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"Time There Was and Plenty": *Ethos* and Ontology in Plato, Nietzsche, and the Grateful Dead

STANLEY J. SPECTOR

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger revisited the philosophical discussion about Being first introduced by Plato in his dialogue *Sophist* (1963b). Heidegger's question, though, is not so much about the meaning of Being as it is about what it means to even ask that question. Both questions are about ontology. Heidegger's strategy for answering was to interrogate the questioner, that is the specific being, who in its being asked that particular question about Being—namely, the human being. Heidegger hoped that by interrogating this particular being he might better understand the more fundamental question about the meaning of Being in general. It is the human being who asks the question, and in an attempt to avoid the various connotations that have been attached to concepts such as human being, man, person, and so forth, Heidegger coined the term *Dasein* to name this being.

As a phenomenologist, Heidegger's strategy for uncovering more of the answer to the general question about Being was to analyze the being of *Dasein* (the *Daseinanalytic*) to show itself as it is, but Heidegger aban-

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doned the project, realizing that this particular strategy was inadequate for the task. Although he did not answer the question of the meaning of being in general (the ontological question) in *Being and Time* (1962), he did illuminate the kind of being human beings express as we live our lives (the existential question). During the course of his interrogation of *Dasein*, he uncovered fundamental structures of human existence and discovered that temporality was a fundamental way of being in the world. Heidegger observed that we always find ourselves in a situation that is sometimes of our own making though not always—a structure of human experience he called thrownness—and from the definite possibilities afforded by that situation, we transcend its limitations by following up on one of those alternatives, a structure he called projection. Heidegger argued that human projects presuppose a horizon of temporality, a past that we have been thrown into and a future that we live toward.

Heidegger's project and analysis highlight at least two specific questions that are germane to a discussion of the Grateful Dead. One is an ontological question: Is there a general theory of Being presupposed in the way that the Grateful Dead played music (and the way we experience it)? The other question is existential: What does the way the Grateful Dead played (and the way we experience it) say about the way that we are in the world? A third question immediately presents itself. If there is a relationship in general between how we are in the world and a more fundamental theory of Being, then what will answering the existential question about the Grateful Dead say about an answer to the ontological question? Like Heidegger, who began with the existential question, I, too, begin with the question about how we are in the world, and after considering Plato's view of the relationship between music, being in the world, and Being, I turn to a consideration of that relationship in terms of the Grateful Dead and Nietzsche.

The existential question of how we are in the world, relative to particular styles, modes, scales and rhythms of music, turns on the Greek concept of *ethos*, a concept initially used to indicate the power of music to "express, or even generate, qualities of good and evil" in an individual (Anderson 1966, 2). Closely aligned with this concept is the notion of *paideia*, which "designates the overall cultural and ethical experience"

(Anderson 1966, 2). Together, these concepts indicate two of the salient features of Greek thought, namely, that music has the power to affect character and that the desired character of an individual is always a reflection of the community within which he finds himself (the *polis)*. The earliest theorist on the relationship between music, character, and the city is Damon, a sixth-century Athenian; unfortunately, all that remains of his work are fragments and references by other thinkers. Plato, however, does offer a systematic treatment of this relationship in *Republic,* Books II and III, where Socrates discusses the primary education of the guardians of the city. Plato accepted that the established norms of early education were divided into three areas: Grammatic (reading and writing), Gymnastic (physical exercise), and Music (a broad subject encompassing reciting poetry, playing music, singing lyric poetry, and the basics of arithmetic and geometry). He argued that the function of education was to develop and train the future guardians of the city, synthesizing the dual functions of the *ethos* of the individual and the *paideia* of the *polis*.

Since the guardians, Plato declared, "are to be expert craftsmen of civic liberty," it would be inappropriate for them to imitate any behavior not promoting such excellence. They therefore should imitate those "who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind" (Plato 1963a, 395c). Plato considered literature the primary art in Music, and so he began by arguing that the content of epic and lyrical poetry must be tales of men with the finest moral character; otherwise, that literature should be eliminated from the curriculum. After having established the general principle that the function of early education is to develop virtuous moral character and having shown the sorts of literature that should be learned, he turned to song, whose three elements of words, harmonic mode, and rhythm, he argued, must follow the same guidelines. His treatment of lyrics is similar to his treatment of epic and lyric poetry; that is, only those lyrics that promote a virtuous example for the guardians will be allowed. Mode and rhythm also must be suitable for the words, so that they, too, will promote good moral character. Therefore, some musical modes are acceptable while others are not. Since the lyrics are not to be dirges or lamentations, for example, there is no place for musical modes that pro-

mote emotional states that accompany those forms.[3] Modes conducive to drunkenness, softness, and sloth are "soft and convivial" (398e), lead to lax behavior, and must not be part of the curriculum for the guardians. Plato concluded that the only acceptable musical modes for the education of the guardians are those "that lead to acting modestly and moderately" (1963a, 399c).

But it is not just modes that need to be suitable to the words that promote good character and the living of an ordered and courageous life; rhythms also have to be suited to such a life. Therefore, Plato continued, those instruments that can accommodate all harmonies will also be unnecessary. "Triangles and harps and all other many stringed instruments," as well as the flute, which is the "most many stringed of all," are to be eliminated (1963a, 399d). All that is left, then, are the lyre and the cithara, both of which are only two-stringed instruments—ones that, coincidentally, Plato observed, are the instruments of Apollo and not Marsyas, the satyr (1963a, 399e)—perhaps a precursor to Dionysus, whom Apollo defeated in a musical contest. Just as polyharmonic instruments are to be banned because of their overabundance of harmonies, complex rhythms will also have no place in the city, and, by implication, no place in the education of the guardians either. "We must not pursue complexity nor great variety in the basic movements," Plato concluded, "but must observe what are the rhythms of a life that is orderly and brave" (1963a, 400a), precisely because "rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take the strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained" (1963a, 401e).

Plato's discussion of the music component of early education follows from his already having established that the function of education is to train the guardians to be morally virtuous. He has also established that music is subordinate to literature and that the components of music proper—lyrics, modes, and rhythms—correspond to different emotional states (what Plato would call states of the soul), just as literature does. For Plato, there is only one desirable state of the soul, and that is a steady, balanced, courageous, temperate, non-volatile, and non-excitable character. Given the overall sense of Plato's philosophical system, the guardians will need "to be watchful against innovations in music and gymnastics coun-

ter to the established order, and to the best of their power guard against them," he argues:

> For a change to a new type of music is something to beware of as a hazard of all our fortunes. For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions … (1963a, 424c)

Plato's attitude toward music is fairly straightforward. Music's power is that it can move the soul, initiating different kinds of moral character (*ethos*). Mode and rhythm are subordinate to and supportive of lyrics, and the function of that whole which is composed of lyrics, mode, and rhythm is designed in the context of the laws of the city to develop good character (*paideia*). Different modes lead to different kinds of character, each of which expresses a particular *ethos*—that is, a particular way of being in the world. A good character results from an intelligent plan, and a bad character deviates from that plan, so much so that different modes and the types of character that correlate with those modes would force us to write different legislation for how to live in the city.

Plato's analysis of the relationship between moral character and music begins to answer the existential question of how human beings are in the world. There is a long tradition, beginning with the Greeks and continuing through the work of contemporary cognitive and neuroscientists, that shows how we are affected by music, how music can shape our attitudes about ourselves and the world, and how music can bring about behavioral changes in our everyday lives. Plato, though, is interested in more than just the theoretical questions about music and *ethos*; he is prescribing a particular *ethos* as desirable, and the desirability of a particular *ethos* presupposes a particular ontological understanding of Being, as well as the relationship of the individual and the city to that standard. In answering the existential question, Plato is already presupposing the answer to the ontological question, for to be morally virtuous in Plato's *Republic* follows from his metaphysical and correlative epistemological positions. For Plato, to be steady, courageous, temperate, and well balanced is to act in accordance with the truth about reality and ultimately to understand why those moral states of character (*ethos*) both flow from and support that particular sense of the truth.

In Plato's *Republic*, there clearly is no place for the Grateful Dead. It is both the *ethos* that follows from the lyrics, modes, and rhythms of their music, and the ontological presuppositions that make such music possible, that are anathematic to Plato. Grateful Dead lyrics, for the most part, do not present the type of morally virtuous behaviors that Plato wants the guardians to imitate. Beginning with the narrator of "Caution (Do Not Stop on the Tracks)" who goes "to see a gypsy woman" who tells him he needs "just a touch of mojo hand" (Trist and Dodd 2005, 6) to the singer of "So Many Roads" who thinks that there are "so many roads to ease my soul" (Trist and Dodd 2005, 363), there are many examples of characters whose *ethos* indicates an ignorance about reality and its underlying ontological framework. The sentiment of "Caution" is that the mojo hand, and not knowledge of the truth, will be able to tell the narrator "what's wrong with me and my baby"; and, since Plato argued that there is only one way to ease a soul—via knowledge—then to think that there is more than one way to ease a soul is simply wrong.

Furthermore, many examples of individuals who exhibit morally questionable behaviors permeate the Grateful Dead songbook. "Cowboy Neal" who was "at the wheel of the bus to never-ever land"; Cosmic Charlie, the spaced-out character whose mother calls him home; Dupree, who robbed a jewelry store and paid the owner "off in lead"; Casey Jones, who crashed his train; Mr. Benson, the neighborhood dealer, and the narrator who would like to use a shotgun to blow him "straight to hell"; the "Loser," who has "no chance of losing this time"; and August West, who spent half of his life "drunk on burgundy wine": all are all examples of protagonists in the lyric poetry of the Grateful Dead whose behavior, from Plato's perspective, is morally degenerate and so would not serve as good examples for the guardians to imitate (Trist and Dodd 2005, 42; 66; 70; 86; 114; 145; 150; 167).

A third kind of lyric would also be problematic for Plato. In addition to songs whose subject matter suggests a different ontology from Plato's, songs whose meaning are ambiguous and are open to interpretation would be excluded. The openness of meanings in songs such as "Ripple," "Eyes of the World," "Terrapin Station," or "Crazy Fingers," for example, could promote an *ethos* for the guardians that could call into question the estab-

lished order and justification for Plato's conception of a particular kind of knowledge as the foundation of morally virtuous character.[4]

From Plato's perspective, the modes of Grateful Dead songs also do not lend themselves to the education of the guardians. Plato not only censored any modes associated with dirges and lamentations, but also states of sorrow, drunkenness, softness, slothfulness, and anything leading to lax behavior. Yet it would be unfair to the Grateful Dead to single them out for expulsion from the city, since the modes they played are for the most part the standard ones found in most genres of popular music. In that sense, most contemporary music would be banned. The Dead did, however, initiate a new kind of music with songs like "The Other One" and "Dark Star" that would still be problematic for Plato. Consider a typical song list from 1969, when the band might begin a set with "Dark Star," a song defying not only the categories Plato delineated but also one that clearly would not lead to the moral virtue he was advocating. For listeners, the song allows us to leave the everyday world of order and balance and enter into a musical space that might open the question about Plato's sense of the real. It is an odd musical experience, in the sense that when it is over, we are left to digest what happened, consciously or not.

Thus if tunes like "Dark Star" do lead to new and different behaviors—and I would argue that they do—they suggest for us a different ontology than Plato's. Our sense of Being might now be fluid and not simply the static counterpart of non-Being, a dualism that lies at the heart of Plato's ontology. In the context of "Dark Star," Being is characterized by change and motion and endless possibilities for the future, and not a view of the unchanging, fully determined givenness of the universe. After playing "Dark Star," the band might segue into "Saint Stephen," a song at times whimsical and at other times sorrowful, and then move into "The Eleven," a song of intense frenzy, followed by "Turn on Your Love Light," another song of intense frenzy, perhaps even one of the songs promoting drunkenness, after which the band would plunge into the depths of despair with "Death Don't Have No Mercy," a song of lamentation. The band, through this sequence, took its audience to emotional depths and heights; but, for Plato, each of these songs has an effect on the mood, emotional state, and character of the listener, and the corresponding *ethos*

is not conducive to that steady, balanced, temperate soul who needs to guard the city.

Lastly, it is obvious that the rhythms played by the Grateful Dead are inappropriate for Plato. They played multi-stringed instruments (guitars), relied heavily on a wide spectrum of harmonic possibilities, and played intricate and varied rhythms, often within the same song. Since for Plato, none of this leads to the orderly and brave life of the guardian, Grateful Dead music cannot be allowed in the city. Indeed, Grateful Dead music, it seems, represents exactly the sort of musical innovations that the guardians of the city need to guard against "as a hazard of all our fortunes" (Plato 1963a, 424c).

Plato's description of the primary education of the guardians is in terms of *ethos*, a state of character that emerges as different moods, feelings, and emotional states are generated by specific lyrics, modes, and rhythms of music. The *ethos* that he desired, including its relationship to *paideia*—that is, the way he thought people should be in the world—presupposes the ontology he delineated in Books V, VI, and VII of the *Republic*. By emphasizing the role of *ethos* in primary education, he began with the existential question of how we are in the world and then moved to its ontological underpinnings.

The situation is slightly different with the Grateful Dead. The members of the band, although philosophical, were not philosophers, so we would not expect to find a systematic treatment of either *ethos* or Being. We do think, however, that there is an *ethos* associated with the Grateful Dead, although it is not as clearly articulated as an *ethos* in the manner of the Greeks. Rather, various expressions of an *ethos* are hinted at and expressed in interviews by the band members, descriptions fans have given of their Grateful Dead experiences, and academic papers that have approached the Grateful Dead phenomenon from different disciplinary perspectives. There is not one clearly defined Grateful Dead *ethos*, but a cluster of allusions and images, which is also indicative of a different ontology than the one suggested by Plato.

That modes correlate with feelings and emotional states is not an issue of dispute. What modes are acceptable in a particular context could be an issue, if the emotional states do not lead to desirable behaviors.

The Grateful Dead played tunes in many different modes, each generating different feelings and emotions. A Grateful Dead *ethos* thus cannot be the result of particular modes, since modes are not the distinguishing mark of Grateful Dead music. Many bands play songs in similar modes. Rhythm is also not a distinguishing feature since many bands play similar rhythms as well. An account of a Grateful Dead *ethos* could rest, however, on the third component of music, the lyrics, and perhaps also on a fourth element, one not identified by the Greeks but one unique to the Grateful Dead—namely, an improvisational style of playing. Taken together, an analysis of Grateful Dead lyrics and the uncovering of the structures of their style of playing will help illuminate a Grateful Dead *ethos*.

In another essay, I analyzed a set of Grateful Dead song lyrics from "Dark Star" to "Terrapin Station," and demonstrated that the lyrical movement of these songs expresses both a non-Platonic *ethos* and a non-Platonic ontology (Spector 2010). I focus here on their style of playing. Fans and critics alike agreed with Bill Graham's assessment that the Grateful Dead were "not the best at what they do; they're the only ones that do what they do" (Jackson et al. 2003, 253), and the body of literature trying to explain just what it is that they did do is growing (Meriwether 2006). Musically, they introduced the practice of jazz improvisation into a rock ensemble whose roots included folk music, avant-garde classical music, bluegrass, jazz, and the blues, and whose song list included tunes not only from each of these genres, but also tunes such as "Dark Star" and "The Other One" that do not fit any traditional category.

Ingrid Monson (1996) and Bruce Benson (2003) have each emphasized the conversational aspect of improvisation, but from two different perspectives: Monson through music analysis and Benson through phenomenology. These two views can each account for both the improvisation of a soloist playing against the backdrop of a rhythm section and the improvising aspect of the rhythm section within the structures of a particular piece of music. Clearly, the Grateful Dead were proficient in these types of improvisation, but what was unique to them were those moments when everyone was improvising, or soloing, at the same time, a musical expression of collective improvisation. Now, according to both Monson and Benson, if one of the structures of improvisation is conversation, and

if, in the conversations within the traditional modes of improvisation, the musicians listen to each other and respond accordingly, then we cannot account for those times when the musicians are soloing simultaneously, as the traditional listen-response structure cannot explain what is happening musically when all of the members of the band play simultaneously, and no individual member is acting as the designated soloist. Instead, as I have argued elsewhere, while each band member does listen to his bandmates while playing, the actual conversation is with the song itself and not with each other (Spector 2010).

And on those special nights when the collective improvisation was at its best, they played flawlessly, as if they could not play a wrong note. Every time they played, they were open to the possibility that that night would be one of those nights when the music played the band: "Those moments," according to Phil Lesh, "when you're not even human anymore—you're not a musician, you're not even a person—you're just there" (Gans 2002, 110). Jerry Garcia echoed this sentiment when he described "those moments when you're playing and the whole room becomes one being" (George-Warren 1995, 64).

Both of these comments illustrate the problem Heidegger highlighted about our understanding of Being. We read their words and have a non-thematic sense of what they mean when Lesh and Garcia report that "you're just there" and "the whole room becomes one being." We have that sense because we probably have had similar experiences and said similar things to describe those experiences. But, if we are pressed to explain exactly what we mean, we offer other metaphors and soon discover how difficult it is to grasp clearly what these ideas express. And yet, they are an expression of an ontology that underlies a Grateful Dead *ethos*. A fully systematic account of that ontology requires a much more thorough treatment than what can be given here; nonetheless, at least one of the structures of that ontology does come to the forefront in the context of a discussion of collective improvisation and a Grateful Dead *ethos*, a different theory of Being underlying a different sense of temporality and its relation to consciousness.

The traditional view of consciousness—that is, the view of at least the last 125 years of the philosophical conversation in the area of phi-

losophy of mind—is that consciousness always intends an object; that is, thoughts and beliefs are always about something. For example, if you pay attention to it, you can be conscious that you are reading the words on this page right now. This kind of awareness forms the baseline understanding of consciousness. Rememberings and imaginings have a similar structure, and some argue that dreams do as well. The subject-object structure of consciousness is also an expression of the temporal horizon. To think of something is to impose a temporal gap between the thinker and the object of that thought.

In speaking of our experience of listening to the Grateful Dead, though, we have used expressions that seemed to collapse the intentional and temporal structures of subject-object consciousness. Rapture, ecstatic or mystical union, and Dionysian all seem to refer to an experience where the self—that is, the subject—disappears as a subject; and when there is no subject to believe or think or sense, then the objects of belief, thought, and sensation also disappear. Both the subject and the temporal horizon have disappeared. But to play the way the Grateful Dead played required that they not check out and disappear, but rather that they be absolutely and fully present. As Garcia once remarked to Charles Reich, "I'm not talking about unconsciousness or zonked out, I'm talking about being fully conscious" (Garcia, Reich, and Wenner 1972, 127). I am quite sure that Garcia did not mean by being fully conscious that one is *really* aware that one is reading the words on this page, especially if we think of being fully conscious in the context of his later remark about "those moments when you're playing and the whole room becomes one being—precious moments, man. But you can't look for them and they can't be repeated" (George-Warren 1995, 64). You cannot look for them, for if you try you will be firmly embedded in a subject-intended object structure of consciousness, and they will elude you. To experience those moments, you have to be present for them, which is how I understand being fully conscious. If you try to *think* them, you will not find them.

When the whole room becomes one being, being fully conscious means that the musicians are not individual, discrete objects separate from each other, the audience, or the equipment. They are not discrete subjects intending the object sounds of the other musicians. Instead, there is an

experience of the whole, but not in a blurred or "zonked out" way. There is a recognition of the parts not as parts *per se*, but as a relational whole that includes each musician, the audience, and the venue. In this way, it is still possible to listen to each other play. As Lesh said, "If you're playing along, all of a sudden you find yourself thinking about what you're doing, thinking the notes as you … play them. In my experience, when I do that, it means I'm not listening" (Gans 2002, 162). If he is thinking about the notes that he or the others are playing, then he is not listening in the sense of allowing the sounds to be received by him. He is an active subject, intending the objects of the notes and sounds. As such, the kind of listening that Lesh has described is an awareness of what the other musicians are playing in the context of his own playing, and in the sense of allowing the sounds to be heard as a complete relational whole, rather than actively trying to hear them particularly or individually. To listen this way means that each musician is in an independent conversation with the song, while simultaneously listening to the others' conversation, none of which can happen within the temporal framework of consciousness intending an object; they must be present, and presence presupposes a non-dualistic ontology.

Ontology, though, is a tricky philosophical concept. Heidegger observed that Being is both closest to us and furthest away from us, simultaneously. At the same time that we have a precognitive sense of what it means to be, we have tremendous difficulty in conceptualizing the concept. In fact, the question of Being was already reformulated by Plato's student, Aristotle, in such a way that the medieval scholastics who followed him abandoned the concept and replaced the emphasis on Being with a focus on essence instead. Nonetheless, lurking behind every philosophical and scientific theory, from the Greeks to the present, is an ontological presupposition about what is real, and how and why. Plato identified desirable states of character based on ontological presuppositions that drove his philosophical inquiry. As a phenomenologist, Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* was first to describe the structures of human experience and then attempt to decipher the ontological presuppositions embedded in that *ethos*.

Heidegger identified the temporal horizon as one of the existential structures of *Dasein* in the sense that we are always thrown into a past that we can transcend in the future. Unfortunately, Heidegger's description cannot account for how the Grateful Dead play, for to play collective improvisation is an activity that requires presence, and there is a sense that the present moment actually stands outside of the temporal horizon. The concept of the eternal recurrence of the same, as formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche, might help clarify this sense of presence and point us to a possible answer to the ontological question.

The idea of the eternal recurrence is unique to Nietzsche and is as problematic for him as the concept of Being is for Heidegger, since Nietzsche formulated the principle differently in different contexts. Even so, as he himself noted, this insight into human experience is central to his philosophy. He wrote in *Ecco Homo*, "The idea of the eternal recurrence … [is] the highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable" (1966, Z1). A full interpretation of the concept of the eternal recurrence requires that it be situated in the context of a discussion of the will to power and self-overcoming, another task that is beyond the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, we can gain a preliminary understanding of what Nietzsche may have meant, and its relationship to the experience of the presence required to play collective improvisation, through a reading of two passages, which will also highlight the interpretive ambiguity involved in gaining a clear understanding of what Nietzsche meant by the eternal return.

The first passage appears in *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche first introduced the idea of the eternal recurrence with this scenario:

> What if a demon crept after you one day or night in your loneliest solitude and said to you: "This life, as you live it now and have lived it, you will have to live again and again, times without number; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and all the unspeakably small and great in your life must return to you, and everything in the same series and sequence …" (1974, 341)

Some commentators have focused on both this passage and others like it as Nietzsche's fundamental formulation, interpreting the idea of eternal

recurrence as a scientific cosmological theory that is either true or false. This seems to be what Nietzsche also believed at the time that he first conceived the idea, for he had planned to study science formally to prove the truth of his claim that all events will eternally repeat themselves in the same order and with the same quality. As Nietzsche himself abandoned the project of determining the truth or falsity of this theory, other scholars have not emphasized whether the doctrine of eternal recurrence is true or not in a cosmological sense, but have suggested instead its utility in a psychological sense. They have considered the implications for living each moment of a life as if it were true that every action were to repeat eternally. This third interpretative strategy of the doctrine of eternal recurrence is wholly indifferent to the truth or falsity of the claim, cosmologically, psychologically, or within any other framework. These scholars still focus on each particular moment but interpret the eternal recurrence as an attitude toward life congruent with self-overcoming and affirmation, and they support their interpretation with another passage, where Nietzsche did emphasize the concept of the present moment as the place where the infinite past and infinite future meet. In the speech, "On the Vision and the Riddle" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wrote:

> Behold this gateway, dwarf! … it has two aspects. Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end. This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us—that is another eternity. They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is written above it; "Moment." (1954, Z III: 2)

It is no longer just the weight of all events recurring eternally that marks the idea of the eternal recurrence; now there is a focus on each event, action, or moment, as the horizon of temporality with its structures of past and future disappears and we live each of those moments in the present. It is this sense of the eternal recurrence that speaks to the presence required for collective improvisation.

The formula of the concept itself is problematic; the juxtaposition of the two words could express a contradiction. Clearly the word recurrence is indicative of a process in time; however, it is not so clear with

the term eternal. In the passage above, the paths extend in both directions for eternity, and we understand eternity in this context as an everlasting duration. But there is another sense to the word eternal, one that is the opposite of temporal. In this sense, to say something is eternal is to say that it is not in time at all. It has no beginning, middle, or end; it just is. It does not stretch across time, and it has no duration. So the concept of the eternal recurrence could mean that all events will recur over and over again, as the commentators who have relied on the first passage found in *The Gay Science* have argued, or it could mean that we return to atemporality; that is, it is not the events that recur over and over again, but rather it is we who return to those moments when the horizon of temporality has disappeared.

We are not normally aware of this experience in our everyday lives, since so much of our experience is marked by beginnings, middles, ends, and the intentionality of consciousness with its subject-object structure. But it is not impossible for us to have experiences that are atemporal, and I think we have them more often than we realize. We probably have had this experience when we listened to the Grateful Dead on those nights when they could not play a wrong note. Certainly there were times when the music moved us to rapture or Dionysian ecstasy, but in those moments I would not say that we were fully conscious in the present; we actually were transported somewhere else.

But there were those moments when we were present. The band and the music and the audience and the venue all formed a relational whole, and we were aware that we were a part of it while none of it became an object for a subjective consciousness. A Grateful Dead *ethos* must account for this dimension of human experience. Unlike Plato, though, whether that *ethos* is desirable or not cannot be determined by looking at an accepted ontological theory that puts Being in opposition to Non-Being. The openness both of lyrical meaning and of playing improvisational music collectively is indicative of different underlying ontological theory, and this theory is as amorphous as the existential experience that follows from it.

NOTES

1. All references to this text are in the Stephanos numbering system.

2. Plato specifically mentions the Greek Ionian, Lydian, Dorian, and Phyrgian modes, and although we use these same names today, they refer to different sets of notes. What is important for this discussion is not the name of the mode, but Plato's description of the effects that the mode will have on the listener.

3. For a more detailed analysis of how some Grateful Dead lyrics are indicative of a different ontology from that presented by Plato, see Spector (2010).

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