

Byung-Chul Han, The Scent of Time

A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingering
(*Verweilen*)

transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, Germany, 2009,
ISBN: 978-3-8376-1157-1
pp. 114,
List price: 15,80 €

Praise in the media

“Scent of Time” makes explicit the philosophico-temporal foundations of Han’s critique of neoliberalism and of digital culture, and is indispensable for an understanding of his later books “society of tiredness” and “society of transparency”.

“Here, in the most brilliant way, Han formulates a critique of the restlessness of the human as ‘animal laborans’.”

Ronald Düker, Literaturen (Literatures), 7/8 (2011)

“The essay is also comprehensible for non-philosophers, the language accessible, and once you have got into it, it’s hard to put the book back down.”

Ulrike Hoffmann-Richter, Psychiatrische Praxis (Psychiatric Praxis), 36/1-2 (2009)

Synopsis:

If nothing else, the current time crisis is connected with the absolutization of the *vita active*. It leads to a work imperative which reduces people to beasts of burden (*animal laborans*). Everyday hyperactivity depletes people's lives of all ability to linger and be contemplative. This renders a fulfilling experience of time impossible. Revitalization of the *vita contemplativa* and relearning of the art of lingering are essential to overcoming the current time crisis.

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Preface

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Today's time crisis no longer lies in acceleration. The age of acceleration has already passed. What we perceive as acceleration today is but *one* of the symptoms of temporal dissipation. Today's time crisis goes back to a dyschronia that produces different temporal disturbances and misperceptions. Time is lacking a proper rhythm. That brings it out of synch. In a way, dyschronia makes time flutter. The impression that life is accelerating is really a sensation of time fluttering aimlessly.

The dyschronia is not a result of forced acceleration. Responsibility for the dyschronia lies primarily with the atomization of time. This is also what causes the feeling that time is going by much faster than it used to. Because of the temporal dissipation, experiencing duration is impossible. Nothing holds ("verhält") time. Life is no longer embedded in the ordering structures or coordinates that grant duration. Fleeting and ephemeral are also those things with which we identify. Thus, we ourselves become radically frail. The atomization of life is accompanied by an atomized identity. One only has oneself, the little I. It is as though one is radically diminishing, spatially and temporally, globally, co-existentially. World poverty is a phenomenon of dyschronia. It lets each person shrink down to his or her little body, which one is by all means trying to keep *healthy*. What else does one have? The health of one's fragile body replaces world and god. Nothing exceeds past

death. Thus, it is particularly difficult to die nowadays. And one ages without ever growing *old*.

The present volume historically and systematically looks for the causes and symptoms of dyschronia. But also chances of recovery are considered. Whereas we look towards heterochronia or uchronia, this study is not limited to finding and rehabilitating these extraordinary places of duration. Rather, via a historical review, it prospectively points out the necessity that life, down to our everyday dealings, has to take on a different form in order to avert that time crisis. It does not mourn the time of the story. The end of the story, the end of history, does not have to bring about a temporal emptiness. Rather, it opens the possibility of a lifetime that gets by without theology and teleology, but nevertheless has its own scent. It does however require a revival of the *vita contemplativa*.

Todays time crisis, not last, is linked to making absolute the *vita activa*. It leads to an *imperative of labor*, which degrades humanity to an *animal laborans*. The everyday *hyper-kinesis* removes any contemplative element, any ability to linger, from human life. It leads to a loss of world and time. The so-called strategies of deceleration do not resolve this time crisis. They even hide the actual problem. A revival of the *vita contemplativa* is required. The time crisis will only be overcome once the *vita activa* in its crisis re-includes the *vita contemplativa*.

[...]

Un-Time

[...] p.12- 25

Nowadays, temporally bound things become obsolete much faster than they used to. They quickly become things of the past, thus withdrawing from attention. The present is reduced to the point of actuality. It no longer lasts. In light of the reign of the punctual, unhistorical present, Heidegger already demands an “de-presenting of the today” (»*Entgegenwärtigung* des Heute«). What causes the shrinking of the present or the diminishing duration is not, as we erroneously tend to believe, acceleration.¹ The relation between the loss of duration and acceleration is much more complex. Time rushes away like an avalanche exactly because it is no longer *fastened* within itself. Those points in the present, among which there no longer is any temporal gravitation, cause the tearing away of time, the aimless acceleration of processes, which is no longer an acceleration *because it lacks direction*. Acceleration, in its proper sense, requires trajectories with direction.

1 This simple scheme is followed by Hartmut Rosa in his Monograph: *Acceleration. The changes in temporal structures of modernity* (Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne), Frankfurt a.M. 2005.

Truth itself is a temporal phenomenon. It is a reflection of the everlasting present. The tearing away of time, the shrinking, gleaming present excavates it. Even experience is based on a temporal dimension, a connection of temporal horizons. For the subject of experience, the past does not simply vanish or get thrown out. Rather, it remains constitutive of his present, his self-conception. A farewell does not dilute the presence of the past. It can even intensify it. What is left behind is not completely severed from the present experience. Rather, it stays connected to it. And the subject of experience must remain open for the upcoming, for the surprise and uncertainty of future. Otherwise, it freezes into a laborer who merely works away time. It does not change. Change destabilizes the labor process. But the subject of experience never stays the same. It inhabits the transition between the past and the future. Experience encompasses a wide timespan. It is far more time-intensive than the punctual, timeless *experienced event* (translator's note: Han writes "Erlebnis" here, instead of "Erfahrung"). Insight is just as time-intensive as experience. It draws its power as much from the past as from the future. Only in this connection of time horizons, knowledge condenses into insight. This temporal density distinguishes insight from information, which is also empty of time, or timeless, in a private sense. Due to this temporal neutrality, information can be saved and recalled at will. If things do not get to retain memory, they become information or even goods. They are pushed into a timeless, unhistorical space. The saving of information is preceded by deleting memory, deleting historical time. Where time falls apart to a mere series of punctual presence, it loses any dialectical tension. Dialectics itself is an intensive happening of time. The dialectical movement owes to a complex connection of time horizons, a *not-yet* of the *already*. What is implicitly there in any given present tears it from itself and allows it to get in motion. The dialectical drive results from the temporal tension between an already and a not-yet, between a past and a future. The present in a dialectical process is tense, while today's present lacks all tension.

On the level of action, the present, reduced to the point of actuality, is heightened to timelessness. Promises, obligation, or fidelity, for instance, are a genuinely temporal practice. They bind the future by continuing the present into the future, connecting the two. Thus, they create a temporal continuity which acts as a stabilizer. It protects the future from the violence of the un-time (*Unzeit*). Where the habit of a long-term self-binding, which would also be a kind of *closure*, yields to an increasing short-termedness, untimeliness also increases, reflected as fear and unrest on a psychological level. The growing discontinuity, the atomization of time, destroys the experience of continuity. This makes the world *untimely*.

The opposite of fulfilled time is a time without beginning or end, stretched out to an empty duration. The empty duration is not opposed to the tearing away of time, but next to it. It is like a silent form or a negative of accelerated doing, time which would be left over, if nothing were left to do or make – a time form of empty doing. Empty duration as much as the tearing away of time are results of detemporalization (Entzeitlichung). The unrest of accelerated doing extends into our sleep. At night, it continues as an empty duration of sleeplessness:

“Sleepless night: it has a formula, hours of anguish without a view of an end and dawn, stretched out in the pointless straining to forget the empty duration. But horrors make for sleepless nights, in which time contracts and fruitlessly runs through our hands. [...] But what is revealed in such contracting hours is the opposite of fulfilled time. When the power of experience breaks the spell of duration in them, and combines past and future in the present, duration yields unbearable horror in the sleepless night.”²

2 »Schlaflose Nacht: dafür gibt es eine Formel, qualvolle Stunden, ohne Aussicht auf Ende und Dämmerung hingedeckt in der vergeblichen Anstrengung, die leere Dauer zu vergessen. Entsetzen aber bereiten schlaflose Nächte, in denen die Zeit sich zusammenzieht und fruchtlos durch die Hände rinnt. (...) Was aber in solcher Kontraktion der Stunden sich offenbart, ist das Gegenbild der erfüllten Zeit. Wenn in dieser die Macht der Er-

Adorno's term "hastily sleepless night" is not paradoxical, because haste and empty duration are of one origin. The haste of day rules night in empty form (*Die Hast des Tages beherrscht die Nacht in Leerform*). Time, now bereft of any hold, any holding gravity, falls away, fleeting and unstoppable. This tearing away of time, that unrestrained, running time, transforms night into an empty duration. In the middle of the exposure to empty duration, sleep is not possible.

Empty duration is unarticulated, undirected time. Here, there is neither sense in *pre* or *post*, neither memory nor expectation. Facing the infinity of time, the short human life is *nothing*. Death is a force untimely ending life from outside. One prematurely, untimely, ceases to be. Death would no longer be a force, if it were *closure* arising from life, from the time of life itself. Only this allows living life to its end, dying *at the right time*. Only temporal forms of closure create duration against infinity, a sensible, fulfilled time. Even sleep, good old sleep, would in the end be a kind of closure.

Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" tellingly begins with the words: »Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure« (For a long time, I used to go to sleep early). The German translation completely omits the »bonne heure«. It is a far reaching word about time and happiness (bonheur). *Bonne heure*, the good time, is the opposite of the bad infinity, the empty, also bad duration in which sleep is impossible. The rip in time, the radical discontinuity of time that permits no memory, leads to tormenting sleeplessness. The first passages of the novel, however, represent an elating sense of continuity (*beglückende Kontinuitätserfahrung*). An effortless hovering between sleep, dream, and awaking, in a cozy fluid state of memory and perception images, a free back-and-forth between past and present, between rigid order and playful confusion. No rip in time throws the protagonist into an empty du-

fahrung den Bann der Dauer bricht und Vergangenes und Zukünftiges in die Gegenwart versammelt, so stiftet Dauer in der hastig schlaflosen Nacht unerträgliches Grauen.« (Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, 217.)

ration. The sleeper is rather a player, wanderer, and even ruler of time: *“The sleeper stretches the passing of hours, the order of years and worlds, around himself”* (»Der Schlafende spannt in einem Kreise um sich den Ablauf der Stunden, die Ordnung der Jahre und der Welten aus«). Occasionally, confusions and irritations arise. But they do not end in catastrophe. The “good angel of certainty” (»gute Engel der Gewißheit«) always comes to assistance:

“[...] when I awoke in the middle of the night, I did not know where I was, not even, at first, who I was, [...] but then memory came, as from above, to pull me from the nothingness, from which I could not have helped myself; within a second I went through centuries of civilization, and from vague images of petroleum lamps and shirts with open collars, my self gradually assembled anew in its original shape.”³

Instead of indifferent, nameless noises from outside, or the overly loud ticking of the clock, which would be so typical of sleeplessness, for empty duration, something *soundful* comes to the ear. Even the darkness of night appears colorful and alive like a kaleidoscope: “I fell asleep again, only to keep waking up for a few seconds, just long enough to hear a creaking in the woodwork or to open my eyes to the kaleidoscope of darkness, and to enjoy sleep even more thanks to a short moment of consciousness [...].”⁴

3 »(...) wenn ich mitten in der Nacht erwachte, wußte ich nicht, wo ich mich befand, ja im ersten Augenblick nicht einmal, wer ich war, (...) dann aber kam mir die Erinnerung (...) gleichsam von oben her zur Hilfe, um mich aus dem Nichts zu ziehen, aus dem ich mir selbst nicht hätte heraushelfen können; in einer Sekunde durchlief ich Jahrhunderte der Zivilisation, und aus vagen Bildern von Petroleumlampen und Hemden mit offenen Kragen setzte sich allmählich mein Ich in seinen originalen Zügen wieder von neuem zusammen.«

4 »Ich schlief wieder ein und wachte dann manchmal nur noch sekundenlang auf, gerade lang genug, um ein Knacken im Gebälk zu hören

It is a fallacy to believe that nowadays the acceleration of the process of living can be traced back to fear of dying. That argument goes roughly as follows: “Acceleration has turned out to be an obvious answer strategy for the problem of limited life time or the falling apart of world time and life time in a secular culture, for which the maximum use of world options and the optimal development of one's own potential – and thus the ideal of a *fulfilled life* – have become the paradigm of successful life. He who lives twice as fast can realize twice as many world possibilities, and thus lead two lives in one; he who becomes infinitely fast brings his life time closer to the potentially unlimited horizon of world time and world possibilities insofar as he is capable of realizing a plethora of life possibilities within a single terrestrial lifespan, and thus no longer has to fear death as a destroyer of options.”⁵ Who lives twice as fast can choose twice as many life options. The acceleration of life multiplies it, bringing it closer to the goal of a fulfilled life. However, this calculus is naïve. It is based on a mix up of fulfillment with mere fullness. The fulfilled life cannot be explained by set theory.

oder den Blick dem Kaleidoskop der Dunkelheit zu öffnen und dank einem kurzen bewußten Augenblick wohlig den Schlaf zu genießen (...).»

5 »Beschleunigung, so hat sich gezeigt, stellt eine nahe liegende Antwortstrategie auf das Problem der beschränkten Lebenszeit bzw. das Auseinanderfallen von Weltzeit und Lebenszeit in einer säkularen Kultur dar, für welche die maximale Auskostung von Weltoptionen und die optimale Entfaltung eigener Anlagen – und damit das Ideal des *erfüllten Lebens* – zum Paradigma gelingenden Lebens geworden ist. Wer doppelt so schnell lebt, kann doppelt so viele Weltmöglichkeiten realisieren und damit gleichsam zwei Leben in einem führen; wer unendlich schnell wird, nähert seine Lebenszeit dem potenziell unbeschränkten Horizont der Weltzeit bzw. der Weltmöglichkeiten insofern wieder an, als er eine Vielzahl von Lebensmöglichkeiten in einer einzigen irdischen Lebensspanne zu verwirklichen vermag und daher den Tod als Optionenvernichter nicht mehr zu fürchten braucht.» (Hartmut Rosa, Beschleunigung, ibid., 474.)

It does not result from the fullness of life possibilities. Neither does a story result automatically from mere counting or listing of events. It rather presupposes a certain synthesis to which it owes its sense. A long list of events does not make for an interesting story. On the contrary, a very short story can unfold high narrative tension. Thus, even a very short life can reach the ideal of a fulfilled life. This acceleration thesis does not recognize the real problem that nowadays, life has lost the possibility of *reaching* meaningful *closure*. But this is what all the rush and nervousness which mark life nowadays come down to. One keeps starting anew, one zaps through “life possibilities”, because one is no longer capable of finishing any one possibility. No history, no meaningful entity fulfills life. The talk of acceleration of life for its maximization is misleading. At second glance, acceleration is revealed as a nervous unrest that seems to make life flutter from one possibility to another. It never comes to a rest, i.e., to closure.

Today, another problem with regards to dying lies in a radical singularization (Vereinzelung) or atomization of life, which makes it even more finite. Life keeps losing breadth, which might grant it duration. It is contained in not much world. This atomization of life makes it radically mortal. First and foremost, this special mortality is what causes a general unrest and rush. At a fleeting glance, this nervousness may cause the impression that everything is accelerating. But in truth, there is no actual acceleration of life. Life simply has become more rushed, more confusing, and more undirected. Due to its dissipation, time no longer unfolds any structuring power. Thus, there are no longer any defining or decisive turning points in life. Life time is no longer structured into sections, endings, thresholds, and transitions. Rather, we are rushing from one present to another. We are aging, without growing *old*. Finally, we untimely cease to be. This is why today, dying is harder than ever.

Time without Scent

Darob, daß nirgend ein Unsterbliches
mehr am Himmel zu sehn ist...

*That nothing immortal remains visi-
ble in the sky...*

FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN

The mythical world is full of meaning. Gods are nothing but everlasting meaning bearers. They give the world meaning, make it meaningful, give it sense. They narrate how things and events belong together. The narrated connection grants meaning. Narration creates *world* from nothing. Full of gods means full of meaning, full of narration. The world can be read like *picture*. One merely needs to let one's gaze wander back and forth to read the sense, the meaningful order from it. Everything has its place, i.e., its meaning in a rigidly set order (*cosmos*). If a thing moves from its place, it is put back where it belongs. Time *rectifies* it. Time is order. Time is justice. It is an offense for a person to shift around things on his own. Time avenges his misdemeanor. Thus, it restores the eternal order. It is just (*diké*). Events stand in a set relation, in a meaningful concatenation. No event can deviate from it. Every event mirrors the undying, immutable substance of the world. Here, there are no movements that would lead to a change in the valid order. In this world of eternal returning, acceleration would make no sense at all. Sense only lies in the eternal repetition of the same, in

the reproduction of what has been, the undying truth. Thus, the prehistorical human lives in a lasting present.

The historical world is based on completely different premises. It is not simply available like a finished *picture*, which could reveal to the beholder an undying substance, an immutable order. Events no longer lie on a still *surface*, but rather on a continuous *line*. Time, which links events and thus sets free meanings, is linear. Not the eternal returning of the same, but the possibility of change makes life meaningful. All is process, either meaning progress or decay. Historical time sets free meaningfulness insofar as it is *directed*. The time-line has a certain direction, a syntax.

Historical time knows no enduring present. Things do not remain in some immobile order. Time does not lead back, but it continues; it does not repeat, but it catches up. Past and future drift apart. Not their sameness, but their difference makes time, which is a change, a process, a development, meaningful. The present itself does not have substance. It is merely a point of transition. Nothing *is*. Everything *becomes*. Everything changes. The repetition of the same yields to the event. Motions and changes grant no disorder, but a different or new order. The temporal meaningfulness comes from the future. This future-orientation creates a temporal forward draft, which also *can* have accelerating effects.

Historical time is linear time. But it has very different forms or appearances. Eschatological time strongly deviates from that form of historical time which promises progress. Eschatological time as final time refers to the end of the world. The eschaton starts the end of time, the end of history itself. And a person's relation to the future is characterized by its *being thrown* (*eine Geworfenheit charakterisiert...*). Eschatological time allows no action, no design. Man is not free. He is god's subject. He does not design *himself* into the future. He does not design *his* time. He is rather thrown into the end, the ultimate end of world and time. He is not the subject of history. It is god, the one who judges.

Even the term "Revolution" originally has a completely different meaning. It is a process. However, it is not free from the aspect of re-

turn and repetition. Originally, *revolutio* refers to the orbit of the stars. Applied to history, it means that forms of rule, limited in their number, repeat in a cycle. The changes that occur in the course of history are embedded in a cycle. Not progress, but repetition determines the course of history. Also, humans are not free subjects of history. Not liberty, but *being thrown* continues to determine the relation between human and time. It is not a human making revolution. He is rather controlled by it, as much as by the laws of the stars. Time is defined by neutral constants. Time is factuality.⁶

In the time of enlightenment, a special concept of historical time emerged. In contrast to the eschatological concept of time, it assumes an open future. Not being until the end, but the departure into the new governs its temporality. It has a meaning and weight of its own. It does not helplessly fall towards the apocalyptic end. And no factuality, no natural constants force it into circular repetition. Thus, revolution gets a completely different meaning. There is no longer an idea of stellar circles attached to it. No circular orbit, but a linear, progressive course of events determines its temporality.

The time concept of enlightenment frees itself from being thrown and from factuality. Time is *defactualized* and also *denaturalized*. Liberty now determines humanity's relationship to time. Man is neither

6 Cf. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* [Future Passed. On the Semantics of Historical Times], Frankfurt a.M. 1979, 71: „*Just like the stars follow their paths independently of earthly humans, but still influence or even determine humanity, has this double sense also been implied in the political concept of revolution: revolutions occur above the heads of those involved, but everybody involved remains [...] subject to their laws.*“ (»So wie die Sterne unabhängig von den irdischen Menschen ihre kreisenden Bahnen ziehen, den Menschen aber gleichwohl beeinflussen oder gar determinieren, so schwang seit dem 17. Jahrhundert auch im politischen Revolutionsbegriff jener Doppelsinn mit: die Revolutionen vollziehen sich zwar über die Köpfe der Beteiligten hinweg, aber jeder Betroffene bleibt (...) ihren Gesetzen verhaftet.«)

thrown into the end of time nor into the natural cycle of things. Now, the idea of liberty, the idea of the “progress of human reason”⁷ gives life to history. The subject of time is no longer that judging god, but the free human, who designs *himself* for the future. Time is not destiny, but *design*. Not what is thrown, but what can be done is what determines humanity's relationship with the future. It is mankind *making* (*produire*) revolution. Thus, concepts like revolutionization and revolutionary (translator's note: not the adjective, but the person) become possible. The point towards feasibility. However, this idea of feasibility destabilizes the world, even time itself. God is slowly withdrawing from time, although as a provider of eternal present, he acted as a stabilizer in every regard.

The belief in feasibility already spurred that remarkable 16th century surge of innovation in the natural sciences. In increasingly short time spans, technical novelties arise. Especially Bacon's expression “Knowledge is Power” reflects the belief in the producibility (Herstellbarkeit) of the world. The political revolution connects to the industrial revolution. They are both animated and driven by the same belief. A 1838 Brockhaus Encyclopedia article on railroad combines industrial and political revolution in heroic tones. The railroad is blissfully declared a “Steam chariot of victory” (Dampftriumphwagen) of the revolution.

The revolution in the age of enlightenment is based on defactualized time. Time frees itself, from being thrown, and from any natural or theological force, just like that steam colossus, off to future, where salvation is expected. It inherits its teleology from the eschatological concept of time. History stays a history of salvation. With respect to the aim lying in the future, acceleration of the process now makes sense. For instance, as Robespierre said at the 1793 constitution ceremony: »Les progrès de la raison humaine ont préparé cette grande ré-

7 »Fortschrittes der menschlichen Vernunft« Robespierre, OEuvres compl., ed. M. Bouloiseau, Paris 1958, IX, 495.

volution, et c'est à vous qu'est spécialement imposé le devoir de l'accélérer.«⁸

Not God, but the free human is the lord of time. Free from being thrown, he designs what is coming. But this *change of regime*, from God to mankind, has consequences. It destabilizes time, because God is the one who grants the ruling order its finality, its seal of eternal truth. He stands for an enduring present. With the change of regime, time loses this *hold*, which creates a resistance against change. Büchner's revolutionary drama »Dantons Tod« ("Danton's Death") also addresses this experience. Camille exclaims: "The general fixed notions, that are called reason, are unbearably boring. The happiest person was the one who could believe to be God, father, son, and holy spirit."⁹

Historical time is only able to fall forwards because it does not rest in itself, because it does not have its center of gravity in the present. It allows no lingering. Lingering only hampers the progressing process. No duration *retains* time (verhält die Zeit). Time is meaningful insofar as it moves towards a goal. That way, acceleration makes sense. But due to the meaningfulness of time, it is not perceived as such. Primarily the *sense* of history comes into our field of vision. Acceleration imposes as such only when time loses its historical meaning, its sense. It becomes a subject or problem of its own exactly when time is torn away into a senseless future.

Mythological time rests like an *image*. Historical time, however, has the shape of a *line*, which runs or flies towards a goal. If that *line* loses its narrative or teleological tension, it falls apart into *points*, which *flutter* aimlessly. The end of history atomizes time to a time of points (Punkt-Zeit). Myth once gave way to history. The static picture

8 Zitiert in: Reinhart Koselleck, Zeitschichten, Studien zur Historik, Frankfurt a.M. 2000, S. 192.

9 »Die allgemeinen fixen Ideen, welche man die gesunde Vernunft tauft, sind unerträglich langweilig. Der glücklichste Mensch war der, welcher sich einbilden konnte, daß er Gott, Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist sei.« Cf. Ch. Deep Boredom.

became a continuous line. *History* now gives way to *information*. The latter has no narrative length or width. It is neither centered nor aimed. It collapses onto us. History lightens, selects, channels the jumble of events, forces them onto a narratively linear track. If this vanishes, a proliferation of information and events, fluttering aimlessly, occurs. Information has *no scent*. This discerns it from history. Contrary to Baudrillard's thesis, information is not to time not what the increasingly perfect simulation is to the original.¹⁰ Instead, information represents a new paradigm. It holds an entirely different temporality. It is a phenomenon of atomized time, i.e., the time of points (Punkt-Zeit).

In between points, a void necessarily gapes, an empty interval in which nothing happens, where there is no *sensation*. Mythical and historical time, however, let no void arise, for line and image have no interval. They form a narrative continuity. Only points create empty gaps. The intervals where nothing ever happens cause boredom. Or they seem threatening, for where nothing happens, where intentionality does not meet anything, there is death. Thus, the time of points (Punkt-Zeit) forces us to remove or shorten the empty intervals. To stop them

10 Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Das Jahr 2000 findet nicht statt* (The year 2000 is not happening), Berlin 1990, 18: “*We can never again hear what music was before stereo [...], what history was before news and media, we can no longer imagine. The original being (of music, of society, ...), the original concept (of the unconscious, of history, ...) have vanished, for they can no longer be separated from their model of perfection [...]. Never again will we know, what history was, before it ascended to the technical perfection of information [...].*” »Was Musik vor dem Stereo war, können wir nie mehr hören (...), was Geschichte vor Nachrichten und Medien war, können wir uns nicht mehr vorstellen. Das ursprüngliche Wesen (der Musik, des Sozialen ...), der ursprüngliche Begriff (des Unbewußten, der Geschichte...) sind verschwunden, denn sie sind nicht mehr von ihrem Perfektionsmodell zu trennen (...). Nie mehr werden wir wissen, was Geschichte war, bevor sie sich zur technischen Perfektion der Information steigerte (...).«

from *lingering for a long time*¹¹, we try to let *sensations* follow each other more quickly. An acceleration of the series of curs or events, to the point of hysteria, ensues, encroaching upon all aspects of life. Due to the missing narrative tension, the atomized time cannot capture attention for long. Thus, our perception is constantly fed with new or drastic things. The time of points (Punkt-Zeit) does not permit contemplative lingering.

Atomized time is discontinuous time. Nothing connects events to create coherence, i.e., duration. Thus, perception is confronted with the unexpected or the sudden, which creates a diffuse fear. Atomization, singularization, and the experience of discontinuities are also responsible for different forms of violence. Nowadays, those social structures which grant continuity and duration are falling apart more and more. Atomization and singularization take hold of the entire society. Social practices such as promises, fidelity, or obligation, which are all temporal practices insofar as they grant duration by fastening the future and limiting it to a horizon.

Mythical as well as historical time have narrative tension. A special concatenation of events shapes time. Narration lets time emit a scent. Time starts to become olfactory when it obtains duration, when it obtains narrative tension or in-depth tension (Tiefenspannung), if it grows in depth and width, in *space*. Time loses its scent when it is stripped bare of all structure of sense and depth, when it is atomized or when it becomes flat, thin, or short. If it completely comes loose from the holding grasp of its anchoring, it becomes unsteady. Released from its fastening, it falls away. The acceleration which is mentioned so often nowadays is not a primary process, which led to different posterior changes in life, but a symptom, a secondary process, i.e., a *result* of time become unsteady and atomized, time without any holding gravitation. Time is fleeting, falling, to compensate for a significant *lack* of

11 Translator's note: in German, the verb *langweilen* (to bore/be boring) and the words *lange weilen* (to linger for a long time) have the same constituents. Han writes the latter.

being, which it cannot achieve because acceleration alone provides no stability. Instead, it lets the existing lack of being appear all the more penetrating