

Gestell, Ereignis, and the Eternal Return
(Chapter 9 of Draft MS: *The Logic of Being: Heidegger, Truth, and Time*)

Over the last several chapters, we have attempted to demonstrate an original phenomenon of undecidability at the root of the givenness of sense and of number. This structural undecidability is formally indicated, as I have argued, through the actual hermeneutics of these factual phenomena, and thereby points, more deeply, to a structurally paradoxical “original” structure of given time. This underlying structure of real paradox internally complicates the ontological problematic of the truth of being, insofar as it also suggests a structurally undecidable logic at the basis of the historical determination of the several epochs of the understanding of being characteristic of the history of metaphysics. As we have seen, in particular, the development of these metaformal indications complicates both the structure of the ontological difference between being and beings and that of the “clearing”, the topological or structural condition of the possibility of a disclosure of being. In indicating these features, the metaformal hermeneutic demonstratively articulates the problematic of thinking and being as it inherently involves the problematic of the givenness of time.

This is the problem that presented itself to Plato as among the deepest with which a dialectical understanding of what truly is would have to reckon; thereby it conditions, as well, the way in which the thinking of being subsequently unfolds as determined by the structure of *logic* that is thought as common to the jointly *ontological* and *theological* founding of the meaning of beings in their being. This unfolding itself reaches a certain kind of completion *and also overcoming*, as I have argued, with the development of modern forms of mathematical logic following Frege and in particular with the metaformal indicated problems of totality and reflexivity that directly follow from them. This overcoming is already suggested as a consequence of Frege’s radical critique of subjectivist representationalism, which leads him to propose a virtual structure of “objective” sense, inherent in language as such as its real structure without being “actual” in the sense of effective. And it is confirmed subsequently in the metaformal results, from Russell’s paradox to Gödel’s theorems in their extended implications, that point to the inherence of the real at the problematic point of the impasse of formal symbolizations, systems, and procedures.

In this final chapter, I consider the consequences of these meta-formal indications as they relate to the *contemporary* ontological situation. The distinctive problems of this situation, whether determined as political, sociological, ethical or ecological, are characterized by *totality*: they are problems about the constitution of wholes, negotiations of the boundaries of what is seen as all-inclusive, and border questions at the limits of the logic of total systems that claim and enforce global comprehensiveness. They are also, just as much, characterized by the presumed effectiveness and force of what is (ambiguously enough) called “technology,” which I shall here understand in a sense that preserves the link of the term with the Greek *techne* as well as with the later-developed sense of “technique” or

procedure. In the light of these problems and in view of the situational factors that determine them, the original question of the relationship of thought and being indeed does, as I shall argue here, also take on a distinctive shape, conditioned as much by the radical discoveries of meta-formal insight that make the structure of the infinite available to mathematical thought, in our time, as by the specific technologies and material practices – in particular the technologies of computation and “information” -- that follow from them. The specific question of the relationship of the finite to the infinite here takes on, as we have already seen, a deepened significance, and is also transformed on meta-formal grounds. But these grounds are also nothing other than the ones on which we must in our time pose the question of the determined limits of our thought and practice, and of what insists or resists beyond them.

From this perspective, Heidegger’s suggestion of a determined history of metaphysics, itself always characterized by its ways of onto-theologically determining the ontic totality of beings, that reaches its inherent culmination or exhaustion in the contemporary situation is an exemplary figure of the reflection on structures of closure and totality that must itself characterize any thinking that can adequately respond to these characteristic problems of our time. But as we have seen over the last several chapters, the formal-ontological provenance of these problems themselves demands a deepening of the ontological problematic on meta-formally indicated grounds.

This deepening and the indications it yields are already sufficient to articulate the relationship of the ontological question to the problems of the contemporary, and of what “beyond” it, is to come, in a different direction. Here, in particular, what is at issue with respect to the determined “history of metaphysics” is no longer the task of a deconstructive “retrieval” of what is thought at its origin and progressively concealed within it or that of safeguarding, during or after the period of its totality or its exhaustion, what within it is, as ultimately determining, anyway purported to be its greatest exigency. It is, rather, just a question of understanding how this relatively determined history can be seen to communicate formally, at a certain point, with its *own* broader structural and temporal conditions in the underlying problems to which it points, and thereby how, with its ontologically-formally determined closure, it also and in the same moment points to a broader “outside”.¹ In fact, the suggestion of such a broader conditioning of the relatively determined “metaphysics of presence” is already essentially made as soon as the structure of the formal problematics of time and sense that we have pursued are indicated. These problematics themselves are configurations to which something like the thinking of “being as presence” must itself be originally responsive, and to which this thinking again opens up at the determined point of the closure or exhaustion of its determining rubrics. It is no accident from this perspective that, as I have argued, they also appear to indicate original formal-ontological problems that plausibly underlie the structure of “natural” time just as much as they do “historical” time, and so thereby articulate the formal and metaformal conditions ontologically characteristic of *thinkable* time, however further determined, and as such.

¹ Cf. Jacques Derrida: “Perhaps we must attempt to think this unheard-of thought, this silent tracing: that the history of Being, whose thought engages the Greco-Western *logos* such as it is produced via the ontological difference, is but an epoch of the *diapherein*. “(p. 22)

I

Familiarly, in “The Question Concerning Technology” and elsewhere, Heidegger characterizes the contemporary age as determined by the predominance of what he describes as the “essence” of technology: *Gestell* or enframing. This essence is not, according to Heidegger, itself any technological thing; nor is it determined or determinable as an outcome simply of human activity. Unlike the various specific technological instruments and systems, we cannot understand the claim of modern technology itself as responsive to antecedently given human needs or desires; rather, understanding technology in its essence requires that we understand how it imposes upon us, “challenging” us to certain characteristic kinds of activity and production. Its determination of the contemporary condition results in a pre-determining of all beings as resources and the “setting-in-order” of all beings in advance as “standing-reserve” [*Bestand*] for production, manipulation, and exploitation. In the essence of modern technology, processes are active that pre-date any specifically modern activity of production and are linked to the original meaning of *techne*, which the Greeks experienced as an organic “bringing-forth” more closely connected to the arts and to the very meaning of truth than to any “production” in the modern sense. According to Heidegger, then, technology is best understood as a mode of revealing or bringing-forth; its “place” is that of truth conceived as “*aletheia*” or disclosure, the bringing-forth of entities from their hiddenness. However, with respect to specifically *modern* technology, this original revealing becomes a “challenging forth,” an aggressive attitude toward things and resources which puts to the natural world the “unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such.” (p. 320). This challenging is a “setting-upon” nature which sets nature in a certain, imposed order only so that resources can be extracted and efficiency optimized. For instance, the modern hydroelectric plant set up on the Rhine completely transforms the character of this ancient river, transforming it into a neutral resource or “standing-reserve” to be drawn upon at our command and constantly challenged to deliver more and more energy resources.

In a related sense, the characteristic and dominant configuration of contemporary thought and practice is described, in a number of texts of the 1930s and 1940s, as a “machination” [*Machenschaft*] which (circularly) aims to order all beings with a view only to their ever-greater orderability. Heidegger understands the contemporary dominance of *Gestell* or (earlier) *Machenschaft* as itself the expression of the necessarily *final* epochal determination of the being of beings within the series of configurations that make up the history of metaphysics as a whole. With this dominance, the “possibilities” of metaphysics are in a certain way completed or exhausted; the exhaustion takes the form, in particular, of the completion of the progressive withdrawal of Being itself from thinkability that has characterized the development of metaphysics since its inception.

Gestell is thus the historically and structurally determined form of the culmination of a history of ever-greater obscurity and forgetting, whereby all the original possibilities of metaphysics are finally used up and the withdrawal of Being and truth is thought as complete. It is therefore striking that at various places in his late work, Heidegger gestures toward an enigmatic relationship, indicated as to be “looked into” or “looked forward to” in the further development of ontological thought or the thought that comes after it, but not significantly developed, between *Gestell* and *Ereignis* itself. One formulation of this is given in the Le Thor seminar of 1969:

An excellent way of approaching *Ereignis* would be to look into the essence of enframing [*Ge-stell*] insofar as it is a passage from metaphysics to another thinking ...for enframing is essentially ambiguous....Enframing is, as it were, the photographic negative of enowning.² (p. 60)

Or, in a partially similar formulation from “The Principle of Identity” (1957):

Thus looking toward the present [*der Gegenwart entgegenblickend*], beyond the situation of man, thinking catches sight of [*erblickt*] the constellation of Being and man in terms of what joins the two to each other [*was beide einander eignet*], from out of the event [*aus dem Ereignis*].

Assuming that the possibility awaited us [*die Möglichkeit warte uns entgegen*] that the frame [*Ge-stell*] – the mutual challenge of man and Being in the calculation of what is calculable – were to award itself to us as the event [*Ereignis*] which first surrenders man and Being to their own [*das Mensch und Sein erst in ihr Eigentliches enteignet*]; then a path would be open for man to experience beings in a more originary way – the totality [*das Ganze*] of the modern technological world, nature and history, and above all their Being.³

With these formulations, Heidegger appears also to indicate a curious relationship of the *totality* of the history of metaphysics – thought as its “culmination”, or the “exhaustion” of its possibilities in the contemporary dominance of *Gestell*, with something outside or beyond it that also determines it. This is the *Ereignis* which grants or ontologically precedes each of the determinate configurations of metaphysics and the whole “epoch” of presence itself. The relationship suggested here between the final of these configurations and this opening is not assured or extant; it is, rather, to be glimpsed, anticipated or prepared, recommended as a *possible* path for thought to come or itself dependent ultimately on the granting that *Ereignis* may allow. Nevertheless, in that *Ereignis* is thought, from the *Beitraege zur Philosophie* to the end of Heidegger’s career, as the very event of the happening of an “other” to the metaphysics of presence or the present itself, and thus (in other words) the event that determines the possibility of a *future* in general, these are determinate indications of the actual form of a thinkable relationship between all that is enclosed in this history and what insists beyond it as its condition and exterior. As such, and as, in particular, determinations of what is hidden or concealed, latent or implicit, in the total character of modern technology, they are indications of the *temporal* relationship of the determined history of metaphysics to what appears as its specifically “other” future.

The problem of this relationship is the problem of the “present” time of technology in relation to the time that, surrounding and determining it, also can (Heidegger suggests) perhaps be indicated on the basis of an ontological thinking of its underlying formal essence. This thinking would itself necessarily be, in a certain way, the repetition of a thinking of time or of the possibility of a future that is itself “determined” by what is called the essence of technology – and *in particular* is determined through and

² “Seminar in Le Thor 1969”, in *Four Seminars*, transl. Andrew Mitchell and Francois Raffoul. Bloomington, IN: Indiana U. Press, 2003, p. 60.

³ “The Principle of Identity”, p. 40 (translation slightly altered).

at the limits of calculation and calculability and the “configuration” or “constellation” in which it places man and Being. It is significant, in this connection, that in indicating the possible relationship between Gestell and Ereignis Heidegger himself uses, in the first quotation, a *technological* metaphor of picturing: that of the negative *photographic* image. In the second formulation, along similar lines, what is indicative of the relation, what gives it to be seen, is specifically determined by “calculation” and what is “calculable” and the particular relationship that exists between them. What is invoked here, in both cases, is not, then, a simple exteriority of “technological” thinking or “calculative” thought to the thought of Being as such, but rather a deep mutual imbrication, whereby the more or less determined forms of technology indicate or become, by means of a sudden reversal whose possibility is nevertheless deeply programmed in their essence, the thinking of or from Ereignis itself.

With this, Heidegger points to the forms in which our “technological” present will possibly or could conceivably communicate with the “beyond” to metaphysics that thereby takes on the sense of a possible future of it, or of a future, in general, beyond the forms of pre-determination that the metaphysically determined ontotheological thought of being will always have enforced. And indeed it would probably not go too far to say that the forms in which a “future” can today be envisaged, the forms in which our age knows itself in relation to what it thinks as its possible “beyond,” are so many figures of this very relationship between a technologically determined thinking of time and the “event”, envisioned in alternate forms of anxiety and celebration as the technologically inevitable moment of global catastrophe or as the equally determined “singularity” in which technological thinking finally overcomes itself and transforms itself, no longer needing the assistance of the organic “human” powers of thought, into something completely unforeseeable by means of them. According to Heidegger, however, the possibility of the thinking that goes to and from the event of the future to come is not to be seen except from within a thinking of the *history* of what, first giving us to think time at all, also withdraws progressively within this history. This withdrawal, familiarly, will have marked and programmed the history of metaphysics, and it is only with the *completion* of its itinerary that its *happening* can truly or actually appear.

How are thought and being related at the beginning of this history, and at its end? And to what kind of determination of time do they thereby point? In the *Beitraege* (1936-38), Heidegger gives another formulation of the peculiar relationship between the essence of technology (here named as “machination”) and the event of Being, here thought as its truth:

Machination as the essential occurrence [Wesung] of beingness [Seiendheit] gives a first hint [gibt einen ersten Wink] of the truth of Being itself. We know little enough of machination, although it dominates the being-history of the previous Western philosophy, from Plato to Nietzsche.⁴

Machination is here thought, not only as the latest and final configuration of the metaphysical thinking of being as “beingness” (Seiendheit), but as in fact “dominating” (durchherrscht) this history in its entirety. In thinking this domination as an “essential” occurrence, it is possible to gain a first glimpse or

⁴ *Beitraege* p. 127 (transl. slightly modified)

hint of the truth of Beyng itself – that is, when it is thought in itself outside just this determination as the “beingness” of beings.

In particular, the futural thinking toward or from Ereignis here takes the form of a grasping of the inner connection of what is, for Heidegger, deeply and decisively linked with machination – the dominance of “lived-experience” [Erlebnis] which develops an anthropologicist or subjectivist principle of the unified experienceability of all things, events, and phenomena. This connection is itself the indication of a particular non-simultaneity, one which opens and closes the history of metaphysics:

If machination and experience are named together, that indicates an essential belonging of the two to each other but at the same moment [zugleich] an equally essential [gleichwesentliche] *non-simultaneity* [Ungleichzeitigkeit] within the “time” of the history of Beyng...

The belonging of the two with and to each other [*Die Zusammengehörigkeit beider*] can be grasped only through a return to their most disparate non-simultaneity and through a dispelling of the appearance of their extreme oppositionality. If thoughtful meditation [Besinnung] (as questioning of the truth of beyng and only as this) achieves knowledge of such belonging, then at the same time the basic thrust [Grundzug] of the history of the first beginning (the history of Western metaphysics) is already grasped out of the knowledge of the other beginning. *Machenschaft* and *Erlebnis* is formally (formelhaft) the more original framing of the formula for the guiding question of Western thought: Beingness (Being) and thinking (as representational grasping).⁵

The “non-simultaneity” to which Heidegger here points is the gap which opens up between thinking and being as such with what is here understood as the “first beginning” – the original thought of being as beingness in the Greeks – and closes in the contemporary configuration of the ever-more insistent dominance of machination and lived-experience. Between this opening and this closing, the whole history of metaphysics is comprehended, and the principle and formula of its communication *as a whole* (“within the ‘time’ of the history of beyng”) with its broader exterior thereby indicated. What is the basis of this indication itself, which Heidegger here specifies as doubly formal, both in the sense of the “formula” for the history of metaphysics – Being and Thinking – and its *more* original formulation – *machenschaft* and *Erlebnis*? According to Heidegger’s suggestion, metaphysics will have had a beginning and end in the thinking of presence, here understood as the dual form of the presence of being, determined as beingness, to thinking, determined as representation; and again, more basically, as that of the linked configuration of machination and lived experience as the redoubled general circulation of experienceable beings.

But how do the beginning, and the end, themselves “take place”? The question has to do with time, the time that Heidegger here indicates exactly as the “‘time’ of the history of beyng,” *in* which the gap between the open and closing of metaphysics – the time *of* the history of metaphysics – itself takes place. How is this time to be thought? It is indicated, here, on the basis of nothing other than the character of a *machenschaft* whose basic form is calculation.

⁵ P. 128 (transl. slightly modified).

Over the last chapters, we have seen formal grounds for beginning to think an originally structure of paradox that is formally indicated, both as the infinite given time of the cosmos and as the paradoxical form of the instant, as the constitutive real-insistent infinite of the instant and the world, as soon as the availability in general of the actual infinite to thought is itself reflected in a thinking of time. WE have also had reason to see a specific link between this given form and the original givenness of number, at the basis of all counting and measuring and all possible calculation as such. If Heidegger does not follow out these connections in detail or by pursuing the analysis of the metaformal question of this givenness of number, he nevertheless repeatedly indicates a thinking of the original form of time that would be at or beyond the formally indicated specific limits of calculation and counting as such. This thinking, followed out (as we have attempted to do here) in terms of the original paradoxes structurally constitutive of time as it gives itself both cosmologically and instantaneously, structurally points to deeper problems of the structure of this more “general” time in which the history of metaphysics, stretched between its Greek inception and its contemporary closure, “takes place”. In particular: does this broader time *itself* “happen” sometime? Does it, like the determined time of the “metaphysics of presence”, open at some locatable time and close at another? And if so, how locatable, how calculable? (How to count what surrounds and conditions counting in general, the more general *conditions* for the possibility of countable order as such)? Or does it go on forever, without beginning or end, endlessly varying itself in configurations whose own rule and decidability would then be found in their constant novelty? Or is it neither of these: neither itself a finite configuration with beginning and end nor an openly infinite endless becoming whose principle is freedom, but rather a path determined both by the form of the unlimited and by the refusal of every such principle, of freedom and novelty as much as of determinacy and necessity: in short, does it *eternally return*?

II

The Nietzsche courses taught by Heidegger between 1936 and 1939 occupy a decisive position within the articulation of the project of the history of being that begins in the *Beitraege* and continues throughout the rest of Heidegger’s career. In the courses, Heidegger develops the suggestion, already made there, that Nietzsche’s thinking represents the *end* of the history of metaphysics that pursues the “guiding question” of the being of beings as opposed to the “grounding question” of being’s truth.⁶ In the lectures as a whole, Heidegger seeks an understanding of Nietzsche’s “basic metaphysical position;” he finds the guideline for this understanding in two statements: first, that the “basic character of beings as such is ‘will to power’” and second, that “Being is ‘eternal recurrence of the same.’”⁷ The implications

⁶ “Wird naeh dem Seienden als Seiendem gefragt (Bv Uov) und in *dieser* Ansetzung und Riehtung somit naeh dem Sein des Seienden, dann steht der Fragende im Bereieh *der* Frage, von der der Anfang der abendlandisehen Philosophie und deren Gesehichte bis zum Ende in Nietzsche geleitet war. Wir nennen deshalb *diese* Frage naeh dem Sein (des Seienden) die Leitfrage. Ihre allgemeinste Form hat bei Aristoteles die Pragung erhalten ..et 'to oV; was ist das Seiende, d. h. fur ihn, was ist Quota als die Seiendheit des Seienden? Sein meint hier *Seiendheit*. Darin driickt sieh zugleich aus, daB trotz Ablehnung des Gattungseharakters das Sein (als Seiendheit) immer und nur als das X.OLVOV, das Gemeinsame und so Gemeine fur jegliches Seiende, gemeint ist.”

⁷ Vol. 1, p. 25.

of these statements are then pursued through interpretations of Nietzsche's conceptions of art, knowledge, truth, and illusion, and situated as based in a particularly and conclusory configuration of the metaphysical interpretation of beings in terms of presence. In Heidegger's second course on Nietzsche, taught in the summer of 1937, in particular, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return is treated comprehensively as an assertion about "beings as a whole," understood as (in Nietzsche's own words from *Ecce Homo*) the doctrine of the "unconditioned and infinitely reiterated circulation of all things" [unbedingten und endlich wiederholten Kreislauf aller Dinge] (p. 926, GT sect. 3).⁸

Heidegger sees the announcement of the doctrine in the form of a "riddle" in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, book III, as a venturing [Wagen] of the "truth of beings as a whole"⁹ [der Wahrheit des Seienden im Ganzen]. The doctrine is here presented by Zarathustra to a dwarf. Zarathustra indicates a gateway on which is inscribed the name "moment" [*Augenblick*]; from the gateway stretch two eternal paths, ahead and behind. Whatever *can* happen has already happened on the path behind, and will happen again on the path running forward.¹⁰ All things are thus "bound together" [fest...verknotet] in such a way as to be drawn behind them by this gateway and must occur again; even the gateway itself must therefore occur once more. On Heidegger's interpretation of the passage, "time and eternity" are here viewed in an image oriented from the "moment" or "now". (p. 41) The image is not, though, directly to be understood as the final theory of Nietzsche, but rather just as the "riddle" that presents a question. The "doctrine", in particular, is first posed as a question to which the dwarf appears readily to have an answer: the dwarf himself asserts the circular form of "time itself" [die Zeit selbst]. However, the question is repeated later on in the passage, this time as the question whether *this* moment – the moment of Zarathustra and the dwarf and their questioning itself – must not be repeated eternally. And this time the dwarf has no answer: with this second formulation, Zarathustra himself becomes "afraid" of his own thoughts, and his vision of a young shepherd being bitten in the mouth by a snake, the head of which he must bite, occurs. The difference between the two formulations, according to Heidegger,

⁸ P. 5 vol II

⁹ P. 37 vol. II

¹⁰ Siehe, sprach ich weiter, diesen Augenblick! Von diesem Thorwege Augenblick läuft eine lange ewige Gasse *rückwärts* hinter uns liegt eine Ewigkeit.

Muss nicht, was laufen *kann* von allen Dingen, schon einmal diese Gasse gelaufen sein? Muss nicht, was geschehn *kann* von allen Dingen, schon einmal geschehn, gethan, vorübergelaufen sein?

Und wenn Alles schon dagewesen ist: was hältst du Zwerg von diesem Augenblick? Muss auch dieser Thorweg nicht schon - dagewesen sein?

Und sind nicht solchermaassen fest alle Dinge verknotet, dass dieser Augenblick *alle* kommenden Dinge nach sich zieht? *Also* - - sich selber noch?

Denn, was laufen *kann* von allen Dingen: auch in dieser langen Gasse *hinaus* - *muss* es einmal noch laufen! -

lies in the fact that the second question is posed, not as a general question about the form of time itself, but on the basis of the *moment*, as the question of the recurrence of *this* moment itself. With this particular kind of questioning, in particular, one is required to “adopt a stance of [one’s] own within the “Moment” itself, that is, in time and its temporality.” With this posing, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche is able to formulate his doctrine in a general way; put this way, it can be seen as an argument from particular assumptions about the finitude and infinitude of time and things:

Nietzsche summarizes an essential thought concerning his doctrine so succinctly here, in the form of a question, that it is hardly comprehensible on its own, especially since the requisite presuppositions, although mentioned, do not really become visible. Those presuppositions are: first, the infinity of time in the directions of future and past; second, the actuality of time, which is not a “subjective” form of intuition; third, the finitude of things and of their courses. On the basis of these presuppositions, everything that can in any way be must, as a being, already have been. For in an infinite time the course of a finite world is necessarily already completed. (p. 43)

By formulating essentially this argument, Heidegger suggests, Nietzsche is able to propose the doctrine of eternal recurrence as a fundamental position relating beings as a whole to their temporal condition. But he is only able to do so by first placing *himself* in the “moment” in a decisive way. In the placing, the thinker of the thought of the eternal recurrence is “transposed to beings as a whole,” (p. 62), or placed under the particular condition of the way in which beings as a whole appear in the “gateway” of the moment in which future and past meet. Through this placing under the condition of the moment, the doctrine of the eternal return is itself shown as a matter which calls for *decision*: “what recurs – if it is to recur – is decided by the Moment and by the force with which the Moment can cope with whatever in it is repelled by such striving.” (p. 57)

According to its own proper content as well as the conditions for its being thought, the thought of the eternal recurrence is thus a *fundamental position* with respect to beings as a whole, grounded in the interpretation of the overall character of their being. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s understanding of this overall character is based in a twofold way on the temporal doctrine of eternal return and on the idea of the will to power, to which it is essentially related. Together, the two ideas determine a *metaphysical* position: indeed, the last metaphysical position, which represents a “consummation” of the original possibilities of metaphysics themselves. This interpretation allows Heidegger, in the 1939 lecture course “The Will to Power as Knowledge,” and especially in two lectures that were written in 1939 as a conclusion to the course (along with the two previous Nietzsche courses) but never delivered, to portray Nietzsche’s position overall as an “inverted Platonism” in which is realized the final configuration of all those in the succession that Plato’s own thought of being as beingness originally inaugurated. The history of the transformation of metaphysical positions from Plato’s to Nietzsche’s is the history of the withdrawal of being, a history marked by the greater and greater insistence of a nihilism which, according to Heidegger, already deeply characterized Plato’s own position, although in a veiled way. With the completion of this withdrawal, the questioning that positively characterized metaphysics itself becomes impossible and thus the metaphysical tradition is at an end; in particular, this consummation, all possibility of posing the question of *truth* becomes “buried” and obscured within a conception of beings as a whole that sees in them their “actuality” [wirklichkeit]

in the sense of their acting and effectiveness. It is such a conception that actually underlies, according to Heidegger, the linked Nietzschean metaphysics of will to power and eternal return, and explains their basic metaphysical orientation. This orientation, the “essence” of the will to power, is the inversion of the Platonic hierarchical opposition of being and becoming into a position that seeks the unlimited “permanentizing” of becoming in presence. The idea of an *eternal* recurrence is that of a “securing” of the becoming of what becomes and a “permanantizing” of its “constancy in the direction of its circling back into itself and forward to itself.” This is a thought of the “permanentizing of whatever becomes into the only kind of presence there is – the self-recapitulation of the identical.” (pp. 164-165) Such a securing of becoming in the repeated form of the self-identical unfolds in particular as a “securing of beings in their perfectly accessible disposability”. This is the position with respect to beings as a whole that is known, in its relation to Being, as “machination.” In it, Heidegger says in the 1939 conclusion, “meaningless comes to power” and is self-organized as a “total mobilization ... by and for the will to power”. In this position, “calculability,” “representation” and “production” are finally driven to an “extreme” point, “characteristic of mankind's unconditioned hegemony over all sources of power on the face of the earth, and indeed its dominion over the globe as such.” (p. 175)

In this way, Heidegger’s interpretation of the significance of the doctrine of eternal recurrence thus plays an essential role in connecting the narrative of the history of being as a whole with the more immediately obvious predominance of assumptions, practices, and modes of thought and action that are characterized by a certain kind of “totalization” of beings. In particular, this is the totalization that leads to their unlimited circulation, production, manipulation and exchange; the idea of the eternal recurrence – interpreted as Heidegger interprets it – both underlies and provides a privileged temporal figure for these practices and “activities” of the acting subject or agent of the “will to power” which is in fact, according to Heidegger, simply a redoubled will to will. Although every metaphysical orientation is, for Heidegger, *as such* marked by one or another distinctive attitude toward beings “as a whole and as such”, the regime of technology that is thus characterized by Nietzsche’s thought is additionally totalizing in a second and different sense: as the *final* orientation of metaphysics, it represents, according to Heidegger, the complete *exhaustion* of the “possibilities” original inherent in the metaphysical thinking of being as presence itself. In particular, this is the exhaustion of the possibilities of a *thinking, questioning, or disclosure* of being that would indeed have characterized the metaphysical tradition, not only at its first moments but throughout its itinerary, up to the present moment in which the questioning of being and its truth become completely obscured and basically impossible. It is at this determined point of extremity, and at it alone, that it may be possible, according to Heidegger, for thought to accomplish or experience suddenly a kind of radical reversal, whereby it suddenly frees itself, by means of an explicit retrieval of the very history whose possibilities are today at an end, of the final configuration of machination and representation and, with it, of the whole history it completes.

This reversal is thought by Heidegger, of course, as the thinking that is “to come,” the thinking “from” Ereignis that once again allows the questioning of the truth of being (or beyng) to come into its own and thereby reclaim its more original relationship to the possibility of questioning in general and to our being (as “man”) in particular. It cannot, according to Heidegger, be assured or predicted; what we can “do”, at best, is prepare ourselves for its possibility, as we would prepare to receive a grant given from a

place beyond our own powers of control and possible influence. In Heidegger's thought after the 1940s, the thought of this preparation is marked by a waning of the rhetoric or figure of decision, and becomes largely characterized as the thought of "Gelassenheit," or of the peculiar "letting" beings be which is to allow once more the possibility of their *being* in an originally disclosive way. This is the thinking, at the most extreme possible distance from technology, enframing, and its characterization of beings in terms of acting and effectivity, of the "saving power" of the original unity of *techne* and *poiesis*, and of the "fourfold" in which the counter-play of earth and sky, man and gods, holds open the place of disclosure and granting as such. The suggestion of this attitude as the successor to a modern "enframing" attitude toward beings has been both endorsed on Heidegger's behalf and, elsewhere, criticized as fundamentally regressive and "nostalgic."¹¹

Without disputing any of these terms in which Heidegger ventures to think or propose the possibility of what cannot yet, *strictu sensu*, even be thought (since its thinking would *already* accomplish it), it is possible and coherent to ask whether there are more specific terms to be found, within the concrete factual interpretation of the determined "present", for the indication or demonstration of what *surrounds* the metaphysical interpretation of being as presence as its prior condition and more general exterior itself. How, in particular, in the thought and reality of the "consummation of metaphysics", is a certain "outside" already indicated, or *readable* in determinate structural, temporal, or ontic-ontological forms? The question asks, with Heidegger, about what *in metaphysics* points to a certain "beyond" its own totality, but *also* about what points (formally or ontologically) to this beyond *in the idea of totality itself*, as this idea gives itself in the constitutive forms in which it regulates contemporary thought and practice. It is, in particular, to be asked how the thought or dominant practice of an "unlimited" effectivity that is marked and visible in the constitutive structure of material technologies, prevailing forms of social organization, ideological conditions of action and its self-rationalization, and "global capitalism" itself can be seen, on the basis of the ontological problematic, as communicating with what is assuredly real, and verifiable on formal grounds, but structurally *ineffective* in itself, though nevertheless inherent in these dominant patterns and assumptions of organized effectivity themselves.

And it is perhaps here that the character of what is called "information technology" is indicatively readable, as pointing toward certain elements that are already thought by Heidegger in the idea of machination and *Gestell*, but also as, in a peculiarly determined way, potentially pointing beyond this idea. Here, it is possible, in particular, to consider the possibility that it is specifically in *information* technology that the metaphysical tradition reaches its most definitive culmination and exhaustion. It is relevant here to consider, as well, the nature of the particular transformations or modifications that have characterized the further development and consolidation of technologically determined techniques and practices in general in the roughly 60 years since Heidegger's description of the essence

¹¹ It is not often noted that in discussing the "saving power," Heidegger actually *contrasts* the possibility of a recovery of *poiesis* with what he treats explicitly as the *distinct* possibility of a sudden transformation of *Gestell* into *Ereignis*: "Whether art may be granted this highest possibility of its essence in the midst of the extreme danger, no one can tell. Yet we can be astounded. Before what? Before this *other* possibility: that the frenziedness of technology may entrench itself everywhere to such an extent that someday, throughout everything technological, the essence of technology may unfold essentially in the propriative event of truth." (p. 340; emphasis added).

of technology as *Gestell*. In particular, whereas the effects of the kinds of industrial and mechanical technologies that Heidegger primarily considers in “The Question Concerning Technology” remain decisively important, these technologies are today supplanted and modified by the ever-more-pervasive technologies of information production, distribution, and exchange which today encircle the globe and affect practically every human life on the planet, through the possibilities of communication and economic transformation they facilitate. Since these technologies are defined, not by their capacities to shape and manipulate matter or natural forces, but rather by their relationship to the increasingly pervasive but elusive and ill-defined value of “information,” they may point to a partially different or otherwise indicative significance of the regime of “total” calculability, representation, and circulation. It is here to be asked, in particular, whether the practices and patterns of thought and action that are increasingly determined by the quantification, exchange, and capitalization of information are really thinkable as simply further instances of the “enframing” of beings in Heidegger’s original sense, or whether they also point to an internal complication of this structure that is itself more determinately indicative of at least one form of its thinkable “beyond.”

In fact, Heidegger himself presciently anticipated the contemporary development of information technology in significant detail in the 1966 essay “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking.” Philosophy, he here declares, is today coming to an end because the historical tradition of metaphysics is coming to its completion in the development of the sciences and the cultural effects of the technologies spawned by them:

It suffices to refer to the independence of psychology, sociology, anthropology as cultural anthropology, or to the role of logic as symbolic logic and semantics. Philosophy turns into the empirical science of man, of all that can become for man the experiential object of his technology, the technology by which he establishes himself in the world by working on it in the manifold modes of making and shaping. All of this happens everywhere on the basis of and according to the criterion of the scientific discovery of the individual areas of beings.

No prophecy is necessary to recognize that the sciences now establishing themselves will soon be determined and regulated by the new fundamental science that is called cybernetics.

This science corresponds to the determination of man as an acting social being. For it is the theory of the regulation of the possible planning and arrangement of human labor. Cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news. The arts become regulated-regulating instruments of information.¹²

Heidegger’s reference to “cybernetics” here – at that time, this was the dominant term for the project of a total informational theory of human and cultural as well as natural “systems” – comprehends not only “information science” in the narrow sense but the whole configuration of life determined by the technologies of information and their effects, including the “media” representation of global information as “news” and the both regulated and increasingly regulative (in the sense of uniform and

¹² “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” in D.F. Krell, ed., *Basic Writings* (revised and expanded edition). San Francisco: Harper, 1993, p. 434.

determinative) information-mediated and popular-cultural fields of the arts and entertainment. This configuration of “modern” life (and here we may say “modern” in the sense of “contemporary”) indeed witnesses, Heidegger suggests, one completion or culmination of metaphysics, as well as the whole historical regime governed by it. In this completion, philosophy comes to an end with the “triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world and of the social order proper to this world.” (p. 435). Yet there may remain, Heidegger cautiously suggests, the possibility of a different kind of culmination and end of the metaphysical tradition, one that, after the end of philosophy, nevertheless ventures a kind of “thinking” that surrenders the metaphysical tradition heretofore to what Heidegger calls the “matter for thinking,” offering to restore our openness to the very place of the happening of unconcealment and truth.

In what specific ways may, then, the underlying structures of “information technology,” which increasingly and ever more pervasively determine the organization of life around the globe today, themselves be formally and ontologically read? It is clear that these technologies differ, both in their specific constitution and in their ontological support, in important ways from the material and industrial technologies of the unlocking of power and the circulation of beings that Heidegger primarily has in mind in the “Question Concerning Technology” essay, they are no less indicative of, because fundamentally rooted in, what is for Heidegger an (perhaps the) *original* and determinative structure of metaphysics itself: namely, the structure of logic as a *technique*. In particular, the structural possibility and actual existence of *all* information technology as such, and thus of the total regime of thought and practice it today determines, is grounded in the radical development of Frege’s logical methods, Cantorian set theory, and the closely related idea of formal procedures that developed alongside these in the project of formalism. These developments are in fact readable, as we have seen repeatedly, over the last several chapters, both as developments of the original conception of logic that underlies the onto-theological unity characteristic of metaphysics as such for Heidegger *and as* performing a radical displacement or transformation of that conception, in particular in the ways that they mobilize and unfold the idea of a specific availability of the *actual infinite* to thought.

Over the preceding chapters, we have seen some of the ways in which the ideas of contemporary mathematical logic and what is unfolded in them point to the consequences of this availability for the formally-ontologically characterized structures of sense, truth, and time. In particular, as we saw most directly in chapter 5, they point to the insistence of a certain structurally determined real at the very limits of effective procedures; and in so doing, they provide formally motivated grounds for interrogating and challenging every figure of the total determination of the thinkable as such by finitely specifiable rules, capacities or methods. The ontological situation that is thus indicated is one in which every claim of effective determinability, every attempt to trace the ontological “origin” of the experience of sense, truth, or time back to an effectively determining finitude, must ultimately fail. For every such attempt will ultimately run up against the more general and deeply rooted *ineffectivity* that must be seen as characterizing finite procedures as such, in light, in particular, of Godel and Turing’s results. In thus verifying the structurally necessary insistence of a fixed point in the real for every finitely determined system of effective capacities, these results verify an ultimate *ineffectivity* that essentially surrounds and conditions the idea and technological practice of effectivity itself. The demonstration of

this necessary ineffectivity then points in a significant and determining way to the underlying actual “ontological” configuration that is determined by this idea and practice today, wherever it takes root and has effects.

In particular, both the way in which the constitutive ideas of logic, finitude, and infinitude, ground the real material existence of the total regime of information technology, *and* the inherent formally indicated limit of the specific effectivity of the patterns, modes, and techniques that characterize it, are clearly in view in Alan Turing’s remarkable 1936 paper, “On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem”. In the paper, as is well known, Turing essentially created the logical structure of the modern electronic computer by developing the abstract architecture of what is now called a “Turing machine,” and serves as the conceptual basis for all forms of digital computers and computer-based technologies.¹³ The core of his demonstration is the rigorous conception of what has been called “effective” computability; that is, the capacity of a problem to be solved by means of an algorithm comprising only a finite number of determinate and explicitly stated rules. Given such a configuration of rules and algorithm, it is possible to treat its process as a purely “mechanical” computation, one that does not imply or demand any irreducible appeal to the role of human consciousness, intentionality, or meaning in the course of its operation. In this way the architecture of the digital symbolic computer (as composed of the various units of input/output, memory, and computational algorithms) was thereby born along with the specific conception of “effectivity” that underlies the functioning of digital computers and all of the informational and communicational technologies that are based upon, or derive from, them.

But it was Turing’s more direct aim to prove, as a result of mathematical logic, that there are actually perfectly well-defined mathematical problems whose answers are *not* “effectively computable” in this precise sense, and he did in fact succeed in proving this in the paper. In particular, the “decision problem” – the question of whether a given machine halts when given a particular input or rather continues calculating forever -- is shown to be uncomputable, and as a consequence formal systems in general (of a certain degree of complexity) are shown to be undecidable in the sense that there is no finitely stateable procedure for determining whether a particular sentence is a theorem. Along with this, and as another consequence, Turing’s result demonstrates the existence of (uncountably) *many* “uncomputable” real numbers: numbers whose decimal expansion cannot be determined by the reiterated application of *any* finitely stateable rule.¹⁴ A further corollary (derivable by partial means of an auxiliary result)¹⁵ is a form of Godel’s first theorem itself: for any system of sufficient complexity to capture arithmetic, there will be an arithmetic sentence that it cannot prove or refute, provided the system itself is consistent.

¹³ Turing, A. “On computable numbers, with an application to the Entscheidungsproblem.” In *The Essential Turing*. Ed. B. J. Copeland. Oxford: Clarendon. (2004).

¹⁴ This is as opposed both to rational numbers but also to real numbers such as pi, whose successive digits *can* be determined by successive applications of such a rule.

¹⁵ In particular the recursive enumerability of theorems in a particular system.

If Turing's result shows in formal detail that any determination of regular effectivity – and also all that assures and guarantees it – communicates with a broader undecidability which is its general surrounding, then it is apparently possible to apply this demonstration to the consideration of the most characteristic and general forms and practices of contemporary technological, social, and political life. In particular, it is here apparently possible to envision a formally based critique of these forms and practices that operates by problematizing and challenging the *claim* or *assumption* of general effectivity that underlies their application and force. Here, the formal indication that is apparently derivable from the actual metaformal results rejoins the Heideggerian ontological problematic at the point at which it, itself, seeks to provide terms to challenge and question the contemporary dominance of "machination" and the assumption of the total circular manipulability of beings that characterizes it. For as Heidegger points out, the basis of this assumption is just the claim of an unlimited calculability and circulability of beings, itself grounded in the totalization of their calculability and total availability to representation. If, then, there is a formally demonstrable incalculability inherent in the very constitutive ideas of number, mathematics, and the thought of procedures itself, then the general suggestion, already made in Heidegger's text, of a specifically determined "limit" and "outside" to the contemporary technological regime here receives significant confirmation and is put on a formally rigorous basis. Furthermore, the specific relationship indicated here between the assumed effectivity of broadly technological procedures and regular methods of handling and calculating with beings and the structurally inherent ineffectivity that appears to be its necessary correlate suggests sharpened terms in which the "ontological" critique of the contemporary regime can then be taken up.

Along these lines, I argued in *The Politics of Logic* that the inherent structural ineffectivity that appears necessarily to condition all determined procedures provides a basis for questioning the assumed force and legitimacy of the kinds of technical, administrative, procedural and organizational structures that are widely promulgated around the globe as the solutions to the problems of collective life. In particular, in the face of these structures, the formal results appear to demonstrate a prior insistence of problems that cannot be completely resolved by such "solutions" and structurally point to the more basic problematic configuration of the situations in which they take place. Most significantly and determinatively for "our" contemporary situation, the problems of the relationship of such determined solutions to the problems that they attempt to confront are characteristically problems of the totality or totalization of effectivity. That is, they are problems of the application or applicability of regularly determined systems and procedures across what is understood as the "global" situation of planetary life. Since procedures for determining and regulating this situation are also procedures for the in-principle unlimited manipulation and exchange of beings, the question that is here posed, in the light of the general dynamic of effectivity and ineffectivity witnessed in the metaformal results, also concerns the structural conditions of possibility of a relatively determined *economy*, whether of capital, goods, or information. It is about the conditions of a more or less determined and determining circulation (of capital, of goods, of information) in a more general structure that surrounds it and determines this possibility of circulation as a limited domain.

Here, the formally indicated terms of critique thus rejoin the late-Heideggerian ontological problematic, which sees the contemporary regime of technology as above all characterized by the assumption of the

unlimited possibility of the circulation of actual-effective beings. But the specific critical suggestions that can be made in light of the deepened formal-ontological problematic are somewhat different than those that are usually accorded to the “Heideggerian” critique itself. There is no suggestion here, for instance, of the usefulness or even possibility of a marginal withdrawal from the prevailing technological forms of organization and effective structure. What is indicated, instead, is a formal thought and a praxis, grounded within it, that *directly* confront the prevailing forms of technological organization and regular practice on the ground of their own constitutive claim to totality. There is also no need, within the deepened formal-ontological problematic, to have reference to the determined category of *poiesis* or art in general as a privileged region within which to base this critique. What the critique of “technological” thinking and practice, thus deepened, calls for is not any kind of escape into, or privileging of, particular kinds of beings or specialized practices of “skill” as a counter to *techne* or its contemporary development as global technology, but rather a direct formal confrontation, *on its own terms*, of the developed idea of technique that underlies it in all of its forms and ideological underpinnings. This prepares what is indeed a “confrontation” of ontological thought with the essence and structure of global technology. But its principle is not to be found either in a simple resistance to technology or in its acceleration to the point where, by means of an actual or fantasized necessity, it suddenly collapses or transforms itself into something different. It is rather, simply, the deeper thinking, in light of the mathematical and metalogical results on which it is genetically dependent, of what is structurally involved and inherent in the very possibility of its effectivity and thereby in the force of its global claim over life and practice.

This confrontation is prepared from a long way off, as we have seen, by the very thinking of *logos* that is itself determinative for the interpretation of being as presence from Plato on. This thinking of *logos*, from the beginning, is itself determined on the basis of a particular thinking of time, and thus communicates essentially with the broader problems of temporal becoming that continue to insist within it. If the distal consequences of this original logical conception of time today both program and structurally problematize the specific forms of economic and political organization that are today broadly characteristic of global life, we may come to see in it this ambiguous twofold situation the structural possibility of an actual overcoming of the contemporary total regime toward very different “possibilities” of collective life, thought, and practice. In grasping this possibility in its formal and ontological structural determinants, we would then see, in a more specific and articulated way, how the “final” configuration of *Gestell* can be taken to communicate structurally or actually point toward a more general “outside” that finally conditions it, along with the whole history of metaphysics that it completes, in the very structure of thinkable time as such.

III

There are various possible arguments from the three premises about time and phenomena that Heidegger attributes to Nietzsche to the claim of a circular eternal recurrence of events. The premises are that i) that time is infinite in the directions of past and future; ii) that time is not subjective or ideal but, rather, real; and iii) that things and “their courses” are necessarily finite. As is well known, after arriving at the doctrine in 1881, Nietzsche envisioned and attempted various kinds of “scientific” proofs of its truth as a cosmological claim about the totality of events in the physical universe. Some of these were to be based on what he took to be established scientific claims, for example that of the finitude and conservation of force (energy) or matter and the determinism of physical laws. One version of the argument is that, given these premises, if any state of the universe recurs once, it must deterministically follow again an infinite number of times. But since (as Nietzsche may have supposed) if matter and forces are finite, any *possible* state must have *already* been reached within (infinite) past time, every such state must thus *already* have repeated itself an infinite number of times.

Even if the premises of determinism and finite energy and matter are granted, the argument does not succeed in this form. For it appears possible, even on these assumptions, that the states of the universe succeed one another in the manner of the succession of digits in the expansion of an irrational number (such as pi or $\sqrt{2}$): the succession of digits is determined by the successive application of a rule, but there is no cyclical repetition of a series of digits at any point. More generally, dynamic phenomena of continuous motion or change, even if governed by fully deterministic rules, need not exhibit fixed periodicity at any point in their (infinitely continued) progress. It is thus not possible to argue directly, as Nietzsche may have hoped to do, from cosmological premises about finitude and determinism to the claim of eternal recurrence by considering the universe to be a closed dynamical system unfolding in a time that is infinite in both directions.

Nevertheless, another, related argument that may have a better chance of success can be drawn from considerations that are already present in Kant’s consideration of the four cosmological antinomies in the “Transcendental Dialectic” of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁶ The antinomies are contradictions of reason with itself with respect to the idea of totality involved in its ongoing search for the conditions of phenomena. They concern, respectively, the completeness of the whole of all appearances in space and time, their spatial and temporal divisibility, the origination of phenomena by means of natural causality or spontaneity, and the conditioning of all phenomena by an absolutely necessary being. Although the topic of time appears officially only in the first antinomy, in parallel with the question of the boundedness of space, the question of time is in fact central to all four antinomies. For all four turn on the question of the totality of series of conditions, and this question in each case raises the issue of the structure of priority thought more or less explicitly in temporal terms, either on the side of the subject or the object or both. Thus, the second antinomy involves the question of the possibility of serially *carrying out* a division of the world into simples, the third turns on the question of the causality of appearances by means of nature or freedom, and the fourth concerns the necessary conditioning of any

¹⁶ In this paragraph and the next, I rely upon an argument sketched by Oskar Becker in his article “Nietzsche’s Beweise für seine Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkehr”.

temporal series of appearances by its immediate temporal predecessor.¹⁷ In each of these cases, the question of totality presents itself as the question of the boundedness or unboundedness of a temporal series, and thus as an instance of the more general problem of the *givenness of time* whereby any temporal ordering is possible.

From this perspective, the decisive consideration appears at the beginning of the argument for the “thesis” of the first antinomy, which claims that the world has a beginning in time and is limited in space:

If we assume that the world has no beginning in time, then up to every given moment an eternity has elapsed, and there has passed away in the world an infinite series of successive states of things. Now the infinity of a series consists in the fact that it can never be completed through successive synthesis. It thus follows that it is impossible for an infinite world-series to have passed away, and that a beginning of the world is therefore a necessary condition of the world’s existence. (A 427/B 455)

If we assume an infinite past time as actual, Kant reasons, we must also assume that an infinite series of successive states has *actually* taken place. This would then mean that the series, though actually infinite, has at some point terminated. But since this supposition is impossible (it is not entirely clear why Kant thinks so), it must be the case that the world has a beginning at most finitely long ago, assuming the world exists at all. This last proviso points, of course, to Kant’s unitary solution to all four antinomies, which is to be found in the transcendental idealist denial of the *existence* of the world as a whole. According to the solution, although the world is *never* given as a (finite or infinite) *totality* of appearances, it is nevertheless always possible for reason to pursue the series of conditions for any given conditioned one step further: looking backward, in particular, it is always possible to seek the prior condition for a given phenomenon. But through this “successive synthesis” one never attains a total or complete representation of the world as a whole.

This particular form of the solution depends not only on Kant’s transcendental idealism, but also on the (Aristotelian) assumption that an infinite totality can be given only *potentially*, in an unlimited ongoing development. It is this latter assumption that leads Kant to identify the infinity of a series with its “never” being able to be completed through successive synthesis, and thus to hold that reason’s synthetic activity itself could never encompass a temporally infinite world as a whole. If we allow both assumptions to lapse, however, and conceive of world-time as *real* and of the actual infinite as thinkable, we are left with the necessity of supposing that, at any moment, an infinite number of successive events have in fact already occurred. If we, further, think of these successive events as determined, as a series, by a unitary rule, we must think that the infinite series determined by the rule has *already* concluded. There is something highly puzzling about this thought, although it is not actually

¹⁷ Thus, in the “proof” of the thesis of the fourth antinomy (i.e. of an absolutely necessary being): “The sensible world, as the sum-total of all appearances, contains a series of alterations. For without such a series even the representation of serial time, as a condition of the possibility of the sensible world, would not be given us. But every alteration stands under its condition, which precedes it in time and renders it necessary.” (A 453/B 481).

obvious that it is simply incoherent.¹⁸ At any rate, though, the problem can be avoided in just one way: by concluding that the infinite succession is in fact an infinitely repeated cycle of finitely many events. If, in particular, a law determines an cyclic repetition of finitely many elements, there is nothing incoherent (or even seemingly so) in supposing that the cycle has *always* been repeating itself and will always do so.

There is thus a route to be traced from the Kantian considerations about the determination of series of appearances to an actual and *actually thinkable* eternal recurrence of events. The argument, in this form, is motivated not only by realism about time but by the essentially Cantorian consideration that an actual infinite can be given to thought as such. Kant, of course, was kept from this consideration by the limitations of the conception of the infinite that he adopts from Aristotle, as well as those of the mathematics of his time. Nevertheless, what can be preserved from the Kantian setting of the problem in the antinomies is its essential relationship to the problem of the givenness of an (ordinal) series as determined by a rule. This question of the givenness of a serial order is, as we have seen, itself intimately connected to the problem of the givenness of number, and in particular of its givenness as *infinite* in two ways: both extensively, in the transfinite hierarchy, and intensively, in the determination of real numbers as infinite expansions. For the consideration that leads (under the condition of realism rather than idealism about time) from the Kantian antinomies to the eternal recurrence, what is actually decisive here is the implications of the second Cantorian “generation-principle,” whereby it is apparently possible to pass in thought from the idea of a series, as given by its rule, to the “limit” collecting *all* of its elements, without supposing (or even being able to suppose) that each of these elements are individually given or produced in actuality. In passing to the first infinite “limit-ordinal,” ω , one passes to an ordinal number which has no predecessor; this is apparently the reason why it appears incoherent (or nearly so) to suppose the end of an actually infinite (and nonrepeating) series to be arrived at in time *by* the successive givenness of its elements. One can nevertheless think of time itself as an infinite actual continuum, proceeding *from* the present both backwards and forward, provided only that it is thereby thought only as a kind of empty form and not, itself, as a determinate series of events. Within the ambit of these assumptions, then, the only way to preserve the actual regular thinkability of the series of events conceived as taking place *within* it is then, as we have seen, to conceive it as an eternally recurrent cycle.

This argumentation is a kind of derivation of the eternal cyclical recurrence of a *series* of events, under the condition of their regular thinkability in infinite actual time, from Cantor’s demonstration of the thinkable coherence of the “first” infinite set, ω . What, though, if we consider the problem of the infinity of time from the broader perspective of the *further* extended developments that follow metalogically directly or indirectly from the Cantorian moment, including *both* the unlimited open development of the transfinite hierarchy in the light of Russell’s paradoxes and the other constitutive

¹⁸ Wittgenstein is said (A.W. Moore (find reference)) to have asked his audience in a lecture to imagine finding a man who has been reading out the digits of pi, backwards, for all time: he has just said, “3! I’m finished”. (compare Philosophical Remarks, page 166). What appears to be problematic here (or perhaps incoherent) is the idea of an actually infinite series *actually* being completed by means of the development of *all* of its individual members.

paradoxes of the one-All, and *also* the further developments of Cantor's own thinking about continuity? Although, as we have seen, Kant's antinomies closely anticipate in certain ways the paradoxes of the One-All, Kant does not really consider the second sort of question (about continuity) in the antinomies, since what is at issue here is always just a determinate *series* of discrete events. On the other hand, as we saw in the last chapter, Aristotle's consideration of what are essentially the problems of continuity and discontinuity in book IV of the *Physics* leads him both to point to the inherently paradoxical form of the "now", as constantly becoming what it is not and not becoming what it is in the procession of its "constant" flowing, and to foreclose this paradox by considering the "now" to inhere in time only potentially, as the result of a *possible* measurement. If, however, by contrast with both Kant and Aristotle, we grasp the givenness of time as the index of a *realism par excellence*, we have to deal with it, as really given, as *infinite* both cosmologically (in the infinity of cosmic time preceding and following the present moment) and in the *infinitely determined* (not simply determinable) structure of the "now" as such. To do so is to grasp a structural and real inherence of constitutive paradox in both cases, both "above" – in relation to the character of the *totality* of infinite time, which can only be given if there is *always* given "more", both before and after – and "below" – in relation to the punctual moment, which always threatens to undermine fixed identities with its continuous becoming. It was in this doubly paradoxical form that, as we saw in the last chapter, the original problem of becoming presented itself to Plato, both as the problem of the totality of time and as the problem of the form of becoming in the present, as the deepest possible challenge to the fixity of the idea and the structure of its *koinon*. And it is in this form that, as I have argued, it must be taken up again by the ontological problematic of being and time, in the light of the contemporary metalogical results that further unfold and articulate the mathematical structure of the infinite as it is given to thought.

If the actual-infinite is thought as really temporally inherent in this twofold way, then the structure that they point to must be seen as a *unitary* structural condition of both the form of time *and* determinate events 'within' it. This is because the underlying structural dynamics of the infinite and paradox are (meta)formally indicated aspects of the givenness of number, which precedes counting and measurement, both of events and of "time itself." Through this structure and by means of it, it becomes possible not only to "measure" time but also to consider events as continuously determined and determining with respect to what precedes and follows them; in this way it is possible to measure their (quantifiable) changes and motions *over* time. Here, the suggestion is not (as it was with Aristotle, for example) that the measurement of time is a special case of, or analogous structure to, the measurement of local motion. The suggestion is rather that both kinds of "measurement" have a *unitary and inherently paradoxical* real structural condition in the real inherence of the infinite, both in the cosmos and in the moment.

With this, the actual infinity of time is no longer conceived as given just to thought in a way that contrasts with its "taking place" in reality. Rather, both the abstract thinkability of infinite time *and* its "actuality" are given by means of the *same* unitary and paradoxical structural form. This form is conceived as real both with respect to thought *and* the being of what is; it is the form of temporal givenness as such, where this no longer contrasts with an imagined, hypothesized, or structurally implied givenness of phenomena from *outside* time. It is then no longer possible to oppose the thought

of the infinite to its (presumed) always only finite *realization*. Neither the Aristotelian nor the Kantian forms of the distinction between what is only “potentially” infinite in temporal reality and the presumptively “finite” modes of its measurement can, any longer, be maintained. This distinction was, as we saw in chapter 8, already problematic in its original Aristotelian setting, since time was there seen as not only or simply ideal, but actually as real, and really infinite as given and not merely as thought. This is what led Aristotle to propose the conception of time as ambiguously both sensible and intellectual, as having an endogenous structural origin in the intellectual activity of the soul as well as an exogenous origin with respect to which it is receptive, a conception of time as the “non-sensuous sensuous” that is, as Derrida argues, essentially repeated in Kant and Hegel. With the conception of time as the structurally undecidable form of givenness, this ambiguity between passivity and receptivity is shown to have its own deeper condition in the undecidability with which both time and events give themselves in general. It is also no longer possible to maintain the exteriority of the empty form of time itself to what is seen as the necessarily finitely determined (because thinkable) succession of events *within* time that we witnessed in the partially Kantian, partially Cantorian argument considered above. For since time and events have, on this conception, a *unified* structural condition in the *actual inherence of the infinite* in the structure of their givenness, both their thought and their reality must be considered, in both cases, actually infinite in both the cosmological and the instantaneous senses.

If the real structure of time and events, in its structurally inherent infinity, is thought as doubly paradoxical in this way, does this mean that time and real becoming are revealed as simply *indeterminate* or *indeterminable*? Not at all. Rather, as we have witnessed over the last several chapters, the idea of the infinite, as it is developed in the train of consequences that follow from Cantor’s set-theoretical treatment of the actual infinite, is in a peculiar and specific relationship to the structural idea of determinability by means of a rule. This idea underlies not only the possibility of the passage to the infinite limit as it is specified by Cantor but also, more broadly and generally, the idea of a formal system as a finitely specifiable system of axioms and rules. But the development of the metalogical problems of totality and infinity after Cantor demonstrate how this idea itself implies a broader *undecidability* shown in two ways: both as the “unpredictable” character of the extended development of the transfinite hierarchy and, more basically, as the essential existence of problems that are undecidable for any given axiomatic system. These two aspects of undecidability have as consequences both the impossibility of presenting the totality of “all” numbers without contradiction and the existence of (uncountably many) *uncomputable* real numbers, numbers whose decimal expansion cannot be determined by *any* finitely stateable iterated rule or procedure.

If the structure of given time is thought as undecidable in both of these ways, it is not thought as *indeterminate* with respect to specific procedures of determination, but rather as determinate in the superior sense that its determinacy provably outstrips all finitely determined decision procedures. With respect to any such procedure, this not indeterminacy but a kind of super-determinacy or hyper-determinacy, pointing to the inherent existence of problems and truths indeterminable by any finite system, but nevertheless structurally demonstrable by means of reflexive thought. This superior determinacy is nothing other than what Godel understood as the “inexhaustibility” of mathematics that is verified by his own incompleteness results. If time is thought as characterized by it, then the moment

as the determined limit of the measurement of a span, or the specifiably determinate *caesura* between “before” and “after”, is visible as a kind of systematic fixed point at which this superior determinacy is indicated or shown. Neither the punctual moment, as a specific and unique real-valued point, nor the infinite totality of *all* moments is determinable *in general* by means of any finitely specified procedure, although both may be determined in specific cases. For example, a discrete moment, in a particular case, *may* be determined by a whole or rational number, or again by an irrational number corresponding to a (computable) procedure. Or the infinity of temporal events *may* be thought as determined in a regular way by a single general form of constant presence or regular repetition. But in both cases, what is or can be determined by a rule is in fact the (infinitely rare) exception with respect to the really inherent superior determinacy of the infinite-given structure of time in itself, which outstrips all rules and all regular determinations. Here, the “general” case of the moment is not the computable number but the uncomputable one, not the determination of the eternal in the form of some standing or constant determining presence functioning as a measure, but rather the inherence of the infinite-undecidable, which is structural immeasurable in its totality by any finite system without contradiction.

The structure of time, thought this way, is not indeterminacy or randomness; but neither is it the “free” unfolding by means of successive spontaneous choices which is thought in the intuitionist idea of the “free choice sequence.” For if a finite procedure, in determining a moment, can also point to its broader and superior surrounding in a determinate reality that surrounds and outstrips what can be determined in just such a procedure, it does so only by means of its own contact with the structurally insistent Real that surrounds and preconditions it. The relationship of any particular procedure with this Real is not that of “freely” determining it but rather of showing how it is determined at certain points and under certain conditions while also verifying that it, itself, cannot *completely* determine this Real without contradiction: the insistence of this larger determinate Real is then visible under the two metalogical headings of incompleteness (if consistency is maintained) and inconsistency (if a single determinate procedure is applied to *all* cases). The assumption and maintenance of consistency within a particular system, as of regular procedures of measurement and calculation in general, is then visible as only a locally determined possibility, in each case capable of opening to discovery what must be only a limited range of truths, and also in general incapable of securing itself by means of an internal consistency proof. But the dynamics of consistency and completeness that are thereby shown also bear witness to the superior structure of undecidability that must surround any such system of local, consistent determination.

If time, in its original givenness, is thought of as having the structure of the undecidable in this way, it is thereby thought as “eternal” in two ways: both as infinite in the directions of the past and the future, and as capable of infinitely many *total* determinations of its character “at all times”. Is undecidability, thought this way as the unitary condition of the determinacy of time and events, then, also, a figure of eternal *recurrence*? If so, it is not the eternal recurrence of a fixed and limited cycle of ontic happenings *within* a general empty form of time that is infinite in both directions. For as we saw above, such an ontic cycle reflects only the character that events must be seen to have, given the premises of the infinity and reality of time, *if* they are also seen as univocally determined by a specific thinkable rule that must itself be applied serially. But the time of the cosmos and of the moment are to be thought in the

form of the superior undecidability contemplated here, then such a determination is always (even if it is seen as determining the form of events *for all time*) only a relatively local determination and can never determine *all* the truths about either. What is witnessed here in the broader phenomenon of undecidability in itself is not, then, the recurrence of a specific subset of events, but rather a kind of structurally inherent *a priori* which precedes the time involved in any regular procedure but in which “everything” has *always* “already happened.”

The happening of a determinate event or the measurement of a determinate time is then thinkable as recurrence with respect to *this a priori* structure. But the *a priori*, thought in this sense, is no longer simply opposed to time and temporal becoming; nor is it thought as determined by the character of fixity, stability, or regularity in itself. It is rather implied in the very structural form of temporal givenness, which is common real structure underlying the measurement of moments *and* events. On the one hand, the “now” is repeated infinitely, before and after, as the empty form of time stretching backward and forward from the empty gateway that it itself opens up. On the other, events are repeated infinitely in the form of their sense, and the interpretation and transformation of their sense repeats them infinitely again. But the two repetitions are no longer opposed to one another as the actual (or sensible) to the thinkable (or possible); rather, they are seen as having a common underlying structure in the undecidable form of given time. The happening of what happens is no longer the “actualization” of the “potential” or possible, nor is it determined in the general form of *dunamis* or effectiveness. It is rather determined by, and determinate in, the virtual and ineffective but fully real structure of the undecidable as such which is the form of given time. In this form, which is itself just the moment, as gateway, from which an infinite path stretches backward and another stretches forward, everything that “can” happen has happened, and everything that does happen will happen an infinite number of time again – including this moment, as gateway, itself. And what “can” happen is not, itself, “pre”-determined as a fixed order of possibilities, but rather (since the distinction between possibility and actuality is itself no longer in effect) as, exactly, what does happen and will happen. As such, the form of the “now” is the real and given form of what gives itself as the original structure of its repeatability, as well as the intelligible structure, inherent in each “now” as its own infinite depth, of the unlimited becoming of the world.

IV

If there is a doctrine of the eternal return that can be derived from the original undecidability of given time, it is not the one that Heidegger ascribes to Nietzsche in his lectures. In particular, it is not, as Heidegger says, doctrine of a “permanentizing of whatever becomes into ... the self-recapitulation of the identical,” for two reasons. First it is not a “permanentizing”, since undecidable givenness precedes and provides the determinate underlying basis for *any* subsequent determination of anything as permanent *or* impermanent; second, it is not a doctrine of the repetition of the identical, since it determines the self-identical as repeatable only *as* a local determination of what is originally the undecidable form of time and sense, which is always becoming other and different. If, indeed, it is true, as Heidegger says, that such a repetition of the identical is “the only kind of presence there is,” then what we witness here

is a thought of time, in developing the paradoxical structure of the “now” and of the infinity of given time, is no longer determined in the medium of the present or as the thought of its consistent, indefinite repetition. Thus we see here a certain structural “other” to the “metaphysics of presence” itself and as a whole, which appears both to condition it as its underlying more general structure and also to become thinkable at a certain determinate moment of its internal development.

More specifically: the structure of an originally undecidable given time is the specific limit and also overcoming of the structure of onto-theology which recurrently organizes, within metaphysics, the interpretation of the being of beings. As we have seen since chapter 1, onto-theology grounds both “from above” and “from below”: both by selecting a superior ontic referent which sets a standard for the intelligibility of beings *as a whole* and by selecting a correspondent ontic principle for the constitution of beings *as such*. Both aspects of grounding together determine, in each case, the form in which beings are understood and experienced, and both have a more basic original temporal determination in the form of the present. If, on the other hand, the original structure of given time is thought as paradoxical and undecidable in the twofold way I have suggested, both with respect to the moment and with respect to the totality, then *both aspects of onto-theological grounding are overcome in favor of their more original infinite-temporal conditions*. In particular: there will henceforth be no theological grounding of beings “from above”, since the whole is not given from the perspective of the theological elevation of a supreme being as a consistent principle of the whole, but rather as the infinite and paradoxical extent of undecidable cosmic time, infinite in both directions. And there will be no ontological grounding “from below”, since the infinitely deep paradoxical form of the “now” underlies the intelligible being of any being as given.

Henceforth, it will no longer be possible to stabilize beings or their becoming by means of ontic referents: in the condition of ontological anarchy (cf. chapter 6) that results, the destitution of all such referents is formally indicated in the infinite-undecidable structure of given time itself. But in pointing to this larger inherence of undecidability in which the specific conditions for onto-theological grounding are themselves situated, the indication of the infinite which here insists both above and below also points to the more original conditions under which it is *possible* to pursue a solution to the original problem of time, though, and becoming by *logical* means. These are the conditions which, we have seen reason to think, presented themselves to Plato, and determined the form of the solution presented by the Visitor in the *Sophist* in terms of the *koinonia* of the great types. The solution, in the categorical form in which it was later further consolidated by Aristotle, persists and continues to determine the tradition’s thinking about logic and presence until the moment when the metalogical problematic brings out, on the basis of the consequences of the thought of the actual infinite, the necessary communication of logical structures of categories and regular procedures with the broader infinite-undecidable temporal structure in which they inhere.

In a number of texts, Gilles Deleuze has suggested that Nietzsche’s occasional descriptions of the eternal return as the cyclic return of the same or identical are simply the exoteric face or manifest form of a deeper and more esoteric true content of the doctrine on which *only* difference returns.¹⁹ Nietzsche, on

¹⁹ D&R, Pp. 41-42., Logic of Sense pp. 263-64.

this reading, will have proposed the doctrine in such a superficial and exoteric form only as the exterior face of a doctrine whose actual truth presupposes the disruption of all fixed identities and the destitution of the form and force of all unitary laws. On this interpretation, is returning indeed the returning of identity, but identity returns “as a secondary power” (p. 41), not the repetition of what is in itself identical or similar, but the *production* of the similar and identical *from* difference and its repetition. Also and for this reason, the eternal return is understood as a doctrine of *selection*: with respect to difference, the eternal return selects certain “extreme forms” and only these return. These are not fixed identities or constituted things, but that in things which acts as “mobile individuating factors unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that individual, this or that Self.” (p. 41) It is as selective in this sense that the eternal return, according to Deleuze, is *affirmative* and is an endless affirmation of difference; in particular, it selects “all the procedures opposed to selection;” what is excluded and made not to return is just whatever “presupposes the Same and the Similar.” (Lof S, p. 265). As such an affirmation, the eternal return is akin to the reality of an “Ideal game” which affirms chance without first subjecting it to distribution by means of fixed rules and assigned identities. Deleuze develops the structure of this affirmation as an original temporal structure, that of the “Aion” which cuts into chronological time with an infinitely straight and infinite line at every point, determining the progressive order of chronological time as divisible *ad infinitum* and always really cut by the infinite repetition of difference.²⁰

With these formulations, Deleuze presents the eternal return as an original form of difference in its repetition which, as pure paradoxical becoming, underlies and surrounds the determinate constitution of categorical and logical identities in the (actually produced) form of the identical. The conception affirms, then, an original becoming of the simulacrum at the real basis of the representational repetition of the identical and similar; the affirmation of such a prior condition of the image or copy in the simulacrum is Deleuze’s development of the project of “overturning Platonism” announced by Nietzsche. And indeed, there is every reason to think that Nietzsche recurrently presents the doctrine of eternal return as one whose explicit or exoteric content (namely that “time itself” is circular, or that a fixed finite totality of events that cyclically repeats itself) masks a deeper truth that is more problematic to master and express. For example, as both Deleuze and Heidegger note, versions of the doctrine are presented several times in *Zarathustra*: when the doctrine is first presented to the dwarf in “The Vision and the Riddle,” he repeats it, murmuring, as the doctrine that “time itself is a circle.” Later, Zarathustra’s animals present a version of the doctrine that time is circular, and Zarathustra complains that they have made of his doctrine a tired refrain. In both cases, the exoteric presentation is contrasted with a more esoteric realization which Zarathustra himself struggles to attain and which is not directly expressed. Furthermore, Nietzsche himself would have known well (as both Deleuze and Heidegger also point out) the many precedents in ancient thought, including in Plato and Aristotle, for

²⁰ Deleuze quotes Nietzsche from *Zarathustra*: “ ‘O sky above me, you pure, lofty sky! This is now your purity to me ... that you are to me a gods’ table for divine chances, that you are to me a gods’ table for divine dice and dicers!’ To which the reply on the other table: ‘If ever I have played dice with gods at their table, the earth, so that the earth trembled and broke open and streams of fire snorted forth: for the earth is a table of the gods, and trembling with creative new words and the dice throws of the gods ...’ Both together, however, the fractured sky and the broken earth, do not support the negative but vomit it out through that which fractures or breaks them; they expel all the false forms of negation, including precisely those which represent the false game...” (p. 284)

the idea of a simple ontic circulation of beings; this could hardly have been the doctrine that he intended with the idea of eternal recurrence, given the degree of importance and novelty he himself ascribed to it.

For all of these reasons, Deleuze's suggestion of a more original content of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence, to be found in the affirmation and repetition of difference which produces identity rather than the repetition of what is basically the same or identical, appears motivated. At any rate, I shall not dispute this suggestion here, but simply try to verify its connection to both the metalogically indicated structure of originally undecidable time, on the one hand, and to the "Heideggerian" ontological problematic and history of being, on the other. We have already seen reason to suspect that it is in the form of the problem of the original undecidability of time that the question of thinkable being and becoming presented itself to Plato, and that it was to this problem, thus understood more or less explicitly, that he presented both the "logical" *koinon* of the *Sophist* and his own more developed view of the dialectic of the indefinite dyad and the one as solutions. But the first solution presupposes and requires the fixed forms of the identity of the great types (including that of "difference") and their logical, psychological and ontological simultaneity; whereas the second, with its appeal to the approximative method of fixing limits by means of iterated division, can only, at best, dissimulate what is now visible as the actual underlying numerical structure of undecidability, in which points determinable by any finite procedure are fleetingly rare and exceptional. If one can see in Nietzsche's doctrine, as part of its esoteric or latent content, a conception of the undecidable structure of given time in which the *apeiron* is insistent in an even more exigent and overwhelming sense than in Plato's late conception, this raises in a different light the question of what in Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return may be seen as simply an "inverted" Platonism (with Heidegger) or what, by contrast, must be seen (with Deleuze) as its actual overcoming. At any rate, if the structure of undecidable given time can be shown both to condition and undermine the specifically logical thought of being inaugurated by Plato on its own underlying temporal ground, it points to the positive and formally indicated broader structure of temporality in which anything like Platonism – or the "history of being" as the metaphysics of presence – itself takes place.²¹

If time, in the form of the moment and its given infinity in the directions of its "before" and "after", is originally given as undecidable, then the affirmation of its original paradoxical structure is indeed something which appears, from the perspective of determinate decision procedures, as the affirmation of chance. For if the determination of temporal becoming cannot be decided by a determinate procedure of decision or measurement, it will indeed appear to be aleatory with respect to that procedure. But undecidability is not randomness; as we have seen, it is a more original structure of determinacy, even excessively so. The structure of the undecidable, rather, points to the way that something like pure difference might be seen as pre-existing, and as determinative with respect to the subsequent possibility that identities are determined by means of fixed procedures of measurement and

²¹ In the description or formal indication of this structure, it is relatively immaterial whether one considers oneself to be overcoming (something called) "metaphysics" as such in favor of a kind of thinking that is not or is no longer metaphysical, as Heidegger does, or whether the indicated thought of difference, beyond presence and identity, remains (as with Deleuze) "metaphysics", even in a "pure" sense.

decision. Relatedly, if it is finite procedures and criteria that determine identities, the prior structure of the undecidable must be seen as the original structure of difference and paradox which conditions all such determination and decision. This original structure, as we have seen, is itself determined as the realized form of the paradoxes of becoming and of infinite differentiation, whereby what becomes some way is always becoming a bit more, and what goes from being something to being something else must pass through a pure infinitesimal point at which it is neither. To affirm the structure of original decidability is to see in the structural form of the moment (or “now” as such) the unresolved depth and positive reality of these paradoxes, as prior and problematic conditions, prior to any possible (consistent) schema or positive image, for the self-identity of anything that changes or the becoming-different of anything that is the same.

Furthermore, if the eternal return is seen in this way, its internal relation to the *ontological* problematic can readily be verified. In particular, if it is not simply the repetition of a fixed sequence of (ontic) events in an empty form of time, but rather the paradoxical structure of the infinite which expresses difference and preserves the paradoxes of unlimited becoming, it is thereby in a direct relationship with the reflexive structure of time’s own self-givenness and thereby with the ontological structure of unconcealment – or truth – as such. The nature of this connection resolves what otherwise presents itself as a puzzling aspect of Nietzsche’s presentation of the eternal return – that although it is on the one hand certainly intended as a *cosmological* doctrine that is seen as true, it is also, just as importantly, *to be affirmed* as the *affirmation of amor fati*. As we shall see, it would be as incorrect to see the first aspect of the doctrine as entering a simply empirical claim about the factual circulation of events as it would be to understand the second as a merely psychological imperative. The two aspects can be seen together, however, if the relationship of both to the ontological difference, and thereby being itself, is clearly grasped.

In his 1969 *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Pierre Klossowski considers the “experience” of the eternal return, arguing that the discovery of the doctrine entails a peculiar kind of *anamnesis* and, with it, a necessary disruption of the identity of the one who discovers it. For in the discovery, I am conscious of myself as having discovered the recurrence of all things and *with this* it must also be granted that the discovery itself has been made innumerable times before. If I, then, have learned the truth an infinite number of times before, I must also have forgotten it infinitely many times before; the current *anamnesis* is possible only on the basis of this infinite prior forgetting. But the revelation, as that of the return of all things, is also the discovery that the revelation itself could have happened at any moment in the cycle, or to anyone in general, and has indeed happened innumerable times before. If, then, I will its repetition, I do not will the repetition of myself as I am now (having discovered the eternal recurrence) or as I was before discovering it. Rather, I will myself “as a fortuitous moment whose very fortuity implies the necessity of the integral return of the whole series” (p. 58), a series which must thus traverse “the successive realizations of all possible identities”. (p. 57). For this reason, at the moment I discover the eternal return:

I cease to be myself *hic et nunc* and am susceptible to becoming innumerable others, knowing that I shall forget this revelation once I am outside the memory of myself; this forgetting forms the object of my present willing; for such a forgetting would amount to a memory outside my

own limits: and my present consciousness will be established only in the forgetting of my other possible identities. (p. 58)

It is in this way that the circle becomes, according to Klossowski, “a sign for everything that has happened, for everything that is happening, and for everything that will ever happen in the world.” (p. 58)

With the discovery of the return, I discover what is on the one hand a general form of time and events, but what on the other implicates me, and the moment of discovery itself, as the outcome of the infinite sequence that also begins at this very moment. The particular moment of discovery is not itself unique; the discovery can happen at any time, and must indeed have happened an infinite number of times before. Accordingly, the possibility of self-disclosure that occurs in it – whereby *I*, in this moment, discover myself as the outcome of an infinite series of events that also begins in it – must be structurally characteristic of every moment as such. Every moment as such structurally includes the possibility of a revelation of the whole circular course, and also the necessity of a correlative forgetting. This possibility is not, moreover, simply *my* possibility; in the revelation, I also understand that is the possibility of anyone at any time. It must rather be seen as structurally implied in the form of the moment itself. Through this structure, every moment in itself communicates with the *whole* totality of infinitely recurrent time. The possibility of the revelation of this whole – the revelation of the eternal return – along with its correlative forgetting – must then be given in the very form in which the moment gives itself. To determine my will in accordance with this form is then nothing other than to will the whole of everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen. This is to will in accordance with *amor fati*.

It is here that contact can be re-established with the ontological problematic, in particular in that it construes the form of given time as a reflexive self-giving that discloses and conceals. *One* form of this self-giving is, as we have seen, the specific structure of Dasein as clearing and concealing, the structure that originally relates it to truth as *aletheia*. This is the structure in which, according to *Being and Time*, temporality temporalizes itself through the temporal ecstases and in which Dasein is ‘its’ time; behind it lies the reflexive structure of paradoxical auto-affection, or self-giving time, that Heidegger discovers through his reading of Kant in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. In this paradoxical structure, as we saw in chapter 6 above, the idea of transcendence is ultimately overcome in favor of the more ontologically basic clearing that precedes the attained Dasein itself and in favor of the epochal historical granting of being’s truth as ground and abyss. But it remains that the specific structural condition for the revealing and concealing of beings and for granting of Being’s truth is to be seen in what, giving itself, gives time.²²

²² Cf. “On Time and Being”: “In the sending of the destiny of Being, in the extending of time, there becomes manifest a dedication, a delivering over into what is their own, namely of Being as presence and of time as the realm of the open. What determines both, time and Being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*, the event of Appropriation. *Ereignis* will be translated as Appropriation or event of Appropriation. One should bear in mind, however, that “event” is not simply an occurrence, but that which makes any occurrence possible.” (p. 19)

Aside from this, there is good independent reason to think that the structure of Dasein's reflexivity and its relationship to the self-giving of time are linked in decisive ways to the specific structures of the infinite and the undecidable. With Becker's analysis in *Mathematische Existenz*, for example, we have seen how Dasein's structural capacity for reflection, including the reflection on the unlimited iterability of reflection that Becker identifies with Cantor's "passage to the limit", may be seen as already implying the whole open development of the transfinite hierarchy. Along with it, as we saw, it appears also to imply a characteristic "openness" or "freedom" in the development, whereby it continually outstrips determinate decision procedures and fixed criteria. We have also seen how the aporetic structure of the "now" in itself, whereby it indicates the paradoxes of original becoming, appears to underlie in its foreclosure – already in Aristotle – every subsequent metaphysical attempt to resolve the problem of being and becoming in categorical or logical form. This aporetic structure itself, if brought out and clarified in view of the contemporary mathematics that reveal it, implies a real undecidability as inherent in the structure of the moment as such. If the givenness of the moment itself involves a self-givenness of original time, whether as the temporalization of temporality in the ecstases or as the paradoxical reflexivity of an auto-affective structure that is both giving and given, it must apparently itself entail this structural undecidability.

Although he treats Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence as the attainment of a "basic metaphysical position," and although he indeed, several times, refers to its discovery as an *Ereignis*, Heidegger does not, in the Nietzsche lectures, discuss this connection between the reflexive form of the self-givenness of time and the specific structure of truth. Heidegger does, as we have seen, say that Nietzsche is able to attain the insight into the eternal recurrence only by placing himself "in the moment" decisively, in such a way that he himself is "transposed to beings as a whole." (p. 62). He thereby recognizes that the form of the discovery of the eternal recurrence is itself decisive for the content of its doctrine, and even that it indicates a structure of the moment as such whereby it demonstrates the more general structure of given time. But what he does not consider in any detail are the extended implications of the thought that time as given in the discovery of the eternal return must be infinite, and must therefore bear in its structure the specific consequences and structural complications of the infinite as such. As we have seen, these consequences include an unlimitedness of difference in becoming, a paradoxical undermining of all fixed forms of identity, and a constitutive undecidability characteristic of the form of the moment and of infinite given time as a whole.

None of these consequences are thinkable under the headings of "stability", "permanentizing", and the identity of the same, with which Heidegger goes on to characterize Nietzsche's doctrine as the final position of metaphysical thinking in the lectures. Together, though, they indicate a more complex and problematic relationship of the thought of the eternal recurrence, if construed in terms of them, to the determined history of metaphysics as a whole. In particular, they appear to bear to this history, as we have seen, the relationship that a general or dialectical problem bears to *one* of its more or less determined solutions. As such, they indicate the more original structure of time as given that pre-exists the "metaphysics of presence" as such, and also pre-determines its *possible* configurations up to their end.

What, though, is that which, in granting the form of time and events, pre-determines the happening of whatever can happen in the determined history of metaphysics as the metaphysics of presence, indeed by pre-determining the form of presencing and the present themselves? It is indicated by a name or descriptor which, as is well known, combines in the later Heidegger's thought the priority of the punctual origin of this history with the thought of the "outside" of what is other to it in general. The name is *Ereignis*. And with the specific thought of these consequences of the eternal recurrence, thought in terms of the specific structures of the infinite indicated in the contemporary mathematical and metalogical texts, it thus apparently becomes possible to think that *the eternal recurrence is itself one form or structure of Ereignis*. In thinking this (apparently) un-Heideggerian thought, we will have also thought the possibility, at a certain determined point of its discovery or revelation, of the appearance of *Ereignis itself* in or as the infinite temporal form of the eternal recurrence. But inasmuch as the eternal recurrence is itself the metaphysical picture correspondent, according to Heidegger himself, to the contemporary regime of the dominance of machination or *Gestell*, to see things this way would simply be to see *Ereignis in Gestell* as its other face or initially hidden form. And with his repeated statements about the peculiar relationship of *Gestell* and *Ereignis*, Heidegger himself will, of course, have said nothing else.

In particular: as we have seen, if we apply the constitutive ideas of the infinite, which appear to be implied in it, explicitly to the structure of the eternal recurrence, we see in it the peculiar structure of the constitutive *undecidable* which insists at the levels of the moment and the totality, determining the general problematic surrounding within which it is then possible for metaphysics, as ontotheology, to seek particular principles of grounding from above and from below. *With the imposition of such particular principles*, beings and their temporal truth are rendered decidable and the original structure of undecidability is concealed. The concealment takes particular successive forms until, finally, there is nothing anymore to serve as a principial standard except becoming itself: here, *energeia* or actuality is no longer measured or balanced by a *dunamis* that precedes and regulates it, but rather both are converted into one another as the unlimited form of the pure will to will. This is the configuration that appears as the "final" metaphysical one, in which the eternal return appears *in one of its aspects* as the unlimited circulation of beings determined only by the will to their unlimited ordering. Here, and in relation to the determined standards and procedures which attempt to secure and verify the unlimited continuance of this setting-into-order, the eternal return is indeed the "securing of becoming" into permanence. But the specification of any such procedures stands in an internal and necessary relationship to the insistence of the actual undecidable which surrounds and conditions them on every side. This real-undecidable form of temporality as such, verified in the very metalogical discoveries that themselves make possible the development of "information technology" and computation as an apparently unlimited pursuit of the calculation of the calculable, by contrast proposes an alternative critical politics and another kind of reaction to the ontologically determined "present" on the ground of what it shows about the underlying form of time itself.

How does it come about, from this perspective, that the metaphysics of presence is able to determine the being of beings, from above and below, by means of specific ontic standards, and how does the affirmation of the eternal return overcome this thought? In his 1965 *Nietzsche*, Deleuze considers the

successive stages of the “triumph of nihilism” in terms of the play of active and reactive forces that each involve . The third and most dangerous of these is that of the ascetic ideal:

The ascetic ideal: The moment of sublimation. What the weak or reactive life ultimately wants is the negation of life. *Its* will to power is a will to nothingness, as a condition of its triumph. Conversely, the will to nothingness can only tolerate a life that is weak, mutilated, reactive – states close to nothing. Then is formed the disturbing alliance. Life is judged according to values that are said to be superior to life: these pious values are opposed to life, condemn it, lead it to nothingness: they promise salvation only to the most reactive, the weakest, the sickest forms of life.” (p. 78)

On the condition of the reactive, which is itself a kind of reflexive form of redoubling, life is judged according to values that are “said to be superior” to it; the world as a whole takes on a determinate meaning as what is to be seen as overcome or able to be overcome it in thought. It is in this development that Deleuze reads Nietzsche as proposing the “genesis of the great categories of our thought: the Self, the World, God, causality, finality, and so on.” (p. 79). More specifically and in the ‘ontological’ idiom: with the specific redoubling accomplished by the reactive, the particular conditions are attained for the institution of metaphysics as onto-theology along with the basic sense of all transcendence as such. The world is determined by values and principles that are said to be outside it and superior to it; these principles aim to stabilize temporal becoming by means of something determinable from a simple “outside” position as extra-temporal or as stably fixed in general. For this operation, it is essential that a specific sense of the whole be attained, and also that it be able to be organized onto-theologically by one or another ontic referent. The affirmation of the active, by contrast, affirms life from within and overcomes the specific conditions of this onto-theological determination of categories. It points to the insistence of active becoming, before and behind the fixed values that are posited in the reactive attitudes as superior to the world and made to seem so. In this, as I have suggested, it affirms the original inherence within becoming of the infinite, and the undecidability that it brings with it as its intrinsically indicated form.

If this is correct, then what is revealed in the revelation of the eternal return is ultimately not either the determinacy of a particular standard for the being of beings or the complete arbitrariness of their utter and final removal from all standards in the generalization of a redoubled will to will. What is shown is rather the broader structure of the real-undecidable which surrounds and conditions any and all determinate procedures of decision. The affirmation of the eternal return is, then, the affirmation of this real-undecidable, and of the open and unlimited return of difference within it. This unlimited return of difference is the insistence of the paradoxes of becoming-unlimited, which cannot be solved or resolved, but only foreclosed, by any kind of determinate decision procedure. The insistence of this structure of paradox in the very form of the moment itself verifies that the moment is not the occasion for a decision or for a privileged gathering into presence but rather an opportunity for indicating the undecidability that inheres within it. On this basis it would apparently be possible – though I do not do so here – to re-read all that links the structure of the moment to the resolute and decisive in Heidegger,

including also the connection he sometimes sees between it and a specially indicated structural opening, the structure of the present as *kairos*. Here, “the moment” is seen as the site of a gathering of authenticity and resoluteness, or as calling for a decision in a most original sense. But if, by contrast, the paradoxical structure of the eternal return is seen here, there is no occasion for decision and no demand for the resolute. All moments are equal as they equally bear the structure of the undecidable within themselves: the center is everywhere, and only difference returns. It is in this way that the moment can become, not an occasion for decision, but the object of an affirmation, an affirmation which goes all the further in implying its own infinite becoming. It is in this affirmation that time and being show themselves in a more original sense.

Heidegger himself may have suspected it. In the 1953 lecture “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra,” Heidegger suggests a different way of understanding the significance of the eternal recurrence, not simply as the fixing of becoming in permanence, but rather in relation to what Nietzsche presents as Zarathustra’s highest hope: the deliverance of man from revenge. “Revenge” itself, Heidegger notes, is further understood by Zarathustra as “the will’s aversion to time and its ‘it was’”. If there is a deliverance from this to be taught, it will thus involve a particular relation to time itself, or to its own structural character. In particular, the “it was” is here “identifies the foundation of time in its entire and intrinsic time-essence.” The will’s aversion, in revenge, is not just to one aspect or character of time but to time itself. In particular, Heidegger suggests, it is *transience* from which, here, the will suffers.” In its attitude of revenge, this suffering will wills its own cessation and disappearance in general. The transient, and the earthly, are also “degraded” and “eternal Ideas” are posited. It is as a response to this, Heidegger suggests, that Nietzsche’s thought of deliverance intervenes. It responds to the “No” of the spirit of revenge with an affirmative “yes”; but this “yes” is, according to Heidegger, nevertheless still the affirmation of a metaphysical conception. It is, in particular, the metaphysical conception of a recurrence that can be “abiding” only if it is “eternal.” With this conception, Nietzsche thinks becoming as the stable condition of beings and thereby thinks once more what is always thought, according to Heidegger, in metaphysics: namely the belonging of the predicate “eternal” to the being of beings.

Nevertheless, in a brief “note on the eternal recurrence of the same” appended to the lecture, Heidegger recognizes the doctrine of recurrence as an “enigma” that today still gives itself to be thought. In particular, it is to be thought in the course of a thinking that tries to “bring the *essence* of modern technology to light”. Here, the eternal recurrence as a figure of technology is just *one* of its faces or aspects; beyond this there is something else, mysterious, still to be understood:

What is the essence of the modern dynamo other than one expression of the eternal recurrence of the same? But the essence of that machine is not anything machine-like or even mechanical.

Just as little may Nietzsche's thought of the eternal recurrence of the same be interpreted in a mechanical sense.

That Nietzsche experienced and expounded his most abysmal thought from the Dionysian standpoint, only suggests that he was still compelled to think it metaphysically, and only metaphysically.

But it does not preclude that this most abysmal thought conceals something unthought, which also is impenetrable to metaphysical thinking.

V

I have argued that if the specific inclusion, within the structure of the thought of eternal recurrence, of the content of the constitutive ideas and problems of the infinite is grasped in the light of contemporary mathematical and metalogical thought, this provides an alternative conception of its structure that exposes its structural connection or substantial sameness with what Heidegger thinks as *Ereignis*, the condition of both historical metaphysics and its overcoming at its end. This provides grounds for resisting Heidegger's reading of the stabilized circulation of beings in Gestell as the *only* form or structure of the eternal recurrence, and also gives content to Heidegger's own avowals of the actual internal relationship between Gestell and Ereignis, in which he places the hope for a contemporary thinking or realization of the latter. In this final section, I shall argue that it also provides the basis for an "ontological" critical politics, at some distance from what are usually seen as the political implications of Heidegger's own work, but nevertheless situationally appropriate to the structural problems and characteristic antinomies of the organization of global life today.

The key to this politics is the demonstration and awareness of the actual ineffectivity that surrounds and conditions the pursuit of all "effective" measures and solutions as a matter of their own inherent *logical* structure. For if systems of capital, structures of organization, global "planning" and the institutionalized and capitalized pursuit of technological "solutions" all operate on the assumption of the unquestioned legitimacy of effective procedures, the metalogical results demonstrate their inherent limit with respect to the total situation of global life to which they address themselves. They show, on the one hand, that effective solutions will never succeed in resolving the structural antagonisms and underlying contradictions that actually structure this situation itself, and on the other that the various determined forms of procedural solution in which the contemporary forms of global governance and capital pursue their resolution can only succeed in reduplicating them. In this way, the demonstration and awareness of generalized ineffectivity provides rigorous grounds for the radical critique of all that is involved in the pursuit and maintenance of effectivity and thereby of the underlying assumptions and enforced practice of the regulated functioning of global life. The enforcement of this regular functioning is as much in force, today, in the seemingly decentered flows of global capital thought according to the ideological figure of the "free" market and the regulating exchange and commodification of "information" as it was earlier, in the time of the planned economies and centralized solutions of the twentieth century. The thought and reality of ineffectivity, which is shown by means of the contemporary metalogical results to be actually structurally inherent in the structure of the pursuit of effective solutions itself, marks the limit of this force and the possibility of its specific overcoming in contemporary thought and action.

This makes for what is, with respect to the globally normative standards and contemporary assumptions of the organization of collective life, on the one hand a rigorous and "ruthless critique of everything existing" and, on the other, an *affirmative* doctrine of the thought and practice of a life no longer determined by the pursuit of effectivity in any of its forms. One temporal figure of such a life is, as I have suggested, the eternal return. But as we have seen, this is no longer the regulated and regulating return of goods, information, or (more basically) capital as its form and determination. It is rather the ontologically conceived and metalogically demonstrated return of all that insists, beyond regular

procedures and their effectiveness, at the very basis of their possible institution, maintenance, and force.

What is at stake in the question, temporal in an exemplary fashion, of the relationship of the two figures of the “eternal” return, the one the stabilizing into constancy of the procedural decidability of the effectiveness of identical beings, and the other the irregular return of the undecidable whose infinite form is not stability or permanence but difference itself? It is a question of *circulation*, and of the relationship of its meaning to the thought and structural reality of the infinite that would have insisted within it since its first specific thought in the history of the West.²³ If contemporary global life and practice indeed determines the form of life and exchange as a securing and ever-increasing expansion of the circulation of goods, information, and capital, the relationship of circulation to the infinite is thought quite differently in the actual ontological content of the eternal recurrence. Here, circulation is no longer the circulation of goods and capital but the return of “all that has happened, is happening, or ever will happen”. And it is not determined by the “eternal” as the stabilization of circulation into the constancy of becoming, but as the recurrence of infinite difference which outstrips every finite form of stabilization and presence.

If, as I have argued, the eternal return can be ontologically thought, in its determination of the very form of the happening of what happens, as “the same as” *Ereignis*, it is possible to think *Ereignis* itself differently than Heidegger himself (at least sometimes) does. In particular, what is at issue here is the evident ambiguity of Heidegger’s own thought of *Ereignis* as the *futural* event of being’s own appropriation to itself, of its ultimate return to itself in the sphere of its own propriety or proper belonging, outside and beyond the withdrawal and obscurity within the history of metaphysics that is also, according to Heidegger, proper to it. The ambiguity of Heidegger’s thought of this futural “to come” is the ambiguity of the figures in which the thought of *Ereignis* would, on the one hand, precede its “actuality” or “realization” as its “preparation” or hearkening, but on the other seem to bring it about, all at once, by means of a kind of sudden transformation of vision or insight. In thinking this ambiguity, Heidegger oscillates problematically between the rhetoric of decision and passivity, between

²³ In the 1946 lecture “Anaximander’s Saying,” Heidegger reads what is “considered to be the oldest saying of Western thinking” as a discourse of the circulation of presence and absence, as the arrival and departure of what comes, whiles, and goes: “Usage hands over what is present to its presencing; to, that is, its while. Usage imparts to it the portion of its while. The while, apportioned in each case to what stays, rests in the jointure which disposes what presences in the passage between the two absences (arrival and departure).” He barely mentions, though, the declaration that is reputed to proceed in Anaximander the specific text considered here, that of the *apeiron* as the *arche* of all beings. (p. 278, top: “According to the tradition reported in Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Anaximander is supposed to have said that that which presences without bounds: *arche ton onton to apeiron*. What is without bounds is not disposed by order and reck. It is not one of the things that are present but rather *to khreon*.”). If, however, as we have suggested, the specific sense of the *apeiron* is already involved in the thought of this circulation and in the thought of presence as such that (as Heidegger will suggest) is originally thought here, then it must also essentially articulate what Heidegger later articulates, in the essay, as the “concealed richness of the unifying One, the *en* which is, in his own way, is thought by every thinker” and in which is to be found, Heidegger suggests, the underlying sameness of being thought as *energeia*, *idea*, *eon*, and *logos*. (p. 280). (There is a somewhat more developed discussion of the *apeiron* in Anaximander at the end of *Basic Concepts* where, nevertheless, its significance in Anaximander’s thought is again treated just as that of the “refusal of every boundary”).

the awaiting of a thinking that already knows the truth of Ereignis and the impulsive insistence of a practice of thought (and also of action?) that would seem to see at a determined “historical” moment the real possibility of bringing it about.²⁴ If Ereignis is instead thought as (one form of) the eternal recurrence in the way I have suggested, its thinking is not structurally “beyond”, because it is the same as, the thinking of what is involved in our present, or of the general form of the present itself. According to this general form, the structure of this present is not the determination of a specific form of presencing or even the stabilization of all becoming into infinite persistence. It is rather the insistence of infinite difference which, differentiating itself, provides for the undecidable coming of whatever is to come. What structurally insists in this coming cannot be pictured in any image of the world, or determined according to any specified or specifiable procedure. But the development of the idea of the infinite in our time points to the fact that there is nevertheless a way for this insistence to be rigorously demonstrated, and, with this, that the very difference of being can be positively indicated and thought.

What, then, of the “event”ality of the event, of the thought or possibility of the determinate moment of the break with all that has come before, or of the overcoming of the specific conditions of a longstanding historical or temporal determination of the sense of beings at a *particular* determined point? If it can be said of the distinctive forms of temporal thought and political organization of the twentieth century that the characteristically pursue a kind of sudden and radical breakthrough to the real at the punctual limit of the purification of forms, then this pursuit recurrently invokes and turns on the rhetoric and figure of the peculiar configuration of crisis, decision, and act. According to this rhetoric, the finally redemptive passage to the new is to be found only by means of a sudden completion of all that has come before whose very structure is that of the decisive “passage to the act.” With this passage, the meaning of history is consummated or reversed, attained or nullified in the gesture that finally delimits it and thereby founds the possibility of another beginning. The rhetoric of this “passion of the real” still persists, today, in the militancy of the politics of the new that invoke the decisive activity of the subject as the basis for a possible transformation or reconfiguration of existing situations at the point of what is there figured as the progressive exigency of truths. But the rhetoric of crisis and its overcoming by means of action is also deployed and pursued by the thought and practice of the regulation of global capital, which recurrently and effectively turns it to its own ends of the insurance of structural functioning and the securing of systems.

By contrast with this, the deadlock which links the thinking of the determined forms of capitalist technological crisis to the idea of the general crisis of the end of history (whether thought in catastrophic or triumphalist forms) is already overcome by the thought of the temporal form of the eternal recurrence as the circulation of the undecidable. Here, “ontological” thought is no longer responsive to an anxiety of the possible loss of what insists within history or the exigency of its futural recovery on other terms or in terms of the “other.” Rather, what is inherent and determinative in the events of history is thought in terms of its own specific structural and temporal relationship to what returns in it, and what thereby structurally implies its communication with all that happens, can happen,

²⁴ It *might* be possible – but only with an adequate and rigorous awareness of all the overdetermined dangers and problems that also are involved here – to begin (but only begin) here a reading of the significance of what have been called the “events” of 1933. I do not intend or presume such a reading, or its outcome, here.

or will happen. With this thought of the infinite circulation of the undecidable, there is no longer anything to decide. There is no need, and no exigency, of its preservation, maintenance or salvation of the event or its destiny, since this destiny also destines everything and everything returns. But there remains the possibility of an affirmation that determines the world and the will under its sign, thereby indicating the inherent temporal ground of the pursuit of a clarified life to come.

The thought of the eternal recurrence, thus understood, has its fixed points in the moments of discovery or revelation at which it is illuminated or pursued, or where it becomes the principle of a life and action that is no longer determined by the effective pursuit of beings. But these fixed points are not themselves unique or privilege; they are simply indicative of the structure that is thereby seen to inhere in the form of time itself, in the moment as such. This points to what is, within them, a very different relationship to history and its becoming than that which is contemplated in the rhetoric of crisis and overcoming which capitalist-technological praxis and decisionist political thought essentially share.

In particular, if Nietzsche, with the revelation of the eternal return, could consider himself in possession of a thought that would or could “break the history of the world in two”, it is because it is part of the structural content of this thought that this specifically determined history is, as such and at each of its moments, *already in communication* with the temporality of what is not history or is other to it, what cannot simply be determined as what happens according to its determinate principle or determining standard. Here there is indicated, in particular, not only the “other” beginning of another history, but other and different histories in general, and also the world-temporality of what is *not* history but is rather thought as the time of “nature” that precedes and envelops it. With this thought of the communication, in the paradoxical form of the moment, of history with its more general temporal condition, history is *already* and as such “broken” with respect to its temporally determining condition with which it is related in the circulation of the eternal return. It is this circulation of historical and natural temporalities, *in the plural*, and their communication within the paradoxical and infinite form of the now, that the eternal return teaches. The broken condition of history is the object of its affirmation, and the indicated site of what “we” must apparently learn to inhabit. In learning to take up this inhabitation, it is not to be doubted that the ontic forms of circulation and of the expansion of its claims can and will continue, even for a long time.

Here, it is possible to suspect or discern the specific structural limit of the great Heideggerian dramatics of being’s concealment and revealing, and in particular of the massive narrative of being’s progressive withdrawal in the forms of its determination as beingness. In the thought of the eternal return, by contrast, “nothing is hidden” and there is no withdrawal, unless it be the forgetting of what can and must always be remembered again, the circulation of what will always come back. The result is that the thought that indicates and affirms the image of this circulation is no longer one that attempts to supply another or superior sense of being with respect to the sense of the circulation itself. The anxiety of nihilism or its completion in the substitution of ontic for ontological measures is no longer threatening within an awareness that sees that, within the structural indication of the recurrence of all that

happens, there is never too little meaning but always too much.²⁵ Under the sign of the eternal recurrence, that is, there is always *more* sense than can be grasped by means of finite procedures, always *more* truth than can be captured by resemblance or representation, always *more* time than is counted by the empirical clock.

Under this sign of the eternal recurrence, ontological thought thus indicates the principle of a circulation of the infinite, an unlimited becoming of sense and things at the structural basis of all principles of fixity and determinate orders of equivalent exchange. What kind of response is invoked here *on the level of action* to the characteristic problems of our time, which present themselves as the problems of the *totalization* of the world, the total pursuit of total enframing or the absolutization of the claim of technological means and practices over the circulation of life on the earth? Here we should think not only of the narrowly specified, though very real, problems of the exhaustion of resources and the verified and increasingly urgent disharmony of the global climate which push to crisis, but also of the internal “problems” of what Marx already discussed as the ongoing and ever more total circulation of life and energy in the planet’s metabolism under the condition of capitalism, which could, for all we know, go on for a very long time to come.

As we have seen, the ontological thinking of the temporal significance of the eternal recurrence, along with the specific structure of the undecidable infinite that is thereby indicated within it, points to the affirmation of this unlimited becoming. The point here is not the restoration of a “natural” balance or a local or global modification of practices, still determined within the overarching form of capital and technological/effective solutions, which allow species and natural habitats to be maintained a bit longer. With respect to the totalization of the world which these solutions will always themselves have both presupposed and promulgated, the affirmation of the eternal return is the affirmation a circulation that can never be total at all, at least not within any form of consistency: it is this circulation which then provides the indication, and principle, of an affirmed possibility and the *scholium* of an education in a planetary life to come. The sense of this education is the clarified life that no longer destroys the earth or saves it, but is finally able to live on it.

In the temporal indication that ontological thought gives with the idea of the eternal recurrence, there is, as we have already seen, nothing any longer to decide. There is no closing or opening here, no demand to open a world or pursue its sense in the cultural decisions of peoples or the institution of their differences. This means also that here world is no longer here opposed, or opposable, to earth in the exigency of their mutual strife; rather, it may first be possible, with and in the specific thought of the structure of the temporal infinite as implied in the eternal return, to see the earth itself under the

²⁵ Cf. Deleuze: “Structure is in fact a machine for the production of incorporeal sense (skindapsos). But when structuralism shows in this manner that sense is produced by nonsense and its perpetual displacement, and that it is born of the respective position of elements which are not by themselves ‘signifying’, we should not at all compare it with what was called the philosophy of the absurd: Carroll, yes; Camus, no. This is so because, for the philosophy of the absurd, nonsense is what is opposed to sense in a simple relation with it, so that the absurd is always defined by a deficiency of sense and a lack (there is not enough of it ...). From the point of view of structure, on the contrary, there is always too much sense: an excess produced and over-produced by nonsense as a lack of itself.” (p. 71)

aspect of the infinite flows of sense and cosmic becoming that inhere in it and circulate around and through it. Here might be indicated the specific sense of what the ontological/temporal problematic gives to be thought in our time, as well as the contemporary implication of a discourse that, in addition to the eternal return, once sought to teach us, who have never known it, the meaning of the earth. The pursuit of the indication as the intimation of what today gives itself to thought in the circulation of life and its communication with the infinite cosmic flows that precede, traverse and animate it would apparently involve, among other things, a determinate rereading of the texts of philosophy, not this time as metaphysics or as the unfolding of presence but under a the different conception or sign of the recurrence of all that it thinks. Such a rereading could draw resources from the essential forms in which the limited and limiting configuration of the logical thought of being as the thinkable gathering of the *koinon* were first defined and announced as the specific meaning of time. It here becomes possible to think of reading, in particular, the limited and limiting circulation permitted by the *logos* and the specific adventure of its history differently, in the broader context of the finite and infinite flows of sense and becoming that surround and envelop it at every side, wherein it is just *one* history and one adventure, among many others. The trace of such an alternative determination might still be available, and give itself in the texts of the “tradition” to be read and thought as an indication of the life of the earth and its communication with the cosmic surrounding that precedes and envelops it. Such an indication would be the indication of a meaning of circulation that is not confined to these limited and limiting forms, but is rather the meaning of the circulation of the infinite in the life of the earth as such. It is pointed to in a specifically mythical discourse, in which the dying Socrates evokes or invokes the transit of the soul and the inherence of the thinkable, of the forgetting of what was once known and its eventual recovery, in the figure of its circulation around and through the earth, which still (and still today) does not give itself to be known. For:

There are many strange places upon the earth, and the earth itself is not such as those who are used to discourse upon it believe it to be in nature or size, as someone has convinced me.
(Plato, *Phaedo*, 108c)

And:

Further, the earth is very large, and we live around the sea in a small portion of it between Phasis and the pillars of Heracles, like ants or frogs around a swamp; many other peoples live in many such parts of it. Everywhere about the earth there are numerous hollows of many kinds and shapes and sizes into which the water and the mist and the air have gathered. The earth itself is pure and lies in the pure sky where the stars are situated, which the majority of those who discourse on these subjects call the ether. The water and mist and air are the sediment of the ether and they always flow into the hollows of the earth. (109a-c)