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Daylight savings and time

Donna Schaper | Mar. 8, 2013 Eco Catholic

What does daylight savings time mean to an environmentalist? Does it ratify our sense of the simultaneity of the local and the global?

After all, California has a different time ?zone? than New York, and it is hard to sing ?White Christmas? at any time in Florida. Australia has winter when Chicago has summer, and vice versa. The clock has long been the great relavatizer and, therefore, globalizer. What China does with carbon matters to what Cincinnati does with carbon.

Environmentalists think more about space than time, as well. We are interested more in the quality of the air or the loam in the land than we are in the rotation of the planet or its stability under our daily feet. Still, we experience time changes and don?t necessarily experience the lost loam or the particulating air.

We have all been through time changes. We travel to Europe and realize it is later there. Or we go to the West Coast and realize it is earlier there. We sleep funny. We wake too early or too late. We find our bodies keep time as though we were always in one zone.

New Yorkers, like me, are already guilty of a supreme parochialism of both time and space in the most conceited city in the world. Isn?t our time of day THE time of day? We may think globally and know that it is now summer in Australia but we act locally, even infiltrating literature with the rites of ?spring? as though spring were an eternal instead of an oscillation.

I remember one night in Florida when the weather changed. It was fall. The summer had been long and hot and muggy. Muggy, long and hot. The weather always changes in Florida, right after we stop believing it can. Right after hurricane season and before the avocados ripen.

I had endured all of the summer I could possibly manage. I was sick of putting on clean clothes only to soak them with sweat on the way to the car. I was sick of eating inside where the air conditioning had already desterilized the air, making it worse than February up north, especially with all that sweat pouring out of you from the journey from the parking lot.

One night on Marcos Island, early in October, we sat outside anyway, just for the hell of it. Lo and behold, a breeze developed. At first it was just a shy breeze, but then it turned into a brave one. We were refreshed, with air we could breathe. I reached for the sweater in the no-longer-sterile air. Usually that weather change happened in October. I marveled that up north, I also reached for the sweater, usually about this time of year. So strange that reach for the sweater, it announces nature among us.

Would becoming more temporal help environmentalists be better environmentalists? I think yes. I think it would keep us from the threat of privatizing and bring us more into the diverse communal.

By diverse communal, I mean the fact of people being in different zones. It is easy to be local as an

environmentalist. We know that McDonalds moved into our block. We don?t know how many other blocks they moved into or what time they had to open in Bulgaria.

Don?t get me wrong. I don?t want any less appreciation of the moment or the local or the loam in my backyard. Why else would I carry all that compost to it?

What I want is more appreciation of the global, the oscillation, the connection, the way you matter to me and I to you, even if I don?t know you. I want all the personal I can get out of life and also all the public I can get from the personal; all the political I can get from the personal; and all the butterflies in my yard and in your yard.

Daylight savings time, which returns Sunday, helps me see the flight of time and its different sunlights on different spaces.

A Prayer for the Spring Equinox

Long after the fear of frost is gone,

We Still fear it.

Long after the snow has gone grey,

The daffodils show their courage next to it.

Long after we touch the clock to turn it ahead,

Declaring the unfairness of losing any hour, any time,

We remember how good it was to have each hour.

A Prayer for the Fall Equinox

As the goldenrods and asters disappear

and dusk descends so quickly, in the fall,

Forward in the fall, back in the spring, we turn the clocks,

Making supper seem too early at 5 p.m. in the spring,
remind me of the age of the planet
and the length of its days.

Disturb my sleep with the awe or seasonality
and then name my season to me.

Prayer in Any Season

Ancient of Days, I know I am small.

I am so grateful that I get
to watch a few seasons change.

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