



2020-2021

Article

8-24-2021

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Recommended Citation

Ortmann, Ariana E. (2021) "The Temperature of Time," *The Mall*: Vol. 5 , Article 17.
Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/the-mall/vol5/iss1/17>

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The Temperature of Time

Ariana E. Ortmann

Physicists measure time by the existence of heat. It is statistically more probable that a quickly moving atom of the hot substance collides with a cold one and leaves it a little of its energy, rather than vice versa.

It was December 23. It had been December 23 for the past 4.81 days. Ah, the coldest day of the year...thus far. The future seemed bleak, as it would probably only grow colder, and stiffer, and slower. Spring seemed so far away, I genuinely could not imagine leaving my New York estate without a fur coat, thermal underwear, and three pairs of wool socks under my dad's old leather boots. The days had dragged on and on—it felt as if time herself was slowing down. That was ironic because the shortest day of the year takes place in December. *Nature has a sick sense of humor*, I thought as I pulled on a hat and set outside. My bones stiffened as I tried to move. In my misery, I contemplated two ideas. The first was that I could try to stay bundled and walk down the street with an artificial sense of warmth. The second was to shed a layer or two of fabric weight and start running to my destination. I choose the latter. At the very least, I would arrive several minutes earlier and could defrost my skin by a fire. At best, I might warm up thanks to physical movement.

I could feel the blood in my veins start to heat up as my legs moved at an accelerated rate and my arms shifted from side to side. The faster I moved, the hotter I became. I forgot where I was going, but it didn't matter because I only wanted to stay warm. If I stilled, I would probably grow cold again. Then, I rationalized, I would have to start running again. It is common sense to know that starting to run is the worst part about it. Not only is your body stiff and uncomfortable, but you have probably thought about how awful your memory of running is and deter yourself from the desire to start. So, like Forrest Gump, I kept going. I ran faster and faster, until I noticed that I had reached my destination. Spring!

I must have run so fast that time sped up with me. Once I halted my sprint, time flowed at a moderate pace, much as it does in the autumn season. I strolled back to the Upper East side and dressed into something much more comfortable. Making sure not to hasten, as I did not want to speed through the awakening of April. Everything around me was closely monitored to ensure its moderate tempo. While this season was a delight after literally being stuck in December 23, I would dread it if the clocks stood still *again*. I could see the effect that a frozen-in-time winter had on the planet and its inhabitants, and I knew that an eternal spring would probably wreak havoc on the environment as well. Enjoying the moment that I was in helped to moderate time. Frequently, I would pass time by people-watching from my

front window. People still ran, but they were usually of a certain demographic. Students and school children who could not wait for the last bell of the semester to ring or their final exam to cease sprinted into Summer. I decided to let that season come to me instead.

The thing about summer is that it is a very desirable season—that is, desirable for those who work or study. However, in my hemisphere, summer is hot, and it moves as such. Everyone scrambling to do the things that they normally would not have time to do during the busy seasons only worsened this time warp effect. Before you know it, you are itching to get out of your skin, you've become so sweaty. But before you have even noticed that discomfort, the period is over. Quite literally, the days blended together. Although far less people are running in the summer (besides CEOs and Presidents and anyone else benefiting from the labors of others), they move just as quickly trying to enjoy their little time off. If they plainly existed, they would have had much more time. Oh, hello Autumn!

Autumn greeted me with a warm hug and a cool whisper of hello. She set to work to ready nature for hibernation. I reset my household to a moderate pace once again. The music held steady, the pendulum clock swung even, and I settled to routine. The rest of the world followed suit. After all, they were exhausted from summer. It was a probable truth, as well, that they were tired of their ever-fleeting freedom anyways. It is taxing on a person to do so much. Thankfully for them, autumn allows an even cooling to revive their bodies from a limp state into a structured being once more. It is almost teasing that we are revived to such solidification, and are grateful for it, before becoming a practical statue in the never-ending months of winter. The decline of temperature began, and the increase of time kicked in once more. I sighed. I hate running. It is currently November 14, and in 5 months' time, it will be December 23 once more and I will have to run into spring.

WORKS CITED

Rovelli, Carlo. "Seven Brief Lessons on Physics" *Penguin Books* New York, 2015