Rezensionen

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Heidegger's Nietzsche, and the Finite Repetition of Difference

1. Rafael Winkler, *Philosophy of Finitude: Heidegger, Levinas and Nietzsche*. London / New York: Bloomsbury 2018, 151 pp., ISBN 978-1350059368.
2. José Daniel Parra, *Heidegger's Nietzsche: European Modernity and the Philosophy of the Future*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2019, 213 pp., ISBN 978-1498576727.
3. Duane Armitage, *Philosophy's Violent Sacred: Heidegger and Nietzsche through Mimetic Theory*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press 2021, 141 pp., ISBN 978-1611863871.

Abstract: In this review essay, I take up a critical analysis of three recently published monographs in Heidegger-Nietzsche scholarship. Whilst their projects are diverse, I suggest that Winkler, Parra and Armitage are each fundamentally concerned with the critique of the Cartesian subject in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and attempt to varying extents to ground this problematization of subjectivity in the phenomenon of time. Nevertheless, whilst each emphasises the importance of time in understanding both Heidegger's and Nietzsche's critique of the subject, it is surprising that they either underplay or misappropriate the significance of eternal recurrence, the temporal phenomenon which Heidegger defines as Nietzsche's "thought of thoughts." After engaging each account, my aim is to then consider how they might be critically re-framed in light of Heidegger's interpretation of eternal recurrence which, I suggest, is fundamental to understanding Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche, as well as his own philosophical project more broadly.

Keywords: Heidegger, Descartes, Subject, Time, Eternal recurrence

Heidegger's well-known account of Nietzsche as a metaphysical thinker endures as an important yet divisive area of research. Regardless of whether it is interpreted as a genuine confrontation, a thinly veiled form of self-expression, or a hermeneutic expansion of themes latent in Nietzsche's thought (Parra, 4–9), Heidegger's sustained encounter with Nietzsche continues to provoke increasingly diverse lines of philosophical inquiry from scholars of both thinkers. This heterogeneity is particularly evident in three recently published monographs: Rafael Winkler's *Philosophy of Finitude*, José Daniel Parra's *Heidegger's Nietzsche*, and Duane Armitage's *Philosophy's Violent Sacred*. Approaching the Heidegger-Nietzsche encounter from significantly different vantage points, these books interrogate a wide-range of philosophical questions, from being, nothingness, death and finitude, to truth, nihilism, presence and absence, and violence, religion and poetry. Whilst there are innumerable lines of intersection among them, two underlying concerns can be seen to draw the projects together: Winkler, Parra and Armitage are all

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fundamentally concerned with the critique of the Cartesian subject in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and attempt to varying extents to ground this problematization of subjectivity in the phenomenon of time. Yet, whilst they emphasise the importance of time in understanding the Heideggerian and Nietzschean critique of the subject, it is curious that they either underplay or misappropriate the significance of eternal recurrence, the temporal phenomenon which Heidegger defines as Nietzsche's "thought of thoughts." After giving a brief account of each book's unique take on the problem of the subject and time, my aim in this review essay is to consider how they might be critically re-framed in light of eternal recurrence, which, I suggest, is fundamental to understanding Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche and his philosophical project more broadly.

Heidegger and Nietzsche at the Limits of Subjectivity

1. Rafael Winkler's *Philosophy of Finitude* is a rich and thought-provoking book that centers around the notion of subjectivity and its confrontation with the experience of "uniqueness." Considering it to be both unidentifiable and unclassifiable, Winkler variously describes uniqueness as absolute difference or otherness; as finitude; singularity; or as Being itself. Throughout the book he situates the confrontation of subjectivity and uniqueness within a range of limit situations given in the work of Heidegger, Levinas and Nietzsche. Each limit situation – whether death, the other, figurations of Being, absolute alterity, the stranger, the unhomely, the absence of the gods, or nihilism – can be seen to call subjectivity into question in various ways. Winkler's idea of uniqueness is compelling and important. Yet, it is at times difficult to see how the concept of uniqueness translates across his treatment of various limit situations, and to thereby understand what is at stake in these confrontations. To some extent anticipating this difficulty, Winkler signals towards the beginning of the book that the subject's relation to the unique is in each case accomplished as time. Specifically, Winkler argues, it is accomplished through the temporality of finitude: "a past that was never present or a future that never will be present" (Winkler, xvi–xvii). For Winkler, the discontinuity of the future and the past from the present introduces difference into limit situations and thereby enables the subject to confront the unique. Yet, despite signalling the importance of discontinuous, finite temporality in understanding the relation between subjectivity and uniqueness, Winkler does not focus on the ontological question of time in any systematic way and notably underplays the role of eternal recurrence in his account of finitude. As a result, it is difficult to understand how the revelation of the subject's uniqueness is grounded ontologically in time, and thus how his otherwise illuminating accounts of each limit situation might ultimately enable the transformation from metaphysics to the question of Being.

2. In *Heidegger's Nietzsche*, José Daniel Parra gives a close reading of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures from 1940 as well as the 1944–46 treatise *The Determination of Nihilism in Accordance with the History of Being*, which he positions in the intersection of hermeneutics and political philosophy. Like Winkler, Parra focusses on the critique of the Cartesian subject in the Heidegger-Nietzsche encounter, but he grounds it in the confrontation with the limit of nihilism, the moment at which the uppermost values devalue themselves. Throughout the book, Parra gives a meticulous and systematic interpretation of Nietzsche's diagnosis of the spiritual crisis of nihilism, and Heidegger's contention that it stems from modernity's failure to get beyond the Cartesian subject and think the nothing (and thereby Being). Parra tracks this failure skillfully, as the metaphysical ground of subjectivity shifts from Descartes' thinking *cogito* to Kant's tran-

scendental apperception and Nietzsche's will to power, such that Being as nothing and *phusis* and *alétheia* is comprehensively covered over. Again like Winkler, Parra signals the importance of understanding the crisis of nihilism and its problematization of the Cartesian subject according to time. Specifically, he emphasises that, for Heidegger, nihilism is constitutive of time as a historical movement that extends far behind us and far ahead of us. Having being brought to its limit in Nietzsche's work, the contemporary, postmodern moment is one of transition: from European nihilism towards the philosophy of the future. Nevertheless, whilst the narrow focus upon Heidegger's 1940 lectures and the 1944–46 treatise enables Parra to give a detailed and systematic political analysis of nihilism, it means that the significance of the eternal recurrence for understanding Heidegger's interpretation, namely as the ontological structure in which any transition to a philosophy of the future is necessarily grounded, is significantly underplayed. As in Winkler's account, therefore, we are to some extent left wondering how it is that the transition from metaphysics to the question of Being is grounded ontologically in time.

3. In *Philosophy's Violent Sacred*, Duane Armitage gives a novel reading of René Girard's mimetic theory in order to critique Nietzschean and Heideggerian attempts at destabilizing the Cartesian subject. According to Armitage, these attempts, which are repeated throughout the continental and postmodern traditions, rely upon an inherently violent conception of the mythic sacred. Grounded in the rejection of Christianity, Armitage argues that the striving of Nietzsche's will to power is constituted by a mimetic desire to imitate Dionysian strife – the unity of creation and destruction, joy and sorrow, sensuality and cruelty – rather than the love and compassion of Christ. Relatedly, Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and the attempt to overcome metaphysics is constituted by a mimetic desire to imitate the Heraclitean *pólemos* – the unity of revealing and concealing, Being and Nothing, the overwhelming and violence-doing – which is inherent in the disclosive gathering of *logos*. Whilst there are important differences in the Nietzschean and Heideggerian projects, Armitage argues that both are underpinned by a disavowal of Judeo-Christian ethics, a tragic affirmation of violence, and a disgust for victims. Unlike Winkler and Parra, Armitage does appeal explicitly to eternal recurrence as the means through which to ground this destructive and disclosive process. In particular, eternal recurrence is for Armitage what sustains the mimetic desire of the will to power and *pólemos* as an endless cycle of violence and cruelty, and thereby ensures the inevitable collapse into relativism. Understood according to Girard's ethical project, it is possible to see how Armitage could interpret eternal recurrence in this way. Yet, as I will suggest in the following, this is arguably a misappropriation of Heidegger's ontological re-interpretation of eternal recurrence of the same as the finite repetition of difference. Turning upon the *Augenblick* or the *Ereignis*, it is the confrontation with ontological difference rather than ontic violence that grounds the transformation from metaphysics to the question of Being.

Difference, Discontinuity and the Unconcealment of the Question of Being

Eternal recurrence, the idea that "the life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more" (GS 341),[1] is described by Heidegger as Nietzsche's

1 Trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1982.

"thought of thoughts," the thought that captures his fundamental metaphysical position, at "the end of metaphysics." Viewed from within the metaphysical project it seeks to eliminate, recurrence concerns beings as a whole rather than the question of Being itself.[2] Nevertheless, Heidegger argues that the paths that stretch into the past and future do not collide in eternity, as the conventional interpretation of recurrence suggests. Rather, Heidegger argues that they collide in the moment, as represented by the gateway in Zarathustra's riddle (Z III, Riddle), where that which recurs is decided. Grounded in the moment, the collision of past and future is not a continuous path through the present, but a moment of rupture and strife that introduces the possibility of difference, and thereby the question of nothing and Being. In this way, eternal recurrence is for Heidegger the thought that accomplishes the closure of metaphysics.[3]

Reconceptualizing eternal recurrence for his own existential-ontological project, Heidegger then contends that the return to that which has been does not mean endlessly replicating the past. Rather, it involves a resolute renunciation of the past, "a *reciprocative rejoinder* to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there."[4] In such a refusal, the past is brought into conflict with the future, in a way that brings the meaning and significance of one's existence into radical question. And whilst Nietzsche resolves the strife between past and future by situating it in the closed, ever-recurring circle of time, Heidegger attempts to shelter this abyssal conflict as a site of transformation. He does so by grounding it in a re-interpretation of Nietzsche's "moment," conceptualized as *Augenblick* ("moment" or "moment of vision") in his early works and *Ereignis* (the appropriating event) in his middle and late works. Yet, unlike Nietzsche's moment which is the gateway of the present positioned between a continuous past and future, Heidegger's "moment of appropriation" involves the rupturing of chronological time with kairological time and is thus an "irruption of *dis*continuity."[5] Distinct from the moment in Nietzsche's eternal recurrence that is, Heidegger's moment of appropriation "does not fit into the linear structure of chronological time, which it both shatters and gathers."[6] This means, as Miguel de Beistegui writes, that "far from reintroducing the same" as in Nietzsche's conception of eternal recurrence, Heidegger's conception of repetition, grounded in the moment of appropriation, both "presupposes" and "introduces difference."[7] Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same thus becomes the *finite repetition of difference*.

The recent books by Winkler, Parra and Armitage each take up the critique of the Cartesian subject in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as manifest in the limit situations of death, the other, figurations of Being, absolute alterity, the stranger, the unhomely, the absence of the gods and nihilism, and the unified strife of creation and destruction, joy and sorrow, sensuality and cruelty, revealing and concealing, Being and nothing, the overwhelming and violence-doing. Further, each then attempt, to varying extents, to ground this problematization of subjectivity in the phenomenon of time: Winkler in finitude, Parra in the future, and Armitage in a critical interpretation of recurrence. I suggest that Winkler and Parra's accounts both presuppose a positive, ontological conception of time as the finite repetition of difference: their accounts of the destabilization of subjectivity both rely upon a moment of appropriation and thus the introduction of difference through discontinuity in order enable the transition from

2 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II, trans. David Farrell Krell, San Francisco, CA 1991, 205–6.

3 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 56–9.

4 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford 1962, 437–8.

5 Felix Ó Murchadha, *The Time of Revolution: Kairos and Chronos in Heidegger*, London 2013, 5.

6 Hans Ruin, "The Moment of Truth: Augenblick and Ereignis in Heidegger," in Hubert Dreyfus / Mark Wrathall (eds.), *Heidegger Reexamined: Art, Poetry and Technology*, London 2002, 235–48: 245.

7 Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements*, Bloomington, IN 2003, 55.

metaphysics to the question of Being in finitude and in the future. Framed as such, I suggest that both interpretations become more salient within Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, but also his philosophical project as a whole. By contrast, I suggest that Armitage's negative, normative conception of time as eternal recurrence misappropriates the ontological conception of time as the finite repetition of difference into an ontic conception of mythic violence that risks obscuring Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, and indeed his overarching philosophical project. Significantly, eternal recurrence is only one particular lens through which to critically engage these three distinct works of Heidegger-Nietzsche scholarship, and there are doubtless many other ways in which they could be compared and contrasted. Nevertheless, given the significance of time in Heidegger's pursuit of the question of Being (in his interpretation of Nietzsche as metaphysician and more broadly), it is a question that cannot be easily dismissed.

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