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Skopje: Time, Narrative, and Politics

Bionote

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Abstract

I would like to recall several ideas that have supported the entirety of my work for the past 40 years: forms of worker emancipation and the regimes of the identification of art; the transformations of literary fiction and the principles of democracy; the presuppositions of historical science and the forms of consensus by today's dominant apparatuses. What unites all these areas of research is the attention to the way in which these practices and forms of knowledge imply a certain cartography of the common world. I have chosen to name this system of relations between ways of being, doing, seeing, and thinking that determine at once the common world and the ways in which everyone takes part within it the "distribution of the sensible." But it must also be said that temporal

categories play an important role in this as well. By defining a now, a before and an after, and in connecting them together within the narrative, they predetermine the way in which the common world is given to us in order to perceive it and to think it as well as the place given to everyone who occupies it and the capacity by which each of us then has to perceive truth. The narrative of time at once states what the flow of time makes possible as well as the way in which the inhabitants of time can grasp (or not grasp) these "possibles." This articulation is a fiction. In this sense, politics and forms of knowledge are established by way of fictions including as well works that are deemed to be of the imagination. And the narrative of time is at the heart of these fictions that structure the intelligibility of these situations, which is to say as well, their acceptability. The narrative of time is always at the same time a fiction of the justice of time.

The title I have chosen for this intervention is: time, narrative, and politics. To give a proper introduction to it, I would like to recall several ideas that support this reflection because they have also supported the entirety of my work for the past 40 years concerning objects and areas of research that apparently seem distant

from each other: forms of worker emancipation and the regimes of the identification of art; the transformations of literary fiction and the principles of democracy; the presuppositions of historical science and the forms of consensus by today's dominant apparatuses. What unites all these areas of research is the attention to the way in which which these practices and forms of knowledge imply a certain cartography of the common world, of the forms of visibility and invisibility that structure it, the way in which which subjects occupy it according to forms of co-existence and exclusion, wherein events and forms of events are identified, wherein the possible and the impossible are determined according to all these varying elements. I have chosen to name this system of relations between ways of being, doing, seeing, and thinking that determine at once the common world and the ways in which everyone takes part within it the "distribution of the sensible." But it must also be said that temporal categories play an important role in this as well. By defining a now, a before and an after, and in connecting them together within the narrative, they predetermine the way in which the common world is given to us in order to perceive it and to think it as well as the place given to everyone who occupies it and the capacity by which each of us then has to perceive truth. A narrative of time always defines at once two things. On one hand, it defines the framework of experience: that which is now present, the way in which this present is linked to a past or detaches itself from it, whereby it allows or forbids certain futures. But at the same time, it also defines ways of being in time, which is to say, ways of being attune with it or not, of participating – by way of the mode of accord or discord— with a power of truth or error linked to this flowing of time. The narrative of time at once states what the flow of time makes possible as well as the way in which the inhabitants of time can grasp (or not grasp) these "possibles." This articulation is a fiction.

But it is important to be clear about the meaning of this word: a fiction is not the invention of an imaginary world. It is the construction of a framework at heart of which subjects, things, and situations can be perceived as being linked together within a common world and where events can be thought in a way as to be organized into an intelligible sequence. In this sense, politics and forms of knowledge are established by way of fictions including as well works that are deemed to be of the imagination. And the narrative of time is at the heart of these fictions that structure the intelligibility of these situations, which is to say as well, their acceptability. The narrative of time is always at the same time a fiction of the justice of time. This expression, "justice of time," recalls the phrase used by Anaximander concerning the manner in which things suffer the payment of their injustice according to the order of time. This phrase is better known by way of the commentary which Heidegger granted to it. But the way in which I want to place the central focus of my talk today in the relation between justice and the order of time is quite different than Heidegger.

For me it seems essential to recall this fictional structuration of time up against the analyses of our present that have flourished during the past 25 years. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet empire was credited to a rather simple view of our time. It was said that with the collapse, it was not merely an economic and state system that fell into rubble, but it was also an entire age of history that had come to an end – the age that had granted time the responsibility to bring about a hidden truth within the heart of the movement of things themselves and which identified the arrival of this truth with the arrival of a world of justice. It was as if time had been stripped of the fictions for which we had made it responsible, stripped of the promises that we had believed to read within its past and stripped of the

future that we had assigned to it as some kind of goal, as if during its course, time had been rendered ordinary. Of course, there are various ways of understanding this ordinary course of time: some people identified it with the wise management of a time freed from utopian futures, a time brought back to the immediate present and its neighbouring consequences [consequénces proches] where it became merely a question of calculating the chances for prosperity presented by the measures taken for the months to come and which were then required to be verified by these months to come. Others identified the opposite, the crepuscular time of a post-history characterized by the generalized nihilist reign of unbelief and by the lone jouissance of market happiness [bonheur marchand] But in every case, there was evidence of a disjunction between this indeed real present and the great expectations and bygone illusions of a historical time directed by the future. This is what the philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, summarized within the stunning formula: the end of the grand narratives.

Nevertheless, this radical change in temporality was immediately called into question. On one hand, the countries that had been freed from a communist future quickly found themselves caught within rediscovered nationalistic narratives, within renewed genealogies of monarchies and empires as well as ethnic and religious conflicts. And on the other hand, it quickly became clear that the triumphant free-market also had its long-term demands which required, in order to preserve its future, the sacrifice of privileges inherited from the past and the egoisms of present interests. What would quickly appear was that the too simple opposition between the solid realities of the present against the illusions of history covered over a division at the heart of the present itself, a division of temporalities which was also a division of possibles and capacities.

In order to understand the logic of these reversals, we have to understand the more complex temporal logic that supported the famous grand narratives. And to do this, we must take a long step all the way back to the canonical text that set in place the laws of fiction in the Occident and by doing so imposed a certain figure of the rationality of time. I want to speak about Aristotle's *Poetics*. In it, he states that the task of the poet is not to create verse but to construct a fiction, namely, a link between events, a structure of causal rationality. For it is not a question of describing how events happened as such, but rather to recount how events could have happened, which is to say, starting from their possibility. The poet constructs a causal schema of connection articulated according to two great relations: the relation between fortune and misfortune, and a relation between ignorance and knowledge. It is this way that the poet constructs a relation between the history of justice and a model of intelligibility. To paraphrase the famous phrase by Anaximander, we could say that tragedy defines an order of time according to which beings gain access to knowledge by way of being judged for their injustice, an injustice which is first of all an ignorance. Tragedy in this way permanently links an intrigue of justice granted to an intrigue of acquired knowledge. But there are two important remarks to make as far as this rationality of an order of time is concerned. The construction of a sequence by which possible events can be created, claims Aristotle, comes about either by way of necessity or plausibility [vraisemblance]. Learned necessity and poetic plausibility are equivalents as forms of the rationalization of time – or of the justice of time. This is because both of them are equally in opposition to a poor form of time: the time of simple succession, the time where things happen one after another without any causal link. This is what, according to Aristotle, makes poetry superior to history: poetry states how thing could

have happened, history simply merely states how things happened within their empirical succession. But we should also add here what Aristotle does not need to state in his *Poetics*: this distinction between two types of temporal linking is itself based on a distinction between two forms of lived experience of time and two categories of humans: there are people for which the present is situated within the events of a time that “can happen”, the time of action and its ends goals [ses fins], of leisure and knowledge: in short, the time of people who have time, these men which for all this we call active. And there are people who live in the present of things where things simply happen one after another, the repetitive and narrow daily time: in short, the time of people who don’t have the time, those people we call passive – not because they don’t do anything but because they passively receive time. The rational causality of temporal linking that assures the passage between fortune and misfortune, knowledge and ignorance, is articulated by a distribution [partage] of temporalities which is a distribution of forms of life. It tosses aside, outside of its domain, those for whom the form of life is doomed to the time of pure succession and by way of this excludes the misfortune and fortune of poetic rationality. So it is that the justice of time is achieved. There is the poetic justice of the process that makes active men pass from fortune to misfortune and from ignorance to knowledge. But there is also this other justice which is the subject of the Platonic *Republic*, this justice which consists of an organized distribution of activities, of spaces and times that is based on a prerequisite posed in Book II of the *Republic* at the very beginning of the tale about the origin of the City: this prerequisite is to retain within the workshop [atelier] beings who have no other time but to do what the work that will not wait demands of them.

Such are the distribution of times which we must return to if we want to understand what is at play within these forms of rationality that we have called the grand narratives. On one hand, the modern grand narratives appropriated the logic of fictional rationality. And they carefully applied it to this historical succession which Aristotle pitted against poetic rationality. Thus, on one hand, they rejected the opposition of temporalities: they made of the world things that happen one after another, a world subjected to the laws of rational linking. And it is precisely in this world, within the obscure daily reality of the production of material life that Marxism embedded [logé] the matrixial form of causality of human events. And by this same token, proposed a new link between knowledge and justice. Whereas tragic heroes only gained access to knowledge by way of the misfortune suffered by their unjust acts, the new knowledge by way of the new temporal order also announced a new type of justice: the new justice was at once the knowledge of laws according to which injustice reigned and the knowledge of laws according to which time itself would judge this injustice. History therefore became the exemplary fiction of a passage from misfortune to fortune based on the passage from ignorance to knowledge. Historical evolution produced a science of evolution that allowed historical agents to play an active role in the transformation of necessity and possibility. But the opposition of temporalities that were apparently driven out by the new rationality of history would soon re-emerge in full force. The historical movement which produced the conditions for knowledge and the fortune it promised also produced gaps [écarts] and delays that threw entire social classes back into the past. And it also produced, within the quotidian practice of gestures of work and modes of thought, the veil of ideology which confined historical agents to the ignorance of necessity. And this ignorance was itself twofold: on one hand, it

was the persistence of repetitive time that indefinitely postponed the completion of justice inherent to the march of history. And on the other hand, it was an illusion for those unaware of the necessity of this delay and too quickly wanted to project themselves into the future. The opposition of temporalities which previously had been between two separate worlds thus lodged itself within the heart of historical necessity itself. The same historical process was lived in two different ways: certain people lived within the time of knowledge, that is, the time of causal connection; others – which was a larger number – lived within the time of ignorance, the time of succession that was not understood in its diverse forms: embedded within the present of repetition, attached to a bygone past, or to the illusory anticipation of a future that is not yet possible. Thus it's not, as they tell us, the simple faith in a future brought about by the evolution of time which had animated the grand narratives of historical necessity. It is the splitting of this necessity into the principles of possibility and impossibility, a splitting that itself was founded by the maintained logic of the opposition of a time where things happen one after another and the time of rational connection. The science of this necessity has always been simultaneously the science of the possible rupture of domination and the science of its necessary reproduction and the indefinite delay of the rupture. From this point of view, it is completely false to say that our époque has broken away entirely from the grand narratives in order to consecrate itself to the lone dimension of the present. Our époque has simply redistributed the relation between necessity, possibility, and impossibility. It has enclosed the possible within the lone alternative of the reproduction of the existing necessity or of the catastrophe of humanity doomed to the radical misfortune of its self-destruction. Necessity has thus become the necessity of the lone possible – or of the least of evils – as the lone

alternative to imminent disaster. And in order to assure of this lone possible, the science of necessary connection more than ever had to be opposed to the ignorance of men of empirical succession which resist the necessity of the march of time. The capitalist and state-owned order that declared the expiration of the Marxist grand narrative simply took back up this same logic for its own account. What quickly emerged was that the solid present our governments and their ideologies had pitted against the reveries of yesterday concerning the meaning of history also had its long-term demands. This present that was said to liberate us from the chimerical promises of history and the revolution could itself only keep its promises by taking into account a much larger historical process, which was called globalization. It is not simply a question of an empirical adjustment to the ebb and flow of the market, but the implementation of conforming the empirical time of individuals with the rational time of production and the capitalist redistribution of wealth: a work in eliminating all the roadblocks to the natural accomplishment of these laws, that is, all the systems guaranteeing the rights to work and the redistribution of wealth in the form of public services and social solidarity. This work of harmonizing time that was entrusted to the various States itself supposed the construction of a new fiction of historical necessity. It is in this way that the Europe of Maastricht (the European Union) pitted the historical process of Reform against the past illusions of the Revolution: not reforms, but Reform as the war of the rational time of necessity against the delayed time of men of succession, attached to the privileges inherited from the past and incapable of seeing beyond the present moment. The dominant logic here takes back up in its own way the Marxist scenario of a war of times. In the 19th century, Marx and Engels stigmatized artisans and petit-bourgeois that held on to outdated social forms hindering the rise of Capitalism and thereby hindering

the socialist future this rise was supposed to bring about. At the end of the 20th century, this scenario was re-interpreted. What hindered the promised prosperity, by way of the wise management of the present, had become the struggling workers who were defending the collective rights to work and institutions of social solidarity. In order to vanquish this sin against the order of time, one first had to re-baptize it: one had to transform the workers in struggle who were defending social rights into privileged egotists, defending their rights in the short term to the future detriment of their own children. On this basis, we see, in my own country, an entire leftist intelligentsia backing justifications of Marxist sciences that are then used by governments of the right that use them in applying the triumph of the Reform. The sense of history was always there and always demanded to clear the path for the future. But however, the future which one needed to clear the way for against the men stuck to the routine of the present no longer went by the name of the socialist revolution but by that of the triumph of the free-market.

The narrative of historical necessity was thus recycled by the managers of the free-market whose destruction it has promised in the past. It is true that, faced with this annexion, it re-affirmed itself as the critical discourse for the capitalist order of time. But it was predominantly under the same mode, which was that of science, on the one hand, tasked to demonstrate the necessity of temporal connection and, on the other, to denounce the ignorance of the inhabitants of time. Only, while the official discourse announced the historical necessity of the global free-market, and denounced those ignorant few who refused to adapt to its rhythm, critical discourse accused those same ignorant few of an inverted sin: that of being too well-adapted to this rhythm and of too quickly wedding themselves to its

values whether it be by way of a passive mode of frenetic consumption, by way of a fascination of the spectacle or by way of slavery to credit, or by way of an active mode of the promotion of libertarian and anti-authoritarian values that destroyed traditional obstacles that had once prevented its development. On the one side, there was the critique of commodity fetishism, of consumer society, and the society of spectacle that formally was preoccupied with making the capitalist machinery visible, which continues more and more to task itself with denouncing the democratic individual, starved of enjoyment [jouissance] at all levels, as the principle reproductive agent of the commodity system. And on the other side, the collective forms of anti-authoritarian subversion were denounced as constructing the new modes of subjectivation necessary for the new forms of capitalist production. This was the main theme depicted in the book, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Its authors strived to show how the May '68 movement in France was opposed to the tradition of social critique, an artistic critique established on individual values of autonomy and creation. It was in this manner, the authors noted, that they provided to capitalism, which was shaken by the crisis of 1973, means to regenerate itself by way of integrating these values of creativity and autonomy within new forms of flexible management. Following this, an entire literature of critique that claimed itself to be radical, ended up showing how the values of the democratic individual and the flexible man at once contributed to new forms of capitalist labour that now mobilizes the totality of life and to the subjective integration of the values of neo-liberalism. So it is that critical thought becomes then a perfect circle of necessity and of an integration of any deviance within this circle. This circular logic lends itself to two scenarios: there is the scenario of repetition, the eternal denunciation of reproduction of necessity that is itself eternal. But there

is also the scenario of the catastrophic spiral that sees a humanity of flexible individuals and frenetic consumers precipitating humanity toward the final Judgment day when it will atone for all these sins against the order of time.

So it is that the logic of the judgment of history is re-distributed according to two fundamental dramaturgies: a dramaturgy that leads the tribunal of history back to the sciences of remedies necessary to keep societies alive, and a dramaturgy that makes of this life itself the scene of the Last Judgment. Both these dramaturgies are two ways of dealing with the dominant scenario of necessity today, which is that of the crisis. In Marx's time, the economic crisis was a sign of the dysfunctions of Capitalism, of its deadly nature. Today it has become the opposite, which is to say, the crisis has become the notion itself by which Capitalism retains its seat of power. On one hand, the crisis itself, is the other name of globalization, the so-called unavoidable reality that dictates the destruction of all the "delays" that are opposed to the law of the free-market. But it has also become the perpetually visible sign of identification between the exercising of this law and scientific necessity. This identification presumes that, behind the economic mechanisms, we reactivate the first notion of the meaning of crisis, its medical meaning. But this reactivation itself implies a manipulation that changes the relation between the notion of crisis and the time of illness. In the Hippocratic tradition, the crisis was in effect a well-defined moment. It was the final moment of the illness when the doctor had done all he could do and let the sick person confront the final battle alone wherein the sick person would either die or come out cured. However, in the use that is now dominant, crisis designates the exact opposite: no longer the moment of resolution but the pathological state itself. The economic crisis in the strictest sense, thus, becomes

a social crisis – or even, an anthropological crisis— an illness of society or humanity, and this illness precisely grants power to the character that the old "crisis" had told to take sick leave, that is, it granted power to the knowledge of the doctor [à savoir le médecin]. If the crisis no longer designates a critical moment of a process but the general state of the world, it is clear that what the crisis calls for are the attentive and uninterrupted care of doctors. As for these doctors themselves, they are, truth be told, nothing more than state authorities and the financial managerial powers of this state named crisis. Which goes back to saying that the "illness" of the crisis is nothing more than the robust health of a system of exploitation. But to appeal to the normality of the name of crisis is also to hollow out once more the gap between those that are ill and live in successive time – pathological time – where, for example, crisis means the loss of employment, the lowering of salary, or the loss of social status, and those who live within the time of science, the time wherein crisis designates both those ignorant who are ill that one must heal and the overall necessity recognized by science. It is to both confirm the knowledge of the scientists and the ignorance of those who are ignorant, but it also confirms the guilt of the ignorant whose illness is to have not known how to adapt their time to global time. The grand narrative of the justice of time comes back to the simple opposition of the time of those who know and those who do not. At the same time, of course, this identity of health and illness, of the medical norm and moral fault allows itself to be interpreted according to a catastrophic schema which makes the crisis a general crisis or a last judgment of human sins.

We have not exited the time of the grand narratives. The narratives that construct the adhesion to domination or those narratives which claim to contest it, remain caught

within the fictional logic that goes all the way back to Aristotle: the logic of a necessary linkage of events, itself founded upon a hierarchical partition of temporalities. In the shadow of the so-called reigning “presentism”, all the authorities of the state, finance, media, and science are ceaselessly working to produce these gaps [écarts] that render the same individuals at once dependent to the justice of global time and constantly at fault with respect to this time [en faute à l’égard du ce temps]. They work at reproducing both the fiction of global necessity and the difference between those who live within the time of knowledge that renders justice and those who live within the guilty time of ignorance. But by this alone, they invite us to change our perspective, to rethink the justice of time that would no longer be on the side of a future directed by global processes, but on the side rather of an intimate division of temporalities. Behind the variants of the discourse on global necessity that goes from ignorance to knowledge and from fortune to misfortune – or the opposite, there is the first division [partage premier] or the first injustice – that separates those who have and those who do not have time. But there are also struggles striving to bring into question this narrative of time, struggles by those who do not have the time to take this time that they do not have, in order to split [fender] from within the interior of time “work that cannot wait”. In my work concerning the forms of workers’ emancipation and the theory of intellectual emancipation, I tasked myself with showing the centrality of the stakes for this recovery of time. I don’t want to take back up this demonstration here but I simply want to extract several elements which seem necessary for me in order to rethink the justice of time.

is not about celebrating the quotidian against the global. It is about stating that the global is always at play within the quotidian. The quotidian is not some misfortune that must be redeemed by way of understanding its dependence with regards to global connection. It is the time within which the whole of injustice of a condition is concentrated, but also its possible reparation. This is what I developed several years ago in Belgrade in speaking about the “method of equality” and in so doing, I returned to a central theme of my book, *Proletarian Nights*, how the workday was recounted in the 1840s by the carpenter, Gauny. The workday is not simply the time that is given to Capital by way of the reproduction of labor force and surplus value. On one hand, for the worker, it is a compulsory occupation [occupation contrainte] An occupation is not simply the exercise of an activity, it is also a way of being in time and space. In this sense, the workday is the quotidian constraint that constantly reproduces the divisions of temporalities as divisions of forms of life. But it is also the concrete flowing of hours and minutes wherein a possible gap can be played out in relation to the norms of reproduction: the possibility of the working of the body and the mind that regains, in regards to the constrictions of space, the deviation of a gaze [regard] that leads thought elsewhere, or in regards to the constrictions of time, the division of a thought that makes the body work faster or slower or in any case in a different way. I have analysed the dramaturgy of the hours constructed in this manner by Gauny and the way in which the relation of the movements of thought to the movements of the body constructed a complex logic of gaps [écarts] between a time of renewed servitude and a time of acquired liberty: two times which occupy the same time. But of course the first recovery is the one which decides to put into a narrative this time, which by definition, had been the time excluded from the order of narrative, the time where nothing happens, if only

At the heart of emancipatory thought, there is first of all a change in focal points: a manner of locating the states of justice and injustice within the scansions of daily time. It

the reproduction of time, which is to say, the separation between times. And of course, this narrative is a fiction. The carpenter does not recount his workday, he fictions: he writes it as the contrary of what it normally is; he writes it as if each hour something happened. It is not merely the microcosm where science can recognize the law of a system of production. It is the time of a redistribution of times. The narrative written about the day, changes the modality of the experience of this time. But one must also add that the writing of this narrative itself supposes another alternation of the order of time. In order to write it, the carpenter had to take the time, either during the night when he takes the necessary pause to recover his energy, or during the time when he was unemployed, a time when normally one's time is spent looking for another job. Which is to say, the carpenter had to not only renounce the Aristotelian division between the time of succession and that of causality, but also the division that the same Aristotle establishes between two forms of inactivity: the pause that restores the energy of the worker and the leisure that nourishes the mind of those who are not subjected to the constraints of work.

This is the fundamental point at the heart of this use of time that defines the work of emancipation. The whole of justice or injustice of time is present in each one of these moments. Starting from these differences of scale, a justice of time is defined that is not filed under the meaning of the march of a homogeneous time, but which on the contrary, exerts itself as division of time, as a production of gaps which are not ignorances or delays as far as the march of time is concerned, but are ruptures from the normal logic of the division of temporalities. Time is divided from within by way of recovering these moments. Each one of these moments is at once the point where the reproduction of the division of time passes and the point of a possible gap [ecart], of a possible re-

division. The moment is the productive power of another time. Which means that time is not a long duration that is opposed to the ephemerality of the moment, but on the contrary, it is the expansion of the power of the moment, which is to say, the redistribution of the weights on the scale of destinies. It is this power of the moment constructing another time which is at the heart of the theory of intellectual emancipation in the work of Joseph Jacotot that I shed light on in *The Ignorant Schoolteacher*. There is normal time, the time of the education processes of individuals and societies which is the endless reproduction of their renewed incapacity in the name of knowledge itself and the promised equality during the term of this path. And there is the time of the capacity of these same individuals and time whose path we can begin to trace starting from any point and any moment whatsoever. This power of the moment that begins another time is not merely the time of individual emancipation. It also characterizes the "revolutionary" days where the people of "passive" men forget the "work that cannot wait" and leave their workshops in order to affirm within the streets participation in a common time. In a famous text, Walter Benjamin saw within this time a powerful explosion of the temporal continuum, symbolized by the man who, during the Paris revolution of July 1830, shot out the street clocks in order to stop time, like Jousé stopping the sun. But what these kinds of days produce is rather the opening of another time where the evidence that structures the temporal order of time is erased, where the distribution of the possible is reconfigured and, with it, the power of those who inhabit time. It is a new common time, constructed starting from breaches within the dominant operating order of time.

We know how this power of the redistribution of time has found itself to be at once repressed [refoulée] within the Marxist revolutionary tradition and appropriated

elsewhere as a principle of a revolution of literature. On the hand, the Marxist tradition puts its over on the side of a bad time: the time of those who want to change time and who are unaware of the scientific laws that preside over the succession of time. On the other hand, the rupture within the scale of time has been the principle of another revolution, the modern revolution of the art of narratives was called literature. This revolution very precisely called into question the Aristotelian opposition between the time of succession and that of causal connection. Here I'm thinking of a text by Virginia Woolf entitled, *Modern Fiction* that denounces the tyranny of the plot and pits against these false sequences of cause and effect, the truth of these atoms of time that ceaselessly fall into our minds and which the writer owes it to herself to re-transcribe. We often have willingly assimilated this rupture of the temporal order with the biased elitist position of literature that takes its time to detail the various states of the idle bourgeois soul. But this would be to forget that this rupture of the temporal scale was first of all a dismissal of the opposition of two human categories. The time of the atoms that fall one after the other is the common time of humans said to be active and humans said to be passive. It is the time that Virginia Woolf's heroine, Mrs Dalloway, shares with all those anonymous lives that cross her path. It is the time of all those lives who strive to shatter the order that keeps them enclosed on the wrong side of the barrier of time. Behind the day of Mrs Dalloway, pre-occupied to preparing for even party, one can feel the presence of another day described by Flaubert: the day of the peasant girl, Emma Bovary, watching behind her windows the always identical flow of the time of hours and who attempted to invent a history that would shatter the repetition of this order; and behind this day, is the day of the carpenter, Gauny, transforming his hours of servitude into hours of freedom. Modern Literary

Fiction puts into its heart this time where the struggle of fortune and misfortune can happen at any hour of the day. But this also means that it creates its own time, the new texture of the narrative, prepared to abandon its characters to the misfortune of those who vainly wanted to have the time that they did not have.

I think today it could be useful to re-think this game of three between the narratives of global processes, the temporality of moments of emancipation and the time of literary fiction in order to exit the grand narrative of necessity in these two versions of the management of the lone possible or of the final catastrophe. I particularly find useful in re-thinking today the possible connections between the lived time of individuals and moments of collective affirmation. On the one hand, it seems necessary to call into question the analyses that are in vogue regarding the conformity of the "flexible" individuality or "neo-liberal subjectivity" with the law of a global process from now on exerting its mastery throughout one's whole lifetime. It also seems impossible for me to subscribe to Hardt and Negri's analysis who, from this supposed identity between work time and living time, want to draw the inverse conclusion: that of a future communist time that is already present within the present forms of capitalist production. Contemporary forms of work impose rather experiences of a time full of holes, one that is discontinuous and full of recesses: incessant passages from employment to unemployment, the development of part-time work positions, and all forms of intermittency; the multiplication of those who belong both to the time of salaried work, and to the time of education, to artistic time and the time of small day jobs; there is also the multiplication of those who trained for one specific job and who are employed in a completely different one, who work in one world and live in another. This fragmented time perhaps puts back on the current

agenda the problematic of emancipation: that of the work of moments of time, concerning the intimate war between the hierarchical division of temporalities: active and passive divisions within the time of work, concerning times of the pause and leisure within non-work. This war for the re-appropriation of holey-time [le temps troué] can perhaps be the principle of a new link between individual and collective ruptures. This is exactly what was proven several years ago in France with the strike of those that were named “Intermittents of the Spectacle.” In the beginning, this strike was concerned with the threats regarding unemployed workers’ compensation for artists whose time is split between visible hours of work and the time necessary for preparation. But the course of the strike revealed two opposing tendencies: a part of the actors in the movement wanted to maintain the specificity of their categorical demands while another group wanted to on the contrary generalize their demands. During this intermittent time of “artists,” they wanted to put the spotlight on the general form in which the precarious time of work now tended, but also shed light on a new form of struggle against this condition of precariousness: the formation of a common time constructed within a new war on the sharing or division [partage] of times.

It can be interesting to analyze the recent forms of collective movements from this point of view. From the Arab spring, to the Spanish “Indignados” movement, to the occupy movements, Madrid to New York or Athens to Istanbul. Their importance has often been denounced in the name of a simple division of times: those who pit against the spontaneous reactions and their ephemeral existence the time of long-term strategies which link moments together according to the connection of means and ends. But this simple opposition leaves out the much more complex game of the division or shaping

of times. It is precisely this game that summarizes the word occupation. This word in effect refers back to an affair of justice incarnated within the distribution of spaces and times. The justice of the Platonic Republic consisted of a distribution of occupations, directing each one to remain within the necessary time and space that suited their specific activity. It is against this that the factory workers of the 20th century occupied their factories in order to transform the place of exploited labor into a space that serviced the common, collective power of the workers. In a certain way, the park or the street takes the place of the factory for a population of workers today that are dispersed by the time and space of their jobs and obliged to create within the circulation of urban spaces, the place for a common time. But it is also the place where, within the same affirmation of a gap [écart], that various fragmented experiences of time can be assembled – multiple experiences of dispossession and recovery of time that is characteristic of the present time of precarious work, a present that is common to the small vendor on a Tunisian street whose suicide incited the Jasmine Revolution, and common to the graduated students without jobs in the occupied parks of New York and Madrid. Occupying as an anonymous people the indeterminate site of circulation while the workers of yesteryear occupied the work site that had already gathered them together, this perhaps is also a way to place back within the center of the conflict, the notion of the distribution of spaces. It is not immaterial that one of the most significant places of the occupations, that of Taksim Square in Istanbul, started out in part as a conflict concerning the future use of a site, it was a question concerning the transformation of a site of leisure open to everyone for indeterminate use into a complex of power and a commercial space. But it is also significant that the occupation of places was also the time of an encounter between multiple temporal experiences which were also

translated into multiple forms of action on time. It's as if the new forms of collective action, instead of strategic traditional temporalities, were implementing those forms of the coexistence of temporalities that the literary revolution has pitted against the worn out tyranny of plot. The temporality of the occupation is the conjunction of several forms of the recovery of time. There are the interruptions of the normal course of the hours of the day and the actions that the *standing man* symbolized in his performance at Taksim Square, standing, silent, for eight hours facing the Atatürk cultural center, a time of interruption that is also one of these new forms of encounter between the time of artistic performance and that of political action. There are organization forms for the collective time of autonomous discussion and decision in relation to the institutional forms of public life. There are forms of the organization of collective daily life. And there is the effort to install in the long term these moments of reconstruction of a common time in the form of institutions affirming the capacity of everyone in all those spheres where within the dominant system, the management of time is identified as a production of gaps [écarts], which is to say, a production of incapacities, from the system of production of goods all the way to the transmission of knowledge or the circulation of information. We know how the recent movements have brought back to our attention these alternative forms of the organization of the time of life that played such a big role in past workers' movements as the future anticipated in the present.

Of course, they also brought back into question the contradiction of these forms of anticipation. But my problem today was not to designate the right or wrong models of the future. It was simply to invite us to re-examine the dominant models that are used today in order for us to think the relations between the historical

flow of global time, the forms of domination, and the time of our lives. I proposed to operate a double displacement in relation to these dominant models. Against the analyses that claim to help us exit the time of grand narratives and which are dedicated to a lone present, I attempted to demonstrate how the narrative of historical necessity continues to structure the dominant time at the price of transforming the promises of liberation into disillusioned findings of subjection or into prophecies of a final catastrophe. I reiterated how this narrative of necessity itself was rooted within a hierarchical division of time that it relentlessly reproduced. I tried to show how another thought of time and its possibilities could be drawn from forms of class struggle as well as forms of narratives that have called this hierarchical division of time into question and continue to do so today.

Translated by Drew S. Burk