

# TOWARDS AN ATEMPORAL SOCIOLOGY



EUGENE MIHAESCO, 'THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF SCIENCE'

## LIBERATION IN A TIMELESS UNIVERSE

BY M. G. HOROWITZ

Since its inception in Paris in the 1830s, social science has sought to conform to perceived imperatives of natural science. Auguste Comte, the French founder of sociology, described the basic contending variables of social structure and social change by deploying the Newtonian concepts of *stasis* and *dynamics* while heralding his new discipline as an overdue *social physics* (*Course in Positive Philosophy*, 1842).

But physics, of course, has outgrown Newtonian mechanics. The holistic quantum mechanics of David Bohm in the 1970s (*Wholeness of the Implicate Order*, 1979), recently followed by Julian Barbour's atemporal cosmology (*End of Time*, 1999) issues a fresh conceptual challenge to classical sociology. Classical social thought is fundamentally temporal: e.g., Marx describing the struggle of social classes over time, Weber the internalization of the Protestant Ethic over time. To be sure, Marx longs for the "classless" society, Weber the emancipation of "spirit." But their utopias are hardly their sociology: neither feels obliged to pen "cookbooks for the future." Their sociology is embedded in time.

Barbour, on the other hand, suggests temporality is the only familiar variable of change. What appears to be the Past is only the burden/resource of experience — life both profits and expires from perceived recollection. Each cosmic moment is simply a choice among alternative sets within the Omnipresent. Yet choice engenders change, hence the illusion of time and motion.

As philosopher, Barbour leaves Consciousness the option of either retaining the dualism of temporality/eternity or discarding it. Yet the social cost of retaining temporal mythology is becoming unmanageable. In a world imperiled by ultimate weaponry, macro-tribes menace the Species by contending over competing approaches to Eternity. Each macro-tribe supposes it may only achieve Eternity via the annihilation of contenders.

But none of the competing dualisms would survive the loss of temporality. Atemporality jettisons clock and regimen. And relieved of theological timetable, the Species might collectively pursue an atemporal *tao* and agenda.

### THE TAO OF SOCIAL ATEMPORALITY

The Tao of Social Atemporality respects the process of organic social development. Evolution, after all, may be understood as the endurance of random mutation in a competitive environment. Organic social development embraces the novelty of *social* evolution. It sets no objectives, but thrives on change. It imposes no schedules of attainment, but celebrates haphazard phases of achievement.

Social change within this paradigm is catalyzed by oriented energy: i.e., when sufficient energy and alert orientation conjoin, change happens.

### THE AGENDA OF SOCIAL ATEMPORALITY

**Atemporal Economics:** The accumulation of wealth is typically temporally based — one incrementally "builds" one's retirement account, for example. Atemporal economics furnishes required resources when and to whom they're needed. To the degree it reliably does so, members need not "build" accounts — they might instead spend their energy realizing the Atemporal Economy.

**Atemporal Politics:** The accumulation of power is temporally based — the temporal politico seeks to control an expanding inventory of personnel, resources and territory. Atemporal politics anonymously coordinates social assets.

**Atemporal History:** Temporal history exposes past "error," warning us to avert "mistakes" of the past. But it warns us too well: i.e., the French prepared for World War 2 by preparing for World War 1; the Americans prepared for the 1960s Viet Cong by preparing for the 1940s Japanese; the Israelis prepared for the Palestinians by preparing for the Nazis. Atemporal history recognizes each situation as unique, not successive.

**Atemporal Recreation:** Spirituality, art and sport are the humanities of Atemporal Society. Freed from the constraint of time, humanity becomes refined expression: i.e., expression distinguishing itself as athletic, rhythmic, aesthetic, emotive, intuitive, mystical, etc.

**Atemporal Science:** Temporal politics reduces science to R&D for the techno-economy. Atemporal Science nurtures Discovery for the Heck of It.

**Achrony** — the End of Time — can as much be a milestone of social liberation as of natural science. The dimensionality that supports progress also aborts it. In the temporal paradigm, a philosopher might argue it's time to replace temporal illusion with atemporal truth. In the atemporal paradigm... at the right juncture... the shift manifests.

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## JAZZ IS FOREVER

### A TRIBUTE TO CULTURAL MIXING

BY DAVID A. HOROWITZ

Ken Burns' PBS television series on jazz earlier this year not only brought the nation's most important indigenous art form back to central stage but poignantly reminded us of the potential strengths of American democracy at its best. As the musical artists and celebrators of the form repeatedly stated, jazz is not about mere self-expression and personal vision, but involves the most intense kind of collaboration, shared aspiration and spiritual connection among participants and audiences. Burns' evocative portrait illustrated how this socially oriented product of spontaneity and improvisation fed off the extensive cultural mixing of ethnicity and race that underlay American society.

How fitting that African American march tunes and blues were supplemented by the European classical music virtuosity of New Orleans Creoles, an ethnically mixed group of professional brass musicians forced out of "white" society by the race segregation codes of the 1890s. The result of the ensuing collaboration was ragtime and "hot" jazz, the forerunners of 20th century American popular culture. New Orleans' rich cultural "gumbo," in turn, produced the brilliant Louis Armstrong, whose musical lyricism and "swing" rhythms dominated popular music for the next 50 years.

Jazz was rooted in the African American experience but its universality spoke to others as well. Growing up in a Mississippi River town in Iowa, the young Bix Beiderbecke heard Armstrong's coronet coming off a passing riverboat. When the incorrigible Bix was sent away to private school outside Chicago, he stole downtown to pick up on the ensemble music played by Armstrong and his cohorts. Yet even during the subsequent Jazz Age of the 1920s, racially integrated bands were taboo. Imagine the scene, then, when Beiderbecke and Armstrong met for a private and unrecorded jam session in a loft somewhere in the Windy City and blew all night just for the love of the music and the thrill of brotherly communion.

Jazz was always inclusive, despite the limits of a society fixated on race. Imagine the immortal Duke Ellington, arguably America's greatest 20th century composer, an artist hosted by European royalty on tours of the Continent, unable to gain hotel accommodations during the orchestra's swings through the South. Yet the group photos of Ellington's musicians show only mature and dignified people whose self-esteem and sense of purpose belie any effort to dehumanize them. Ellington's answer to racism was an ironic laugh and further immersion

in the music. During World War 2 he hosted a radio program whose renditions of his band's swing favorites were interrupted only by Ellington's personal pleas to African Americans to support the war against fascism by buying war bonds.

The inclusiveness of jazz culture meant that the immortal Billie Holiday eagerly adopted the Tin Pan Alley tunes of the great Jewish and Irish tunesmiths and paid tribute to the composers with improvised vocals that were purely sublime. Hard-driving and race-conscious bebop musicians like Lester Young and Charles ('Bird') Parker did the same with their horns. And when the young Miles Davis sought a musical arranger for his recordings to complement the trumpeter's "cool" style, it was Gil Evans, a white artist, with whom Miles worked on such masterpieces as *Sketches of Spain* and *Porgy & Bess*.

How ironic that Louis Armstrong, falsely perceived as a passive accommodationist, would be the African American musician to gain the greatest exposure for denunciations of racism. Armstrong refused to participate in a State Department goodwill tour of the Soviet Union in 1957 until the federal government acted to protect black students seeking to enroll at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. (President Eisenhower soon dispatched federal troops.) And when officials in New Orleans prohibited the appearance of a white musician on the same stage with Armstrong for a scheduled homecoming for the esteemed coronetist, Louis canceled the appearance and vowed he would never return to the Crescent City in life or death (he is buried in the North Bronx).

Who can say how the burdens of race contributed to either the transcendent lyricism or the harsh intensity of jazz music? What Burns reminds us is that jazz could not have come out of any other culture but our own. America's diverse strands of ethnic experience, the pluralism of its people, and its incessant cultural mixing encouraged an expression of freedom open to anyone with guts enough to try. In that essence of the democratic spirit lies the wonder of the gift to which we are the fortunate heirs.

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