

THE 6TH MOMENTUM BIENNIAL

IMAGINE BEING HERE NOW

[Reader]

Mousse Publishing

Fatoş Üstek

Moment Over Time Records Proudly Presents:
It is Now or Never a.k.a. In the Pursuit of Now

Pick a number and throw the dice. Actually, it is the other way around.

Please follow the directions:

A. Find a pair of dice and bring them into the close proximity of this book, or bring yourself with the book to a place where you can throw the dice. You will need to repeat this action more than once.

If you do not have dice and cannot make up your mind to search longer for a pair or stop reading this piece for a minute, then pick a two-digit prime number.

If you are already tired of these instructions and kind of impatient to start the text, rather than spurred on by a slight curiosity to find out what all this fuss is about dice or a prime number, then I have nothing to say to you, dear reader; you will need to imagine a different now from this one and move on.

A1. Find a pencil, or if you can spot one from where you are, please pick up the pencil and bring it to where you

will be reading this book. You can keep reading as you walk.

A2. Find an eraser, or a second pencil of a different color. This time it can also be a ballpoint pen. The second writing tool is necessary for us to arrive at differences, as well as to create an aesthetically appealing structure.

A3. Please do not start looking at the text right now; instead, put on your favorite record and get yourself a cup of herbal tea to keep you company. My choice would be *A Day in the Life of John Coltrane* and genmaicha, popularly known as Japanese brown rice tea.

A4. Now that you are ready, throw the dice and read the number out loud, or pick a two-digit prime number and go to that section to start reading. After you have started reading, keep throwing the dice, if you would rather adopt a playful approach, OR choose the track whose title appeals to you, if you are a can't-be-bothered type. If you cannot find your number below, repeat the action.

Note: If you are still here, I guarantee exuberance.

2. TO THE SCIENTIST THERE IS THE JOY IN PURSUING NOW THAT NEARLY COUNTERACTS THE DEPRESSING REVELATIONS OF NOW. 1

Sometimes you think you will never run into the same person that you saw two days ago while you were in emotional agony, not caring whether you shed tears in front of others, and who then got off at their stop as you

continued on to yours. Remnants of you stay with them: as a sad woman on a bus late one Friday night. Perhaps you only looked at them because of the language they spoke and its phonetics, which made you try to guess if it was Spanish or Brazilian Portuguese, while looking at the clothes of the woman sitting opposite and finding the textures that surrounded her appealing. When a bad smell spreads through the rear of the bus and you don't know who the source is, nor look back to find out, the impact makes your eyes meet when the smell becomes too much to bear. The shared laughter dissipates into the air as the smell becomes weaker. And they get off the bus, you think they must have come for a week-end visit from somewhere you do not know, maybe they did not even fly and instead live in some nearby town. You don't need to know, neither do I. You come home wrapped in your cloud of sadness, without knowing what disturbed you so much or what could have hurt you so deeply... recalling the moments of tension does not necessarily help. The attempt to draw conclusions and arrive at answers keeps sleep from coming over you. It's not what you would normally do, but you decide to increase the density of your cloud by lighting a cigarette and looking down at the street from above, gazing at the sky, realizing that the moon is full; then upon locking the kitchen door, you feel like locking yourself up in front of your screen. You search for something that will make the cloud disappear or at least condense into some kind of strange liquid that you could wash off your bed. Nothing works, though it feels like working. You watch a rather soapy TV series – the sixth episode in. You try to think your way out, out of your spheres of thinking. You try to let go of that feeling and feel something

else – whether flattering or elevating or condemning or troubling. Something besides what you are feeling right in that now. And you think if now is incomplete and if there are other sensations to what I am feeling right now, it should be able to convey them or encapsulate them. Do I need to open a lock or employ a new function to carry me from a to b? “How on earth am I so stuck in this that the now is not passing me by,” you might ask yourself. You try to keep yourself under the duvet, among four pillows. It is not happening, the cloud isn't... you stop... looking for a word... sublimation – one of your favorites. And you are taken aback by the sample sentence in the Oxford English Dictionary: *he sublimates his hurt and anger into humor.*

You don't necessarily know what to do with your temporary insomnia. Opting for a nicotine cloud, you open the window. It is past 3am and people are still passing by, perhaps walking back home after a night out drinking. You try to eavesdrop on the conversation of two women who are chatting feverishly yet joyfully. It is dripping rain and the graveyard opposite is wrapped in dark silence. Back in the moments of tension, you are... trying to make up your mind on how to proceed in the nows-about-to-come. You go back to your screen and watch another TV series, convincing yourself in its aftermath to fall into the silence of thoughts. Getting out of bed with a stone in your heart, you don't know if you are awake yet or in the midst of a dream, where the phone is ringing and it is her calling.

You want to listen to a song, a song that takes away the dust accumulated on your eyes. The boy who has been drawn badly and their record of a truthful calculation

bring you to a condition experienced on repeat. After several times around, you start singing the song out loud: Go on do what you've got to do. / You've got your dreams I've got mine too. / Be strong get off at the next stop. / Don't worry about a thing. / Keep taking it easy. [approving in your head] / This time it's not personal. [inner voice: definitely!] / The universe will help you now. / To find a place you can breathe. / And do what you've got to do.

Keep taking it easy. / Keep taking it easy. / Come on. / I'll let you borrow my four leaf clover. Come on. / Take it with you, you can pass it on. / Come on. / You know I'm not the kind to say that it's over. / We'll be rubbing shoulders once again in the sun. / Come on. / Take your dreams, where nobody can find them. / Come on. / You know I won't be happy till you've won. / So come on. / Come on over, borrow my clover. / Is there anything left that you haven't done? / Go on do what you've got to do. / You've got your dreams I've got mine too. / Be strong get off at the next stop. / Don't worry about a thing. / Keep taking it easy. And you see the same group, actually recognizing them from the blonde woman. They look up as they are passing in front on your window, not necessarily at you but at the café below – checking whether they want to treat themselves to something there or not. And there's you, the song, and them under your window. She – the blonde – looks up and sees you as you see her seeing you; you try to recall why that is familiar. The next second, you remember the bus ride and think: “now they know where I live, do they remember me too?”

3. *THERE'S A CONTINUOUS BUILD-UP OF FOREIGN MATTER THAT DISTORTS THE VIEW AND THAT MUST BE PERIODICALLY WASHED AWAY.* “My body practitioner has prescribed singing and dancing to me. She has encouraged me to play a suitable record of mine when I feel stuck in the moment of now, to expand its margins. As I turn on the stereo and put on the record, I am already imagining where I could dance, and what to wear to move freely in the space, at my place in London. You may end up jumping on the bed like you did as a child and then be afraid of falling off as you begin to set free your legs and arms, knees and ankles. How far one goes beyond the remnants of lived experience towards actual being is still a mystery,” she noted in her diary.

5. *ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF THE COMPLEXITY AND IMMEDIACY OF THE PRESENT, LET ALONE THE FUTURE AND THE PAST.*

Imagine holding a rubber band in your hands. The regular kind that the postman drops in your mailbox with a bundle of tax letters and bank statements, which also occasionally includes a postcard or a letter, depending on your relationship with others and especially with the medium of posting handwritten manifestations of emotion. Hence imagine the rubber band that once held the bundle now being in your hands. And start stretching the band: keep your left hand still as the starting point of the stretch whereas your right hand keeps pulling the band. Let your left hand be the now of the experience of stretching while the right hand is the one that stays in action, which also traces the now. Rather than focusing

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on how the band looks, or being afraid you might lose control of the action – which could result in a bit of pain – focus on the action of tracing “now”. Which in this picture is continuous and indivisible. Hence what you are holding in your hands is the exact image of duration. But is this a complete representation of duration? Now, take your pencil and draw a line from the point marked below.

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You can feel free to draw the line in any direction and in any style. In other words, you can make a curve or a line with sharp edges. You are on your own and absolutely free in this action of yours.

Now, focus on the act of drawing the line rather than on the line itself. Or let us start over:

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For Bergson, movement always takes priority over the things that move; the thing that moves is an abstraction of the movement. “Now” precedes its location. The line you have just drawn twice is/can hardly be the

MOMENT OVER TIME RECORDS (...)

representation of “now”, but rather the place where you have located its experience. This aspect of now recalls Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle: one can determine either the position or the momentum of an electron or any other particle with some degree of accuracy, but not both at the same time. This brings us to the point that: when you are fully alert and aware of the experience of “now”, you can no longer be in the now as such. Please pick up your eraser or pen, since we will go over the two lines above. Let’s begin with the first one, and start making disruptions in the line by erasing it or drawing short, unconnected lines mimicking the line underneath.

The last exercise, for this track, is to make an image of time, so connect the two dots below.

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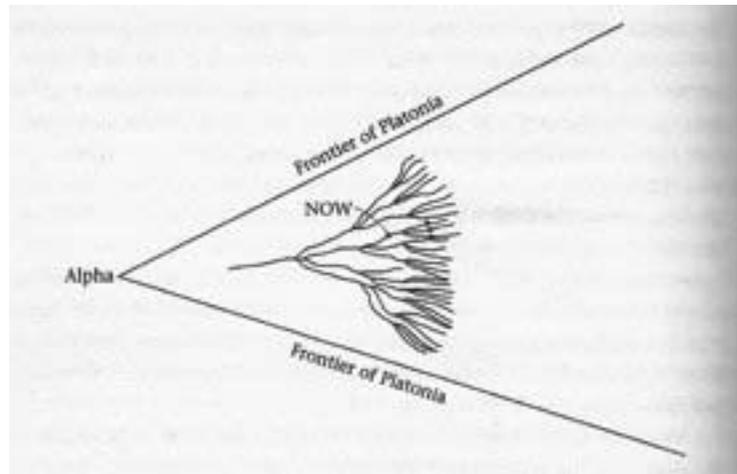
7. BE AWARE OF YOUR BREATHING FROM TIME TO TIME. LOOK AWAY AT REGULAR INTERVALS SO THAT IT DOES NOT COMPLETELY TAKE POSSESSION OF YOUR INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT. “Better: what comes ‘after’ the ‘now’ will have to come ‘before’ it. In as much as a monad in thus saturating its memory is stocking the future, the present loses its privilege of being an ungraspable point from which, however, time should always distribute itself between the ‘not yet’ of the future and the ‘no longer’ of the past.”²

13. CRONUS AND NOT CHRONOS Why is it that the zeitgeist these days is an obsession with the “now”? I do not yet understand this peculiar, increasing interest in the present moment. Sometimes it makes me think “this too shall pass”. As humanity moves through several domains of interest, concentrating on one aspect longer than others, such as how history is being written or what the future holds for us... Now is the time of now. I also wonder if the fact that we only experience the present moment makes us better consumers because we live without the shadow of past or future, so to feel the present, we expand the margins of what we can receive and gain. Then what happens? Where does the present moment disappear to? In every attempt to grasp a moment and feel its presence, that moment slips away. Though one can hold onto the past and recall what has happened again and again and even rewrite it a bit with each recollection. Likewise, one can hold onto the future and adjust one’s present to expectations of what will come true and how fulfilling that will be. Though I wonder whether the past and the future both dissolve in the present... Since the past is also composed of moments, and the future will be, and the moments are also the moments that are composing “now”. As you read through this text and follow my line of thought, I feel that you also constitute an inquiry about the nature of time. No, this is not a jump-cut! Dr. Julian Barbour³ says that the next revolution in the universe will be when applied physics accepts the terms and conditions of quantum physics, which have already removed time as a parameter. In other words, Barbour says time is a construct of modern physics – and he openly blames Newton for it – that has been “invented”

to measure change in the absence of its subjects. This requires a major shift in the parameters we use in relating to the world around us. By this, I don’t mean getting rid of clock-time, but thinking and contemplating further on what the non-existence of time could imply. Looking around the world in search of the reasons for the interrelation of things can be alienating. You might say, “no way, this is something too strange for me to be familiar with”. You might be right, or you might not... Now, stop looking at this book for a while and look around. What can you observe as a proof of time? The daylight fading away? Or that your hands are more wrinkled than they used to be a couple of years ago? Is time what we call the traces of change? If so, it cannot be the fourth dimension of our reality. Since each dimension gives us a space to explore its nature... Imagine a bird walking along an electrical wire; the bird’s three-dimensional existence is then projected onto two-dimensional space: the height of the bird and length of the wire. Within the constellation of the universe as n-dimensional, we are in the projected space of that n-dimensionality in three-dimensional space, hence we are in the midst of a constellation but not necessarily in the n-dimension as such.

To understand the reality of time as a composition of nows, Barbour proposes the concept of time capsules. You might recall the Voyager vessel that was sent out in 1977 with five golden records intended to spread information about Earth throughout the universe, and this is not necessarily the same thing, yet also is. Time capsules, to Barbour, are a single configuration that seems to be the outcome of a dynamic process of evolution through time in accordance with definite laws. They

appear to contain records of the past, and these records are mutually consistent. They can be a rock, or all the matter within a star... In his book, Barbour constructs a world without time (Platonía), composed of instants of now. His main argument revolves around the fact that we only have the present moment, which is as yet inexplicable and ungraspable, opening up to other nows, whereas time capsules are the only possible way for a notion of time to arise in a timeless context.



This graph is striking because of the three possibilities of now, and this also coincides with beliefs that prioritize unity with the universe, thus consciousness at large. Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, a Dzogchen teacher, tells us that there are three options at stake in a single now: doing, not-doing, and choosing to do something else. More specifically, imagine you are going to a meeting and you are waiting at the bus stop; when the bus

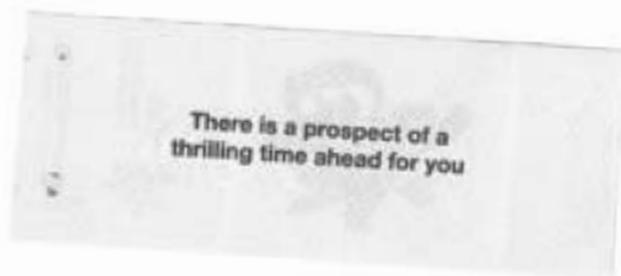
arrives, you can choose to get on the bus or not, and at the same time, you can choose to cross the street and purchase yourself a cup of coffee. This example may sound rather blunt compared to the accumulation of thoughts above, but if you give this reflection time, it may open up other spaces of connection.

17. DURATION OF A PRESENCE IN FIVE ACTS, OR: COME CLOSER TO FEEL THE DISTANCE IN TIME

Liotard begins his text on Barnett Newman by distinguishing between time in relation to artistic production and the artwork: “A distinction should be made between the time it takes the painter to paint the picture (time of ‘production’), the time required to look at and understand the work (time of ‘consumption’), the time to which the work refers (a moment, a scene, a situation, a sequence of events: the time of the diegetic referent, of the story told by the picture), the time it takes to reach the viewer once it has been ‘created’ (the time of circulation) and finally, perhaps, the time the painting *is*. This principle, childish as its ambitions may be, should allow us to isolate different ‘sites of time’.”⁴

19. It was a morning as it was and I was walking through the streets of a city that was somehow familiar though I didn’t know it well. I needed to take myself

somewhere; some place that would feel good to be in, but which at the same time would have private space, preferably a non-hectic café without people rushing in and out. A place where I could sit and sip my coffee while pinning down thoughts in my diary. I needed to express myself, and was quite eager to give visible form to the ideas that had been whirling around in my head since the night before, like a parliament of owls. I needed to write them down so that I could see the picture. I was looking for a café, but without knowing what street to take or what to look for. Then I remembered the charming place with an Art Deco façade. I found my legs moving me in its direction and there I was. I went in, kind of startled at first by the crowd; I certainly was not expecting that much noise. I decided to stay there and not bother looking around for another venue. Instead of the table, I was given a tall chair by the window. I was curious whether people could read me and see me as I was, in that mode of passing through anger and pain, disappointment and acceptance. Neither the plot nor the story is important. The coffee came with a fortune chocolate, which read:



23. *A VERITABLE ORGY OF VERBOMANIA* “The title *Time Today* is not without paradox. *Today* is a time designator, a deictic indexing time in the same way as ‘now’, ‘yesterday’, etc. Like all temporal deictics, it operates by referring what it designates to the sole present of the sentence itself, or to the sentence only in so far as it is present. It temporalizes the referent of the present sentence by situating it exclusively with respect to the time in which this sentence is taking place, which is the present. And without at all having recourse to the time *in which* the sentence could in turn be located, for example by means of a clock or a calendar. In this latter case, sentence 1 could itself be taken as referent of another sentence 2, which would say, for example. ‘Sentence 0 took place on the 24 June.’ Calendar and clock constitute networks of ‘objective’ time, which allow the moment of sentence 2 to be located without reference to the time ‘of’ sentence 1. Even supposing that a new sentence (3) makes no use of dates and hours to refer to sentence 1 (for example [sentence 3]: ‘sentence 1 was uttered yesterday’, in which the event of sentence 1 is indeed located by reference to the present of sentence 3 alone), the fact remains that sentence 1 is put in the position of being designated by the deictic ‘yesterday’. Sentence 1 is no longer the presenting present, it becomes that present ‘then presenting and now presented’, in other words the past. As an occurrence, each sentence is a ‘now’. It presents, now, a meaning, a referent, a sender and an addressee. With respect to presentation, we must imagine the time of an occurrence as – and only as – present. This present cannot be grasped as such, it is absolute. It cannot be synthesized *directly* with other presents. The other presents with which it can be placed

in relation are necessarily and immediately changed into presented presents, i.e. past.”⁵

“Bergson’s major theses on time are as follows: the past coexists with the present that it has been; the past is preserved in itself, as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved. Bergsonism has often been reduced to the following idea: duration is subjective, and constitutes our internal life. And it is true that Bergson had to express himself in this way, at least at the outset. But, increasingly, he came to say something quite different: the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round. That we are in time looks like a commonplace, yet it is the highest paradox. Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change.”

“What is actual is always a present. But then, precisely, the present changes or passes. We can always say that it becomes past when it no longer is, when a new present replaces it. But this is meaningless. Is it clearly necessary for it to pass on for the new present to arrive, and it is clearly necessary for it to pass at the same time as it is present, at the moment that it is the present. Thus the image has to be present and past, still present and already past, at once and at the same time. If it was not already past at the same time as present, the present would never pass on. The past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was.”

29. *REQUIEM FOR HALLUCINATORY PRESENCES* I read once in a strange book that déjà-vu is a game our brain plays with the foundations of perception. It can last longer than a split second, and when it does, it becomes more intense and illusionary experience is increased. Paramnesia, the illusion of déjà-vu or having been in a situation before, immediately asks us to recollect the present within its contemporaneous self, closely coupled with an experience of another contemporaneity. Déjà-vu is not a repetition or a recurrence, but an experience that has been through a slight abbreviation of change, though strong enough to resonate livedness.

There was a time in my life when I was continuously locked in the condition of paramnesia; these moments became quite unsettling, as I could no longer be in the present as such, but in an interpretation of it. It is an experience more frightening than comforting; in this case, the experience of the continuum being “not in accordance with a new present in relation to which it would be (relatively) past, but in accordance with the actual present *of which* it is the past, absolutely and simultaneously: although it is specific it is none the less part of ‘the past in general’, in the sense that it has not yet received a date.”⁶ My existence unfolding in time duplicated itself along with a symbolic existence. I do not think I can recall this as the mirroring of the present within a similar experience of a past. It is perhaps akin to Brechtian alienation, where one can no longer be in the present as such, but observe oneself being in the present as it also once was.

The single episode Proust experienced led him to write voluptuous novels. Time, as he positioned it, is not internal to the subject, but the subject is internal to time,

where time continuously loses and discovers itself within itself while letting the present pass and preserving the passed as past.

And then I wake up, as if waking up from a dream that has taken me far too long to become acquainted with...

31. CONFUSING A MINOR MESS WITH A MAJOR SNAFU: A BIG MISTAKE, TO TREAT A SMALL TEMPORARY DETOUR AS A PERMANENT LOSS OF MOMENTUM.

“A completely timeless world can still be experienced as temporal!” the crowd was shouting as it marched along the Thames.

It is not such a challenge to accept the fact that time, as we conceptualize it, is not necessarily of a linear nature. Rather, its non-linearity can be sampled in small details of everyday life. On a larger scale, the shortest distance between two points in the universe is a curve, not a straight line. Or within the constellation of past-present-future, we may very well discover that this linearity is based on the assumption that those instants are realized in a one-dimensional continuum. But if we recognize the fact that these configurations do not occur in the instants of time, but rather *are* the instants themselves, this leads us to a multidimensional space of configurations. Then we are left with a heap of possibilities and a heap of actualities (realized configurations). In other words, the potentiality of the instant of now and what it has embraced. There is neither time nor frame, just the heap of possibilities.

In an article entitled “Body Clocks”, Michal Juza in-

vestigates the perception of time in relation to age, and thus bodily conditions. He suggests that if a young person’s scar heals at twice the rate of an old man’s, because the cells in his body renew themselves at twice the speed, then that means that he experiences twice as much at the cellular level and therefore also at a mental level, which derives from the most basic synaptic connections between nerve cells etc., and his day is therefore experienced as being longer. Juza adds, later on, that in an adult, less and less time is being added to one’s life with each day, while in early childhood the increase is enormous. The distinction that Juza makes in the process that shapes the reception of time is also closely linked to how the individual is brought up. In other words, one has to bear in mind the conditions in which the individual’s perception is sculpted. It must be the undistinguishable emergence of both that leads us to perceive time as it is and as we think we experience its manifestations.

37. AN INTERGALACTIC VOYAGE: SPACE – PLACE, UNITY - MULTIPLICITY

“The physical body is no more than a misperception of who you are. Physicists have discovered that the apparent solidity of matter is an illusion created by our senses. This includes the physical body, which we perceive and think as a form, but 99.99% of which is actually empty space. In many ways it is a microcosmic version of outer space.

...

Your body is just as spacious as the universe.”⁷

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41. NOW WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT TIME TO DELVE INTO THAT WORTHY PROJECT. Do we praise the now because the past is already passé and the horizon of the future is so blurred that no crystalline image lies ahead? In other words, does the loss of content in both the past and the future lead us to hold on to the evanescence of the present?

Or do we require another inert frame of reference in order to relate things to ourselves and to themselves? If so, accepting the fact that time is a mere abstraction to cover the singleton existences of “nows” that are sequentially brought together, leads us to an unknown land. The burning question is: can we deal with existence within an incoherency?

ENDNOTES

1. The title is an appropriation of H.P. Lovecraft's words: "To the scientist there is the joy in pursuing truth which nearly counteracts the depressing revelations of truth".
2. Jean Francois Lyotard, "Time Today", in *The Inhuman Reflections on Time*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 65.
3. Julian Barbour, *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in our understanding of the Universe*, London: Phoenix, 2000.
4. Jean Francois Lyotard, "Newman: The Instant", in *The Inhuman Reflections on Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 72.
5. Ibid., p. 58.
6. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 80.
7. Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, Plume, 2006, p. 250.