

Editors Editorial

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Editorial

The modern arrives when the boundaries dividing old and new become sites of struggle in the way that the divide between the sacred and the profane was previously. These distinctions – old/new, sacred/profane – are strategic: they refer to one embedded position in the life-world relative to another. In the October 2017 issue of *e-flux journal*, Noemi Smolik shows how, within Russia, the deployment of modernizing iconoclasm against the belief systems of Russia's rural poor confounded distinctions between old and new, sacred and profane, even before the October Revolution and the Russian avant-garde. Aleksandra Shatskikh diagnoses a contemporary symptom of this misrecognition in the attribution to Malevich of a racialized joke scribbled by a vandal under his *Black Square* after it had been painted.

In retrospect, Promethean modernism was drawn and quartered between two conflicting concepts of time – time as teleology, and time as cycle. The teleological concept of time is implied in the “modern” itself, as the condition of possibility for drawing the distinction between old and new. Teleology says that the future will be new, that it will be more than the past. Under teleology, the future is a hyperobject, more than the sum of its parts, and Timothy Morton argues in this issue that it should be possible to imagine the future “subscending” the past, as being something less than what it contains. This is essential if we are going to approach the problem of climate change as a problem, rather than as a fate decided in advance. Brian Holmes revisits the theoretical and physical architecture of metropolitan modernism to consider how planetary material in the Anthropocene may finally provide for a full aesthetic reception of László Moholy-Nagy. Meanwhile, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez points out that slowing down our institutions to a more deliberate speed is one way to avoid the dangers of linear time without presuming to transcend them.

However, Ezra Pound's modernist axiom to “make it new” was impatient and voracious, and demanded also that we feed on the inherited concept of time, the teleological one, which the moderns rightly understood as the doddering Abrahamic eschatology dressed up in secular, dialectical dross. This need for a second, non-teleological concept of time explains modernity's fascination with Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, which presents time as a cycle rather than as a linear progression from one place to someplace else. Hence the oedipal contradiction of modernity's paternity by teleological time: it assures itself of novelty by rejecting its identification with old teleology in favor of a “new” concept of cyclical time. But any concept of the new is precisely

what cyclical time rules out in advance. We are still living – and dying – in the aftermath of this contradiction. Lorenza Pignatti remembers the work of Erkki Kuriennemi, which combined a faith in the accumulation of technology with a conviction that this technology would eventually transcend the death-life continuum.

Revolution, too, is stranded between time-as-progress and time-as-cycle. Was Stalin a new and singular kind of criminal? Or just another absolute monarch, a pseudo-secular tsar empowered to act against the peasants and his political enemies, real and imagined, on an industrial scale? Luciana Parisi examines the way in which contemporary forces of representation continue to intensify our despotic traditions. One way of making progress while rejecting the colonial machine might be to increase our operating knowledge of the cycles that surround us. Jonathan Beller argues for a left reconsideration of the emancipatory potential of crypto-currency in particular and the monetary cycle more generally. Finally, McKenzie Wark tries to sell his ass to Jerry Saltz, and in the process formulates a theory of the contemporary collecting of digital objects. It may not be the end of history, but there are worse places to be than at the start of a new cycle.

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