



Research Paper

Nietzsche's eternal return as the eternal repetition of difference in Gilles Deleuze's thought

Hossein Zohedi Sehat^{*1} , Masoud Seif² , Ali Naghi Baghersshahi² 

¹ Ph.D. of Contemporary Philosophy - Department of Theology, Farhangian University, Hamedan, Iran.

² Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran.

***Corresponding Author:** Hossein Zohedi Sehat
Address: Farhangian University, Hamedan, Iran.

Email: h.zohdi5911@yahoo.com


[10.22080/JEPR.2025.28835.1268](https://doi.org/10.22080/JEPR.2025.28835.1268)
Received:

January 12, 2025

Accepted:

June 18, 2025

Available online:

July 13, 2025

Abstract

This article examines and critiques Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, which is presented as an ambiguous issue in Nietzsche's philosophy. Therefore, it has many interpretations, one of which is Deleuze's interpretation. This article explains this interpretation using a descriptive-analytical-critical approach. In order to complete the problem of temporality in Bergson, who depicts the role of the future vague and weak, Deleuze goes to Nietzsche and his eternal return in order to correctly draw the third side of the triangle of past, present and future, in order to provide the necessary and suitable platform for the Spinozian concept of "expression". According to Deleuze, the eternal return is the return of what becomes; or it is the same becoming same, rather than being and existing; It means something that is confirmed in becoming. In fact, the eternal return is not an identity thought at all, but a mixed and completely different thought, so such a return is not the return of the "same" that returns eternally; It does not mean repeating history and sequences of being; Rather, it is the return of the self, the self that belongs to a multiplicity, a multiplicity that is different; In other words, eternal return is the repetition of difference. And what we always face is the difference. This difference that constitutes Deleuze's Nietzschean spirit. Of course, Deleuze seeks to express his own view more through Nietzsche's language; that is, he seeks to justify his own view rather than explain Nietzsche's view.

Keywords:

Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze,
Eternal return, Difference,
Repetition



Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

After borrowing the issue of expression from Spinoza, Deleuze finds it to be a temporal matter; he searches for the nature of this temporality in Bergson; but although Bergson deals in detail with the relationship between the present and the past, he does not say much about the future; therefore, Deleuze distances himself from Bergson on this issue and goes to Nietzsche's eternal return. On the other hand, the influence of Hegelian thought in France through Alexander Kojève's interpretations of Hegel and the negation of differences and the substitution of totality forced Deleuze to introduce Nietzsche as an alternative to this trend. Another reason for Nietzsche's attraction to Deleuze is the death of God, because the vertical transcendence, which is one of the main concerns of Deleuze's philosophy, is practically negated by Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God.

Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche is based on an ontological renewal implied by Nietzsche's two terms, "the will to power" and "the eternal return." The concept of recurrence is explored in the late 19th century, popularized by Nietzsche and others, and redefined in the late 20th century by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze's concept opposes any notion of eternal recurrence as rebirth, reincarnation, identical cycles, recollections of events, ideas, or even similar patterns.

2. Methods

This research was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method with a critical approach, relying on the works of Nietzsche and Deleuze, and utilizing the works of a number of famous commentators of Deleuze.

3. Results

The eternal return is not the permanence of the same, the state of equilibrium or the resting place of the same. It is not the "same" or "oneness" that returns in the eternal return, but the return of the same itself that must belong to diversity and to what is different. When it is said that everything returns, it means that everything is repeated; but in this view, what is repeated is not in the form of real or actualized identities, but in the form of the difference of virtuality that

constitutes those identities. What Deleuze means by Nietzsche's return is repetition; the eternal repetition of difference; Deleuze understands Nietzsche's eternal recurrence as this repetition. Eternal recurrence is the repetition of difference. Identity is the identity of difference (the repeated difference that gives meaning consistency) and being is the being of becoming or the being of becoming (i.e., eternal recurrence is a difference that can only be repeated). For Nietzsche and Deleuze, what is real is not being and identity, but becoming and difference. The most important criticism of Deleuze is that in Nietzsche's thought, there is a return to "what was" and "what happened", but Deleuze's interpretation of return is the repetition of difference; that is, the repetition of "what was not" and "what did not happen"; and this means the repetition of difference; therefore, nothing is repeated except the truth of difference.

4. Conclusion

Eternal return for Deleuze does not mean the return of the "same" or the repetition of history or successive being, but rather its becoming and eternal repetition; and that is a repetition that is forever different. A becoming that is completely active and proactive, not reactive and passive; this synthesis is also carried out internally, with a will called the will to power; a will based on the principle of eternal return; a return and repetition with the consistency of difference. A difference that is rooted in the accidental, chance, or randomness of becomings, becomings that are completely unpredictable and foreshadowed. In fact, the only thing that is predictable is the unpredictability of becomings. Deleuze has tried to present a reading that is neither too salty (as some have completely cut it to the root), nor too salty (as others have interpreted it as a return to the same, or an apparent repetition of history). Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, especially his eternal return, is a revelation of some hidden angles of possibility because Nietzsche "could say"; because he could be the streamer of Nietzsche's subsequent interpretations; but because Nietzsche "said", it sometimes seems to be a justification that seeks to remove accusations and ambiguity from Nietzsche instead of describing this view; a reading that helps to complete his philosophical puzzle; an interpretation



that can justify Deleuze's philosophical view; that is, a justification of justification.

Funding

There is no funding support

ContributionAuthors' c

The first author conducted the research, analysis, critique, and writing, while the second and third authors provided supervision, conceptual guidance, and revisions.

Conflict of interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest



References

- Colebrook, Claire (2002). *GILLES DELEUZE*, Taylor and Francis e-library, London. New York.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1984) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia university Press.
- (1983). *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, (first published 1962).
- Due, Reidar Andreas (2007). *Deleuze*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK; Maiden, USA.
- Hardt, Michael (1997). *Deleuze, Gilles: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, by the Regents of the University of Minnesota. London.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (2001). *The Gay Science*, trans: Josefine Nauckhoff, Cambridge University Press.
- (1968). *The Will to Power*, trans: [Walter Kaufmann](#), Vintage, New York.
- (2003). *THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA A Book For All And None*. Trans: Thomas Wayne, Algora Publishing New York.
- Peyton, Paul (2023). Critical Reading, Interpretation and Interpretation of the Works of Gilles Deleuze. Translated by: Abdol Ali Dastgheib. Mahris Publishing House, second edition, Tehran.
- Todd May. (2005) *Gills Deleuze An INTRODUCTION*, Cambridge University Press, p:26-71.