Chapter V

TIME AND VALUE

We began by saying that Nietzsche claims to be a "tragic" philosopher. There are two sides to this claim. The first is his position of pessimism and philosophical nihilism, and the second is his philosophy of Dionysian affirmation. The latter, it may be observed, is an integral part of the Transvaluation since it suggests an alternative to (weak) pessimism and, as such, forms part of the outer dialectic of the Transvaluation.

In continuing such a discussion we seek first to give a background of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, observing how Nietzsche scholars have variously treated it.

We then see how Nietzsche relates the problem of time with the will. The "reconciliation" of the will with time is purportedly achieved through the dual conceptions of the Eternal Recurrence and *Amor Fatii*. We shall try to relate these with the problem of nihilism and Nietzsche's claims to be a "tragic" philosopher.

But further, we try to see the role of myth and eternity in Nietzsche's thought. We shall try to show that both are important to understand his philosophy of affirmation and the Eternal Recurrence. One "argument" in which Nietzsche may be seen to collect these ideas together. The notion of "eternity" however remains an abstruse one in Nietzsche's thought.
The Eternal Recurrence -- background: Nietzsche claims that the idea of the Eternal Recurrence "came" to him in August 1881 as he was taking a walk through the woods near Lake Silvaplana. This flash of intuition, or inspiration, came as the fundamental conception of Zarathustra and was to be "the highest formula for affirmation that can ever be attained." 1

The idea always occurs, in Nietzsche, in the context of the psychological reactions that the Eternal Recurrence could induce. For the idea that everything, to the smallest detail, repeats itself in eternal cycles, is fatalistic enough to produce the "greatest stress". 2

As a thinker whose deepest concern is with human existence, Nietzsche tries to see the impact that the Eternal Recurrence would have on the very being of man.

The idea of the Eternal Recurrence has had its protagonists and antagonists in almost the entire history of both Eastern and Western thought. It was a recurrent theme in early Greek Philosophy. Jewish and Christian theology have negatively been concerned with trying to refute it. In more contemporary times scientific models of an oscillating universe have been conceived 3 and it has even been sought to be conceived on mathematical grounds. 4

The conception of an oscillating universe has also been treated extensively in various mythologies. The Hindu myth of "Ishana" -- the
divine play, in which the One becomes the many and the many return into the One, in endless cycles, is a characteristic example.

Oscillatory models, however, may not contain that added qualification that each cycle contains an identical recurrence of configurations, as Nietzsche asserts they do. Therefore, analogies between Nietzsche's, the scientific and mythological models cannot be much emphasized.

Nietzsche on his part is aware that the Stoics held onto a doctrine of Eternal Recurrence and conjectures that perhaps Heracleitus held it too. However, Nietzsche only indicates an intellectual genealogy and we ought not to take this as an indication of an "influence" in any mechanical sense. The idea did come to him in a unique "light".

Nietzsche scholars have tried to grapple with this idea at very many levels of scientific and logical consistency, all of which go to show the precarious nature of Nietzsche's assumptions. It has been dismissed by some as little better than a wild illusion and philosophically untenable. Most interpret it in the light of the rest of Nietzsche's other ideas, mainly nihilism and affirmation.

Kaufmann, for example, does not see Nietzsche's theoretical formulations as of any significance and cites Simmel to show that it can even be refuted. Jaspers similarly dismisses the theoretical formulations of Nietzsche while wishing to retain its axiological
importance for Nietzsche:

when we deal analytically and critically with this idea, we encounter **a form of scientific argument that in this case cannot but fail.**

Yet it is "philosophically as essential as it is questionable" and "to him (Nietzsche) it was most overpowering, while probably no one since then has taken it seriously."

Let us briefly see how Nietzsche himself offered arguments for the idea that a cyclical cosmos repeats itself endlessly. Nietzsche rejects the notion of a spirit or power operating in or behind becoming. Further becoming cannot be regarded as a chain of infinite novelty. The "law" implied by him states that this follows from the very definition of the concept of "force":

> the world, as force, may not be thought of as unlimited, for it cannot be so thought of, we forbid ourselves the concept of an infinite force as incompatible with the concept "force". Thus the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty.

Using the assumptions that (i) the total sum of energy is finite, (ii) that its configurations are, therefore, also finite, and (iii) that time is infinite, Nietzsche's clearest statement of the position runs as follows:

If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force, 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 ad infinitum.

It is difficult to evaluate such an argument on purely evidential grounds. Like the will to power, the Eternal Recurrence stands essentially unverifiable by Popperian criteria. It is a logical argument, based on certain postulates and a series of deductions, rather than an empirical hypothesis.

Danto and Magnus have made acute critical evaluations of the doctrine. Both have shown the precarious nature of Nietzsche's assumptions, all of which he may not even have explicitly and consistently held. Magnus shows that there is an ambiguity in Nietzsche's use of certain terms like "state" (Lage), configuration (Gesamtlage) and the plural form of the latter (Gesamtlagen). He shows that the cosmological arguments, if subjected to critical analysis, turn out to be "either fundamentally defective, ambiguous, or inconsistent".

Nietzsche is aware of the difficulty in assuming an Eternal Recurrence in which each recurrence would be identical to all other recurrences.
Everything has come to pass in so far as the total configuration of all energy eternally recurs. Whether, quite aside from that, anything identical has come to pass is entirely indemonstrable. 13

Such a formulation may be interpreted to mean that Nietzsche held on to a position of a general cyclical recurrence without postulating an identical recurrence. Rose Pfeffer for instance, argues on the basis of Nietzsche's characterization of the world as a fluid, but finite, sum of energy, that Nietzsche indeed does not advocate an identical return; rather he advocates a return of the "total field of energy", "which contains within itself the elements of change and activity, tension and release, repulsion and attraction, destruction and creation. Thus she goes on to argue for the return of "the tragic pattern of life". 15 Such an interpretation, however, ignores those passages where Nietzsche does intend to work out an identical return and which is so important to his axiological position in the published works. It is precisely such a fatalistic determinism which raises for Nietzsche certain existential problems.

We shall end this discussion by a few observations. Though Nietzsche uses the term "scientific" for the Eternal Recurrence, it ought not to mislead us into demanding too much from the doctrine. Magnus observes that the German equivalent for "scientific" includes "scholarly" and "learned" and need not connote the restrictive English
usage of meaning "methodological rigor, empirical verification, or an axiomatized deductive system". Further it is extremely difficult to make jumps from scientific theories to philosophical assumptions: As Danto puts it:

The relationship between science and philosophy is complex, and the validity of inferences which run from one to the other is utterly vulnerable to attack.

The crucial point, however, is to make the very important methodological qualification, as some writers do, that in Nietzsche all references to the Eternal Recurrence as a scientific hypothesis are to be found in the notes and there are no such references in the works Nietzsche intended for publication. From this it can be concluded that Nietzsche was aware of the cosmological arguments but was unsure of working out a consistent cosmology.

Keeping this methodological qualification in mind it becomes clear that Nietzsche's use of the idea in his published works undermines the cosmological significance of the idea. The "postscript" that Nietzsche added to the Eternal Recurrence, "6000 feet beyond man and time", can hardly indicate a level that is scientific or logical. That in spite of this Nietzsche attempts positivist formulations can only be attributed to his ambivalence towards myth and science. We wish to at least emphasize the former. This has not been investigated adequately by Nietzsche scholars.

Nietzsche's attitude, however, is clearly ambivalent. It oscillates between the scientific-positivist outlook and the view that
the Eternal Recurrence is a spontaneous intuition of what was essentially hidden in his unconscious, as part of his own necessity. Thus we find that though Nietzsche attributes the Eternal Recurrence to his "destiny", and that it "came" as an intuitive flash, and remarks that it was to form the "fundamental conception" of Zarathustra, he nonetheless goes on to make entries in his notebooks that reveal a positivist attempt to "argue" the Eternal Recurrence.

This ambivalence is substantiated from biographical accounts of Nietzsche. He is reported to have written in a letter that the doctrine was to be referred to as a "silently whispered secret". On the other hand he is reported to have wanted to give up all other studies to devote the next 10 years of his life to the study of mathematics and the natural sciences to try and offer "proof" for his intuitive insights.

The problem of the will and time: Nietzsche's project of the Transvaluation of all Values is essentially an endeavour to examine the various responses that arise from man's confrontation with his own existence.

Zarathustra introduces the notion of time as a problem faced by an individual in the confrontation with his existence. He describes how the will turns upon time with the spirit of revenge.
"This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will's antipathy towards time and time's 'It was'" 23 Nietzsche thought that the will, which is really the will to power, must, in order to keep to its true nature and disposition, keep overcoming or going beyond the stage of constancy. However, it so happens that the will could get "trapped" by its own willing. This occurs when the will, regretting its past deeds, longs for a redemption from those past deeds:

willing liberates; but what is it that fastens in fetters even the liberator?

"It was": that is what the will's teeth-gnashing and most lonely affliction is called. Powerless against that which has been done, the will is an angry spectator of all things past. The will cannot will backwards; that it cannot break time and time's desire — that is the will's most lonely affliction. 24

The will is powerless to redeem the past. This state of affairs, a kind of powerlessness and frustration, turns the will against time. The process may be abbreviated as follows: (i) There is an act — a willing. (ii) This act produces remorse and guilt. (iii) The will desires redemption from that act of willing. (iv) Unable to do so it turns upon time in frustration and a desire for revenge. The will becomes disillusioned with itself and the here and now.

Rather than project itself towards an overcoming — towards a will to power, the will seeks redemption in a realm that seems to
transcend time altogether. The will, evolving into the various forms of pessimism and nihilism, adopts anti-time postures. It manifests itself in the formulation of such principles as "willing itself and all life is punishment"; "everything passes away, therefore, it deserves to pass away". It postulates a "law" namely that "time must devour her children" and that this is "justice itself"; that existence is punishment, a consequence of some primordial crime and guilt. Finally, the will seeks to redeem itself by becoming a "not willing" the passive nihilism of empty nothingness that Nietzsche attributes to Schopenhauer and Buddhism.

Zarathustra sees as his mission the reconciliation of the will with time. The will must be redeemed from its "backward glance" to the past. Zarathustra's intention is to teach the will that its past was its own creation, not an inevitable consequence of some crime. The view that existence is the result of a primordial crime is to be found not only in some early Greek thinkers but most significantly in the Christian doctrines of Creation and the Fall of Man. Zarathustra says that our past deeds were the act of will and must be affirmed as such.

To redeem that past of mankind and transform every "It was", until the will says, "But I willed it thus! So shall I will it" 25
In other words, Zarathustra wishes the will to return to the "moment", the here and now, and affirm its own temporality, its own present reality. Such a return is the precondition of the will's reconciliation with time.

The Eternal Recurrence and Amor Fati — the axiological arguments! Let us now turn towards seeing how Nietzsche wishes to achieve the will's reconciliation with time. The Eternal Recurrence serves as the ground from which he can fully work out his whole philosophy of affirmation, a pithy expression for which is the formula Amor Fati, "Love thy Fate," both the Eternal Recurrence and Amor Fati function as axiological formulae for grappling with the problem of time.

Nietzsche, as we have seen, sees the world as amoral and valueless. Not because men have no morals or values but because these can have no metaphysical or ontological foundations. There can be no reified eternal, grounds for values. Nietzsche, however, does pose the will to power as the ground of all values. But why did Nietzsche not stop there? He could well have developed a theory of values entirely on the basis of the will to power.

But Nietzsche did not stop there. He went on to also introduce the Eternal Recurrence, the most "extreme form of nihilism". Zarathustra is not only the first to announce the will to power but also first to announce the Eternal Recurrence — his most "abyssal thought".
Strangely, Nietzsche does not explicitly work out any relation between the will to power and the Eternal Recurrence. One could even venture to assert that whereas the will to power, antithetical to philosophical nihilism, creates the ground for value, the Eternal Recurrence introduces a form of nihilism.

But why Nietzsche worked out these cosmological ideas remains problematic. Both seem to have been worked out with different purposes in mind. Whereas the will to power has the intention of describing the world, the Eternal Recurrences has the purpose of testing man’s ability to confront the world.

Interestingly, Heidegger sees an "intimate" relation between the two. He sees Nietzsche's idea singularly as "the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same." (See M. Heidegger, Nietzsche, Vol 1, "The Will to Power as Art", trans. David Peper Areal, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1973, pp 18ff. However, this interpretation has the disadvantage of moving away from the kind of meaning that Nietzsche gives to his two ideas. Further, Heidegger does not, to this writer's knowledge, offer textual references as to where Nietzsche actually relates the two ideas. Nietzsche could be seen to only hint to a relation in vague allusions couched in poetic prose. That too in a small section of his notes. (See WP 1053 -1067.)
Briefly then, the Eternal Recurrence wishes to, on the one hand, eliminate the ground for value and on the other to introduce a philosophy for the affirmation of existence.

To be more explicit, the nihilism of the Eternal Recurrence implies, firstly, that there is no "end or "goal" in nature.

Nietzsche is aware that the Eternal Recurrence could be accused of being a reification of becoming into Beings it is the "closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being". Treated in a strictly cosmological sense, however, it becomes logically impossible to impose any teleology into the world. An eternal recurrence is indeed in the true sense of the term, endless and therefore, cannot reach any end or goal. (One could question Nietzsche whether "recurrence" is not itself a goal.) The cycle itself is timeless and therefore it becomes meaningless to talk of there being an end or goal to it.

Duration "in vain" without end or aim, is the most paralyzing idea,... existence as it is without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: "the eternal recurrence".

This is the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing ("meaninglessness") eternally i..... We deny ends and goals if existence had one it would have been reached.
Secondly, the Eternal Recurrence introduces a psychological debility in the face of an inexorable fatalistic determinism. Zarathustra's project of redeeming the will from its backward glance could be threatened. For if the "moment", time in its most immediate sense, is fated to be without goal or meaning the will could still direct its longing towards a nihilism of empty nothingness.

In the context of the axiological arguments, therefore, the Eternal Recurrence would introduce the most "extreme form of nihilism". As such, the Eternal Recurrence would pose problems, not metaphysical or cosmological ones, but of an existential nature.

Nietzsche's idea is disturbing. If everything is predestined, then life seems to lose its vitality — one would be disinclined to act purposefully. Indeed, one cannot speak anymore of alternatives, possibilities and choices, nor of purposes, ends or goals; all action is predetermined to occur in identical patterns. The whole assumption that man is free, can deliberate and therefore make choices and decisions is rendered quite superfluous.

We shall take up the problem of determinism elsewhere since Nietzsche does use "willing", "becoming" and "creativity" in a significant way. For the moment we may observe that Nietzsche is aware of the implied fatalism of the Eternal Recurrence. The important point is that Nietzsche sought to introduce and affirm precisely such a kind of fatalism. He is aware of the psychological debilitating
consequences of the Eternal Recurrence. But this, he holds, cannot thereby exonerate us from taking it seriously. He does not wish to turn away from it, nor does he wish to remain indifferent to it, he wishes to affirm it.

It is thus that out of the extreme nihilism of the Eternal Recurrence Nietzsche envisages his philosophy of affirmation. Zarathustra's "abyssal thought" is put in a "new light": "My abyss snarls, I have turned my ultimate depth into the light". 22

In order to understand the "light" in which Zarathustra brings his "abyssal thought" one must understand the general context of Nietzsche's philosophy of affirmation, to which we must now turn.

For Nietzsche, Heraclitus' intuition that "eternal and elusive Becoming" never is, is an "awful and appalling conception" and he grants credit to Heraclitus for the transalation of this "effect into its opposite, into the sublime, into happy astonishment". 23 In his philosophical autobiography, Nietzsche reaffirms his "affinity" to Heraclitus because the latter had adopted a yea-saying attitude in the face of a world whose most essential attribute was contradiction and strife. Such an attitude is, for Nietzsche, a Dionysian attitude. 30
The important point to note in Nietzsche's declared affinity is the emphasis on the "yes-saying" attitude — a sense of saying "Yes" to life. In the Birth of Tragedy the One is revealed through Dionysian ecstasy. In the later works Nietzsche retains the Dionysian symbol to convey his attitude of a tragic affirmation of existence.

Nietzsche claims to have discovered the clue to the "psychology of tragedy" in the fact that the will is able to affirm existence with its "strongest and most difficult problem", and it is precisely this that he calls tragic and Dionysian. Whereas the tragic poet is the "eternal joy of becoming itself", Nietzsche claims to be a tragic philosopher on the grounds that in the fact of a pessimism (and philosophical nihilism) he is able to adopt an attitude of affirmation. Whereas pessimism interprets the tragic world (suffering) morally, and seeks redemption in a beyond or in nothingness, Nietzsche wishes to be exactly the opposite of pessimism. Referring to his insight into Dionysian affirmation he says:

In this sense I have the right to regard myself as the first tragic philosopher that is to say, the extreme antithesis and antipodes of a pessimistic philosopher. Before me there was no such translation of the Dionysian phenomenon into philosophic pathos: tragic wisdom was lacking, I have sought variously for signs of it even amongst the great Greek philosophers.
For Nietzsche the symbol of Dionysus is the symbol of the tragic. It has a dual character. On one side of the coin lies tragic wisdom, that is, pessimism (strong) and nihilism (strong). On the other side lies tragic affirmation, that is, saying "Yes" to life with its suffering and contradiction.

Nietzsche says that such an affirmative attitude is to be a philosophical attitude. What he probably means to say is that all kinds of transcendental realms must be forsaken. One must go about one's (intellectual) task with a clear awareness of one's earthly existence which is surrounded not by transcendental realms but by the nihil — nothingness.

One may say that in Nietzsche's total vision the philosophy of affirmation encompasses his philosophical nihilism. This kind of thinking crystallises into a paradigm with the dual conceptions of the Eternal Recurrence and Amor Fati.

Thus while the Eternal Recurrence introduces the "most extreme form of nihilism", a painful, fatalistic determinism where everything down to the minutest detail is to recur eternally, Nietzsche finds the "strength" to love his fate:

My formula for the greatness of a human being is Amor Fati: that one wants nothing to be different — not forward, not backward, not in all eternity.
Nietzsche's use of the "formula" conveys a rich meaning and wishes to convey the senses of joy, affirmation, exuberance and love. Though by strict linguistic usage one could distinguish between these, for Nietzsche they form a family of cognate usage. They become almost synonymous under the generic formula of Amor Pati. Thus Nietzsche contends that where Schopenhauer and the Buddha project "world-denying" modes of thought he himself seeks to the "opposite ideal": "the ideal of the most exuberant most living and most world affirming man". In his typical manner he refuses to go beyond the phenomenal world of man and nature.

Nietzsche's deep commitment to an affirmative attitude is best revealed in passages where he breaks free from traditional philosophical categories and strives to express himself in poetic metaphor. The mood is almost one of exuberant pantheism. In these moments Nietzsche is less concerned with trying to show the world as the will to power or the Eternal Recurrence than he is in showing the evanescent and elusive nature of a live, dynamic, and unified physis. In such moments (when time is "merely the blissful mockery of moments") Nietzsche resorts to, for example, the metaphor of "dance", an oft-recurring image in Nietzsche's
Consciousness of appearance: In what a marvellous and new
and at the same time terrible and ironic relationship with
the totality of existence do I feel myself to stand with
my knowledge! I have discovered for myself that the old
human and animal world, indeed the entire prehistory and
past of all sentient being, works on, loves on, hates on,
thinks on in me — I have suddenly woken in the midst of
this dream but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming
and that I have to go on dreaming in order not to be
destroyed as the sleep walker has to go on dreaming in
order not to fall. What is 'appearance' to me now? Certainly
not the opposite of some kind of being — what can I say
about being of any kind that is not a predicate of its
appearance? Certainly not a dead mask placed over an
unknown 'X', which could, if one wished, be removed?
Appearance is for me the active and living itself, which
goes so far in its self-mockery as to allow me to feel
that there is nothing here but appearance and will-o-the-
wise and a flickering dance of spirits — that among all
these dreamers I, too, the 'man of knowledge', dance my
dance, that the man of knowledge is a means of spinning
out the earthly dance and to that extent one of the
masters of ceremonies of existence, and that the sublime
consistency and unity of all knowledge is and will be
perhaps the supreme means of preserving the universality
of dreaming and the mutual intelligibility of all these
dreamers, and thereby the continuance of the dream.
Myth and eternity: We must now try to see what role myth and eternity play in Nietzsche's thought. If we can show that Nietzsche gives them some significance then there would be some justification for relating them to the Eternal Recurrence.

How does Nietzsche see the significance of myth? In the Birth of Tragedy we observed how Nietzsche attacks the rational-scientific models of the world. His attack, directed essentially against Socrates, alleges that the latter had proved to be a destructive force upon the mythical and tragic interpretations that the Greeks gave to his everyday experiences. For Nietzsche, a mythical interpretation is to be valued much more than Socratism because only through myth can man transcend the historical into the realm of the timeless.

The destruction of myth, therefore, forces man's attention back from the timeless into the present. The Greeks interpreted their experiences in accordance with their myths and thereby suffused, so to speak, the present with the timeless;

indeed it was only through this association that they could understand them (the experiences), so that even the most immediate present necessarily appeared to them sub specie aeterni and in a certain sense as timeless. 38

We can already see how intimately Nietzsche weaves in the notion of eternity into his discussion of myth. He says that the
Greek sought for the timeless in mythology "in order to find repose from the burden of the moment". Nietzsche suggests that modern man, who seems to have developed an acute sense for the historical, is in no better a position. The historical need cannot be an alternative to the need for myth and the timeless. This is one of the reasons why modern man feels lost.

Nietzsche soon abandons the metaphysics of the Birth of Tragedy. He is not overtly concerned with either myth or eternity. More often than not he is bent upon offering rational, critical analysis and even using positivist methods and proofs to substantiate his ideas. He works on a metaphysics of becoming and uses the historical-physiological "method" in his critical ventures, but which, as we mentioned earlier, could hardly be taken seriously.

Though Nietzsche does not discuss myth as such, he does give a lot of importance to the unconscious. This can be significant if we see that there have been attempts to correlate the unconscious and myth. In Nietzsche's case particularly it is almost as if the movement towards the unconscious "naturally" gives rise to thought forms which are mythical in nature rather than rational or
It has been pointed out by Jung and others that there are certain essential features which are common to all mythologies. These features, which he calls symbols or "archetypes", emerge out of the unconscious with the force of a psychic storm. Indeed, it has been observed that:

Religious mystics have often provoked amazing archetypal fantasies from their unconscious by subjecting themselves to severe asceticism.

Giles Driscoll has likened Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence to such mystical and mythical origins. He asserts that Nietzsche himself underwent "a similar, though involuntary, ascedia" and that the Eternal Recurrence "welled up from the unconscious".

Nietzsche's own autobiographical accounts support such a contention. He describes the doctrine as a "revelation". His condition at that moment he depicts as follows:

"Everything occurs without edition... The spontaneity of the images is most remarkable... it actually seems as if the things came themselves to one."

And thus Nietzsche added to it the postscript "600 feet beyond man and time". 
Such an interpretation lends support to our contention that though Nietzsche does not explicitly say anything about myth in the later works, there is, nonetheless, strong reason to believe that the Eternal Recurrence is, by its very nature, of a mythical character.

The nature and function of myth is itself complex and controversial, requiring extensive scholarship for an adequate discussion. Therefore, we had best avoid discussing it, noting simply that the Eternal Recurrence does harbour at least some elements of a myth. 47

Let us now turn to this troubling notion of eternity. If the Eternal Recurrence can be seen as a myth, it is also possible to assume that the "purpose" of the myth is to reach for the timeless.

Eternity itself has an enigmatic meaning and is usually shrouded in a mystique. It has the sense of expressing or implying a contrast with time. Eternity, therefore, connotes the timeless. In ordinary language, however, as well as in the Greek roots of the word, eternity has the sense of being sempiternal, that is, implying an "everlasting existence" 48 or "existence with reference to which the relation of succession has no application" 49.

Both uses of the term i.e. "timeless" and "eternal existence", can be observed in the history of philosophy. There is firstly the sense of the timeless as conveyed by the propositions of mathematics, for example, "two plus two is equal to four" or "the sum of the angles
of a triangle is equal to 180°. Thus have the sense of being true for all times irrespective of whether the statement was made in the past or present or would be made in the future. The same can be said for analytical propositions of the type 'A is A.' The verb in the proposition referred to, 'is', seems to convey the sense of the 'present' but actually conveys the sense of a timelessness.

Secondly, we also encounter in philosophy the use of the term eternity in a sempiternal sense. Thus for example, Plato's Ideas or Forms, or for that matter any postulation of a metaphysical reality, a Being that is unchanging, always the same, and hence is the Eternal. Such ontological entities assume that something concrete exists with the timeless necessity found in analytic or mathematical propositions.

Thirdly, we may encounter many enigmatic utterances about eternity in poetry, mythology, and mystical and occult literature which could barely come under the purview of critical analysis. 50

Kierkegaard himself is not concerned with the timelessness of logical or mathematical propositions. Neither is he concerned with the timeless in the sempiternal sense. This is clear from both philosophical nihilism and the Transvaluation. Thus the
arguments against the Eternal are essentially arguments against the sempiternal uses of eternity. Of course the Eternal Recurrence could be seen to introduce the sense of the sempiternal. Though, as we saw, Nietzsche is cautious enough to say that the Eternal Recurrence is only the "closest approximation" of the world of becoming to a world of Being we could question whether the Eternal Recurrence does not introduce a reification and hence sempiternalism.

However, so Nietzsche uses eternity primarily as an axiological category. We have already seen that it has a specific role to play in art and aesthetics and as a symbol which reflects the transfiguration of existence. We can be more explicit about the way in which Nietzsche uses eternity.

Early in The Birth of Tragedy we find the very important axiological postulates:

A people -- and, for that matter also a man -- is to be valued only according to its ability to impress on its experiences the stamp of eternity; for it is thus, as it were, de secularized. 51

In spite of abandoning his early metaphysics Nietzsche nonetheless remarks that the idea that the beautiful and the ecstatic

* We are using "axiological category" to imply that a term is being used either as a value term, or, as a term which can be used to evaluate individuals, works of art, cultures and so on.
must be fleeting and transitory is an "unbearable idea", and that one is thereupon filled with the "longing for eternity". 62

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche still apparently uses eternity as an axiological category when he distinguishes between two kinds of the "will to eternise". It could be seen as the ground for both the desire for, and the value of, eternity.

By the will to eternise Nietzsche refers to that predisposition of individuals which is the motivating force behind the search for the timeless. In his typical manner he distinguishes between those in whom this will is decadent and those in whom it is healthy.

The healthy will to eternise is born out of "gratitude and love" and as examples Nietzsche cites Rubens, Hafiz and Goethe. 53 On the other hand the decadent will to eternise is "that tyrannic will of one who is seriously ailing, struggling and tortured". 54 The latter is obviously a reference to metaphysicians and theologians who search for the Eternal. In his own times Nietzsche names Schopenhauer and Wagner as examples of "romantic pessimists" in whom the "will to eternise" is decadent.
Nietzsche scholars seem to have largely ignored the significance of eternity as an axiological category and especially its function in the Eternal Recurrence. Nietzsche's own reference to eternity is only mentioned by R.L. Rowley, but is virtually ignored by Kaufmann, Danto and Rose-Pfeffer. Giles Driscoll sees its significance in a Jungian analysis of the Eternal Recurrence.

There is one "cosmological" argument in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which seems to have evaded the notice of scholars. We wish to refer to it, not because it is profound, but merely because eternity enters into it in a significant way.

Nietzsche's "argument" is entirely an exercise in speculative cosmology and is indeed far removed from the positivist cosmological arguments which he attempts in the notes.

Nietzsche approaches eternity as a value through his philosophy of affirmation. It seems to follow from his demand for the "transfiguration" of the present moment through "joy". He seems to want to say "Affirm, love thy fate, be joyful." But why does he wish us to do that? Because, we are told, "joy desires eternity."
This may seem strange. Zarathustra's task is precisely the reconciliation of the will with time. Yet the reconciliation paradoxically reintroduces the timeless. This paradox---between the will's reconciliation with the present moment and the "desire for eternity"---is one of the most enigmatic aspects of Nietzsche's thought. It is a paradox from which Nietzsche does not wish to escape.

He avoids discursive analysis, but states almost axiomatically that "joy desires eternity." Veiled by poetic metaphor, Zarathustra proclaims:

The world is deep,
Deeper than day can comprehend,
Deep is its woe,
Joy - deeper than heart's agony,
Woe says: Fade & Go !
But all joy wants eternity,
Wants deep, deep, deep eternity. 56

Till now it would seem that Nietzsche is using eternity in an axiological context. Affirmation is a value, indeed the highest value, because through it man is able to reach for the timeless. Eternity itself is translated into an emotive value.

But here the purely axiological run of the argument conveniently slips into a cosmological argument. The "desire" for eternity
becomes an axiom from which the Eternal Recurrence itself can be deduced. The "argument" can be schematized as follows:

1) "All joy wants the eternity of all things ...."  
2) "the will of the ring wrestles within it ...." 57

Nietzsche says that one joy is enough to set a ball rolling whereby one would desire everything again: just in order to be able to experience that joy again. A world-affirming man would want everything to return in the self-same manner. Joy, in effect, creates or necessitates or "causes" the Eternal Recurrence. If a man were able to want everything "as it was and is to all eternity" he would make the whole cycle, the "whole piece and play", necessary, "because he needs himself again and again — and makes himself necessary." 58

Underlying the claim that "joy" has the efficacy of introducing a cosmic cycle is the assumption about the unity of all of being: "All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love". Thus:

if ever you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: "you please me, happiness, instant, moment!" then you wanted everything to return." 59
We may conclude by saying that it is possible to assume that Nietzsche was always concerned with the notion of eternity. It could even be conjectured that the whole philosophy of affirmation and the Eternal Recurrence arises as an answer to Nietzsche's basic concern.

But, we may ask, do these two provide an adequate answer? This remains enigmatic. The rest of Nietzsche's works, after Thus Spoke Zarathustra, barely mention eternity. Rather, the Eternal Recurrence and Amor Fati are emphasized only in the context of the axiological arguments.

There is, however, one context in which "eternity" occurs again in a significant way (without reference to the Eternal Recurrence or Amor Fati). In the Anti-Christ he interprets, as we saw, Jesus' use of the symbols Father and Son as follows:

in the word 'Son' is expressed the entry into the collective feeling of the transfiguration of all things (blessedness), in the word 'Father' this feeling itself, the feeling of perfection and eternity, etc.

Clearly the contexts in which eternity functions are varied. In *The Birth of Tragedy* eternity is discussed in the context of myth.
Later he talks about the will to eternise in the context of artists, and philosophers. In Zarathustra, the climax of his middle period, eternity is discussed as an emotive value in the context of the philosophy of affirmation. Finally, in The Anti-Christ, one of his last major works, eternity is discussed in the context of a practice of the heart — in the context of the transfiguration of existence.

It is precisely these varying contexts in which eternity occurs that indicate that Nietzsche was not sure if the Eternal Recurrence and Amor Fati were themselves adequate responses to the "desire" for eternity. This also indicates that though Nietzsche begins by wishing to use eternity as an axiological category, he was never sure of how to go about it. Consequently the introduction of the notion into his ideas remains an abstruse one. The only continuity we could find is merely that it is almost invariably used in an axiological context.

Further, the greatest lacuna we face here is that Nietzsche never "describes" eternity. How are we to know if if and when we arrive at it in our personal experience or in art?
The problem of eternity is, we are convinced, a perennial one. However, this is not so much a matter for speculation, nor is it to be lightly dealt with. The "desire" for it is a psychological problem and hence care is needed in responding to it. 62