

The Many Shades of Temporal Pluralities: Alternative Ethics of Law and Society

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Introduction: Conceptualizing Temporal Pluralities

Society survived a ‘grand collapse’ at the end of modernity that has had it transforming to postmodern conditions. The grand collapse was, arguably, a collapse of human imagination, causing a fall of everything society held dear, and quite opportunely, it was also a collapse of all that it despised. Of all that which collapsed, what has social imagination going kaput was the collapse of time, to be precisely, it was the collapse of the sense of time the social subject of the modernist society had. David Harvey explains in a Marxian vein that the collapse of time is due to the ‘annihilation of space by time’ such that time, which was the experience of space, lost its coherence, resulting in the loss of the time-space synchrony. There are quite a few interesting late-modern theories on and against the collapse that has had us thinking, and we are sure, they will have you too engaging seriously with them (Sheppard, 2002). Whatsoever, postmodernists—the late-modern progressivists—unanimously agree that time, when collapsed, lost its singular glory, meaning social times thenceforth became plural times.

What does it mean to be experiencing plural times, particularly when experience is basically understood as singular? In fact, what we call experience is nothing but the ‘sense of time-space’ which is a holistic awareness one has about one’s existence in space and time. It is the presence of the social subject in singular spaces that gives it a unified experience of time. Annihilation of space by time (that is the loss of spatial experience), as aforementioned, from the time-space dyad will have the social subject losing the singular sense of time, as loss of space lets in multiple times to enter the subjects’ cognition. This existence—time without space—becomes problematic as absence of singular space of experience allows a free play of time, leading to an anachronistic intervention of one time-space into another time-space. At its simplest best, plurality of times can be that individuals in the same material and spiritual conditions get divergent, at times conflicting, temporal experience. It can be in the form of an interpellation of known past (*déjà vu*), unknown present (individual solipsism and social amnesia) and to-be-known future (transcendental) into the present state of existence. Largely, it is a case of time losing its chronology and linearity, leaving late-modern subjects in a collective vertigo. This state of plural experience of time is finely captured by Italo Calvino: ‘I felt a kind of vertigo, as if I were merely plunging from one world to another’ (Calvino, 2012).

The response by the social subjects to plural experience of time has been wide-ranging. It ranges from extreme nihilism to well informed radicalism, and a repertoire of emotions and sensibilities in between them. We are not quite keen to focus on the late-modern gloom and despair that prevailed in certain quarters; rather we are enthusiastic about the resilience of the social subject against the odds of time/untime. Therefore, we focus on how individuals and collectivities struggle against these odds by way of discrete imaginations and adaptations. We are particularly interested in such struggles, for they are prompted by a sense of being in a revolutionary moment, a moment in which they can reinvent their

experience, their existence. While individual adaptations have always been subjective—ranging from ‘reinventing the self’ to ‘anesthetizing oneself to the new reality’—responses from systems of social organization created new frameworks of homogeneity such as law and legal system. The inherent legality and normativity of these frameworks make them the ideal space for the selves decentred in the said conditions to reinvent themselves, forgetting any personalized pursuits in self-reorganization and yielding dependently to these frameworks. Late-modern subjects, thus, unwittingly, fell into the thrall of systems.

We called the late-modern subject’s resilience a fall into thrall, as we sense that all this business of resilience and adaptation is part of a ‘politics of homogenization’ and ‘politics of reinvention’ by which centres of historical dominance get the advantageousness of forging a preconceived sociality. They have a historical privilege over individual efforts when it comes to social ordering—‘social self-perfecting’ as a means for ‘individual self-becoming’ had always a predominance over ‘social self-becoming’ through ‘individual self-perfecting’. However, if one is ready to give the allowance of ordinariness to this top-down process, the politics of reinvention becomes unproblematic, for social times have always been dominated by centres of power (political, ideological, religious and so on) which controlled the imaginations and actions of individuals, yet giving them a sense of participation and involvement. This in effect is a singularization of time otherwise became plural.

Those subjects which resisted the co-optation by frameworks of homogeneity and preferred to stay amid the odds of plurality either in resistance or in reinvention were mollified by a pluralism discourse, prompting a pluralist mindset that resists reductionism in all forms. In the illusory comfort of pluralism, the late-modern subject uncritically accepted the pluralities around it, including the plurality of time.

Does it mean that revolutionary moments of modernity have been consumed by frameworks of homogeneity and discourses of pluralism, totalizing and subsuming all possibilities of transformation? Have all important questions and complexities posed by temporal plurality been answered and addressed (respectively) such that individuals have been left in a barrenness of imagination? If so, is there scope left for an alternative revolution for those who have been victims of the politics of transformation? What transformation has law undergone in the politics of imaginations? What is the social ethics of the transformed time? Such and many more questions beg for response as we settle into a false (?) comfort of a ‘temporal pluralism’—the uncritical mindset by which the temporal pluralities are accommodated without tension as if a natural state in the evolution to postmodernity.

Responses to these questions can be obtained only within a critical framework of imagination that facilitates discourses on *alternatives*, for when the singularity of time, and the comfort associated with it, is challenged by a plurality, only alternative ideas can release the individual and collective selves from the indeterminacy created by temporal pluralities. In this special issue of the *Journal of Human Values* (JHV) our contributors broadly address the tension between the much habituated singularity and the unknown plurality of times. The contributions range from alternatives to the predominant positivistic conceptions of law and society to the ethics of systems in transformation and the ethics of alternative systems, situating the discourses on temporal challenges, resistance and adaptations in a new vantage.

Reinventing Identities: Role of Courts in Plural Times

The projects of re-imagination and reinvention have been particularly interesting for us, for they give us hope in prevailing over the ambivalence that temporal pluralities have produced. However, in these projects, as we expect some modicum of alternative wisdom, we also anticipate elements of identity politics, normalization of contradictions and crisis/politics of representation. Jean-Philippe Dequen in

‘Back to the Future? Temporality and Society in Indian Constitutional Law: A Closer Look at Section 377 and Sabarimala Decisions and the Genealogy of Legal Reasoning’ has captured such a project spearheaded by the Supreme Court of India (hereinafter ‘the Court’), as he further captures and problematizes the presence of all the said elements of a postmodern project of recovery. His subject matter of analysis is two judgements of the Court—the case on the decriminalization of homosexuality (*Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India*) and right of menstruating women to enter the *Sabarimala* temple (*Indian Young Lawyers Association v. Union of India*). The context in which the discourse is set is a postmodern search for identity of the social subjects (particularly of LGBTQ community and menstruating women) by the apex court of India.

The article reveals a contradiction in the reasoning of the Court, which has its roots in temporality. In *Johar*, the Court problematized a historical temporal condition by revealing the thralldom of objectivity forged by positivistic approaches to law. Dequen reasons that positivistic law is a superimposition on the social sentiments and values of the masses, alienating them from their own selves in the name of cleansing false morality from society. This was achieved through a violence of values, as Dequen puts it, ‘The “universal” reference of the legal discourse produced at the time was of course imperial in nature and unabashedly confused with European civilizational values’. The Court condemned this historical falsehood—this counterfeiting of social actuality—in the name of civilizing and legalizing, which has sexual minorities becoming criminals in society. Accordingly, the Court ‘debunked the false sense of objectivity, and correctness thereof’, of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) by problematizing the temporal conditions that has Section 377 becoming the legal morality of society. On the contrary, in *Indian Young Lawyers Association v. Union of India* (hereinafter ‘Sabarimala’), the Court has upheld the constitutional morality of ‘equality before law’ by negating the prevalent social morality of non-entry of menstruating woman in *Sabarimala* temple practiced as custom.

In *Johar* history is used as a tool to create a new social reality *against a legally-forged-reality*, whereas in *Sabarimala* history is used to create a new *legal reality against an allegedly socially-forged-reality*. In both cases, the Court has relied on historical temporalities to re-create new temporal experiences, resulting in contradictions, as Dequen concisely put it,

History is being on the one hand contemplated as a safeguarding force taming the transformative ambitions of Law, which should furthermore reflect the latter’s empirical manifestations [as in *Sabarimala*]; on the other hand, it can also be considered as but the translation of social oppressive values which precisely Law, in its positive sense, has been devised to free the individual from the shackles [as in *Johar*].

Johar and *Sabarimala*, irrespective of their outcomes, are prompted by a postmodern search for identity. They are opportune interventions into dominant legal and social imaginations which have deprived certain subjects of their representation in modernist conditions. The Court in both cases provided representation to such subjects through alternative wisdom. However, the Court’s subjective application of past temporalities (history) to legitimize the reinvention of the subjects’ identities makes the Court susceptible to the criticism of it being a stage for identity politics. Whatsoever, the decisions of the Court, notwithstanding the contradiction in reasoning, they are a postmodern response to the collapse of singularly held notions and to the surge of pluralities. In this larger scheme of resilience, when beliefs and convictions were thrown into a complex system of pluralities, cannot the Court’s efforts in *Johar* and *Sabarimala* be seen as resistance to the frameworks of homogeneity such as law and social practices? If so, the otherwise contradictory application of historical temporalities is a way for the court to keep late-modern realities as plural rather than letting reality to be created and singularized by systems of homogenization.

In ‘Epistemic Injustice and Judicial Discourse on Transgender Rights in India: Uncovering Temporal Pluralism’, Dipika Jain and Kimberly M. Rhoten turn temporal pluralism to a tool to explode a narrative grid customarily relied on by courts in India in cases involving ‘gender diverse litigants’. The narrative grid in question is typical to the positivistic tradition of law that demands the narratives submitted before courts to be of the nature of a normative discourse, as the authors write, the ‘legal institution, in its *praxis*, is normative: reflective as well as co-creative of societal norms’. The narrative grid has forged a singularity in terms of the narratives to be presented before courts by gender diverse litigants, which is in abject rejection of the plural particularities of the lived experience of gender diverse persons. Jain and Rhoten make a case for a framework that will have courts accepting the particularities of the social experience of gender diverse persons. In another word, they make a case for a legal imagination beyond the male–female binary to bring ‘legal legibility’ to the narratives before courts on matters involving gender diverse litigants.

The handicap of courts to hear and understand pursuers of justice is alarming, as, in late-modernity, courts have, on their own volition, assumed the responsibility of reinventing identities of social subjects. This motivation is evident in *Johar* and *Sabarimala*. Such spirited response by courts, though refreshing, cannot survive the complexities of temporal pluralities if courts’ own identity remains un-reinvented as an untemporality. If this untemporality of courts is in fact the case, it also creates sufficient grounds to be sceptical about the reasoning—though not much of the correctness—of the verdict in *Johar*. Did the Court hear the narratives by the petitioners as ‘legally legible’ narratives as it should be? If not, is *Johar* another judgement of a normative judicial process that happens to be coincidentally favourable to sexual minorities? Going by Jain and Rhoten, even the apex court is not free from the preconception that sex and gender considerations operate in a binary, as is evident in *National Legal Service Authority v. Union of India* (hereinafter ‘NALSA’). In *NALSA*, despite the progressiveness the Court showed, it retained the male–female binary by recognizing the ‘third gender’. Let alone courts, even this prejudice is deeply entrenched in many Indian legislations dating as far back to colonial days.

Jain and Rhoten propose to rock the boat by posing critical questions on ‘law’s capacity for exclusivity and inclusivity to arise and the reflexivity to thrive’. They argue that

Rather than fit the lived experiences of gender diverse persons into the narrow confines of the court’s own narrative on gender, it is imperative that such systemic patterns in the legal system are recognized and questioned.

Their proposal is for an acceptance of pluralities. However, the authors state that rather than accepting pluralities within a framework of homogeneity—be that a legal recognition (as in *NALSA*) or the compromising mindset of pluralism—pluralities should be accepted as pluralist particularities open for the contestation for truthiness, a state of affairs Duncan Kennedy (Kennedy, 1986) refers to as ‘indeterminacy’.

If we juxtapose the piece by Jain and Rhoten with Dequen’s piece, we find a very interesting conversation happening. The Court’s act of overcoming a false legal objectivity by a temporally imagined social reality (as explained by Dequen as the case with *Johar*) comes closer to the contestation of pluralities for truthiness envisaged by Jain and Rhoten. It is the false legal objectivity (as problematized by Dequen)—which often is at the cost of historical truths—that manifests as the normative singularity of courts (as problematized by Jain and Rhoten).

However, if we shift the focus on *Sabarimala* in the same vein, we see the Court becoming a ‘bad listener’ of a social particularity. The submissions before the Court—drawing on the historical, religious and social practices—were deemed ‘legally illegible’ by the Court, subsuming them into the narrative

singularity of the judicial process. The many review petitions filed before the Court post *Sabarimala* evidence this fact. Whatsoever, as *Sabarimala* makes the ‘imaginative contradictions’ presented by Dequen more salient, it also confirms the politics of singularization presented by Jain and Rhoten. On another note, if *Sabarimala* is viewed within the broader framework of temporal pluralities, the Court does not owe a justification for the contradictions in its reasoning, as Jain and Rhoten state somewhere that it is time for pluralities. Perhaps what awaits is a blissful ‘mess’.

Political Identity and Temporal Pluralities

Politics and culture are understood to be integral to the idea of state, including all individual and collective identities associated with state (Cuoto, 2013). This connection between culture and politics, however, has been lost in the grand collapse in the late-modernity. The disconnection has prompted classically held meanings of politics to become irrelevant to the cultural context. And culture, devoid of politics, disintegrated into cultural clusters that are way beyond any political imagination. This has prompted larger reorganization and unification projects, which tries to create hyper-real unions. In ‘The Present of the Past: The Plurality of Competing Narratives in the EU Context’, Maria Stoicheva examines the process of European Union (EU) integration by the creation of a supranational hyper-reality like the EU.

While the need for a supranational union like the EU is not immediately caused by the grand collapse in late-modernity, the issue of the identity of subjects, which were earlier part of politico-cultural unions, became more prominent in late-modernity. In fact, the identity of the early modern European subjects were constituted by a comfort they felt in the legacy of division of nations into political units with culture as the main source of diversity. Stoicheva points out that the narrative that fetched this early modern identity is constituted by the series of events from prehistoric times to the fall of the Berlin wall. The collapse of the Berlin wall, which coincided with the onset of late-modernity, is symptomatic of the split between politics and culture. As the orthodox European narrative lost the idea of a politically unified, but culturally diverse, Europe, the singularity of the European idea also was lost.

In response to this identity crisis, ‘a hyper-real Europe has emerged’, which is presented as more abstractly European in understanding than the continent in itself or its history. Stoicheva says that the nascent narrative, the specialties of which she would explain later, is free of historical memory; rather it is based on a philosophically conceived notion of self and consciousness through space-time analytics. Stoicheva further exposes the politics of the European narrative formation. She points out that the absence of history does not, however, evince absence of state from the narratives; they continue to be the loci of European narrative formation. In that advantageousness, states create alternative and particular histories as ‘national narratives’ in place of the grand historical narrative which was the bedrock of the European identity. The politics of the process is such that, as Stoicheva explores, in choosing history ‘they operate within different temporal scales and use different units of division and analysis of time’. It is also the case that by choosing a certain temporal condition to represent as history, states have been able to shape narratives that are best suited for its people to stand united as a cultural group under the policy of the state.

The identity created by the new narrative is pretty much a national identity which is constructed on the fault lines of the orthodox narrative. The modern narrative is not substantially different from the orthodox narrative, for herein too politics is united with culture. However, the politics in question is based on the states’ version of European history, a history that best appeals to the cultural sentiments of

its masses. What this means is that states will remain prominent in whatsoever be the form of supranational integration that comes into existence. This position is succinctly clarified by Stoicheva:

In this respect the nation still represents an incomparable [...] community of memory. And it is very unlikely that ‘the state that embodies it, with its familiar and appropriate scaled frame’ will be replaced and its top place as ‘the (only) remaining as well as the best-adapted source of collective and communal identification’.

According to Stoicheva, this approach of states is an obsession to be different in a framework of pluralism than being unified under a political union.

Stoicheva’s piece is a stark illustration of the politics of integration by the appropriation of temporal pluralities. The ongoing EU integration, as Stoicheva would agree, is an interplay of temporalities. This is quite evident from the present integration-narrative: The element of ‘history’ in the integration-narrative is not a history that dates back to the pre-history or the history as narrated through the generally accepted historical moments in European history; rather history in the integration-narrative is a temporal condition that best suits the motivations of states. This renders the integration-narrative a colligation of numerous temporalities in a narrative thread. Stoicheva provides a fantastic picture of these pluralities: the ‘multiple spatial and temporal scales and the relations between the temporal scales of a multiplicity of narratives in an understanding of the European integration as a multiscale time-space phenomenon’.

The overall approach of contemporary European integration is an acceptance of pluralities, although a top-down perspective may make European integration look like it being in a move towards a framework of pluralism, a system of homogenization, so to speak. Stoicheva says that this top-down approach is quite prevalent among the academia. However, such approaches are in object oversight of the pluralities that is settling down in the consciousness of European subjects.

The Politics of Narratives: The Plurality of Textual Identity

Late-modernity is characterized by a collapse of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984). Collapse of metanarratives was followed by the rise of little narratives, creating scope of plurality of narratives. In fact, narratives play a far more important role in modernity than any other social constituent. That is, given that history/past also has collapsed in the grand collapse and given the importance of the past in constituting the ‘present’, any reconstitution is not possible without narratives. Hence, we see a heavy reliance on narratives in late-modernity.

In our times, there is a plurality of narratives aiming a reconstitution of human social reality. They also contest for truthiness, relevance and dominance. Galina Rousseva-Sokolova in ‘Voices from the Past: Rearranging Values in Times of Crisis—The Example of North Indian Vaishnava Hagiographies’, tells the tale of a set of hagiographic narratives (*varta*) to survive the collapse of time and become relevant in emergent temporal conditions. Rousseva-Sokolova’s case in point is the narratives which belong to the sect of Vallabhacharya, a sixteenth century theologian and religious leader. One unique aspect of hagiographical literature is that they capture the values of a life lived in a particular time-space while urging adherence to them in other spatio-temporal conditions. Hagiographical narratives are kept alive across the time by creating a public memory through narratives and roman à these.

Rousseva-Sokolova’s starting point is the sixteenth century which witnessed ‘deep ideological shifts in Hindu religious thought’ that had religious pursuits leaning towards a certain materialism. Interestingly, this resulted in a surge of *Bhakti* (devotion) to a personal deity who is considered to be the fulfiller of wishes. Values enunciated by Vallabhacharya, the sage in question, became relevant in such temporal conditions.

In order to keep the teachings time-transcending and for retaining public memory, Vallabhacharya's teachings were given narrative/didactic form by the hagiographers. This is finely captured by Rousseva-Sokolova in the piece. As she explains the progress of narratives through historical epochs, she depicts the politics of narration of the *varta* which the hagiographers, more often than not, indulged in through innocuous distortions of the sage's teachings, what Rousseva-Sokolova calls 'rearranging old values and validating new'.

In the seventeenth century, the narratives on Vallabhacharya's teachings centred on mobilizing public support and getting continued relevance amid the rapidly changing social fabric. Therefore, departing from the didactic style of narration, they adopted a straightforwardness such that the narratives become direct and 'implicit injunctions' on good way of living. Rousseva-Sokolova provides an illustration from the narratives:

[T]he divine souls [are] endowed with a special quality of vision, though, they are nothing less but living and breathing divine beings (*svarūpa*), and are treated as such throughout a highly regulated daily regimen from waking them up in the morning to putting them to sleep at night, including preparation of appropriate foods offerings later distributed to the devotees as *prasād*.

The injunctions in the narrative were spread across themes like caste, gender, sainthood, salvation and social behaviour. This departure, in fact, was prompted by a desire to rearrange clusters of meanings.

The other details of the narratives that Rousseva-Sokolova provides are fine representations of the temporal adaptations of the narrative techniques. For example, as time progressed to modernity, the concept of salvation began to lose footing in a society that was deeply getting enmeshed in materiality. The metaphysical distance of salvation (as salvation is conceptualized in original texts) prompted the narrators to create an agency through the saint by localizing the latter in a metaphysical plane which is in close proximity to the deity. Thus narrators relayed teachings of the saint as alternatives to salvation for followers living in material social conditions. It would not be an overstatement that many a times the narratives were trying to gain entry to the spaces of institutionalized social rules that regulated social life.

What differentiates Rousseva-Sokolova's piece from the other pieces in this special issue is that the temporal pluralities she presents are not pluralities created by the incursion of many times into a given time; rather they are the shift of a narrative tradition, as part of its adaptation, across many temporal conditions and its effort to stay relevant. The larger project of adaptation has been carried out through many little narratives. The little narrative herein does not become the constituents of a social re-imagination and reorganization following the grand collapse. The little narratives, however, in this case are the many narrative efforts to fight against the emergent social temporality that has the narrative tradition of hagiographers of Vallabhacharya thrown into a sudden irrelevance. Despite the divergence in her discourse, Rousseva-Sokolova, however, provides us with a stark case of the formation of alternative ethics of law and society against the odds of time.

Temporal Pluralities: Spaces and Experiences

Our interest in the theme of temporalities, and their pluralities thereof, shall not be mistaken as our identification with the extreme position often seen in spatio-temporal studies that time has made space irrelevant in late-modernity. It is true that plurality of time has posed a challenge to space, but we hold the more moderate position that time annihilating space and the challenge to spatiality has made space a heuristic imagination for addressing many late-modernist concerns, particularly in addressing the problem of collective vertigo, the senselessness in late-modernity (Sheppard, 2002).

Surajit Chakravarty situates his contribution, 'Continuous Production and New Forms of Labour: A Case for Reclaiming Public Time', within this approach. Chakravarty's starting point is the relevance of time in spaces (geographies, both meta and material) particularly on the how time helps in understanding material movements and happenings on spaces, as he puts it, 'time and temporalities [therefore] are crucial for understand[ing] the urban condition'. Chakravarty then emphasizes on the economic aspect of time, saying that 'Human time is "productive" ... [that is the] measurable and accumulable economic value can be derived from individuals' time'. While the measurability of human time remained constant, human productivity substantially increased as time advanced through various technological evolutions on the scale of time. As we entered late-modernity, this advancement reached a stage whereby advanced technologies, what Chakravarty refers to as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) 'have ensure[d] that the flow of time is not only multivalent, but also multilayered'. The scenario in later-modernity became such that 'ICTs allows individuals to inhabit and create economic value in parallel flows, within any given moment of clock time'.

Chakravarty then makes the point that while late-modernity is generally characterized as a condition when space is annihilated by time, it is in fact a time in which time is annihilated by time. The latter is a condition in which obstacles to time are 'broken down'. This has enabled individuals to have parallel flows of consumption-time, for example, as Chakravarty puts it, [W]e are now able to consume in multiple flows of time. Multiple activities, such as sharing information, posting comments, announcing one's current location or disposition, checking e-mail, 'following' people, expressing interest in random pieces of information, watching videos, chatting, downloading songs etc., can now happen simultaneously. The multiple flows of time have freed consumption from territorial and temporal limitations, which has created new form of labour.

The effect of ICT on various walks of human life and social production is presented by Chakravarty in an illustrative way. Although the descriptive style is engaging and constructive, the reader may sense the undertones of a late-modern anxiety, especially when dealing with themes like 'loss of public time'. However, Chakravarty then turns the mood to the policy responses to the erosion of human time in social spaces, primarily on the efforts to valorize the pluralities of time. First, the piece proposes for the creation of polyrhythmic public space through spatial imagination/reorganization that will have the plural times to converge in one space. Second, it proposes for turning public spaces into sites of public time. However, Chakravarty does advocate for integrating ICT into the said efforts rather than making a case against ICT.

Chakravarty's arguments make an excellent contribution to the effort of the epistemic community of social geographers which stand against the annihilation-of-space argument. In the same vein as the community of social geographers, Chakravarty's discourse does not disprove late-modern realities—rather there is an acknowledgement of the pluralities of time. Chakravarty turns pluralities into an analytic and apparatus to develop approaches to re-create the allegedly annihilated space. The possibility of phenomenologically appropriating technology for creating better social experiences in re-created spaces is an alternative approach to social reconstituting.

As Chakravarty gives us a case for the continuing relevance and utility of material spaces in conditions of temporal plurality, Yugank Goyal makes a case that slants more towards the dynamics of late-modern experiences in spaces of modernity. In 'Of Modernity, House Prices and Suspending Singularity of Time', Goyal, however, does not rediscover space, as Chakravarty does. Rather, Goyal, by capturing certain aspects of 'social living' in late-modern spaces, confirms that late-modern subjects are caught in a web of temporal pluralities that is impacting their present and future living and thinking.

Goyal's analytic tool is house prices and discount rates. He uses the discount rates attached to house prices as a means to make a case for the plurality of times. Goyal puts it that discount rates 'tell us how

far away does one sees her future' such that discount rates influence present behaviour: 'Someone with high discount rate will not worry as much about harmful effect of smoking, or will not use a condom, as much a person with a lower discount rate does'. On balance, Goyal makes the hypothesis for a case study that a discount rate on a purchase, be that a house or a land, determines the distance of one's future from one's present temporal condition. The distance one thus feels from the present builds, what Goyal calls, a 'time-type' for the subject.

Embarking on a case study on house pricing in India, Goyal reveals that the overwhelming variation in the price–rent ratio, mostly at the higher scales, that decides the house prices, creates varied expectations among buyers. When the ratio and its impact on house prices are put in divergent sociocultural contexts, the future that is projected before the buyer comes in time-types, breaking all singular notions of future, as Goyal illustrates, 'People in Delhi do not look at future in the same way as those in Mumbai look. And they also look distinct from elsewhere'.

Into this framework of temporal pluralities, when enters the discount rates on the loans that were used to purchase the houses which banks impose uniformly through uniform interest rates, buyers, who otherwise experience various time-types, move closer into a certain homogeneity. Goyal theorizes this irony, 'Must one say [...] that modernity has time-alienated people? And the same modernity imposes fresh rules for homogenizing them, albeit not in the same community'. However, Goyal cautions that the homogenization is not a return to singularity again; rather it is a proof of and a response to the loss of singularity. The homogenization creates a mindset of pluralism that impact subject experiencing temporal pluralities at different levels.

Chakravarty and Goyal finely complement each other. While Chakravarty reclaims spaces to re-create the late-modern subject's experience of pluralities, Goyal tells how life of temporal pluralities unfolds routinely in late-modern spaces. Goyal, however, does not have the optimism of Chakravarty in terms of future. For him, life is an enforced homogeneity. As he says time's up, perhaps Goyal, as many others in this special issue, is making a case for pluralities, what Jain and Rhoten referred to as the 'mess'. But, mind you, that mess is idyllic.

Goyal concludes this special issue finely by confirming that temporal plurality is a fact. It does not exist in any *a priori* heights but it is in our real-time experiences.

Conclusion

We submit this special issue to the readers with great pleasure and honour. We have the pleasure of having been able to weave a thread on our times, an investigation into things that have been puzzling us. We have the honour of having been engaged with the thoughts of our esteemed contributors—so erudite, so eclectic and as farsighted in their ways of grappling with a subject as this. For us, this was a humbling experience, as what all we have learned during the making of this special issue have been never told by our times—after all, time tells nothing.

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