

Hi JH

Deleuze's approach to eternal return is to reverse the usual idea that everything returns as the same in cycles (Groundhog Day). That idea does not make sense since, if everything is exactly the same, you cannot know that it is returning (because that knowledge would make it different). So Deleuze works out that what really must return is difference. This means nothing is ever the same. The eternal thing that returns is the thing that makes things different. Call it the new or difference or novelty. His deep point is that it makes more sense to think of the world as always new again than always the same again: the eternal return of difference.

This means that his philosophy of time looks at the traditional ideas of past, present and future, but thinks of them as always changing, in cycles where each category interferes with the others to make them new and different. The past changes the present and the future, the present changes the past and the future, and the future changes the past and the present. For example, when a tennis player takes a shot all the practice in the past influences the shot, but the shot also influences the meaning of all that practice (when the shot is poor, for instance). The point is that each practice and the shot is not the same; it is a variation where new things happen. When the future influences the past and present, radically new things happen: there is a break in the present (for example, when a player introduces a new shot such a dive volley) and a reconfiguration of the past (what past uses of volleying meant and where they were leading to change). In short, Deleuze wants to show how time is made up of living and changing processes that run through the whole of time (past, present and future) in different and complementary ways.

Hope that helps!