

RECONSIDERING WHAT NIETZSCHE MEANT BY *THE SAME*  
IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE

It is not possible to step twice into the same river.  
-Heraclitus

I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent--not to a new life, or a better life, or a similar life: I come again eternally to this same (*gleichen*) and selfsame (*selbigen*) life, in its greatest and its smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence (*ewigeWiederkunft*) of all things.

-Nietzsche's Zarathustra

ABSTRACT

*Hermeneutical considerations involving the nuances of words in translation have a bearing in interpreting philosophical concepts. Stambaugh highlighted the eternal in Nietzsche as well as the meaning of the Same in the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same. As translation of the German word das Gleiche, she provided important considerations regarding the nuances of das Gleiche and the sense of how the English word "the same" could capture as well as leave out some meanings in the original. This paper builds on Stambaugh's observations by providing a linguistic analysis of das Gleiche to open up to how it does mean immediacy and likeness as Stambaugh already observed, but the said analysis propels the discussion further by also pointing to the fact that das Gleiche also refers to what is imminent and forthcoming. This reconsidered meaning of das Gleiche as imminent and open to futurity will provide a fresh understanding of Nietzsche's doctrine. The paper ends by featuring Higgins's reading of eternal recurrence as present-oriented akin to the temporal experience of music to show that this insight in Higgins could also be developed further by showing the futurity and imminence of music as hermeneutical key to Nietzsche's doctrine.*

Key Words: eternal recurrence of the same, *das Gleiche*, eternity, time.

The task of this paper is a further explication of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same by focusing on what Friedrich Nietzsche [1844-1900] meant by *the Same*. We must remember that the full expression of the doctrine is *the eternal recurrence/return of the same*. I will provide here an exposition of the work already done by Joan Stambaugh [1932-2013] to which I will add my own linguistic analysis to further explicate Nietzsche's meaning.

I refer to Nietzsche's doctrine as *eternal recurrence*. This is consistent with the practice in the Nietzsche literature. Even outside Nietzsche and studies on Nietzsche, this is the same name associated with some ancient cosmologies of cyclical time, including Stoic cosmology (or physics). The alternative term, of course, is *eternal return*. These two terminologies, *eternal recurrence* and *eternal return* appear as interchangeable without any loss to the fundamental meaning of the doctrine they both express. However, listening sensitively to each term will open up a slight yet significant difference between the two. *Recurrence* moves within the temporal sense. It refers to an occurrence that happens again. For something to occur and recur, that something must happen in time. The Latin root of the word is *currere*: to run. It seems that running has always been the mental image for time. One thinks of an athlete on an oval track or the playing track of recorded media. In both cases, coaches are conscious of the *running* time as the athlete completes the circuit and music producers of the *running* time as the music plays. To recur is to run again or to run back. On the other hand, *return* moves within the spatial sense. It refers to how something could go back to its place of origin. For something to return, that something must reappear in the same place as before. Thus Oedipus *returned*, and not *recurred*, to Thebes as a foreigner. The Latin root of the word is *tornus*: a lathe; a machine that turns something so that it goes back round and round its axis.

In Nietzsche's German, *Wiederkunft* roughly corresponds to *recurrence* and *Wiederkehr* to *return*. The German prefix *wieder-* roughly corresponds to the Latin and English *re-*. Thus to repeat is *wiederholen*, to see again is *wiedersehen*, to bring back is *wiederbringen*. *Wiederkehr* is found in most German dictionaries. *Kehre* and *kehren* mean the turn (noun) and to turn (verb) respectively. *Wiederkunft*, however, has fallen out of use if it is not a neologism by Nietzsche. *Zukunft* is the German word

for *the future* and *künftig* means *up-and-coming*. Thus the translation of *Wiederkunft* as recurrence and *Wiederkehr* as return retain the same temporal and spatial sense of the two German words respectively. Stambaugh agrees with some of the observations stated here when she says:

A basic distinction between *Wiederkehr* and *Wiederkunft*, more sharply drawn in English than in German, is that what *recurs* is an event, something which has previously occurred. What *returns* might be anything, including a person, which goes back to where it was. A recurrence is something which has run through its course and occurs again. A return implies a turning about and going back to an original place or state. A person cannot “recur” home; an event cannot “return,” in the sense of going back to its original state. *Return* emphasizes a going back, a *completion* of movement. *Recurrence* emphasizes *another* occurrence or beginning of a movement. Thus *recurrence* is closer in meaning to *repetition* than *return* (Stambaugh 1972, 30).

Since the main thesis of this paper has to do with time, I have chosen to refer to the doctrine as *eternal recurrence* rather than *eternal return*. But at this point, we have to admit that the above terminologies are only shorthand for the actual name that Nietzsche gave his doctrine, which is the *eternal recurrence/return of the same*. This is what Nietzsche gave his doctrine the moment he made it his own. Thus the genitive “of the same” is not present in the name of the doctrine hitherto. The original German phrasing is *ewige Wiederkunft/Wiederkehr des Gleichen*. If we ask what it is that eternally recurs or returns, the answer is: the Same (*das Gleiche*).<sup>1</sup> Stambaugh has given much attention to the meaning of *the Same*. I shall feature the work she already accomplished on the topic so that I may add my own contribution.

**Stambaugh: the *eternal* in the *thought* of eternal recurrence**

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<sup>1</sup> This is the nominative form of the noun. The genitive form expressed in English as “of the Same” is *des Gleichen*. Similarly, readers of Hegel know that *das Geist* is the nominative form of the German word for *spirit* and appears in the title *Phänomenologie des Geistes* as such because of the genitive case.

Stambaugh focuses on the eternal recurrence as a thought: an insight that invaded Nietzsche on that particular August day in 1881. She uses Nietzsche's own word *invade* to emphasize the sudden coming of the thought to the thinker and its arrival like a lightning flash that both surprises and changes the man. The thought changed him so radically that he even ended up identifying it as the central theme of his philosophy. But Stambaugh is also quick to point out that even Nietzsche himself did not know what to do with it when it first came to him and he was not able to shake it off for the rest of his thinking and writing.

Stambaugh focuses on the eternal return as a thought. The question of what it means to think the eternal return is what guides her interpretation. Thinking the eternal return establishes some sort of relationship between the thinker and the cosmos. Stambaugh endeavors to show that the nature of the eternal return as thought brings the relationship of the thinker to the cosmos to sharp focus. By bringing attention to the fact that Nietzsche rejected all forms of transcendence save for the eternal, she draws out the relevance of the temporal relationship of the thinker to the cosmos in interpreting the eternal return. To be more exact, one could also say that the eternal return as such immediately establishes a temporal relation with the cosmos, for the cosmos is always experienced temporally.

She begins her study with Nietzsche's rejection of transcendence. This is a well-known Nietzschean position. Every form of beyond devalues life. Every form of beyond becomes an unreachable standard that leads even the wisest among philosophers to put in the judgment that life is no good. Every form of beyond is the enemy of all things earthly and human. If you shall arrange seats at a dinner party, never assign Plato and Nietzsche to the same table. But it seems Nietzsche's rejection of transcendence was not wholesale. He allowed one category to remain: the category

of the eternal. If Nietzsche rejects divine perfection, the afterlife, utopia, and so on, he not only has a soft spot for eternity, he has even made it the centerpiece of his philosophy. However, as must be expected from Nietzsche vouching for eternity, he has a distinct understanding of eternity so radical and original that it ends up siding with imminence and becoming. In other words, Nietzsche's understanding of eternity and the Same remains exclusively outside that which he rejected, namely, all the other forms of transcendence. As Stambaugh puts it:

The question that arises here is: why did Nietzsche not reject eternity along with the other transcendent or transcendental concepts that belong to it? With what, then, was he left? An eternal *what* or *whom*? If there is no God or Spirit, or One or Being to be eternally, what is it that is eternal? The only answer is that Nietzsche had a new and very problematical concept of eternity. What was eternal for him was the return of the Same (Stambaugh 1972, 3).

Stambaugh then endeavors to show the contrast between the traditional meaning of eternity against Nietzsche's own. She shows that there are four basic meanings of the word: (1) endless duration; (2) an eternal present (*nunc stans*), a present that never ceases to be present, never becomes past; (3) the simultaneity of all the disparate, disrupted, successive parts of time; and (4) timelessness.

Eternity as endless duration is easiest to grasp but it is the one that makes the least sense to Nietzsche's doctrine. Endless duration is like being caught in the frozen moment of a photograph and being unable to break free from it. It is to keep an experience going on and on without end along with the feelings we associate with it.

Eternity as eternal present is probably the sense that is closest to Nietzsche's meaning but never quite captures it. In this view, the present never came from a future and will never fade into the past. The present moment just remains without any reference to the future or the past. Time does not stand still in the sense of endless

duration above, but time does not move on either. I shall go back to this after clarifying Nietzsche's meaning.

Simultaneity of all parts of time dissolves the successiveness of time. All events of past, present, and future happen all at the same time. This bears the closest resemblance to the point of view of a God who exists outside of time. Everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen are all the same to this omniscient view of events. This is a very interesting view, but it is nobody's view for no human being experiences time in this way.

Lastly, timelessness ultimately rejects all forms of change. Since time is the stage upon which change happens, timelessness makes change impossible. Everything becomes static and lifeless in this conception of time which is not a conception at all because it cannot be thought let alone experienced. It cannot have any concrete meaning because it is an absolute negation of our very experience of time.

In sum, the traditional interpretation of eternity lies in the act of elevating time, with all the experience of its flux; transience; its modes of past, present, and future; to the level of eternity. This is similar to redeeming becoming into Being, the many to the One, the imminent into the transcendent. As Stambaugh put it, "the Western philosophical tradition thinks eternity as some sort of negation, overcoming, prolongation, or gathering together of the successive passing moments of time. Nietzsche does not (Stambaugh 1972, 3)."

For Nietzsche, there is no end, and there is no such thing as a once and for all. Franz Kafka [1883-1924] captured this insight so well with his critique of the modern bureaucracy. The civil servant never accomplishes the work once and for all. It just goes on and on. The bureaucrat seeks reprieve through vacation leaves only to be plunged back to the daily grind afterwards. The run of the mill Hollywood

blockbuster gives us the satisfaction that the hero has succeeded once and for all and the villain is vanquished, only to be offered a sequel that makes the villain rise again for a new struggle with the hero. In the single movie *Star Wars* turned film franchise, Luke Skywalker defeats the Empire and saves his father from the dark side of the force, then he becomes a recluse only to be fetched again for a new struggle with the First Order. It seems the Resistance cannot resist once and for all. It goes on and on.

In our lives, it seems that once and for all only applies to the departed. The departed has died once and for all but the bereaved must go on. After the funeral and the burial, the ones who survived the departed must go back to the ordinary world to go on. Even if Indian thought vis-a-vis the reality of death posited eternal recurrence by way of metempsychosis, it had to arrive at a once and for all in the form of Atman's immersion in Brahman (Hinduism) or through the attainment of nirvana (Hinayana Buddhism). The context, of course of Indian thought is release from suffering. Stambaugh contrasts this with Nietzsche's eternal recurrence:

Nietzsche, however, rejected every kind of striving for release from eternal recurrence as nihilistic. It was precisely eternal recurrence which he wishes to affirm. He also rejected the interpretation of eternal recurrence as a transmigration of souls (Nietzsche 1999, 13:378), on the ground that it was a reversed Darwinism.<sup>2</sup> closely related to this rejection of transmigration was his emphasis on the word "same (Stambaugh 1972, 5)."

World religions are uncomfortable with the human condition I am describing here: that the world goes on and on without end. In the Abrahamic faiths, the world

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche (1999, 13:378) wrote this entry bridging together ideas from Hindu and Greek traditions with references to the caste system and the world soul. It alludes to Plato as the spirit of Manu (the first man in Hindu mythology), juxtaposing Plato as Brahmanist with Pyrrho as Buddhist. As philosophical types, they represent the separation between *esoteric* and *exoteric* teachings. I translate the last line thus: "the transmigration of souls as reversed Darwinism (--is not Greek) [*die Seelenwanderung als umgekehrter Darwinismus (--ist nicht griechisch)*]. My interpretation regarding the reversal is that metempsychosis looks back to a glorious initial state (Manu as archetype) whereas Darwinism posits that the best state is in a future form.

we know has an end. Islam and Christianity both believe in a transcendent permanent state in its aftermath. Judaism has no orthodox position on what form the afterlife takes, but there is a permanent afterlife nonetheless. In the East, metempsychosis is seen as suffering and punishment and thus every soul must find a way to escape the wheel of rebirth. In Hinduism it is in the unity of Atman (the individual soul) with Brahman (the ultimate reality). In Buddhism, perfection is in the nothingness called nirvana. All these worldviews are at bottom nihilistic for Nietzsche. They all deny our actual experience of the world and of time as continuously changing and never ending. They say nay to the repeating cycle of time and life and tell the laborer that toil has its ending. They say nay to human suffering and insist that our condition is only temporary. They say nay to life in favor of an afterlife (or as Nietzsche says of Plato, an *afterworld*). The eternal recurrence of the same is Nietzsche's yes to toil, suffering, and life.

### **Stambaugh on *das Gleiche***

Stambaugh notes that Nietzsche's use of *das Gleiche* is rather unusual. I demonstrate her point this way: imagine that Nietzsche's mother-tongue was English and he called the doctrine eternal recurrence of the same. Translators to German would most probably render it as *ewige Wiederkehr des Selben* and the commentaries and interpretations in English and German would remain unaltered. *Selbe* is the German counterpart of the English pronoun *same*.<sup>3</sup> The phrase "in the same house" is *im selben Haus* in German. The phrase "at the same time" is *zur selben Zeit*. Consequently, *Selbst* is the German counterpart of the English noun *self*. What are the

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<sup>3</sup> The nuance is felt in the quotation that begins this paper. Let me repeat it here. Zarathustra says: "I will return to this same and selfsame life (Nietzsche 2006, 178)." The German reads: „*ich komme ewig wieder zu diesem gleichen und selbigen Leben* (Nietzsche 1999, 4:276).“

consequences of Nietzsche's decision to go with the unusual *des Gleiches* instead of the more familiar *des Selben*? If you remove the letter g from *gleich*, it would sound close to the English *like*. Stambaugh states that these two words are etymologically related. But be that as it may, *das Gleiche* is not identity simpliciter and therefore does not really mean the Same. The word resides in the middle of the Same and the Similar but neither of them at the same time.

Can we think of the same as content? Asking this question brings Stambaugh close to interpretations of the eternal recurrence as the empirical make up of the cosmos when she states:

The problem of the Same is the problem of "what" recurs. If the Same is not simply taken as the content *stuffed* into a prefabricated scheme of "eternal recurrence," a content totally indifferent to the process of recurrence, it becomes even more problematic and challenges the whole meaning of the phrase "eternal recurrence of the Same." If the Same were simply this indifferent, dead content caught up in recurring cycles, it would make no difference whether it was a thing or a tree or a man which recurred. The essential passages--that is, those in which Nietzsche is trying to think out the meaning of his thought, and not to "prove" it with the concepts of limited force and unlimited time (even these are very fruitful when not taken at a pseudoscientific level)--render an understanding of the Same as *content* impossible (Stambaugh 1972, 31).

Stambaugh emphasizes above that repetition of content renders irrelevant whether it is a thing, a tree or a man which recurred. Thus it is not as simple as saying that time is a cycle and all particles of matter simply appear again and again in that prefabricated scheme of recurrences. She clearly notes that Nietzsche was not out to prove recurrence as true and therefore we must be careful in construing the doctrine in empirical scientific terms. The task is to think out the meaning of the thought of eternal recurrence.

Given that it is not as simple as something identical recurring, we are led to think of the Same as some sort of process. There is no such thing as substance or content in the traditional sense in the mind of Nietzsche. And since it is concerned

with process, Stambaugh identifies the main emphasis of Nietzsche's doctrine as time and eternity with the human being in sharp focus. She contends that it is not about the recurrence of something which is in time, but time itself, the moment, which comes again. We easily stumble into thinking that there are two elements expressed in the name of the doctrine: the first element is time as eternally recurring and the second element is the content that recurs, i.e. the Same. Stambaugh exposes our error by saying that time eternally recurs and it is time itself that eternally recurs. This is what she means by rendering the Same as content impossible. Thinking the meaning of eternal recurrence leads her to conclude that Nietzsche's act of eternalizing time comes from being invaded by the thought that it is time as experienced humanly speaking which eternally recurs.

#### **A Linguistic Analysis of the German word *das Gleiche***

My contribution focuses on the nuance of *das Gleiche* that is lost in its translation as *the Same*. The nuance is very subtle in that it could only be observed in certain uses of the word leading to it being easily overlooked by German and Germanophone commentators of Nietzsche. First of all, let us admit that in many cases in spoken language, speakers employ some words as substantive: a word that is not a noun but transposed to have all and every grammatical characteristic of a noun. As for the word *das Gleiche*, it is not found in the German dictionary but it is expressed in spoken language. If I see something I like, and I say that I want the same, that is expressed in German by saying *Ich mag das Gleiche*. But *das Gleiche* is mostly known in formal German as either an adjective or adverb: *gleich*. The same is true of the translation *the Same*. The word *same* is employed above as a pronoun (standing in for a noun) but is known in formal English as an adjective, adverb, but never as a noun. Let us now enter the world of ordinary speaking and writing.

I am not saying that it is incorrect to translate *gleich* as *same*. In the most usual sense, this is the translation of the word that will make the most sense, as the above example already illustrated. Here we see equivalence between the German word and its English translation. The meaning of the German word is absolutely, exactly the same as the English translation. But there are other instances when *gleich* could not be translated as *same*. Consider the following use of the word:

*Zwei mal zwei ist gleich vier.*  
Two times two is equal to four.

In mathematical examples and statements regarding equality, *gleich* is employed.<sup>4</sup> The German word *egal* which comes from the same Latin root as the English *equal* is employed differently. You use *egal* to state indifference, or that something doesn't matter. Compare:

*Es ist mir egal.*  
It is (all) the same to me.

*Gleich* differs from “same” in cases when the former is taken as an adverb. As adverb, *gleich* could mean *straightaway* or *immediately*. Consider the following examples that feature *gleich* in the purely temporal sense. Let us say that you are watching German television. When a program ends and the title of the next one is announced over the interim, you may read on the screen:

*Gleich: Nachrichten.*  
Next: News.

The English word *next* is the proper translation to fit the Anglophone context but it does not do justice to *gleich* here. German has a similar word: *nächst* that functions exactly the same way as the English “next” in expressing temporal succession. Thus the sense that is expressed here is not the temporal succession

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<sup>4</sup> Compare: *alle Menschen sind gleich*, with “all humans are equal.”

between the finished program and the one about to begin. The next feature is only forthcoming but the television station does not want the viewer to change channels in the interim and so gives the assurance that the next program follows in a few seconds. It is as if the next program is already being featured. What is identified as next in a series is already experienced here and now. Take another example: this time of a father telling his son to hurry.

*Es ist gleich zehn (Uhr)!*  
It is already ten (o'clock)!

In this example, anyone familiar with the context knows that it is probably not strictly true that it is already ten o'clock. It is probably a few minutes before ten but depending on the level of stress, the father is definitely noting that ten comes soon if not quickly and thus there is no time to lose. Even if they are not yet late, they will definitely be late if the son does not hurry. It is as if the hour has already descended while it is still on its way.

There are other examples where the temporal sense of *gleich* touches upon a spatial sense. In the example that follows, we will see how the use of the German word gives the same sense of the imminent future but this time, it is by way of dissolving the spatial distance. This is found in cases when the word expresses the immediacy of arriving somewhere closeby. The time it takes to arrive is so momentary that it is as if one has already arrived. Imagine a mother standing on the front porch of the house calling for her child who is at a nearby playground.

*Mutter: Komm hier. Kind: Gleich!*  
Mother: Come here. Child: Coming!

Notice that there is a big difference between the single word answers in German and in English. If we give the more formal responses that provide complete sentences, we could give the German *Ich komme gleich!* to the English "I am coming!" But they are

so different that English does not do justice to the German expression. The word *gleich* has no counterpart in the English expression. Perhaps in this case, the Filipino expression could capture the German better:

*Mutter: Komm hier. Kind: Gleich!*  
*Nanay: Halika rito. Anak: Nariyan na po!*

I add a Filipino translation here because German and Filipino children seem to be saying exactly the same thing in cases like this. English could only capture the same sense awkwardly through expressions like “I am already there!” or “I’m coming immediately!” Both expressions are hardly spoken and do not roll off the tongue easily. This is *gleich* in the spatial sense of the child being here (in the playground) but it is as if the child is already there (on the front porch). The proclamation dissolves the spatial difference by way of instantaneous time.

### **Zarathustra and The Nuptial Ring of Rings**

We now glean from the above examples how *gleich* refers to what is immediate, immediately present, or imminent. I am building a case for a reconsideration of what it is that eternally recurs or eternally returns. If it is *das Gleiche* which eternally recurs or returns, and if *gleich* refers to what is immediate, immediately present, or imminent, then it is precisely the immediate, immediately present or imminent which eternally returns or recurs.

Returning to the only transcendent concept in Nietzsche: the eternal, I now state clearly that for Nietzsche, time is that which he eternalizes. But the four senses of eternity enumerated at the beginning of this paper do not apply here. Even the notion of eternity as eternal present does not capture Nietzsche’s meaning. The eternal present is but a snapshot of reality but reality keeps moving on. No matter how often you say the word “now,” each utterance is a particular moment that fades into the oblivion of the past. Time as eternal present is not our experience of time.

Nietzsche's commitment to all things earthly and all things human is expressed clearly in the teaching of Zarathustra at the beginning of that book for everyone and no one. Zarathustra, addressing people for the first time since his ten-year seclusion in his cave announces:

I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth* and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away! Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and then all these desecrators died. Now to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing, and to esteem the bowels of the unfathomable higher than the meaning of the earth (Nietzsche 2006, 6)!

The same book ends<sup>5</sup> with Zarathustra wedding himself to eternity. In “The Seven Seals (Or: The Yes And Amen Song),” Zarathustra proclaims his “wedding vows” which end with this passage:

Oh how then could I not lust for eternity and for the nuptial ring of rings – the ring of recurrence! Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it were this woman whom I love: for I love you, oh eternity!  
*For I love you, oh eternity* (Nietzsche 2006, 187)!

If Zarathustra is to be true to himself, his teaching to remain faithful and to esteem the earth must be compatible with his love for and marital promises to eternity. For Nietzsche, our only experience of time is the human and earthly experience of time. Thus he would not accept the transcendent senses of eternity already enumerated above. Thus to be faithful to the earth and to live the meaning of the earth is to live and experience time in the only earthly and human way: through the present as *das Gleiche*. As I have already pointed out through the linguistic analysis above, this is not just the present experienced as the fleeting now but an opening up to the future as also already here, imminent. Given that Nietzsche uses the

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<sup>5</sup> I refer to the end of the book as it was first published in 1883 and 1884. Nietzsche distributed the fourth part privately. His family published it eight years later.

imagery himself, it would not be a stretch to say that the “yes, I do” of the wedding vow is a yes to the present but also an opening up for the future as already here. Now and eternity are not two realities fused into one. Note Zarathustra’s desire for eternity is a desire to beget children with her as well. The present is always pregnant with the possibilities of the future. The experience of time as *das Gleiche* refers to both now and eternity as one and the same and therefore that which eternally recurs.

In this sense, it is incorrect to say that Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence teaches us to live for the moment given that life is short and time waits for no one. This would be a very narrow rapport with the present and with time. Aside from that, it is also nihilistic and life-denying. It is not true that all that we have is the present and nothing more. Our analysis of *das Gleiche* inaugurated an understanding of the present as opening up to a future that is already experienced as being at hand. My treatment up to this point carries in allegory and symbolism. Allow me now to show more concretely how eternalized time as *das Gleiche* is humanly experienced.

### ***Das Gleiche* as Experienced in Music and Art**

*Das Gleiche* as immediacy could be expressed by the appreciation of music and art. In an approach similar to mine, Kathleen Marie Higgins [born 1954] took Nietzsche’s lead in *Ecce homo* and found a hermeneutical key to Zarathustra. Nietzsche said that “Zarathustra as a whole may perhaps be counted as music (Nietzsche 2007, 65).” She arrived at the following thesis:

[E]ternal recurrence as the idea presented in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, is the expression of a general attitude to life that contrasts with the past-obsessed perspective that Nietzsche believes goes hand in hand with the Christian moral worldview.

[She] go[es] on to suggest an analogy for the kind of present-centered perspective that the doctrine expresses: the temporal orientation proposed by the doctrine of eternal recurrence is like the temporal orientation that we assume while listening to a piece of music (Higgins 1987, 160).

The eternal recurrence is Nietzsche's response to the nihilism of Western civilization which carries along with it the Christian moral worldview. I shall not rehearse that point here so as not to digress from the concern of this paper, which is the meaning of the Same and its implications on our attitude towards time.

Earlier in this paper, I noted that recurrence is a reference to running. Let us think of the jeepney traversing its looped route like the one labeled UP Ikot in the University of the Philippines, Diliman, or the Ejeep going around the Ateneo de Manila University campus in Loyola Heights. As the ride stops at a particular station, all the other stations come before and at the same time after it when you take the perspective of the driver of the ride. Since the transport vehicle goes around and around endlessly, past and future are the same because the same stations passed in the past are the same stations that it will pass in the future. Everything is experienced in the present moment, symbolized by the transport vehicle itself but opens up to all the stations in the past for those are also all the same stations in the future.

Similarly, Higgins interprets the encounter between Zarathustra and the dwarf in "On the Vision and the Riddle" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the same way. The present is the gateway Moment (*Augenblick*) and past and future stretch endlessly contradicting each other in the present. Imagining that past and future are connected to form a loop, like the UP Ikot or Ateneo Ejeep rides, past and future are resolved as the same.

When the dwarf murmurs contemptuously that "All that is straight lies. All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle (Nietzsche 2006, 125)," he is chastised by Zarathustra as making it too easy for himself. This is because the dwarf's notion of eternity is that of simultaneity of all parts of time, that which we noted is from the vantage point of a God who exists outside of time. This is not the view nor the

teaching of Zarathustra, as we have shown above. Zarathustra's emphasis on the gateway Moment is Nietzsche's emphasis on the present moment as the only real experience of time that is available to us mortals. Let us now follow Higgins's foray into musicology to help us understand the significance of the present moment.

Higgins is indebted to the insights of Victor Zuckerkandl [1896-1965] as expressed in his 1956 book *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*. Zuckerkandl's observations of the several features of the temporality of music are reminiscent of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. For example, when we count the beat as one-two, the two here does not simply express mathematical symmetry but a movement to and fro. As the conductor's hand swings like a pendulum, the one-beat completes the last movement but also simultaneously begins the next. Moreover, it is not memory that makes it possible for us to appreciate music because memory only pieces together bits and pieces in its reconstruction of the past. On the contrary, the intro of the musical piece portends the entire piece in that the intro brings in the promise of the entire piece. Throughout the performance, we do not grasp moment after moment of the running of the music but the entire musical piece is contained in every moment of its running. The clamor for a repeat performance is a search for the immediacy of the experience that no recollection could ever reconstruct. People need to hear the music play; play in the present to appreciate the music as a whole. If a repeat performance is impossible, the audience will end up humming it to themselves and play it over in their heads. This is not an act of remembering the music that was played. It is allowing the selfsame music to continue playing on in one's head, sometimes wittingly, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes to the point that it nauseates as the so-called last song syndrome. Higgins summarizes her insight this way:

Our attitude in musical listening is an attitude of *delight* in the present. Our delight, like our musical concentration, is not contingent on our sense that some clear progress is being made. On the contrary, we enjoy great music because of its circuitousness, its ingenuity at taking devious paths toward its evident aims, its instinct for moving in ways contrary to precedent, its unmitigated sense of life. We enjoy the fullness of the present musical moment, even if it is dissonant, not for its efficiency in moving toward the evident musical goal, but for its own surprising presence (Higgins 1987, 184).

The observations and insights from music help us understand the eternal recurrence as a present-oriented attitude towards life. Earlier in this paper, I showed the rejection of interpretations of the doctrine in terms of metempsychosis. Now, the linear model of time proposed by the Christian moral worldview is also overcome. In the Christian worldview, human sinfulness in the past is dissolved once and for all by the Lamb of God on Golgotha, thus Christians are called to repent from their sins to merit the promise of redemption in heaven. Its focus is the sinfulness of the past and the promise of the future. Thus, to Zarathustra's eyes, the Christian is not oriented to the present and has turned away from the meaning of the earth. Setting Zarathustra to music leads us to understand how the eternal recurrence eternalizes the present so that mortals may learn the meaning of the earth; the only meaning that we could ever really have.

The experience of the immediate and imminent is fundamental to art appreciation. One has to sit and read through a book. One has to stand in front of a painting to behold and contemplate it. One has to witness the performance of theater or music even if these are enjoyed through recorded media. Past, present, and future all blend together as one while the participant is enjoying the work of art. For one thing, there is anticipation of what is yet to unfold but at the same time it is also a retention of what has unfolded. All these interactions enter an interplay within the experience of art. It is as if time is standing still but at the same time, it is the passing of time which allows for the unfolding of the work of art. The experience of passing

time and the eternalization of time both find complete expression without contradiction in the experience of the work of art. Our focus has been on music because music is the most Nietzschean art form, the most paradigmatic artform for Nietzsche.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The focus of this paper is the meaning of the Same in the doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same. Given the two expressions of the doctrine as either eternal recurrence or eternal return, I clarified why the choice of the former over the latter is made in the current study: namely that the focus on time that our investigations make in this study leads to the choice of recurrence for its resonance with time as evidenced by the imagery of running in the Latin root of the word which also corresponds to the German word *Wiederkunft*.

Stambaugh's reflections on the meaning of eternity functioned as a guidepost to understand the doctrine further in terms of the meaning of eternity as transcendent in Nietzsche and his rejection of other notions of transcendence. An indissoluble affinity between time and eternity is established in Stambaugh's interpretation of the eternal recurrence.

I offered my own linguistic analysis for the original German word that Nietzsche used which came to be translated in English as the Same. By demonstrating some of the ways the German word *gleich* is used where its translation into *same* does not capture its meaning, I was able to show that aside from the sense of being the *same* or being *self-same*, the German word *gleich* also points to the immediacy of the present, the instantaneity of the present, which also at the same time looks to the immediate future as always already here. In *gleich*, the hour has not yet descended but it is expressed as if it already has.

The observations regarding the meaning of *das Gleiche* as applied to the eternal recurrence found textual confirmation in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I showed in the basic teaching of Zarathustra as well as the final scene of its third section that the meaning of the earth and loving eternity are joined together in the ring of rings: the ring of recurrence. The attitude expressed by *das Gleiche* is a yes to the present as it opens up to a future that is already at hand, not to a faraway utopia, promised land, or paradise that is unreachable and intangible.

The symbolic expressions I took from Zarathustra are given concrete manifestations by borrowing Higgins's comparison of the eternal recurrence to the temporal experience of music. Here we saw that it is not human memory that reconstructs the musical experience for the sake of appreciation. The immediacy of passing through the temporal manifestation of music gave a very intimate rapport with time in that the experience is now described as another expression of *das Gleiche*: the now of the musical experience is also already an enjoyment of the entire musical piece that continues to be an opening to what the musical piece has in store as it continues to unfold.

The present-oriented understanding of eternal recurrence allowed Higgins to show how the doctrine of eternal recurrence is meant to dissolve the doctrine of sin in the Christian worldview. If Christianity is forever past-oriented with its obsession with fault and sin, the eternal recurrence is present-oriented with its emphasis on this life here and now with our feet consciously planted on the earth.

Therefore, I have shown in this paper Nietzsche's understanding of time as eternalized in his doctrine of eternal recurrence, where that which recurs is time itself as immediately present but always already living the possibility of the future as

already at hand. This is how my reading of Stambaugh and Higgins, together with my linguistic analysis of *das Gleiche* leads to a reconsidered meaning of the Same.

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