Nietzsche and the Critique of Revolution

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CHAPTER ONE

NIETZSCHE, DELEUZE, AND THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE OF THE SAME

> Judged from the point of view of our reason, unsuccessful attempts are by all odds the rule, the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune which may never be called a melody—and ultimately even the phrase "unsuccessful attempt" is too anthropomorphic and reproachful. But how could we reproach or praise the universe? Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness and unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man.
>
> Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much an error as the God of the Eleatics. But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When may we begin to *"naturalize"* humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, 1887
>
> There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche.
> —Gilles Deleuze, 1962

That most nineteenth-century European thinkers believed in notions of inevitable human progress is a truism. Nietzsche was one of the few philosophers of his time who did not subscribe to this idea. His conception of history is encapsulated within his theory of the eternal recurrence of the same. According to this notion, the history of humanity, and, indeed, of the entire universe, never changes. It merely repeats itself, unfolding itself within the infinitude of time. According to him, "If the motion of the world aimed at a final state, that state would have been reached." (Nietzsche, 708 n.) Nietzsche first enunciated the idea of the eternal recurrence towards the end of the fourth book of his work *The Gay Science* (1882). The passage in

which he first describes the concept deserves to be quoted at length; nowhere else did Nietzsche describe it so succinctly and so beautifully:

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you in your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing
>
> new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in life will have to 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 upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust! (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* 273)

Time has borne out Nietzsche's idea. Who can mouth ideas of inevitable historical progress after Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki? The horrors of the twentieth century have put to rest, once and for all, the delusions of the nineteenth. Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence of history is (potentially) revolutionary, for it helps us to see the futility of placing our faith in any so-called "laws" and forces of history, à la Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.[1] If one believes in the possibility, or necessity, of emancipation, one can achieve emancipation by means of voluntary struggle. We do not have to wait for the laws of history to bail us out.

Gilles Deleuze, in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), delineates the emancipative potential of Nietzsche's battle against the dialectic (147-195). For Deleuze, the historicist, Hegelian, and dialectical traditions are not the only ways to achieve emancipation (197). For the French philosopher, that is the supreme significance of Nietzsche's antipathy toward the idea of the possibility of progress. Nietzsche sees that "multiplicity, becoming, and chance are objects of pure affirmation" (197).

However, the historical immanence of Nietzsche's anti-dialectical philosophy is lost on Deleuze. Deleuze is correct when he notes that "There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche" (195).[2] The German philosopher's anti-dialectical stance cannot be abstracted from his

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[1] The pathos of affirming the eternal recurrence, which Nietzsche saw as the mark of a truly noble individual, will be discussed here only insofar as it helps to illustrate the politico-philosophical connotations and underpinnings of Nietzsche's thought.

[2] This is something that was completely lost on Walter A. Kaufmann, the famous German-American scholar and translator of Nietzsche's works. In his *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950), Nietzsche appears as an emasculated, milquetoast-y Hegelian, in love with dialectics. Kaufmann was himself a Hegelian.

consistent struggle with egalitarianism. The potentially radical implications of the dialectic have often been noted. The struggle between thesis and antithesis produces a synthesis; the synthesis (now a thesis) goes on to struggle with a new antithesis, to produce a new synthesis, and so on. Hegel famously applied the dialectic to different historical phases and attempted to prove that history was a rational, meaningful, ever-changing development of one unchanging being, the idea (or god) (Hegel, 9).

Karl Marx sums up the revolutionary implications of Hegel's dialectic in the preface to the second edition of the first volume of *Das Kapital.* He writes:

> In its rational form it (the dialectic) is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in essence critical and revolutionary (Marx, 25-26).

It is this revolutionary and disintegrating aspect of the dialectic that Nietzsche loathes and attempts to combat. The idea of historical change inevitably leads to the idea of sociopolitical change. The dissolution of historical categories and epochs becomes the dissolution of entire social structures and social formations. What is the result? A final stage is reached, the "end of history." What is the final stage? Is the final stage a liberal, bourgeois, democratic, or communist society? These questions are irrelevant for Nietzsche. For him, what matters is that, in the dialectical scheme of things, human history is ultimately reduced to a final stage of rest, of eternal Being.

It is significant that the personification of the dialectic in Nietzsche's works is not Hegel, but rather Socrates. From his first book to his last, Nietzsche sees the Greek philosopher as the embodiment of the disintegrating, corrosive dialectic. In one of his last works, *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), Nietzsche writes, "Is the irony of Socrates an expression of revolt? Of plebeian *ressentiment?* (476) And in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), he describes Socrates as "the prototype of the theoretical optimist who… ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea..." (97). The Athenian philosopher believed that man commits evil out of ignorance. If man enlightens himself as to his own true nature, and the nature of his fellows, he will cease to commit evil

acts. Socrates believed that man can use his reason to free himself from the baseness and irrationality of his lower nature.

He believed that man, when confronted with the choice of good or evil, will always choose the former. For how can he, the most rational of all creatures, not see that choosing to do evil leads to disharmony, with himself and others? Socrates (or at least, the Socrates found in Plato's dialogues) had an unyielding, almost naïve faith in man's reason. And it was this ability to have and use reason that, for Socrates, constitutes man's greatest virtue. He sees the instincts and emotions as being last on the order of man's attributes. Indeed, he ascribes vice to the instincts. Not even art, which in the Periclean Age of Greece, was viewed as being the product of "the emotions and the intellect" working "together," can be attributed to the emotions (Hamilton and Cairns, 215).

In the *Ion,* for example, the Platonic Socrates describes art as "not (being) dependent upon the emotions; it belongs to the realm of knowledge" (Hamilton and Cairns, 215). The same naïve, smug faith in reason and progress held by Socrates is the same faith in progress held by the democrats, socialists, and liberal utilitarians of Nietzsche's time. In the German philosopher's works, Socrates assumes the mantle of the revolutionary, as the disintegrator of the holy myths and traditions of the Athenian aristocracy. Socrates accomplishes this, according to Nietzsche, by means of the dialectic, of reason, and of arid logic.[3] Socrates, not Hegel, personifies the dialectic because he was the first to use it as a weapon in his struggle against the established order. Hegel is one of the heirs of Socrates, and one of the most dangerously effective. The Greek philosopher is seen as "a symptom of a radical and momentous cultural transformation that had carried over into his [Nietzsche's] own era" (Rudiger Safranski, *Nietzsche, A Philosophical Biography,* 64).

The late Italian Marxist philosopher and political theorist Domenico Losurdo, in his *Nietzsche, il ribelle aristocratico; Biografia intellettuale e bilancio critico* (2002), notes that Nietzsche's Socrates is really an ideal type. The Socrates of *The Birth of Tragedy,* according to Losurdo, is the prototype of the revolutionary intellectual of the nineteenth century (Losurdo, 5-78,104-136). Certainly, Nietzsche attributes revolutionary and seditious implications to Socrates' teachings. Yet Socrates is not just a

[3] In *The Philosophy of History,* Hegel writes, "The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of *Reason;* that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process" (Hegel, 9). Hegel therefore equates the constant flux of the historical process with the dictates of Reason. Nietzsche's views on Socrates, the Greeks, and science, will be further discussed in the next section.

representative of revolutionary thought in general. He is also the representative of a particular mode of revolutionary thinking, of a particular method of viewing history: the dialectic. Deleuze sees Nietzsche as encountering "his own Socrates" in the positivist and socialist thinkers of his time (Deleuze, 58-59, Safranski, 64).

These, according to Deleuze, are "freethinkers" who "claim to carry out the critique of values; they claim to refuse all appeals to transcendental values…." (Deleuze, 59) The atheist, the socialist, and the anarchist might reject the existence of the Judeo-Christian God. Nevertheless, they still accept the fundamental premises upon which Judaism and Christianity are built. These premises are the complex syntheses of moral valuations that are subsumed under the category of "Judeo-Christian morality." This morality is above all a morality of compassion, of sympathy for the weak, the suffering, and the defenseless, a sympathy for what Nietzsche elsewhere calls "the bungled and the botched." The outraged indignation the socialist feels at seeing the exploitation of the workers by their employers, of the many by the few, is the same indignation the Christian feels in contemplating the injustices of life. The modern freethinker does not reject the idea of justice, an idea first found, clothed in theological garb, in Christianity. On the contrary; he enlarges on the theme of justice, and proclaims himself the champion of suffering, degraded humanity. According to Deleuze, "This is why we can have no confidence in the freethinker's atheism." (Deleuze, 60)

This embrace of ever-returning diversity within the cycle of the eternal recurrence can certainly be utilized as a tool of (non-historicist, non-structuralist) emancipation. One can now celebrate the diversity of human identity, of sexuality, of sexual orientation, of race and ethnicity. The diverse cycles of the eternal return are a reproach to the naïve, positivistic, and determinist hopes of the nineteenth century. The belief in inevitable progress, so dear to the hearts of Darwinians, utilitarians, and (vulgar) Marxists, is now made unnecessary. One can now be comforted by the fact that one will always experience different, random, and unexpected events, forever and ever. We can now revel in the very uncertainty and unexpectedness of life. Deleuze sees the nature of the emancipative aspect of Nietzsche's opposition to the dialectic. However, he does not see the immediate implications of Nietzsche's cosmology, implications that are extremely reactionary.

After having resolved all contradictions, the dialectic leaves us with man as he has always been (Deleuze, 163). The dialectic enables man to exist continually, after having incorporated and subsumed all of pre-existing reality (Deleuze, 163). According to Deleuze, "the dialectical man is the most wretched because he is no longer anything but a man, having

annihilated everything which was not himself" (Deleuze, 163). Whereas the dialectic "reverses" values, the truly noble man, the Overman, creates values. The dialectic cannot create anything; it is impotent.

Nietzsche's Overman "has nothing in common with the species, being of the dialecticians" (Deleuze, 163). The Nietzschean Overman's goal is to institute "*a new way of thinking [that]* predicates other than divine ones; for the divine is still a way of preserving man and of preserving the essential characteristic of God as attribute" (Deleuze, 163). The dialectic enables man to become God, to subsume His qualities within himself. That is what the death of God means for Hegel (Deleuze, 156). The overcoming of contradiction and alienation that the dialectic carries within itself is essentially a plebeian struggle. This is because the struggle does not take into account "far more subtle and subterranean differential mechanisms: topological displacements, typological variations" (Deleuze, 157). There is no attempt to analyze the value of the forces in contradiction. The nobility or baseness of opposing forces is not seen; they are not even presumed to be in existence. The dialectic is an essentially democratic methodology; it does not recognize privilege.

This inability-or unwillingness- of the dialectical process, to see the pedigree of the contending forces that lie within it, leads to the question of difference. That is, Nietzsche's conception of the "pathos of distance" is intimately tied to his critique of the dialectic (Nietzsche, 391). Before touching upon this, however, it is appropriate to further analyze Deleuze's ideas on the selectivity of the will to power.

Deleuze does not believe the eternal recurrence is a recurrence of the same exact events that have occurred within the space of time (Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau, 1991,* 120, 194-195; Deleuze, 48, 68). According to him, "It is not some one thing which returns but rather returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it is affirmed of becoming and of that which passes" (Deleuze, 48). It is the process of returning that always recurs, not the actual train of events that have already taken place. In fact, according to Deleuze, this is the closest approximation toward the possibility—and desirability—of Being, that Nietzsche ever achieves. The always-recurring process of returning *is* the state of Being. Being *is* recurrence (Deleuze. 47-48). The conscious and willing acceptance of this eternal process—though it occurs irrespective of our willingness—is the mark of a noble human being who affirms life.

This constant return of the process of returning is linked to the idea of the will to power. For Deleuze, the will to power is not equivalent to mere, empirical, and brute, force. It is not even the act of willing as such. Rather, it is the act of willing *selectively.*

One should will in a way that is selective, so that the events and aspects of our lives that have been the most pleasing, or the most life-affirming, return to us.[4] Those events that have been the most useless, or even harmful, from the standpoint of the affirmation of life, should not be willed to return.[5] It is this selective willing that, for Deleuze, constitutes one of the fundamental traits of the Overman. This ability to will what one wants, to will back the forces that are noble, active, creative, and life-affirming, is notably contrasted with the plebeian impotence of the dialectic. The dialectical process of contradiction, which arises out of alienation, is resolved by ending that alienation. How is alienation ended? It is ended by taking into oneself, by subsuming, all of the forces that have previously struggled with each other. The dialectic is opposed to "the spirit of interpretation itself which judges forces from the standpoint of their origin and quality" (Deleuze, 60).

The eternal return of the process of recurrence does not even recur in a single cycle; rather, it recurs in numerous series of cycles. Deleuze writes that "we can only understand the eternal return as the expression of a principle which serves as an explanation of *diversity and its reproduction, of difference and its repetition* (Deleuze, 49)[6]. In one of his notes from the 1880s, which was subsequently included in the posthumous collection entitled *The Will to Power* (1901), Nietzsche wrote that the eternal recurrence consists of a diverse series of cycles, and that these cycles

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[4] In *Nietzsche contra Rousseau,* Ansell-Pearson succinctly summarizes Deleuze's interpretation of the eternal recurrence as follows: "Deleuze construes the eternal return as a selective kind of categorical imperative which breeds strength and nobility. Eternal return is a selective ethical principle; that which returns is not the 'same,' that is the actual content of one's willing, but only the form of willing (the returning). In this way the will selects that which it wishes to return and that which it does not. What does not return, Deleuze argues, are the reactive forces, namely, all that is sick, base, weak, and lowly" (194-195).

[5] Like Heidegger, Deleuze establishes a conceptual relation between the eternal recurrence and the will to power. For a further comparison, see the second volume of Heidegger's *Nietzsche: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same (*1954). See also Karl Löwith's long neglected *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same (*1935). Löwith was the first to note the centrality the idea of the eternal recurrence had for Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole. He was also the first to recognize the contradictions in the theory. For if the process of recurrence constantly returns, irrespective of one's will, what, then, is the point of willing at all? Löwith, unlike Deleuze, interprets the process of recurrence as a return of the same exact events. He also does not equate the act of willing the eternal return with the will to power, as Heidegger and Deleuze do.

[6] Emphasis added.

contain differently recurring events within themselves (Nietzsche, 325, 334, 374, 634; Deleuze, 49). Deleuze was one of the first interpreters of the eternal recurrence to pick up on the implications of diversity within the cosmological theory. It is not every single little thing that has occurred since time began that occurs and recurs; rather; it is the cycle itself which recurs. The possibility, the chance, of existence beginning anew, *ad infinitum,* is the central core of the theory of the eternal recurrence of the same. Within an unlimited amount of cosmic space, with a delimited amount of energy and force, existence will recur, over and over again.

One always has the chance to relive one's life. With every new cycle of recurring existence, one can always recreate and reform one's destiny, as one wills. Existence then becomes like clay in the hands of a potter, like marble in the hands of a sculptor. The ever-recurring diverse cycles of diverse recurrence enable us to become artists in respect to our lives; we shape and transform them however we like. We *will* our lives, our existences (Nietzsche, 374, 634; Deleuze, 49). Far from being the worst form of determinism imaginable, the eternal recurrence is the best guarantor imaginable of freedom, of free will (Deleuze, 49).

Nietzsche's equation of the recognition and affirmation of difference as symbol of the will to power is a result of his philosophical nominalism (Losurdo, 92-95). His conception of the "pathos of distance" was noted above. What does this idea have to do with the recognition of differences within the cosmology of the eternal recurrence? If Nietzsche saw the willing recognition of differences within the recurring cycle as an affirmation of life in its totality, does it not follow, then, that this applies in political life as well? This is my contention, that this phrase—"the pathos of distance"—is both a political and philosophical term. Let us look at the matter more closely.

Nietzsche first introduces the concept of the pathos of distance in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), a work that he describes as "a critique of modernity, not excluding the modern sciences, the modern arts, even modern politics" (77). In his sociological and historiographical description of the formation of aristocratic societies, he writes,

> Every *enhancement*[7] of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society….a society that believes in the long ladder of the *order of rank and differences in value between man and man,* and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata-when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and

[7] Emphasis in this paragraph added.

> just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance….the craving for an ever new widening of distances *within the soul itself,* the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states-in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "man," the continual "self-overcoming of man," to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense (Nietzsche, 391).

It is significant that Nietzsche equates political inequality with the *enhancement*[8] of man and his spiritual sensibilities, of the enlargement of his inner being ("the soul," etc.). For the German philosopher, the greatest crime perpetrated by modern man against life and nature, is the creation of the idea of equal rights. Ever since the French Revolution, the ideas of political and socioeconomic equality have been drummed into men's heads. The continuous "leveling" of Europe by the modern democratic movement, which Nietzsche constantly derides, is destroying the noble qualities of European man. As we have seen, part of what constitutes nobility, for Nietzsche, is the recognition of, and the understanding of, the importance of difference. The concepts of difference and diversity are not mere philosophical and ontological metaphors for Nietzsche. They are above all sociopolitical categories. The utter lack of respect for status, hierarchy, and social rank, is the mark of a base, vulgar, and ignoble mind. What is the ultimate cause of this baseness?

For Nietzsche, the cause lies in the universal nature of the ideals of the French Revolution (Losurdo, 25, 50). In this respect, Nietzsche is following in the footsteps of others. Joseph de Maistre, in his *Considerations on France,* mocks the inherently abstract and universal nature of the idea of the "rights of man."[9] He contemptuously notes that, "The 1795 constitution [of the revolutionary French republic] like its predecessors, was made for *man*[10]. But there is no such thing as *man* in the world. During my life, I have seen Frenchman, Italians, Russians, and so on; thanks to Montesquieu, I even know that one can be *Persian;*[11] but I must say, as for *man,* I have

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[8] Emphasis added.

[9] Nietzsche's nominalism, his philosophical relations with de Maistre and Burke, and his critique of the French Revolution, are touched upon here only insofar as they have a relationship with the theory of the eternal recurrence and with the political implications of the theory. For a more detailed exposition of the relations between Nietzsche, Burke, and de Maistre, see the next sections. Also see Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (2011), 48-49, 223-224, 232-233, 103.

[10] Emphasis in this paragraph added.

[11] De Maistre is referring to Montesquieu's racy eighteenth-century novel *The Persian Letters.*

never come across him anywhere; if he exists, he is completely unknown to me." (de Maistre, 80)

For de Maistre, the abstract and sweeping universalism of the ideas of 1789 are untenable, for the simple reason that they disregard the concrete differences that exist between different groups of people within society.[12] The French reactionary's pronounced cultural relativism and multiculturalism is the outcome of a profound antipathy toward the abstract and utopian ideas of the French revolutionaries (Losurdo, 79-103). Their desire to grant man—man in general as well as man in the abstract, completely divorced from any concrete class, culture, or status—his rights constitutes an attack upon hierarchy. De Maistre is opposed to recognizing the possible existence of universal values and ethics. We use the rhetoric of the rights of man to this day. What is the doctrine of human rights, if not the ideological descendent of the 1789 battle cry, "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality?" In an unpublished fragment from the early 1870's, Nietzsche articulates his rejection of the abstract notion of the rights of man; he writes, "Humanity is a concept that is absolutely non-Greek." (Nietzsche, VII, 127, Losurdo, 92) That is to say, the idea of the rights of man delegitimizes the necessity of servitude, oppression, and even slavery, which are necessary as bases for high culture and civilization. The Greeks knew this: The notions of freedom and equal rights for all, which have permeated the consciousness of modern men, oppose the dominance of higher men, rich in creative and artistic powers (Nietzsche, CV, 3; I, 765-66; Losurdo, 92).

By stressing the necessity of having hierarchy between groups, Nietzsche places himself within the counter-revolutionary, reactionary tradition (Losurdo, 230). Only the plebeian, the man of *ressentiment*,[13] refuses to accept the necessity of hierarchy (Deleuze, 111-145). Those who are different from the man of *ressentiment* are blamed for all his sufferings (Nietzsche, 475).[14]

The man of *ressentiment* does not recognize difference—he does not see difference. He *refuses* (emphasis added.) to see diversity. Everything that is different from him, that is not of his kind, that is above him, he looks upon with bitter hatred and envy. He wants to destroy those that are different

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[12] Burke also noted, and decried, the disintegrating abstractness of the language of the rights of man (Burke, 110, 118; Losurdo, 72, 293, 79-84). See next section.

[13] See *The Genealogy of Morals,* 472-273, and Deleuze, 45, 111-146

[14] In his book on Rousseau and the Romantic movement, Irving Babbitt sums up his dislike of "Rousseauism" in a quintessentially Nietzschean statement: "One of my chief objections, indeed, to Rousseauism….is that it encourages the *making of scapegoats"* (11). (Emphasis added.) Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment* also makes scapegoats out of those who differ from him in rank, power, etc.

from him, and he sometimes succeeds in doing so (Nietzsche, 470-474). Deleuze[15] notes that the man of *ressentiment* is a man who is incapable of having respect for the noble and beautiful. The man of *ressentiment* "takes *his* misfortune seriously" and "shows a difficult digestion and a base way of thinking which is incapable of feeling respect" (Deleuze, 117). On the other hand, what distinguishes the "aristocratic man" is the profound sense of respect he has for his misfortunes. He takes pride, and even pleasure, in his misfortune. This is because the misfortune he experiences is an outcome of the particular enemy that he has, and that he faces.

Manifestly, it also follows that the aristocratic man does not bow before accomplished fact. Nietzsche's distaste for Hegelian historicism also stems from historicism's tendency to accept historical flux and change as progress in itself. The conception of human history as a linear process of inevitable becoming, of inevitable flux, is inextricably linked to the notion of inevitable stasis, of Being: In the historicist schema of things, particularly in Hegelian instantiation, the ultimate stage of human history, whether it be a socialist utopia or a bourgeois liberal society, is the acme of all human progress and capability, simply because it is the last stage of human history. Progress is embodied in the historical event, in the accomplished historical act. Nietzsche sees the dialectic as a plebeian mode of viewing history; the worship of concrete historical reality, the acceptance of the accomplished historical fact, of concrete socio-political as it is currently constituted, indicates an anti-aristocratic, ignoble conception of history and of historical change. Acceptance of history, of present sociopolitical conditions as they currently exist, is in actuality mere groveling before what is. In their early works, particularly in *The German Ideology* (1845*)* and in *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) Marx and Engels critique the idealist and reactionary interpretation of Hegelian philosophy then current in the European (specifically German) bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. These classes viewed the feudal-monarchical and (burgeoning) capitalist market as

[15] Deleuze sees the significance that the man of *ressentiment,* the "Judaic priest", the Christian, the socialist, and the democrat, have in Nietzsche's thought. However, he fails to see the historical and sociological importance these types have for Nietzsche. Whereas Deleuze sees them as categories that can be applied to anyone, Nietzsche sees them as ideal types that are describing real, politico-historical personalities and groups. Walter Kaufmann, however, in his *Nietzsche,* correctly states that "what Nietzsche is concerned with [in the application of these categories] is the contrast of those who have power and those lack it….and he investigates it by contrasting not individuals but groups of people." The "distinction(s)" are "sociological" in nature (Kaufmann, 297). Of course, that does not necessarily mean that they always have to be used to describe political and sociological groups.

embodiments of historical progress, as embodiments of Hegel's conception of absolute reason and of the *Geist* (the world spirit) on earth. For the founders of historical materialism, however, the acceptance, by both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, of the concrete contemporaneous sociopolitical reality was a mere ideological outgrowth of their class interests. It provided an ideological justification for social and economic dominance over the ever-growing industrial proletariat, just as the ancient slave-owning and feudal landholding classes saw, naively, their exploitation of the surplus labor of the subaltern classes as the normal development and embodiment of humanity's social, political, economic, cultural, and artistic, capabilities.

Nietzsche also sees a self-serving, almost mercenary element in historicism and Hegelianism. To him, the profound plebeian and anti-aristocratic nature of historicism results from its proponents' conflation of progress with the accomplished fact and historical reality. For example, historicism interprets the French Revolution as one of the greatest events in modern political history—indeed, as ushering in a new age for of European and even all non-European humanity; this is one of the dominant tropes found in the works of nearly all mid-to-late nineteenth century European historians and historiographers, including those who opposed the ideals of the Revolution. For example, in his autobiographical work *Ecce Homo* (1888), which he wrote a year before his mental collapse, Nietzsche criticizes the anti-democratic French historian Hippolyte Taine for succumbing to the historicist notions of Hegel (Nietzsche, 91). And in the *Genealogy of Morals* (1886), he has a fictional and figurative representative of the modern democratic movement say the following:

> But why are you still talking about *more noble* ideals! Let us acquiesce to the facts: The common people have won—or "the slaves," or 'the rabble," or "the herd," or whatever you prefer to call it—if this happened through the Jews, so be it! Then never has a people had a more world-historic mission. "The masters" have been dismissed; the morality of the common man has been victorious. One might at the same time take this victory as a blood-poisoning (it has mixed the races together[16]). I do not contradict; but without a doubt this intoxication has *succeeded.* The "redemption" of the human race (namely from "the masters") is well on its way; everything is noticeably becoming jewified or christianized or rabbleized (what do words matter!). The progress of this poisoning throughout the entire body of humankind seems unstoppable, its tempo and pace from now on can be ever

[16] Nietzsche's conception of race will be further discussed in the third section.

> slower, more subtle, less audible, more thoughtful—one has time after all… (Nietzsche: 227-228). (Emphasis added.)

The slavish acceptance of the victory of "the common people," and of the democratic and egalitarian values and mores of modernity, constitutes, for the German philosopher, the very essence of historicism. Such a slavish acceptance of social and political reality, as it now exists and is constituted, implies an acceptance of the development of the modern democratic movement and its equation with progress as such.

That is, for Nietzsche, the acceptance of the accomplished historical act, which, by means of its actuality and its being brought into being through the passage of time, and its thus *becoming* history as such, is problematic because within this notion is implied the *acceptance of modernity.* To accept modernity is to imply that the existence of the modern European democratic and socialist movement, and indeed, all European and non-European emancipatory movements and ideologies, is progressive, and actually constitutes the height of human progress. The leveling and gradual weakening, effeminization, and rendering mediocre of the modern human is, in fact, an instance of *regression* (Nietzsche: 220). To accept existing reality as it is currently constituted, to bow before European modernity as if it represented the acme of all human potential and capability, is not only absurd; it represents the plebeian, anti-bellicose, and anti-aristocratic ethos of the utilitarian bourgeois, of the socialist and anarchist "herd animal" (Nietzsche: 119). To change, to utterly and ruthlessly destroy modern social and political relations in order to construct, not a socialist society, but rather an aristocratic society, a society where slavery for the masses is a necessary prerequisite for the artistic and cultural flowering of a new ruling class, a class that has and recognizes its right to dominate and command, a society that combines elements of classical antiquity and of the Renaissance, yet also includes and goes beyond the technological and educational developments and accomplishments of modernity—this is what the German philosopher sees as representing the "self-overcoming of man," as the "bridge to the Overman," and thus a surpassing of modernity (Nietzsche: 330). Yet such an overcoming of modernity is not synonymous with the supersession (*Aufhebung*) of the Hegelian and historicist dialectic. Rather, the surpassing of modernity is a simultaneous destruction of modernity and all its constitutive elements, as well as the escape from any linear notions of historical progress and time, of change, of becoming, and of being. The overcoming of modernity is predicated upon the creation of a mode of sociopolitical, cultural, and aesthetic existence that is based on the simultaneous destruction of (democratic) modernity, with its dissolving egalitarian and democratic notions and value judgments, the retention of

elements inherited from antiquity and the Renaissance, and the simultaneous creation of a completely new social and political order, an order that still retains the educational and technological methods and habits of modernity and that will be used to "breed" a new "domestic slave" and "herd animal," a new *instrumentum vocale* for the new master caste. Thus, the break with modernity, which represents the regression of humanity, can only be accomplished by breaking with all linear notions of history, of becoming and of being, and thus, with Hegelianism and historicism. It is in this sense, in breaking with Hegelianism and historicism and in destroying the political and ideological constitutive elements of modernity, that Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* writes of the philosophical and ideological (Hegelian) "morass of the fifties" of the nineteenth century and writes, "We cannot help but be revolutionaries!" (Nietzsche, 238) That is, those who, like the German philosopher, oppose notions of inevitable historical progress, who refuse to accept European modernity as embodying humanity's capability for progress, and who oppose the leveling and mediocritizing influence of the modern democratic movement, cannot help but want to overthrow and destroy, ruthlessly, all the elements of the modern European social and political order, as well as all the elements of the old regime that can no longer be resurrected (but which many European conservatives are still fighting to bring back)[17]. This conception of history

[17]Throughout this thesis, I have invariably used the terms "conservative" and "reaction" almost interchangeably. In an email communication to me, Domenico Losurdo, whose intellectual biography of Nietzsche I have found to be invaluable, pointed out that there is a subtle distinction between someone who is "conservative" and someone who is a "reactionary." According to him, conservatives are usually defined by a wish to restore or reinstate the old institutions, values, norms, and practices that have been overthrown by a revolutionary movement. Reactionaries are usually defined by a desire to overthrow a particular revolutionary or radical regime and replace it by a regime that is hierarchical in nature, but do not necessarily favor the restoration of old, long-overthrown institutions (the Church, the aristocracy, etc.) because they see their restoration as quixotic and impractical. According to Losurdo, "We can only speak of Nietzsche as a conservative during his early period," that is, during his association with Wagner. During his later intellectual development, Nietzsche can only be categorized as a "reactionary" since he opposes modernity but opposes the European conservatives' attempts to restore the old, pre-1789 regime. Though there is a great deal of intellectual and methodological value in Prof. Losurdo's distinction, I have decided to refer to the great German thinker throughout this thesis as being simultaneously a conservative and a reactionary, since, as mentioned above, within his opposition to modernity and his project to replace it with a more aristocratic, anti-egalitarian order is the implication that elements of antiquity, of the Renaissance, and even of modern

and of historical change is thus opposed to the conception of history found in Marx and Engels, who, while also calling for a "radical overthrow" of modern social and political relations, also subscribe to the notion of the necessity and possibility of a linear and progressive development and transcendence of human history, which, for the founders of scientific socialism, through its various and manifold stages, has always had one thing in common: class division and exploitation (Marx and Engels, 50).[18]

Moreover, the aristocratic man, unlike the base man, the man of *ressentiment,* takes pride in his enemies. The particularity of his adversaries—their intelligence, their rank and status, their courage—all these individual characteristics of the author of his troubles give the aristocratic man a sense of pride (Deleuze, 117). The man of *ressentiment* has no feeling of appreciation for the greatness of his adversary and author

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democratic society will be restored and retained *within* that order. I therefore use the terms "conservative" and "reactionary" interchangeably, as signifying any thorough and radical theoretical critique and opposition to, modernity, and the attempt to radically and thoroughly change it.

[18] It should, however, be noted that there is one significant aspect in which Nietzsche and the founders of modern scientific socialism agree. In *The German Ideology,* Marx and Engels, while critical of their narrow, positivist, and economistic preconceptions, praise the English historians and political economists of the early twentieth century for nevertheless providing a materialist and nonidealist presentation of human and "civil" history and civil society (Marx and Engels: 225). It must be admitted, however, that in this early stage of their intellectual development, at least, Marx and Engels' first systematic presentation of the materialist conception of history contains some elements of this vulgar economism and positivism, which Nietzsche would later categorize as characteristically English. They contrast this favorably with the methodologies of German historians of the time, who not only subscribe to the idealist and Hegelian view of history, which sees history as the gradual unfolding of the world spirit in concrete form on earth, but even subscribe to Romantic notions of history as a long epic of war and adventure, of highway robbery and of plunder, and attempts to reduce "history into world history" by means of "a mere abstract act on the part of 'self-consciousness,' the world spirit, or of any other metaphysical spectre." (Marx and Engels: 59) Marx and Engels then famously give the example of the Wars of Liberation, which, contrary to the idealist and Romantic speculations of the German historians, did not occur as a consequence of nationalist idealism or the unfolding of the world spirit, but rather to the more prosaic yet all the more real economic exigencies of the Napoleonic blockade and continental system, and which caused a shortage of sugar and coffee. (Marx and Engels: 58-59) Similarly, in *The Genealogy,* Nietzsche, though also extremely critical of the vulgar positivism and "unhistorical method(s)" of the "English genealogists of morals," also credits them with at least being the first to present us with a secular, nontheological "history of morality." (Nietzsche: 217-218)

of his misfortunes—if he should ever be so fortunate as to have such a noble enemy and adversary. He does not appreciate the beauty of particularity. He has no reverence.

How can one love, respect, and even fear, what one has robbed of its distinction? It is this that connects Nietzsche's cosmology of the eternal recurrence with his loathing and horror of radical social change. If willing the eternal recurrence is equated with the affirmation of life, and all of its manifold diversity, then it follows, logically, that one must affirm even what is often deemed as "objections" to life (Nietzsche, 464 n., 91; Deleuze, 15-16; Losurdo, 34-39). Does not life include within its compass pain, oppression, injustice, submission, and cruelty? Does it not include within its compass slavery, dominion, hierarchy, rank, and status? This is the significance that distinction and difference have within Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence of the same.

Peter Berkowitz, in his *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (1995), states that, for Nietzsche, "Socrates' theoretical interpretation of reality," was the forbear of the Christian "religious interpretation of the world" (Berkowitz, 243). With its overemphasis on reason and virtue, Socratic philosophy stifles the emotional, instinctual vitalism of the great man, thereby dampening his creative genius (Berkowitz, 243). Socratic philosophy does more than this. Through its emphasis on the corrective powers of the intellect, Socratic philosophy instilled in man the belief in the possibility, the necessity, and the desirability of correcting what are seen as the cruel necessities of life. The harsh realities of existence demand the subordination and enslavement of some and the domination of others. The "Socratic man," with his self-satisfied faith in reason, while possibly recognizing the existence of this necessity of domination and subordination in nature, does not see this necessity as an immutable fact. With a little tinkering, and armed with the powers of reason, the Socratic man corrects the amoral "errors" of existence. The Socratic man wants to eliminate the "cruelties" and "injustices" of life, of nature.

What the Socratic man, the theoretical forbear of the man of *ressentiment,* does not realize is that, "Nature is not immoral when it has no pity for the degenerate: on the contrary, the growth of physiological and moral ills among mankind is the consequence of … an unnatural morality," i.e., of Judeo-Christian morality (Nietzsche, 32, 52 n.). The "unnatural morality" decried by Nietzsche, is really the attempt to eradicate the cruelties and seeming injustices of life, by means of a preconceived schema drawn by the intellect. The horrible necessities of life, which are taken to be objections to existence, are to be eradicated. Together with his modern descendants, the socialists and the democrats, the Socratic man cries out,

"No more slavery! No more domination! No more subordination to any kind of rule whatsoever!" In the socialists of the nineteenth century, with their preconceived, abstruse notions on how to rebuild society anew, Nietzsche saw the visage of Socrates, the believer in reason. What of the noble man, the "aristocratic man?"

The noble human being is he who joyfully accepts the unfairness and injustice of life, and who does not want to correct this injustice with abstract notions of universal equality. Nietzsche's willingness to accept life in its totality, including the aspects that are deemed as "objections" to it, is in complete opposition to the views taken by the revolutionary thinkers and writers of his time. The German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, admired and loved by both Nietzsche and Marx, wrote, "because I believe in progress… I cultivate a conception of the divine higher than that held by those pious people who believe in the eternal unhappiness of man" (Heine: 519; Losurdo: 51).[19] And Marx, in an 1844 letter addressed to Ludwig Feuerbach, praises the famed philosopher-humanist for having "provided… a philosophical basis for socialism." (Wheen, 55) The German revolutionary and materialist then goes on to say, in surprisingly religious accents, "…The unity of man with man, *which is based on the real differences between men,* the concept of the human species brought down from the heaven of abstraction *to the real earth,* what is this but the concept of society! (Emphases added.)

Heine and Marx believed in the desirability and the possibility of creating a better life for man on earth, by means of the revolutionary reconstruction of society. The elimination of the "objections" to life—such as suffering, oppression, and domination—could be achieved. What Nietzsche saw as the mark of nobility, in the acceptance of ever-recurring life in its totality, Marx and Heine saw as the mark of the oppressed slave, still unable to see the possibilities of emancipation (Losurdo, 34-39). In his letter to Feuerbach, cited above, Marx establishes a link between the concrete differences that exist between individuals, and the abstract concept of humanity. Only by means of a social revolution, a revolution carried out in the here and now, can the abstract notions of the rights of man be realized while still preserving the concreteness of difference and diversity (Losurdo, 34-39). Marx, unlike Nietzsche, Burke, and de Maistre, did not see the impossibility of preserving difference within egalitarianism. For Nietzsche, however, thanks to his philosophical nominalism, the recognition of difference distinguishes the noble man precisely because he recognizes the impossibility of reconciling difference with equality. It is the plebeian who

[19] I have translated this from the original Italian.

either refuses to recognize difference and diversity, or who naively believes one can reconcile difference with the notion of equality. The eschatological connotations found in Marx and Heine of building a just society on earth also help confirm Nietzsche's suspicion of the revolutionary implications of Christianity.

The diversity within the various cycles of constantly returning recurrence will always contain, according to Nietzsche, the "objectionable" aspects of life. The truly noble human being, the aristocrat, the Overman, knows this- and therefore wills it, over and over again. Only a man with an aristocratic nature can feel that pathos, that spiritual "enhancement," that "widening" of the "soul", while contemplating that amoral demand for domination and submission, which life constantly requires and displays (Nietzsche, 391). Not so the vulgar man, the man of *ressentiment.* The man of *ressentiment* refuses to accept the necessity of rank, of hierarchy. This is the main reason for Nietzsche's rejection of egalitarian democracy and socialism. As Keith Ansell-Pearson notes in his *Nietzsche contra Rousseau,* Nietzsche viewed the issue of the revolutionary transformation of society "in terms of a problem of an ascetic education" (Ansell-Pearson, 35). This "problem of an aesthetic education" described by Ansell-Pearson is actually the pathos of distance and domination described by the German philosopher in *Beyond Good and Evil.* The great human being looks out over the horizon, and sees the numerous patterns of dominion, of hierarchy, even of enslavement. Instead of being moved with compassion, with a sense of the injustice and cruelty of life, the great human being is awed; he sees this cruel necessity as an affirmation of life, an affirmation that is political and aesthetic, particularly aesthetic. The man of *ressentiment* is blind to all aesthetic sensibilities and considerations. For him, the order of rank is a glaring injustice, a living condemnation of the whole social order, and indeed, of life itself. He does not understand the necessity of the order of rank. Nietzsche believed that culture "can only be conceived along the lines of a pyramid in which society is divided into a noble elite and a mediocre majority….Nietzsche concludes this discussion of the ancient natural law-giving moralities (in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Antichrist*) by criticizing the 'socialist rabble' for undermining the worker's instinct and feeling of contentment with himself. Socialism is based on the fundamental delusion that justice is to be reached by equality and the establishment of equal rights….such a demand for equality by the socialists is merely the expression of the envy and vengefulness they share with Christians and anarchists." (Ansell-Pearson, 209)

The imminent reactionary implications of Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence place his thought within the conservative political

tradition. The next section offers a comparison and contrast of Nietzsche's political thought with that of Burke and de Tocqueville. It will be shown that Nietzsche's distrust of all notions of historical progress, as well as his antipathy towards theories of radical social change, have a very distinguished historical pedigree.

Chapter Two

Nietzsche, Burke, de Tocqueville, and the Legacy of 1789

> In an even more decisive and profound sense than before, Judea once gain achieved victory over the classical ideal with the French Revolution: the last political nobleness that existed in Europe, that of the seventeenth and eighteenth *French* centuries, collapsed under the popular instincts of *ressentiment*—never on earth had a greater jubilation, a noisier enthusiasm been heard!
> —Friedrich Nietzsche, 1885

> By adhering in this manner and on those principles to our forefathers, we are guided not by the superstition of antiquarians, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.
> —Edmund Burke, 1790

> It would therefore be quite wrong to believe that the *Ancien Régime* was a time of servility and dependence. Liberty was far more prevalent then than it is today, but it was a kind of irregular and intermittent liberty, always limited by class distinctions, always bound up with the idea of exception and privilege, which allowed people to defy the law almost as much as the exercise of arbitrary power and seldom went so far as to guarantee to all citizens the most natural and necessary rights. Though limited and twisted in this way, liberty remained fruitful.
> —Alexis de Tocqueville, 1856

Edmund Burke is the father of political conservatism. His writings on the French Revolution are the fountainhead from which conservatives and reactionaries over the past three centuries have drawn inspiration. Those who have combated the very idea of radical societal transformation have ultimately turned to Burke and his opposition to the French Revolution as a

model on which to base their efforts. In this section, we will attempt to place Nietzsche's critique of modernity within the antirevolutionary intellectual tradition. It will be shown how influential Burke's opposition to the 1789 revolution was on Nietzsche's own intellectual struggle against the modern democratic movement in Europe.

Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was written in 1790, a year after the revolution broke out in Paris. Some scholars and historians see the *Reflections* as an impassioned warning against the possibilities of revolutionary terror. According to this view, Burke's work was a preemptive attack against the 1794 Reign of Terror, which he somehow foresaw. However, this argument simply does not stand the test of historical criticism, for the simple fact that there are very few references to revolutionary terror in the *Reflections*. The very fact that Burke wrote his book four years before the Terror is itself highly significant. For Burke, the self-emancipation of the French masses was the real original sin of the revolution, not the possible occurrence of violent excesses. The very notion of the emancipation of the subordinate classes was anathema to Burke. It is this that makes Burke, in many respects, the intellectual forbear of Nietzsche.

There is no evidence that Nietzsche was familiar with Burke's writings. However, the general tenor of Nietzsche's writings on the French Revolution is strikingly similar to Burke's. In any case, any evidence of direct influence is not needed. By being the originator of antirevolutionary critique and opposition, Burke created an atmosphere within the intellectual elites of Europe through which opposition to the rise of egalitarian ideologies could percolate. When Nietzsche sat down at his desk and wrote against the "slave revolt" in morals, he was partaking of that intellectual stock of criticism first formulated by Burke. Nietzsche, Constant, Taine, de Tocqueville: They were all, in many respects, the politico-philosophical heirs of the English Whig. Let us look at the matter more closely.

In a striking passage in the *Reflections,* Burke describes how the "mechanical" philosophy of the French *philosophes* destroyed the grandeur and beauty of the Old Regime.

> … the age of chivalry is gone—that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, nevermore, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The un-bought grace of life, the cheap defense of the nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled

> whatever it touched, and under which life itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness. (Burke, 170)

The greatest crime the French revolutionaries committed, in Burke's eyes, was their destruction of the glittering façade of the French monarchy. The enraged mobs, the gibbet, the scaffold, the revolutionary committees—all these things were irrelevant for Burke. The greatness of the *Ancien Régime* lay in its ability to "soften" the necessity of obedience and subjection in the manor and in the royal palace, with the features of friendship and camaraderie (Burke, 171). There was already equality within domination, within the Estate. That "spirit of an exalted freedom," which abided "even within servitude itself," was a sense of camaraderie within the relationship of lord and serf, of king and subject. The equality that existed between the monarch and, say, his favorite cup bearer was greater than the abstract equality of man and citizen touted by the revolutionaries. There was almost a kind of patronizing benevolence that the lord and the monarch had for his social inferiors. It was repaid, on the part of the subaltern, with a loving pride, which they had precisely because of their submission to power.

Then along came the revolutionaries, armed with the abstract theories of Voltaire and Rousseau. With these "mechanical" theories, the revolutionaries tore away the glittering pomp and circumstance of the monarchy. The revolutionaries saw the old society as a decaying cadaver, upon which they could conduct any and every social experiment. By cutting up and dissecting the body politic, the revolutionary "calculators" destroyed the romantic coverings hiding the ugliness and decay of the Old Regime. Through the application of their theories, they have created disenchantment with the world, as it once was (Burke, 170-171). The Jacobins wanted to strip the Old Regime down to its bare nuts and bolts; they wanted to rip away the "decent drapery of life" in order to uncover "the defects of our naked, shivering nature…." According to Burke, "now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle and obedience liberal….all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off" (Burke, 171). Burke was essentially a political Romantic at heart.

The eminent Burke scholar and biographer Conor Cruise O'Brien notes how instrumental the revolution was in delineating Burke's suspicion of abstract intellectualism. According to him, what characterized the French Revolution's English sympathizers, against whom Burke polemicized, was their "rational rejection of superstition" (O'Brien, 55). Rejection of faith and "superstition" in the name of reason and progress was a common feature of the European Enlightenment tradition. Faith in reason was often, though not always, yoked to faith in inevitable historical progress. Burke was one of the first leading intellectuals of his time to question this faith. Burke's

critique of faith in reason and progress was tied, however, to his critique of the disintegrating influence reason has on society. Reason, in its very nature, is abstract. It has no immediate relation with the concreteness and particularity of reality. Most importantly, reason does not *recognize* particularity. It tries to overcome and equalize these particularities, these differences.

In the first section, we discussed the importance the acceptance and affirmation of difference plays in Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence. This affirmation cannot be carried out by the base man, the plebeian, the man of *ressentiment.* We also explored how reason and the intellect are the primary weapons used by the man of *ressentiment* in his attempt to correct the injustices and "objections" to life. Burke was the first to recognize the egalitarian implications of the systematic use of reason by the European intellectual to reconstitute society. Nietzsche also recognized these implications—and strove to combat them.

In *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music,* for example, he provides a similar critique of theoretical abstractness. In his discussion of the decline of Greek tragedy, he first presents us with the instinctual love the Greeks had for beauty and grandeur.[20] He writes, "(The) Greeks were superficial—out of profundity" (Nietzsche, 681-683). In noting the acidic corrosiveness that Socratic philosophy had on Dionysian tragedy, Nietzsche writes, "Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist will always cling with rapt gaze to what still remains covering even after such uncovering…." (Nietzsche, 94) The "profundity" of the ancient Greeks lay in their recognition of the dangers of disenchantment with the world. They saw the importance, the necessity, of myth. Without myth, without a mythical tragedy, the Greeks would have suffered from the same ailment affecting modern European man. That is, they would have suffered from the drab, dull, and monotonous boredom that is the natural concomitant of bourgeois society. We see then, that Nietzsche was just as much influenced by political Romanticism as Burke was.[21]

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[20] Domenico Losurdo is one of the few scholars, I believe, who has noted the central importance of this work for the development of Nietzsche's politico-philosophical thought. For Losurdo, *The Birth* is not just a work on aesthetics and philosophy; nor is it merely the result of Nietzsche's association with Wagner. Rather, it is an attack on the (dangerously) revolutionary implications that Socratism, modern science, and abstract revolutionary theories have, for the status quo. The main dichotomy of *The Birth* is not, according to Losurdo, the Apollonian versus the Dionysian, but rather, the Socratic versus the Dionysian (Losurdo, 5-103).

[21] On the relation Nietzsche's thought has with Romanticism, see Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (1941), and Fritz Stern, *The Politics of*