How to breathe

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Abstract

For Marx, all forms of economics could be reduced to "an economics of time". To restore a sustainable rhythm to our planet, our lifeways and economy, we need to decolonize time. The first part of this essay sketches a history of capitalism as robbery: ever tighter control of time yielding greater economic exploitation and inequality. The second part asks how we could reorganize and redistribute time. What can indigenous and egalitarian societies teach us today about the passage of time? What biological and cultural resources do we have for slowing down the rhythms of our economy and redistributing time? The evolution of women's reproductive cycles and the lunar calendars shared by world religions give evidence for a deep time human lunar ecology.

Keywords: time; capitalism; religion; menstruation; sex-strike; lunarchy

Capitalism as robbery

We can't breathe. We humans, the voice and breath of the planet as its most conscious living organism, we can't breathe. We need to breathe. In and out. Deeply. Take the long view for our planet and all earth's organisms. Panicking now would be a disaster. To return to a breathable rhythm, we need to decolonize time.

We are dazzled by constant brightness, rarely see the dark sky, screens flickering day through night as turbocapitalism never stops. When we evolved as hunter-gatherers, before patriarchy, our productive activities, joys, and sufferings were aligned with the risings and settings, day and night, of sun and moon, stars and seasons turning. For certain, no indigenous people before being colonized ever used manmade months. They used Earth-MoonSun systems, aligning all social life to the cosmos, the tides, nesting and migration of birds, changes of the moon, germination of seeds, and fruiting of trees.

The ultimate expression of white supremacy is control of time itself, through the Gregorian calendar which subdued cosmological and ecological time. Conquistadors and imperialist freebooters, venturing forth with express intent to rob, deracinated native modes of cyclical time, propagating in their place such peculiar concepts as time being "wasted" or "spent", that time was indeed "money".

Capitalism as a system emerging out of this background of forced labor robs us of our time. As Marx (1971: 76) said: "In the final analysis, all forms of economics can be reduced to an economics of time". How a society organizes – and distributes – time reveals what it truly values. The more that any person has their time taken away from them, eroded and devalued by poverty wages, the greater the degree of inequality.

In the first part of this essay, I will sketch a history of how tighter and tighter control of time, from hours to minutes to seconds, has led to ever greater economic exploitation. In the second part, I will ask how we could organize time in a way that

would turn back inequality. What can indigenous and egalitarian societies teach us today about the passage of time?

Imperialist time

The hourglass – adopted by Extinction Rebellion as their symbol – started it. Church canonical hours, dictating the fixed times for prayers and activities in Christian patriarchal orders, began to remove divisions of time from nature. In their "très riches heures", aristocratic ladies followed the monastic discipline of time and motion through their breviaries, while the peasants who labored for the feudal landowners snatched work breaks measured by a sandglass. As time grew linear, trickling forever between two bulbs of glass, *Tempus fugit* – the idea of a shortage of time – impressed itself onto European Christendom.

European voyages of "discovery" and exploration mapping out the colonial future depended on the hourglass. On Magellan's circumnavigation (1519–22), 18 hourglasses from Barcelona were used to keep the ship's log, keeping track of the hour in the home port against the local noon, the sun at zenith.

The Royal Observatory, built at Greenwich in 1675–6, established what would become the prime meridian, the imperial standard of measurement of time and space across the Earth. It housed the Astronomer Royal, whose express job description was to "apply himself ... to the rectifying of the tables of the motions of the heavens, and the places of the fixed stars, so as to find out the so much desired longitude of places for perfecting the art of navigation" (Baily, 1836: 293).

Solving the problem of longitude – location from East to West on the surface of the Earth – was vital to the voyages of imperialist exploration and conquest. Initially, a cosmological approach was taken, aiming to understand the errant motion of the moon and its eclipses, and tabulate this precisely. But by the 1750s, John Harrison's chronometer, the marine watch H4, now enshrined at Greenwich, proved practical and accurate (Sobel, 1995). On his first voyage, James Cook used the lunar distance method to calculate his E-W position, but took K1, a copy of H4, on his later voyages and produced his famous charts of the southern Pacific, planting the first Union flag on Botany Bay, 29 April 1770.

Capitalist time

In his brilliant essay "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism" (1967), E. P. Thompson traces how and when clocks, especially clocks with minute hands, began to impact working people's lives in England. This process was intimately associated with the onset of industrialization, and the accompanying enclosures forcing many off the land into the slums, factories, and workhouses. It also lies at the root of our entire education system, indoctrinating children into "time-thrift".

People working on the land could fairly well disregard clocks. Church bells chased them up in the morning, but so too did cockcrow. The natural limits of dawn to dusk gave customary expectation of what could be done in one day. Fishermen and sailors had to attend to the lunar rhythm of tides. But time was fundamentally "task-orientated" (Thompson, 1967: 60), work being organized by what needed to be done in accordance with seasonal and organic rhythms. Task orientation involves least demarcation between work and life; social life and labor run together; and there is little conflict between labor and "passing the time of day". This holds true above all for an independent peasant or craftsman. But as soon as someone's labor is employed by another, a sharp distinction emerges of the employer's time and a worker's own time. The value of time is monetized: "Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent" (Thompson, 1967: 61).

So long as manufacturing was done in small-scale workshops and cottage industries with family members engaged in a division of labor, the socially flexible and irregular labor patterns under task-orientation could prevail (Thompson, 1967: 71). Many such workers had a wide variety of occupations and tasks: Cornish miner-fishers; Pennine farmer-weavers; domestic workers who joined in the harvest. No single day's work might look exactly like another, and much was paid piece-work.

Thompson pays particular attention to a traditional irregularity of the working week. If artisanal workers were paid for goods delivered by Saturday, then drank away the Sabbath day's rest, they frequently treated Saint Monday as another day off (1967: 72). With a wage in their pocket, they were in no hurry to get back to work. This tradition of workmen's autonomy was a major stumbling block for large-scale machine industry as factory owners and foremen tried to make sure their workforce turned up on time.

At the turn of $18^{th}/19^{th}$ century, Saint Monday (sometimes followed by Saint Tuesday) was observed among all trades: "shoemakers, tailors, colliers, printing workers, potters, weavers, hosiery workers, cutlers, all Cockneys" (Thompson, 1967: 73). Thompson draws on diaries to show the frequently hectic pattern of the working week. Time off on Monday and Tuesday meant longer and longer hours towards the week's end to meet contracted orders. Thompson observes that this work pattern of alternate bouts of intense labor and then idleness occurred wherever men were in control of their own working lives. He suggests it may be a "natural" human work-rhythm.

But there were sexual conflicts entailed in the ways skilled laborers drank up their wages, voiced in the late 18^{th}-century Sheffield song, *The Jovial Cutlers*:

> Brother workmen, cease your labour,
> Lay your files and hammers by.
> Listen while a brother neighbor
> Sings a cutler's destiny:
> How upon a good Saint Monday,
> Sitting by the smithy fire,

Telling what's been done o't Sunday,
And in cheerful mirth conspire.
Soon I hear the trap-door rise up,
On the ladder stands my wife:
"Damn thee, Jack, I'll dust thy eyes up,
Thou leads a plaguy drunken life;
Here thou sits instead of working,
Wi' thy pitcher on thy knee;
Curse thee, thou'd be always lurking.
And I may slave myself for thee.
"Ah, the bright, fat, idle devil
Now I see thy goings on,
Here thou sits all day to revel
Ne'er a stroke o' work thou'st done.
See thee, look what stays I've gotten,
See thee, what a pair o' shoes;
Gown and petticoat half rotten,
Ne'er a whole stitch in my hose.
"Pray thee, look here, all the forenoon
Thou's wasted with thy idel way;
When does t'a mean to get thy sours done?
Thy mester wants 'em in today.
Thou knows I hate to broil and quarrel,
But I've neither soap nor tea;
Od burn thee, Jack, forsake thy barrel,
Or nevermore thou'st lie wi' me".

While a workman still could apportion his time, a wife – household labors unpaid – had one weapon only: sex-strike. Women's demands for cleanliness and respectable attire may have been one of the most important factors in promoting work hour discipline, and women's complaints about their husbands are often posed against rambunctious male idleness. Rural labor, under the pressure of enclosure (removing access to common land) and agricultural improvement, was increasingly forced to greater work-discipline, or the punitive threat of unemployment, and the poor law. As Thompson (1967: 79) recognizes, rural laborer's wives had the most arduous and prolonged working hours of all, including childcare, housework, domestic chores, and work in the fields.

In tracing the transition from the "highly developed and technically alert" manufacturing industries arising in the 18th century to mature industrial capitalism of the 19th century, Thompson takes an anthropological view that "The stress of the transition falls upon the whole culture: resistance to change and assent to change arise from the whole culture. And this culture includes the systems of power, property-relations, religious institutions" (1967: 80). Among the reasons why the transition was pecu-

liarly protracted and fraught with conflict in England was simply that England's was the first industrial revolution. There were no "Cadillacs, steel mills, or television sets" (Thompson, 1967: 80) already existing as spurs to some Great British dream for the impoverished slum and tenement dwellers of Manchester, Glasgow, or Merthyr.

Thompson inspects one of the oldest testaments to time-discipline, the Law Book of the Crowley Iron Works, dating to 1700. At the very birth of the large-scale unit in manufacturing industry, the owner of the ironworks "found it necessary to design an entire civil and penal code, running to more than 100,000 words, to govern and regulate his refractory labour-force" (1967: 81). This had all the features of disciplined industrial capitalism – the time-sheet, the time-keeper, the informers, and the fines.

A whole doctrine and propaganda of "time-thrift" emerged, inculcated by religious and educational institutions aimed at "the poor" whose "idle ragged children" were not only "losing their Time" but learning habits of gaming. Charity schools multiplied to teach Industry, Frugality, Order, and Regularity: "the Scholars here are obliged to rise betimes and to observe Hours with great Punctuality" (Clayton, 1755, cited in Thompson, 1967: 84). In other words, England's education system was founded to train children to use their time for the bosses' profit.

Thompson (1967: 85) notes the stages of resistance to this "onslaught ... upon the people's old working habits". First came simple resistance. But, in the next stage, as the new time-discipline was imposed, so the workers fought, not against time, but about it. It was in the industries – textiles and engineering – where the new time-discipline was most rigorously imposed that the contest over time became most intense:

> The first generation of factory workers were taught by their masters the importance of time; the second generation formed their short-time committees in the ten-hour movement; the third generation struck for overtime or time-and-a-half. They had accepted the categories of their employers and learned to fight back within them. They had learned their lesson, that time is money, only too well. (1967: 86)

Benjamin Franklin, regularly on time when working as a printer in 1720s London, gave full expression to the new capitalist, puritan ethic:

> Since our Time is reduced to a Standard, and the Bullion of the Day minted out into Hours, the Industrious know how to employ every Piece of Time to a real Advantage in their different Professions: And he that is prodigal of his Hours, is, in effect, a Squanderer of Money. I remember a notable Woman, who was fully sensible of the intrinsic Value of Time. Her Husband was a Shoemaker, and an excellent Craftsman, but never minded how the Minutes passed. In vain did she inculcate to him, That Time is Money... (Franklin, 1751, cited in Thompson, 1967: 89)

Hear the voice of the Complaining Woman again. Thompson (1967: 90) summarizes: "In all these ways – by the division of labor; the supervision of labor; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports – new labor habits were formed, and a new time-discipline was imposed." Through the 19th century, workers were incessantly bombarded by the "propaganda of time-thrift". The leisured classes began "to discover the 'problem' ... of the leisure of the masses" (1967: 90).

As documented by Marx and Engels, the original proletarian class struggle of the 19th century took place on this battleground over time. Today, that battle has been transported to every corner of the earth, South and East Asia, Central America, the Middle East, and Africa, the same patterns arising as people are forced off the land, which granted them a certain autonomy, into regimented factories. Listen to the words of an Indian woman worker, reported in November 2020 (Vaidyanathan, 2020), from a rural South Indian factory scrambling to meet orders from fashion giant Ralph Lauren:

> We're made to work continuously, often through the night, sleeping at 3 am, then waking up [on the factory floor] by 5 am for another full day ...Our bosses don't care. They're only bothered about production.

Similarly, workers at supermarket suppliers (including Marks & Spencer, Sainsburys, Tesco) said: "We don't get toilet breaks, we don't get time to drink water on shift. We barely get time to eat lunch." Often forced to work overtime, and not allowed home until all contracted work is finished, these women were harassed and bullied under threat of losing their jobs. One objected, "they shouldn't treat us like slaves". Conditions resemble modern slavery, with almost complete alienation of time. But rich First-World economies do not alleviate exploitation of workers trapped and intimidated into accepting less than the minimum wage, as witnessed by conditions in Leicester textile sweat shops during the summer of 2020, found to be rife COVID hotspots (Pittam, 2020). In China, Uyghur, Tibetan, and North Korean workers forced into factories to meet vast emergency orders for PPE were treated as virtual slave labor (Pattison et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the world's original proletariat – English, Scottish, and Welsh workers – have lost their jobs and former organizational solidarity in manufacturing industries that have gone global. Now they scramble for the crumbs of a post-industrial gig economy. No longer clocking in by the minute, they become subject to intense surveillance as they try to meet delivery targets and times, with actions and GPS locations now recorded to the second. In this new order of time-and-space discipline every second is made to count by punitive fines and pay deductions when failing to get deliveries to the right addresses through gridlock traffic. Ken Loach's film *Sorry we Missed you* (2019) tells the story of a self-employed delivery driver succumbing to the stress of work patterns that lack any fallback for sickness, time-off, or family troubles. There is no time to be human.

At the other end of the scale of casino capitalism, high frequency trading on the world's stock exchanges now operates on a basis of nanoseconds, with investment banking and hedge fund manipulation and shorting of stock values at incredibly small fractions of time (MoonX, 2019). The priority of these systems is completely given over to roller-coaster, algorithmic profit-seeking at the expense of any form of stability or security for producers of commodities or assets. "Securities" and "futures" become oxymoronic labels for complete insecurity of an unsustainable future. At the stroke of a keyboard in the London or New York Stock Exchange, livelihoods can be wiped out on the other side of the world.

This is the ultimate expression of capitalism's control of time, triumphant in its ability to extract more and more value from tiny divisions of time, leaving a workforce (if lucky enough to have jobs at all) zombified and bloodless. Desperate to pay rent, food and energy bills, on zero-hours contracts, the precariat lacks a pulse or breathable rhythm for human social life as our planet hurtles into ecological catastrophe.

Human lunar ecology

So far I have examined a history of how tighter and tighter divisions of time, from hours to minutes to seconds, has tightened the screws of ever greater economic exploitation. In this second part, I ask how we could organize "an economics of time" in a way that would turn back inequality. What can indigenous and egalitarian societies teach us about the passage of time for human beings? What human resources do we have for slowing down the rhythms of our economy and redistributing time?

It is not true that capitalism has stripped out all reference to cosmological time. Existing alongside and within capitalist economy, in sometimes uneasy, sometimes symbiotic relationship, are patriarchal religions able to thrive in capitalist conditions. Virtually all these so-called world religions maintain calendars which are very unlikely to be patriarchal in origin. They are all organized by lunar time. In fact, it may be a defining feature of religion to work with the moon – the source of magic, transformation, and the other world, the fundamental metaphor of life, death, and resurrection.

Patriarchy cannot have invented this, but has inherited these forms of marking time from earlier religions. As institutionalized ritual, symbolic, and political superiority of men over women, patriarchy has a complicated relationship with the moon. The Neolithic farming immigrants to Britain who built Stonehenge went to extreme lengths to transform the moon's ritual powers into those of the sun (Sims, 2006). The Gregorian calendar, deriving from the old Roman Julian calendar, uses man-made months named after emperors to impose a grid onto the solar year, detaching us entirely from reference to moon cycles. Christianity took on the old winter solstice festivals but, try as it might, could not ditch the lunar schedule of its major ritual at Easter. While imputations of "lunacy", "lunatic", "moonshine", and "moonstruck" were associated with an unstable, "hysteric", and irrational "feminine", in material fact, $17^{\text{th}}/18^{\text{th}}$-century

astronomers formed a scientific male "secret" society – the Royal Society – obsessed with the movements of the wandering moon. Until clocks became accurate at sea, the Empire needed science of the moon for calculating the all-important longitude.

The European enlightenment inherited superstitions about women and the moon from Classical Greek and Roman authors. Cosmological beliefs about connections between women and the moon are known in traditional cultures worldwide. Usually these are treated by scientists with skepticism as, again, a form of irrationality. Any individual woman has variable cycle lengths, and women vary between themselves. But now, as data are collected in large quantities from menstrual apps, this shows a close approach of mean menstrual cycle length to the lunar synodic cycle length of 29.5 days (Bull et al., 2019).

Fertile menstrual cycles for women in their 20s, with quite low Body Mass Index (BMI) tend very closely to lunar cyclicity. BMI measures an index of weight to height; during our evolution, humans would have been at the low end of that scale. It's beginning to look as though women may have evolved menstrual cycle and pregnancy lengths in relation to the moon as part of an ancient hominin lunar ecology.

Imagine the scenario of *Homo erectus* living in increasingly open savannah-like conditions in the early Pleistocene, 2 million years ago. The landscape is full of terrifying predators. In total darkness, these huge felines and hyenas have superb night vision. Groups of *Homo erectus* women with children would have needed to plan their defences, with techniques of mass mobbing and chorusing to deter predators (Knight and Lewis, 2017). Even a small glimmer of moonlight is sufficient to stop big cat hunting activity. To this day in Africa, lion predation of humans is phased by the moon (Packer et al., 2011). Timing of social, sexual, and reproductive activity in relation to moonlight would have been adaptive in that evolutionary environment.

Why delve into the Pleistocene here? We have two human universals, one cultural and relatively recent, the other biological, baked into our bodies by evolution. Religions *the world over* are lunar-organized; women *the world over* have evolved lunar length cycles. Does this suggest that the basic template for reclaiming human breathable, cosmic time would be lunar? Let's look at some deep time connections.

Trickstertime: lunarchy

While Hindu, Judaic, Islamic, and Chinese calendars are indisputably lunar, there is some ambiguity over Christianity. It overlays old pagan agricultural solstice and quarter day feasts with the lunar-scheduled passiontide of Christ. So it is solilunar. Following Judaic Passover tradition, Easter falls on the first Sunday (the seven-day week is itself a unit of lunar time) after the paschal full moon after 21 March (approximation of the vernal equinox).

Today's world religions are extremely young, 4,000 or 5,000 years old at most, and inherited their lunar phasing from lost Neolithic forebears. But just how old could this lunar timeframe of religion be? Something interesting happened when Bushman

peoples of the Kalahari began to meet missionaries propagating Jesus. The Bushmen told stories and danced with a panoply of "gods" and spirits, entities of various names, which governed healing, hunting, and menstruation. Christian priests, teachers and farmers, hearing of these trickster-like beings, called them Devils. But the Bushmen had a different idea. The more they got to hear about Jesus, the more it became clear to them Jesus was a trickster.

In Tricksters and Trancers (1999: 116–120), Mathias Guenther, an expert of Bushman religion, discusses how people from various Kalahari groups – some missionized, others "Farm" Bushmen, yet others closer to life as was lived in the bush – tend to identify or conflate Jesus Christ with the trickster. Similarities include involvement in healing, and a tendency to chat up women at wells, but the main structure that aligns Jesus with tricksters such as //Gauwa or Heiseb, is the death and resurrection. "Being beaten, torn apart and killed is a plight also of the trickster ... suffered many times over whenever one of his misdeeds has backfired" (Guenther, 1999: 119). But the trickster has this uncanny ability to spring back to life, first in parts and then as a whole, able to ascend to the sky. This power to come back from the dead, linked to healing, is symbolically governed by the moon. Like Easter.

Other connections can be made. For instance, there's a common motif of tricksters offering parts of themselves – viscera, buttocks, or genitals – as food (when they fail lamentably in the hunt and dare not face their wives). Body and blood? A further common factor – in fact, the most basic – between Jesus and Trickster lies in organization of time. In eclipse on the cross on Good Friday, Jesus nails time down for the Christian calendar of moveable feasts, organized from that point. And Trickster is an algorithm of time.

In Khoisan cosmology, Trickster is strongly tied to two entities that grow large and fade in cyclical time – the great Eland antelope and the Moon. Trickster governs first menstruation rituals for girls, prowling on guard around them. Known as the Eland Bull dance, this ancient Kalahari ritual is timed by the moon, so that a girl is released with New Moon to grow fat as the eland grows fat for the hunter (Power and Watts, 1997). Women of the camp flash naked buttocks as they sing and step to some of the oldest music in the world, the Rain/Eland scale. Men can only admire but not approach close to the girl's seclusion hut. Her potency, called *n/om* by the Ju/'hoansi, provides rocket fuel to carry the whole community with her into First Creation, if they shed blood together (Keeney and Keeney, 2013). She is at the center of the Bushman universe and this dance is the most probable candidate for the longest continuous religious tradition of humanity, at a guess, 70,000–100,000 years old. Return to first creation indeed.

Juxtaposing two images created by European and African hunting cultures (Figure 1) gives us more indication about how old this lunar ritual timeframe is. This rock carving from France (Figure 1a) and rock painting from Zimbabwe (Figure 1b) are separated by thousands of years and thousands of miles. But they look highly similar. The famous "Venus" of Laussel, a bas-relief from a Dordogne rock shelter c.25,000

years old, belongs to the Gravettian culture. She was originally rubbed with red ochre, still detectable but not visible in the area below her tummy button and between her thighs. She holds an animal horn, sometimes said to be bison, sometimes ibex, with an enigmatic scoring of 13 marks. The Zimbabwe image from the Matopos hills is harder to date, but is certainly older than 2,000 years, before any cattle came to that area, so belongs to the prime hunting era of the Khoisan inhabitants. It could be upwards of 10,000 years old, almost Palaeolithic (Garlake, 1995). Painted in red ochre, a female figure fat with *n/om* potency holds up a crescent shaped object, with rainbows of blood arcing from between her thighs up to the horned heads of the mighty antelope. Both these ancient European and African religious icons show connection of women, their blood, and the moon to the horned game.

[[][Figure 1 **Ancient hunter-gatherer** religious iconography from Europe and Africa

1. the "Venus" of Laussel, Dordogne, France (Parkyn, 1915, Plate V)
2. Potent female figure holding crescent, with partner. Mutoko, Zimbabwe (Garlake, 1995: 88)

Lunarchy – a joking coinage of lunacy and anarchy – is personified by the trickster. As trickstertime, lunarchy oscillates between waxing and waning moon, aligning ritual, sexual and economic activities by lunar phase. This gives a continual switching of power between the sexes. In *Blood Relations* (1991), Chris Knight outlined the sex-strike model of human culture born in a revolution when women went on strike. Women with their kin, sons and brothers, would celebrate ritually at dark moon, signaled by menstrual blood (real or cosmetic); as the moon waxed and the night sky got brighter, men would go hunting for large game, bringing back kills to their wives' camp for the full moon feast, when all taboos on marital sex and meat were relaxed. At the next dark moon, women would go on sex-strike again to keep the cosmos turning. This syntax, waxing vs waning, raw vs cooked, blood vs fire, kinship vs marriage persists at the core of all magical myths, fairytales and ritually derived narrative dramas.

For the Central African BaYaka hunters, a menstruating woman is *ekila*, in the moon, and the Moon is her "biggest husband" (Lewis, 2008: 299). She should not be in sexual contact with her husband and he cannot hunt while she menstruates, or the animals will smell him. The ritual life of the Mbendjele BaYaka provides a perfect example of lunarchy in action, with women's collective, *Ngoku* spirit, taking over the camp before the men's collective, *Ejengi* spirit, push back. As Morna Finnegan (2009: 37) says: "sensual repartee between male and female ritual collectives animates the political pendulum at the heart of the community". Each sex, under the moon's sway, takes power in turn. To resolve the ritual tension would be to freeze this momentum, allowing hierarchy to flood back in.

Where is the moon today?

More than half of us now live in cities. Even in the most impoverished and denuded urban landscape, people still experience the daily cycles of the earth's spin and annual cycles of movement around the sun. But our connection to lunar cyclicity is more and more fragmented. We are cut off from the moon in the sky of cityscapes, can hardly see it, know where it rises and sets, or when it is in its phase (Figure 2). Many children born in cities have never seen the Milky Way beyond the night-time glare. If the moon really mattered to the evolution of human bodies, then this is a matter of environmental, physical and mental health. We evolved under the sway of the moon.

][Figure 2 Midsummer full moonrise over the City of London, Gregorian date 14 June 2022 (Photo: John Cox).

Scientific discourse only nervously mentions the moon. The enlightenment's rational tradition in male-only theological colleges had trouble with two entities: 1) women; 2) the moon. Yet the question of what made us human cannot be solved without attention to women, the moon, and menstruation. African hunter-gatherer cosmology takes the lunar cycle as the crucial timeframe for ritual, sex, and economic activities. The shared sources of this cosmology carry us back to earliest human symbolic culture, the very origins of art and ritual itself, over 100,000 years ago. These hunter-gatherer societies are among the most gender egalitarian on earth. But how does such egalitarianism work? Women especially assert power through their bodies collectively to resist any threat of male exploitation. As the moon waxes and wanes, the dynamic of power switches in more or less playful battles between the sexes. No one rules but the moon. Could lunarchy offer us a way to decolonize time, and reclaim our revolutionary heritage as humans?

Talking about the emergence of industrial political economy, E. P. Thompson (1967: 80) argued: "The stress of the transition falls upon the whole culture". So, going back to the future will involve the whole culture: ritual, sexual, political, economic. In his anthropological researches, Marx (1881) spoke of the return of modern societies to the "archaic" type of communal property and production. He was recalling a passage at the end of Ancient Society (1877) by American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan who wrote about "communism in living" among the Iroquois. "A mere property career", Morgan (1877: 552) declared, was not the final destiny of humans: "Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival, in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes." Engels imported Morgan's grand "verdict on civilization" as the final word in The Origin of the Family (1968). Lunarchy's essential logic is that no one wins or dominates for good (Power & Knight, 2012). In the theatre of lunarchy, in one phase of the carnival cycle, the populace triumphs, in the other, the powers that be. Drawing on this human egalitarian expertise, why not let the trickster government take the power in one phase – waxing moon – and then let

the capitalists and bankers try their best as the moon wanes? But only on condition of strike again at New Moon. That way, there won't be any bankers or capitalists: they won't have time at their disposal to accumulate wealth and power. We will have *reclaimed time.* No longer one woman alone nagging about her torn knickers – as heard in the old Saint Monday song *The Jovial Cutlers* – this should be a strike of all womankind and the international working class with a planet to win. And menstruation is its flag. To win back time, we need ritual menstrual leavetaking from the Earth to the Moon.

Covidstruck/moonstruck?

UCL scientists Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018) called for two things to stop climate catastrophe and environment collapse. First, everyone should have Universal Basic Income (UBI), to take care of all basic needs, and second, we have to rewild half the planet: Half Earth. The economic collapse conjured out of nowhere by the coronavirus provoked vociferous calls for UBI, even from "reluctant socialists". Under the threat of COVID-19, some of us – those lucky enough to be working from home or furloughed – learned to "rewild" our time.

Could this be the formula? Half and half, half space/half time? Half Earth and Half Moon.

During the Covid-struck 2020 northern spring, some of us were suddenly able to take our time back from the excessive demands of turbocapitalism, releasing creativity, reflection, above all time for the planet to rest. We caught a glimpse of the ways we could change, could act collectively for a common good. Extractive capitalism was suddenly not the priority, but people's health and lives. Of course, it didn't last, and far from "Building back better", we have reverted to "Business as usual". But we glimpsed what could be if we began to act with intelligence and forethought on a global basis.

As the planet won desperately needed respite, we fell under a spell as if the Sleeping Beauty pricked her finger and fell asleep for one hundred years. In the fairytale, that long sleep resulted from a man denying his daughter's cyclical pulse of fertility – refusing to let her bleed. How we emerge will depend on whether we can restore a sustainable pulse to our life on earth. Imagine that we could calibrate a rhythm of seclusion/activity, pause/action, virtual/physical by the phases of the moon. Imagine we could restore the Earth-Moon dance, celebration of her/our menstrual cycles as guarantee of future fertility.

Because all humanity shares that pulse, the peoples of the world would become entrained, enchanted, and ensorcelled by the ancient rhythms of our past. This ritual periodicity has both global universal and local cultural efficacy. We would now be able to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell the difference this dance made to our beautiful world as we breathed the fresher air, found time for our children and grandparents, heard the birds and insects return. We would have realized how important sharing properly was for our health and the health of our mother.

It is not only perfectly humanly possible. It is natural to us. It's lunarchy.

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