
Heidegger's Nietzsche'

What is Heidegger's intention in his book on Nietzsche? It is to advance his uncovering of Being, not in the sense of the beingness that makes every being a being, but in the sense of what, *in* Heidegger's account, philosophers implicitly project, take for granted, and then ignore when they clarify this beingness itself.

The fact that readers have become familiar with Heidegger's view that there is such a "Being," however, should not lead us to take for granted that it exists. Nor should the mysterious statements that he sometimes makes about Being lead us to dismiss his argument prematurely. The central questions to ask Heidegger are whether "there is" Being at all, in the sense that he intends it, and what its characteristics might be. Less elliptically, the issue is whether previous philosophy, or a richer metaphysics, is sufficient to grasp the phenomena that are apparently most in need of illumination by Heidegger's understanding of Being.

Heidegger advances his intention in *Nietzsche* by clarifying several basic structures of beingness, several leading questions of "metaphysics," the better to ultimately differentiate metaphysics from thought about Being as such and to take the determinations of beingness-essence and existence, for example-back to their unity in Being. The bulk of Heidegger's discussion, therefore, concen-

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trates on making clear what metaphysics is, and what Nietzsche's place is in metaphysics' "history."

Because what Heidegger means by metaphysics is identical to what he means by philosophy, Heidegger's *Nietzsche* proves to be a central locus for his discussion of philosophy in general. Therefore, even if Heidegger's attempt to disclose a Being as such that eludes the philosophers falls short, and philosophy's horizon proves to be the basic one, his *Nietzsche* remains fundamental, for it discusses philosophy with evident force. Its power is similar to that of *Being and Time* in the sense that Heidegger's analysis of what is apparently familiar to us—there, elementary human phenomena, here, the standpoints of various philosophers—is sufficiently compelling that it stands as evidence for his overall approach. Would Heidegger have been able to see so deeply into *physis*, subjectivity, and value if he had not uncovered the fundamental ground in terms of which these concepts can be discussed? Moreover, *Nietzsche* discusses phenomena, such as love and, especially, beauty, that were ignored or given short shrift in *Being and Time*. These discussions make it difficult to claim that Heidegger's relative silence there on such questions demonstrates the inadequacy of his understanding. On the contrary: his analyses of these phenomena in *Nietzsche* are so illuminating that they seem more to support than to undermine him.

The place of Nietzsche in Heidegger's analysis is simple: Nietzsche's work is the end of philosophy, end in the sense that with him the basic possibilities of metaphysics are completed, and, indeed, exhausted. This is especially clear for the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, with its evident emphasis on "will," but as Heidegger sees it, the possibilities that Nietzsche unfolds ultimately are contained in metaphysics as Plato originated it.

This metaphysical place that Heidegger finds for Nietzsche is hardly an obvious one, even today when our understanding of Nietzsche is so much under the influence of Heidegger's interpretation. For Nietzsche is famous as one who denounces all talk about

"Being" and turns instead to unvarnished "becoming."

Heidegger nonetheless understands Nietzsche's thought to be the completion of metaphysics for two reasons. First, he argues that Nietzsche deals with the basic metaphysical distinctions at the proper metaphysical level, sometimes intentionally, sometimes as insufficiently considered presuppositions or projections that ground his intentional arguments. We cannot understand will to power or the eternal return of the same, for example, unless we see that they are arguments about the Being of beings, and not statements about or within physics, psychology, or historiology. That Nietzsche sometimes treats them as statements within the sciences and offers proofs appropriate to these sciences shows only that he did not always succeed in properly structuring and expressing his thought. Indeed, that the *Will to Power* consists of plans, sketches, and notes, organized by others under editorial schemes that Heidegger seldom refrains from denouncing, is evidence for this, although these deficiencies do not prevent Heidegger from using these notes (and sections of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*) as his chief texts, with only occasional reference to, say, *Beyond Good and Evil* or *Twilight of the Idols*. The basic point, as we will see, is that Nietzsche's remarks about truth and value, as well as his discussions of eternal return and will to power, not to mention (and, in fact, more fundamentally than) what he says directly about Being and becoming, are ontological statements. Even, or in fact, especially, when Nietzsche talks about phenomena such as "art" and "life" we must not mistake him for an art historian or a failed biologist. He is not taking for granted what art or life mean and then making remarks about phenomena that he thoughtlessly believes to be living or artistic. Rather, he is first *establishing* what art and life mean, first clarifying what art and life are in their being and how they are grounded in this being.

The second way that Heidegger maintains the argument that Nietzsche completes metaphysics is by indicating-"indicating," because this analysis is less developed than the first point-that Nietzsche's understanding of being represents the final triumph of beings over Being, the fullest forgetfulness of Being as such. Nietzsche's understanding is perfectly coordinated with (that is, it is

the appropriate metaphysical understanding projected in advance of and making possible) man's dealing with every being, including himself, as a being to be dominated and controlled. It belongs together with "machination," which is an early statement of what Heidegger later speaks and writes about as technology. The complete oblivion of Being is presaged at the very beginning of metaphysics, with Plato; more obviously, Nietzsche radicalizes what is at the heart of the defining event of modernity, Descartes' uncovering of Being as the methodical representedness of objects in their certainty to the human subject whose own representing is the ultimate certainty.

The precise elements of Heidegger's view of Nietzsche as philosopher, as metaphysician, flow from his grasp of what is crucial in metaphysics as such. Heidegger's discussion is not normally formulaic, however, but emerges in his "confrontation" with Nietzsche. The distinguishing rhetorical quality of the book (especially of the lectures, on which I am concentrating here in Part I and which, together with several essays on the History of Being on which I will concentrate in Part II, make up *Nietzsche* as a whole) is to encourage us to consider the guiding questions of metaphysics as they emerge in Nietzsche himself, and in what we must see about earlier thinkers in order to grasp what Nietzsche explicitly intends and implicitly observes. Mechanical repetition of these crucial elements, however, often becomes the unfortunate substance of what is said about Heidegger's *Nietzsche* when, departing from Heidegger's own practice, one summarizes his material formulaically rather than attempting to think it through. Nonetheless, glancing at these elements is what allows Heidegger to understand will to power, eternal return, truth, perspective, and values as well as he does; therefore, we must organize our discussion around Heidegger's own fundamental distinctions.

To every understanding of the beingness of beings, Heidegger argues, there belongs some interpretation of *what* beings are, which we usually call their essence, and *that* beings are, which we usually call their existence. In the most familiar version, *what* each tree is is precisely that—a *tree*, *i.e.*, it possesses or presents itself in its

treeness. *That* this tree is is a second determination of its Being. As Heidegger reports it, the ordinary elaborations of this distinction between what a being is and that it is have hardly progressed from, indeed are debased versions of, Plato or Aristotle; when we discuss art, for example, we can barely begin to speak before we already are taking for granted that to each work of art there belongs its form-what it is-and the matter that the form shapes into this particular piece.

From this perspective, when Nietzsche discusses things in terms of the will to power, he is discussing what constitutes a being as a being: the Being of every entity is what it is in and for will to power. And, when Nietzsche discusses the eternal return of the same, he is elaborating how and that each being is as it is, namely, as necessarily belonging to that which decisive moments show us is a countless circling, a countless recurrence, an eternal becoming of what will be and has been.

In addition to essence and existence, truth is a third element crucially connected to Being wherever metaphysics is possible. To speak the truth about something is to say what it is, rather than how it seems or appears to be, i.e., rather than as it is not. What is is what is true, whether or not we later interpret this to mean that truth is in the subject's statements, in objects themselves, in our understanding, or in things as they draw forth our understanding. In this light, Nietzsche's several discussions of truth belong to his philosophical or metaphysical projections. They are not epistemological, and surely are not examples of cognitive psychology. Rather, they concern the Being of beings and our understanding of this Being.

As Heidegger sees it, Nietzsche's discussion of truth belongs to the traditional way in which metaphysics specifies truth: truth is harmony with the actual, correspondence with things as they are. For when Nietzsche makes his notorious claim that previous truths are, in fact, errors, he means that they are errors from the point of view of truth as the essential assimilation to beings as a whole, and to beings themselves. In his understanding, beings as a whole are chaotic, not fixed. But the traditional "truths" fix things in place. Therefore, they are errors when considered in terms of how things

in fact are: previous "truths" fall short of proper harmony. And it is some sense of proper harmony which, for Nietzsche as well as for every other thinker, constitutes the "metaphysical essence of truth."

To outline the determinations of this harmony, which, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche calls justification (or "justice," *Gerechtigkeit*), is to begin to outline more concretely the elements that constitute the will to power, as Heidegger sees them. The usual truth that fixes things in place is an error, but such error is necessary for life; truth as fixing in place, truth as holding to be true, must demonstrate and display will to power. Indeed, this fixing in place must assimilate itself to what is to be fixated. Holding something to be true, seeing something as if it were stable enough to obey a principle of contradiction, for instance, is an error because we are fixing what is not fixed, while believing that we are discovering what is already fixed. But the fixing is true because it must in some way assimilate itself to the chaos that it is fixing. "What is true in this holding-to-be-true fixates Becoming and thus precisely does not correspond to the nature of becoming as chaos. What is true in such truth is noncorrespondence, untruth, error, illusion. However, this characterization of the true as a kind of error is founded on the assimilation of the re-presented to what is to be fixated. There too, where the true of holding-to-be-true is conceptualized as the untrue, the most general essence of truth in the sense of *homoiosis* provides the foundation" (III 139-40; I 635).¹

Holding to be true, "knowledge as the securing of permanence," is necessary. But it is "art as the higher value [that] is still more necessary." The link between art and truth, their discord and their similarity, is the clue to the essence of will to power. Art, Heidegger concludes after extensive discussion of beauty, rapture, form, and "the grand style," is transfiguration. "Transfiguration creates possibilities for the self-surpassing of life at any given point of limitation" (III 140; I 635-636). "Self-surpassing" is fundamental in understanding will. For, will is command, and "commanding is the fundamental mood of being superior," not merely to others but "always beforehand superior with regard to oneself." This superiority of the self to itself means "excelling, taking one's essence higher in such a way that

one's very own essence consists in such excelling."

Power is "determined as the panoramic gaze into the comprehensive vista" (III 152; I 651), or, to say this in another way, power is overpowering, "a becoming master of oneself from having climbed and opened a higher height" (III 146; I 643). To be panoramic is to look beyond narrow perspectives, or, more strictly, it is the looking that "opens up perspectives." That is to say that for Nietzsche truth in its essence (justification) does not *have* a perspective; rather, "it is itself a perspective as an erecting, opening and keeping open of it" (III 148; I 646). Will and power therefore "are selfsame in the metaphysical sense that they cohere in the one original essence of the will to power"; in thinking the "essence" of either will or of power, we do not think them alone, but, rather, think will to power. Hence, "will to power means empowering to the excelling of itself. Such overpowering to excelling is at the same time the fundamental act of excelling itself. For this reason, Nietzsche constantly speaks of power being in itself 'enhancement of power'; the powering of power is empowering to 'more' power" (III 152;153; I 651).

Knowledge, the securing of permanence or the fixating of things, is necessary to, and proceeds within, will to power because "knowledge in each case posits the fixated and fixating boundaries so that there can be something to surpass, whereas art is able to retain its higher necessity. Art and knowledge require each other in their essence. Art and knowledge accomplishing their reciprocity first bring about the full securing of permanence of the living as such" (III 140; I 636).

The full story of this permanence, however, cannot be told until we see that the essence of the will to power is itself "permanentizing becoming into presence." For the empowering to the excelling of one's own essence that constitutes will to power "brings excelling-Becoming-to a stand and to permanence." Nietzsche "wants Becoming and what becomes, as the fundamental character of beings as a whole; but he wants what becomes precisely and before all else as what remains, as authentic 'being', namely, being in the sense of the Greek thinkers." In thinking will to power, Nietzsche thinks "what is becoming and is moved in the highest and most authentic

sense," life itself, "in its permanence" (III 156 I 656). Becoming is to be shaped "as being in such a way that as becoming it is preserved, has subsistence, i.e., is" (II 466).

Heidegger's discussion of eternal return is at the same level of philosophical analysis as his discussion of will to power. "We must say at the outset . . . that the doctrine of the eternal return of the same is the fundamental doctrine in Nietzsche's philosophy" (II 6; I 256). He rejects attempts to choose one concept as truer to Nietzsche's intention than the other, and then to dismiss the other as contradictory or inconsequential. For although Heidegger ultimately interprets Nietzsche with an eye toward what Nietzsche himself did not bring explicitly to light, the path to this interpretation treats what Nietzsche in fact said with diligence and care.

The eternal return of the same is the *way* that being as a whole is. The world's becoming is a finite turning back on itself, a permanent, an eternal, becoming. *How* we think the thought of eternal return is linked to its "content," just as will to power as what being is and eternal return as how beings are must also be linked. When I decide in the decisive moments to be myself by surpassing and overcoming myself, I will most clearly be affirming myself as one who is by going beyond himself if each and every thing that I am, each and every goal and purpose now revealed in its full nihilistic emptiness, is by my decision allowed to be again and again. Just as Heidegger explicates Nietzsche's understanding of will to power by concentrating on his remark, "To stamp Becoming with the character of Being—that is the supreme will to power," so he caps his discussion of eternal return by referring us to Nietzsche's statement: "That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of Becoming to one of Being: peak of the meditation."

On the basis of what we have said about will to power and eternal return separately, we can now understand how Heidegger believes them to be linked, if we attend to Heidegger's summary description of the recoinage of Becoming as being.

What is this recoinage, in which whatever becomes comes to be being? It is the reconfiguration of what becomes in its highest

possibilities in which it is transfigured and attains subsistence in its very dimensions and domains. This recoining is a creating. To create, in the sense of creation out beyond oneself, is most intrinsically this: to stand in the moment of decision, in which moment what has prevailed hitherto, our endowment, is directed toward a projected task and therefore is preserved. The "momentary" character of creation is the essence of actual, actuating eternity, which attains its highest breadth and keenest edge as the moment of eternity in the return of the same. The recoining of what becomes into being-will to power in its highest configuration-is in its most profound essence something that occurs in the "glance of an eye" as eternal recurrence of the same. The will to power, as constitution of being, is as it is solely on the basis of the way to be which Nietzsche projects for being as a whole: Will to power, in its essence and according to its inner possibility, is eternal recurrence of the same (II 202-3; I 466-7).

Through such analysis, Heidegger is able to show that however much Nietzsche denounces sterile talk of what is permanently in being, his explorations project in advance what all thinkers project in advance: he takes it for granted that Being means permanent presence, that truth means harmony, and that all beings have both an essence and an existence.

Heidegger's analysis of what Nietzsche means by value is of the same kind as his analyses of truth, will to power, and eternal return. "Values" are not terms of morality or economics, but rather, of metaphysics. What Nietzsche calls values are conditions that make will to power possible; they are what will to power posits as its own conditions of possibility. They do not exist independently, but are only as conditions that are useful for the preservation and enhancement of one of the constructs of domination into which will to power forms itself. "Values are the conditions with which power as such must reckon 'Values' are in the first place the conditions of enhancement that the will to power has in view" (IV 63; II 103). Nietzsche's notion of the enhancing viewpoint is the link between

the talk of values and the talk of perspectives that are both so prevalent in contemporary scholarly and everyday discussion.

That Nietzsche considers values to be conditions also shows, in Heidegger's judgment, how he remains a philosophical thinker, a metaphysician, in his roots. Just as essence, existence, and truth all pertain to thinking of being, so too does the determination of entities in terms of conditions. In fact, Heidegger believes that Nietzsche's discussion of value completes the possibility first uncovered in Plato's discussion of the idea of the good.²

We say "the Good" and think of "good" in the Christian-moral sense of well-behaved, orderly, in keeping with law and order. For the Greeks, and for Plato too, *agathon* means the suitable, what is suitable for something and itself suitable Through Plato's interpretation of idea as *agathon* Being comes to be what makes a being fit to be a being. Being is shown in the character of making-possible and conditioning. Here the decisive step for all metaphysics is taken, through which the a priori character of Being at the same time receives the distinction of being a condition . . . we now know that Nietzsche conceives values as conditions of the possibility of the will to power; that is, of the basic character of beings. Nietzsche thinks of the beingness of beings essentially as a condition, making possible, making suitable, *agathon*. He thinks Being in a thoroughly Platonic and metaphysical way—even as the overturner of Platonism, even as the antimetaphysician (IV 169; II 225-6).

Heidegger's discussions of truth, will to power, eternal return, and values differ from interpretations of Nietzsche that precede his own because Heidegger is so obstinate, so resolute, in trying to understand these concepts to be formulations of the guiding metaphysical questions of philosophy, and because he himself sees these questions so clearly. Almost every other interpretation fails to examine just what, say, Nietzsche's discussions of the will to power are about, even when they report what he says with reasonable accuracy. At best, his statements are treated as remarkable generalizations about the psychological concept of "will" combined with a half-

digested physics of energy and power. Even those thinkers who are compelled by Heidegger to consider the intention and direction of Nietzsche's arguments lack the acute understanding of phenomena that distinguishes Heidegger's thinking.

The power of Heidegger's analysis is evident not only in its own terms, but in the way in which it rarely shies away from, and almost always deals convincingly with, standard questions faced by anyone who truly *thinks* about Nietzsche: what is the status of the attempt to prove the existence of eternal return; what precisely are will and power; what links will to power and eternal return; what links these two to values and the revaluation of values; how can truth be an error and some truths still exist; what is meant by creation, transfiguring, surpassing, and overcoming? The price that Heidegger pays for his rigorous metaphysical understanding, and it is a characteristic price, is to glide over almost everything that Nietzsche says about particular phenomena, particular regions of being such as art or politics, except to the degree that they contribute directly to the metaphysical discussion. Even if Heidegger is correct in thinking that what Nietzsche says about art, politics, religion, and knowledge is ultimately conceived in terms of will to power and, therefore, is at the metaphysical level, not everything that he says is directly at that level. Some of his remarks maybe well- or ill-conceived "science." Heidegger argues that the sciences cannot demonstrate by their own methods the adequacy of the conception of, say, life, history, or art that they project in advance of their scientific analyses. The biologist *qua* biologist works within, but cannot demonstrate, the truth of his preconception of what counts as living. Obviously, however, that same person might reflect, and reflect deeply, on the metaphysics of the "living." Similarly, much of what Nietzsche says maybe scientific reflections, or even everyday remarks, that take for granted what art or politics are, rather than explorations of their underlying constitution and ways of being. Although Heidegger leaves undiscussed the ways in which conscious philosophical reflection might actually inform the approach or conceptions of any science, it stands to reason that Nietzsche's everyday or scientific remarks, if, indeed, much of what he says is in fact at that level, are at root determined by his

philosophical reflections. But they need not always be identical to these reflections.

The effect of Heidegger's procedure is to ignore or, from the point of view of politics and morality, soften much of what is most outrageous, dangerous, or challenging in what Nietzsche says about politics, morality, and religion. We will explore this briefly below. It is another matter, of course, whether he is correct to assert that the greater danger is to misinterpret the philosophical level of Nietzsche's discussions, and therefore, to ignore how his thought constitutes the end of philosophy and the greatest metaphysical forgetfulness of Being.

II

Heidegger touches on several themes in *Nietzsche* that are significant to students of political philosophy beyond his discussion of Nietzsche's own thought. Within the limits of my emphasis on the sections of *Nietzsche* that deal with philosophy rather than with Heidegger's indications about Being itself, I will briefly mention three of them: his division of ancient and modern thought, his explicit remarks on politics, and his remarks on relativism. I will consider Heidegger's discussion of the history of the "Event" of Being, his attempt to bring the question of Being itself to light both as it grounds metaphysics and as it stands on its own, in the second part of this paper.

Heidegger understands the distinction between ancient and modern thought to rest with Descartes' uncovering of subjectivity and the representation of beings as objects. The methodical securing of objects for my subjective certainty is what makes possible modernity, including the mathematical representation that is characteristic of it. Mathematical physics does not ground modernity, that is to say, but is itself grounded in the modern metaphysical projection. By extension, it is clear that the characteristic understanding of nature, the common good, and ruling that we find in Machiavelli and Hobbes would also need to be rooted in this projection. Heidegger mentions Machiavelli (and Thucydides) as authors to consider when analyzing

power. "Nietzsche . . . had clear knowledge of the fact that the metaphysics of will to power conforms only to Roman-ness and Machiavelli's Prince. For the thinker of will to power, the only essential figure among the Greeks was the historical thinker Thucydides, who reflects on the history of the Peloponnesian War But Thucydides, the thinker of history, was not able to overcome the Platonism reigning at the basis of Nietzsche's thought" (IV 165; II 221-2). Despite this remark, Heidegger does not go on to analyze either Thucydides or Machiavelli; his discussion of power is confined to Nietzsche and Aristotle, and his purpose is to show that although Nietzsche does not see the connection between his "concept of power as a concept of Being and Aristotle's doctrine," this doctrine has more to do with Nietzsche than do any of the academic distinctions of possibility, actuality, and necessity. Indeed, Book IX of the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle uncovers *dynamis* (force) as the capacity to be gathered in itself and prepared to work effects, *energeia* as the process of dominance, the being at work of force, and *entelechia* as power's coming to the circumscribed simplicity of its essence is "the most worthy of questions" of all books in Aristotle (I 64-5; I 76-8).

Still, precisely because mathematical physics is not the heart of modernity, one cannot help wondering whether Machiavelli's political radicalism might not prove to be the first clear projection of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Similarly, although it is a mistake to take a statement about beings as such and reproduce it as if it could be a useful or intelligible concept when applied scientifically to one region of entities, Heidegger's clarification of the philosophical link between certainty and representation would seem to provide useful clues in understanding Hobbes and Locke. The fear of death that is the ground of modern political thought and practice is not so much fear of one particular entity as it is the fear of being nothing at all. Fear of death is the certain passion that discloses this simple emptiness, and it is in the light of this passion that any entity is first intelligible as-first can be-good or evil. What is good is what "secures" us in our flight from death; what is "objectively" good is what secures us in the steadiness of this passionate movement. Our

rights are the authoritative standpoints in which we gather ourselves in our certain passion and discover what is desirable. In this sense, our rights specify our subjectivity and open it outward.

Heidegger's few remarks about Nietzsche's political rhetoric manifest his wariness of the error that we have mentioned of confusing philosophy with science. Heidegger obviously interprets power metaphysically and he believes that Nietzsche does as well. But this metaphysical interpretation also prevails in Heidegger's remarks about "great politics" and the "blond beast." For Heidegger, "great politics" is merely another one of Nietzsche's names for his overall effort, and the "beast" of the "blond beast" expresses the significance of the sensual and the living in Nietzsche, chaos and becoming as against the rational and the fixed. But life, chaos, and becoming are, as we have seen Heidegger argue, terms whose authentic Nietzschean meaning is to describe being as a whole and aspects of the beingness of beings. They are not terms of biology or physics, or casual everyday concepts. The "political interpretations of Nietzsche's fundamental thought" are the greatest culprits in stripping it of its philosophical depth; they further the "flattening process the most, if they do not actually cancel out the essence of will to power." Indeed, "it does not matter whether these political counterfeits" that prevent us from seeing the true meaning of will to power "feed a hatred of Germans or `serve' a love of Germans" (III 151; I 650). Does this mean, then, that Heidegger ignores or flees the terrible implications of what Nietzsche says?

From his own perspective, Heidegger believes that he faces them more squarely than anyone, because he has uncovered how Nietzsche has brought us face to face with the sheer oblivion of Being. Moreover, far from shying from Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism, he makes it thematic.

Heidegger's thematic treatment of Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism, however, also treats it metaphysically. The devaluing of the previously highest values is significant not so much because it leaves a vacuum at the core of ordinary choice, as because the old gods taken at face value no longer are useful conditions of and for the perspectives that overpowering self-surpassing opens up. The difficulty is

with the range and scope of the way in which beings are mastered, rather than with the growing insignificance of any particular entities that happened to guide us in the past. The fact that the devaluation of this or that guiding or attractive standard or way of life might lead to unchecked destruction, murder, and misery is not what is most terrible about nihilism; indeed, that this may result is not as such part of Heidegger's analysis.

Yet Nietzsche's understanding is the most radical triumph of nihilism in perhaps its most important sense: the triumph of beings over Being. Heidegger would not want to deny, indeed he wishes to assert, that this radical fact suffuses the meaning of every entity today. But, with the exception of one or two possible pieces of evidence, Heidegger leaves unexplored what nihilism metaphysically understood means for the fate and power of any concrete guide or restraint.

For one, Heidegger makes evident his dissatisfaction with Alfred Baeumler's interpretation of Nietzsche. We might read this dissatisfaction as evidence of his dislike for philosophic arguments with which the Nazis had some sympathy. In fact, however, Heidegger's concern is largely with the mistake of understanding Nietzsche's concepts politically rather than metaphysically, and with Baeumler's failure to take the eternal return seriously. That is, his concern is not moral or political in the usual sense of assessing the possibilities and standards for everyday choice; it is moral or political only to the degree that the failure to grasp Nietzsche correctly obfuscates the possibility and necessity for the radical decision that will allow us to see the singular context of Being from which beingness itself takes its light. Presumably, this decision may then have consequences for the meaning of everyday moral and political choice. But from the standpoint of this decision, the nihilism at the root of contemporary morality and politics cannot be "overcome by tearing away at it or shoving it aside-which is what we do when we replace the Christian God with yet another ideal, such as Reason, Progress, political and economic 'Socialism,' or mere Democracy" (II 179; I 442). Each of these gods is equivalent, because each is equally dead. Though Heidegger may no longer believe that Nazism offers hope of being

the political movement that is coordinate with resolute openness, he still does not condemn it: at most, we might say that he now believes it to advance nihilism at the same level as Democracy, Reason, and Progress, at which level it would be equivalent to them, but not inferior.'

The closest that Heidegger comes to interpreting a concrete political event in Nietzschean terms is in a remark that he makes about the British destruction of the French fleet at Oran in 1940. The burden of this remark is to illustrate the fact that from Nietzsche's standpoint the justification for the act must stand within the British attempt to enhance their power. "We" [Germans? thinkers? moral men?] cannot and dare not supply the justification, because "in a metaphysical sense" each power has its own right and comes to wrong only through impotence. It belongs to the "metaphysical tactics" of any power not to regard its opponents' actions from their perspective but, rather, to subject them to standards of universal morality, with the consequent value for propaganda.

Beyond its being an example of the emptiness of universal standards once power is understood in Nietzsche's sense, is Heidegger's illustration a call for German wariness, or a reminder of the nihilistic meaning of Nietzsche's own thought, for Germans as well as other Europeans? Or is it both, an instance of the link between his people's destiny and the possible overcoming of nihilism (See IV 144-5; II 198)?

This discussion raises the question of Heidegger's view of the opinion that truth about good and bad, indeed, truth generally, is relative to what is fleeting and arbitrary. For today, of course, this opinion usually is advanced behind the Nietzschean armor of values, perspectives, and domination. Heidegger lays out, and then criticizes, this ordinary judgment, especially as it is used to reduce all philosophy to mere subjective standpoint. Whatever one may finally say about the success of Heidegger's efforts, one must see that, just as is true of Nietzsche, he is aware of and grapples with the problem of "relativism" and the dangers it poses.

The common notion that everything is merely relative to this or that human standpoint fails to ask, Heidegger argues, exactly who

man is to whom things are relative, and mistakenly confuses scientific certainty, according to this or that half-grasped notion of science, with understanding beings in their being. Some understanding of beings such that, say, the principle of contradiction holds true of them precedes every possible science. The common relativistic notion presupposes in an unexamined way a notion of man and his relation to being such that talk about human subjectivity and standpoints for observation is intelligible to begin with. The actual problem of justification, however, is more difficult, more subtle, and, finally, more dangerous than ordinary relativism sees because it puts in question the entire horizon in terms of which the very intelligibility of justification is possible. Indeed, it puts in question the intelligibility of the terms and concepts—human choice and decision, goods and values, perspectives and standpoints—used to launch the common criticism in the first place.

Heidegger, therefore, raises the question of justification precisely as he launches into his discussion of justification as the central term for grasping Nietzsche's understanding of truth, and, consequently, of Being. Only through constructing the broadest and most overpowering perspective in constant self-excelling does a clearing open in which justification of values can begin to be established. Thought through, such a notion of justification shows that Nietzsche is at one with all philosophers in ultimately attempting to see what is within its permanent presence. Each philosopher grounds everything that men choose to do in something comprehensive and "eternal," however understood. And yet the result for all, as Heidegger sees it, is nihilism. The issue for us, then, is how to understand the philosophers where they differ, a task that is possible only by questioning on grounds on which they all stand.

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Notes

1. The first reference will be to the English translation of *Nietzsche*, sometimes with minor modifications. The second reference will be to the German edition. In both cases, the Roman

numeral refers to the volume and the Arabic numeral refers to the page within the volume. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Harpercollins, 1979 ff., edited by David Farrell Krell. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Verlag Gunther Neske, Pfullingen, 1961. (The lectures and essays that make up *Nietzsche* were first composed and delivered between 1936 and 1946.)

2. I will discuss the status of Heidegger's understanding of Plato in Part II of this paper.

3. See Mark Blitz, *Heidegger's "Being and Time" and the Possibility of Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), Chapter 6.