

ANTHROPOCENE, GREAT ACCELERATION AND SOCIAL ACCELERATION:
“REDEEMING THE TIME” IN AN UNBRIDLED SPEED-SOCIETY

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Abstract: Lack of time or the permanent obligation to speed everything up became a characteristic of our late modern [un]culture and religion. The phenomenon is considered the central aspect of the Anthropocene, in environmental studies registered as the great acceleration, and in social and cultural studies as social acceleration. “Great acceleration” describes twelve socio-economic megatrends and its effect on twelve earth-trends; social acceleration (Hartmut Rosa) the self-reinforcing effect of technological acceleration, acceleration of social change and acceleration of the pace of life, causing personal (burnout and depression), institutional and political instability (complexity needs time to negotiate). Last not least, the speed society favors innovation over tradition and utopia, which changes the relation between the past, the present and future, mainly incurving things into the here and now.

But is the acceleration of time a natural phenomenon to be respected as unchangeable, a new kind of blind destiny? Or can we still “redeem the time” because time is a cultural phenomenon and by this transformable? Even in bad days the human being is motivated to explore the *kairós* (Ephesius 5.15-16). But in the Anthropocene and its speed society, what looks this time of opportunity like? Is it simply any kind of deacceleration? Is it to respect the sabbath? Is it the creation of time barriers? Is it a time of quality, the annunciation of hope in times of despair? Is it a new kind of time management in personal, institutional and social life? The paper tries to dialogue with these questions and by this to create a sensibility for a late modern temporality not as our destiny, but as a understandable phenomenon which we can humanize and ecologize for the sake of future generations of all creatures.

1. Time, temporality, sensation of stability and instability

The phenomenon of the acceleration of time is a relatively new issue in human science and even more in the field of religious studies, study of religion or theology.¹ The first to

¹ In more recent encyclopedias about the philosophy time the issue does not appear. See Robin le Poidevin; Murray MacBeath (Eds.). *The philosophy of time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Couzens Hoy. *The time of our lives: a critical history of temporality* (Cambridge, MASS: London: MIT Press,

introduce the subject was Paul Virilio. In his book *Velocity and politics*², especially in the chapters “dromotological progress”³ and the “dromotological society”⁴, he pointed the necessity to develop a dromology for social and cultural studies, a science or logic of speed. Virilio, mentioned the political form of acceleration in a capitalist world: “Dromocracy establishes and reproduces standardized forms of assembly and disassembly for the systematic integration of human energy into specific infrastructures”.⁵

The author who actually me introduced to the topic was Hartmut Rosa, reading his book *Beschleunigung und Endfremdung*⁶, translated from the English⁷; and it was actually Rosa who coined the term social acceleration. His central point can be described like this:

Modern life is speeding-up, incessantly. Strange as it is, while the art of saving time reaches unprecedented heights through the introduction of ever-new technologies of communication and production, it nevertheless feels like we are running out of time. In all western societies alike, time-famine is rising and individuals report the impression that they have to run faster and faster each year - not in order to get somewhere, but just to stay in place! This book presents an

2009); Adrian Bardon. *A brief history of the philosophy of time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Adrian Bardon; Heather Dyke (Eds.). *A companion to the philosophy of time* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

² Paul Virilio. *Vitesse et politique* (Paris: Édition Galilée, 1977). English translation: Paul Virilio. *Speed and politics*. Translation: Marc Polizzotto. Introdução: Benjamin H. Bratton (Los Angeles, CA: Editora Semiotext(e), 2006).

³ Virilio, *Speed and politics*, 59-80.

⁴ Virilio, *Speed and politics*, 81-141.

⁵ Virilio, *Speed and politics*, 14.

⁶ Hartmut Rosa. *Beschleunigung und Entfremdung. Entwurf einer Kritischen Theorie spätmoderner Zeitlichkeit*. Aus dem Englischen von Robin Celikates (Berlin, Suhrkamp: 2010). It was not his first text on the issue: Hartmut Rosa. *Beschleunigung: die Veränderungen der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005). Others publications are: Hartmut Rosa; William E. Scheuerman (ed.). *High-speed society: social acceleration, power and modernity* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012); Hartmut Rosa; Jonathan Trejo-Mathys. *Social acceleration: a new theory of modernity* (2013). Hartmut Rosa. *Aceleração: a transformação das estruturas temporais da modernidade* (São Paulo: Editora da Unesp, 2019). In his more recent publication, Rosa focusses on the overcoming of the loss of resonance with the world as a major byproduct of the acceleration of time. Hartmut Rosa. *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2017). Translation into English: Hartmut Rosa. *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (Boston, USA, Cambridge e Oxford, GBR: Polity, 2019).

⁷ Hartmut Rosa. *Alienation and Acceleration: towards a critical theory of late-modern temporality* (Forte Lauderdale, Florida: NSU Press, 2010).

analytic framework to identify the causes and effects of the various sped-up-processes which define modernity - and it develops a critical theory of late-modern temporality. Crucial for this is the idea that acceleration in the end leads to monstrous forms of alienation from time and space, from things and actions - and from self and other.⁸

This short introduction indicates how in the phenomena of the acceleration of time subjective aspects and objective facts are interwoven with one-another. I describe this time – experience as temporality, which not only refers to the lived time, but, to the experienced time which is at the same an imagined time. It is part of a personal, temporal world which, among others, relates the past, the present and the future, always in a very specific form, and, at the same time, in varies specific forms. The same way that human experience varies over time⁹, human time experience and imagination of time – or temporality – has differed, too. Second, Rosa observes that the acceleration of time, although it exists already a long time and accompanies western modernity since its early beginnings, has nowadays reached a life-threatening speed, which represents a tipping point towards a profound loss of quality of live, in total contraction of its promises to make live better.

John R. McNeil introduced the concept of the “great acceleration”, for the first time in 2007.¹⁰ It resumes the hard data of twelve earth system megatrends¹¹ and twelve related socioeconomic megatrends¹². Although the concepts of the “great acceleration” and the

⁸ Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, back cover.

⁹ The same can be sad, as widely known in religious studies and theology, concerning space, as there is sacred time and there are sacred spaces. The equivalent of time acceleration is space – compression, although time-space compression is used either. See Anthony Giddins. *A Contemporary critique of historical materialism: power, property and the state* (London: Macmillan. 1981), especially the chapter “Time-space distanciation and the generation of power” (pp. 90-108). Jon May; Nigel Thrift. *Time-space: geographies of temporality* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Barney Warf. *Time-space compression: historical geographies* (London: New York: Routledge, 2008). The idea of spatial compression originally came from studies of geography and its political-economic impact, including from the center-periphery perspective, but it is also present in cultural studies. The temporal aspect, on the other hand, is predominant in cultural, social and anthropological studies.

¹⁰ Will Steffen; Paul J. Crutzen; John R. McNeill. “The Anthropocene: Are humans now overwhelming the great forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36 (2007), 614–621. Later: John R. Neill; Peter Engelke. *The great acceleration: an environmental history of the anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harward University Press, 2016).

¹¹ The growth of 1. Carbon dioxide, 2. Nitrous oxide, 3. Methane; 4. Stratospheric ozone; 5. Surface temperature; 6. Ocean acidification; 7. Marine fish capture; 8. Shrimp aquaculture; 9. Nitrogen to coastal zone; 10. Tropical forest loss; 11. Domesticated land degradation; 12. Terrestrial biosphere degradation.

¹² 1. Tackling climate change; 2. Demographic shifts; 3. Rapid urbanization; 3. The energy transition; 4. Future of mobility; 5 Hyper-connectivity; 6. rise of technology & industry 5.0; 7. Shift in global economic power; 9. Innovating to zero; 10. Health and wellness evolution; 11. Social instability; 12. Fracturing world.

“social acceleration” have not been related to one-another, one may say that both perspectives identify as principal aspect the search for stability through development, a development in a dynamic of not only continual, but increasing acceleration, compaction and micronation. Nevertheless, and even though one of twelve socio-economic megatrends – social instability¹³ – is also discussed within the concept of social acceleration, these megatrends never were related to its philosophical backgrounds: the narratives that accompany, defend or shield these megatrends. Here Hartmut Rosa May add important insights.¹⁴ Second, both concepts have concluded that our world or is rapidly advancing towards dangerous tipping points or has already passed them, and that glad tidings of salvation seem to be far away within this age of a temporality crisis. Rosa distinguishes three main dimensions of temporal acceleration: technical acceleration, acceleration of social change and acceleration of the rhythm of life.

The acceleration of social change [...] implies a growing dissociation between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation and, thus, the shortening of the stability of temporal horizons, in the sense of a “contraction of the present”: conditions of action and situational determinations lose their validity in increasingly shorter intervals. [...] this leads to an existential situation, characterized by the slipping-slope syndrome, which can be described as “being on slippery slopes”, which is valid not only for individual social actors, but also for organizations and institutions: the horizons of expectation and experience must be constantly corrected, social actors are forced to keep pace in the face of multidimensional transformations in their environment and to exercise their corresponding adaptive capacities.¹⁵

Social instabilisation is the result, and this causes anxiousness. Rosa focuses on one aspect of this anxiety, the fear of “being replaced” because one cannot keep up with the speed society and its technical and social accelerations:

The ubiquitous feeling of always being behind in a world “always on the run” has its generalizable cause not in the individual and institutional waste of time, or in

¹³ I prefer social “instabilization”, to stress the ongoing process.

¹⁴ Who studies the effects of social acceleration will sooner or later see similarities with the concept of liquid modernity in Zygmunt Bauman. What is missing in Bauman is the relation between liquid modernity and accelerated modernity, as the work of Bauman precedes the work of Rosa. Whereas Bauman is much studied within the studies of religion, Rosa is not.

¹⁵ ROSA, *Aceleração*, 309. Our translation.

“indolence”, but rather in the structural incongruity, growing with the advance of modernization, between the time of the world and the time of life.¹⁶

Symptomatic of this double loss are two characteristic complaints regarding the new generations, whose contradiction between them is explained by the group that each of them articulates: on the one hand, it is claimed that the youth no longer respect traditions; on the other hand, it is lamented that the youth no longer have dreams. It is easy to understand that traditions suffer a huge impact in times of acceleration, since traditional knowledge loses its explanatory power more quickly in a speed society. Technological changes serve as an example: what was a telephone, became a cell phone with a keyboard, and today a smartphone with icons. This, however, also seems to extend to the world of habits, rites, beliefs and their respective traditions.

The decline of utopian thinking is not so easily related to the phenomenon of acceleration, but it is perceived when one considers what comes to replace it: innovation. Innovation has become the magic word of our accelerated era, as a continuous and primary requirement to guarantee institutional and product line survival and the promise of a better future. Each innovation is presented as a near-realization of an ultimate dream, but it arrives with ever-shorter expiration dates or leads to an ever-more frenetic pace of countless transformative innovations. When innovation replaces utopia, notions of complexity and the necessary perseverance in the search for its construction are lost. Furthermore, utopias do not serve as consumer products, they are not a commodity, and they cannot be bought.

Acceleration of time, institutional instability, the unease in the culture or disenchantment

What is apparently not perceived is the effect of this double threat, both to the main function of tradition, that is, conservative thought – which is to guarantee a good life through knowledge of the past – and to the function of utopia, that is, progressive thought – which is to guarantee a better life through the construction of a new future, accompanied by change. Therefore, the acceleration of time challenges these two fundamental elements of the religious construction of meaning and hope, its traditions¹⁷ and its utopian horizons.

¹⁶ ROSA, *Aceleração*, 301.

¹⁷ “[...] the present age is losing its ability to preserve its own past, it has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind that all previous social formations had in

The notion of the loss of utopia accompanies a temporal notion of stagnation,¹⁸ if not the end of history¹⁹ and sadness in dystopian urban spaces²⁰. Traditions, then, are not exactly lost or rejected, but questioned as to their capacity to make sense in an accelerated world. Rosa distinguishes between three forms of acceleration that have always existed:

[...] not all acceleratory processes are of the same type; analytically and logically, the three forms of social acceleration [elaborated] – the technical acceleration of object-directed processes, the acceleration of social change and the acceleration of life – have to be strictly differentiated from each other. [...].²¹

Nevertheless,

[...] acceleration has become a self-propelling process, which arranges the three areas of acceleration in a circular interaction, in which they relate to each other in the direction of increase. Acceleration within this circle thus always and inevitably generates more acceleration, it becomes a “feedback system” that reinforces itself.

One effect of this is the loss of importance of institutions, considering that institutions transmit ideas, imaginaries, habits, values, and feelings among at least three generations: the past, the present, and the future. At a time when acceleration forces individuals to change, for example, their profession, the place of their “home,” and, eventually, their economic, political, and religious thoughts, the aspect of continuity and institutional belonging creates noisiness and cracks, because they are, apparently, at least in the individual perception, not in time. Willingness to change, flexibility, adaptation, and innovation are not innate characteristics of institutions, but of movements. Institutions that classically desire and provide stability, predictability, and security now find themselves in direct competition with startups (economy), new types of parties (La

one way or another” Frederic Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 179 *apud* Russell West-Pavlov. *Temporalities* (London, New York: 2003), p. 142.

¹⁸ Eduardo Duque. “Contributos para a compreensão da aceleração do tempo”. Emília Araújo; Eudardo Duque (Eds). *Os tempos sociais e o mundo contemporâneo: Um debate para as ciências sociais e humanas* (Braga: Universidade do Minho: Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade / Centro de Investigação em Ciências Sociais, 2012), p. 117: “Let us consider that behind the dynamics of permanent acceleration there may be a ‘paradoxical stagnation’ of history in which nothing really new appears”.

¹⁹ I think this impression of the “end” follows the postmodern trend of exchanging long for shorter and shorter narratives as a kind of notion of the radicality of the occurring paradigm shift. See Francis Fukuyama. *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Avon. 1992.

²⁰ Films about future urban spaces almost always point to nearly uninhabitable environments.. See Jens M.Baumgarten “The dystopian city of São Paulo: troubling the universality of climate crisis”. *Afterimage*, 4.2, (2020): 40-45, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2020.472008>.

²¹ Rosa, *Aceleração*, 301.

République en Marche, Macron, France), and deinstitutionalized religious expressions (the unchurched²²). Or, as Rosa states: in a speed society and culture, personal, social, and cultural stability will achieve or maintain, who changes permanently, and in an always quicker manner. In this perspective, stability is dynamic stability.

For many who cannot accompany this frenetic rhythm, who are uneasy with this speed culture or who feel profoundly disenchanted within it, the reaffirmation of traditions seems the answer. This is the banner of many “fundamentalist” movements²³. Discussions about the future of utopian thought²⁴ or the *homo utopicus*²⁵ in anti-utopian²⁶ or dystopian times,²⁷ the expressed need for a new utopian spirit,²⁸ are also reactions to this threat. The challenge lies in an important detail: in the current conflict in society and institutions, stagnation is attributed to the positions of the other, in a cultural struggle between traditionalists and utopians, conservatives and progressives or modernists. The first cause and the fact itself of the parallel deconstruction, in “real time” and “identical space”, of these two essential paths of the construction of meaning, by the compression of space and the acceleration of time is largely disregarded.

Furthermore, the consideration of the phenomenon of acceleration of time can help to understand the notion of modernity as “liquid”, due to the impact of speed²⁹ which results in transformations of the temporal structures of everyday life and the restructuring of life, including religious life, the process of formation of identity and religious subjectivity, the relationship of human beings with the world and their perception of the process of history and their insertion in it.

²² George Hunter III. *Church for the unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

²³ Helmut Renders. “A promessa de infalibilidade de três fundamentalismos religiosos cristãos e sua relação com as temporalidades da pré-modernidade, modernidade e modernidade tardia”, in Sandra Duarte de Souza (org.). *Fundamentalismos religiosos contemporâneos* (São Paulo: Fonte Editorial, 2013), 113-133.

²⁴ FERNANDO, Julian Fernando *et al.* “Functions of Utopia: How Utopian Thinking Motivates Societal Engagement”. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44 (2017). DOI: 10.1177/0146167217748604; Julian Fernando. *et al.* More Than Idyll Speculation: Utopian Thinking for Planetary Health”. *Challenges*, 10.16 (2019). DOI:10.3390/challe10010016.

²⁵ Cosimo Quarta. *Homo utopicus: la dimensione storico-antropologica dell’utopia* (Bari, Italia: Edizioni Dedalo, 2015).

²⁶ JACOBY, Russell Jacoby. *Imagem imperfeita: pensamento utópico para uma época antiutópica* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007).

²⁷ Espen Hammer. “A Utopia for a Dystopian Age”. in Columna *The Stone*, New York Times. Disponível em: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/opinion/a-utopia-for-a-dystopian-age.html>.

²⁸ Adauto Novaes (ed.). *Mutações: o novo espírito utópico* (São Paulo: Edições SESC, 2016).

²⁹ James Gleick. *A velocidade da vida moderna: acelerado o desafio de lidar com o tempo* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 2000).

118 ROSA, Hartmut. **Aceleração**. 2019,

Acceleration of time, pressure towards hybridization, burnout and depression

At a personal and institutional level, the acceleration of time contributes to a precondition of hybridization, the obligation and possibility of choice facing a permanent increase of alternatives. Rosa also observes this:

[...] it is not surprising that diagnoses of a “postmodern” identity, which are generally so heterogeneous, tend towards a consensus on the thesis of a liquefaction of stable personal identity in favor of a more open, experimental and, at times, fragmented project of the self. Individualization also means, in its late-modern form, the increase in options for choice, [...] although this increase takes [...] above all the form of a freer combinability [*Kombinierbarkeit*] and a simpler revisability [*Revidierbarkeit*] of the components of identity.³⁰

Combinability [*Kombinierbarkeit*] and revisability [*Revidierbarkeit*] are in fact fundamental for the processes of hybridization to actually occur. However, the respective processes are not simple, evident and linear. We observe that in the religious field “a more free combinability” does indeed occur today, and that they can at the same time be rejected.³¹ However, these rejections do not eliminate the fact that

[...] the predicates indicating identity must, in Late Modernity, always be signaled with a temporal index: one is no longer a baker, conservative or Catholic per se, but rather, at that moment and, tendentially in a contracted present, of unpredictable duration, one was something different and (probably) one will be something else. [...] decisions and positions (constituting identity) become relative to time, and no longer relative to being.³²

One of the consequences at the level of personal life is the detemporalization of life itself in the sense of the deconstruction of standardized sequences or normalized biographies,

³⁰ Rosa, *Aceleração*, p. 466.

³¹ Compare the two examples of, on the one hand, a hybridization of historically antagonistic religious imaginaries and, on the other hand, a rejection of a ritualistic hybridization in Helmut Renders. Introdução, aceitação e rejeição de novas celebrações no metodismo brasileiro: a história da ‘Celebração do Coração Aquecido’ e da ‘Festa de Dona Susana’”. *Interações, Cultura e Comunidade*, 9.16 (2014): 350-373.

³² Rosa, *Aceleração*, p. 468-469.

including religious ones, which, at the same time, is strengthened by the parallel processes of deinstitutionalization.³³

Another consequence of the unbridled self-propelled acceleration between the technical acceleration of the social world and personal life is the increase in types of diseases that in one way or another signal that a person feels unable to keep up with the pace of information and the increasing shortening of deadlines, of meeting work demands, with emphasis on depression and burnout. Acceleration, from a certain intensity³⁴, not only stresses, it increasingly and literally paralyzes human beings. This situation sets in when there is a desynchronization of the biological rhythm or of life – both of human beings and animals – of social life (such as work) and cultural life as well as technical “live”, which also can no longer be responded to with proposals to increase the efficiency of actions. A “timeout” is therefore needed to recharge the batteries. The loss of resonance as a result of the acceleration processes impacts human beings on three levels: individual, personal and social. As for the individual level or the relationship “with oneself”, acceleration has reached a level where the biological rhythm of more and more people in more and more phases of their lives seems to be overwhelmed by the continuous and growing or accelerating demand to adapt or innovate. The notion of tiredness³⁵ and the fear of falling behind, of no longer being able to cope with the demands of rushing and completing tasks in ever shorter times, correspond to the depressive states and burnout as diseases of our times. Rosa and related researchers see in the unbridled dynamics of acceleration an immense wave of human alienation, but in a perverse “desquality”, since it weakens if not deconstructs, in parallel with the classically created and used means to overcome alienation(s): democracy, institutions and an imaginary that knows how to define limits and project alternatives.

³³ Institutions, in temporal terms, not only have the purpose of guaranteeing a faithful mediation between past and future generations, under the understanding of the supposed immutability of the essential aspects of life (and religion) to guarantee stability at an individual, personal or community and social or public level, but they also need to permanently negotiate within themselves and among themselves the relationship between a growing plurality and their proposed stability.

³⁴ “According to Paul Virilio, postmodern time is the disembodied and constantly accelerating time of technology, “pure time in the computer... [which] helps to construct a permanent present, a limitless and timeless intensity.” West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*, p. 137-138. The author cites VIRILIO, Paul Virilio. *The lost dimension*. Translation: Daniel Moshenberg (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p. 15.

³⁵ Byung-Chul Han. *Sociedade do cansaço*. Tradução: Enio Paulo Giachini. 2nd ed. (Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2017).

***Acceleration of time, dynamic stability and the intensification of religious experience:
fast religion and super religion***

The question of how the acceleration of time impacts the *homo religiosus*, his religious institutions and his religious imagination is related to the question whether and in case how religion can be accelerated. As for the first, it is clear that the *homo religiosus* suffers the same pressures in the world of work and that his institutions are currently being deconstructed in a similar way as parties or unions.

One of the internal reactions found is the attempt to implement programs for its dynamization, formal and structural experimentation, with an emphasis on its effectiveness in terms of its expansion, that is, it is believed that stability arises again from dynamic stabilization. As for the second question, what can be accelerated in religious life, I suggest distinguishing between areas, timelines, intensities or qualities. I start from a classic religious narrative of the maximum description of the quality of [religious] life, the narrative concerning the possibility or necessity of “perfection”. The concept contains at least three distinct aspects: it can describe “integrity” in the sense of “something without damage”; “fullness” – in the sense of “balance or perfect harmony that relates various elements,” possibly antagonists, and perfection; or an “unsurpassable completion of a process”.

When a temporal reading is applied to the classic areas of religious interest, normally the attainment of maturity, wisdom, or the provision of experience, are mentioned. Among these, the field of experience seems to me the most elastic field or, from our perspective, subjectively, the most compressible, intensifiable, and accelerable field. Enthusiastic experiences can serve as a strong motivation of empowerment as serve as a kind of drug to flee the real word, at least, for a moment. On the other hand, the classic paths of attaining maturity and wisdom not only require time, but also integrate error and transgression into their path, since the steps of maturity are necessarily immature and true wisdom is literally unlimited³⁶ – at least for those who “know that they know nothing”.³⁷

³⁶ When one looks at the various corruption and abuse scandals, one gets the impression that the super-religion of accelerated religion and its emphasis on the supernatural creates a parallel world with its own rules that dissolve traditional conventions and make the “anointed” untouchable. Likewise, it replaces direct, spontaneous, ecstatic inspiration in the form of prophecy with a more analytical discourse.

³⁷ However, it seems to me that there are also ways of supposedly “accelerating” wisdom and maturity. In the first case, the accumulation of knowledge through study and multiple experiences is exchanged for instantaneous and complete “inspiration,” the truth of which is evidenced merely by the phenomenon; in

Therefore, it is up to *homo religiosus*, while he or she tries to adapt to the fast-paced society and create an accelerated, if not unbridled, religion, to value especially the field of religious experience. This is necessary, because the way of experiencing religion is not an anthropological constant and access to it involves interpretation and language, whether textual or visual. Not infrequently, the religious subject even has difficulty finding the “right” words to describe his or her experience and the situation becomes even more complicated when we talk about descriptions of experiences from the past: between us and this past, there will always be hermeneutics. In addition, human beings interact with environmental and social changes through a process of continuous construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of their culture and their way of relating to it, of their being in the world, including their being in the world “religiously”:

In postmodernity, the emphasis on the religious experience of plenitude has shifted not only to the beginning of the religious journey, but to a new density, with a scope never seen before. This explains, in turn, the structural proximity and the social difference between the medieval emphasis on mystical union and the late modern emphasis on baptism in the Holy Spirit as highly prestigious experiences. Both emphases on the encounter with God within the human being – or within God – occur at a time of transition between periods in which institutions – which normally take care of the transfer of ancient experiences to the next generations – were no longer preferentially sought in search of answers to essential questions. [...] The difference between the medieval and postmodern mystical experience lies in the temporal inversion: in medieval times, mystical union was expected at the end of a long path of emptying, followed by enlightenment; in late modernity, the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is expected immediately after the beginning of initiation into the Christian faith, confession and baptism.

First, it is important to reaffirm that the phenomenon of acceleration is ancient and that its inherent demand for change makes it, initially, an ally of modernity. Here, too, the rule applies that the dose makes the poison. When Protestants, for example, affirm *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*, they start from the idea of the supposedly beneficial aspect of

the second case, for example, virtue – prudence, temperance, courage, and justice – is exchanged for a strong emotion of “love” as a sign of behavioral fulfillment.

institutional, doctrinal, ritualistic and behavioral changes³⁸ in an incomplete and open world. In fact, history has no shortage of accepted and successful movements of contextualization, enculturation, conscious syncretism or hybridization that are considered to promote the common good and the valorization of whole human beings capable of completing rather than excluding. I stated in the previous section that religious processes of hybridization are favored by the compression of space or the shortening of distances, first and foremost by the increase in options for choice.

The acceleration of time, on the other hand, places a new tension on this potential. For example, in the field of ethics, we can observe a certain delay in the integration of new perspectives resulting from the acceleration of time, whether they have been accepted and whether they have in fact become established. This happened at the beginning of modernity, when utilitarian ethics conquered its place alongside deontological ethics, and at the beginning of late modernity, when situational ethics initially carved out its space alongside the other two, a process that is, in fact, still under construction.³⁹ Religion, as a system of interpreting being in the world, of seeing oneself in the world and of relating to this world, responds to the phenomenon of acceleration, even of unbridled escalation, in two ways: sometimes it declares desynchronization or being outside the world as the only way to maintain its essence, sometimes it claims the loss of resonance (with oneself, with the world, with God). And here I think that behind each hybridization there is the promise or the search for resonance among distinct groups, in the field of beliefs and their respective imaginaries and rites and their forms and functions. The aspect of unlimited and timeless intensity in the field of religion corresponds to the field of religious experience, perfect, complete and finished, a moment of full union with the transcendent and of ecstasy, of God within us, a speed religion within a speed society.

³⁸ We could say that, within Christianity, the Protestant Reformation is essentially “modern” insofar as it favors utopian thinking more, since its ideal world is located in a better future. Instead, the Catholic Reformation bet on the revitalization of religious traditions, ethical concepts, cosmologies, religious imaginaries, etc., which were basically pre-modern. The seemingly enormous appeal of dispensational theories, especially after 1945, in the perspective of the acceleration of time, is radically “modern” – insofar as the ideal world lies in the future, and radically postmodern insofar as the imminence of the end is “soon.”

³⁹ Helmut Renders. “O tempora! O mores! Para uma valorização em conjunta das éticas e temporalidades pré-moderna, moderna e pós-moderna como chave do discernimento moral contemporâneo”, in Helmut Renders; José Carlos de Souza. *Ética comunitária, ética da vida* (São Bernardo do Campo, SP: Editeo, 2016), p. 109-128.

The acceleration of time, then, stimulates new forms of hybridization, especially, but not only in neo-Pentecostal churches⁴⁰, favoring the most enthusiastic field of experience possible. With this, however, it creates a potential impasse: how can religious experience be accelerated and compacted in such a way that the sensation of plenitude and perfection remains at this high level of intensity, not only for a select few, but for the vast majority, constantly, since the promise of fast religiosity cannot be less than plenitude and prosperity already? And, until when can the speed-religion proposal of stabilization through dynamization be even more intensive, since the acceleration of time apparently does not stop? Rosa points to a limit, where the human being simply becomes ill, because he can no longer keep up with the demands of intensity. With this, hybridization as a standardization of originally much more diverse expressions of religious experiences can reach its limit.

Epilog

The challenge to redeem the time, to find *kairos* within *chronos*, changes, with every alteration of temporality. When Methodism started in the 18th century, the dominant temporality perceived and expected already changes from generation to generation. The answer was a religious proposal, that included the whole circle of life, from birth to death. The challenge to understand fractured, hybrid identities, and the longing for ecstatic experiences as attempt to respond on the level of personal religious life to a new temporality, is given.

Whereas in biblical times the gospel had to overcome world and time structures hostile towards change, in our days the velocity of change itself becomes the challenge. As *religious temporality* contains in general a cosmologic dimension of time, which is accompanied by the sensation that time is something that cannot be changed. As it is believed that one has to follow its eternal rules, classic religion is badly prepared to understand the phenomenon of the acceleration of time as product of culture, and not of nature. One direct result was the introduction of defined success rates in models of church growth, as criteria of “healthy” churches. Since then, experiences of burn out are more

⁴⁰ BITTENCOURT FILHO, José. *Matriz religiosa brasileira: religiosidade e mudança social* (Petrópolis: Vozes: Koinonia, 2003). p. 77 called this a characteristic of the Brazilian religious matrix: “The Brazilian Religious Matrix gives rise to, and the matrix’ religiosity ratifies, religious ecstasy as a kind of peak of direct experience with the sacred”. The author understands this matrix as “... the substrate of the religiosity of Brazilian common sense [...] that [...] favors religious forms and induces devotional behaviors.” I would relate this observation to the general effect of acceleration, not to the Brazilian culture on its own.

and more common among clergy and lay people, who feel that they cannot respond any more to this kind of accelerated expectation. As traditional and utopian thinking together are challenged in our speed society, traditional and utopian thinkers should start to understand the contribution of both approaches to recognize the signs of the time and look for a contemporary answer to redeem the time, because speed society is evil to both, and at the actual state, to the majority of the people and all living beings.

Religious systems as Methodism, which started to promote human maturity in a wide scale including social justice, and who are not eager to confound maturity with peaks of single ecstatic experiences, defend that to achieve the capacity to read the signs of the time, and to achieve the maturity to handle our complex world is a life task or a process. That is why it includes the importance of the act of faith, as the capacity to keep walking in an unsecure world, expressing one's believe in divine grace, by taking one's cross to make the world a better place. The today's level of the acceleration of time is part of a process of continuous alienation and disenchantment, which one cannot longer simply try to adapt to. As part of a religious movement and institution, we need to understand its challenge, denounce it's consequences and ask ourselves how religion may contribute to an understanding of stability and dynamics which promote and guarantee live. To redeem our time, we need to promote an attitude towards today's temporality. And in many aspects, I believe, we have to slow down.