

# Seize the moment, or can you repeat it?

Written by Redwan Rahman

Can any moment truly be repeated? In short, no. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “You cannot step into the same river twice.” Just like the flow of a river, the universe is forever changing, ever expanding. The expansion of the universe is even affirmed by its Creator Himself, “We built the universe with ‘great’ might, and We are certainly expanding ‘it’.” – Quran 51:47. The universe appears to expand uniformly when averaged over hundreds of millions of light-years, but locally the expansion is not uniform at all. Galaxies move apart at speeds influenced by dark energy. The exact spatial configuration of celestial bodies will never return.

Even if we imagined pausing the cosmos, quantum mechanics forbids repetition. Particles can exist in multiple states (superposition). But when observed, they “collapse” to a single state. Once this happens, that specific superposition is gone forever. You cannot simultaneously know the exact position and momentum of a particle. Every observation changes the system.[1] This implies that no quantum state is ever observed the same way twice.

This is about space and state so far, but what about time?

It is no brainer that you cannot repeat time (Even without invoking the Thermodynamic Arrow of Time, we intuitively know that time only moves forward), and one can argue that moment is a unit of time itself. “Time is what prevents everything from happening at once.” (often attributed to Wheeler, encapsulating his views on the nature of time). Without time, nothing ever happened or everything happened all at once. And once a moment slips through the fabric of time, it becomes physically and existentially unreachable.

But what about memory? Is it a metaphysical realm where we can revisit a moment? No, psychologists say humans can never remember a moment exactly as it is, no matter how precious it is. Even the person you shared the memory with. “You’ll never find the same person twice, not even in the same person.” – Mahmoud Darwish.

The universe, quantum physics, time itself, and even psychology and poetry say no moment can truly be repeated. It’s best for all of us to seize the moment when we have it. I would like to end this article with a few lines from an Oscar-winning lyric, “You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow. This opportunity comes once in a lifetime.” – Eminem

## References:

1. "Modern Physics 3rd Edition – Problem 20: Measuring wavelength and frequency simultaneously," Vaia.com, 2025.  
<https://www.vaia.com/en-us/textbooks/physics/modern-physics-3-edition/chapter-5/problem-20-we-wish-to-measure-simultaneously-the-wavelength-/>