
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Becoming in Heraclitus and Its Bearing on Nietzsche's Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation is an inquiry into the affinity between Nietzsche and Heraclitus. More specifically, in section (1) I aim to establish one particular reading of the 'doctrine of flux' which emerges from a philological interpretation of the so-called 'river fragments' of Heraclitus. My claim in sections (2) and (3) is that Nietzsche's reading of Heraclitus treads these same interpretative lines, namely a conception of the cosmos as *absolute flux*, governed by a reality of Becoming and measured by the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the unity of opposites. I will analyse Nietzsche's approach to the teachings of Heraclitus in passages of both his published and unpublished works, positing in section (4) the analogy between the Will to Power and Flux, as well as Heraclitean *Logos* and Nietzschean Necessity. Our final analysis (5) will turn to Nietzsche's most troublesome doctrine, that of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, as I will elucidate Nietzsche's perplexing claim that Heraclitus could have been an early proponent of this theory as taught by Zarathustra. The structure of the following inquiry is historical in nature and follows intertextual parameters in the scrutiny of Nietzsche's works, researching passages throughout Nietzsche's philosophical corpus which are best elucidated with the reading of Heraclitus instituted in (1). Ultimately, I will demonstrate how two of Zarathustra's fundamental teachings - the Will to Power and Eternal Recurrence - are both enrooted in Nietzsche's understanding of the cosmos of Heraclitus in my present evaluation of the fragments. While I will not place a particular focus on it, I will also mention the final teaching of Zarathustra and make a connection to the *Übermensch* in passing,¹ contextualizing each doctrine through the lens of Nietzsche's project of life-affirmation.

KEYWORDS

Nietzsche; Heraclitus; Eternal Recurrence, River Fragments; Will to Power; Cosmic Conflagration; Unity of Opposites.

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1. Introduction

1.1 A Philological Analysis of the Doctrine of Flux Embedded in The River Fragments

In order to contextualize what Nietzsche made of the so called 'doctrine of flux'² of Heraclitus, it is imperative to establish the parameters of such a doctrine, and the nature of these parameters. The use of the term varies heavily depending on the realm in

¹ Some works have attempted to trace a connection between Nietzsche's 'Übermensch' and the teachings of Heraclitus. Undoubtedly, the *Übermensch* is both tied to the Eternal Recurrence and the Will to Power, and as such a Heraclitean connection could be posited (see Howard, 1992 and Ackerman, 2022). However, beyond a brief discussion on great individuals in section (3) and a final callback on the section on the Eternal Recurrence (5), I will not delve into an analysis of the *Übermensch* - this is because it is forceful, in my advise, to directly (and thus efficaciously) attribute the seeds for the conception of Nietzsche's 'overman' to Heraclitus, or to any Ancient Greek thinker, in virtue of (among other reasons) its grounding in notions of modernity and its idiosyncratic belonging to Nietzsche.

² This exact nomenclature generally refers to the reading of the doctrine in Platonic terms. For the sake of brevity, I will still speak of 'doctrine of flux' after running through the arguments against Plato's interpretation of Heraclitus. What will be implied is something more general along the lines of 'the notion of universal flux in Heraclitus'. With regards to the fragments, I will use the Diels-Kranz (see Diels & Kranz, 1973) enumeration and classification throughout the dissertation.

which we are operating – metaphysics, ontology, or even psychology - and as such generates distinctively different philosophical perspectives about the universe depending on the interpretation. Scholars and philosophers have historically been (and currently are) in disagreement over how much is revealed by Heraclitus in the fragments that have survived. The contribution of more modern scholarship on the fragments of Heraclitus will be employed in the project of elucidating the relevant philosophical conceptions which emerge in Heraclitus and that bear influence on Nietzsche – by the end of this section I will have delineated my own reading of the 'doctrine of flux', which I also believe to have been Nietzsche's. One last opening point about this section concerns the scholarly stance on the relationship between Nietzsche and Heraclitus. If I am correct in attributing the upcoming interpretation to the work of Heraclitus, then I may also be successful in reducing the persuasive force of certain approaches, such as that of Przybyslawski (2002), which construct Nietzsche's Heraclitus as an archetypal presence operating through Nietzsche's own lens. My suggestion is that Nietzsche's philosophical inspiration progresses through attentiveness to the fragments themselves and not merely to the Heraclitus-persona he constructs in *PTOG* and, consequently, exegetical work on Nietzsche and Heraclitus must be contacted on the former *and* the latter, not merely on Nietzsche's portrait of Heraclitus, insofar as my claim that Nietzsche is faithful to Heraclitus holds true.

Many discussions have arisen regarding the three fragments - B12, B49a B91 in the original Diels-Kranz classification - that present the river as a metaphor for universal flux. The fragments that engage with the metaphor of the river are the following:

B12: Upon those stepping into the same rivers, different and different waters flow.
B12 (Alternative translation with different emphasis): Upon those stepping into rivers and staying the same, different and different waters flow.³

B49a: Into the same rivers we step and we do not step, we are and we are not.⁴

B91: Indeed it is not possible to step into the same river twice according to Heraclitus, nor is it to encounter mortal beings twice in the same state.⁵

In order to understand flux, we must first be faithful towards the fragments as well as their language and their authorship. After all, if we are to render unto Heraclitus what is proper of his doctrine, discussion upon the varying interpretation and attribution cannot be avoided, and with even greater respect towards Nietzsche and what we are to ascertain of his own reevaluation of the teaching of Heraclitus.

I will not venture into B12, the authenticity of which is almost unanimously recognized by scholars (Marcovich, Kirk),⁶ both in virtue of its archaic forms and Ionicisms, as well as the employment of those linguistic constructions which Nietzsche himself recognizes as standardly Heraclitean rhetorical tools of illusion.⁷ The grammatical ambiguity evident in the translation above purposefully establishes a connection between the status of the man stepping into the river and that of the river itself, while further reiterating the motion of the rivers with the succession of datives. As we will see in the following paragraph, the paraphrasis of Plato in the *Cratylus*,⁸ who infers that according to Heraclitus one cannot step twice into the same river,⁹ suggests either a misappropriate reading on Plato's part or the influence of supplementary fragments that have not survived. B91 indeed is seen, by a majority of scholars, as an unlikely original fragment whose real purpose was that of providing a supplementary explanation to what was already phrased in B12.¹⁰ This proviso must be read through Plato's interpretation of flux, for the philosophical claim that the provenance of B91 is non-Heraclitean further rests on the upcoming reading that Heraclitus did not understand the preservation of sameness as an autonomous category. On the other hand, although the authorship of B49a has been doubted¹¹ - either partially

³ B12, as quoted by Arius Didymus: "ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ." All translations from Ancient Greek are my own, and the original Greek will be included whenever there is relevant discrepancy between other available translations. My translations will reflect my reading of Heraclitus, since – as will be shown throughout the essay – different interpretations of his philosophy can produce different translations, either in lexical and grammatical choices or emphasis placement.

⁴ B49a: "ποταμοῖς τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐμβαίνομεν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐμβαίνομεν, εἶμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμέν."

⁵ B91, in Plutarch, *De E Apud Delphos*, 12: "ποταμῷ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμβῆναι δις τῷ αὐτῷ καθ' Ἡράκλειτο οὐδὲ θνητῆς οὐσίας δις ἄψασθαι κατὰ ἕξιν <τῆς αὐτῆς.>"

⁶ I am not including the latter part quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 15.20.2, who adds "καὶ ψυχὰι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ὑγρῶν ἀναθυμῶνται" ("and souls, too, come out of moisture"). Zeller and Bywater had already acknowledged the latter part of the fragment as non-Heraclitean.

Suffices to say there is still debate on the authorship of the fragment – regardless, its inclusion would excessively limit the scope of the fragment to the psychological.

⁷ More on the role of interpretation by analogy for the comprehension of the movement of reality, see Fink (2020), p.17.

⁸ *Cratylus*, 402a. More on Cratylus and the problematic influence of Heraclitean disciples on Plato's interpretation see Kirk (1951).

⁹ Even further from Plato's interpretation of B12 is Aristotle's comment on the *Cratylus* – who takes Plato's reading at face value - in favour of the impossibility of stepping even once into the same river. *Metaphysics*, 1010a.

¹⁰ Kahn (1979) p.168-9. Its provenance from Plutarch, who was renowned for adapting passages from memory, further disqualifies this fragment.

¹¹ Chiefly, the fragment is in Attic and not Ionic dialectic.

(Reinhardt, 1942) or in its entirety (Gigon, 1935)¹² – a proper exegesis of its meaning does point to a wholly different direction from that proposed by Plato. The latter two fragments indeed have been differently elucidated – and yet, particularly through B49a, a philological analysis will provide a better exemplification of the misinterpretation of the original content of B12.

Fragment B49a is worth analysing, above all, for the tempting equivocation generated by the presence of εἶμι (“to be”) in the second part of the fragment. The existential interpretation of the fragment has been rejected for different reasons, mostly concerned with admonishing the interpreter not to read Heraclitus through the spectacles of some later philosopher.¹³ Hegel did mistakenly understand Heraclitus to have been influenced by Parmenides, after all, although the intersecting of their biographical timelines and historical evidence testify to the opposite. With ‘existential interpretation’ I speak of Being as understood (in antiquity) by Parmenides and Anaximander and (in later times) by Kant – a fixed category in its own right, endowed with a distinct and *non-contiguous* opposite and linguistically adaptable. The separation of the two propositions, whether grammatically or conceptually or both, misses an important relation which is instead embedded in B12. The relegation of εἶμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμέν (“we are and we are not”) to mere interpolation not only (erroneously) establishes ontological categories, but it irredeemably assigns the power to decree the changing nature of the river to those who step into it. Syntactically, this is supported by the separation between the former and later clause, which are autonomous coordinates. What Plato, Aristotle and Seneca¹⁴ fail to elucidate in their reading is precisely the identity of the river, or better, what constitutes it – it is not by virtue of the witnesses that the river is no longer the same, but we ought to apply a transposition of the ‘doctrine of flux’ from the first proposition to the latter. In other words, if we are to make better sense of both B12 and B49a, we must deploy an exercise of application of the stylistic features of Heraclitus in B12, namely its syntactic ambiguity and rhetorical tropes¹⁵ to the uncertain authorship of B49a, that is, we ought to make sense of this latter fragments at least in appropriate Heraclitean terms.

Heraclitus does not deny the identity of the rivers, nor does he employ them to establish any dualism of differing identities (as would Plato) – that is to say, there is no ‘former’ river (in time) nor any ‘latter’ river within which one may set foot, the river is one and the same while simultaneously being different. The crux of the question lies in the conception that “the identity of a given river remains fixed, despite or even because its substance is constantly changing.”¹⁶ The notion warrants that any one thing cannot be understood as itself unless it undergoes change, as attested by other fragments such as B125,¹⁷ where a cocktail cannot be deemed such if not constantly stirred. In fact, according to the Cratylan interpretation of the ‘doctrine of flux’, if it is true that everything always changes, then it is equally true that nothing can ever be said of an object, and as such Plato gathered that if nothing could be predicated, then one can certainly not refer to anything either.¹⁸ Plato took this as proof that Heraclitus could not possibly understand the identity of the river as ever-changing. This reading, however, falls short of upholding the Heraclitean notion of universal radical flux which transpires from B12 and which best accounts for the larger corpus of the fragments.

Indeed, if we resort to Reinhardt, we should remark that the Platonic ‘doctrine of flux’ identified by some classical scholars in B12 is but an equivocation that stems from the analogy of the river(s) and the natural attributes that we ascribe to it. The permanence that we identify in the regularity of their flows, and the stability drawn from the limitation of the riverbanks cannot be inferred even comparatively to the permanent change of the waters. On the contrary, an exercise of comparison warrants that the inferred stability be *illusory*, insofar as the riverbanks are null without first positing the flow of the river and its perpetually varying waters. Early in his lectures on the Pre-Platonic Philosophers, Nietzsche considers that within the Heraclitean doctrine of “everything flows [πάντα ῥεῖ]” lies the idea that “nowhere does a fixed persistence exist, because we always come in the final analysis to forces, whose effects simultaneously include a desire for power.”¹⁹ For Heraclitus, this desire for power is represented by one opposite attempting to trample over its counterpart, albeit never succeeding, casting the universe in constant tension. Reinhardt concludes that “the fundamental conception of Heraclitus constitutes instead the most decisive conceivable opposition to the doctrine of flux, that is to say, permanence in change.”²⁰ This notion of permanence must be understood as an existential category, of identity *as Being*. We should be better off with by framing it in terms of ‘change in permanence’ – the river retains its identity (its ‘sameness’) through the constancy of Becoming. Indeed, Fränkel²¹ notes that the ‘doctrine of flux’ consists in a sort of phenomenon that

¹² Gigon makes a number of philological arguments against the authenticity of B49a. Kirk convenes, but Calogero (1936) concedes only on the point that, in its content, the fragment reflects the stance taken by Cratylus. This point alone, I believe, suffices to adopt a healthy scepticism towards a total attribution of the fragment to Heraclitus. On this point, see Mazzantini (1945).

¹³ Kirk mentions the phenomenology of Hegel, Ramnoux (*Heraclite ou l'homme entre les choses et les mots*, 1959) quotes the anthropological outlook of the Stoics.

¹⁴ Rather than nature, Seneca speaks of ‘nomen fluminis’. *Epistula*, 58,23.

¹⁵ B12 presents an alliteration, rhyme and, most notably, a chiasmus.

¹⁶ Kahn (1979), p.168.

¹⁷ “Even the barley-drink disintegrates if it is not stirred.”

¹⁸ Barnes (1933), p.69.

¹⁹ PPP 10. Nietzsche’s works are abbreviated throughout. For a list of abbreviations, see Bibliography.

²⁰ Reinhardt (1977), p. 206.

²¹ Fränkel (1973).

preserves the permanent stability within a permanent state of conveyance – as Heraclitus claims to be the case for the sun (B6), which “is new every day”²² since its light is interrupted at night, but constantly burns anew in its own flame, fuelled by an ever-changing state of physical transformations which nevertheless embody the identical light from the same one sun. As a result, it appears that the very doctrine embodied in *πάντα ῥεῖ* - *everything flows* - holds its intended meaning insofar as one does not exclude the complementary principle of its opposite – *everything also stays the same* (Gigon, 1935). The rivers are the same because their waters, themselves, are different and perpetually flow. This is also the case for the light of the sun and the darkness of night in B6. That is to say, one cannot ignore the role of the coincidence of opposites in one, and the constant (and ever-changing) coexistence of said opposites. Heraclitus states it plainly in B50:

It is wise [...] to agree that all things are one.

A comparison with the flame is befitting, since the essence of the fragment seeks to establish “the preservation of structure, where a unitary form is maintained while its material embodiment or ‘filling’ is constantly lost and replaced.”²³ The same then must be true, if not *a fortiori*, for rivers and their waters *ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα* (“different and different again”). This disqualifies B49a, whose clause separation establishes a categorization of reality which Heraclitus would have doubtlessly avoided, insofar as it emphasises substances as Being and thus bearing an identity *in itself* (that is, not through change), but that nevertheless could assume the subtlety of B12 if taken in tandem with it. I take this to evidence that a reading of ‘the doctrine of flux’ imbued with the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* is the most faithful interpretation of Heraclitus in B12 and who, on the basis of this reading, was the unlikely author of B49a, which may have conceivably belonged to a faithful but stylistically maladroit follower of a later time. I employ this terminology of *coincidentia oppositorum* in one very specific interpretation of it. The unity of opposites for Heraclitus is understood in the thesis of this inquiry as a peculiar case, in which the opposites themselves are never endowed with any fixed category of Being and indicate the conduit manner by which things are both alike and different, in and through, time according to the essence of Becoming. Opposites are true simultaneously, and Heraclitus finds evidence for it in the world:

B61: The sea is the purest and the impurest water. Fish can drink it, and it is good for them; to men it is undrinkable and harmful.²⁴

The importance of the coincidence of opposites in the proper ‘doctrine of flux’ represents a clear condemnation of a strict duality of worlds, where the opposite of an object is non-contiguous with itself, whereas Heraclitus stresses that an object is itself *despite* becoming its opposite, even *in virtue* of becoming its opposite, for that is the nature of change. More explicitly in B51 Heraclitus states:

They do not understand how, in diverging with itself, it accords:²⁵ a backwards-turning joining as of a bow and a lire.

The conclusion seems to be, for Heraclitus, that stability masks change, and that as a result and to a certain extent, it even embodies it. The important point of the doctrine of flux must be traced to the capacity in which the constancy observed in the universe, occasionally mistaken for Being, is preserved by the immanent war at the foundation of reality. As a final point, I want to draw attention to Kirk’s suggestion that the idea of change in one, represented by *ἐμβαίνομέν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐμβαίνομεν* (“stepping and not stepping into [the same rivers]”) in the case of fragment B49a, is also reinforced by analogy with *οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει* (“it is unwilling and willing”) in fragment B32,²⁶ where the wise is emphasized as one alone, but his essence is remarked as both one and its opposite. In fact, as I will reference in section (3), Nietzsche himself conceives of the individual as a temporary balance of forces, devoid of a proper subjective unity and conceivably deemed as a simple ‘regulative fiction’ [*regulative Fiktion*].²⁷

2. Nietzsche and Heraclitus

The connection to Nietzsche can be easily established through B32, where the name of Zeus, understood as the supreme deity and the principle of life (ζῆν, “Zen”, here the genitive of Zeus seems to be deliberately Ζηνός, “Zenos” instead of the more frequent Δῖός, “Dios”), is in one both “Life-Death, according to the binomial of opposites that supremely expresses the eternal war and

²² B6: “νέος ἐφ’ ἡμέρη ἐστίν.” “The sun, he says, is new every day.” In Aristotle, *Meteorology*, 2.2, 355a 13-14.

²³ Kahn (1979), p.168.

²⁴ This notion is also adopted by Nietzsche to describe the differing nature of men, for whom “the poison from which the weaker nature perishes strengthens the strong man - and he does not call it poison.” (GS 19) Cfr. also BGE 30: “What helps feed or nourish the higher type of man must be almost poisonous to a very different and lesser type. The virtues of a base man could indicate vices and weaknesses in a philosopher.”

²⁵ This is also deliberately ambiguous. With different emphasis: “...how, diverging, it accords with itself.” In Hippolytus (*Haer.* 9.9.2): “οὐ ξυνιάσων ὀκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογεί· παλίντροπος ἀρμονίη ὀκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.”

²⁶ B32: “ἐν τῷ σοφῶν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνός ὄνομα.” It reads: “The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus.”

²⁷ *Nachlass*, 1885, 36[15], KSA, 11.526.

contention of the world."²⁸ Nietzsche recognizes this same contradiction in the orphic myth of Zagreus-Dionysus,²⁹ which is then transposed onto the doctrine of the *Ur-Eine*, the Primordial Oneness that encompasses both *Ur-Lust* and *Ur-Schmerz*. Furthermore, Macchioro suggests, the orphic mysteries of Zagreus also represent the gateway to the exegesis of fragment B62,³⁰ which would supposedly depict Zagreus, the one Greek god capable of dying, together with the initiate to his rites, who is assimilated and identified in the god himself. We can trace something analogous in Nietzsche, whose conception of reality as a constant mixture of opposing qualities that cannot exist on their own³¹ certainly reveals syntony with the 'doctrine of flux' of B12 in the interpretation explored above, one overarched by the principle of the coincidence of contiguous opposites. Fink maintains that "Nietzsche believes he encounters his own questions in Heraclitus. Heraclitus denies constant being, recognizes becoming and the flow of time as the true dimensions of 'reality'. He is also sensitive to the polarized tension between the opposites within the temporal flux. Nietzsche believes that the Heraclitean opposites are precursors to his own opposition between Dionysos and Apollo." And yet beyond his famous interest in the Dionysian way of life, Nietzsche openly speaks of the syntony and nexus of life and death in GS 109:

"Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is only a form of what is dead, and a very rare form. Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are *no eternally enduring substances*; matter is as much of an error as the god of the Eleatics." (my emphasis)

The ever-changing cosmos, occasionally construed as the fleeting appearance of the essence of things, strongly mirroring Schopenhauer's *Wille*, takes on a wider role in Nietzsche, who rejects any notion of Being of metaphysicians (BGE 2) and ultimately rejects this Schopenhauerian view.³² Nietzsche escapes Schopenhauer's semi-physical, semi-phenomenal notion of matter³³ by endorsing the notion that:

"The Things themselves in the permanency of which the limited intellect of man and animal believes, do not 'exist' at all."³⁴

The passages that follow in *PTG*, which display Nietzsche's early admiration for the categorization of Schopenhauer (at least in nomenclature), nevertheless fail to indicate whether Nietzsche had made Schopenhauer's conception of matter his own. I would argue, on the contrary, that with the exception of *The Birth of Tragedy* and some dubious passages in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, later manuscripts (*Will To Power*, *Ecce Homo* on *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) instead reveal the opposite display of worldly interpretation in a clear anti-dualistic³⁵ and anti-metaphysical position.³⁶ In fact, in *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche endorses the view that science itself warrants a universe of Becoming devoid of non-contiguous opposites, whose semblance of Being represents a mere "error of reason."³⁷ In the passage, Nietzsche treads the metaphor of 'sublimation', the chemical process in which a substance undergoes change from solid to gas state without the intermediary liquid stage. To "the most careful observer," Nietzsche claims, the implicit, concealed passage that unifies the two perceived opposites, such as sublimation, is instead manifest. He takes this position, a few years prior, to be that of Heraclitus:

"[Heraclitus] conceived it under the form of polarity, as being the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to re-unite. Everlastingly, a given quality contends against itself and separates into opposites; everlastingly these opposites seek to re-unite. Ordinary people fancy they see something rigid, complete and permanent; in truth, however, light and dark, bitter and sweet are attached to each other and interlocked at any given moment. [...] The strife of the opposites gives birth to all that comes-to-be; the definite qualities which look permanent to us express but the momentary ascendancy of one partner. But this by no means signifies the end of the war; the contest endures in all eternity."³⁸

²⁸ Calogero (1936), p.206.

²⁹ On the influence of orphic thought on Heraclitus see also Macchioro (1922) and Colli (1980).

³⁰ B62 "ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοί ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεώτες" "Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, one living the other's death, and dying the other's life."

³¹ Fink, (2003) p.32.

³² As early as *PTG* 6, Nietzsche remarks that "the many perceivable qualities are neither eternal substances nor phantasms of our senses [...]; they are neither rigid autocratic being nor fleeting semblance flitting through human minds."

³³ *WWR* p.380.

³⁴ *PTG* 5, my emphasis.

³⁵ Nietzsche takes a very different stance from that of Zeller, who in his *Philosophie der Griechen* ascribes to Heraclitus a dualistic view of reality.

³⁶ In *Twilight of the Idols* there is an explicit critique of every conception that is Parmenidean and Platonic. Nietzsche quotes a "hatred of the very idea of becoming" (*TI*, Reason, 1).

³⁷ *HAAH* 1

³⁸ *PTG* 5

Nietzsche's understanding is that Primordial Oneness was split into competing will to powers that each pull in opposing directions and from which tension, strife, and change emerge. This intrinsic subdivision of the will to power into *Willens-Punktationen* - theory drafts of the will – will be elaborated upon in section (4), devoted to the Will to Power. For the present time, suffice to say that Nietzsche had quite renownedly overcome Schopenhauer entirely in his maturity. But Nietzsche's acknowledgement of Heraclitus as a possible precursor to certain pillaring notions in his philosophy can be tracked throughout his career. In fact, the appearance of references to Heraclitus in Nietzsche's notes during the composition of *The Gay Science* and *Zarathustra* suggests that Nietzsche reevaluated Heraclitus as a possibly early teacher of the Eternal Recurrence precisely because of this understanding of radical flux. This is because, I will argue through the works of Paul Loeb (2010, 2018, 2021), Nietzsche believed Eternal Recurrence to be closely implied by absolute flux. I will now elaborate on the notion of Becoming and relate it to Nietzsche's philosophical agenda of endorsement of the present-world, which, I will claim, can be identified in Heraclitus in his assessment of great individuals and the ancient culture of contest.

3. Becoming and One World

Heraclitus viewed his ever-changing world in the metaphor of fire. Accordingly, Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges that Heraclitus "denied the duality of totally diverse worlds"³⁹ insofar as the presocratic philosopher - as much as for Nietzsche himself - there was only one world, the world of Becoming, that sought in the coincidence of opposites the explanation for the unstable nature of reality. He does not separate between an apparent and true world as Anaximander had done before him. Following in the footsteps of Heraclitus, Nietzsche's reflections tread the same line woven by B12 in the purest anti-Platonic interpretation. There is a complete rejection of any subjective unity,⁴⁰ which is conceived by Nietzsche as a superficial fiction at best, and which instead becomes an eternal flow of waters construed as a plurality of identities, with the notion of 'individual' – recall B32 in (1) – representing the temporary balance between them. In fact, Nietzsche stresses that the only proper 'recognizability' [Erkennbarkeit] of the individual is inscribed onto the world of becoming.⁴¹ Nietzsche conceives Heraclitean flux as a perpetual transfiguration of the self within the wider flux of the universe. Every contraposition, every strict dichotomy is absorbed in the eternal flux of things, there is no longer sense in *being something*, but *becoming something* replaces the dialectical schemes warranted by language which have long fooled the metaphysicians. It is naive to "use names for things as if they rigidly, persistently endured,"⁴² because what gives the appearance of Being, that is, some perceived constancy in the identity of the object, is merely the temporary domination of an opposite over the other. It appears that according to Nietzsche Being is a straight impossibility, and Becoming is a given:

"If the world had a goal, then it must have been reached. If there were an unintended final state in store for it, then it likewise must have been reached. If it were at all capable of a pause and a becoming fixed, of a 'being,' if in the whole course of its becoming it had even for a single moment this capacity for 'being,' then in turn all its becoming would long since have come to an end, therefore also along with it all thinking, all 'mind.' The fact of 'mind' as a form of becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state, and is incapable of being."⁴³

There is a complete rejection of the 'Thing in itself' in the standard sense advocated by metaphysical philosophy,⁴⁴ and it has been already surveyed how Nietzsche attributes such a stance to Heraclitus. Indeed for Heraclitus, as for Nietzsche, the world is one - *our own* - with change being elevated to Necessity for the preservation of the identity of the world, that is, the preservation of the world itself within the proviso that the world and the fluctuations of change are inseparable. It must be constantly subjected to change for it not to putrefy, as we have noted through the metaphor of the stirred barley-cocktail in B125¹⁵ or, in more general terms, in B126:⁴⁵

B126: "Cold things become warm, what is warm becomes cold; what is wet dries, and what is parched becomes moistened."

In this spectacle, Necessity rules in the theatre of accidents, and no divine or other teleology. What is implied by 'Necessity' will be elaborated upon in the following section, but we can comfortably follow Whelson in understanding necessary conditions of the

³⁹ PTG 5

⁴⁰ WTP 520 (1885)

⁴¹ KSA, 11.526.

⁴² PTG 5

⁴³ Nachlass 1885, 36[15], KSA 11.556–7. Trans. by Loeb (2021). All translations from the Nachlass will be from Loeb (2021) unless otherwise indicated.

⁴⁴ Cfr. HAH 1, 1 "Historical philosophy, on the contrary [of metaphysics], [...] has ascertained in single cases that there are no opposites except in the usual exaggeration of the popular or metaphysical point of view, and that an error of reason lies at the bottom of the opposition." It is no secret that Nietzsche was highly critical of Kant and his categories, more on his criticism of Kant and Schopenhauer through the doctrines of the pre-Socratics Anaximander and Parmenides, see Nietzsche's unfinished manuscript *Das Philosophenbuch*.

⁴⁵ Cfr. also B88.

world as those features that remain true in any metaphysically possible world.⁴⁶ As such change seems to be a condition of the world itself as world, and seems adjacent to Nietzsche's rejection of any conception of the flux of the cosmos with an underlying sense of purpose, particularly if otherworldly. If change is true of the world *tout court*, so much that its fibre is interwoven with the essence of world-events, the moderation of experiences and events must be relegated to change as the one common denominator.

Doubtlessly, Nietzsche's attraction toward the ancient Greeks as a philologist first, lies in the fundamentally Greek approach to life as a present-worldly attitude which Nietzsche first outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy* and which he prevalingly recognized in Heraclitus. In *EH* he sees in Heraclitus a thinker "in whose presence, alone, I felt warmer and more at ease than anywhere else."⁴⁷ And indeed Heraclitus too, like Nietzsche, sought an answer for an eternal return to life in the Dionysian spirit. Thus he praises Dionysus:

B15: If indeed it were not for Dionysus that they made a procession and sang the phallic hymn, they would carry out the most shameless things. But Hades and Dionysus are the same, in whose honour they go mad and rave.

In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche celebrates the Dionysian mysteries and considers himself the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus and the teacher of Eternal Recurrence. The same Eternal Recurrence which is prophesized by the demon in *GS* 341, who figures during the reader's "loneliest loneliness" just as "the feeling of solitude"⁴⁸ had pierced Heraclitus on the temple of Artemis. Nietzsche finds these possibilities in the thought of Heraclitus himself - when meditating upon the thought of Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche notes:

"the yes-saying to the impermanence and annihilation of things, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; the yes-saying to contradiction and war, the postulation of Becoming, together with the radical rejection even of the concept *Being*: [...] in all these things I must recognize [Heraclitus] who has come nearest to me in thought hither to."⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the philosophical similarities are numerous. Heraclitus too appears to draw a close reading of the eternal tension of flux with a normative endorsement of individual and social contest, understood as the Greek perpetual drive for competition and predominance. Heraclitus perceives the innate drive for human cruelty and agonism as embedded in a similarly behaving universe, which 'redeems' it *eo ipso*. As early as *PTG*, Nietzsche reads this precisely as a peculiarly Heraclitean thought:

"The strife of the opposites gives birth to all that comes-to-be; the definite qualities which look permanent to us express but the momentary ascendancy of one partner. But this by no means signifies the end of the war; the contest endures in all eternity. Everything that happens, happens in accordance with this strife, and it is just in the strife that eternal justice is revealed. It is a wonderful idea, welling up from the purest strings of Hellenism, the idea that strife embodies the everlasting sovereignty of strict justice, bound to everlasting laws. Only a Greek was capable of finding such an idea to be the fundament of a cosmology; it is Hesiod's good *Eris* transformed into the cosmic principle; it is the contest-idea of the Greek individual and the Greek state, taken from the gymnasium and the palaestra, from the artist's *agon*, from the contest between political parties and between cities - all transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it."⁵⁰

This form of aristocratic radicalism finds a further manifestation in Heraclitus' disdain for the masses and celebration of great individuals:

B104: What intelligence or cognition do they possess? They follow popular bards and take their crowd as their teacher, knowing not that 'the many are bad and the few are good (*agathoi*).'

Along the same lines:

B121: The Ephesians would do well to hang themselves, every grown man among them, and leave the city to beardless lads; for they have cast out Hermodorus, the best man among them, claiming: "We will have none who is best among us; if there be any such, let him be so elsewhere and among others."

Nietzsche explains this fragment precisely in terms of the absolute necessity of the correct upkeep of the Greek contest: "For why should nobody be the best? Because with that, the contest would dry up and the permanent basis of life in the Hellenic state would be endangered."⁵¹ For Nietzsche, the concern with herd mentality and the narrowing of differences among men must be

⁴⁶ Whelson (2004), p.93.

⁴⁷ *EH* on *BT* 3

⁴⁸ *PTG* 8

⁴⁹ *EH* on *BT* 3

⁵⁰ *PTG* 5

⁵¹ *Homer's Contest*, in *GM* (1994), p.179.

exorcized as a profoundly harmful guiding notion, one which he had recognized as fundamentally opposed to the status quo of contest already displayed by the Ancient Greeks. According to this framework, perpetual conflict is not only natural, but it fosters greatness. Nietzsche understood the ideologies of modernity as effectively numbing those aspects of human nature which were deemed most reprehensible for the sake of expelling them from our way of life. However, just as "we no longer admire dentists who pull out teeth so that they won't hurt anymore,"⁵² then pretending equality among the parts and thus mitigating conflict also becomes hostile to life. According to Nietzsche, the contest for greatness has been abandoned in the lulled morality of modernity. He clearly states that the "*pathos of distance* is typical of every *strong age*," while:

"The tension, the extension between the extremes is getting smaller and smaller today – the extremes themselves are shrinking down to similarity in the end . . ."⁵³

Analogously, Heraclitus condemns the Ephesians for their attempt to relinquish the contest of opposites. He further admonishes against the same threats of weaker men while praising those that endorse those attitudes that cultivate the pathos of distance:

B29: Indeed the best of them choose one thing above all others: perpetual glory among mortals, while most of them glut themselves like cattle.⁵⁴

This is coherent with Nietzsche's project of life-affirmation which urges one to turn to this world and avoid any form of escapism to a beyond. The courageous and exceptional among men accept universal struggle and universal context insofar as they promote excellence, but above all because they constitute the fabric of the world itself. Nietzsche does not conceive the one-dimensional world of *Becoming* as a limitation, but as an opportunity for the true expression of the self. He pictures an active introduction of man in the eternal flux, different from the perpetual struggle understood by Schopenhauer, whose stance on the matter, as we have seen, is "quite different from that which Heraclitus offers, because strife for Schopenhauer is a proof of the internal self-dissociation of the Will to Live, which is seen as a self-consuming, menacing and gloomy drive, a thoroughly frightful and by no means blessed phenomenon."⁵⁵ Nietzsche posits his *Übermensch*, overman, as an individual conscious of the eternal flux of things who actively seeks to move within its state of conveyance, a way of transposing his own inner state of fluctuation onto the river (of ever-changing reality), that is, of stepping into the river as per the interpretation of B12 urged in (1).

4. The Will to Power and Logos

The equivocation of Plato, Plutarch, Seneca, and the discussion upon the proper interpretation of the 'doctrine of flux' assumes a higher relevance if we are to make sense of the notion of the 'Will to Power' (*Wille zur Macht*) in his *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. During the late years of Nietzsche's philosophical activity, we witness a reevaluation of that idiosyncratically Heraclitean consciousness which Nietzsche had already effectively delineated in *PTG*. Nietzsche imagines reality as an ever-changing flux moved by a combination of forces governed by the Will to Power, a guiding force that steers everything like Heraclitean lightning. Lightning (Blitz) is also present in *Zarathustra* as the terrible power which governs the world, with a further mention of the overman himself labelled as lightning.⁵⁶ The ultimate affirmation of tension and war seen in Heraclitus is precisely formulated in the late Nietzsche through the guise of the will to power. At different points it is even postulated to be the very essence of the world itself,⁵⁷ and, furthermore, the force/energy that constitutes life is described as essentially will to power.⁵⁸ Willard Mittleman elucidates "Nietzsche's claim that the world is nothing but will to power" by tying it to the Heraclitean idea "that the world consists solely of the flux of various centers of force, or power, which are constantly seeking to overcome, or appropriate, each other."⁵⁹ As we have previously noted, the very reduction of the essence of the world to fixed linguistical denominators as descriptors fails to uphold the reality of the world insofar as it renders it stone, encapsulating it in mere regulative fictions. Words such as 'Becoming' - which is completely absent in Heraclitus - or 'Will to Power' also fall victim to this fate. From Nietzsche's notes, he is aware of it: "Linguistic means of expression are useless for expressing "becoming"; it accords with our inevitable need to preserve ourselves to posit a crude world of stability, of "things," etc. [...] There is no will: there are treaty drafts of will [Willens-Punktationen] that are constantly increasing or losing their power."⁶⁰ The periphrastic tinge of *Willens-Punktationen* expresses precisely the need to stress the essence of compositeness of things which cannot be reduced to one opposite or the other, and neither in the ascription of their essence to simple 'contradiction' insofar as these qualities are opposites, at least in a perceived sense. For Heraclitus, seawater

⁵² *TI* Morality as Anti-Nature, 1

⁵³ *TI* 37

⁵⁴ Cfr. Aristotle *NE*, I.5 1095b 18-19: "ordinary people seem wholly slavish, because the life they deliberately choose (that of pleasure) is one that is characteristic of grazing cattle."

⁵⁵ *PTG* 5

⁵⁶ *Z* Prologue, 3

⁵⁷ *BGE* 36, 186

⁵⁸ *BGE* 13, 259 and *WTP* 1067

⁵⁹ Mittleman (1980) p.35.

⁶⁰ *WTP* 715

was both pure and impure, and though the distinction might spell contradiction in one sense, it may only hold true relationally – it is pure to fish and poisonous to mankind. A circumventing solution which Nietzsche often deploys (see *WTP* 1067) is the exercise of listing of metaphors which express the perpetual state of fluctuation. Metaphors are efficacious in this project for reasons which Nietzsche delineates early in *On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense*, in which they are credited with the formation of concepts so that “every concept originates through our equating what is unequal.” It is an epistemological attempt to define and crystalize what is fundamentally impossible to immortalize, but which reveals more about the world than it does of our methods to systematize it. Things in the world are fleeting, they are under flux and are thus changing, they are fundamentally unequal to themselves because everything is at war within its own compositeness – as Nietzsche points out, it is not one will, but several *Willens-Punktationen*.

Relevantly, Nietzsche seemed attracted towards the so called ‘anti-evolutionary Darwinism’ advocated by Roux (1881) and Rolph (1884),⁶¹ in which reality conceived as a constant war down to the cellular level resonated with the view of perpetual flux that Nietzsche traced to Heraclitus, and was functional for the development of the will to power as the arbiter of universal processes.⁶² Flux and the will to power thus assume the connotation, for each philosopher, of one single dynamic principle of nature, which can be noted in Nietzsche’s writings since *PTG*. Ofelia Schutte remarks, in fact, that “long before Nietzsche thought of the term ‘will to power’ to designate the reality of all that is in flux, he had already argued in favour of Heraclitus’s conception of existence,”⁶³ measured by the pervasive notion that all is fundamentally at war. Heraclitus, indeed, openly states his recognition of the world as one ‘ordained’ by the principle of war:

B53: War is the father of all, and the king of all; he has rendered some gods and some other men, some slaves and some free.

What role Darwin broadly attributed to ‘natural selection’, Nietzsche ascribed to the will to power, and Heraclitus to his *ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ* (*ethos anthropo*, “the ethos/character of a man”).⁶⁴ Nietzsche believed that remarkable individuals, above all the *Übermensch*, are capable of directing their own will to power. In the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* he seems to attribute this quality of “superhuman [übermenschlich] self-glorification”⁶⁵ to Heraclitus, whose action is entirely entrenched in a rejection of religiousness as a life-renouncing practice. As we will explore in section (5), the formidable character of these individuals is conferred by their ability to bear the reality of a Godless universe of flux by controlling and channelling their very will to power. This is in line with the thought of being *the architect of one’s own destiny*, which Heraclitus speaks of in the above terms: the ideological nemesis of the oppressive power of *δαίμων* (*daimon*) which held the (good and bad) fortune of men in Archaic Greece.

Within this state of Becoming, the individual is conceived as a necessary expression of the forces of change, furrowing a base-line separation between those who submit to them and those who instead are capable of harnessing them. Indeed, Heraclitus posits the *ethos* (the character, the customary occurrence) of world-events to be inherently divine.⁶⁶ According to Heraclitus, it possible for a capable man (as an example, he cites himself) to rise to the awareness of the greater divine logos, as a burning flame belonging to the larger cosmic fire;⁶⁷ but logos itself lives beyond the flaring up and extinguishing of the individual flames. Indeed, this conception must be integrated in the appreciation of Heraclitean flux as sporting an ordering force, which Heraclitus traced to the supreme logos of Necessity. This essay will employ the Ancient Greek formulation logos for its original multiplicity of senses and meanings, from ‘word’ to ‘principle’, to ‘law’ and ‘reasoning’. Relevantly, the first attested use of the term, including its embedded semantic nuance, is traced to the fragments of Heraclitus. In fact, while Heraclitus deploys logos in all its polyvalence, we will adopt a general reading of logos as ‘cosmic law or principle’.⁶⁸ Here the metaphor of fire yields its full explanatory power: in plainer terms, life, fire, burns on. But the greater cosmic fire, in the garb of the logos of Necessity, operates on a different standpoint. *It* does not differentiate between the contest of opposites, for in the eyes of the divine “all things are beautiful and good and just, while men regard some things as just and others unjust.”⁶⁹ This is the relevant differentiation between B102 and B67: it holds true that for the divine logos all is fair, since all is ethos, but God is also:

“day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; it takes various shapes, just as fire when mixed with spices is named according to the savour of each.”⁷⁰

⁶¹ Brobjer (1997)

⁶² Cfr. with GS, 5.

⁶³ Schutte (1984), p. 40.

⁶⁴ In Stobaeus, Anthology IV, 40.23, B119: “Ἡράκλειτος ἔφη ὡς ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων” “Heraclitus claims a man’s character [ethos] is his fate.”

⁶⁵ PPP X, p.55

⁶⁶ B78: “In fact ethos does not belong to human judgement, but to divine will.”

⁶⁷ B26: “

⁶⁸ Cfr. B1, B2, B50.

⁶⁹ B102

⁷⁰ B67

It is only to the minds of men that ethos has one particular *logos*, intended as judgment. But the striving condition imposed by human *logos* is trivial in the face of divine *logos*. In this greater scheme, nature adopts the embedded qualities of the Greek *φύσις* (*phusis*, "nature"), understood as the origin of a process as well as the development and growth of said process. In likening the Diotimatic nature to the cosmos of Heraclitus, K. L. Yeager explains that "although the sea of living generated beings partakes of the whole, the natural whole is independent of its living beings in the sense that it itself qua ungenerated being 'suffers nothing' and exists always with the same unique structure."⁷¹ As early as Nietzsche's unpublished essay *Homer's contest*, he understood the natural allotment of man to include those "terrible aptitudes, construed as inhuman," representative of "the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity in its stirrings, deeds, and actions, can grow forth."⁷² Even cruelty is construed as a favourable necessity:

"without cruelty there is no festival: thus the longest and most ancient part of human history teaches."⁷³

Nietzsche writes about our world "that it follows a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, albeit not because laws are dominant in it, but rather because laws are totally absent, and every power draws its final consequences at every moment."⁷⁴ Similarly to Nietzschean drives, the cosmos of Heraclitus is governed by forces of opposites which strive for dominion – these never prevail on their counterpart because they are administered by the *logos*, which guarantees the eternal flux of Becoming, the eternal strife of coming to be and passing away. Heraclitus states explicitly:

B8: What is opposed unites, and the most sublime attunement stems from things cast in opposite directions, and all things come about by strife.

And more explicitly in B80: We must know that war is common to all things, that justice is contest and that all things come to pass (*γινόμενα*, *ginomena*) through strife and by necessity.

Nietzsche reads Heraclitean *logos* as incorporating those "inviolable laws and standards that are immanent in the struggle."⁷⁵ Although almost diametrically in opposition, Heidegger's account of *logos* as Being incorporates many of the same Heraclitean notions in the interpretation above; he writes: "[*logos*] does not let what it holds in its power dissolve into an empty freedom from opposition, but by uniting the opposites maintains the full sharpness of their tension."⁷⁶ There is a form of balance, a semblance of identity that can be recognized in the pulling of opposite forces, but it is never reached to completion for the balancing itself is subject to perpetually striving energies which are internally ordained by their competing appetite for power. The perpetual tension between extremes, neither of which at any time possess a true state of 'Being' tout court, is cited by Nietzsche elsewhere:

"Oh the false opposites! War and "peace"! Reason and passion! Subject object! Such things do not exist!"⁷⁷

Within this contest, it is the productive bridging (albeit never bridged to completion)⁷⁸ of opposites - through the exercise and control of the will to power - that guarantees that element of greatness in individuals:

"What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is an over-going and down-going..."⁷⁹

The rhetoric about human essence as a bridge and the standing point of humanity in the face of chance further figures in GM II, while also explicitly drawing upon Heraclitus and his imagery:

"Man has been included among the most unexpected and exciting throws of dice played by Heraclitus' 'great child', call him Zeus or fate, – he arouses interest, tension, hope, almost certainty for himself, as though something were being announced through him, were being prepared, as though man were not an end but just a path, an episode, a bridge, a great promise..."⁸⁰

Heraclitus' river and Nietzsche's humanity are alike because they are both subjected to the Necessity of the cosmos and, just like the universe, they must constantly redefine and reconstitute themselves. Recall from section (1), that in his lectures on Pre-Platonic

⁷¹ Yeager (1998), p.626.

⁷² KS I, 783

⁷³ GM, II, 6

⁷⁴ BGE I 22

⁷⁵ PTG 5

⁷⁶ Heidegger (1961), p. 113.

⁷⁷ Nachlass 1881, 11[140], KSA 9.493.

⁷⁸ Cfr. with what Nietzsche says of Heraclitus' teaching in PTG 5: "The everlasting and exclusive coming-to-be, the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts and comes-to-be *but never is*." (My emphasis.)

⁷⁹ Z, Prologue.

⁸⁰ GM, II, 16.

philosophers Nietzsche delineates the operations of nature around their essential impermanence and on the basis of forces in competition between each other: "Nowhere does a fixed persistence exist," he claims, "because we always come in the final analysis to forces, whose effects simultaneously include a desire for power." Heraclitus acknowledged the contest of dominion-seeking forces, having conceived of the totality of things as steered by lightning,⁸¹ and further describing this immanent fire as a force which operates through the pursuit of need and satiety. In the *Refutatio*, Hippolytus explains that Heraclitean "fire is intelligent and cause of the management of the whole; he calls it 'need' and 'satiety'; need is the arrangement of the world, according to him, and the conflagration is satiety."⁸² We will return to matters of cosmic conflagration in the next section, but for the present time, we must understand that for Nietzsche the question of Being, "that which persists, the unmoving [μὴ ῥεῖν], proves to be a complete illusion, as a result of our [restricted] human intellect."⁸³ He reiterates this point about Heraclitus in *PTG* 5: "[Heraclitus] denied being. For this one world which he retained - supported by eternal unwritten laws, flowing upward and downward in brazen rhythmic beat - nowhere shows a tarrying, an indestructibility, a bulwark in the stream." The compatibility with the stable operation of logos arises itself as a necessity out of the forces at play in nature; referencing B94,⁸⁴ Nietzsche quotes "lawful order, unflinching certainties, ever-like orbits of lawfulness, Erinnyes sitting in judgment on all transgressions against lawful order, the whole world the spectacle of sovereign justice and of the demonically ever-present natural forces that serve it." This stance has been understood by some scholars⁸⁵ to evidence Nietzsche's belief, and in turn that of Heraclitus, in some form of a fixed stability and permanence in the cosmos, in the form of the laws established by *logos* and Necessity.

The correct interpretation of the above passages of both Nietzsche and Heraclitus attests to the impossibility of such a position. Loeb explains that "Nietzsche's actual and more subtle point, as he goes on to write, is that these laws have a merely immanent existence within the strife of opposites that gives birth to all change." Nietzsche's critique of teleology incorporates a further critique of this reading of the law of Necessity in which he condemns the "compulsion to consider the movement of the world and of all that is as if that movement had a purpose laid down by an extra-worldly principle or even laid down by that movement itself."⁸⁶ This is what Nietzsche calls "mechanical necessity," which he demotes from the status of "fact" to "interpretation," and denies that the "formulatable character of events" of the cosmos could be elevated to "the consequence of a necessity that rules over events."⁸⁷ In different passages Nietzsche urges us to be rid of this notion of necessity.⁸⁸ This is, *in primis*, because "there are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible, elusive." His desire is, in effect, to introduce Becoming as the only rule of the cosmos:

"Becoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment; [...] "Necessity" not in the shape of an overreaching, dominating total force, or that of a prime mover; even less as a necessary condition for something valuable."⁸⁹

This thought is recognized by Nietzsche as purely Heraclitean, and a strict implication of his doctrine of Becoming. Recall how, in *PTG* 5, Nietzsche had spoken of the "eternal justice" that is revealed within the world of contest, by which he signified the justification created by the Greek culture of agonism for the cosmos of strife, of competing wills to power. In fact, in the same passage he has Heraclitus monologuing as follows:

"'Becoming' is what I contemplate, [...] and what did I see? [...] Not the punishment of what has come-to-be did I see, but the justification of that which is coming-into-being."⁹⁰

Subsequently, Necessity, as Heraclitean *logos*, proves true and eternal insofar as the contest of opposing forces is eternal. It emerges contingently from the perpetual struggle of Becoming. In fact, I suggest, *logos* for Heraclitus and Necessity for Nietzsche are the maximum expression of the doctrine of flux, insofar as the semblance of permanence and the conception of identity emerge from the ever-changing essence of the cosmos. Necessity has no greater permanent stability than the contest of opposites. In the scheme of Heraclitus, change is a constant for identity because identity itself rests on permanent conveyance, expressed in the metaphor of fire. In fact, in the metaphor of the minor flames and the greater cosmic fire, divine logos is endowed with a conditional

⁸¹ B64: "τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός" "Lightning manoeuvres everything."

⁸² Hippolytus, *Refutatio* IX.10. This passage from Hippolytus has been attacked by scholars as a logically lacking and unclear reappropriation of different notions of Heraclitus. Finkelberg (1998, pp. 213-217) provides a solid rebuttal to these criticisms, together with a rigorous break-down of the different points of efficacy and accuracy in Hippolytus' presentation.

⁸³ PPP 10

⁸⁴ B94: "The sun will not overstep his measures; lest the Erinnyes, the auxiliaries of Justice, will find him out."

⁸⁵ See for instance, Kirk (1962), pp.377-84; and Berry (2013), p.97.

⁸⁶ Löwith (1997), p.117

⁸⁷ *WTP* 552 (Spring-Fall 1887)

⁸⁸ Cfr. *WTP* 634 (March-June 1888)

⁸⁹ *WTP* 708 (Nov. 1887-March 1888)

⁹⁰ *PTG* 5

status insofar as its dependent upon the rising and dying of its flames. We must be mindful, in this context, that the "balancing out" of opposites might suggest a form of stability in their contest for dominion, which thus recapitulated does not constitute a mistaken reading. Nevertheless, we ought to be careful in attributing any character of Being to this stability, since the balancing out of opposites is merely the temporary identity which arises from competing forces, similarly to the status of a scale with equally-weighted plates: both balanced and in tension. On the other hand, Being is actualized only when one opposite conclusively tramples the other, when one plate reaches the ground and the other is disbanded. The certainty that Being is never reached has been stated clearly in the immanent "handmaids of Justice," which merely express the immanent laws of Becoming which sanction the contest for power of opposites. This struggle, according to Heraclitus, fuels existence:

B30: "This order of things, which is the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it always was, is, and will be: an ever-living fire, in measures kindled and in measures fading out."

The embrace of Becoming seems to follow the lines of a normative endorsement on Nietzsche's part. It is justified *ex ipso* in the claim that individuals are not different from the condition of Heraclitus' river. They are one with flux because they too hinge upon the forces of change. Nietzsche realized that humans irredeemably abide by human *logos*, and his advocacy parallels that of Heraclitus in the encouragement to pursue a divine *logos*, here envisioned as understanding. Indeed, the limitedness of the human outlook is mapped by Nietzsche, in a practical sense, onto the baseline experiential capacities of men: he claims that "if we could conceive of human perception indefinitely increased according to the strength and power of the organs, there would conversely [to the perception limited by human intellect] exist no persistent thing... but rather only a Becoming."⁹¹ Nietzsche calls on the individual to rise up to life by first acknowledging the fluctuating essence of existence and ultimately transposing their own essence upon it. In the upcoming section I will posit that the confrontation with a Godless cosmos is the catalyst to this transposition, which discredits any upholding of a teleology or a fixed moral world-order for the harnessing of true greatness.

For the present, this chapter has introduced several ideas regarding the status of *logos* for Heraclitus, and in turn for Nietzsche. The fundamental takeaway from this demanding metaphysical jargon can be condensed thus: the role that *logos* assumes in Heraclitus is that of ensuring the order and the perpetual contest of things (that is, the very essence of Becoming), insofar as *logos* itself emerges contingently out of the striving equilibrium of forces. In the following chapter I will maintain that the Eternal Recurrence assumes this role in Nietzsche, who sanctions it as the guarantor for the constancy of conflict and as the regulator of the struggle. Thus we can account for this late note of Nietzsche's, in terms of the perceived identity of things through the constancy of the struggle, which in semblance narrows the gap between the subjective disunity of things and the superficial emergence of a fixed category of Being:

"That everything recurs is the closest *approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being: high point of the contemplation.*"⁹²

Indeed, Schutte remarks that Heraclitean flux was essentially refashioned by Nietzsche in different doctrines so that "the will to power was not the only name that Nietzsche gave to the Heraclitean world of flux. He also called it 'the innocence of becoming', 'my beyond good and evil', and 'the eternal recurrence of all things'."⁹³ This is the reason for which, I will argue, Nietzsche believes in the possibility of Heraclitus having originally taught the doctrine as he understood it. I will now turn, in this final section, to Nietzsche's enigmatic claim that Heraclitus could have been a possible early teacher of his most terrifying thought - the Eternal Recurrence.

5. The Eternal Recurrence of The Same

The doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence as taught by Zarathustra proposes that all events in the universe, including the entire course of one's life, will recur infinitely and endlessly in the same sequence. As presented in *GS* 341, the Eternal Recurrence is offered by a demon as the most important thought worthy of contemplation, capable of having one "cast [himself] down and gnash [his] teeth" in despair or, adversely, scoring the demon the appellative of "god" and the doctrine that of most divine thing. Here is the passage:

"What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once

⁹¹ PPP, 10

⁹² Nachlass 1886/87, 7[54], KSA 12.312.

⁹³ Schutte (1984), p.58.

experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this again and innumerable times again?' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?'⁹⁴

Ever since Ivan Soll's very influential exegesis of the fragment,⁹⁵ the doctrine has been widely accepted by scholars as a normative thought-experiment which weighs the scale of existence in terms of the ideal of life-affirmation, or, conversely, of life-denial. Nietzsche, or the demon for him, asks individuals to picture their lives, with all their successes and failures, sorrows and joys, as eternally recurring with every one instant identically repeating at every succeeding turn of the hourglass. One is meant to challenge the significance of one's actions and choices in the landscape of the meaningfulness of their existence by calling for the acceptance, or affirmation, of the totality of one's experiences in the face of the unchanging, "unconditional and endlessly repeated circular course of all things."⁹⁶ GS 341 can be understood as a compressed gist of the doctrine, a sort of preview into the full-fledged treatment of the Eternal Recurrence in *Zarathustra*. Such is the stance taken by Paul Loeb,⁹⁷ who identifies within the lines of GS 341 and the adjacent aphorisms those cardinal elements of the doctrine that would be elaborated in *Zarathustra*.

In fact, GS 340 is conceived by Loeb as the antithetical thread that Zarathustra walks in the book: as Nietzsche has Socrates cursing life at its end, Zarathustra will urge us to affirm it. GS 342 is precisely the beginning of Zarathustra's journey with his descent from the mountain, and GS 341 provides a synopsis to the answer to the demon's question, and the underlying question within it. The confrontation with existence that we feel is warranted from the demon's homily is meant to approach the tragic finitude that stems from the death of God. The Eternal Recurrence is conceived, under these prospects, within the panorama of cultural decadence and, more crucially, for the overarching quest for meaning that Nietzsche believes permeates existence.⁹⁸ The works of Loeb will provide a cornerstone to this discussion, chiefly as (to my knowledge) the only serious modern proponent of a cosmological reading of the Eternal Recurrence. By the end of this chapter, I will hopefully have shown that an important and often overlooked linkage between Nietzsche and Heraclitus can reinvigorate the cosmological hypothesis.

Having juxtaposed the Eternal Recurrence with Heraclitean *logos*, we might be tempted, as Heidegger and other commentators did, to find a problematic element in the affirmation of the Eternal Recurrence as the doctrine of the overman, who until this point is postulated to be the embodiment of the awareness of Becoming. Such a position appears to be implied by Nietzsche's affirmation that Eternal Recurrence is in fact the closest approximation of the world of Becoming to the world of Being. The thought behind this idea has been clarified by Joan Stambaugh: "if finitude is understood to mean impermanence, eternal return is that which gives permanence to Becoming."⁹⁹ Such permanence would be of course a representative semblance of Being. Further ahead, Stambaugh elaborates upon the Eternal Recurrence conceived as the playing field of the will to power, that is, an existential environment endowed with "something stable, something which constantly remains to be overcome and thus gives rise to more. Otherwise the Will to Power would simply be a chaotic flux."¹⁰⁰ This stability arises from the perpetual return of strife and tension, but such an interpretation severs the importance of the role of the overman, who would find the responsibility of controlling and directing his will to power lifted from himself and bore by the Eternal Recurrence.

A closer reading between Heraclitean cosmos and Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence can reconcile this apparent contradiction. There are numerous parallels between the demon's annunciation of the terrible truth of the Eternal Recurrence in GS 341 and Nietzsche's own description of Heraclitean Becoming in *PTG* 5. Both are conceived as a "paralyzing thought" for the beholder which shapes itself to be "the gravest weight." Both are overcome in the light of a "tremendous moment" which requires "astonishing strength to transform this reaction into its opposite," and which Heraclitus had already achieved by recognizing the essence of the universe as that of a "polarity, as being the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to re-unite." Such recognition transforms the cruel demon into a god, and his terrible revelation as something most divine – in fact, the affirmation of Eternal Recurrence, conceived in terms of flux, renders the one opposite contiguous with its counterpart. Nietzsche must have envisioned Heraclitean radical flux in the interpretation of *coincidentia oppositorum* illustrated above: it premises not a chaotic war of opposites, but a universal tension between them irredeemably tied by the necessity of *logos*, which is construed by Heraclitus as the universally permeating inevitability that one extreme is bound to its opposite. It is a fundamentally nihilistic outlook on the cosmos since neither part prevails on the other insofar as complete annihilation of one opposite represents the triumph of Being. Nietzsche convenes in GS 109 "that there are only necessities" in our world, which on the contrary is deprived of

⁹⁴ GS 341

⁹⁵ Soll (1973)

⁹⁶ EH, BT:3

⁹⁷ Loeb (2013), p.646.

⁹⁸ Hatab (2005), p.57.

⁹⁹ Stambaugh (1972), p.13.

¹⁰⁰ Stambaugh (1972), p.14.

"purposes" and in which there is "no accident." And doubtlessly Nietzsche endorsed a *descriptive* nihilism about the universe - while surely rejecting any normative endorsements of it - and the presence of any form of Being would undermine the psychological force that this recognition exerts. But within this context, Nietzsche's overman is one of those great individuals capable of transforming his nihilistic drives into creative ones.

We can ascertain the connection between Heraclitus and Nietzschean Eternal Recurrence as early as the first mention of the Eternal Recurrence, '*die ewige Wiederkunft*', in GS 285 where he calls to his "man of renunciation" to "will the eternal recurrence of war and peace." Williams explains it thus: "The phrase 'eternal recurrence' occurs first at sec. 285, but in a more limited connection [vis-à-vis GS 341], of recognizing that there is no perpetual peace, but only (as the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus taught) a cycle of war and peace."¹⁰¹ The first mention of the Eternal Recurrence in a clear reference to Heraclitus may appear deliberate. Of course, the Eternal Recurrence urges us not merely to accept the perpetual return of war and peace, but the identical return of such war and peace. It can be perplexing, then, to make sense of Nietzsche's insistent claim in *Ecce Homo* that the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence as he (Zarathustra) understood it could "have been taught before [by Heraclitus.] In any case, the Stoics, who derived nearly their fundamental ideas from Heraclitus, show traces of it"¹⁰² - since the cyclical cosmology that emerges in the fragments of Heraclitus never openly endorses the identical repetition of each cycle. I aim now to shed light on this point, and illustrate the reasons for which Nietzsche's understanding of Heraclitean flux, which I have sustained earlier to be the interpretation that emerges from the fragments, led him to believe that Eternal Recurrence as professed by Zarathustra is bound with the cosmos of Heraclitus.

The first clue emerges from the final call to the man of renunciation in GS 285, of whom Nietzsche writes:

"Perhaps this very renunciation will lend us the strength to bear renunciation; perhaps man will rise ever higher when he no longer *flows off* into a god."

The contextualization of this passage concerns the crisis that befalls individuals in a Godless cosmos and Nietzsche's call to renounce the comfort of divinity in pursuit of something greater, as the name of the section "*Excelsior*" anticipates. "Endless trust," Nietzsche explains, must be replaced by "war and peace," and one must face the absence of "no final corrector of the text of your life." Once again Nietzsche mentions the enormous "strength" required to renounce the warmth of this divine light, and we can conceivably imagine the unity of opposites of Heraclitus guiding him in the recognition that while one renounces "the view of a mountain-range with snow-capped peaks," his renunciation will allow him to "rise even higher." After all, the overman acknowledges pain and joy to be the same token:

"Pain is also joy, a curse is also a blessing, the night is also a sun.... Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to all woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love."

And thus Zarathustra, through the example of joy, ties the willing of the sameness of opposites to the desire for eternity:

"Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. [...] if you ever wanted one moment twice, if you ever said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted *everything* to return! [...] You say even to woe: 'Go, but return!' *For all joy wants -eternity!*"¹⁰³

Joy cannot exist without its opposite, and longing eternally for the return of one, *eternally affirming one*, involves eternally affirming its opposite. As Nietzsche prefigures in GS 27, the renouncer is in truth the ultimate affirmer who desires to "soar beyond" everyone else. But what is he renouncing? Nietzsche prefigures in GS 109 the question of the standing point of man in relation to a deified cosmos, one in which neither God nor his shadow reign over the spirit of man. The first important insight lies within the passage, where Nietzsche postulates that acknowledging the death of God means to "arm yourself against ultimate peace" and turning to the reality of our world until we are strong enough to "will the eternal recurrence of war and peace." This is not merely by the token of the world itself being in tension, which one must affirm and thus must consequently affirm the struggle within it, but because the *coincidentia oppositorum* warrants that even willing peace intimately implies first willing war. Indeed, the overman, alone capable of directing his will to power, fashions it anew from the nihilistic drive to destruction - catalysed by a Godless universe - into a creative force. Secondly, the importance of a de-deified cosmos lies in Nietzsche's belief that such a universe would be eternally repeating. Traces of this are already present in GS 109, where he speaks of "the whole musical mechanism" which "repeats eternally its tune," but are sketched further in depth in Nietzsche's notes, where he rejects the capacity for "eternal novelty" conferred by any divine cosmos, while instead postulating that:

¹⁰¹ Williams (2001), p.xv n.4.

¹⁰² *EH* on *BT*, 3

¹⁰³ Z IV, The Intoxicated Song. Also cfr. *ibid.* "For all joy wants itself, therefore it also wants heart's agony! O happiness! O pain! Oh break, heart! You Higher Men, learn this, learn that hoy wants eternity, joy wants the eternity of all things, *wants deep, deep, deep eternity!*"

“the world, as force, may not be conceived as unlimited, for it cannot be so conceived – we forbid ourselves the concept of an infinite force as something that is incompatible with the concept “force.” Therefore – the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty.”¹⁰⁴

Nietzsche did provide different attempts at a ‘proof’, albeit without ever publishing them, concerning the cosmological evidence for the Eternal Recurrence. Of course, his own rationale for the sketching of a scientific proof in his posthumous notes has been severely disputed. Nietzsche’s attempt at providing a cosmological proof rests on the assumptions which have been stated by the Stoics¹⁰⁵ (God as a supreme rational ordainer notwithstanding), namely that physical forces (energy) in the universe are finite and conserved, while time itself is infinite. According to Nietzsche, the former point would be supported by the first law of thermodynamics insofar as “the principle of conservation of energy demands the Eternal Return.”¹⁰⁶ I am not here concerned with the soundness of Nietzsche’s proof, but it is conceivable that he understood the Stoic doctrine to have been influenced by Heraclitus. The notion of the Stoic Great Year is explicitly cited in *Zarathustra*, in which the prophet is proclaimed to “teach that there is a great year of becoming, a monster [ungeheuer] of a great year, which must, like an hourglass, turn over again and again so that it may run down and run out again.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Nietzsche’s belief in the Heraclitean universe of perpetual change and strife is assumed:

“That a state of equilibrium is never reached proves that it is not possible. But in an indefinite space it would have to have been reached. Likewise in a spherical space. The shape of space must be the cause of eternal movement, and ultimately of all ‘imperfection.’”¹⁰⁸

A brief biographical analysis of Nietzsche’s approach to the Eternal Recurrence may illuminate this point further. As a philologist, it is entirely probable that Nietzsche had encountered the notion of Eternal Recurrence early in his career. In fact, it is referenced explicitly in his early essay *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (1874) in which Nietzsche attributes the doctrine to the Pythagoreans, albeit operating upon the discriminant premise that some elements between each cycle of the Recurrence do remain fixed, whereas Zarathustra imposes that everything returns, that is to say, that everything first goes out of existence in order to come into existence (identically) once more. Yet, according to the Pythagoreans, certain objects such as celestial bodies are permanent between cycles – consequently, Nietzsche correctly read¹⁰⁹ the doctrinal formulation taught by the Pythagoreans not to rest upon universal flux. Nietzsche thus rejected this doctrine as false.¹¹⁰ This stance accompanied Nietzsche until 1881, when he came to accept the Eternal Recurrence and its truth, and made no mention of the doctrine in its Pythagorean iteration. We can further ascertain from his notes and letters that the revelation of the Eternal Recurrence, which Nietzsche conceived as a novel thought, prompted him to reconsider every previously held belief.¹¹¹ Once we accept that Eternal Recurrence warrants the eternal repetition of all things down to every minute detail of the cosmos¹¹² we must acknowledge that the doctrine rests upon the reality of universal absolute flux.

In fact, one reading of the Eternal Recurrence, notably advocated by Loeb, maintains that what we are experiencing at each moment is eternally recurring sameness,¹¹³ which in tandem with the molecular ever-changing nature of everything renders the character of everything, including our experience of the present moment, both fundamentally different and fundamentally alike. Thus Nietzsche must altogether reject B91, for not only is it possible to step twice in the same river, but we do so infinite times. It can be claimed, as we did for Heraclitus’ river fragments, that the eternally recurring sameness of Loeb (or in Heraclitean terms plainly *sameness*) is preserved by perpetually ensuing change. The proofs that Nietzsche sketched in his posthumous fragments and which

¹⁰⁴ Nachlass 1885, 36[15], KSA 11.556–7)

¹⁰⁵ Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 38 = SVF 2.625.

¹⁰⁶ *Posthumous Fragments* 1886, 5 [54]. Nietzsche operates on the same wavelength of Poincaré, who would later develop his Recurrence Theorem, according to which, granted the length of eternity, all configurations of energy states would come to repeat themselves. The argument is made explicit in PH 1888, 14 [188]: “If the universe may be conceived as a definite quantity of energy, as a definite number of centres of energy, — and every other concept remains indefinite and therefore useless, — it follows therefrom that the universe must go through a calculable number of combinations in the great game of chance which constitutes its existence. In infinity, at some moment or other, every possible combination must once have been realised; not only this, but it must have been realised an infinite number of times.”

¹⁰⁷ Z, The Coalescent.

¹⁰⁸ WTP 1064 (1885). The note continues, albeit fragmentarily, in further references to the unity of opposites and flux: “That ‘force’ and ‘rest,’ ‘remaining the same,’ contradict one another. The measure of force (as magnitude) as fixed, but its essence in flux, in tension, compelling.”

¹⁰⁹ This is my stance as well as the current scholarly consensus. For further discussion, see Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London 1982, 502 ff.

¹¹⁰ HL, 2

¹¹¹ Nachlass 1881, 11[141], KSA 9.494; and Letter to Franz Overbeck, March 8, 1884, no. 494, KSB 6.485: “[I]t is possible that the thought which splits humankind in two halves has come for the first time to me [...]. If it is true, or rather: if it is believed to be true – then everything is changed and turned around, and all previous values are devalued.”

¹¹² Z III, On the Vision and the Riddle, 2.

¹¹³ See Loeb (2018).

I have quoted above show Nietzsche's belief in such cosmological connection. Loeb clarifies that, according to Nietzsche, "this is because nothing can come back into existence as the same unless it has already gone out of existence, and so it must be the case that throughout all eternity every single aspect of the universe is going out of existence at every moment."¹¹⁴ With this, it must be understood that achieving permanent stability (sameness) is impossible per the rules of Becoming, but it is most approximated when its world-process is repeated once more. This accounts for Nietzsche's consideration of Heraclitus as a precursor to his Eternal Recurrence, if one imagines that Nietzsche believed that Eternal Recurrence was a logical consequence of universal radical flux. The passage from the *The Covalescent* chapter cited earlier provides another avenue to contextualize the reading of GS 341 as a life-affirming thought experiment in an assumed cosmological background. The monster/colossus [ungeheuer] of a Great Year is juxtaposed with the monstrous/tremendous moment of the demon's revelation of the recurrence in GS 341. Loeb investigates the character of the moment and what about its nature renders it as colossal as the great year of becoming which turns into itself to eternal repetition. His verdict is that "the concluding sentence of GS 341 suggests a long-term, stable, and far-reaching change in my disposition that will lead me to crave nothing more fervently than the eternal return of every detail of my life."¹¹⁵

Loeb reads the demon in GS 341 to already presuppose a cosmological recurrence. He takes the demon to quote a previously experienced moment, in which one may confidently and life-affirmingly say Yes to the Recurrence, as one did in each previous *ungeheuer Augenblick* in every past recurrence. The demon announces that "I have to experience an eternally returning moment in which I am hearing his revelation. So when the narrator asks me afterward whether I have once experienced an *ungeheuer* moment when I would have worshipped the demon who spoke to me thus, the most natural reading of this adjective is that it refers to just this *eternal return* of the moment."¹¹⁶ On this account, the monstrosity of the moment does not refer to the qualitative character of the experience, but to the temporal weight of the recurrence-long time-lapse. In the infinite magnitude of its repetition, the moment becomes colossal. In fact, *The Covalescent* continues from where we left off:

"...and all these years are alike in what is greatest and even in what is smallest; and we ourselves are alike in every great year, in what is greatest and even in what is smallest."

Paraphrasing the passage through Loeb's reading, what Zarathustra is implying is that we eternally recur in the essence of the fleeting moment *and* in the immensity of its perpetual repetition. The amplification of joy and pain in the moment is explained by the colossal impact of the crushing or the elated experience felt in the present moment and amplified by its eternal repetition. Loeb defines this *the immanent experience* of the Eternal Recurrence, according to which "the revelatory moment must return to me during this moment itself and that I am actually reliving this revelatory moment countless times during this moment itself,"¹¹⁷ that is, eternally recurring sameness, and which Nietzsche alludes to in his mention of the turning of the hourglass. With the immanent experience of the Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche seems to propose something akin to the Heraclitean distinction between the cosmic awareness of the great fire attained through divine logos, and the experience of the minor flame. On this parallel reading, the divinity of logos is mirrored in the divinity of the demon, and more broadly in the welcoming of his revelation as "the ultimate eternal confirmation." Such a realization does render, as per B62, the fading, fleeting mortal moment essentially immortal, if we are capable of beholding and accepting divine logos and if we are willing to entertain and immerse ourselves in the colossal implications of a cosmological recurrence.

Nietzsche's hesitation in openly attributing this idea to Heraclitus stems from the absence of the Eternal Recurrence (as taught by Zarathustra) in the fragments, only vaguely present in the passages professing ekpyrosis (B6, B30, B67); but his deliberate citation of Heraclitus, which represents a rare exception in Nietzsche's otherwise recalcitrant recognition of his intellectual debts, suggests that in fact the doctrine as he understood it was intimately tied to Heraclitean teachings. As far as the ancient cosmological framework is concerned, there is no indication that Heraclitus took the Eternal Recurrence to be anything but a factual supposition. At different points but most notably in the *Physics*, Aristotle seems to appropriate specifically to Heraclitus the view that the entirety of worldly things becomes fire, and then from fire again the totality of worldly things takes form,¹¹⁸ suggesting a form of recurrent cosmic conflagration. The Peripatetics, too, follow suit, and that the world is an ἀνταμοιβή (*antamoibe*, "interchange/requital") for fire is put forward explicitly in B90.¹¹⁹ Fire is posited quite unequivocally in B66¹²⁰ as the judgement and conviction of all things; if we appeal to Hippolytus, we should read that "conflagration is satiety" in terms of the end of a cosmic cycle and the subsequent commencement of a new one, in which hunger rises once more, for in fact "need is the arrangement of the world." Finkelberg

¹¹⁴ Loeb (2021) pp.86-97.

¹¹⁵ Loeb (2018), p. 431. For Loeb's consideration on the nature of the *ungeheuer Augenblick*, see pp. 429-33 *passim*.

¹¹⁶ Loeb (2018), p. 434.

¹¹⁷ Loeb (2018), *Ibid*.

¹¹⁸ This is my reading of the grammatical ambiguity in section 205a1-205a6, *Physica* III.5. Cfr. also *De Caelo* I.10.

¹¹⁹ B90: "πυρὸς τε ἀνταμοιβὴ τὰ πάντα καὶ πῦρ ἀπάντων ὅκωσπερ χρυσοῦ χρήματα καὶ χρημάτων χρυσός;" "The totality of things is an interchange for fire, and fire for the wholeness of things; in the same manner gold is for goods, and goods for gold."

¹²⁰ B66: "πάντα γὰρ τὸ πῦρ ἐπελθὼν κρινεῖ καὶ καταλήψεται;" "Fire, on its advance, will judge and convict all things."

clarifies that for Heraclitus “war and peace, strife and agreement, and, most of all, need and satiety convey the religious and value significance of the cosmic cycle: the world is a god suffering ‘need’ and striving for fullness or ‘satiety’, conflagration being the consummation.”¹²¹ If understood in the same lines of the Eternal Recurrence as a cosmologically supported and value-generating doctrine, conflagration normatively enacts the same life-affirming counsel which Nietzsche urges in GS 341, namely that “conflagration is a consummation of cosmic evolution, an end which communicates religious and moral significance to cosmic evolution in general, to the world as its intermediary stage, and to human life as an integral part of life in the world.”¹²² If the influence of the fragments of Heraclitus has been as extensive as I have attempted to show, I believe there might be sufficient reason to review Nietzsche’s own outlook on the cosmological status of the Recurrence. In any case, if Heraclitus was truly the precursor to Nietzsche’s most terrifying doctrine, and Nietzsche’s integration of several of his defining notions was as extensive as I have claimed above, I find no reason to believe that Nietzsche merely derived a *gedankenexperiment* conclusion from an otherwise unquestionably cosmological theory.

Certainly, the Eternal Recurrence is invested with redemptive power by Zarathustra in relation to the struggle of universal flux, whose operation is openly described in Nietzsche’s notes through the metaphor of Heraclitean rivers as seen in B12:

“I teach you redemption from the eternal flux: the flux flows back into itself again and again, and you step into the same flux again and again, as the same ones.”¹²³

The “redemption from the flux of things” (II, *On Redemption*) and the metaphor of the “river of becoming” (II, *On Self-Overcoming*), and once more the declaration that “all is in flux” (III, *On Old and New Tables*, 8) are all referenced in *Zarathustra*. Of course, flux (*Fluß*) preserves in German the double meaning of flux and river. But the emphasis posed in the notes of the *Nachlass* is identical to the one urged throughout this dissertation, namely that it is in fact possible to step twice into the same river, into the same flux, while ‘it’ – either *the river* or *those who step into it*, with relevant emphasis on the ambiguity – preserves its identity [*als die Gleichen*]. Once more resorting to Loeb, he explains that “according to Nietzsche’s new interpretation, what Heraclitus means when he says that we do *not* step into the same rivers is that there is absolute flux; and what he means when he says that we *do* step into the same rivers is that there is an eternal identical repetition of this absolute flux. Because the absolute flux flows back into itself again and again, we (as the same ones) step into the same flux again and again.” I believe that Nietzsche, as a trained philologist, was aware of the syntactic ambiguity of B12 and deliberately transposed its polysemy in German, insofar as he identified the philosophical relevance of the grammatical point in B12, and thus rejecting B91 as non-Heraclitean and accepting B49a in the interpretation of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Whether it is the identity of the river or that of those stepping into the rivers which remains the same, it is deliberately left unclear: the reason for this is because both change and sameness are simultaneously true of our world, and the former effectively ensures the preservation of the latter, just as universal radical flux ensures the eternal repetition of all things that thus, in one relevant sense, *stay the same* since it is necessary that they eternally repeat.

It serves a further point insofar as the redemption from the flux of things – recall the justification of Becoming explored in (4) – represents a transposition of the conditions of the cosmos into the struggle of the overman and for great cultures. The overman recognizes in the Eternal Recurrence the new worldly alternative to a divine cosmos – whose experiential reality maintains the veracious weight through the acceptance of an underlying cyclical cosmology – and through enormous strength of spirit channels his will to power to accept and metabolize this reality as his own. The overman sees the strife of the world and himself as fundamentally alike in the shared essence of will to power:

“This world is the will to power— and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!”¹²⁴

In fact, the overman welcomes the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence as the ultimate milieu of life-affirmation because it guarantees the return of the terrible de-deified cosmos of radical flux, within which his will to power can elevate him to accept the reality of Becoming, *this world*, and subsequently affirm it. Indeed, Nietzsche’s close reading of the doctrine of flux with Eternal Recurrence is suggested by one final note treading the cosmic conflagration of B30, according to which “the order of things [...] always was, is, and will be:”

“Do not fear the flux of things: this flux turns back into itself: it flees itself not just twice. /All “it was” becomes an “it is” again. The past bites all that is future in the tail.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Finkelberg (1998), p. 219.

¹²² Finkelberg (1998), p. 220.

¹²³ The passage in the original German is as follows, “Ich lehre euch die Erlösung vom ewigen Flusse: der Fluß fließt immer wieder in sich zurück, und immer wieder steigt ihr in den gleichen Fluß, als die Gleichen.” (Nachlass 1882/83, 5[1]160, KSA 10.205).

¹²⁴ WTP 1067 (1885)

¹²⁵ (Nachlass 1882/83, 4[85], KSA 10.139)

Thus the overman affirms flux, and as such, Nietzsche argues, he gazes into the terrible reality of the Eternal Recurrence. But the Eternal Recurrence itself affirms flux, for it rises out of the perpetual strife of the cosmos – and thus out of necessity – and the overman may wield his will to power to elevate himself beyond its frightening implications, accepting it and endorsing it as the only life-affirming doctrine in the bellicose world of Becoming.

6. Conclusion

In the present piece I have explored the question surrounding the extent to which Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus is faithful to the doctrine of flux as presented in the original fragments. I have claimed that this occurs to a considerable extent, particularly after a proper analysis of the river fragments of Heraclitus in the exegesis of B12 explored above. After exploring the dangers of a Platonic 'existential' exegesis of the fragments, I have shown how the doctrine of flux of Heraclitus reveals that the conception of flux embodies the principle of "permanency within permanent conveyance." Heraclitus' doctrine of flux demands an understanding of *coincidentia oppositorum* which preserves identity through perpetual change, retaining the coexistence of multiple identities in one. I have turned to the similarities between this reading and the Nietzschean notion of the world as will to power, arguing for Nietzsche's concurrency with the cosmos of Heraclitus since *PTG*. I have further claimed that *logos* for Heraclitus and Necessity for Nietzsche operate on similar wavelengths, understood as immanent and contingent realities of identity in a reality of perpetual strife, with the latter further transposing the principle of preservation of identity in flux onto his doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence.

Lastly, I have proposed the reading that Nietzsche's understanding of Heraclitus as a precursor and possible early teacher of the Eternal Recurrence can only be vindicated insofar as Nietzsche read the Eternal Recurrence as, first, an implication of the cosmos as absolute flux and, consequently, as the only possibility to affirm a de-deified cosmos of Becoming. By the end of this piece, I aim to have demonstrated Nietzsche's close affinity to Heraclitus, having shown the grounds not merely for the inspiration that the German philosopher has drawn from his archaic Greek precursor, but the very foundations of the most idiosyncratically Nietzschean doctrines, those of the Will to Power and the Eternal Recurrence. Although it has not been framed within the scope of this essay, I have suggested that this is one possible pathway to understanding Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence as more than a mere thought-experiment, positing it instead in the form of a cosmological reality. I do not take any of my arguments to rest upon this claim, but I believe this dissertation to provide one cardinal cornerstone for any such interpretation of the otherwise controversial doctrine, which ought to scrutinize Nietzsche's identification of Heraclitus' teachings with the doctrine of Zarathustra with a more careful eye.

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