

## Atemporality and World-History

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“No matter whose books we've read, we're the children of capital; the love of speed is ingrained in us.”

- N+1

Certain things are appreciable whether or not we've really stopped to study them in detail. The days pass into days, whether we are asleep or awake. But there is mistrust of the progressions, an alienation from the day-to-day pattern of metered movement. We become detached from time, from history, from others, and from ourselves. Perhaps we can get back on the spinning circle, but there will always be that separation. The segments change their length, or we perceive them to do so, whether we study them carefully, measuring them with complex physical instruments or simply with our untrained eye. Sometimes it seems nothing will ever meter out correctly, return when we expect it to, or take as long or short a time as we wish.

But then other times, we feel as if everything is precisely right. We pick up speed, and with this intensity we feel ourselves oscillating correctly. We couldn't put a number on the speed, or measure it relative to anything. It becomes an irrelative sense of time, relevant to itself and everything we see, but focused in our perception rather than our natural systems of measurement and thought. There is speed, and then there is the sensation of speed. These happen again and again, throughout our lives, and throughout history.

“Time is out of joint, time is unhinged. The hinges are the axis around which the door turns. *Cardo*, in Latin, designates the subordination of time to the cardinal points through which the periodical movements that it measures pass. As long as time remains on its hinges, it is subordinate to movement: it is the measure of movement, interval or number. This was the view of ancient philosophy. But time out of joint signifies the reversal of the movement-time relationship. It is now movement which is subordinate to time. Everything changes, including movement. We move from one labyrinth to another. The labyrinth is no longer a circle, or a spiral which would translate its complications, but a thread, a straight line, all the more mysterious for being simple, inexorable as Borges says, 'the labyrinth which is composed of a single straight line, and which is indivisible, incessant'.”

- Deleuze, preface to “Kant's Critical Philosophy”

Kant defined time as one of the foundations of transcendental idealism, the other being space. By having these ideals built into the framework of our consciousness, we were able to comprehend and perceive individual objects within time and space. Time was not something simply to be measured, to count in units of seconds and minutes. Time was an infinite length, the passage of which could be divided into units, but only as small subsets of a particular mental acuity. You must feel timeliness, in order to measure the passage of time. In human consciousness, there is a feature of time sensation, which must first exist purely, and then may be quantified. No extent occasion of time exist without it being a fragment of the ideal timeliness. In this way, 12:12 PM on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2112 cannot happen more than once, because if you exist at that point in time, you would not confuse that moment with

any other moment in history. (A tongue-in-cheek example, to be sure.) Space works in the same way; by every instance of physical, three dimensional space being a portion of the overall concept of space, you can be sure that two solid objects cannot exist in the same time and the same place.

From these transcendently ideal concepts, we are able to measure the sequence of time and space in ideal units. Because we can think of the extension of a moment into a precise length, which we call a second, we can then measure one second succeeded by the next, and so forth. We can think of the extension of space in a precise length, which we call an inch, and then we can measure one inch succeeded by the next, and so on.

Through Kant, we can see that whereas we naturally think of movement—the measure of space in conjunction with a measure in time—actually requires the ideal concepts of space, and more importantly, time, before it can be perceived. We think of a ball traveling through space requiring physical space as its fundamental requirement for motion. But in actuality, before we perceive it in space, moving or not, we first require within us the sensation of time, because time is internal to us, as much as space is external. Things must be existent in duration, before they can exist in space.

“The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”

-Marx, Thesis on Feuerbach, XI

Movement is change, our way of noticing difference over time. Difference over time, as we make note of it and remember it for ourselves, is history. Marx was interested in history, and specifically, interested in rescuing it from the tradition of German Idealism, born out of thinkers like Kant, who drove us to look internally for our interpretations of the world. Marx wanted us to look back to the outside world, to society, and to history, but naturally he could not completely leave behind the internal world of our transcendental faculties.

Marx's four fundamental conditions of history are simple, and take root in such material idealisms as basic as time and space to the world of perception and intuition. There are human needs, and with human needs, develop more specific needs. Then there are humans themselves, each existent and fundamentally differentiated from each other as they reproduce; and then more humans, as they run into each other and interact. These humans and their needs must arrange themselves as they seek to fulfill themselves, and so end up with a system of relations between needs, the diversification of needs, humans, and the co-operation between them to negotiate this historical sphere, which we call society.

A need is an attachment to a particular thing more than it is a hole to be filled, as we tend to think of it simply. We may have a hunger for food at a particular time, but the need itself is a desire for food, refracted into beams of light, each shining at a particular time when bent off from the whole of desire. Certain things are illuminated, and then darkened again, but the desire continues within us. We form connections, and then they break off, and perhaps form again in another location or time, driven by the engines of desire constantly running. These connections may be with food itself, or with the land required to grow the food, or with the other humans whose help we require to grow it. This network of connections is constantly oscillating, breaking and then renewing itself, as we travel over our known territories in the material world, moving through physical space and time. Marx calls the connections relations, and equates them with the ideality of language, something appearing only in our consciousness. In his day he assumed only humans (or as he writes, men) had the capacity for communication, and while with idealized communications he may be correct, we have since learned that even bacteria communicate with each other to co-ordinate their needs in space and time. There are millions upon millions of interactions and connections breaking and re-establishing between the teeming life on this planet, all of them furthering the cause of material life.

But Marx wants to juxtapose the material relations with the social relations, because as he sees correctly, there is a distinct breakage occurring between these two, a rhythm that cannot seem to re-establish itself, a timing perpetually out of joint. Nature, the physical world opposed to our mental worlds, “appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts,” (*German Ideology*, 51). Nature and the physical world, does not always adhere to our

mental conceptions of it, because our understanding of our ideal faculties is an ongoing process. As such, we oppose nature as a force opposed to our knowledge of it, and we seek to master it as best we can. We develop natural religions, using magic and fetishes and other forms of esoteric knowledge in the attempt to affect the world as best we can. Our desires are routed through our limited knowledge of the stars and the seasons, and blood and other vitreous humors, and the basic social arrangements of the family, the village, the power of humans over humans, and what other sorts of relations as we can devise. We re-territorialize ourselves to our land and each other, organizing our relations through ideas, and our relations with ideas, hoping to somehow overcome this alien force.

And this is simply the beginning. In our effort to reterritorialize, we split our mental and physical efforts into categories, breaking our inherent knowledge of space and time from our measures of physical space and time, separating our needs from our actual work to procure the responses to these needs, and dividing humans and their labors from each other to create new regimes of desires, territories, production, spaces, and times. The division of labor as Marx would have it, but as we are beginning to see, it is something much more cosmologically complicated than that.

Very cosmologically complicated, and of course, we get confused. In the arising regimes of relations, the alien sensation of Nature becomes dislocated, de-territorialized, and routed through different stations and pathways. The productions of product, desire, ideas, and relations become more complicated, and difficult for our minds to hold on to. "The social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force, which arise through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labor, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these," (*German Ideology*, 54). The social forces have supplanted the minds which brought them about, and its controlling regime is more powerful than those who invented it. Our measures of space and time, and production and people, and desires and relations, are now more powerful our own interior, fundamental concepts of these things. What matter is your sense of time if you are late for work? Who cares about where you consider home if your mortgage is due? What difference does your skill make if you cannot find a job? What is suffering in comparison to GDP? What is sex in relation to society? Who are our friends, next to the power of our enemies? We are alienated from ourselves mentally, and therefore physically, because we cannot orient ourselves to a world that refuses to acknowledge us. Our ideals will never catch up with the physical world, because our conception of the physical world will not allow itself to be caught.

It was a natural religion which first attempted to change the regimes of ideals to match the natural world. Then, it was the State, which for convenience sake, absorbed all territoriality to itself. Then it was Capitalism, and the market, which proved itself more efficient and lucrative than even the State. Will we ever catch up? Is it possible to catch up? Or should we listen to Marx, and try to find a new sort of rhythm?

"Capitalism is a bet about tomorrow—and it's always the same bet. Tomorrow will be "better" than today. More wealth will be created, more resources will be used, and, excepting recessions, the economy will continue growing forever. The bet takes the form of credit and investment—you lend or invest a sum today to get back a larger sum tomorrow, because tomorrow there will be *more* of everything (except oil, old-growth forest, et cetera)."

- N+1

Few, other than the lovely *N+1* publication of course, are actually interested in review the ideal relations we have regarding our material conditions. It is a big project of course, and there is little way to tell when we are right in diagnosing a neurotic pathway of our consciousnesses, forever banging its head into some material wall because of something territorialized wrongly in one of those less-than-conscious pathways and relations. We can tell when we're banging our heads of course, but why? And what will make it stop? Who knows, right?

But on the other hand, we have no trouble keeping up with the speed of the times. Change is constant, and we're on top of that. We can adapt to the newest technologies without batting an eye, and we can be the early adopters, who go out and write long treatises and tutorials for our friends, with no motivation other than helping everyone out, and helping us reterritorialize to a new geography of ideas, spread over a material network moving at an incredible rate of speed. We can make social-tools of connection and communication a radical part of our lives, for whatever benefit there might be. Is there a benefit? Who knows, but we certainly won't be left behind when we all find out. We'll be there, and be on the forefront, in the vanguard of... what is it? Ah yes, an archaic term—history. We will be the ones making a change, and we won't even have to change, because change will become what we are, moving at the speed of thought.

But this is not real movement. This speed we think we are feeling is just an ideal increase of our time ideal. It is a sensation of always being in the present, and of history increasing its speed, and of us hanging on for dear life. But we are not moving. Society is much the same as it ever was, and it is only our relative sensation of speed which has decreased. As we shrink our quantitative segment of time, we assume, according to our material model of the world, that we are speeding up. We are not going faster, only our world is getting smaller. We are completely ignoring our acuity for ideal timeliness, and focusing on the passage of quantitative time segments before our eyes. We have rejected the ideal realm completely, and look to society for what we should think and feel. We have thrown away the idealism of Kant, instead trusting our most basic empiricism, as dictated to us by societies regimes. Society says Twitter is new, Twitter is fast, and Twitter is hot. But does it ever say why? Some completely ignore this toy train, but others grab a hold of it, shrieking with delight at the speed they are told they are feeling.

Marx would be appalled that we have become so propertyless, and yet our consciousnesses tell us we are rich. We have less, and are told it is more. History is stretched out to the breaking point, and we are told we are moving faster than ever before. We are so used to being deterritorialized, and having our world dragged out from under us, that we barely wake, instead just rolling over and going back to sleep.

And yet, the world is changing. We have new realms for society to inhabit, electronic realms that are virtually infinite in size. Our ideal concept of space itself becomes irrelevant to these sorts of connections and relations. Our ideal concept of time is left at the station, unable to feel any sort of time in relation to instant communication. Perhaps it is a state of constant deterritorialization, except that there are all these connections being made. All of this progress—perhaps not in a direction, or with any measureable rate of change, but change all the same. There is something happening, but we are not sure what. We connect, and others connect, and we engage, and we share, and we co-operate, and we produce, to what? What sort of production is this? The division of labor has grown into a division of cosmology, and one industry of cosmological progress cannot unify itself with the others.

The history, left confused and spinning in the dust, catches onto a gear and is pulled again into the machine. It is spread out, stretched, and multiplied, found in the strangest of places. In an article off in a corner of the Internet, an unnamed author calls out a particular social relation, explaining how it is a dirty trick, taking advantage of its participants for the benefit of a few individuals. Elsewhere, in a multi-party discussion on a web page, conclusions are offered about the future of a particular technology for connecting individuals across the world in archivable discussion. And then somewhere else, a particular person discovers a way to broadcast her personal opinion to a large number of people from her cell phone. She does so, serendipitously mentioning these two previous things, which she just so happened to witness unfolding on the Internet. Then, in a month, when the previously mentioned technology becomes available, someone searching for information about it happens across the old posts, and sees the evidence of the social injustice, and begins to test a third-party app for protesters to use with the new technology. The rest, as they say, is history.

But what sort of history is this? A history that is taggable, multi-user, archivable, constantly evolving with new uses and new developers, the very accessible fabric of which is constantly under revision, restructuring, retirement, and rerouting. Every person whose thought is routed through these series of connections becomes a part of this history instantly, though in what quantitative measurement, and to what isolated, casual effect is impossible to say. But there is an effect, there is no doubt about it.

“The real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). *All-round* dependence, this natural form of the *world-historical* co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.” (*German Ideology*, 55)

We always seem to return to our history. Only now our history is globalized, but split into fragments, not determined by the national and local lines of our previous history. It is stratified, but its stratification is one of connections, not of divisions. Our connections will not unify our history, but they can make a divisive rift impossible to maintain. Once the center could not hold, but now it is the splits and segments that will always shatter. The network is always on, and always connecting. Access is the principle, rather than the exception.

Our ideal concepts of time and space may just return, once the quantitative segments we have replaced them with in our minds refuse to stay ideal. Those primary principles will help us form territorializations and connections rather than needing to be paved over. What is the day to a world constantly online? What is a border to an anonymous chat? The real ideals may return, and we will remember that time is anything contemporaneous, and space is anything simultaneous, and with ideal time and space, flows ourselves. We will no longer feel society condensing us to singularities of infinite speed, but feel ourselves expanding to moments of pure totality, as far as we can reach. We can't connect with everything in the world, but we will have occasion to connect with the *right* things, the positive things, and that which can help us all, cooperatively. The infinite will return to its proper place inside us, and we will be free to engage with the finitudes of space and time in the world. We can deal with finite needs, finite desires, and finite space and time in which to affect them. We can make the proper connections and territorializations, not simply unified or totalized connections with regimes of control. The ideal will be brought back into proper relation with the material, and while it will never be a unified partnership, the alienation will stop shifting from one side to the other, and can be parceled out as it should be. There will be no moment of eternal, ahistorical self-consciousness, but rather a continuous unfolding and production of timeliness against time, and existence against space, and world-historiality against the tragedies of history.

It remains on the “real ground of history,” the surmounting of ideal and material obstacles by human beings. It is production, and relation, and resolution, and consumption combined into movement, the pure movement of ideal space over ideal time, and therefore, material space over material time. It is a passing-over, a constant presence of returning, a timeliness in atemporality, and a existential nonexistence in our spaces and bodies. By feeling the speed within us, we can properly measure it outside of us, not for a unification of quantitative segments with any particular regime, but to build from the segments something we can use.

But, Marx and Kant both knew it's not something that exists apart from us. Technology dramatically changes the world, but only inside our heads can we really change ourselves. And then, once we have become the change in ourselves, perhaps there will be material change we can notice.