

# Temporal Horizons

Erwin Straus

Edited with introduction by Marcin Moskalewicz<sup>1,2,3</sup> 

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**Abstract** The article presents Erwin W. Straus' unpublished manuscript "Temporal Horizons" from 1952. In the paper, in addition to an extensive philosophical discussion with St. Augustine, Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud, Straus elaborates on his idea of a unified view of temporal experience, comprising both the personal and the impersonal dimensions of time. The manuscript also contains an interview with a psychotic patient, which is supposed to exemplify Straus' core idea on the psychotic temporal experience, according to which the break of the invisible bond between immanent or personal, and clock or impersonal time leads to a loss of a sense of reality.

**Keywords** Erwin. W. Straus · Temporality · Temporal experience · Psychosis · Depression · Clock time · Today · St. Augustine · Sigmund Freud · Henri Bergson

## Introduction to Erwin Straus's Temporal Horizons

Two manuscripts under the same title - *Temporal Horizons* - written by Erwin W. Straus exist.<sup>1</sup> The shorter of them was written during a single day - the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1952. It is two pages long and concerns only the concept of "today" - a concept by which Straus hoped to overcome the traditional dichotomy of personal and clock time.<sup>2</sup> The longer manuscript presented here is thirty-three pages long and includes a version of the shorter manuscript, abbreviated by Straus himself. In addition to an extensive philosophical discussion with St. Augustine, Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud, in the longer manuscript Straus

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<sup>1</sup>Both are at the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University, USA (ref. FF 137).

<sup>2</sup>The shorter manuscript appeared in print in Polish translation only (Moskalewicz, 2015).

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presents and elaborates on his idea of a unified view of temporal experience, comprising both the personal and the impersonal dimensions of time.

The longer manuscript also contains an interview with a psychotic patient, which is supposed to exemplify Straus' core idea on the psychotic temporal experience, according to which the break of the invisible bond between immanent or personal, and clock or impersonal time leads to a loss of a sense of reality.

The interview was taken on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1952 at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, where Straus was a director at that time. As a full transcript of the interview (not included in the longer *Temporal Horizons* manuscript) indicates, it was conducted at Observation Ward 16B by Erwin Straus and his collaborator, Richard Marion Griffith (1921–1969), a research psychologist. The full transcript is sixteen typed pages long; the shortened one presented below is four and a half typed pages long, and it is underlined, presumably by Straus himself, within the full transcript.

The interviewed patient was a graduate student and part-time instructor at the University of Kentucky who managed to take his own life one year later, at the age of 26, by poison.<sup>3</sup> It may be inferred therefore that the longer *Temporal Horizons* manuscript must have been written sometime between 10<sup>th</sup> July 1952 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 1953, for the fact of the suicide of his patient would surely have had an impact upon Straus' interpretation and is likely to have been at least mentioned.

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## Reference

Moskalewicz, M. (2015). Horyzonty czasowe Erwina W. Strausa: pojęcie „dzisiaj”. *Sensus Historiae*, 18(2).

<sup>3</sup> “The Kentucky Kernel”, July 31, 1953, p. 4.

## Temporal Horizons by Erwin W. Straus<sup>1</sup>

*The obvious is the riddle!*

Day after day, in hundreds of psychiatric case histories, reference is made to time. A short passage noting orientation or disorientation in time is a matter of routine, on a par with the recordings of pulse, temperature, and blood pressure. Such entries reflect our expectation. We take it for granted that a normal person is capable of forming a concept of time and therefore should know the time; in other words, we expect everybody to be familiar with clock and calendar, to know hour and day, month and year. Most patients live up to our expectations. Those who fail – those who, as we say, are disoriented in time – constitute a minority. Even in this small group the deficiency is characterized by an ignorance of details rather than by a complete lack of temporal concepts in general. A Korsakoff patient who misplaces the actual date somewhere in the scheme of the calendar still has preserved the knowledge of the order of time; an octogenarian who claims to be no more than fifty years old still knows of age and its measurement; a schizophrenic who assures us that he is a billion years old – perhaps he wants to say that his existence is no longer submerged in the flux of time – still refers to the duration of lengths of time, divided and counted by years. Someone who serves as the subject of an experiment exploring the effects of hashish or mescaline may grossly overrate the length of a given period of time; still he has not lost the understanding of the measurement of time as such.

The conceptual scheme of chronology proves very resistive even when the capacity to determine the chronicle has failed. Passing through three levels, the process of deterioration affects knowledge of details first; it is a movement directed from the most specific to the most generic. The point where the questions "When?" and "How long?" have lost any meaning is reached in asymptotic curves only.

The rule – well established through observation of many cases of brain injury (Goldstein 1942) – that abstract attitudes are impaired appears to be contradicted by the behavior of patients disoriented in time, since they are not bound by concrete situations and are less impaired in their attitude toward the abstract than in their capacity for making it concrete. How can we explain this discrepancy? Perhaps the rule of impairment of abstract attitudes permits exceptions, or perhaps it needs further elaboration. Perhaps our terminology is too crude; we should avoid talking about the concept of time. But there is still another possibility. Perhaps time is a "category" of its own, not on the same level with other categories; the experience of time is basic, the foundation of many other experiences. It may be that disorientation of time reveals the peculiar character of the experiencing of time as such. Pathology, then, as it so often does, would point to a problem of much wider scope. Before we can understand the deficiencies of the experience of time we must have insight into the normal accomplishments that have suffered impairment.

Unfortunately, in psychiatry we are usually satisfied with noting, observing and describing disorientation in time; we appreciate it as a symptom. Long experience has taught us to accent it as a sign of some organic disorder of the brain. Pleased with its tested

<sup>1</sup> © Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University, USA. Obvious spelling errors and punctuations were corrected, repetitions were omitted, and the footnotes were also added in case they were missing. The transcript was prepared by Katarzyna Kulas and Marcin Moskalewicz – editor's note.

reliability, we are not inclined to give much thought to the presuppositions on which this part of our semiology rests. In our expectation that everybody will be familiar with clock and calendar we simply carry over – unchallenged – an everyday life experience into the psychiatric examination room, and we do it for very good practical reasons.

Indeed, without clock and calendar, without the possibility of measuring time and of placing the actual moment in a given scheme, our Western civilization would collapse immediately. Whoever wants to move around in its orbit as an active member – be it with a minimum of independence, initiative, and responsibility – must be able to understand clock and calendar and to follow their exacting demands. The church bell is no longer sufficient; the watch has become an indispensable tool. He who owns none must find out by other means “what time it is”. Without such information he would be lost in an environment where everything runs on schedules and by time tables. Our civilization obliges all its members to be familiar with clock and calendar, or, to reverse this relationship, because everyone is able to comply with this demand, a civilization like ours can come into existence. To be sure, there are cultures where time is articulated in a less precise order and measured with much less accuracy. But we have no doubt that someone transplanted to our shores from a primitive island would soon join the ranks.

To conceive time, to understand clock and calendar, is no prerogative of any race. It is the most common human capacity. Therefore nobody receives special credit for the acquisition of such knowledge. In the practice of life we show little respect for accomplishments that are shared by everyone and therefore confer no distinction on anybody. What could be more trivial than the question “What time is it?”, and the answer given to this question after consulting the watch? The prompt performance prevents us from recognizing the enigma concealed in such simple actions. The first task, therefore, is to discover the problems hidden in these seemingly commonplace manifestations.

In fact the need not be discovered, rediscovery suffices:

We speak as to time and time, times and times, – “How long is the time since he said this?” “How long the time since I saw that?” and, “This syllable has double the time of that single short syllable.” These words we speak, and these we hear; and we are understood, and we understand. They are most manifest and most usual, and the same things again lie hid too deeply, and the discovery of them is new (Augustine 1943, p. 293).

For what is time? Who can easily and briefly explain it? Who even in thought can comprehend it, even to the pronouncing of a word concerning it? But what in speaking do we refer to more familiarly and knowingly than time? (Augustine 1943, p. 285)

There are certain occasions – birth and death, the blessings of fortune and vicissitudes of fate – when we begin to wonder about time and eternity, transitoriness and duration. On ordinary occasions, however, we do not like to stop and to ponder about habitual actions which we perform easily and, it seems, understand sufficiently well. There are many things about which we can converse with other and understand each other without understanding the nature of things themselves, “...there are but few things which we speak properly, many things improperly; but what we may wish to say is understood.” (Augustine 1943, p. 291)

Expressions of amazement about the interpenetration of knowing and not knowing pervade Augustine's analysis of time. The famous formulation, so often quoted, "What, then, is time? If no one asks of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not," is only one variation of a theme which constantly presses his inquiry forward, dividing as well as linking its parts (Augustine 1943, p. 285).

Augustine was not the only one, nor the first one, to discover the paradoxes of time. His mediations, however, are distinguished by a truly classical style. His essay on time, limited to a small number of problems, is constructed as a perfect whole. It speaks for itself; it needs no commentary. It is a monument, which has lasted through the ages. In the soliloquies of his autobiography Augustine does not present his thoughts so much as his thinking, through which he awakens and incites the reader. In a dramatic development argument is taken up after argument, one solution tried after another – and each one rejected – until in a climactic ending a final answer is reached: "In thee, O my mind, I measure times" (Augustine 1943, p. 300).<sup>2</sup>

Three theses are discussed by Augustine: the theological enigma – the relation of time and eternity; the ontological question – "What is time?"; and the scientific problem – "How do we measure time?" As in Augustine's view time has been created with the world, time springs from eternity to which it returns. The presentation of the "secular" problems of time is therefore encompassed by a discussion of the relation of time and eternity.

The question "What is time?" is unanswerable, Augustine shows, if the word "is" in that question is interpreted in terms of being, of essence; for time "is" not.

I say with confidence, that I know that if nothing passed away, there would not be past time; and if nothing were coming, there would not be future time; and if nothing were, there would not be present time. Those two times, therefore, past and future, how are they, when even the past now is not, and the future is not as yet? But should the present be always present, and should it not pass into time past, time truly it could not be, but eternity. If, then, time present – if it be time – only comes into existence because it passes into time past, how do we say that even this is, whose cause of being is that it shall not be – namely, so that we cannot truly say that time is, unless because it tends not to be? (Augustine 1943, p. 285–6).

We are inclined to think in categories of substance, but confronted with the phenomenon of time those concepts prove utterly inadequate. The continuum of time does not consist of small particles, of timeless instants. If the categories of substance are not sufficient, one may try to replace them by functional concepts: time is related to change, to motion. Yet Augustine gives many reasons why time is not identical with "the motion of a body": "I have heard from a learned man that the motions of the sun, moon, and stars constituted time, and I assented not" (Augustine 1943, p. 293). And yet we measure times; we perceive intervals and count units of time.

<sup>2</sup> The translation is not exact. It omits the word "mea" in the Latin text: *In te, anime meus, tempora mea metior*. True, a literal translation of the last words, "I measure my times," sounds awkward and may be misleading. Nevertheless, the words "tempora mea" are intimately related to Augustine's psychological interpretation of time.

That I measure time, I know. But I measure not the future, for it is not yet; nor do I measure the present, because it is extended by no space; nor do I measure the past, because it no longer is. What, therefore, do I measure? (p. 298) (...) But do I thus measure, O my God, and know not what I measure? (p. 297) (...) Or is it, perchance, that I know not in what wise I may express what I know? (p. 296) (...) I measure the motion of a body by time; and the time itself do I not measure? (p. 297).

In measuring we compare, but what is it, then, that we can compare in measuring time?

Do we by a shorter time measure a longer, as by the space of a cubit the space of a crossbeam? For thus, indeed, we seem by the space of a short syllable to measure the space of a long syllable, and to say that is double. (...) But neither thus is any certain measure of time obtained (p. 297). (...) And yet we measure times; still not those which as yet are not, nor those which no longer are, nor those which are protracted by some delay, nor those which have no limits. We, therefore, measure neither future times, nor past, nor present, nor those passing by; and yet we do measure times (p. 299).

The fact of measuring time, far from answering the original question, “What is time?”, leads to the discovery of unforeseen problems and new difficulties.

By common sense, then, I measure a long by a short syllable, and I find that it has twice as much. But when one sounds after another, if the former be short, the latter long, how shall I hold the short one, and how measuring shall I apply it to the long, so that I may find out that this has twice as much, when indeed the long does not begin to sound unless the short leaves off sounding? (...) What, then, is it that I can measure? Where is the short syllable by which I measure? Where is the long one which I measure? Both have sounded, have flown, have passed away, and are no longer; and still I measure, and I confidently answer (so far as is trusted to a practiced sense), that as to space of time this syllable is single, that double. Nor could I do this, unless because they have passed, and are ended. Therefore do I not measure themselves, which now are not, but something in my memory, which remains fixed (p. 299–300).

At this point the meditation culminates in: “In thee, O my mind, I measure times.” The mind “expects, and considers, and remembers, that that which it expects, through that which it considers, may pass into that which it remembers” (p. 301). It is not correct to speak about three times, past, present, and future,

but perchance it might be fitly said, “There are three times; a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.” For these three do somehow exist in the soul (...) present of things past, memory; present of things present, sight; present of things future, expectation (p. 291). (...) The impression which things as they pass by make on thee [my mind], and which, when they have past by, remains, that I measure as time present, not those things which have passed by, that the impression should be made. (...) Either, then, these are times, or I do not measure times (p. 300).

In listening to Augustine's meditations it was our paramount, although not our only, interest to follow his operation of unearthing the hidden problems of time. The chronologist, unlike the archaeologist, does not have to hire men to uncover the past. All is in the open. His task is to rescue the obvious from oblivion, a job of salvaging that never comes to an end.

As often as the enigmas of time have been discovered, so often they have been forgotten. No wonder that in the history of ideas the same problems frequently reappear. Those who are inclined to construct history as a steady progress from modest, simple beginnings to the perfection and fullness of insight of our day may like to praise Augustine as one who anticipated the psychological problems of time, who noticed the difference between the measuring of time and time measured, and already came close to the distinction of immanent, immediately experienced time and the objective construction of time, the physical time – the time of clocks and calendar. This interpretation would give to Augustine's analysis more credit than it deserves and less than is its due. It would give more because seven centuries before Augustine, Aristotle in writing about the subject of time had pointed to the difference between the experiencing of time and the notion of time, to the relation of time and numbers, and the paradoxical character of past and future, their being no longer and not yet (Aristotle 1957, 218a-224a). Aristotle, who begins his analysis with a few casual remarks about the paradoxes of time – well known, he says, to earlier thinkers – takes up in the last chapter a discussion of the relation of time and soul. One sees that most of the problems that tormented Augustine are within the realm of Aristotle's discussion, but within the framework of Christian cosmology the phenomenon of time appears in a new perspective. Augustine has to be studied in his own right; his role in neither that of a follower of Aristotle nor that of a forerunner of contemporary thinkers.

With the emphasis laid on the interpretation of times – the present of the present, the present of the past, the present of the future – Augustine seems to anticipate the development of modern thought, especially Bergson's idea of duration, which at the turn of the century gave new impetus to the study of the problems of time and left its mark on psychology and psychopathology. There certainly are similarities between Augustine's and Bergson's concept of duration; the divergences, however, are just as remarkable and even more essential and revealing than the similarities. In Augustine's view, duration enables man to measure time. There is no conflict between objective time and the immediate experiences of time, the interpenetration of times. Augustine is far removed from depreciating measurable time to the greater glory of immediately experienced time, a tendency which grew so strong with Bergson and many who followed his example.

In reading an English translation of Augustine one must not forget that the word "mind" has for the contemporary reader a meaning that differs widely from the Augustinian concept of "anima" and "animus", for which it stands. "Animus", the soul or the mind, although created, is immortal and therefore more closely related to eternity than the soul or mind about which, if at all, a modern psychologist speaks. Augustine's psychology must not be severed from his theology.

Any change of metaphysical climate has profound effects. It cannot but influence all the answers given to the question: "What is man" – the psychiatric ones included, as will soon be seen.

Bergson separates duration from "time assimilated to space" and brings the two into sharp antithesis (Bergson 1888). He extolls the immediateness, fullness, and

concreteness of psychological time and decries the abstract mechanized time measured by clock and calendar. Homogeneous time is described in harsh terms. It is lambasted as a “bastard concept”, owing to the intrusion of the idea of space into the domain of pure consciousness (*conscience pure*). Through the influence of social life, or practical needs, we have become accustomed, according to Bergson, to substituting homogenous, measurable time for true duration; in doing this we substitute a symbol for the original; the language of common sense, the “brutal word”,<sup>3</sup> prevents us from recognizing the immediate date of consciousness; discursive thinking estranges us from the deep reality of our existence. For Bergson a superficial Ego, its surface in contact with the outer world, usurps the place of the deep authentic Ego.

The following table illustrates the antithesis of objective time and duration:

TABLE I<sup>4</sup>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Abstract, symbolic, conceived time	Concrete, true (real), experienced ( <i>durée vécue</i> )
Homogenous	Heterogeneous
Independent	Dependent
Immobile, spatialized	Movable
Different	Non-differentiated
Extensive symbol of true duration	Qualitative-manifold without relation to number, space, quantity, inaccessible to mathematical knowledge
Its moments are serialized side by side, time appears pulverized	Its aspects penetrate each other

The antithesis of duration and objective time reflects and has its complement in the antithesis of the deep and the superficial Egos. Their characteristic differences are shown on the next diagram:

TABLE II  
(Gent 1930, p. 316)

<b>Superficial Ego</b>	<b>Deep Ego</b>
Outward	Inner
Homogenous	Heterogeneous
Dead, immovable	Living
Symbolic	True
Parasitic, artificial	Fundamental

<sup>3</sup> “The word with well fired contours, the „brutal word” which stores everything which is stable, common, and therefore impersonal in the ideas of mankind, erases or at least covers up the delicate and transient in our individual consciousness” (Bergson 1888, p. 100) – Straus’ translation.

<sup>4</sup> From (Gent 1930, p. 312), with some modifications.



In these diagrams the columns to the left are stigmatized as inferior. Compared with the deep Ego, the superficial Ego appears to be an apostate who betrays the good and righteous cause. Objective time is treated as an artifact: the relation between duration and objective time reassembles that between the pulse which beats against the radius and the watch strapped around the wrist. There is the true life – the *élan vital*, and here a dead and deadening mechanism. Searching through the history of ideas for comparable arrangements, one may go all the way back to the Pythagorean tables or Good and Evil. But while the Pythagorean principles of good and evil are opposites, equal in status, origin and power, the deep and the superficial Ego, duration and objective time are not adversaries of equal rank. The defect of objective time is a deficiency of reality. Objective time, a mere artifact produced by discursive thinking, is the manifestation of psychological function suffering from a kind of metaphysical anemia. The superficial Ego is a parasite on a metaphysical level. Bergson's doctrine of time presupposes degrees of reality: it is wrapped in a philosophy of culture – or, more precisely – in a misological metaphysics of culture.

The metaphysical premise brings psychoanalysis – and through it contemporary psychiatry – and Bergsonism into close relationship. Bergson's consciousness with its immediate date corresponds to Freud's unconsciousness, Bergson's Ego to Freud's consciousness. We must not allow ourselves to be misled by mere differences in terminology! It is easy to see that there is no difference in matter if one keeps in mind the fact that the immediate data of consciousness are inaccessible to, or not directly accessible to, the superficial Ego which maintains contact with the environment.

Let us distinguish then two forms of multiplicity, two very different appreciation of duration, two aspects of conscious life. Below the homogenous duration, that extensive symbol of true duration, an attentive psychology will discover a duration the heterogeneous movements of which interpenetrate each other; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states it will find qualitative multiplicity; below the Ego, with well-defined states, an Ego where succession implies fusion and organization. However, we are usually satisfied with the first, that is to say: with the shadow of the Ego projected into homogenous space. Consciousness, tormented by an insatiable desire to distinguish, substitutes the symbol for reality – or perceives reality only through the symbol. Since the Ego, refracted in this way and thereby subdivided, lends itself infinitely better to the demands of social life in general and of language in particular, consciousness prefers it and gradually loses sight of the fundamental Ego. To recover this Ego, as an unchanged consciousness would perceive it, a vigorous effort of analysis is necessary (Bergson 1888, p. 96–97).

In his later works, Bergson ascribes the power of leading us back into the immediate life of consciousness to intuition. The Essay praises the dream as one of the manifestations of the deep Ego in its original purity.

In order to prevent the Ego from perceiving homogenous time, it suffices to deprive it of this superficial layer of psychical facts which it uses as a regulator. The dream puts us exactly in this condition for sleep, in slowing down the play of the organic functions, modifies first of all the surface communication between the

Ego and the external objects. Then we no longer measure duration, but feel it. From quantity, it is turned back to the condition of quality. Mathematical appreciation of time elapsed no longer occurs; it concedes its place to a confused instinct capable, as are all instincts, of permitting gross mistakes and sometimes also of proceeding with extraordinary surety (Bergson 1888, p. 96–97).

Someone not familiar with the text from which this passage has been quoted may wonder whether the original was written in French or in German, in 1888 by Bergson or in 1900 by Freud. Indeed, there are many spots where one can comfortably ferry across from Freud to Bergson and from Bergson to Freud. In a sentence-completion test, the last sentence quoted above – “Mathematical appreciation of time elapsed no longer occurs; it concedes its place to a confused instinct” – could well be terminated, from this point on, by adding: the *secondary* process yields to the *primary* one.

To abrogate the distinction between secondary and primary processes we could quote from Freud’s *New Introductory Lecture*: “The relation to time, too, which is so hard to describe is communicated to the Ego by the perceptual system; indeed it can hardly be doubted that the mode in which this system works is the source of the idea of time” (Freud 1933, p. 106f). In contrast to the Ego, there is in the Id “nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and (a thing which is very remarkable and awaits adequate attention in philosophic thought) no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time” (Freud 1933, p. 104). Freud, although he never made time a central theme of his research, recognized its central position.

Both thinkers, Freud and Bergson, agree in their interpretation of human existence both posit an aggregate of two psychological systems. The two parts, different in substance and ancestry, have been forced into a *mésalliance*. Language, “the brutal word”, science and technics – the *homo sapiens* and *homo faber* – have invaded and corrupted the sphere of vital being, something unpolluted by ratio. The bias of such metaphysical rating can but interfere with any attempt to comprehend the achievement attained in the creation of systems of objective time, with invention of clock and calendar. We have to part with the metaphysics of a superficial and a deep Ego, we have to abandon the anatomy of the mental personality, in the light of which man appears as a centaur composed of an Ego and an Id.

How can one expect to understand the psychological meaning of objective time if he begins with its condemnation? The judgment should follow the trial. It is more appropriate to defer the appraisal of objective time and to attempt first an accurate analysis of its psychological content and meaning. Whether primary or secondary, deep or superficial, good or evil, the comprehension of objective time, the creation of clock and calendar, is a specifically human accomplishment and therefore a manifestation of man’s potentialities in general, notwithstanding the facts that clocks had to be invented, that each individual has to learn their arrangement and signification, and that there are not one but many calendars.

It needs little sagacity to detect the effect of convention in most human creation, be they in law, language, or chronology. We could order our days into vigilia instead of hours; there is no ultimate reason why we should not divide the hour into 50 or 100 minutes. Yet the argumentation of historicism misses the point. Objective time ordered by conventional agreements is in itself not conventional. Before we begin to

articulate time, to divide the continuum and unite the parts into such units as hours, days, and months, we have already been aware of objective time itself.

It is easy to realize how calendar in its various forms, such as the Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, Greek, Roman and Chinese was shaped by religious, political and historical conditions. There is an element of arbitrariness on our reckoning of time, limited and controlled – but not completely controlled – by astronomical observations. The power of tradition is strong enough to counteract strictly scientific procedures. Russia, under the Czars, refused to accept the Gregorian reform of the calendar, until by 1918 the date was 13 days behind the Western Calendar. Other countries had shown less, but still comparable, reluctance to adopt a plan initiated by the Vatican. England and its American colonies did not hurry to jump on the bandwagon of the New Style; they delayed the transition for almost two hundred years, from 1582 to 1752. The Jacobins felt differently; as true sons or fathers of the Revolution, they saw in their own deeds the beginning of a new era. Eager to change the historical foundations of the calendar, they declared the year 1792 A.D. to be Year No. I of the Republic, and, in spite of their admiration for Roman virtues, took the pains to invent new names for the months. The innovation did not last long. Napoleon, as Consul, turned back to the traditional calendar and restored the familiar Latin names of months; with the result that the ninth month in the circle of the year is called September (literally the seventh), the tenth month October (literally the eighth), and so on.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that the calendar as a scheme has a long history; so has the clock as a tool; calendars and clocks however, do not produce objective time, they are applied to it. The inventions of the sun dial, the pendulum clock, the spring watch, all deal with the measurement of time. While they follow each other in history, they are directed to something unhistorical, just as the conventional schemes of the calendar are related to something unconventional. The historical constructions are erected on foundations which in themselves are not arbitrary or conventional.

Man learns only that which he is capable learning. He learns to walk, to talk, to write, but he does not learn to fly under his own power. We can learn the specific arrangement of a watch because we are able to comprehend objective time. Such comprehension precedes the sophisticated procedures commonly used in western civilization. That millions of people have not shared and do not share in such knowledge is no argument against the psychology of clock and calendar, just as illiteracy does not nullify the psychological meaning of writing and reading. It does not matter how many actually realize their capacities; we are not so much concerned with what men do as with the problem of what man can do.

Long before the scientist and the engineer appeared on the scene man had conceived of time as measurable. There is a prescientific comprehension of objective time: days are counted, the succession and return of seasons noticed, revolutions of the moon observed – time is in some way related to astronomical cosmic events, although not fully neutralized in a manner permitting accurate measurement. The concept of the homogeneity of time is a late accomplishment, delayed by the power of the

<sup>5</sup> The misnomers, anachronisms in a double sense, are due to the Julian calendar reform in 46 B.C. To bring the reckoning of the year up to astronomical data, two months were added at the beginning of the year. The formerly fifth and sixth months, *Quintilius* and *Sextilius*, were renamed, in honor of Julius Caesar and his nephew, Julius and Augustus. Yet the old names of September, October, etc., were continued in spite of their changed position in the whole of the series.

physiognomic characteristics of day and night, summer and winter, sacred and profane days. The refinement of the conceptual and technical instrumentarium brings to perfection potentialities which, constitutive of human existence, are realized everywhere – if only in a rudimentary form – and expressed in everyday-life language, through the verb with its tenses, through the Now and When, though the earlier and the later, and through the distinctions of today, tomorrow, and yesterday. These simple words, so familiar through daily usage, are fraught with meaning, almost defying complete description and sharp definition. With these words, or, to be more accurate, through the experience expressed by them, the ground is laid for all later elaboration of objective time. We shall, therefore, turn our attention first to the phenomenon and experience named *Today*.

The one who says Today and those who listen to him know very well what is meant by this word. A pre-scientific term, it is understandable to everybody; or could it be, as Augustine said, that all of us understand and yet do not fully know what is meant? Should we infer, therefore, that the word Today expresses a pre-logical or a pre-theoretical experience? In that case it should be assigned to the right column on Bergson's table, to the concrete immediate experience of time. But is it not also an extensive symbol? It is inaccessible to mathematical treatment, yet is it completely without relation to number? It is hard to decide whether it is dependent or independent. It seems that on this level the antithesis between the time of immediate experience and objective time, a distinction so clear and sharp at first glance, dissipates before our eyes.

Grammar registers the word Today as an adverb of time. This is a correct but incomplete label, for Today is a personal expression; it is my, your, his, our, Today. The temporal determination Today makes sense only in direct relation to the speaker, to his activity of talking at that vary moment, to his state of becoming.

Today signifies "this day", and signifies it is the first as "this, my day." Like any other demonstrative pronoun or adjective, Today implies a gesture of pointing, whose direction is determined not only by the point aimed at but also by the actual situation of the person who does the pointing. It is determined by the "terminus a quo," the wherefrom, as well as by the "terminus ad quem," the where-to. The place, the thing, singled out in pointing, is comprehensive only through reference, turned back, to the Here and Now of the speaker. Today refers to a moment in a phase of my personal existence. Every word implicitly refers to a speaker but not every word demands the presence of the speaker. Today is such a word; it is a word of the spoken language. Detached from the immediate presence of speaker and listeners the word loses any precise meaning. In script, or print, it remains ambiguous unless finally determined by reference to a given time or to some circumstance to localize Today in the order of the calendar. Without such additional evidence, Today would mean any day, not the one, this one, pointed out by the speaker. The actual presence of the speaker and listeners indispensable for the unequivocal determination of the meaning of Today is a fundamental pre-logical experience, not derivable from any other. The actuality of sensory experience has no foundation outside itself: there is experience of time because experiencing is temporal.

The reference to my own existence is only one of the two elements necessary for the determination of Today; the other one is the reference to the world in its temporal aspects, to a certain period of cosmic events, to the extension of time between dawn and sunset or between this morning and the next one. The word Today expresses a double, a mutual relation; it determines my state of becoming as a moment within the orbit of the world and articulates the cosmic events through reference to a phase of my existence. This relation, although reciprocal, is not symmetrical. In this relation the world is the encompassing whole to which I belong as a part with other parts. Today is not a pure measurement of time; it does not signify merely temporal extension, or a temporal unit; it means this world-day common to all of us. The meaning of the word Today, then, rests on two pillars, linking, like a bridge, my existence with that of the world. Nevertheless, in the superficial understanding of everyday-life conversation we focus our attention on one side only: on temporal aspects of the world pointed out through the word Today. In this respect the word Today behaves like any other word; it participates in the basic tendency of language to reach beyond the confinement of private existence. The importance of the presence of the speaker – self-evident and thereby hidden through the very act of speaking – is first revealed by a special effort of reflection. Only under unusual conditions, as under the impact of disease, will it be felt spontaneously.

In states of depersonalization some patients realize, to their greatest distress, a temporal discordance. Time disintegrates; world time and personal time separate: "Time ceased to exist," one patient stated, "There is no time", another, "All is timeless, unchanged, hopeless", a third, "Absolute rigidity surrounds me" (Straus 1947). Patients in these not frequent, but typical, cases assure us that the experience, described in these seemingly absurd terms, is most dreadful and tormenting. They insist that far from presenting any secondary explanation they try to describe directly an immediate experience with the characteristics, the power, and the reality of sensory experience from which they cannot escape. Nevertheless, it is so different from all familiar experiences that language proves rather incongruous; since it does not offer a suitable vocabulary, the patients have recourse to paradoxical formulations. When confronted with the obvious contradictions contained in their statements, these patients are frequently able to elaborate what they intend to say both for themselves and for us. They tell us that they still realize the change from day to night, from "rain" to "shine"; they still know that there is time, but they are no longer able to make this knowledge an actual part of their existence. They are incapable of feeling the flux of time, of entering into the current of events.

The following quotations from an interview with a twenty-five-year old patient illustrate well the experience of disintegration of time. This patient, a highly intelligent university student with an excellent scholastic record, was recently admitted to the hospital after an attempt at suicide. He was willing, even eager, to enter into a discussion. The interview with him brought to light a great variety of manifestations of depersonalization. From a long recording only passages related to the disintegration of time have been selected.

*Interview*

Erwin W. Straus: I have been told that you have some unusual experience with time, is that so?

Patient: It is true. I can't get time straightened out. I don't know, it is not a continuous sort of thing. (...) Well, it seems to me that there is no such thing as a yesterday or a tomorrow or a future. I can't seem to think like a cyclical process (...). Time to me is like climbing stairs – literally – and that you reach a certain point and then you fall down.

S: Where, then, is your present? Where is this moment of our conversation?

P: I don't know; it doesn't seem to make any impression. I will know that it happened and then it will vanish; it won't be significant in any sense at all. (...)

S: At this moment of your being here, has it not the usual character of Now?

P: No, because physically – I suppose that physically I am here, but I don't have a feeling that this is Today and that there will be a Tomorrow. At this time I quit progressing; it is as though when I think of time I revolve around. There is no such thing as there being a *beginning* or an *end*. It is a continuous sort of thing – round and round. (...)

S. You said there is *no Yesterday*?

P: I mean as being one distinct day as, for example, what will happen today will sometime seem it came before yesterday, for example. (...)

S: Is there any experience of having gone through that before?

P: Yes, I have the feeling even now that I am back in the Army.

S: Although you know you are not?

P: I know that I am not. This is the silly thing about it. I know what this is the Veterans Administration Hospital and I know that it is in Lexington, Kentucky, and I know that I live 12 miles from here, but at times I don't have any feeling of this being any particular place, of being any particular time, or that this is Lexington, Kentucky. I don't know – what it is like. (...)

S: You have the feeling of being in the army. Where was it?

P: It is as though it were at Ft. McClelland where I took basic training.

S: Where is that?

P: Alabama.

S: Is that here now?

P: Sometimes it is. Sometime it feels like it is. I can see things that make me think that it is, and I have to stop and think. When I stop and think, then I get all confused – as though I am nothing more than a series of words or something. There is a great discontinuity between my mind and my body. (...)

S: Does the body appear as yours?

P: No. No, I don't even recognize it. I know, *factually*, I know that it is my body; it is as though the body takes care of itself but the mind takes care of itself and neither will have anything to do with the other. (...)

S: Do you feel hunger sometimes?

P: No, not particularly; I just eat because I know that you are supposed to. Somehow I can't get it in my head that this whole thing is me. It seems that I have been dissociated in some way with anything that resembles this – this whatever it is. Since about six years ago I don't feel like anything. It is as though I wander around, in and out, never anything significant about it at all.

S: Now what does *Today* mean to you? If I say today or we say today, is it different in its meaning?

P: It just doesn't have any meaning – time. Six years ago I stopped living almost, it is as though, and now this is just playing around. It is something you have to do. It just goes on, I don't know why it goes on. I don't even feel like it is happening.

S: Does motion of things appear different?

P: Yes.

S: When you see someone moving around here on the grounds, playing ball, or going over there to eat?

P: I can't get it into my head that there are such things and people. They appear to be like cardboard cutouts. (...)

S: When you see a truck or a car moving around here, is it also different from what it was?

P: Yes.

S: How is that?

P: I don't know. Motion doesn't seem to have any significance. I know that my hand is moving but there is no such thing as its actually moving from one place to another and that it happens because I am making it. I don't know what it is like.

S: When we look at things we see them in a perspective, some appear at a greater distance than others.

P: I can tell you something that is farther away than something else,

S: But?

P: But there is no depth it seems.

S: Are they all equally remote?

P: No, one object is farther away, I can tell that, than another. But I don't know; I can't seem to feel that it has any depth. When I pick that up, it has dimensions, three. When I look at, it is as though the things just melt into one another. There is no distinct standing up or being distinct from this thing. (...)

S: Could the word emptiness apply to all that?

P: It is as if there were a terrific void there. (...)

S: Your own words have not the character of being actually spoken at this present moment?

P: I can hear a voice, I know that, but whose it is I don't know. I don't seem to have anything. I have nothing.

S: If I should cut you, would you feel that?

P: I have often wondered about that. Would it bleed? Would something actually exist? It is as though I know, actually, but I guess I would bleed. I suppose it would hurt, but the thing which would hurt wouldn't be me. It would just be my hand which would be hurt, because I seem to be rolled up somewhere, apart from all this, just looking on somewhere. Actually, I don't know what "I" means, what it is that makes me a person. It just seems to have nothing to do with me, *whatsoever*. It is just sitting around waiting until the foolishness stops and then to come back. It is as though it is intact; the things which is me is intact somewhere. But it has nothing to do with what is going on now; it hasn't for about six years (sigh). I haven't seen myself in that time.

S: Why do you put the beginning at that time? What happened six years ago?



P: Because that is when all this stuff started, whatever it was. (...)

S: Did you then have the same experience about *time* as you have now?

P: No. This thing of time has only come into my feelings in the last, oh, month or so. Before that I didn't actually experience – I don't know what I did. I know that I have been to college, but do you know I think I don't realize it; I have to make myself know it; I don't know it... I can tell you things that I did there, but it is not as though it happened to me. (...)

S: Do you ponder about that all day long?

P: Yes, I wonder "Where am I"? Not just my body, not just my body. I mean the thing that is me. What is it? Can you see it? Can you touch it? I know you can't. I can't feel it. What is it that makes you know that you are you? How do you know that? Because something in you feels it?

S: Now, does the word "Here" mean anything?

P: Here? (...) Yes, I know that I am sitting right here, that this body is sitting here – but I don't exist in time. The thing that is me goes back and forth, around, and in and out. It is trying desperately to get the whole mess straightened out, I know that, but until it is straightened out it won't have anything to do with what is actually here. I seem to be disgusted with the whole business. But the thing that is me doesn't actually live, I feel it is just waiting around. That is why I have to wait. I don't know. It seems my body is just *back* somewhere, hasn't crossed that gap yet, hasn't caught up with my mind and that is why I am waiting now, until I get it straightened out, until it can meet my body. (...)

Richard M. Griffith: Have you had the feeling that the thing that is *not* you may be something else?

P: Oh, yes. That is why I – this body isn't mine.

R. Whose is it?

P: I don't know.

The interview with our patient does not represent an accidental accumulation of incoherent psychotic experience: one can collect similar, even identical, descriptions of the disintegration of time, space, depth, motion, of being-and-acting as oneself, from other patients. In each case the context of experiences is somehow preserved; the fragments are still coherent, since one central theme of distortion pervades the manifold of bewildering manifestation in their totality. The patterns of disintegration are prescribed by the norm. Out of the ruins we can reconstitute the original structure – sometimes with a deepened understanding of the original plan.

Depersonalization, as we have seen, may render a patient incapable of executing Today. Pathology thus confirms our interpretation. Today is an expression of the simultaneity of my own existence and becoming with the gyration of the world. This simultaneity is characteristic for all sensory experience. Today is but one of many manifestations of this comprehensive temporal relation, which for the sake of brevity I shall call the simultaneity of sensory experience.

Every discussion of temporal experience inevitably leads to a point where an analysis of one particular phenomenon demands the expansion of the basis discussion. A digression, considering briefly some problems of such general character, cannot be spared here. All sensory modalities participate in the simultaneity of sensory experiencing. In touching I am touched. An utterance like, “Oh, this is hot”, may be understood as a statement about the thing contacted or about the person touched, or about both. In hearing, I am moved by and moving with the rhythm of the music. In seeing, the thing seen appears as “self-present”; I find myself confronted with the visible things. In seeing, I am not looking through a peeping-hole of consciousness into the “outside world”; I find myself, in my corporeality, on the same plane with the visible things; one and the same “Now” embraces the things and myself. Self-presence is not an attribute of visible things *per se*, it is revealed as a temporal relation – their meeting with me as a seeing being. My sight discovers their localization within the visible horizon, it also discovers their localization in relation to me; my Here is determined in relation to things Over There. In seeing, I find myself in contact with the world, directed to things as the objects of my observation; objects, that will say, thrown into the way of my seeing (German *Gegen-stand*). Things seen are experienced as simultaneous with the act of seeing.

### Acknowledgments

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