

Reflections on Everyday Life

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PREFACE

In 2012 I was given the task of carrying out one of the sessions in a workshop entitled “Reality, Causality and Resistance”, organised by the LIF/FLUL research unit at FCSH/UNL. The topic of the session was the question of “self-affection” in one of the last volumes of Husserl’s complete works. With its more than 900 pages of text, on the Saturday on which the session took place there was certainly quite enough to look at to occupy the time.

However, I concentrated mainly on the operators of “passive synthesis” and “anonymous intentionality”. The passage of time is exemplified by Husserl with the “experiencing” of days and their parts and their respective insertions in the fields of latency of the past and the future, the transition from the future to the present and from the present to the past.

The idea of writing about the days of the week had been rendered concrete on various occasions by me in my scientific philosophical work, but now it was gaining an absolutely explosive impetus.

Henrique Monteiro gave me the possibility of setting up a blog in the online version of *Expresso*, titled “The Way of Time”. Each day, for several consecutive months, I published in it most of the tests of “deformalisation” presented here. He is for this reason one of the people most responsible for this text, and I thank him very gratefully for this.

Paulo José Miranda, with whom I spoke in Curitiba about what I was doing, gave me more than the encouragement I needed for drafting it. To him I owe the internal organisation of the text and the arranging of the chapters. It is also to him that I dedicate this book.

I thought that only the publisher Abysmo would have room for “me”. For this reason, I sent an early version of the text to João Paulo Cotrim in February 2014.

An August Friday, when I was in a period of deep grieving, brought a piece of good news.

Alcântara, Summer 2014.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DAYS OF THE WEEK

The days of the week have names. Each day has its own personality. Each day of the week is that day in every country in the world. And the same applies to weekends. Each day is different and there are as many days as there are persons experiencing them. Nevertheless, there are also some identity rules. Every day of the week in someone's life can be different. They can be experienced in the same way but with different content. They can always have the same content, but be experienced in different ways. One can always do the same things. And yet the days can all be different. One can always do different things, while the days seem the same.

There seems to be an identity alluded to by the names of the seven days of the week. A Monday in October is different from a Monday in August. But, whatever the month, a Monday is always a Monday. It is completely different from a Sunday or a Tuesday. The days of the week vary depending on which month they are days of. The same applies to the months of the year. The months of the year vary from one year to the next.

Nevertheless, does not each day of the week have its own "personal" identity? Does it not seem that each specific day of the week comes back again each week, each month and each year?

Days are chronological units of 24 hours. A week is 7 days. And a month 28, 29, 30 or 31 days. But there is an enormous difference between one hour and another. Monday morning, for example, is different from Tuesday night. A short day in December is different from a long one in August.

The same applies to years. Infancy seems to have one single kind of time making it pulsate. And perhaps the same applies to youth too. But in old age there is a difference between years. Each year is experienced as if it were the last. When the end is near, one finds that each day is a different character. Like a guest leaving as dawn breaks and living with us during a sleepless night.

Perhaps life is one sole day. Of the type that disappears when we have carried out our programme and returns, empty, in the middle of the night. There are days that are different. And there are days that are the same as

all the others.

One day's time thus has a chronological identity, which is not the same quantity as the hours.

What does this difference consist of? How do days and their hours pass by? What form do they take? How is it that they have as many different contents as there are people in the world? How do we all share the same day, when at the same moment we can be experiencing completely different contents? And does time get created when one day is joined to another, to produce what is "day by day"? Does each month not have its days and weeks that are different from other months' days and weeks? Are Mondays in the month of September not different from those in October, November, December, etc.?

Why do they have the same name, when they go and come back again the following week? Where does a Monday go after it has passed by, when it is already Tuesday? Is the Monday of the first week of the first month of the year the same as that of the last week of the last month of the year? Is it not, on the other hand, true that, from the start, a month sets the tone for how its days are spent?

Is it not also a fact that the days of the months are different from one month to the next because the months are different from one year to the next? Is it not true that years are different depending on the period in one's life?

And are not the periods in life, with their beginnings and their ends, different from one life to the next?

And what if a lifetime did not derive from adding a second to each new second until a minute is complete? And what if an entire lifetime did not derive from joining together 60 minutes to make an hour, 24 hours to make a day, 7 days to make a week, 4 weeks to make a month and 12 months to make a year, or all the years of our lives to make a lifetime?

And what if a whole lifetime—even without being used up or lived to its extreme limit—pulsated in a compressed and compact fashion in just a second? And what if a whole lifetime was densely and solidly compressed into the first second of life just as in the last?

All the moments during life's journey are between the first instant and the last. All are the beginning and, at the same time, the end. All have a duration, even if it is only an instant. Life begins at the weekend or on holiday, because life begins on the brink of everything. It also ends on the brink. And we always live with this imminence, a "not yet".

A day is a character with its own identity. It has a soul. It is a way of being. It has a personality. It has its way of being like a person. And it happens with a melody that belongs only to itself.

It is like a character in our lives. It causes a ripple. It has its own rhythm. It is an atmosphere with various climates and environments. There are days that are normal, cheerful or sad. There are wonderful and horrible days. And there are happy days.

Each day has its own spirit. It is a person. It is like a person who arrives, stays and then leaves. The days on which we always do the same things and which are always lived in the same way are like clones of one sole day. Months can pass by. Even years. All the days of our lives can die away. We find ourselves waking from winter in spring. Or suddenly it is Christmas again.

And, nevertheless, each day is different. There are differences in the way we traverse them. Or we spend them through the hours. Or they are lost days. Despite the similarities among the days, each one is unique. It could have a name. Instead of this, days are dated.

Life, nevertheless, tends to create identity rules. Periods in days are experienced in the same way, even if we vary the parameters compared to our usual normality. Days are dated according to periods. There are the summer afternoons of our childhood holidays. These are afternoons that never come back again. But a “summer afternoon” as an “afternoon” is perceived as a period of duration in a day. It has a formally identical shape, whether it is in summer or winter. Whether it is a question of a childhood afternoon or an afternoon now.

Days are all different, but we tend to interpret them in accordance with identity rules. The identity is that of the heart of life. Each life shapes its days as its own. Each person is the period of time that they have to live. The form of their days, when it comes down to it, is irretrievable for any other person. Fundamentally, we might discern that a day in the life of a person has a rhythm as marked as the subject of a “childhood afternoon”. “A childhood afternoon” is unequivocally understood by everyone, whereas “the childhood afternoon” of any particular individual is irretrievable for any other person.

The days of each person’s life are the days of their particular life. However much one manages to peep inside others’ lives, they are submerged in a radical obscurity. One never manages to get out of one’s life, of the time that constitutes it, of the way in which one lives, to submerge oneself entirely in the life of each one of the others, or even of one sole person.

The days of the week have names. With these names it is not only possible to organise the week, month or year. The days are given names because they have their own identity.

Who is able to live a Monday on a Friday? Who has not confused one day of the week with another and stopped seeing that the personality of the day ends up imposing itself? All the Mondays in the world are identical, but they are different from Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and, even more so, from Saturdays and Sundays. No day of the week could be mistaken for another.

But the spirit of the days is not only generic or specific. Each day is singular, unique even. And this is not because of it being recorded with the number of the month and year to which it belongs. This method merely individualises it. Each day is a particular date, even if undetermined. There are days that are more important than others and for each life there are always special days. They are the days to which we refer in the singular and which we never forget. Even if we do not have a clear idea of what month or year it was, we know which day it was.

There are days full of promise and others of leave-taking, and days and days and days when nothing happens. There are days when we meet people. There are also days when we get separated from others for ever. There are days when we were different; so different that it was as if life had alienated us and we did not know what to do.

The consistency of a day is its spirit. Its spirit is not its states or moments. That is, it is not the specific content that we experience during each day. It is the spirit of the day that brings events on stage and also removes them. Even if we confuse a day with its narratives, its people and its events, it is completely different from what occurs while it is a day. There are strange days without us having a clear idea of why or for what reason they were so. There are unforgettable days and days to be forgotten. Days when it was the very first time and also when it was the beginning of the end.

What does the spirit of a day say? How can we listen to it? With what sensor can it be picked up? An overwhelming majority of the time, we cannot manage to detect it. A day needs to take on a physical shape for one to discern how it worked itself into the world, arrived as far as ourselves and stayed for ever.

There is a natural tendency for us humans to choose the “unusual” as the subject of our attention. The word has a negative tone, although its etymological meaning is merely: “what is not customary or habitual”. The reference is thus to the distinctive character of a given occurrence, an occurrence that causes, as a minimum, perplexity.

The strangeness of the unusual breaks the habitual and normal chain repeating the days that we pass through. In the daily sequence of time and in the organisation of the days, there is a distribution of the hours that

divides them into 24, of the days of the week into 7, of the months of the year into 12, and of years into a life. It is this apparent domestication of time that the unusual smashes to pieces. Let us give it all our attention. It is composed of the strange stories happening to others or the stories happening to us and leaving us unfamiliar to ourselves, different and changed.

But there is another dimension present in the unusual, in what does not always happen and is different from what is habitual and normal. What breaks the repetitive chain of the quantitative distribution of time can have an absolutely extraordinary or exceptional character. It is what is different from normality and what is habitual. It does not matter now whether we pay it attention or not, whether we are inattentive or not in our lives. It does not even matter whether we seek the extraordinary and exceptional, as if it were a stimulus, the absolutely new, something that provokes curiosity or attracts.

The different days alter everything through their extraordinary character. They occur, happen to us, come to meet us, touch us and shape us. There is a generosity in this occurrence of different moments or days. They seem like gifts or offerings. They are granted to us; one does not know by whom or why, nor where they come from or how they will residually remain in our lives. Or where they are going to. We could ask how they made us different, alien and unfamiliar even to ourselves.

There are days that, with their unfamiliarity, convulsively alter our lives forever. We became what we were not. We are more ourselves after they happened than before they happened. If these moments in time did not happen to us, we would not be us. They intrinsically form for us the essence of the path directed by us and towards us.

We can think of various moments that perturbed us but made us ourselves, although they made us different: “the first day of school”, “the first dip in the Atlantic during the summer holidays”, “the first time we met someone”, “our first falling in love”, “the light of spring sunshine in our childhood”. Each of us can put between inverted commas what he thinks best or, rather, the moments in which he became himself.

We are at the same time unprepared for these encounters. And they perhaps occur and happen to us. And we pass them by. We divide our time between working and non-working hours, no matter whether the value of working time is interpreted as being good or bad. We have the idea that we control time with agendas and timetables, and with long, medium or short term programmes. Holidays, weekends, public holidays and the hours of the day outside office hours counterbalance office hours, from Mondays to Fridays or even at weekends and in the summer. We find it hard to be on

our own; we need to be busy, to employ our time.

To create meaning we need our hours to be all filled up, to go on tiptoe through our day, go to sleep early to repeat another day, which we will go through stomping and putting our foot down at every hour, with this being like a stepping-stone for crossing the day from one bank to the other. We take so much care in how we place our feet that we do not look at the river. We are just frightened of falling in. Diving in and swimming across does not even enter our heads. No.

We need to have our hours filled up, to not be alone with ourselves in the silence of our lives, and to probe further: “the first time of all first times”, “the first encounter with the sacred beings in our lives”, of whom it is said that they are named like the saints, “mother”, “father”, “brother”, “aunt”, “grandfather”, “grandmother”, “friend”, “boyfriend”, “girlfriend”.

The others that we happen to meet can be unusual, sinister, strange or inhospitable. But when we meet them, it is as if they were the best thing that ever happened to us. They are not only the names of the saints of our lives, but also of those to whom we devote ourselves and for whom we would sacrifice ourselves, to whom we surrender ourselves and dedicate ourselves to the best of our ability. Perhaps we do only the minimum for them, and sometimes not even that.

But these others that we have met and go on meeting open doors of opportunity, take us to landscapes and dimensions where we would not go on our own, because all the landscapes that others allow us to see are their own lives. They can be our teachers. One of these others, a capricious stranger, may pronounce a sentence to clarify anything at all.

They are without doubt those we call “our folks” to whom we are bound by very close ties, so close that it is as if the same blood circulated in our veins or we breathed the same spirit. As if we could not manage to say “me” without including them in us and us in them. If they disappeared or had never appeared, the graphs of our lives would become unrecognisable. We would not be the same.

The erosion of time seems to make everything equal through the action of its inexorable passing. Springs no longer bring the sun that filled the hall in my childhood home; they are seasons in the year that come after winter and depart before summer. My first summer dip in the sea is no longer like it once was, when my childhood beach was not at a distance from Lisbon but existed between the first day in July and the last day in October. We no longer see in another’s gaze someone we have not seen for a very long while. We no longer see ourselves and we are no longer seen. And sometimes not even this matters any more.

And, nevertheless, the extraordinary is now, because each moment is

unique. It happens, comes and goes, and does not return. But this “extraordinary” is the first time for everything in life. It can be the total extension of life in eternity and on a world scale.

The portion of time that is our life is shaped by a sense of unreachable and incomprehensible totality. It is very difficult to account for what this life is, ours, mine, yours, his and the extraordinary. Us being here like nobody wants it! And us being, in the passing of the hours, some close by and others without us noticing them.

Each person is on a world scale and their time is without doubt finite, but their reach is that of eternity. The engraving in the world of our lives, of the generations and generations of lives of persons and of families, originates from an event that makes us meet the others in this world.

CHAPTER TWO

MONDAY

The weekend is already over. There has been a break between last week and this. One now takes up again what was left pending. I take myself up again. But is it a question of taking myself up again, even if I did not stop doing what I usually do?

Periodicity immerses me in myself, in the densest cadence of the coming week. Monday is customarily the day we start again. It is when we surrender to what we are with the work we have. With the weekend there was a suspension from Friday afternoon until now, this morning. Nevertheless, Monday already started yesterday, on Sunday afternoon. Monday has already started when there is the expectation that the weekend is going to end. On Sunday one already knows that Monday is arriving. And with it the whole week. Life may not start on Mondays, but the week does.

Monday already has all the days of this week—from Monday to Friday—wrapped up in it. It is during this time that a whole set of experiences will occur. The week is anticipated with appointments written down in one's diary. Some will take place. Others will not. There is nevertheless a significant margin for events that are not on the horizon of foreseeability. Only the horizon of the week is anticipated, even if it is unclear.

The days of the week were in ancient times seen as a huge sheet rolling itself up in itself. Or unrolling itself to spread out. Time gets compressed and decompressed. The passing of time is the rolling up or unrolling of this huge sheet. The passing of time reveals what there is or what there was to be experienced.

The spirit of Monday's arrangement reveals its situation to us. Monday has to climb the sheer mountain that is the week. And then come back down it. All states of mind are involved in this interpretation. There is defeat, tiredness and boredom. And then there is enthusiasm with the unrolling of events. This potential double and contrary attitude is produced by the opening to the formal emptiness of what is going to be. The start of the week can renew everything. It can also lead to recognising the unaltered

state of things.

On Monday one can already see all the days of the week. Monday compactly shows what is about to happen. On Monday mornings, for example, one experiences the prospect of the week's horizon. We get directed towards what is about to happen. The week's time pulls us towards it. Friday seems to be at the summit of a steep mountainside. On Monday we are at the foot. Or we thus have the sensation that we are slipping down the bedsheet of time. We can also slide down until Friday.

There are clocks on all levels, with their hands stopped at different times. The hours coincide twice a day, without one knowing whether it is before or after noon. There is a collection of clocks and they have all stopped. In Titisee, in the Black Forest, there are shops with cuckoo clocks marking the time ten minutes before and after each quarter of an hour. All over the town there is the ominous presence of public clocks, all synchronised with each other. They get buses and trams to start off invariably at the same time, from the same traffic junction, in every part of the town.

A chronometer measures units in training. Three minutes can bring defeat or victory. There are people who run against the clock and beat records by seconds or tenths of a second. Kitchen lights get turned on and off many times each second. Darkness is overcome, because it does not remain present for a long time.

Lightning removes the coastline from darkness, only then to let it plunge again into darkness. The coastline is no longer the same. It is known, in this way, that there are boats off shore, and rocks and white, frothy waves. There are micro-movements spread over yoctoseconds. They are so rapid that the slowness of perception is unable to follow them. There have been, they say, 4.6 gigayears since planet Earth was formed. How many yoctoseconds make up 4,600 million years? It is a symbolic bridge between the infinitesimal and the infinite.

There are clocks without hands: see Rumble Fish (<http://bit.ly/1avkK5J>) and Wild Strawberries (<http://bit.ly/ZcldHs>). The hours are indicated by the clouds passing below the metamorphosis of the sky. Or, the sky indicates the hours below the metamorphosis of life. Or is it life below the metamorphosis of eternity? One takes a dive into micro-chronology. The passing of the days speeds up to the velocity of the vibrating particles. The speed of the vibrating of the particles slows down until they become motionless in an abstraction that withdraws them from time. Inexorable, the other time. Which measures and is not measured. Countdown: chronic. Indissoluble.

It is like wanting to die and not being able to. Feeling an immense desire to disappear now or else to have never even been born. Our final hour strangles the essential way in which time passes. It compresses. It asphyxiates. It is the time of our death. The time of “my” death. Monday morning brings with itself the perfection of us not wanting to be who we are, of us wanting to be beyond ourselves, beyond everything. In short, beyond life. In the usual passing of time that with death is held to be certain. It will arrive later, only that, for now, not yet. Our final hour, just like a Monday morning, lets itself loose. Death threatens to crash down on us. Or else it is like a steep mountainside which we suddenly come across during a journey.

Our final hour is slow in passing, but not because time slows down. There is an isthmus between the living present which is here, now, and the imminent future about to break forth. It is now! No, again. It is now! No, again. It is now! No, again.

At each moment we are about to die. Nevertheless, at each moment, the threat does not reach fruition. The imminent danger was, in the end, nothing. In this paradoxical situation, between a present hoping for the end and a future still to come, life passes by with difficulty.

My final hour is the crossing over between me, now, and who I may be in no time from now. Time does not make moments glide fluidly by, one after another. The fact is that time passes, even at the time of our death, even in our final hour.

But how? What time is this that passes? It is real time, objectively indicated by the hands of a clock. It can even be the lifetimes of all the others who are there with me, a time that flows, that slips away in the hours. Whether the time that passes is objective or that of the others; in one’s final hour, time does not pass.

And it is only my time that does not pass, because the death is in whatever case mine and only I can end with it. At this time we are overtaken by the irreversible character of the event. We stop waiting for whatever it is, because the end has been reached. At the hour of our death, time reveals itself as what it is and has been. There is a loss of the notion of what times are coming.

In this situation, one can see that time has, forever, been continuously draining away.

“Real” time itself cannot be grafted onto “my” time in me. There is nothing that can be done in order that time opens itself up.

The hour of death gets dispelled. With a respite in its pangs, the severity of its attack gets attenuated. Or is it the contrary: the pangs get dispelled and death stands back? What made it impossible to endure it has

disappeared, and time seems to pass again. How? Where did the future come back from?

Ice cubes fall on the floor. The windows are open. Someone “calls” the elevator. A queue forms to take the bus with all the people always looking in the same direction. One witnesses the Sun setting in the opposite place whence it rose. One climbs the stairs in less time than is needed for the front door of the building to close. One phones someone. One is in the doctor’s waiting room. One waits in the corridor for someone to finish. Someone tells you to wait and hours go by. After a number of weeks, we think it is not going to happen. Someone plans their holidays. A pregnant woman looks at her stomach with an interior without sex or number. A gambler sees his hopes rise again after each bet he loses. One looks out of the window to see how many people are going to come out of the buildings on the right hand side and how many from those on the left. Will the people going along the street go into one of the buildings or get into one of the parked cars? A bird flies onto a branch. Another one flies, following it. Will it go to sleep?

There are pools of water in the kitchen in the morning. There is glass on the floor and the curtains are fluttering. One goes downstairs. There is a power cut. Someone says there is a public transport strike. People are disbanding. Today there will be no bus coming at that time. The Sun sets in the river mouth. The front door of the building closes before I get to my flat. Somebody answers the phone. You can come in. It’s your turn. It has happened. There were no holidays. The lady had a baby girl. The gambler goes back home, a failure. Nobody in the street. The bird. It is day again. How long has someone not been sleeping? In five minutes’ time one will know what has happened in five minutes’ time.

With the weekend, we again have the idea that we are going to start the week defeated or victorious. The expression “the weekend gone by” is again coming to light on Monday. The weekend makes itself felt as the time for the recovering and regathering of strength in order to start again. But it can also, on the other hand, use up resources. In any case, one has an outlook that opens up with great, small or no expectations about what is going to happen: the coming week. The opening up into an “outlook” occurs without any organisation of an agenda. There can be no clear idea about what is going to happen. The whole week opens up to us, nevertheless. It compels us to turn towards it. If the week is promising, we venture into it full of confidence. If it is threatening, we start it already on the defensive.

A Monday is not very different from a place. Indeed, it is a place, a specific place. We do whatever it may be in a particular location. There is

an orientation that thus gets accomplished. Being there involves a prior purpose. When we go from the bedroom to the living room, it is to go there to do something. Often, however, we forget the objective. We are surprised to find ourselves in a place without knowing what we went there to do. We can “know” that we are searching for something we need. But we cannot remember what it is. The need for a thing makes us get up from our chair and go along the corridor to the living room. Not “knowing” annuls the meaning.

We go to places to meet people. And they do not appear. One crosses the town while thinking about meeting someone. Going to see someone, at that time, in that place. The expression “going to see someone” makes us get dressed, go out, go through the town, wait for them to come. We know that this someone is not coming any more. At a certain moment we leave. Starting from a certain moment, we know it. And does the significance of going there get annulled? When I say: “I’m at the University”, I am not referring to the geographical or geometrical sense of being within, or of being at, or of the place where I am, of its toponymy. I say it to someone who knows what going to and being at the University is for me. If someone repairing the elevator says to the person at the other end of his mobile phone that he is at the University, it is not in the same sense as it has for me, as this would not make sense. The technician will need to specify that he is at the University repairing the elevator, doing his job; he is not at the University to give or listen to lectures, etc.

If I say that I am in room T8, this does not refer only to the fact that I am however many floors above ground level in Tower X of Faculty Y. I say it because someone is asking me where the lecture is or where they can find me. But it may one day happen that there is a murderer loose on the campus and I am talking to the police. Then, if I say quietly and with fear, “I’m in room T8”, I am asking for help, for them to save my life. There are very different ways of “being”. When revealing my location, all depends on a meaning and a context that is much more concrete and profound than a mere geographical, topographical or geometrical location. It is what I am there to do.

And when I ask “What did I come here to do?”, what does the adverb of the place “here” express? It is not the specific “where” of any place. Is it the place of all places, the world? Is the world life? Am I the bearer of life to the world? Why do I conjugate the verb “come” in the first person of the past simple indicative in the active voice? I did not shift from anywhere specific towards life in its entirety. I was led. For this reason, I do not refer to anything concrete. Or is it the most concrete thing there is? It is what we refer to when we say: “we are going”. “Going” is a way

of existing, “to get to come”. The form life takes is that of a journey along a route. No, of shifting. And what does “making” mean? The direct complement is life: make life. But not only life. Fundamentally, it is the direction of life that is determined by the making.

The question “What did I come here to do?” asks of the meaning, in the fundamental circumstance, in which there can be life without meaning. Not having come here to do nothing. Having come, but not having gone.

One day encloses in itself many and various purposes, objectives, goals and intentions. We are continuously “having to go to places to deal with matters”, “having to solve problems”. Doing what we have to do. The many and various tasks are set out in our mental agenda. First, go to place A, then to B, and then to C. One day has an orientation. It guides what there is to do. What has to be done.

There are also moments for daydreaming. Interludes between tasks, even on a Monday. They are not necessarily interludes, interruptions or pauses. We can be concentrated on carrying out our duties and not be “there”. Daydreaming about other scenes. The detachment from reality creates an imaginary horizon, a fiction. Or one lingers over memories of the past or on an outlook anticipating the future. The meaning of days is guided by their passing. The order of the carrying out of tasks, daydreams, dreams and imagining is that of the day itself. The very direction gets expressed by what we do with a day. By what we do in a day. By what occurs when we do nothing or when nothing apparently happens.

The order of the days in our lives has an orientation and a direction. Life guides the birth of each day and its ending. Life has as its limits its first and last days. It is the days that are in the meanwhile that are lived. And perhaps it is on Monday that this bursts most narrowly, most tightly, with the greatest reduction in the area in which we are, in the time we have and in the place where we find ourselves: at the time in the morning when we are getting ready to go to work or when we start working.

When “we were far away”, “we are not here”. We are absorbed by some distant thought. When “we are already here”, we cannot even remember the “places” where we were. The “distance” between “here” and “far away” is not spatial. It is that which exists between absence and presence. Nearness and distance depend on another dimension. Which is that of time.

A memory of myself when I was young, seated on a sofa watching television, comes to me. Someone asks, “Do you want a coffee?”. The room where I find myself now is the same as in this scene from my youth, but they are not placed side by side. One superimposes itself on the other. I superimpose myself on myself. The question dispels the remembered

past. I am expelled from that surrounding atmosphere. I was in the midst of it. I now land in the contemporary situation of the present.

When we say “we were not here” or “we were so far away”, we express a crossing over to “another” world. It can be oneiric, like when we daydream. At such moments, we are present only corporeally in the contemporary world. In these absences we inhabit the “places” where we go through the presence of our spirit. When we “land” in this world, we go back to paying attention to what is happening here. The “other” world gets dispelled. Not totally, because it remains with us in a residual form. We know about our having been “there”. This is how someone recovers their senses and awakens. On returning to reality, we come to ourselves.

In how many ways do we say “there”? In how many ways do we embody or take on a body? How do we come to our senses? From what “up” to what “down”? Can it not happen that we do not wake up? Or always sleep dreaming? Or daydream about situations? How are we to comprehend this particular geography of the senses? Have I completely woken up what I can wake up? Can I create dream worlds where I can be more myself than I am in the present of the indicative?

One does not always manage to remain inside one’s work. There are diversions. Losses of concentration. Now it is a thought that plagues me. Or a musical chord echoes. A fly buzzes. The memory of something without importance comes to mind. We are woken up by a smartphone reminder of something we have to do later. These interferences can be episodic. They drain away as quickly as they flowed in. They can be permanently located between us and what we are doing the whole day. There is an interruption to my task. In spite of the break in concentration, I can again return to “being there”. In the carrying out of the task, there is a tendency to set myself free and disencumber the passing of the hours. The carrying out diverts me from obstacles. Problems get solved on the basis of a more or less complex programme, which depends on my situation. The complex links between situations and different contexts constitute the original structure with which we have to see ourselves. It is starting from these links that life unfolds. Life constitutes a common thread. The traction goes in one direction and has a direction: that of the passing of time, of entering the world and of the construction of a meaning for the living of the passing of the hours in it.

With the weekend and relaxation there is, as it were, an untying of the knot of certain cords that were inert, that proffered resistance through being tangled and entangling us. Monday can open up possibilities and a new start. The halt represented by the weekend can encourage expectations for the new week that is starting. Our mood for this week can

already be perceived at the beginning of the morning.

We immerse ourselves in the rhythm of the week. Overcoming Monday morning is to overcome the most difficult part of that day. Overcoming Monday is to immediately overcome the most difficult part of the week. "Every start is difficult".

By Monday afternoon, we have already got over a part of the inertia of the rest period. The horizon changes. It changes in line with how much we distance ourselves from the past weekend and immerse ourselves more deeply in the week that has started in the meanwhile. Even without outbreaks of memories of the weekend gone by, its atmosphere will make itself felt and has not completely changed. But gradually we get turned towards the horizon of the new week that has already started in the meanwhile.

In the afternoon we have already got used to the rhythm of the working day. We have got into the week. There is different content on the television, on the radio and in the newspapers. There is, as it were, a picking up again of what was left pending during the weekend. All the work that was in hand was interrupted during the weekend.

Monday picks up any work again that had stopped: trials, building works, assignments, the exercise of functions, executions, duties, etc. On Monday we start again what we left to be done.

The pause of the weekend interrupts the week's succession of events.

Now we fall again into the current of time. We are pulled by the flow created by scheduling things. We exercise pressure to get ourselves back *en route*. On Monday afternoon one feels that the tie to what was left pending before the weekend is fully re-established.

We can be in our workplace and have not yet started to work. We read our emails. We listen to music on the radio. What triggers the accomplishment of the first task? We can try increasing our concentration. And we do not manage to "get into the subject".

"Getting into" whatever it is does not depend on willpower. What one can see is that one gets to the meaning beyond the printed page. Reading happens. We are pulled and carried by the fluidity of comprehension. The perception that one has of getting into a particular topic occurs, nevertheless, when we are no longer dealing with it. Not half way through the task. What one perceives are clear moments. When we do not get in, when we are following a topic, or when we are no longer turned towards it.

What happens when one actually starts a task? Is it the first sentence in a lecture? Is it the first sentence that we manage to read and which makes sense? Is it warming up before a race? What is the meaning of "pick up", "get into"? What is the nature of the traction that carries us during the

hours? What makes it possible for us to carry out functions, discharge duties, fulfil tasks, accomplish jobs?

But “where” does what gets left pending “go”? The work to be done was in the office. The court buildings close. The persons taking part in the meeting have left the room. The factory has closed. All the materials, all the tools and all the machinery ended up outside the dynamics of production. The poem got interrupted. The conveyor belt stopped half way.

The wanting it to be done is interrupted during the weekend and taken up again on Monday. When the time of the weekend has been left behind, there is a resumption of the things from the last day of the previous week.

The resumption is not a “linking without further ado” of the end of the loose threads of Friday to the beginning of the loose threads of Monday. There is no “knot” without “in the meantime”, without “pause”, without “interruption”. The fact is that, without us realising it, things are not the same.

In the same way, we can ask how the day unfurls itself. Between the end of each working day and the start of another, there is dinner time. Then there is time available for whatever. This time at the end of the day can be difficult to get through. It is a turning point. We are handed over to ourselves. This vague time requires that we are occupied. It is a time for retiring from the world. The result is an exiting from tasks. It is not, necessarily, a time for relaxation. Getting through this period is difficult. There is, therefore, a sort of hiatus in time. We have to make time with whatever there is.

At a certain point, nevertheless, there arrives, one knows not how, the flow of time. It pulls us, drags us, carries us through the hours.

It is ten o'clock. We cannot understand how time has “passed” and brought us from seven o'clock in the evening to ten o'clock at night. Where did these dramatic hours go? How slow they were in passing! How we crept along! What causes a relenting of time? Or does time always travel at the same speed? Is its modelling inside us? Or is time's form the intrinsic relationship between the “me” that there is in all of us and objective time?

There is a reserve of time at this hour of the day, welcoming us. It forbids us to take the plunge. The prohibition is a waterproofing of time against our lives. I still have my work problems on my mind. I am still absorbed by the solving of professional questions. I live these moments with the shadow cast by what has occurred during the day. I do not switch off. I carry everything that happened to me during the day with me. And I cannot manage to build another horizon of living. I cannot get used to the

evening situation. I cannot cast off the “state of mind” created by work. It does not relinquish me. It is as if there were a force field repelling me.

One does not manage to do anything: listen to music, watch a TV programme, go for a stroll, read a book. We are left without resources to attack and use up time. Not even for an instant. It does not make sense. There is no direction in which to go. There is nothing to guide us as to where to go.

The contents by means of which our time got distributed throughout the day simply disappear, one after another. It is the contents in our agenda that provide a sense, direction and orientation to our daily routine. They are handled in a constitutive order. Their ordering and hierarchisation depend on urgency and priorities. The coexistence and simultaneousness of lines of action, subsequently integrated into the basic sequence, constitute the course taken by the day.

“Without content” means no carrying out of tasks (housework, getting electrical items repaired, getting your hair cut). There is no discharging of functions (working) or exercising of skills (reading, convening). Evening time is the very content of the evening. Maybe we find nothing interesting. The time that has time as its content implodes. It exhausts. Starting from a certain point, however, we are dragged, pulled and carried through time. Contents in which time takes its lodgings get created. The sequence occurs. It can be passing the day in review. The attention paid to a piece of news. The memory of someone. A certain thought that presents itself to us opens up a sequence line. It makes it possible for us to detach ourselves from the stagnant present. A dimension that makes a sequence appear gets created. The sequence occurs one knows not how, but one is nevertheless sucked into its flow.

I cannot manage to be inside myself and I am not outside myself. What carried me through the hours was interrupted. My way of being in the evening is different from my way of being at work. They are, formally, two completely different ways of being. The concrete experiencing of time is different in the two situations.

I am now like someone who is in their living room. I am surrounded by armchairs, sofas, tables, chairs, pictures, televisions, sound systems, radios and books. But I do nothing with “this”. I take up just the space occupied by my body. I am not present in spirit. I do not turn towards anything. I do not even see what the TV is broadcasting in front of me. I cannot hear anything. I am absorbed. But nothing absorbs me. There is nothing that awakens my interest. The situation closes me in on myself. It expropriates me from myself. Who am I while I am like this, in the midst of various pieces of furniture but not in my living room?

A day is like the river from our childhood. Every morning is different, and yet, in the same place, with the same bed. No matter the difficulty or ease with which we recover what we left pending on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, Monday “retrieves”, “picks up again”, “recovers” what remained pending. Often not even any sort of shadow of anxiety is cast over us on account of starting the coming week. We take up our life again “as if nobody felt like it”.

On Monday the whole week is seen all together. Each day is like a wall of ice. Friday is there at the end. It is the last wall of ice. We see the week like a parallelepiped of dense and gigantic ice. We can see through it as far as the end: Friday, Thursday, Wednesday and, immediately, “tomorrow”, Tuesday. We can also see the next week and those close to it. To live each day and each week is to drill through and cross the layers of time. To drill through and transpose the block, layer by layer, from the surface of the first layer, which we have in front of us, up to the front surface of the last layer, there at the end.

When picking things up again, we do not only retrieve what was left pending, while often even forgetting essential details that have been, as it were, wiped out of our perception. We pick things up in another way, based on the time that again becomes unconcluded over five days and five nights. We see each day of the week projected with its own material; we see all the days of the week together, one after the other. But we know that we have to pass through all the moments that make up each day and all the days of the week until the weekend arrives again.

On Monday night it seems that we have already plunged into the middle of the week. What happened during the weekend becomes ever more submerged. It sinks and tends to fall into the sphere of oblivion. It becomes “last weekend”. A unit of meaning established in a few brief seconds. It is looked at in an empty way.

When the weekend becomes past, it encloses in itself 48 hours of contents: the states of mind one was in, the impressions one had, the mental states one passed through, the feelings that made themselves felt, calculations that were done, tasks that were performed, techniques that were used, persons one thought about and with whom one was, books that were read, TV programmes that were watched, walks one went on, what one ate, the outside world and the inner world. All the contents distributed over 48 hours are, as it were, wrapped up and rolled up into a single instant, which compacted them. While time carries off the weekend, a new horizon is constituted. Or we come to turn towards this new horizon, which has already opened up without us realising it.

CHAPTER THREE

TUESDAY

“Down that falls. Ferns then, or white feathers, for ever and ever.”
Virginia Woolf, *Monday or Tuesday*¹

On Monday night we are so tired that we would like another weekend. But, the worst is over. We have conquered the world. We are still in play! After this comes Tuesday and suddenly it is as if everything were running headlong towards the next weekend. There is a moment of anxiety. The week all rolled up in itself—without developments, without being laid out with all its contents—springs up before us compacted and compressed, like the weekend gone by. Only we do not know how it is going to develop and unfold itself. This compact and compressed mass of time to come causes pressure on Monday night.

What is it with Tuesday that distinguishes it from Monday and Wednesday? And from the other days? Being the day after Monday and before Wednesday? Being in the wake of Monday? And of the past weekend? Preceding Wednesday? Being the first full day in the week? Having the weekend located in last week? But what makes it “the” day of the week that is Tuesday? Being what spontaneously occurs on this Tuesday and not on any other day of the week? Possessing what happens on Tuesdays? Having various names in other languages (“Dienstag”, “mardi”, “dies Martis”, “terça feira”)?

And, in life, does one not have the perception that Tuesday has a form? Not always being the same Tuesday as at college, at high school or at university. Not having always the same backdrop. There being different periods in our lives. There being Tuesdays for sport and for other things. Are there Tuesdays as different as persons, countries or activities are? Are they different if they fall on working or non-working days? And has each person had Tuesdays in their life that are different from each other? Is there a face for Tuesday or not?

¹ Virginia Woolf, *Monday or Tuesday* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921).

Tuesday appears to us like another person appears to us. We do not know the overwhelming majority of people alive. We belong to a particular generation and, consequently, we do not know the overwhelming majority of past or future generations either. But we are inevitably with others. We are with the others who, without us divining it, were present and ended up disappearing. We are with others who have always been present. But even those whom we never knew are not “nothings”. They are worthy of being recorded. We know they exist. The orphans, widows and widowers, the survivors, live together with absences more present than many people present in their lives.

We live in a clearing between generations. We are stretched out between the beginning of the life of the oldest person we know when still in our infancy and the end of the life of the youngest person we will get to know when we are at the end of ours. The confines of a generation go beyond the confines of the life of a person. The oldest people we come across at the beginning of our lives are already not here. We still remember what they told us of their youth. They transported us to times gone by that already only existed in their heads and now in ours too. When we get old and tell a child how we were in our youth, we let him know about content that he did not experience and live directly, but to which he in some way has access. The child is going to survive us.

But we also exist in the contemporaneity of “our folks”. “Our” friends and relatives are not just lives that are entwined with ours or close to us. Each look by the other modifies the constitution of mine. It does not only stress and underline contents but also erases them and makes one forget them. My own look is the other’s. When someone dies, this look gets erased and everything is naked because it is divested of the covering represented by the other’s look. There are moments with absences when they go about their business. There are moments of reunion: at night or next weekend. Or someday.

There are many encounters, encroachments of our look by others. There are many missed engagements and deaths. “In the first look promise. In the first look farewell.” We are with the others who are about to stop being. We are with the others who came, stayed and left. They live life away from us. Sometimes we know of them, but the overwhelming majority of the time we live through their absence: an absence with body and volume, overwhelming, a black hole. The nothing that they left us. We are all these others through whom we project our lives. We carry them dead, blind, mute in the silence of their absence.

This structure involving the announcing of the other is what happens in the week with the day of Tuesday. Tuesday precedes Wednesday, which is