

Time for Justice¹

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What time is it? 10 hours, you might say. You would be right. But what time is it really? Who can really answer that question? By "time", ladies and gentlemen, I do not mean our representation of time, but the "event" in which we live. By "we" I mean each one of us. Not just human beings, but the whole organic and inorganic world that shares this universe at this moment. All that we perceive immediately, through the conjunction of our outer and inner senses. But to have this immediate knowledge we need to think differently. Beyond our common representations of time and being lies this living existence that each of us is experiencing and sharing at this moment. I call this different way of thinking, which is not rooted in the idea of things and being, but in existence itself, organic philosophy. To think here is to feel with one's body, mind, heart, the life that is happening now; through one's organs and mind, in one's breathing, seeing, hearing, and in the forms that we perceive from within and without our mind at this moment. To think is to be alive!

So let me ask the question again: **What time is it?** If you have really followed my previous descriptions, I think you will now better understand the real meaning of my question. You should know exactly what I mean when I ask: What time is it? You know because you possess one of the most beautiful gifts that nature has given to human beings: the intellect, the heart and the will. It is through the combination of these three faculties that you have the intuition of the real time in which we live. Through them you can connect directly with this inner life and thus perceive the true meaning of the word time. This meaning is not a number, but something you perceive

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through your own being; something you can connect with through your mind, your heart and the use of your free will. So you know immediately what I know, because you perceive what I perceive, because you and I are both not only alive, living human beings.

So let me ask the question for the last time: **What time is it?** Sure, you can answer by saying: What does it matter? Or you could say: Is it important to ask such a question at this time, in this place? By saying this you are expressing a legitimate doubt. In fact, there is no obvious connection between the idea of time and the idea of justice that we are talking about. But in the light of the organic philosophy I have just outlined, there are at least three obvious reasons for asking this question now: First, because we intellectuals are not used to asking ourselves this question in this way. We almost always assume that we know the truth about the nature of things simply because we have their representations. For us, thinking usually means analysing concepts. As Schopenhauer says, the world is my representation. The truth about time is therefore connected with the idea of time that we possess by looking at our watches. The truth about justice is what our teachers tell us, what is written in official books and handbooks: justice means either equality, fairness, solidarity, and so on. But the preconditions of these ideas and principles, the real meaning of time and justice, remain almost in the shadows, beyond our canonical representations. The question "What time is it?" aims at revealing this other side, shadowed by our algorithmic mind. I call this shift in our way of thinking organic philosophy.

But there is a second reason why raising this question of time is important for our understanding of planetary justice. When we think in terms of what I call **organic philosophy**, we can almost always connect to the real time in which we humans and non-humans live. For example, we know that we are living in a bad time. Then, at the moment we are talking in this room, millions of people are dying all over the world from malnutrition, disease, war, lack of the minimal basic resources necessary to sustain a decent life. Outside the doors or windows of these

conferences, in the shadows of our concept of justice, millions of people are dying in real time, under tons of bombs in Burkina Faso, in Cameroon, in Sudan, in Yemen, in Mali, in Iran, in Congo, in Pakistan, in Israel, in Palestine, in Ukraine, and so on.

These grotesque wars should not be distinguished from the daily wars we live in, in our inner or outer worlds, when our fundamental rights are contested, when we are instrumentalised and manipulated by our own notions of truth, or by cultural, political or religious beliefs... Thinking beyond the common sense of time therefore means perceiving the immediate violence that lies beneath the truths we share. The third and final reason why the question of time is important for our thinking about planetary justice is that this different way of thinking is, in my opinion, the only one that allows us to engage effectively, not just with words, but with the real matter of our inquiries. By thinking from the perspective of the real time in which we live, we dismantle the algorithmic machines that we have become; that machine that has produced thousands of concepts, theories, conferences, articles, books, but nothing of real value for the real sustainability of life. In fact, this machine is slowly dying from within. The shift I propose is to rediscover the real meaning of our time, in our bodies and minds, and to engage effectively, not with an idea of justice, but with justice itself, from the inner perspective of real time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, instead of giving a classical lecture on Mbembes Planetary Justice, as I had intended, I have taken the risk of sharing with you the experience of the real time in which we are living. I took this risk for two reasons: first, this is the first time we have met, and perhaps it will be the last. But the second and much more important reason is that we are living in a troubled time that demands new ways of thinking. I apologise to the organisers of this conference and to the audience who were expecting a classical lecture on Mbembe. For those interested, I have posted my original paper on the Earth System Governance website. I hope that I have been able to plant some seeds in the direction we have identified

together. The aim is to open a new horizon for our time and the living experience of justice that our humanity demands.

Thank you for listening!