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Nietzsche and Heraclitus

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NIETZSCHE AND HERACLITUS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Philosophy

by
Virginia Lyle Jennings Howard
B.A., Oglethorpe University, 1988
May 1992

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Nietzsche's Collected Works:

- KS Friedrich Nietzsche Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe. Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. 15 Vols. Berlin, 1980.
- KG Friedrich Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Edited by Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari. 8 divs. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Unpublished Works by Nietzsche:

- HW Homers Wettkampf (Homer's Contest)
- WL Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn (On Truth and Falsehood in an Extramoral Sense)
- PTG Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen (Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks)
- WM Wille zur Macht (Will to Power, Unpublished Notes)

Published Works by Nietzsche:

- GT Die Geburt der Tragödie (The Birth of Tragedy)
- UB Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen (Untimely Meditations)
- I. David Strauss, der Bekenner und Schriftsteller
 (David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer)
- II. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben (Of the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life)
- III. Schopenhauer als Erzieher (Schopenhauer as Educator)
- IV. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth
- MA Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human, All too Human)
- WS Der Wanderer und sein Schatten (The Wanderer and his Shadow)
- M Die Morgenröte (The Dawn)
- FW Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)

Z Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)
JGB Jenseits von Gut und Böse (Beyond Good and Evil)
GM Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)
W Der Fall Wagner (The Case of Wagner)
G-D Die Götzen-Dämmerung (The Twilight of the Idols)
A Der Antichrist (The Antichrist)
EH Ecce homo
NCW Nietzsche contra Wagner

ABSTRACT

Nietzsche's philosophical ideas are closely based upon his early studies of Greek thought. Unless his philosophy is approached from the standpoint of its foundation in the ancient Greeks, Heraclitus in particular, then it can be difficult to gain a coherent picture of Nietzsche's thought.

In Heraclitus he found an affirmation of precisely what he loved about the ancient Greek way of life, its most fundamental concept: the contest. The Greeks embrace their apparently terrible characteristics and control them with a rule-governed contest. In the same way Heraclitus's universe consists of opposites which strive for dominion, not through wars of annihilation, but by a rule-ordered contest of forces. According to Heraclitean strife, the Greek contest, and Nietzsche's will to power, a balancing out of opposing forces is never achieved, otherwise the struggle which fuels existence would die out. The struggle must never be extinguished; opposing forces must continue the battle, each overcoming the other in turn, for all eternity. This is the way in which the eternal recurrence serves as a prescription for the overman. The will to power, mankind's unrefined animosity and envy, must be acknowledged by the strong individual and transformed from a nihilistic force into one of positive ambition and increase. The eternal recurrence is

what the overman strives for within himself; since the rules of eternal becoming, of the contest, do not apply to humanity by nature. Each individual must choose whether to enter into the eternal contest or to extinguish the struggle with his will to power by denying his passions. The eternal recurrence and will to power fit together in that it is the belief in eternal recurrence which gives great individuals the strength to acknowledge the potential of this terrible drive as a source of elevation and increase.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is convenient and sometimes illuminating to divide a philosopher's works into stages, such as early, middle, and late; and while there are many reasons to do so in the case of Nietzsche's corpus, such a separation can detract from the unity that underlies his various writings. A distinction is usually made between Nietzsche's earlier philological writings and his later, published works. This division is easily justified because the early writings are technically philological rather than philosophical; and, since Nietzsche did not publish them, the early writings are thought not to represent his views as accurately as his published books. It is easy to classify Nietzsche's works in this way, but the importance of Nietzsche's early philological studies of the Greeks, and of other early unpublished essays, should not be overlooked. Rather than assuming that the authentic Nietzsche only showed himself in his published works, one should treat his unpublished essays as valuable companions to his books. When Nietzsche is approached in this way, one can see the continuity in his thought, and the common source which sustains his later philosophical ideas.

The influence or inspiration of the ancient Greeks can be found at the source of Nietzsche's earliest work as well as at the heart of his later philosophy. His central interest, the concern for modern culture, arose out of his philological studies. By tracing the Heraclitean element in Nietzsche's thought, the unity among his early and late writings and the connection between his philosophical ideas is highlighted; for the main elements of his views on culture--the will to power, eternal recurrence and the overman--are all grounded in a distinctively Heraclitean world-view.

Though the present fragmentary condition of Heraclitus's works may make it difficult to understand the subtleties of his thought, this should not hinder a study of Nietzsche's understanding and use of Heraclitus. As Sarah Kofman points out, Heraclitus was obscure even to his contemporaries who had access to all of his texts (1987, 39). Moreover, one must remember that Nietzsche also had only fragmentary material to work with. His edition of the fragments was somewhat different from what we have today; he did not have access to H. Diels's Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, which eliminates some fragments previously attributed to Heraclitus.

In chapter one I discuss the current literature dealing with the significance of Nietzsche's philological works and concerning his relationship to Heraclitus. In chapter two I examine the influence of the Greeks, particularly Heraclitus, on Nietzsche's early thought, and the continued presence of Heraclitus's influence on Nietzsche's ideas of the will to power, eternal recurrence and the overman. In chapter three I discuss criticisms of Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus, including Heidegger's criticism that Nietzsche's interpretation gives little attention to the logos and places too much importance on change. When Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus is understood in light of his relation to the ancient Greeks in general, it can illuminate aspects of his philosophic thought that are easily misunderstood. In chapter four, the ideas of eternal recurrence, will to power, and overman are shown to fit together according to their common ground in the Heraclitean cosmos and the Greek contest.

Though prominent scholars such as R. J. Hollingdale believe that little can be gained from the study of Nietzsche's early unpublished works, others have emphasized the importance of these writings, such as Daniel Breazeale

and Karl Schlechta. Hollingdale advises against focusing one's interpretation of Nietzsche on the unpublished works. If one were to rely on them, says Hollingdale, then one, "has to assume that since he published what he should have rejected and rejected what he should have published, Nietzsche was unaware of what his opinions really were or deliberately sought to conceal them, and there is no evidence for either contention" (1965, xii). Hollingdale is not referring to the notes of the 1880's collected as The Will to Power, which no "serious scholar" would prefer to the published books (Kaufman 1974, 78). He is criticizing Nietzsche's early unpublished essays and lectures, which in fact should be considered independently of the late notes and with much more weight, for they are finished works in their own right, and not nearly as questionable as the unused notes.

Breazeale and Schlechta disagree with Hollingdale's criticism, and have given evidence to suggest that Nietzsche may in fact have had reasons to withhold from publication certain early works. They point out that while the books Nietzsche published prior to Human, All-too-Human are very different in tone and style from what came afterwards, a comparison of the early unpublished essays to the later books

does not reveal any discontinuity in Nietzsche's thought and development (Breazeale 1979, xlix; Schlechta 1972, 142). According to Schlechta, the early unpublished writings are more representative of the "real" Nietzsche than are the published writings of the same time period. He suggests that in the period before the publication of Human, All-too-Human there was an "unofficial" but "authentic" Nietzsche whose main philosophical ideas were concealed from view by the pessimistic and largely ambivalent "official" works he was publishing at the time (1972, 142). This claim is also made by Breazeale, and both cite the preface (written in September 1886) to the second volume of Human, All-too-Human, where Nietzsche writes, "When I expressed my reverence for the great Arthur Schopenhauer ... I no longer believed in 'a single blessed thing', as the people say, not even in Schopenhauer. It was precisely at this time that I formulated an essay, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense', which I kept secret" (H II, Preface, 209). In this later preface, Nietzsche might merely be taking advantage of the opportunity to amend his earlier work, so his comment should not be accepted without question. The statement in question intimates that when he wrote Human, All-too-Human, he had a private side which was at odds with what he was

voicing to the public. It is possible that these doubts were not present at the time he wrote the book and were merely expressed in hindsight; but he does refer to a specific unpublished work, "On Truth and Lie," which was written in 1873. Schlechta believes that the early unpublished essays were written by the authentic Nietzsche, who had not yet found his public voice. It was only in these early essays that Nietzsche found "his specific theme and consequently his specific language. It is already the theme and language of the later Nietzsche, the Nietzsche of Human, All-too-Human onwards, the real Nietzsche!" (Schlechta 1972, 142). Thus Schlechta shows that though there may be a break in the style of Nietzsche's published works beginning with Human, All-too-Human, his later thought and style were already present in the early material which remained private. One may also point out that the unpublished lectures and essays are more than scattered, unfinished notes; they are complete works. There may have been no reason to publish a lecture or an essay, and so Nietzsche focused on larger projects which often incorporated the ideas previously explored in his essays and lectures.

Rather than rejecting the ideas in his unpublished writings, as Hollingdale suggests he did, Nietzsche salvaged

them for use in his published books. In the introductory essay to his translations in Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks from the Early 1870's, Breazeale writes that, "Like Robinson Crusoe supplying himself from the wreck of his ship, Nietzsche appears to have turned again and again over the years to his notebooks of the early 1870's, returning as it were to the original source of many of his thoughts and the original exposition of many of his themes" (1979, lii). Though one should not ignore the fact that Nietzsche let his early writings go unpublished, one cannot assume that the reason they were left unpublished is that Nietzsche later rejected their content. As Breazeale points out, one need only compare the unpublished works with the published books in order to dispel this line of reasoning (Breazeale 1979, li). It is uncommon for authors to publish everything they write, and the fact that Nietzsche published only some of his projects does not necessarily mean that those withheld from the public are any less representative of his views.

Stephen F. Hershbell, in his article "Nietzsche and Heraclitus," says that "a specific problem [in interpreting Nietzsche's relationship with Heraclitus] arises from the fact that most of Nietzsche's explicit references to

Heraclitus come from his early philological work" (1979, 18). Because Hershbell discounts Nietzsche's early essays as problematic, he is hesitant to employ them in demonstrating the enduring significance of Heraclitus in Nietzsche's thought. He even criticizes Richard Oehler for "quot[ing] indiscriminately from Nietzsche's notes rather than from the finished works, thus obviating any sort of context within which one could understand the influence of Heraclitus" (1979, 17). Although Nietzsche's unpublished essays of the early 1870's should not take the place of his published works, they are indispensable to a study of the origin and development of Nietzsche's thought. These early works contain "the first sketches of many ideas which only appeared in Nietzsche's published writings many years later" (Breazeale, xlix; Schlechta, 142), and these first sketches of Nietzsche's ideas are closer to the original source of his philosophy than are the more polished versions in his later works. Even though technically philological in nature, Nietzsche's early studies of the Greeks contain the foundation of the philosophical ideas which are not refined and published until later, when Nietzsche deliberately presents himself as a philosopher.

A central theme in Nietzsche's philosophy which is grounded in his study of the Greeks is the theme of culture. "If there is any theme unquestioningly audible in everything that Nietzsche wrote it is the theme of culture, the problem of civilization..." (Breazeale 1979, xxvii). The search for ways to prevent the downfall of mankind "occupied the center of Nietzsche's attentions in his later books; but in the early published and unpublished writings his main concern was with the prior task of determining the general nature and precondition of culture as such and its relation to other forces" (Breazeale 1979, xxviii). The theme of culture is a prominent concern in the whole of Nietzsche's thought, around which his main philosophical ideas are constructed.

One unpublished essay I will examine in chapter two is "Homer's Contest," one of Nietzsche's "Five Forewords to Unwritten Books." In this early essay, written in 1872, Nietzsche compares the Greek way of life to the modern. He focuses on examining the Greek contest as the ground of Hellenic culture in general, and on pointing to the danger of its absence in the decadent modern world. This philological essay encapsulates Nietzsche's vision of modern culture. A similar understanding of this essay is expressed by Ernst

Vogt in his article "Nietzsche und der Wettkampf Homers."

Vogt says of "Homer's Contest": "In a few pages Nietzsche gives a sketch of early Greek culture, which by way of suggestion anticipates the essential thought of his later doctrine, so that the essay assumes a certain key position between pure philological work and philosophical work" (1962, 112). Walter Kaufmann translates most of "Homer's Contest" in The Portable Nietzsche, and mentions in the book's introduction that this "fragment ... should be of greater help for an understanding both of Nietzsche's early conception of ancient Greece and of his subsequent intellectual development" (1988, 2). Arthur Danto cites the essay when writing on Nietzsche's aesthetics, to support his claim that "Greek art, like Greek religion, was then a contrivance for coping with and finally accepting life instead of its abbreviation or extinction. The idea here is one quite central to Nietzsche's thought, and it has application to all of culture, not to the Greeks alone" (1965, 52). Breazeale, in his article "The Hegel-Nietzsche Problem," makes brief reference to "Homer's Contest" when criticizing Deleuze's notion that playful creativity rather than struggle and conflict is the expression of the will to power. He writes, "What Nietzsche called for was not the

overcoming of struggle, but rather the overcoming of the spirit of vengeance which so often accompanies it. This idea is already present in the very early essay Homers Wettkampf, and is encountered again in almost everything Nietzsche wrote thereafter" (1975, 161).

Nietzsche's belief that struggle is the life blood of society came from his study of Greek civilization. He views civilization as sustaining itself with the constant tension between different natures in a Heraclitean world of flux. Breazeale writes that, "Nietzsche's fundamental idea of culture ... is not [of] an artificial homogeneity imposed by external restraints or ascetic self denial, but [of] an organic unity cultivated on the very soil of discord and difference" (1979, xxvii). Though Breazeale does not mention it specifically, the "soil of discord and difference" is also the foundation of Heraclitus's cosmos. Hershbell points out that, "Nietzsche's emphasis on strife ... is similar to and no doubt influenced by Heraclitus's conception" (1979, 23).

One difference between Nietzsche's early and late writings that is of particular interest here is that though Nietzsche explicitly mentions the name of Heraclitus often in his early notes, he very rarely does so in his later books. Giuliano Campioni concludes that "In early times Nietzsche

found the teachings of Heraclitus to be important; however his fascination was soon put aside" (1987, 209). There is another explanation than this for why Nietzsche neglected to mention Heraclitus in his later works. Arthur H. Knight suggests that Nietzsche was being insincere in refusing to acknowledge his sources (1933, 111). It is probable that Nietzsche felt such a kinship with Heraclitus that references to him would be superfluous. Nietzsche habitually invoked the names of various great thinkers, but it was his tendency to absorb aspects of their thought into his own rather than treating them as external to his own thought. In his study of Nietzsche's readings in romanticism, Adrian Del Caro writes, "Since he generally rejected a given influence, even one he had embraced with passion, Nietzsche's dialogue with others remains very one-sided. The 'previous thoughts' with which he associated his reading encounters were those of a restless, growing agenda, which over the years became his philosophy, his contributions, and his life" (1989, 34). Del Caro also discusses the influences of several individuals whose writings are treated by Nietzsche in some context, but which are not cited (1989, 35ff.). It is interesting that in Ecce Homo, which was written during Nietzsche's last productive year, and in which he analyzes the development of

his own ideas, Heraclitus is the only thinker mentioned who "might" have previously taught some of Nietzsche's concepts (EH, "The Birth of Tragedy," §3, 274). The absence of any specific reference to Heraclitus in Nietzsche's later writings does not demonstrate his absence from Nietzsche's thought.

Heraclitus's influence can be seen not only in Nietzsche's early explorations of the theme of culture, but also in his later conceptions of the will to power, the eternal recurrence, and the overman. Ofelia Schutte, while noting both the early origin of the will to power in Nietzsche's philological works and the Heraclitean nature of the concept, writes, "Long before Nietzsche thought of the term 'will to power' to designate the reality of all that is in flux, he had already argued in favor of Heraclitus's conception of existence [in Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks]" (1984, 40). Hershbelle also mentions the Heraclitean nature of the will to power when he says, "Like Heraclitus, Nietzsche believed that 'all is one'. He, too, saw a basic unity in all things and posited a single directive, dynamic principle: der Wille zur Macht" (1979, 23). In his essay, "The Relation between Nietzsche's Theory of the Will to Power and His Earlier Conception of Power,"

Willard Mittleman writes, "Nietzsche's claim that the world is nothing but will to power means, basically, that the world consists solely of the flux of various centers of force, or power, which are constantly seeking to overcome, or appropriate, each other..." (1980, 135). Though Mittleman does not specifically mention Heraclitus, his description of the will to power as a cosmological doctrine is very Heraclitean indeed. The doctrine is based on the affirmation of change and strife, as well as the denial of absolute being.

The eternal recurrence has also been described as a cosmological doctrine. Jerry H. Combee, like Mittleman, does not specifically mention Heraclitus, but he does ground the eternal recurrence in a particularly Heraclitean cosmos: "...the idea of eternal recurrence gives the lie to any notion of the world having a purpose, meaning, or final state of any kind; consequently, the responsibility for whatever meaning the universe is to have must be borne by man, whose every act has occurred and will occur again an infinite number of times" (Combee 1974, 40). Though Combee does not point out the Heraclitean foundation of the eternal recurrence, one can see that as a moral theory it is grounded in a Heraclitean universe. Hershbelle writes, "The Eternal

Recurrence is the apotheosis of the affirmation of the whole world of becoming..." (1979, 34). Nietzsche's Heraclitean world is one in which there is no absolute being, only the constant struggle between opposites and the temporary ascendancy of one over the other. Every state of affairs in this cosmos is temporary, and in turn it will be overcome by its counterpart, and then rise again, in a never-ending cycle.

This is the climate out of which the overman is born. He must continually renew the struggle to overcome himself. Hershbell makes the connection between the overman and the Heraclitean world of strife: "Like Heraclitus, Nietzsche developed an ethical basis for men that springs from his basic perception of the phusis.... Nietzsche subsequently sees the Übermensch as one who has overcome himself. The process of overcoming has as its basis strife and opposition" (Hershbell 1979, 25). Though Nietzsche abandons the overman after Zarathustra, the same characteristics are present in the "new philosophers" which take the place of the more abstract, idealized concept of the overman. Mittleman observes the Heraclitean nature of Nietzsche's "Dionysian individual," when he writes, "Since life, according to Nietzsche, simply is the struggle and conflict of contending

wills to power, it follows that the Dionysian individual affirms strife and conflict. This furnishes an understanding of Nietzsche's high estimation of Heraclitus..." (1980, 140). Nietzsche's great individual is one who has affirmed the Heraclitean world of becoming; he accepts the constant struggle within, and is elevated by it.

By examining the overman, the eternal recurrence, and the will to power in light of Heraclitus, the vital link between them can be observed. This connection within Nietzsche's thought is not otherwise available. Richard Perkins writes that, "there is no 'true' Nietzsche lurking behind dark veils to reveal or to conceal his inner nature. The man himself is but a series of masks: and his philosophy, but an endless succession of caves behind caves. His name is 'Legion': for he is many" (Perkins 1977, 206). Breazeale writes, "It seems to be one of Nietzsche's stylistic aims to obscure the close connection between his various themes, to present his thoughts on various subjects as if they were independent of each other" (1979, xlix). It is one thing to say, as Breazeale does, that Nietzsche conceals the unity of his thought behind various masks, and quite another to conclude, as Perkins does, that Nietzsche is nothing more than the sum of his various masks. While it is true that

Nietzsche denies the possibility of final and absolute truth and believes in a multiplicity of truths (Perkins 1977, 205), Perkins's conclusion that Nietzsche's thought is therefore only a series of perceptions is extreme. Kofman suggests that the kind of obscurity which shrouds both Nietzsche and Heraclitus disappears when one is guided through their works by an initiate with a key (1987, 40). According to Schutte, the key to clarifying Nietzsche's thought is to approach what he wrote from his Dionysian perspective on existence (1984, x). Nietzsche's Dionysian perspective is essential to his later thought, but it is Heraclitus who is present at its origin. Alan Schrift, quoting Fink, says: "Heraclitus remains the originary root of Nietzsche's philosophy" (Fink 1968, 63; Schrift 1990, 13).

In trying to connect Nietzsche's various theories to one another, Hershbell (1979, 38) and Combee (1974, 39) note that Nietzsche's ethical and metaphysical theories are interwoven. Hershbell even points out that Heraclitus's own ethical advice was also tied to his physical theory (1979, 38). When Nietzsche's ideas are seen as products of his particular world-view, the similarities between them no longer remain hidden. The common Heraclitean foundation of Nietzsche's theories is indicated by Schutte in her search

for a line of continuity in Nietzsche between metaphysics and psychology. "From a metaphysical angle," she writes, "the will to power was not the only name that Nietzsche gave to the Heraclitean world of flux. He also called it 'the innocence of becoming', 'my "beyond good and evil"', and 'the eternal recurrence of all things'" (1984, 58).

While one should be careful not to oversimplify Heraclitus's influence on Nietzsche by finding it everywhere in Nietzsche's work, that influence is something which can be found behind his thought in general; both at its conception in his earliest writings and at its refined state in his later books. A Heraclitean world-view is the underlying connection between the various ideas of Nietzsche's philosophy. It is the will to power which stirs the overman to greatness, and which serves as the force behind the world of becoming. The overman limits and structures his ambition in that he accepts the eternal nature of his struggle. Neither a final state of being nor any absolute values can be possessed by the overman, because the contest between opposing forces never reaches a conclusion. There is no static state of being--only the eternal cycle in which opponents are in turn defeated and victorious: the eternal recurrence of the same.

CHAPTER TWO

NIETZSCHE'S STUDY OF ANCIENT GREEK THOUGHT

Nietzsche's attraction to Heraclitus can be traced to his early affinity for ancient Greek thought. As a student at Bonn and Leipzig (1864-1868) Nietzsche studied classical philology. Before completing his Doctorate he was given a professorship of classical philology at the University of Basel where he taught from 1869-1879, resigning because of his failing health (Kaufmann 1974, 24). Although he was not a philosopher by profession during this time, it is significant that he devoted so much of his career to studying the ancient Greeks. The importance of this period for Nietzsche's thought is rarely given sufficient attention when examining his subsequent philosophical development. His philological works are particularly relevant to a comparison of Nietzsche and Heraclitus, but not only for the obvious reason that Heraclitus is an ancient Greek philosopher. Only by examining these works do we see the reason why Nietzsche was so attracted to Heraclitus's philosophy. In Heraclitus he found an affirmation of precisely what he loved about the

ancient Greek way of life, its most fundamental concept: the contest.

Even in his earliest years as a professor at Basel, Nietzsche criticized the traditional scholarly approach to ancient texts. In his inaugural address he warned that if one searches with the eye of traditional scholarship, one always loses "that wonderful creative force ... of the atmosphere of antiquity" (KG II, vol. 1, 252). He called to his new colleagues not to "forget that passionate emotion which instinctively drove our meditation and enjoyment back to the Greeks" (KG II, vol. 1, 252). Nietzsche's own examination of Greek thought goes beyond a linguistic or historical analysis of the fragmentary texts. He focuses instead on reconstructing the ancient authors so that they might speak for themselves about their way of life. In his early essay Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (1873), Nietzsche literally gives voice to the Presocratic philosophers, by writing down words for them and even putting these utterances in quotation marks. With this unique way of listening to the Greeks, Nietzsche tries to uncover the way of life which formed the foundation of their philosophical systems. He is not merely interested in determining the meaning of these ancient texts, rather he wants to recreate

and promote a certain world-view. He believes that the way of life which existed in ancient times is still a possibility for us today, and that it is the purpose of philosophy to revive this way of looking at humanity and the world in order to halt the decay of our own society. "This way of living and of looking at human matters was there once in any case, and so is still possible: the [individual philosopher's] 'system' is the growth from out of this soil" (PTG, Preface, 23; cf. JGB §6, 203). Any philosophical system, whether it is true or not, was generated and nurtured by the soil of life which surrounded it, and so contains the secret of the ground out of which it grew. One can discover the life of the individual philosopher by examining his philosophical system, "just as one may guess at the nature of the soil in a given place by studying a plant that grows there" (PTG, Preface, 23). Nietzsche's love of the Greek way of life may have arisen out of his contempt for modern society, or perhaps it was the study of the Greeks that gave shape and focus to his contempt. Either way, his philological studies are closely connected with his philosophical criticism of modern society. Nietzsche the philosopher was originally Nietzsche the philologist, and to set the two apart is to

lose the sense of purpose and unity behind his philosophic thought.

Nietzsche views the ancient Greek texts as living things, and every living thing requires an atmosphere in which to flourish. He believed that the Presocratic cosmologies have become "hard and barren" over the millennia, because by greedily devouring the trivial workings of their texts, modern scholarship has condemned the ancient geniuses to withstand the bright light of a sun devoid of a protective atmosphere (U II, §7, 95). Nietzsche finds himself connected throughout the millennia with these ancient individuals. He considers himself the "pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic;" and he wants history to provide him with untimely insights that would act against the present age, and have a positive effect on coming ages (U II, Preface, 60). By looking to the past for examples with which to improve the weak and lifeless modern humanity, he hopes to gain "a place of honor in the temple of history" from which to teach and admonish those to come after him (U II, §2, 68). His premise is that what had the power to expand and beautify humanity in the past must still have the power to do so in the present (U II, §2, 68).

Nietzsche is particularly interested in Heraclitus, for in him he finds one "in whose proximity I feel warmer and better than anywhere else" (EH, "The Birth of Tragedy," §3, 273). Heraclitus is not "Heraclitus the Obscure," but a philosopher whose style is more lucid and luminous than almost anyone else's; an unimaginably proud philosopher who lives in solitude and completely without concern for anything in the here and now (PTG §8, 65-66). Like Nietzsche, Heraclitus considers himself to be among the great individuals. He criticizes the masses (DK 104), saying, "What discernment or intelligence do they possess? They place their trust in popular bards, and take the throng for their teacher, not realizing that 'the majority are bad, and only few are good'" (Robinson 1987, 61-63). Heraclitus fits Nietzsche's model for greatness, for he distinguishes himself from the herd, with the result that his writings are hidden from their lower level of intelligence. Nietzsche writes, "All the nobler spirits and tastes select their audience when they wish to communicate; and choosing that, one at the same time erects barriers against 'the others'.... All the more subtle laws of any style have their origin at this point: they at the same time keep away, create a distance, forbid 'entrance', understanding, as said above--while they open the

ears of those whose ears are related to ours" (FW §381, 343). Nietzsche is a fellow inhabitant of Heraclitus's ancient cosmos, in which modern humanity's call for equality is the battle cry only of stasis and death itself.

Throughout his philosophical works Nietzsche criticizes the modern-day concept of humanity, which fatally excludes the notion of struggle and is detrimental to life itself. The goal of modern humanity is to reduce all individuals to the same level, that is, to close the gap between differences and eliminate tension and struggle. This central theme also dominates Nietzsche's study of the Greeks. Tension is the force behind the very existence of the Greek individual and the Greek state, as well as Heraclitus's cosmos. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche says that modern thinkers mistakenly see in the older forms of society the causes of all human misery and failure, and strive to achieve the "green-pasture happiness of the herd, with security, lack of danger, comfort, and an easier life for everyone" (JGB §44, 244). While modern man wants to alleviate suffering, severity, everything terrible and predatory, Nietzsche says that "everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents serves the enhancement of the species 'man' as much as its opposite does" (JGB §44, 244). This very thought is

expressed in the early unpublished essay, "Homer's Contest." There Nietzsche writes that man's "terrible aptitudes, construed as inhuman, are perhaps even the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity in its stirrings, deeds, and actions, can grow forth" (KS I, 783). The Greeks see the horrible strengths of man "not as a defect, but as the effect of a beneficent godhead" (KS I, 787). In Greek society, humanity's most terrible qualities are controlled by the rule-governed contest. The Greeks' lust for annihilation is bounded by their desire to benefit Athens, which supersedes the desire for personal glory and gain.

Instead of harnessing mankind's hostile desires, modern humanity wants to stamp them out as inhuman, and seeks to eliminate them as the cause of human misery. The Christian Church, for example, orders extermination of the passions; its cure for them is castration. But just as "we no longer admire dentists who pull out the teeth to stop them hurting" (G-D §1, 42), the Church exercises extreme folly when it attacks the passions at their roots. To do this is "to attack life at its roots: the practice of the Church is hostile to life..." (G-D §1, 42). The modern morality of helping one's neighbor is based on the decaying instincts of a weak age, in which "everyone is to a certain degree an

invalid and everyone a nurse" (G-D §37, 90). Every strong age, however, is characterized by pathos of distance--"the chasm between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out" (G-D §37, 91). Nietzsche says we should live at war with our neighbor, because tension, envy and competition produce everything which is great in humanity. The never-ending contest for fame and glory, the struggle toward greatness, that is, toward the spiritualization of everything predatory in man, is precisely what is absent in the soft, overstuffed, weak-willed herd morality of modern humanity. Heraclitus expressed it this way (DK 29): "The best choose one thing in place of all things--ever-flowing glory among mortals. The majority, however, glut themselves like cattle" (Robinson 1987, 85).

The concept that competition is essential to life is prominent in Heraclitus's philosophy. The following passage from Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks sums up Nietzsche's perception of the role of the Greek contest as the fundamental thought behind Heraclitus's cosmos:

It is a wonderful idea, welling up from the purest springs of Hellenism, the idea that strife embodies the everlasting sovereignty of strict justice, bound to everlasting laws. Only a Greek was capable of finding such an idea to be the fundament of a cosmology; it is Hesiod's good Eris transformed into the cosmic principle; it is the

contest idea of the Greek individual and the Greek state, taken from the gymnasium and the palaestra, from the artist's agon, from the contest between political parties and between cities--all transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it. (PTG §5, 55)

This passage closely parallels the essay "Homer's Contest," which was written one year previously. In "Homer's Contest" Nietzsche paints a picture of the Greek contest as the "noblest Hellenic fundamental thought" (KS I, 792). He explains that there are two goddesses of envy in Greek mythology. One is thought of as evil because she promotes hostile battles of annihilation among men. The other goddess is considered to be good for mankind, for she motivates men to compete among themselves. Talent and genius unfold only in competition with others, just as "in the natural order of things there are always several geniuses who mutually spur themselves to action and hold themselves within the borders of measure" (KS I, 789). The most important restriction on the competition is that no one shall be the best, for if one individual were to rise above all other opponents, then "the contest would dry up, and the perpetual soil of life for the Hellenic state would be endangered" (KS I, 788). If the state is to survive, the contest must endure. In the same way, the ascendancy of one opposite over the other in

Heraclitus's cosmos can never be maintained without constant strife.

The affirmation of tension and struggle appears in Nietzsche's later works as the doctrine of the will to power. The Greek contest provides the historical basis upon which Nietzsche later builds his prescription for the present age: that "the struggle, great and small, everywhere turns on ascendancy, on growth and extension, in accordance with the will to power, which is precisely the will of life" (FW §349, 230). An historical basis for the will to power has also been identified as Schopenhauer's will to live. In 1865, when Nietzsche was studying philology in Leipzig, he bought a copy of Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation at a second-hand bookstore (Kaufmann 1974, 24). There is a passage in Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (1873) in which Nietzsche seems to criticize Schopenhauer after praising Heraclitus's concept of strife and the Greek contest. He writes that "the basic tone of [Schopenhauer's description of strife] is quite different from that which Heraclitus offers, because strife for Schopenhauer is a proof of the internal self-dissociation of the Will to Live, which is seen as a self-consuming, menacing, and gloomy drive, a thoroughly frightful and by no means blessed phenomenon" (PTG

\$5, 56). In this passage, Nietzsche affirms Heraclitean strife which is interpreted as an ordering force as opposed to Schopenhauer's strife which is a sign of dissociation. It would seem that although Schopenhauer's philosophy had a significant impact on Nietzsche, Heraclitus provided a closer model for his own concept of the will to power.

According to Nietzsche, the will to power is the most fundamental force. He writes that the world is will to power and nothing else (JGB §36, 238); it is the sustaining force behind greatness, as well as the unrefined animosity and envy which propel an individual to the height of glory. The will to power, though, is not an isolated force; the furious drive must have a direction and purpose in order for one to avoid self destruction. "He whom the flames of jealousy surround at last turns his poisoned sting against himself, like the scorpion..." (Z, "Of Joys and Passions," 64-65). What limits and controls the will to power? The passage just quoted from Zarathustra concludes, "Man is something that must be overcome." It is the overman, and later the new philosophers, who are able to harness the will to power and to re-direct this otherwise destructive force that is within mankind.

In the same way, the Greek contest was more than an uncontrolled desire for battle. The Greek individual's struggle for fame was limited by his desire to bring glory to Athens; "he wanted to increase her fame in his own" (KS I, 789). This love of his mother city inflamed his ambition, and at the same time directed it and kept it contained. In this way, says Nietzsche, "the individuals in antiquity were freer because their limits were nearer and more tangible. Modern man, on the other hand, is everywhere crossed by infinity, like the quick-footed Achilles in the parable of the Eleatic, Zeno: infinity hinders him, he cannot even catch up to the tortoise" (KS I, 790). The Greeks embrace their jealousy and animosity, and overcome these apparently terrible characteristics by controlling them with a rule-governed contest, whereas modern ambition has no focus. In the same way Heraclitus's universe consists of opposites which strive for dominion, but not blindly. The competing forces never annihilate their opponent, but are ordered by the logos, which guarantees an eternal contest of coming to be and passing away. Strife is essential to Heraclitus's cosmos, but his universe is not kept in existence by wars of annihilation. The power behind Heraclitus's cosmos is governed and limited by a rule-ordered contest of forces, but

the rules are not absolute; "they are inviolable laws and standards that are immanent in the struggle" (PTG §5, 55). This would be Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus's fragment DK 30: "The ordered world, the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is, and will be, an everliving fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures" (Robinson 1987, 25).

The Greek individual is one who has overcome himself, who has successfully striven to transform his passions into something sublime. Like Nietzsche's overman, he has become his own creator, forever in the process of becoming who he is. "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across..." (Z I, Prologue, 3). The "range between extremes," "tension," and "pathos of distance" are essential in both instances, and are necessary to prevent the weakening of the individual and the state (G-D §37, 91). Tension and overcoming are also vital to Heraclitus's cosmos, in which nothing is in a state of being; it is only by virtue of strife that anything has the semblance of permanence. Heraclitus says (DK 8) that "'what opposes unites', and that the finest attunement stems from things bearing in opposite directions, and that all things come about by strife"

(Robinson 1987, 15). There is no solid ground of being beneath man's feet, and so humanity, like the cosmos itself, must continually re-define itself and create its own boundaries and set of rules. Similarly, Nietzsche wrote, "...this world has a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, not because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely lacking, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment" (JGB §22, 220).

According to the Greek contest, Heraclitean strife, and Nietzsche's will to power, a balancing out of forces is never achieved. A state of equilibrium is never reached, for if all forces were equalized, the struggle which fuels all existence would die out. The Greek contest, the everliving fire, and the passionate struggle must never be extinguished; opposing forces must continue the battle, each overcoming the other in turn, for all eternity. This is the basis of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. The Greek individual must never think his opponent defeated, for this would lead to his own swift downfall and, therefore, to the end of the contest and of life itself. In the same way, the overman is in a constant state of becoming; the morality he creates does not become absolute, but must continuously be infused with new ideas. "Unchanging good and evil does not exist! From out

of themselves they must overcome themselves again and again" (Z, "Of Self Overcoming," 139). The eternal recurrence of the same allows for continuous affirmation of life in the absence of any final state or absolute truth. Like the Greek contest and the Heraclitean logos, the eternal recurrence signifies the order and pattern inherent in all coming to be and passing away. It calls for the perpetuation of conflict and of overcoming; it warns against the illusion of being, and affirms the present world with an eye to the future, which is continually being created here and now.

The study of the Greeks for Nietzsche was much more than an academic exercise. His early essays on the Greeks in which he compares ancient and modern humanity form the very foundation of what he later calls his philosophical thought. In "Homer's Contest," Nietzsche gives his full attention to what he found to be the source of life itself for the Greeks, namely, the contest; and he criticizes modern humanity as being unable even to comprehend this concept (see KS I, 784, 787, 789-90). In Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, he interprets Heraclitus's strife in connection with the Greek contest. The criticism of modern humanity as weak and decadent is repeated as a central theme in his later works. In the Greek contest and Heraclitus's cosmos, Nietzsche finds

what is absent in modern man: the harnessing of so-called
"inhuman" qualities, the affirmation of struggle and strife;
in short, the acceptance of life itself.

CHAPTER THREE

NIETZSCHE'S INTERPRETATION OF HERACLITUS

What can be said about the similarity between Nietzsche's philosophy and that of Heraclitus? Nietzsche believes that he has found a predecessor in Heraclitus, but his interpretation of the Heraclitean fragments has been challenged, most notably by Martin Heidegger. If Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus is shown to be biased or incorrect, the similarities that he saw between his own views and those of Heraclitus would still provide insight into his own philosophy. It is nonetheless interesting to compare his interpretation with that of others. Heidegger in particular has a very different view of Heraclitus, which in the end affects his understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy as well.

According to Heidegger, all of the Greek thinkers speak in the language of being. Even "Heraclitus, to whom is ascribed the doctrine of becoming as diametrically opposed to Parmenides' doctrine of being, says the same as Parmenides" (Heidegger 1959, 97). Nietzsche is mislead, says Heidegger, by traditional interpretations which portray Heraclitus and Parmenides in opposition to one another (Heidegger 1959, 126). Nietzsche's adherence to the tradition in this respect, says Heidegger, leads to an interpretation of

Heraclitus which puts too much emphasis on change (becoming) and does not assign enough importance to the logos (being).

My thesis does not hinge on Nietzsche's interpretation being correct or not. As Sarah Kofman writes, "What is at stake in [the confrontation between Heidegger and Nietzsche] is not the 'philological' truth or falsity of this or that translation or interpretation of such and such a fragment of Heraclitus, but a whole conception of philosophy, of its history, of thought, language, textuality, and translation" (Kofman 1987, 39). Nietzsche and Heidegger have different approaches to the Greek texts, differences that can be traced back to their reasons for wanting to incorporate these texts into their own thought. While Nietzsche is interested in discovering the possibilities for life which existed for the text's author, Heidegger wants to uncover a possibility that "was unthought by the Greeks, but is now ... made possible for us to think" (Maly and Emad 1986, 7). The two approaches are similar in that both thinkers are trying to recover a way of thinking from the past that has a meaning for us in our own time. Both thinkers find something in the ancient Greek world that is missing in society today, to its detriment. The direction the two methods take, however, is reversed. Nietzsche uses the study of the Greeks as a starting point

for his own philosophic thought. The approach to life as a perpetual contest is an idea which is first uncovered as the basis of Greek life and which is then incorporated into Nietzsche's prescription for modern humanity. Heidegger's approach to the Greeks, however, is influenced by his own idea of being as the most fundamental concept. Heidegger finds all of the early Greek thinkers speaking in terms of the language of being, a language which he says has been ignored by the tradition prior to him. Heidegger criticizes Nietzsche's method of trying to uncover the thinking that was unique to philosophers of the past because that method ignores the progression of the history of thought (Kofman 1987, 52). Heidegger himself does not seem concerned with what the Greeks said in the past, but only with what they could possibly say to us today. This fundamental difference in interpretive style leads to widely divergent views of Heraclitus.

While Nietzsche sees in him an affirmation of the will to power, of strife and tension and overcoming, Heidegger makes Heraclitus say the word being. Correspondingly, tension and struggle are what Nietzsche finds missing in modern society, while Heidegger prescribes being. His most textually oriented disagreement with Nietzsche's

interpretation centers around the concept of flux. He writes, "The popular interpretation of Heraclitus tends to sum up his philosophy in the dictum panta rhei, 'everything flows'. If these words stem from Heraclitus to begin with, they do not mean that everything is mere continuous and evanescent change, pure impermanence; no, they mean that the essent as a whole, in its being is hurled back and forth from one opposition to another; being is the gathering of this conflict and unrest" (1959, 134). Heidegger does not think Heraclitus meant that all physical things are constantly changing, but that there is an element of measure and balance in change. This is also the view of G. S. Kirk. The fragment most commonly cited to demonstrate Heraclitus' belief in continuous change is DK 91, "It is not possible to step twice into the same river" (Freeman 1983, 31). This is the fragment Nietzsche refers to when he has Heraclitus proclaim, "I see nothing other than becoming" (PTG §5, 51). Kirk, however, thinks that the river image given in another fragment, DK 12, is more representative of Heraclitus' concept of flux. It reads, "Those who step into the same river have different waters flowing ever upon them" (Freeman 1983, 31; Kirk et al. 1983, 194-197). This fragment emphasizes that the river is, at least in a sense, the same

river, even though it is undergoing change. Kirk's interpretation of the Heraclitean cosmos is that the world as a complex whole retains unity even though its parts are forever changing (1983, 197). There is much controversy over how to interpret these two fragments; for instance, in opposition to Kirk, Guthrie holds the extreme flux view. The two fragments are even thought to be incommensurable, and DK 12 is now considered to be the more genuine expression of Heraclitus's thought (Kirk et al. 1983, 196-97; cf. Robinson 1987, 140).

The disagreement over the two river fragments is usually based on whether one thinks that Heraclitus believed in the constant change of all physical things or only in eventual change. Heidegger accepts the concept of eventual change, and thus finds an element of being in Heraclitus's cosmos. In An Introduction to Metaphysics he writes, "For the Greeks appearing belonged to being, or more precisely that the essence of being lay partly in appearing. This has been clarified through the supreme possibility of human being, as fashioned by the Greeks, through glory and glorification" (1959, 103). Nietzsche, though, says the opposite. Once being is injected into the struggle for glory, that is, once one has reached the highest point of glory and is elevated

above the contest, his downfall is immanent. Nothing remains in a state of being without struggle, just as no opponent can remain unchallenged above the contest. Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus teaches "the everlasting and exclusive coming-to-be, the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts and comes-to-be but never is" (PTG §5, 54). According to his view, it is not necessary that everything change constantly, or even that it eventually change; it is only important that everything is continually in a state of coming-to-be. That is, even though what is present to us in the world may have the semblance of being, it can never arrive at that state because it must constantly struggle to maintain its ascendancy lest it be overtaken. To reach a state of being is impossible. For Nietzsche, the river image is not a symbol for the extreme flux model, rather it is a metaphor for time. The point is that nothing "shows a tarrying, an indestructibility" (PTG §5, 51). He writes, "You use names for things as if they rigidly, persistently endured; yet even the stream into which you step a second time is not the one you stepped into before" (PTG §5, 52). Something may remain unchanged for a period of time, but it does so not because it possesses being; it does so only because it has momentarily ascended above its opponent. "But

this by no means signifies the end of the war; the contest endures in all eternity" (PTG §5, 55). The proclamation that everything is constantly becoming does not mean that everything must always be changing.

Heidegger expresses something similar to what Nietzsche says when he writes, "Because being as logos is basic gathering, not mass and turmoil in which everything has as much or as little value as everything else, rank and domination are implicit in being. If being is to disclose itself, it must have and maintain a rank" (1959, 133). He writes, "[The logos] does not let what it holds in its power dissolve into an empty freedom from opposition, but by uniting the opposites maintains the full sharpness of their tension" (Heidegger 1959, 134). Heidegger finds being in the logos, which is a gathering and a harmony. To him the logos is the pattern of the hierarchical structure of beings, it is the permanent order that gives meaning to the chaos and keeps it from falling apart. This is what Heidegger thinks is missing from Nietzsche's view of Heraclitus as the philosopher of becoming. As Nietzsche explains, the logos is eternal and unwritten harmony, but not one that imposes itself on the world of strife from outside; the physical world is no longer ruled by a metaphysical one (PTG §5, 51).

Although Heidegger criticizes Nietzsche for overemphasizing becoming in Heraclitus, he also makes the attempt to read Nietzsche as if he, too, had been speaking the language of being all along. When Heidegger tries to overturn Nietzsche's concepts to fit into his own understanding of being, however, Nietzsche's thought is completely lost. At one point it seems that the reason for having Nietzsche say "Being" is to put him back into the company of metaphysicians. Heidegger writes, "The very nature of becoming is determined as will to power. Can one then still call Nietzsche's thinking a consummation of metaphysics? Is it not its denial, or even its overcoming? Away from 'Being'--and on to 'Becoming'?" (Heidegger 1987, vol. III, 155-56). In the following paragraphs he explains that:

As opposed to all that, we must consider anew what will to power means: empowering to the excelling of one's own essence. Empowering brings excelling--becoming--to a stand and to permanence. In the thought of will to power, what is becoming and is moved in the highest and most proper sense--life itself--is to be thought in its permanence.

This interpretation of Nietzsche ignores the fundamental idea behind the Greek contest: that it must never end. Once one contestant rises above all other contestants, once his excelling is brought to permanence, his swift downfall has

already begun. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche parallels his interpretation of Heraclitus's river fragment. In both cases there is something which possesses being (the river and life itself), yet which is constantly becoming. Life itself, which is full of change, is to be thought in its permanence in the same way the logos represents the eternal order which rules over the otherwise chaotic world. Nietzsche's view is different. According to his interpretation of Heraclitus, there is no absolute order. Even though the logos is eternal, it is created out of and held together by the tension between opposites. Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus, "could no longer see the contesting pairs and their referees as separate; the judges themselves seemed to be striving in the contest and the contestants seemed to be judging them.... The struggle of the many is pure justice itself!" (PTG §6, 57).

When Nietzsche is interpreted by Heidegger in terms of being, the world becomes something which is powerless to create itself. It still retains becoming (Heidegger 1984, vol. II, 147), but it also possesses being in a passive way. It no longer has to struggle for value and existence. To Heidegger, the eternal recurrence is what redeems the world from its eternal flux, by injecting being into becoming

(Heidegger 1984, vol. II, 144). He says that the eternal flux is represented in Nietzsche's philosophy as the will to power (1977, 74). The will to power has an essentially destructive character (Heidegger 1984, vol. II, 145), and it is the eternal recurrence that overcomes this eternal flux. In the end, this kind of overcoming would lead to permanence; to the slackening of tension and the alleviation of strife. Heidegger uses this interpretation of Nietzsche to show what a very peculiar affair his 'Heracliteanism' is.

In Nietzsche's philosophy, constant strife has an inherent structure in the form of the eternal recurrence, but the eternal recurrence does not freeze the eternal flow, nor does it incorporate the ultimate truth. Becoming itself is not something to be overcome and injected with being; becoming is not a war of annihilation but a rule-governed contest similar to Heraclitus's cosmos. The eternal recurrence limits the struggle in the way the logos does, but it does not throw any Being into the path of the eternal flow, as Heidegger thinks. At best, "That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being" (WM, 617).

It is impossible to reconcile the differences between Heidegger and Nietzsche. Their purposes and goals differ too

much. Nietzsche likes the idea of taking a terrible, paralyzing thought such as the impermanence of everything and transforming it "into sublimity and the feeling of blessed astonishment" (PTG §5, 54). The thought that existence has no meaning, but recurs inevitably without end, "is the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (the 'meaningless'), eternally!" (WM §55, 36). And yet, Nietzsche perceived this thought to be a new source of strength. He writes, "To the paralyzing sense of general disintegration and incompleteness I opposed the eternal recurrence" (WM §417, 224). This is the sense in which eternal flux is overcome. It is not stabilized by being, rather it produces an inherent ordering pattern that rises out of the struggle itself. Heidegger, by reading an element of being into the picture, disrupts this cycle of the creative force.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETERNAL RECURRENCE, WILL TO POWER AND OVERMAN

In order to understand how Nietzsche's ideas of the eternal recurrence, will to power, and overman complement one another and work together, it is essential to understand the common ground out of which they are developed. A feel for Nietzsche's method of interpretation will be useful in recognizing this common ground, even in the face of his reluctance to discuss his sources, and will help to fit these ideas into a coherent picture of his thought.

Nietzsche's method of interpretation is much more textually oriented than Heidegger's phenomenological approach. Instead of searching for a particular insight concealed between the lines of a text, as Heidegger does, Nietzsche tries to open up a path between us and the author. Nietzsche does not attempt to subvert the text in the way Heidegger does, yet his approach is not like that of traditional scholarship either. His method of interpretation goes beyond an objective search for knowledge about the text. His aim is to revive the text, to reach an understanding of it and an agreement with it (cf. Kofman 1987, 52).

This is the way Nietzsche approaches the ancient Greek texts in his earliest philological writings. He interprets

these texts in order to allow a possibility for life, which was present to the Presocratic philosophers, to show itself to us in modern times. When Nietzsche's texts are interpreted in the same way that he himself approached a text, one can begin to see why he is so reluctant to acknowledge his predecessors. The repeated mention of Heraclitus without specific acknowledgment of Heraclitus's "influence" is a significant feature of this reluctance. Nietzsche approaches a text from the standpoint of a fellow architect of history. He considers himself to be among the great individuals who have understood and shaped history. Because of this approach he feels justified in reviving the ancient texts within his own philosophical writings, without acknowledging the original authors. According to Nietzsche's method of interpretation, what is important is not the actual text itself (as it would be in a traditional scholarly approach), and it is not even the philosophical system presented in the text. Nietzsche wants to uncover the individual philosopher's way of life, and the intrinsic possibility for life that existed in the author's time, which is still accessible to us through the text. Nietzsche's ultimate source is neither the author nor his text. These

are only the paths that he follows to his original source, the way of life that was present to the author.

According to this, what intrigued Nietzsche about Heraclitus was not the specific cosmological system that could be pieced together from the fragments of text. Even when he was writing about Heraclitus explicitly, as in Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Nietzsche was interested in the ground in which Heraclitus's ideas were nurtured. This is why it is so important to look at his interpretation of Heraclitus in light of Nietzsche's affinity for the Greek contest. When searching for the connection between the eternal recurrence, the will to power, and the overman, it is also helpful to approach Nietzsche's text the same way that he approached a text, as being based on a particular way of life. When Nietzsche began to write his philosophical books, he had already completed his search for the foundation of the ancient Greek texts, and it was no longer necessary for him to use the texts or to write about them. The ways of thinking he had uncovered were now his to present to the modern world in his own way. As a result, Nietzsche's thought can be interpreted as a reworking of notions such as Heraclitean strife and the Greek contest, and

as a repackaging of them for presentation to the modern world.

Nietzsche's aphoristic style does not leave much room for the discussion of his predecessors. A mention of various relevant doctrines similar to his would require too much detail and analysis, which would weaken the intuitive impact of his works. Nietzsche writes passionately and with a purpose; he writes so that the right reader will experience a flash of insight. At the same time he wants to exclude the wrong readers who could work their way through a lengthy argument. In the Forward to The Antichrist, he writes, "These alone are my readers, my rightful readers, my predestined readers: what do the rest matter?--The rest are merely mankind.--One must be superior to mankind in force, in loftiness of soul--in contempt" (A, Forward, 114). Nietzsche writes in a way that he hopes will obscure his thought from most, and will reveal it only to the few who are strong enough to embrace his ideas. The masses of humanity are not strong enough to recognize their freedom, their "will to self-responsibility" (G-D §38, 92), and so are not fully human.

When considering Nietzsche's contempt for the mass of humanity, it is important to understand what he means by the

notion of the overman, of the great individual. Unless the overman is understood in accordance with Greek thought, Nietzsche's contempt for the masses can be misconstrued, and his views perhaps distorted by his arrogant tone (cf. Schutte 1984, x). Greatness is measured according to one's acknowledgement and harnessing of the will to power within oneself. According to Nietzsche, it is only the few strongest individuals who are able to accept this furious drive and contain it. Today, the class of genius is thought to be an exclusive one. Great individuals are defined according to what is held in esteem by the mass of society, such as wealth, beauty or political power, for example. These individuals may be resented or feared as being invulnerable, since their power is conferred upon them according to popular and therefore ontologically irrelevant criteria. However, Nietzsche's concept of the great individual is based on the ancient Greek view that the rank of genius is never an exclusive one. The distinction between the ancient and modern concepts of the genius is made in "Homer's Contest." In order for the contest to continue it must be open to several geniuses who compete among themselves, a thought which "is hostile to the 'exclusiveness' of the genius in the modern sense..." (KS I,

789). For the Greeks there are no pre-set conditions for greatness, according to which an exclusive class is measured, because if the competition were not kept open to different "weaker" natures, then the contest would degenerate.

Not only must the overman be able to acknowledge and direct his will to power, he must at the same time be strong enough to live with the most paralyzing, nihilistic thought, the eternal recurrence. The eternal recurrence governs the world of the overman. The belief that the struggle never ends, but eternally turns back upon itself, acts upon him like a stimulant. Greatness is not something that can be achieved; it can only be sustained through continued strife. Only the strongest individuals can acknowledge the never ending cycle, the knowledge that there is no final state, no absolute goal to be reached. The individuals who can accept this are the ones who are willing to set their own limits and thus contain and direct their will to power. Only when it is acknowledged that there is no final goal or end to life is the overman able to embrace his will to power. Without the perspective of the eternal recurrence, he is content to play out his role in the progression of humanity toward predetermined goals. When the point of view of the eternal recurrence is taken, when there is nothing beyond the endless

perpetual cycle of events, strong individuals are compelled to take on a decisive role. They strive toward the only possible goal, which is the eventual return of the cycle to the present moment. Like a serpent biting its tail, the overman is driven forward by the thought of conquering the present again and again.

The overman affirms the moment of joy, and longs for its opposite, because he knows that the two are inseparable. "Pain is also joy, a curse is also a blessing, the night is also a sun.... Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to all woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love" (2 IV, "The Intoxicated Song," §10, 331). To desire the return of joy is also to affirm its eternal struggle with despair, for joy cannot exist without its opposite. Because the struggle between the two will never end, neither joy nor despair will endure, but both will return eternally. Because the overman embraces this thought, he can only affirm and wish for both.

If the eternal recurrence is supposed to act upon the will to power as a stimulant, then it is problematic to interpret the eternal recurrence as something which adds an element of stability to the world of becoming. Heidegger is

not the only commentator to discover an element of being in the eternal recurrence. Kaufman, Danto, and Joan Stambaugh also take this view as the starting point from which to analyze the eternal recurrence. Danto writes, "In the end, there is no passing away and no true becoming in the world. There is an eternally frozen mobility" (1968, 211). Kaufman writes, "[Nietzsche] thought he had succeeded in creating a synthesis of the philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides, of the dynamic and the static world-pictures, of being and becoming" (1974, 328), and Stambaugh writes, "If finitude is understood to mean impermanence, eternal return is that which gives permanence to Becoming" (1972, 13). When making these statements, Kaufman and Stambaugh both cite the same passage from the Will to Power as Heidegger does: "that everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being" (WM 617, 330).

Each of these commentators progresses from this point in a different way. Danto sees the eternal recurrence acting on the overman as a Kantian categorical imperative. "Stated as an imperative: So act (or so be) that you would be willing to act exactly the same way (or be exactly the same thing) an infinite number of times over" (Danto 1968, 212). This view is criticized by Kaufman who explains that Nietzsche is not

concerned with providing a universal guideline or criterion for particular actions (1974, 325). Combee also disagrees with Danto's interpretation by pointing out that, "it involves acting with recognition of eternal recurrence as a fact beyond one's will" (1974, 40). If the eternal recurrence is to be interpreted as an universal criterion or fact, then it is no longer a nihilistic thought. Kaufman draws a more compatible conclusion, which is that the overman finds eternity in the moment (1974, 328). Kaufman criticizes Nietzsche's notion of the return, though, saying that "One can grasp Nietzsche's conception of "Dionysian" joy while feeling that the more explicit 'doctrine' [of eternal recurrence] transforms a fruitful notion into a rigid crudity" (1974, 332). Stambaugh sees the eternal recurrence as providing the will to power with "something stable, something which constantly remains to be overcome and thus gives rise to more. Otherwise the Will to Power would simply be a chaotic flux" (1972, 14). In this sense, the eternal recurrence supports the will to power by guaranteeing the eternity of overcoming. The only difficulty with this interpretation is the Stambaugh sees the eternal recurrence as providing the will to power with a stable ground. According to Stambaugh, the eternal recurrence complements

the will to power by guaranteeing the eternal nature of the struggle, in the way the Greek contest calls for the perpetuation of competition. Connecting the eternal recurrence with the notion of will to power in this way can be awkward. Stambaugh wants to avoid the attempt to fit "Nietzsche's two fundamental concepts ... into the framework of a systematic relationship which Nietzsche never reached and perhaps did not wish to reach" (1972, 101). Though Nietzsche does not think of his philosophy as constituting an overarching system, it should nonetheless be possible to find a working connection between his two main doctrines. When the will to power and eternal recurrence are approached from behind Nietzsche's text, that is, from the standpoint of Heraclitus's cosmos and the Greek contest, the two can be seen to fit together so that one does not exclude the other.

If the eternal recurrence does stabilize the will to power, it could only weaken the position of the overman. The overman is motivated by this most nihilistic thought, he is able to recognize his will to power because of the lack of any being or permanence, because of the lack of any stable ground beneath his feet. When the will to power and eternal recurrence are placed in the context of Heraclitean strife,

the eternal recurrence no longer detracts from the will to power by serving as a stabilizer.

The eternal recurrence is Nietzsche's way of explaining the world of flux itself, and the effect it has on humanity.

In Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, he writes:

The everlasting and exclusive coming-to-be, the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts and comes-to-be but never is, as Heraclitus teaches it, is a terrible, paralyzing thought. Its impact on men can most nearly be likened to the sensation during an earthquake when one loses one's familiar confidence in a firmly grounded earth. It takes astonishing strength to transform this reaction into its opposite, into sublimity and the feeling of blessed astonishment. Heraclitus achieved this by means of an observation regarding the actual process of all coming-to-be and passing away. He conceived it under the form of polarity, as being the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to re-unite. (PTG §5, 54)

According to this description of Heraclitus's cosmos, which is similar to Nietzsche's descriptions of the eternal recurrence, what redeems the eternal flux is the tension between extremes which is inherent in the process of becoming itself. Rather than a chaotic war between opposites, the struggle is an orderly contest in which each quality is inextricably bound to its opposite. The character of becoming is nihilistic in that the permanent victory of one opposite over another is impossible. There is no room for stability or being in this world of becoming.

What is the connection between the world of becoming, of the eternal contest between opposites, and the will to power? The world of the eternal recurrence is the world of the great individual who is able to contain and overcome his will to power by transforming it from a nihilistic force into a productive one. If the eternal recurrence were to act upon the will to power in such a way as to lend order and permanence to it, then the burden of controlling this drive is removed from the shoulders of the individual; for it is already contained. In this sense, the two concepts do not fit together. The will to power represents an unlimited, terrible drive, while the eternal recurrence represents an ordered contest of forces that will never have a victor. In what way are the two compatible? The eternal recurrence is what the overman strives for within himself; for the rules of eternal becoming, of the contest, do not apply to humanity by nature. Each individual must choose whether to enter into the eternal contest or to extinguish the struggle with his will to power by denying his passions altogether. The eternal recurrence and will to power fit together in that the strongest individuals must embrace the fact of eternal recurrence as a way of harnessing their will to power. It is the belief in eternal recurrence which gives them the

strength to acknowledge the potential of this terrible drive as a source of elevation and increase.

The quotation that Heidegger, Kaufman and Stambaugh cite can easily be misconstrued. It is important to note that Nietzsche only said that the eternal recurrence is the closest approximation of the world of becoming to a world of being. This does not mean that the eternal recurrence provides an element of being; the world is still referred to as the world of becoming. The eternal recurrence does not provide a semblance of being, for if it did, it would no longer serve as a nihilistic thought.

When the eternal recurrence and the will to power are no longer approached as being independent doctrines but as products of a particular view of life, it can be seen that they do not have to be alike in order to be compatible. When viewed in accordance with Nietzsche's affinity for Heraclitus and the Greek contest, they can both be seen to fit within Nietzsche's world-view, with each doctrine representing a different aspect of his viewpoint. Within the rejuvenated atmosphere of Heraclitean strife and the Greek contest, the eternal recurrence takes on the role of the unwritten laws of becoming and the limiting nature of the contest. The will to power is that unrefined drive which strong individuals must

acknowledge and overcome, by accepting the thought that the struggle will continue throughout eternity. These strong individuals must live according to the eternal recurrence, so that instead of abandoning the struggle to be human, their natures are constantly transforming the will to power into something higher: always "flowing upward and downward in brazen rhythmic beat" (PTG §5, 51), "so that the contest of powers [will] once again awaken" (KS I, 789).

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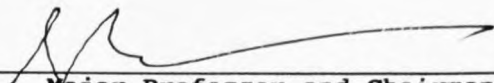
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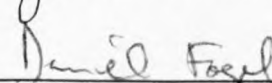
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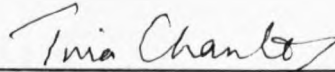
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