

TIME OUT OF JOINT: BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

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It seems to me that a philosophical concern with the inter-relation of time *and* politics immediately discloses that one is not an analytic philosopher. To put it less slavishly (that is, less in terms of an identity bestowed from outside), a positive concern with the conjunction of such themes is one of the core criteria for being a “continental” philosopher.¹ Such generalisations need not entail that the various different forms of continental philosophy are effaced or denied, however, since how to understand this conjunction is variously construed. As Elizabeth Grosz suggests:

Each of the three temporal modalities (past, present, and future in all of their conjugative complexities) entail presumptions regarding the others that are often ill- or unconsidered: how we understand the past, and our links to it through reminiscence, melancholy or nostalgia, prefigures and contains corresponding concepts about the present and the future; the substantiality or privilege we pragmatically grant to the present has implications for the retrievability of the past and the predictability of the future; and, depending on whether we grant to the future the supervening power to rewrite the present and past, so too we must problematise the notions of identity, origin, and development.²

And certainly there is no consensus in continental philosophy as to the appropriate answer to these and other issues, nor to the relationship between what David Hoy calls the times of our lives and the time of the universe (the ‘objective’ time of physicists)³. This enduring interest in the relationship between time and politics is one important marker among others that helps to provide a loose philosophical identity to that motley crew that is sometimes sloppily called ‘continental’, although it arguably also has some kind of diagnostic privilege over other family resemblance features. This is because the endorsement (and rejection) of various different philosophical methods is partly bound up with their success (and failure) in illuminating the relationship between time and politics. Consider the following ‘methods’: dialectics, transcendental reasoning post-Kant, genealogy, hermeneutical and psychoanalytic techniques, Heidegger’s destructive retrieve (and Derridean deconstruction),

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the Frankfurt School style critique of modernity, as well as the general wariness of aligning philosophical method with either common-sense or a deferential relationship to the findings of the sciences, indexed to the present, etc. (at least one of the last two characterises a central aspect of the meta-philosophy of most analytic philosophers). From Husserl's genetic phenomenology, to Bergson's *durée*, to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, time and method have been central to continental philosophy at least since the start of the twentieth century and, to a lesser extent, since the nineteenth century (think of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx).

In this essay, however, I would like to respond to Nathan Widder's impressive book, *Reflections on Time and Politics*, by highlighting what I take to be one of the major internal differences within continental philosophy that Widder's book helps to make manifest: that between phenomenology and post-structuralism (which includes the renewed interest in, and use of, Nietzsche and Bergson's work by poststructuralist philosophers). While many deplore the use of umbrella terms like these, I hope to be able to proffer some useful generalisations about each in regard to their philosophies of time. Although it is implicitly present in Husserl's work, an association between time and normativity is explicitly emphasised in Bergson's and Heidegger's work. Heidegger's *Being and Time*, for example, draws a strong association between so-called "vulgar" time and inauthenticity. Moreover, for authentic Dasein time passes in a coherent and connected manner—that is, at least once *Angst* has jolted Dasein from its immersion in worldly time, clock time, and vulgar time. Without considering Heidegger much at all, Widder's book takes what I characterise as a poststructuralist position concerning the intersection between time and normativity. For him (and the various philosophers that he draws on, particularly Deleuze and Bergson) phenomenological accounts of time are thought to be problematic for still seeing time as, if not the measure of change, then at least as irremediably bound up with movement. And certainly most of the criticisms that Deleuze, Derrida and other poststructuralist philosophers pose regarding phenomenology revolve around issues to do with time and transcendental philosophy. One of their main objections is that phenomenological descriptions of the experience of time focus, predominantly if not exclusively, on the manner in which time gathers, or conjoins rather than disjoins (we have already seen that this appears to be true of authentic Dasein). More generally, the worry is that "lived time" is described by phenomenologists as a neat and unified continuum, but for the post-structuralists this kind of experience is an illusion of sorts. On their view, the unity of experience revealed in the 'living present' covers over something more fundamental about time—if I can put it somewhat dramatically as the theorists involved typically do, that is time as wounding (see Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*), time as out of joint in the manner of Hamlet's memorable refrain (see Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*), time as "nick" as Grosz puts it in *The Nick of Time*, or time as ungrounding as Widder phrases a related point, as casting asunder the identity of subjects and bodies. To put the point another way, it seems to me that the poststructuralist philosophers want to quite radically *disassociate* time from movement, and to allege that phenomenological conceptions of time too readily *associate* time and movement. What is at stake in this charge, and why would it matter if it is true? The poststructuralists (including Widder) allege that any association of time and movement threatens to be unable to explain the advent of genuine difference and novelty, and is, at best, only an indirect way of understanding time.

Of course, one wouldn't want to overstate the differences between phenomenologists and poststructuralists. We might note that in certain of his writings Derrida is not clearly on what I am characterising as the poststructuralist side of the equation at all. After all, whether there can be any more direct understanding of time than the vulgar common sense one is the subject of Derrida's great early essay on Heidegger, "Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*" (in *Margins of Philosophy*). In addition, poststructuralist understandings of time crucially depend upon the work of phenomenologists like Heidegger and Levinas as much as they depend on Nietzsche and Bergson, and they all share in common the concern to avoiding reducing philosophy of time to clarifications regarding the physicist's understanding of it (Einstein and four-dimensionalism⁴) and are equally reluctant to concede that the physicists give us the truth about time *tout court*. As Hoy suggests in his recent book *The Time of our Lives*, Heidegger maintains that starting from objective time (the time of the universe) the philosopher will not be able to adequately explain the time of our lives, but starting from the temporality of our lives we can explain objective time⁵. To put Heidegger's point simply, then, we cannot understand objective time without existential time, and such a move is not dissimilar to that made by Bergson and various more

recent thinkers, whatever the concrete differences in their actual accounts of temporality. In different ways, both phenomenologists and poststructuralists also seek to avoid a conception of time that we might associate with common sense and the natural attitude. This view understands time as the chronological succession of an infinite series of ‘nows’, or instants, stretching from the future to the past. Why the future first, and the past second? Well, if a priority is given to this present instant, then we know that there are various things that have not yet happened (a *not-yet-now*), which we will come closer to (note the spatial metaphor), which will then happen, and which will then be in the past (a *no-longer-now*). This conception of time involves a series of moments, and a linear trajectory, which clock-time regulates and subjects to measurement. The arguments against such views tend to rely on various forms of transcendental reasoning, which attempt to show either that linear-clock time—or theoretical ideas of time that are dependent on a clock-like series of moments—is an abstraction from lived time, or that clock-time presupposes the existence of a past that cannot be recalled and a future that cannot be anticipated, and thus give us a one-sided account of the structures of time.

But to return to the *differend* that separates much work in contemporary continental philosophy (as practiced both on the continent and in Anglo-American countries), while I think that Widder, Deleuze, et al are roughly correct in their diagnosis of phenomenology’s association of time (or, better, temporality) with the subject, including with the movement of subject, I am not convinced that they are correct in considering this to be a theoretical weakness, nor that the proffered alternatives are to be preferred. I myself am pulled both ways, and in a critical vein here want to point to some problems with the “time out of joint” trajectory of Widder and others, or at the very least to establish some risks that are associated with such a perspective. My basic worry is that too often the transcendental critique of vulgar time and any emphasis on the “living-present” and other such “chronopathologies” trades on claims of necessity that are either speculative (the transcendental claim is not established as a necessary one, but is at best a weak inference to a better explanation) or that depend upon their association with an accompanying moral and political tenor (what I have elsewhere called “empirico-romanticism”⁶) that threatens to be dogmatic. While I agree with Widder and others that time and politics are intimately connected I also think that theoretical accounts of this fragile connection need to be careful to avoid lapsing into dogmatism, and this is so even if the relevant conception of time is not tethered to any teleological account of the trajectory of history. To worry about this risk is not to simply be the victim of a false problem as Widder suggests (p4), or a transcendental “illusion” as James Williams phrased a related objection⁷. But this is all very abstract. Using a simple sporting example, I will try to clarify some of the key aspects of a phenomenological account of temporal experience as well as what Deleuze and Widder are worried about in phenomenology’s focus on lived time, and thus, by default, the living-present.

CRICKET AND THE ‘LIVING-PRESENT’

It is received wisdom in cricket and other sports that players both are not, and should not, be directly phenomenologically aware of any kind of conscious decision-making processes while absorbed in what various theorists since Hubert Dreyfus have called skilful coping. In cricket, one reason for this kind of injunction is obvious enough: batting is, as John Sutton observes, regulated improvisation under severe time constraints⁸. Faced with a fast bowler (for those from the USA, think of an express baseball pitcher), say Brett Lee in his prime, there is no time for thinking or any kind of hesitation; batsmen need to spontaneously respond, and to be totally absorbed in the moment. There is not even time, according to Sutton’s research, to actually watch the ball all the way and then respond. Despite the fact that almost all coaches will advocate unwavering watching of the ball, elite players don’t, however, watch the ball for its entire trajectory. The best players watch it out of the hand, anticipate where it will land and direct their vision there, then attend to where it lands on the pitch and anticipate where it will go. Without this kind of anticipation, one could never respond adequately to the visual stimulus in a timely fashion when faced with a 150km an hour delivery.

Let’s consider the temporal experience involved here. It seems clear that in any “living present”, the sports player retains the past in the form of a retention or sedimentation in the body of what has happened before—this is what is called procedural memory in psychology and cognitive science. At the same time, they must

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also anticipate probable future scenarios regarding what will be likely to happen in the future. Such coping techniques simultaneously carry the weight of past sedimentation and yet are also productive of a world of anticipated possibilities that are increasingly differentiated from each other; for the expert, the situation calls for, or solicits, increasingly refined responses. Moreover it is the ability to perform such anticipations more quickly, and with greater accuracy, that separates experts from those who are merely competent. Such responses cannot be mechanistic, or rigidly rule-governed. Every stroke will need to be played in slightly different circumstances, on a different pitch, with differing wind conditions, differing condition of the ball, and an altered trajectory of the delivery, to mention just a few of the variables. As such, any given cricket stroke will never be totally new, but neither will it be brute or instinctual repetition either, having to be attentive to the difference presented by each ball, but still implicitly drawing on one's repertoire of past experiences that contribute to each shot (hence each batsman has a recognisable style). Through training and skill, one is solicited by the situation to respond to it in more and more nuanced and specific ways. Being-in-the-present, on this view, involves an experience of time that synthesises or integrates elements of the past and the future within its purview.

In his reflections on the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness in the book of that name, Husserl makes a related point. He famously suggests that our integrated experience of a melody—even on first listening—implies that any so-called 'now' must have a retentive element that retains the past notes, and a protentive moment that anticipates future elaborations, as well as what he calls the primal impression. Otherwise, our experience of the sounds would be random and disparate in a way that it is not, without any kind of ability to hear a melody. This kind of temporal experience then, is a synthesis, in which any living present, for it to be meaningful, involves a retentive and protentive element rather than being a self-contained instant, or a series of such instants.

While there is an important phenomenological distinction between these kind of acts that involve procedural memory and a passive synthesis of time, and explicit biographical memory or reflection on our past, we should also note that the 'don't over think' injunction that plays a large role in sporting activity usually prescribes more than just being in the present when engaged in the activity in question. The cricketer who dwells on the past between deliveries, say, or who reflects on their lucky escape a ball before when someone dropped them on 99, or the minefield that is the pitch, is not likely to perform well. Likewise the player who is preoccupied with getting to the lunch break in ten minutes time without being dismissed, rather than playing each ball on its merits, is also likely to make a mistake. This doesn't seem merely to be folklore, but is borne out by various studies (again, see Sutton). An elite sportsman or woman thus has to train themselves to put past biographical experiences out of their mind; certainly out of their immediate focus. Being a good cricketer depends not merely on talent and not merely on training in the various skill domains either, but on training one's mind; in particular, in controlling one's temporal experience throughout an afternoon or so of projectiles being aimed at one's torso. Without putting too fine a point on it, it seems that one performs better when one is not haunted by ghosts from the past or future.

Likewise, Dreyfus produces some quite compelling empirical research on decision-making processes that suggest that it is a spontaneous embodied responsive to the environment (which is not a matter of rational calculation) that leads to mastery and expertise in any number of given fields, whether they be basketball, chess, business, or even morality⁹. Constant calculators, people who reflect all of the time on the best course of action to take, tend not to make the best decisions and do not often reach the highest levels of expertise in a given field. This suggests that expert activity involves a disciplining of the manner in which one experiences time. There is, we might say, a kind of expert-induced amnesia, which is actually not necessarily a weakness. As such, we have an account of the synthesis of the living-present, as well as a normative account of how to 'successfully' live time, at least in relation to some specific skill domains. These domains may differ importantly from the domain of philosophy, art, and other creative endeavours, but I will leave this an open question, other than to say that I think there is a continuum here rather than a difference in kind.

Of course, one needs to be able to adjust when the cricket bat is unready-to-hand, as Heidegger might say. When Adam Gilchrist or Ricky Ponting, say, keep getting dismissed by spin bowlers on the subcontinent, it is probably true that some kind of integration of reflection and practice is required, some kind of integration between acting and thinking, doing and knowing. Even if you wouldn't want to be thinking too much during a test-match, prior thought and preparation will inform your procedural memory. As such, we can and should complicate the Dreyfusian account a little. But the point is that phenomenology seems perfectly able to describe such experiences, as well as to explain the skill acquisition that is fundamental to such expertise. Phenomenological descriptions, for example, help us to see the manner in which our experience of time is aligned with the movements of a body-subject. They also help us to see the need for the adding of retentive and protentive elements to any idea of a 'now' moment, rather than deploying a model of time that involves a series of instants. In addition, a phenomenology of bodily intentionality and anticipation helps to render explicable the ability of batsmen to respond in a timely fashion, since bodily know-how functions at a far quicker and more immediate way than would be suggested by the old representationalist model in which one passively perceives the sense data, then makes an active judgment regarding what to do, and then reacts, all while still attending to the trajectory of the ball¹⁰.

Of course, this isn't all, or even a large part, of what phenomenological philosophers say about time, not considering the detailed descriptions of Heidegger on boredom, care, etc., or Levinas' work in *Time and the Other*, to give two key examples. Husserl also insists that past, present and future are different from retention, primal impression and protention. As Hoy puts it, "we experience ourselves as in time and as having a past, present, and future because our temporality involves the structure of protention, retention and primal impression"¹¹. It is perhaps fair to say, however, that the synthesis of time involved in what phenomenologists called the 'living-present' involves emphasising this integrative aspect, this gathering together, and in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty it is also privileged. In the latter's work, our bodily intentionality helps us to secure an equilibrium with the world and a normalising trajectory that allows us to succeed in various areas of expertise. The question is, however, whether this is but a phenomenological/psychological illusion as John Searle or Daniel Dennett might maintain, or a transcendental illusion as Widder and Deleuze might suggest, or whether there is something problematic about both of these kinds of dismissals of the phenomenological rendering of the times of our lives. While analytic philosophers often look to physics and the neurosciences for an answer to this question (the empirical conditions of objective time, or the empirical conditions of our experience of time), Widder and Deleuze look to what we might call a transcendental psychoanalysis. Transcendental philosophy and Freud are thought to get us beyond the time of consciousness and the time of embodied subjectivity, such that 'I' become a "multiplicity of subjects living different temporalities within the same not so unified being"¹². Both challenge the philosophical significance of any phenomenological conception of the living-present and want to look beyond such experience to its conditions, and in both cases it involves a preoccupation with metaphysical issues in relation to time. For analytic philosophy, the key question is typically whether the experience of time's passage and/or the 'now' are real or a subjective illusion, with the truth about time typically being thought to be that which is revealed by the physicist. For Widder/Deleuze, there is no need to make this objectivist move: transcendental philosophy can reveal the partiality and, ultimately, illusory nature of this experience of the 'now' and the living-present from 'within', rather than presupposing a view from nowhere. As Widder puts the claim, "an inversion of the relation of time and movement is here required. Insofar as time is read off of movement, Deleuze argues, we are given only an indirect image of what it is"¹³.

Now it is perhaps true that much of the above account of the lived-time of the cricket player is indirect. It is also not entirely unfair to associate this with phenomenology more generally. But the question is what kind of direct image of time might be proffered instead, noting the long acknowledged aporias and difficulties with directly philosophizing about time, illustrated by Aristotle, Heidegger, Derrida, to mention a few, and famously lamented by Augustine: "What then is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me: but if I am asked what it is and try to explain it, I am baffled"¹⁴. Assuming that one is not content to simply trace time from the empirical (that is, from post-Einsteinian physics and four-dimensionalism, where time's difference from space is ultimately effaced), is the solution to radically distinguish time from movement, bodies, etc. (as

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with Bergson) and to insist on time as a formal transcendental condition in a quasi-Kantian manner? (as with Deleuze). Maybe. Such answers will certainly differ from the phenomenological accounts of time of (the later) Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, where time and space (incl. movement) are intimately connected. Merleau-Ponty insists that one need not take the Bergsonian pill of radically separating time and space and privileging the former, and post *Being and Time* Heidegger also emphasizes time-space, and on certain interpretations, place. For both, the metaphysical question of which came first, time or the subject/Dasein, is misplaced. As Merleau-Ponty says in *Phenomenology of Perception*, “We are not saying that time is for someone... we are saying that time is someone... We must understand time as the subject and the subject as time” (PP: 422). Given that we know that the subject for Merleau-Ponty in this period is a body-subject, then motility and time are clearly bound up with one another on his view. Bodily motility and bodily intentionality seem from the beginning of life to be temporally tensed: proprioception is evident at the earliest stages of *in utero* life, and in neo-natal life the perception of an object gives us hitherto undisclosed sides, sides that our attention might be directed towards and which we necessarily anticipate. If these kind of conditions of bodily subjectivity are also conditions of a “world” in Heidegger’s sense, does this mean idealism? It depends on whether Merleau-Ponty means “time is the subject” metaphysically. If he did, this would seem to entail that so-called objective time is derivative of the time of our lives, and it might hence be protested what while our experience of objective time (objective time ‘for us’ as Quentin Meillassoux might say) may be derivative of this lived time, that doesn’t mean there is any metaphysical relationship of derivation. On this latter view, we might more plausibly read Merleau-Ponty’s comment as simply referring to the manner in which our learning about the world is through and through temporally tensed, as well as the manner in which our situated experience of time is also what enables self-reflection and the constitution of subjectivity.

This is a long story that we cannot detail here, but suffice to say that for Deleuze time still needs to be unhinged from this too subjective a perspective. The key problem with this account of time is that it does not seem to offer an account of the ‘new’, and why it is that time (including our experience of it, is always cut, nicked, or broken up, and exposed to an unknown future). Deleuze’s various books hence argue that genuine creativity requires a rather different experience of time, a form of time that the apparent ‘excesses’ of sadism and masochism are more open to, and which he and Derrida both borrow from Hamlet, the Northern Prince, and call “time out of joint” (while some maintain that this condition cannot be experienced, there is much in *Difference and Repetition* that implies otherwise). On the other hand, it seems from my account of the cricket player that it is precisely the integrative aspects of temporal experience that open up a horizon in all of its difference and variability. This, of course, is one of Husserl’s reasons for privileging the living-present: memorial time and narrative time in we which project particular futures all depend on this primary temporal immersion that is the living-present and are inconceivable without it. While Deleuze, Derrida, and others have given us sufficient reason to worry about this trajectory of grounding all aspects of temporality in the “living-present”, any stronger claim than that, however, such as that the former are an illusion and tacitly a debased conservatism, seem to me to be rather more tenuous, and whether their own transcendental philosophy of time is any better placed than Husserl’s is not so clear, being generally illuminative rather than strictly necessitarian. Likewise, while a normative emphasis on the nick of time—the *contretemps*—that sunders identity has value, we have also seen that there are normative virtues associated with the temporal amnesia that I have described. As Nietzsche says, “without forgetfulness, there can be no happiness, no hope, no present”¹⁵. Let us briefly consider Deleuze, Derrida, and Widder on “time out of joint” before returning to this question.

DELEUZE AND DERRIDA: TIME OUT OF JOINT

While Deleuze’s (and Widder’s) account of time out of joint is argued to be a formal condition for experience to have the structure that it does, it is important to note that it is not merely a neutral transcendental claim, also being explicitly associated with actual traumatic experiences like that of Hamlet (and learning to swim, etc.) and having a clear normative register. When Shakespeare has Hamlet declare that time is out of joint or unhinged¹⁶, this is predominantly a recognition that various actual events have monstrously violated Hamlet’s sense of his world, including most notably the murder of his father, and his mother’s remarriage to his uncle. They paralyse

him before he becomes equal to the act. This kind of aporetic impasse, this undecidability, is essential to the notion of ‘time out of joint’ for Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*. Indeed, Derrida’s point—which hovers between being a form of conceptual analysis and being more metaphysically committed—is that the only time in which something can ever happen, is when time is out of joint, when there is a constitutive not knowing what to do and how to be. “Time out of joint” hence has something to do with what Derrida calls *contretemps* (SM: 77), which indicates an unforeseen occurrence or event, but is more literally translated as the untimely, or counter-time. Derrida is clear that the untimely is not, however, atemporal, but is rather counter to linear time, and teleological history, with its seasons, regularity and order. *Contretemps* is the condition for vulgar time, the time of the present, but it is also that which breaks that living-present apart. It is the time of the event.

For Derrida and Deleuze, there is a sense in which this disjointed experience of time is more pervasive than that being a response to actual worldly trauma, but is also a condition for our experience of the living-present, albeit one that is covered over and concealed by experience itself. In this respect, time out of joint might refer to the manner in which waiting is essential to all experience, as well as the manner in which every experience contains an aspect of lateness¹⁷. Later in his career, Derrida will call this kind of relation to time “anachronism”. Anachronism is an error of sorts, a relating to an event or custom or ritual as if from the wrong time. It suggests someone, or something, is out of harmony with time, the living present. While there are clearly forms of anachronism that may be problematic—interpreting the past from the perspective of our own current predilections and interests—there is also something positive to anachronism for Derrida. In times of crisis when the new (and potentially violent) threatens to erupt in revolutionary crisis, Derrida suggests the more that one needs to borrow from past, and to attend to spectres and hauntings (SM: 109). This might not be in the form of nostalgia for the past, but some kind of spectral or uncanny visitation is required. Of course, precisely what we saw the sportsperson does not seem to want, or need, is such visitations.

In arguably the central part of *Difference and Repetition*, the account of the eternal return of difference and the disjunctive synthesis of time, Deleuze also invokes the Northern Prince. For Deleuze, prior to his father’s murder, Hamlet’s experience of time was oriented around “those properly cardinal points through which pass the periodic movements which it measures”—time was measured in relation to orderly movements of the world, sun and moon, dinner, duties, etc. Deleuze says “a time out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve... freed from the event which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned” (DR: 88). The movements by which time had been measured are disrupted, leaving only an empty form of time that eschews the unity of the subject. Widder pays a lot of attention to this fractured self, explaining its psychoanalytic provenance and seeking to problematise the normalising trajectory of bodies seeking an equilibrium (the return of the same rather than difference, we must assume). While neither he nor Deleuze want to dispute that this happens (at a superficial level), they want to revalue another kind of temporal condition for the living-present, which is also both an ‘experience’ of sorts, hence the analogy with Hamlet, as well as a kind of regulative idea for how to live. This unhinging, to return to Shakespeare, fractures the self and opens it to a becoming-other of some kind. On Widder’s view, time is a structure or disjunctive synthesis that ungrounds movement, including the idea of the flow, or passage, of time (p3). As Widder puts it: “‘time’ names the structure, not the measure, of change. It is a kind of being out of synch with oneself that is the condition of anything to change or move” (p6). This reversal also carries risks of idealism, as Widder acknowledges (p6). He also accepts that “an ontology of time is a human (although not a humanist) ontology” (Widder p4). It seems, then, if we conjoin these sentences, that the condition for anything to change or move is that the human being is out of sync with itself. *Prima facie* this looks like idealism. Of course, this risk of idealism would be ameliorated if we took the phenomenological step (with its alleged metaphysical agnosticism) of saying that Deleuze is just talking about temporality insofar as it manifests itself in human existence, but Deleuze’s metaphysics and transcendental philosophy (and Bergson’s) trades on stronger claims than this, extending to all things (wheat, for example). There is hence an equivocation about the level of analysis, or at least there is a difference between Widder’s account of time and Deleuze’s.

Not only is time out of joint a transcendental condition for all experience, but Deleuze also indicates that we can also better affirm and embrace this time, if only we could become good throwers of the dice, embracing both

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chance and necessity. This is why in *Difference and Repetition* he repeatedly refers to an essential “apprenticeship of learning” (DR: 164). This latter phrase is intended to evoke experiences where one is radically disrupted, forced to instigate new ways of existing. Consider Deleuze’s preferred example of learning, which is about learning to swim. He suggests that learning to swim, or learning a foreign language, means “composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems” (DR: 192). The kind of learning experience with which Deleuze is primarily concerned is not only that of the beginner and novice, but also the end, paradoxically enough, and that which constitutes true expertise and stands as an exemplar for a life of encounters and exposure to difference. The genuinely important aspect of learning is the way in which it always involves a violent training, a traumatic experiment in apprenticeship. At one stage Deleuze compares the experience of learning to the acephalic, the albino, the aphasic (DR: 165), and this understanding of learning rejects the more normative claim that a suitably refined adjustment towards one’s environment is the telos of learning and skill acquisition, and the account of time and the living-present which is bound up with it. Instead, Deleuze valorises those learning experiences that force us out of any such equilibrium with our environment; the kind of structural coupling between subject and world that is pivotal to the constitution of a living-present. Within certain bounds, we must aspire to be the perpetual apprentice, to encounter new situations that are inassimilable to our average coping techniques, and to become a nomad who is never at home¹⁸. Such analyses do have a certain phenomenological resonance, even if they are also argued to be more than that. We might, for example, invoke a related image of the sportsplayer who “counter-actualises” situations, and for whom it is a matter of not simply responding to the actual (even in the attenuated sense of actuality with its projective and retentive aspects as described above), but is fundamentally about negotiating the intensities provoked by past experiences and hopes for an unknown future (the famous Deleuzian war-time example is Joë Bousquet in *The Logic of Sense*).

Indeed, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that nomads change their habits so as not to change their habitat (ice and desert), but migrants move and change their habitat so as not to change their habits. In relation to this opposition, Deleuze and Guattari side with the nomads (as a regulative ideal at least—they call them the noumena of history), but perhaps a philosopher like Merleau-Ponty and cognitive scientists indebted to him, are tacitly on the side of the migrants. Although circumstance changes, and we must consistently adjust, there is a normative impetus to attaining maximum grip on an environment (this is an evolutionary pressure too), to what cognitive scientists call structural coupling between organism and environment. Deleuze and Guattari argue that any genuine creativity or learning must be provoked by something traumatic, or at least the possibility of trauma must be omnipresent to sustain creative performance in any domain, but perhaps particularly philosophy and art. It is easy to get an intuitive grasp of what they are on about in this regard. We have all seen great performers in the early stages of their careers, who, some short time later, flush with success, are totally confident in coping with the pressures of live performance, but have lost something vital about their performance. And Deleuze, Widder, and others, are clearly right to suggest that life is not exhausted by bodily coping (and the time of the living-present, *l’habitude*), that even the activity of the cricket player is not done justice to without some reference to what we might summarise as ‘time out of joint’, in both its formal and also more experiential guises. Perhaps there are also some strategic reasons for privileging ‘lost time’ in modernity, given the sense in which clock time is increasingly dominant. But worlds and lives change, whether the self is fractured, whether Joe is thrown into the volcano or not. If there is a law, it is that of change, but it is never clear to me that the transcendental arguments about time out of joint (or structural equivalents) that are bound up with a recognition of this fact are compelling. They typically depend upon an opposition between the event and inexorable sameness, predictable predicates, etc. But is every philosophy of mediation, of continuums, necessarily condemned to be unable to explain the event/change? It is not clear that this is so. Transcendental reasoning of this sort depends upon a contrast that excludes other possibilities and cannot establish that its alleged conditions are the uniquely valid ones. Although I can only gesture towards this here, it seems to me that what we are witness to in these temporal disputes between phenomenologists and poststructuralists is an account of the time(s) of our lives which is irremediably split in both of these directions, and which problematises any attempt to adequately ground the one in the other. In regard to the association between time

and politics, it seems to me that this quasi-transcendental necessity also precludes any too easy decision in the realm of the ethico-political (e.g. change and rupture vs. sameness and coping).

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NOTES

- 1 See James Chase and Jack Reynolds, *Analytic Versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy* (Acumen 2010), and Jack Reynolds, *Chronopathologies: Time, Politics, and Transcendental Philosophy* (forthcoming Maryland: Lexington Books 2010).
2. E. Grosz, "Thinking the New", *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, p18.
3. David Hoy, *The Time of our Lives: A Critical History of Temporality*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.
4. Einstein contends, for example, that when it comes to time there is just the objective time revealed by physics, and psychological or subjective time on the other hand, and nothing else to be said about time (H. Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity* p159). Suffice to say almost no continental philosopher will accept that.
5. Hoy, p22.
6. Jack Reynolds, "Deleuze and Dreyfus on *l'habitude*, coping and trauma in skill acquisition", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 2006, p563-83.
7. James Williams, "Why Deleuze does not blow the actual on virtual priority. A rejoinder to Jack Reynolds", *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008, p97-100.
8. John Sutton, "Batting, Habit, and Memory: the embodied mind and the nature of skill", *The Philosophy of Cricket*, ed. J. McKenna, London: Routledge 2008.
9. See H. Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997 edition, particularly part 3, "The Role of the Body in Intelligent Behaviour".
10. As such, phenomenology of this kind is not greatly trouble by Benjamin Libet's experiments on time-consciousness which seem to show that our conscious experience of making decisions is actually misleading. When we are conscious of having made a decision, in actual fact the decision was made (judging by neural activity) about 300 milliseconds earlier. What do such findings mean for phenomenology? Such data would be taken by most phenomenologists to support (rather than falsify) their view, in that embodied intentionality is shown to operate at a different level from conscious reflective decision-making (roughly the know-how/know-that distinction), and the manner in which the former kind of pre-reflective motor intentionality is always-already at work..
11. Hoy, p51.
12. N. Widder, "Time is Out of Joint - and so are We: Deleuzian Immanence and the Fractured Self", *Philosophy Today*, 50 (4) 2006, p411.
13. Widder, as above.
14. Augustine, as cited in Antonio Negri, *Time For Revolution*, London: Continuum, 2005, p29.
15. F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufman, New York: Vintage Books, 1969, p57-8.
16. See Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* for an interesting account of the differing French and German translations of this famous quote.
17. See Len Lawlor, "Derrida", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
18. Such claims are explored in detail in Reynolds (2006, see above) as well as my paper "Deleuze on the Ethics (and the time) of the Event", *Deleuze Studies* 2007.

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