

## Chapter XV

# SPACE AND TIME

### A) SPACE AND TIME AS EXPRESSIONS OF THE INTERVAL

*ART. 1: Space and time are modes through which the interval is realised, and rightly vehicles of absence.*

We would now like to undertake a deduction of space and time. Instead of restricting ourselves to describing them as common features of experience, instead of positing them as formal conditions without which the experience before us would be impossible, we want to show that space and time arise perforce as means of participation, as instruments without which finite being could neither arise in the All nor be distinguished from it nor find infinite development. In that case, space and time are constant features of finite being in general and not merely features of human experience, expressing our mental and physiologic makeup.

In this sense space and time must appear to us as means without which we could neither posit our own freedom nor conceive of the interval that separates us from the All and allows us to oppose the one to the many, the finite to the infinite.

It is noteworthy that the notions of space and time appear to us in the form of a void that must be filled. Now, that is the very meaning we give to the interval. It is even hard to evoke either space or time other than as the interval between two points or the interval between two instants. Matter fills the spatial interval and life fills the temporal interval. But space and time cannot be defined as sheer intervals. Through them are realised the distinctions between objects and events: the more two objects are separated in space, the more two instants are separated by time, the more they strike us as deprived of communication. As soon as they converge, they tend to unite. Thus, the interval that separates them also puts them into relation.

The place and the instant are not facts to be thought, they are facts to be occupied; and in the occupied place and instant, it always seems we have won a victory over space and time. Space and time propose ends to us and therefore necessarily separate us from the end we target. They allow us to attain particular ends but also propose others, constantly more distant, which arouse in us the activity of willing. Owing to this they always leave us discontented because it seems they leave us ever distant from Being, so that we naturally finish by considering them a kind of screen that conceals it from us. In opening before us a path to follow, they show us that nothing can belong to us except by way of an action we need to carry out. Time and space therefore define the interval that separates being from phenomena. Yet these are also what separate the perceiving subject from the perceived object, and the lust of desire from the desired end. Space and time are the means separating all things and beings; but the separations themselves are what allow us to cross the distance, either through movement or through memory. And in their connection with the interval, one clearly sees how space and time can never be disassociated, at least if space separates—though composed of simultaneous positions—precisely because it subordinates us to matter; and if time unites, not only because it permits bodies to draw near each other through movement, but because—though it is the inverse of space that renders them simultaneous—it inserts between them a new and more profound interval, which is that of succession. Time again is what spans the interval through memory, delivering them from their materiality, thereby overcoming the interval it has carved out.

Space and time therefore bring about the contrast and relationship between presence and absence (which are only developed from the notion of the interval) which give us, so to speak, a disposal of that interval in which our situation vis-à-vis other beings is sometimes determined by us and sometimes undergone. They do not shatter the total presence of the Act on which participation is founded, as evidenced by the fact that it always enters space and time in our experience. However, they divide it in a certain manner, or, if one wishes, oppose one another at the heart of an immutable presence from which one cannot remove oneself, a relative presence and a relative absence, as seen in the theory of contraries. Through its absolute simultaneity, space is an image of the total

presence. Hence geometric objects strike us as eternal objects and the most changeable empirical objects strike us as always occupying the same place, and space itself seems an indifferent matter, constantly before us, to which many different shapes may be assigned without altering it. But the simultaneity and immutability of pure space are not characters of concrete experience, they are only ideas: they can only be thought. We only ever obtain particular simultaneities that exclude one another and thereby give rise to absence. For in their origin and in their proper mental nature, presence and absence have significance only with respect to an act of attention, the absence of which always indicates a falling-off. Space and time are like an absolute stretching of the pure act, though they can always be surmounted. They are vehicles of absence rather than presence but for that reason render disparate presences possible, which are produced only in the coincidence of an instant and a point in which the distinction between space and time and their very reality begin to vanish. But space itself is only a dispersal: there is doubtless within it the ideal co-presence of all its parts, which nonetheless make sense only in the mind's apperception. Time in turn constantly actualises particular presences; they only pass so that it can introduce them, thanks to memory, into the timelessness of the total presence.

*ART. 2: Space and time permit us to join the one to the many and the infinite to the finite.*

The liaison between time and space permits us to oppose the one to the many as well to unite them. For there is doubtless no other way to think of the multiple than by way of the distinctions between places and instants. However, this does not amount to a simple reading of experience or an empirical distinction between these two forms of multiplicity. First of all, they are only one, since all multiplicity has to be enumerated, i.e. counted out over time: the multiple is an act engaged in time, which constantly opposes the operation it does to the one it has done, or the one it is about to do; it is an act that is both continuous and interrupted, i.e. one that at each instant restores to unity the multiplicity it gives birth to. But how can it be interrupted unless space precisely provides it with a plurality of distinct positions, just as every concrete collection ceases to be a heap and becomes a number when the elements composing it are separated by intervals? And how could the unity of this multiplicity be realised if we only had access to a time that constantly vanished and was reborn? Memory alone would not suffice since it would allow a heterogeneity between what had been counted, and therefore belongs to the past, and the act of counting in the present; and since it has need of, in order represent ensembles of operations it has performed, some schema of a simultaneity comprised of distinct parts, i.e. a schema of imagined space. Which shows that multiplicity can only be understood where space permits us to embrace it through the unity of a single regard.

Space and time also justify the distinction and connection between the finite and the infinite. For they require us to occupy a circumscribed place at the interior of a limitless expanse and duration, nonetheless dominating them by way of thought so that we can thoughtfully occupy all possible places and instants. And it would be a singular idolatry to consider the twofold infinity as static, which would be a contradiction. There is no actual infinity apart from that of the pure act. Accordingly, the infinities of time and space are produced by us, so to speak, as a means of participation, showing that, regardless of the horizon we have so far chosen to embrace, there always remains some movement that obliges us to surpass it, which the Pure Act never ceases to supply us.

With respect to the theory of participation it is singularly instructive to observe that, if space and time alone allow us to think of ourselves as part of an All, that All could however never be encompassed by us, which would so to speak put us on its level and consequently efface our nature as parts. This shows rather well the necessity of positing the All, i.e. positing the indivisibility of space and time (or the act that founds participation), and at the same time positing it as infinite, which permits the interval that separates us from it to subsist and consequently gives our participated activity, i.e. our existence, its irreducibility.

## B) SPACE AND TIME AS MODES OF PARTICIPATION

*ART. 3: Time makes the progression of consciousness possible through the conversion of the future into the past, thanks to the connection in the instant between the act's eternity and the fleetingness of appearance.*

The duality of space and time explains the twofold means by which participation is achieved. Which allows each to be deduced and shows that they cannot be separated.

Time is, first of all, the act itself in so far as it is participated, in so far as it echelons our life according to a successive order that allows our consciousness an indefinite spiritual progress. It forbids us from ever coinciding with Being, or even with our own being. But it permits our creative power to engage in a future it can determine, though not in an absolute manner since the past weighs on it and every action we accomplish is suborned to conditions imposed on it by the world; yet it is from the side of the future that our independence is affirmed, along with the ability to convert possibility into reality. On the other hand, the action that we make, and that always resumes, is not lost without trace: it is incorporated in us and becomes our nature, so that we are not only subject to a past that took place without us but as well to the past we have helped to bring about. Not that we are in a state of pure servitude with regard to this past, for activity and passivity constantly criss-cross, not only through time and within

the opposition between past and future but in the future itself, which we determine only in part, which lies ahead of us and makes us submit, and in the past, which resides beyond our reach, both because we forget it and because it is unchangeable, yet which is also the favoured place of our activity if it is true that we never cease to resurrect and utilise it.

By its very flightiness time prevents us from possessing it; it is always evanescent. There is nothing real about it but the instant, which renders all that traverses it unreal. But that itself is instructive. For the peculiarity of the instant, that sheer division between past and future, is to allow us constantly to convert one into the other, i.e. to obtain the spiritual realisation and possession of being, which in turning us toward the future we continually seek to give ourselves thereby renders possible the initiative by which we inscribe ourselves in eternal being.

The notion of the instant clarifies the entire theory of participation. For there is no instant except through the meeting of subject and object: their presence to one another forms the instant. If we could detach the subject from every object, it would be nothing but the presence of a power and not an actualised presence; and if we could detach the object from the subject, it would be no more than the possibility of a presence and not a realised presence. Now the power of the subject is actualised at the moment the possibility of the object is realised. Then the instant appears. And here one sees arise a singularly revealing ambiguity: for if one regards the instant from the side of the object, it seems we are dealing with an infinite multiplicity of instants through which everything that juts into being is straightaway swallowed by nothingness. Which doubtless signifies that the object is a testament and means of access to being – but not being itself. Inversely, the instant lets us penetrate the present, the present from which, we must say, we have never left nor will ever leave. Now this present is the presence of the act, a presence indivisible from the All and ourselves. Let us now suppose that the instant is not this evanescent limit of which we have just spoken; that it has, rather, the least thickness or depth. One would then understand neither how this immobilisation of time could thereafter permit it to resume its course nor how we could avoid confusing ourselves during this instant, however short, with that object, that state or that thing which would fill out its content.<sup>1</sup> It is because the instant only ever gives us a tangential contact with realised being that it always frees us, by obliging us to take responsibility for ourselves and to identify ourselves with a self-realising act. This suffices to show, as we will try to establish in chapter XVIII, that the world, which is completely present in the instant, has no permanent reality, that it is a constantly changing veneer, which our activity, attached to it by the given, finds ever before it yet which it always surpasses, either in advance or from behind, according to a temporal dimension

---

<sup>1</sup> I suppose this confusion does in fact take place whenever we are totally immersed in an object and retain no sense of being present and conscious.

that is the condition without which our participated life could not be our creation.

The instant is therefore the junction between an eternal presence and a temporal presence, i.e. a vanishing one. For in every act we accomplish we participate in—according to our forces—an omnipresent efficacy that, on becoming ours, requires us to eternalise what we do. By contrast, the object that is correlative to it and manifests our limitedness, that constantly summons another object and has nothing within it to enable it to subsist or to be posited (apart from the act that posits it) never ceases to perish. None of our operations proceeds from a material that is not participated; but the formation and nullification of this material are the two continual conditions that permit these operations to be realised and to determine our place in the unconditioned being.

Participation is therefore the encounter between a factual presence, whose content never ceases to be renewed and to flee us, and the presence of an act that actualises the fact but ever abandons it, as soon as it has been in some respect determined by it, in order to inscribe our participated essence in the absolute. Thus participation, which is one with freedom, gives us responsibility over ourselves. And because it is a participation in the eternity of the pure act, it immortalises the being it has allowed us to give ourselves; in other words, because it is an opening on eternity, freedom grants us immortality.

One can therefore easily understand that the instant can be taken as the meeting-place of spirit and matter; hence it has two different meanings: the material world dies and is reborn in each instant, it is for us only an appearance deprived of depth. In fact, we see well that it constantly dissipates; it is the testing-ground that allows all beings to realise themselves but that definitely slips away when they die, i.e. when they have come through. Only, it is also in the instant that, whenever reflexion permits us to recover ourselves and triumph over the play of phenomena, we rediscover the always identical and always available act that introduces us into the present of eternity.

Participation, precisely because it is participation in an eternal act, is also a first beginning, i.e. a freedom; but as it can only detach us from the eternal act by engaging us in time, it is a first beginning that must ever recommence. And that is why its exercise is subject to perpetual intermittences, so that time is not continuous but rather punctuated by instants, each of which, being the act and the creator of actuality, is less an instant of time than an instant of eternity.

What is most important to us in the theory of participation is that the act (even the act of participation that is ours) is always exercised in the present. It is a *during* that knows neither *before* nor *after*. From that one can gather that before and after exist only as effects of participation, destined to translate and repair its insufficiency by allowing us to create ourselves little by little through an autonomous development.

ART. 4: *Space gives participation an ever-novel object in bringing about a kind of figuration of eternity.*

One now sees rather clearly the role of space in connection with time. For in the temporal act, space expresses precisely what limits it, and furnishes it with an object it can grasp. We have seen how pure time, precisely because it is perpetually fluid and cannot be stopped for even a short moment, forbids me from possessing anything; rather, it shows me that my being resides only in an act that must always be reborn. Also, time is incapable of furnishing me with any real given. However, these givens, which the act constantly calls forth, are furnished by space in a horizontal slice of becoming, where those who situate Being on the side of the given naturally suppose the totality of the real is located.

Moreover, space gives us a certain image of Being's immutability: it strikes us that a single space is populated by the most diverse objects and traversed by the infinite multitude of changes that fill the world—without space itself being altered. Geometry, which studies figures that are purely subject to the condition of being in space, crystallises them into an immobile perfection. It suffices for thinking to dissociate space from time for space to be immediately invested with an eternal character. It acquires this, not in being present so to speak through all the phases of temporal becoming, for then one could not conceive of it being alien to change, but in its being innately non-temporal or timeless. And since it lends an infinite multitude of possible objects the character of simultaneity, one should not be astonished that we always represent the thought-about universe on the model of spatial simultaneity when we conceive of it as stripped of change and death. Which is an objection often directed against the belief in immortality.

Thus, through a sort of paradox, the eternity of the Pure Act is represented by space while time, in which the participated act occurs, seems to divide and constantly separate the Act from itself so to speak. But one easily understands why it seems like that if one reflects that time, being the means of participation, must precisely express its essentially unfinished state and unlimited progress: thus, it seems at each instant that it separates us from being in order to give us a new contact with it. Yet Being remains indivisibly present to us. It necessarily does so through the very form of the given, insofar as it surpasses the act we make our own. The role of space—that matrix of the real world which we can legitimately regard as immutable and eternal in itself, an abstraction consisting of the distinctions we make within it, though each stands in relation to a participated act—gives this act an object and a support, and receives from it a place at the interior of becoming. Space gives me a kind of static image of the Act's eternity: ideally, I can contemplate it in a single glance. Yet within it I contemplate time, for movement is accomplished there and it constantly varies to infinity the face the world offers me. Within it comes to be joined that creative

analysis through which participation endlessly pursues its operations and the unifying synthesis that allows us to embrace them in the totality of Being.

Space is itself eternal, if one considers it in its indivisible totality, i.e. as an infinity of simultaneous positions; ideal positions, since one can distinguish them from one another only through thought and in a purely abstract fashion; yet none of them can be made to correspond with either an eternal object or a real object. The object itself, which individualises positions in space, can only appear there through an analysis, i.e. through a temporal operation that actualises it at a determined point and instant. The coincidence of a point and an instant will give the object its reality, for the instant ties it to the participated act and the point to the given actuality that surpasses participation yet is ever evoked by it. Space is the identical content of each instant and all instants. It is eternal, as is participation, in that it is always on offer. It only arises together with participation, as the schema of all possible participations: it is therefore an eternal potentiality. One understands that it is as lacking in breadth as the instant; that its phenomenality alone resides within it; that it can appear as the site of Being since it is the site where participation is carried out; that one can distinguish within it only fleeting events that wear the mark of time; that the spirit passes beyond space into a future where being is still undetermined, or dwells on the side of space that has permitted it to be realised, i.e. in a past where it is now possessed and spiritualised. Space is precisely the means of converting the future into the past, without being itself more than a thin screen that participation must traverse in order to find within the totality of being the confirmation it needs, without which it would never be assured that it had gone beyond the limits of our subjectivity.

*ART. 5: Time is what permits us to introduce sense and value into the world.*

Time imparts sense<sup>2</sup> to all events, the world and ourselves. It is natural that we look toward the future for this sense. And indeed, it is toward this future that all action tends. However, it would be idolatry to say that the future, considered in itself or with respect to what is going to occur, is the *raison d'être* of all that is, i.e. both present and past. In reality the future allows us, not to find the sense of the world and ourselves, but to give them one. For that, we must have posited the value of an end that is still for us only an idea we seek to realise: since it gives sense to our life, we must sacrifice our life to it. Accordingly, the world does not have a sense we need to discover: the only sense it has is one we infuse it with, through a spiritual action, lacking which the world is left to subsist as a sheer mechanism we make no use of.

When we say that the future gives a sense to the present, this should not be understood too literally. For the future is nothing if it has not entered being in

---

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this passage the word translated as “sense” can equally be translated as “meaning” or “direction”.



the form of the present. Only, this being must appear to us under the aspect of value, as something desired and willed; it must therefore present itself as an intentional object. Afterwards, it must not only have been actualised; it must have gone through proof of its actualisation so that it can become an imperishable spiritual possession. In this fashion, not only the future as future but the future after it has entered the present becomes the past, which gives all the events that arise and all the actions we can accomplish their veritable significance. We never know whether it can be truthfully said that something will be; but we know for sure whether it is true or false to say that it has been. It has in that case penetrated being; but because it has penetrated being after first having been wanted as something in the future it imparts to being the mark of value.<sup>3</sup>

Sense explains the rapport of things with the I, their being possessed by it, and consequently the formation and creation of our personal being in the world. We say at once the sense of time and the sense of life; and it is obvious that time has no other sense for us than that we can give a sense to our life. The direction<sup>4</sup> of time that goes from the past to the future allows us to propose to our activity an eventual end, which we later transform into a realised acquisition. But we say that our life makes sense when this end we have chosen by a free act is then incorporated in our very being: for then what we are becomes the effect of what we have willed.

## B) SPACE AND TIME AS MEDIATIONS BETWEEN FREEDOM AND THE WORLD

*ART. 6: Space and time are indeterminate yet the means of all determination*

Space and time are formless in themselves yet sustain all forms. They are empty frames that ask to be filled. Only, we can explain how such determination can appear, how form can be outlined, how a content can be constituted, only if we add time and space to the general conditions that render participation possible. These are the instruments of participation, the paths of spiritual progress that bring us an ever-novel object at every instant and place. Participation is the common origin of time and space, engendering both at once. Then time, in which the act of participation is takes place, finds within space material for the most diverse operations. It offers the practice of freedom a dynamic field of indetermination, which finds the response it needs in a static

---

<sup>3</sup> Lavelle here touches upon the notion of time as a progression from the future to the present to the past (contrary to the usual understanding of time's flow) in order for actions and events to become engraved in a kind of eternal memory. The idea is matured and filled out in Volume Three of his *Dialectic (Of Time and Eternity)* and again in Volume Four (*Of the Human Soul*).

<sup>4</sup> Also, sense.

field of indetermination, as well as an instrument of objectivisation. Presence proceeds from a space where its constantly changing shape is always correlative of a time in which change is constantly occurring; it is the image of presence at each instant. It carries within it the trace of all the movements we have performed; and these movements (even those that seem to occur in a mechanical fashion) are only the visible form of the act that gives them birth, of which they express a certain degree of tension or slackness. Time and space are primarily empty milieux so that time can be the site of action and space the site of representation, in secondary sense. As soon as participation begins, space and time oppose one another yet also enter into rapport. Then their two-fold indeterminacy ceases: their twofold possibility is actualised. Within a single present appears a plurality of instants, each constituting a unique and indefinitely variable limit between an imagined or desired future and a remembered and possessed past. In the common and indifferent stuff of spatiality, where all points are relative to each other, each point becomes a site that acquires a particularity and an absolute originality. In this fashion, ever-novel acts effected in a privileged moment of time give rise to ever-diverse givens occupying ever-varying positions in space.

However, there is here much difference between time and space. For infinity properly belongs to time, and not to space. This appears rather clearly if one reflects that time is the means that allows a union of the participated act with the pure act, a liaison that requires the former to be engaged in a limitless development, which testifies more clearly still to the need to locate all successive instants in a single eternal present in which they appear to burst forth one after another so to speak. Now the infinity of space could only be an actualised infinity. But in reality, it is nothing more than time's infinity projected into space in order to trace there, without letup, the operations of determination and actualisation, which never come to completion. Also, space is assured of never being without it. We can never grasp anything in time but the act apprehending some object in space; but it is through this object that the act, along with the time in which it is exerted, receives a definite form. Hence, everything in space must be positioned and consequently circumscribed and finite, though we might seek within it the infinite act of positioning or circumscribing: this is owing to movement, which is effectively the factor linking space to time. Without it one could not distinguish successive instants; it would be nothing more than the expression of the ideal infinity inseparable from every participated act.

The distinction between abstract and concrete space is the distinction between all possible movements and all realised movements, between all the constructions we might make and all the constructions we have in fact made, between the schema of an infinite act that surpasses all the operation we are capable of and the support of all the sensible qualities that are correlatives of operations we have in fact performed.

As for time, it is a path perpetually open to participation. In it arises desire, manifest in what we lack and in the distance that always separates us from pure being; desire, constantly renewed, furnishes freedom with the élan it needs but that must be put to work. Freedom can escape indeterminacy only by giving rise to some finite object that responds to it and permits it to escape potentiality. This object is indeed always surpassed by freedom; otherwise, freedom could only be extinguished and mortified in it. However, we also know that freedom realises the extent of its efficacy in the perfection of the ends to which it is devoted, one after another. Then one sees appear being's infinite variety of forms. In this fashion is constituted a world that is the same for all, since all liberties participate in the same pure act, which is nonetheless peculiar to each, since each liberty has vindicated its independence. For that reason, time is simultaneously the manifestation of the real and proof of the I. From that come the celebrated saws to the effect that time reveals truth—according to Thales, divulges all—which is the best counsel to mortals, the touchstone and grindstone of our thoughts.

The act is therefore actualised by way of space and time. But the heterogeneity separating them—in obliging us to recognise that each instant contains the totality of points in space and inversely that each point in space is capable of spanning infinite time while varying it at every instant—requires us to establish between them, not a sterile parallelism but an ever-changing correspondence that is the result of our freedom. It is exercised only by actualising itself through the synthesis it makes between these two sounding-boards of possibility: one that permits it to apply itself to different points at each instant and one that permits it always to modify the state of each point at different instants.

One will also note that the same participated act that engages us in space and time for its employment nonetheless delivers us from each of them. Everything comes about or is undone in space and time. Here, the act of participation can test itself ahead of acquiring a spiritual and perennial character, as may be observed in the simplest wish. But one would hardly be surprised that the act that creates space and time cannot itself be subject to them. It surpasses them because it produces them. It cannot be made to crumble through their twofold multiplicity. It links one to the other, and it links the elements they shape. Thus, no one will be astonished that the same initiative both creates and abolishes space and time since, there within space and time, the act that is eternally present to itself is omnipotent with respect to all finite modes of participation.

*ART. 7: Space and time are instruments of possibility through which our freedom constructs the world, thereby realising a continual correspondence between the operation and the given, the intelligible and the sensible.*

Space and time provide us with the schemas of determinism that link phenomena to each other whenever we contemplate the universe as an observed

object. Yet they are correlatively the instruments of our freedom. This appears rather clearly – not only when we consider that determinism itself is the product of our freedom, as well as a conquest of experience by the mind and the mainstay of all the initiatives through which we act on the world to reshape it – but also when we consider that time, which is constantly reborn, rips us from a static and finished world to place us at the first beginning of ourselves and the world. For its part, space, which is the location of all directions, places before our eyes so to speak an infinite plurality of simultaneous directions, among which we must choose. Time and space are therefore above all vehicles of possibility and the passage of power to the act; through them power is distinguished from the act and actualised: through them freedom is exercised.

But while the future expresses this power insofar as it is always available for participation, straightaway becoming for us a source of invention, the past expresses the same power insofar as it has already become ours and is for us an object of possession we can dispose as we dispose ourselves. That the instant in which we live seems ever to proceed along a timeline is the mark of the ever-changing rapport between the pure act and participation. As for space, which seems to lock the reality before us into a ready-made world, we should not forget that it is not exclusively a spectacle for us, or if it is one, it is a changing spectacle that we in some fashion produce. First of all, this spectacle, qua sheer spectacle, is not a reality for us; it is in rapport with us without being us; all the sites that we do not occupy, in which we situate represented objects, are for us only virtual sites that we might occupy and toward which we could transport ourselves.

Thus, as has been shown, if the nature of time is to virtualise the act so that we can take it upon ourselves and participate in it, the space that spreads around us and presently offers us an infinite diversity of paths along which we might move, and among which we must choose, actualises our possibilities so to speak. Only, while the nature of the participated act is to evoke a given correlative to it, space alone provides it. Though it can only be conceived by way of an act that distinguishes positions within it and gathers them together, i.e. as a spatialising activity, one can say that it is always presented to us in the form of a given and that it is the format and support for every given. Not that it is ever given in isolation but that whatever is properly given is given in space; it is what precisely allows qualities to become given. And if one could conceive of a pure time in which our life was constantly renewed without our momentary acts ever forming a spectacle before us, there would rightly speaking be no given.<sup>5</sup> Time and space therefore admirably evince the scission and the correspondence between the participated act and the given. And just as time allows us to accomplish ever-novel acts, varying them in an initiative that always starts over, one also understands that space is only an immense tableau in which, with every

---

<sup>5</sup> It strikes me that such “pure time” qualifies as pure being or pure consciousness. It vouchsafes that, for Lavelle, time is more fundamental to being than space with its myriad displays.

operation we are perform, there corresponds a worldly quality that answers to it and is always original and inimitable.

This is the reason that time and space permit us to establish a link between the intelligible and the sensible, a link that—instead of placing them in opposition by relegating them to two different worlds, between which one could never succeed in establishing true harmony—renders them on the contrary strictly united in a block. Indeed, on the one hand, intelligibility represents to us a construction our mind can make, and we realise it through an act accomplished in time that nonetheless seizes its object, as soon as it is constructed, in a non-temporal intuition. Consequently, belief in the eternal character of intelligibility is justified both by the permanent availability of the constructive act and by the correlative possibility of starting over at whatever instant and whatever place, i.e. time and space serve us as general schemas of participation, independently of whatever actual and concrete form participation might take. Intelligibility therefore plays the role of mediator between possible participation and realised participation; but at each place, at each instant, there where participation is considered not as an abstract power but as a realised one, intelligibility is necessarily joined to the sensible, which corresponds to it and completes it yet is with respect to it always a surplus that can never be reduced to it. Thus, it is not astonishing that, at the point where they unite, the intelligible and the sensible allow us bring together the infinite repetition that goes with a mental act that can always be repeated and the infinity of the individual datum, which is ever such and such, and to which the mind ever seeks to apply an analysis that will never terminate.

*ART. 8: The indivisibility of the Act, which in the pure instant gives rise to the future without being itself engaged in it, ensures the spirituality of the world.*

All participation has the character of a limitation with respect to the pure act (though there is much to say on this point, and at the limit of actual infinity the offer and the gift the act makes of itself need not be considered as a mere parcelling out of shared goods but as an essential and enriching generosity) and it has the character of a creation with respect to us and the world in which the participated act is manifest. Now it is this participation that makes space and time the conditions of its possibility, conditions that are not given ahead of its employment but created by it.

Accordingly, the single act that traverses both time and space requires us not so much to detach it from time and space as to consider it omnipresent, i.e. present *always* and *everywhere*. And because the act resides at the point where space and time are engendered together, not only in their abstract universality but in their concrete relation as both present and lived, the unity of the act engenders all the modalities of what is.

Hence, it is noteworthy that space and time furnish us with a field of mediations between the indivisibility of the act and an infinite plurality of experienced aspects. For that reason, as well, every particular operation seems susceptible of being indefinitely resumed, when considered in a homogeneous space and time, while it is always unique in nature when considered in the *hic* and *nunc* of concrete application.

It is therefore obvious that the act that gives rise to space and time, that produces the multiplicity of their elements and the relations between them, cannot itself be sought in space and time; only its effects may be engaged there. But becoming<sup>6</sup> cannot be set in opposition to being. It is interior to it. It is how particular being is constituted within the total being, it is the wake of its action, the witness of the interval separating the pure act from the act of participation, and the progressive effort to fill it. Being is not subordinate to it. Rather, becoming is subordinate to being, which is not something born and perishing in every instant. Becoming is deployed at the bosom of being where it is the instrument that permits the personality to create itself through the incessant transformation of its possible being into its realised being.

Nothing is more instructive than to meditate on this becoming that has actual existence only in the instantaneous. We always need to traverse it but we can never set ourselves up there. However, the instant is at the same time the constantly renewed breakthrough of our participated activity into the eternal present. Hence, the indivisibility of the pure instant preserves the world's spirituality. It forbids me from coinciding with the given, except in a tangential fashion. Still, the same instant that explains my limitedness reveals a purely spiritual activity that restores my past, anticipates the future and constantly converts what I will into what I am.

---

<sup>6</sup> Or, the future.