

LEISURE, TEMPORALITY AND EXISTENCE a reading in the light of Heideggerian phenomenology and hermeneutics*

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Abstract: The present reflection seeks to articulate the central determining factors in current societies and contemporary cultures using the concept of leisure time, investigating its potential and its constraints. The application of Heideggerian phenomenology, including the concepts of *dasein* and work-of-art, permits the unavoidable necessity of an idle relationship with truth, as something which is both concealed and revealed, both through language and through (im)proper ways of relating between *dasein* and temporality..

Keywords: Idleness; Temporality; Work of Art; Existence; Culture.

Introduction

We are subject to the confiscation of time in everydayness, which seems to deny us the possibility of linking the term 'leisure' with 'daily life'. If we add the term 'economic crisis' to these words, we appear to enter the realm of the surreal.

In effect, modes of employing, using, selling and renting the time of each individual in contemporary societies seem relevant before the dominance of 'unemployment' and the consequent exasperation, in terms of days that are empty and pass by slowly. Or, on the contrary, the vortex and acceleration of time, launching those who are still 'employees' into a maelstrom of tasks and obligations which are infinite, that exceed time itself and thus drain a life which is full of small nothings, leaving the individual deserted or in despair and yet with the feeling that these small nothings are never fully done and finished.

In an ultimate paradox, the current globalised capitalist societies are the evidence of an extreme use of time, whether through exhausting time to the extent of inducing neurosis and hysteria, or whether endlessly devaluing time, rendering it useless (unemployed) with the subject himself becoming a burden, a social difficulty, the origin of which is primarily attributed to a guilt-inducing personal and individual failure.

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However, according to Agostinho de Silva (Mattos, 2004), existence is free and no-one can be considered to be unemployed from existence. It is precisely as a departure from this perspective that we develop our thinking about leisure, time, temporality and existence, starting with the heideggerian premise that the human being is nothing more than time, or before, temporality, and that only from this horizon can he understand himself or the others. In this context, the leisure time will be considered as the possibility of a human being- Heidegger's *da-sein* - remains in the listening of the being and of the truth and therefore the closest possible to itself. Thus, in keeping with Heidegger, we consider the work of art in its temporality as the quintessential mode of existence with which he may scrutinise the mystery of Human, the Earth and the World. Because it is an autotelic activity, this is a truly idle way of producing the World.

1. Leisure and (free) Time

Current industrial societies - in which citizens sell not only their labour power, but with that their own time - devote themselves to precisely measuring and quantifying time. Time becomes objective, something that can be traded, entering the market as a commodity which appears to be infinitely renewable and inexhaustible. The time which is empty and does not have market value is represented by the unemployed. They serve as a rebuttal to this gross falsification of the experience of temporality which each one of us lives.

Therefore, if the market can even reject the time belonging to some of us, it is because time only becomes valuable in certain circumstances and is absolutely interchangeable: if someone makes his own time unavailable to the market there is always a multitude of other subjects willing to make transactions for their time and their labour power.

Time, and more specifically the temporality that each of one of us lives, then loses its subjective dimension and its intimate experience dimension, as time becomes to be viewed only from an objective and exterior perspective – as merchandise.

We can also understand why, in these circumstances, there is no place for time itself to be perceived as leisure time, but only as free time, time which is free from work. Time is understood and valued only as long as free time exists, and by the ways in which it can be intensified. However, we must note that the 'free time' of the unemployed is immediately devalued, either socially or by itself, as it is not directly related with that which qualifies time as free: time at work or employment.

Thus, it is clear how the human being can be dispossessed of one of its fundamental dimensions: temporality. Indeed, on the rare occasions in life when individuals are confronted with the shortage of their own temporality, when they momentarily recognise that they have limited temporality, it is the entire method of organising their own time that appears problematic and nonsensical to themselves. It is precisely this fleeting experience - the confrontation with the temporality of the subject itself - that the mode of economic and cultural organization of our societies immediately hide, by offering a society in which everything becomes a spectacle, whereby everything becomes a commodity which is at hand - even death itself (cf. (Ariès, 1988) and (Llosa, 2012) amongst others).

It's no wonder, then, that the possibility of organising the temporal dimensions of the subjects in greater depth and authenticity does not comply with our current westernised society.

What we propose in the context of this reflection is to think — in the context of an existential analysis of Heidegger's *dasein* — under what conditions could we allow an idle human temporality to emerge and how this promote existence to another level of knowledge, development and proximity to the human being itself, in listening to what is more intimate and authentic in himself.

2. Leisure and Contemporary Cultures

2.1 The psycho-social and cultural dimensions

Nowadays, mediated societies impose a logic that promotes uncritical and passive consumption above all. The logic of mass production of symbolic goods is no longer necessarily related to individual cultural creation and has been turned into market logic and the need to constantly anew.

The possibility of deepening some individual creative or re-creative sphere does not form part of the system's logic, except for those who are part of a favoured socio-economic and academic framework (Llosa, 2012).

The depth of the screen is its surface (Martins, 2011). The system moves from star to star in a 'star system' (Barthes, 1957), which not only constantly creates new products and formats just as it requires a cultural, hyper-consumerist epidermic appropriation, but also founds a new kind of existential despair, rooted in hedonism (Lipovetsky, 1989).

The situation is nothing new and was already perfectly described in the context of critical reflections of the Frankfurt School on the subject of cultural industries, the emergence of which took place in the twentieth century. In texts such as *A Dialética do Iluminismo*, (Adorno e Horkheimer, 1972), Adorno and Horkheimer drew attention to the difficulty in even maintaining the possibility of a critical culture in the (then) new broadcast medium that was film, after the television, and finally in technology, in a digital world.

Indeed, the Marxist theory of alienation (which was already Hegelian (cf. (Hegel, s / d)) informed us about the consequences of a world in which everything would become a commodity, and also signalled the impossibility of a non-alienated time in an alienated society.

Different modalities of postmodern culture have done nothing more than confirm what from Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1996) to Heidegger (Heidegger, 1991) has been identified as the advent of an inauthentic and in-human time, founded in and the founder of a deep existential despair of the human being facing a vortex and speed, which is closer to the nothingness. And not even the appeal to 'deceleration' (Heller, 2009), can reverse this discomfort, this sense of constant crisis that the media celebrate from morning to night.

Indeed, in this context it is not to convert 'free time' into 'leisure time', but to seriously consider the possibilities opened by the theme of reinvesting of the leisure time in the lives of individuals, that could allow a radical change in their relationship with time, their existence and with their own world.

2.2 The ontological-existential dimension

In our opinion, it is from the ontological-existential dimension, in line with heideggerian philosophy, that the theme of leisure time can have a profoundly revolutionary effect on subjects' lives.

Time as a category in Western culture has been a central point of articulation regarding the way in which the human being is understood in the world (Lourenço, 2004). In classical culture, time is considered as an element where the *physis* is inscribed, with the necessary cyclic movements of generation and corruption. Since Christianity, time has become to be seen in a double dimension: the time of the falling and corruption of mortals, as opposed to time of eternity that is established by the possibility of Man's salvation. With the emergence of modern science, another conception of time emerges: time is what can be measured and fragmented to its point of exhaustion, a kind of vertigo of domination and control, that which the measuring instrument itself

apparently endows human beings. But it was to be the nineteenth century, and more consciously the twentieth century, which inaugurated man's exasperated relationship with time.

Devoid of the sacred and salvific character of eternal time, our increasingly secular and profane societies are confronted with their own finite temporality. In the wake of Kierkegaard (who still encounters a religious way out of human despair), Sartrean existentialism makes us aware of the many modalities of the nothingness, where the finite temporality of being human is, inexorably, installed.

Finally, with Heidegger, any possibility of misunderstanding is dissipated: the human being is not only steeped in a finite temporality, but he is nothing more than temporality, the only essential determination on which the possibility of understanding or accessing the truth of the world and of earth can be founded.

Therefore, understanding the world obliges the assumption of a time, of a history (individual and collective), which creates us from the foam of the days, that consume us and in which we consume our lives. More than a subjective dip in an authentically human and creative leisure time, we envisage the assumption of life seen as just a sequences of temporalities that, to keep us close to the possibility of accessing our own human truth, must necessarily be of leisure, a time of creation and re-creation of a world of meaning in permanent opposition to the a land that shelters us.

In the context of this study, we follow the inspiring existential analysis which Heidegger established, in aiming to highlight the notion of 'care' as an essential form of dasein knowledge, in order to catch the presence of an idle temporality there. At this point, we refer to Steiner's interpretation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*:

Knowledge is a way of being. It is not a kind of mysterious jump from the subject to the object or from the object to the subject (...). On the contrary, it is a way of being-with; it is a care (...) for the world and in the world. Where there is no intention of production, manipulation or commercial use, such care means «loiter-near-by» (...). Disinterest is, though, the superior modality of care

(Steiner, 1981:114)

Thus, to know is to abandon the mere 'theoretical' attitude and 'instrumental' view of the world, but also our perspective of others, as to «understand the presence of the others is to exist. The heideggerian being-in-the-world, is being-with» (Steiner, 1981:121). In refusing to bow to social pressure (the 'if', the 'them'), in order to recover the sense of historical community, Heidegger considers that it is the world's care

(*sorge*) the earth's care, the others' and the works of art's care, that give meaning to the existence of a being that is since the beginning, projected into the world.

However such 'care' or 'pre-occupation' structures itself in an existential understanding of time, as is proposed in *Being and Time*. The temporal modalities are, in their authentic modes, the future, in terms of an attitude of openness to their own potential of being (and not worrying 'worrying about ...'), a past as an 'has been', reiterated or remembered, and a present, as a project (Heidegger, 1991:37). It should be noted; again, that only this particular way of conceiving time establishes a framework in which *dasein* can be understood in its authentic mode.

One can easily observe that these ways of regarding time coincide with the broad outlines of human development proposed by humanist leisure, according to the research developed in recent decades by the Laboratório do Ócio (Cabeza, 2011).

Similarly, the mode of living in an improper time — we could say, the one that specifically excludes any possibility of living leisure time as a humane and creative time — is the basis of which Heidegger means by the 'falling' (Heidegger, 1991:195), which may arise in the present through the following modalities (Heidegger, 1991:196):

a) jabber, which reveals *dasein* as 'relative to its world, the others and to itself', but in a form which fluctuates without a foundation;

b) gossip, which opens all and every thing, in a way which the being is everywhere and nowhere;

c) ambiguity, that does not hide anything to the understanding of *dasein*, but only merges talk (being-in-the-world) and gossip (uprooting the 'everywhere and nowhere')

Even if Heidegger does not have a metaphysical conception of 'fall' (this is even before sin), he considers it an improper mode of being of the *dasein*, which justly constitutes the way of 'being- in-the-world', fully possessed by the world. And, with such a relation to temporality, the possibility of a creative leisure is diluted or becomes impossible, once *dasein* is lost in things. Only the recovery of its own language and of that which it conceals as not yet been thought, the still-to-come, may allow the recovery of that time, which, idly lets the truth come to him.

3. Leisure, art and truth – from representation to listening

In 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (Heidegger, 1992), Heidegger proffers a seemingly simple definition of a work of art: «The artwork as work installs a world. The work keeps open the open of the world» (Heidegger, 1992:35). And it is precisely because the work of art offers to the *dasein* multiple possible meanings, under the conditions of availability and proximity, that it is not possible to achieve such richness through 'idle talk', 'gossip' or 'ambiguity'. Furthermore, artwork is *produced* from the earth, although it is not, as one might imagine, a concept of instrumental production which is transformation and spent on what it acts. On the contrary, the work of art is «(...) inexhaustible richness of simple modes and shapes» (Heidegger, 1992:37), according to Heidegger's description:

To be sure, the sculptor uses stone just as, in his own way, the mason uses it. But he does not use it up. That can be, in a certain sense, said of the work only when it fails. To be sure, the painter, too, makes use of pigment; he uses it, however, in such a way that the colours are not used up but begin, rather, for the first time, to shine. To be sure, the poet, too, uses words, not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who must use them up, but rather in such a way that only now does the word become and remain truly a word

(*ibidem*)

Undoubtedly a beautiful description of what scholars refer to as Leisure (Csikszentmihalyi, 2001), when considering what they call 'creative leisure'. In Heidegger's terms, that implies that the work fights between concealment and exposition of meaning and truth, a battle of intimate opposites, which occurs in the stillness of the work and which shall never be resolved (Heidegger 1992:50-51).

Similarly, to 'recreate', to care for, to preserve, to protect and to enjoy the work requires an idle, autotelic and unanticipated relationship with temporality and existence where it is projected, which is precisely described by Heidegger as follows:

The more solitary the work, fixed in the figure, stands within itself, the more purely it seems to sever all ties to human beings, then the more simply does the thrust that such a work is step into the open, and the more essentially the extraordinary is thrust to the surface and the long-familiar thrust down. Yet there is nothing violent about this multidirectional thrust, for the more purely is the work itself transported into the openness of beings it itself opens up, then the more simply does it carry us into this openness and, at the same time, out of the realm of the usual. (...). This allowing the work to be a work is what we call its preservation. Just as a work

cannot be without being created, just as it stands in essential need of creators, so what is created cannot come into being without preservers

(Heidegger, 1992:53)

Indeed, art has what Heidegger describes as a «poeticizing projection of truth» (Heidegger, 1992:60), it requires an idle stance for it to be recognized, accepted and maintained in a disinterested relationship, which excludes 'idle talk', the 'gossip' and 'ambiguity', introducing a 'leap' to its origins, as:

It is not only the creation of the work that is poetic; equally poetic, though in its own way, is the preservation of the work. For a work only actually is as a work when we transport ourselves out of the habitual and into what is opened up by the work so as to bring our essence itself to take a stand within the truth of beings

(op.cit. p.60)

What better description for the leisure/idle acts of creation, of re-creation and of the fruition of a work of art?

4. A 'poetic project/projection of leisure?'

Far from considering a *tout court* right, for us the idle way of living challenges our existence, and requires preparation, effort and dedication. It is rather more of a challenge to change our relationship with the time that we are given to live, our temporality. And so the right to idleness must become, in our opinion, our duty to promote being idle, in addition to the correlating right that everybody should have educational and cultural conditions that bring us closer to the humanity of the human being, which only is possible under the condition of time lived in leisure.

The question about the conditions of possibility for a «poeticizing projection of truth» in our societies remains. But that is a story for another paper.

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