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TOWARDS A NEW TIME CULIURE

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Towards a New Time Culture - Conceptual and Perceptual Tools

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Foreword

In late 2011 I was on the phone with Morten explaining how I as grappling with this strange sensation that I had been catapulted through the year. Looking back at it, I could not quite understand how what felt like several years in emotional and mental time mapped onto such a short span of calendar time. As it happened, he was then working on his thesis about the relationships between time, art and society¹, and my conjecture resonated with some of the concepts and thinking he had been ruminating. This was the beginning of a collaborative exploration based on our intuition that finding a new relationship with time is at the heart of coming to new ways of seeing that lie beyond mechanistic and progressive worldviews.

Since its beginning *time culture* has revolved around dialogue: it grew out of a lifelong conversation between Morten and I and has been nourished by plenty of other conversations along the way. A first impetus was provided by Dougald Hine's invitation to write a piece for *Despatches from to Invisible Revolution*² (this was the essay that became 'Repossessing the future') and it was sustained by further dialogue with friends and strangers both online and in first life. Thank you to everyone who has pollinated this project whether through engaging with the ideas or helping us raise the little bit of money that was needed to produce this publication. It is our hope that this pamphlet, our online home (www.time-culture.net), and continuing dialogue go some way in providing a platform and a language for building a new time culture.

It has been a thoroughly rewarding process to edit this text. Revisiting the key ideas has brought out a new depth and clarified insights that I had previously glanced only sideways. A new time culture means (re)grounding our relationship with time. And this in turn asks us to find ways of comprehending the multiplicity of temporalities that unfold in our surroundings. Morten is discovering a set of effective conceptual tools which we can use as a stepping stone into new analytic and perceptual practices - a set of tools within the larger kit we need to reconnect with the time of nature and our planet.

Special thanks go to Peter Holm-Jensen³: it is out of his generosity and sublime feel for language that you are reading these words.

-Jeppe Graugaard, Norwich, 09/02/13

¹Morten Svenstrup (2012) Tid, kunst og samfund - Et bidrag til kompositionen af en ny tidskultur. MA thesis. See http://www.scribd.com/doc/101429895/Tid-Kunst-Og-Samfund-Morten-Svenstrup

²D. Hine and K. Kahn-Harris (Eds) Despatches from to Invisible Revolution - New Public Thinking #1: Reflections on 2011. PediaPress, 2012

³http://www.sagatranslations.co.uk

Preface

This pamphlet takes as its point of departure Michel Serres' insight that the principal component of the ecological crisis is time. People have pondered the question of time throughout history, but the particular approach to the analysis of time that I make use of here is relatively recent. It deals with the relationship between humans, society and nature and, in short, suggests that human actions are taking place at such an accelerated pace that fundamental ecological balances are shifting. Beyond this descriptive goal, the analysis also has a more creative aim: to set out a path towards the foundation of a new time culture.

I have long been interested in the concept of time, particularly in relation to music. Through this interest I have become aware of the very different temporalities that exist in music and that might even be said to constitute the core of the art form. In the wider artistic field, I have often encountered strategies that unfold in modes of time that I have rarely seen outside the arts. I believe further study of these temporalities can prove very valuable in contexts that are not traditionally associated with art theory.

Against this background, my thesis is that art has a 'knowledge' of time, and that this knowledge can form a kind of counterweight to the mechanistic temporalities that exist in society. This raises many questions. For one thing, how can we even talk about time? How can a society be said to have particular temporalities? And how do we distinguish between beneficial and harmful social temporalities? How is it possible to conceptualise the modes of time that exist in artworks? How can one get a hold of them when they are often based on distinctly subjective experiences? And finally, how can art's temporalities be said to counteract other unfavourable temporalities? In this paper I attempt to outline some answers to these questions.

-Morten Svenstrup, Copenhagen, 17/11/12

"We can only deal consciously with time once we have acquired the necessary skills. And only by training the faculties of perception does it seem possible to arrive at a notion of temporal diversity that does justice to the environment, society and its members."

-Bernhard Albert



1 RHYTHMS BETWEEN SENSES, NATURE AND SOCIETY

Lefebvre and rhythmanalysis

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French thinker who examined philosophical, political and sociological issues from a Marxist perspective throughout most of the 20th century. In *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, Lefebvre presented his theory of 'rhythmanalysis', a concept that has remained relatively marginal, but which Lefebvre himself hoped would form the basis for a new branch of science.

Rhythmanalysis concerns the rhythms that manifest themselves in our surrounding sense-world and what they reveal about it. The object of investigation can be anything from a city square, a group of people, a body, a society or a piece of music - for Lefebvre believes that everything has a rhythm and can be seen from a rhythmic perspective.

Becoming and rhythm

Before we can learn about rhythms, we must first have some temporal understanding of the world. Lefebvre paves the way for such an understanding by discussing the concept of 'the thing'. He does not consider the thing an immutable object outside time. A thing is not unchangeable and eternal. It is a multiplicity of rhythms that manifest themselves in specific contexts at any given time. To see the world as a 'becoming' (an idea shared by Deleuze among others) is to suggest that things are "ensemble[s] full of meaning, transforming them no longer into diverse things, but into presences"⁴. These presences unfold in a multiplicity of different tempos. Lefebvre breaks with our notion of constancy at a basic level. This allows him to examine the world's temporalities, and he does this from the point of view of rhythm.

Although from this perspective a thing is always a 'becoming', this is not the same as saying that it has a rhythm. A rhythm is more than a movement. A rhythm always contains, in addition, a form of repetition, a return and a difference. There must be a clear event that marks the return point of a rhythmic cycle. A rhythm's return must also follow some law. However, this law must be different from that of identical/mechanical repetition. Any return must therefore include an element of difference that occurs internally in the event and causes the cycle to change upon each return. Here Lefebvre distinguishes between a (differentiated) rhythm and a (mechanical) return.

The differentiated return and the mechanical return

Lefebvre sees the linear and the cyclical as a dialectical pair of concepts between which there is a constant tension. They form an 'antagonistic unity'. Therefore, there are no examples of phenomena that exclusively operate cyclically, since there will always be a linear element present - and vice versa. Moreover, predominantly cyclical events usually occur in the natural world, such as plant cycles, breathing, the month, the year and tides. Approaching the linear pole on the other hand, we mainly find examples from human society: the hammer's blow, the rhythms of working days, the beats of a metronome. The linear often springs from the human and from the industrialised work of human beings. These rhythms are goal-oriented. As a rule, when these rhythms are completely mechanised, what has just happened copies itself and thus forms its own closed system. Lefebreve calls this a 'brutal repetition'.

The cyclical and the linear are present in all rhythms. This opposition is perhaps most evident in the daily life and work of human beings: living rhythms versus goal-oriented production. Lefebvre clearly sides with the cyclical, since it leaves room for difference, unlike mechanical monotony, which he believes creates fatigue.

⁴ Lefebvre 2004 p. 23

The body as a nexus of rhythms

The most important starting point for Lefebvre's analyses of rhythms is the human body - its own rhythms, its reception of other rhythms and its sensations.

In Lefebvre's terminology, the body is a 'bouquet' of rhythms that both function at their own paces and are mutually arranged to form a coordination. Lefebvre uses the term 'polyrhythm' to denote a multilayered rhythmic environment where different rhythms interact at the same time. Examples of the body's concurrent rhythms are the heartbeat, craniosacral rhythm, digestion and breath. Lefebvre calls the state of such diverse rhythms interacting in coordination 'eurhythmia'. Here the rhythms form a special harmony in which they work both as a whole and in their own tempo. Eurhythmia is a state of normality in which things work as they should and in which the rhythms therefore are usually not noticed.

However, if there is a negative disturbance in the rhythms, this typically causes the local disharmony to spread, which may have further disastrous consequences for the entire system. Lefebvre calls this destructive rhythmic phenomenon 'arrhythmia'. Arrhythmia is typically discovered in cases of disease or dysfunction, where the rhythms become noticeable.

The last of Lefebvre's concepts of rhythm is 'isorhythmia', which is a collection of hierarchically coordinated rhythms. This relation of rhythms is synchronised from above - the rhythms are brought into concurrence by an external impulse-giver. Thus these rhythms are externally constituted. This phenomenon contrasts with eurhythmia, where the rhythms are internally constituted. According to Lefebvre, eurhythmia and isorhythmia are mutually exclusive.

By virtue of its inbuilt polyrhythms, the body is an example of how many different (in this case biological) rhythms can work together in eurhythmia. Besides its own biological rhythms, the body also receives rhythms from the outside - from the social, cosmic and natural/ecological worlds. The social rhythms are culturally and historically conditioned and include rhythms of eating and sleeping, working hours, breaks and holidays. These rhythms are learned, but of course affect the biological rhythms (and vice versa). The same applies to cosmic and natural/ecological rhythms, such as the rhythms of day and night, months, seasons, plants and weather systems.

All these rhythms can of course be grouped together in many ways, as there is no *a priori* division. They interact in various simultaneous forms of interplay between the extreme poles of eurhythmia and arrhythmia. Lefebvre also speaks of many different 'bodies' - the bodies of societies, of human groups, of the Earth, etc. - which act as constitutive entities whose interacting rhythms can be analysed. However, the human body remains our centre, in relation to which the rhythms that are important to us meet, interact and are proportioned.

The body as a measure, the body as a sensor

Lefebvre makes an important point: the body proportions the rhythms we sense. Seen at an abstract level, the speeds of rhythms are relative. Slowness and quickness are relative. For example, the rhythm of a diurnal cycle is very slow compared to that of a mosquito's wing beats, but fast compared to the Earth's orbit around the sun. But the human body gives us a basis on which to compare rhythms. Abstract temporalities become associated with an actual physical place, namely a human body, and therefore become actual themselves. Because an anchor value is introduced, concepts such as slow and fast suddenly make sense and can be used as real descriptors.

A rhythm analyst, writes Lefebvre, uses all of his or her senses and attempts to sense as much as possible: "He will listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to murmurs, full of meaning - and finally he will listen to silences"⁵. In a formulation that John Cage probably would have agreed with, Lefebvre urges the reader to listen "in a sensitive, preconceptual but vivid way"⁶ before analysing. Thus the analyst does not take stock of what makes sense and what doesn't in advance. In this way Lefebvre reinstates sensory perception (and the body) as the common-sense foundation that he believes philosophy has long undermined.

To gain an understanding of rhythms, of time, one therefore has to experience the rhythms oneself, through one's own body: "[the rhythm analyst] thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality"⁷. The ability to sense in this way, according to Lefebvre, is something that has to be learned as a discipline, something that requires concentration and a certain amount of time. The latter not least because, as he describes it, one has to surrender oneself to the rhythms to which one listens, which literally takes time. This point I think is very important, especially for those of us who work with written theory: it is crucial that these theories are experienced with the body and not only understood on an abstract plane.

⁵Lefebvre 2004 p. 19

⁶Ibid. p. 72

⁷Ibid. p. 21

Lefebvre's theory of rhythm thus has four key aspects:

- 1. First, his understanding of the relationship between part and whole. He considers all entities to be part of a context, of a cooperative network. There are parallel examples of this view in other disciplines, for example actor-network theory in the social sciences and chaos theory and thermodynamics in the natural sciences, to which temporality is integral.
- 2. Second, his theory contains an implicit ethics, since eurhythmic systems are presented as balanced and healthy and arrhythmic systems as presented as 'sick' and approaching collapse.
- 3. Third, Lefebvre calls for participation, for an experience of temporality, not just distanced observation.
- 4. Finally, he employs the dialectical concepts of circular and linear, which make it possible to analyse temporal correlations in systems the analyst must define him/herself, but which are always based on concrete contexts.

Lefebvre employs rhythmanalysis to address key ontological and philosophical issues, but rhythmanalysis is so open that it can be used very widely as an analytical tool to address both actual physical correlations and more metaphorical artistic issues.



2 CONCEPTS OF TIME

Nature and culture

At the Tutzing Protestant Academy in Germany, researchers involved in the 'Ecology of Time' project (*Ökologie der Zeit*) work with temporality as a key aspect of their analysis of modern society and its relationship to nature and ecology. Since its beginnings in 1989, the project's researchers have published academic articles and books examining the topic from a wide range of disciplines - but with an emphasis on social science. The researchers whom I will draw on in the following are: Karlheinz Geißler, a professor of philosophy, economics and education, Martin Held, director of studies at the academy, specialising in economics and social research, Klaus Kümmerer, a professor specialising in chemistry and material resources, and finally Barbara Adam, whose research is central to the field. She is based at Cardiff University and has published a significant body of research. Adam has worked with the concept of time from a sociological perspective for many years.

In this context, her thoughts on the philosophical aspect of the relationship between nature and culture are interesting⁸. First, she considers any strict dichotomy between the two dangerous and false. According to her, human beings have for too long regarded their activities (culture) as distinct from nature, with the result that nature has become viewed as the 'other' which has nothing to do with the human. Nature has become a kind of 'container' or 'frame'

⁸See Adam 1998 pp. 13-14 and 24-28

within which humans may well live, but which they are not directly part of. However, Adam believes that, from a temporal perspective there is no natureculture dichotomy: "we are nature, we constitute nature and we create nature through our actions in conditions that are largely pre-set for us by evolution and history"⁹.

The concept of history that underlies this statement is thus inseparable from natural history. Human history is inseparable from that of nature, and since we therefore are a part of nature, human time is also nature's time. It follows that the question of whether global ecological changes will affect nature or culture is moot: they will have consequences for both.

Yet there is an ambiguity in this statement that culture and nature are inseparable. The dissolution of the nature-culture divide is only a first step. As Adam writes, we are still forced to recognise the important differences between cultural and natural temporalities, as this enables us to locate and analyse different temporal conflicts that are central to contemporary historical conditions. Thus the conceptual pairing should be used as an analytical tool, not as an *a priori* division of the world.

The timescape

The word 'timescape' derives from the word landscape, but instead of placing the emphasis on the visible and the spatial, as the word landscape implicitly can be said to do, timescape refers to the rhythms or temporalities that prevail in a given area or situation. In a landscape you can read the history of a given place based on your prior knowledge. There may be a special type of vegetation that says something about the place as a biotope - its soil, temperature, humidity, etc. - but there will also be historical indicators such as different soil layers, hills and valleys that may indicate the movement of glaciers during the Ice Age, and so on. In addition, there may be signs of human intervention: a landscape may have a motorway running, or may even be a town centre. To take these varying factors into account, Adam therefore defines a landscape as "a record of constitutive activity"¹⁰.

Similarly, in a timescape you can glean a lot of information about the site's distinctive character through your prior knowledge and the questions you ask - including questions about environmental problems. How do a given plant's rhythms interact with those of another plant, of a tree, of an animal? How do the rhythms of the traffic interact with the rhythms of the traffic lights or

⁹Adam 1998 p. 13

¹⁰Ibid. p. 54

the diurnal cycle? And how can a machine's time be described in relation to the rhythms of a biotope? This approach can point to certain conflicts in a timescape, such as the cultural temporality of work compared to the temporality of its surroundings.

The concept of timescapes may expand our awareness of the temporal connections that are everywhere - including the natural environment. In addition, as a viewer you become aware of the 'whole picture' and the relations of dependence it entails. As Adam writes: "we grasp environmental phenomena as complex, unified, temporal, contextually specific wholes"¹¹. Moreover, she believes that in this way we become aware of our own place within such a whole, and that this perspective promotes a sense of responsibility for ourselves and our communities.

The concept of timescapes and Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis complement each other well. Their approaches clearly overlap, but have different areas of focus. Lefebvere's theory highlights the ways different rhythms interact, while Adam focuses more on environment. Moreover, the concept of the timescape incorporates all modes of time, not just that of rhythms. There need not be returns in Adam's concept: it can include relatively discrete movements, such as a lump of ice melting, as well as "beats, sequences, beginnings and ends, growth and decay, birth and death, night and day, seasonality, memory"¹².

Eigenzeit

The German word *Eigenzeit* ('inherent time', lit., 'own time') denotes the temporality that is naturally embedded in any given process, be it that of an organism, an ecosystem or an economic system. As Martin Held writes: "This perspective involves understanding and acknowledging the *Eigenzeit* of humans, other life forms as well as rivers, landscapes, etc."¹³. Everything has an *Eigenzeit* - not just living but also dead processes.

Held speaks of introducing a respect for *Eigenzeit* as a social ideal. To overlook and thereby risk suppressing the inherent temporalities of things can have grave consequences. This can be seen at both micro- and macro-levels. (One example is when a person becomes stressed due to an excessive workload.) A joint article by some of the Tutzing researchers, referring to the notion of *Eigenzeit*, states that the project's goal is "sustainable development that incorporates not just the time scales and rhythmicities of production but also those

¹¹Adam et al. 2001 p. 81

¹²Adam's concept as described by Hassan 2009a p. 46

¹³Held 1999 p. 3, my translation from the German

of regeneration and reproduction (soil and water being examples of key bases of existence in urgent need of such reorientation: developed over millennia, they are currently used up in periods extending over no more than a few hundred years)"¹⁴. This example demonstrates how a regeneration phase after a harvest phase may lead us to abide by the *Eigenzeit* of environmental rhythms. In other words, there is in this instance a kind of circularity whereby unproductive phases must be allowed to take their course if the system is to remain fertile.

Zeitgeber

The concept of *Eigenzeit* can be opposed to the concept of *Zeitgeber* ('time giver'), which indicates a particular form or ideal of time that governs the temporality of other processes. An example of a *Zeitgeber* is the Earth's rotation, which governs the rhythms of most living beings, from the opening and closing of flowers to the diurnal cycles of animals. A timetable based on clock time can also be a *Zeitgeber*, since other rhythms become subjected to its time.

However, there is a significant difference between clock time and the rhythms of nature. The cycle of night and day, as a *Zeitgeber*, is different from a timetable, since the Earth's natural ecology has arisen under the conditions created by the diurnal cycle. The diurnal rhythm is integral to nature's temporal constitution, which is why the diurnal cycle does not dominate natural rhythms but works in eurhythmia with them. A timetable, on the other hand, is created with efficiency in mind, which is why it often dominates and streamlines surrounding rhythms according to its own rationale - it is isorhythmic. The term *Zeitgeber* is most often used to refer to the latter kind of 'time giver', although its original meaning is more wide-ranging. Thus the concept has a negative connotation, since this dominance of other rhythms is considered problematic.

Sensitivity to time

The Tutzing theorists write: "a sensitivity to time in its diverse forms is a precondition to taking account of it in decisions and policies that affect the environment across time and space"¹⁵. A sensitivity to temporality can be crucial to the creation of a new sustainable future for our society. It is important simply to become aware of temporality, so that it may be incorporated into

¹⁴Adam, Geißler, Held and Kümmerer 1997 pp. 78-9

¹⁵Ibid. p. 75

future projects and action plans in as wide a social range as possible. The new conceptualisations offered by the terms timescape and *Eigenzeit* may point the way to a new awareness in this area.

Since this kind of thinking about time is a relatively new enterprise, there is some theoretical work to be done to ensure that time analysis can become as sharp and powerful a tool as possible. A solid conceptual apparatus is of course a good means to this end. But another equally important approach is the bodily and perceptual experience of temporal diversity. One not only needs to know something about different forms of time: in order to understand them better one also needs to actively acquire 'time skills' and train one's sensitivity when it come to perceiving time.

Blindness to temporality can result in modes of time that are problematic but are never perceived as such. Conversely, an awareness of this fundamental aspect of any process can be a key to changing basic temporal constitutions in a positive way. The new relation to time focuses on connections. Situations must therefore always be understood and analysed in a broad context. At the same time, a historical approach is essential in relation to both the past and the future, since the present cannot be understood in isolation.

3 A HISTORY OF RHYTHM

An attempt at a temporal diagnosis of history

I will now attempt to outline a history of time that can identify key factors in the acceleration of the speed of society. This may help to clarify the grounds on which we can talk about this acceleration of time. I will take my starting point in the historical division offered by Robert Hassan in his book *Empires of Speed: Time and the Acceleration of Politics and Society.* Hassan argues that societal relationships to time have changed significantly over the past three hundred years. He sets out two different phases based on two technological innovations: the clock and information and communication technologies (ICT). These technologies can be said to encapsulate two different historical developments whereby "technologically based forms of time (clock and computer) [...] dominate other forms of time reckoning and occlude other ways of thinking about time"¹⁶. The division, whose different characteristics I will elaborate below is: 1) The first temporal Empire (clock time); and 2) The second temporal Empire (ICT/network time).

But although technology is an important factor in determining a certain historical period's understanding of time, it is not the only one. According to Hassan, in the same way that a certain understanding of time forms the basis for specific actions, one can account for a particular period's temporal meta-context by examining its dominant forms of time, which are "mediated through politics, through the logic of capitalism, and through the dogmas of science and technology"¹⁷. In other words, a given era's temporal meta-context arises from that era's worldview and modes of production. However, there is an important reason why Hassan points out precisely the two technologies mentioned above. They represent two essentially different structurings of time: on the one hand,

¹⁶Hassan 2009a p. 3. Quote slightly modified.

¹⁷Hassan 2009a p. 12

what might be called 'the mathematical grid', and on the other, what might be called 'empty time'. In the following sections I will attempt to show how these modes of time operate.

Naturally, the invention of the clock did not mean that all societal rhythms immediately began to structure themselves according to this new principle. There will always be differences between the speeds that new technologies make possible and the time cultures of the societies in which they are introduced. Indeed, throughout history there are many examples of counterreactions to accelerations of time. Nevertheless, the general tendency is that the fastest speeds are followed. As the early environmental thinker Ivan Illich pointed out: "A linear sense of time progression inherent in the idea of development implies that there is always a better and a more"¹⁸. Implicit in the ideology of development that has long dominated the Western world is a latent desire for something more and better. Following this, the highest speed, and its benefits, become goals in themselves. Technological time and the time culture of Western societies can be said to have followed from one another throughout history, though of course it is essential to maintain a distinction between the two.

Below I will broadly describe the first temporal Empire: how it became based on clock and thus machine time and how our understanding of the future has been affected by this. Next I will describe the second temporal Empire: how it has become based on computer time, how all human time is tending to become production-oriented and how the very idea of the future is tending to disappear.

The first temporal Empire

According to Hassan, the first temporal Empire begins with the industrial revolution. One technological innovation plays a key if not basic role in this: the invention of the mechanical clock. Clock time is an abstraction that exists neither in humans nor in our natural environment. Rather, by mechanical means, clock time creates a mathematically precise 'time grid' against which other kinds of time can be measured. Thus we can speak of the clock's synchronising effect: all other forms of time can be compared against the clock. This is because clock time does not change - it repeats itself in a constant way and therefore remains the same. Clock time's own logic is pure repetition without difference. In Hassan's formulation, the clock 'cuts' all timescapes into mathematically equal pieces.

¹⁸Illich 1999 p. 16

However, the fact that the clock can measure all other temporalities is double-sided. Everything can indeed be measured according to the clock's system but in itself the clock is not adequate to measure, for example, what Lefebvre calls rhythms, i.e. the rhythms that contain difference, since the clock precisely cannot 'sympathise'¹⁹ with these; clock time can only measure the rhythms' purely mathematical 'quantity'. The clock measures without context of any kind, so one can say that it makes all other times abstract by drawing them into its own one-dimensional plane. There is a strong analogy here with the way in which economic systems measure value. And as with the monetary system, this abstraction has systemic advantages. Everything can be measured and what results is extremely simple and devoid of context: a number.

So much for the clock as a measuring instrument. However, the clock soon begins to be used as an organiser, a *Zeitgeber*. Other times are not only measured against it, but start to change under the dominance of this new organising time giver. Thus clock time develops from a mono-temporal measurement technique into a framework for the acceleration of societal temporalities - including social, political and economic temporalities.

The economy, the machine and intensified time

The introduction of clock time technology comes to transform society's notion of time. At times, the hegemony of clock time becomes so great that it is identified with time itself. Its appearance is also symptomatic of the change in consciousness that takes place at this point in history, when the rationalist worldview emerges. The whole nexus whose foundations are laid by the Enlightenment's scientific and rational worldview, and which, very broadly speaking, later translates into industrialisation, modernity, capitalism and the development of liberal democracy, is partly sustained by clock time and the new opportunities this synchronising and systematising temporality allows.

Through the logic of the clock, time is viewed as boxes or blocks of time that, to use spatial terms, can be placed next to each other, a function that in turn can be used to increase the efficiency of work²⁰. This enables minute planning of, for example, when students or workers are to arrive at schools or factories, how long they have to stay there and how much they have to achieve.

¹⁹This concept is derived from Bergson, who describes sensitivity to one's environment

²⁰Bergson is the philosopher who has dealt most directly with this idea of clock time, which is why many of the concepts associated with this topic are very similar to his critical concepts of 'quantitative' and 'spatial' time, as presented for example in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*.

In this temporal regime, time speeds up year by year. Historically, this translates into modes of production such as Taylorism and Fordism, ideals according to which every second of workers' time are to be maximally exploited²¹.

For the first time, capital and speed become truly connected, resulting in a circular process: faster technologies and faster labour become key to competing in conditions of scarcity created by the new market mechanisms, mechanisms which in turn demand greater efficiency. This process becomes a key historical driver in the following centuries and remains so in today's socio-economic world, in which capital and speed are inseparable.

The clock and the disembodied future

When a whole society's temporal constitution and lifeworld is transformed in this way, it has a number of consequences, as I have outlined above. People's perception of the future also changes. Barbara Adam and Chris Groves describe how the introduction of mechanical time results in an abstraction of society's view of the future. The future is no longer a continuation of the present, but is detached and becomes free-floating, disembodied. An abstract predictability based on the imperatives of production takes the place of a future that is a continuation of the present. The gains that are to be made in a week, a month, a year are timetabled, and this sets the trend for a future largely determined by the systematising rationale of the clock (and calendar). Adam and Groves highlight the link between the economy and clock time and develop a notion of the 'commodified future'. In Adam's words, the future is transformed into a resource that can be "budgeted, wasted, allocated, sold, or controlled"²². In other words, the future has been emptied out and can therefore be filled with economic rationales.

What, following Hassan, I am calling the first temporal Empire, is initially characterised by the change in the temporal meta-context that took place after the introduction of clock time as *Zeitgeber*, which is a key factor in social acceleration. This period sees a continuous intensification of time. The goal is an increase in production per unit of clock time in order to increase economic accumulation. This process is fundamental to the industrial revolution.

The mindset on which the intensification and acceleration of time is based, which can be traced back to the beginning of the industrial revolution, becomes increasingly dominant in modernity. However, according to Hassan, the way in which this acceleration works begins to undergo a radical change. Once again,

 $^{^{21}\}mathrm{A}$ description of these two concepts can be found in Harvey 1990 pp. 125-41

²²Adams 1990 p. 104

this can be analysed by looking at the development of new technologies, in this case information and communication technologies (ICT).

The second temporal Empire: the nonstop society and extensified temporality

The transition from the first to the second temporal Empire, which Hassan locates at around 1970, may in part be described as a transition from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist work structure, which among other things involves what is called flextime. The transition occurs partly because the Fordist way of working comes to be regarded as inflexible and rigid. Flextime on the other hand is designed to allow the individual to structure his or her working week without being bound by fixed working hours. This happens partly because the nature of work changes from material to immaterial labour as a result of much of the work being taken over by ICT and thus no longer being bound to certain times or places.

What happens initially, then, is that the individual's temporal autonomy is extended. In the transition from a work environment controlled by clock time, this at first seems liberating and, in Martin Held's words, awakens a "hope for the freedom to decide the temporal structure of one's own life"²³. Yet there is a danger. The disappearance of fixed working hours can lead to a way of thinking about time as 'empty space', with the individual as the sovereign organiser. The formal differences between working time, leisure time and other previously fixed forms of time disappear, meaning that all the hours of the day become potential working hours. The hope of freedom, writes Held, conceals the fact that the motto of "having everything available everywhere, right away, and for as long as you want"²⁴ becomes the new way of thinking about time. This has led to the concepts of 'the nonstop society' and 'the 24-hour world'.

Put differently, one could say that the clock's mechanical rhythm is broken down and replaced by an empty time without predetermined divisions - a time in which nothing is defined in advance²⁵. In this time the possibilities seem completely open, meaning that the individual may tend to feel in command of his or her self-realisation. The transition to this undefined time breaks down the divisions maintained by the era of the clock in the first temporal Empire,

²³Held 1999 p. 3, my translations

²⁴Ibid. p. 3, my translations

²⁵Deleuze and Guattari have an apt term for this: 'the smooth (time) space'. This is contrasted with 'the striated (time) space', as clock time could be called. See Deleuze and Guattari 2004 pp. 523-551

such as the eight-hour working day. The rationale of the time grid is being eroded and all time is becoming potentially production-oriented. According to Held, this has significant consequences for individuals, producing feelings of restlessness and 'pauselessness'²⁶. With the dissolution of the Fordist division between work and leisure, the production period becomes 'extensified' to encompass all 24 hours of the day. Thus the road is paved for an increase in weekly working hours - and increased acceleration.

Network time: computer language, integration and speed

In discussing the first temporal Empire, I described a tendency of intensification of social rhythms. This intensification can be said to have continued in the second temporal Empire, but in new guises. The extensification of work time is one reflection of this. In addition, a shift occurs in terms of where the temporal changes takes place: the scene changes. In the second temporal Empire, the virtual space becomes central. A process of digitisation occurs. As Hassan writes: "ICT takes centre-stage as a flexible and invasive techno-logic that transforms the range of older and more diverse processes and dynamics within the economy, society and culture into a singular connecting system"²⁷. With these new technologies, a new form of organisation arises that functions on new and exceptional premises. This new virtual space operates on the basis of the binary number system, which in turn is based on the smallest possible difference between units of information: 1 and 0 or 'on' and 'off'. All the information the system takes in is translated into this language, which because of its basic simplicity works extremely quickly - and therefore is accompanied by a lot of immediate advantages.

The network expands very rapidly and seems to be able to integrate almost everything, from the numerical measurements used in the banking and taxation sectors to digitalised music and movies, cartography and so on. This integration also happens within social relationships. In this way the network opens up through wide-ranging integration and begins to have a major impact on societal rhythms.

There is a marked increase in the speed of integration. This doesn't come free: "its totalizing logic tends to close down those elements of economy and

²⁶ 'Pausenlosigkeit'. Held 1999 pp. 1-2

²⁷Hassan 2009a p. 69

society that are not consistent with its modalities"²⁸. There are two parts to this statement. The first is that the digital networks have their own modalities, which in fact are not open to everything: something is necessarily lost in the conversion to the digital sphere and its language. The network is by nature reductive and reduction creates acceleration. Secondly, Hassan's statement implies that, in the temporal perspective, it is the spheres with slow *Eigenzeiten* that will not fit into the network's modality or will soon be marginalised by faster systems. Thus it can be said that the network's inherent logic is to increase in speed.

What happens in the second temporal Empire, therefore, is a radical and colossal translation of large parts of the human lifeworld into a meta-language whose basic characteristic is speed. In addition, this network's inherent logic causes a marginalisation of those systems that operate more slowly than the very fastest ones. The temporal spectrum is in danger of reduction to include only the fastest tempos.

There are almost no limits to what this network can translate and thereby integrate into its system. We ourselves, who increasingly work with and in the network, also become accustomed to and synchronised with its temporality. We are moving towards the above-mentioned 'nonstop society' (which tends to extend the individual's working hours) by virtue of the fact that we become ever more connected to the network: "The virtual ecology is created, maintained and sustained as a consequence of the users' capacity to be 'always on', and through the system's logic that is oriented towards 'ubiquitous computing' which, in turn, creates the appropriate environmental conditions for [...] the 'persistent connection"²⁹. In this way, the individual becomes, to a great extent, synchronised with network time, and thus the foundation is laid for a lifeworld with a completely different kind of temporality. In these surroundings it is vital to create a time culture in which we can deliberately choose the temporalities that fit our lifeworld best. Thereby we will hopefully be able to distinguish between gains and losses in using the new technologies that are on the rise and that has the potential to change our lives in radical ways.

Life within the second temporal Empire

Michel Serres suggests a supplementary concept to 'hard pollution', which is his term for what we normally understand by pollution: chemical and toxic waste, etc. 'Soft pollution' consists not of CO2 or toxins, but of "tsunamis of

²⁸Hassan 2009a p. 80

²⁹Ibid. p. 87

writing, signs, images, and logos" that flood "rural, civic, public and natural spaces as well as landscapes"³⁰. The term refers to the amount of information in the form of language and signs that are constantly sent into the ether by administrators, journalists, scientists, and of course the entertainment and advertising sectors, forming such a thick layer of signs that it's hard to get a word in. The density of information is radically increased, and the resulting competition for attention leads to a further intensification of the signs: it becomes necessary to communicate as loudly as possible in order to penetrate the layer of soft pollution.

Serres describes how this soft pollution overshadows or conceals our capacity for long-term thinking. This happens because the languages and signs of soft pollution mainly relate to our internal communication networks, such as "numerical data, equations, dossiers, legal texts, news bulletins hot off the press or the wire"³¹ - in other words, short-term networks that do not primarily concern 'things', or our actual surroundings. The overriding social communication now takes place indoors and in words, never outdoors and with things, as Serres formulates it. He sees this as a radical social change, and indeed describes the greatest event of the 20th century as the loss of agriculture as an essential part of the general population's lifeworld, since this meant the loss of daily contact with the rhythm of 'things'.

Soft pollution's loud, human-centred communication also casts a shadow over our perceptual abilities. The communication bombardment that we are subjected to can be said to lead us towards a kind of anaesthesia and insensitivity to our surroundings. Soft pollution covers up the 'space of things' with information, with the result that things with marginal presences and low voices risk being ignored. This could for example be a landscape, "which itself is more difficult, discreet, silent, and often dying because unseen by any saving perception"³². What you no longer see is easier to pollute, and Serres describes how pollution continuously spreads to unprotected areas: it is disastrous for a landscape or a natural environment to no longer to be seen, or not to be seen for what it is and for the timescape it contains, but instead as a territory that can be possessed.

For Serres the vital capacity for long-term thinking is linked with the ability and opportunity to stay connected with the outside world - with the world of things and the world of the cosmos. This world operates with immensely long time spans and can teach humans to incorporate these into their lifeworld -

³⁰Serres 2010 pp. 41-2

³¹Serres 1995 p. 28

³²Serres 2010 p. 51

not just for their own sake, but also out of respect for the Earth's temporalities. This sensibility and human synchronisation with the Earth's time are in danger of being forgotten amid the noise and rapacity of soft pollution.



4 DECONTEXTUALISATION AND TEMPORAL BLINDNESS

Towards a history of time: a summary

I have attempted to outline a historical development that can broadly be described as a process of acceleration. At the same time I have tried to show how this acceleration can be said to unfold in many ways, operate on many levels and have many consequences. It can therefore also be read in a multitude of places. Given that time is not, in the Kantian sense, a homogeneous medium that can be decontextualised, the acceleration cannot be said to take place without being incarnated in events, objects or people. Thus my description has mostly highlighted the ways in which the perception of time has changed in human consciousness - in the inner world. When the temporal meta-context in a society and for individuals begins to take on a faster pace within a shorter timeframe, human consciousness itself becomes synchronised with this new temporality, and the human understanding of time changes. As a result, the new actions that are performed are also constituted on the basis of speed and short-termism.

The human understanding of time has changed dramatically over the past three centuries. The changes have taken place in line with the development of specific technologies that have enabled acceleration. Generally speaking the changes can be summarised as follows:

- a streamlining and intensification of time
- an extensification of work time
- a marginalisation of slow forms of time

- a devaluing of long-term thinking
- an intensification of information density and a resulting 'pauselessness'
- the decontextualisation of human beings from their concrete (temporal) surroundings radically increased uncertainty about the future

All these aspects either lead to or are consequences of the general historical acceleration. In this view, the contemporary understanding of time tends to-wards the pathological. There is a limit to how much a society's rhythms can be accelerated. At some point the speed will become too great both for ourselves and for the ecological world in which we live - arrhythmia sets in.

Between the abstract and the concrete

Across the various theories I have presented above, one can trace an idea of human beings' decontextualisation from their concrete or natural environments - environments that, temporally speaking, tend to be cyclical.

In general, technology has long had the effect of removing people from their natural environments and their synchronisation with the cosmic timegivers. For instance, the invention of the electric light levelled out the cosmic cycle of day and night, heating systems and air conditioning regulate the indoor climate in homes, shops sell unseasonal fruits and vegetables from other parts of the world all year round. From a human perspective, although this has made life a great deal more convenient, it has also partly levelled out our experience of the seasons' cosmic cycle. The biggest change may have occurred as a result of the expansion of the digital world, which has no sense of cosmic temporality, with the exception of certain functions such as reports and representations of the weather. The digital world is available at any time on any day, e-shops are never closed and operating platforms can be used at any time. Only the individual's own body sets the limit for the digital nonstop society after all, we still have to sleep.

I have repeatedly used the word 'abstract' to describe the digital world in which we humans spend more and more of our lives. 'Abstract' suggests the opposite of 'concrete', something that is detached from reality. Here an interesting schism arises. On the one hand, as Hassan points out, the digital world is just as concrete, or 'actual', as our cities and the natural ecology within which we have built our world. It takes up a large part of our daily lives and determines our lives and livelihoods on many levels. Thus the virtual world cannot be said to be unreal. However, this new virtual non-space exists outside of time and space and is therefore to an extreme degree cut off from the physical manifestations of our natural surroundings, both materially and temporally. Much of humanity now spends its time in a lifeworld that is at once real and decontextualised from the physical world - as approaching a state of unreality. What is problematic here is that living more or less cut off from the 'world of things', or the natural world, does not mean that the pollution we emit disappears - it just disappears from sight.

The context that disappeared

As shown, the dominant time technology in the first temporal Empire was the clock. Rather than upholding a timescape that abide by many different times, the clock becomes a *Zeitgeber* and creates a hegemony. In this context one can speak of a hierarchical temporality in which the time culture that follows the clock as *Zeitgeber* subjugates the many other modes of time that relate to the human lifeworld. The relationship between these different modes of time is of crucial importance at this stage of history, since this is when that relationship begins to change radically.

In the second temporal Empire a new *Zeitgeber* appears: network time. As I've shown, this can also be described as 'empty time', since it frees itself completely from temporal contexts of any kind - including the abstract time grid of clock time. The illusion of empty time now makes its historical appearance. It is only possible to talk about empty time when one does not experience time based on one's actual surroundings - in which there will always be temporalities - or when one's environment becomes virtual, instantly accessible and dematerialised.

What is at stake here is that the *Eigenzeiten* of things and the actual environment are at risk of becoming overlooked or even altogether invisible to us, since our perception of time is dominated by an empty time that does not provide the conceptual space necessary to perceive the diverse and concrete temporalities of things. Cyclical and slower forms of time seem particularly at risk.

Since our contemporary understanding of time is largely based on our virtual and decontextualised life-world, we have largely lost awareness of cyclical forms of time. This is problematic, because it means that critiques of the increasingly uncompromising linear time model used in contemporary society are in danger of losing their grounding. And this in an age were natural (re)sources are consumed in a linear manner with no considerations of the pauses needed for regeneration and replenishment.

Growth versus long-term thinking

Oil and gas are examples of resources that are currently being used at a pace that bears no relation to the time they took to develop. At the current rate of use, a long list of metals will as well be gone in the near future - metals that are basic components of many of our everyday utility items. The logic of using up a resource at a pace that is faster than its regeneration time is grounded in the desire for increased production per unit of time. This can therefore also be analysed from a temporal perspective.

Moreover, the ideology of economic growth is strongly linked to shorttermism. If one takes a long-term view of the idea of growth, its problems quickly become clear. There are very few areas of our society where people now speak of longer periods of time than twenty years. For the sake of illustration, one could contrast this with the idea of cycles of 'kalpas' in Buddhist cosmology, which relates to the time span it takes for the world to be born, exist, die and await a new birth. In Buddhist cosmology, this cycle lasts about 4,320,000 years. This mythology also has equations designed to give a sense of the number of kalpas that have already occurred, a timescale that is even more awe-inspiring. Whether this is a cyclical or an extremely long-term view of time is almost a moot point, since the two can hardly be distinguished in the human imagination.

One can identify certain guiding narratives that underlie the worldview of any given society. Buddhist cosmology speaks of time as something immense. We might ask which guiding narratives about time underlie our view of time now that we have broken with both religion and the so-called grand narratives³³. Which guiding narratives do we have to lead our lives and societies by now?

³³One can go so far as to say that norms as such in our historical situation are under constant fire. For example, Terry Eagleton points out how both postmodernists and neoliberals are 'suspicious' of all kinds of norms, values and traditions (see Eagleton 2003 p. 29).



5 ART AND THE PEACEFUL GAZE

In order to make long-term plans in any given context, it is essential to have an integrated understanding of the broader conditions of that context - and to be able to trust that these conditions will not change dramatically. In past eras people could take it for granted that their current practices and knowledge would continue to be useful in the future. This trust in the future has now partly disappeared because of the highly changeable nature of our world. Habits, customs and traditions are breaking up, partly due to a new perception of the future, which I have described as 'empty'.

In network time, the awareness of history itself is in danger of disappearing. With the illusory collapse of the dimension of time, the very idea of a future is in danger of disappearing. 'Here and now' becomes the new temporality, replacing sequential time and duration. From this follows a radically open future in which nothing is certain. An open and undecided future has come to dominate our perception of time.

However, the collapse of the dimension of time is precisely an illusion because the future remains a reality: what we do in the present inevitably has an effect on the future. A condition in which the future is neglected is potentially disastrous, since the responsibility for the future disappears with it: "we can plunder and pollute it with impunity. We can forget that our future is the present of others and pretend that it is ours to do with as we please"³⁴. In other words, there is a chasm between the human understanding of reality and reality itself - because naturally our actions have consequences.

³⁴Adam and Groves 2007 p. 13

This lack of responsibility for our environment, which can at least partly be traced to a distorted view of time, and especially of the future, comes at a critical moment in history. Our actions have had consequences on a global level. The perception of a future emptied of content tends to subvert the potential for a critique of linear time and enables the acceleration, escalating production, and whatever else follows in terms of increased pressure on the ecosystem, to continue.

Serres describes the atmospheric system as a historically "inconstant but fairly stable [system], deterministic and stochastic, moving quasi-periodically with rhythms and response times that vary collosally"³⁵. The question is how these rhythms change as a result of growth-oriented short-termism: "What serious disequilibria will occur, what global change must be expected in the whole climate from our growing industrial activities and technological prowess, which pour thousands of tons of carbon monoxide and other toxic wastes into the atmosphere?"³⁶.

Based on these descriptions, we might call the Earth's atmospheric system, which is a crucial part of the overall ecological system, a eurhythmia. And to stay with Lefebvre's terms, the escalating human intervention in this system is so powerful that it may potentially transform the eurhythmia into an arrhythmia. To put it in more temporal terms, the linear and short-term human understanding of time, and the actions that result from it, are in danger of collapsing the buffer systems that allow the system to remain eurythmic.

In other words, our current way of living and experiencing time may have immeasurable consequences, both for ourselves and for the environment in which we live and which we cannot live without. In finding other ways of living that integrate and respect nature's temporalities, art has something important to tell us.

The sphere of art and the shield against soft pollution

Art 'knows' something about time. Like everything else, works of art are shaped in time: the time a work of art lasts, the time it takes to work on the mind or body of a spectator and its internal rhythms are all temporally constituted. And often artists are very aware of this aspect of their work, perhaps most tangibly in the so-called temporal arts: music and cinema. But beyond

³⁵Serres 1995 p. 27

³⁶Ibid. p. 27

the temporalities related to the artwork itself, there is a special relation to time built into the realm of art as such.

Art is a sphere in which many societal demands can partly be suspended. Historically, art has often been seen as an activity that can enact a kind of free space - a space as free as possible from rationales other than those of art itself, especially economic rationales. And since economic rationales have been a driving factor of the general acceleration of society, it may be that art has been less affected by this acceleration than other spheres of human activity. In any case, art offers the possibility of being less affected by acceleration. It may therefore be possible to encounter rhythms and temporalities in art that do not exist in very many other areas of society.

The relative temporal autonomy of art, as one might call it, is also reflected in exhibition and performance spaces, such as galleries or concert halls. Here the ideal is often the exclusion of all other modes of time than those of the artworks themselves. Thus the audience is usually required not to talk too much, to turn off their mobile phones and to behave discreetly in the gallery space or during the performance. In line with Serres' concept of pollution, one could say that the exhibition or performance space, with its specific habitus requirements, forms a kind of shield against soft pollution. The audience is invited to focus as much as possible on the artwork itself and hence the artwork's own rhythms.

When, for example, a film is projected or a concert is performed, the audience usually knows roughly how long it will take: the time to view the work is set aside in advance. A concert may last an hour and a half, and if you want to experience it fully and show respect for the work, you will of course make sure in advance that you won't be doing anything else during this period of time. Thus the audience itself also creates a free period of time to devote to the work.

Moreover, a work of art takes the time it needs. It wouldn't make sense, for example, to play a Mozart adagio in twice the tempo to save time. This would change the experience totally. The artistry lies precisely in finding the 'right' tempo for a given interpretation. Nor does it make sense to play a film at a different speed, unless it is for the sake of artistic experiment. Even a poem can be said to have its own reading pace. A given work takes the time it needs. In a societal perspective, this is a rarity.

Aesthetic sensibility

Another characteristic of the sphere of art is the relationship between the spectator (subject) and the work (object). The spectator uses his or her aesthetic sensibility to relate to a work. He or she 'senses' the artwork and, to use Bergson's expression, 'sympathises' with it. Ideally, spectators try to forget their own preferences and prejudices to allow the work's unique qualities to enter their consciousness. This idea bears resemblance to Kant's concept of 'disinterested delight'³⁷. Ideally, then, the spectators forget themselves and their own aims and rationales to make space for the artwork.

The 'riddle-character'³⁸ of artworks means that it is not sufficient to experience them in a more or less shallow way. Such an 'experience' simply reflects back on the spectators themselves and their own superficial satisfaction. Before a riddle can be solved, one has to listen to the riddle itself; a greater effort is required. A true aesthetic experience thus requires a 'realisation' derived from a "dialectical exchange on the artwork's terms"³⁹. This exchange takes place between a subject and object whose relationship is far from one-sided.

In this experience, the audience's sensibility so to speak glides from the subject to the work, which in the aesthetic experience takes precedence - but always in the form of an exchange with the subject. In rare cases, the experience culminates in a 'being shaken', in which "the objective breaks through" and "the subject moves out of himself" in a 'groundbreaking experience'⁴⁰. The point of the spectrum of aesthetic experience, from the simpler experiences to 'being shaken', is the expansion of consciousness that takes places when the work 'invades' the subject after turning his or her sensibility towards the work, and the new experiences that occur as a result.

Turning towards the work allows the artwork to lead an audience into its 'drama', to become participants. In a temporal perspective, spectators not only observe the work's rhythms but experience them through participation. The temporal constitution of the artwork - what it knows about time - can be so fully experienced that its rhythms become living rhythms. For the audience, then, the artwork's temporality takes the form of bodily experienced rhythms that have something to teach about time.

Michel Serres and aesthetics

The special kind of attention that is present in the aesthetic writings of Adorno has some similarities with some of Serres aesthetic ideas. These thoughts also relates to the search for time skills that this article is partly about. The concept

³⁷Kant introduces the concept in his *Critique of Judgement of 1790*.

³⁸This is Adorno's terminology

³⁹Sangild 2004 p. 123, my translation from the Danish

⁴⁰Ibid. p. 125, my translation from the Danish

of beauty is, for Serres, the removal of appropriation. When ownership is removed, peace occurs. The special attention that Adorno ascribes our art experiences has some similarities with Michel Serres' aesthetics. This special gaze is described by Serres as a form of perception that uncovers the language of things. His concept of soft pollution is linked to his understanding of beauty.

Serres suggests that the ability to see the world's beauty is a matter of removing the 'filth' derived from the human appropriation of the world. He uses the term *découvrir*, to uncover/discover. Soft pollution is one example of what needs to be uncovered to allow the beauty of the world to be perceived. In Serres' view, all forms of communicative images, signs, languages etc. which serve as appropriations must also be removed before beauty can step forth.

This appropriation can be very fine-meshed: "we cover [the real] not only with garbage, signs, and marks but also with finer structures through which we do not see, feel, or understand the real but rather appropriate it under the name of science, technique, thought; hundreds of other maps"⁴¹. 'Maps' is Serres's term for contexts of human understanding. It is not just soft pollution that blurs the perception of the concrete: simply having a more or less discursive understanding of context is also a form of appropriation.

Thus the concept of appropriation spreads out. As Serres writes: "Kant defined the Beautiful as disinterested. I propose dis-appropriated, relieved of filth"⁴². The interesting thing is that the individual who experiences this beauty is also uncovered: "What lies underneath? First of all, beauty. As I perceive it, a peaceful ecstasy lifts me out of myself"⁴³. The individual is lifted out of himor herself in 'peaceful ecstasy'.

The peaceful gaze

Beauty means to eliminate ownership. And when ownership is eliminated, peace appears. The special gaze that occurs outside of all appropriation accepts everything that exists - in an artwork as well as in the surrounding world in general. This I will tentatively name 'the peaceful gaze'. The peaceful gaze is thus an extension of the aesthetic sensibility beyond art.

To be aware of and be able to follow the logics that are constantly in play within one's surroundings, which the peaceful gaze uncovers, is extremely useful. Most often the logics we carry around within ourselves overshadow the

⁴¹Serres 2010 p. 74

⁴²Ibid. p. 73

⁴³Ibid. p. 75

logics of the contexts we move about in. Ideally, the peaceful gaze can open up for a 'turning to the world' that uncovers the logics of our surroundings.

This sensitivity to the outside world can be said to be vital in many, if not all, contexts. It is extremely valuable in human relationships, in politics (especially in the case of conflicting parties' deafness to the arguments of their 'opponents'), as well as in science, where certain logics tend to exclude others - often because science still tends to regard itself as objective, which in the worst case can make vital experiences impossible⁴⁴.

But this peaceful gaze is particularly important as regards our relation to nature. It can be a step towards re-contextualising the individual. In our current historical situation, it has become necessary for us to learn to see ourselves as part of our surrounding world. The first step in this process is of course to recognise this outside world in the first place. As a response to the soft pollution's storm of images, the increasingly language-determined nature of society and the types of rhythms that follow from this, acquiring a peaceful gaze can help us refine our sensitivity to our environment and learn the discipline of living in accordance with the rhythms of things.

⁴⁴Latour accounts for this in his book *Laboratory Life: the Social Construction of Scientific Facts* from 1979



6 TOWARDS A NEW TIME CULTURE

In my experience, time analysis is a very powerful conceptual tool, since it can be applied to a very diverse range of areas, while at the same time it can help to point out precise benefits and disadvantages of different courses of action. In addition, aside from its anti-capitalist undertones, it is a relatively apolitical tool because it doesn't side with any 'actor' but ask us to understand and respect the inherent temporalities that surrounds us. Time analysis is not based on an abstract system but on the constitutive behaviour of the object of analysis itself. There is a 'turning to the world' built into the analysis that I consider very positive.

In a contemporary world where economic problems and natural disasters fill the media, it has become clear that it is crucial to find other ways of life. The values that our society has glorified in particular over the last twenty years have gone largely unquestioned. However, this has changed in the last few years as various social conditions have begun to be questioned more intensely across the public sphere. There is currently a momentum for new ways of thinking about the future.

A key element in the pursuit of a more balanced way of living is to take seriously the place in which we actually find ourselves. We must become aware that we live in a world that cannot cope with unlimited pollution and that has its own temporalities which must be respected. The most beneficial values on which to build our future are not necessarily abstract, but can just as well be concrete and decipherable in our immediate surroundings. Instead of a Beckettian space in which everything seems abstract, empty and uncertain, the cosmic space must be reinstated as man's actual context. This realisation can stand as an example of a change that can make a world of difference.

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is a platform for dialogue around the role of time in our lifeworlds and a place for collectively building the lifeskills we need to lead flourishing lives in the networked society.

It is time we consider where the linear time of Progress, Growth and Efficiency is taking us.