

Iqbal and Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence

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Abstract: Nietzsche has been a strong influence on some influential Muslim thinkers. He has been appropriated in divergent perspectives from mystical to nihilistic. Amongst the responses of Muslim thinkers to Nietzsche, Iqbal's is perhaps the most articulate and interesting. The present paper has two main objectives: to examine a critical understanding of the Nietzsche's most ambiguous idea of eternal recurrence and to explore Iqbal's response to it. Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence, seen by some philosophers as his most significant concept, has been questioned by Iqbal as the weakest link in his philosophy. Iqbal argues the case for transcendence and upholds the Islamic doctrine of fate which allows enough space for freedom of spirit in contrast to the absolutely deterministic view of Nietzsche. Iqbal's sufi conception of the Perfect Man differs from Nietzsche's Superman in the ability to deploy creativity and freedom for remoulding of the self and appropriating divine attributes. Thus, Iqbal deploys Islamic mystical resources in problematizing alternative models of human perfection and the response to tragic fact that a horizontal existence of man in an "indifferent universe" seems to be.

Key words: Eternal recurrence, fatalism, transcendence, mysticism

Abstrak: Nietzsche amat mempengaruhi beberapa pemikir Islam terkemuka. Beliau telah digambarkan dalam perspektif yang berbeza daripada mistik ke nihilistik. Antara respons pemikir-pemikir Islam terhadap Nietzsche, Iqbal merupakan yang paling lantang dan menarik. Kertas kerja ini mengandungi dua objektif utama: untuk mengupas pemahaman idea pengulangan abadi Nietzsche yang paling kabur dan untuk meninjau respons Iqbal terhadap isu ini. Konsep pengulangan abadi Nietzsche, dilihat oleh beberapa ahli falsafah

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sebagai konsep yang paling penting baginya, dipersoalkan oleh Iqbal sebagai rangkaian yang paling lemah dalam falsafahnya. Iqbal mempertikaikan kes untuk melampaui dan berpegang dengan doktrin Islam yang memberi ruang kebebasanroh berbanding dengan pandangan ketentuan mutlak Nietzsche. Konsep sufi Iqbal tentang Manusia Sempurna berbeza dengan “Superman” Nietzsche dalam keupayaan menggunakan kreativiti dan kebebasan dalam pembentukan diri dan penyesuaian sifat-sifat kudus. Oleh itu, Iqbal menggunakan sumber metafizik Islam dalam mengemukakan model alternatif kesempurnaan manusia.

Kata kunci: perulangan berkekalan, fatalisme, jangkauan, mistisisme

The doctrine of eternal recurrence is first formulated in 341 section of *The gay science*. The section follows the image of Socrates on his death bed, which may imply that Nietzsche directed it against the Socratic Idealistic doctrine of the afterlife of the human soul after death liberates it from the body of becoming. So the revelation is not a changeless realm for the soul after death but the promise of the mortal and earthly life and its ultimate and “eternal confirmation and seal” (Fraser, 2002, p. 109). Nietzsche’s anti-metaphysical attitude of the non-existence of being finds full expression in the doctrine with the only difference that the becoming in the world of time and space becomes the permanent and the only knowable fact of the human condition. Outside or beyond this becoming is nothing that can be known or is worth knowing. Nietzsche says clearly “I see nothing other than becoming. Be not deceived. It is the fault of your myopia, not the nature of things, if you believe you see land somewhere in the ocean of coming-to-be and passing away. You use names for things as though they rigidly, persistently endured” (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 107). The God of metaphysics is dead or remains dead or is killed by man himself. However, the death does not reduce the world to a mechanical machine or to materialistic Epicureanism. Rather, it inaugurates the celebration of the open-endedness of all existence. It celebrates the mystery or the unknowability of the ultimate concerns of existence. It may be painful and shocking as it leaves man in the cosmic void rotating wilfully without any supernatural consolation or reward because all rotation is beyond good and evil, and the only reward that humanity can have is to have a will to eternal rotation. In other words, the death of God unchains the earth, and thereby the human spirit, from

the old shackles of faith, reason and all the dead and life-denying values. The new values must tie man to earth and to earth alone.

How to live? Nietzsche would reply 'by the will to power,' by the principle of the 'innocence of becoming' and by the total affirmation of our 'eternal recurrence or repetition' on this very earth, thereby becoming a Superman. A Superman is a great 'yes-sayer' to all that is. A member of the 'herd' is a partial yes-sayer who accepts the good only and excludes the evil. He confronts life cowardly and shields his bosom from the arrows of suffering and passion by inventing the myths of morality and the afterlife, the myth that fosters the strength of weakness, hypocritical sincerity and a self-appointed reward of afterlife and all its associated corollaries. Whereas the Superman is loyal to earth, open to experience the summers and the winters, self-discipline and the wilful drive to power, as well as the self-experienced knowledge that:

Now I die and vanish...the soul is as immortal as the body.
But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of eternal recurrence. 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 back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest as in what is smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, pp. 285-286).

Does this passage mean physical and psychic rebirth of human personality to the same selfsame conditions of space, time and change? And does Nietzsche know it as a fact or merely works it out as 'a mechanical hypothesis' on the data supplied by the scientific outlook and the historical sense? Is there no possibility of the evolution of human consciousness beyond the space-time limits, and are there states or stations of consciousness which mystics describe and Iqbal believes? And, finally, what conclusions can we draw from a comparative analysis of Nietzsche and Iqbal on the idea of the eternal recurrence? These questions will be discussed from four perspectives: the Cosmological, Existential, Intellectual and Ethical aspects of the idea of eternal recurrence. There is no strict demarcating line between the four aspects, so some overlapping and repetition is inevitable.

The cosmological aspect of eternal recurrence

The above questions form the core of Iqbal's critique of the idea of eternal recurrence. The first question is, what is the fate of human soul, or personality or Ego? Does the soul evolve by accident in time-space out of an irrationally vitalistic tendency of will to endless cycles of life-death? Nietzsche's response is 'yes.' If yes, then one must have some kind of vision or memory (subjective) of one's past and maybe future cycles, as the Indian mystics generally talk of their rebirths (on the psychological and biological planes) before attaining final liberation from the wheel of birth-death cycles—or is the birth of soul directed by some higher forms of purposive reality? There is no divine ground to the human soul or body in Nietzsche, rather the belief in the body is more fundamental than the belief in the soul. It is the 'agonies of the body' that have given rise to the unscientific belief regarding the soul.

As a trend-setter of much of postmodernism, Nietzsche conceives subject as a fiction, a bundle of thought processes that have no centre except a relational and arbitrary reference. As the subject stands decentred, what is left is the random playfulness not only of mental/intellectual energy but also the nihilistic 'becoming' of all that one's intellect can conceive. Out of these basic propositions, Nietzsche draws an apparently positive conclusion of the affirmation of 'universal becoming.'

Beyond this affirmation Nietzsche says nothing about the fate of the human soul. In other words, Nietzsche's conclusion converges with the Eastern cyclic view of life that posits no absolute beginning and end but perpetual movement or becoming; a wheel of *samsara* from which one needs to move to the still-point where one no longer identifies with this becoming but transcends it. The fate of man is the movement of this wheel. It is the wheel of cosmic Will that has fastened man to 'eternal' movement. However, the project of salvation consists in detachment or transcendence of this bondage which one cannot find in Nietzsche. Man is not the process or part of the process of perpetual becoming but transcends it in the depths of his being where time ceases to exist. Nirvana and subsistence in God in the Sufism of Iqbal are precisely such transformative

experiences or modes of living where the weight of 'samsaric' becoming—the slavery to fate—is lifted.

In the major religious traditions, the human soul finally attains liberation from this wheel, while to Nietzsche it is tied once for all to the repetitive cyclic movements of 'life-death.' Man is to affirm this movement just as Sisyphus forever rolls a rock to the hilltop and is forever aware that it will not stay on the top. If man wills this eternal movement he must then love his fate. That is why Nietzsche terms the eternal recurrence as *amor fati*. The question is, however, what proof do we have to believe such a fate?

We may infer that neither birth nor death stop on this planet. So the basic powers that are 'born' and 'die' in the form of humans are neither exhausted nor stopped, and time continues to support the germination of these powers. This does not guarantee that an individual will be created in the same pattern and personality, and will follow the same footprints. If this were so, life would be boring. If these 'rebirths' and 'becomings' have already and actually taken place and an individual remembers them now, as he must if it is true, then suicide would be the basic instinct to get rid of the boredom of 'habit' and 'routine' of living which Nietzsche so vehemently criticized. Else, if one (as an individual) has forgotten one's previous cycles then one cannot remember one's future course of life either. Although as one does not see anything beyond the world of becoming, so one can conclude that after death one *may be* recycled as an individual into the same world. However, this is not a fact, rather it is a supposition or a logical assumption that may or may not be true. Or we may ask what would happen to the world of 'becoming' when the estimated age of our sun god passes? Will the 'becoming' then stop? Nietzsche has no answer for these questions simply because the idea of recurrence is not a mystical/apocalyptic vision but an intellectual and logical deduction out of our empirical response to the stimulus of serial time: "An infinitely new becoming is a contradiction, since it would presuppose an infinitely growing force. But from what should it grow! Whence its nourishment, its surplus of nourishments!

The supposition that the universe is an organism conflicts with the essence of the organic" (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 241).

Nietzsche draws a calculated scientific conclusion. This is the reason that Iqbal likens the doctrine with a worse kind of fatalism and Superman can give him no ‘aspiration’ as his birth is not only ‘inevitable’ but there is also nothing ‘absolutely new’ (Iqbal, 2000, p. 116). In his birth that can direct and energize the ever-growing human ego in its march towards unveiling the secrets of Self (discussed ahead in the chapter), and in establishing a contact, through the dynamically creative evolution/unveiling, with the Divine Ego besides implementing a just and sophisticated code of conduct of moral, political and ethical principles for a smooth and proper social functioning.

The existential/mystical aspect of eternal recurrence

Although the time past and the time future flow from the time present, or both are merged in the present moment, it is the moment that is eternally present. It is the moment that is loaded with eternity. The nature of this moment in Nietzsche’s view is not a timeless stagnation, nor is it the moment wherein the human ego may ripen to attain a contact with the Divine Ego as in Iqbal, rather the moment in Nietzsche is a decisive existential possibility of unburdening the human mind of the ‘It was’ or ‘what will be’ of every event and moment that even human willing can’t redeem: “To redeem the past and to transform every ‘It was’ into an ‘I wanted it thus!’—that alone do I call redemption...The will can’t will backwards: that it can’t break time and time’s desire—that is the will’s most lonely affliction” (Fraser, 2002, p. 108). To Nietzsche, one can liberate oneself by living unhistorically as animals live and ‘unhistorical’ is “the art and the power to be able to forget and to enclose oneself in a limited horizon; I term ‘suprahistorical’ those powers that divert one’s gaze from what is in the process of becoming to what lends existence the character of something eternal and stable in meaning.” (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 139).

Explaining the idea of recurrence in the context of the ‘unhistorical moment,’ we can infer that Nietzsche attempts to live a consciousness that Bergson calls ‘Pure Duration,’ in which individual consciousness transcends the divisions of serial time. It is not a ‘timeless, changeless and stagnant’ realm either. It is the moment of intuition not of intellection, of perception not of conception, and a moment of reception not of projection. Nietzsche

wants to transform serial time into pure duration by not only affirming its endless cyclic moments as the moments of joy and pain, of love and hate and so forth but by living them out on the practical altar and drama of perpetual change; in short, to immortalize time and our participation in it, not us as subjects. The nature of such moments is described in detail in the paper. To Iqbal also, the "movement of the universe in time" (Iqbal, 2000, p. 54) is devoid of a foreseen end. It is not to attain a far-off destination to which, as it is commonly believed, the whole creation moves. The universe in time is non-teleological, a free becoming. However, time processes cannot be conceived as a line already drawn, rather it is a line in the drawing—"an actualisation of open possibilities" (p. 55).

One possibility, out of many, is that which carries within it potential release from the net of serial and cyclic repetition of the self same causes and effects. This release is not an escape into a stagnant world of abstract metaphysical timelessness, rather it is an organically inclusive whole "in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with, and operating in, the present. And the future is given to it not as lying before, yet to be traversed; it is given only in the sense that is present in its nature as an open possibility" (Iqbal, 2000, p. 49).

In this sense, Destiny is not a pre-established route that man is to traverse, rather a new beginning of each moment and each moment is a self-disclosure of never-repeating divine possibilities, for God is infinite and unconstructed both in essence and in His manifestation. The Divine vastness forbids repetition. Iqbal concludes that "Destiny is time regarded as prior to the disclosure of its possibilities. It is time freed from the net of causal sequence—the diagrammatic character which the logical understanding imposes upon it. In a word, it is time as felt and not as thought and calculated" (p. 49).

Not every moment is new but full of creative glory and joy. Even the destructive aspects of time unveil the conditions that are necessary for creativity. Catastrophes bring about the possibility of fresh human initiatives. The destruction of the old is an inevitable condition for the emergence of the new for both philosophers. This new is not only an outward growth of science, tracing and tracking

the historical, psychological and anthropological residues of human development, nor the mere intellectual understanding of things but more importantly the 'new' is the inner/intuitive realization of 'being the crown of creation' and not a useless and soulless object driven sometimes by the rational categories and sometimes by the primitive animal instincts. The encounter with the Divine is direct and unmediated by the intellect and this encounter with the divine is totally present in Iqbal and largely absent in Nietzsche.

Almost all the aspects of Iqbalian thought and philosophy are permeated by the grandeur of this Divine presence. Even the matter is endowed with the divine light for manifesting the spiritually higher realities and stations. There is a rising spiritual pull in matter, for minerals die to be born into plants which in turn die to transform into beasts and beasts die to be born as humans. Humans must die to be born as Perfect Man. In Nietzsche, man is a cord tied between beast and Superman. The Perfect Man appropriates the divine attributes and thus transcends the Nietzschean world of mere 'becoming.' Iqbal emphasizes this point in the following words:

The climax of religious life, however, is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual self-hood. It is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness, its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status. Strictly speaking, the experience which leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation which can't be captured in the net of logical categories. It can embody itself only in a world-making or world-shaking act; and in this form alone the content of this timeless experience can diffuse itself in the time-movement, and make itself effectively visible to the eye of history (p. 184).

However, if the doctrine of eternal recurrence is understood as a moment of pure joy and ecstasy in which one is able to exclaim with joy a 'Yes' to everything, an intoxicated 'Yes' of a lover and not the 'cautious and cold 'Yes' of a scholar, then one can affirm the 'the heaviest burden' of the terrifying recurrence because the lover affirms all aspects of the beloved. True love is an intuitional and

unconditional arrest by the beloved. The intoxicated lover affirms unconditionally. This affirmation forms the core of the eternal recurrence and Iqbal's mystico-poetical genius with the main difference that in Iqbal's view what is affirmed is not the repetitive affirmation/negation of the age-old beliefs and disbeliefs or historical cycles, rather it is a participation and tasting of the fountains of knowledge that transcend the domain of intellect and the serial time.

Iqbal says that there are two approaches to understand the world: intellectual and vital. The first "consists in understanding the world as a rigid system of cause and effect. The vital is the absolute acceptance of the inevitable necessity of life, regarded as a whole which in evolving its inner richness creates serial time. This vital way of appropriating the universe is what the Qur'ān describes as '*iman*.' *Iman* is not merely a passive belief in one or more propositions of a certain kind; it is living assurance begotten of a rare experience. Strong personalities alone are capable of rising to this experience and the higher fatalism implied in it" (p. 109-110).

Iqbal's poetry highlights the 'limited capacity' of the intellect in communing with the Real. Iqbal compares the Intellect with Satan, a symbol of the willed deviation from the face of the Lord. The Intellect, to Iqbal, is information while the Heart is revelation.

The Mind is Past's and Present's prisoner
And tends the Idols of the eye and ear
My flesh, like others, is of clay and blood,
But in this flesh there dwells a spaceless thought
I only have this secret understood (Khundmiri 1980, p. 50).

The affirmation is accompanied in Iqbal by the revelation of the nature of the Self, an unveiling of the higher forms of life for 'an ever-growing ego' and such forms transcend the spatio-temporal limitations which is the only reality for Nietzsche's Superman. Nietzsche said:

The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deceptions of sensation: these again are the basis of all our judgements and knowledge—there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into the real world! We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we catch in it, we catch nothing

except that which allows itself to be caught precisely in our net (Fraser, 2002, p. 160).

However one cannot omit the fact that very idea of the recurrence dawned on Nietzsche as an ecstatic moment “6000 feet beyond men and time” (p. 120). Besides, to Nietzsche, life can be affirmed as an aesthetic phenomenon, if not a spiritual one. And each moment in this phenomenon is not a logical puzzle to be solved rather an epiphany of childish playfulness, of forgetfulness and innocence. However, it’s the vision or intuition of the ‘other than human mind can conceive’ that substantially gives an edge of purposefulness to the content of Iqbal’s affirmation over Nietzsche’s affirmation of the ‘universal flux of becoming’ unaccompanied by such visions. Iqbal notices this fact about Nietzsche when he says that “a really ‘imperative’ vision of the Divine in man did come to him can’t be denied. I call his vision ‘imperative’ because it appears to have given him a kind of prophetic mentality which, by some kind of technique, aims at turning its visions into permanent life forces” (Iqbal, 2000, p. 195).

Yet, Nietzsche is still a ‘failure’ in Iqbal’s account. It is because of two important reasons. One is due to the intellectual heritage of Schopenhauer and Darwin, whose intellectual or mental influence ‘blinded’ Nietzsche towards the spiritual significance of his own vision. Second is the lack of spiritual guidance of a true master, such as Rumi was to Iqbal. As a mystic, Iqbal offers many instances where the Intellect as a servant to the Heart conceptualizes the flights of the spirit that transcend its world of understanding. In such flights, the finite ego communes with the Infinite. Iqbal centralizes the finite ego in the metaphysics of the universe but not in the sense that western humanism/abstract metaphysics in general, and Nietzschean atheism, in particular, has done. Man is incomplete without God in Iqbal, and complete in Nietzsche and humanism.

Western humanism and atheism displaced God to define man in his own terms and made a pseudo-god of him whose sole purpose remains to follow the footsteps of rationality that, after Descartes, has imprisoned him in the skull of thought, thinker and a ‘thinking thing,’ and in the universal flux of Nietzsche. Or else to master the nature denuded of spiritual significance. Such interpretations have

helped to reduce everything to a mechanical law that tries to explain everything, and anything that escapes the space of this law is dismissed as 'metaphysical,' which does not exist.

Is man no more than an effect of a mechanical causation? Iqbal's response is 'yes.' He is the 'heart,' the site of intuition, vision and revelation. He is a lover who is in search of his beloved in the deserts of existence. The lover in Iqbal is never alone because there is nothing other than the face of the beloved. Everywhere there is only love. Without love there can neither be a lover nor a beloved. Love has the power to create a beloved out of a stone idol. In the spiritual journey, the heart becomes the rider of man's soul and reason is a silent spectator of the grandeur of the light and love in beloved's search. That is why the mystical search of all the saints is diametrically opposed to the rational search of the philosophers. It is the longing for the 'heart' by Iqbal that makes the 13th century mystic, Rumi, his spiritual mentor.

Nietzsche's unparalleled quest and love for God make him the greatest religious genius of the 20th century and the divine tragic hero. Young Nietzsche wants to know and even serve a God who is an "incomprehensible yet related one" (Fraser, 2002, p. 24) and "who [has] reached deep into my soul, into my life like the gust of a storm" (p. 24). And the mature Nietzsche concludes his pilgrimage as a "poor search" (Iqbal, 2000, p. 195). Nietzsche realized the need of a master and spiritual discipline because he knew that he confronted an immense problem alone that made him lost in a forest. In eastern spirituality, a seeker of truth is believed to have known God when he finds a true master. A seeker without a master in this context is like a rider riding a horse without reins. Iqbal's intellectual adventures into the burning flames of Western philosophy led him also initially to the path of atheism but finally it is, as Iqbal repeatedly says in his verses, master Rumi's intoxicated love and presence besides others that transform the bed of Abrahamic flames into a bed of roses. So, in Iqbal's account, Nietzsche's vision, besides other factors, "remained unproductive for want of external guidance in his spiritual life" (p. 195).

Nietzsche's affirmation of the moment is nothing except the affirmation of the universal flux or of indefinite becoming of all binaries and processes that please and displease, hurt and heal, and

create and destroy, the never ending drama of life. It is here that Iqbal differs from Nietzsche radically. Although Iqbal, too, rejects the Platonic world of Ideal or Timeless Reality, and designates it as stagnation and death, yet he experiences the world of 'becoming' as not a mere affirmation of becoming rather as creatively evolving and as well-directed meaningful adventure into the secrets of Self. What are the secrets? As mentioned above, these are the participation of the human ego with the Divine Ego resulting the certitude of the human ego as co-partner in the process of creativity and growth. Iqbal takes recourse to Islam and its kernel, Sufism, to explain his points of view.

According to the Qur'ān, Iqbal explains, man is the vicegerent of God and a trustee of free personality. Though the human personality or human ego has a beginning in the spatio-temporal order, its existence precedes this order and its birth is not an accident or a blind stroke of a reinless Will. The Islamic perspective emphasizes the fact that the soul is a trust from God to man and not a mere accident of a blind will to life and power. It is purposive and creative in nature in Iqbal. Nor does death annihilate the ego. In this world, ego is caught in the tension of limits of spatio-temporal order which render it finite. However, its finitude is not a misfortune, rather it renders a peculiar individuality to the finite ego to "approach the infinite ego to see for himself the consequences of his past action and to judge the possibilities of his future" (Iqbal, 2000, p.117). The "unceasing reward" (p. 117) is the goal of human ego and it accomplishes it in the "gradual growth in self possession, in uniqueness, and intensity of his activity" (p.117), the culmination of which is the direct vision by the finite ego of the all-embracing Ultimate Ego as exemplified by the Prophet's *Mi'rāj*. For Iqbal, *Mi'rāj* is the highest state of self-consciousness, where one gets a vision of Reality without any reference to its attributes. Awareness of Reality through attributes is the intellectual awareness, acquaintance of things through their effects. Iqbal describes it as 'transformation in consciousness' wherein the mystery of Time (Time is serially infinite or Pure Duration) is unified. Khundmiri (1980) explains this point in the following words:

Is this experience Timeless? Iqbal's position is yes and no both. It is timeless in the sense that human time becomes

irrelevant in this experience and therefore it is not wrong to call it timeless. But in a deeper sense, Time is not irrelevant to it as it happens in time and hence this involvement is an experience of Time itself. The ego gets a glimpse of the Highest Life Whose essence is Pure Duration. It is definitely different from the Indian attitude of 'flight from Time.' It is the conquest of Time but at the same time an experience of Life- Eternal which is described by Iqbal as 'non-successional change.' The term 'time' is not a very fortunate term here. The opposite of Time is that 'Timelessness' which is the complete negation of Time but no experience is possible in this 'timeless condition.' This higher experience which is often called 'timeless' is an encounter with the Eternal which includes Time as well as non-successional Duration. The Eternal is not separated from the temporal 'in a spatial sense' and hence the traditional controversy about the '*Miraj*' being a physical experience or a purely spiritual one or in a dream-like condition or in a waking state is not a sensible one (pp. 60-61).

In Nietzsche's atheistic ontological conception of Reality there is neither possibility nor necessity of such 'higher' experiences and visions that Iqbal, in particular, and almost all the great mystical and prophetic traditions of the world in general affirm or have experienced since time immemorial. Therefore, Iqbal regards ego as the highest form of life in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. However, Iqbal does not believe that these exclusive centres are 'windowless' and acting according to pre-established harmony in a static universe. The human ego is potentially immortal. Its immortality is personal rather than collective. Life is an arena for the ego's activity. Weak egos dissolve at death but the grown and self-disciplined egos that survive the shock of death gain, in the stage between death and resurrection, fresh opportunities for growth.

Sufi experiences show that the ego, during this period, continues to possess consciousness. At its re-emergence, the ego's character manifests itself in the form of heaven and hell, which are states, not locations. The ego after death and resurrection continues to receive ever new opportunities for self-growth and creative self-unfolding. And, according to the Qur'ān, rebirth or the return to the same spatio-

temporal and physical condition is an impossibility. Although Iqbal (2000) admits that after physical death there must be “some other way” (p. 122) or medium for the further working and development of the human ego. But that ‘way’ is unknown to Iqbal. This paves the way to Iqbal’s belief on Sufi experiences that there are grades of time and space which are qualitatively and quantitatively different than our present experience of time-space.

In fact, Sufi literature abounds with such miraculous references as a Sufi’s being present simultaneously at so many different and distant places. In Sufi terminology such a state is called *Taye-maqaano-zamaa*. The unconscious awareness of space-time in sound sleep is, in all its dimensions, different from the waking awareness of the same. If such a state can exist normally, why not the other states that Iqbal and other Sufis talk of? The Perfect Man is not a slave of serial time and its consequent effects but its master. Having etched himself in the divine attribute of omnipresence, he transcends the limits of space-time which is nothing but a single effect of boundless Divine Creativity.

The concept of creativity in Iqbal is like a mysterious shoreless ocean that keeps pouring out newer and fresher waters each moment. In fact, our world is born anew each moment, and each moment in all its attributes and dimensions is not only unique but also totally and radically different from any other moment. However, the instrument that can bring one on such a plane of realization is heart and love, an unending quest after the Beloved. The lover can never conclude his ever-creative journey for he sees no limit to the divine effulgence. Iqbal’s vision of Time finds its beautiful and mystically dynamic reflection in the following lines of his poem “The Melody of Time” included in his *Pyami-i-Mashriq*:

The sun is in my lap, the stars are in my pocket
 If you look at me, I am nothing, if you
 see in the depth of your Self, I am life
 I am the pain, I am the cure...I am life abundant
 I am the sword that destroys the world, I am the
 fountain of life
 I am the traveller and you my destination; I am the
 field and you my harvest

You are the instrument that creates innumerable Melodies
 the warmth of this universe,
 You who are aimlessly wandering in the world of
 events, find your place in your heart
 You will find an infinite ocean contained in this small goblet
 From your lofty waves spring my deluge (Khundmiri, 1980,
 pp. 54-55).

The intellectual/scientific aspect of eternal recurrence

In Nietzsche, the fate of the human soul is to repeat itself on this very earth because the “knot of causes” (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 285) in which human soul or ‘I’ is entangled in some automatic machine or a coded chip which cannot process new commands (as there are none new), rather it will repeat forever the number of given or limited commands that are predetermined. It is like Descartes’ modified form of ‘cogitio.’ The modified ‘I’ is locked eternally in the chip. In this chip the processor ‘I’ is to traverse an infinite time while the events in this chip (the world of time and space) are finite. This means that in an infinite time, the finite events are bound to recur again and again eternally. Nietzsche himself said that the “Law of conservation of energy demands eternal recurrence” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 547). The world therefore is a never ending process of coming to be and passing away. In his *Will to Power*, Nietzsche explains:

If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force—and every other representation remains indefinite and therefore useless—it follows that, in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more, it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated; the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 549).

It is this mechanical aspect of the theory that Iqbal criticizes. He says that it is a worked out “hypothesis of science” (Iqbal, 2000, p. 115) and is not based on “an ascertained fact” (p. 115). It is based on an assumption on the scientific law of conservation of the universe in which time as an objective finite series of events returns to itself indefinitely:

The centres of this energy are limited in number, and their combination perfectly calculable. There is no beginning or end of this ever active energy, no equilibrium, no first or last change. Since time is finite, therefore all possible combinations of energy-centres have already been exhausted. There is no new happening in the universe; whatever now happens has happened before an infinite number of times, and will continue to happen an infinite number of times in the future...for since an infinite time has passed, the energy-centres must have, by this time, formed certain definite mode of behaviour. The very word ‘Recurrence’ implies this fixity...Now, time, regarded as a perpetual circular movement, makes immortality absolutely intolerable. Nietzsche himself feels this and describes his doctrine, not as one of immortality but rather as a view of life which would make immortality endurable. And what makes immortality bearable, according to Nietzsche? It is the expectation that a recurrence of the combination of energy-centres which constitutes my personal existence is the necessary factor in the birth of...Superman (pp. 114-115).

In other words, if one could have things all over again, one cannot do anything different. However, if one believes wholeheartedly for one’s self to have the things the same way indefinitely, one is entitled to have passed the test of the doctrine and thereby achieved redemption.

What can redeem humanity as a whole is not transcendence but to accept and affirm the human existence and human condition unconditionally and in its totality. It is the antithesis to the Christian conception of an otherworldly life and the reward and punishment theory. Nietzsche says that eternal recurrence is a new response to the European Nihilism that was followed after the demise of metaphysics. It involves a mistrust of all previous evaluations that

“allow the whole comedy [of existence] to drag on without ever getting closer to a solution” (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 386).

The recurrence is the solution: with the death of the belief in God, there remains no meaning in existence and suffering. It seems as if everything is in vain with no aim and purpose. In such a scenario “duration is the most paralysing thought” (p. 386). Eternal recurrence, therefore, is a response to the ‘in vain’ with which is related the duration. The anxiety and the dread of ‘in vain duration’ demand a practical and ‘the most scientific hypothesis’ of the eternal recurrence which denies ‘final goals’ and takes the Nihilism to its logical conclusion of the ‘eternal return’ without a finale in nothingness. And Nietzsche considers it to be “most extreme form of nihilism”...a “European form of Buddhism” (p. 388). It is a will to nothingness but the nothingness is not of negative theology. That nothingness, as of Eckhart or Buddha, is an affirmation of the transcendent Reality by the very negation of all the attributes that are in/directly related to the transcendence. It is an impersonal/metaphysical realization of the Reality.

In comparison, eternal recurrence is a categorical rejection of all transcendence and an exclusive paganistic acceptance of the world of senses and mind. Similarly, it is not mystical ‘choiceless awareness’ wherein there is neither affirmation nor negation rather ‘witnessing’ of all mental, psychological and moral constructs. ‘Choiceless awareness’ is like an ever-expanding circle of silence. The recurrence can come into being only after we reject the idea of ‘other life’ and all other ‘grades and experiences’ of time other than our own serial and sensory one. So the recurrence is the atheistic acceptance of whatever comes one’s way. Now it is the only way to justify life and living, the tragedy and comedy of life and all that life offers. It is non-dualistic and balances the tormenting and conflicting binaries of the human intellect and human history. It unifies dualistic tendencies—created by the Christian conception of the afterlife and otherworldly attitude—by making humans loyal to earth and earth only. It inaugurates the beginning of a new value system in which humans replace God and humans are what they know they are: an effect of various changes and forces that have neither beginning nor end.

The myth of the progress of science and the human intellect in unravelling the mysteries of nature and finally subjugating it has ended in the mechanical conception of the modern scientific conception of reality. Nietzsche rejects the Christian and the Enlightenment 'linear theory of time.' History is endless and repeats itself in the identical cycles. And these cycles are independent of all supernatural and metaphysical influences. They are self-sufficient and self-regulating energy centres that can neither be created nor destroyed by our willing or belief systems. These cycles are not different cycles but exactly the same. To affirm one cycle is to have affirmed the whole recurrence. What is then the point in affirming identical affirmations and cycles? Is not repetition boredom?

Iqbal notices this point and says that the eternal recurrence "is the most hopeless idea of immortality ever formed by man. This eternal repetition is not eternal 'becoming'; it is the same old idea of 'being' masquerading as 'becoming'." (Iqbal, 2000, p. 187). Heidegger comes close to this interpretation when he says that the eternal recurrence is "Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position" (Fraser, 2002, p. 114) while Nietzsche himself says of it that "[t]o impose upon becoming the character of being—that is the supreme will to power...that everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being" (p. 114). From this, Heidegger derives the conclusion that "[t]he sense is that one must shape Becoming as being in such a way that *as becoming* it is preserved has subsistence, in a word, is" (p. 114).

Moreover, it is the essential principle of the universe that manifests itself as intelligence in the very thinking mechanism of human minds, first as a possibility and then as a necessity. Thought is a possibility of 'divine intelligence' to which the very extension of every thought in time and space is directed for thought, and its mechanism as an entity in itself self-created, self-creating and self-explanatory, ends in absurdity with regard to the question as to what makes a thought, an image or a picture intelligible. If we say 'thought' itself, then it is all thought about thought and so on *ad infinitum*. Nietzsche remains entangled in this dilemma when he perceived the Truth in terms of linguistic metaphors and metonymies, or when he said there is no truth but 'interpretations.'

However, Iqbal the mystic sees reason and thought and the intellectual interpretations as 'good servants' but dangerous guides if relied upon wholly and solely. Reason is a limited principle of divine intelligence and restricted to the world of time and space. Its mode of operation and comprehension is indirect and objective or non-participatory. It operates by dividing itself into subject and object and the gap between the two—the 'I' and 'Thou'—remains as two never-unifying entities.

The knowledge of the modern philosophy and science is based merely on this principle and Nietzsche's comprehension of reality is fraught with rational enquiry or irrational doubt. He had overloaded himself with knowledge and felt the need of a spiritual master and obedience/devotion: "I need help. I need disciples: I need a *master*. It would be so sweet to obey (Iqbal, 2000, p. 195). Iqbal rightly says that Nietzsche did not know the meaning of *Abdahu*, devotion/slavery to God. Nietzsche rejects 'Thou' as non-existent or inaccessible therefore useless and affirms the 'I' as the sole chaos of a cosmic will while as Iqbal maintains the 'I' in a constant 'tension' in quest of an ontologically established 'Thou.'

Intellect or reason in the Perfect Man can conceptualize what the heart perceives, and what is perceived is not a mere concept or a theory of knowledge but an organic and whole vision of reality. It is not the conception of Reality but the very perception that reveals the true nature of Reality. It is direct where the 'I' and 'Thou,' as with Moses on Mount Sinai or Muhammad (SAW) during the *Mi'rāj*, mirror each other face-to-face without losing their respective identity/level.

The ethical/moral aspect of eternal recurrence

It is important to note here that Iqbal's Perfect Man is not indifferent or ascetic towards what Nietzsche calls the 'herd.' The Perfect Man is a socially-responsible soul. He does not neglect his social roles which may be deemed habitual and mundane repetition of the herd by Nietzsche's Superman. He is a 'social monk' who mirrors every colour of existence through the sight that has no colour. He takes on shapes like a liquid takes on that of the container in which it is poured. He lives in *faqr* or spiritual poverty. There is no egoism or

over-confident assertion of the 'I' because the real 'I' is God before whom our Perfect Man surrenders all his 'egoistic selves' and seeks the shelter of the divine grace. For such a soul, life and death and all values come and belong to Allah, God. Suffering and pain are from God, and man can do nothing except whatever small or big things he can do to reduce the suffering. The rest is the will of God and submission is the solution. However, Nietzsche's heroic Zarathustra is haunted by the dwarf; the small man's presence becomes an obstacle to Zarathustra for the 'full affirmation' and he addresses the Dwarf "You! or I!" (Fraser, 2002, p. 163). Finally the hero opts to kill the Dwarf or sacrifice him even, rather than to allow him to make the dwarf a hero. Giles Fraser well observes in this connection that:

Zarathustra can rise no higher until he overcomes the pity for humanity that still pulls him back to the earth. In this way Nietzsche's rejection of pity ...represents a rejection of, a refusal to acknowledge, any sense of identity between himself and the crippled dwarf figure, suffering humanity...In rejecting suffering humanity, in casting people as herd, Nietzsche is seeking to set himself free from the earth below. This begins Nietzsche's disloyalty to earth; a murderous disloyalty which, for all Nietzsche's emphasis on honesty, is motivated by an unwillingness fully to face the pains and disappointments of his own humanity. (pp. 163-164)

The question is, does the idea of the recurrence teach us to affirm everything or to affirm 'selectively'? Different critics respond to this apparent contradiction differently. Gilles Deleuze advocates the interpretation of 'selective affirmation.' He says that the eternal recurrence distinguishes between the 'reactive forces' which are the products of *ressentiment* and are to be resisted, and the 'active forces' which are free from *ressentiment* and are to be affirmed. However, this reading brings into focus another contradiction which Ansell-Pearson (1994) puts in the following words:

On one level, it [Eternal recurrence] provides an experience of the affirmation of life in its totality and unity (providing a feeling of cosmic oneness with the universe); on another level, which is brought out by Deleuze's reading, it exists as a kind of ethical imperative. My argument is that if the eternal return is to be viewed in the latter terms, then it cancels out

the attitude of total affirmation implied in the cosmic view, and imposes upon human beings the necessity, as moral beings, of making judgements on life: not only saying yes. I will that again and again, but also saying, no, never again (p. 111).

This is 'selective affirmation.' It cannot be totally indiscriminate. It is not possible to pity yet be unaffected by the 'sentiments' evoked by the pitied. The theoretical affirmation of the whole contradicts the actual and concrete living of a Superman. In this sense, a Superman is not a hypocrite, rather a 'selective' affirmer of what fits in the hierarchy of a Superman. A Superman cannot affirm and live the value-level of the herd: "I teach the No to all that makes weak—which exhausts. I teach a Yes to all that makes for strength" (p. 112). So the recurrence is not to affirm 'generality' but 'particularity.' One cannot in practice affirm everything, for the value of affirmation lies not in the 'theoretical acceptance' of each and everything, rather it lies in the very 'practical act of living out' a definition of value that appeals and challenges one's whole personality into thought and action.

The values of a Superman are necessarily selective. Being selective, they cannot be universal or indiscriminately general. The value of the recurrence lies not in its being a factual and ascertained universal truth but in our acceptance or rejection of the very idea, in our living out the doctrine concretely. It is holy to live wholly. The holy whole is the circle of eternal recurrence. In this sense, recurrence is a modern divinization or deification of a godless earth and its humanity. In Christian terminology, it is the eternal submission to the biblical dictum 'thy will be done.' However, it is not a passive resignation to a divinely established scheme, rather it is an active and positive affirmation/synthesis of all the binaries (intellectual and emotional) that have hitherto divided human personality. It is active in creating a new value system and replacing the outdated ones, especially of Christianity. Its crown concern is humans and earth, not God. It is mystical or religious in the sense that it sees everything as divine/holy in itself and rejects anything that despairs of the earth and is unholy or non-sacred or incomplete. The creative potential of the eternal recurrence is that Superman, like a Dionysian reveller, is lost in the ocean of life, thereby justifying it as an aesthetic pleasure

sung out on the instruments of art weaved by the Apollonian classical discipline. The Dionysian and Apollonian drives for life finally complement the art of living in Nietzsche. The human instinct to create art saves men from the truth which, after God's death, is horror and different interpretations. Thus, art replaces the religious instinct to 'create, live and love' for the 'other than human.' 'Will to truth' thus is replaced by the 'will to power.' However, the demon puts forward the idea as an option between an affirmation of the "heaviest burden" (p. 109), of a "tremendous moment" (p. 109) which can transform or crush one; and the negation of the very burden of the recurrence that one may curse such a fate:

What if some day or night a demon crept into your loneliest loneliness and said to you: 'This life as you live it now and have lived it, you will have to live it again and again time without number: there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy, every thought and every sigh...and everything in the same series and sequence...in the same way this moment and I myself...and you with it, you dust of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you experienced a tremendous moment in which you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never did I hear anything more divine!' if this thought gained power over you it would, as you are now, transform and perhaps crush you: the question in all and everything, 'do you want this again and again, times without number?' would lie as the heaviest burden on all your actions. Or how well disposed towards yourself and towards life would you have to become to have no greater desire than for this ultimate confirmation and seal (p. 341).

Milan Kundera notices this apparently ambiguous nature of the idea of eternal recurrence and calls it 'mad myth.' He explains the myth in terms of 'lightness and weight' and says that it becomes a way for the self to generate its own moral gravity. Here again we can see the revaluation of values. Nietzsche offers an alternative soteriology which is not only more terrifying than its Christian one but also morally more demanding and ambiguously graver. In terms of 'lightness,' "the myth of eternal return states that a life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime, its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing"

(Kundera, 2010, p. 1). So finally it means nothing whether it was full of 'horror' or 'beauty.' In terms of 'weight' the 'unbearable responsibility' of the affirmation of the eternal return of every second of life is a 'terrifying prospect' because in this one is 'nailed' to the cross of recurrence eternally. This way it becomes the heaviest of burdens. Fraser (2002) sharply observes in this connection:

Whereas before God's death the weight of divine judgement bore upon each and every human choice, the felt presence of heaven and hell rendered human decision making of ultimate significance, freedom from divine judgement means that what human beings choose to do no longer carry the same significance. What is required by Nietzsche is some way of generating gravity, of introducing judgement, without returning to divine judgement of divine weight...It looks as if Nietzsche invents the eternal recurrence as a way of having his cake and eating it—of having liberation from divine oppression and also having the sort of moral and spiritual gravity that comes from the presence of divine judgement (pp. 115-116).

But what shall we choose: 'lightness' or 'weight'? This brings us back to the basic question on which eternal recurrence rests whether individuals/souls are recurred or not. Only that can decide whether we live life in 'light' or under 'weight' for to know is to choose.

Nietzsche rejects questions regarding posthumous life as metaphysical and useless and defines everything in terms of appearances of life. He works out a mechanical scientific hypothesis for explaining the genealogy of human soul. However, it is acknowledged by almost all the Prophets and saints of all civilizations that the human soul is on an eternal journey and earth is one of its stations. Iqbal believes the conclusions drawn by the prophetic and mystic experiences/revelations regarding the fate of human soul.

However, it is not the belief in one or the other theory that can save one, rather it is one's participation in the Reality. Nietzsche's concept of recurrence is his own participation/experience in search of Reality. In both Iqbal and Nietzsche, life/living continues though qualitatively on different planes. Life and living in itself, without God, is divine and sacred in Nietzsche. The sanctity of life and living, of being human, is further glorified and magnified by the presence

of God in Iqbal: the human journey is incomplete without God, just as a lover's love is impossible without the beloved. The beloved unveils her beauty springs into the secret depths of the lover's heart. Nietzsche creates a new lover who must love his eternal loneliness, for the beloved has hidden her face behind the ever-fleeting images of the cosmos. The image is the beloved herself.

Iqbal's dynamic concept of creative evolution is questionable on many grounds but its kernel is that on the path of love and spiritual poverty there is the revelation of new modes of knowledge that transcend all our worldly knowledge and its mode of operation. This fact gets support by all the veteran Sufi authorities such as Rumi or Ibn Arabi to whom Iqbal refers time and again. Eternal recurrence implies that the revelatory and new knowledge cannot be because then there would be things and knowledge 'to become,' while the foundational aspect of recurrence stresses that all things have already become, and there is no new becoming: neither of knowledge nor of revelation. There are no eternal truths to be revealed as there is no subject and no object, just becoming. In this sense, recurrence is a delimiting and rigid system of value. It puts an end to the infinite resources of 'divine knowledge' that Iqbal and all mystics speaks of. Art becomes a crutch for Nietzsche to lean on after the death of God. For Iqbal, on the other hand, art is just a poor instrument that cannot communicate the knowledge and joy which is wordless and thoughtless.

However, the mere affirmation or negation of a value system cannot be a guarantee of salvation for a searching soul. It is the process of participation, of living out, however high or low, the possibilities that life offers that can finally guarantee the validity of truth one creates or comes across. There are as many truths as there are approaches. No truth is final in the final analysis when one comes to understand the nature of Truth. Truth is open-ended and thus bewildering. It is the ecstatic bewilderment with relation to truth that characterizes the highest station of the seeker of Truth.

Conclusion

It has been argued that Nietzsche's conception of eternal recurrence, although converging in some respects with the Eastern metaphysical

and mystical conception of the wheel of life or fate, is problematic on epistemological, ontological and ethical grounds. The project of salvation and salvific ethic cannot be grounded on it. The Perfect Man becomes an impossible project in the background of a strict deterministic universe. Nietzsche's appropriation of scientific thought blocks his way to a fuller realization of the mystical core of his idea of Perfect Man, who is free from the slavery to the given by virtue of *amor fati*. Iqbal deploys the notion of love of fate for ultimately conquering fate in the moment of transcendental perception where time simply ceases to be serial time. The tragic does not constitute the absolute given in this changed view, and fidelity to truth is maintained as it is not identified with anything immanent. The human can, by virtue of ethical choice, change the coordinates of the given world of dualism of thought and being, and affirm everything without losing creativity and freedom in the process. Slavery to God becomes the road to freedom which makes life not only tolerable but a song of joy and a spectacle of love. To Nietzsche is denied this subtle dialectical understanding of *amor fati* vis-à-vis the transcendence that God is in mystical worldviews including the Sufi worldview of Iqbal.

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