

The agents of time and the time of the agents: the action of timepieces in Christian Marclay's *The Clock*[†]

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ABSTRACT

In the first part, the paper introduces and unfolds the concept of the 'agent' as contrasting the concept of the 'actor'. The figure of the secret agent, for example, in TV series and feature films, serves as a starting point for the analysis of the concept. Agents, efficient only if they work independently and under command at the same time, having agency only within networks of both persons and artefacts, cross the border between the active and the passive. Even objects can be addressed as agents, an example of which is the clock. As an agent of timemaking, the clock has an intricate relation to intentionality; it hence deals with the problem of how and under which conditions it is possible to qualify certain operations, such as the functioning of a clock, as actions without actor. In the second part, the concept of the clock as agent of time and the time it produces is re-examined against the backdrop of Christian Marclay's video installation *The Clock*. It shows that, according to Marclay's work, the intersection of two operations of timing, namely the punctuating rhythmic measurement on the one hand, and the opening of undefined duration, creates moments of continuous presence in which an operation can change its course, take another direction or be affected by another. The overlapping of time measurement and duration thus opens up the necessary possibility for intentionality to inscribe itself into the chain of operations which then can be ascribed the quality of action, however, infiltrated with passivity at the same time.

KEYWORDS Philosophy of time; agency; media philosophy; tactility; synchronization

Introduction

The following discussion, in conjunction with Christiane Voss' contribution to this volume, is concerned with Christian Marclay's film installation *The Clock* and the media-philosophical perspectives that it unleashes. The problem of the mediality of affects and the affectivity of media was discussed by Christiane Voss in her contribution to this volume. There, the primary approach

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to the phenomena of media concerned passivity, concerned enduring, concerned suffering. Here we will proceed from a complementary position and observe the moving image's cluster of medial relationships from a perspective that treats it as a generally active and effectual phenomenon. We are concerned here with the question of action, and especially with the strangely configured and mediated, externally controlled action of agents (as distinguished from autonomous, self-centred actors, and also a network of actors).¹ We ask: how does a configured and related field, 'agency', handle, in a single process, that which is addressable as 'action', and how are purportedly passive and purportedly active moments related thereby?

In order to investigate this question, one need only take Marclay's work literally, and with superficial seriousness. *The Clock* is actually nothing other than a secret agent film, not only because it contains a surprising number of clips from this genre of film and even pieces from secret agents' television series, but also because it has a main character, a protagonist, who rapidly reappears, changed into different disguises and functions, in always changing contexts. She seems to guide, directly or indirectly, the figures who appear in a single scene, to influence them or manipulate them. She also seems to be under foreign orders on a mission from outside, and even gets us, the viewers, wrapped up in her mission, which we can only gradually guess at or deduce. It is finally revealed that these orders are at once given by, carried out by, and aim to serve the agent herself. This need not impress us all that much. In the final analysis, there are lots of secret-agent films. *The Clock* is nevertheless extraordinarily relevant as a secret agent film because the agent the film is about is the clock. And this poses a three-part challenge to consider. The first consideration is whether, and how, an object like a time-piece can be an agent; the second is what it means to be an agent, to act as an agent and be treated as one. Finally, the function of time in the action of agents, in the action of film, and in acting through film is naturally an especially important consideration in this case.

These challenges present important and fundamental media-philosophical questions. The contours of media philosophy, as they have been developed to date, have been shaped by two main tendencies, in addition to the continuous work towards defining the term 'medium'. The first tendency is directed towards the materiality and the materials of media. Initially this might include specific materials such as glass, air, electricity, celluloid, paper, or silicone, but can also be directed to compact and complex objects, artefacts, and material-technical things and arrays, such as projection apparatuses, buildings, key-boards, optical instruments, instruments of measure, tools, and writing implements. They do not shape meaning (*sinnförmig*) in and of themselves, but they have a stake in the experiences through which meaning and reflection are accomplished, and which are made possible and rendered by media. This interests media philosophy.² So much for the first tendency. The other

tendency of media philosophy by contrast is characterized by the conception of media as relative and relational, and therefore constituting operatively effective measures: media are relative and relational, they enter into relational structures and are themselves only addressable as relational structures. Media make interventions into already existing relations possible or actual, and are therefore demarcated from the referentiality and changes that are performed within those relations.³ Media only become media when they establish the relationships that they themselves will eventually embody.

It is exactly this process that Christiane Voss has described using various concepts of affective flow of events – the affectual capacities and capacities of binding, which media embody, and which she explicated with the help of the concept of the ‘loaned body’ and of ‘anthropo-medial relations’ (Voss 2006, 2010, 2013). In her contribution to this volume, she placed special emphasis on the temporality of medial relationships and demonstrated their importance with regard to *The Clock*. The affective field, as she demonstrated, is composed in a genuinely dynamic and temporal manner, and exactly this reciprocal moulding of time and affect through film is explored in *The Clock*. The material assembly, on the one hand, and the relational and operative capacities, on the other, which media compile, render, and constitute in and of themselves, cannot merely be terminologically and conceptually described and understood. They are, rather, themselves embodied, observed, and represented (*Darstellung*) by and in media.⁴ As in Voss’ considerations in this volume, the following remarks assume that this clearly takes place in the film.⁵ The film fosters at least an implicit knowledge of the relationship between materiality and operativity, including of the transformation (*Umschlag*) of the one into the other, which media – in various ways – recognize and distinguish. This filmic knowledge of the operativity of a definite (*bestimmten*) material apparatus, namely that of the timepiece, is made available to us by Christian Marclay’s installation *The Clock*.⁶ And it accomplishes this in a filmic form, as a film and through the progression of a cluster of unique filmic operations. And for these filmic operations, the timepiece, whose operativity *The Clock* reveals, has a central function, from this point on as the timepiece in the image and the timepiece as image in the film.

The thesis that undergirds the following considerations is, however that, from the point of view of the film, it is not only relationality and operativity, as an always already ordered flow of events, that are under discussion. Instead, even the agency and the execution of actions are called into question. Affects, as Voss has shown, are always already directed and do always give direction, and as such they are in no way purely passive or pacifying. They are always already effectual: they expand and have a transformative power.⁷ Under certain conditions this transformation can assume the form of action, and it is exactly this transition – from affect to agent – that we can observe in *The Clock*. The distinction made directly in this thesis

between the mere discharge (*Ablauf*) of an operation on the one hand, and the intentional performance of an operation on the other, is naturally highly problematic and contentious. It has been negated or retracted by many theorists of media because it seems to contradict the most fundamental concern of media philosophy, namely, the strict insistence on materiality.⁸ Action always seems to refer back to difficult measures such as intention or even the will, consciousness, or subjectivity, which always themselves require a foundation in an organized materiality.

On the other hand, one can distinguish a conception of action using the term 'social action', as employed by Hannah Arendt, for example, that seems to avoid making recourse to these problematic residues by avoiding the moment of intentionality of action.⁹ The systems theory of Niklas Luhmann works in exactly the same way, even if it places the concept of action far behind that of communication by explicitly imputing an assumption of causation, defining action and experience in contradistinction to one another (Luhmann 1984). In addition, it takes consciousness, more or less in Husserl's usage, to be the fundamental medium of psychic systems – that is to say, it is a measure explicitly based on intentionality (pp. 60–63). In Latour's conception of a sociology expanded through materiality, which deviates substantially from systems theory, even intentionality must be comprehensible as an effect of material operations, such as in Voss' reading of affects.¹⁰ It is, in adherence to the creed of media theory, the product of complex mediations, for example, of subjectification, or also, at once straightforwardly and with difficulty, of mere imputation.

Actions can be differentiated from mere operations when intention can be ascribed to them (Davidson 1980). It is possible that there are conceptions of action, such as Arendt's, which largely manage without the motivation of intentionality. But once a purpose has been ascribed or imputed, it is clear that an operation has become an action. Operations – complexly distributed, as always, across diverse relations – proceed from multiple relations of causation, and are describable as the unwilled effects of material or medial orderings (*Anordnungen*). Actions, by contrast, are marked, and can be qualified as actions through the minimal condition of the attribution of some kind of authorial intention to them. More precisely: actions are only observable under certain conditions, namely, that an authorial intention has been attributed to them, an intention that, naturally, need not come to fruition, but can and will in such cases be read as failed, latent, confused, or broken. Actions are operations that are observable as a consequence of constantly changing intentions, intentions realized or frustrated, effective or inconsequential, accomplished or failed, completed or aborted. In the investigation of the turning of mere operations into actions, our aim will therefore be to determine the conditions under which intentionality can be observed in materially effectual operations (Mersch 2010).

It is exactly this observation of the emerging of intentionality and hence of agency from non-intentional and non-active conditions that seems to be the special function of the medium of film. Film, perhaps especially the feature film, observes and describes material and concrete assemblies – the scenery and necessarily also gesture, costuming, and acting, even extending as far as lighting, framing, *mise en scène*, and montage. Yet it also refers to actions, to operations with imputed intent (Engell 2011). When talking about film, as a rule we talk first and foremost about the action of characters, but also we frequently refer to the intentions of the film's producers or the film industry, if not about the intentions of the filmmaker. For film as a medium, and in individual films, and especially in the constant transition between the two, what concerns us is the constant back and forth between material operations and intentional actions. This transition necessitates, according to the following thesis, an arbiter – the figure of the agent. And concerning the film medium, the question arises to which extent and under which conditions we accord agency to the moving image itself.

In this transition from object to action and from causality to intention, the timepiece plays a prominent and exemplary role as an agent in film. The timepiece is operative in and of itself, simply because it functions. But beyond itself, it has the function of at least triggering (*auslösend*) other operations, and possibly even of prompting action. This is particularly true [, therefore] for the filmic images of timepieces. Gilles Deleuze has described the filmic image of timepieces as not only preceding all action, but also enabling it and serving as the condition of possibility for the transmission of the functions of human consciousness. This occurs through close-ups of faces, of things, especially of the timepiece, and of the filmic image itself (Deleuze 1989). The timepiece, furthermore, has the function of triggering (*auslösend*) action.¹¹ It allows me as a viewer, for example, to assume a fictive simultaneity between two sequential scenes. The timepiece is also capable of acting on foreign orders, those of the narration or those of the narrator. Finally, film even ascribes the timepiece a kind of quasi-action of its own, something that Marclay's film offers every occasion to investigate more closely.¹² The timepiece wakes figures in film, for example, or lets them stay awake. It drives them forward, it sends them off, lets them linger or wait, it reminds them of something. The clearest case is probably that of the alarm clock. It converts mere operativity into the aforementioned quasi-action. This is true even when it encounters a point of resistance, of indolence, when it countermands the cherished intention of a character in the film – namely, the wish to sleep further. The alarm has its order, an order that sometimes means turning against figures in film. The order can make a character into the object of a mission – whoever sets an alarm anticipates exactly this deviation between a current order and possible later resistance, whether in the world or in a film.

To this extent, I sometimes encounter my own expressed intentions when the alarm goes off, in the same way that a figure in a film does: as a delayed external effect, which the alarm exerts on figures in film as it does on viewers or on real people. The relationship between mechanical causality and the intentionality of an order is stretched through the act of projection, but it is certainly not completely severed. One can treat the alarm as though it had its own intention, can trust it, curse it, or even attack it physically. The alarm can even make its own additions to, or wrench something from (*abgewinnen*), this order. In the case of a well-regulated dispatch of an order, this would be the alarm's unique ability to preserve, expand, and transmit the order through time. The alarm can carry out its own share better or worse, or not at all. Timepieces can be imprecise, they can malfunction, or they can be reset by a third party. It is amazing how imprecisely the timepieces in Marclay's compilation sometimes run, and how difficult they frequently are to read. I will return to this point.

In various ways, all of this is true for not only alarms, but also other uses of timepieces. Although it is an object, a timepiece nevertheless simultaneously embodies both an order and the intention to which it is set, the intention of its user. Naturally, I, or any person, can either reject or accept the orders received or read from a timepiece, just as the timepiece itself can fail or be imprecise. This is true all the more so because a timepiece does not simply assume my own orders and transmit them through time, but instead becomes available to a diverse and complexly distributed group of commanders – to employers as well as to subordinates, and to partners of all kinds, some of whom we already refer to as 'dates'. Highly complex organizations belong on this list too, for instance, systems of travel or information, whom we refer to as [if they were] actors: not only 'the train', 'the airline', 'the university', but also 'the television' and 'the film' ('the film starts at seven'). My timepiece tells me: 'I have to hurry.' All of these mixed, and then defunct, givers of orders, sometimes including myself as Other, at an earlier or later time, all exercise their effect on me through the same agent, the clock. And this is also exactly the way in which I subordinate myself to the directives and decrees of the timepiece. The same holds true for the action of watching a film. Very much like the characters in a feature film, I, as a spectator, let myself guide through (diegetic) time by (film) time, for example, by ordering time along with actions qualified as prior to other ones, as simultaneous or as subsequent.

It is exactly this condensed and reified, then deferred and erased set of orders, which constitutes the particular figure of the agent. We can confirm this wonderfully with reference to the personal agent, the secret agents of film and television series. Although it is not the theme of this essay, a diversion will be instructive. In the somewhat older secret agent series *Mission: Impossible*, which I will briefly introduce as a representative example here, each episode begins with the now legendary opening ritual (White 1991).

Someone – after a few repetitions we know that it is a member, and usually the head, of a troop of secret agents – finds or receives a tape or tape player along with a file under conspiratorial circumstances. When the tape is played, the voice that gives the agent the orders offers a few explanations and then indicates that the mission can be rejected. If it is accepted, however, then it never existed: the commander (*Auftraggeber*) has no identity, and all institutions that might be responsible for giving such orders will deny that it ever existed. Once the message has been played, the tape, clearly acting automatically, catches fire, so that the transmission of the orders is untraceably deleted. Agents are thus not autonomous and self-centred actors. They are instruments that proceed according to the intentions of another under foreign orders, characteristically even under multiple orders simultaneously, which might even exclude one another (Mersch 2010). But they tend to destroy the giver of orders in the process. They become, when they accept the assignment, the bearer of a foreign purpose that has no bearer. To this extent, that which they do remains an operation which, however, is simultaneously a quasi-action or a weak, deferred action.

The agents in the series can only carry out the orders by breaking them down into numerous smaller assignments, and distributing the single operational steps. The original intention of the total plan is no longer recognizable in these individual steps. The purpose of the individual actions often remains concealed from the viewers, and even from the filmic agents, and is only revealed through a montaged interaction of sequences across the whole of the episode. The carrying out of the mission therefore requires the absolutely perfect adjustment of the individual actions of the team, which always consists of multiple operators. This coordination requires a timeline above all else, and the most precise synchronization of the individual actions and their scrupulously preserved succession. The whole operation has to run like clockwork. The coordination of the individual actions required for the completion of the orders is achieved especially through the relationing and distribution of time, and this, once again, takes place mostly through timepieces. Timepieces and shots of timepieces are naturally required for this. Close-up shots of Timex watches, or snappy zooms to wall clocks or clocks in towers – images that can be integrated directly into the repertoire of *The Clock* – therefore belong to the standard vocabulary of *Mission: Impossible*.

The agents encounter the display of time through time pieces in various forms as they set about bringing the orders, or the foreign intentions, to completion. Technical means of communication, such as radios, apparatuses of surveillance, video links, or televisions, however, are also frequently employed. These devices can help achieve simultaneity, but can also be manipulated to give false information. It is again surprising how often in *The Clock* telephones, radio apparatuses, or television screens appear alongside, and simultaneously with, timepieces in order to support this synchronization.

The timepiece functions in yet another capacity as a model of a reified agent. In no small part, the agents distribute their orders, they transmit the individual steps by delegating them to all manner of sophisticated devices and unique apparatuses, just as we saw in the case of the alarm clock above (Latour 2002). This is related to yet a further capacity of the agent. On one hand, they use these devices; on the other, the devices use them. Devices and people tolerate and deal with one another. Their reciprocal mastery is absolutely indispensable for the completion of the mission. This places significant demands, however, first on the suitability of the instruments, and second on the agent's dexterity, control of their own bodies, their skill. What makes for a good agent is less abstract intelligence and purely representative knowledge than skill and cleverness – that is to say, situational, contextual, and network-specific gifts. The agent is, therefore, to use Bruno Latour's terminology, a figure of Odysseus' type: not wise and educated, but rather a clever and tricky 'polymetic' (from the Greek 'polymetis') figure (p. 212).

Deception is the most important form of cleverness which agents must master. Agents are constantly employed as figures of some sort – as the very figures they are (cause themselves to be) in their iconic, self-presenting quality, or 'in disguise' as other figures, which they occasionally cause themselves to operate as. For this purpose, they once again employ material aids, not only masks and uniforms, but also all kinds of apparatuses for projection and illusion. The manipulation of timepieces belongs once again, and with surprising frequency, to the deceptive operations of the agents in *Mission: Impossible*. Finally, however, a highly developed capacity to deviate from the original script of the entire plan and to improvise is needed if the original plan must be changed due to adverse circumstances or other unforeseeable difficulties – that is, if everything does not run like clockwork. The demand for improvisation occurs in all cases, and repeatedly through the malfunctioning of the devices employed. Something like the self-will (*Eigensinn*) of the object is made evident through this resistance of the material.¹³

An important characteristic of the agent as a figure of agency remains undeveloped in *Mission: Impossible*: the agent's capacity for treachery, or at least to subvert the mission. The agents' relative passivity which we have stated above is in its core ensured by their fundamental approachability, their receptivity to command, qualities presumably due to the ideological and didactic context of the Cold War. Being prepared to subordinate themselves to unknown orderings, agents have to be available not simply to one, but rather to multiple commanders. Just like public timepieces, they can be employed in the most diverse quasi-actions by many people at the same time, which they then carry out, pass on, or pass back (*weiter- oder zurückspielen*).¹⁴ One example from *The Clock* is an alarm that has been alienated from its purpose and made to serve as the time fuse for a bomb next to the

hero of the film. A misappropriation of the timepiece takes place in the fragments of *The Clock*, exactly as happened in the original film. Images of clocks are separated from the purposes that they assumed in the original film and are given new orders. They produce new contexts, but above all else, they coordinate filmic time with real time. It is [completely] essential that agents are able to act either on their own account, taking only their own interests into account, or in the interests of a third party. And they need not betray the original order to do so. It is enough for them to carry out their orders with different methods, for example, with indirect methods. Most importantly, however, they can only subvert their orders when they are subordinated to them. Only as the instrument of a foreign, delegated intention can they register their own intentions. But it is only as unreliable instruments that they can act in accordance with their orders, can produce the necessary illusions, can demonstrate their skill, and can improvise.

If, then, Marclay's installation is itself the timepiece that the installation is about, how is it about agents? To what extent do they transcend their operative function as timepieces, in order not only to create elbowroom for the depicted and montaged timepieces, but also to create the space in which they themselves can contribute to the mixed intentionality of the action of agents?

In the light of day, the timing that Marclay seems to undertake is in no way as precise or unrelenting as it might appear.¹⁵ The moments of imprecision in the succession of time might appear to be minimal, being under a minute, but they are still striking and noticeable. To begin with, not every cut actually manages to generate the progression of time. The second hand's tick to noon, 12:00 pm exactly, is very noticeably divided into numerous, if short, shots of timepieces and therefore last notably longer than the second that is being displayed: the hand's advance to 12 o'clock is shown exactly 12 times; but these 12 displays interrupt the principal of absolute succession. They are simultaneous. The sounding of the bell at 12 o'clock exactly is also repeated 12 times.

Another example of this kind of imprecision can be found at minute 15:29 hours (3:29 pm). The time '15:29:35' is displayed for precisely 50 real seconds before the hand of the timepiece jumps to '15:30', and exactly 8 seconds after that another timepiece makes the jump to '15:30'. There is a duration of 70 real seconds between the first and the last displays of the filmic time '15:30', and the following minute is correspondingly shorter. An hour later, at '16:30', the display of the exact time, that is to say the jump to 4:30 exactly, is also shown 3 times, with 40 seconds between them. Additionally, there are countless shots of analog clocks that are not clearly legible, and can therefore be cut into the film at various points in order to obtain the desired simultaneity between filmic and real time. A surprising number of images occur in which timepieces might be visible, or in which figures in

the film look at a timepiece, but which in no way make the time available to the viewer. They can therefore also be deployed anywhere without consequence for the time. The clip from *M* showing the children's counting song provides an excellent example: the arm of the counting girl rotates in steps over the heads of the standing children, just like the hand of a clock over the numerals – but there is neither a time displayed, nor a precise visual metonym, as there are not 12 children in the circle.

Naturally the point here cannot be to accuse Marclay's installation of imprecision. Exactly the opposite, these macroscopic, clearly visible overlaps, hesitations, accelerations, condensations, and dilations, even the brief reversals of clock time (*Taktzeit*), have their own method that we can consider as potential intention, without asking to whom this intentionality might belong. These imprecisions as symptoms indicate a principal factor that they display, but which they do not cause. Even if the installation were accurate to the minute in all of its transitions and coordinated to real time with the same precision, even if it were correct down to the second, there would still invariably be a progression of time between two points of measurement that would not have been punctuated and in which time, seen metrically, would remain unobserved. The present, as an exactly precise meeting of the unlike, and as a pure difference, without distortion or corporealization, between past and present (as in the filmic cut), will always require a second present. This second present can be conceptualized, according to the circumstances, as a coextension of the variance, and as the persistence of an operation. It can also be conceptualized as that temporal space in which a condition is (still) capable of changing, in which a progression or an act (*Handlung*) can be carried out, and within which a new direction can be adopted (Bergson 1896/1982, pp. 131–135, 1920/1989, pp. 60–106) for a conception of presence as difference (see Luhmann 1984). In film, this would manifest in the continual flow of new shots (Bazin 1985).

The remarkable thing about Marclay's installation is, then, that this polarity between the two different concepts of present time as difference and as duration is not exhausted in the tension between the inflexibility of systemic time, understood as a number, that is, as a measure of movement on the one hand, and the flowing internal time of the shots on the other hand. According to a theory of agency, this polarization would therefore proceed in order to likewise polarize the prescribed function of coordinating images of a clocks' agency in film with their strong-willed resistance (*Eigensinnigkeit*) to external control. But this is exactly not the case here: the determination of time in Marclay is itself never exact, it never designates a point in time formally. It is, rather, always already a specific progression of time, which can be empty or full. It is not, then, as though there were a series of interlaced exact points in time, which were then all synchronized and made to take place in exact succession. The display of time is fundamentally a series of

interconnected, interwoven overlaps and superimpositions. A minute for Marclay is not a numerical value or a particular point in time. Instead, it is, at best, a duration, during which change can take place, and which is provided with, or delineated through, a numerical value – though even that is not necessary (Luhmann 1999, pp. 51–56).

These imprecisions demonstrate that even the cuts between the same image of a timepiece reveal their own temporal durations, that is to say that they themselves have the ability to generate progression and change, that they have tactile, gesticulatory, action-like characteristics. They reveal that, for Marclay, even the display of time is either an apparative-mechanistic or human gesture is, which itself makes use of time and is therefore in no way a disembodied or, above all else, timeless operation (Flusser 1994). Even time, insofar as it is the result of an operation, is timely and within time. Beyond this linkage between intention, indexicality, and time, it is also the case that without the determination of a point in time, that is to say without temporal, itself inflexible punctuation, the present can be neither understood nor articulated as either a gesture or as a transmission. Without these survey marks of time (*Zeitmesspunkte*) in Marclay's installation, these violations of the strict cadence of time would be impossible. There would be no point of reference for presence as persistence, nowhere for it to erect itself (*sich aufspannen*). Changes or changes of direction, in the sense of deviations from the script, would not be possible.

The operations of the exacting and condensing measure and display of time in *The Clock* produces, then, through its necessarily unfaithful agent, the timepiece, a flexible openness that is perceptible through its imprecision. This is the condition for the imputation of an agent-ruptured intentionality in the technical operations of the production of timing in or through film. Precision and blurriness are not fundamentally different, as they continually allow themselves to be translated and transmitted into one another. As with the apparent errors in Marclay's timing, each specific point in time is at once a way of condensing a flexible and flowing present, which is itself the dilated version of a more or less dense chain of indexical points of synchronization. In and through Marclay's work, time becomes both an essential medium of the agent and a product of that same agent. The implicit thesis of the clock can be described in the following manner: film itself, functioning as an agent, produces, through its regimentation of time, the preconditions for the blurriness of its operations and the addressability of its objects and figures as personal and material agents. It becomes capable, thereby, of becoming the agent that it itself finally represents.

Following the assumptions that are inherent to, and implied by, *The Clock*, and allowing them to be generalized for a moment, we can reach three conclusions regarding *The Clock* with reference to our initial questions. The first concerns the dichotomy between tolerating and effectuating, between

acting and suffering, active and passive. Through the figure of the timepiece and its status as an agent, it becomes clear that these polarized categories are not mutually exclusive, nor are they convertible into one another, nor do they require one another, because they are only recognizable through the contrast between them. This all correct, but the crux of the aforementioned argument implied in Marclay's work is that they constantly push one another forward and establish one another: only insofar as the agent is capable of acting under its own power, can it be passive, and vice versa.

The second conclusion concerns the relationship between materiality and intentionality. Similar to passivity and activity, the two are in no way reducible to one another, nor do they replace one another. They do not contradict each other; instead, they overlap with one another. Appearing only in already mixed configurations, they are inscribed on one another. Each imputation of the one must return to the other. Outside of its complex and interrupted structure of intentionality, which we have observed in detail above, the very material artefact of the alarm or of the timepiece does not even appear as an object of observation or description or subjected to actions. And this is exactly the claim that *The Clock* makes for *The Clock*, and for the moving image as such. As a material field, the moving image is always already a field of action and only as such it is possible, respectively observable, and effectual. To impute materiality to the field is necessarily to make reference to its intentionality, and vice versa. In this respect – as Marclay's installation claims – there is no materiality that can be distinguished from and set against materiality, and therefore also no simply effective operativity, which could be stably opposed to intentionality, and thereby to the characteristics of action.

The third and most specific conclusion, finally, distinguishes synchronization, and time along with it, as the decisive operation or action that serves to generate the initial recursive organization of interpenetrating materiality and intentionality, as well as of passivity and activity. An operative, precise punctuation of time is not to be had, *The Clock* assumes, without the simultaneous generation of an open, action-enabling present, neither can this present be observed or imputed on its own. At least in the medium of the moving picture, and possibly far beyond, both operations and actions require time, because it is exactly through the foundation of time that they always produce operations and actions. The timepiece, and the image of a timepiece that is the film, are also the very agents that are constantly creating the preconditions that are required for their own action, and to which they are constantly, doubly synchronized.

Notes

1. For a critique of the concept of 'actors' in actor-network theory, see Latour (2006; see also Cuntz 2012).

2. Friedrich Kittler remains a primary media-historical paradigm for this kind of investigation (Kittler 1999). For a media-philosophical approach, see Engell (2003).
3. For the characterization of film as an intervention into reality, see Pasolini (1972). On the relationality of media, see, for example, Vogl (2009).
4. The term 'represented' here and below translates the German *Darstellung*, which has a wide range of meanings in German, all of which are employed here. It means 'representation' (in the sense of an image or scene that depicts a particular event), but also exposure (in the sense that an anatomist exposes one of the body's organs), it also means 'to produce' or 'to supply' (in the sense that a housekeeper 'produces' or 'supplies' a necessary sum).
5. The term 'film' is not reserved especially for celluloid images here, rather it applies – surely without media-theoretical consequences – simply and without distinction to all moving images notwithstanding the means of their delivery.
6. Regarding *The Clock*, see, for example (Leader 2010, Velasco 2012, Zalewski 2012).
7. See Voss (2014).
8. See, for example, John Law, *Machinic pleasures and interpellations*, 2001.
9. Sigrid Weigel made reference to Hannah Arendt's conception of action in contrast to that of Bruno Latour in her unpublished lecture during the lecture series on media theory at the Bauhaus Universität Weimar in 2012 (see Arend 1994, Greven 2003).
10. Voss (2014).
11. And to that extent would be thematizable as a motif (Engell and Wendler 2009).
12. The term quasi-action is used here in analogy to Michel Serres concept of quasi-object (Serres 1981).
13. On the malice of objects, see Vischer (1996).
14. On the ontologically relevant connection between time and the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*), see Heidegger (1979).
15. This is in contradistinction to Hartmut Böhme's claim, which precedes from the assumption of mechanistically precise timing in Marclay's work (Böhme 2011).

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