

Nietzsche's Anti-Gospel:

Eternal Recurrence as a Strategic Thought Experiment and the Structure of Affirmatio

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<Abstract>

This paper challenges conventional interpretations of Nietzsche's "Eternal Recurrence" (*Ewige Wiederkunft*), arguing that it functions neither as a normative ethical command nor as a speculative cosmological fact. Instead, by framing Nietzsche's project as a structural "Anti-Gospel," this paper reinterprets the doctrine as a precise 'strategic thought experiment' and an 'existential device' engineered to confront the nihilism ensuing from the "death of God." The study demonstrates that the "greatest weight" operates not merely as a test, but as a combative mechanism to induce existential 'vertigo'—forcing the realization that 'this moment' is the sole locus of eternity in the face of absolute nothingness. Consequently, Eternal Recurrence is positioned as the foundational engine within Nietzsche's counter-soteriology, logically linking the *Will to Power*, *Übermensch*, and *Amor Fati*. This strategic architecture provides a coherent methodology for *Affirmatio*, replacing transcendental salvation with the absolute affirmation of the immanent 'here and now.'

Keyword: Eternal Recurrence, Anti-Gospel, Nihilism, Will to Power, Amor Fati

Introduction: The Misunderstood Nietzsche, The Unasked Question

If one were to name the philosopher who has exerted the most profound influence on modern thought, it would undoubtedly be Friedrich Nietzsche. His ideas, constantly reinterpreted across disciplines like literature, art, and psychology, possess a powerful and enduring vitality. Yet, behind his fame lies a serious misunderstanding. In particular, one of his core doctrines, the 'Eternal Recurrence' (Ewige Wiederkunft)¹, is often reduced to a superficial ethical maxim not only in popular philosophy but even within academia, owing to its abstruse nature.

The prevailing interpretation posits the Eternal Recurrence as a practical imperative: Live each moment so fully that you could affirm its eternal return. This ethical reading, famously represented by Karl Löwith, ensnares Nietzsche in a self-contradiction. Löwith argues that this doctrine functions as a new categorical imperative for a godless world.¹ He argues that by making the *future* repetition the standard for the *present* action, Nietzsche falls back into the very metaphysical valuation—sacrificing the 'now' for a 'beyond'—that he so vehemently despised. Löwith interpreted the Eternal Recurrence as a normative, ethical law designed to judge the present. However, beyond the critique Löwith himself pointed out, interpreting this as an ethical law faces another dilemma: it necessitates positing 'eternal repetition' as a fact, even if only as a hypothesis. Even allowing for Nietzsche's fragmentary and contradictory nature, considering that his absolute task was the abolition of precisely such 'hypothetical-transcendental' metaphysics, to elevate this approach—which implies a reconstruction of the 'Hinterwelt'—from a mere methodology or declarative metaphor to the core premise of ethics may be an interpretation that focuses excessively on Nietzsche's rhetorical aspects.

¹ Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

The alternative view, treating it as a 'cosmological fact,' finds its most prominent advocate in Arthur Danto.² In his influential *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (1965), Danto, seeking to reclaim Nietzsche as a rigorous thinker, takes the 'scientific' proofs found in the *Nachlass* at face value. He argues that the Eternal Recurrence is not an ethical imperative but a cosmological hypothesis about the actual state of the universe, which Nietzsche genuinely believed. This interpretation, however, immediately presents a profound difficulty. To accept Danto's reading is to accept that Nietzsche, the vehement anti-metaphysician, grounded his "fundamental conception" (*EH* Books Z: 1) on an unstable, unprovable, and potentially flawed mere scientific 'conjecture.' This reading risks positioning Nietzsche himself—and his entire philosophy—not as a tool against metaphysics, but as speculative metaphysics itself. Therefore, his *Nachlass* is more plausible to interpret not as a consideration of cosmological fact, but as a struggle with the 'methodology' of how to strategically deliver this thought.

Consequently, recent scholarship has attempted to reposition the Eternal Recurrence. Gilles Deleuze, for instance, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, radically reinterprets this not as the return of the 'Same' (*des Gleichen*), but as the repetition of 'Difference,' an ontological principle of selective thought.³ While philosophically profound, this reading—as Deleuze himself seemingly admits—amounts less to a rigorous exegesis than to a creative appropriation of Nietzsche for his own project. Crucially, by strategically sidelining the existential terror of the returning 'Same'—the core of the "greatest weight" (*GS*: 341)—in favor of a 'selective' return, this interpretation marks a decisive departure from Nietzsche's fundamental intent.

Turning to analytic interpretations that adhere more closely to Nietzsche's text, scholars

² Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 23.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

such as Bernard Reginster in *The Affirmation of Life*⁴ and Maudemarie Clark in *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*⁵ frame the doctrine as a psychological test for affirmation (Reginster) or a conditional assessment rather than a moral command (Clark). Specifically, Reginster effectively frames the Eternal Recurrence as a radical thought experiment: if we can affirm a life that includes all suffering, we achieve amor fati. This definition successfully identifies Eternal Recurrence as a 'resistance' to be overcome. However, this functionalist reading remains somewhat limited in accounting for the 'religious tremor' and the sense of the 'divine' (Göttlicheres) experienced by the demon's auditor in GS 341. If the thought were merely a training tool, it might be an object of conquest, but hardly an object of worship. We must, therefore, seek an interpretation that explains why this doctrine constitutes the "heaviest weight" while simultaneously commanding a sense of the "divine."

Similarly, Maudemarie Clark distances herself from interpreting Eternal Recurrence as a moral command, proposing instead a conditional assessment: if one successfully affirms life, one would logically affirm its recurrence. While this avoids trapping Nietzsche in a moralizing role, it invites skepticism: does this interpretation capture the sheer ferocity of Nietzsche's fundamental thought? If Eternal Recurrence is regarded simply as an automatic consequence or a secondary effect of affirmation, there is no existential compulsion to 'gnash one's teeth'—whether in resistance or in affirmation—since one could simply decline to entertain the hypothesis.

Furthermore, while unintentional, both interpretations carry the latent and functional risk of reducing Nietzsche's project to a species of hedonistic calculus. That is, they dangerously

⁴ Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁵ Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

imply that one passes the test simply if the aggregate of joys exceeds the aggregate of sorrows ("I will live again because the good outweighs the bad"). This implication runs counter to Nietzsche's rigorous demand for a total affirmation of every moment, including the most agonizing ones.

Consequently, by framing the doctrine as a normative "test" or "qualification," these interpretations fail to functionally distinguish themselves from Löwith's ethical imperative and struggle to reconcile with Nietzsche's known contempt for external commands. While they brilliantly explain *what* Nietzsche said, they defer the fundamental question of *why* he constructed his framework in such a structurally paradoxical manner. We require, therefore, an interpretation that establishes Eternal Recurrence not as a state susceptible to being misread as 'affirmation outweighing pain,' but as the absolute condition for affirming the totality of existence—suffering included.

This paper, therefore, challenges this conventional interpretation, aiming to reinterpret the Eternal Recurrence not as an ethical command or a cosmological fact, but as a 'strategic thought experiment' and an 'existential device' for overcoming the Nihilism that follows the 'death of God.' Furthermore, to explore how the Eternal Recurrence can have a different meaning than a mere 'test' or 'qualification'—and to differentiate it from an ethical command—this paper poses a different question. Instead of asking whether the Eternal Recurrence is 'true,' this paper asks: *"If there is no transcendental 'eternity,' then what, precisely, in this moment?"* Through this asks, I will argue that the Eternal Recurrence was Nietzsche's combative attempt to bestow absolute gravity upon the life of the 'here and now.'

Chapter 1: God is Dead – Vertigo and Existential Original Sin

Most of us live by unconsciously presupposing an afterlife, a transcendental 'eternity.' This is a presupposition separate from theism or atheism. Even if one does not believe in an afterlife, one tends to vaguely imagine time flowing on even after one's own death, presupposing values that persist beyond it—such as fame, reputation, or legacy. However, Nietzsche, with his declaration 'God is dead,' severs this very presupposition of transcendental eternity: "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?" (Gott ist tot! Gott bleibt tot! Und wir haben ihn getötet! Wie trösten wir uns, die Mörder aller Mörder?) (GS: 125).

This 'death of God' is not merely a theological proposition but a 'declaration' that the foundation of all absolute values (Truth, Morality, Purpose) that has sustained Western civilization has collapsed. But the most important and *fatal* collapse of all was that of the 'afterlife.' For fifteen hundred years, 'God' was the metaphysical guarantor of the 'Hinterwelt' (world-beyond). The fact that God is dead is a declaration that transcendental eternity has vanished. If so, death is now complete 'Nothingness,' nothing more and nothing less.

Humanity thus confronts the abyss of life's meaninglessness before a death that has no afterlife. The weak, unable to endure this abyss without God, face the crisis of being consumed by the specter of Nihilism. However, at this point, a crucial reversal occurs. When only 'eternal nothingness' (death) and 'ephemeral something' (life) remain, the relationship between life and death becomes analogous to that of '0' and '1.' In a world where only '0' and '1' exist, '1' is not merely one unit greater than '0.' As the sole 'being' opposing 'nothingness,' it holds an absolutely infinite value. That is, '1' is infinitely greater than '0.' 'Being' is infinitely heavier than 'non-being,' and 'life' is infinitely longer than 'death.' To be infinitely long—that

is 'eternity.' Here, then, the true meaning of Eternal Recurrence reveals itself. 'Eternity' is not a future that will someday recur. The 'now,' 'this very moment,' *is* that 'eternity.'

How this shift in existential weight is *viscerally* felt—and how this differs from the ethical reading—can be clarified through an analogy. The conventional ethical reading remains a kind of 'thought *play*,' advising us to 'imagine walking alongside a 100-meter cliff' in our daily lives. In contrast, Nietzsche's declaration forces us to face the fact that 'the cliff is not an imagination but a reality; the moment you misstep, there is no afterlife given to you. You annihilate into complete nothingness, and everything you possess is solely this very moment of walking along the cliff.' This is the existential 'Vertigo' caused by the 'death of God.' With the transcendental safety net (God, afterlife) gone, the 'fear of death' replaces theological 'Original Sin' as humanity's new fundamental condition. The moment one confronts this absolute dread and the possibility of nihilism, the life of the 'here and now'—as the only desperate reality one can cling to—assumes the greatest possible gravity. This is "the greatest weight" (*das größte Schwergewicht*) (GS: 341).

Chapter 2: Eternal Recurrence — A Strategy to Compel Transcendental Eternity into an Existential Moment

Just as Nietzsche elucidated in *Ecce Homo*—explaining 'Why I Am So Wise' and 'Why I Am So Clever'—he grasped the weight of this moment intuitively and, quite literally, as '*a destiny*.' However, had he merely asserted, 'Reality is akin to eternity, so live *every moment with scrupulous diligence*,' this would have been nothing more than another species of metaphysics and ethical dogma—precisely the stance he opposed even more vehemently than nihilism. As the "first psychologist of distinction" (*EH* Destiny: 6) and a master stylist,

Nietzsche knew how hollow such a declaration would sound compared to his profound realization. He knew exactly how his truth must be delivered to reach people with genuine gravity: not as 'imagination,' but as 'truth' that overwhelms. That device is the 'Eternal Recurrence.'

If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?' would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

(Wenn jener Gedanke über dich Gewalt bekäme, er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen; die Frage bei allem und jedem "willst du dies noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?" würde als das größte Schwergewicht auf deinem Handeln liegen! Oder wie müsstest du dir selber und dem Leben gut werden, um nach Nichts mehr zu verlangen als nach dieser letzten ewigen Bestätigung und Besiegelung?) (GS: 341).

This is precisely 'the greatest weight' (*das größte Schwergewicht*). Just as imagining a cliff is different from standing on one, this question is not a naive or comfortable inquiry into 'whether life seems likely to repeat.' It asks: Accepting 'death' as complete 'nothingness,' if 'this very moment' is the entirety of all moments I can expect—the sole foothold on this cliff—how then shall I live it? Can you face the stark reality that your life and choices now are *irrevocable*—that is, they cannot be repeated 'differently'—and that this current choice alone carries the weight of a final, unalterable seal? And can you accept and affirm this present moment, which is everything that is given to you?

To secure the ontological weight of this thought experiment, Nietzsche strategically sought to use the most trusted language of his time. In a world where 'Theology' was dead, killed by 'Reason,' the most credible language was precisely its killer's language: 'Science.' Therefore, Nietzsche, the philologist and philosopher, attempted to "overwhelm" his audience by mobilizing the *tools* of science (energy conservation, atomism) to wrap his philosophical realization in the guise of ontological necessity: "The total amount of force is fixed... In an infinite time, in a finite space, the becoming must repeat itself." (Die Gesamtquantität der Kraft ist bestimmt [...] In einer unendlichen Zeit, in einem endlichen Raum, muß die Werdung sich wiederholen.) (KSA 9:11[197]).

Thus, whether Nietzsche seriously believed the world repeats is not the core issue. The more important question is why he—a philosopher, not a scientist—attempted to use the tool of 'science' at all, and consequently, why that 'scientific inquiry' remains confined to his posthumous notebooks (*Nachlass*) and is absent from his published works. It was the very embodiment of his 'struggle with strategy'. That is, it was an attempt based on the conviction that compelling people to believe it was the only way to awaken them to the absolute weight of this moment.

Furthermore, this implies that Nietzsche himself recognized the incompleteness of his own scientific proofs. Given the nature of science, if he were to ground the Eternal Recurrence—the very foundation of his philosophy—upon potentially flawed scientific proofs, the refutation of those proofs would result in a fatal collapse of his philosophy.

Therefore, while Nietzsche's *Nachlass* contains the traces of a fierce scientific struggle, the

published works present the concept primarily as an existential test. In his earlier work, *The Gay Science*, he does not state it as a law, but whispers it as a terrifying hypothetical question posed by a demon—forcing the reader to confront the sheer weight of the thought as a personal experience

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you 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 more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to 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 upside down 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 did I hear anything more divine!"

(Wie, wenn dir eines Tages oder Nachts, ein Dämon in deine einsamste Einsamkeit nachschliche und dir sagte: "Dies Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast, wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Kleine und Große deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und alles in der selben Reihe und Folge — und ebenso diese Spinne und dieses Mondlicht zwischen den Bäumen, und ebenso dieser Augenblick und ich selber. Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht werden — und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!" — Würdest du dich nicht zur Erde niederwerfen und mit den Zähnen knirschen und den Dämon verfluchen, der so redete? Oder hast du einmal einen ungeheuren Augenblick

erlebt, wo du ihm antworten würdest: "Du bist ein Gott und niemals hörte ich Göttlicheres!") (GS: 341).

This harrowing question, however, evolves into a prophetic declaration in his later work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Here, the hypothetical 'What if' disappears. Through the voices of his animals, the thought is no longer asked but proclaimed as the inescapable law of the cosmos—a destiny that the protagonist finally embraces: "Everything returns, this dog, this spider, this moonlight... and you yourself with it! your whole life will be turned over again and again like an hourglass! (Alles kehrt wieder, dieser Hund, diese Spinne, dies Mondlicht [...] und du selber mit! – dein ganzes Leben wird wie eine Sanduhr immer wieder von neuem umgedreht werden!) (*Z III: "The Convalescent"* 2).

Even if Nietzsche personally yearned for scientific verification, as an author, he refused to permit incomplete science to contaminate his philosophical message. Consequently, in his published works, he adopted a 'strategy of silence' regarding these proofs, choosing instead to deploy the rhetorical instruments and dazzling aphorisms he wielded with such mastery. This is precisely the juncture where his identity as a strategist is perfected.

Chapter 3: The Will to Power — Rule over the Given

For one who has faced the truth that 'this very moment' is the only eternity and a lone tightrope walk over the abyss, how then must one live? Nietzsche's answer is resolute. One must not live passively, deceived by an empty afterlife, and thereby give up on the present moment, which is all that is given to oneself. Instead, through the 'Will to Power' (*Wille zur Macht*), one must actively create and bestow one's own values and dominate everything that

is given to oneself.

This, however, must be distinguished from an ethical command that is externally imposed upon an individual, or one that is chosen simply because it "looks good." It is, rather, akin to the existential will needed to overcome the dread of death. It is Nietzsche's critical revaluation of the Schopenhauerian "Will to Life" (*Wille zum Leben*)⁶—which Schopenhauer saw as a blind, tragic force to be negated. For Nietzsche, in the face of absolute 'Nothingness,' this Will is not something to be negated, but to be *transformed* into a "Will to Power": a creative force. To face the 'nothingness,' awaken to the weight of reality, and create value in every moment through this Will is the *only option* for survival. It is not an ethical *choice*; it is an existential *necessity*.

Crucially, this concept must be sharply distinguished from its infamous political distortions. The 'power' (Macht) Nietzsche describes is not aimed at 'domination' over others as its primary goal. Rather, domination should be understood through the lens of the 'Pathos of Distance' (Pathos der Distanz). For a creator to legislate their own values against external constraints, a hierarchical distance distinguishing them from mass values is essential. Thus, domination or contempt is merely the structural by-product of the struggle to secure a sovereign space for creation. Furthermore, to seek domination itself as an end would be a 'passive' attitude—a slave morality. Paradoxically, the obsession with commanding others is a symptom of the inability to command oneself. Nietzsche repeatedly diagnoses the urge to command others as a symptom of an incapacity for self-command. "One will seldom go wrong if one attributes all extreme actions of vanity, as well as political ambition [...] to a feeling of impotence." (Man wird selten fehlgreifen, wenn man alle extremen Handlungen der

⁶ For Schopenhauer's foundational concept of the will as a blind, striving force, see Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), esp. Book II.

Eitelkeit, ebenso der politischen Ehrgeizsucht [...] auf ein Gefühl der Ohnmacht zurückführt.)
(WS 181)

Equally important, belonging to the 'ruling class' does not guarantee nobility. For Nietzsche, merely dominating others without self-legislation is meaningless. He perceives the modern state and the demand for equality as apparatuses that tame the human spirit, entrapping both the rulers and the ruled in a collective slave morality: "That the ascetic ideal has... so far ruled over the 'masters' of the earth... not excepting the philosophers... this... is a fact." (Dass das asketische Ideal... über die 'Herren' der Erde... so weit gebotet hat...) (GM III: 1). "The state is the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies; and this lie crawls from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.'" (Staat heißt das kälteste aller kalten Ungeheuer. [...] "Ich, der Staat, bin das Volk.") (Z I: "*The New Idol*").

If the 'Will to Power' does not seek domination over others as its primary end, then what, precisely, does it pursue? The 'Will to Power' is, in essence, the creative 'power' to generate values. Consequently, the true 'power' that the Will pursues is the sovereign authority to legislate one's own values—ensuring that one remains unbound by the values of others. This state of absolute sovereignty is, precisely, perfect self-conquest:

The noble human being honors in himself the powerful one, also him who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silent, who gladly practices severity and hardness toward himself, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard. (Der vornehme Mensch ehrt in sich den Mächtigen, auch den, der Macht über sich selbst hat, der zu reden und zu schweigen versteht, der mit Lust streng und hart gegen sich übt und Ehrfurcht vor allem Strengen und Harten hat.) (BGE 260).

The most spiritual men, as the strongest, find their happiness where others would find their ruin: in the labyrinth, in severity towards themselves and others, in experiments; their joy is self-conquest... (Die geistigsten Menschen, als die Stärksten, finden ihr Glück, worin Andre ihren Untergang fänden: im Labyrinthe, in der Härte gegen sich und Andre, im Versuche; ihre Freude ist die Selbst-Bezwungung...) (AC: 57)

Therefore, Nietzsche's contempt for the weak and his rejection of democracy must also be reinterpreted. This is not a directive for the oppression and domination of the class-based, materially, or socially oppressed. Rather, it is a contempt for the internally weak who passively accept external values rather than creating their own. Furthermore, it is a refusal to be dominated by the slave morality revered by the majority. It is, literally, the stance of keeping a distance—the 'Pathos of Distance' (Pathos der Distanz)—and refusing to mix with them: "I do not wish to be mixed up and confused with these preachers of equality. [...] But thus speak the tarantulas: 'We want equality, and we shall take it!'" (Nicht will ich vermisch und verwechselt sein mit diesen Predigern der Gleichheit. [...] Wir wollen Gleichheit — wir werden sie nehmen!) (Z II: "*The Tarantulas*").

Yet, the reason this concept was misused as 'domination' or 'Power'—and at times utilized as such by Nietzsche himself—is clear. Nietzsche intentionally employed this subtle, polysemous, and exquisite word (*Macht*) to underscore a 'power' synonymous with the sovereignty of Self-Mastery—the power of perfect self-conquest—and the 'Legislator's Authority' to create one's own values. In other words, the act of conquering oneself, the refusal to be dominated by external values (which transforms one into a ruling subject rather than a ruled object, consequently encompassing the command over others), and the raw

concepts of 'force' and 'power' are not distinct; they are linguistically, functionally, and philosophically fused into a single, multi-layered concept.

Therefore, Nietzsche's naming of his moralities as 'Master' and 'Slave' was also not based merely on aristocracy or accidental rhetorical expression. It is the very 'definition' of that distinction. As Nietzsche suggests, those who lack inner sovereignty inevitably sink into subjection to command. Are you a 'Master' of a free life who creates values for yourself, or a 'Slave' obeying values created by others? This is the essence of master and slave morality. "He who cannot obey himself will be commanded. That is the nature of living creatures." (Der, welcher sich nicht gehorchen kann, wird befohlen. Das ist die Art der Lebendigen.) (Z II: *"On Self-Overcoming"*).

Chapter 4: Übermensch and Amor Fati – The Human Type Who Affirms and Loves This Moment

The one who awakens to the weight of reality and overcomes the vertigo of absolute nothingness, regards this very moment with the value of eternity and pushes the Will to Power to its limit in every instant. He is not consumed by the Ressentiment that gnaws at him, nor does he surrender himself to the *décadence* that is encroaching upon the world. Rather, he converts his Ressentiment into creative energy, and by confronting *décadence* head-on, he escapes it: "What does not kill me makes me stronger. (Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker.) (TI: *"Maxims"* 8).

The being who, through the Will to Power, becomes stronger than he was before, ceaselessly overcoming himself (Selbst-Überwindung)—that being is the *'Übermensch'*: "Behold, I teach you the Übermensch! The Übermensch is the meaning of the earth. [...] Man is something that shall be overcome." (Siehe, ich lehre euch den Übermenschen! Der

Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. [...] Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll.)
(*Z Prologue 3*).

The Übermensch is not the 'last man' (der letzte Mensch) who depends on external values like Heaven or Ideas, but the legislator who bestows meaning upon his own life. By growing in every moment, he overcomes his past self and can live by 'rolling on his own,' without the injection of external values: "How the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child. [...] The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a holy 'Yes.'" (Wie der Geist zum Kameele wird, und zum Löwen das Kameel, und zum Kinde zuletzt der Löwe. [...] Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen.) (*Z I: "The Three Metamorphoses"*)

If the 'camel' is the passive spirit bearing others' values (tradition, morality), the 'lion' is the active nihilist who destroys those values (freedom). However, true creation is only possible upon reaching the 'child.' The child, free from the burden of destruction, 'holily affirms' (heiliges Ja-sagen) the play of becoming—the Eternal Recurrence.

Understood this way, Nietzsche's philosophy is no longer a mere collection of fragmented concepts. It is a single, perfect logical conclusion:

1. *God is Dead*: There is *no transcendental eternity*.
2. *Eternal Recurrence*: Therefore, the 'now' is *everything given to you* (eternity)
3. *Will to Power*: Therefore, you must *master* everything that is given to you.
4. *Übermensch*: And, by mastering everything given to you without exception—harnessing even the positive and the negative as driving forces for your growth—ceaselessly overcome

yourself and become the *Übermensch*, the master of your own life.

5. *Amor Fati*: In doing so, you attain the absolute affirmation (*Affirmatio*) and love of everything given to you—that is, your fate.

This is Nietzsche's sole methodology for overcoming nihilism in a world where God is dead.

Chapter 5: The Anti-Gospel – The One Hammer to Collapse the Absolute System

Someone might criticize this paper thus: 'Nietzsche is not a philosopher who seeks to build a system. His contradiction is his philosophy. And he was not a philosopher who gave ethical commands on 'how to live.' He was a thoroughly anti-systematic philosopher, and he could not possibly have intended to align his philosophy into such a consistent system.'

This argument has sufficient merit within traditional interpretations. Nietzsche himself enjoyed fragmented and contradictory statements, and his aphorisms were tools that made many readers lose their way. However, this stems from a failure to distinguish between the realm of methodology employed to convey the message and the totality of the message itself. Nietzsche's 'contradiction' should not be viewed as the sum of his philosophy, but rather validly as the domain of 'strategic methodology' within it. This is because his absolute stance rejected the notion that 'philosophy' should be made easy to understand—which ultimately results in everyone arriving at the same conclusion in the same way (or to be more precise, in another's way, reaching another's conclusion).

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who

think alike than those who think differently. (Die sicherste Art, einen Jüngling zu verderben, ist, ihn anzuweisen, den Gleichdenkenden höher zu achten als den Andersdenkenden.) (*D*: 556)

All profound thinkers fear being understood more than being misunderstood. (Alle tiefen Denker haben mehr Furcht davor, verstanden zu werden, als davor, mißverstanden zu werden.) (*BGE*: 290).

What does your conscience say? 'You shall become the one you are.' (Was sagt dein Gewissen? – Du sollst der werden, der du bist.) (*GS*: 335).

Nietzsche's goal was not to raise 'camels' by merely transmitting the results of enlightenment, but to raise 'lions' who destroy the system themselves, and 'children' who come to realization on their own."

Furthermore, the claim that Nietzsche was not a philosopher who issued 'ethical commands' must also be carefully considered. For this claim to be true, Nietzsche would have to be a philosopher who says, 'It does not matter if you live merely as you are inclined.' However, Nietzsche's moral perspective was firm: one must become one who creates values and masters one's own life (Herrenmoral, Übermensch), not one who is subordinated to or swayed by the values of others (Sklavenmoral, Ressentiment). In short, Nietzsche's 'ethical command' is not one that demands passive obedience to external moral norms. It is a command to act according to norms that you yourself have legislated. While formally a 'command,' it is not an instruction to act based on an 'external command given by Nietzsche'; rather, it is a 'meta-command' that demands one to establish *for oneself* the imperative that

defines one's own actions. This is the fundamental functional difference that separates his project from the normative 'tests' or 'imperatives' of previous interpretations.

The claim that Nietzsche is an anti-systematic philosopher must also be taken seriously. However, we must first clarify what, precisely, Nietzsche was an adversary *against*. His true enemy was consistent: the Christian spirit, the absolute reason that imposes a singular truth, the state that dominates the individual, and above all, the slave morality domesticated by it. In short, Nietzsche's enemy was the monolithic, monistic system that tames the human spirit.

Therefore, his goal is also clear: to diagnose the sickness of weak, habituated human beings; to become the 'dynamite' capable of destroying the monolithic system that is the cause of both the age's and humanity's sickness; and to place the power of all valuation and creation back into human hands, awakening their spirit to become masters of their own lives.

Nietzsche famously called himself a 'philosopher with a hammer.' This hammer is not for mere crude destruction. As he clarifies, it is used 'as with a tuning fork (wie mit einer Stimmgabel)' to sound out the hollow, sick idols of the age (*TI*, Preface). So, after diagnosing the sickness of the age with the hammer, and then destroying all absolute values with that same hammer, what is the hammer's role next? In the epilogue to *Twilight of the Idols*, titled 'The Hammer Speaks,' Nietzsche borrows the voice of Zarathustra:

"Why so hard?"—the kitchen charcoal once said to the diamond; "are we not close relatives?"—Why so soft? O my brothers, thus I ask you: are you not—my brothers? Why so soft, so submissive and yielding? [...] For the creator is hard. And it must seem blessedness to you to press your hand upon millennia as upon wax, [...] Ah, a hammer,

and the hardness of the hammer! [...] This, this is the language of the hammer, – This new tablet, O my brothers, I place over you: Become hard!

("Warum so hart!" — sprach zum Diamanten einst die Küchenkohle; "sind wir denn nicht Nah-Verwandte?" — Warum so weich? o meine Brüder, also frage ich euch: seid ihr denn nicht — meine Brüder? Warum so weich, so weichend und nachgebend? [...] Denn alles Schaffende ist hart. Und Seligkeit muss es euch dünken, eure Hand auf Jahrtausende zu drücken wie auf Wachs, [...] — diese neue Tafel, o meine Brüder, stelle ich über euch: werdet hart!) (*Z III: "On Old and New Tablets" 29*).

Finally, the hammer becomes a tool for new creation. The hammer is the tool of the creator who, like a sculptor, must use force to inscribe new values onto the hardest of materials. Therefore, his true and final task was to diagnose the age and then to establish a new foundation on the ruins he himself had cleared. His mission was to establish: not another normative system, but an infinitely open structure—a living space—where all human beings could legislate their own values and their own lives could become dynamic.

The task assigned to the hammer is to diagnose the existing system, shatter it, and pave a new foundation. To diagnose, destroy, and inscribe new values, the hammer must be 'harder' than anything else it seeks to affect. Because the hammer must be hard, it cannot function in its true capacity if it remains merely contradictory or fragmentary in itself. Therefore, even if Nietzsche's ultimate goal is a 'ground' where pluralistic values can dance, his 'philosophy'—the hammer itself—must not be regarded or interpreted as soft or contradictory.

The moment we acknowledge that the hammer he wields is not loose or inconsistent, but the 'hard' and solid hammer of a destroyer and creator—and thus affirm the philosopher with

the hammer as a true 'creator'—we can see that his philosophy, which until now seemed only disruptive and contradictory, was, in fact, meticulously designed from the beginning as an 'Anti-Gospel' to perfectly replace the Christian Gospel."

<i>The Christian Gospel</i>	<i>Nietzsche's Anti-Gospel</i>
<i>Creation:</i> God, who guarantees the 'beyond' and eternity.	<i>The 'Event':</i> "God is Dead"; transcendental eternity is nullified.
<i>Original Sin:</i> The theological burden given by God.	<i>Existential Vertigo:</i> The fear of 'absolute Nothingness' (death); the "greatest weight" of this moment.
<i>Faith & Atonement:</i> Passive acceptance of grace and values.	<i>Will to Power:</i> Actively creating one's own values to overcome this vertigo.
<i>Christian Morality:</i> Based on guilt, submission, and obedience to external law.	<i>Creator's Morality:</i> Based on creativity, sovereignty, and self-legislation.
<i>Salvation (Erlösung):</i> Given by God, leading to eternal life after death.	<i>Übermensch:</i> Self-overcoming; becoming the master and creator of one's own life now.
<i>The 'Afterlife':</i> The transcendental goal; negation of this life.	<i>Amor Fati:</i> The absolute affirmation of this life as the only eternity.

Note. This schema serves as a heuristic device to highlight the structural symmetry of Nietzsche's 'Anti-Gospel' project. It is not intended to suggest a mechanical or reductive one-to-one correspondence between every Christian dogma and Nietzschean concept, but rather to illustrate the strategic inversion of the theological architecture.

Viewed in this context, the micro-contradictions scattered throughout Nietzsche's philosophy—such as the coexistence of a fate where the same eternally recurs and the

creative will, or the denial of absolute truth alongside the absolutization of his own philosophy—are not mere logical errors or fragmented mistakes. These must be understood as a 'structural necessity' designed to perfectly replace the massive system of Christianity.

Just as Christianity draws out absolute 'faith' and 'obedience'—replacing believers' 'reason' and 'doubt'—through the 'Paradox' of coexisting concepts like gaining eternal life through death or the interplay of predestined salvation and salvation through faith, Nietzsche's Anti-Gospel likewise employs corresponding 'Contradictions' and 'Aporias' to block the readers' comfortable 'blind faith' and 'adherence,' thereby enforcing intense 'struggle' and 'autonomous legislation.'

In other words, Nietzsche's contradictions are a sophisticated 'Mirror Image' of the Christian paradox. If the Christian paradox is a device to make humans kneel before God, Nietzsche's contradictions function as a 'tempering' process to re-establish humans as masters of their own lives—training them to ceaselessly think, struggle, and find their own way.

This is precisely the 'greatest gift' that Nietzsche, as the self-proclaimed 'Anti-Christ,' sought to provide: a way of life based not on theological faith but on existential will—replacing transcendental salvation with the absolute affirmation of the unique life given to oneself: Zarathustra is... the *greatest gift* that has ever been made to mankind. (Zarathustra ist... das *grösste Geschenk*, das ihm der Menschheit bisher gemacht worden ist.) (EH: Preface 4).

This serves, quite literally, as the *greatest gift* by which humanity—the 'murderers of all murderers'—can 'comfort (redeem)' itself.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – The Failed Blade, The Question That Reaches Us

Paradoxically, the 'Eternal Recurrence'—the sharpest blade Nietzsche painstakingly forged to hold to the throat of his age—was, contrary to his intent, misunderstood as the bluntest of moral lessons. He was literally 'proud' of the Eternal Recurrence, yet its true implications ultimately failed to reach his contemporaries. But the failure of this attempt does not diminish its significance. Nietzsche's question was never a benevolent exhortation to "live a life worth repeating!" or a naive belief that "this world will repeat infinitely!" It was a harrowing, existential, and combative query: *"Do you have the courage to accept your own complete annihilation, devoid of any consolation? And are you therefore prepared to face the fact that this single life given to you is your one and only 'eternity'?"*

When we look at this blade-like logic hidden behind Nietzsche's deliberate abstruseness and literary devices, we move past the image of the dazzling and contradictory madman and encounter the meticulous, cold-blooded thinker, and simultaneously, the philosopher who wrote not with ink, but with his own blood. His message, after more than 140 years, reaches us, here and now, without fading in the slightest. His question is still valid.

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¹ References to Nietzsche's works are identified by standard abbreviations. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own based on the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA). Where applicable, I have consulted standard English translations such as those by Walter Kaufmann or R. J. Hollingdale.