

LONG WALKS

& ANARCHO-

PRIMITIVISM

a blog about change

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Available free on-line at:
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/lwap/>

View the video for this post here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDB89L4aYRc>

The issue here is **'mechanomorphism'**²: The tendency for humans in a technological environment to identify their essential being with that of a machine. This idea will take a little time for me to unpack – so please, **unplug your remote network connections, disable interrupts, and drop your motor functions into standby mode!**

All those popular **'life hack' videos**³ – where people try to reach their optimum productivity or creativity – have nothing to do with realising our own individual self. Instead, they condition us to conform as a "better cog" within the hyper-individuated mass machine of the technological society:

- ◆ Much of this technology, operating within **the hyper-capitalist**⁴ goals of **Silicon Valley's libertarian ideology**⁵, simplifies many aspects of **our modern lifestyle**⁶ to work with 'dumb' machines;
- ◆ In turn – from music reproduction on mobile phones, to automated call handling – this reduces the quality of human interaction, and creates greater frustration, due to the barriers it erects within our everyday lives; and ultimately,
- ◆ What this achieves is to make our daily lives ever-more 'machine-friendly', rather than the stated objective of technology providing a **'better quality of life'**⁷ – which it sometimes can, but usually only for those who can afford the premium service options.

Pt. 8: 'What's With the Moon Names?'

Full Pink Moon 2023

Time: Do you have enough of it?; does it drag?; does it pass too quickly?; and if you try and save time, why do you never get it back again with a certain percentage interest paid?

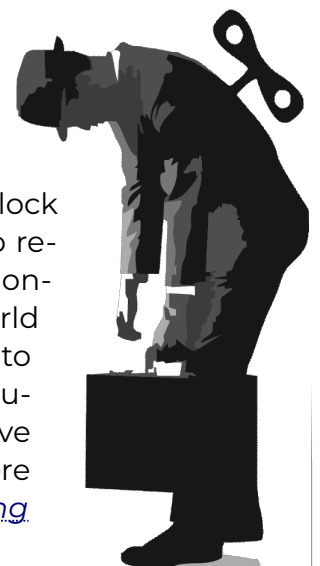
In answer to some recent feedback, I was asked why I date my work with the names of moons. In reply, I thought I'd expand an idea I **began in Part 4**¹: To explain why time is not only critical to the quality of our lives, but also to our impacts on the world around us; and so why 'time' is a key, yet overlooked part of the ecological debate today.

Why, then, do I often date my work with the names of moons or pagan festivals?

The reason that 'workers' are tolerated by **late-stage capitalism**⁸ is that **'biological robots'**⁹ are cheaper than their mechanical alternatives... that is, *until recently*. The current debate about artificial intelligence (AI) – which I covered **in a recent video**¹⁰ – should be a wake-up call to the immiserated future that awaits us if we continue to conform to this technocratic rationale.

When we consciously reduce our natural being to that of a machine, we not only make ourselves more machine-like, but also, more easily replaceable by machines in the near future. When we look at what forces us into machine-like thinking, the key issue **is time**¹¹, and time measurement.

The organising **machine of 'clock time'**¹², since the first fully mechanical clocks were invented eight hundred years ago, has purposefully **diminished our natural**¹³ animal nature to be an adjunct of a **greater social machine**¹⁴. As I outlined in Part 4, breaking the hold of 'clock time' is the first step to realising a different relationship to the natural world – one far more akin to the natural patterns humans evolved to live within before they were subject to the **'galling yoke of time'**¹⁵.



As time-saving [and 'efficiency'](#)¹⁶ are upheld as an 'incontestable good' by our modern culture, few challenge this idea. In practise, scaling our actions by the metric of time, and making time-saving the optimum goal of those actions, has significant ecological impacts.



A basic equation in physics relates speed of an object, to the energy given to that object to make it move at that speed – creating, ['kinetic energy'](#)¹⁷:

$$E_k \text{ (J)} = \frac{1}{2} \times \text{mass (kg)} \times \text{speed (ms}^{-1}\text{)}^2$$

In English: “*The energy imparted, in Joules, equals half the mass of the object, in kilos, multiplied by the speed of the object, in metres-per-second, squared*”. That little ‘2’ at the end, the ‘*speed squared*’ part, is important:

- ◆ Doubling the speed requires four times the energy to reach it;
- ◆ Alternately, to achieve only half the speed takes a quarter the energy.

People talk of saving energy, or being more sustainable, but rarely do they perceive the powerful implications of using ‘speed’ to [‘save time’](#)¹⁸ as part of the modern lifestyle. As our lifestyle speeds-up, and creates longer supply chains, it amplifies the amounts of energy society demands.

If you’ve ever been moving at high speed down a road for some time, and you suddenly decelerate to walking speed, everything feels *really ‘slow’*. Your perceptions, which had previously been racing to keep up with the high-speed stream of sensory information, are suddenly ‘underwhelmed’.

What do you think happens if people try and slow their modern lifestyle? Do those living the high-pressure consumer lifestyle find it difficult to just kick-back, and be [‘in the moment’](#)¹⁹, because they’ve been conditioned by that system to live at high speed?

The [Slow Movement](#)²⁰ like to talk of ‘slow food’, ‘slow travel’, or ‘slow living’. Why, then, can’t we talk about, ‘slow time’? That has a certain meaning in music. Like music, we naturally perceive the pace of time to pass at varying rates; while in the background, the general pressure across society is for that rate to increase, [creating aggravation](#)²¹.

The human brain can’t distinguish the small divisions of time that are increasingly important to technological society. Likewise, the imposed measure of ‘machine time’, which dictates that rate, may often not reflect how the individual is feeling, or is perceiving the passage of time – which is when the modern lifestyle creates [harmful stress and anxiety](#)²² as people sense a ‘loss of control’.

After many years of trying to live more simply and less intensively, I find it very difficult to think within the same ‘frame of time’ as those deeply embedded in the modern world. Just as people are conditioned to move fast, and feel weird when they slow, I no longer feel comfortable ‘going quickly’.

As I outlined previously in Part 4, “*I have no mobile phone; I have no watch; but I have time*”. What made me abandon watches, and resist the use of mobile devices, was my experience of being outdoors – away from machine-regulated time. It was at least twenty years ago, just as the rest of the world started to go ‘mobile’ and ‘wireless’, that I found ‘machine time’ imposed a far greater burden on my work; and without realising, I began to just ignore the clock, and move with the rhythm of the natural world around me. That said:

- ◆ Daylight, and the movement of the sun, moon, or stars, has always allowed me to feel the passage of time more freely than a mechanical device;
- ◆ I’m always more observant of the phases of the moon than the months on the wall calendar; and
- ◆ The passing of the year is related more closely to the progress of the seasons, than the increments of abstract numbers in the current date.

For me, time doesn’t pass with a ‘tick’, but with sensing liminal moments: Of celestial bodies rising and setting; of the slow progress of the moon’s phases; and the slow cycle of plants from bud, to leaf, to fruit, to bare stem – *and of course, all these different measures are contextually taking place simultaneously to fix my sense of ‘now’*.

There is one traditional calendar which measures the world in this way: The Pagan [‘Wheel of the Year’](#)²³. It doesn’t matter whether you actually believe any of the ‘pagan’ part of that or not; it’s what it practically signifies that’s important.

Based upon natural cycles, the basic units of the pagan calendar are years, days, and the Moon’s cycle. The movement of celestial objects operates outside of any human-created mechanism; and represents the way human communities traditionally measured time before the imposition of machine time – *at a slower, less precise pace*.

In fact, our modern 24-hour day is itself ‘imprecise’ – a deliberate error for the sake of using round numbers. This is why we have to use [leap years](#)²⁴, to adjust the error between machine time and natural time; otherwise the seasons would move out-of-step with the months on the calendar. And in today’s time-obsessed world, those leap years have now spawned [‘leap seconds’](#)²⁵, as the need for the precise, systematic co-ordination of globally-networked technologies must correct for the inaccuracies created by the imprecise value of the leap year.

Imposed upon the year are the twelve random calendar months. To understand how ‘random’ they are, the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth month of the year, are named after the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth month of the two-and-a-half thousand year-old [Roman calendar](#)²⁶, which began the year at the Spring equinox.

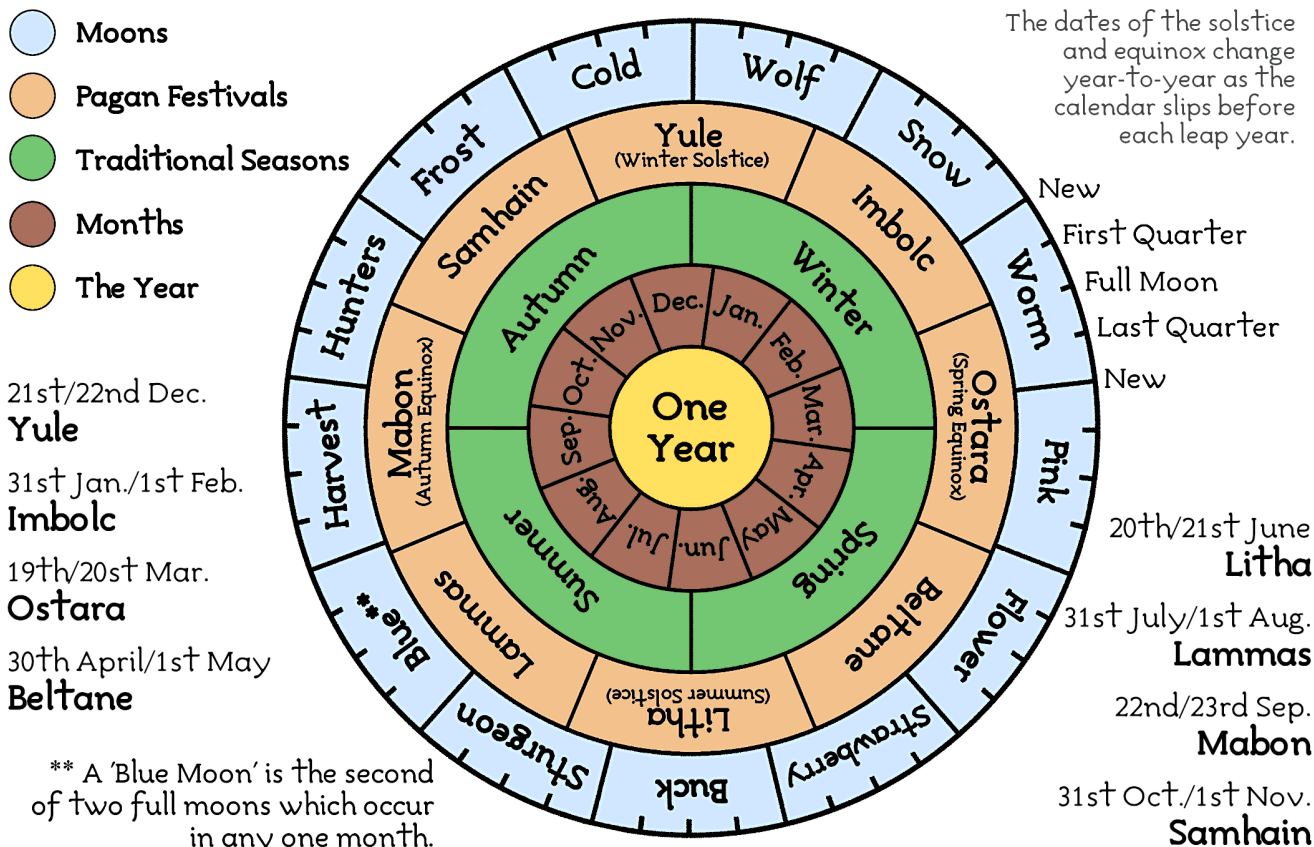
That Roman calendar, later changed by the whim of Emperors [and Popes](#)²⁷, was based within a pagan calendar, very similar to the ‘Wheel of the Year’. This shows how today’s modern calendar is ‘colonial’; being more dependent upon the historic dominance of Western European rulers than the way we physically measure time today.

Within the ‘Wheel of the Year’ there are eight festivals:

- ◆ The four ‘quarter’ Saxon festivals which follow the cycle of the sun – the extremes of day and night at [the two solstices](#)²⁸, and when day and night are in balance at [the two equinoxes](#)²⁹; and
- ◆ The four ‘cross-quarter’ Celtic festivals, that fall mid-way between these points.

Though solstices and equinoxes are fixed

The traditional calendar, the ‘Wheel’ festivals, and the ‘moons’



by the movement of the Earth, they can vary by a day or so from year-to-year because of the 'leap year' issue.

The published 'day' of the solstice or equinox represents the exact moment of the astronomical event, measured by all our modern technology. In reality, ancient peoples would have not celebrated these events on precise days: They would have marked them with a more imprecise period of a few days to a week, by observing the position of distant stars or the sun relative to fixed points in the landscape – such as [standing stones](#)³⁰.

Traditionally ancient fire festivals started at sunset, and carried on past dawn the following day (ancient peoples [really knew how to party!](#)³¹). In Scotland, and some English towns, some remnants of these ancient festivals are preserved to this day – usually as part of *Bonfire Night* celebrations rather than the dates of those ancient festivals.

As the divisions between the festivals last many weeks they do not allow for very accurate time-keeping. This is why, across many cultures, there is also a thirteen-cycle lunar calendar year, measuring equal 27-day [lunar months](#)³².

As humans are apt to do when they appropriate something, these moons were given names – often representative of the season. Though ancient Europeans had their own names, it's the names from the Indigenous People's of North America which dominate the almanac listings today.

However, as the exact 27-and-one-third day lunar month falls outside both calendar months and the 365-day year, the date when a named lunar cycle begins varies from year-to-year. To relate the lunar cycle to the calendar month, they are named for the full moon which occurs within each month. Sometimes there are two full moons in one month, in which case the second of these is the famed, 'blue moon'.



Finally, a 27 $\frac{1}{3}$ day lunar month is a long time. By rough estimation, 7-day weeks can be measured between the four lunar phases: The 'new' moon; 'first quarter'; 'full moon'; and the 'third' or 'last quarter'. And as I set out in Part 4, not only can the phases of the moon mark the passing of the month; the phase and angle of the moon can also tell you the rough hour of the day – in the same way the time can be measured from the angle of the sun during the day.

As my perceptions have slowly changed, as my life decelerates – just like a car that slows from 70 to 5 miles an hour – so I find the need to abandon more precise, 'machine time'-keeping, in order to make sense of things. *Rather than precisely define time, I feel the need to be less precise – more uncertain – to reflect my perception of 'slow time'..* **which is why I date my work with the name of the moon or festival it was completed under.**

Whether you have faith in such mythological matters, or none, the pagan calendar holds within it a deeper truth: Of how we can relate to the world in a [more meaningful way](#)³³ – outside of the imposed scales of 'machine time'; and so live more slowly, and more simply; and from [a psychological level](#)³⁴, de-intensify our lifestyle; and so physically meet the challenges of energy use, climate change and resource depletion.

To conclude: To change the world we must first 'change our minds'. Our relationship to 'time' is a critical first step here. I appreciate that many, not living within this frame³⁵ ***of reference, will be very confused right now. To be fair, that's just how I feel about those who, Gollum-like, paw their 'precious' mobile phones. But I urge you to try and comprehend this idea, as you may find it bestows some, perhaps unexpected benefits for your quality of life in general.***

Long Walks & Anarcho-Primitivism, Part 8: 'What's With the Moon Names'

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