

Time in Aesthetic Politics: Jacques Rancière on Anachrony

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Abstract:

The issue of time is at the core of Jacques Rancière's aesthetic politics. Anachrony occurs at the very time when the politics of equality pursued by Rancière takes place. The proposal of a positive anachrony is based on Rancière's deconstruction of the concept of anachronism. The Annales School regarded anachronism as the most unforgivable sin in writing history. It adopted a series of poetic means to redeem anachronism and establish the scientific status of historical discourse. Rancière reveals that this historical science, based on linear time and constituting time as a whole, hides profound inequalities and that anachrony is the essence of history, which contains both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Anachrony makes it possible to write the history of the proletarians, who are regarded as heretics, and the proletarians, as a synonym for anachrony, demonstrate the practical possibility and emancipatory potential of anachrony.

Keywords: anachrony; anachronism; aesthetic politics; proletarian; the distribution of the sensible.

Among contemporary Marxist theorists, the most famous ones who relate aesthetics to politics intrinsically rather than extrinsically and point out their consistency are Terry Eagleton in England and Jacques Rancière in France. In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Eagleton (1990) pinpointed that aesthetics is fundamentally political and that modern western aesthetics is a history of ideological struggle. Rancière, in a series of works such as *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* (2000), analyzed the aesthetic nature of the basic strategies of politics. In particular, Rancière takes a unique approach by incorporating the dimension of time into the thinking of aesthetic politics, which opens up a new realm for aesthetic politics and a fresh perspective to discuss the issue of time.

Rancière (2005) made it clear: "Time as a form of distribution of the possible and of the impossible: the investigation of this 'aesthetic' topic has been at the core of my whole research" (p. 23). Here, Rancière places time at the heart of his aesthetics, highlighting that his thinking on time is never purely philosophical. Therefore, Mark Robson (2015) said: "Rancière's work is never not about time, even if this does not mean that his thinking could or should ever be abstracted into a philosophy of time per se" (p. 309). History is vital to Rancière's aesthetic politics because of its connection with time. However, Rancière's involvement in history is not due to the temporality of historical events in general but to a more fundamental question: How can history, a discourse on time, become a science? For him, the answer lies in the poetic mechanism of writing history. The "anachronism" in historical narratives highlights the core issues, such as the operating mechanism of historical poetics. By deconstructing "anachronism," Rancière proposes "anachrony" with radical political connotations, pointing to truth and democracy in historical narratives. While recent studies on Rancière's aesthetic politics have been increasingly fruitful, why does the issue of time figure so prominently in Rancière's thought? Why does history writing adopt a poetic mechanism? Why does anachrony have a positive significance in aesthetic politics? Moreover, what is the so-called anachrony? All of these questions have yet to be discussed in depth.

1. Aesthetic Politics with Time at the Core

Since ancient times, there have been plenty of philosophical discussions on the issue of time. What is unique about Rancière's view of time is that he takes the theory of the distribution of the sensible (i.e., *partage du sensible*) as the cornerstone, on the one hand absorbing the "a priori" nature of time and space representations in Kant's philosophy, and on the other hand injecting the aesthetic politics connotation towards equality into time from practical activities. To understand this, it is necessary first to clarify the theory of the distribution of the sensible, which is the cornerstone of Rancière's system of thought.

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“Partage du sensible” is a critical concept coined by Rancière, which has flexible polysemy. First, the French verb “partager” means, on the one hand, to share something; on the other hand, the premise of sharing implies being divided, and inclusion also implies exclusion, so division or distribution is the second meaning of the verb. Secondly, the distributed object “le sensible” also has a double meaning in English; one is perceptible or sensible, and the other is reasonable or rational. Therefore, *partage du sensible* is not only the division of the sensible but also the division of legitimacy, and the division is not merely limited to external structures but also internalized in the way people perceive all things. In the mutual contact between the commonality of sharing sensible and the distinction of distributing sensible, there lies the impetus and possibility of dissolving the division hierarchy. Thus, rather than focusing on a particular domain, Rancière is concerned with the boundaries that are dynamically generated in the contact between distribution and sharing. Rancière’s work examines these boundaries, and its starting point is aesthetic. On this basis, Rancière developed his unique idea of aesthetic politics. In his view, not only are aesthetics and politics not externally dichotomous, but politics itself is an aesthetic act: “They intermix in any case; politics has its aesthetics, and aesthetics has its politics” (Rancière, 2013b, p. 58). According to Rancière, the aesthetic dimension is inherent in any radical politics of emancipation, an assertion that Žižek (2013) regards as one of Rancière’s most important theoretical contributions (p. 72).

What makes aesthetics and politics equivalent or identical is Rancière’s unique understanding of politics and aesthetics. We usually see politics as the procedure for reaching a collective assemblage or consensus, the distribution of power and roles, and the strategies for justifying these distributions. Nevertheless, Rancière (1999) sees this view as a simplification of politics, naming this system of distribution and justification “police” in *Disagreement*: “The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party’s share or lack of it. But to define this, you first must define the configuration of the perceptible in which one or the other is inscribed. The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise” (p. 29). The resulting police order is a hierarchical social order that distinguishes between qualified and not qualified to participate in the community’s affairs on multiple levels and determines people’s position in society. This division is not just a superficial distinction of social status. However, it points more profoundly to whether a particular group can be understood because those excluded from the police order become invisible and unintelligible.

From this, Rancière (1999) uses the term politics to denote activities against the established police order: “Whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration—that of the part of those who have no part. This break is manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined. Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place’s destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise” (pp. 29-30). Politics is, therefore, the destruction of the existing configuration, making visible and perceptible what was otherwise invisible and imperceptible. It is at this point that politics and aesthetics are linked. The aesthetics that Rancière talks about are in no way about artistic taste or artistic theory and discipline in general; he states that “aesthetics can be understood in a Kantian sense—re-examined perhaps by Foucault—as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” (Rancière, 2013b, p. 8). Aesthetics delineates the boundaries between time and space, the visible and the invisible, the speech and noise, which are the central concerns of politics. Rancière’s aesthetic politics is essentially a question of the distribution of the sensible.

So, in what way is the distributed sensible presented, and how is it possible? It is time and space that provide the place and mediation for the realization of the distribution of the sensible. As Rancière (2005) puts it, “It (the aesthetic) is, first of all, a matter of time and space” (p. 13). Rancière (2005) clarifies that his work on aesthetics “was aimed at reframing the temporal categories by means of which modern and contemporary artistic practices are generally grasped” (p. 19). Because, in Rancière’s view, established temporal categories prevent us from understanding the transformation of modern and contemporary art and its relationship with politics. His discussion of politics “was aimed at breaking the alleged solidarity between emancipatory politics and any kind of one-way direction of History or any kind of ‘grand narrative’” (Rancière, 2005, p. 19) to show that there is no end of politics. Here, Rancière (2019) deals with time as how our place in society is configured and how the public and individual shares are distributed: “Space and time are constructed from the outset not as containers or empty directions, but already as a way of dividing creatures” (p. 67). As Heidegger shows in *Being and Time*, time is identical to presence, and being temporal means being presented, and vice versa.

As early as in his doctoral dissertation, *La Nuit des prolétaires*, Rancière (1981) restated the birth of the workers' movement as an aesthetic movement—an attempt to reconfigure the distribution of time and space in which the proletarians lived. He revealed, “At the core of the emancipation of the workers was an aesthetic revolution. And the core of that revolution was the issue of time” (Rancière, 2005, p. 14). Understanding this can be traced back to Plato's denial in *The Republic* that a person can do two jobs simultaneously: “We didn't allow our shoemaker to try and be a farmer as well—or a weaver or builder. He had to be a shoemaker, to make sure the business of shoemaking was carried out properly. In the same way we assigned a single task to each member of the other occupations—the task he was naturally suited to, and for which he would keep himself free from other tasks, working at it throughout his life, and taking every opportunity to produce good results” (Plato, 2000, p. 57). Plato assigns the shares of time to people according to their different “metallic” attributes, the so-called natural talents, and thus determines the ways of their physical and spiritual existence: the craftsmen of the iron tribe are the day-laborers who produce and reproduce, who have no time for anything other than their own work; while the other group of leisure and late-night people, the gold tribe, are the only ones who have time for the affairs of the community, and they are the supreme council of the city. At the heart of this conception, essentially designed to preserve the established hierarchical order, is the question of the distribution of time. Rancière (2009) notes: “Their ‘absence of time’ is actually a naturalized prohibition written into the very forms of sensory experience. Politics occurs when those who ‘have no’ time take the time necessary to front up as inhabitants of a common space and demonstrate that their mouths really do emit speech capable of making pronouncements on the common, which cannot be reduced to voices signaling pain. This distribution and redistribution of places and identities, this apportioning and reapportioning of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, and of noise and speech constitutes what I call the distribution of the sensible” (pp. 24-25). The anachrony and politics occur when those who “have no time” to do anything other than their own work engage in additional aesthetic activities during the nights that are supposed to be used to recover their labor strength, thus proving their ability to participate in the common world and questioning the impossibility under the division of time.

Therefore, to break the existing hierarchical order and reshape identity, time becomes the critical breakthrough of this revolution, and anachrony is an effective strategy to achieve this breakthrough. In “The Concept of Anachronism and the Historian's Truth,” Rancière explicitly proposes a positive “anachrony,” which is first based on his deconstruction of the concept of anachronism.

2. The Sin and Redemption of Anachronism

Lucien Febvre (1982), one of the founders of the French Annales School, in *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, considers anachronism the most unforgivable sin of historical narratives (p. 5). Why is this so? Rancière thinks it has to do with the word's prefix “ana-”: this prefix refers not only to a horizontal forward displacement on the time axis but also to a vertical movement from below to above. Rancière (2015) thus points out: “It is not a horizontal problem of the order of times but a vertical problem of the order of time in the hierarchy of beings. It is a problem of the division (partage) of time, in the sense of ‘what one receives as one's share.’ The question of anachronism concerns what truth time has as it is divided, in a vertical order that connects time to what is above it, that is to say, what one ordinarily calls eternity” (p. 23). It can be seen that anachronism is far from being a technical problem in historical compilation but an aesthetic problem closely related to *realpolitik*.

Anachronism is not the mistaken implantation of a historical element from one period into another but its mistaken expulsion from an epoch out of that epoch, which involves two kinds of temporal movements. One is the horizontal displacement of narrative time antecedents, such as the junction of a confirmed chronological time with a legendary time for which the period cannot be determined. However, what makes anachronism unforgivable points in particular to the second, more essential temporal movement, namely, a vertical displacement that violates the hierarchical order. Anachronism is not the confusion of dates but the confusion of epochs. An epoch is not merely a simple cut in continuous historical time but is marked by a specific regime of truth. Rancière argues that the truth of an epoch promoted by the Annales School is closely linked to the eternal, which deploys truth and makes it visible in the experience of fluid time. So, he points out that: “Chronological time depends upon a time without chronology: a pure present, or eternity” (Rancière, 2015, p. 24). In this way, the fluid time of everyday experience is connected to the unique and unchanging eternal time that overrides it and connects truth, structurally forming a top-down vertical regime of truth unique to each epoch. Therefore, for the Annales School, what seems to be merely anachronism that disrupts the chronological time order is an invasion of the truth regime of a particular epoch by a time belonging to another truth regime, thus disrupting the established solid top-down hierarchical order—this is the most unforgivable and fatal aspect of anachronism in the annals of history. The disturbance is caused by the fluid time at the lower level and thus touches the eternal time at the top, symbolizing truth: this is the original meaning of what Rancière calls the vertical anachrony.

However, the political connotations that Rancière gives to this concept and mode are more critical. The heterogeneous time of the “invasion” symbolizes the “heretics” at the bottom of society, which are expelled and erased by the dominant truth regime of the invaded epoch. Nevertheless, these “wrong” heretics challenge the hierarchical order from below to above through anachrony. When they spend time on political or aesthetic matters that are not part of their share of time and thus prove their rich possibilities, it is when anachrony of the temporal order centered on the role of everyone occurs. Therefore, the hierarchical order associated with the order of time distribution is questioned and shaken. It can be seen that the vertical anachrony contains three layers of meaning, which is not only an abstract and static summary of the “anachronism” in historical writing but also a symbol of the political struggle of the voiceless underclass people to achieve equality and challenge hierarchy, and it is a vital resistance strategy from below to above to realize the struggle. The historian who is devoted to the construction of facts and truth cannot tolerate anachronism, therefore, not because it is merely a technical error in the annals of history, but because it violates the order of truth in a more fundamental dimension, that is, the hierarchical order under the established system of the distribution of the sensible. In response, historians have adopted a poetic approach to redeem this unforgivable sin.

Rancière depicts two typical poetic mechanisms for seeking the identity of epoch and truth. The first is to replace a simple sequence of events with a causal order. Polybius, a famous ancient Greek historian, first defined the task of historians as writing a meaningful organic whole rather than simply laying out scattered and isolated events, and he proposed universal history (Yi Ning, 2007, p. 6). The view of universal history has two fundamental characteristics: first, it emphasizes the organic integrity of history; second, it is a substantive way of thinking. It believes that although history’s specific content changes rapidly, a constant theme continually runs through it. Rancière’s perspicacity lies in his belief that Polybius’s view of universal history echoes Aristotle’s. The latter in *Poetics* makes a hierarchy of philosophy over poetry and poetry over history because poetry is more philosophical than history. Rancière further reveals the profound differences and connections between poetry and history. He points out that “history is the domain of *kath’ hekaston*, of ‘one by one,’ which informs us that there is just one thing and then another. As for poetry, it is the domain of the general, of the *katholon* (‘relating to the whole’) that places actions under a single, articulated totality” (Rancière, 2015, p. 25). The critical consequence of this difference is that history, which is based on truth, elevates the status of its discourse by imitating the totalizing capacity of poetry, i.e., utilizing literature, as Polybius did. Thus, the poetic logic of necessity or verisimilitude and the teleological logic of showing divine truth underpins the construction of the historical regime of truth in this way of redeeming anachronism.

The second approach to redemption, which is closely related to the central problem of anachronism, differs from the first approach that follows the causal order to narrate history as a series of inevitable events revealing providence; it constructs time as a totality, imitating eternal time as an internal principle to be followed by all historical objects within this totality. The Annales School is representative of this approach. “They tell us this: For history to be a science, which is to say, so that it gains something of eternity, its time must as far as possible resemble eternity” (Rancière, 2015, p. 34). In other words, let the historical compilation be unquestionably true, and it is eternal because it is true. How is this possible? The answer of the Annales School is: “For time to be redeemed there must be a pure present, a principle of the co-presence of historical subjects. Historical subjects must ‘resemble’ their time, which is to say, they must resemble the principle of their co-presence” (Rancière, 2015, p. 34). It means that historical subjects must think and act in a way that is consistent with the time in which they live, and in the case of historical compilations, it means that historical writing presents events or people in the “present” by narrative, thus allowing them to exist. The Annales School holds that the basic principle of the epoch is synchronicity rather than continuity, that the beings are similar to their epochs rather than to their parents, and that their behavior is invariably per the requirements of the epoch. Rancière (2015) notes: “This second way is at the heart of the modern definition of the scientific nature of history. And for this [reason] history places at its heart the question of anachronism as mortal sin, a sin against the presence of eternity in time, the presence of eternity as time” (p. 26).

This poetic mechanism is mainly reflected in Febvre’s discussion of Rabelais’ religious belief. The question originated when Abel Lefranc argued that beneath the Rabelaisian parody lay Rabelais’ anti-Christian atheistic ideas. However, Febvre considered Lefranc’s assertion the most severe and absurd anachronism and pointed out that Rabelais did not possess a time that contained such a possibility. According to Rancière, Febvre demonstrated the impossibility of Rabelais’ faithlessness by applying the two poetic procedures of *dispositio* and *elocutio*.

First, *dispositio* refers to an “anachronic” element that is put in place. Rancière (2015) emphasizes, “The ‘anachronic,’ remember, is that which does not belong to *or does not suit* the time in which it is found” (p. 40). The criteria depend on the verisimilitude principle of the judge’s time. To describe a man living in the 16th century without faith, as in Febvre’s time, is clearly at odds with his surroundings.

Using the poetic logic of the verisimilitude and its absence, Febvre proves the untestable question of Rabelais' faithlessness is anachronic. Second, *elocutio* involves a series of grammatical procedures. Rancière (2015) notes that Febvre deployed a "more-than-present" temporal system in his exposition: "A modal and temporal system is deployed here, imperiously governed by a time—the present of the indicative—and even by a quasi-time, a detemporalised time, essentialized and made similar to the identity of eternity, similar to the absence of time" (p. 43). When Febvre recounted that in Rabelais' time, a deceased person could not refuse a Christian burial or for Rabelais to be faithless, a simple "impossible" suppressed all temporal and verbal markers, shaping how Rabelais' time instantly defined the way of being of those who lived in it. This poetic procedure, culminating in non-time, blurs Emile Benveniste's distinction between *récit historique* and discourses, thus eliminating the untruth of words and time. In this way, Febvre realized the narrative identity of fluid experience with the general rule and proved the impossibility of violating the regime of truth.

So, to be the writing objects of the Annales School, the subjects must believe in the beliefs of their time. Rancière (2015) describes it as "Belief is to truth what becoming is to essence" (p. 36). The faith here is merely a marker of the historical subject's resemblance to its time, and the historian guarantees the truth by imposing this resemblance, that is, an imitation of eternity. Rancière (2015) points out that this preserves the distinguishing function of time in *The Republic* in a double sense. One is that time's imitation of truth means that the subject cannot become any role other than that of the prescribed self, which corresponds to Plato's requirement that one person does only one thing. The second is the distinction between the knower and the ignorant in time. Rancière (2015) argues that what one believes is what one does not know, which means that the historical subject is placed in ignorance of his own time, but the historian, who knows the meaning of this "pure present," is above this present. While preserving the similarity between the historical subject and his time, the historian eliminates the identity of the former with ignorance. This modern city of humanities and social sciences is thus modeled on Plato's hierarchically distinct philosophical city, where the truths historians have painstakingly worked on are based on profound inequalities.

3. Heretics in the Rifts

The historical science's subordination of historical existence to the demands of the epochs and rhetoric has provoked the provocation of historical negationism. However, Rancière (2015) points out that what is illegitimate and should be denied is not history itself but the anachronism concept proposed by historical science because "It is the submission of existence to the possible that is, at its core, anti-historical" (p. 45). Rancière suggests that history is made up of "anachronism," that history exists precisely in the gaps when people do not resemble their times and violate the temporal lines that hold them in place rather than in a linear progression of truth. So, no anachronism must be redeemed, and this notion needs to be deconstructed. It means, in addition to freeing history from the game of possibilities and liberating time from the principle of coexistence, injecting new connotations into the concept of anachronism. Therefore, Rancière (2015) proposed the positive anachrony: "There is no anachronism. But there are modes of connection that in a positive sense we can call anachronies: events, ideas, significations that are contrary to time, that make meaning circulate in a way that escapes any contemporaneity, any identity of time with 'itself.' An anachrony is a word, an event, or a signifying sequence that has left 'its' time, and in this way is given the capacity to define completely original points of orientation (*les aiguillages*), to carry out leaps from one temporal line to another" (p. 47).

For Rancière, the proletarian, which is hidden as a heretic, is synonymous with anachrony: "It was the name for a rupture of the resemblance between workers and 'their' time, the time of the ordinary cycle of time, the cycle of the day devoted to work and the night devoted to rest, which prevented workers from doing, in Platonic terms, anything other than what they should" (Rancière, 2015, p. 46). The word "proletarian" comes from the Latin word "proles," which denotes race and descent and refers to those who do nothing but survive and reproduce and do not possess a name, identity, or any symbolic status in the city. In this context, a proletarian is a person whose identity has been eliminated by the police order: "The proletariat are neither manual workers nor the labor classes. They are the class of the uncounted that only exists in the very declaration in which they are counted as those of no account" (Rancière, 1999, p. 38). The interval between the identity of the proletarian and the other exposes the inequality of the police order. At the same time, the original meaning of heresy is separation. The proletarian, who is regarded as a heretic, is to do nothing less than to break away from the assumed habit, from the imposed and constantly circular working hours: "[This heresy] installs the democratic subject in the infinite of their separation and their reciprocal contestation, and in the same motion puts its history outside the assurances of subordination, into the uncertainties of conjunction" (Rancière, 1994, p. 94). In this anachrony, history is constantly created from the break with the continuum. Hence, the heretics rejected by historians such as the Annales School are precisely the objects of history Rancière believes should be written. The history he promotes is that "It is also the new fabric in which each and every person's perceptions and sensations are captured.

Historical time is not just the time of great collective destinies. It is the time where anyone and anything at all make history and bear witness to history” (Rancière, 2014, p. 69). This epoch, defined by a new sensibility of the world, is what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime of art, in which artistic disorder and democratic arbitrariness replace hierarchy, the anonymous people enter the world of the speaker, the voices of the “heretics” erased by traditional historical writing are revived, and a new subject of history, the people, is born.

In addition to its significance to the writing of history, the aesthetic practice of the proletarians demonstrates the practical possibilities and emancipatory potential of anachrony. After working hard during the day, young Mallarmé continues to think and write at night, an image of an “intruder” who fully demonstrates the identity of night, “suicide,” thought, and poetry. Mallarmé’s letters from his youth recount the workdays when he was forced to work as required during the day and then squeezed out of his sleep to write poetry at night. He called this refusal to the day-night division “suicide”: “Suicide is the rupture of the time/work/gold equivalence, of the knot that links the reproduction of life to the exchange of equivalents” (Rancière, 2007, p. 103). It symbolizes a more essential “suicide,” namely, “the workers’ bodies are taken out of time and out of the ways of being, doing and saying that are specific to the men of reproduction” (Rancière, 2007, p. 105). Rancière (2007) analogizes that if the mechanical repetition of workers’ labor is seen as a horizontal order of economics in which work is exchanged for the equivalent of money, then the intruder, through additional writing practices, creates another vertical order that cannot be measured by money and belongs to the symbolic economy of poetry. The latter not only causes a rupture in the horizontal economic structure but also disrupts the established order of the distribution of the sensible and hierarchical relations in the vertical anachrony. In this sense, Rancière sees time as central to the aesthetic revolution and the emancipation of workers. Thus, anachrony is not simply an interruption of continuity but is the embedding of heterogeneous ruptures in the homogeneous linear time of capitalist production, making it possible for one timeline to be connected to other timelines, that is, to make history.

It follows that the proletarian breaks the established order of time, not merely to earn more lazy rest but to obtain the leisure that belongs to the free man. The former is only the separation of two moments of energy consumption in work. However, the latter is the time belonging to those who do not need to work for a living, and it points to the privilege of thinking instead of laziness. The power of leisure time, as Rousseau (2000), who came from a family of craftsmen, is showed in his autobiography: “These hours of solitude and meditation are the only ones in the day during which I am fully myself and for myself, without diversion, without obstacle, and during which I can truly claim to be what nature willed” (p. 9). This fantastic enjoyment is not only because the proletarian has moved out of his original position but also because, in these moments, in the essential sensory experience, man’s interests and hierarchy are dissolved. So Rancière (2013a) points out: “The plebeian’s happiness does not lie in the conquest of society. It lies in doing nothing, in annulling *hic et nunc* the barriers of social hierarchy and the torment of confronting them, in the equality of pure sensation, in the uncalculated sharing of the sensible moment” (p. 52). It is evident that behind the acquisition of leisure is a revolution in the practice of equality, for all people, regardless of their position, are equally endowed with this sensible capacity. Schiller (1982) saw in the aesthetic State that human equality in the sensible can shape a new kind of freedom: “Even the tool which serves—is a free citizen, having equal rights with the noblest” (p. 219). Another example is the principle of common sense revealed by Kant (1987), “which determines only by feeling rather than by concepts, though nonetheless with universal validity, what is liked or disliked” (p. 87). In this universality, without resorting to concepts, Rancière sees the possibility of uniting the still divided classes, and access to leisure in the rifts of anachrony is the fundamental prerequisite for achieving all this.

4. Conclusion

Suppose the Annales School, as Rancière saw it, promoted the idea that history should be strictly subject to contemporaneity, resembling Hegel’s view that all social components of a given history could only express the essence of that historical period. In that case, Rancière’s understanding of history parallels the Marxist theory of history, which insists that certain people or events could always transcend a particular historical period. When Rancière points out that anachronism occurs not only in the horizontal dimension but also in the vertical dimension and is directly related to the question of truth and eternity, it means that anachronism is not a technical error, but an inescapable ontological “error” inherent in all historical compilations, which inevitably involve the distribution of the sensible, i.e., selections. Therefore, there is no so-called anachronism, and anachrony is the essence of history. The question is not whether the historian creates literature but what kind of literature he creates.

Needless to say, Rancière's aesthetic politics centered on anachrony is too radical. However, this revolutionary program, clearly utopian in practice, is not unique to Rancière but is a manifestation of the shift from the political and economic sphere to the cultural sphere and from hardening to weakening in the overall struggle strategy of left-wing politics in the second half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, this view of anachrony, pivoted on the distribution of the sensible and characterized by disputes as a central feature, remains the key to understanding Rancière's thought. At the same time, in this age of "996" and even "007" work system, it is of great practical significance to rediscuss time as a way of living. The 24/7 system is trying to deprive people of their last hours of sleep. Although, as Jonathan Crary (2013) argues, sleep has the power to resist capitalism precisely because it cannot be assimilated into capital, the fact is that sleep is increasingly scarce in modern times, not only because of the dramatically extended working hours but also because more and more people choose to "retaliate" by staying up late after working overtime, compensating for the robbed time by engaging in extra leisure activities at night when rest is already short and should be used to recover from work. On the surface, retaliatory staying up late is a way for individuals to gain a sense of freedom to control their time, but at the root, this tendency to break the chain of economic reproduction is the prominence of the vertical dimension of time, i.e., individuals express their rebellion against the established way of being by occupying an extra share of time. As Rancière (2020) emphasizes: "The articulation of time on the horizontal axis of succession was dependent on a vertical axis which differentiated ways of being in time, of having or not having time. On that axis time is not a duration, it is a location" (p. 113). He argues that we can only avoid the trap of the continuity of historical time by combining these two dimensions. He states, "This is what emancipation is about: changing one's manner of inhabiting time" (Rancière, 2020, p. 122). Therefore, the concept and strategy of resisting the suppression of time contained in anachrony provide positive insights for us to reflect on the current issues of people's new perceptual experience of time and the construction of a new sensible community.

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