

Harmony of Past, Present and Future - the Idea of the Recurrence of Political Cycles

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We most naturally experience the linear nature of time as the future turns into past, and the individual reaches older and older ages. The circularity of time is also experienced, primarily in the recurrence of the cycles of nature, such as days or seasons. Accordingly, history can either be viewed as linear or cyclical. The notion of the cyclical nature of history has been expounded by thinkers and historians as diverse as Joachim a Fiore, Giambattista Vico or Oswald Spengler. Mircea Eliade in *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1949) calls linear, historical time a cause of anxiety, whereas the eternal return of mythical time offers the harmony of existence.

Anthony Burgess explicates his ideas of political cycles in the first chapters of his dystopian novel *The Wanting Seed* (1962), whereas the rest of the book serves as an illustration to the theory of the cycles. According to Burgess, three phases of history follow each other: an Augustinian, a Pelagian and an Interphase, when the cycle repeats itself. The Augustinian phase, where anthropological pessimism prevails and those in power exercise laissez-faire techniques (as practically nothing is expected from people), is always followed by a Pelagian phase. Here the expectations towards everyday people grow, yet if these expectations are not met, only mild measures are taken. But when such measures prove insufficient, the world moves into an Interphase, where the government becomes authoritarian and draconic methods are applied. The paper will examine how Burgess's system relates to the ideas of the above-mentioned theorists, and whether the cyclical view of history brings about the harmony suggested by Eliade in relieving the individual from the tyranny of death or does it constitute the ultimate dystopian reality with the complete lack of freedom as the course of history cannot be changed?

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