

# Nietzschean Recurrence: The Science and the Moment

DAVID W. GOLDBERG

Hiram College

In note #55 from the *Will To Power*, Nietzsche, with the audacity of one who is self-assured, refers to his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence as "the most scientific of all possible hypotheses."<sup>1</sup> In this certitude Nietzsche situates Recurrence at the hierarchical apogee of all possible scientific hypotheses in an age when such assertions and assurances are expected to be proffered by someone connected with a more traditional science, like physics, but surely not from a philosopher. Contemporary expectations, derivative as they are from the Cartesian-Galilean view of the mathematical universe, lead to a desire that the highest scientific hypothesis be symbolized in mathematical terms and yet Nietzsche, with his usual hyperbole, does not offer anything approachable to the mathematical: instead he offers a hazy doctrine presented in the problematic symbolism of ordinary language. Immediately we may ask why would Nietzsche, who was well aware of modern science and the desire for mathematical explanation, offer Eternal Recurrence as the most scientific hypothesis of not only his time, but as the note suggests, all times?

A simplistic answer might be to dismiss the note as nothing more than wishful thinking, overestimation or an isolated thought on Nietzsche's part and yet this is not the sole occurrence in which he speaks so highly of Recurrence. Examples of Nietzsche's hyperbolic estimation of this doctrine can be found throughout his writings and all suggest the attachment of a superlative value to Recurrence. But what is unique in this particular quote, and demands further attention, is its direct rather than implied connection to science. This is not to suggest that this is the only note referencing a possible scientific interpretation of Eternal Recurrence, to the contrary any competent Nietzsche scholar is quite aware that a variety of textual citations can be referenced to connect Recurrence with science. What is significant about note #55 is that it expressly offers Recurrence as a scientific hypothesis, and as the highest such hypothesis.

Indicative of the *apparent* pervasiveness of this connection of Recurrence and science is the way many scholars have attempted to define Recurrence as a Cosmological doctrine understood through the veil of a Cartesian mathematical universe. Such Cosmologists ground their view of Recurrence on a modern, mathematically scientific perspective of reality as quantifiable and finite necessitating circular repetition. But is this the sense in which Nietzsche uses the term *science*? I think not, in particular I will show that Recurrence must not be understood according to the ubiquitous meaning of the scientific, i.e., the Cartesian mathematical science and to do so is to lead directly into contradiction with the remainder of Nietzsche's philosophic thought.

To begin, it is apparent in the language used in formulating this hypothesis that a novel comprehension of *science* is present, for in clarifying Recurrence Nietzsche does not conform to modernity's desire for mathematical precision expressed in the simplicity of a formal symbolic

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<sup>1</sup>(all Nietzsche references are to section numbers) Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967) 55.

system. This suggests that Nietzsche is using the term *science* in a non-Cartesian sense and the Hollingdale-Kaufmann translation of *The Will To Power* suggests as much by stylistically enticing us to examine the use of the German term *Wissenschaft* through its italicization which gives the indication that we should pay special attention to the semantic meaning that is attached to this term. What needs clarification is whether this inducement to attention is merely an indication of the fact that *Wissenschaft* is a much more encompassing concept than the traditional English equivalent or are Hollingdale and Kaufmann suggesting that Nietzsche's use of the term is original?

So how is the term to be understood? First let me say that to immediately comprehend Nietzsche's use of *Wissenschaft* as comparable to, or equivalent with modernity's Cartesian mathematical science is hasty and erroneous. In fact it would lead to a double error for first it would go contrary to the more encompassing meanings of the German term *Wissenschaft* : a term which takes in the humanities as well the mathematical sciences. Secondly, it would contradict the language that Nietzsche uses to present this "most scientific of all possible hypotheses," a language which is quite contrary to that of the Cartesian mathematical system. Accordingly, what is necessary is an examination of the meaning Nietzsche attaches to this term in *his* conceptual system and not that of the ubiquitous science of Western society. We need to ask the question: What does Nietzsche mean by *science* ?

First and foremost, Nietzsche's view of science, as well as philosophy, religion and all attempts at explaining the unexplainable are grounded in the Dionysian experiences of man as aesthetic and the *Primordial Unity* of existence that he speaks of in *The Birth of Tragedy*. A representative, textual sample of science expressed in Dionysian terms occurs in *The Will To Power* where Nietzsche states: 'Science-the transformation of nature into concepts for the purpose of mastering nature-belongs under the rubric "means."<sup>2</sup> Science, according to this note, is a *means*, but a *means* to what? Traditionally science has self-servingly answered this question by equating itself with knowledge about reality and thus it understood itself as a *means* for knowledge acquisition. As such, it appropriates from nature the static knowledge present prior to the appropriation, but if we examine Nietzsche's terms he suggests that science *transforms* nature in its attempt to *master* nature and hence he suggests that science is nothing more than an aesthetic *means* of survival, where aesthetic is understood as creative. The concern is not with acquiring a static cognition of existence expressed in the appellation *knowledge*, but with dominating and controlling existence through our ability to *transform* it. What is significant is that science, in its attempt to master existence, does not reveal objectified existence but rather constructs a reality to meet with our desire to dominate, our desire for the *will to power*.

Science thus is no better than any other *means* employed by the aesthetic species to enable an *overcoming* and *transformation* of reality in order to promote our continued survival. This ability to transform nature is not, therefore, the soul property of science, but on the contrary it is for Nietzsche an essential character of the aesthetic species. Our ability to *transform* reality thus becomes a fundamental aspect of human existence: an ability which Nietzsche terms in *The Will To Power* our "will to art, to lie."<sup>3</sup> For aesthetic beings science is one means among many to dominate existence and thus the information derived from science is based on "a particular species of animal

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 610.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 853.

that can prosper only through a certain relative rightness; above all regularity of its perceptions....<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, Nietzsche praises science to the extent that it is a *means* enabling a "regularity of perceptions" and thus ensuring continued survival. This approval of science is especially prevalent in *Human, All To Human* where, as Marion Faber indicates, this work presents "a scientific attitude that predominates: his first aphorism is entitled 'A chemistry of concepts and feelings, indicating Nietzsche's attempt to overcome the heat of a romantic approach and take on the coolness of science.'<sup>5</sup>

But the mature Nietzsche condemns science and the reasoning behind this condemnation must be properly understood. The aesthetic species is capable of a variety of perspectives with each seeking "regularity of perspective" to enable species survival. Of the plurality of perspectives each obtains the data for its *regularity* from the Primordial One, i.e., temporal existence, and only from this foundation can aesthetic species create so called *conclusions*. Each perspective *regulates* these experiences and apparently each is justified and hence the inevitable problem with all perspectivism: how do we rank conceptual systems? If science is merely one out of many, it would appear that all these *means* can be equally justified leaving none as preferential. In other words is Nietzsche, given his system, capable of axiologically judging perspectives, including that of Recurrence?

Factually we can state that he does judge, one need only examine his comments on Christianity to verify this, but does he have a justifiable position from which to make this evaluative decision? Nietzsche would answer in the affirmative, claiming that he adjudicates perspectives according to their relation to the Primordial Unity of existence, the well-spring of all experiences. Every *means* for creating a "regularity of [our] perceptions" must, of necessity, axiologically decide on the worth of the flux that is becoming. It is this axiological decision of each perspective on existence that will supply Nietzsche with a means for ranking systems. Each *means of transformation* must begin in the world of Heraclitian flux, the Primordial One, as the only material at its disposal for constructing a *solution* for survival, and each will come to a decision concerning the value of this flux. It is this decision that becomes Nietzsche's touchstone for evaluating perspectival *means*.

Given this criterion Nietzsche equates science, when understood as universal mathematics, with metaphysics, religion, and traditional morality as a perspective attempting to objectify its *transformation*.<sup>6</sup> The fact that these systems project meaning is in itself not problematic for Nietzsche, the problem lies in their assumption that man is capable of judging once-and-for-all the value of becoming: a viewpoint which Nietzsche patently rejects. On the contrary, Nietzsche suggests that this is precisely what the aesthetic species is not capable of for as he states in *Twilight of the Idols*: "the value of life cannot be estimated. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not judges;..."<sup>7</sup> But is this not precisely what science, metaphysics, religion and morality want to accomplish as well as much of Western philosophy: to judge the value of life once-and-for-all?

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 480.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All To Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) introduction, xii.

<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 853.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968) "The Problem of Socrates", 2.

We must be careful here for Nietzsche is not suggesting that the ability to place value is in itself contentious. On the contrary, it is precisely because we are an aesthetic creature that value projection is necessitated as a species survival tactic. What Nietzsche objects to is the establishment of absolute value, the pronouncement of the once-and-for-all. Whenever a perspective attempts to establish such final *solutions* Nietzsche will object and this is especially true in modern science with its search for the *laws of nature*, for is not this scientific attempt to understand nothing more than a judgment of existence according to the desire for universal solutions? To the extent that science seeks a universalization of its proclamation, to this extent Nietzsche must object to science, for as biased participants in existence we are incapable of universalizing our judgments.

From the preceding it can be concluded that Nietzsche uses the term *science* in relation to an aesthetic being that needs a *means* to transform existence; a *means* to enable its domination over existence; a *means* to ensure its continued survival. As a *means* it is condoned by Nietzsche as long as it realizes that its results are of a temporal nature and not universal laws. The moment that science attempts universalization of its claims he immediately classes it with "metaphysics, religion and morality," and just as immediately condemns the *means* as an attempt to judge existence according to an objective standard.<sup>8</sup> Given both these considerations Nietzsche can therefore say that science, along with metaphysics, morality, and religion merits "consideration only as various forms of lies: with their help one can have *faith* in life": a quote which expresses both affirmation and condemnation of science.<sup>9</sup>

Now, we can tackle our second problem, that is the question of why Eternal Recurrence is the "most *scientific*" hypothesis. To facilitate this endeavor, we must inquire into the doctrine itself, and in particular into the *what* that returns. Traditionally there have been two alternative interpretations of Recurrence: the Cosmological, and what I call the Hypothetical. But as I will show both tend to present Recurrence in a similar fashion, the only difference being that one is more Cartesian than the other, and it is with this one that I shall begin, i.e., the Cosmological.

At the basis of the Cosmological interpretations is an understanding of existence as quantifiable. As Alexander Nehemas points out in his work *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, these Cosmological interpretation begin with two premises: 1. Unlimited time 2. Limited power centers.<sup>10</sup> From these premises the Cosmologists conclude that Recurrence must imply a circular return of events which simply stated suggests that if the Universe is comprised of a limited number of *Kraftlagen* (power centers) and an unlimited amount of time then there is a necessity for repetition, a necessity for Recurrence. The key then is to answer the questions: What kind of repetition is necessitated? and What returns?

As I have suggested, most interpretations of Recurrence (including many non-Cosmological ones) have concluded that what returns is the circular recurrence of sequential events *ad infinitum*, but is this the necessary conclusion from the given premises? It is important to notice that these interpretations understand the *what* of Recurrence as the circularity of sequential events and hence they suggest that Nietzsche's use of the circle is not merely symbolic. As Bernd Magnus states such Cosmologists tend "to

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 853.

<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 853.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) 143.

interpret the doctrine of eternal recurrence as itself an attempt to offer a theory of the universe."<sup>11</sup> What they offer, then, is a "theory" similar to Einstein's theory of Relativity which is grounded in a Cartesian mathematical explanation of reality, the only difference being that Nietzsche leaves out the mathematical. At the center of this theory is the circularity of events in time, a fact which is derived from the quantifiable nature of their beginning premises and as theory, they suggest, even if only ever so slightly, that a means of justification is possible for establishing the veracity of the doctrine. But this is where the fundamental problems of a Cosmological interpretation of Eternal Recurrence occurs, for the Cosmological account is necessarily unverifiable. Why?

The answer lies in how the *what* of what returns is expressed. According to the theory if there is a limited amount of matter and an unlimited amount of time, there is a necessity that repetition must occur. But, again, what kind of repetition is necessitated? In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche gives the indication that what repeats is similarity in the ideal: "And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and you and I in the gateway, whispering together, whispering eternal things—must not all of us have been there before?"<sup>12</sup> Recurrence is here expressed as the repetition of the *same* in the highest sense of the word and Nietzschean Cosmologists have taken this literally, along with unpublished comments on limited universe/ unlimited time, to indicate that what returns is the exact sameness that not only has been, but is and will be forever: the eternal circle whose points are spatially and sequentially determined.

But there are many simple ways of showing that given these premises there need not be a circular repetition of sequential events to such a degree that every event repeats itself in the same order. If, for example, we conceive of a limited universe, say of four numbers (1, 2, 3 and 4), we can construct a model in which repetition occurs but not in a *necessary* sequential format. If you begin with the sequence 1, 2, 3 and 4, and then continue selecting numbers from these "limited power centers" it can easily be shown that given an unlimited continuation of events at least one of the numbers must be repetitive, but not that the original sequence must recur eternally. Another example is familiar to any computer programmer who inadvertently places a loop within the universe of his program. Given the limited construct of this particular program, and unlimited time, we necessarily fall into the loop and never escape the continual recurrence of the same small portion of this limited existence: avoiding an ideal repetition which would be the circularity of the entire program. The programmer's only alternative is to destroy the universe and begin again.

These though, are nothing more than Hessean *glass bead games* and there are more fundamental means of showing why Cosmological Recurrence is problematic and unverifiable. First, it is unverifiable due to the fact that there is no way of distinguishing one circular sequence from another. This is the inherent problem of the non-differentiation between sequences if the mathematical Cosmologists are correct. What returns are the same events in the same sequence and *same* here is understood in the ideal. This leads to the impossibility of distinguishing one occurrence of the circle from another, as each is an exact duplicate. But a duplicate is a differentiated copy of an original and in this account of the Eternal Return there is no way of

<sup>11</sup> Bernd Magnus, *Existential Imperative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 141.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in the Portable Nietzsche (New York: The Viking Press, 1968) 'On the Vision and the Riddle' 2.

differentiating, as well as no original to be differentiated from the duplicate. To differentiate we would have to separate ourselves from the circle and observe it from a distance. If this were possible we could conceivably distinguish one repetitive circle from another through the mere temporal relation of the completed circles. But not only is this an impossibility for man as he is necessarily tied to the circle, but it also would be a recursive event within the circle and therefore would not be a viewing from a distance.

Secondly the attempt to verify Recurrence from a theoretical perspective is also doomed. Theoretically we could establish that given the beginning suppositions of unlimited time and limited Power Centers there is a necessity for repetition. But to get circular repetition we must add one more premise: the necessary connection between events (which by the way is a point that many Cosmological interpretation seem to forego). Still, such assumptions would not grant us the ability of experiencing the repetitive circle, but it could offer a means to theoretically verify Recurrence given the three presuppositions.

But such a theoretical proof rests heavily on the connection that is to hold between events: either Nietzsche allows for cause/effect, in which case ideal recurrence can be justified but never verified, or he does not in which case we must come up with another understanding of the *what* that recurs. If cause/effect is problematic in Nietzschean thought then the relation between events will not be necessarily sequential and hence we must examine Nietzsche's thoughts on the subject. Indicative of his view on cause/effect is a passage from the *Gay Science* which is quite emphatic on the subject: "Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists;..."<sup>13</sup> In the same passage Nietzsche suggests that science, in relation to cause and effect, "is an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible."<sup>14</sup> Further, in *Beyond Good and Evil* he states: "It is *we* alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed "in itself," we act once more as we have always acted-mythologically."<sup>15</sup> For Nietzsche such terms are the constructs of an aesthetic being capable of mythological projection, of *transformation*. As artist we create these concepts and project them on to existence as if they were there to be found or as Nietzsche states "we first turn everything into an *image*, our image!"<sup>16</sup>

And yet, Nietzsche's comments on Recurrence appear to suggest that events in the arena of life are connected causally in such a manner and that no event is capable of being separated from the circular sequence. For example he states: "And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game *in infinitum*." <sup>17</sup> Such quotes seem to contradict those concerning the relative value of cause/effect, and demand some attempt to alleviate this discrepancy. One way to overcome the

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 173.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 112.

<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) 21.

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 112.

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 1066.

problem is to recognize that most of Nietzsche's positive comments on cause/effect appear to be connected with his unpublished notes and not the published texts, and hence may, to some extent, be considered incomplete.

Another more adequate answer can be obtained by examining the quotes more carefully, especially those within the unpublished notes. Upon closer examination we see that Nietzsche offers them in a kind of hypothetical sense, a kind of "what if" statement. The preceding passage begins "If the world may be thought of....."<sup>18</sup> In similar notes Nietzsche refers to Recurrence in relation to "theoretical presuppositions"; "consequences of its being believed"; and "the presuppositions that would have to be true if it were true."<sup>19</sup> Some notes seem to suggest a "what if" approach to the doctrine while others suggest that there can be a "Proof of the doctrine": leaving the reader with two contradictory views of Eternal Recurrence.<sup>20</sup> It is from this apparent discrepancy that the two primary interpretations of Recurrence have prospered: the Cosmological and the Hypothetical. On the one hand Recurrence is offered as an account of existence that is, to some extent, factual. On the other it is offered as a hypothetical doctrine that is to be believed. If it is to be factual, according to traditional science, it must be verifiable, yet as has been shown the Cosmological account of the Eternal Return is unverifiable given its premises. And if it is to be Hypothetical in what sense is it so? We need to alleviate the contradiction that seems to be inherent between these two perspectives.

A solution to this enigma might concern the issue of understanding when we are to take Nietzsche's thoughts as factual and when as hypothetical? When, and in relation to *what* is he speaking factually? In similar light, when, and in relation to *what* is he speaking hypothetically? Both viewpoints seem to be offered textually, but are both to be understood according to a traditional understanding of Recurrence as the circle of repetitive, sequential events? All preceding examinations of Eternal Recurrence have based their conclusions on this comprehension of Recurrence, but is this what Nietzsche suggests in the Eternal Return? Is this what is meant by the *same* in the Eternal Return of the Same?

If we now return to note #55, which necessitated this exposé of the relation between Recurrence and science, further examination will direct us to an answer. Just prior to Nietzsche's suggestion of this relation he gives a description of Eternal Recurrence, a description which can clarify the relation between Recurrence and science. If by science is understood modernity's notion that there would be expectations, at least according to a Cosmological viewpoint, of a scientific presentation for Recurrence referenced to the sequential circle of events. But this is precisely what we are not given prior to the dramatic equating of science and Recurrence. Instead we are told 'Let us think this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: "the eternal recurrence."<sup>21</sup> Recurrence is understood here as "existence as it is," not as the circle of events but existence as temporality, as presented. There is no expression of repetitive circles but an acceptance of the experience of an eternal becoming. What is offered is a unification of eternity and becoming expressed in the recognition of an eternal/temporality. This is the Dionysian experience of

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<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 1066.

<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 1057.

<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 1057.

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 55.

the Primordial Unity of existence, not the circular unity, but a Primordial Unity that offers temporal existence in perpetuity.

Temporality as eternal illuminates Nietzsche's suggestion that Recurrence is to "impose upon becoming the character of being- that is the supreme will to power."<sup>22</sup> In a later line he states that "*everything returns is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being....*"<sup>23</sup> What is attempted in this non-Traditional juxtaposition of terms is the stamping of becoming with the character of being, a character which is based on the concept of duration through eternity. Yet becoming is precisely an existence that is structured undurationally for its characteristic is that of change, continual change, and thus the attempt to stamp becoming with being is just that, only an attempt, and at best an attempt which receives an "highest approximation." As Heraclitus would suggest "Those who step into the same river have different waters flowing ever upon them."<sup>24</sup> What remains the same is the fact of becoming, the river of becoming, but the waters are continually changing. In other words, Recurrence is, *at best*, an hypothesis incapable of scientific verification that stamps becoming with the character of eternity, and to this extent it is the "most scientific of all hypotheses." It seeks not to become verifiable law, but remains an experience of existence and therefore highly subjective. No attempt at verification can succeed, for if it could it would fall into the same pitfall as metaphysics, religion and objective morality and that is the attempt to judge that which is by nature beyond our abilities, an attempt to the once-and-for-all.

The Cosmological interpretation of Recurrence would, on the contrary, stamp becoming with circular being and hence would be successful at imposing the character of being on becoming. Yet Nietzsche states that only the attempt is made to equate becoming and being and therefore the Cosmological interpretation is fundamentally problematic as it would accomplish that which it can not succeed at: the stamping of becoming with the being of the circle of events. Such Cosmological conclusions are an attempt at objective universalization and are quite beyond our abilities. Accordingly, the *what* that Returns must reference something other than the return of identical content, but what?

This *what* that returns according to note #55 is becoming, not a particular becoming, but generalized becoming. Recurrence, when examined from this perspective, is in relation to process, to existence as process and change, and therefore the fact of Recurrence that is textually open to substantiation is the generalized fact of becoming and not the circularity of sequential events. What returns is existence, is temporal existence, and Nietzsche presents this in the significance of what he terms in *Zarathustra* the *Moment*. This is what returns, over and over again, the *Moment*, in its unbridled eternal presence. *Moment* returns, not this particular moment, or any particular sequence of moments, but *Moment* and therefore in the continual present we have the ability to experience the entire process of the Primordial Unity of existence. Recurrent Existence is substantiated in the experience of the *Moment* as eternal and not in the repetitive circular sequence of events, and this experience of the *Moment* is quite within our abilities.

Accordingly, Eternal Recurrence can not be verified or turned into some objective law of nature, but it is experiential and therefore dependent on the

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 617.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 617.

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) 25.



recognition of the return of *Moment*. Nietzsche's famous image of the man with the black snake stuck fast in his throat expresses this quite clearly. What is needed is not a verification of the beast, but a response, a confrontation to the beast through a joint Cosmological/Hypothetical understanding of Recurrence. We can either suffocate in the meaninglessness of existence or bite off the head of the snake and aesthetically respond to the experience, and this leads to the second reason why Eternal Recurrence is the "most *scientific* of all hypotheses," for the recognition of Recurrence enables a positive response to the realization that existence is Nihilistic. Nihilistic existence can not allow for objectification in any form: including metaphysical, religious, moral, scientific or even philosophical. Traditional science, in its search for law and order, functions quite contrary to the Dionysian experience of this Nihilistic nature of existence for the Cartesian sciences seek universal, mathematical order in an existence that is, for Nietzsche, fundamentally chaotic and incomprehensible in itself. Rather than seeking a "regularity of perceptions" fitting to both man and reality, traditional science seeks a uniformity of perception that it hopes will durationally abide.

Recurrence, on the other hand, when understood as the eternal return of generalized becoming, enables us to exist aesthetically according to an adequate, or honest, reflection on existence and man. This is accomplished in the presentation of Recurrence as a hypothetical circle of events and not a factual one. Nietzsche uses the hypothetical because it does not guarantee the truth value of the antecedent, and thus the antecedent of Nietzsche's conditional is offered as an "as if," an "as if" to induce some kind of response. For Nietzsche this inducement must always be made in accordance with an experience of life which for him meant the *Dionysian Experience*. What he is seeking is a way of getting man to act according to a justified perspective on existence and man, an honest experience that reflects the return of the *Moment*. As artists Nietzsche is asking that we create in proportion to an experience of Unity and not according to the delusions of the Metaphysical systems of our tradition that bifurcate existence into the dissimilar realms of being and becoming. His concern is with the value that we project on existence and thus note #55 equates Recurrence with the experience of the meaninglessness of existence. This Nihilism can be a most defeating experience for man, and Nietzsche suggests as much in his exposé of European Nihilism in the first book of *The Will To Power*.

What Recurrence offers is an avoidance of this defeat by comparing our existence to the circle, not in the sense that life is a factual repetition of sequential events, but by suggesting that we view our existence as complete in temporality. The circle represents life as singular for any particular existence, for all is given in the circle, there is no depth, no other dimension behind what is presented. Any enclosed, two-dimensional polygon would have sufficed to express this. What Nietzsche wants to avoid is the notion that there is something behind existence that is more *real* than our experience of becoming, as is suggested with any Metaphysical system.

The Hypothetical then is a means of getting man to accept the singularity of his existence and thus to get response and action of a temporal nature and not one of an Ontological perspective. Nietzsche terms such response: 'the revaluation of all values'. No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer "cause and effect" but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, "everything is *merely* subjective," but "it is also *our* work!- Let us be proud of

it!"<sup>25</sup> And here we see why Eternal Recurrence is the "most scientific of all hypotheses." Not only does it avoid the universality of scientific law, but it makes us aware of the significance of our ability to *transform* existence. When Recurrence is understood as this Dionysian experience of becoming and the motivation of the hypothetical circle it avoids the pitfalls of traditional scientific thought, and yet it allows for the method to proceed according to a fundamental recognition of not only ourselves, but also of existence. Is it any wonder that once we extricate the snake from our throats, once we bite the head off of the snake with our acceptance of Eternal Recurrence that Nietzsche describes such a man as "one changed, radiant, laughing!"<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche, *Power* 1059.

<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'On the Vision and the Riddle' 2.