

## The Aesthetics of Time in Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Reappraisal of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same

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**Abstract :** According to Nietzsche, the eternal recurrence is his most important idea. However, it is perhaps his most cryptic and difficult to interpret. Early readings considered it as a cosmological hypothesis about the cyclic nature of time. However, following Nehamas's 'Life as Literature' (1985), it has become a widespread interpretation that the eternal recurrence never really had any theoretical dimensions, and is not actually a philosophy of time, but a practical thought experiment intended to measure the extent to which we have mastered and perfected our lives. This paper endeavours to challenge this line of thought becoming scholarly consensus, and to carry out a more complex analysis of the eternal recurrence as it is presented in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In its wider scope, this research proposes that Thus Spoke Zarathustra — as opposed to The Birth of Tragedy — be taken as the primary source for a study of Nietzsche's Aesthetics, due to its more intrinsic aesthetic qualities and expressive devices. The eternal recurrence is the central philosophy of a work that communicates its ideas in unprecedentedly experimental and aesthetic terms, and a more in-depth understanding of why Nietzsche chooses to present his conception of time in aesthetic terms is warranted. Through hermeneutical analysis of Thus Spoke Zarathustra and engagement with secondary sources such as those by Nehamas, Karl Löwith, and Jill Marsden, the present analysis challenges the ethics of self-perfection upon which current interpretations of the recurrence are based, as well as their reliance upon a linear conception of time. Instead, it finds the recurrence to be a cyclic interplay between the self and the world, rather than a metric pertaining solely to the self. In this interpretation, time is found to be composed of an intertemporal rather than linear multitude of will to power, which structures itself through tensional cycles into an experience of circular time that can be seen to have aesthetic dimensions. In putting forth this understanding of the eternal recurrence, this research hopes to reopen debate on this key concept in the field of Nietzsche studies.

**Keywords :** Nietzsche, eternal recurrence, Zarathustra, aesthetics, time

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