



Differences between World Time and Individual Perceptions of Time in Thomas Mann's Novel 'The Magic Mountain'

Gunter Wolf

Department of Internal Medicine III, University Hospital Jena, Jena, Germany

Abstract: Thomas Mann (1875-1955) published his third novel, '*Der Zauberberg*' ('*The Magic Mountain*'), in 1924. This masterpiece spans more than 1,000 pages and took Mann over a decade (1913-1924) to complete, with a significant interruption due to World War I (1914-1918). The novel follows young Hans Castorp in a Swiss sanatorium for tuberculosis patients called 'Der Berghof'. During his stay in this isolated environment before 1914, Castorp encounters otherworldly figures who challenge him with discussions on politics, philosophy, love, illness and death. Enchanted by a woman he meets there, who reflects an early and formative affection for a male classmate (likely reflecting Thomas Mann's own un-lived homosexuality), he extends his visit from a planned short stay to a total of seven years. Castorp engages with various characters and participates in profound political and philosophical debates with Lodovico Settembrini, a humanist and Freemason who significantly influences him. In contrast, the ascetic Jesuit Naphta, a Galician Jew with a troubled past who converted to Catholicism, serves as Settembrini's counterpoint. Naphta is a brilliant and rhetorically gifted logician. Time plays a crucial role in this novel, with individual time appearing completely disconnected from world time within the sanatorium's closed community. This analysis examines the concept of time, particularly as it pertains to ill patients. I will reference the concept of 'Lebenszeit und Weltzeit' ('Life Time and World Time') as articulated by the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) and explore how this concept relates to the narrative. The patients in the sanatorium have entirely excluded world time and instead live according to their own temporal frameworks, which contributes to both psychological and somatic pathologies.

Keywords: Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain, Hans Blumenberg, perception of time, world time, individual time.

INTRODUCTION

The Magic Mountain was Thomas Mann's third novel, following *Buddenbrooks* (1901), for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1929, and *Royal Highness* (1909). Published in late November 1924, Mann's novel reached its 100th edition by 1928. This more than 1,000-page book remains one of Mann's best-known yet most complex works (T. Mann 1980, T. Mann 2024). Thomas Mann, always intent on structuring his texts with numerous symbolic relationships, has not fully elaborated on the complexity of symbolism, particularly the significance of the number seven in the novel (Heißerer 2018). He also described it as a novel about the philosophy of the time. The narrative spans Hans Castorp's seven-year stay in a fictional clinic near Davos in the Swiss Alps. Set against the backdrop of the First World War, Castorp encounters personalities with diverse worldviews, and this confrontation proves to be formative for him. The narrative spans 1907-1914. Various authors have already analysed the medical and psychological aspects of this fascinating novel in detail (Prüssian

1925; Klemperer 1925), and this analysis will not be repeated here (Sauereßig 1974; Carter 1998; Max 2010; Virchow 2016; Eschenburg, Heuer 2024).

The novel was originally inspired by Mann's visit to his wife, Katia, who was suffering from lung disease (tuberculosis) and spent six months in a Davos sanatorium in 1912. Mann studied the conditions there in detail (Borchmeyer 2022); however, his wife's letters about the situation have not been preserved. Mann began writing in 1913, initially intending to create a humorous short story based on his experiences in Davos (Detken, Kindt, Sina 2025). However, he did not resume work until 1920, and the original novella grew in size and depth after the experiences of World War I. The public of the Weimar Republic received the novel enthusiastically, and it reached a circulation of over 100,000 copies within four years. The *Magic Mountain* can also be considered a parody of the classic '*Bildungsroman*' (Langer 2009). For readers, it was quite an expensive book, earning Mann an excellent honorarium, which allowed him to afford a garage, a car and a driver for the first time in his life (Heißerer 2018). Nevertheless, Mann refrained from commenting on his novel for a long time. In April 1939, just before the onset of World War II, Mann, who was forced to emigrate to the USA, pointed out in a seminar at Princeton University that *The Magic Mountain* is a historical novel, serving as a document of the European state of mind and mental problems in the early 20th century. Posterity will likely recognise that sanatoriums were a typical phenomenon of the pre-war period, as only the wealthy could afford extended stays in places like '*Der Berghof*' (Detken, Kindt, Sina 2025). Mann also emphasised the complex symbolic relationships embedded in the novel and encouraged students to read it a second time, as such relationships can only be discovered after freeing oneself from a focus on the plot (Görner, Latifi 2021, Lahme 2025). For example, the number seven holds special significance in the novel: Castorp stays on the Magic Mountain for seven years, there are seven different dinner parties, body temperature is measured for exactly seven minutes, Castorp's room number is 34 (the sum of which is seven) and the novel comprises seven chapters, with earlier chapters covering longer time periods and later chapters becoming progressively shorter. The last two chapters span six and a half years, from March 1908 until the start of World War I in August 1914, and are of similar length to the first five chapters, constituting the second volume of the two-volume German first edition (Heißerer 2018).

THE PLOT

Hans Castorp, 24, the only child of a Hamburg merchant family, grew up with his grandfather, Hans Lorenz Castorp, and later with his uncle, Tienappel, after his parents' death. He studied shipbuilding technology and, before his planned entry as an engineer at a Hamburg shipyard, visited his cousin, Joachim Ziemßen, who is suffering from tuberculosis (he is a typical German representative of the soldierly and loyal fulfilment of duty, who later leaves the sanatorium despite his illness to begin his military service, returns ill and then dies soon afterwards) in the Swiss sanatorium '*Berghof*'. Joachim familiarises Hans with the clinic's rules, set high in the Alps. Life there follows a rhythm completely different from that of lowland Hamburg. Initially unsettled, Castorp quickly adapts to sanatorium life. He begins to enjoy the structured schedule of meals, medical examinations and outdoor reclining cures, with days passing quickly without his active participation. His interactions with the other patients become more important to him than his distant relatives in Hamburg. Castorp's sense and experience of time shift from the external world-time of the 'flatland'

to a highly individual perception of time (as will be detailed below), prompting him to postpone his return several times. When he develops a fever, he willingly follows the advice of the resolute doctor, Hofrat Behrens, and remains at the 'Berghof'. This contrasts sharply with his cousin, the officer candidate Joachim, who wishes to return to the lowlands as quickly as possible to continue his military career. Unlike Hans, Joachim resists the clinic's altered perception of time through strong self-discipline, ultimately leaving against Behrens' recommendation. He subsequently falls ill, returns and dies shortly thereafter (Gesler 2000).

Castorp is drawn to fellow patient Clawdia Chauchat, a Russian woman a few years older than him, who possesses an unconventional and captivating erotic charisma. She evokes memories of his former classmate Pribislav Hippe, with whom he was secretly in love, likely reflecting Mann's own unfulfilled homosexual interests. After a carnival party, Castorp spends a night of love with her; however, she leaves the 'Berghof' shortly afterwards.

Castorp lets the clinic's comforts lull him into passivity, losing all sense of time. The witty writer Lodovico Settembrini warns him against this complacency. Settembrini, an Italian intellectual and freemason, is a patient at the 'Berghof', residing in a small room on the third floor. He later moves to the village as a subtenant of the ladies' tailor, Lukacek, for financial reasons. Settembrini, characterised by his pleasant voice and engaging rhetoric, speaks to Ziemßen and Castorp during their first walk together. In his mid-30s, he has black eyes and a black moustache, and his free, graceful posture almost distracts from his poor appearance, as he always wears the same clothes. He reminds Castorp of a barrel organ player. As a humanist and writer, Settembrini engages in philosophical debates, attempting to educate Castorp to become a responsible citizen and democrat. He urges him to leave the sanatorium to contribute to societal progress as an engineer. Settembrini takes a genuine interest in Castorp's education and warns him about the dangers of the sanatorium's world to individual time perception. He defends reason, enlightenment, work and health. He often addresses Castorp as an 'engineer' to emphasise the profession's progressive nature. From the outset, he advises Castorp to leave and cautions against becoming alienated from real life through devotion to illness and, above all, the seductive allure of death.

In the second part of the novel, Leo Naphta enters the scene. Settembrini has moved into the house of the ladies' tailor Lukacek, where the wealthier Naphta already resides. Naphta is small, unattractive and beardless, with sharp features and thick spectacles, and he exudes a 'corrosive' effect. His voice resembles that of a cracked plate—he is Settembrini's complete ideological opposite. Naphta hails from a pious Jewish family near the Galician-Volhynian border; his father, a butcher, was murdered by crucifixion. Despite this tragic background, Naphta entered the Jesuit order and advocated for both Catholic theocracy and communism.

Naphta's views prompt Hans to contemplate death—an idea that Settembrini rejects. An X-ray examination confirms that Castorp is not healthy. His uncle, James Tienappel, travels from Hamburg to Davos and tries in vain to persuade Castorp to return with him.

During a ski trip, the novice skier Castorp becomes trapped in a snowstorm and loses consciousness. He dreams of a walk in a paradisiacal landscape, where he suddenly sees two witches tearing a child apart. Upon waking, Castorp reflects on the dream and discovers his

own attitude towards death: neither its exaggeration (as espoused by Naphta) nor the rational battle against it (as advocated by Settembrini) can oppose it; only love can.

Joachim Ziemßen returns from military training to the 'Berghof', where he dies a few weeks later. Meanwhile, Castorp longs for Clawdia's return. She finally appears in the seventh and final chapter of *The Magic Mountain*, accompanied by the elderly coffee planter Mynheer Peeperkorn. Although initially disappointed, Castorp is simultaneously fascinated by the charismatic Dutchman, who captivates the other patients as well. According to Dr Behrens, Peeperkorn is a 'retired coffee king', a wealthy colonial Dutchman suffering from tropical fever. He is a tall, broad man of about 60 years, with a majestic, 'idol-like' wrinkled forehead, flowing white hair, pale eyes and a white chin beard. His imposing presence captivates everyone, particularly through the grand gestures with which he delivers his speeches. Encouraged by the analyst Dr Krokowski, the patients grow increasingly interested in unusual topics. Psychoanalysis (in which Thomas Mann had a deep interest; Carter 1998) and superstition intermingle; they become intrigued by hypnosis and telepathy and organise séances. During one such session with the 'medium' Ellen Brand, Castorp sees the spirit of the deceased Joachim.

Peeperkorn consumes large quantities of wine and genever. One evening, he meets Castorp and invites selected guests to an extended meal that becomes a 'bacchanal'. The serving dwarf, Emerentia, also under Peeperkorn's spell, brings in enormous quantities of food and alcoholic beverages from the kitchen while the guests play cards. Castorp empathetically recognises that panic and terror flicker behind the grand gestures of Peeperkorn's choleric 'personality'. The drunken old man paints a metaphorical vision of the failure of virility and the defeat of feeling before life. Later, in the spring of 1910, when Peeperkorn was often ill and Castorp visited him, he abruptly asked, 'And you love Madame?' (Mann 1980, VII, 602). Castorp abandons his excuses and explains what transpired on that 'leap evening', the '*dream night*' of February 29, 1908. Peeperkorn acknowledges that he and Clawdia have wronged Hans Castorp. Instead of proposing a duel, he now offers Castorp the term 'Du': 'we are brothers'. He refers to Clawdia as 'our beloved'. In May 1910, seven patients embark on an excursion to a waterfall, where, amidst the roar of the falls, Peeperkorn delivers incomprehensible speeches. That night, he dies by suicide using a sophisticated poison instrument (he has already spoken about exotic poisons), probably with the assistance of his mysterious Malay servant. On his deathbed, Clawdia allows Hans Castorp to kiss her on the forehead. The atmosphere at the 'Berghof' becomes increasingly irritable, unstable and aggressive. This tension also applies to the intellectual disputes between Naphta and Settembrini, culminating in a pistol duel. Settembrini deliberately refrains from aiming at Naphta and fires into the air while Naphta shoots himself. The outbreak of the First World War fundamentally alters the situation at the sanatorium. The patients urgently leave the '*Berghof*', and Castorp joins a volunteer regiment, facing an uncertain future as he is forced back into the realities of the outside world.

WHAT IS TIME? AN EXPLORATION OF VARIOUS CONCEPTS.

German physicist and founder of the theory of relativity, Albert Einstein (1879-1955), is often credited with the quote, 'Time is what you read on the clock' (Sieroka 2018). However, time has more nuanced concepts (Ezzei 2002).

Even in early antiquity, ceremonial festivals based on regularly recurring celestial phenomena were used to mark the passage of time. Both Aztec pyramids and European megaliths (e.g., Stonehenge) were used to measure and determine recurring points in time, such as the summer solstice. The approximately 4,000-year-old Nebra Sky Disk (now on display at the State Museum of Prehistory in Halle/S, Germany) likely measured the summer and winter solstices, as well as the beginnings of fall and spring by identifying the equinoxes (Weinrich 2005). About 7000 BC, sedentary farming cultures began to emerge, followed by the first urban cultures around 3000 BC in the Near East. These cultures significantly contributed to optimising agriculture and organising state and public life.

Pre-Socratic philosophers were the first to question the causal origins of regularity and change. Heraclitus (550-480 BC) viewed the law of change as eternal, stating, 'You cannot step into the same river twice the same river twice, because other waters follow'. In contrast, Parmenides of Elea (515-445 BC) posited that only the permanent and unchanging is real. Zeno of Elea (490-430 BC), a student of Parmenides, tried to support his teacher's idea of a homogeneous continuum by arguing that divisibility has no limit and that distance consists of an infinite number of individual points. Thus, Achilles can never overtake the tortoise, as it is always one point ahead. What Zeno overlooked in his paradox (and we all know that Achilles only needs one long step to leave the tortoise behind) is (and which Aristotle [384-322 BC] already pointed out in his *Physics*) that an even infinite series can have a finite sum (because an infinite series of summands very well converges to a finite quantity). Therefore, an infinite amount of time is not required to cover the distance. Achilles can easily overtake the tortoise (Wolf 2006).

For Aristotle, time is closely linked to place and movement; it cannot be conceived without movement and the associated changes, which make it countable. The Greeks distinguished between two different concepts of time, represented by *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos*, allegorically depicted as an old man, corresponds to the long duration of life's journey (see also the poem 'At Schwager *Chronos*' by the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) from 1774 [Goethe 1998]). In contrast, the God *Kairos* is portrayed as a vigorous youth with wings and a pronounced head of hair, symbolising the right moment, such as during an operation for acute appendicitis—neither too early nor too late is ideal. For instance, continuously checking your cellphone while hiking can detract from the experience of witnessing a beautiful sunrise, as you become preoccupied with social media (Wolf 2006, Sieroka 2018). The Christian tradition is based on a linear concept of time, extending from God's creation of the world to the Last Judgement. However, the Church Father Augustine (354-430) also reflected on the nature of time in his *Confessions*, stating, 'So what is time? If no one asks me about it, I know I know it; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know it'. Our concept of clock time originates from the monastic life of the Benedictines, whose daily routines were tightly organised and summarised in weekly and annual schedules, reminiscent of the mental acceleration in our neoliberal society. The Industrial Revolution commodified time, quantifying it for profit, with the adage, 'Time is money' (Benjamin Franklin [1706-1790]).

The theory of relativity demonstrates that the classical concept of absolute linear time, as proposed by Newtonian physics, does not exist (Sieroka 2018). The relativity of time, which is ultimately a social construct, is further illustrated by the biannual changes to summer and winter time in Europe. It is not surprising that such transitions can cause considerable physical discomfort (Aredt 1998).

The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (born 1965) has written a highly acclaimed book in which he argues that modernity changes time structures through acceleration (Rosa 2005). Rosa postulates that the average pace of life has accelerated continuously since the beginning of modernity, albeit not linearly, but in spurts interrupted by pauses and minor trend reversals' (Rosa 2005, p. 199). However, this assertion, while certainly accurate, can be traced back to Karl Marx's (1818-1883) critique of capitalism nearly 150 years earlier. However, Marx could not have anticipated that the continuous accessibility and merging of work and leisure—especially during the home office periods of the COVID-19 pandemic—would lead to an institutionalised temporal deregulation of individual life. Pre-structured frameworks, such as vacations, public holidays, and weekends, can now be disregarded because of current corporate demands (Wrede et al. 2023). Consequently, there is a decline in collective, recurring cyclical rhythms of time structure, such as day-night cycles, workdays-weekends and the start of the year with vacations and holidays.

The resonance (in physics, the vibration of one body stimulating that of another) between people is disrupted in our world by the acceleration and linearisation of the arrow of time. The prerequisites for resonance are rooted in the relationships within the physical world.

Rosa refers to being placed in the world, while Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) speaks of 'Dasein (that) is also always already thrown into a world without being asked' (Heidegger 2006, p. 39). Rosa, like the philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs (born 1958), explains that the constant exchange process of breathing is essential for being placed in the world. We often say that 'our breath catches' when our relationship with the world becomes precarious or that 'the air is thick' when tensions arise between people (Fuchs 2000). Following philosopher Hermann Schmitz (1928-2021), Rosa links the relationship to the world (world attitude) with the bodily processes of opening and closing during breathing: 'The expansion of the chest and of the gaze occurs when we have the feeling that the world facing us is behaving responsively, is supportive or caring towards us, comforting, kind, so that we would like to open up to it, while the faltering or constricted breath and narrowed gaze represent the reaction to a section of the world that is perceived as tending to be repulsive, towards which a protective self-closure and an instrumental-manipulative attitude is indicated' (Rosa 2005, p. 95). The structure of living systems is characterised by two temporal aspects: a continuous resonance between exogenous time givers (day-night cycles, seasons, etc.) and the body's intrinsic 24-hour rhythm. It is easy to understand that focusing too strongly on purely physiological parameters of breathing can disrupt this bodily 'being in the world' through resonance. As a psychiatrist, Fuchs as well as Mundt and colleagues describes the disturbed sense of time in depressive individuals as a desynchronisation between the body and its environment (Fuchs 2021, Mundt, et al. 1998). In contrast, manic patients perceive time as passing subjectively much more quickly (Franck et al., 2005). In his detailed analysis of time sickness in 'The Magic Mountain', Christian Hick (Hick 2003) distinguishes

- The dissolution of the temporal ecstasies of past and future.
- The destruction of time through the normalisation of the time structure and the permissive time background of the entire epoch.
- This progressive acceleration of the pace of life is accompanied by an acceleration of social change.

HANS BLUMENBERG

The German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) differentiated between world time and individual lifetime (Blumenberg 2006). Blumenberg retired in 1985, which significantly altered his personal time management due to the elimination of academic duties. In 1986, he published 'Lifetime and Worldtime' (Wetz 2004, Blumenberg 2006,), which reflects his own changed situation. Blumenberg understands world time as the changes occurring in nature and the universe, the book of world history and an open horizon of possibilities that serves as a projection surface for human wishes and demands. The divergence between world time and lifetime remains unbridgeable; these two concepts of time cannot be reconciled (Rülke 2019). The individual human being, with a finite lifetime, has less and less time for more and more possibilities and desires. Blumenberg understands world time to mean the changes in nature and the universe, the book of world history, but also an open horizon of possibilities that offers itself to people as a projection surface for their wishes and aspirations. In addition to familiarity and clarity, the individual lifeworld does not require a theory. There are no thoughts and actions at disposal. Those who move in the world of life do not know about its background because it consists of a network of typical and familiar situations that normally do not require complex reflections. The divergence of world time from lifetime remains unbridgeable; the two concepts of time can no longer be reconciled (Heidenreich 2020). The individual human being with a finite lifetime has less and less time for more and more possibilities and desires.

Blumenberg begins his astute analysis by describing the history of modernity as a 'falling apart' of time, an 'opening of the time gap'. The expulsion from paradise, the early modern era and the Kantian turn in philosophy all signify paradigm shifts in humanity's understanding of time. For Kant, time is an 'a priori of knowledge', something that people impose on things to recognise them, thereby shaping every object into a 'thing for us' as a recognisable thing (Blumenberg 2006).

Blumenberg centres his analysis on the contrast between world time, which is independent of human beings, and the limited time of human life. He writes, 'Stepping out of life-time means that life-time and world-time come into conflict' (Blumenberg 2006).

Ultimately, time 'takes its revenge' on humanity. Blumenberg describes it as the 'most outrageous imposition' and 'bitterest of all discoveries': as a child, one feels they have all the time in the world, only to realise that the world has all the time in the world while humans possess only a finite lifespan. This realisation leads to feelings of inadequacy. The world not only reveals human finiteness but also 'brags about life with time'. In view of the infinity of desires, life feels too short, and the thought of the inevitable 'missed life opportunities' is agonising (Blumenberg 2006). Even more distressing is the notion that what the world withholds from one person may be granted to another. On the one hand, time serves as an anthropological constant and a fundamental existential experience of human life; on the other hand, the existential category itself seems continuously subject to time. In modernity, Blumenberg diagnoses an uncanny increase in the disproportion between lifetime and world time, progressing from a 'phase of indeterminate discomfort' to a 'pathology of time reference'. He cites political fanaticism, particularly its most extreme form—fascism—as an example of this pathological relationship with time. What, then, are the human strategies for coping with this dilemma? One possibility is to retreat from the

world into an 'archaic homeliness' where 'security and worldly comfort' prevail (Blumenberg 2006, Rülke 2019).

Envy divides the group from its own past and future. Resentment arises from the belief that the time one has fallen into demands greater sacrifice and that the concessions made to society do not yield adequate returns. The thought that others achieve more with less sacrifice leads to time envy, resulting in a furore of suspicion that ambushes others and aims to put them in their place. This critical assessment of others' lives is hostile and anticipates the behaviour of the fanatic, leading to the denunciation and persecution of fellow human beings. The unease in time, which the idyllic retreat cannot successfully overcome, transforms into an unease in culture. The depressing reality of one's final farewell to life and the world lies in the exclusion from further world events. Blumenberg writes, 'Every divergence of life-time and world-time contains this annoyance' (Blumenberg 2006,).

According to Blumenberg, another strategy to alleviate this grievance is to 'gain more time in order to have more of the world'. This involves making every effort to extend one's own lifetime and racing against the limits of time (Blumenberg 2006,). The downside of this speculation on increased lifetime is that, even with daily jogging, eating organic produce and participating in the quantified-self movement, one may not actually live longer. The 'price of time' paid in 'health-related compulsory times to acquire can-time' may, as Blumenberg neurotically suggests, be paid for nothing.

In a strangely neurotic hedonism, individuals attempt to maximise life; the greatest accumulation of pleasure resembles what Ernst Bloch termed the 'Dionysian philistine'. Consumption promises a 'higher world saturation' and an intensified life experience. Individuals not only take everything they can get, but also feel entitled to everything available; this habitus of the colonial master is revenge against the limits imposed by the world set for them.

In addition to artificially stretching time and optimising its exploitation, acceleration serves as another means of achieving more of the world. Blumenberg argues that mechanisation embodies this 'dream of efficiency'. Optimisation, synchronisation, and more effective organisation free us from unnecessary time consumption. However, Blumenberg contends that such simplifications of life are not freedoms but 'prejudices'. This is evident when a dating platform's algorithm pairs you with someone who is exactly like you. The 'global village', as a counterpart to the 'rural world' of the idyll, ultimately withholds what it promises through the same curse of identity: the world (Blumenberg 2006).

Unlike his cousin, Hans Castorp deliberately isolates himself from the world for seven years, focusing solely on his own lifetime. This results in a semblance of eternal reciprocity that suggests a halt in time (Hick 2003). This phenomenon may stem from Castorp's inherently passive nature, characterised by a history of indulgence and chronic fatigue. The comfortable, passive absorption in the sanatorium's pure, activityless environment, devoid of past and future, suits his disposition. Castorp mistakenly believes that detaching from external time extends individual lifespan.

Despite the certainty of life's finiteness revealed by the X-ray examination of his lungs, which occurs amidst loud thunderstorms and electric lightning, Castorp remains ensnared in his strange 'flaccidity'.

Castorp also consciously refrains from using aids to disrupt his perception of time. Mann wrote, 'Hans Castorp had taken no calendar with him on his trip' (Mann 1980, III, S. 42).

Hick noted, 'The waiting rush forward is aimless. The empty frenzy of overtaking senseless waiting time spreads further and further. The time coming from the future, unstructured and unformed, disappears in the whirlpool of the waiting point' (Hick 2003).

Some patients, though not all, inquire about how long they have left to live after being diagnosed with cancer (Wolf 2006). Here, the obvious time reference of an illness becomes abundantly clear. Time also plays an important, though often neglected, role in chronic illnesses without an immediately unfavourable prognosis. It could be argued that chronic illnesses, in particular, force patients to take dishonourable measures of time, thus transferring the subjective perception of time into physical clock time (Wolf 2006).

Time perception is subject to biological influences. For instance, elevated body temperature or hyperthyroidism can lead to overestimating time intervals (Wolf 2006). In contrast, hypercortisolism is associated with underestimating time intervals. The effects of drugs on time perception have long been known. Hallucinogens such as lysergic diethylamide (LSD), psilocybin and even marijuana can create a sensation of time dilation, leading to feelings of 'creeping along' or even a perception of time standing still (Fuchs 2021). Depressive patients perceive the passage of time as slower than healthy controls, a phenomenon noted by German psychiatrists Erwin Strauss (1891-1975) and Viktor Emil von Gelbsattel (1883-1976) in the early 20th century (reviewed in Fuchs 2021). Openness to future perspectives also diminishes with the severity of depression (Fuchs 2021). In contrast, schizophrenic patients tend to overestimate time intervals. Déjà vu experiences (the feeling of having experienced something objectively unknown before) occur more frequently in schizophrenics and epileptics and can be interpreted as disorders of time experience, as they falsely present the present as the past to the sense of time (Franck et al. 2005). However, Castorp is not clinically depressed, as evidenced by his plans for a snow walk, which indicates that he is working towards a goal. His heart races from the exertion of the ascent, reestablishing the physiological connection between physical activity and increased heart rate (Heißerer 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Der Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain) is a novel of over 1,000 pages by German writer Thomas Mann (1875-1955), originally published in two volumes in late November 1924. The novel describes the seven-year stay of its protagonist, Hans Castorp (initially 24), the son of a Hamburg merchant, in a fictional clinic near Davos in the Swiss Alps. On the eve of the First World War, Castorp encounters personalities with a wide variety of worldviews, and this confrontation becomes formative for him. The narrative spans 1907 to 1914. Hans Castorp, a largely passive character with few ambitions, sinks deeper into the enchanting mountain world and the sanatorium's morbid atmosphere. He loses touch with the realities of life and any sense of the outside world, as life in the sanatorium is passive and follows its own schedule. The novel was inspired by Mann's experiences in a Davos sanatorium, which he encountered in 1912 while visiting his wife Katia (1883-1980), who had a lung

disease that necessitated her stay. The extensive medical and psychological aspects of the novel have already been analysed in detail, and this work focuses exclusively on time.

The work of German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996), who is not widely known outside of German-speaking countries, separated world time from individual lifetime in his 1986 study 'Lebenszeit und Weltzeit' ('Lifetime and Worldtime'), which has (to the best of my knowledge) not yet been translated into English. This work fits nicely with explaining the time behaviour in the sanatorium.

At the beginning of Blumenberg's analysis, he states, 'Stepping out of the lifeworld means that lifetime and world time diverge'. Both times drift inexorably apart; strategic undertakings to reconcile them must ultimately fail (Blumenberg 2006). This deficiency characterises it: time is always the time missing from our lives. In other words, the lifetime deficit becomes visible against the existence of an almost endless world time. My short lifetime within the indifferent world of time is ultimately only a minimal moment in an almost infinite time horizon. In short, it does not matter whether I am present for the world to exist. Awareness of time gradually erodes my self-confidence, my identity, and my experiences, ultimately leading to a loss of self. Hans Castorp and the other protagonists behave as if they have all the time in the world because of the sanatorium's uniform daily routine. The sudden awakening comes with the onset of World War I and Castorp's conscription. Times have fundamentally changed, and world time has overtaken individual time. The guests of the sanatorium do not have to anticipate anything, as they are freed and condemned by the lack of expectations. Their future, which should normally be shaped by expectations, hope or anticipation, remains indefinitely empty.

REFERENCES

- Arendt J.: Biological rhythms: the science of chronobiology. J R Coll Physicians Lond. 32:27-35, 1998.
- Blumenberg H.: Lebenszeit und Weltzeit. Suhrkamp 1. Auflage 2006.
- Borchmeyer D.: Thomas Mann: Werk und Zeit. Die erste umfassende Monographie zum Werk des Nobelpreisträgers. Insel 2022.
- Carter R.: The Mask of Thomas Mann (1875-1955): Medical Insights and Last Illness. Ann Thorac Surg 65:578-85, 1998.
- Detken A., Kindt T., Sina K. (Hrsg.): Zauberberg-Handbuch. J. B.Metzler 2025.
- Eschenburg B., Heuer C. (Hrsg.): Thomas Manns Der Zauberberg: Fiebertraum und Höhenrausch. Verlag? , 2024.
- Ezzeii C.: What is time? The answer varies from society to society. Scientific Americ. 287: 74-76, 2002.
- Franck N., Posada A. , Pichon S., Haggard P.: Altered subjective time of events in schizophrenia. J. Nervous Mental Dis. 193: 350-353, 2005.
- Fuchs T: Leib, Raum, Person- Entwurf einer phänomenologischen Anthropologie. Klett Cotta, 2000.
- Fuchs T.: Depression als Desynchronisierung, in: Randzonen der Erfahrung. Beiträge zur phänomenologischen Psychopathologie. Karl Alber. 2021; S. 170-192.

- Gesler W.: Hans Castorp's journey-to-knowledge of disease and health in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. *Health & Place* 6: 125-134 (2000).
- Goethe JW: *Gedichte*. Reclam 1998.
- Görner R., Latifi K.: *Thomas Mann: Ein Schriftsteller setzt sich in Szene*. Wbg Theiss 2021.
- Heidegger M: *Sein und Zeit*. Max Niemeyer Verlag 19. Auflage 2006.
- Heidenreich F.: *Politische Metaphorologie: Hans Blumenberg heute*. J.B: Metzler 2020.
- Heißerer D.: *Thomas Manns Zauberberg: Einstieg, Etappen, Ausblick*. Königshausen und Neumann, 2018.
- Hick C.: VomSchwindel ewiger Gegenwart. Zur Pathologie der Zeit in Thomas Manns *Zauberberg*, in *Der Zauberberg- die Welt der Wissensschaften in Thomas Manns Roman*. Engelhardt D.v., Wißkirchen H. (Hrgs.). Schattauer 2003, S. 71-106.
- Isojima Y., Okumura N., Nagai K.: Molecular mechanism of mammalian circadian clock. *J. Biochem.* 134: 777-784, 2003.
- Klemperer F.: Ärztlicher Kommentar zu Thomas Manns „Zauberberg“. *Die Therapie der Gegenwart* 66: 601-606, 1925.
- Lahme T.: *Thomas Mann: Ein Leben. Die Biografie, wie sie noch nie erzählt wurde - endlich der ganze Thomas Mann*. DTV 2025
- Langer D.: *Thomas Mann Der Zauberberg. Erläuterungen und Dokumente* Reclam 2009.
- Mann T.: *Der Zauberberg*, Fischer Taschenbuch 212.Tausenste Auflage 1980.
- Mann T.: *The Magic Mountain (English Edition)*. H. T. Lowe-Porter (Translation). Verlag. 2024.
- Max K.: Weihnachtliches vom Zauberberg (Thomas Mann).Medizinische und religiöse Aspekte des Totentanz-Kapitels. *Dtsch Med Wochenschr* 135: 2574-2578, 2010.
- Mundt C, Richter P., van Hess H. , Stumpf T.: Zeiterleben und Zeitschätzung depressiver Patienten. *Nervenarzt* 69: 38-45, 1998.
- Prüssian A.: *Der Zauberberg*. Münch Med Wochenschr 72: 696-697, 1925
- Rosa H.: *Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*. Suhrkamp 2005.
- Rülke T.: *Sein, Zeit und Lebenswelt: Eine temporale Phänomenologie des Daseins ausgehend vom Denken der Zeit bei Edmund Husserl und Hans Blumenberg*. ePubli. 2019.
- Sauereßig H.: *Literatur und Medizin. Zu Thomas Manns Roman „Der Zauberberg“*. *Dtsch Med Wochenschr* 36: 1780-1786, 1974.
- Sieroka N. : *Philosophie der Zeit: Grundlagen und Perspektiven*. CH. Beck 2018.
- Virchow C.: 80 Jahre „Der Zauberberg“ Über die Reaktion der Ärzte auf den Roman Thomas Manns. *Pneumologie* 70, Supplement 2: S128-S139. 2016.
- Weinrich H.: *Knappe Zeit: Kunst und Ökonomie des befristeten Lebens*. C.H: Beck 2005.
- Wetz F.J.: *Hans Blumenberg zur Einführung*. Junius Verlag 2004.
- Wrede SJS., Claassen K., Rodil Dos Anjos D., Kettschau JP., Broding HC: Impact of digital stress on negative emotions and physical complaints in the home office: a follow up study. *Health Psychol Behav Med* 11:2263068, 2023.
- Wolf G.: Zeit als vernachlässigte Krankheitsdimension: Patienten mit chronischer Niereninsuffizienz als Beispiel. *Nieren- und Hochdruckkrankheiten* 35: 185-190, 2006.

Author Contributions: This is a single author contribution

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Does not apply.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.