

Daylight Saving: A Rhythm Celebration of Bodily Time and Space

The shape of *time* is uncapturable directly through human eyes, hence invisible.

However, people have created various measurements in history, trying to identify the trace of time given its perceptibility. The alternation of day and night inspired human ancestors to invent the timer. With such a visible and convenient measurement, time, once regarded as abstract, has gradually become a normalized commonsense, sweeping over the dial fashion. Daylight Saving Time (DST), as a practice of human adjustment following the periodic change of daylight, exhibits the flexibility of the negotiation between human activities and natural dynamics. This essay takes Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* as the primary coordinate to explore the phenomenological meaning behind DST as a human attempt rather than to explain the history, necessity, and effectiveness of DST as an action. This exploratory analysis concentrates on the active human behaviors on dealing with the relations between objectivity and subjectivity, as well as internality and externality in terms of the dimensions of time and space.

Sensing Is Believing

Sensing internalizes the external. When time becomes sensible to us, we see dawn and dusk, blooming and withering, and birth and death. Our sensory functions enable the conversation with the outside world, in which "sensing is this living communication with the world that makes it present to us as the familiar place of our life" (Merleau-Ponty 53). It seems *strange* for people when they first enter into a new place. It is their body, however, that bridges the internal and external worlds. Through this process, our body not only helps us obtain the realization of the environment where we live but also configures a connection with such surroundings that accept us. It is the ability of "sensing" that makes this relationship possible. Meanwhile, this human, organ-driven spontaneous and vital communication between our body

and the inhabited environment generates a sense of familiarity that reaches the agreement of human presence between one's body and one's living place. Because of this sensitivity, we get access to information about the world we have entered. Progressively, after adapting to the new environment, we start to feel less strange and even more comfortable with this inhabitation.

The creation of DST is a byproduct in the process of this familiarization. When daylight time turns shorter or longer than the night, people who are living under this circumstance receive these messages from visible phenomena and their sensible sources. People who get used to waking up at 6 a.m., realize the sky outside the window is still dark, while what they usually see is the sun rising. Such dissonance of the timeframe brings back the sense of strangeness even though they are physically in the same place. Their body, again, using its sensibility to collect and update the new information to internalize the emergent changes in the world. Later, people learn to push forward or off their wake-up time to adjust the new schedule of daylight and night. Year after year, this shift of the day and night teaches people to schedule their errands according to their senses of the external world. This "living communication" allows people to own their life by dominating the sensory territory from the internalized outside world until the threat of strangeness becomes unnoticeable. However, at this stage, the idea of DST is rather emergent than apparent. The non-active sensory mechanism administrates most internalization at this stage. The game-changing moment kicks off when people respond to the periodic change of daylight and night actively.

Sensing subjectifies the objective. When people objectify the time, they tend to honor it as uncontrollable and untouchable, at least beyond their reach. In Merleau-Ponty's perception, "the inner horizon of an object cannot become an object without the surrounding objects becoming a horizon, and so vision is a two-sided act" (70). The introduction of the horizon provides the

possibility of decoding the nuance between the perceiving and the perceived. In other words, the discovery of the body is similar to the discovery of time. The awareness of the body is the result of the echo from the outside world. The “surrounding objects” serve as a dimensional horizon, which not only proves the existence of the human body but also activates their “inner horizon” to perceive the world and to locate more horizons. This double-sided act achieves the birth of vision, and this vision serves as the foundation of the reflectional significance and dialectical relationship between the body and embodiment. Such a vision unfreezes the fluidity between subjectivity and objectivity. Thus, people start to modify *time* to accommodate their body.

Since the genesis of the objective body is but a moment in the constitution of the objects, the body, by withdrawing from the objective world, will carry with it the intentional threads that unite it to its surroundings and that, in the end, will reveal to us the perceiving subjects as well as the perceived world (74).

Again, the unity of the world and body mirrors the revelation of the interdependence beneath the juxtaposition of subjectivity and objectivity. There is neither absolute subjectivity nor objectivity. The genesis of DST demonstrates how people subjectify the objective with the advantage of sensing to ease their daily life, the rhythm of their bodies, and vice versa.

Homo Sapiens Are Homo Tempus

Our bodies reflect the rhythm of time, and we utilize time to maintain the elegance of our bodies. Merleau-Ponty suggests using systematic thinking, or Gestalt perspective, to consider the relationship between one’s body and the world. “One’s own body is in the world just as the heart is in the organism: it continuously breathes life into the visible spectacle, animates it and nourishes it from within, and forms a system with it” (209). Our body and the world, or the perceived world, are inseparable. When we sense the being of time, our bodies become the vessel

of time. In this case, time does not exist but only lives. There is no pure substance called time. Instead, time and body are in the status of coexistence.

Human beings are also time beings or *Homo Tempus*. We are not merely followers of time. Instead, we are masters of time. People actively take actions to resonate with the changing rhythm of time to pursue the harmony of their life. The purpose of DST is to help people realize the changing patterns of time and make better use of daylight. The process of people adjusting themselves to the new time, especially at the beginning and the end of the DST, illustrates the meaning of time in our bodies. We are time, and thus time is inescapable but adaptable. A healthy body needs a strong heart. A well-organized world also needs a good sense of time.

Time and Space Are Siamese Twins

Our senses create fields, and these fields envelop both time and space. “Vision is a thought subjugated to a certain field, and this is what is called a sense” (225). With time comes space. When you inhabit time, you also inhabit space. However, many people are familiar with the combination of sensible time and visible space but more often overlook invisible but sensible space. This phenomenon usually happens because of their careless observation of their own bodies. “The body as an agent plays an essential role in establishing a level” (260). This level in terms of the perceived space in Merleau-Ponty’s perception is called “the spatial level, a certain possession of the world by my body, a certain hold my body has on the world” (261).

Where there is a place, there is always a time stamp attached. The moment when you are *out of mind*, you are situated in a virtual space. When you anchor yourself in a virtual space, you are also experiencing time concurrently, and vice versa.

What counts for the orientation of the spectacle is not my body, such as it in fact exists, as a thing in objective space, but rather my body as a system of possible

actions, a virtual body whose phenomenal “place” is defined by its task and by its situation (260).

DST is not only a matter of time but also of space. As Edward S. Casey summarizes Merleau-Ponty’s perception about space, “space is experienced in the first person and in one’s own body” (205). In this manner, the body is not “in” space but inhabits it. On the one hand, when people have trouble adapting to DST at the beginning stage, they are bewildered about the changed time and stuck at the virtual space led by this confusion. They are undergoing an uncomfortable transition from the previous time track to the new one. By absorbing the strangeness both in time and space, they are familiarizing the field. On the other hand, when they talk with people who are not in the same DST zone, for example, from the other side of the earth, they need to position themselves to a different time and space field to stay on the same page with the others. This switch shows their proficiency in the field traveling. These active and voluntary attempts following DST display the ability of our body to possess the world. This world highlights the field that combines time and space as two indispensable coordinates where dwells the curve of rhythm from our body and the world.

As evidence of the *living communication* of the body and the world through the channel of sensing, DST represents the victory of human negotiation between the bodily time and space in pursuit of the internal and external balance as well as indicates the power of our bodies.

Works Cited

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