

## WHERE IS TIME?

BY Nancy Cramer

I feel like I am living in a timeless world. There is only day and night- light and darkness. I ask, "What is time? It has no matter, no physical matter that can be touched or felt. It is purely abstract, something that men long ago developed to guide them in their daily tasks." I have no sense of what day it is, what appointments or calls, if I have for today. I resort to looking at the dateline on my computer if the newspaper has not been delivered yet. Time is ethereal, bodiless, and mobile. I could reach out but not touch it. I cannot smell it or feel it on my face or hair. It is abstraction in its most intimate meaning.

So I start my day often without a purpose, which lends itself to this feeling of nothingness. Yet I know time is something, it is how we organize our day and our world. We spend our lives living on "borrowed time," meaning I think that I took some time meant for another purpose and directed it to my own wishes. To do that I resort to looking at a clock or wristwatch, or the clock on my stove. They often say a different time, within minutes of course, but those minutes may be valuable. I may miss my ride, the train, an airplane, be late to an important meeting or conference. Those tiny gold or black lines or dots on the dial of my watch are my Commander in Chief. I must obey or suffer the consequences.

However, during this "sheltering" I rarely receive a command from my Commander in Chief. A few times I have not heeded them and missed the meeting or appointment. "No big matter," I am told, "everyone forgets some times." But I feel ill at ease, embarrassed, uncomfortable and vow that tomorrow I will organize my day. But during this "sheltering," the usual routine has vanished, the trips outside the apartment carry some risk of infection from the virus. So I sit and ponder. And wonder.

I take action, determine what day of the week it is, check my calendar and appointment book and hope they are up to date. Which I learn they are not, adding to my already discomfort. I have a few clocks scattered in the apartment, they help, and of course my wrist watch. But still there is a pervading sense of timelessness.

It makes me wonder how people hundreds of years ago kept the time in their lives. Did they keep their meetings, their rendezvous, their private and public obligations on time? Using only animal power or their two legs to propel them to their destinations, how did they manage? They did manage. Tea parties were held, councils of war occurred, ships left the docks, and stage coaches picked up and dropped off passengers, who had someone there to meet them. It seems impossible to me, but they did have a sense of time and their lives reflected that sense. Was time measured in small bits? The Battle of Waterloo, for example, lasted less than six hours, determining the fate of Napoleon and France. The First World War was carried out over more than four years. It, however, did not determine the fates of too many peoples. Inventions of machines—the train engine, airplane, car, radio, television et al took many years, and their completion is not yet in sight.

So what is this elusive matter we call Time, and how can we exert more command over it to ease our present discomfort. This period is especially difficult for people who live alone, are elderly, shut-ins, or disabled. I think we have not begun to see the effects of timelessness upon our minds. The demand for mental health will match or exceed the number of coronavirus cases. Each one of us has to create his own passage of life. For some it will mean watching endless hours of television. And snacking. For others, it will provide the long sought opportunity to be creative, to make something, sew something, try a new recipe, get out the woodworking tools,

spade the garden, or just relax.

As long as most of us are able to create our own sense of time, design our own calendar and fill it with enriching opportunities at home, our country will get back on its feet in good shape. Otherwise, I hope the guys in charge have a better plan for this event than they did for the eruption of the virus. We can make time do our bidding, be useful and healthy. We just have to do it.

How do our astronauts deal with the sense of time? Do they receive a wake up call from earth? or set alarm clocks? I am sure they have all varieties of time keepers, but mentally, do they have a sense of time? That is what I am dealing with now. And it is not just me. Some friends missed our "regular" zoom meeting on Tuesday. I scheduled a precious anticipate hair appointment the same time as a zoom Salvation Army board meeting. This morning I missed a 9;30 appt thinking it was at 2 this afternoon. Where is my reality? Where is a sense of order that I have lived all my life with it dictating my actions and activities of the day? As a retired person, I have no 8 to 5 day, Monday through Friday, and I was just getting adjusted to that, then this COVID-19 pandemic hit us with a mighty fist.

I am sure I will get my mind, and thus my body, accustomed to the constraints, or maybe it is lack of constraints in my new daily life. I am a scheduled, fill every minute person, so I know it can be done. And then- when I finally solve the problems of day and night and the 24 hours therein,- hopefully this pandemic will have exhausted itself and disappear. It certainly is exhausting many of us, that's for sure.

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