle because it holds that two things can be qualitatively identical and numerically distinct. Nietzsche's first task, then, is thinking the thought of eternal
Nietzsche himself is not trapped in this epistemic nihilism for two reasons. First, Nietzsche does not hold that classical logic is universal or *a priori*. Second, Nietzsche also offers a second affective mode of engagement. This second mode of engagement is a thought experiment in which one makes use of eternal recurrence to think through one's disgust towards everything this-worldly. For Nietzsche, the Western tradition finds its foundational motivation in a pessimistic attitude that sees life as a disgusting disease in need of a cure. It is this life negating perspective that caused the Western tradition to flee to heavenly afterworlds and platonic backworlds. Thinking through eternal recurrence as a thought experiment allows one to come face to face with that disgust. Such an encounter has two possible results: suicidal pessimism or the emergence of a new ideal. When we think pessimism to its depth, it seems not only unnecessary but a very odd and even alien presupposition to begin with. Thinking this pessimism to its depths through the thought experiment of eternal recurrence allows us to begin to overcome it and, as we do, a new ideal emerges. This new ideal, *amor fati*, emerges in front of a new kind of humanity that, in opposition to pessimism, affirms the value of life. The overcoming of this disgust and the affirmation of *amor fati* are expressions of the will to power.

Summarizing in more detail, I have argued that Nietzsche read about the principle of identity in Plato and Aristotle and that he explicitly critiqued the principle of identity in both. I then addressed one reason for rejecting eternal recurrence that has become known as the standard objection. This objection holds that the idea of eternal recurrence runs afoul of one proposed consequence of the principle of identity: the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. This principle states that if two things are completely identical then there are not actually two things,
but only one. The eternal recurrence of the same violates this principle because it claims that the whole universe repeats itself eternally in an identical way. If one holds the principle of identity and its consequent, the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, to be true then eternal recurrence generates a contradiction.

The primary way scholars attempt to get around this contradiction is to apply the principle of charity and claim Nietzsche was unaware of the contradiction and therefore can be forgiven, even if the thought itself is unsalvageable. In this dissertation I took a different route and demonstrated, first, that Nietzsche had access to a number of texts containing discussions of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles such as Ueberweg and Schopenhauer. Nietzsche’s annotations demonstrate he read these texts and sections. Second, Nietzsche discusses the principle, although not by name, as early as 1872. He continued thinking about this problem even in the very same notebook where he claimed he first wrote down his thought of eternal recurrence in 1881. Indeed, he remarks that based on such a principle, two things being identical would be impossible.\(^{682}\)

Through a genetic analysis, I argued that the thought of eternal recurrence, as a thought experiment, offers two modes of engagement: one destructive and one affirmative. Through a genetic analysis of drafts, fair copies, and proof pages, I argued that Nietzsche sees himself as pushing the thought of eternal recurrence, as it is proposed by philosophers previously, to its logical conclusion: nihilism. However, Nietzsche is not particularly clear about how eternal recurrence generates nihilism. I then argued that his reading of Cicero suggests one plausible mechanism by which eternal recurrence could generate epistemic nihilism. In particular, Cicero

\(^{682}\) Nietzsche also holds at various points that even one thing cannot be self-identical because he rejects the principle of identity.
held that, (1) eternal recurrence is conceivable, (2) the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is true, and (3) any violation of the principle of identity of indiscernibles leads to the principle of explosion and epistemological nihilism. If eternal recurrence is coherently conceivable and violates the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, then we have successfully generated an epistemic nihilism that undermines the distinction between truth and falsity.

One might rightly be concerned that Nietzsche has become trapped within his own snare. If the only mode of engagement eternal recurrence offered was nihilistic, Nietzsche would have made himself into a kind of dynamite. However, a more accurate metaphor might be a suicide bomber because not only would the targeted philosophies be destroyed but Nietzsche’s philosophy along with it. If all the thought of eternal recurrence does is undermine classical logic and traditional philosophy then all it would offer would be epistemological nihilism.

However, it is important to remember that Nietzsche is not a nihilist. Eternal recurrence also offers a second mode of engagement through the affect of disgust. This mode of engagement is affective, rather than epistemological, and therefore it is not impacted by the destructive aspect of eternal recurrence. This form of engagement takes eternal recurrence as a thought experiment that allows us to gauge and reflect on our own disgust with everything this-worldly. It is this disgust with humanity's smallness that drove philosophers to posit Platonic backworlds and heavenly afterworlds. It was disgust with everything earthly and human that drove philosophers to disparage this world and call it false, while positing other worlds and christening them true. Eternal recurrence allows us to think this pessimism and disgust to their depth and confront our own misanthropy. If one's misanthropy finds it hard to affirm the small man (which is actually all humankind as such) in only a single recurrence of the universe, then that misanthropy will be magnified by the eternal recurrence of the small man (humankind as such).
Not only does thinking through eternal recurrence reflect our predispositions back to us but it magnifies and amplifies them to monstrous proportions. While scholars have previously argued that eternal recurrence can function as a mirror to reflect our values, I would hold that the thought of eternal recurrence functions more like a magnifying glass or a fun house mirror. When thought through, eternal recurrence brings before us, as if for the first time, our disgust towards life. The foundation of the western tradition was a pessimistic perspective on life that saw it as a disgusting disease in need of a cure. Such a perspective would writhe and gnash its teeth at the prospect of eternal recurrence from which there is no escape.

Through the lens of eternal recurrence, however, evaluating life in this pessimistic way not only seems unnecessary but somewhat odd. There is nothing inevitable about this kind of value judgment towards life. When we think eternal recurrence through the affect of disgust, we are given the opportunity to see that pessimistic life denying attitudes played a foundational role in philosophy's escapism from everything this-worldly. It is the disgust with everything this worldly that caused the creation of metaphysical and theological systems as a form of nihilistic revenge. This new monstrous and abysmal glimpse at our values makes them seem odd, unfamiliar, bizarre, and perhaps even alien to how we envision ourselves. Seen this way, one can now ask the question, is this perspective on life healthy? If one answers “no,” a new opposite ideal begins to emerge on the horizon.683

When engaged through the affect of disgust, the thought of eternal recurrence allows a new affirmative ideal to come forward. Rather than seeing life as a disgusting disease to be cured, life is seen as inherently valuable and something worth celebrating. Life is hard, yes, but

683 Cf. EH BT 2.
that does not devalue life. Struggle itself is what makes life potentially valuable. For Nietzsche this requires not only courage, but a surplus of force born out of overfullness. Life that is not degenerating needs to express itself. This new ideal of life affirmation sees life not as something that must be cured but something that offers a call to adventure for born seafarers and explorers. Life is then seen as a difficult and treacherous journey that will challenge your mind, courage, and character. Such a journey not only tests the power of your will and determination, but also can forge you, like a piece of metal between hammer and anvil, into your full self. Struggle in this sense is the condition for the possibility that you become, as Nietzsche sometimes says, who you are.

Such an approach would necessarily view life as something to be affirmed. One would not affirm life begrudgingly but rather celebrate this marvelous opportunity full of adventure and challenges. Such a view would affirm its own existence and be able to affirm *amor fati* (love of fate). It is not a teleological goal, such as heaven or Nirvana, that makes life worth living. Life is not made worthwhile or given value because one has achieved some end. Even less so is life justified by reference to one participation in some transcendent Platonic truth. Rather, the actual living of life, including its challenging moments, is intrinsically valuable. Such an individual would not be crushed by the weight of universal compassion and disgust when they hear about the thought of eternal recurrence, but rather would make such a thought their most fervent wish. It is precisely this affirmative position that Nietzsche's philosophy tries to articulate and bring about.

What Nietzsche is committed to is not what is physically the case, though its instantiation would not hurt his argument, but rather he is committed to bringing about the emergence of a counter ideal to pessimism affirmed by a future humanity; *amor fati*. A future humanity that
could affirm *amor fati* would have a new kind of happiness than had ever been previously experienced by humanity before. A happiness born of deep courage, love, and power. Such a future humanity would find joy in light of existing itself, a *need* for life that is eternal and unquenchable. As Nietzsche writes, such a future humanity would have, "a divine happiness full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness which, like the sun in the evening, continually draws on its inexhaustible riches, giving them away and pouring them into the sea […] this divine feeling would be called – humanity!"684

684 GS 337.
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Appendices
Appendix A: Permission to Publish StABS Erziehung X 34.
Appendix B: Permission from *The Agonist* to Republish "Zarathustra's Disgust: Rejecting the Foundation of Western Metaphysics."
Appendix C: Permission from *Nietzsche-Studien* to Republish "Does Nietzsche have a 'Nachlass'?", "Nachweis aus Friedrich Ueberweg, Uber die Platonische Weltseele, in: Rhenisches Museum 9 (1854)", and "Dating Nietzsche's Lecture Notes for the Pre-Platonic Philosophers."