

Arcs, Rings, and Running Out of Mario

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 02 January 2015 17:35

No more timely time to consider Time itself than right around the time we all make the consensual, arbitrary, stolid-but-capricious agreement to watch every midnight tick of the clock one night a year and swap out calendars, jumping from one felled tree to another in the roaring river of Time, as we log-drivers all shoot the mandatory rapids, trying to balance, stay upright, not get soaked or knocked in the drink, not get socked in the head by something large, unyielding, and not likely to stop at skull, once it gets up a head of steam, develops a mind of its own, aimed at our own head-meat.

When alive, those de-limbed trees blitzing the white-water once counted time on an arc far longer than the beings who felled them. Time is more relative than we think -- perhaps more than we *can* think.

We've all experienced the paralysis of time passage when laboring under weights of various dreads, known the palpable, brake-locked stoppage of time during moments of life-frozen crisis, felt the jet-winged shredding of clocks while swooping, soaring, and threading our many delights.

But, accounting for longer arcs and eras? That takes, well, *time* -- the nearest we're likely to get to feeling the stuff of tree-time, of sensing our inner rings under our barks and bites, of telling histories from what lies between those rings, from drought to drowning and back again, is experiencing a long wink of time, even though a brief blink in tree-time.

You see, I just discovered, moments ago, that Mario Cuomo left the planet on New Year's Day: The day where we all envision the mythic figures of Father Time, cloaked and stooped over, handing off the marathon baton and large, double-dome-chimed windup clock, to the diapered babe, freshly powdered, chest-bannered, and ready to assume the mantle and yoke of its year-long master. This day has had me feeling that tree arc in my roots, like that sensibility just fell across my windshield, out of the blue, crushing my hood and roof.

The news might as well have been a spent jet engine, augering into the driveway, so much excess baggage shaken off the fuselage, shed from an out-of-sight overflight. Contemplating such a deep, sharp, gash and sudden shaft in the gravel drive, and sighting such an impromptu, scattergun-style decorating scheme of spare aircraft pieces and shattered piecemeal geology, would have been much easier to do, simpler to take in.

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Having a hand the size of an alpine peak, say, come down, scoop me up, and set me gently down in Tahiti, would have been a piece of comparative cake to absorb. Being invited in to the glowing saucer by the little mauve men -- *green is out this year on the universal fashion palette, I guess* -- with their spindly antennae and nine eyes each, would have been something I could have taken in without a wince, grimace, comment, or shrug.

Losing this fiery, passionate, fair, sane voice of reason locks me into slow-motion and then freeze-frames me, stretching life all rubbery, like cold taffy, both daft and daffy, banding my timeline as if my motions and emotions were framed around the room in swirly frescoes and friezes.

How could we possibly be all out of Marios? my mind asks me, in its own fumbling way, causing me to squint as I suss out some starter suspicions and suppositions of how this could perhaps be, rolling around attempts to fathom the spherical corners of my own square, block-headed notions of time, and how it passes, through us and all around us, and how it fails to brief us before slipping its cogs and losing its mind, taking someone from us.

- *It was 1991, and Mario thought about running for President. □ For any number of reasons, he said no, making room for Bill Clinton's nomination. □ Mario still crackled the air, though, singeing and scorching it with impassioned electricity that caused all the hairs on your body to snap to attention, take stock, understand, and know -- really know -- the truth, and to agree.*

- *This time was yesterday; □ no, wait: this was 23, 24 years ago. And these crisped, scalded, still-smoldering realizations jerk you back, making you cast around in your mind for other anchors into the solid grip of the bedrock along Time's shoreline -- where you find 30 years has passed since the day when... or has it really been 19 years since we... surely it hasn't been... how could it be 11 years ago that we all...*

- *We know life. □ We know nothing else. □ We count on it being there every morning when*

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we wake. □ We take it for granted, for ourselves, for others, never glancing at the unsecretive reality we daily ignore -- that some day, we will reach for this usual reality, this state of being alive, and it will not be there, it will not reach back to touch our outstretched fingers...

And this is how we ran fresh out of Mario, and you now know it. The shock of the thing -- *and here's the thing, here's the thing* -- reverberates without end, each twitch triggering more twitches, right through the soul, right through the mind, right through each cell of the construct that you, and other constructs around you, have come to know as *you, and you as them*

.

The sure certainty of this knowledge of Time's traits coming to rest within you is like peering out through the railings of a ship as it slips through the sea, and you, the child in short pants, slat breeze through your hair, sun on your face, begin to contemplate for the very first time the vastness of the water, the curvature of the planet, where the horizon goes way out at sea, what happens to the sun at night, the one and only face the Moon lets us see, the path our planet takes that causes us to change calendars one time every year.

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Happy New Year, I say to some, and, to others, to the very special people in my infinitely small life in this infinitely expansive universe, I say to them -- just as I do on each of their birthdays -- *Happy Annual Lap Around the Sun Day*.

There's something about saying it that way that makes it seem more real. It may seem childish, but it makes it seem more like what this thing really is. Saying it this way brings a whiff of ocean and planetary horizon, and the sense of going 67-thousand miles an hour around our star in our orbital dance, far more real.

More real that we let on, day to day, time after time.

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These childhood thoughts seem to grant some viable grab handles to outsized thoughts far too big for me to get my arms around, even now, as an adult.

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If I thought it would do any good, I would demand somebody, somewhere, come out of hiding, or slip down from the clouds, or ease off the perch on Mount Olympus, or speak from the cave lip-edge from the Himalayas, or what have you, and do some serious *explainin'*.

Unfortunately, I know it won't do any good at all, not in reality. But the thought of my requesting such explanations, and the thought of some being holding class for humanity on the subject, makes me laugh -- which is the whole, self-given right and benefit of any decent distraction you can dredge up for yourself, off the cuff, on a whim, while out on an untimely limb.

* * * * *

Contemplating Time and Our Place in the Universe: This is another demonstration of the benefit and blessing of human intelligence, self-awareness, and the ability to reason, steaming along as we do, huffing and puffing, hurtling along apace, before being driven completely mad.

However, it helps to have a sense of humor, a head start, and some familiarity with Pink Floyd, so that considering the phrase, *I've always been mad*, brings a broad inner and outer smile, and a small measure of relief, served with a side of knowledge -- knowledge that intelligence, the ability to reason, and self-awareness, are entertaining amusements, and mesmerizing *bemusements*

demonstrate that no one is driving the Universal Bus, and that Evolution got conned at the Drive-In, when it skinnied up its resources for this paltry Happy Meal of puny parlor skills for the species to test-drive on the highway of life.

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Explains flats and toll roads, I suppose. But, in this analogy, I'm still waiting for proof that the auto club actually exists, despite some good works along the side of the road.

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I've sometimes believed in fighting fire with fire. And, as cosmic a scope as all these things tend to be, and as woozy-making as they can become, I have to ask: *If fighting fire with fire is so right and good and important, why aren't we all worshipping at the altar of Friction?*

After all, without friction, of course, there can be no fire...

Probably best to leave this one for us to sort out around a crackling campfire, on a clear night, when all the stars dance and giggle overhead, trying not to point at us and laugh.

* * * * *

Back in the day, my friends and I used to gather around the fire with an *adult entertainment beverage of choice*, and treat ourselves for shock -- you know: loosening our clothing, lying down, getting our feet higher than our heads, keeping warm, getting *plenty* of fluids...

Conversation, and fire, would always conspire, and inspire, to make many healthful, heaping helpings of Healing the Universe. It was something we did for everyone else, see -- we healed the universe for another year. It was a selfless thing to do.

(Yes, I am snickering right now with the sort of fond memories such heart-filled altruism can create...)

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I imagine our ancestors did this sort of thing, too -- Straightening Out Things by Starlight, and by taking a big stick, and stirring up the embers, revealing more *orange orange orange orange...*

Of course, our ancestors never had wall-screen movie players, so they'd probably not get our chuckling references to their cave fires being early *teevee*, and that their big fire poker were the early *remotes, to help change the channels, to get the picture to do something else...*

We still huddle around the flickering images, and the images still give light, but no answers. *Illu mination and no meaning, light but no heat -- quite a fire we humans have made for ourselves, eh?*

Yes, well: fur skins or sweats or loungewear, we haven't changed all that much. The stars haven't shifted so much we can't still see Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Polaris, the Big and Little Dippers, Orion's belt...

We speculate about the stars in that belt, and how the Time alignment and positioning of those stars matches points, positions, placements of the larger pyramids in Egypt, and we wonder...

On the Cosmic Clock, we only tamed that same cave fire 16 minutes ago before our midnight of The Right Now.

And, 13 seconds ago, on that same clock, humans first scratched their first words.

Nine seconds ago, Hammurabi tossed out a bone for us all to chew on, with a code of behavior that is still echoing down through the ages, us gnawing at it, and vice versa, with an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth...

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Five seconds ago, we considered the need for a zero, and invented it.

Two seconds ago, the age of Renaissance bloomed in Europe, Christopher Columbus voyaged to the Americas...

And *yesterday*, we ran completely out of Mario.

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What good is Time? Albert Einstein said the only reason for Time is so everything doesn't happen at once. He had an uneasy relationship with Time, though, playing as it did with his most earnest pet theories, so he can be forgiven pointing out the obvious, and giving Time a simultaneous taste of the joy buzzer and the whoopee cushion.

* * * * *

2015, believe it or not, ready or not. All the world's a stage, and we mortal players? We all have our hands full, keeping down stage fright, trying not to choke, trying to keep limber, and keep our lines straight, ready to do something intelligent or clever or petty or beautiful or selfish or stupid or truly grand when Director Time shouts, *"Annn
nnnd..... Action!"*

* * * * *

We have the stars, and each other, for company and comfort, now that we are all out of Mario, and as we zoom along at 67-thousand miles an hour, never stopping even once, Time never slowing down, never taking a minute to adjust its clothing at the side of the hot, dusty road, never brushing itself off after slipping and falling, never having to admit it can't get back up again.

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Time: It makes me never want to punch a time-clock again, except with a very large hand, say, the size of an Alpine peak, maybe, with the hand wrapped in a bright yellow, sun-colored boxing glove, smashing that time-clock to bits, and along the lines of the giant bare foot that descended from the skies above, while the Monty Python Flying Circus theme song pumped and blared and gurgled and chortled away.

Epilog

Sorry to be so windy. I meant for this to be shorter, just as I mean for all of these to be shorter. Thing is, as Mark Twain observed, *"I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead."*

This is my same sense of Time. One of them, anyway. No time to list them all, of course.

But, I can say that this is not the first time I have thought that Mark Twain would be a very excellent dinner companion in the next world, along with a great number of others to help stir the embers and admire the stars, from whatever new position and place we might find to observe them, and for whatever sense we can make of any of it there, too.

Mario:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/01/01/former-new-york-governor-mario-cuomo-dead-82/21170217/>

Our appearance in Time: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_Calendar

Today's Humorous Bonuses:

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Monty's theme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq37WSg9ESg>

Monty's universe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqBThWK8rqE>

Monty's advice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrdEMERq8MA>

Added Bonus Bonuses:

More salve and solace: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1bFr2SWP1I>

Imagine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVg2EJvvIF8>