

**IGOR
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THE TIME THAT REMAINS

...to the extent that it entertains a nontrivial relation to truth (...) gossip is certainly a form of art...(1)

A week is a book with seven chapters.

Each chapter a day; each day, a depository containing remains of all the Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

Sunday, the seventh day, is kept on purpose - empty.

I began depositing fragments of my days a bit less than a year ago. What is collected until now, not unlike a diary, reflects my immediate experiences, from one day to the next. And yet, what is collected is, again and again, referring somewhat obscurely, back to the content of the book that gave the name to the endeavor.

This book, its form - six chapters marked as days - provided a blueprint for my work. And its content - *A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* - supplied me with a key for reconsidering and rearranging my own daily experiences. Finally, both form and content of it kept reminding me that the only living time available to me is the one that remains sedimented inside the gaps between past, present, and future.

So, this is an unfinished personal diary, but it is also a chronicle of a (re)search about one particular book. At every moment, I am at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of it - simultaneously. Time keeps (un)folding, days made of weeks made of months made of years are sedimenting themselves into the depository, as we speak.

This is an invitation to peak into this process. It is good to remember that what is attempted will certainly not be fulfilled. It can never be fulfilled unless the time stops. And yet (to not forget the immanence of death), it is always almost already done in its chaotic incompleteness.

We begin

The next place might be so near at hand
That one could hear the cocks crowing in it, the dogs barking;
But the people would grow old and die
Without ever having been there.(2)

there

Or we begin

take a breath and as you exhale, let's read together:

than

We wish to pay heed to the sources of the unnameable despair that flows in every soul. The souls listen expectantly to the melody of their youth - a youth that is guaranteed them a thousandfold. But the more they immerse themselves in the uncertain decades and broach that part of their youth which is most laden with future, the more orphaned they are in the emptiness of the present. One day they wake to despair: the **first day** of the diary. With hopeless seriousness it poses the question: In what time does man live? That he lives in no time is something thinkers have always known. The immortality of thoughts and deeds banishes him to a realm of timelessness at whose heart an inscrutable death lies in wait. Throughout his life the emptiness of time surrounds him, but not immortality. Devoured by the manifold things, time slipped away from him; that medium in which the pure melody of his youth would swell was destroyed. The fulfilled tranquility in which his late maturity would ripen was stolen from him. It was purloined by everyday reality, which in a thousand ways, with event, accident, and obligation, disrupted youthful time, immortal time, at which he did not guess. Lurking even more menacingly behind the everyday was death. Now it manifests itself in little things, and kills daily so as to let live a while longer. Until one day the great death falls from the clouds, like a hand that no longer lets live. From day to day, second to second, the "I" preserves itself clinging to the instrument -time- it was supposed to play. He who thus despairs recalls his childhood, when there was still time without flight and an "I" without death. He gazes down and down into the current whence he had emerged and slowly, finally, redemptively loses his understanding. In the midst of such oblivion in which he no longer knows what he intends, although his intention is redeemed - the diary begins: this unfathomable book of a life never lived, book of a life in whose time everything we experienced inadequately is transformed and perfected.(3)

So, we begin

here, at the beginning : 



we begin with a gossip about the beginning of the end

Σ a u l o s

The story goes that the one who bore this name surpassed all, not only in beauty but also in stature among the Israelites. He was sent from Jerusalem by a high priest to prosecute Christians in Damascus.



On the road to Damascus, he experienced conversion. Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"





The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Paul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. He left Jerusalem as Saul; he arrived in Damascus as Paul. For three days he was blind, and when his sight came back, he saw everything - differently.

π a u l o s

calling

Paulus in Latin means “small, of little significance,”
The substitution of sigma by pi therefore signifies no less than the passage from the regal to the insignificant, from grandeur to smallness: Saulos that is Paulos carries within itself a prophecy that those things that are weak and insignificant will, in the days of the Messiah, prevail over those things the world considers to be strong and important (4).

we will be treating this first verse of Paul’s Letter to the Romans as though
 π aulos doulos christou iesou, kletos apostolos
paul a slave of the messiah, called back and sent

at this point we should remember that, from the syntactic point of view, the verse presents itself like a single noun

servitude

envy

separation

... through its first ten words recapitulate the meaning of the remaining text(5):
... τοσ ἀφορισμένους εἰς εὐγγαλίον θεοῦ
... sent forth, separated to be united with a message

... original syntagma that is absolutely paratactic, uttered in one single breath, moving according to the crescendo(6):

For Paul, the contraction of time, the “remaining” time represents the messianic situation par excellence, the only real time. We are confronted here with a (...) structure of messianic time and the particular conjunction of memory and hope, past and present, plenitude and lack, origin and end that it implies (...). The restoration of Paul to his messianic context therefore suggest above all, that we attempt to understand the meaning and internal form of the time he defines as *ho nyn kairos*(5):

the time of the **n o w**

v o i



Today I learned that my mother is in the hospital. I got a n



Monday 25th of May

message with a photo of Pepi, my mother's dog spending the whole night lying on the sofa next to her bag, waiting.

Later on, as I was leaving the apartment, I discovered that a book I ordered some weeks ago - finally arrived in my postbox. So, I walked to the graveyard, found the bench in the sun, and as I was taking a seat, I opened the book (7). But then, instead of reading, I decided to make a movie of what was in front of my eyes.

GATE ONE

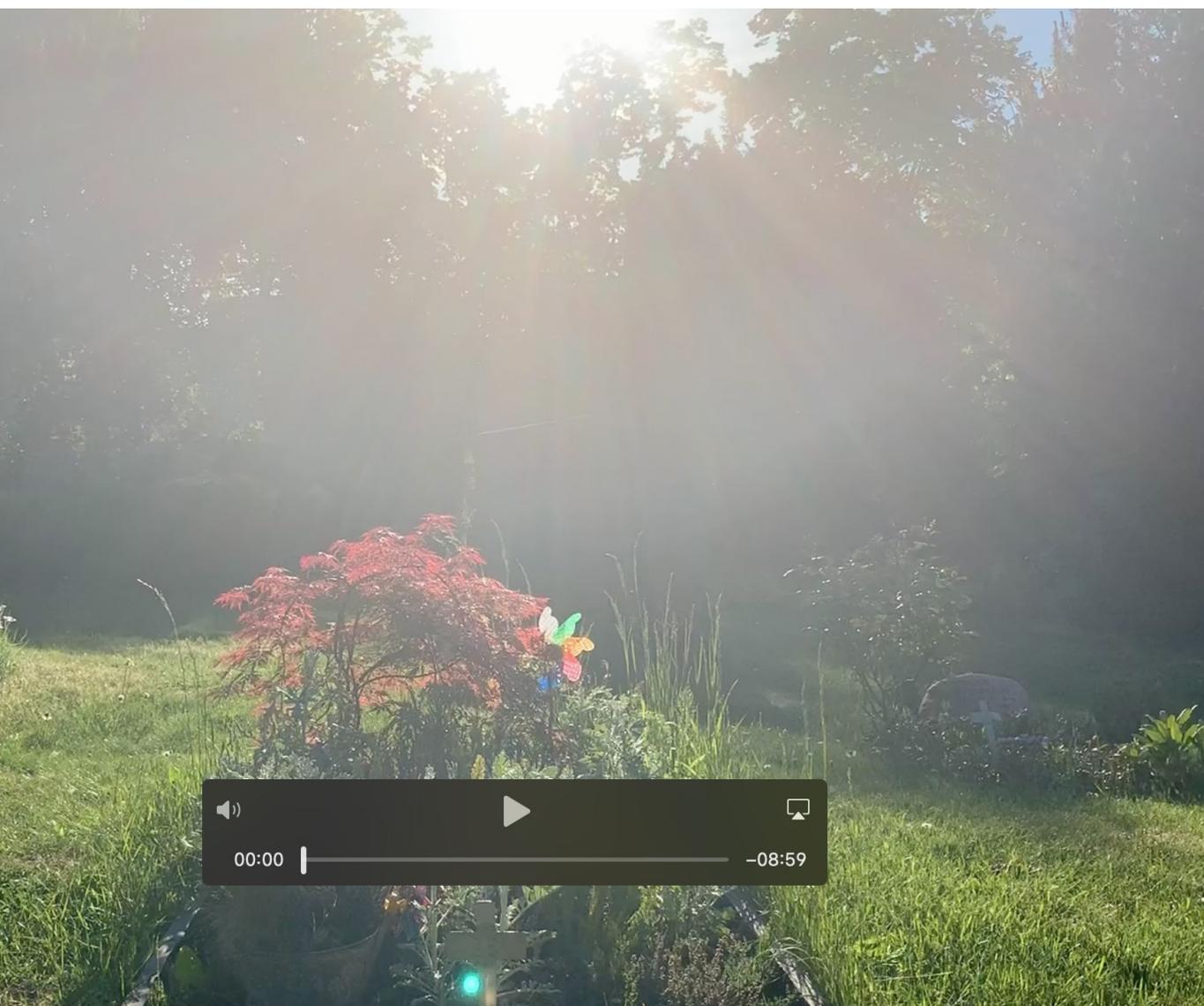
Recognition of the Continuum

ONE ELUSIVE CONTINUUM binds the mind's inner conditions with the outer manifestations it takes as real. This single ground of phenomena is called *adamah*—the unknowable basis of all that can be known and all that remains unknown. Recognition of the ground's essential nature is the doorway of gnostic realization.

The mind awakens to the ground by direct immersion. The ground already perfectly presents itself while including the mind within it, so on the absolute level nothing needs to be done. However, on the relative level perceptual habits will always resist surrender of their assumed autonomy, and will only go down fighting. In order to come to terms with the profound essentiality of their own wholeness, the tangled habits that concretize and fragment a subject from its objects must be undone. The process of unmaking these impulses takes tremendous effort and is not without pain, as it goes against every tendency the mind is used to.

Contemplative inquiry is initiated by meeting the display of mind's motion directly in the midst of perceiving. One can begin by thinking about thinking as it thinks, or observing observation as it observes. The assumed solidity of the perceptual reality then opens its reductive patterns, like a salt crystal dissolving into the ocean. As the reifying





While filming, I noticed a bright green dot dancing over the surface of a small cross at the foot of the grave. I gradually understood that the glass surface of the lens reflects the sun and then captures back its shimmering reflection. Behind a shimmer, I noticed a number pressed into the thin surface of the cross: 35. So I decided that I will keep recording the image for exactly $3+5 = 8$ minutes.





00:08:46

But then, I had a thought. I remembered that somewhere close to the beginning of the recording, I lost a grip over the camera and for a fraction of time - the image trembled. So now, if I want to be faithful to my intention to record 8 minutes of material, I would need to include this undesired disturbance at the beginning of it. I started negotiating with myself. Maybe, if I record more than 8 minutes but stop just before the 9th, this could still be considered accurate to my intention and at the same time, later on, allow me to cut the first imperfect minute out of it. After all, where precisely the 8th minute begins, and where it ends? At the moment of its emergence out of 7 or just a moment before it transitions into 9? Later on, as I watched my recording, I realized that undesired interruption/rupture took place later than I assumed and repeated itself more than once, so finally, I decided to leave the movie as it is.

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Tuesday 10th of June

I woke up with a feeling that I did not sleep. As if, during the night, my mind contracted away from itself - imperfectly, and it kept hanging there, suspended in between a surface and a depth. A scull-like membrane, a tight passage squeezed between two thin, rigid walls; unwilling vessel, neither full nor empty. I carried my partially contracted mind into the day, and the day filled it uncomfortably, imperfectly.





secret garden

As if they are made of silk. Artificial. The women at the flower stand noticed my gaze so she explain - that's their name. We take three of them home. Only later while we were arranging them into a vase on our kitchen table to make a photograph and share it with my mother in a hospital, I noticed that their petals in some disorderly manner resembles the image of the labyrinth.

My mother told me.

Many years ago, when she was just a little girl, she lived with her sister, her father, and her mother in the countryside. They lived there, a Serbian family in a tiny Croatian village known as May Fields. The year was 1948, the second world war was just over, and they were lucky enough to survive it. More than that, they were, for the moment, almost prosperous. They had a cow, four pigs, numerous chickens, and even a horse. But what my mother remembers most vividly from those short-lived, happy days of her childhood in the countryside is the image of her mother, all in white, with a wide-brimmed hat, the face behind a fine mesh net, hands in long stiff gloves, her whole body covered with bees. My grandmother loved bees, and as my mother used to say, bees loved her in return. But that was before my grandfather died of cancer, marrying my grandmother on his deathbed; and before my grandmother, being a single woman in a small village, sold the estate and moved with her two daughters to a big city; and before my mother met my father and fell in love; and before she decided not to have an abortion; and before I was born; and before my grandmother moved from a small house in the suburbia into an even smaller apartment; and before the new war started; and before she got a stroke and could not move anymore; and before I left her and moved to Amsterdam and then Berlin; and before she died; and before - today.

There was that love between my grandmother and the bees out of which the sweet honey poured, filling the sealed glass jars on top of the cupboard in the children's bedroom.

Wednesday 11th of June

I finally fell into the depth of sleep and had a dream. And although I could not recall much of it apart from a feeling that it was elaborate and relieving, it soothed my soul bruised by yesterday's contraction.

Only one detail from its fabric that sank swiftly unto the dark bottom of sleep got captured vividly into the loose net of my mind as I was waking up.

Some time ago, a plant died in our house, and although nothing is left of it but a dry twig sticking out of the earth, for weeks, I was refusing to stop watering it in the hope that it will come back to life.

In my dream, I was burying my fingers into the earth, digging under the dead, dry twig. It was not clear to me why am I doing this. Was I trying to pull rotten roots out and clean the earth for some new plant to be planted? (as Roger was urging me to do for days, laughing with scorn at my futile ritual of feeding the corpse). Or was I desperately searching for a sign of life deep down below the surface?

The only thing I remember is that as I was pulling the soil out, something fresh, soft, and alive started wriggling between my fingers. Bare, pale root, full of sap, was quivering under my fingertips. What was dead up here, on the surface of things, was alive in the moist darkness down below. I woke up with a smell of earth in my nostrils, deeply touched by a revelation of an unexpected hope.

This hope, fragrant with a scent of fresh earth after rain, is following me around the whole day, today.



He said: imagine if Berlin would have a sea.

We were walking down the street in our neighborhood, amused by an unexpected promise of summer that was making us feel as if we are on our way to the beach.

But the vessel is broken and what was kept together once upon a time is now separate. Berlin from the Sea

I will call you inspector gadget, he said later on.

I like gadgets, indeed. And I am investigating something as well. But let us be clear. I am not searching for fragments of a broken vessel to glue them together all over again. So maybe I am like an inspector, investigating the original catastrophe, the crime scene that made us live among the rubble of the past. Yet, this ultimate gadget, the vessel holding the substance of time together, is broken irreparably, and it is a waste of time to try and put it together.

You know the feeling? When the precious cup breaks in so many pieces that there is nothing you can do to repair it.

What I am trying to do is even more hopeless. I am attempting to collect the liquid which was once contained inside of the vessel. It spilled everywhere when what was holding it together violently came apart.

berlin



athens

So maybe one can not glue Berlin and Athens together, but that's not the point. The substance of time in both - once they were still together - is one and the same. One doesn't need a vessel, a gadget to hold it anymore.

You do it with two palms drawn together.

It is this thought that brought me back home. I suddenly knew what today is all about.

I entered the flat and rushed to the computer to start working on it, and as I was moving my finger over the trackpad, this image, out of nowhere, appeared on the screen. I stared at it until I remembered.

I took a photo, from the plane, last summer on the way back from the sea. The Alps below separating the north from the south. Berlin from Athens.

The Wall. Falling down?



Saturday 1



1th of July

Imagine that there is no future other than a precise expiration date for the present, after which the time will exist only in the past. Like in a dream, such imagination is not making much sense. Because if the world is going to expire at the predestined moment in the future, how can the past persist?

The time that is radically foreclosed allows us to understand that what is gifted by the announcement of the end is not a present moment as an infinitesimal instant squeezed between the eternity of before and after but rather the present as a fullness of time which, by the collapse of the future, is suddenly encompassing all of the past. Under the shadow of the end, history is finally getting actualized and redeemed - now.

Inside an interval between now of my realization and now of the end, everything that ever happened is finally brought into the presence, is made available, offered to be actualized, and reconciled. My body who's demise is suddenly made immanent and known, is for a short while, transformed into the vessel of time. The memory of the ages past is now made to be my own memory, and when I speak, I am giving a voice to it. I read myself as a book, and what is written in this book is not only what I remember of my own existence but also the full recollection of what has ever existed. And yet the instant I open my mouth to read from it, it is only that much that I'll be able to utter before the end arrives to end me away.

Although resolutely framed by the ticking clock that with every passing second is squeezing the time toward its own scheduled disappearance, what of it still remains is containing everything that ever has happened. The last instant is an everlasting eternity. Anything that I manage to remember and utter in a limited time left before the end - will be the full expression of that eternity.

The beginning is marked by the moment in which I concluded that the time will end. Everything that ever happened before the beginning, as marked by the moment of the conclusion about the end, is enclosed in a middle between the beginning and the end.

The book was opened, and it is going to be closed - now. Everything is already spoken while almost nothing is said.

References

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- (3) Walter Benjamin, *Early Writings*, Harward University Press 2011, page 150
- (4) Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, Stanford University Press 2005, page 9
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- (6) Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, Stanford University Press 2005, page 7
- (7) Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, Stanford University Press 2005, page 5, 6, 8
- (8) David Chaim Smith, *The Awakening Ground*, Inner Traditions, 2016, page 31