



Social Acceleration in Late Modernity: From Resonance to Religious Transcendence

Carlos F. De Angelis

Facultad de Ciencias Sociales – UBA, Argentina

cfdeangelis@gmail.com

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Abstract

Social acceleration is not an accidental feature of contemporary societies but the organizing principle of a modernity that must continuously increase its rates of production, change, and innovation in order to sustain its own conditions of existence. This article examines whether qualitatively different temporalities can be produced within this structure, allowing for a relationship with time that is not reducible to the logic of optimization. The argument unfolds on three interconnected levels. First, acceleration is analyzed as a form of temporal domination that affects distinct social groups differently and colonizes the subjective experience of time in ways that go beyond mere scarcity. Second, the two most influential responses in contemporary theoretical debate, resonance theory and the theses of polar inertia and exhaustion, are examined with attention to both their specific contributions and the limitations they share. Third, religious and contemplative traditions are explored as systems of temporal organization that operate through mechanisms of decoupling from capitalist speed, and this dimension is articulated within the sociological perspective of plural temporalities. The article draws on the sociology of religion, Berger's concept of the sacred canopy, Taylor's account of secular modernity, Casanova's analysis of public religion, Hervieu-Leger's notion of religion as a chain of memory, and the phenomenology of religious experience developed by James and Otto, arguing that religious traditions do not persist in modernity despite acceleration but because they offer precisely what an accelerated society cannot produce from within its own logic: collective pause, structured silence, anxiety-free waiting, non-linear cycles, and transcendence as a horizon of meaning irreducible to utility. A critical account of religious formations compatible with or reinforcing acceleration, from prosperity theology to corporate mindfulness, is incorporated to qualify the argument and to specify the conditions under which temporal decoupling is genuine rather than compensatory.

Keywords: *Social Acceleration; Alternative Temporalities; Resonance; Polar Inertia; Religion and Modernity; Transcendence; Dynamic Stabilization; Temporal Plurality*

Introduction

The experience of time always running short, of each day ending with more unfinished tasks than it began with, and of the future shrinking while the present becomes a meaningless point of transit, is not an individual pathology or an anecdotal feature of contemporary life. It is the subjective effect of a social structure that organizes the material reproduction of modern societies around acceleration as its guiding principle. Understanding this principle is the prerequisite for any serious discussion about whether, and to what extent, it can be interrupted, limited, or transformed.

Social acceleration, as conceptualized in contemporary theoretical debate, refers not only to the speed of technical processes or the volume of information circulating per second on digital networks. More fundamentally, it refers to a mechanism of systemic reproduction: modern societies require continuous growth, innovation, and optimization to sustain their conditions of existence, so that deceleration is not a luxury the system can forego but a structural threat to its survival. This mechanism, which the specialized literature has termed dynamic stabilization (Rosa, 2013), implies that speed is not an excess of late capitalism but its constitutive principle. The question of whether it is possible to simply decelerate society has no satisfactory answer at the structural level: it is not, at least not without a transformation of the conditions that produce acceleration. This conclusion should not, however, lead to a closed pessimism about the possibilities of resistance or alternative practice. The problem is not whether the structure can be reversed suddenly, but what kind of cracks it produces in its own functioning and what cultural, institutional, and symbolic resources allow those cracks to be inhabited.

The relevant question, therefore, is not whether acceleration can be halted globally, but rather what qualitatively distinct temporalities persist, are reconstituted, or can be constructed in the interstices of an accelerated society. This reformulation shifts the debate from the macro level of systemic transformation to the meso level of temporal decoupling mechanisms: the social, cultural, and institutional devices that allow for experiences of time not reducible to the logic of optimization. At this level, the answers available in social theory, philosophy, and the sociology of religion prove most productive, though they have not been adequately brought into dialogue with one another.

This article proposes to examine three lines of response. The first reconstructs the critical-theoretical account of acceleration as a form of temporal domination. The second analyses the responses that have circulated most influentially in contemporary debate, resonance theory and the theses of exhaustion and inertia, attending to their specific contributions and to the limits they share. The third examines religious and contemplative traditions as systems of temporal organization with a demonstrated capacity for decoupling from accelerated modernity. The argument proceeds through a method of comparative conceptual reconstruction: rather than generating new empirical data, it critically reviews and rearticulates an existing body of theoretical literature drawn from social theory, sociology of religion, and phenomenology of religious experience. The selection of traditions analyzed is guided by their theoretical centrality in the relevant literature and by their structural diversity, which allows for a comparative identification of the mechanisms through which temporal decoupling operates. The conclusions synthesize the findings and advance a hypothesis concerning the social function of traditions of transcendence in late modernity.

1. Acceleration as Temporal Domination: Structure, Subjectivity, and Inequality

To understand why social acceleration constitutes a theoretical problem rather than simply an empirical description of contemporary life, it is necessary to consider the transformation that occurs in temporal experience when time is subordinated to the logic of speed. In late capitalist societies, time has ceased to function as a dimension of lived experience and has become a scarce resource subject to management, distribution, and optimization. This transformation has consequences that go beyond the individual feeling of haste or scarcity: when time becomes a resource, any activity that does not produce a measurable result is automatically disqualified as unproductive. Silence is emptiness, waiting is

inefficiency, contemplation is idleness, and purposeless conversation is distraction. The problem does not lie in any incapacity of individuals to concentrate or to rest, but in the fact that the social structure systematically penalizes forms of temporal relation not articulated with the logic of accumulation.

This penalty does not operate solely through direct labour market pressure or explicit institutional coercion. What is theoretically more significant is that it operates through internalization: the performance society, analyzed by Han (2015) and Rosa (2013) from complementary perspectives, does not require external coercion because individuals have internalized the logic of performance and apply it to themselves in the name of freedom, self-realization, and personal excellence. Han (2015) has argued that one of the most significant effects of this transformation is the disappearance of contemplative time, that is, time that produces no measurable results, which does not advance towards any predefined goal, which is simply inhabited. Activities sustained by this kind of time, among them meditation, prayer, reflective walking, purposeless reading, and conversation without an agenda, have been relegated to the margins of social life not because they have been prohibited but because the value structure of the performance society renders those who practice them subject to the suspicion of irresponsibility. Berardi (2011) elaborates the same dynamic from the perspective of cognitive capitalism: the digital economy does not merely compete for workers' time; it fully mobilizes their attentional, affective, and cognitive capacities, generating what he calls *soul exhaustion*, a condition in which the nervous system reaches its processing limit and responds with withdrawal, depression, or panic. This exhaustion is neither an individual pathology nor an avoidable side effect of the system; it is a structural contradiction between the demands of a speed-driven economic model and the biological and psychological conditions of the individuals who inhabit it.

Acceleration, however, is not merely a matter of cultural valuation or psychic effect. Kavanagh, Lightfoot, and Lilley (2007) have argued that it also constitutes an ideological construct that naturalizes speed as a condition of progress, so that those who decelerate lose not only efficiency but also status and social legitimacy. This ideological dimension is relevant because it explains why acceleration is so difficult to resist even for those who have clearly identified its effects on their own experience: questioning speed involves confronting not only an economic structure but also the forms of social valuation that structure has internalized in subjects. Anders (2011), in a diagnosis that anticipates much of this debate, formulated the same contradiction in terms of Promethean shame: human beings can no longer keep pace with the artefacts they produce, which generates an ontological humiliation expressed as permanent inadequacy in the face of the demands of the technological environment. The connection between this phenomenological observation and the sociological analysis of ideological naturalization is significant: both point to the same mechanism through which the temporal order of acceleration is reproduced below the threshold of explicit justification. What Stiegler (2009) calls the destruction of *tertiary retention*, the loss of the collective symbolic memory that gives experience its historical depth, names the cultural cost of this process at a level that neither purely sociological nor purely psychological analysis can capture on its own.

There is a dimension of the problem that theoretical discussions on acceleration do not always articulate with sufficient precision: the relationship between speed and the formation of meaning. When the pace of daily life exceeds the threshold beyond which it becomes possible to integrate experiences into coherent narratives, individuals lose not only time but the capacity to construct meaning from what happens to them. Meaning requires elaboration, and elaboration requires time to process, to connect, and to solidify experience into understanding. Acceleration, by compressing this time for elaboration, does not only exhaust; it empties. It produces an accumulation of experiences that cannot be integrated and therefore do not become learning, memory, or identity. This emptying has been articulated from distinct perspectives by Koselleck (2004), who identified the widening gap between space of experience and horizon of expectation as the defining temporal problem of modernity, and by Adam (1990), whose concept of *Timescape* draws attention to the multiple temporal dimensions, including rhythms, sequences, durations, and orientations, that coexist in tension within any social phenomenon. What Adam's

framework adds to the sociological analysis of acceleration is the recognition that not all temporal dimensions are equally colonizable: some strata of social time, biological time, natural time, the long-term institutional time of durable cultural formations, have their own rhythms that resist indefinite compression and that can serve as footholds for the construction of alternative temporalities.

One dimension of the problem that social theory has persistently underestimated is its relationship to inequality. Acceleration does not affect all social groups with the same intensity or the same meaning. For the segments of the working class most exposed to precarity, acceleration does not produce a sense of dynamic possibility but of instability and permanent threat: the accelerated obsolescence of skills, the impossibility of projecting the future with any degree of certainty, and the demand for permanent availability are forms of temporal violence whose specificity cannot be reduced to a general analysis of social speed. Furthermore, there is a pronounced asymmetry in the capacity to escape the pressure of speed: those with more economic, cultural, or relational resources have a greater capacity to regulate their own relationship with time, to afford contemplative retreats, to reduce working hours, or to work under conditions of relative temporal autonomy. Elias (1992) observed that time is a social symbol whose production and distribution are permeated by power relations; the struggle for time is thus also a constitutive dimension of social inequality, and access to alternative temporalities is a resource distributed unequally across social positions.

An additional dimension of the problem concerns the relationship between acceleration and attention. The digital economy has transformed attention into the scarcest and most coveted resource in the system: every platform, every interface design competes to capture fractions of attentional time that can be converted into data and commercial value. This attention economy has direct consequences for the structure of temporal experience. Fragmented attention, distributed among multiple simultaneous flows of information without hierarchy or continuity, cannot produce the kind of profound temporal experience required by both resonance and contemplation. This qualitative difference in temporal experience is one of the most concrete mechanisms through which acceleration destroys the conditions for alternative temporalities, and it is precisely the mechanism to which contemplative practices, examined in the third section, respond most directly. Couldry and Mejias (2019) have extended this analysis to the global dimension, showing how data colonialism imposes the temporal logics of platform capitalism on populations whose cultural traditions operate according to different temporal grammars, thereby establishing a connection between the phenomenology of accelerated attention and the political economy of temporal extraction that neither analysis can sustain on its own.

This diagnosis leads to a conclusion that guides the rest of the analysis: temporal domination produced by acceleration is never total. It cannot be, because the complete homogenization of social time would destroy the conditions for the reproduction of society itself. Biological time, geological time, the institutional time of the long term, and the symbolic time of cultural traditions all have their own rhythms that cannot be accelerated indefinitely without producing collapses of different kinds. This structural resistance of temporal plurality does not eliminate the problem of domination, but it does indicate that there are cracks in the system that can be inhabited and expanded. It is in this direction that the resources for a different relationship with time must be sought.

2. Resonance, Exhaustion, and Inertia: Convergences and Limits of Theoretical Responses

The responses to the diagnosis of social acceleration that have circulated most influentially in contemporary theoretical debate can be grouped into two families which, starting from different premises and emphasizing different aspects of the problem, share a common intuition: acceleration produces forms of experience that cannot be sustained indefinitely and that, sooner or later, generate conditions for their own interruption. Examining both families carefully allows for the identification of their specific contributions and, above all, of the limitations they share, limitations that neither can overcome on their own.

The resonance proposal originates in a diagnosis that shifts the focus from speed to relationship. For Rosa (2019), what defines the pathology of late modernity is not that everything moves too fast, but that the relationship of subjects with the world has been transformed into one of availability and control. The environment, including people, institutions, and nature, ceases to be able to engage the subject and becomes a set of objects available for manipulation and management. Rosa calls this condition the muteness of the world and understands it as the accumulated effect of centuries of instrumental rationalization that have progressively emptied the environment of its capacity to respond to the subject in ways that are not anticipated or controlled. Resonance, in contrast, designates a relationship in which the subject and the world affect each other in a non-instrumental way: something in the environment engages the subject in a manner that modifies them, that calls upon them to respond in ways that were not foreseen, that produces a transformation not reducible to any planned outcome. This relationship cannot be produced at will or planned instrumentally, which places it structurally outside the scope of performance logic. Rosa (2019) identifies religion as one of the historically central domains of resonance experience and develops the notion of *vertical resonance* to describe the experience of relation to something that transcends the ordinary self, a relationship with God, nature, art, or what he terms the totality of being. This formulation comes very close to what the phenomenology of religious experience describes as the characteristic content of intense religious states, and the proximity raises a question that Rosa's framework does not fully resolve: whether religion is a form of resonance, or whether resonance is rather a secularized translation of categories originally developed within religious traditions. If the latter is the case, the concept of resonance may systematically underestimate what is specifically at stake in the religious experience it partially captures.

What is theoretically most powerful about the resonance proposal is that it shifts discussion from the quantitative to the qualitative dimension of time. It is not about having more free time but about inhabiting those hours in a qualitatively different way; not about slowing down the objective pace of life but about transforming the orientation of temporal experience. This distinction allows for connections with very different traditions, from critical pedagogy to contemplative philosophy, which have insisted that the transformation of temporal experience is a matter of orientation and disposition rather than quantity. Shim (2022) has explored this link in the field of education, arguing that a pedagogy oriented by resonance does not seek to make learning more efficient but to rebuild students' capacity to relate meaningfully to knowledge and to others, a capacity that requires precisely the temporal conditions that accelerated schooling systematically destroys. Zalec (2021) has argued that religious experience functions as a privileged domain of resonance because the logic of control is structurally more difficult to impose within it: religious silence cannot be managed or prayer optimized without destroying what makes them meaningful, and this internal resistance to instrumentalization is not an accidental limitation but a constitutive feature. Quintana and Combalia (2023) have taken this argument further, proposing that resonance theory can itself be read as a secularisation of religious experience, which would imply that the theoretical resources of the sociology of religion are not peripheral supplements to the acceleration debate but among its unacknowledged conditions of possibility.

The resonance proposal faces, however, a limitation that its critics have identified and that is difficult to overcome from within the proposed framework. Fuchs (2020) observes that Rosa accurately describes the subjective conditions of possibility for resonance but leaves insufficiently addressed the question of how those conditions can be institutionalized in societies structured by economic imperatives of perpetual growth. If resonance depends on subjective conditions that in turn depend on specific material conditions, then the proposal risks becoming a normative ideal accessible only to those whose basic needs are already met: a therapeutic orientation that leaves intact the structural conditions that produce temporal alienation. This is a real limit, and the comparison with religious traditions, which have institutionalized collective mechanisms of temporal decoupling independently of the individual dispositions of their members, is significant at precisely this point. The Sabbath does not depend on whether its observers feel in a resonant mood; it is a collectively binding institution that produces the

pause regardless of individual preference. This structural difference between resonance as a subjective disposition and temporal decoupling as a social institution is one of the most important contributions that the sociology of religion can make to the acceleration debate.

The second set of responses starts from a different premise: rather than proposing a different relationship with time, it argues that acceleration itself generates the conditions for its paralysis and exhaustion. Virilio (1986) formulated the concept of polar inertia to designate the paradoxical effect of extreme speed: when everything reaches the individual instantaneously and ubiquitously, physical movement and concrete agency become superfluous. Absolute speed does not expand experience; it replaces it with its simulation. This argument has a political dimension that goes beyond the phenomenology of experience: for Virilio, the control of speed is also a form of political control, so that acceleration is not a neutral effect of technological development but a power device that concentrates the possibilities for action in the hands of those who control the flows. Baudrillard (1991) arrived at structurally analogous conclusions from a different perspective. The hyperspeed of sign circulation produces what he called hyperreality: a regime in which simulacra replace referents and the acceleration of information generates indifference rather than knowledge. The result is not a society of informed and active subjects but of saturated and reactive subjects who respond compulsively to stimulus they cannot process. This description converges with Han's (2015) diagnosis of the exhaustion of the performance subject, although it starts from different premises: where Han identifies the violence of positivity and self-domination, Baudrillard identifies the neutralization of difference through sign saturation. The convergence of both in the diagnosis of subjective emptiness points to a common mechanism, which Berardi (2011) articulates in more materialist terms as the structural contradiction between the demands of cognitive capitalism and the biological and psychological conditions of the workers it deploys. Illich's (1973) concept of *counterproductivity* provides a more general formulation of the same paradox: beyond a certain threshold of development, modern institutions produce more of the problems they are supposed to solve. Applied to time, this implies that acceleration, past the threshold that generates the conditions of exhaustion and inertia, produces more temporal scarcity than it resolves.

The problem of temporal acceleration cannot be separated from the problem of collective memory, a connection that exhaustion and inertia theories register but do not adequately theorize. Accelerated societies not only lose the capacity to project into the future; they also lose the capacity to maintain the past as an active resource for orientation. When cycles of novelty shorten to the point where anything produced more than a few years ago appears outdated, accumulated experience ceases to function as a substrate of collective wisdom. Religious traditions and contemplative practices are, among other things, mechanisms for transmitting memory over the long term: they keep alive forms of experience and meaning that the cycle of novelty would otherwise discard, thereby producing a temporal continuity that accelerated modernity cannot generate on its own. This mnemonic function of religious traditions, which Hervieu-Leger (2000) analyses as the defining characteristic of religion understood as a chain of memory, has not received sufficient attention in the debates on acceleration and constitutes one of the most productive points of contact between the two literatures.

The limitation of the exhaustion and inertia family is, however, equally clear. Polar inertia and exhaustion describe structural conditions that acceleration produces, but they are not, in themselves, alternatives to the logic of acceleration. Collapse is not a policy. Exhaustion can force an interruption, but that interruption does not in itself produce the conditions for a different relationship with time; it produces only the temporary absence of the usual conditions, without offering the resources to build something different in that empty space. The point of convergence between both families of theoretical response is, on this account, more fruitful than their differences. Both resonance and the limits of exhaustion point to the same fundamental need: the need for time not driven by production, time that allows for the recovery of the capacity to be affected, time that introduces into the fabric of social life a temporal logic distinct from that of constant optimization. It is at this point of convergence that religious and contemplative traditions offer their most specific theoretical contribution: not as a mystical alternative to social analysis,

but as institutional and symbolic systems that have articulated for centuries the practical conditions of collective pause, silence, waiting, and transcendence, and that have demonstrated a capacity for social reproduction that neither of the two theoretical families examined can match.

3. Transcendence, Contemplation, and Temporal Plurality

The discussion on religion and modernity was marked, for most of the twentieth century, by the secularisation thesis, according to which advanced modernization would necessarily entail the decline of religious beliefs and practices. This thesis has proven considerably less robust than its proponents assumed. Contemporary debate is oriented more towards understanding the conditions under which religious traditions are transformed, adapted, and in many contexts revitalized within modern societies. Berger (1967), one of the earliest and most systematic proponents of the secularisation thesis, substantially revised his position in later decades, arguing that modernity produces not religious decline but religious pluralism and the proliferation of competing sacred canopies. Casanova (1994) updated this analysis by arguing that the secularisation thesis was insufficiently attentive to the multiple publics that religious traditions continue to occupy, and that the differentiation of religion from other social spheres does not necessarily entail its privatization or decline. Taylor (2007) provides perhaps the most philosophically developed account of the relationship between modernity and religion: his genealogy of secular modernity traces how the immanent frame, the cultural horizon within which transcendence is no longer a background condition of experience, was historically constituted, and argues that this constitution does not eliminate but rather transforms the conditions under which transcendence can be encountered. What Taylor's analysis adds to the acceleration debate is the observation that the problem of speed is inseparable from the problem of what he calls fullness: the experience of ordinary time as oriented towards something that exceeds it, an orientation that secular modernity has made structurally more difficult to sustain without eliminating it as a human possibility.

From the perspective of the problem this article examines, what is most relevant is not the doctrinal dimension of religion or the demographic question of secularisation, but rather the temporal function that religious traditions fulfil in contemporary societies. Religious traditions are, among other things, systems of temporal organization: they structure the experience of time through rhythms, interruptions, cycles, and forms of waiting that cannot be reduced to the logic of optimization. This is the dimension that makes them relevant to the problem of acceleration, and it is the dimension that has been most neglected by both the acceleration literature and the sociology of religion. Hervieu-Leger (2000) opens a productive connection between the two when she argues that what defines religion sociologically is not its doctrinal content but its claim to an authority derived from a past that exceeds individual and even collective living memory. This claim to deep temporal continuity, to a tradition that links practitioners to predecessors reaching back beyond the horizon of lived experience, constitutes precisely the kind of temporal anchoring that accelerated modernity, with its structural tendency to dissolve durable collective memories, cannot reproduce. Davie's (1994) concept of vicarious religion adds a further sociological complexity: in many contemporary contexts, religious institutions are maintained by a practicing minority whose activity serves a representative function for a larger population that does not practice regularly but retains a diffuse orientation towards the transcendent and the durable. This arrangement suggests that the temporal resources of religious tradition may remain socially available in conditions of advanced secularisation, though in a form that is not equally accessible to all.

The phenomenology of religious experience provides a further and distinct level of analysis that sociological accounts of institutional persistence do not capture on their own. James (1902), in the most systematic examination of the varieties of religious experience undertaken in the social sciences, identifies the sense of a widening of the self as one of the characteristic features of intense religious states: the ordinary boundaries of the subject are relaxed, and the subject finds itself in relation to something larger. Crucially, this transformation is also a temporal transformation: the ordinary experience of time as a series of pressured moments gives way to something more like a sense of simultaneity or

depth, what James calls the experience of reconciliation with the universe. Otto (1917) adds to this analysis the concept of the *numinous*, the encounter with what he calls the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which suspends the ordinary instrumental orientations of the subject and produces an experience of the present as saturated with significance that cannot be predicted or controlled. Neither James nor Otto argues that this experience is exclusively available within institutional religion, but their analyses establish that certain forms of practice systematically produce transformations of temporal experience that go well beyond the production of a pause. What religious practice offers, at its phenomenological depth, is not simply an interruption of acceleration but a reorientation of the subject's relationship to time as such: a movement from the future-directed, calculative temporality of the performance society towards a form of temporal experience organized around depth, presence, and orientation towards something irreducible to utility.

The most theoretically developed case in the acceleration debate concerning the temporal function of religion is that of the Sabbath in the Jewish tradition. Heschel (1951) formulated this argument with a clarity that remains productive for social theory. Western civilization has constructed, in his account, a civilization of space, oriented towards conquest, accumulation, and the technical transformation of the material world. The Sabbath represents the institution of a radically different temporality: not a restorative pause to resume production, but a positive affirmation that time has an intrinsic value not reducible to its utility. The sanctification of time rather than of space is the specific contribution of the Jewish tradition to human experience. What is theoretically decisive for the acceleration debate is not the theological content of this argument but its social structure: the Sabbath is not an individual practice of voluntary disconnection that the individual cultivates according to personal preferences and available resources, but a collective institution with binding consequences for the entire community. The suspension of work, commerce, and the technical manipulation of the world does not depend on the subjective disposition of individuals but on a social structure that produces the pause in a mandatory, collective, and periodic manner. This institutional and collective dimension is precisely what the resonance proposal cannot articulate on its own: rather than a subjective disposition that must be cultivated with individual resources, it is a social structure that generates the pause regardless of personal preference. An analogous structure, though with its own content and logic, operates in the Islamic practice of the five daily prayers (*salat*). The structuring of the day around fixed moments of collective orientation towards the transcendent creates, across the course of ordinary life, a series of interruptions to the temporality of production and consumption that are not individually negotiable. Nasr (1996) has argued that Islamic religious practice introduces a rhythm qualitatively different from that imposed by the modern economy: prayer time cannot be shortened or compressed without being destroyed in its meaning. This internal resistance to compression is, from the perspective of acceleration analysis, a structural characteristic of considerable theoretical importance: the practice cannot be optimized without ceasing to be prayer, which makes it one of the few areas of contemporary life that, by its constitutive nature, resists colonization by the logic of speed.

The Buddhist tradition offers a different angle on the same problem. Where Judaism and Islam institutionalize the periodic interruption of activity as a mechanism of temporal decoupling, Buddhism proposes a more radical transformation of the very structure of the subject's temporal experience. The practice of mindfulness, articulated for the contemporary context by teachers such as Thich Nhat Hanh (1999), directly addresses the temporal pathologies produced by accelerated modernity: the mind that inhabits an accelerated society does not inhabit the present but oscillates compulsively between rumination on the past and anxious anticipation of the future. What Buddhism proposes is not to slow down the world but to transform the subject's relationship with time so that external speed loses its power to capture internal experience. Suzuki (1970) had pointed to a complementary dimension when describing *satori*: Zen insight, precisely because it cannot be planned or produced instrumentally, constitutes a radical interruption of the logic of optimization. However, a critical qualification is required here, and it is one that bears on the broader argument of this article. Žižek's (2001) analysis of the appropriation of

Buddhist mindfulness practices by corporate culture argues that what corporate wellness programs extract from Buddhist practice is not the transformation of the subject's temporal existence but a technique of stress management that enables the accelerated subject to inhabit an unchanged temporal structure more comfortably. Mindfulness in this corporate form does not interrupt the logic of optimization; it makes that logic more sustainable. This critical observation specifies the conditions under which contemplative practice functions as genuine temporal decoupling rather than as compensation: the question is not whether mindfulness techniques are derived from Buddhist sources but whether they preserve or sever the relationship with the framework of meaning, the doctrine of impermanence, the communal structure, the orientation towards liberation, that gives those techniques their specific temporal depth.

Hindu tradition introduces a perspective on time that contrasts more radically with Western modernity than any of the preceding traditions: an alternative to linear and progressive temporality. Hindu cosmology, with its cyclical conception of time articulated around the four yugas or cosmic ages, is not merely a belief system about the origin and destiny of the universe. It is also a structure of meaning that organizes temporal experience in a way radically different from that presupposed by the ideology of progress. Radhakrishnan (1953) argued that the cyclical notion of time allows for a relationship with history in which repetition and return carry positive value: they are not symptoms of stagnation but forms of renewal. Much of the ideological legitimation of capitalist acceleration rests on a secularized theology of linear progress that assumes constant forward movement as the necessary and correct way to inhabit time. A cyclical temporal structure not only challenges this premise but offers an alternative framework in which indefinite linear acceleration appears as a culturally specific anomaly rather than a universal condition.

In the Western philosophical tradition, the recovery of contemplation as a form of relating to time not reducible to utility has found two of its most precise formulations in Pieper (1952) and Hadot (1995), whose contributions articulate a critique of acceleration *avant la lettre*. Pieper revived the Aristotelian and Thomistic distinction between *negotium* and *otium*, work and genuine leisure, to point out that what the performance society has destroyed is not merely the possibility of rest but the possibility of inhabiting a time without purpose: the time of gratuitous contemplation, of play that pursues no outcome, of conversation without an agenda. Hadot (1995) reconstructed the spiritual exercises of ancient philosophy, from the Stoics to the Neoplatonists, showing that philosophy in antiquity was primarily a practice of self-transformation that included systematic exercises aimed at modifying the subject's relationship with time, death, and the present moment. Stoic meditation on finitude, Epicurean attentiveness exercises, and Platonic contemplation are not primitive precursors of modern wellness techniques; they are elaborate practices for transforming temporal experience that produce a relationship with the present qualitatively different from that of the subject captured in the rush of ordinary life. Heidegger (1962) connects these philosophical reflections with a critique of modernity that has direct implications for the analysis of acceleration: according to his diagnosis, everyday existence in modernity is organized by a compulsive occupation of time that functions as a flight from the confrontation with finitude, a compulsive occupation structurally analogous to the logic of acceleration itself.

An examination of these traditions suggests a pattern that deserves to be formulated with precision: all of them, regardless of their specific doctrinal content, share a common temporal structure oriented towards producing what might be called non-instrumental availability. The Jewish Sabbath, Islamic prayer, Buddhist meditation, Hindu cyclical time, and the contemplative leisure of the Western philosophical tradition do not pursue any outcome external to themselves; their value lies precisely in the fact that they open up a temporal space not oriented towards any end beyond the experience itself. This structure is the exact opposite of the logic of performance, which only legitimizes activities on the basis of their results. From the perspective of resonance theory, this convergence is not accidental: contemplative traditions produce the conditions of possibility for resonance that accelerated modernity systematically destroys. Kim (2023) has argued, from the perspective of Christian theology, that religious faith offers a form of vertical resonance that involves a relationship with something that transcends the

subject and cannot be produced by the subject alone, a form of encounter that shares with all the traditions analyzed the characteristic of being, by its constitutive nature, resistant to acceleration.

Articulating these traditions within a common analytical framework requires incorporating the sociological perspective of plural temporalities. Gurvitch (1964) identified multiple irreducible forms of social time that coexist in any social formation: long-term time, waiting time, alternating time, cyclical time, and time of creative explosion, among others. This plurality is not merely an empirical description of temporal diversity; it is also a normative statement about the constitutively plural nature of social time. What this implies for the analysis of acceleration is that temporal homogenization can never be complete: destroying it entirely would mean destroying the conditions for the reproduction of society itself. Temporal plurality is not a weakness of the system in the face of acceleration but a structural resistance that operates independently of the will of subjects and that indicates the real limits of temporal colonization.

Koselleck (2004) articulated this intuition in historical terms through the concept of layers of time. History does not unfold in homogeneous time but in the superimposition of temporal strata with their own speeds and logics. Modernity has accelerated the most superficial stratum, that of events, political transformations, and economic cycles, but has failed to modify the deeper temporalities of long-term geological, biological, and cultural structures. Religious traditions are, from this perspective, deep temporal layers: they have survived empires, industrial revolutions, and technological transformations of a magnitude comparable to that of contemporary acceleration. They are not pre-modern remnants that the modernization process has not yet managed to dissolve; they are temporal strata with their own logics that resist, precisely because of their depth and symbolic density, the pressures of the accelerated surface. This perspective also allows for a reformulation of the secularisation question: if religious traditions are deep temporal strata with their own logics of reproduction, then the decline of formal religious participation in some Western societies does not necessarily equate to the disappearance of the temporal resources those traditions offer. What happens is that these resources are redistributed, reformulated, and in some cases partially secularized without losing their fundamental temporal structure. Secular meditation practices, digital detox retreats, and contemplation-oriented pedagogical approaches are, to a considerable extent, attempts to preserve or reconstitute temporal resources that religious traditions have institutionalized for centuries, even when the doctrinal and communal framework that gave those resources their original coherence is absent.

These considerations also require engaging with the critical dimension of the argument: not all forms of contemporary religion resist the temporal logic of acceleration. Illouz (2008) has shown how late modern spirituality frequently reconstitutes religious practice as a form of self-optimization, a technology of the self-oriented towards the production of success, health, and emotional wellbeing. Prosperity theology and its variants do not interrupt the instrumental temporality of the accelerated subject; they provide it with additional resources. The practices of self-improvement and affective management that characterize this religiosity are not phenomenologically distinguishable from the productivity-oriented practices of secular self-help culture. Bauman (2000) anticipates this development in his analysis of liquid modernity: the dissolution of durable institutional forms produces a religious landscape in which belonging is episodic, commitment is provisional, and the relationship between the practitioner and the tradition is mediated by the same logics of consumer choice that governs other domains of life. Liquid religion does not construct the kind of durable temporal architecture that Heschel describes; it provides, at most, temporary interruptions to an otherwise unmodified accelerated existence. The distinction between religion as temporal decoupling and religion as temporal acceleration is not a theological distinction between authentic and inauthentic faith; it is a sociological and phenomenological distinction between forms of practice that do and do not transform the structure of temporal experience, a distinction that the analysis of any specific religious formation must examine empirically rather than assuming in advance.

The hypothesis that emerges from this analysis concerns the function these traditions fulfil in late modernity. The question of why religion persists in the most accelerated and technologically advanced societies, a question that secularisation theory never answered satisfactorily, finds at least a partial answer in the perspective developed here: religious traditions persist not despite acceleration but because acceleration itself generates the demand they satisfy. A society that has colonized almost every sphere of available time with the logic of optimization produces, by its very functioning, an acute scarcity of the temporal resources that only traditions of transcendence can offer in an institutionalized and collective way: the obligatory pause, the non-negotiable alternative rhythm, purposeless contemplation, waiting as a positive practice rather than as inefficiency, and the cycle that does not progress linearly. This is not a proposal for ideological compensation for the costs of progress, nor an escape from the world; it is a sociological observation about the structural demand that accelerated modernity creates and that religious and contemplative traditions, when they retain their temporal depth, are organized to meet.

Conclusions

The argumentative path developed in the preceding sections allows for the formulation of four articulated conclusions that specify the terms in which the problem should be addressed and indicate the most productive lines of inquiry for subsequent research.

The first conclusion concerns the formulation of the problem. The question of how to halt social acceleration is misframed if understood as a question about the reversibility of the dynamic stabilization principle of late capitalism. Such a reversal is not on the immediate horizon of any of the theoretical traditions examined. The theoretically productive question is different: what qualitatively distinct temporalities can be preserved, reconstituted, or constructed within an accelerated society; what social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms allow for the production of experiences of time not reducible to the logic of optimization; and under what conditions can these mechanisms be articulated into collectively sustainable ways of life. This reformulation is not a normative setback but a gain in analytical precision, because it allows for the identification of where the mechanisms of resistance actually operate and where their real limits lie.

The second conclusion concerns the relationship between the available theoretical responses. Resonance and exhaustion are not rival proposals offering alternative solutions to the same problem; they are complementary diagnoses that address it from opposite angles. Resonance accurately describes what is lost when the relationship with the world is instrumentalized and time becomes a resource; exhaustion describes what happens when that loss reaches its physiological and psychological limit. Neither, however, offers a theory of the resources that allow for the production of alternative temporalities: resonance lacks a theory of institutionalization that would remove it from the realm of individual subjective disposition; exhaustion and polar inertia describe pathologies of the system rather than alternatives to it. The convergence between these two diagnoses points to the direction in which such resources should be sought: in the traditions that have collectively and consistently institutionalized pause, silence, waiting, and transcendence.

The third conclusion concerns the theoretical status of religious and contemplative traditions. These traditions are not pre-modern remnants persisting through cultural inertia, nor are they individual techniques of wellbeing tolerated by modernity on their margins. They are elaborated systems of temporal organization operating at institutional, communal, and subjective levels, and they have demonstrated a capacity for persistence and adaptation that no contemporary theoretical proposal for resisting acceleration can match in terms of social roots and historical depth. Their limitations are real: many contemporary religious formations actively reproduce the temporal logic of acceleration rather than interrupting it, and access to those traditions that do provide genuine temporal decoupling is not equally distributed across social positions. But their existence and persistence demonstrate that the constitutive plurality of social time has not been eliminated by capitalist acceleration, that resources for a different

relationship with time are available, and that social theory which ignores them is working with an incomplete map.

The fourth conclusion, the most speculative and the most fertile for further inquiry, concerns the function these traditions fulfil in late modernity. The hypothesis developed in this article is that religious and contemplative traditions persist not despite acceleration but because acceleration itself creates the demand they satisfy. This hypothesis does not constitute a religious claim, nor does it assume that contemplative traditions are sufficient solutions for transforming the structural conditions that produce acceleration. What it implies, more precisely, is that any social theory aspiring to understand the mechanisms of resistance to temporal domination must incorporate the religious and contemplative dimension as a primary object of analysis: not as a peripheral sociological curiosity but as a historically established system of temporal organization that offers what accelerated modernity cannot produce from within its own logic. The question of whether the mechanisms of temporal decoupling operating within these traditions can be articulated in collective political projects that transcend the communities that practice them remains open for future research. That question would require recognizing that the defense of temporal plurality is not a private matter of conscience but a condition of possibility for the reproduction of social life itself.

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